

Altering Bodies, Altering Minds: Examining Essentialism, Gendered Discrimination and Violence,
Racism, and Colonialism through Speculative Fiction Tropes

by

Meghan K. Riley

A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2025

© Meghan K. Riley 2025

Examining Committee Membership

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examination Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner	Dr. Sherryl Vint Professor, English
Supervisor	Dr. Victoria Lamont Associate Professor, English Language and Literature University of Waterloo
Internal Members	Dr. Heather Smyth Associate Professor, English Language and Literature University of Waterloo Dr. Katy Fulfer Associate Professor, Philosophy University of Waterloo

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the ways in which speculative fiction tropes simultaneously reinforce and challenge ideologies which uphold not only discourses about but also systems of domination, including racism, ethnocentrism, colonialism, and gendered violence. Further, the novum – the element within the text which distinguishes the world of the story from our own – and the resulting distance (Suvin 6) enables profound engagement with the lived experiences of being raced, gendered, and subordinated, while often resisting didacticism. However, it is that same distance which can lead to the repetition and circulation of insidious ideologies. I argue that it is these factors which make the genre of speculative fiction particularly generative as a postcolonialist, feminist literature, and for destabilizing students’ taking pervasive essentialist worldviews as a given so that they can critically engage with and critique the aforementioned ideologies in media.

The analysis spans five chapters. The first chapter examines how the tropes of shapeshifting, cloning, transgenerational memory, and extreme longevity in Octavia E. Butler’s *Wild Seed*, Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*, and Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death* operate to center embodied knowledge and alternate ways of knowing and producing, serving as a challenge to Western rationalism as well as patriarchal and colonialist ideologies. Chapter two demonstrates how the speculative fiction tropes of pheromones, advanced brain alterations, genetic modification, extrasensory abilities, and an alien breeding scheme in Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling* foreground the ethics of consent in rape culture, medical care, and colonialism. Chapter three focuses on the role tropes such as shapeshifting, extrasensory abilities, parthenogenesis, and a third sex play in critiquing essentialism, gendered discrimination, and violence, but ultimately failing to imagine a future in which men are able to act beyond their biology or in which caregiving is not exclusive to people who can give birth. The fourth chapter examines and critiques the tendency of speculative fiction film and television to deny racialized alien characters reproduction, and if reproduction occurs, to deny these characters a stable and healthy family life – a denial which mimics cultural genocide and other colonialist practices. Further, the persistence of “scientific” racism, the ubiquitous reproduction of white bodies through a range of speculative fiction tropes such as doubling through cloning and time travel, and the valorization of white parents and children that occurs through speculative tropes is made clear. In the fifth chapter, I apply my analysis of the above to my recommendations on teaching a course which addresses these ideologies in speculative fiction media and invites students to consider the ways in which aspects of their worldview have been influenced by embodiment, the social construction of race and gender, etc.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Lamont, for her guidance and advocacy throughout this long journey. Your supervision style, from your realism when I was too ambitious too early in the program to your praise and encouragement when I later began to doubt myself as a scholar, was exactly what I needed. I have always appreciated your candor and willingness to let me thrive in my own time. Further, your comments on my (many, many) drafts – especially in relation to my address of essentialism, strategic essentialism, colonialism, masculinity, and speculative fiction tropes – enabled me to make more nuanced, thorough, well substantiated arguments.

Thank you, too, to my doctoral committee members, Dr. Heather Smyth and Dr. Katy Fulfer. Dr. Smyth, you provided me with critical insight into postcolonial theory, and you offered persistent critique that aided me in argumentation and substantiation. Dr. Fulfer, your enthusiasm for my project, your insights into speculative fiction as both a fan and a scholar, your expertise in the ethics of consent and philosophical theories more broadly, and your reading suggestions were a boon. Both of you reinvigorated my keenness and drive to complete the project.

The completion of this dissertation was aided by generous funding, including the Ontario Trillium Scholarship, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and a grant from the Centre for Teaching Excellence at the University of Waterloo.

I would also like to thank others who provided critique and encouragement related to the project, mainly in the form of reading chapters. These include the reviewers and editorial team of volume 3, issue 3 of the *Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics*, in which an early draft of the second chapter of this dissertation was published. Dr. Karra Shimabukuro also provided valuable feedback on an early draft of the fourth chapter.

A few of my family members, including “found family”, were instrumental in my completion. These include my daughter, Ava; my husband, Brad; my friends Rebecca and Dan, for making me laugh; and my closest friend, Yvette. Brad and Yvette in particular, your unwavering encouragement while reminding me that I was a whole person and helping me to care for myself while working towards the goal made finishing this project so much easier.

Finally, I would like to thank myself for my resilience and tenacity when it seemed that the odds were stacked against me.

Table of Contents

Examining Committee.....	ii
Author's Declaration	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Preface	1
Introduction.....	6
Chapter 1 - "Hear[ing] the Dead and Remember[ing] the Past": Modes of Knowing, (Knowledge) Production, and Strategic Essentialism	37
Chapter 2 - "Your Body Has Made a Different Choice": The Ethics of Consent and Colonial Control in Octavia E. Butler's <i>Lilith's Brood</i> and <i>Fledgling</i>	66
Chapter 3 - "The Birth of Us All": Essentialism, Gendered Violence, Queer Representation, and Devaluation/Revaluation of Caregiving in <i>Who Fears Death</i> , <i>Salt Fish Girl</i> , and Octavia E. Butler's Oeuvre	100
Chapter 4 - Representation ≠ Reproduction: Sterilized Renderings of Raced and Racialized Characters, Cultural Genocide, "Scientific" Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Colonialism in Speculative Fiction Television	137
Chapter 5 - Altering Bodies, Altering Minds: Teaching Speculative Fiction for Critical Engagement with Media and Social Change	174
Conclusion	195
Works Cited	201

Preface

At the age of thirteen, I read *Xenogenesis* (1989)¹, Octavia E. Butler's trilogy about a Black woman who is kept in stasis by the alien Oankali following a third world war and who becomes the first mother to Oankali-human hybrid children. A few years later I was asked, "What book or author has majorly influenced the way you live your life today?" I answered, "The book which most influenced the way I live my life is, without a doubt, the trilogy *Xenogenesis* [...] A ... commentary on (social constructions of) race and gender, and the ways [...] people respond to difference, it is also a post-apocalyptic adventure novel [...] it completely changed the way I thought about science fiction. Now I have read all of Butler's work, and I research speculative fiction, race, and gender."

The above is a concise summary of the way I situate myself in the work, and the significance researching and teaching about depictions of race and gender in speculative fiction, but also depictions of difference and belonging more broadly in speculative fiction, holds for me. Though I had and continue to have the privileges of being white, cisgender, and heterosexual, I was alienated in my youth by having very little close family, a minority religious affiliation, and my neurodivergence. I had no social outlets outside of school, few friends, and often bore the brunt of mocking from my peers at school because of my appearance and special interests. The loneliness of the characters in *Xenogenesis* - adrift from their homes, history, and family, particularly the character of Akin, who is bereft without the paired sibling he should have had as a companion since birth, and not fully claimed either by his family nor the humans who have stolen him from his family - resonated with me. Further, while I have come over time to identify

¹ *Xenogenesis*, a compilation of *Dawn*, *Imago*, and *Adulthood Rites*, was later republished as *Lilith's Brood*.

as cisgender, in my youth up until my mid-twenties I had an ambivalent relationship with my gender, as I did not share the interests or enjoy the activities stereotypically associated with being a young woman, such as cosmetics, fashion, or discussing boys. Though I never experienced dysphoria, I often had the sense that my body was foreign to me, particularly in adolescence, as my body developed. I didn't feel that my appearance or my name were attuned with my impression of my self. In my early twenties, I described myself as "androgynous" for these reasons. That the Oankali were sexless at birth and could eventually transform into a sex that no one expected based on their initial physical qualities was a compelling concept.

Reading *Xenogenesis* in 1998 also marked the first time I had experienced the depiction of a Black woman in science fiction, save Lieutenant Uhura on *Star Trek: The Original Series* and Guinan on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Reading *Xenogenesis* was most certainly the first time that I encountered a nuanced representation of a woman who was powerful in her own right, and not characterized primarily as beautiful or hormonal and in need of a man's support to mitigate her emotionality, in a science fiction story. I was not just intrigued - I was enchanted. Obsessed. I devoured Butler's fiction, and while completing my undergraduate and Masters degrees I was introduced to the work of authors such as Tananarive Due, Nalo Hopkinson, Nnedi Okorafor, Larissa Lai, and Eden Robinson - authors who, albeit in ways distinct from Butler, feature women of colour whose experiences are determined by the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and depict race and gender in novel and complex ways through speculative fiction tropes. Though these authors' styles and the particularities of setting, characterization, and theme differ greatly from Butler's, like Butler does in the *Xenogenesis* and *Patternist* trilogies, these authors often demonstrate the loneliness and pain that can result from being significantly different from one's community, the characters' longing for similar companions,

and the impact of alienation and assimilation – both by colonizing forces and by those who have internalized the values of colonizing forces. Some other unifying elements include the presence of aliens and/or gods fusing with humans, both genetically and culturally, and transformation of the body leading to characters thinking differently about supposedly innate or ingrained characteristics and ways of life. Further, many of these texts feature situations in which hybridity – either through reproduction or through alterations to a character’s body, or both – occurs without consent and conflation of sex and gender or essentialist representations of race which are variously enabled or challenged through speculative fiction tropes. Prominent and recurring speculative fiction tropes include staples such as time travel and alternate worlds – noted by Sarah LeFanu in her assertion that generic tropes “metaphorically and metonymically” productively examine “the construction of ‘woman’” (4-5) – as well as shapeshifting, reincarnation, transgenerational memory, broader forms of memory transfer, immortality, the isolation of species-linked genes to produce a single-species alien from a hybrid, and cloning or other forms of doubling involving an array of technologies which create a copy of an original person. Shapeshifting refers to the ability of someone to take on other forms at will. Transgenerational memory is defined as memory which is passed to later generations of a family or group of people, resulting in individuals who were not physically present (or, indeed, even alive) at the time of the memory to have a lived experience of it. Memory transfer works in much the same way, through a character possessing someone else’s memory shares that memory with others, including the sensory detail associated with the memory.

My dissertation project emerged out of the question, “How can I use diverse speculative fiction to better engage students in thinking and talking about race and gender?” In 2005, I began the work I am still pursuing now with the creation of a lesson unit for a pre-service English

education teaching course that teacher candidates took prior to practice teaching and ultimately earning a secondary teaching certificate. I was heavily influenced by my great appreciation for Butler's oeuvre and my expanding familiarity of speculative fiction by women of colour, which would become a constant in my career. The unit featured historical fiction and science fiction by Tananarive Due and Octavia E. Butler and was called, "History and Mystery: Two African American Women Dream Up Past (and Future) Worlds." Even then, my focus was on the "portray[al] [of] women's issues within the speculative fiction genre," and I defined speculative fiction as encompassing historical fiction as well as science fiction.

That initial unit plan, which I unfortunately never had the opportunity to teach, in many ways formed the basis for my dissertation project. It has been guided by the challenges I faced in teaching the aforementioned authors in the secondary education context (such as administrators not understanding the relevance of the materials and denying my request to teach it, and providing students with enough context and framework for analysis), and informed by my study of postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theory during and following comprehensive exams. As I became familiar with postcolonial literature and theory and gender theory, I realized that gender, intersectional feminist, and postcolonial theories not only provided a framework for analysis of speculative fiction, but that speculative fiction – because of the critical ways that the world in speculative fiction differs from our own, and because the resulting distance can assist readers in reconsidering their perspectives and positions - is often an especially productive genre for critically considering individual's and group's experiences with colonialism and gender.

In addition to examining how pervasive cultural concepts about race and gender appear through speculative fiction tropes in the work of Butler, Okorafor, Lai, Robinson, Adeyemi, Hopkinson, and other authors, I consider how while the genre of science fiction has historically

been purported to be more socially progressive than other genres, depictions of race and gender in speculative fiction television often reinforce erroneous and harmful notions such as the concept that certain traits are inherent to a particular race, or that white women are better and more deserving parents than those of other races and genders. In 2015, I revisited the Star Trek series which I had first watched as a young child, and began to watch other speculative fiction television series, including *Fringe*, *Continuum*, *Orphan Black*, and *The Flash*. At the time, these activities were merely for leisure and a welcome distraction from my academic pursuits. However, watching these programmes alongside my studies of gender, intersectional feminist, and postcolonial theories, I noticed glaring omissions in the representation of people of colour or alien characters who function as people of colour. These omissions occurred particularly in the representation of children and family, and I began to identify other patterns across the works mentioned above and in many other popular speculative fiction series.

I share my journey towards this project because, first of all, I want it to be evident that my work stemmed from my identities as a fan of speculative fiction and as a teacher, as well as from the way these texts and the core concepts shared across them resonated with me – both because I related to the alienation from society experienced by the characters and because the speculative fiction texts I discuss in this dissertation were particularly generative for me, as a white, cisgender, heterosexual woman, in better understanding the diversity and complexity of experiences of being gendered and being racially othered. Second, I intend for this work to be useful for secondary and postsecondary instructors who are seeking to aid students in gaining nuanced perspectives on gender, sexuality, colonialism, and intersectionality through an examination of how these experiences are portrayed in speculative fiction texts.

Introduction

Race, gender, and sexuality are concepts in relation to the human experience and to discrimination that many people discuss, but which tend – in the general public – to be conditioned by the positionality of any given person or group, often without a recognition or acknowledgement of how that positionality contributes to perspectives and to distinct differences in lived experiences, particularly if the positionality involves privilege. That lack of recognition applies to nuanced understanding of their own identities and how they came to identify in those particular ways, the privilege granted by certain subject positions and identities (for instance, being white, cisgender, and heterosexual), and how discrimination operates in conjunction with categories of race, gender, and sexuality.

Many people tend to think of their subject identities as being inherent qualities, in particular sexuality, and - while they may be aware of how their race, gender, or sexuality impacts their overall experience of privilege - they are less likely to critically reflect upon the effect these categories have had upon their experiences and thus the formation of their identity, worldviews, and biases.

Multiple postsecondary courses ask students to consider categories to which they belong or to which they have been assigned by others, identity formation, and empathy for experiences different than one's own. Secondary courses do not necessarily engage explicitly with these questions, but they do often ask students to think about and respond to historical and current events, which necessitates thinking about race, gender, and sexuality - or, at least, thinking about and responding to historical and current events *should* take these factors into consideration.

Gender, too, has a significant effect on social experiences, including gendered violence and access to opportunities - or lack thereof. Socioeconomically, women have drastically different experiences than men - as of 2015, white women in the United States earned 82 cents for every dollar that white men earned. Black women earned 56 cents for every dollar that white men earned. In Canada, “non-racialized” women earned 67 cents for every dollar that white men earned, while “racialized women” earned 59 cents, respectively (Block et al. 5). Just as intersectionality theory - the theory that experiences of discrimination are based on multiple, intersecting categories including that of race and gender - applies to the discrepancy between men and women’s earnings, it also applies to experiences of precarity and poverty. Advocates for Youth notes that race and sexuality intersect for young queer people, often resulting in more negative outcomes: “GLBTQ* youth of colour” are more at risk for feeling they have brought shame upon their families due to cultural norms, and that 50% of those surveyed in a study on United States GLBTQ youth of colour stated they were bullied or attacked “because of both race and sexual identity.”

Clearly, then, an understanding of categories of race, gender, and sexuality - and the resulting discrimination based on these factors not merely as separate categories but as they intersect - is relevant to not just historical and current events, but also everyday social experiences.

However, students are not necessarily likely to be asked to critically contend — beyond their lived experience — with matters of race, gender, or sexuality in any meaningful way unless they take a course which focuses on racialized people, or a gender studies course. Moreover, when students - and, indeed, most people - are asked to consider the ways in which their experiences are contingent upon whatever body they were born with, they often struggle

significantly, as Stacey Waite notes of her students' discomfort with ambiguous and destabilizing embodiment and with texts which expose the social situatedness of their experiences and in particular their privilege (59-62). Waite references Bourdieu's contention that "domination" is "legitimiz[ed] [...] [through] embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction" (qtd. in Waite 55). Waite argues that for this reason, students perceive her "gender performance [...]" as an embodiment that is asking them to change the way they think about identity". They reject her masculinity because it is not "sanctioned and approved by the legitimate order" (Waite 57). Thus, Waite's body is one that aligns with Kristeva's concept of "abjection". It does not align with "borders, positions, rules" but, rather, destabilizes borders, positions and rules and it is for that reason that it is so disconcerting (Waite 59-60). Waite concludes that her gender performance, alongside the texts that she teaches, destabilizes students' "visions of the world" as well as "some version of themselves they hold dear" (61). That Waite's gender performance does not align with what has been sanctioned by society results in students' fears that aspects of their own identities such as gender performance, sexuality, and their worldviews more broadly are perhaps not as stable and more contingent on embodiment and positionality than they might have thought, as opposed to core or even innate traits.

Said's *Orientalism* argued that European writers represented colonised people and "the East" more broadly in ways that were first and foremost a result of their complicity with colonisation (11). These representations were not always entirely intentional and instead were a reflection of being immersed in preconceived notions about the East. Said emphasizes the influence of seemingly varied but at the same time totalizing discourse in maintaining colonial domination, asking whether it is the "general" and undeniably racist, imperialist literature about

the East that is most effective in the maintenance or the “work produced by almost uncountable individual writers, whom one would take up as individual instances of authors dealing with the Orient” (8). The totalizing nature of “individual instances” can be identified in enduringly ubiquitous motifs of “imaginative geography” such as the stark division between Europe and Asia, Europeans or their representatives speaking for and in fact “creating” Asia, the East’s threatening “excesses” and lack of reason, the East alternately as an “Old World to which one returned” or an entirely new place which existed only insofar as Europeans infiltrated, alluring unfamiliarity brought under control (Said 58), and the East as “blank spaces” (Said qtd. in Hamadi 41). This pattern of portraying the colonised as “dependent races” and corrupting forces persists somewhat more subtly in European literature of the 19th century (Said qtd. in Hamadi 42-43).

Beyond Said’s exposure and critique of these motifs, he also discusses culture as preliminary resistance, arguing that a colonial “literature of opposition and decolonization” preceded “politics, military history, [and] economic process” which rejected imperialism. Here there is a set of corresponding yet opposing motifs; for instance, the river as path to corruption in *Heart of Darkness* becomes an irrepressible “‘river of cure’” in *The River Between*, and a route through which to defeat the West in *Season of Migration to the North* (Said qtd. in Hamadi 44).

In 1999, Homi K. Bhabha wrote that “magical realism ... becomes the language of the emergent postcolonial world” (6). Rooted in Jacques Stephen Alexis’s positioning of magical realism as consonant with rather than opposed to “post-war, radical intellectuals” insistence on “social realism as a tool for revolutionary social representation” and in alignment with “mythic and magical traditions ... [as a] collective ... articulat[ion] [of] difference from the ... colonial and racial oppressors” (Ashcroft et al. 118-119), the genre is understood as “an aesthetic that

belongs organically to non-Western ... cultures” (Siskind qtd. in Figlerowicz and Mertehikian 4) and has “cultural emancipatory potential” (Figlerowicz and Mertehikian 4).

Ousmane Ngom argues that Bhabha referred to the magical realism feature of “mythic figures” who traverse time and space and their ability to “offer a firsthand” account of “societies before, during, and after” colonialism, resulting in an “interface between history and memory” (197). Nurhidaya and Setiawan posit that magical realism equates to postcolonial criticism because it asserts the magical as logical, in opposition to “Western historical narrative” which substantiates “the *real* through reality” and shuns “the *magical*” in association with “the *East*, the *Other*, or the *indigenous*”, with an “aim to unsettle the authoritative steadiness of reality, fact, and even history” (23-24).

The structure of magical realism is described as being comprised of divergent, parallel strands of the magic and the real. These divergent strands are, according to Stephen Slemon, “two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other” (qtd. in Nurhidayah and Setiawan 24). Eva Aldea concurs, positing that “magical realism is defined by the paradoxically equal and non-hierarchical coexistence of realism and magic”, with the magic and realism both divergent from and discordant with each other (qtd. in Ngom 197). These structural aspects – the form - align with the aforementioned function of representing the colonial worldview and the worldviews of indigenous people as diametrically opposed.

Speculative fiction, however, achieves a core theme of postcoloniality, representing situations in which “discontinuous realities are nonetheless implicated with each other and intertwined, no matter how remote they may at first have seemed” (Jameson qtd. in Smith 4). Drawing on Jameson’s analysis of magical realism in film, which states that magical realism

merged “precapitalist [...] [and] nascent capitalist or technological features” (Jameson qtd. in Smith 11), Eric D. Smith argues, compellingly, that while magical realism confronts the results of “a constitutive shift or disturbance in the mode of production,” that science fiction responds to “the decline of one historical situation [...] signaling the recognition of a new one, whose unique parameters demand an altogether different set of representational strategies” than those employed in magical realism (11).

The fusion of the real and the speculative more closely aligns with Bhabha’s consideration of the role of hybridity in postcolonial contexts—particularly the way in which colonial mimicry, while arrogating symbols of the colonisers’ power, simultaneously acts as a form of resistance through the difference it produces—and his call for the contemporary not to be “envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future (5). In my dissertation, I seek to demonstrate that speculative fiction, with its consistent use of what Darko Suvin called cognitive estrangement and in particular the novum, which delineates a “subject, but at the same time make[s] it seem unfamiliar” (6), indicates “a mapping of possible alternatives” (12), and provides a mirror which “is not only a reflecting one, [...] [but] a transforming one, [...] a crucible” (5) – should be viewed as an important emergent model for postcolonial literature in the 21st century and that the postcolonial critique speculative fiction offers is bound up in feminist and intersectional critique as well.

In order to declare speculative fiction as a particularly productive genre for the representation of postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist experiences, however, one must first answer the question: What is speculative fiction? It can reasonably be argued that speculative fiction emerged from the genre of science fiction. Like magical realism, science fiction was initially a response to “epistemic changes” – for the latter, those changes produced by

“cultural, scientific, and technological upheavals” in the nineteenth century. Brian Aldiss argues that science fiction as a coherent genre could not have formed prior to the nineteenth century because it was only at that time that science – as both a practice and as a worldview – “obtained widespread cultural currency” (qtd. in Roberts 5). These responses to “epistemic changes” bore their own set of structural and stylistic tendencies, including reduced emphasis on the subject and increased emphasis on the object (Broderick qtd. in Roberts 1-2). Historically, both popular - broadly speaking - and academic considerations of science fiction as a genre have privileged “hard” science fiction, in conjunction with its traditionally, predominantly white, male authors. Though he has since reversed his stance, Suvin famously disregarded fantasy in his initial theory of the “novum,” positing that there must be a scientific device in order for the novum to operate (6), and that “[a]s a literary genre, SF is fully as opposed to supernatural or metaphysical estrangement as it is to naturalism or empiricism” (7).

Speculative fiction has sought to combat these restrictions on the novum in accordance with a resistance to the underlying premises of that insistence on scientific devices and on the object’s primacy over the subject, rejecting the “Western, post-Enlightenment, androcentric, and colonialist mindset that had long excluded from ‘Literature’ stories that had failed to imitate reality or embraced a different version of the real” (Oziewicz 2). A brief history of the term speculative fiction may assist in illuminating the meaning of the term and the reasons for its use, especially as the definition and reasoning have changed over time. Coined in 1941 by Robert Heinlein to refer to a very narrow set of generic criteria (Oziewicz 3-4), the use of the term speculative fiction in accordance with how it tends to be used now originated in the late 1960s, when author and editor Judith Merril advocated for its use in order to expand the criteria for what types of speculation should be given credence:

Stories whose objective is to explore, to discover, to learn, by means of projection, extrapolation, analogue, hypothesis-and-paper-experimentation, something about the nature of the universe, of man, or 'reality' ... the mode which makes use of the traditional 'scientific method' (observation, hypothesis, experiment) to examine some postulated approximation of reality, by introducing a given set of changes – imaginary or inventive – into the common background of 'known facts', creating an environment in which the responses and perceptions of the characters will reveal something about the inventions, the characters, or both” (60).

In 1993, Jewelle Gomez used the term “to encompass the broad range of writing that includes science fiction and fantasy,” asserting that “conflat[ion] [of] the terms *science fiction* and *fantasy fiction*” and subsuming them under the term speculative fiction was fitting because “each in its own way [...] postulates a time and circumstance as yet unknown.” Further, Gomez associated growing usage of the term with the increase in women not only writing in the fantasy genre, but also “eschew[ing] the space age settings and scientific jargon that had previously dominated the field” of science fiction (949).

As important as it is that the use of the term speculative fiction has, to some extent, led to greater inclusion in the industry and readership, the use of the term also blurs the supposed barriers between genres so that readers can focus on what the text *does* rather than how it fits within a lineage and hierarchy, or categorizing and dismissing or privileging a work based on a potentially hasty and probably uncertain determination of its genre. That is, by forestalling the question of whether a work of speculative fiction is fantasy or science fiction, readers can more readily and thoroughly engage with the impact of cognitive estrangement. Marek Oziewicz argues that not only does the term speculative fiction function to reduce “border wars among genres; their exclusivist definitions; and [...] claims [...] to primacy,” it has also changed the focus from the genre’s “‘literariness’” to “how non-mimetic genres” are “potentially more

adequate than so-called realist literature to address contemporary global challenges and reflect the diverse perspectives, traditions, and experiences of the multicultural world.”

Among other factors, it is the rejection of the “post-Enlightenment” and its association with “rational” male thought alongside the increasing representation of historically underrepresented authors who have lived experience of being othered which makes speculative fiction so germane to postcolonial concerns. However, this has not resulted in postcolonial literature being inclusive of the speculative fiction genre. Postcolonial literature has canonized multiple works of magical realism, with little consideration of science fiction. In the 1980s and 1990s, American universities began to pair magical realism with postcolonial literature and theory (Figlerowicz and Mertehikian 7). Critical examination of science fiction and fantasy as opposed to magical realism was slow to emerge in the academy because of the early and ongoing dismissal of science fiction and fantasy as literature. Adam Roberts cites the historical tendency to assign greater esteem to literary fiction as opposed to genre fiction, “in many cases ranking science fiction as especially juvenile and valueless, below historical [...] and crime fiction” (3). For this reason, some scholars have even referred to science fiction as a paraliterature, or subliterature. Samuel Delany addresses the overwhelming lack of regard for science fiction as literature when he notes that he has had people approach him at conventions to say that they “don’t really like science fiction”, asserting that many fewer people have been so bold as to inform poets that they do not like poetry (209).

Further, perhaps science fiction is excluded from the postcolonial canon because science fiction which explicitly and meaningfully addresses significant social issues was still struggling for prominence and recognition within the science fiction genre by the time a postcolonial canon had begun to form. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that science fiction,

during the New Wave, began to have significant representation by women and some representation by authors of colour; it was at that same time that the field shifted to an emphasis on “soft” science fiction or “social” science fiction, which is characterized by narratives in which the science is either secondary to a concern with examining social issues, or in which a scientific explanation is missing, not fully explained, or scientifically inaccurate.

In addition to the preceding reasons for speculative fiction’s exclusion from the postcolonial canon, the fantastic elements of speculative fiction literature may seem to be in conflict with a central aim of postcolonial literature: to decry and resist the colonialist impulse to fetishize and exoticize people and cultures different than their own. Christine Kim posits that the reason Larissa Lai’s *When Fox is a Thousand* did not receive as much popular or critical attention as Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night* is that the latter, with its Canadian setting and especially its critique of the Canadian rhetoric of multiculturalism, is “not as easily exoticized as” the former (168). To readers who are unfamiliar or less familiar with speculative fiction, however, *When Fox is a Thousand* - and other speculative fiction works dealing with gender and race - may seem more easily exoticized, not only because of the novelty of the genre itself but because speculative fiction works often address gender and race through aliens and supernatural beings (Lavender, Wolmark).

Though the genre, as Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn note, “disrupts ‘realist’ ethnographic representations of Asianness” (19) - a use which Larissa Lai espouses in order to challenge “state incorporation” - it also is generically marked by representations of otherness, often otherness which is posited to be locatable on a genetic level. As such speculative fiction may seem, to those unfamiliar with the way the genre often subverts or at least complicates concepts of otherness, to be fundamentally incompatible with postcolonial theory’s stated aim of

rejecting representations which pose differences between people or cultures to be essential and irreconcilable (Bhabha 74). Indeed, as I discuss in the following chapters, certain depictions of race and gender in speculative fiction use the novum to reify concepts of essentialism; some function as strategic essentialism and others are uncritical representations of scientific racism, but either way, the tacit support of essentialism across speculative fiction texts may make it difficult for postcolonial scholars and theorists of gender who do not espouse essentialism to consider widening the canon for speculative fiction.

Nevertheless, speculative fiction has been and continues to be a productive genre for engaging with postcolonial concerns. Like canonical postcolonial texts, a considerable amount of speculative fiction seeks to invert the “hierarchical order” of European discourse, and to challenge the metaphysical foundations of that discourse, just as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins argue of postcolonial literature (32). Eric D. Smith extends Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal’s claim that “visionary” science fiction “reveal[s] the stresses and contradictions internal to imperialist histories” rather than reproducing the present in depictions of the future: Smith remarks that the “ethics of Otherness [are] demonstrated in SF and postcolonial literatures alike” (13-14). Rieder claims that “the disturbance of ethnocentrism, the achievement of a perspective from which one’s own culture is only one of a number of possible cultures,” is a significant element of the development of science fiction – perhaps even more so than its engagement with scientific theories and concepts (2). It is that disturbance which Donna Haraway remarks on when she defines science fiction as “concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others and with the exploration of possible worlds in a context structured by transnational technoscience” (300). Moreover, the denial of any affinity with the other – which Jenny Wolmark argues is a feature of speculative fiction texts and is

characterized by the inability of human characters to relate to alien characters – is also a central feature of postcolonial literature and theory. In referring to the tendencies of postcolonial literature, Bhabha notes that “the Other must not be imaged [...] as a fixed phenomenological point opposed to the self, that represents a culturally alien consciousness” (74). Speculative fiction clearly and consistently engages with these concepts of self, other, culture, and hegemony.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that the use of the novum (a scientific or fantastic element which distinguishes the world in the text from our own) or novums make it possible to expose the social constructedness of race and gender in novel ways. Since speculative fiction often represents alternate ways of being gendered as well as characters with lived experiences based on an array of embodiments, speculative fiction is a particularly generative mode through which to articulate and examine individual’s and groups’ experiences of being gendered, intersectional discrimination, and colonialism.

Eric Smith posits that while extant studies of science fiction as a postcolonial literature, such as Jessica Langer’s 2011 study *Postcolonialism and Science Fiction*, lean towards a discussion of the discursive rather than the material and endeavor to apply or adapt “the familiar conventions of postcolonial analysis” to science fiction, science fiction exposes the restrictions of postcolonial theory, especially in regards to developments in globalism (15). Smith argues that alongside the tendency of speculative fiction and speculative fiction criticism which engages in the concerns of postcoloniality to focus on “a purely ethno-cultural Otherness”, there is a consequent lack of prolonged attendance to “the material” (14). This lack of attendance to the material refers to the ways in which globalism has resulted in a starkly different set of oppressive strategies and structures than imperialism, which are more difficult to combat, particularly in

terms of “respatialization of capital” and the changing priorities of “the nation-state” (Smith 16). The predominant focus on tenets of postcoloniality such as “identity, epistemology, and discursivity” is often paired with a lack of historicization (Smith 15).

My project aims to demonstrate how speculative fiction can provide readers with a shift in mindset, through its novel depictions and considerations of concepts such as essentialism, hybridity, and the divide between self and other. The distinction is not a contest of Smith’s argument, but rather, a difference in focus; I approach the analysis through theories of identity formation and group responses to difference. Smith’s position results in a widening of genre in terms of setting and other generic elements, but severe limitations of the content, in that the materialist analysis Smith calls for focuses chiefly on “localis[ing] and historicis[ing] the machinations of globalization” as they relate to both colonial history and to ongoing practices (18). I argue that it is still crucial to engage with the ways that speculative fiction both reinforces and challenges racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination in particular ways due to the novum and the critical distance from our reality that the novum provides. For instance, the pathological privileging of white bodies and white reproduction in an array of speculative fiction television that I discuss in the fourth chapter occurs through the speculative fiction tropes of cloning, time travel, and magic and would be difficult if not impossible to achieve in a realist genre; the implicit “scientific” racism in speculative fiction television episodes such as *Star Trek: TNG*’s “Faces” and “The Abandoned” would be anathema in a supposedly progressive television series outside of the speculative fiction genre. The discursive is material and the material is discursive, especially for women and people of colour. As the two are inextricable, I acknowledge that capitalism is implicated in practices of marginalization. That noted, I want to focus now on how the characters and group dynamics in these texts evoke how “representations

and *modes of perception* are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule” (McLeod 19), why representation in speculative fiction matters and how, in writing about the ways characters of colour adapt their bodies in order to survive both within and beyond capitalist societies, these authors acknowledge the impact on the psyche of isolation, marginalization, and the ongoing tensions between assimilation and retention of cultural practices and values.

Larissa Lai articulates eloquently the overlap between the discursive and the material, and the necessary emphasis on addressing identity and representation through speculative fiction, in *Slanting I, Imagining We*, stating that “realist modes [...] of writing run the danger of state incorporation, capitalist consumption, and the repression of racialized trauma,” and therefore “it becomes necessary to seek other strategies of subject production” (135). For Lai, these “other strategies of subject production” entail acknowledging that “brand new representations are never really possible”, and that “identity ... [is] a sedimentation of historical practices and performances with real material consequences” which are “nevertheless ... always in flux and thus open to difference within itself as well as to change through further practice and/or performance over time” (“Familiarizing Grist Village” 2). Lai then returns to the discursive, stating that she has eschewed memoir and realist fiction because “audiences might not hear language as made”, instead assuming that realist fiction or memoir is “proof of [her] being”. In contrast, to “write speculative fiction is to slip the noose of a single identification or a single set of relationships, and through the work of allegory, metaphor, and analogy comment on and play through the intersections, interactions, constant alterations, and layerings of multiple ways of being with others in the world and out of it” (Familiarizing Grist Village” 3).

Lai's musings on the discursive affordances of the speculative fiction genre align with my contention that speculative fiction especially enables working through and re-working concepts of who people are, who they should be, and why, based on social constructs of race and sex. The generic elements of speculative fiction – including alternate histories, projected futures, and a variety of speculative fiction tropes which offer biologies which differ from our own, different social constructions of gender and gender roles, and unprecedented experimentation with lived experiences – are at the root of these affordances.

Many works of speculative fiction - and most certainly the fiction of Octavia E. Butler, Larissa Lai, Nnedi Okorafor, and Tomi Adeyemi - are indisputably transnational, postnational, or both. Indeed, beyond these works' engagement with transnational settings and characters in ways that more closely correspond to mundane fiction - for instance, Anyanwu's forced or at least coerced migration from her Igbo people's village in Africa to Doro's colony on the coast of what would later be called North America - they are also representative of the generic tendency in speculative fiction to utilize recent past and near future settings to ask "What if?" and to imagine the world differently and, in so doing, portray situations in which historical borders delineated and enforced by nations have become obsolete and meaningless. The utilization of speculative fiction tropes - particularly alternative pasts or distant future settings which demand of readers that they question the inevitability of the world as we imagine or assume we know it - has pivotal effects on the discussion of postcolonial theory. By questioning the concept of inevitability of the world as it is today, speculative fiction authors and audiences may be able to elide even Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin's extension of Salman Rushdie's assertion that postcolonial literature is inevitably "writ[ing] back to the centre" (8). As Joshua Yu Burnett argues of Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, speculative fiction has the capacity to realize postcolonial ideals "in ways not

possible in mainstream literature” (137). One example of how the setting of a speculative fiction text illustrates tenets of postcolonial theory is that - though the behaviour of the Oankali mimics that of colonisers in some ways - in *Lilith's Brood*, the Oankali settlements are truly postnational. There are no borders except those which the human resisters construct; people are free to leave and join settlements as they wish. As Lilith tells the humans she awakens from stasis, “‘Down on Earth’ ... “‘there are no people left to draw lines on maps and say which sides of those lines are the right lines’” (141).

It is not merely the cognitive estrangement that the settings provide, however, that lends itself to these texts as being ideal for imagining postcolonial worlds and ways of being. The lived experience and bodily knowledge of characters who are shapeshifters or who have access to others' memories is essential to imagining postcoloniality as well. Because of the gradual identification of readers with the characters and situations which they encounter in speculative fiction, particularly the destabilized bodies and shifting worldviews, speculative fiction can both provide a valuable introduction to postcolonial theory and assist students in achieving the first level in critical consciousness, “conscientização” (Freire 19). In as much as speculative fiction actively and consistently encourages its readers to consider how reality might be different if certain underlying factors were to be altered even slightly, it provides postcolonial literature and theory a base from which to imagine the world differently, and thus to begin to question one's assumption of reality as static and inevitable, rather than determined by “causal and circumstantial correlations” (Freire 44). According to Mark Fisher, for social change to occur, “emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a ‘natural order’”, reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, [...] [and] make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable” (17). Speculative fiction enables

readers to question the purported inevitability of history and social orders, and thus to imagine radically alternate pasts and futures. At the Northeast Modern Language Association meeting in 2019, Homi Bhabha, drawing on Ernest Bloch, stated that “hope will be disappointed because it doesn’t aspire to a simple minded fulfillment in the future. Hope doesn’t address itself to what already exists. Hope is committed to change rather than repetition and incorporates the element of chance, without which there can be nothing new.” Bhabha further stated, following Arendt, that ““solidarity and affiliation will be based on alterity [...] on the recognition of alterity.” Speculative fiction positions itself on the pivot of chance, and embodies through literature both the recognition of the other as the other in and of themselves, and recognition of “the other in ourselves.”

Further to the way its portrayal of shapeshifting characters exposes the social construction of race and gender, its transnational and postnational characters and settings, and its ability to not only consider but construct a variety of worlds vastly different from the one we think we know, speculative fiction is also germane to Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial theory because of its portrayal of characters whose identities are more than, as Bhabha writes, “the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender etc.)?” (2). The work of Butler, Due, Lai, and Okorafor locates the kind of subject that Bhabha calls for, emphasizing both the specificities and the shared qualities of their characters’ uncanny experiences. Moreover, Bhabha argues that it is in investigating the experiences of the “freaks,” the people who are marginalized even in marginalized communities, that postcolonial theory might come to an understanding of the colonial experience that appeals to neither nationalism nor universalism. Certain works of speculative fiction accomplish the very task that Bhabha describes through their focus on characters with different, often supernatural abilities: separate from each other in some ways

because of their differences, they still have solidarity with each other as subjects who possess supernatural abilities and thus are “freaks.”

Yet another reason that speculative fiction is ideally suited to represent postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist themes is its public nature and the way the public has responded to it, particularly in recent years. Eric D. Smith argues that the dismissal of science fiction is “based traditionally on its presumed stylistic infelicities or inferiorities,” but that the underlying reason may actually be “a deep aversion to SF’s inherently public orientation.” This “public orientation” may have deterred literary consideration, but it also increases the likelihood that the average person will have had some exposure to the genre. As of 2009, thirty-five of the fifty top earning movies “of all time” were either science fiction or fantasy (Brake and Hook 202). The public orientation of speculative fiction is more and more evident; in April 2018, Netflix announced that because viewing trends indicated “sci-fi and fantasy” as the most popular genre of 2018, science fiction and fantasy will be prioritized in original programming moving forward” (Barnett). In April 2019, Netflix UK released lists of their top ten most viewed television programmes, movies, and “overall most watched.” On the “overall most watched list, four of the ten were speculative fiction. A third of the top ten movies were speculative fiction, and one fourth of the top ten television series (Spellberg). Netflix continued to release top ten lists weekly, and the trend continued, with one third speculative fiction for television and one fourth for movies. Given the increase in popularity of speculative fiction, especially in the past decade, it is likely that the average person will have some interaction with speculative fiction media. However, because of the preponderance and inequitable promotion of white authors of speculative fiction and the emphasis on white reproduction that takes place in speculative fiction television as I examine in Chapter 4, readers’ introduction to speculative fiction is also likely to

be characterized by racist and sexist depictions. Readers' interaction with racist and sexist depictions in speculative fiction television can be mitigated in three ways: first by engaging with speculative fiction which challenges essentialism, second by analyzing the depictions through gender, postcolonial, and intersectional feminist theories; and third through watching and analyzing television programmes and movies which are more inclusive of a variety of bodies and ways of being and more critical of racism and sexism than the average speculative fiction media – for instance, *Black Lightning* and *Black Panther*.

The success of *Black Panther* has generated some compelling and publicly oriented arguments regarding the suitability of speculative fiction for assisting people in developing a mode of critical consciousness in accordance with the theory Paulo Freire proposes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. When asked during an interview about why none of the characters in *Black Panther* have straightened hair, the actress portraying Nakia, Lupita Nyong'o, responded:

Before the advent of the white man, black people on the continent were doing all sorts of things with their hair. The idea of extensions and all that is not new, but the shaming or rejecting of kinks and curls is new. That did come with the white man, and so in the story, Wakanda is a country that's never been colonised. So they embrace themselves. They have their own sense of what is beautiful.

Though of course there are Black women who don't straighten their hair, Wakanda, using the speculative fiction tropes of alternate history and hidden societies², presents an opportunity: first to assert that there is a place which has "never been colonised," and second to leverage the recent popularity of superhero movies to show a vast audience a place where no Black woman straightens her hair, and no Black woman ever has. Wakanda destabilizes the concept that colonization was part of an inevitable sequence of events but also, through its popularity and through the public engagement of its actors, expands the Overton window. That is, it utilizes the

² Note that the representation of an advanced, hidden African civilization dates back at least to 1902, with the publication of *Of One Blood* by Pauline Hopkins.

superhero trend to reimagine beauty at an unprecedented scale, critique racist beauty standards, and extend the range of the discourse. Similarly, Tomi Adeyemi, the author of *Children of Blood and Bone* shares that since “skin bleaching is about accessing whiteness” and *Children of Blood and Bone* “doesn’t have white people,” the people in the novel do not practice skin bleaching.

Finally, the ways in which speculative fiction can and does place past, present, and future in a literal - within the world of the speculative fiction narrative, of course - conversation with each other is a major asset for speculative fiction’s address of postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist tenets. Jewelle Gomez argues that Black lesbian poets of the 1980s utilized speculative fiction tropes in such a way, “evok[ing] the past, yet placing the action in an unthinkable future”, such as a poem by Cheryl Clarke in which “rapists are forced to pay child support” but attacks on lesbians and people of colour are still rampant (951). Butler notes of her novel *Kindred* that “[t]ime travel is just a device for getting the character to confront where she came from” (Butler “An Interview” 496). Maria Varsam argues of *Kindred* that time travel assists Dana in recognizing how oppression operates across time in different forms to illuminate “the omnipresence” of “a system of dominant and violent hierarchy” (219-220), cautioning “against any complacency in the present” (219). Immortal characters function in much the same way. In *My Soul to Keep*, Tananarive Due juxtaposes scenes of the immortal Dawit’s modern life with his searing memories of when his wife, Adele, was lynched in the 1800s. Through the speculative fiction tropes of time travel and immortality, speculative fiction authors compare and contrast the ways in which racism and sexism operate currently with the ways in which racism and sexism operated in the past. In addition, they often function as an example of Lorenzo Veracini’s argument, in *The Settler Colonial Present*, that settler colonialism is not situated in the past but instead is ongoing, and further, that one of the ways in which settler colonialism

operates is through a societal preoccupation with narratives (including popular fiction series and board games, with a special focus on science fiction and texts about vampires) which replicate settler colonialism across space and time (71, 74-75). Indeed, Veracini asserts that the commercial success of such narratives illustrates their dominance (71, 74), and that these narratives function to either reinforce the eventual primacy of the settler over the indigenous (72), or to preclude the possibility of the indigenous population's existence (75-76). Veracini's argument is especially pertinent to the arguments I make in the fourth chapter about how speculative fiction television reproduces white bodies while simultaneously eliding the reproduction of raced and racialized characters, and transmits ethnocentric and colonialist values through institutions which purport to be egalitarian.

Historically, science fiction has not been a genre which opposes colonialist values and practices. As Nalo Hopkinson notes in the introduction to what is widely considered the first postcolonial science fiction anthology, *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy* (2004), "one of the most familiar memes of science fiction is that of going to foreign countries and colonizing the natives" (1). John Rieder remarks upon the considerable and relatively consistent tendency of "early science fiction [...] to transpose and revivify colonialist ideologies" (17-18), arguing that "English-language science fiction" in its nascent stages may have been a response to the dearth of explorable and conquerable territories (16-17). However, "satiric reversal" of colonialist ideologies in the vein of Washington Irving's "The Conquest of the Earth by the Moon" (Rieder 17-18) enables a critique of colonization in which "the white Western narrator", so accustomed to being the "scientific observer", becomes "the dominated indigenous inhabitant of the colonised land" (Rieder 19-20). Hopkinson proposes and enacts utilizing science fiction tropes in the service of representing historically colonised people,

“tak[ing] the meme of colonizing the natives and, from the experience of the colonisee, critique it, pervert it, fuck with it, with irony, with anger, with humour, and also, with love and respect for the genre of science fiction that makes it possible to think about new ways of doing things” (2-3).

Indeed, despite its association with colonialism, speculative fiction has a long history of engaging with social justice concepts. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, *Star Trek: The Original Series* is often lauded as featuring the first interracial kiss on network television — though that claim has also been challenged. *Star Trek: The Original Series* is cited, too, for its initially diverse cast, representing a Russian man, African woman, and Asian man at a time when such diversity on television was rare. Well known speculative fiction novels include Ursula K. LeGuin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which imagines a world in which social constructions of gender and caregiving are much different from those even in today’s arguably evolving conceptions, and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, which utilizes a representation of a dystopian government to critique historical inequities of reproductive rights and other gendered elements of discrimination.

Multiple speculative fiction authors have also noted the functions of speculative fiction for, if not promoting social justice, at least examining social issues, and in particular issues of exclusion and representation. Some historically underrepresented authors of speculative fiction describe their writing as a project of increasing the representation of women and people of colour in speculative fiction, as Tananarive Due notes of her writing, saying that as an early writer, all of her characters were white, but “I had to force myself to see myself [...] I was raised by civil rights activists and I have a keen awareness of racial history—lessons I think all Americans should know—so I would consider it artistic dishonesty to write primarily from an experience

that was not black”. More recently, Tomi Adeyemi, author of the #1 NYT young-adult fantasy novel optioned by Fox 2000 for a film adaptation, *Children of Blood and Bone*, stated that her motivation to write a fantasy novel set in West Africa was because she “want[s] a little Black girl to pick up my book one day and see herself as the star. I want her to know that she’s beautiful and she matters and she can have a crazy, magical adventure” (Okare).

Many authors describe their preference for writing science fiction or speculative fiction as being about the possibilities uniquely afforded by the genre, particularly in regard to examining social issues in a way that would not be possible in other genres or to an extent that is not necessarily realized in other genres. Octavia E. Butler stated that she was drawn to science fiction “because it was so wide open. I was able to do anything and there were no walls to hem you in and there was no human condition that you were stopped from examining” (Butler “Interviewing the Oracle”). Of Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* trilogy, Orson Scott Card writes, “What Octavia Butler has wrought is the sort of story science fiction exists to tell. We never understand humanity better than when we see ourselves through alien eyes”. Nnedi Okorafor notes, “[s]cience fiction carries the potential to change the world. Literally. It has changed the world. The concept of the very computer I am using to type these words was first dreamed up in a science fiction novel” (“African Science Fiction is Still Alien”). Junot Díaz recollects that he never encountered “mainstream, literary realistic fiction talking about power” as a child, but it was prevalent in the science fiction he read: “Whether it was the Dorsai series or Harry Harrison or the Death World novels, where they’re imprisoned in this nightmare world where it’s sort of like a Doom videogame on crack. There was all of this extreme stuff happening that resonated with a lot of the ideas and experiences and the historical shadows that have been cast from the Dominican Republic. I didn’t see mainstream, literary fiction talking about power, talking about

dictatorship, talking about the consequences of breeding people”. Larissa Lai discusses how her novel *Salt Fish Girl* was informed by current events, both in terms of technological advances and human rights, including: “the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the arrival of three rusty ships from China on the west coast of British Columbia carrying around 600 Chinese migrant labourers, [and] Monsanto’s suing of a farmer whose canola crop, probably through natural pollination, had picked up some of Monsanto’s altered DNA” (“Future Asians” 171-172).

Speculative fiction scholars also argue that speculative fiction may be uniquely suited as a tool of social justice. Sherryl Vint asks, “What is it about our contemporary moment that makes sf the ideal mode through which to respond to it? And what kind of cultural work does the genre do in this context?”. Vint argues, drawing on Elizabeth Povinelli, that neoliberal projections of the future result in foreclosure on “alternative social projects that invest in different kinds of futures”, but that “the tools and techniques of science fiction” can resist that foreclosure, “offer[ing] us examples and locations for an ethics of possibility” (9-10). Donna Haraway declares, “Sf is perhaps our best set of apparatuses for tracking late capitalism into its lairs and provoking the roars and rattles that tell of its always innovative, abstractivist, still colonizing masculinities” (“Comments”). Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright discuss how much of the science fiction from “Europe, Latin America and the Asian and African diasporas” calls upon science fiction readers to interrogate “assumptions of Otherness and Futurity,” particularly when its authors are representative of the “subjects of earlier explorations of Otherness in science fiction” (8). At the same time, scholars acknowledge that there are some potentially problematic elements of utilizing speculative fiction to critique oppressive social systems. Vint notes, for instance, that perhaps speculative fiction’s “status as an entertainment commodity inevitably compromise[s] its utility as a tool for social critique” (9).

The commodification of speculative fiction is a concern in terms of inclusive representation – one which I discuss in more detail in chapter 4 – nevertheless, the relevance of speculative fiction to concepts of self and other, including race, gender, and the applicability of mutable bodies to challenging essentialist concepts, cannot be underestimated. It is imperative to recognize and celebrate the potential of speculative fiction to challenge essentialist ideologies that assert the presence of static, innate traits and behaviours due to race or sex and are then used as an instrument of control, while also recognizing that sometimes speculative fiction tropes reinforce essentialist ideologies.

While shapeshifting and other speculative fiction tropes centred on the body frequently symbolize cultural erosion, the trope of embodied knowledge — particularly through reincarnation and the literal transfer of memories — suggests that the body can also function as a vital medium for reclaiming lost knowledge. In the first chapter, “‘Hear[ing] the dead” and ‘remember[ing] the past’: Ways of Knowing in Postcolonial Speculative Fiction,”³ I demonstrate how an array of transnational speculative fiction – including Octavia E. Butler’s *Patternist* series, Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death*, Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*, Tomi Adeyemi’s *Children of Blood and Bone* series, and Ibi Zoboi’s “Kiss the Sun” - positions the ontological or bodily knowledge of women and people of colour as being of value in a way that, as Zakkiyah Jackson notes of posthumanism, “does not privilege European man and its idiom ... [and an] ongoing investment in Europe as standard-bearer of Reason and Culture” (673). As such, postcolonial speculative fiction effects what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak terms strategic essentialism (Grosz 185), whereby the bodily knowledge of characters of colour functions as a recognition of the ways of knowing that have been denigrated and supplanted by Western discourses on rationality

³ I take my title from page 413 of Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death*.

and scientific progress. I will argue that both Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl* and Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* position transgenerational memory and communal affect as a more valuable form of knowledge and production than scientific research because in both novels, the comprehension and generative capacities of the transgenerational memory and reproductive technology have surpassed the boundaries fabricated by the scientists and corporations. As such, the literature also serves as an allegory for the postcolonial experience; to use Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha's terms, the formerly colonised people have produced an excess of the performative (Butler 382-383, Bhabha 76), inevitably influenced by colonial discourses and technology, but also making it their own. That is, the subalterns in these texts are, to use Salman Rushdie's term, "writing back" (Ashcroft et al. 32), but they are doing so in a way that both challenges the dominance of Western rationality and imagines a future in which Western rationality is obsolete. Within the construction of the unruliness of postcolonial bodies, particularly in *Salt Fish Girl*, postcolonial subjects are positioned like and as nature, a conflation which I will attempt to destabilize and deconstruct.

Colonial oppression has historically occurred through the joined approaches of the control of bodies and the control of information, and in particular, colonial powers' destruction of precolonial texts and forms of knowledge alongside coerced and forced sex with colonised people. In Chapter 2, I extend the consideration of the forced nature of reproduction in *Lilith's Brood* to engage with questions of coercion, force, and the ethics of consent in both *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling*, in which the alien Oankali and the vampires called Ina deliberately limit humans' options from the outset to achieve control. I draw correlations between issues of consent in the two novels and rape discourse, reproductive rights, and medical consent in other contexts. Further, I address the relevance of the juncture of deceit, coercion, and force in sexual

encounters between the Oankali/Ina and humans alongside the ways that the Oankali deliberately and consistently devalue and destroy human culture and both the Oankali and Ina claim species superiority, to colonial vectors of control.

While shapeshifting characters in speculative fiction are generally emblematic of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of moments of enunciation, which critiques the concept that "claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable" (54-55) and thus shapeshifting characters function as a critique of positivist notions of race, they also more often than not produce an unresolved tension between essentialized and hybrid notions of identity, particularly in regards to sex and gender. In Chapter 3, I will argue that though the emphasis on the female sex as a core and static element of shapeshifting cisgender female characters initially seems to indicate a reification of biological sex and its equation with gender as an unproblematic concept, it actually functions as a strategic essentialism of sex. Such strategic essentialism marks not a positivist approach to sex, but rather an insistence on acknowledging and analyzing "the feminine" as *both* socially constructed *and* necessary to contend with while disassembling "the conceptual systems which support it" (Schor qtd. in Chow 70). Rey Chow describes attention to "the feminine" as an element of "the local" in which "the local as a base, a war front, when the cannon shots of patriarchal postmodernism are still heard everywhere" (70). Put another way, to ignore the social effects of sexism via poststructuralism would be premature. Attention to the local does not entail "essentializing one position"; rather, "the local is never 'one'", particularly for "'third world' feminists" (70). Chow's reminder is relevant to characters who shapeshift in speculative fiction texts but cannot assume the male form, and such characters also suggest Spivak's strategic essentialism. By denying shapeshifting characters the ability to change their sex, these texts engage with and confront the lived experiences of women, including sexism and

gendered violence. However, in the analysis, I demonstrate that the essentialism featured in these texts is not unequivocally strategic; indeed, it sometimes results in a reification of essentialism, particularly as it applies to men and to the gendered division of care giving labour. This chapter will also use intersectional feminist theory as a framework, examining the ways in which experiences of marginalization are impacted by the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Though speculative fiction film and television have been lauded as achieving equity in representations of diverse races and genders, it generally reproduces colonialist and imperialist discourses of white, Western superiority, surveillance, and control. Beyond noting the distance between the rhetoric of speculative fiction film and television and the reality, as already documented by scholars of science fiction and race such as Isiah Lavender, Daniel Bernardi, and Allen Kwan, in the fourth chapter, I will investigate how a wide array of speculative fiction television produced in Canada and the United States– including, but not limited to, *Star Trek*, *Fringe*, *Orphan Black*, *Continuum*, *Haven*, and *The Flash* – continuously reproduces the image and biology of white men and women, recalling Edward W. Said’s evaluation of Dickens’ *Dombey and Son* as one which emphasizes “Dombey’s overweening self-importance,” with Dombey “think[ing] that the universe, and the whole of time, was his to trade in” (13). In these speculative fiction television programmes, the focus on white characters’ control over time and space and their resulting dominance over life and death becomes literal; for instance, in *The Flash*, Barry Allen’s ability to change time results in the loss of other characters’ family members. Moreover, such a ubiquitous reproduction of white characters’ bodies, which also elides the reproductive and family lives of people of colour and non-biological families, suggests

a pathological emphasis on the endurance of white supremacy and heterosexism in both the Canadian and United States contexts.

The fourth chapter will also extend my arguments regarding the way speculative fiction tropes serve as challenges to and reinforcements of race and ethnicity as biology and gendered understandings of race, through my consideration of Robin Roberts' position that B'Elanna Torres is a "tragic mulatta" (206-208). The portrayal of B'Elanna Torres in "Faces" as separated, through the aid of genetic engineering, into two people – one fully Klingon and one fully human – is one example. Another is B'Elanna's anxiety regarding how her unborn daughter will be treated as a part Klingon and her attempts at genetic modification which reduce Klingon features, subsequently making the daughter appear to be white and stereotypically attractive in a way that reinforces racist standards of beauty. Further, I will locate the emphasis on oppressively ubiquitous reproduction of white and white coded people, the colonial implications of Federation discourses and practices, whitewashed hybridity, race as biology, and essentialized identity in discourses of scientific racism. Finally, I will discuss some examples of science fiction television programmes which, while not entirely avoiding racist and sexist stereotypes, provide more inclusive and nuanced depictions of race and gender.

The fifth chapter is an account of asking students to put postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories in conversation with speculative fiction texts and to consider how the novum or novums influence characters' experiences of colonialism, gender in society, and intersectionality, during a course I taught at the University of Waterloo in 2019. The texts comprised novels and excerpts of novels, selected television episodes, and selected theory. The chapter delineates the learning objectives for the course, how I determined the texts to be taught, the information I provided to students prior to and during class discussions of texts, the

assignments I gave, and details about how students responded to the material, both during class and outside of class. Including a chapter addressing how a thoughtfully designed speculative course can facilitate students' awareness of and critical perspectives on experiences with colonialism, being gendered, and intersectionality is my way of bridging my identities as a fan, scholar, and teacher.

Through the course, I shared my abiding enthusiasm for speculative fiction. I focused on how the critical distance offered by the novum provides sometimes unparalleled opportunities to consider or reconsider histories and social phenomena. In addition to addressing the novum's potential to illuminate experiences of intersectional discrimination and the role of knowledge suppression in colonial control, I emphasized the potential to (better) understand sex and race as socially constructed by identifying with protagonists who demonstrate, through the novums of shapeshifting and reincarnation, the ways that it is embodied lived experiences in particular places and times – rather than purely the bodies themselves – that contribute to discrimination, privilege, and perspectives on one's place in the world. I contrasted these with depictions in popular media which, through racialization of mixed-species characters, seem to “naturalize” essentialism. These focal points emerged from my studies of postcolonial theory and gender theory, which considerably enhanced my analysis of portrayals of race and gender in speculative fiction by women of colour, allowing me to arrive at more nuanced interpretations than in earlier readings. Finally, in both teaching the course and my account of it in the fifth chapter, I merged the identities of fan and teacher once again. Teaching the course and then explaining the course design and students' responses was a return to my earliest experiences as an educator who sought to teach literature with which I thought myself deeply familiar and for which I had great appreciation. In doing so, I fulfilled an aspiration that began over a decade before and played a

small role in mitigating the dearth of recent research on pedagogical approaches to speculative fiction.

Chapter 1

“Hear[ing] the dead and remember[ing] the past: Modes of Knowing, (Knowledge) Production, and Strategic Essentialism

If, as Leopold Senghor states in “Negritude: A Humanism of The Twentieth Century,” the traditional Western philosophy is one that “makes an absolute distinction between body and soul, matter and spirit” (30), then Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*, Octavia E. Butler’s *Wild Seed*, Nnedi Okorafor’s *Who Fears Death*, Tomi Adeyemi’s *Children of Blood and Bone*, and Ibi Zoboi’s “Kiss the Sun” challenge traditional Western philosophy. Indeed, all five texts are thoroughly postcolonial works of speculative fiction, utilizing the tropes of speculative fiction – and, in particular, the body as a site of knowledge, and magical abilities as inherited, essential, and biological - to effect an essentialism which is only sometimes strategic but always critiques or at least complicates notions of Western universality and rationality. These critiques and complications are consistent with the way that “Indigenous teachings” do not make a firm distinction between magic and the scientific realm, but rather, contend with the role that the unexplained and spiritual play in knowledge (Murrell qtd. in Sanchez-Taylor par. 6) and do not consider the scientific process as exclusively “objective” but instead recognize “the interconnectivity that exists between all beings” (Sanchez-Taylor par. 12).

Simultaneously and seemingly conversely, *Wild Seed* and *Who Fears Death* also demonstrate the capacity of mutable bodies and transgenerational memory to alter an individual’s worldview through the affordance of lived experiences that would not have been available to them in their own body, thus providing rationale for understanding race and sexuality as learned rather than inherent characteristics. That is, these two texts link the

protagonists' experiences of race, gender, and sexuality to how they are treated and how their worldview gradually changes when inhabiting different bodies during different times, rather than to innate feelings or drives related to the body with which they were born, offering a speculative framework for understanding race and sexuality as social constructs which are continuously revised through interactions with others and throughout space and time.

To contextualize the discussion that follows, each of the novels to be discussed involves the development of a character's magical abilities as very closely linked to their genetics, to their burgeoning knowledge of their family and cultural histories, or both. Four of these six texts feature a protagonist whose body allows her or him to experience the perspectives of others - either literally, through transgenerational memory, or by giving her a body in which she can experience some of the features of what life might be like for those with races and sexes other than her own.

Salt Fish Girl, set primarily in a mid 22nd century Vancouver in which the government has collapsed and big cities are run by corporations in contrast to the low income, unregulated areas outside, follows the stories of the ancient Chinese goddess Nu Wa, Nu Wa's human incarnation and life, and Nu Wa's descendant Miranda. From a very early age, Miranda is beset by the odor of durians, a fruit native to Southeast Asia, which results in ostracism and bullying from her peers at school. She eventually begins to develop scales on her legs and other symptoms, including strange, inexplicable memories of a life that is not her own. Following the death of her mother and her father's job loss, Miranda struggles to understand what is happening to her, and why. Miranda soon meets Evie, one of a group of clones, and realizes that somehow Evie is the reincarnation of Nu Wa's lover, the salt fish girl (150).

Who Fears Death chronicles the story of Onyesonwu, a young magic wielder in a barely recognizable future Africa who is (at first unknowingly) placed in the centre of a battle between her father's people the Nuru, who have raped and colonised her mother's people, the Okeke. Onyesonwu is isolated from most other people in her village because of her differences. She is both *Ewu*, the Okeke name for the children of Okeke and Nuru people and who are normally borne of rape, and *Eshu*, a magic wielder. Onyesonwu finds herself at the centre of a prophecy which foretells a Nuru man who will save the Okeke.

What I seek to accomplish is to put *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* in conversation with each other and with the other four texts, but moreover, to outline the ways in which the novels explicitly critique Western rationalism as the predominant form of knowledge and production, unequivocally challenging Western claims to knowledge, power, production, and rationality through a celebration of different ways of knowing, being, prevailing, and producing. *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* are especially well paired because each deliberately complicates the concepts of original identity, linear time, and science as being diametrically opposed to (and better than) other ways of knowing.

In challenging Western claims of knowledge and rationality, these texts complicate the supposed generic form of science fiction. Suvin emphasizes the “novum” as an element of cognitive strangeness, connecting back to history, and making the familiar unfamiliar (7). Suvin also insists that the novum must be scientific in nature, a demand that results in what Paul Lai describes as “privileg[ing] a version of Western modernity in which scientific progress and rational thought occlude all other possible modernities and genealogies” (Paul Lai 1). To insist that the novum must be scientific in nature to categorize a narrative as science fiction also excludes magical realism, and as such, many applicable novels by women and by non-Western

authors. The term speculative fiction is much more inclusive and allows for the consideration of a wider range of works which, as Zakiyyah Jackson writes of posthumanism, “[do] not privilege European man and its idiom ... [and an] ongoing investment in Europe as standard-bearer of “Reason and Culture” (Jackson 673). In these ways, the works to be discussed align with Taryne Jade Taylor’s declaration of “CoFuturisms” as “clearly identifiable movement[s], mode[s], aesthetic[s], and subgenre[s]” deriving from “Afrofuturisms, Indigenous Futurisms, Latinx Futurisms, Asian Futurisms, and Gulf/Middle Eastern Futurisms” which share a focus on reclamation of subdued histories and the formation of “just, inclusive futures” (par. 1). Further, these texts – especially *Who Fears Death* – correspond with the premise that CoFuturisms are not merely a refutation of the futures constructed by the “racist, capitalist Global North” (Taylor par. 13).

Finally, I would suggest that postcolonial speculative fiction reverses Suvin’s concept of the novum. It makes the unfamiliar familiar. By becoming the other, these characters to some extent understand the other. By identifying with and developing an investment in these character’s stories, readers can too.

Previous scholarship on *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* focuses on genre and the relationship between genre and postcolonial concepts. Much of the scholarship on *Salt Fish Girl* emphasizes the tension between Western notions of universality and knowledge and the mythical approach to multiple forms of humanity and history in the novel. Hee-Jung Serenity Joo equates the genre of science fiction with a “universal” subject and the mythic with racialization, arguing that in *Salt Fish Girl* neither is privileged: “Miranda’s science fiction narrative serves to question and destabilize Nu Wa’s mythical one, and vice versa. Together, their voices critique the authority of both a universal, abstract subject and a particular, racialized one” (48). Joo notes the

importance of not “read[ing] the book as a binary between science fiction and myth” (49). Joshua Yu Burnett acclaims the way in which Okorafor utilizes the tropes of science fiction alongside magical realism to imagine a future that destabilizes the history of racism, arguing that in *Who Fears Death*, Okorafor discusses and realizes postcolonialism in “ways not possible in mainstream literature.” Similarly to Joo’s assertion that the mythic and science fiction are inextricable in *Salt Fish Girl*, Miriam Pahl discusses how *Who Fears Death* employs “not a succession but *simultaneity* of magical realism and science fiction, [...] not only challeng[ing] the notion of Africa as ahistorical, but question[ing] the understanding of time as progress altogether” (209). Just as *Who Fears Death* undermines the concept of “time as progress”, so does *Salt Fish Girl*, as it shifts between past and future narratives, demonstrates that the problems of the past exist in the future, and offers a framework for hope – particularly so long as the past can be recalled, learned from, and employed in an effort to combat colonial control of minds and bodies.

Beyond blending science fiction and magical realism tropes to critique the notion of time as progress and the privileging of either “universal” or “particular” subjects, these two novels also suggest that memory is an instrumental tool for combating continued colonization and is, in and of itself, a valuable type of knowledge. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that in post-colonial theory, “the ‘will to truth’ is linked to the ‘will to power’ in the same way that power and knowledge are linked. The will of European nations to exercise dominant control over the world, which led to the growth of empires, has been accompanied by the capacity to confirm European notions of utility, rationality [and] discipline as truth” (73). The central tie between the novels, beyond their challenge of Western standards of reason, is the persistence of characters in remembering or recovering the history and strengthens the opposition would rather them forget -

and in most cases, actively advocate for and effect their loss through force, coercion, or both. The use of narrative practices and genres - most prominently, speculative fiction tropes in conjunction with bildungsroman - contribute to the realization of challenging Western standards of reason and knowledge production and the characters' recovery of lost heritages. The main characters must journey, sometimes across a great distance, to better understand themselves and develop their powers. The element of speculative fiction is necessary not only for the journey to begin, but for it to be sustained - the recovery of suppressed knowledge has at its core a supernatural aspect in each of these works.

Onyesonwu, Anyanwu, Miranda, Zelig, Jared, and Solange, the respective protagonists, resist the dominant impulse to forget the experience of those marginalized by imperialist and colonialist projects. Lai, Butler, Okorafor, Robinson, Adeyemi, and Zobei present such a resistance as not without barriers and not without consequences. The use of their powers comes with both physical and social consequences. Miranda and those with the "Contagion" are considered diseased not only because of their unusual smell, which is only the physical manifestation of their difference that enables them to be singled out as diseased, but also because they persist in remembering what others might rather forget. Miranda's durian scent also functions as a critique of colonial practices and attitudes, particularly that of expecting colonised and formerly colonised people to produce a difference that is solely for the consumption of colonisers and their descendants. While Miranda's scent is unusual and apparently distasteful to her peers at school, to the point that they tease and shun her because of it (21), in her family's shop which sells durians Miranda is able to "blend with [her] environment and those who passed through found the odour sweet and pleasant" (82). To extend Paul Lai's analysis of the durian as being an "alien fruit [and] resonat[ing] with the Asian human as alien subject in Canada and the

United States” (174), Miranda’s body is only acceptable in an environment which commodifies Asian products and in which visitors expect to find Asian products, including Asian bodies. Similarly, while Onyesonwu and her companion Mwitia are at first excluded from their peers primarily on the basis of their physical differences and especially the hybridity of their skin colour, a tawny hue combining the light skinned Nuru and dark Okeke, it is Onyesonwu’s ability to physically remember the past and transmit that experience to others which truly sets her apart. Further, Onyesonwu’s ability to shapeshift and to raise the dead comes with an array of negative side effects, including dried mucus between her fingers (5). In *Son of a Trickster*, Jared’s telepathic link with his father and ability to see and hear spirits lends itself to his eventual knowledge of his extended family and even of his ancestor’s lives and deaths, but his powers, too, come with a cost.

It is those who have forgotten or never knew their history and their cultural heritage who present lessons about the difficulties involved in forgetting and in re-membering – in putting back together the pieces of one’s past. As Gregory Jerome Hampton notes, “[t]he fact that written history is not necessarily equivalent to universal truth is far from controversial” (3). The present involves “direct sensory experience”, but the past is only experienceable through “memories” or “mental images” (Burke qtd. in Ott and Aoki 394); remembering is “incomplete and partisan” (Nietzsche, qtd. in Ott and Aoki 394), and “subject to constant revision ... through discourse” in the present (Bergson qtd. in Ott and Aoki 394). Because history cannot actually be known (to be accurate), these narratives are merely another way of interpreting the past. These narratives suggest that it is through the body a person’s or culture’s history is lost, and it is through the body that history must be retained or recovered. Moreover, by utilizing the tropes of speculative fiction to recover and to celebrate an experience which was lost or obscured due to

imperialism and colonialism, Lai and Okorafor critique not just the racist and sexist past, but the racist and sexist present – including not only racist and sexist behaviour that is practiced by characters who are privileged by the social structure, but also that which is reproduced by expecting postcolonial theorists and writers to conform to Western standards of scientific knowledge and historical study.

Lai and Okorafor emphasize the importance of the body and the body's physical space for preserving elements of culture such as language and intergenerational memory. Very often, the possessions and places of one's past cannot be recovered. Therefore, though objects and places sometimes stand in for a lost [way of] life, in speculative fiction it is often the body which is the central site of loss and recovery. In *Salt Fish Girl*, the clearest physical manifestation of the difference of those with the “dreaming disease” is that they, like Miranda, emanate strange scents from their bodies, as Miranda learns at Dr. Flowers' clinic:

Within a week I was seeing patients.... I met a man who smelled of milk and could remember all the famines that had ever been caused by war. I met a girl who smelled of stainless steel and could recite the lives of everyone who had ever died of tuberculosis.
(101-102)

The primary carriers of the Contagion are actually remembering history, an ability linked to the unusual scents that they emit. Miranda realizes that she, too, remembers history. While Evie calls it “one of the defects” (163), Miranda thinks “the purpose of my fistulas was ... that they served the function of memory, recalling a time when we were more closely related to fish, a time when the body glistened with scales and turned in the water [...] This is why, when pressed, the liquid they release smells of the sea” (107-108).

Both forgetting and remembering are embodied in these works. Those with the Contagion are expected to forget like everyone else, which is why it is so important that the characters' physical differences and ability to remember the past are characterized as a disease. The only known treatment for the dreaming disease, which simultaneously causes people to smell unusual, is to take long baths, and even this treatment is not very effective (73). For Miranda, the treatment is especially impotent; not only do baths not wash away the durian scent, they cause her to form silvery, slippery scales (45). This irritating and idiosyncratic side effect of the ineffectual treatment is another indicator of Miranda's dual status as a clone and the descendant of a goddess, as the scales can be traced back to Nu Wa, who was a snake goddess. Miranda thinks, though it is important to note that it is her current life she is trying to forget, not a past one, "If memory could not be washed away perhaps it could be cut" (212).

It is not washing or cutting, however, that ultimately assists Miranda in temporarily forgetting her current life and her past ones. It is the exchange of certain material belongings for others. Miranda encounters this phenomenon in Ian Chestnut, a childhood friend, when she meets him again years later: "he had gracefully morphed from a pale fragile child to a slim golden young man, casually dressed in a white T-shirt, expensive, well-cut jeans and a pair of Pallas runners in deep navy with thin silver strips along the sides" (188).

Ian has changed from a thoughtful, compassionate boy who displays kindness to and shares friendship with an outcast, to a privileged young man who favours expensive clothing produced by an exploitative company. Miranda is seduced into Ian's world when he invites her to a party in Serendipity, the walled town reserved for affluent people (189). Miranda has just begun working for Dr. Flowers and though the receptionist looks "disdainfully" at Miranda's "badly dressed body" (99), Dr. Flowers' office is in the less affluent unregulated zone, and for

the most part, Miranda blends in there. However, Miranda is repeatedly reminded of her perceived inadequacies in Serendipity, the walled town in which she grew up, from her “tattered mask” (191) to her “third-hand and ten years old” attire as Ian’s friend and Pallas company representative Adrian Withers asks her if she has ever owned a pair of Pallas shoes (197). The scene recalls how Miranda was humiliated by her mother’s old playing cards when she was a young girl, visiting the “electronic jungle” (64) of Ian’s home:

I felt momentarily ashamed of my boring, antiquated playing cards, in spite of my mother’s voice at the back of my mind reminding me of the importance of keeping old games, old stories, and traditional values alive. Sometimes it was difficult to hang on to that, especially at moments like this when the glittering technologies of the new world beckoned. (65)

Now, embarrassed by her lack of wealth in front of Ian and his friend, Miranda has a chance to improve her material prospects when Adrian Withers asks her to sell her mother’s famous song. Miranda sells the song “about the dangers of glamour” (202-203) and begins working for Pallas Company, designing advertisements about the Little Mermaid for shoes which supplant “the handsome prince as objects of desire” (236) and “protect” people “against the dreaming disease” with their “[m]emory-proof soles (244). Miranda feels remorse for selling her mother’s song and supporting a company which produces and uses clones for labour, but nevertheless is lured by Darling Tom’s “long white dress,” “lush eyelashes ... [and] silken smooth cheek” as well as “dinner ... blue martinis ... caviche and roasted lamb, [and] berry scented wine” (238), much like her ancestor was lured by Edwina.

Just as Miranda leaves her family and Evie for promises of beauty and comfort, the human incarnation of Nu Wa leaves the salt fish girl when she meets Edwina, a “foreign woman” whose skin is “almost translucent.” Edwina grabs Nu Wa’s hand and leads her out of the city to a far away place; Nu Wa barely protests and does not attempt to return (123-135). Instead, she stays with Edwina and loses her original language in a process that again emphasizes the body. After drinking a strange, “bitter and herbal” concoction, she goes to the bathroom to urinate and feels her “old language gushing away ... liquid, yellow and irretrievable” (125-126). Nu Wa recognizes what she has lost when she returns home from the Island of Mist and Forgetting, but is unable to recover her language or communicate with her mother, her brother, or the salt fish girl (172-173). Because it is the first incarnation of Nu Wa who experiences the frustration of not being able to speak to her own family and lover, rather than a later incarnation or a descendant, the loss of language is all the more poignant.

Edwina replaces Nu Wa’s language with her own, but she also tries to remake Nu Wa’s body in her image. Edwina, like Darling Tom, represents wealth and comfort. That wealth and comfort is evident in Edwina’s body and in its associated scents. Nu Wa notices that Edwina smells of “expensive face powder and the kind of cologne that comes in crystal bottles (127). Even though Nu Wa wonders if Edwina truly possesses a corporeal form, “trying to grasp a sense of her materiality, trying to understand whether or not she was real” (135) Edwina continues to bewitch and bewilder Nu Wa’s human form through the lure of the material, promising Nu Wa a pedicure and spa treatment along with a trip to the beach: “Her enthusiasm and the promise of a luxurious pleasure were overwhelming.... I would have trusted her with anything” (137). Nu Wa’s suspicion of Edwina’s embodiment or lack thereof represents her suspicion of Edwina’s promises, but moreover, Edwina represents the manipulative Western

coloniser Senghor delineates, separated from her body, her ethics, and the world around her. By juxtaposing Nu Wa's suspicion and complicity with Miranda's recollection that her mother wanted her to remember "the old games, old stories, and traditions" in spite of the siren call of "glittering technology," Lai remarks upon the Western world's privileging of supposedly universal, rational scientific progress in opposition to the lives, memories, and histories of people marginalized by imperial domination. *Salt Fish Girl* also explicitly repudiates the privileging of science in Evie's confrontation of her father/creator, Dr. Flowers, over the murder of her sisters and the destruction of the mutated durian tree that allowed her sisters, the Sonias, to reproduce:

"You don't know," said the doctor, "what monstrosities might have come of those births. Those trees have been interbreeding and mutating for at least three generations since the original work. The fertility those durians provided was neither natural nor controllable. It was too dangerous."

"But what you did to make me, to make us, was not? I should cut your heart out and eat it."

"I'm a scientist, Evie. Whereas those Sonias ... not human ..." (255-256)

In linking Dr. Flowers' concept of himself as a scientist with his denial of the Sonias' humanity, Lai associates Western "rationality" and "impartial" science with its tendency to deny the humanity of those very people who have made possible its emergence and dominance. So, too, is the way Dr. Flowers frames the opposition between himself and the clones critical. As a male scientist and the speaker, he is afforded the first-person "I", "whereas those Sonias ... not human" are denied that due to their use as free labour but moreover in being spoken for by Dr. Flowers and his refusal to acknowledge their humanity. In omitting the word "are" or "were," the

doctor also denies Evie's sisters their very (past) existence. By calling the clones "those Sonias," he denies them individuality, even though when they lived they had names and personalities quite distinct from one another - as Miranda realizes when she first meets her brother's wife Karen and mistakes her for Evie, learning that unlike Evie, Karen does not remember Miranda and has no attraction to her (214). Moreover, Dr. Flowers' lack of facility with words when speaking about Evie's clone sisters - in stark contrast to his glib diatribe regarding the durian trees - suggests an inability to confront his supposedly monstrous creations. Similarly, when Miranda encounters genetically engineered people at her school and asks, "Who are those women?" Ian responds blithely, "They're not women. They're janitors" (76), denying them their humanity just as Dr. Flower does.

Moreover, the ways in which Evie's clone sisters can be read as the product of science which has gotten out of control both extends and troubles the way *Salt Fish Girl* functions as a postcolonial text. In many canonized works of postcolonial literature, nature serves as a metaphor for the fall of "civilized" and imperialistic cultures and the healing and rise of peoples and cultures who once were colonised. For instance, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *No Telephone to Heaven*, rapidly growing and even invasive nature parallels and symbolizes the characters' recognition of their colonization and reclamation of their cultural history. In *Salt Fish Girl*, the unruliness of nature and the subalterns' developing consciousness of their colonisation are one and the same. While both the durian trees and the clones have surpassed the doctor's expectations and limitations on them, which aligns with Bhabha's notion of the colonised subject exceeding performativity, the conflation of nature and the clones' subjectivity alongside the use of the clones as a collective character and plot device limits their potential. The fact that Evie's clones sisters' existence and their ability to reproduce is inextricable from the mutation of the

durian trees could be read as an example of Donna Haraway's contentions about the cyborg; rather than humanism's "plot of original unity out of which difference must be produced and enlisted in a drama of escalating domination of woman/nature [...] [t]he cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with Nature in the Western sense" (8). The clone sisters cannot be traced back merely to nature – to a "unity" with Evie. Nor are they merely a product of science. Rather, they are a conflation of both, and they also extend beyond both separately from the conflation. Further, Evie's clone sisters have distinct personalities and even sexual orientations (Lai 214-216) and as such serve as another way in which speculative fiction critiques essentialist theories. Nevertheless, the clones ultimately function as little more than a symbol of the scientist's inability to reign in his creations and a foil for Miranda's and Evie's liberation.

The implicit critique of scientific knowledge construction and science as progress, however, serves a purpose. Ways of knowing that allow characters to recover their obscured histories are situated exclusively in the bodies of formerly colonised people, and these ways of knowing are privileged over capitalist and scientific forms of knowledge and goods production. The intertwining of subaltern bodies with privileged ways of knowing that can be traced to an unintended side effect of genetic engineering could also be read as representing Bhabha's position that colonised peoples produce an "excess of the performative" (76). It is the intervention of Western science, which then evolves into something new and no longer controllable by its creators, that enables Miranda's mother, Miranda, and Evie's clone sisters to reproduce - and thus pass down their knowledge, contained in their different bodies, to the next generation.

On the one hand, locating the transformational difference and transgenerational memory in the bodies of subaltern characters is a powerful move. Locating the difference and memory in the bodies of formerly colonised and still subjugated people pushes back against the concept that knowledge production is the privileged domain of Western powers and those who have benefited from Western forms of knowledge production not only because it challenges the ontological/epistemological divide and the privileging of the latter, but also because by locating knowledge in the body, that knowledge is neither - strictly speaking - constructed nor simple to wrest away from the people whom it can deliver from subjugation. On the other hand, by locating knowledge in the body and a specific sort of knowledge in the bodies of people from a specific ethnic group and culture, these works may result in readers implicitly taking away lessons about essentialized identity and biological race. That the concept of essentialism operates to empower subaltern characters and interrogate not just Western power itself but the often unchallenged discourses of Western rationality and scientific progress which make that power possible and uphold it is potentially empowering but troubling. It is troubling because, as effective as it may be to make embodied and transgenerational knowledge literal through speculative fiction tropes, the resulting essentialism becomes a “moment of enunciation” not just on the page but in the minds of its collective readers; it functions as yet another way stereotypes get reworked through culture, becoming the stereotypes that the present moment needs them to be and entrenching them in a cultural imagination. In these cases, the “moment of enunciation” not only reinforces the concept that certain traits are locatable at a genetic level, but also opposes Bhabha’s “refusal to think of cultures as pure or holistic, with received wisdom handed down from generation to generation” (McLeod 253).

Alternatively to understanding these representations as implicitly supporting the concepts of essential, fixed identities that are linked to biological race, these representations might instead be interpreted as a form of strategic essentialism. Strategic essentialism can be traced to Gayatri Spivak's statement in a 1984 interview with Elizabeth Grosz: "I think we have to choose again strategically, not universal discourse but essentialist discourse. [...] In fact I must say I am an essentialist from time to time" (11). Spivak later extended the model of strategic essentialism, referring to the concept of "subaltern consciousness" as "a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (214).

Négritude, a movement which originated amongst Francophone African writers in the 1920s and which suggested that "all people of [African] descent shared certain inalienable essential characteristics" (Ashcroft et al. *Postcolonial Studies* 176-177) can be understood as an example of strategic essentialism. Both its originators and contemporary scholars argue for Négritude as a "myth" (Senghor qtd. in Constant and Mabana 6), "identity construct" (Jeffers qtd. in Constant and Mabana 6) or a concept (Ferninand qtd. in Constant and Mabana 7), which ultimately aims to recognize and elevate the distinctiveness and worth of the cultures of the African diaspora (Constant and Mabana 6). Therefore, "the charge of essentialism loses its validity" (Jeffers qtd. in Constant and Mabana 7).

Thus, we might understand the linkage of blood, phenotype, and categories of magical abilities in *Children of Blood and Bone* as strategic essentialism. In this novel the protagonist, Zelie, who has lost her mother and her powers in the war between her people and the purportedly magicless ruling class, learns that some of the ruling class do in fact have magic. The novel consistently establishes that diviners and maji can be distinguished from those who do not wield magic by appearance alone as well as that the ability to do magic resides in the blood and each

type of power is hereditary, usually inherited from the magic wielder's mother rather than their father. Even before they come of age and gain their powers at thirteen, and even when magic is supposedly lost, diviners are recognizable because of their snow white hair. People without magical abilities - nor, ostensibly, the potential to gain magical abilities when they come of age - are called kosidan and have black hair.

Though the representations of essentialism in *Children of Blood and Bone* could have been mitigated by the spread of magic to people other than visible diviners or maji, ultimately the text reinforces essentialism - first because kosidan who turn into maji experience a change in their appearance, and second because the kosidan who become maji are royals whose family possessed magic before the gods took it away.

Throughout the story, there are indications that magic is hereditary, based in the blood, and linked to visible and easily identifiable physical characteristics. Magic is inherited, and “[o]ften diviners inherited the magic of their parents, almost always deferring to the magic in their mothers bloodline” (78). Zelig notes that “the presence of ashe in our blood is what separates diviners from maji. [...] Ashe is what maji need to do magic at all” (77).

Though Zelig thinks that one “can’t identify a maji’s powers on sight alone,” (157) it is the case that those with magical abilities can be identified by their appearance. When the prince begins to exhibit magical ability, it comes with a telltale white streak in his hair: “My eyes go back to the jagged white streak running through the prince’s hair, the only true marker of a maji. Our hair is always as stark and white as the snow that covers the mountaintops of Ibadan” (113).

Upon meeting Zelig, another character tells her that he “can sense” that her “mother was a Reaper” and that “Reaper blood runs thick through your veins” (157), suggesting that in

addition to the differentiated physical appearance of those with the potential for magical prowess, those with magic derive that magic from their genetics. Moreover, it is possible for someone to detect that magical ability in their very blood - and not merely that a person has magical ability, but also what kind.

While the technique for and mechanics of tracing one's lineage and recalling one's cultural history differs greatly between *Children of Blood and Bone* and the two aforementioned novels, the effect is similar. Like the characters in *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death*, Zelig is able to recover knowledge that is denigrated and suppressed by a ruling class, through supernatural abilities which are hereditary.

These representations of strategic essentialism are present in both minor and major ways in multiple other speculative fiction texts. Two notable examples are "Kiss the Sun" by Ibi Zoboi and Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Woman*. In the former, "girth and curves" are indicated to be a physical indicator of soucouyants (221). The soucouyant's leader first asserts that a light-skinned girl could not possibly be a soucouyant because "[w]e don't have any pale skins among us," (231) and when she ultimately acknowledges the girl as a soucouyant, she observes that due to the lightness of her skin, the girl is weaker, "barely strong enough to take flight" (236). While the soucouyant's strength is inextricable from their dark skin, which would suggest it should be valued, the characters must still contend with the ongoing impacts of colonialism, especially in terms of colourism and the fetishization of the bodies of colonised people. In the latter, *Akata Witch*, the protagonist, Sunny Nwazue, belongs to an isolated group of women with special abilities, and that membership is positioned as being inextricably linked to her genetics. Sunny's friend tells her that "[a]nyone with Nimm blood" knows where the Nimm village is located (72) and that their Nimm blood gives them the power of "blood memory" (83).

While these texts effect a reclamation of essentialism in linking characters' strengths, including but not limited to the ability to remember the past, to a biological or, at least, bodily component (despite the ways in which the science fiction narrative in *Salt Fish Girl* destabilizes the mythic narrative), the ability of these characters to change their form serves other, very different, purposes. In particular, it enables them to - sometimes over a very long periods of time, due to having a comprehensive understanding of the way a person with that race or sex might live - develop a new worldview.

Octavia E. Butler once stated, "All that we know that we have is the flesh" ("Radio Imagination" 59). No matter how much a person might try to understand others' perspectives, they are often limited to the perspective they have already developed based on their own experiences. Those experiences are, in many respects, determined by our bodies. Embodiment theory proposes that the body is the "basis of phenomena such as meaning, mind, cognition, and language" (Ziemke et. al 1). Further, "thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are grounded in sensory experiences and bodily states" (Meier et. al 706). Because the body mediates all social experiences and in turn social experiences mediate an individual's understanding of who they are, it is difficult if not impossible for a person to imagine themselves otherwise and thus to have empathy for a person who has had a much different experience than their own. As Mackenzie and Scully note, "the moral imagination is constrained by embodied experience and by the social possibilities foreclosed or made available by a person's specific embodiment" (338).

What if, though, people could have the lived experiences of those whose social and material conditions are very different from their own? In *Wild Seed* and *Who Fears Death*, Butler and Okorafor ask and answer that question. Indeed, it is not only in these novels that they address the relationship between mutable bodies, lived experience, and shifting perspectives, but

across their oeuvre. However, these novels, out of all these authors' works, best represent how a person's perspective can alter based on their lived experience. What these works demonstrate is that shapeshifting gives these characters access to lived experiences they would not have likely had otherwise, and that lived experience in turn enables them to then consider - and even assimilate to - perspectives which were previously alien to them.

Homi K. Bhabha posits that in the "articulation of forms of difference - racial and sexual," there is an opportunity to move beyond the concept of an "'original' identity" (96) - that is, because racial and sexual difference must constantly be articulated within its social and cultural context and because stereotypes of racial and sexual difference must continuously be repeated to maintain their power (110-111, 113), these stereotypes change each time. I argue that in speculative fiction texts, the articulation of racial and sexual difference through shapeshifting characters allows for a version of Bhabha's "moments of enunciation" - a revision of a character's identity. Specifically, speculative fiction texts featuring shapeshifting characters provide an opportunity for critiquing the concept that there is ever any original or predetermined race, sex, gender, or sexuality. When shapeshifters alter their race or sex, they instead suggest that identification with a race or sex - and even sexuality - is produced by the social experiences afforded by someone's body. The mutability of seemingly stable categories through shapeshifting characters is demonstrated most notably in *Wild Seed*, as Anyanwu, a many-hundreds year old Igbo shapeshifter, travels to colonial America with Doro, an even older spirit with no body of his own who breeds people with supernatural abilities in order to feed on their energy and take their bodies. Anyanwu must cope with both a new culture and the changes to her sense of self when she lives for decades as a white male plantation owner in Louisiana, as well as with Doro's incessant attempts to breed her and control her children.

Anyanwu's trajectory of adaptation begins with her forced migration to colonial America and insertion in a small community controlled by her captor, Doro, but ends with her eventual immersion in the practices of slavery. Initially Anyanwu views the majority of the practices in colonial America and in Doro's colony specifically as anathema to her own beliefs, preferences, and overall way of life. When she first arrives in the small colony on the coast of New England, Anywanwu scoffs at the European women's practice of sweeping the floors, and states that the drinking of cow's milk "an abomination" (110). Anyanwu persists in giving each of her children Igbo names along with their European names, a practice which Christopher N. Okonkwo argues is representative of a challenge to slavers' and slaveowners' use of changing slaves' names in an attempt to "disempower the enslaved" (77). When another one of Doro's subjects informs Anyanwu that she is surprised Doro has not chosen a new and English name for Anyanwu, Anywanwu asks why he should, saying "He has not changed his own name. Why should he change mine?" (105). She refuses to "adopt a European name or call her children by their European names" (140). Anyanwu also pronounces Doro's plan to marry her to his son Isaac as an abomination, in keeping with her people's practice of only marrying a husband's son if that husband has died (112), noting "he's your son! How can I have the son when his father, my husband, still lives?" In responding to Anyanwu's censure, Doro emphasizes the physical move and Anyanwu's loss of community: "You have left your village, Anyanwu, and your town and your people. You are here where I rule." (113).

The journey that Anyanwu makes - both physically, from Nigeria to the east coast of North America, and personally, from a powerful healer and representative of the gods to disguised and living in fear - is a clear statement of the shortcomings of the possibilities for women of colour in the "New World" as contrasted with the more matriarchal society Anyanwu

abandoned under duress. Anyanwu's insistence on retaining her customs is inextricable from her sense of herself as a powerful woman, as well as her actual power. Before she leaves home with Doro, she practices deception with her people, assuming the form of a very elderly woman. However, she is unequivocally black and a woman. Anyanwu's loss of her Igbo culture occurs in conjunction with her loss of consistent, unfettered agency as a black woman. At first, Anyanwu's acknowledgment that Doro possesses her is made with conditions - "'as much as any man could'" (27). Yet in leaving her home and embracing the customs of the people in Doro's colony, Anyanwu relinquishes her power. First she gives up her confidence as a speaker. Anyanwu finds herself "ashamed to speak before all these strangers—yet she had always spoken before strangers, and spoken well" (107). Finally, Anyanwu gives up her power as a black woman, because she can no longer safely live as a black woman. Initially, Anyanwu is hopeful that she can retain her identity as a black woman. She asks Doro, "'Must I become white? [...] I thought with you I could be myself.'" (89). She tells another man who critiques her blackness that she will become white only if she must become white to survive (150). Soon she learns that, steeped in the racism and sexism of the colonies, she must. Anyanwu is also at first critical of the concept that she can belong simply through changing her attire. She equates the new Dutch clothing she is told to wear with being "like a prisoner. All bound" (95). Anyanwu contemptuously challenges Doro's son, Issac's, assertion that because she is wearing European clothing she "'can be a real lady,'" noting that she will be living in a place where "'most of the people are white, and of the few blacks, most are slaves,'" but because Isaac - who is the descendant of Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans - appears to be white he "'look[s] like a 'real man'" (96). Anyanwu's critique of Isaac foregrounds intersectionality - that it is only because Isaac is white that he is afforded consideration as a man. Isaac's response to Anyanwu, "I can't help how I look,"

foregrounds the novum – because, of course, Anyanwu can, unlike Isaac, determine her skin colour – and perhaps foreshadows Anyanwu’s eventual capitulation to both becoming white and to the customs of the place to which she has traveled. The passage of time and Anyanwu’s repeated concessions to survive in a culture dominated by whites and males only cements her loss of agency to “be [her]self” and protect her children, as well as the people she adopts, as herself - or at all. When Anyanwu is approached by Doro nearly two centuries after she travels with him to North America, she decides to confront him over his dangerous meddling in her carefully constructed community. Expressing her plans to her daughter, the child asks if Doro will do something “just because you say so” (209). Anyanwu reflects over the time and planning it has taken to ensure that the people in her community make “her their final authority,” and how “[i]t had taken only a few weeks of Doro’s presence to erode that confidence so badly that even her children doubted her” (209).

Like Miranda and Nu Wa, Anyanwu is seduced by the allure of certain material goods. She exchanges some of her customs for new ones which gain her compliments from Isaac – who eventually becomes her husband – and acceptance from the women in the colony. However, for Anyanwu, ultimately it is not the replacement of belongings or customs that leads to her change in perspective. It is the replacement of her body. Anyanwu lives with a white male body for over thirty years in Louisiana, taking on the role of a plantation owner in order to protect her children and the people she has gathered - people of colour, others with supernatural abilities, and disabled people. Though Anyanwu once expressed disgust when Doro asked if she would become a male and have intercourse with him as he utilized a female body, hundreds of years later in Louisiana, Anyanwu marries a woman. Anyanwu explains to Doro when he eventually tracks her down that while the marriage had been proposed by Leah’s parents - who were fooled

by Anyanwu's guise as a wealthy white male - she became drawn to Leah because she realized Leah could see spirits, and that she and Leah "started to want each other." "Even though you were black and a woman?" Doro asks. "Even so," Anyanwu simply responds (197). Speaking to her daughter Margaret not long after the conversation with Doro, Anyanwu suggests that she continues to pursue romantic and sexual relationships with women though her wife Denice has died. Doro confirms that Anyanwu no longer limits herself to male romantic and sexual partners, arguing that she might be attracted to him in a woman's body: "Anyanwu's had wives, after all" (241). Though Anyanwu once reacted vehemently against the concept of assuming a male form and loving a woman sexually, she has adapted because her body - in accordance with her social situation - enables her to adapt.

Anyanwu's adaptations are not consistently adaptations that contribute to her growth or to a more inclusive, just worldview. Indeed, the intertwined novums of shapeshifting and extreme longevity facilitate a speculative critique of how certain bodies have access to privilege that others do not, resulting in a lack of - or, in Anyanwu's experience, a loss of - empathy for others who do not share that access to privilege. In her white male body, which she has utilized for many years in order to amass wealth and social standing, Anyanwu is contemplating her material gains when a convoy of slaves to be sold at auction moves past. Suddenly one of the slaves calls, "Does that white skin cover your eyes too?" Not only can he see past Anyanwu's disguise, he suggests that Anyanwu's identity as black and a woman is fundamental. Anyanwu also realizes that living as a white person has distinctly altered her awareness and affective knowledge of slavery: "I realized I was not seeing the slaves in front of me. I had been white for too long" (191). Catherine Ramirez, in "Cyborg Feminism: The Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa," notes how Anyanwu "gains (and sometimes loses) a particular

worldview” because she is able to change forms (385). In this case, Anyanwu has forgotten what it is like to have the form of a black person in colonial America. Because she is now white, it is no longer necessary for Anyanwu to be concerned with the negative impacts of slavery on black people. The novums enable a crystallization of Bhabha’s assertion that rather than a core, essentialized identity, identity is continuously formed through one’s interactions.

Similarly, Onyesonwu’s desire to belong, and her performance of an ethnic identity in terms of gender, is most evident through her use of her ability to shapeshift and her gradual trend towards sharing the values and adopting the practices of the people of Jwahir. As Mary-Anne Fortier notes, gender and ethnicity are also performed in constructing one’s place in a group identity (42). Onyesonwu can take the shape of many creatures and is not originally from Jhawir. Her mother, being from a different ethnic group, does not endorse circumcision, demonstrating the variability in practices related to gender. Still, Onyesonwu feels compelled to follow local customs such as circumcision because “I live here!” (Okorafor *Who Fears Death* 54) and “Every girl here has it done!” (52). Onyesonwu is so affected by the customs of Jwahir that she unknowingly removes her clitoris after the first time she regrows it (150).

Onyesonwu’s unconscious removal of her clitoris after intentionally regrowing it is an excellent example of how the novum can provide an unparalleled way of commenting on and questioning social norms. As the novum allows for Onyesonwu to shapeshift – and moreover, to shapeshift without intending to or even realizing that she has shapeshifted – the reader recognizes that Onyesonwu’s desire to belong or to conform is so great and rooted so deep in her consciousness that she would remove her clitoris a second time, even though she only did it in the first place to reduce the social risks to her mother and stepfather because of her differences, and even though everyone in Jwahir believes she has already removed her clitoris and that the

removal was permanent. That is, there is no pressure on Onyesonwu to remove her clitoris a second time since no one is aware that she has regrown her clitoris. The fact that Onyesonwu unconsciously removes her clitoris again suggests that she has, at a subconscious level, internalized Jhawir's gendered norms.

Whether the culprit is the acceptance of material goods or the displacement of the body, in each case one belonging or membership to some extent replaces another. Nu Wa, Miranda, and Onyesonwu expose the dangers of conformity, in that it can often lead to cultural forgetting. These characters survive, belong, and learn to identify with the other. But at what cost? Levinson's position that, historically, African American passing narratives have featured characters (and, in particular, women characters) who feel the strain of having left behind their culture and family for the benefits of passing (2) is especially relevant to Nu Wa's experience in her first life. When a character conforms simply to survive, the risk is the loss of one's cultural identity and history, and potentially, complicity with the oppressor. However, while cultural values and memories can never be fully recovered, neither are they entirely concealed or rewritten.

Whereas the trope of shapeshifting and other speculative fiction tropes involving the body often serve as representations of cultural loss, the trope of embodied knowledge – especially through reincarnation and the ability to transmit memories to others – demonstrates that the body can also be an essential site for recovery of knowledge. The body is the means by which a human being understands his or her world, through all of the bodily senses and functions. To merely be told about one's cultural heritage, or read it, does not involve all of the senses, whereas the bodily experience assists in forming and retaining memories. The trope of embodied memory in *Who Fears Death* enables a recognition of the relationship between lived

experience and empathy; feeling her mother's rape makes it real to Onyesonwu and Onyesonwu's sharing the memory of the rape with others makes it real to them (163-164). *Who Fears Death* also emphasizes the value of acknowledging one's ancestors and knowing history which is not recorded in books; the supernatural powers Onyesonwu has given to all the women in Durfa include "hear[ing] the dead" and "remember[ing] the past, before the Great Book" (413). In *Salt Fish Girl*, scent is the physical link to memory – catalyzing Miranda's recognition of Evie Xin as her lover in a past life, enabling transgenerational memory, and, as Paul Lai notes, "offering memories to people who never directly experienced the war and trauma of which they dream" (176). The speculative fiction trope of embodied memory effects a reparation of the fissure between "those who can remember a place [...] and those who cannot," and the distinction which is made between migrants and "children of migrants" (McLeod 246). Memory, retained through the body, is also how Miranda recognizes Evie as her past lover, and why Miranda draws images of Nu Wa splitting early humans' tails into legs and watching them procreate on the sand (*Salt Fish Girl* 187). Miranda does not always understand the information she knows. Nevertheless, the body carries memory from the past, and into and through the future.

Both Onyesonwu and Miranda/Nu Wa and Evie/the salt fish girl embody returning to the past as a means of recovering one's cultural history for the future. The fish, which both Miranda and Evie incorporate in their bodies – Miranda due to being a reincarnated form of Nu Wa and Evie due to her patented carp genes (158) – embodies a return to the first physical forms and to a thousands-year-old culture and history. This return, however, is a return which also entails moving forward. As Miranda thinks:

[N]ow we step out of moist earth, out of DNA both new and old, an imprint of what has gone before, but also a variation. By our difference we mark how ancient the alphabet of our bodies. By our strangeness we write our bodies into the future. (259)

Ultimately, both *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* suggest that in emphasizing new sites of knowledge and production, it is possible to resist the ways in which the history of colonised people and of women is othered, denigrated, and forgotten. This form of resistance is, in Rey Chow's words, drawing upon Michael de Certeau's framework, a tactic, "betting on time instead of space," and like the example de Certeau gives of "fishes and insects that disguise ... themselves[,]"" this tactic, too, is obscured by "the form of rationality currently dominant in Western culture" (16). As Keren Omry notes, "the certainties of time, space, and progress are destabilized, making space for alternatives" (76). Like in Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred*, of which Butler said in 2006 that she "wanted to make the past real and [show] how it scars the present" ("Interviewing the Oracle") these characters are, as Baccolini states, using their bodies in order to explore "the relationship to past history, ... to understand one's ancestors, and ... to resolve feelings about the past" (Baccolini 47). Lai describes the necessity and intentionality of her own writing in a similar way to Butler, stating: "The key to liberation is to recall what we were, the parts of ourselves that we want to bring into the future. If women can recall their histories and retain their memories, then men's histories and the systems of oppression they justify will no longer hold water" ("The Sixth Sensory Organ").

In these texts, the Western separation between mind and body that Senghor notes is resisted through embodied knowledge, both in terms of the lived experiences that shapeshifting characters are afforded when they alter their race and sex, and through the trope of transgenerational and shared memory. The association between genetics and supernatural

abilities which enable characters to have direct experience of intergenerational memory and cultural history potentially risks reifying the colonial concept that traits are inextricable from race and seems to be in opposition to Bhabha's caution against perceiving and portraying people and cultures as insular and static, especially in terms of how certain shapeshifting characters are represented as having an "originary" identity. However, the way the speculative fiction tropes are enacted and their results on the characters more often than not effect a strategic essentialism which challenges the supposed superiority of Western forms of knowledge, or a representation of how identity is discursively and continuously constructed.

Chapter 2

“Your body has made a different choice”: The Ethics of Consent and Colonial Control in Octavia E. Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling*

All struggles are essentially power struggles. Who will rule? Who will lead? Who will define, refine, confine, design? Who will dominate? —Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

I began writing about power because I had so little.

—Octavia E. Butler, Interview with Carolyn S. Davidson, “The Science Fiction of Octavia Butler”

In this chapter, I fully articulate the strategies that Butler’s powerful characters utilize to control the less powerful. I demonstrate that far from relying exclusively on their supernatural abilities to perceive human’s physical responses and emotions and to control humans using druglike substances, Butler’s powerful characters rely on a few very human strategies to establish and sustain unequal power dynamics. I also aim to make Butler’s associations between sexual coercion, the ethics of consent, and medical ethics explicit, thereby further exposing the relevance of Butler’s work for discussions on rape culture, reproductive rights (and, in particular, the reproductive rights of people who carry a child to term and give birth), and bioethics. The following chapter contextualizes Butler’s treatises on the ethics of consent across Butler’s oeuvre, both through the body of existing scholarship on Butler, and for its relevance to public discourse on rape, reproductive rights, and bioethics. Finally, the chapter considers some of the associations the text makes between desire, reproduction, and control - both of individual and

group's bodies and of these people's access to information - and how the associations can lend themselves to a postcolonial reading.

Emphases on power are prevalent in Butler's work. Butler is concerned, even obsessed, with issues of coercion, control, and consent. *Wild Seed's* Doro demands Anyanwu produce children for his control, lest he harm the children she already has. In "The Evening and the Morning and the Night," Lynn, who has a genetically hereditary disease which results in self-harm, realizes that her particular pheromones enable her to draw men with the disease to her and influence them to follow her commands, an ability which aids male group members – who are more prone to progressively worse self-harm as they age than the women – in surviving. The protagonist of *Kindred*, a Black woman living in the 1990s, travels back in time to the antebellum period, to discover that her great-great-grandmother was the product of rape and that she must effectively facilitate that rape to ensure her own existence. Anyanwu's granddaughter, Mary, can – somewhat like Lynn – attract and compel her distant relatives, who are also descendants of Doro and Anyanwu and who also have powers, to do her bidding. "Bloodchild" is perhaps most aligned with human histories of colonialism. While the alien T'lic are much larger and more physically powerful than the humans, that is not the only way they control humans. Humans have been rounded up and put into camps by the T'lic. The colonised humans of "Bloodchild" incubate alien children in return for an elixir which puts them in a drug-like state and slows their aging process, but they are never quite free of the aliens' seductive power; nor are the humans free from the power dynamics associated with being colonised.

Various treatises on Butler address power struggles across time and space in Butler's fiction. Sandra Govan addresses Doro's coercion of Anyanwu in *Wild Seed*, and in particular Doro's use of the "time-encrusted masculine ploy" to get Anyanwu pregnant, "the most

immediate method he can use to control” her (85-86). Theri Pickens observes that “Butler’s oeuvre stresses the impact of hierarchical relationships” (33), and Erin M. Pryor Ackerman notes that “[t]he issues of power and agency in Butler’s writings have produced a wealth of criticism” (35). Some of the scholarship on Butler explicitly addresses power and desire in *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling*. Frances Bonner, for instance, links the relationship between desire, power, and consent in *Lilith’s Brood* (58) as well as discusses both rape and forced reproduction. Marty Fink posits that “[a]s in ‘Bloodchild’ and *Dawn* ... [in *Fledgling*] physical need and erotic transcendence preclude the possibility for escape,” asking if “consent might not be plausible because of the factors informing [their] decisions” (418). Florian Bast suggests that “the possibility of agency is called into question when [Butler’s characters are] confronted with biological realities rather than social constructions.”

It is, particularly, the contention that the control which the respective powerful aliens assert over humans is due to “biological realities rather than social constructions” with which I take issue and critique in this chapter. Rather than the control being a result of primarily “biological realities”, the speculative fiction devices such as shapeshifting and biochemical drugs which keep humans under the aliens’ thrall serve as a foil to the more human tactics of deception, coercion, and force. The devices utilized – such as the Oankali and Ina’s use of heightened senses to monitor and control the humans, and the Oankali’s ability to initiate a reproductive act without the awareness of the human involved in the reproductive act, and the Oankali-human hybrid’s deployment of shapeshifting to convince potential human mates of their desirability and safety – enables a novel and nuanced portrayal and critique of consent and colonialism. What initiates and/or maintains the humans’ subservience to the aliens is very much socially constructed. While the aforementioned treatments of consent in Butler’s fiction argue

that the combination of human desire and the supernatural characters' ability to perceive that desire results in the notion of consent being implausible or impossible, the complex depiction of the constraints on humans as they attempt to give, deny, or revoke consent to the Oankali and the Ina make the humans an obvious analogy for the ethics of consent in actual situations of rape and reproductive rights. The ethics of consent pertains also to how the Oankali and Ina's treatment of (and "need" for) humans parallels colonisers' fetishization and subsumption of colonised subjects, both culturally and genetically, as well as to the strategies the aliens use to ensure compliance. As Robert J.C. Young notes, "[i]f language preserves one major product of contact" – one which is less "straightforward" than dominance of one group over another and which emphasizes interaction and fusion over time – "a second, less usual model [...] is equally literal and more physical: sex" (5). Like the imposition of language, the long term impact of colonisers forcing sex upon colonised people exceeds the original aim. Nevertheless, it is critical to acknowledge that the intent was rooted in patriarchal control and ethnocentrism.

To better articulate the implicit and explicit associations between the ethics of consent in Butler's work and rape culture⁴, the reproductive rights of potentially birth giving people, and bioethics, a brief discussion of perspectives on the ethics of consent and autonomy follows.

Onora O'Neill argues that "[t]o use someone as a mere means is to involve them in a scheme of action to which they could not in principle consent." Such situations include deceit:

⁴ Rebecca M. Hayes defines rape culture as "an institutional culture" which has at its base "the heteronormative white supremacist patriarchy where sexual violence is normalized" and also intersects with "other types of oppression". Within this framework, rape culture is constituted of "victim blaming, sexual objectification (turning a person into a sex object or an object), trivialization of rape, and denial of widespread rape" (12-13). For the purposes of the discussion of rape culture within Butler's novels, I will be focusing mainly on sexual objectification and trivialization of rape.

One person may make a promise to another with every intention of breaking it. If the promise is accepted, then the person to whom it was given must be ignorant of what the promisor's intention (maxim) really is.... Successful false promising depends on deceiving the person to whom the promise is made about what one's real maxim is. And since the person who is deceived doesn't know that real maxim, he or she can't in principle consent to his or her part in the proposed scheme of action. (287)

A second situation in which consent is impossible, O'Neill elaborates, is when coercion is involved. For instance, "[i]f a rich and powerful person threatens a debtor with bankruptcy unless he or she joins in some scheme, then the creditor's intention is to coerce; and the debtor, if coerced, cannot consent" (287). Robin West makes the connection to rape explicit in her contention that nonconsensual sex can occur through "fraudulent misrepresentation" and compulsion which does not involve force (240).

It is not only the lack of consent, however, which is an issue. Rather, it is also (and perhaps primarily, since that is what drives the deception, coercion, and force) the Oankali's derivatization of humans. Ann Cahill defines derivatization as "portray[ing], render[ing], understand[ing], or approach[ing] a being solely or primarily as the reflection, projection, or expression of another being's identity, desires, fears, etc. (32), noting that derivatization applies not only to sexual encounters but to any circumstance in which someone or a group of people is considered and treated as a "not-quite-person" (33).

Through unequal power dynamics, limiting the humans' options, deceit, force, and drugs/sex, the Oankali and Ina consistently treat the humans as though they are only an extension of themselves and their needs, scorning and fearing their difference but praising and using the aspects of the humans that appeal to them or which can be exploited – for instance, Lilith's self sufficiency, parenting skills, and cancer. Because the humans are subjected to multiple and sustained constraints on their agency, they are unable to give consent. The other aspects of the

relationship – better health, long lives, communal living, etc. – have very little or no bearing upon the morality of the Oankali’s and Ina’s actions because the humans did not enter into the beneficial aspects of the relationship with prior knowledge or willingness.

Octavia E. Butler’s two works to deal most prominently with the ethics of consent are *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling*. *Lilith’s Brood*, originally published in 1989 as *Xenogenesis*, consists of *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989). The trilogy commences with Lilith’s realization that she has been held captive by the alien Oankali for over two hundred years. The Oankali have periodically woken Lilith from suspended animation in order to determine her fit for her new roles – teaching the other humans how to survive on the post-apocalyptic Earth, and bearing the first Oankali-human hybrid, or construct. Once the Oankali decide that Lilith is indeed the human that they want, they begin to prepare her. What follows is a Cold War of sorts between Oankali and human resisters – humans who have been altered by the Oankali so they cannot have children on their own, but refuse to breed with the Oankali. Over the next thirty years, Lilith’s children – human and Oankali hybrids, or constructs - must convince the Oankali to let human resisters have a separate colony and human children. Lilith’s children must also find mates among the few willing humans left unclaimed by the older Oankali.

In *Fledgling*, Shori Matthews fights for her life against the old and influential white vampires who comprise the entrenched power system of the hidden vampire society and who feel threatened by a black vampire who can walk in the sun. *Fledgling*, as with *Lilith’s Brood*, begins in media res. Its protagonist, like Lilith, awakes confused and alone, and questioning her sanity. The similarities between Lilith and *Fledgling*’s protagonist end there, however. Shori has awakened with amnesia, but soon learns that she is a 53-year-old Ina (Butler *Fledgling* 70-72), or

vampire. Shori appears to be a young black child, but she is much more like the Oankali than like Lilith. She holds most of the power in her relationship with her symbionts, the humans that she utilizes for sustenance and sex. It is Shori who withholds information, seduces, and coerces. As Shori attempts to find out who killed her family and left her with amnesia, her symbionts become pawns in a battle between the Ina factions.

Once the alien Oankali and the vampire Ina decide they want something, they take it. In this case, what they want are humans, who provide sexual release for both Oankali and Ina. Humans are also breeding partners in the case of the Oankali; they are sustenance, servants, and sometimes, sexual partners, for the Ina. The Oankali and Ina are not opposed to using force to subdue their “trade” partners (*Lilith’s Brood* 289) or “symbionts” (*Fledgling* 69), the Oankali and Ina’s respective terms for the humans that they use. They are also not opposed to literally altering the humans’ brain chemistry; indeed, it is their primary way of luring humans in and keeping the humans invested in the relationship. The Oankali inject humans with a biochemical substance which has the ability to calm humans (*Lilith’s Brood* 619) as well as encourage a human’s body to “secrete specific endorphins” (512). The bite of an Ina serves the same function (*Fledgling* 79). Moreover, repeated exposure to an Ina’s saliva means death if the human no longer has access to the saliva for a prolonged period of time (79-80). Human symbionts are addicted to, and dependent upon, the biochemical in the saliva (76, 79).

Though the Oankali’s release of a human is not a death sentence, the Oankali pose many other dangers. The Oankali control humans through one of five strategies: they “read” human body language and scents, use physical force, present the humans with dichotomous “choices” in order to ensure an outcome favorable for the Oankali, omit information, and drug the humans.

The first strategy, that of utilizing their extrasensory abilities to know human fears and desires, is one that the Oankali use often.

The Oankali are particularly threatening because they perceive biological factors that humans do not perceive about themselves. The Oankali are so perceptive that some humans think that the Oankali can read minds (*Lilith's Brood* 25). The Oankali can even tell when humans are lying; because of their incredible senses, they “'can't help knowing'” when a human lies (619). The Oankali also perceive the humans' sexual attraction to and biochemical need for the Oankali:

“You said I could choose. I've made my choice!”

“You have, yes.” It opened its jacket with its many-fingered true hands and stripped the garment from him. When he would have backed away, it held him. It managed to lie down on the bed without seeming to force him down. “You see. Your body has made a different choice.” (189)

The Oankali's incredible extrasensory perception is ultimately only a foil for force. The Oankali routinely resort to physical force, which they invariably justify by saying that they only did what the humans wanted them to do.

Physical force is, with few exceptions, a precursor to seduction for the Oankali. The Oankali assert that the humans want to be intimate with the Oankali, though their actions would seem to say otherwise. Lilith says, “They know our bodies better than we do” (169). The Oankali's defense of their sexual coercion of the humans is eerily similar to the arguments of rape apologists. That is, though the humans express their rejection of sex with Oankali both through their words and through their physical actions, the Oankali assert that “no” means “yes”,

denying humans the agency not to act on the desire they may feel. Indeed, some of the men in the novel feel as though they have been raped by men or at least that they have been raped like women when they have intercourse with the third sex ooloi (192, 203). As Rachel Pollack notes, rape is central, and apparently acceptable, in *Dawn*, the first book of Lilith's Brood (Pollack qtd. in Bonner). Meanwhile, human women bear the brunt of the Oankali's efforts to transform the human species, with the Oankali again relying on their ability to "read" humans. Lilith tells Tino, a human resister who becomes her mate, her discomfort at failing to give her words meaning and impact, a simultaneous lack of agency in speech and ambivalence which is further emphasized by the way Lilith shakes "her head from side to side," which typically indicates denial, as she answers in the affirmative:

"They forced you to have kids?" the man asked.

"One of them surprised me," she said. "It made me pregnant, then told me about it. Said it was giving me what I wanted but would never come out and ask for."

"Was it?"

"Yes." She shook her head from side to side. "Oh, yes. But if I had the strength not to ask, it should have had the strength to let me alone." (274)

It is Nikanj who impregnates Lilith and produces the first Oankali-human construct. Nikanj makes Lilith pregnant without her verbal consent, or even her knowledge, and it uses force to make her listen to its reasoning:

"Is it an unclean thing that I have made you pregnant?"

She did not understand the words at first. It was as though it had begun speaking a language she did not know.

“You ... what?”

“I have made you pregnant with Joseph’s child. I shouldn’t have done it so soon, but I wanted to use his seed, not a print. I could not make you closely enough related to a child mixed from a print. And there’s a limit to how long I can keep sperm alive.”

She was staring at it, speechless. It was speaking as casually as though discussing the weather. She got up, would have backed away from it, but it caught her by both wrists.

She made a violent effort to break away, realized at once that she could not break its grip.

“You said—“ She ran out of breath and had to start again. “You said you wouldn’t do this. You said—“

“I said not until you were ready.”

“I’m not ready! I’ll never be ready!” (246)

Again Nikanj justifies its invasion of Lilith’s body with its supersensory knowledge and utilizes force in order to accomplish its goal, both mimicking and directly referencing its treatment of Joseph:

“You’ll have a daughter,” it said. “And you are ready to be her mother. You could never have said so. Just as Joseph could never have invited me into his bed—no matter how much he wanted me there. Nothing about you but your words reject this child.” (247)

In impregnating Lilith, Nikanj utilizes both its privileged information about Lilith’s body, and force, in order to control the outcome of the situation.

Only occasionally do the Oankali appear to offer a choice. This choice is always a very narrow one; either it is between two options, neither of which are very favorable for the human, or it is a statement disguised as a question, intended to lead the human to the option the Oankali prefer. One example of such a “choice” is that Lilith – and, by extension, the other humans – can only have children with the Oankali, or not at all. Another example is when Lilith asks why she cannot have Jdahya as her teacher. Jdahya and his mate, Tediin, ask Lilith a series of questions that confirm for Lilith that there is no real choice:

“... [I]f you and Nikanj weren’t supposed to be teaching each other, you would be learning from Kahguyaht.”

Lilith shuddered. “Good god,” she whispered. And seconds later, “Why couldn’t it be you?”

“Ooloi generally handle the teaching of new species.”

“Why? If I have to be taught, I’d rather you did it.”

His head tentacles smoothed.

“You like him or Kahguyaht?” Tediin asked. Her unpracticed English, acquired just from hearing others speak was much better than Lilith’s Oankali.

“No offense,” Lilith said, “but I prefer Jdahya.”

“Good,” Tediin said, her own head smooth, though Lilith did not understand why. “You like him or Nikanj?” (71-72)

Lilith admits that she prefers Nikanj, adding, ““You people are manipulative as hell, aren’t you?”” (72).

Lilith is again forced to choose between two unfavourable options when she learns that, no matter her wishes, the Oankali intend to make changes to her brain that will result in enhanced memory and nearly effortless language learning. Lilith is against the idea, saying, “[N]o part of me is more definitive of who I am than my brain” (76). Nikanj convinces Lilith to submit to the changes by telling her that surprising her would be “wrong” (78-79). Rather than preventing its ooloi parent, or “ooan,” Kahguyaht, from altering Lilith’s brain, Nikanj says that it will not surprise her, but “‘you must trust me or let Ooan surprise you when it’s tired of waiting’” (79). Lilith confronts Nikanj’s hypocrisy when it says, “‘We were bred to work with you ... We should be able to find ways through most of our differences.’” “‘Coercion,’” Lilith replies with rancor. “‘That’s the way you’ve found’” (81-82). Lilith knows that when force or coercion do not work, the Oankali resort to subterfuge.

The Oankali control access to the information humans have in a number of ways. The first way in which they alter human knowledge is to block human survivors’ access to memories of being captured by the Oankali: “‘Humans who were allowed to remember their rescue became uncontrollable,’” sometimes killing themselves or others (87). While the Oankali’s erasure of humans’ memories of being captured following the third world war initially seems somewhat altruistic, in conjunction with the other ways they deny human’s access to knowledge, these tactics are eerily similar to the ways that colonial control operates, with the Oankali “controlling the means of communication”, erasing the human’s history and enacting cultural genocide.

Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin’s synthesis and evaluation of Todorov’s arguments provides some context for this application. Todorov’s assertion that rather than “control over life and property”, it is “the control of the *means of communication*” and in particular an “imposed ... system of writing” which is “the empowering factor in any colonial enterprise” is especially

relevant. (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 78). It is not necessarily a language which is imposed as it is “writing over orality”, because the imposition of the means of communication means the domination of one way of “conceiving the practice and substance of language” over another (Todorov, qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 80). JanMohammed contends that written language obliterates “the immediacy of personal experience” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 80). Further, the introduction of written language entails a completely “different and intrusive ... orientation to knowledge and interpretation (Ashcroft et al. 81), positioning “the human past as an “objective reality available to casual analysis (JanMohammed qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 81). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue that “[t]he corpus of post-colonial literature is replete with examples of the fear that the dominated will gain knowledge and hence, power” (84).

The fear that subjugated people will gain knowledge is paired with the fear that they will retain knowledge they possessed prior to colonization. The valuable knowledge of “indigenous peoples”, such as knowledge of “local environments, cultures, and social systems” was actively discredited and repressed by colonisers (Tesfaye and Makuna), and even outright “eradicated” (“Indigenous People & Settler Colonialism”).

Intriguingly, in *Lilith's Brood*, the shift in the means of communication is transformed from what has occurred in colonization throughout human history. Instead of writing or orality, it is the Oankali's use of extrasensory perception which is privileged. Soon after Lilith meets Nikanj, she asks it for paper and writing utensils; it responds that not only will it not give Lilith such materials, ““none of your people are permitted to see”” the records that survived the war and that the Oankali have determined that human's access to writing materials ““should not be allowed”” (62). Similarly, when Lilith asks Jdahya for writing materials, he refuses (72). Many years later, a human remarks that the only artifacts remaining are those that humans have dug up

from sites “‘smashed and covered by the Oankali [...] They didn’t want us living here and remembering what we used to be’” (384), an assumption at least partially confirmed by Jdahya’s earlier statement that the Oankali had “‘destroyed many’” of the ruins and would place humans “‘in areas that are clean of radioactivity and history. You will become something other than you were’” (34). Though Lilith is initially denied writing materials and books, once Nikanj makes the changes to Lilith’s brain, she is given “a block of tough, thin white paper—more than a ream—and a handful of pens” as well as “a few brittle, yellowed books” (108), suggesting either that Lilith is being rewarded for her docility, that because she has been convinced of her role in their project to breed with the humans it is no longer as much of a threat for her to remember the way life was before the Oankali arrived, or both. Lilith is also permitted to have writing tools to make notes when she is tasked with awakening the humans, which suggests that the Oankali are comfortable with Lilith using writing tools in service of their aims (116).

By denying the humans access to records of their culture prior to the war, the Oankali erase much of human history and force them to change culturally. By denying Lilith information about how Oankali bonds function, the Oankali trick Lilith into accepting Nikanj as her mate. Shortly after being denied access to writing materials and human records, Lilith thinks, “Surely sexless children were not used in breeding experiments” (64). The Oankali rely on Lilith’s perceptions of Nikanj as a child, and her lack of awareness of how Oankali bonding and sexual activity works, by pairing her with Nikanj as her Oankali teacher while it is still a child. Lilith thinks of Nikanj as a child, “no more responsible for the thing that was to happen to the remnants of humanity than she was” (72). Nikanj also tells Lilith that it is not, and cannot be, aroused by her (82). Butler associates the changes Nikanj makes to Lilith’s brain with sexual coercion and

deceit; Lilith learns, for instance, that Nikanj's performance of the brain "surgery" has left her bound to Nikanj:

There was a faint odor to the hand—oddly flowery. Lilith did not like it and drew back from it after a moment of looking. Kahguyaht retracted the hand so quickly that it seemed to vanish. It lowered the sensory arm. "Humans and Oankali tend to bond to one ooloi," it told her. "The bond is chemical and not strong in you now because of Nikanj's immaturity. That's why my scent makes you uncomfortable."

"Nikanj didn't mention anything like that," she said suspiciously.

"It healed your injuries. It improved your memory. It couldn't do those things without leaving its mark. It should have told you." (110)

Soon after, Lilith becomes Nikanj's sexual partner (242). Lilith's ooloi children are even more duplicitous than is Nikanj, for they are able to change their appearance at will to appear more attractive to humans (604, 630). Lilith is eventually complicit in the deceit, deliberately withholding from her ooloi child's potential human mates that if they choose to stay with Jodahs through its metamorphosis, they will never be able to leave (659-660). Oankali subterfuge depends upon limiting the humans' access to the truth and dampening their perceptions. Nikanj admits that its pairing with Lilith was entirely premeditated, saying, "'You were being prepared for me, Lilith. Adults believed you would be best paired with me during my subadult stage. Jdahya believed he could bring you to me without drugs, and he was right'" (186).

Humans who pose too much of a threat are drugged. As Nikanj notes, "'We dull your natural fear of strangers and of difference. We keep you from injuring or killing us or yourselves. We teach you more pleasant things to do'" (191-192). Nikanj also admits that the Oankali

drugged “newly awakened Humans much more than was good for them ... because we saw ... that we were damaging Lilith and the others” who had not been drugged, making them the target of their own people because the other humans perceive undrugged humans as having submitted willingly, even eagerly, to the Oankali (300).

Similarly to the forced shift in the means of communication, the use of drugs to subdue non-compliant humans in *Lilith's Brood* parallels the history of colonization. Colonisers introduced alcohol to both “American Indians” and Native Hawaiians (Greywolf and Lowe 2). Later, colonisers in Hawaii instituted laws prohibiting use of alcohol by Native Hawaiians, which resulted in “maint[enance] [of] political dominance over Native Hawaiians”. That political dominance increased the disintegration of Native Hawaiians’ “culture and power”, and in turn increased coloniser’s ability to encroach further into “Native Hawaiian lands” (Greywolf and Lowe 3). Further, the colonisers referenced Native Hawaiians use of alcohol to justify claims that Native Hawaiians were unable to govern themselves (Greywolf and Lowe 2-3).

In *Fledgling* and *Lilith's Brood*, sex functions as another addiction which maintains aliens’ control of humans. Lilith observes the trap of Oankali seduction: “Nikanj could give her an intimacy with Joseph that was beyond ordinary human experience. And what it gave, it also experienced. This was what had captured Paul Titus ... This, not sorrow over his losses or fear of a primitive Earth” (161). Lilith’s partner, Joseph, says of sex with the Oankali, “If a thing like that could be bottled, it would have outsold any illegal drug on the market” (169). Lilith, too, is addicted, as she more or less admits when Joseph asks why she has allowed the Oankali to have sex with her:

“To have changes made. The strength, the fast healing—“ He stopped in front of her, faced her. “Is that all?” he demanded.

She stared at him, seeing the accusation in his eyes, refusing to defend herself. “I liked it,” she said softly. “Didn’t you?” (169)

Lilith makes similar statements to Tino, her mate after Joseph, in describing to him his conditioning by Nikanj when he was young and the reason he is so drawn to the Oankali:

“‘Nikanj touched you when you were too young to have any defenses. And what it gave you, you won’t ever quite forget—or quite remember, unless you feel it again. You want it again. Don’t you.’ It was not a question” (294). Lilith is convinced of the power of the Oankali drug – the physical sensations that come with stimulation via the ooloi’s sex organ – to win over most anyone who has felt it. This is why Akin, Lilith’s construct son, says to one of the human resisters, “You wanted to [stay with the Oankali] ... You still do” (363).

As Lilith says to another of the human resisters, “‘We’re all a little bit co-opted, at least as far as our ooloi are concerned’” (240). It is not just the ooloi sex, though; it is the way in which the humans first experience ooloi sex. It is the lack of information about what an ooloi’s touch will do to them. It is that, knowing most humans would never agree to sexual contact of their own accord, the first contact is almost always forced or done under the guise of some other action. It is the juncture of desire, force, deceit, limited agency, and sex that has made the humans so malleable and integrated them into the folds of the Oankali.

Ultimately, though, it is as much the Oankali’s fascination with the humans and their desire to study and breed with them as the limitations the Oankali force upon the humans that

makes the text ripe for a postcolonial reading. The Oankali represent their actions toward the humans as a compulsion, stating, “‘We...do need you.’ [...] ‘A partner must be biologically interesting, attractive to us, and you are fascinating. You are horror and beauty in rare combination. In a very real way, you’ve captured us, and we can’t escape. But you’re more than only the composition and the workings of your bodies. You are your personalities, your cultures. We’re interested in those too’” (154). Nikanj’s admission evokes the impression of colonisers towards the people they colonise: that “the colonised” are “domesticated, explicable, knowable; but also *at the same time* wild, mysterious, harmful” (McLeod 64). Here is an example of the Oankali willfully harming humans – because they *could* extract cancer from a clone of Lilith and they *could* breed with copies of the humans who survived the world war – but they choose instead to manipulate human desires to subjugate the humans.

The Oankali’s obsession with humans and drive to mate with them even as they continuously articulate the shortcomings of the humans is relevant to Robert J.C. Young’s position that characterizations of “English experience” are actually not a rigidly defined depiction of what it is to be British at all, but portrayals “of fluidity and a painful sense of, or need for, otherness” and, moreover, that “*the* dominant motif” of British fiction is “incorporating the culture of the other” and that the “attractions and fantasies” of colonial desire “were no doubt complicit with colonialism itself” (2-3). Just as some colonisers “advocate[d] the advantages of racial amalgamation [...] on the grounds that colonization required different attributes of white and black” or that interbreeding between English colonisers and the colonised people of India would lead to progeny “with European brains but local resistance to climate” and would likely reduce or even prevent uprising (Young 142-143), the Oankali assert that integrating Lilith’s and other human’s “‘talent for cancer’” (22) with their own DNA will allow “‘future Oankali [...] [to]

be much less frightening to potential trade partners if they're able to reshape themselves and look more like the partners before the trade'" (41) and that human's "hierarchical tendencies will be modified'" (42).

Indeed, the Oankali's paternalistic attitudes towards humans – from their belief that humans are genetically faulty and will never be able to understand the Oankali, to their tendency to insist that humans are in need of monitoring and guidance from the Oankali, to their assertion that they know what humans desire and thus are entitled to sex with them – closely resemble the paternalistic attitudes, informed by racism, of colonisers. It is the argument that control is "*in the interests of, for the good of, and as promoting the welfare of the colonised*", as Uma Narayan notes of the way that colonial practices were justified by colonisers (133-134), with the colonised people framed as "children" (Narayan 136) who need "saving from themselves" (McLeod 46), which most clearly demonstrates the Oankali's subjugation of humans as a "colonizing project" (Narayan 133). For instance, the Oankali append the Oankali word for "child" to the Oankali kinship name they give to Lilith, limit the information they share with her, and follow her when she goes somewhere they have not authorized her to be. They also contend that the humans will necessarily and inevitably destroy themselves, and thus it is perfectly acceptable – even preferable – for them to intervene by preventing humans from reproducing on their own, rather than reproducing with Oankali genes to mitigate humanity's innate destructive impulses.

That the Oankali can infallibly discern the humans' drive towards destruction is the crux of the moral quandary in *Lilith's Brood*, introducing an element of doubt in the interpretation of the Oankali as colonisers. Early in the narrative, Jdahya gravely informs Lilith that his Oankali relatives were fearful of a human doctor who lived with them not long after they came to Earth, stating "'[t]hey had never before seen so much life and so much death in one being. It hurt some

of them to touch her ... It was her genetic structure that disturbed them” (Butler *Dawn* 27).

Nikanj, too, says of Lilith, “You’re filled with so much life and death and potential for change

... I understand now why some [Oankali] took so long to get over their fear of your kind” (89).

The Oankali assert that human “bodies are fatally flawed” because humans are both

“intelligent” and “hierarchical” (40-41), and that they unequivocally will destroy themselves.

Of course, it can be true that the Oankali are correct in their assessment of the human propensity to enact species-wide destruction *and* that the Oankali use the humans to their own ends. Gerry Canavan asks whether the Oankali are a “deviation from the colonial and imperial history that has made human history such an existential horror, or ... the ultimate perfection of the colonial enterprise” (139). Indeed, the Oankali at first seem to be a counterpoint to humans’ fear of difference, a “xenophilic” (as so named by Butler) species (Canavan 147). Canavan also notes that each human not cooperating with the Oankali (excepting Gabe and Tate, who he does not mention in this section) is portrayed as without redemption; the resisters steal, trade in people, rape, and murder in addition to being virulently racist and homophobic in many cases (147). The implicit is left unstated, which is that the resisters are clearly meant to represent the worst of humanity, and the fact that they are in opposition to the Oankali’s and their human partners’ embrace of inclusivity is initially a convincing argument in favour of the Oankali’s preeminence but upon further consideration its weaknesses are exposed. Canavan proceeds to argue that the Oankali continuously harm the humans, from “psychological manipulation” (148) to the lack of informed consent (149), rape (150), imperialism (150), genocide (151-152), eugenics (151), heteronormativity (152), and ableism (152). Further, the Oankali simultaneously assert that the humans are unable to make decisions for themselves based on “a constitutive flaw in the human genome” (Holden qtd. in Canavan 153) and leverage that claim to take humans’

resources, a “lie familiar to any student of colonial and imperial history” (153). Nevertheless, the texts continuously reassert the veracity of the claim that humans are irrevocably flawed on a genetic level (160-163).

What becomes evident across Butler’s oeuvre is that it is not whether the individual or party with greater power cares for those under their control, to what extent their motivations were rooted in concern for the individual or party with lesser power, or the outcomes of the control, that matters. Instead, Butler exposes – from the way that the T’lic constrain the humans to how Mary adopts Doro’s mechanisms of control to enslave humans without supernatural abilities and to imbue objects with an “official” history (Jones 706-708) – that it is the structural patterns which indicate the problems inherent in unequal power dynamics. The claim I am making here resonates with Canavan’s position that Butler’s texts “are ... in close conversation with one another, and best read in terms of one another” (24), a position that is also relevant to the intersections between survival and the ongoing power dynamics of reproduction, particularly in terms of Lilith’s complicity in the Oankali project as one instance of a recurring theme in Butler’s work.

Butler’s characters are almost unilaterally forced to choose between survival – not just their own survival, but also the survival of their children – and lack of compliance with a more powerful individual or group. Canavan notes that Butler’s “heroes ... seem to cross unthinkable lines of ethics and integrity in the name of survival”, describing compliance as not merely “resist[ing] their invaders ... but ... aid[ing] them, fall[ing] in love with them, or merg[ing] entirely with them”, representing “mutual interdependence” versus “individualistic competition” (19). Alys E. Weinbaum shares a much less charitable assessment of this tendency in the character of Dana, asserting that Dana, unaware of the biopolitical crossover between the

antebellum period she is drawn back to and her own present, “fails to see that the struggle in which she is involved is not only over personal survival but also over sexual and reproductive power – over kinship, genealogy, and ultimately futurity ... that human reproduction, kinship, and genealogy are power’s source and stake” (53-54).

Just as Dana’s decisions illuminate how decisions about “personal survival” are never made in a vacuum and that Lilith’s alliance with the Oankali impacts other humans, the Ina serve as a foil to the Oankali. They are similar to the Oankali in many ways, but it is clear from the outset that their concern for their human symbionts is extremely limited. Some Ina care for “their” humans more than others, but ultimately the Ina – even the faction of Ina who are not racist, murderous schemers who use humans with abandon –demonstrate that concern for humans is very much tangential to the ways in which humans can serve the Ina. In this way, the Ina may be a deliberate revision of the Oankali, eroding the impulse to perceive the Oankali as benevolent and altruistic.

Ina can, and do, dominate humans just as the Oankali do. They also use their extrasensory abilities to choose and to influence their symbionts, resort to physical force when necessary, prevent early symbionts from knowing the Ina’s identity, offer humans limited options so that the Ina can determine the outcome, and utilize drugs. In addition, the Ina’s use of the drugs means that they can compel humans under their influence to answer questions, remember information, and perform tasks. As with the Oankali, there is a strong sexual component to the Ina’s relationship with their symbionts. Indeed, most of the Ina have sexual intercourse of some form or another with most or all of their symbionts. Like the Oankali, the Ina are able to determine whether or not a human is likely to be receptive to their sexual advances prior to initiating sexual advances.

Even without her memory intact, Shori relies on scent to tell her which humans to approach and try to convert to her symbionts. Her first convert, Wright, smells “really interesting” (15). Shori meets Wright by chance and seemingly drinks his blood out of desperation, but she chooses Theodora more carefully; Theodora’s “aloneness was good, somehow ... I got the impression that no one had touched her in a long time” (30). Shori tells Theodora, “[Y]ou smell open, wanting alone.... longing, needing.” Theodora asks, “Do you mean that I smelled lonely? ... I didn’t imagine that loneliness had a scent.... I am lonely” (98). In at least some fashion, Shori’s choice of Theodora is completely calculated. Another Ina discusses the concept of a “good symbiont,” and Shori’s choice of Theodora, with Shori:

“... [S]he loves you absolutely. She’s exactly the kind of person I would expect to be able to resist one of us—older, educated, well-off—but she couldn’t wait to get to you.”

“She was lonely,” I said. (207)

Because Theodora is lonely, Shori knows that Theodora will want to join Shori, Wright, and Shori’s Ina family: “She’ll want to come. She doesn’t have to, but she’ll want to” (93). Further, the Ina’s description of someone who would be able to resist an Ina is telling and suggests a deliberate association by Butler between what the Ina do and sexual grooming. If someone who is “older, educated, [and] well-off” is more likely to be able to resist Ina, then someone who is younger, ignorant, and poor is less likely to be able to resist. A 2000 study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that fifty-four percent of the rape victims surveyed were under 18 at the time of the assault (Thoennes and Tjaden 2000). The humans under Oankali and Ina control in *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling*, like rape victims, are often in vulnerable situations.

In addition to her use of scent to determine whether a human is likely to be a receptive symbiont, Shori assesses voices and other cues to determine whether a human is scared or lying (251-252). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the Ina can influence humans and other Ina through their scent, both unconsciously and deliberately (216, 222).

For some reason, though – perhaps to emphasize lack of consent – Butler never writes a character that is converted or seduced through scent, desire, or their own free will alone. Force is always integral to Oankali and Ina dominance.

Even after Shori bites Wright for the first time, she has to take his hand and forcibly keep it between hers while he tries to shake her off. Wright shakes Shori so vigorously that he lifts her “into the air a little.” He continues to attempt to get away, but Shori is determined: “I didn’t let go.” Eventually Wright stops struggling (17). This pattern follows for all of Shori’s symbionts and other humans that she bites (49, 117). When Shori first bites Theodora, the force Shori uses is intense and extended:

I lay down beside the woman and covered her mouth with my hand as she woke. I held on to her with my other arm and both my legs as she began to struggle. Once I was sure of my hold on her, I bit into her neck. She struggled wildly at first, tried to bite me, tried to scream. But after I had fed for a few seconds, she stopped struggling. I held her a little longer, to be sure she was subdued; then, when she gave no more trouble, I let her go.”
(31)

Shori is stronger than all of her symbionts, including Wright (16). She uses force with abandon in each first bite.

Once a human is exposed to the Ina biochemical, it is difficult for that human to give up the pleasure. Wright tells Shori that it was impossible for him to choose to give her up, particularly given that she offered him the choice in a time of danger: "... [Y]ou think I could have just gone away and not come back? I had to leave you lying on the ground bleeding. You insisted on it. How could I not come back to make sure you were all right?" (89). Wright points out the futility of Shori's offer when she asks him if he wants to leave:

"Why bother to ask me that?" he demanded. "I can't leave you. I don't even want to leave you."

"Then what do you want?"

He sighed and shook his head. "I don't know. I know I wish I had driven past you on the road eleven nights ago and not stopped." (90).

Wright is so certain that he cannot have given consent once being exposed to Shori's drugged saliva that he wishes he had not met her at all. But save for the children of symbionts, who are raised with the knowledge of their parents' bondage, it is very rare that a potential symbiont is offered the choice to be or not be a symbiont before exposure to the drug.

Wright says that humans let the Ina take them over "because we have no choice. By the time we realize what's happened to us, it's too late." Brook, another symbiont, counters Wright: "It's not usually that way ... Iosif told me what would happen if I accepted him, that I would become addicted and need him. That I would have to obey. That if he died, I might die" (167). Martin Harrison, however, disagrees with Brook's more generous assessment:

"It doesn't seem to matter to most humans what our lives were before we met you. You bite us, and that's all it takes.... He bit me, and after that I never really had a chance. I

didn't have any idea what I was getting into.... I wasn't physically addicted. No pain, no sickness. But psychologically ... Well, I couldn't forget it. I wanted it like crazy." (210)

Though Brook suggests Shori's deceit is unintentional and "'probably because of her memory loss,'" and Wright says Shori has "'shown herself to be a weirdly ethical little thing most of the time'" (168), Shori is deceitful in other ways. In converting Theodora, perhaps anticipating Theodora's negative reaction to her skin colour and apparent youth (95), Shori deliberately prevents Theodora from seeing her (34, 94). Shori is deceitful repeatedly and intentionally in order to ascertain her symbionts' addiction and compliance.

Deception is more closely tied to addiction in *Fledgling*. The limitations on human agency, also, are much more inextricably linked to biochemical drug addiction in *Fledgling* than in *Lilith's Brood*. Indeed, in *Fledgling*, the drug is more powerful. The drug's consequences for humans are more powerful as well. Not only can the addiction lead to death for human symbionts that lose their Ina, the biochemical affects any human who is bitten even once. For this reason, an otherwise unaffected human – one who is not bitten successively and does not eventually become a symbiont - can be led to give an Ina money or goods, divulge to an Ina privileged information, and even fight other symbionts in his or her family. Human symbionts must follow all orders given to them by their own Ina, and it is literally impossible for them to forget an order. Shori is aware of the power of her venom: "What I told them to do, they would try to do, once I had taken their blood" (110). The sexual pleasure inherent in the bite is also literally compelling. After first being bitten, Wright says he isn't sure he should allow Shori to do it again. Immediately after, he says, "'Shit, you can do it right now if you want to'" (24). The humans Shori bites ask, even beg, her to do it again (58, 180), equating the experience of

pleasure and addiction to cocaine (187). The humans truly feel that they need continued exposure to Ina venom, and the Ina take advantage.

Advanced sensory awareness, combined with superior strength and addictive venom, means that Shori, and the other Ina, can ostensibly have complete control over humans. Some of the Ina respect humans as autonomous beings, to an extent, as when Shori's father Iosif cautions her to be fair:

“...[T]reat your people well, Shori. Let them see that you trust them and let them solve their own problems, make their own decisions. Do that and they will willingly commit their lives to you. Bully them, control them out of fear or malice or just for your own convenience, and after a while, you'll have to spend all your time thinking for them, controlling them, and stifling their resentment.” (79)

Though he counsels her to be fair, Iosif sees the Ina as humans' “‘more gifted cousin’” (73). Other Ina regard humans as no more than “tools;” weapons for murdering Ina or other symbionts (284-285). Even Shori admits, to one of her symbionts, that she “‘won't always ask’” (289). For the Ina, asking for and receiving consent is an option, not a necessity.

There are startling similarities between the Oankali's and Ina's treatment of the humans and the discourse of rape culture, reproductive rights, and bioethics. Like the humans in *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling*, victims of rape, people seeking abortions, and others in medical care situations, are often subject to reduced agency. They are told that their perceptions are inaccurate and/or that someone in a position of power has greater access to the truth. They are forced into situations to which they do not want to and/or cannot give consent. They are presented with only

a limited range of options, and they are tricked or drugged. What follows is a discussion of how *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling* apply to a discourse of rape and rape culture.

One must differentiate between the way Butler's work eroticizes and even romanticizes lack of consent in sexual intercourse, and actual rape culture. In other ways, however, there are a number of correlates between lack of consent in Butler's work and the ways in which lack of consent is discussed in other venues. Three of the Oankali and Ina strategies bear most closely upon the dynamics of a discussion of rape culture through *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling*: force, coercion, and drugs. The ways in which the Oankali and the Ina take advantage of humans are strikingly like the ways in which rape victims are first raped and then blamed as though they entered into the sexual intercourse willingly. In both *Lilith's Brood* and in *Fledgling*, sexual relationships are initiated through force or through deceit. Joseph, for instance, is laid down on the bed against his will by Nikanj. Lilith's first sexual encounter with Nikanj is under the guise that it is only making changes to her brain⁵. Tino is too young to have defenses against the Oankali's sexual coercion. Shori surprises Wright when she first bites him, and literally has to hold down Theodora.

The humans in *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling* are also drugged, as is often the case with rape victims. The National Institute of Justice Campus Sexual Assault survey (2007) is germane to the inability to consent of the humans in the two novels; it found that though "[m]ore women

⁵ Nikanj notes before this encounter that it is too young to make the experience pleasurable for Lilith. Frances Bonner posits that the omission of the first physically pleasurable, and purely sexual, activity between Lilith and Nikanj is telling: "Butler presents this scene [the sexual encounter between Joseph and Nikanj] with the male rather than the female human and indeed does not show us the scene where Nikanj first rapes/seduces Lilith at all. It occurs between the first and second sections of Dawn and is not even recalled in memory.... With Lilith there to assure the reader that the sexual experience is pleasurable and something she is all too willing to engage in herself, rape more easily masquerades as seduction. Her own first encounter, devoid of any such commentary, would be difficult to present convincingly as a desirable experience."

experienced forced sexual assault before college than during,” it was more common for college students to be sexually assaulted while incapacitated, whether through drugs or alcohol (Krebs et al. 5-1 – 5-3). Men who participated in this study and who had been sexually assaulted reported higher rates of incapacitated sexual assault than forced sexual assault (Krebs et al. 5-5). There is a strong correlation between Butler’s human characters and these victims of sexual assault because, as with human “trade partners” and “symbionts,” the college students reported being “unable to provide consent” (Krebs et al. 5-2).

Another way in which Butler’s human characters are like rape victims is their inability to say “no” and have that statement respected as truth. This inability to effectively dissent is particularly true of the humans in *Lilith’s Brood*. Joseph says he doesn’t want to have sex with the Oankali. He tells Nikanj, “Let go of me.” Nikanj says, “Be grateful, Joe. I’m not going to let go of you.” Nikanj explains, “Your body said one thing. Your words said another” (190).

The disconnect between a rape victim’s words and their other actions is often a feature of the discourse surrounding rape and rape culture. Linda A. Bell notes that “judges and jurors might look at a perpetrator’s intention, worrying about the injustice of punishing one who ... really believed his victim was consenting (176). Posters from Project Unbreakable, in which rape victims write what their rapists said to them just before or after the assault, include these statements: “I know you want it.” “You know you want it.” “We both know you don’t really mean it when you say no.” “You said no, but your body told me yes” (Koehler). A consent infographic circulating in various forms and originally based on a tumblr post discusses consent and the lack thereof in detail:

NO means NO.

STOP means NO.

TURNING AWAY means NO.

PUSHING AWAY means NO.

‘LEAVE ME ALONE’ MEANS NO.

PASSED OUT means NO.

‘I’M NOT READY’ means NO.

‘I DON’T FEEL LIKE IT’ means NO.

INTOXICATED means NO. (“_____ means _____”)

The statements and actions above, and the ones which follow on the original, all represent the statement “no.” However, rape is legally defined in most states as sexual intercourse “when the offender purposely compels the other person to submit by force or threat of force”

(Tuerkheimer). Both Joseph’s and Lilith’s first sexual encounters with the Oankali could be considered as rape by such standards, as could Wright’s and Theodora’s with Shori. All the sexual encounters in Lilith’s *Brood* and *Fledgling* are preceded by force. However, like a rape victim who has been drugged or is otherwise intoxicated beforehand or during, the humans in *Lilith’s Brood* and *Fledgling* would not have the ability to give consent, even if offered the opportunity. Butler’s work lends nuance to portrayals of sexual intercourse that do not truly involve consent.

The Oankali and Ina, like rapists and like colonisers, fail to see their victims as ends in themselves. The Oankali and Ina emphasize the symbiotic nature of the relationship they have with humans, as well as their own needs – for the Oankali, to “trade ... [o]ur genetic material

for yours’” (40) and for the Ina, to “find several people to take blood from” (21). As Lilith says to Joseph, of Nikanj, “‘I doubt whether it really cares what either of us wants’” (170). The Oankali and Ina, as Michele M. Moody-Adams writes of rapists and rape apologists, do not “respect the integrity and separateness of the victim” (203). Similarly, Lilith’s pregnancy occurs because of the lack of respect for Lilith as an end in herself, and the way her pregnancy is made known to her functions as an illumination of reproductive rights. In these works, the novums - including the Oankali’s ability to impregnate humans without the human’s realizing that a reproductive act has even occurred, and the Oankali’s ability to perceive humans’ desires - serve as a chilling, crystallized reminder that violation of one’s bodily autonomy can happen in a variety of ways and that people who become pregnant against their wishes are often convinced to retain the pregnancy through enforced delays in the abortion process.

Lilith’s pregnancy is forced upon her. Years later, Nikanj still insists that the pregnancy is what Lilith wanted:

Tino turned toward Lilith but spoke to Nikanj. “Did you make her pregnant against her will?”

“Against one part of her will, yes,” Nikanj admitted. “She had wanted a child with Joseph, but he was dead.... In the first children, I gave Lilith what she wanted but could not ask for.” (300)

When Lilith thanks Nikanj for making Akin appear to be human, Nikanj says, “‘You have never thanked me before.... And I think you go on loving them even when they change’” (254).

In both instances, Nikanj insinuates that Lilith needed only to get used to the idea of being pregnant (with an alien). Such an insinuation is not so different from the coercive tactics of

those who are against abortion, or pro-lifers. In particular, Nikanj's action resembles the pervasive laws in the United States that require women to receive counseling, wait anywhere from 12-72 hours ("An Overview of Abortion Laws"), and view - or at least be offered the chance to view - an ultrasound before undergoing an abortion procedure ("Requirements for Ultrasound"). In Canada, there are no such laws regarding restrictions on abortion; however, there are approximately 200 (as opposed to 4000 in the United States) Crisis Pregnancy Centres which also aim to prevent abortions through the use of misinformation and coercion (Khandaker). Moreover, two bills introduced in Canada in recent years – Bill C-484 and Bill C-510 – also relied on the premise that women would realize the value of pregnancy and motherhood either during or after the pregnancy, with Bill C-484 suggesting that "women are incapable of understanding the mother-child relationship they are forfeiting until they see their child born" (Davies 13) and Bill C-510 "protecting against coerced abortion but not coerced childbirth" (Davies 1).

Such tactics, like Nikanj's in impregnating Lilith without her knowledge and then using force and coercion in order to gain her cooperation, again do not respect the right of a woman to be an end in herself. Such tactics ignore that, like Lilith, many women who are pregnant have not freely given their consent to participate in a sexual relationship (Bell 21, 23) or had the opportunity to prevent conception (Bell 26) in the first place. They are also indicative of the general tendency for institutions of medicine, whose representatives are largely male, to make decisions for women and to "coerce women into seeing an unwanted pregnancy through" (Sherwin 66-67). The deceitful and coercive tactics and acts used by anti-abortion activists also suggest that, just as the Oankali and Ina believe of humans, people who seek an abortion are incapable of reasoning and acting on their own.

Butler makes the association between medical care, especially neurological changes, and sexual coercion and deceit, when Lilith learns that Nikanj's changes to her brain have also resulted in a sexual connection with and addiction to Nikanj. That association persists more subtly throughout *Lilith's Brood* and also *Fledgling*, and is underscored by the Oankali and Ina assumption that humans must be led. Performing certain examinations without informed consent could be considered "extreme battery" – for instance, in the case of a patient who unwillingly undergoes a testicular cancer exam (Eyal 10).

The link between the overall coercion of humans in *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling* and the rising concern with bioethics, however, is more substantial. Nir Eyal observes that concern for informed consent as a predominant feature of bioethics grew in the twentieth century, especially "in medical research on human subjects ... in reaction to abuses" (1). A patient who has given informed consent must be competent, as well as be aware of and understand the treatment procedures (Eyal 3). Eyal posits that informed consent is important in order to avoid abusive contact (11-12) and domination (15), as well as preserve trust (12-15), self-ownership (14-15), and personal integrity (15-17). For a patient to truly give informed consent, interactions with the physician must be free of "[l]ies about pertinent matters," "non-lying deceit," and "partial disclosure" (Eyal 19-20). Informed consent practices must also be free of "coercion" (Eyal 24-25); "undue inducement," or an offer "that is alluring to the point that it clouds rational judgment" (Eyal 25); and "so-called no choice situations" (Wertheimer qtd. in Eyal 26). Since "medicine is rife with potential to become hierarchical, given the utter dependency of patients and research participants on physicians" (Levine qtd. in Eyal 15), informed consent is necessary.

In *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling*, the Oankali and Ina lie, trick humans through various means, and disclose only partial information or no information at all. Coercion and undue

influence both occur also, though it is mainly inducement via biochemical addiction that spurs the humans to continue to serve the Oankali and the Ina. Lilith's choice between brain alterations made by either Nikanj or Kahguyaht can be seen as a "no choice situation." In all cases, the humans in these novels are in situations where they have very little or no agency.

Lilith's Brood and *Fledgling* do not ever explicitly equate the Oankali and Ina's treatment of humans with rape and rape culture, reproductive rights, and bioethics. Rather, *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling* trace associations between rape, reproductive rights, and bioethics to show the ways in which constraints on agency via lack of access to privileged information, force, deceit, limited choice, and drugs can result in nearly complete control of a subject. Further, they suggest a correlation between the Oankali and Ina's control of humans – particularly the Oankali's claim that the humans are simultaneously inferior and irresistible, their suppression and destruction of human culture, and their insistence on "improving" humans by breeding with them – and the history of colonialism. What is clear is that the humans in the two novels do not have the ability to choose, any more than do colonised people, rape victims, people coerced into initiating or sustaining a pregnancy, and many medical patients. They are not respected as ends in themselves, and as such, cannot give consent. More thorough examinations of Butler's work promise to continue to illuminate the ethics of consent, contribute to a growing body of scholarship on agency in Butler's work, and initiate nuanced but responsible public discourse on rape, reproductive rights, and bioethics.

Chapter 3

“The Birth of Us All”: Essentialism, Gendered Violence, Queer Representation, and Devaluation/Revaluation of Caregiving in *Who Fears Death*, *Salt Fish Girl*, and Octavia E. Butler’s Oeuvre

Judith Butler postulates that “the gendered body is performative [...] it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality” (173) and rather gender is “a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies” (174) and “a sustained social performance” (180). Speculative fiction, and especially speculative fiction about shapeshifters and other characters who can take on other forms, would seem to be a particularly generative genre for considering both race and gender as socially inscribed rather than essential or biological. Moreover, a genre which imagines the world and its people otherwise has great potential to be productive in interrogating dominant social roles such as the assumed role of women as child bearers and care givers - and, indeed, some speculative fiction texts such as Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Left Hand of Darkness* question dominant gendered social roles and provide an alternative model. My interest in this chapter is to consider how and why the Patternist books, *Lilith’s Brood*, *Salt Fish Girl*, and *Who Fears Death* both portray and trouble sex essentialism and dominant gendered social roles, utilizing speculative fiction tropes. Because these works at first seem to be utilizing speculative fiction tropes to productively and fully interrogate sex essentialism and gendered roles that correspond to biological sex and stereotypes about who should do care giving work, perhaps in order to portray essentialist concepts and inequitable division of care labor, I would characterize some portrayals of sex essentialism in these works as being evident of Fredric Jameson’s assertion that the failure to envision a future that truly differs

from the near past and the present is a “necessary failure” (Jameson qtd. in Smith 7) - that in order to imagine change, speculative fiction must first acknowledge and confront entrenched beliefs and practices about and towards people with uteruses, inequitable division of care labor, and gendered violence.

In doing so, these texts engage with – and sometimes complicate – concepts of sex essentialism/innatism (or biological determinism) and the ongoing conflation of sex and gender. Biological determinism, which I refer to as sex essentialism, sex innatism, and positivism throughout the rest of the chapter, is the belief that “stereotypical male and female characteristics”, like sex dimorphism, are the product of biology (Bluhm et al. 15), with both physical and social traits being thought of as “natural” and fixed (Bluhm et al. 17). Drawing on the distinction made between sex and gender by psychologists John Money and Robert Stoller, feminists of the late 1960s to early 1970s began to argue that gender was culturally produced (Bluhm et al. 14-15), and in fact that “social institutions” deliberately manufactured the majority “of the differences between women and men” in service of “gender inequality” (Fausto-Sterling qtd. in Bluhm et al. 15). However, it is still a pervasive belief that behavioural differences between “girls and boys and the women and men they become” are due to “XX versus XY chromosomal makeup” and the resulting in “gonadal differences ... different levels of sex hormones ... [and differential] development of the brain” (Bluhm et al. 17).

Recent scholarship on feminist interventions into the convergence of gender and technology in speculative fiction addresses the significance of “thinking about biological production beyond essentialism”, comprehending and altering “structures of the family, especially motherhood as an often sentimentalized and essentialized identity”, “the undertheorized place of trans, lesbian, and other non-binary gender identities in ... speculative

fiction”, the overlap between “colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy” and in particular the way these contribute to “the design and implementation of technology”, and acknowledging that the crux of feminism must be intersectional (Vint “Introduction: Sociotechnical Design and the Future of Gender” 9).

This chapter focuses primarily on what initially appears to be support for essentialized sex through the inability of shapeshifters to assume a male form alongside speculative fiction tropes reifying and extending notions of essentialized sex, as well as the interspersed ambiguous representations and critiques of these concepts. For instance, some of the texts seem to be equating a cisgender identification and performance unproblematically with biological sex. This chapter also addresses the representation of queer and trans characters in the texts analyzed, and in particular, the limitations on queer representation, especially in terms of queer reproduction, despite the speculative technologies which could ostensibly broaden the options for queer reproduction.

Further, it would be difficult to discuss social experiences of gender without addressing pregnancy, childbearing, and care giving expectations or responsibilities. In the works to be discussed, childbirth and care giving are critical to the plot. These depictions are compelling because, rather than focusing primarily on the disadvantages of pregnancy and care giving, these works - with, perhaps, the exception of *Wild Seed* - instead address the ways in which pregnancy and care giving are devalued, denigrated, and utilized by men and male figures as a tool of control - but then celebrate pregnancy and care giving. In these texts, but especially *Who Fears Death* and *Salt Fish Girl*, it is through giving birth that people who can give birth literally remake the world, defining anew what it is to be human and how women can live and work together in ways that benefit all in the community.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive representation of childbirth and care giving in *Who Fears Death*, *Salt Fish Girl*, the Patternist series and *Lilith's Brood*, there remains an ambivalence regarding parenthood and the regenerative capacity of reproduction - sexual or asexual, heterosexual or queered reproduction - that is not entirely explained by the historical and social factors related to the devaluation of female children, the compulsory nature of some of these procreative activities, or even the inequitable burden of care giving on people who give birth. It is in order to examine ambivalent portrayals of reproductive and care work that I consider *Mind of My Mind*, the second novel in Butler's Patternist series, in this chapter. *Mind of My Mind* is the story of Anyanwu's descendant, Mary, and a host of other characters who are also descendants of either Anyanwu or Doro and who have varying degrees of superhuman ability. In the novel, Mary struggles against Doro's desires to breed her - just as he did her mother and Anyanwu - for his project of creating new people with abilities for his consumption. The novel is germane to this chapter mainly for its portrayal of women as reluctant mothers who give birth to but do not care for their children. Such an ambivalence is most evident in Butler's work. There's Mary's mother, Rina, who knew she never wanted to be a mother and does not act maternally in any way towards Mary. Lilith's disposition towards her children is more complex. She cares fiercely for her children, but regularly seeks time away from her them due to her ambivalence about her relationship with the Oankali and, ostensibly, because she did not initially produce children with the Oankali of her own free will.

In *Salt Fish Girl*, *Who Fears Death*, and *Wild Seed*, the speculative fiction tropes of shapeshifting and bodily knowledge, especially transgenerational memory, play a central role - indeed, the central role - in demonstrating the potential for understanding worldviews removed from one's own lived experience. The instability of Miranda and Onyesonwu's bodies, together

with the shifting consciousness of their bodies, also functions to destabilize and even defeat Western hierarchies of knowledge. Anyanwu's ability to assume a male form and the Oankali human hybrids' ability to shapeshift contribute to an interrogation of unproblematic equations between sex and sexuality. Even as these texts challenge Western claims to rationality and positivist theories of race and sexuality via uncertain bodies, the bodies which are in all other ways uncertain and shifting remain unequivocally female in form and/or chromosomes. The problem is best expressed when, after Mwita tells Onyesonwu that Aro won't teach her because she was "'born in the wrong body'" and "'can't ever change *that*'" (69), Onyesonwu muses, "No matter what I changed into, I could only become the female version."

Onyesonwu, despite her vast shapeshifting abilities, cannot change her sex. She can turn into a sparrow and a vulture, among other animals, at first simply by wishing it. As noted in the first chapter, her ability is accompanied by a change in perspective afforded by the experience of having another form. Onyesonwu describes the experience of assuming the vulture's body as akin to omnipotence: "I could hear everything. I could see... it looked as if the world had opened itself up to me" (54). Onyesonwu's shapeshifting is just one of the benefits of her being an *Eshu*, as she later learns; she can also bring back the dead and enter a spiritual plane which allows her to communicate with the dead, see events great distances away, experience others' memories, and transmit those memories to people near her. Yet, despite her great and unparalleled power, Onyesonwu is unable to change her sex. Everything she experiences as another creature, she experiences with a female form. The lack of opportunity to alter her sex foregrounds the bias and discrimination Onyesonwu faces, such as her reluctant mentor Aro's sanction of Mwita's desire for Onyesonwu because "'You're a man and this woman is yours'" while blaming Onyesonwu for her lack of control (118).

Anyanwu has a similar limitation to Onyesonwu's, and in her case, the way that the limitation and its resulting limitations are depicted effect a less strategic essentialism than in Onyesonwu's case; instead of forcing the protagonist and thus the readers to contend with gender-based discrimination, it unproblematically reifies the association between sex and gender. Though one of the central novums - Anyanwu's ability to shapeshift, altering her species, appearing as a different race, and changing her sex - seems to destabilize positivist theories of race and sexuality, the very same novum reifies the concept of sex as essential and, later, gender as inextricably linked to sex and static. Early in the narrative, Anyanwu believes she is unable to reproduce as a male. Later she learns that while she is able to procreate in a male form, the children she produces as a male are consistently female (17, 198). What such a limitation suggests is that at some level, Anyanwu's core or stable form is that of a biological woman, with XX chromosomes. Anyanwu is only able to father male children if those children are another "man's sons," if she takes the form of a person completely unrelated to her (198). Therefore, so long as her male form is somewhat related to her form at birth, Anyanwu remains a biological woman. As such, even though she can create sperm and impregnate a woman, Anyanwu is only able to contribute X chromosomes to pair with the X chromosomes in her partner's egg - thus the children are female. The statement that Anyanwu would have to become someone unrelated to her to make male children implies that when Anyanwu is biologically male, she is not herself any longer. Anyanwu's limitation in reproduction serves only as a reinforcement for an explicit statement made about her shapeshifting: that her young, Black, female form is the one she always comes back to, the way "I am [...] would always be if I did not age or change myself for others. This shape flows back to me very easily" (16).

Miranda, the central character of *Salt Fish Girl*, does not shapeshift; however, like Onyesonwu, she has access to transgenerational memory. Just as Onyesonwu's access to others' memories seems to be limited to her mother, the transgenerational memory which Miranda is privy to is exclusive to her female ancestors, and particularly the goddess Nu Wa. In addition to memories of a distant past, Nu Wa's legacy to Miranda is that when Miranda gets wet, she develops silvery scales. Moreover, Miranda is said to look very much like her mother. Miranda, like her mother before her, may be a clone of Nu Wa whose existence is at least partially enabled by the durian fruit. When Miranda and her partner have a baby together, that baby is female.

To date, the scholarship regarding sex and gender essentialism in these works tends to either celebrate the depiction of women as integral to the future because of their cooperative behaviour and reproductive and caregiving labour, or to critique that depiction as being primarily a positivist and unproblematic alignment between social roles and an inherent sex, as well as inherent sex with inherent and static sexual orientations. Thelma J. Shinn argues that Butler's female protagonists "lead in the name of helping others," recognizing that their actions have implications for not only themselves and their own children's survival but others' survival as well (81). Sandra Govan also interprets the care giving and protecting roles of women in Butler's novels as largely favorable, arguing that Dana, the protagonist of *Kindred*, "has the same acute sense of social responsibility that her sister heroines exhibit. Caring for family, however extended, is a theme that resonates consistently throughout all the novels" (87).

It is important to distinguish between prosocial caregiving rooted in historical realities and survival as opposed to the unproblematic association between sex assigned at birth and supposedly inherent, static characteristics linked to sex. There is perhaps some correlation between the extended family and even chosen family caregiving that is ubiquitous in Butler's

novels, as well as the fact that it is overwhelmingly performed by birth-giving people, and Patricia Hill Collins's consideration of "othermothering" in Black communities. Hill Collins traces the scholarship on extended care networks among Black women in the United States as being rooted both in "African-derived cultural sensibilities" and in adjustment to "intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and nation" (Tanner et al. qtd. in Hill Collins 217). Reading the texts along these lines, it is notable that some of the caregivers are not acting out of a desire or drive, but because they must. The caregivers across Butler's oeuvre have accepted the task assigned to them (albeit, sometimes reluctantly) for the good of their community.

Ruth Salvaggio reads Anyanwu's orientation and role as a mother and protector simply as a limitation, since Anyanwu is driven to beget and protect children as though it is her single most important purpose (81). That is, Anyanwu's great and unparalleled powers of shapeshifting, healing, and reproductive control are overshadowed by what is apparently her biological imperative and social mission to produce and care for children.

Nancy Jesser argues that though Butler's approach to race in *Dawn*, the first book of *Xenogenesis*, is constructivist - that is, Butler's depiction of characters critiques any correlation between biology and racial characteristics and instead serves as an argument of race as socially constructed - her approach to sex and gender is positivist. Lilith and other ostensibly women characters are "biologically" coded as female, and that biological sex is unproblematically associated with "maternal instincts" and care-giving behaviour (38). Jesser further asserts that Butler "does little to destabilize the scientific reifications of sex/gender and little to dismantle a normative heterosexuality that demands sex/gender positions" (40). Moreover, Jesser claims that in *Dawn*, the first book of *Lilith's Brood*, men are portrayed as both more representative of the Oankali's claim that humans are dangerously hierarchical (42) and as more likely to attempt rape

(44), whereas women are more likely to be group oriented and nurturing (45), never “performing [their] way out of a discursively coded female body” (51).

A counterpoint to that reading lies in acknowledging the history of patriarchal, colonial, racist, and ethnocentrist control over Black women’s reproductive practices and care giving labour alongside recognizing that *Dawn* parallels *Wild Seed* in terms of how each address Black women’s agency – or lack thereof – in navigating reproduction and care giving, as well as in terms of the protagonists’ ability to stay with their children and assure their safety. In *Black Women’s Burden: Commodifying Black Reproduction*, Nicole Rousseau thoroughly accounts for the trajectory of white patriarchal control of Black women’s reproduction, first through enforced and encouraged reproduction as it benefited the profits of slave dealers and owners (and the associated rhetoric of Black women being promiscuous and especially suited to reproductive and domestic labour) and later through eugenics ideologies, forced sterilization, and the “pathologiz[ation] of Black women” post-Civil War, as the economic situation no longer demanded excess Black bodies (8-10). Recognizing that Black women have often lost or been unable to care for their children – through their sale, being left at home while Black women acted as nurses or maids to white children, racist social service practices, and murder – the consideration that Lilith in particular is an example of Black reclamation of motherhood is compelling. Anyanwu is the foil to Lilith and in some ways a historically accurate version of a Black mother under patriarchal, colonialist control. Once promised by Doro that he can give her “‘children [she] will never have to bury’” (Butler *Seed to Harvest* 23), Doro has sex with her children, breeds her children to others, and regularly threatens harm to her children. Later, the progeny of his breeding schemes rape and kill her children. In contrast, Lilith – though her children are also the product of a breeding scheme and she also sometimes fears for her children

– is able to raise her children in a comparatively safe and peaceful situation, maintaining close contact with her children and their children during their extended life spans.

Beyond the interpretation of maternal behaviour in *Dawn* as a reclamation of Black motherhood, the respective limitations of each character's powers and the emphasis on child bearing and care giving at first seem to be a reification of essentialized sex, much as Jesser argues of gender portrayals in *Dawn*, upholding the concept that there are inherent differences based on one's biological sex and equating a cisgender identification and performance unproblematically with biological sex. That is, because these shapeshifting characters cannot change their sex and the ones who have transgenerational memory only have access to female family members' memories, the texts to an extent reinforce cissexism and the idea that men and women are so dissimilar that they could not possibly understand each others' perspectives. Thus, they also reinforce the gender binary, and elide the experiences of people who are transgender or gender fluid.

However, the presentation of core gendered identities which correlate with a sex assigned at birth interacts with other features of the texts to trouble that correlation and to serve two other functions, at least in *Who Fears Death* and *Wild Seed*: a recognition of the challenges people assigned female at birth and who are gendered as women face in escaping sexism and gendered violence, and a robust representation of intersectional experiences of discrimination.

To elaborate on the latter, the speculative fiction narratives considered in this chapter represent sex and gender in ways that are illustrative both of Kimberlé Crenshaw's early articulation of intersectionality, and of Patricia Hill Collin's consideration of the intersectional feminist theories and methodologies that have arisen since Crenshaw first proposed the

framework of intersectional feminism in the late 1980s. In “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Law,” Crenshaw argues that the discrimination Black women encounter in their employment is based on others’ subordination of them as both Black and women, and thus cannot be analyzed through frameworks of discrimination which consider only race or only gender, stating “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (140). That is, Black women have *distinct* experiences of marginalization and discrimination at the intersection of race and gender. Patricia Hill Collins posits that because it “recognize[s] the significance of structural arrangements of power ... [and] how individual and group experiences reflect those structural intersections” (26), the concept of intersectionality has been generative for reconsidering and resisting marginalization and oppression within and across “seemingly separate systems of power” (28). Hill Collins asserts that “intersectionality as a metaphor breaks down mono-categorical analyses to focus on the conceptual correspondences ... among racism or sexism” and that further, “this process need not end with just race and gender” (30).

Of the works discussed in this chapter, *Who Fears Death* is perhaps the most representative of gendered violence, essentialism, and intersectional feminism. According to Aro, the mentor who teaches her magic, Onyesonwu was “‘supposed to be a boy’” (118). Many of the characters in *Who Fears Death*, including Aro, presume that had Onyesonwu been male, she would have fought alongside her father’s cause, which was to destroy the Okeke people. Aro tells Onyesonwu that Onyesonwu is what she is - both female and *Eshu* - because her mother “‘demanded it the day you were conceived [...] If you had been a boy, he’d have had an ally instead of an enemy’” (128). Onyesonwu’s friend Luyu believes the same, stating that Onyesonwu’s mother would have let her die “‘if you’d come out a boy. Your biological father is

evil, and if you were a boy, you would have been, too, I think’” (144). Because Onyesonwu was female, her birth led to her father’s defeat. The correlation suggests that sharing a sex or gender entails inevitable coalition. Particularly given that *Who Fears Death* does not ever explicitly link these claims about coalition and sex at birth to who (would have) raised Onyesonwu and thus to social constructions of gender, these statements suggest sex essentialism. To trouble such interpretations, however, there is Mwita’s character. Onyesonwu’s lover and the father of her child, Mwita was raised by Daib, Onyesonwu’s father, just as Onyesonwu might have been were she male. Mwita, rather than being corrupted by Daib or agreeing with him because he is also male, goes on to advocate for Onyesonwu’s magical training and support her in her journey to find and kill her father before he can kill her.

The text serves to challenge concepts of essentialized gender and gender roles, then, by first forcing readers to engage with concepts such as essentialized sex and then questioning them. It is this aspect of *Who Fears Death* which is most salient to Rey Chow’s contention that it is necessary to attend to “the feminine”, that “the feminine” is the “local”, and “the local [is] a base, a war front, when the cannon shots of patriarchal postmodernism are still heard everywhere” (70). Though the Sudan of *Who Fears Death* is in many ways not the Sudan the world has known in the past or recognizable as Sudan today, and is more representative of postcolonial literature than either *Salt Fish Girl* or *Wild Seed*, it is still a future in which women must contend with sexism and gendered violence. By not making Onyesonwu protected from or immune to that gendered violence and not offering her even brief escapes through her ability to shapeshift, Okorafor issues a statement about the pervasiveness and enduring problem of gendered violence. While Onyesonwu is powerful, and indeed perhaps the most powerful Eshu her world has known, Onyesonwu is still a woman in a world that despises and fears women. She

cannot change her sex, and thus must experience and confront gender-based discrimination and gendered violence. Because Onyesonwu must confront gender-based discrimination and violence, both in her own person and through experiencing her mother's rape, the reader must confront gendered violence.

Onyesonwu's narrative is also a rejection of a necessary or essentialist conflation of sex and gender, and an insistence on intersectional feminist theory. For Onyesonwu, to be female is not essential. That is, Onyesonwu categorically rejects the notion that she is or should be limited due to her sex and gender, or that her sex and gender causes her to be fundamentally different in morality or intelligence (139, 146-147). Onyesonwu is nevertheless constantly navigating the social impacts of not only sexism towards her as a woman, but also racism towards her as an Ewu - and a particular gendered or sexualized discrimination towards her because she is both a woman and Ewu. As she tells Mwita, "It's not bad enough that I'm *Ewu* and that thing wants to get me! I had to be female too! That crazy man you live with loves and hates you but he just hates me" (72). Similarly, Mwita is fetishized at the intersection of race and gender; Onyesonwu's friends perceive Mwita as alluring and attractive (56), but consider Onyesonwu ugly (116, 136, 202). Moreover, Onyesonwu's categorization as an Eshu - someone with magical abilities - interacts with the other forms of discrimination she experiences. As an Eshu, Ewu, and woman, Onyesonwu is subject to a kind of discrimination that neither the other young women in her village nor Mwita - who is also Ewu and Eshu - experience. Though she cannot change her female form, there are no other points at which her account of what it means for her to be a woman is not influenced by her social experiences with being gendered. As she travels, Onyesonwu experiences intersectional discrimination towards Ewu women even more distinctly. Onyesonwu's differing experiences of intersectionality by place are in the vein of Jean-Francois

Staszak's analysis of Josephine Baker and Anna May Wong's intersectional experiences in Europe versus the United States, which delineates the role of geography and its distinct cultural and political atmospheres in the intersection of racialization, gender, and class on fetishization and social agency (629-630). Onyesonwu notes when visiting Banza that both men and women assume she is a prostitute simply because in that town, Ewu women are prostitutes. Onyesonwu is sexualized at the intersection of gender and skin colour, but this intersection depends on her location (204, 207). Onyesonwu is figured as lower class at the intersection of being Ewu and a woman, both by Aro and by the people of Banza; as such, the depiction of Onyesonwu recalls Chow's note that "[g]ender is not only gender but what has been muted in orthodox discussions of class" (171).

Intersectionality also features in *Lilith's Brood*. Lilith's worries about her hybrid son Akin situate Akin's maleness and alienness within male human resisters' potential reactions to Akin: "Will Akin survive the Human males who will hate him? ... Un-Human women are offensive to [resisters], but they don't usually try to hurt them, and they do sleep with them—like a racist sleeping with racially different women. But Akin ... They'll see him as a threat. Hell, he is a threat. He's one of their replacements" (257). Lilith explicitly articulates the experiences that female constructs have as opposed to the experiences that male constructs have, noting that each have a distinct experience at the intersection of gender and species, in a metaphor for intersectionality in colonialism and racism.

Lilith's statement that though "Un-Human women are offensive" to Human men who have not joined the Oankali, those Human men "sleep with them – like a racist sleeping with racially different women" directly alludes to the history of colonisers who perceived racially different women as inferior, but who would nevertheless have sex with them, while viewing their

male counterparts merely as potential threats to be subdued or killed. Young describes the former as a “compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion”, one which is detectable in the theories of anti-miscegenation writers such as Gobineau and Agassiz, as well as late 19th century fiction (108-109). Young extends Gobineau’s claim that the “civilized” Aryan population is driven to provide superior “blood” to “yellow and black races” who have no desire towards white people to its logical conclusion. This drive is the white man’s drive as the purveyor of the “strong, conquering race”; his “instinctive attraction” overrides his “allegedly natural repulsion”, and the woman’s lack of interest contributes to his sense of “mastery and domination” (108). Gobineau’s theory that the drive he proposes ironically leads to the degeneration and downfall of all civilization (Young 100, 107-108) resembles the human resister’s denigration of the Oankali settlements and their nomadic, low-technology customs, as well as their despair that humanity will be lost both culturally and genetically – though, interestingly, the comparison breaks down in that human resisters, despite knowing that they are sterile, have sex with hybrid human-Oankali women. Similarly, just as Gobineau claims that the improvement of colonised peoples cannot be accomplished by missionary work and education alone and requires interbreeding (Young 106), so too the Oankali pursue the tandem strategy of isolating humans from their history and artifacts while breeding their supposed inferiority out of existence.

In *Salt Fish Girl*, Miranda’s experiences of being othered as a woman, Asian, and strange-smelling person fit with the intersectional feminist framework of discrimination. Hee-Jung Serenity Joo argues that “[t]he act of Nu Wa becoming human means that she must be embodied, both racially and in terms of gender” (51). As Paul Lai notes, though, Miranda experiences discrimination because she smells of durian, and so she is “alienat[ed] on multiple

levels—olfactory, species, and gender” (175). Miranda’s mother, Aimee, comments upon Miranda’s potential intersectional experience of discrimination, noting that Miranda’s unusual and, to most, distasteful odor is not the only way she differs from her classmates: ““We agreed that we wouldn’t make her feel self-conscious about the smell, didn’t we? It’s hard enough that she’s the only Asian child in her class, and surely she is aware of that”” (23). Indeed, the denigration and discrimination Miranda encounters at school is at the intersection of her gender, being racially othered, and the scent she emits; a prime example is when her classmates call her “Cat Box,” “Kitty Litter” and “Pissy Pussy” (21).

While Butler’s texts and *Salt Fish Girl* feature characters who must contend with both intersectional discrimination and circumscribed gender roles, it is *Who Fears Death* which most acutely and thoroughly addresses the social construction of gender. Further to its address of gendered violence and representation of intersectional discrimination, *Who Fears Death* asserts the importance of naming and valuing the experiences of women rather than subsuming them under the male default, even as it makes a distinction between recognition of differentiated lived experiences based on gender and ways of being that are not impacted by gender at all.

Onyesonwu’s statements are a testimony to refusing to have one’s othered existence erased or glossed over. When Aro queries of Onyesonwu in response to her objection when he calls his mother a “fisherman”, “Should I call [my mother] a fisherwoman? Would that please you?”, Onyesonwu agrees that it would (149). Yet when Mwitia says, “I have no idea how to guide [...] a lady sorceress in training,” Onyesonwu retorts, “Just call me sorcerer [...] There’s only one kind, man or woman. And we are always training” (176). Rather than interpreting Onyesonwu’s two statements as an inconsistency in the text, Onyesonwu’s statements reflect Onyesonwu’s own understanding of the ways in which women’s roles and contributions are either not

recognized at all due to male centred language or judged differently on the basis of one's sex organs alone. Onyesonwu's statements, and the distinction she makes between her experiences of being gendered and the lack of bearing sex and gender have upon her competence and talent, reflect the text in its commitment to representing the lived experience of woman as other and to ensuring that such an experience is not subsumed under the general "male" while also declaring that some experiences operate irrespective of sex and gender, particularly because they are so removed from traditional society and gender roles, despite others' attempts to apply gender roles to sorcery. Onyesonwu rejects the implication that being a woman makes her different, as a magic wielder, than a man as a magic wielder. In stating "we are always training," Onyesonwu rejects Mwita's implication that Onyesonwu is only a student, an implication that was, given the sentence structure, linked with gendered assumptions and judgments about Onyesonwu's capacity to do magic.

In contrast to sex essentialism in Okorafor and Lai's work, sex essentialism in Butler's work is less directly a critique (and in some cases even an affirmation) and also less of a consideration of socially constructed gendered roles, particularly in terms of the humans. Returning to Jesser's analysis of the way human men are portrayed as violent versus women as nurturing (42-45), in the first book of the trilogy, *Dawn*, it is human men responsible for most of the human-to-human conflict once the Oankali awake humans from stasis. Multiple human men attempt to rape human women. Later, when some of the humans have become resisters to the Oankali and formed separate camps, it is primarily the men who raid other camps, stealing supplies, women, and children in addition to killing. It is not only their behaviour that distinguishes human men from human women. Instead, the Oankali (who can "read" genes) proclaim human men more dangerous in terms of their genetic makeup. For that reason, the

Oankali are initially hesitant to allow the first male Oankali born to a human woman, because Oankali hybrids born to human women “come dangerously close to fully Human males” and “bear more of the Human contradiction [hierarchy and intelligence] than any other people” (442).

The fact that Oankali do not develop a sex until they reach adulthood would seem to suggest that there is no original or essential sex and Jodahs notes that each child’s “own inclinations” determine its sex (550). When Jodahs, a young human-Oankali hybrid who has not yet assumed a sex, says it wants to be ooloi - a third sex which manipulates embryos through organic genetic engineering but contributes none of its own genetic material - its ooloi parent, Nikanj, says, “You want to be what you are” (533). The sense of an essential self with essential sexual desires is reinforced when Nikanj tells Jodahs that though it might experiment with sexual intercourse in a male form, it would not be satisfied with a male sexual role, and could not make a male contribution to reproduction (534). In contrast with Anyanwu’s realization that she is attracted to her wife Denice and Denice is also attracted to her - though Anyanwu, at least, was not attracted to women previously - in *Lilith’s Brood*, the range of sexual options is more limited, especially for humans. The Oankali-human hybrids, however, seem to be afforded the potential for one’s own inclinations and lived experience to influence their sex and sexuality. While each child’s inclinations are initially limited by the fact that in any given set of children, typically one must be male, one female, and one ooloi (550), Jodahs and its ooloi sibling (who were expected to be a male and female, respectively) challenge this pattern. Ooloi mate with both men and women (human and Oankali), and in fact, often mate with four people at a time. Given the potential for queer reproduction among humans, since the Oankali ooloi routinely mix the

genetic code of four partners (two opposite sex humans and two opposite sex Oankali), it is conspicuous that there are no queer human couples reproducing with the Oankali.

One reading is that in *Lilith's Brood*, sex essentialism operates both within and outside of sex and gender paradigms which contemporary readers might recognize, suggesting that sex essentialism itself is an insidious concept. Though the Oankali sexes and sexual desires do not necessarily correspond with human sexes and desires, if one reads the work as an allegory or commentary, *Lilith's Brood* does very little to challenge sex essentialism or even heterosexism, instead reproducing the dominant social model at the time in which it was written when it comes to representations of binary gender and heteronormativity.

Butler's representation of trans and non-binary characters is much more promising. While Butler's men and women do not seem to be able to exceed the roles assigned to them by society and these roles are reified by the Oankali's insistence that these traits are locatable at a genetic level, the ooloi have more range. Dagmar Van Engen challenges the pervasive interpretation of Butler's work by "feminist science scholars" that "biology in literature equals *essentialism*" (738), arguing for an alternate perspective – that Butler "reimagines biology in particularly queer and trans ways" (Van Engen 734). Van Engen contends that the characters in *Lilith's Brood* are continuously guiding "readers to imagine genders that are not masculinities, nor femininities, nor some combination thereof", and that by the end of the trilogy, "nonbinary genders [are] not only objects of science fictional estrangement from a cisgender perspective, but also subjects" (736). Further, the Oankali are based "on the weird, queer biology of tiny animals that do not reproduce in ways involving 'male' or 'female'" (Van Engen 739). Van Engen asserts that "[t]he ... metamorphosis process makes all Oankali trans, since they all undergo gender transition ... but the ooloi deserve attention as nonbinary trans characters within that paradigm" (738) and that the

representation of Oankali as trans by Butler was deliberate, as she drew on research about transgender experiences while writing *Imago* (743-744). Van Engen also argues that the following conversation between Jodahs, the first human-Oankali hybrid ooloi, and its same-sex parent Nikanj, is a coming-out narrative:

“If I can change my shape ...” I focused narrowly on Nikanj. “Could I become male?”

Nikanj hesitated. “Do you still want to be male?”

Had I ever wanted to be male? I had just assumed I *was* male, and would have no choice in the matter. “The people wouldn’t be as hard on you if I were male.”

Later, Jodahs says, “I wouldn’t want to give up on being who I am ... I ... I want to be ooloi. I really want it. And I wish I didn’t. How can I want to cause the family so much trouble?” Nikanj replies simply, “You want to be what you are. That’s healthy and right for you” (547). Van Engen cites the “the child’s fear of disrupting the family, the striking differences between the child’s actual gender versus the gender everyone thought it would be, the child’s guilt-laden efforts to pass as something else for a while, and the supportive parent’s encouragement of the child to become what it is” as “stereotypical coming-out language” (746).

Van Engen further asserts that while the human-hybrid ooloi can, and do, alter their form to appear as though they are male or female while courting human mates – what he decries as a limiting “heterosexual imaginary of the shapeshifting” (747) – it is the ooloi’s “nonbinary appearance” that is valuable, and that “nonbinary sensuality” which maintains the attraction of Jodahs’s human mates rather than “human gender binaries” (748).

Given that Oankali children are literally sexless, their maturation to having a sex post-puberty is more like a fetus’s development of sex organs than a “transition”. While it is not

necessarily accurate to argue that “all Oankali [are] trans” as does Van Engen (738), there is sufficient evidence to argue for recognition of Jodahs as a nonbinary trans character. That noted, further analysis of the ooloi as nonbinary trans characters – beyond their sex appeal *as* nonbinary and elaborating upon the claim that the “ooloi also have rich lives, culture, politics, social worlds, relationships, and biological sensory worlds” (Van Engen 747) – would contribute to a more convincing argument.

In representing parents, Butler returns to subtle essentialism. Though Butler makes clear that gendered experiences involve the unique burdens associated with parenting as a birth giving person, that consideration of socially constructed gendered experiences is accompanied by implicit associations with a conflation of sex and gendered roles, namely the reinforcement of the concept that assigned female at birth people are inherently mothers and caretakers. As alluded to in the first chapter, which details Anyanwu’s loss of agency that occurs once Anyanwu travels from her home to colonial America with Doro, Anyanwu is restricted primarily by her maternal compulsions and feelings. Doro first compels Anyanwu to leave her home and travel with him to North America by threatening her children. Then he plans for Anyanwu to become pregnant so that “[h]er independence would vanish without a struggle. She would do whatever he asked then to keep her child safe. [...] once she was isolated in America with an infant to care for, she would learn submissiveness” (27). Doro relies on Anyanwu’s maternal compulsions and obligations in his plan to control her, knowing that despite her ability to “become an animal or alter herself enough to travel freely among whites or Indians, [...] several children would surely slow her down. And she would not abandon them. She was too much a mother for that” (87). Doro notes that taking a non-human form would likely kill a fetus within Anyanwu, and that while Anyanwu is able to “abort any pregnancy without help or danger to

herself,” she “would not abort” and protects her children as much “before they were born as afterward” (242), much like Onyesonwu’s mother’s aversion to abortion because “an Okeke woman will *never* kill a child kindled inside of her” (*Who Fears Death* 21). Sandra Govan observes that Doro utilizes the “time-encrusted masculine ploy” of getting Anyanwu pregnant, “the most immediate method he can use to control her” (85-86). With more children to raise, Anyanwu is less likely to escape Doro. Indeed, it is only after both Anyanwu’s husband Isaac, and her daughter Nweke have died and her other children are adults that she decides to leave (*Butler Seed to Harvest* 177-180). When Doro locates Anyanwu in Louisiana 150 years later and is again threatening her and her children, her daughter Margaret says, “We’re your weakness, aren’t we? You could outrun him for a hundred more years if not for us.” Anyanwu tries to reassure Margaret, saying, “Why do you think I have all these children? I could have husbands and wives and lovers into the next century and never have a child. Why should I have so many except that I want them and love them?” (219-220). Anyanwu’s response suggests that at least to some extent, Anyanwu is compelled to have children, though she knows that Doro will continue to pursue her and them. As she is in full control of her reproductive functions, and she has not been forced by Doro to produce children for the nearly two centuries since she escaped him, having “so many” children is Anyanwu’s choice. Anyanwu is portrayed as the quintessential mother; she is driven by her nature to reproduce and to care for her children. Lilith is portrayed as similarly dedicated to her children and thus as similarly predisposed to caregiving roles on the basis of sex.

Just as Anyanwu becomes pregnant with her first child for Doro under duress, Lilith is deceived into producing the first Oankali human hybrid. While both men and women are used as breeders for Doro (*Seed to Harvest* 153) and for the Oankali (*Lilith’s Brood* 94-95), both

willingly and unwillingly (*Seed to Harvest* 330) and many of the children bred by Doro are sent to adoptive families due to their biological parents' inability to care for them (*Seed to Harvest* 126-127, 239), it is still birth giving people who disproportionately care for the children produced by Doro and the Oankali's breeding projects. In both the Patternist series and *Lilith's Brood*, it is both women's own statements and statements made by other characters of women that support the concept that women are more interested and invested in care giving roles and that women are inequitably tasked with caring for children even when they are not interested. When Akin is kidnapped so that he can be sold to human resisters, the men of the villages they visit are fascinated by him, but the women fawn over him, "fed him and bathed him as though he could do nothing for himself," and "believed that their breasts could be made to produce milk if they kept Akin" (342). Anyanwu's descendant, Rina, though she "'hates kids, especially babies," bears and raises a daughter for Doro (262). Though Lilith's daughters were concerned that Lilith would "leave and not come back" (269), Ahajas, an Oankali female and one of Lilith's mates, says of Lilith, "I've never seen her reject one of her children" (422). In contrast to female character's care giving labor and generally nurturing attitude towards their children, male characters are presented as providing genetic material for and occasionally visiting their children.

Doro brings men and women together merely for the purpose of breeding (155), a practice that Anyanwu criticizes severely, saying that the practice harms the men: "Haven't you seen the men slaves in this country who are used for breeding? They are never permitted to learn what it means to be a man. They are not permitted to care for their children" (195). In this way, Anyanwu correlates care work as contributing to the formation of an adult male. However, though Anyanwu critiques the practice, it is nevertheless the case that care work - by both biological and adoptive parents - is performed mainly by those who have given birth or who can

give birth. And it is care work that women are praised and recognized for, while men are recognized for stereotypically masculine roles such as diplomacy. Rather than lauding Isaac for his care towards his children, though Isaac is a dedicated father, Doro recognizes Isaac's ability to speak with people and convince them when no one else can (124). In contrast, Doro wishes there were more Anyanwus instead of women like Susan who are good breeding stock because of their abilities but unable to care for their children (230).

In *Lilith's Brood*, Butler's depiction of communal care giving is purportedly sex and gender neutral, and thus ostensibly all parents partake in care giving: when children are born each member of the family is present to reassure mother and child that they are "[a]ll interconnected, all united—a network of family" (324), and during communal events adults feed "their own children and others' children" (271), followed by the young children falling asleep "with their heads on adults' laps" (278). adrienne maree brown discusses Oankali breeding and communal life as "symbiotic sexual experiences and communities", with relationships not being based merely or invariably "on visual attraction but other kinds of longing and need", leading not to "singular ownership" but rather broader "interdependence", "learn[ing] the right ways to enter and" maintain community (23). Similarly, Gerry Canavan describes Oankali reproductive units with the humans as "polyamorous unions" (122). Given that Oankali-human breeding consists of a male and female human, a male and female Oankali, and an ooloi, it seems reasonable to expect that it is simply a group of "adults" caring for children in alignment with the account above. However, the utopian gender neutral parenting presented in these passages does not bear out in the rest of the text.

The depiction of male characters in *Lilith's Brood*, and the lack of orientation towards care giving, is perhaps more pointed and damning than in *Wild Seed* because despite the

constraints placed upon them by the Oankali, most characters in *Lilith's Brood* act according to their own will and inclinations. Neither the humans nor the Oankali prevent male characters from caring for their own children, but for the most part, they do not. Vidor Domonkos, one of Lilith's mates, "move[s] to a village several miles upriver when he and Lilith tired of one another," and only returns two or three times each year to visit his daughter Margit (262). Male characters who stay and raise children are exceptions, notably Wray Ordway who has "chosen not to wander" and "never tired of" his mate Leah (276). Tino is also presented as being unusual, primarily because he remembers and recognizes the Oankali who healed him and made him sterile (282-283), but Tino is also unusual because of the way he cares for his adopted son Akin (293) and stays with Lilith to raise their children (512). The pattern of men being predisposed against care giving carries forward into the future, with even less indication that males will nurture children. Oankali human hybrid males are described as non-monogamous (257) and "not want[ing] to stay in one place and be a father to [...] children" (415), and thus Oankali human hybrid family units will consist of "'a female, an ooloi, and children'" (257).

As with the depiction of individual cisgender men characters, the depiction of individual cisgender women characters betrays the communal indication that care giving is sex and gender neutral. Almost without exception, women character's roles in *Lilith's Brood* consist exclusively or solely of childbearing and care giving. Lilith's secondary role to the Oankali is child bearer, but her primary role is care giver: first to the humans she is charged with awakening from stasis to teach and protect, and then to her children. One of the humans suggests that Lilith was chosen for her experience of giving birth naturally, outside of a hospital and without medication, and that Lilith's experience is rare, stating "'I wonder how many women they had to go through before they came up with you. A lot, I'll bet.'" (91). The ooloi Kahguyaht describes Lilith's role

with the humans coming out of stasis as a “parent,” stating that Lilith will “teach, [...] give comfort, [...] [and] feed and clothe” (111) the first group of humans to awaken and learn that the world as they know it is gone and the Oankali have co-opted what remains. When Lilith becomes aware of the Oankali’s plans for her, she protests, “You’re going to set me up as their *mother*? Then put me back to sleep, damnit!” (111-112). The section in which Lilith awakens humans is titled, “Nursery” (113). One of Lilith’s earliest charges, Tate, wryly characterizes Lilith’s unwelcome mission of awakening humans and helping them to adjust to the Oankali as creating “a family ... with you as Mama” (143). Lilith is even described by her future mate, Tino, as appearing to be “saintly. A mother. Very much a mother” (280). Lilith describes herself as a mother, too, saying that when she leaves, “after a while, I start to miss my children” (293). Lilith is also a protector, in the context of being a parent, telling Tino that she has “other children in that village. You won’t take weapons among them” (266). Furthermore, Lilith’s potential to harm as a human is mediated by her relationship with her children in a gendered way, at least according to her daughter Margit, who tells Akin that her human father is dangerous:

“In some ways, he can be just as dangerous as any other Human.”

“Your father?”

“Akin ... All of them! Haven’t you explored any of them? Can’t you feel it?” She gave him a complex image. He understood it only because he had explored a few Humans himself. Humans were a compelling, seductive deadly contradiction. He felt drawn to them, yet warned against them. To touch a Human deeply—to taste one—was to feel this.

“I know,” he said. “But I don’t understand.”

“Talk to Ooan. It knows and understands. Talk to Mother too. She knows more than she likes to admit.”

“She’s Human. You don’t think she’s dangerous, too, do you?”

“Not to us” (262).

Therefore, not only does Vidor have little interaction with his daughter Margit, his threat as a human male specifically outweighs what care he has for Margit; Lilith’s role as mother to her alien human hybrid children, however, negates her potential harm to them, though she is human, because she is a woman in a care giving role to them.

Moreover, Lilith is posed as being a very deliberate choice based on her gender and the fact that she is reluctant to lead. After learning that the genetic changes necessary to make Lilith stronger would result in psychological changes to a man, Lilith’s human mate, Joseph, asks her “Do you understand why they chose you—someone who desperately doesn’t want the responsibility, who doesn’t want to lead, who is a woman?” (Butler *Dawn* 176). This instance of essentialism reinforces the pattern of essentialism throughout the text. It also is an instance of the pervasive concept that women “are innately more virtuous than men” (Takeshita 181) - an aspect of cultural feminism (Ryan qtd. in Takeshita 176) but a mindset that can also be traced back to the 19th century tenets of the cult of domesticity. Butler’s emphasis on the stark, biological division between men and women shares many qualities with cultural feminism; as Canavan notes, it falls short of a “feminist utopia” though Butler’s notes allude to the development of one, but Butler clearly was both influenced by the feminist utopias of the 1970s and perceived “masculinity, not just on the level of ideology but on the level of biology – as the real problem to be solved” (24-25).

Just as Lilith does not truly have a role beyond reproductive work and care giving, it is only Lilith's male and ooloi children, Akin and Jodahs, who are granted a narrative beyond one of creating and rearing children. Indeed, there is a void in the text between the conclusion of the first book of *Xenogenesis*, in which Lilith has just been told she is pregnant with the first Oankali human hybrid, a daughter (242), and the beginning of the second book, which opens with the birth of Akin, the first male Oankali human hybrid born to a human mother (251-252). Ayre, Lilith's eldest daughter, is not afforded her own narrative, nor is Margit, Lilith's other daughter to be mentioned. Thus their stories - and especially Ayre's, because of the jarring gap between the first book ending just as Lilith finding out she is pregnant with Ayre and the second book beginning with Akin's birth - are abrogated. Akin and Jodahs, both the first to be born of their kind - male Oankali human hybrid and an ooloi Oankali human hybrid - each have a book of their own. Akin's mission is to learn about human resister culture and, once he has, convince the Oankali to allow the human resisters to leave Earth and reproduce without Oankali interference, and convince human resisters with whom he has formed relationships to spread his message to other human resisters (473). Jodahs finds and heals a hidden group of humans who can still reproduce on their own and convinces them to join and have children with the Oankali (377), who are by this point in the narrative having difficulty finding human mates, as many of the humans who survived the third world war are resisters to the Oankali and those who are not already have Oankali mates. Thus, characters who are not women have roles of diplomacy and delegation, which involve characteristics stereotypically associated with men - exploring, reasoning, speaking, and persuasion. The ooloi Kahguyaht notes the primacy of men culturally and the relationship between genetics and culture, stating that it "believed that because of the way human genetics were expressed in culture, a human male should be chosen to parent the first

group’” of humans to be awakened from stasis (111). Early in the narrative, Lilith tells a human character that in terms of sex and gender roles, ““there are no human parallels [...] for the ooloi”” (170), providing an opportunity to suggest alternatives to human structures of care giving labor, but it is one that is not realized. There is a sense that just as in the human history which the survivors of the third world war have supposedly left behind, despite the major changes to human descendants’ biology and ways of life, it is those who are not women who will be politicians and leaders. While Akin’s role as a mediator between humans and Oankali is very similar to the role Lilith held with the initial group of humans held captive by the Oankali, his role is framed very differently.

In stark contrast to Akin’s and Jodah’s stereotypically male social roles as characters who are not women, it is Akin’s older sisters who care for him, both when he is a young child (260-261) and when he is nearly adult. The last mention of Akin’s favorite sister (263) Margit is when she experiences metamorphosis and Akin says that the next time he sees her, she will “be someone else, probably mated and pregnant” (433). Similarly, Ayre, Akin’s oldest sister, is described as having “borne several children” (433) and behaving in a concerned, nurturing way towards Akin (424-425). In fact, Ayre is featured *only* as a newborn and as a mother, suggesting that she has no significance beyond her role as a mother. Outside of these roles in relation to the significant male character, Ayre and Margit are afforded no characterization or exposition of their own. Moreover, despite the differences between humans and the Oankali, Oankali females perform care giving roles very similarly to human women, with Akin often being held by Ahajas, his Oankali mother - a character who has very little role in the text except as mate to the Oankali male Dichaan and to reinforce Lilith’s role as a mother.

Additionally to their contention that childbearing and care giving roles are often associated with clear disadvantages which are primarily related to the ways women can be deceived into bearing children and then feel compelled to care for those children, these texts address how women are devalued or considered lesser due to their childbearing and care giving roles. When Doro asks Anyanwu's son Stephen what one of Anyanwu's daughters can do, Stephen answers "Nothing but have babies." Doro finds value in Anyanwu's daughter merely because her children might have powers, noting that "[s]he should be bred to a near relative" to increase the likelihood that her children will have abilities (188). Anyanwu's descendant Mary, in *Mind of my Mind*, initially cannot imagine any life beyond a childbearing function in Doro's breeding scheme, though she already has some mind reading ability and knows that her powers will increase drastically once she goes through her transition as well as that Doro considers her to be unique among his creations:

"What do I do after my transition?"

"Do?"

"Well, I'll be able to read minds. I'll be able to steal better without getting caught—if I still want to. I'll be able to snoop through other people's secrets, even make robots of people. But ..."

"But?"

"What am I supposed to do—except maybe have babies?" (291).

Even though Mary ultimately has a much, much greater role than merely "hav[ing] babies," her ability to draw in her relatives and siphon their powers still positions her as a caregiver of sorts, much like both Lilith and Onyesonwu are figuratively mothers to the new, hybrid people.

In *Salt Fish Girl*, the sex essentialism - primarily Miranda's likeness to her mother and her ability to recall only the history of Nu Wa's human incarnation rather than male ancestors - is mitigated by Miranda and Evie's queerness and the lack of association of Miranda with caregiving work, despite the conclusion of the novel with the birth of Miranda and Evie's daughter. Paul Lai notes that the durian fruits function as "vectors of non-normative reproduction," and are indicative of "the possibility of a reproductive futurity separate from heterosexual copulation (or even genetic material from men)" (172). Because speculative fiction tropes operate to interrogate rather than reify heteronormativity in *Salt Fish Girl*, it fulfills the requirements Jesser sets out for feminist speculative fiction and which she finds lacking in Butler's work. It is also easier to distinguish that any correlations between sex and gender function strictly as a commentary on social impacts of others' correlations between sex and gender, rather than a reification of sex and gender as being one and the same. That is, when the narrative features the devaluing of women or presents complicated relationships between mothers and daughters, it is clear that these portrayals are situated in a historical and social context. For instance, *Salt Fish Girl* challenges the concept that one cannot rely on female children because they will leave their birth family for their husband's family, with the human incarnation of Nu Wa musing, "[I]n these modern times, you can't rely on boys either. Who knows if or when their overseas uncles will call for them, change their names, call them 'son' ... and leave you in the dirt?" (49). Nu Wa's narrative also questions the supposed inherent caregiving orientation of women, stating, "my mother started me on salt fish congee early. Who could blame her? She was never the type meant for motherhood" (49).

Despite the fact that *Salt Fish Girl* emphasizes the historically and socially situated nature of mothers' ambivalence towards caregiving, it - like the other texts - foregrounds

ambivalent and even antagonist relationships between birth giving parents and their children (especially daughters), mothers' lack of interest in caregiving, and the attribution of valued characteristics such as magical abilities to male parents. Miranda recalls her relationship with her now dead mother, Aimee, as being fraught, even though it was Aimee who argued against a treatment that will entail sending Miranda away for years (80) and her father who attempted to have her "cured" of her differences (68-70). Miranda's feelings about her relationship with her mother are so complex that she wonders if the accident that killed her mother was her fault (86-88). It is one of Lilith's female children who worry that Lilith will leave and never return, rather than her male or ooloi children. Butler portrays motherhood and the problematic aspects of the caregiving responsibilities women disproportionately face even more unfavorably in the Patternist series, and particularly prominently in *Mind of my Mind*. Rina, a descendant of Anyanwu and Doro, unequivocally rejects any interest in motherhood. Unlike Anyanwu, who desired motherhood, Rina did not want to be a mother. Rina's lack of interest is apparent in her actions and lack thereof; though she is not abusive to Mary, Rina does not stop her boyfriends from abusing Mary. The series explains that people with mind reading abilities, like Rina, consistently make for poor parents; because of their sensitivity to others' thoughts and feelings, they often suffer from mental illness and mistreat their children. However, Rina's lack of interest in and difficulty raising Mary could just as easily be interpreted as a response to forced motherhood. Unlike Anyanwu, Rina had no experience with conceiving and raising children of her own accord, or of raising children in a community in which children are valued - as Anyanwu describes her Igbo village in the 1600s. Thus, Rina acts as an individual correlate for Black women raising Black children in a racist society that does not value either them or their children. In this context, Anyanwu's refusal to let Mary live with her - "Absolutely not. I've

raised enough children. More than enough” (266) - can be read as the statement of a tired Black grandmother who no longer wants to be a care giver.

In both *Who Fears Death* and *Trickster Drift* - the latter of which is about Jared, who is the son of a witch and a trickster god and who can see the dead and shapeshift - complex and strained mother and child relationships dominate the text, and the powers both Onyesonwu and Jared possess are attributed to their respective fathers. After the first time Onyesonwu shapeshifts, she asks her mother, “Has anything like [...] [that] ever happened to you?” Onyesonwu’s mother responds, “My dear, you think too hard” (33). Later Onyesonwu learns that her ability to travel to the spirit world is inherited from her mother; Mwita remarks, “It’s why your mother chose to live when she realized she was carrying you. It’s part of why you and your mother are so close. And it’s probably why Daib chose your mother to impregnate” (333-334). Jared’s ability to recognize others’ supernatural forms underneath their human facade, communicate telepathically with his father and father’s supernatural family, and communicate with spirits are attributed to his father; as Jared’s aunt Georgina notes, “‘Humans don’t share dreams like this’” (62). However, when a witch tastes Jared’s blood she can determine from it that he is both witch and Trickster; since Jared’s mother is a witch and can also communicate with spirits, it is reasonable to consider that at least some of his powers derived from her (276).

Although the texts offer varied representations of the ways in which birth giving people are devalued, and the impact of intersectionality on sexism and gendered violence, they converge with respect to how motherhood is, in each of the texts, ultimately exalted as a source of power and integral to new beginnings. It is significant that both *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* end with birth, and in *Wild Seed*, the birth of Anyanwu’s child signals an ambivalent denouement. These births are not like other births. Rather, they emphasize a new creation

narrative, one in which women and mothers are at the centre and the relevance of men, either in production of people or the transmission of knowledge and values, wanes. *Salt Fish Girl*'s protagonist becomes pregnant as a result of the ““fruit of certain trees [that] could make women pregnant without any need for insemination”” (258) and gives birth to “a little baby girl” with Evie at her side (269); similarly, the Sonia clones are able to reproduce in this way resulting in a second generation they call the Doras (250). Thus, as I discussed in another context in the second chapter, the body becomes a space in *Salt Fish Girl* for a new site of production. This site of production, unlike the scientists' clones and durian trees, is not constrained by restrictions or by scientists' plans to control the bodies of future subaltern people for material gain. Nor is it restricted by heteronormative determinations of what reproduction should be.

The body is similarly a new site for production, limiting and altering the control and aims of future science, in Nnedi Okorafor's *Book of Phoenix* and *Who Fears Death*. As the second book of the pair, though it was written first, *Who Fears Death* suggests that scientists' attempts to control the body and powers of Phoenix, Onyesonwu's ancestress, were unsuccessful. In *Who Fears Death*, Onyesonwu makes all the women in the town pregnant (402) and passes on supernatural abilities to them. Though all of the fertile men are dead due to Onyesonwu's powers, a woman of Durfa says, “All the women ... she gave birth to us all” (413). Okorafor, too, writes a new creation narrative, one in which “giving birth” means not just a literal act of conception and childbirth, but a change of identity and a new beginning for all the women. To accomplish this genocide and genesis, however, Onyesonwu must first challenge the concept that her sex organs, emotionality, and ability to nurture life is what weakens her and makes her dangerous, according to both her mentor, Aro, and the people where she lives. Further, Onyesonwu's simultaneous act of destruction and creation can be interpreted as a response to

men's fears of a weakening patriarchy – an interpretation which is foreshadowed by Aro's misogyny and his warning to Onyesonwu that conceiving “while still learning ... could get us all killed” (118). Like *Salt Fish Girl*, the conclusion to *Who Fears Death* offers an alternative to heteronormative reproduction and patriarchal society.

These portrayals of societies devoid of men, aided by technological and supernatural interventions into reproduction, resemble the 1970s and 1980s “lesbian and cultural feminist” preoccupation with reproduction which did not involve men, particularly in terms of the potential for “future society” – again invoking the moral supremacy of women (Rensenbrink qtd. in Takeshita 181).

The speculative fiction texts addressed in this chapter leverage speculative fiction tropes – in particular, shapeshifting – to examine and challenge dominant constructions of gender and gendered roles. Though characters' ability to shift forms initially seems to suggest a destabilization of essentialism, the limitations of their abilities and the gendered constraints placed on them by others often functions as a demonstration of the pervasiveness and persistence of restrictive theories and practices regarding gendered roles. Indeed, in many cases these deliberate limitations operate alongside clear and incisive commentary on gendered roles results not in a reification of the conflation of sex and gender or essentialist concepts, but instead exposes that gender is not innate; rather, it is an incessant inscription upon bodies through societal conventions and systems of control. Moreover, certain tropes such as parthenogenesis enable a potential transformation of society.

The critique is not without gaps. Despite the affordances of speculative fiction tropes to depict situations in which gender binaries are not the norm and to reject essentialism, women are

still often conveyed as being naturally predisposed to caregiving. Beyond that, the potential to escape the conflation between sex and gender, and the resulting essentialism, is rarely offered to men. Even when speculative tropes such as locating traits at the genetic level are not employed to naturalize essentialism, men are portrayed as almost unilaterally isolated, devious, selfish (and in particular, disinterested in care giving), and violent. The options for masculinity are limited to breeding and violence, and the “exceptions” to the “rule”, such as Wray’s faithfulness, Isaac’s kindness, and Tino’s disposition towards care giving. As opposed to women characters, who are frequently able to at least undermine the conflation of sex, gender, and sexuality through speculative fiction tropes, characters who are men do not have this opportunity.

In *Salt Fish Girl*, *Wild Seed*, and *Who Fears Death*, pregnancy, childbirth, and care giving work are portrayed ambivalently, with very few alternatives to historically gendered divisions of care giving. The labour that people who give birth undertake in producing children and in ensuring their children’s survival is portrayed as valuable just as much, if not more, than the work of characters who cannot give birth, in terms of individual and group survival and even in the formation of alternate ways of living. Unfortunately, the valuation of the labour of birth giving people is accompanied by lack of regard for their value outside of that task. Ultimately, the potential that care giving labour will not be compulsory and exclusive to birth giving people, with no or few other avenues for reproductive or other work, remains just that - potential.

The insistence on an unproblematic association between biological sex and gendered division of reproductive and care giving labour limits the speculative potential of these texts. As critical as it is to utilize strategic essentialism and to represent essentialism, intersectional discrimination, and gendered violence so that these historical and contemporary strategies of domination can be exposed, acknowledged, and critiqued, the resolutions in *Who Fears Death*,

Salt Fish Girl, *Lilith's Brood*, and the first two books of the Patternist series extend these issues into the future by failing to critique essentialist ideologies about men's proclivities and behaviour and presenting exclusively or almost exclusively care giving by people who can give birth as the only alternative. The tropes of speculative fiction – including alternate realities, future worlds, different biologies, and aliens' social constructions of gender - offer incredible opportunities to imagine the world differently and to move beyond critique into transcendence, but these opportunities are not realized.

Chapter 4

Representation ≠ Reproduction: “Sterilized” Renderings of Raced and Raced Characters, Cultural Genocide, “Scientific” Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Colonialism in Speculative Fiction Television

In what venues and among what people is scientific racism an acceptable theory to espouse and uphold? In her scathing review of *A Troublesome Inheritance*, Nicholas Wade’s book that argues “human races are a biological reality” and that genetic differences between races are responsible for social and economic differences (Balter), sociologist Ann Morning notes that average “Americans will be- or already are- easily persuaded that different races have different genes that make some more hard-working, innovative, or peace-loving,” citing her 2011 research: “essentialist beliefs about fixed, inherited biological racial differences far outstrip any perception of races as being social constructs” (197). Omi and Winant trace the history of scientific racism, noting that in the late 18th century, “religious justifications for racial difference gradually gave way to scientific ones” (115). As colonial projects expanded alongside claims about “‘the rights of man’”, so too did claims that enslaved people were not fully human: “claims of species distinctiveness among humans justified the inequitable distribution of political and social rights” (Omi and Winant 115-116). By the mid-19th century, scientific racism was being employed to justify “Social Darwinism ... eugenics ... discriminatory policies and practices of immigrant exclusion, naturalization rights, residential segregation, and forced sterilization” (Omi and Winant 116-117). Despite the “1950 UNESCO Statement on Race ... assert[ing] that race was not a biological fact but a social myth” (Omi and Winant, 117) and the Human Genome Project (1990-2003) discrediting the basis for scientific racism (Hood et al. 914), race as biology has

persisted in the health fields, ancestry, criminal investigations, and psychology (Omi and Winant 119). Further, “temperament, sexuality, intelligence, athletic ability, [and] aesthetic preferences are presumed to be fixed and discernable from the palpable mark of race” (Omi and Winant 126). Similarly, modern beliefs by medical professionals that black people feel less pain (Rakatansky 2) and “research that ties racialized disparities in COVID-19 ... to gene expression” (Hood et al. 914) demonstrate that “scientific” racism in the medical treatment and research fields persists. While the concepts of essentialism and “scientific” racism are still prevalent in contemporary society, these concepts are typically not portrayed explicitly in contemporary mass media, instead operating through more subtle stereotypes or through excising people of colour almost completely. An exception is speculative fiction television. Speculative fiction television such as *Star Trek*, *The Flash*, and *Orphan Black* depict worlds in which race is fixed and innate and/or in which white characters are unproblematically reproduced through cloning and other speculative fiction tropes such as reincarnation and time travel, with little regard for the consequences for people of colour either within or outside the world of the story. Moreover, prioritization and privileging of whiteness and the reproduction of whiteness are achieved in ways that would not be possible without relying on an array of speculative fiction tropes. The speculative fiction tropes and metaphors (for instance, aliens representing various racial and ethnic groups) serve to reinforce the notion that people of colour possess inherent, static characterizations related to their race, that white people are deserving of primacy in the future, and that relationships between white (or white coded) characters and their children are healthier and more important.

Octavia E. Butler noted in 1980 that white people are likely to see themselves as mattering more than other people, and that science fiction could be a productive intervention:

I see science fiction as a way of disseminating the fact that we don't have only one kind of people, namely white males, in this world.... It's very easy for ... a white person, to get the idea that they are really the only ones who matter ... that is the impression they internalize because of all that's around them.

In popular cultural production, speculative fiction has often failed to meet its potential, following the pattern of other television and film representation of people of colour. Television and film representation has generally been overwhelmingly white, and that overwhelming whiteness has persisted in the past decade. In a study of the 100 top-grossing films of 2007-2014, Stacy L. Smith et al. found that 73.1 percent of 3,932 speaking characters were white (4-5), over half of the films under indexed Black characters in speaking roles (15-16), and only 4.9 percent and 4.4 percent of the speaking roles were filled by Hispanics and Asians (15). Popular media also tends to represent and in turn reinforce racist attitudes and depictions. Cultural productions “provide ... an indication about how power relations are organized in a society, at certain historical moments (Taylor and Wilson qtd. in Jeyapal 563), but they also often eschew portraying racism overtly, instead relying on narratives that “justify a system in which some groups (such as racial minorities) are subordinate to others” while “deny[ing] the extent and systemic causes of racial inequality” (Larson 2). Similarly, Dana Mastro notes that not only are Latino people, Asian Americans, and Native Americans severely underrepresented in popular media, their representations are often linked to racist stereotypes (3-4).

Further, the tradition in which the television programmes to be discussed emerged from a move towards “prime-time fiction” which was hailed as “quality television”, and which according to Elliott Logan rests on the basis of “particular means to profit under a certain set of market conditions, which have a determining influence upon the form of what are considered the most commercially attractive kinds of prime-time fiction (144-145). The shifts in the industry related to more expansive and controversial content, but also to the tendency for viewers to set

themselves apart through “‘elevated’ cultural pursuits” (149) in which “‘[s]elect groups feel themselves distinctive in culture and thus choose cultural goods ... to affirm their status” (Nelson qtd. in Logan 149), with the “process ... driven by ‘hierarchies of gender, class, and social position” (Newman and Levine qtd. in Logan 149). Beginning in the 1970s popular media which espoused liberal ideas, targeted to viewers who ostensibly supported the rights of African Americans (Newman 75), nevertheless allowed “little room for non-white subjectivity”, instead “relegat[ing] more progressive or radical politics ... beyond the boundaries of mainstream discourse, ... “reaffirm[ing] a politics capable of making peace with middle-class white privilege and hostile to radical social and political change” (Newman 77-78). Logan argues that this continued tradition is very much reliant on market demand, which stratifies viewers “along lines of class, gender, and race” (152) and which results in “fixed ... relationships between particular segments of the audience and certain forms of television fiction”, and in some cases those segments of the audience demand racism (Dasgupta qtd. in Logan 152-153).

Still, speculative fiction has long been hailed as an antidote to the erasure of marginalized people in film and television, as well as a representation of worlds devoid of racism, from the earliest examples of the genre to today. In the 2015 article, “The post-racial revolution will be televised,” John Blake argues that science fiction, fantasy, and horror television shows “feature actors of colour in non-stereotypical roles, and interracial relationships are the norm.” Historically, speculative fiction television was acclaimed for its ostensible diversity. Those who argue that science fiction television is superior to other genres in terms of equal, anti-racist representation often cite the diversity of the cast in *Star Trek: The Original Series* (Kwan 61), as well the kiss between Kirk and Uhura as the first interracial kiss on network television (Winn) –

a claim which, not incidentally, has been disputed. It is the case that science fiction film and television has been groundbreaking for its inclusion of characters who are not white men.

Despite these gains, however, Butler's optimism that science fiction could fundamentally alter the representation of people other than white men has largely not been realized in mainstream television and film. Multiple scholars of speculative fiction have called attention to the erroneous, or at least exaggerated, claim that speculative fiction has acted as a significant intervention to racist depictions and lack of representation of people of colour. Isiah Lavender notes in relation to his examination of racist depictions in *Dollhouse* (2009), "science fiction has an unwarranted reputation for being 'progressive' in matters of race and racism" (4). Other scholars argue that science fiction television reproduces and develops racist depictions (Bernardi 211, Kwan 61-62) and "privileges Whiteness and American culture" (Kwan 62). Ott and Aoki write that imagination as a counterpart to memory can impact public perception of the present but also prime those who engage with imagined futures for future technology and ideologies (393-396). Alternatively, they can restrict the cultural imagination by presenting futures very much like the present in certain ways. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* "appeals to a collective vision of the future that ... reinstantiates the current cultural hegemony with regard to identity politics" (Ott and Aoki 393), representing ubiquitous "contemporary identity politics" (Ott and Aoki 398). The Enterprise crew is almost exclusively human and "coded principally as White", non-white actors playing human characters are subsumed within the White culture (Ott and Aoki 399), and racism has been offloaded onto the alien species (Vande Berg qtd. in Ott and Aoki 399). This displacement of racist stereotypes onto aliens correlates with intersectional discrimination. For instance, Worf is coded as a Black man, with the resulting stereotypes about Black men's sexuality, anger, and aggression (Ott and Aoki 399-400). However, Klingon men

are also typically portrayed as possessing honor and commitment to a cause. The only Klingon woman characters of note are the Duras sisters, who take advantage of their sexuality to lure in potential male coconspirators but who are also portrayed as devious betrayers (Ott and Aoki 402-403), crude, and the laughingstock of all who interact with them. In alignment with the earlier consideration of popular media as denying structural racism and purporting to be progressive while reinforcing racist beliefs and portrayals, there is considerable research on how mainstream science fiction has failed to authentically and critically engage with the history and current status of racism but instead reproduces racist and ethnocentric attitudes uncritically, both in terms of *Star Trek* and also more broadly.

However, few scholars of science fiction television have considered how that marginalization extends to raced and racialized characters as parents and their racialized children, assuming that such children even exist. Recognition and critique of the overwhelming tendency to erase or demean familial bonds between racialized characters and their children is important because just as parenting, family life, and the dual pursuits of tradition and progress have been integral to maintaining colonizing nations (McClintock 92), the denial of these to racialized characters leads to erosion of their solidarity and culture. Nor have many scholars considered how the marginalization of raced and racialized characters' children in science fiction television illuminates the insidiousness of scientific racism, perverting the genre's tendency to alter the representation of - or at least critique - social norms. Conversely, science fiction television functions both as a mimetic reproduction of current racism and sexism and a reversion to unproblematic presentation of the concepts of scientific racism. Mainstream science fiction television and movies have reified racist and sexist concepts in ways that would not be as likely to occur – or even, necessarily, possible – in other genres. In speculative fiction television and

film, the tropes of speculative fiction function to insidiously and repeatedly reinforce scientific racism through the depiction of racialized alien characters as biologically predetermined. Moreover, astute viewers can trace a pattern of privileging white and hybrid children, in some cases to the extent that they figure as extraordinary saviors, as well as the incredible reproduction of white male characters – from the early examples of the genre to today. Furthermore, the portrayal of white motherhood in many of the more recent speculative fiction television shows – including *Fringe*, *Orphan Black*, and *Continuum* – is pertinent to the longstanding association of white women with purity, morality, and motherhood and the pervasive media focus on missing white children while ignoring the plight of mothers of colour whose children are missing or who have lost their children to violence.

Indeed, in its depiction of only racialized children as colonised and conflicted about their heritage versus white children as special and especially valued, speculative fiction television is mundane and realist rather than adhering to Darko Suvin's and Donna Haraway's claims that science fiction "indicates a mapping of possible alternatives" (Suvin 12) and is "concerned with the interpenetration of boundaries between problematic selves and unexpected others and with the exploration of possible worlds" (Haraway 300). Rather, the self in speculative fiction television is almost always white, and the "unexpected others" often cannot "intrude" in any meaningful way on the white self because they are so completely dismissed. Because the settings and characters of science fiction television are supposedly removed from reality, speculative fiction television often upholds scientific racism and concepts of white supremacy in a way that is much more insidious than in other mass media genres.

Speculative fiction television perpetually erases raced and racialized characters via those characters' lack of opportunity or capacity to procreate or, if they have children, to care for those

children. Moreover, raced and racialized children are rarely portrayed as important characters, regardless of their family situation. Raced and racialized children are denied meaningful non-biological family ties, unless those non-biological family ties are informed by and perpetuate ethnocentrism and colonialism. However, white and white coded characters' reproduction serves as a reinforcement of white dominance.

The Star Trek franchise⁶, *Fringe*, *Orphan Black*, *Haven*, *The Flash*, and a range of other speculative fiction television programmes consistently not just represent, but also reproduce, white men – and, in more recent years as white feminism gains traction, white women. As such, these programmes reproduce white supremacy alongside, and sometimes in conjunction with, the reproduction of white bodies. Characters representing other races, from Geordi in *The Next Generation* to Harry Kim in *Voyager* to Sarah and Helena's surrogate mother in *Orphan Black*, are often denied the ability to reproduce in their own right. The ways in which raced and racialized characters are removed from their family, culture, and even their homes, present a clearer picture than ever of the pro-colonial themes running through science fiction television. Representation is not equal to reproduction, and without reproduction, raced and racialized characters are being sterilized in science fiction television. As a result of their lack of reproductive agency and their subsumption into family structures which are coded as white, raced and racialized people are represented as posing no threat to white dominance even in the far future.

⁶ I begin my analysis with the *Star Trek* franchise not only because it aligns with my introduction to speculative fiction media, but also because it has been the most enduring of the earliest programs of the genre, and therefore has (as with my own experience) been responsible for introducing many people to the genre.

This chapter examines the symbolic sterilization of raced, racialized, and sexed science fiction television characters within the larger context of colonial tropes about race and reproduction. First, I will detail situations in which white men are able to reproduce, and analyze the reasons why white men in *Star Trek* and other science fiction television programmes are consistently positioned as virile. Next, I will detail situations in which individual raced, racialized, and sexed characters from these series lack the opportunity or capacity to reproduce. Then, I will consider situations in which individual raced and racialized characters lack the opportunity or ability to act as a caregiver or nurturer for their children, and I will discuss how successful families in *Star Trek* are white and/or colonised. Finally, I will detail a situation in which an entire group of racialized characters, namely the Jem-Hadar, lacked the opportunity or capacity to care for their children. After explicating these ubiquitous and perpetual representations in science fiction television, I will briefly examine how more recent representations of children in science fiction television completely elide the presence and/or experience of raced and racialized children. The conclusion will consider the significance of these representations and what we might do to make science fiction television and film more inclusive.

Since *Star Trek: The Original Series* is excluded from this analysis, the discussion of white male reproduction focuses on Captain Picard, Data, Riker, and Odo in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (which will henceforth be abbreviated as *TNG* and *DS9*). These two programmes overlapped both in terms of the time period during which they were produced, and in terms of narrative time. *TNG* ran from 1987-1994, occurring from 2364 to 2378. *DS9* ran from 1993-1999, and takes place in the 2370s. Data, Picard, Riker, and Odo are representative of the dominance of white male reproduction in *Star Trek*. There are variations

among these depictions of reproduction, but what is common among them is that these white male characters produce, with one exception, exact copies of themselves. Another common element is their ability to reproduce, despite apparent barriers.

Data is not necessarily expected to be a sexual being, but as a white male reproduction, he is “fully functional,” as he assures Tasha Yar (“The Naked Now”). Data’s other romantic and sexual encounters are brief and unsuccessful (“The Ensigns of Command”, “In Theory”, *Star Trek: First Contact*), but Data is able to reproduce himself in the form of “android B-4,” who has all of Data’s memory files and yet, from its behaviour, has a distinct personality. In “Second Chances,” Commander Will Riker meets his duplicate, the result of a transporter disruption. Dr. Crusher confirms that the second Riker is an exact copy. Odo most clearly represents my postulation that these characters, who are all white men or marked as white men, reproduce themselves. Odo cares for a young Changeling. The Changeling dies and merges with Odo, restoring Odo’s ability to shapeshift, which was taken from him by the Founders, a group of shapeshifters who have collaborated to form a ruling class in the Gamma quadrant. Odo becomes himself again (“The Begotten”).

These white male figures are able to either literally or symbolically create a copy of themselves – to create a copy of the white male. None of these reproductions involve sex. The only intentional reproduction is that of Data, who has ensured a copy of himself. Therefore, these white male and white male coded characters find themselves in the unlikely position of having a copy of themselves through no will or intent of their own. I posit that such duplication is a way to dictate the virility of white men, particularly those who are lacking in the features of masculinity as catalogued by Bem’s Masculine Sex Role Inventory– while Picard, Data, and Odo are independent, analytical leaders, they also do not pursue power or violent means of resolving

situations. Picard and Data also demonstrate as many of the behaviours of the Feminine Norms Category as they do of the Masculine; they are “sensitive to needs of others,” “sympathetic,” and “gentle” (Bem qtd. in Schiappa 17). Virility might be expected for characters such as Riker, but for Picard, Data, and Odo, it is a way to bolster their masculinity. Further, the ubiquitous and literal reproduction of these white male and white male-coded characters is indicative of a pathological emphasis on whiteness and masculinity – its dominance and its endurance. For white male viewers especially, these incredible reproductions of the white male figure through white male coded characters– embodied by human, alien, and AI characters and representing multiple personality types – serve as a reassurance (and perhaps even a way to resolve their fears about being replaced, either subconsciously or in the vein of the Great Replacement Theory⁷) that white men remain deserving of and superior in terms of reproduction.

In contrast to the inexplicable sexuality and virility of white male characters and/or characters that are figured as white and male, characters that are raced or racialized are often denied masculinity, virility, and family life. Geordi’s romantic relationships are nearly nonexistent. When he enters into a relationship, it fails. Despite putting Geordi in repeated situations in which he might have a sustained romantic relationship or even a sexual liaison with a woman, none of these situations are successful. Geordi, furthermore, is continuously positioned as having a quiet, subservient demeanor. His lack of success with women is frequently a subject of mirth among his shipmates.

⁷ The Great Replacement Theory, also sometimes referred to as the White Replacement Theory, can be traced back at least to the early twentieth century with the publication of Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race*, but was popularized in 2012 through Renaud Camus’s *Le Grand Remplacement*. The conspiracy theory argues that “Western countries with majority White populations” are being intentionally supplanted by people of colour. The belief is espoused by “White nationalists, alt-right supporters, and hardline conservatives” (Mohn).

Voyager's Harry Kim recalls Geordi's portrayal in his inability to pursue a romantic partnership, but with Harry, the difficulty is more obvious and so is the way in which his failure is emphasized. Tom Paris's incessant mocking of Kim's failed sexual pursuits, though Tom is supposed to be Kim's friend, is indicative of how Harry, who is Korean American, serves as a foil to a virile white male figure. Harry's only relationship of note is with Tal, an alien woman who remarks after their sexual encounter, "So ... you liked what happened? Enough to try it again?" Harry answers, "Absolutely. But [...] I wasn't expecting something so ... different." Tal says, "Neither was I. Our species look so similar [...] on the surface" ("The Disease"). It is clear that were Harry and Tal to continue their relationship, reproduction would be difficult if not impossible.

Another character on *Voyager*, Neelix, is similarly depicted as having troubled, sterile relationships. Neelix's relationship with Kes, who is of a different species but with whom he apparently could produce children ("Elogium"), ends when Kes chooses to leave Neelix ("Darkling"). Neelix's only other sexual liaison is in the episode "The Prophecy." A Klingon woman, Ch'Rega, unsuccessfully propositions Kim before choosing Neelix. As with Geordi and Kim's sexual liaisons, Neelix's affair with Ch'Rega is brief and unlikely to result in a stable relationship or produce children. Indeed, Neelix – whom David Greven describes as a male mother figure (83) and who is constantly seeking new ways to be useful on *Voyager* – is perhaps most representative of the lack of a future for racialized characters in the Federation. Neelix chooses to stay with a group of his people he encounters just before *Voyager* returns to Earth, and seems to have adopted a family of a widowed woman and her young son ("Homestead," "Endgame"). Neelix, therefore, can only have a family life of his own off-screen; the representation of his reproductive and family life is achieved through lack of representation.

It is telling that in two out of three of the cases in which they are successful in attracting a woman, these three characters are performing masculinity. Geordi briefly catches the attention of Christy Henshaw, who notes Geordi's changed behaviour after Worf coaches Geordi in how to act around women. Ch'Rega is first attracted to Kim after he breaks up a fight in the mess hall, and then to Neelix when he pretends to threaten Kim in order to direct Ch'Rega's interest away from Kim. Thus, performative masculinity is, at least in the case of these raced and racialized characters, a mitigating factor in their emasculation and an important factor in potential reproduction.

Raced and racialized characters who do have children do not, like the white male and white male coded characters, reproduce themselves. They produce children who deny their parentage or at the very least profess to find their parentage deeply troubling. Further, in all cases, these children represent Victor Villanueva Jr.'s extension of Bhabha's concept of "colonial mimicry", in that the children speak and act in service of colonial ideologies (187). Worf, a Klingon raised by humans on Earth and thus alienated from his Klingon roots, is one of the few racialized characters to have a child. While Worf is afforded stereotypical masculinity and virility, these traits are framed at the intersection of species and sex; as Ott and Aoki demonstrate, Worf's depiction is based on racist, sexist notions about Black men. Worf is "physically powerful, instinctively violent, and overtly sexual" (400), exposing a pattern of portraying raced and racialized male characters as either confirming racist stereotypes or as unthreatening⁸. Worf's son Alexander is figured as a mixed-race child, as his mother was half

⁸ There are exceptions – for instance, Chakotay from *Voyager* and Sisko from *Deep Space Nine*. While Chakotay is masculine and sexual in less stereotypical ways, his portrayal as an Indian from a fictional tribe, his lack of Indian heritage, and the fact that his character was crafted by a consultant pretending to be Indian (Stowe) are problematic. Sisko, however, is a nuanced Black man who has a healthy relationship with his son and a healthy sex life; as such, he might be perceived as a foil to Worf, further substantiating Ott and Aoki's claim

human. Alexander is deprived of his only parent who is truly familiar with Klingon heritage when his mother is murdered shortly after his birth. Indeed, Anne McClintock's argument that women are often portrayed as the "atavistic and authentic body of national tradition" (92) figures into the death of Alexander's mother, as Alexander's access to Klingon culture dies with his mother. Worf does not transmit Klingon culture to Alexander, because he does not have any involvement with Alexander for many years. Worf sends Alexander to live with his own adoptive parents, a Russian couple living on Earth, perpetuating the colonialism Worf experienced when he was raised by humans, on Earth, following the death of his parents. Indeed, Worf's Klingon friend and leader, Martok, asks why Worf never mentioned Alexander, confirming that Worf ignored Alexander's existence. In "Sons and Daughters," an adult Alexander represents a racialized child who professes to reject his Klingon heritage even as he unsuccessfully tries to enter a culture and customs of which he is entirely ignorant, having been deprived of Klingon role models. It is also clear that Alexander will be unable to fulfill the duties of a Klingon officer. Alexander is unable to compete in battle with a Klingon who mocks him; once Alexander has fallen, the Klingon says, "Your combat training has been sadly neglected, little one." The episode closes with Worf, Alexander, and Martok completing a blood-letting ceremony which ushers Alexander into the House of Martok. Martok says, "Welcome to the House of Martok, son of Worf." Alexander's feeling that he has no father, and Worf's denial of his son, has been symbolically resolved. Yet it is not clear how Alexander will live between two worlds, or choose just one, and it is not clear that Alexander and Worf will have any sort of relationship in the future.

that anti-Black racism is displaced upon Worf.

In the same episode, the relationship between Gul'Dukat and his daughter is similarly fraught, and clearly a product of colonization - both in terms of Tora Ziyal's existence and in terms of Gul'Dukat's uncertain support of Tora Ziyal, despite her desperation for his attention, affection, and respect. When Gul'Dukat first realized that Ziyal was still alive following the end of the Cardassian occupation of Bajor, he intended to kill her, as having a half Bajoran daughter would threaten his political career on Cardassia ("Indiscretion"). In "Sons and Daughters," Gul'Dukat uses Ziyal as a ploy to get Major Kira to have dinner with him, as part of his ongoing - and entirely unsuccessful - attempt to seduce Major Kira, an attempt which demonstrates Gul'Dukat's fetishization of Bajoran women despite perceiving them as inferior. Like Alexander, Ziyal's mother is dead, and like Alexander, Ziyal has a troubled relationship with both sides of her mixed heritage, though in Ziyal's case there are reasons beyond the fact that she is of mixed heritage. Ziyal explains to Major Kira that she has not left Bajor simply because of her desire for her father's approval: "The students at the University ... everybody was ... polite. But then I'd see them whispering in the hallways ... staring at me. I'm the daughter of Gul'Dukat. My father is leading a war against the Emissary of the Prophets. I don't know what made me think I belonged there." Ziyal goes on to explain that building a relationship with her father, despite the fact that he let her down a second time when she was last aboard *Deep Space Nine*, is important to her - that, except for Major Kira, "[h]e's all I have." Further, Ziyal takes it upon herself to act as an ambassador of sorts between Cardassians and Bajorans, stating that showing her art in an exhibition is "a chance to show that both Bajorans and Cardassians look at the universe the same way" ("Sons and Daughters"). Ziyal is portrayed even more tragically than Alexander, and as if her early demise was inevitable, recalling the portrayal of "tragic mulattas" as doomed to a fraught existence and premature death. When she is killed by a Cardassian for

being a traitor by speaking out against her father, Gul'Dukat says, "A short time was all she ever had" ("Waltz"). Beyond these problematic representations of mixed race and colonised children, there are gendered patterns in terms of the absence of racialized and colonised children's parents, as well as problematic gendered representations of children's responses to their parents' neglect.

When racialized, mixed, and colonised children are portrayed in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Star Trek: Voyager*, it is often the case that their mother is entirely absent and their father is neglectful. In both the case of Alexander and Ziyal, their mother is dead and their father has sent them away. What is particularly interesting is the gendered ways in which Alexander and Ziyal respond to the neglect. Ziyal internalizes her father's abandonment, embraces her Cardassian heritage, and repeatedly aims for conciliation with her father. In "Sons and Daughters", she places herself at fault instead of her father, excusing his abandonment of her to Kira by saying, "But family loyalty is important to my father, and he felt I betrayed him". Ziyal also perceives her only possible role as a mediator between cultures, reflecting the stereotypically feminine gender role of smoothing things out and reducing conflict. Finally, she takes responsibility for her father's lecherous and predatory actions towards Kira – "I promise my father will behave."

While Alexander's obsession with becoming a warrior can arguably be said to *not* be gendered – as young Klingon women are also expected to be warriors – his initial resistance to being honest about his motivations for joining the Klingon warriors and his feelings towards Worf are stereotypical masculine behaviours. Rather than demurely attempting to reconcile with Worf and following Worf's orders, Alexander demonstrates considerable resistance in response to Worf's guidance. When he finally admits to Worf how he feels, he clearly blames Worf:

“You haven’t tried to see me or talk to me in five years. I wasn’t the kind of son you wanted, so you pretended you had no son. You never accepted me. You abandoned me.”

Viewers are relatively consistently given the impression that if a raced or racialized character reproduces and has the desire, will, and opportunity to nurture that child or children, the raced or racialized character is an exception. The viewer is also often given the impression that the child has been done a service by not having at least one parent who can pass along to them any other tradition but the Federation’s. That is, the value of their parental culture or cultures is ignored or diminished, and the Federation is placed in the role of a “universal” values system that will unproblematically subsume the young character’s parental culture or cultures. Nog, a young Ferengi on the space station *Deep Space Nine*, is a good representative of the privileging of the Federation as a superior culture in a context that also supersedes parental relationships. Considerable scholarship has addressed the ways in which the representation of Ferengis closely resembles stereotypes about Jewish people. Miriam Eve Mora offers a particularly comprehensive, historically situated account of how the Ferengi were designed and perceived as Jews, beginning with *Star Trek: The Next Generation* coproducer Herb Wright’s admission that, visually, the Ferengis were inspired by Shylock and continuing with how Ferengi appearance and behaviours corresponds with the scientific racism of the late 1800s to the early 1900s:

The superficial similarities to Jewish archetypes cover nearly everything distinctive about their phenotypical traits and are also the elements most closely connected to anti-Semitic depictions of Jews, particularly those propagated in Nazi Germany. These include that the Ferengi are short and have strange, oversized noses; big ears; visibly large brains; distinctive head coverings; dark-circled, beady eyes; dark/orange skin; oversized (and thus eternally clenched) teeth; and blue fingernails. These align closely with the characteristics ascribed to Jews by the so-called “racial science” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was said, for example, that Jews had oversized ears; large, hooked noses; short stature; abnormal intellect and cunning (and therefore

discernible craniometry); square fingernails; dark skin; clenched teeth; and beady or twitchy eyes. (133).

Mora goes on to address the behavioural overlaps between the Ferengi's representation and anti-Semitic accusations, including that the Ferengi were rumoured to be cannibalistic, their preoccupation with wealth, their "distance from humanity", a tendency to be overbearing, poor manners, bigotry towards women, and excessively lecherous (133-134).

It is clear, then, that the Ferengi are racialized, but are they colonised? Sarah Katz positions the Ferengi as being under constant threat of colonization, stating that Bajorans have been colonised whereas the Ferengi have been "begrudgingly assimilated". For instance, Quark is acutely aware of "the precarious position the Ferengi have held in Cardassian as well as Federation spaces; he adheres to Federation policies because if he doesn't, "people like me are rounded up and shot'" (Katz 174). Of the mere three Ferengi characters who are afforded somewhat of a character arc (a lack of representation which has not been rectified since *Deep Space Nine* ended in 1999, and in fact has gotten worse)⁹, Quark toes the line of assimilation, his brother Rom has been denied it, and Rom's son Nog desires it. The threat of colonization is achieved, with some succumbing to it, through fear and indoctrination.

⁹ The lack of Ferengi representation – much less character development – since *Deep Space Nine* is particularly damning. Of the seven series and three movies released in the last 26 years, only four feature Ferengis on screen. *Discovery* has no speaking roles for Ferengis (Donaldson), meaning that less than a third of the programs have speaking roles for Ferengi. The representations which do exist in *Discovery* seem to be tokenization – for instance, referring to a Federation ship as "The USS Nog" ("Die Trying") and showing a Ferengi as a representative for the Federation. *Enterprise* and *Prodigy* feature Ferengi in stereotypical roles, as raiders or charlatans ("Acquisition", Hadyniak). In *Lower Decks* – beyond one episode featuring yet another set of stereotypical devious Ferengis ("Mugato, Gumato") and an appearance by Rom as the Grand Nagus, who arranges to join the Federation ("Parth Ferengi's Heart Place") – there are two episodes with Mariner Beckett's Ferengi friend Quimp. In one, at Mariner's request, he pretends to be a scheming Ferengi to make Bradward Boimler feel better about his lack of facility with "street skills" and engaging with alien cultures ("Envoys"). In another, Quimp counsels Mariner through an identity crisis ("Parth Ferengi's Heart Place").

For Nog, that threat – which is ultimately realized – is through indoctrination. The association of colonization persists in the representation of education - particularly the ways in which it has been used to ensure compliance with colonial control – and Federation ideology more broadly. Sisko only approves of the friendship between Nog and Sisko’s son, Jake, after he learns that Jake is teaching Nog to read because Nog’s father has forbidden Nog from attending school. Sisko accepts Jake’s friendship with Nog because Nog is learning Federation, rather than Ferengi, values. The trend continues when, years later, Nog tells Commander Sisko that, “[a]ccording to Ferengi by-laws, section 105, sub-paragraph 10, upon reaching adulthood, Ferengi males must purchase an apprenticeship from a suitable role model. I choose you.”

Sisko cannot imagine why Nog wants to join Starfleet. Sisko tells Nog, “You’re just not academy material,” and says, “You’re a Ferengi. Why would you want to be in Starfleet?” Nog confesses that he wants to join Starfleet because his father is a failure as a Ferengi and he will be, too:

“I don’t want to end up like my father!”

“Your ... father?”

“That’s right. My father.... He’s been chasing profit his whole life. And what has it gotten him? Nothing. And you know why? Because he doesn’t have the lobes. And neither do I.”

“And a Ferengi without profit...”

“Is no Ferengi at all.”

“The Eighteenth rule of acquisition.”

“My father is a mechanical genius. He could have been chief engineer of a starship if he’d had the opportunity. But he went into business, like a good Ferengi. The only thing is, he’s not a good Ferengi. Not when it comes to acquiring profit. So now, all he has to live for is the slim chance that someday, somehow, he might be able to take over my uncle’s bar. Well, I’m not going to make the same mistake!” (“Heart of Stone”)

Though Nog praises Rom’s mechanical ability and calls him a “genius”, he clearly views his father as lacking. Not only is Rom not successful in either a Ferengi or a Federation context, Rom is also routinely criticized, even emasculated, by his brother Quark, Nog’s uncle. Somewhat like Alexander, Nog dissociates himself from both his father and the Ferengi. What distinguishes the two is that Alexander desires a relationship with his father, whereas Nog seems to see very little tangible value in Rom. Neither Nog nor his father are good Ferengi, but because Nog cannot be a good Ferengi and Rom is a failure, only Sisko is a suitable role model. As J. Emmett Winn notes, Nog “grows from Ferengi boy to a man who adopts the values of a culture that despises his race” (6). Nog is no longer a Ferengi, but a future Federation officer.

Characters like Alexander and Nog, and their troubled relationship with family, reproduce both scientific racism and ethnocentrism in highly subtle ways. The Ferengi are a biological and cultural monolith. Nog is a “good Ferengi” because he rejects his biological and cultural ties to the Ferengi and embraces the Federation. Much like Asian and Black people who are successful in terms of the traditionally Western standards for education and business, Nog has become a “model minority.” Alexander is a “good” Klingon because he is only part Klingon biologically and not Klingon at all, culturally. The threat posed by Alexander’s desire to have a relationship with his father, and thus potentially learn about and adopt Klingon customs and values, is also mitigated because Worf has pledged his life and his loyalty to the Federation.

Many of the *Star Trek* plots, such as Nog's and Worf's, emphasize the cultural superiority of the Federation – which is, primarily, a culture represented by white humans. By making racialized alien characters adhere to the Federation's educational and service values, the series promotes the cultural aspect of imperialism. In contrast, other characters promote the literal whitewashing of racialized people in the future.

Raced, racialized and hybrid child characters in the *Star Trek* franchise are routinely whitewashed - not only culturally as in the case of Alexander, B'Elanna, and Nog, but biologically as well. Daniel Leonard Bernardi argues that *Star Trek* reproduces an anachronistic fear of miscegenation, citing that Geordi, for instance, is only permitted to have a romantic relationship with a Black woman. In the later series, however, fear of miscegenation is abandoned in favor of whitewashed and human-centric hybridity, though it still echoes colonial fears of miscegenation. In "Lineage," Tom, a white human, is surprised by half-Klingon and half-human B'Elanna's pregnancy with him, saying, "The odds against human-Klingon conception are so high." Paris's statement recalls older ideologies of fundamental biological incompatibility based on different phenotypes. His statement is also an elision of the reality in the *Star Trek* narrative that a raced or racialized character never pursues a relationship with and raises children with a person of the same ethnic and cultural background. It is rare for a raced or racialized character to produce and/or raise children with someone who is not a (white) human or, in some cases, a hybrid character. As Denise Allesandria Hurd notes, it is also rare for hybrids who are not part human to be featured on *Star Trek* (Hurd). Here (though it is not entirely indistinguishable from entrenched privileging of the representation of white people more broadly), Gobineau's theory of the white man's (and in this case, woman's) drive to share their supposedly superior genetic material is relevant once again.

“Lineage” is also notable for B’Elanna’s fears that her daughter will appear to be Klingon. B’Elanna struggles with the idea that her daughter will look like her because B’Elanna was ostracized for her Klingon appearance and behaviour as a child. Because she and her mother were the only Klingons on Kessik IV, she was acutely aware of her difference as a child, which led her to hide her forehead ridges. She also believes that her father left because she was Klingon (“Faces”). After learning that her daughter will have “forehead ridges” though “she is only one-quarter Klingon,” B’Elanna asks the computer to delete sequences from her daughter’s “fetus genome,” extrapolating what the child would look like with each deletion: from dark-haired with brow ridges, to blonde-haired with brow ridges, to blonde-haired without brow ridges. Robin Roberts posits that B’Elanna, because of her conflicting identities, her portrayal by a Puerto Rican actress, and the emphasis on her Klingon facial features, is a tragic mulatta figure (Roberts 206-208). Certainly B’Elanna’s fear that her daughter will look Klingon is reminiscent of tragic mulatta narratives, and it is telling that the fewer Klingon gene sequences B’Elanna’s fetus’ genome has, the whiter she appears. However, B’Elanna’s split identity (Harris 123) is representative of all non-white-coded and racially othered hybrids in *Star Trek*; not only does her ambivalence towards and denial of her heritage align with that of other *Star Trek* hybrids, her marriage and reproduction are representative of nearly all unions in *Star Trek* between one racially overrepresented character and one racially othered character. As Hurd notes, the “implication of an inevitable biological essentialism when two races are mixed” persists, as does “personal angst which stems from the difficulty of [...] living with the ‘pull’ of its different blood”, alongside the “threat to society” of the hybrid characters’ reproduction and tendency for either the parent or child to die when reproduction occurs (23-24).

The only difference between B'Elanna and other *Star Trek* hybrids, and one that makes her even more representative of the tragic mulatta trope, is that B'Elanna realizes she has the option to alter her daughter's genetic structure and thus her appearance. Though B'Elanna's heritage is known and she does not pass as non-Klingon (nor could she), her concerns about her daughter's Klingon appearance recall the worry of tragic mulatta characters that their children's appearance will expose their African ancestry. While "The Prophecy" emphasizes the wisdom of B'Elanna's decision not to alter her daughter's genetic structure and implicitly advocates for hybridity, it is specifically the (white) human genes which are desirable in this hybrid child.

The episode "The Prophecy," in which a group of Klingons stuck in the Delta quadrant believe that B'Elanna's baby may be their prophesied leader, begins with allusions to miscegenation but ultimately favors hybridity. The Klingons call B'Elanna's baby "a mongrel" and sneer at the idea that someone not even half Klingon could be their savior. Yet the doctor discovers that the baby's stem cells can cure the Klingons of a terminal disease; it is only because of the baby's "Klingon and human DNA" that the cells can be used for an antiviral. In addition to depicting white, human genes as the cure for a centuries-old Klingon disease, "The Prophecy" depicts B'Elanna as a "safe" Klingon, one who does not practice Klingon customs, a lack which can probably be attributed to the fact that B'Elanna grew up with her mother on Kessik IV, where there were no other Klingons ("B'Elanna Torres"). B'Elanna's hybridity, then, recalls Victor Villanueva, Jr.'s definition of hybridity as a type of voice that is only granted to the other who has first assimilated and speaks for the oppressor rather than for the other: "Hybridity can mean a creative transcendence, but it also tends to include the cultural mimicry that the other is forced to undergo before creative transcendence is allowed expression" (187).

Further, the portrayal of B'Elanna relies heavily on essentialist concepts, particularly in the episode "Faces". While on an away mission, B'Elanna's "genome" is "reconstituted" through extracting the "Klingon genetic material" which then was converted from matter to energy and "rematerialized as [a] purely Klingon specimen". She says, "You've surgically altered my face! I look like a Klingon!", suggesting that she does not perceive herself as Klingon. Later, it is revealed that there is also a purely human version. The very concept of splitting a hybrid person into two people who are "pure" is essentialist. Additionally, the alien who has altered B'Elanna has also infected her with a debilitating disease. He tells her that the disease causes "excruciating joint pain" that has killed others and is astonished by her resistance to pain, recalling pseudoscientific theories that Black people do not experience pain as strongly as others. Further, Klingon B'Elanna's voice is strident and forceful, whereas human B'Elanna's voice is soft and whispery. Human B'Elanna, as opposed to Klingon B'Elanna, "'feel[s] so weak'" and is easily fatigued. She is also fearful, cowering in a corner and whimpering when Tom Paris is threatened. She tells Tom, "I think that when they extracted my Klingon DNA, they turned me into some kind of coward". Meanwhile, Klingon B'Elanna breaks free from metal clasps around her arms and wrists, then lifts the alien off the ground with one hand. Though each are shown to be equally strategic, in every other way, the two are completely opposite. While the experience enables B'Elanna to reconcile the aspects of her traits that she perceived as conflicting or as problematic, that Klingon B'Elanna and human B'Elanna are polar opposites with traits that are associated with their genetic code as opposed to their shared lived experience reifies essentialism.

Ironically, the speculative fiction tropes in speculative fiction television – in *Star Trek*, the trope of alien characters – contribute to a mimetic scientific racism, colonialism, and

imperialism, depicting the majority of alien characters as virtually indistinguishable beyond minor surface differences, despite the supposed diversity of race and species. When differences are noted, they are often exclusively negative differences. Isiah Lavender argues that in speculative fiction, aliens serve to obscure actual depictions of race: “Science fiction talks about race by not talking about race [...] from a generic white place [...] Alien ‘others’ stand in for racial ‘others’” (7-8). Applying Lavender’s observation to *Star Trek*, it is evident that much of the series is just as “mundane” as non-speculative fiction series, displaying a stunning lack of imagination and lack of representation. Because *Star Trek* so often fails to portray the histories or family life of alien characters, it often completely elides representing anyone who isn’t white or coded as white, especially in terms of culture. For instance, the Voyager’s Naomi Wildman, whose mother is a white human, has pale skin and light hair; the only visible distinction that she is not a white human is the small horns on her forehead. Because the Voyager is lost in the Delta quadrant, Naomi has never met her Ktarian father. She therefore has no relationship with her father and no knowledge of Ktarian customs or history. Naomi’s relationship with her white mother is depicted as tranquil and largely positive. Naomi recalls Wesley Crusher from *The Next Generation*, who has lost his (white) father but is raised by his white mother, Dr. Beverley Crusher, and who is portrayed as exceptionally gifted, “‘like Mozart’,” and “‘destined for something quite different than the rest’” of the Federation crew (“Journey’s End”).

Even when they do not figure as extraordinary children, white (or white coded) human children rarely have conflicts about their parentage. They are not concerned about their race, ethnicity, or conforming to the dominant culture; these children are the dominant culture. Even when white characters have conflicts with their parents, such as Picard and Paris, these conflicts are portrayed as limited to those individual relationships rather than being representative of

failing to fit within a culture. In contrast, what Alexander and Nog have in common with B'Elanna's unborn daughter, is that they represent Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial mimicry, or "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (114). These hybrid children are almost, but not quite, white, human Federation members. They appear to be different, but their speech patterns, desires, values, and goals are closer to those of white, human Federation members, than to their parents. As such, both these children and the *Star Trek* franchise reproduce old, racist, and harmful, notions of what it means to be a person.

The *Star Trek* franchise engages in a fantasy which reproduces the cathartic story of white colonialist oppression and "model minorities" even in the 24th century: Not only will white people be dominant in the future; any threat to their dominance by those who do not look and act as they do will be mitigated by transmitting their values both to their own children and to the children of the others who threaten their way of life. Subordinate groups will be subsumed by the dominant group, both in terms of culture and physiology.

The depiction of racialized hybrid, colonised children and alien races whose behaviour and destiny is entirely controlled by biology evokes the scientific racism of the late 19th to early 20th century, which wavered between total opposition to miscegenation and the concept that hybridity could improve races which were considered inferior or achieve equality for Black people: Charles Chesnutt, in his 1900 essay "The Future American," argued that if black and white people were to fully integrate and produce only mixed race children, that, "[t]here would be no inferior race to domineer over; there would be no superior race to oppress those who differed from them in racial externals" (Chesnutt 168). In contrast, the racist physician J.C. Nott held the position that when "mulattoes intermarry, they are less prolific than when crossed on the

parent stock” and that “when a [Black] man married a white woman, the offspring partook more largely of the [Black] type” (Nott 156). Most relevant to the *Star Trek* saga is the way in which scientific racism insisted that “dark races are [intellectually] ... greatly inferior to the others of fairer complexion” (Nott 155), that Asians and Black people had no concept of honour (Gobineau 153-154), and that Black men in particular are brutish and violent killers (Gobineau 153). Those racist beliefs, neutralized in characters such as Geordi and mitigated in characters such as Worf, are covertly realized in the Jem’Hadar, a reptilian-like alien species who are portrayed by Black actors and appear to be Black before they reach maturity and gain their scales.

The portrayal of raced and racialized characters as being unwilling or unable to care for their families becomes even more damaging and insidious in the case of entire groups of racialized characters, and is most clearly evidenced in the Jem’Hadar. The Jem’Hadar, aliens genetically modified to serve the Founders, a group of shapeshifting aliens called changelings, literally cannot care for their children because, in effect, they have no children. The Jem’Hadar grow at a rate so accelerated that an infant becomes an adult in one day. “The Abandoned,” episode six of the third season of *Deep Space Nine*, both marks the Jem’Hadar as Black and suggests that, due to their biology, the Jem’Hadar are unable to do anything other than violently serve the Founders. In this episode, an abandoned Jem’Hadar infant has light brown skin. The “Jem’Hadar as a teenager” is played by Bumper Robinson, who is African American (“Bumper Robinson”). Furthermore, the Jem’Hadar youth is impulsive and violent even as a young child. Both the other characters’ assumptions about the Jem’Hadar people and the young Jem’Hadar’s actions serve to reinforce the perception that every single Jem’Hadar is inferior and violent, controlled by his genetic code. Dr. Bashir remarks that an organism “as complex as a humanoid”

would, in his experience, not be able to grow as quickly as does the Jem'Hadar child. Odo asks the Jem'Hadar if he is capable of thinking of anything besides killing, and the Jem'Hadar responds in the negative. The implication is that not only are the Jem'Hadar not human, they are not even "humanoid." They, a Black coded group of people, are denied control over their reproduction, unable to have families, and portrayed as inevitably violent.

Adding nuance to a discussion of the Jem'Hadar are the writer's and director's comments. Avery Brooks, who plays Commander Benjamin Sisko and also directed "The Abandoned," says in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Companion* that for him, the episode "was a story about young brown men, and to some extent, a story about a society that is responsible for the creation of a generation of young men who are feared, who are addicted, who are potential killers" (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Companion* qtd. in "The Abandoned (episode)").

The potential for such critical examination is lost, however, in the arc of the authorial choices made in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. It is an arc of authorial choices which portrays entire species of racialized aliens as violent, greedy, and emotional and which privileges hybridity, particularly hybridity in which white humanity is dominant and superior. A raced or racialized character only has a part in the story in terms of the ways in which that character can contribute to the priorities of the largely white, human Federation – and only reproduces and raises a family when the reproduction and family is consonant with Federation goals and values.

An emphasis on whiteness as dominant and virile and a lack of focus on the reproductive and family life of raced and racialized characters persists in more recent science fiction television, with a critical new element: the privileging of white motherhood, and in particular plots which focus on a white mother reuniting with her child.

The plot of *Continuum*, a Canadian television show that aired on Showcase from 2012 to 2015, revolves around Kiera Cameron returning to her young son after she unintentionally travels through time from 2077 to 2012. There is no such emphasis on Black time traveler Travis Verta's return to his daughter. Moreover, in the only scene with his daughter, Travis appears just as diabolical and representative of racist stereotypes as he does in the majority of the series, pretending to hold his daughter's mother hostage at gunpoint and scaring the woman and his young daughter in the process. Travis is reformed and gains redemption through his eventual identification with Kiera's cause, and dies in an attempt to save Kiera. Kiera, however, achieves catharsis and resolution when she returns to 2077 to find her son reunited with an alternate timeline version of herself. Kiera's replication in the future suggests the same pathological preoccupation with the proliferation of whiteness that is indicated by Picard, Riker, Data, and Odo. Kiera is so important that there are two of her in the future, whereas Travis did not survive the events leading up to Kiera's return to 2077; not only may Travis not have a relationship with his daughter in the alternate timeline, he may not even be alive, and he is not considered a significant enough character to address his existence or lack thereof.

Fringe's plot similarly focuses on the sex appeal and motherly quest of a white woman. On *Fringe*, various characters are attracted to Olivia, the white protagonist. Junior FBI agent Astrid, a Black woman, is never portrayed as having a romantic relationship, and is shown with her father only once. Phillip Broyles, Special-Agent-in-Charge and Olivia's boss, has minor screen time with his family. The entire last season of *Fringe* is about Peter and Olivia's loss and recovery of their daughter; the family lives of everyone else fade into obscurity. Peter and Olivia are able to save their daughter because they assist September/Donald, one of many white men who come from the future and have incredible powers, in saving his son – a son that September

has only because he was obsessed by the concept of biological reproduction and families, despite his people's rejection of familial relationships ("An Enemy of Fate"). *Fringe* positions white and white-coded familial relationships as exceptional relationships and the only ones deserving of attention.

Similarly to *Fringe*, *Orphan Black* uses speculative fiction tropes to centre the reproductive capacities and activity as well as the care giving proclivities of white characters, while relegating the sexual and family lives of Black characters to quickly abandoned lesser plot arcs. Early in *Orphan Black*, Sarah witnesses a woman who looks exactly like her die by suicide, and soon learns that both she and the woman who died, Rachel, are one of many clones. In the penultimate episode of the third season of *Orphan Black*, Sarah discovers that both her clone sisters and their male counterpart clones have all stemmed from one white woman, who absorbed her male twin and thus carries two sets of DNA ("Insolvent Phantom of Tomorrow"). Sarah is one of numerous clones but is revered for her ability to conceive children because she is the only one of the clones to be, as the Proletheans, a cult that aims to use the clones for breeding purposes, say, "fertile." None of the other clones can conceive children. Sarah's daughter is not only also fertile but also heals quickly and seems to be able to feel the emotions of all the clones, functioning as an exceptional white child. Despite the rhetoric of the episode "Community of Dreadful Fear and Hate," which purports to value non-biological family relationships, the emphasis of *Orphan Black* is on biology – particularly the biology of the white protagonists. Alison's biracial adopted children are rarely mentioned or featured in an episode. Sarah and Helena's surrogate mother, a Black woman, is killed before anything more is revealed about her besides her desire to protect Sarah and Helena. Sarah exhibits very little extended concern or grief for her surrogate mother's death, but displays considerable and ongoing grief for Rachel's

demise. Like both Olivia and Kiera, Sarah's desire to return to her daughter – whom she abandoned early due to her penchant for partying and drug use – is portrayed as almost saintly. Juxtaposed with action scenes and Sarah's attempt to unravel the mystery of the clones, she is depicted telling her daughter how much she wants to be her mum again.

Perhaps the most egregious representation of doubling accompanied by white motherhood and biology, though, features in *Haven*. In *Haven*, FBI agent Audrey Parker arrives in the small town of Haven, Maine, ostensibly to apprehend a fugitive. Audrey's quest, at first, is to find a woman whom she thinks is her mother - a woman in a photo from an article published 27 years before and who looks exactly like Audrey. Soon Audrey learns that the woman in the photo is not her mother at all, but a mysterious and ageless woman who comes to Haven every 27 years to help people afflicted with supernatural powers. Once Audrey realizes that *she* is the woman in the newspaper photo, she begins searching for her missing son, who was born during a visit to Haven approximately 50 years prior. Audrey learns that she is responsible for the town's supernatural affliction, and that her visits to Haven are at once a punishment and a potential redemption, but she must fight for primacy against her original self, Mara. Mara, who is trapped within Audrey's mind, wants to be free to wreak more havoc on Haven. Ultimately *Haven's* representation of doubling, white motherhood, and white biology combines the tropes apparent in *Orphan Black*, *Fringe*, and *Continuum* to suggest that one white woman is so important that she deserves several lifetimes to redeem herself and a third chance at happiness with the man she loves.

Beyond the ways in which the speculative fiction trope of doubling - in all its forms, from cloning to accidental replication - serves the function of privileging white characters and denying characters of colour, and thus the actors who might have portrayed them, screen time, and the

way discounted pseudo scientific theories of race are insidiously reinforced through alien characters and other speculative fiction novums such as genetic engineering, there are multiple other novums at play which reflect the present world and historical injustices toward people of colour rather than challenge them. More than reflect, the use of the novum even allows the plot to reinforce and justify injustices toward people of colour, making them seem natural and encouraging casual viewers to accept the plot as part of a natural order in which people of colour are secondary to white people. Besides the cavalier attitude towards the Jem'Hadar's lack of humanity, the most evident example, perhaps, is *The Flash's* Barry Allen's use of time travel to prevent his mother's murder, resulting in an alternate timeline in which his friend Cisco's brother has died. When Barry gains consciousness in the new timeline, it has been months since Cisco's brother's death, but Cisco is still grieving. Barry ultimately admits to Cisco what he has done and that he is therefore responsible for the new timeline in which Cisco's brother is not alive. Another consequence of Barry's time travel is that John Diggle and Lyla Michael's daughter ceases to exist in the new timeline. Cisco briefly confronts Barry over Barry's refusal to travel in time and prevent Cisco's brother's death, exposing the magnitude of Barry's lack of concern for his friends: "I've been trying this whole time to get you to do this one thing for me. But you kept saying, 'No, Cisco. I *can't*, Cisco. I would never *do* that, Cisco. And now you're telling me you went and did it for yourself.'" Barry tells Cisco, "I can't change it. All I can do is move forward," even though he has made multiple changes to the timeline in an attempt to save his mother ("Paradox"). Barry's use of time travel is capricious and selfish, and rarely is Barry forced to confront the inequities caused by his use of time travel.

Fringe, *Continuum*, and *Orphan Black* recall and extend the *Star Trek* franchise legacy of demeaning raced and racialized characters - especially children - while prioritizing reproductions

of whiteness in ways that would not be possible without the use of a variety of speculative fiction tropes. These programmes depict diverse races and ethnicities, but characters who are not white serve only as foils to those who are white. Moreover, often raced and racialized characters are not depicted as having children, an omission which may be a simple implicitly racist oversight, but one that harkens back to nineteenth century fears of “Northern European intellectuals” that their stock would be weakened or even superseded by “miscegenation with non-European populations”, or by the higher fertility rates of southern and eastern Europeans (McDaniel 135). When raced and racialized characters do have children, if the parental relationship is featured at all, the emphasis is on the negative rather than the positive aspects, a representation which mimics nineteenth century assertions that Black women were hypersexual but not fit to be mothers, as well as their exclusion from the cult of domesticity (Marshall 93). Raced and racialized children in *Star Trek* experience the absence of their raced or racialized parent(s), question their identity, and reject their racial and ethnic characteristics - both physical and habitual - to embrace Federation values and culture. The pattern of portraying raced and racialized children in this way makes it impossible to ignore the association that the *Star Trek* series makes between raced and racialized children and colonised subjects. In *Fringe*, *Continuum*, and *Orphan Black*, the experience of raced and racialized children is elided almost completely in order to focus inordinately on the ability of white men and women to produce celebrated, exceptional children – children who are so important and so valued by their parents that the crux of the plot for an entire season, or even series, is the reunion between that celebrated white child and the mother.

Why does this matter? And what can be done about it? It matters because representation matters. It matters because, as Jane Rhodes observes, media is instrumental in promoting racist

values and in keeping them circulating (185). It matters because a 2012 study posited that “[t]elevision exposure” was related to “a decrease in self-esteem for White and Black girls and Black boys, and an increase in self-esteem among White boys” (Martins and Harrison 338). It matters because – though such an analogy risks trivializing historical and current events – in denying raced and racialized characters the ability to reproduce and raise families, symbolic sterilization and symbolic cultural genocide occur. Iaccino argues that when James T. Kirk discovers he has a son, he feels “young ... even reborn ... he now realizes that his existence goes beyond the limited confines of his *Star Trek* career (20-21). While Kirk’s son dies, Iaccino’s point is sound. What must the effect be for people who watch science fiction television and film but rarely, if ever, see themselves “reborn” in the future? The lack of representation of the reproductive and family life of raced and racialized characters in science fiction film and television also matters because science fiction film and television is purported to be inclusive, but it is not. The reproductive and family life of raced and racialized characters and groups of characters is sometimes mentioned, but it is rarely reproduced on screen.

Television shows such as *Fringe*, *Continuum*, and *The Flash* feature diverse characters, but they are not inclusive. How can we make science fiction more inclusive, particularly in the context of science fiction film and tv, and even more specifically in the context of how reproduction and family life is disproportionately assigned to characters and groups of characters in science fiction film and tv? As Stacy L. Smith et al. note, one potential solution is to ensure that the writers are more diverse, so that it is less likely that the critical consideration of the portrayal of raced and racialized characters and groups is forgotten. A prime example of a show that is racially diverse in terms of both characters and writers is *Extant* (2014), developed by Mickey Fisher and starring Halle Berry, about a Black woman astronaut, Molly Woods, and her

two sons. There is much to improve about *Extant*, including that it, like the other television programmes mentioned, privileges hybridity and that, like the *Star Trek* franchise, *Fringe* and *Orphan Black*, it favours biological reproduction and family over other types of bonds and familial relationships. The possibility of a relationship with Ahdu, Molly's alien son, reminds Molly that her first pregnancy ended due to a car accident, and that she was unable to conceive with her husband, John. Molly consistently ignores her robotic son, Ethan, and even risks his life, when forced to choose between Ethan and Ahdu. By depicting Ahdu as aging to adulthood within days and using - as is apparent from the visual depictions of Ahdu's victims - mainly white, human women as expendable receptacles for his efforts to reproduce, *Extant* propagates harmful notions about Black children and men but fails to critically engage with or question these notions. However, *Extant* is notable because its form of hybridity emphasizes Blackness over whiteness. All of Molly's descendants through Ahdu have varying shades of brown skin ("You Say You Want an Evolution"). Because *Extant* speculates that the key to humanity's survival may be Molly's alien descendants, the future of humanity may be a future of Black people. *Extant* was canceled in 2015, but its portrayal of race and futurity as well as its production team and cast make it a worthwhile model for future science fiction film and television. Another example of inclusive representation, and especially inclusive representation of families, is *Black Lightning* (2018). Like *Extant*, *Black Lightning* features a Black character as the central protagonist, and Black children as being essential to the future. Unlike *Extant*, *Black Lightning* critically engages with Black people's history and the project of dismantling racism. Moreover, it portrays the daily life of a Black family. *Black Lightning* focuses on Jefferson Pierce, a Black school principal and superhero, his wife, and their two daughters. *Black Lightning* is notable not only because it is one of the rare speculative fiction television

programmes to thoroughly portray a Black family, it also portrays the multitude of ways family can form, including the pseudo-adoptive relationship between Pierce and his mentor, and the trajectory from Anissa meeting her lover, Grace Choi, to marrying her.

Finally, beyond searching for more inclusive representations in speculative fiction television, we could turn to the fans to address the gap between the rhetoric of inclusivity in speculative fiction and its rigorous realization. Peter A. Chvany notes that “the science fiction audience is noticeably whiter on average, speaking strictly of skin colour, than the population at large” (219). The viewer demographics bely the concept of science fiction film and television as somehow being less racist, or at least more diverse, than other genres. The *Star Trek: The Original Series* audience was largely composed of white men ages 18-45 (Palmer 100). Lincoln Geraghty observes that despite *Star Trek*’s shortcomings in nuanced depictions of race, fans engage with the theme of social change in *Star Trek* (91-93) and view it as a model for acceptance of plurality in race, gender, and disability (96-98). How can the science fiction film and television audience be mobilized - rather than consume a “colour blind” future as does one of the fans Geraghty mentions (96) - to address the symbolic sterilization of raced and racialized characters in film and television? By involving fans, partly through teaching about race and gender in speculative fiction, more fans will be able to recognize the need for less racist and more inclusive representation in speculative fiction television and film and to advocate for change.

Science fiction television and film has long been considered a progressive genre and medium. But in not depicting raced and racialized characters as having the same opportunity and capacity to reproduce and nurture their children as do white, human characters, these television programmes and movies effectively erase these raced and racialized characters from the future. It

is time for science fiction film and television to live up to its reputation of progressiveness in racial and gender diversity, and not just represent, but reproduce, it.

Chapter 5

Altering Bodies, Altering Minds: Teaching Speculative Fiction for Critical Engagement with Media and Social Change

Having established that the speculative fiction tropes of shapeshifting, extreme longevity and immortality, reincarnation, transgenerational memory and other forms of memory transfer, genetic manipulation, and doubling through a variety of tropes such as cloning have resulted in intriguing patterns of alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) challenging or reifying essentialist concepts as well as the portrayal of colonial situations and postcolonial interventions – both of which are often inextricable from reproduction and family structures – I turn now to a consideration of how these representations can be employed to aid students in nuanced consideration of how essentialist and colonialist ideologies are formed and re-formed. In this last chapter, I offer an account of examining essentialist and colonial ideologies alongside their alternatives in an undergraduate Science Fiction course at the University of Waterloo in 2019, supported by a teaching grant from the Centre for Teaching Excellence at the University of Waterloo.

There are some isolated, recently published studies regarding teaching postcolonial and gender theories through speculative fiction. Most notably, there are essays by Brian Attebery and Uppinder Mehan on “Teaching Gender and Science Fiction” and “Teaching Postcolonial Science Fiction,” respectively, both of which are in *Teaching Science Fiction*. In the introduction to the anthology, editors Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright assert that science fiction is “one of the most effective literary genres for challenging the perspectives which, in Great Britain at least, seems detached from social, political and cultural debate and which sees the status quo as immutable”

(1). Given my focus, Mehan and Atteberry's essays on teaching gender and postcolonial concepts through science fiction are most relevant to my work.

Brian Atteberry contextualizes "Teaching Gender and Science Fiction" with three major tenets: that gender is a "culturally mediated" form of communicating or enacting "sexual difference," that gender tends to make "differences into polarities" and produce "hierarchies," and that historically the majority of science fiction was "written and read" without overt or critical attention to gender (146). Atteberry further contests that a critical examination of gender has been present in science fiction since the late 1960s, citing Ursula K. Le Guin's *Left Hand of Darkness* and Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (146-147). Atteberry suggests a framework for teaching the critical examination of gender through speculative fiction, recommending that instructors organize the class around parabolas - or a "familiar but flexible scenario" which begins with a set of easily recognizable characterizations, settings, and plots but can end in a variety of ways (149) as a way to make readings consistent thematically and provide one example "history of the genre and its social concepts." Atteberry also recommends that students be introduced to core terminology of the study of science fiction and to feminist theory (150). Finally, Atteberry argues that certain parabolas are most relevant to teaching gender through science fiction: "the cyborg or artificial being, the shapeshifter, the androgyne, the single-sex utopia and the sexualized alien" (151). Atteberry then recommends texts fitting each parabola; for the shapeshifter, he suggests Octavia E. Butler's *Wild Seed*, and notes that while presentation of gender fluidity is uncommon in science fiction film and television, the Trill on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* are an exception (156).

In "Teaching Postcolonial Science Fiction," Mehan argues that though it is important to analyze "racist and ethnocentric assumptions" in colonialist science fiction, it is more important

to emphasize science fiction by “the (formerly) colonised” (162). Mehan also makes some arguments about the central features of postcolonial science fiction to contextualize the teaching of postcolonial science fiction. First, though most science fiction is ambivalent about technology, in postcolonial science fiction there is an additional layer of ambivalence; formerly colonised people are wary of technology because it aided in the dissolution of their “cultural and social patterns” as well as, often, traditional technology, and yet it must be acknowledged that technology offers the potential for “a more prosperous future.” Mehan adds that in postcolonial science fiction, the apprehension about “technology enslaving humanity” is not as prominent as in most science fiction, to some extent because as Baldev Raj Nayar argues, “the degradation and dehumanisation caused by machines is nothing as compared to that imposed by poverty” (163). Further, Mehan notes the importance of having historical awareness in order to be able to better understand and appreciate the plots and concepts of postcolonial science fiction (165). Finally, Mehan postulates that “issues of history and technology” in postcolonial science fiction are intertwined with “the postcolonial body,” and that postcolonial and science fiction authors alike interrogate “the notion of the body as an unmediated and sovereign entity” (165). Postcolonial writing considers the impact on identity of the disassociation “created between self and body” by practices such as slavery and by pseudo scientific “construction of the black or brown body” as better or worse than but certainly distinct from “the ‘normal’ white body.” Science fiction writing has a history of critiquing the concept of “the ‘natural’ body,” and began to do so at a time when most other writers - outside of theorists - were not. Mehan asserts that it is Octavia E. Butler’s oeuvre which “most consistently and most forcefully explored the territory of history, technology and the body” (166).

Both Atteberry and Mehan provide reading lists, themes on which to focus with students, and contextualization in the form of a survey of the field and brief literary analysis. Another essential essay regarding teaching speculative fiction for social change is Ruben Mendoza's "Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Science Fictional Teaching: James Tiptree, Jr. And China Mieville as Sophistic Pedagogues." Mendoza argues that Patrick Parrinder's "science-fictional 'mode of thinking'" is the central pedagogical element of science fiction (116). Mendoza asserts that the mode of thinking which Parrinder means, and its relevance to a sophist pedagogy, is that immersion "in sf's paradoxically alien yet analogical storytelling" results in a disturbance to "audiences' normalized perceptual and cognitive habits" (117). Though Mendoza focuses on *Up the Walls of the World* and *Embassytown*, positing that the "content and form" of the two works provide a model of sophist pedagogy, he argues that the blueprint of "sf aesthetics as pedagogy" can be applied to science fiction more broadly (123). Mendoza clearly details the connection between the ethical and social implications of cognitive estrangement in speculative fiction and Freire's "'cognitive dissonance'" as utilizing rhetorical tools to produce "estranging effects that engender critical distance and analysis of normative sociocultural structures," even arguing both theories draw upon "Russian formalist concepts of defamiliarization" (122).

Many of the reasons that *Who Fears Death*, *Wild Seed*, *Salt Fish Girl*, and *Lilith's Brood* were selected for the course readings are covered in the preceding analysis. The rationale for the texts to be taught as postcolonial, intersectional material occurs in chapters one through four, with an analysis of the ways in which the postcolonial, gender, and intersectional concepts appear and function in each work. The analysis familiarizes instructors who have less facility with either the texts themselves or the concepts and can aid teachers in making it clear to administrators why they should support the project, as well as gives teachers a basis from which

to discuss the relevance of speculative fiction - in its own right and as a particularly productive genre for examining essentialist and colonial ideologies - with students and parents. However, in order to better serve educators and to specifically address the design of the course, the following is a rationale for why and how the texts were utilized.

First, in their critique of what has traditionally been and is still too often women's work, reproduction and childcare, these selections can be read in a historical and modern context that examines the potential limits of the novum to re-imagine the world - or, alternatively, the necessity of acknowledging the social constraints that women still unduly face despite the possibilities demonstrated by other works of speculative fiction for imagining and depicting a world in which reproductive and care work is no longer predominantly the work of women. In their celebration of women's child bearing and care giving work, they can help young people re-frame their understanding of reproductive and care work in a world that often dismisses and devalues it.

These works can also assist students in understanding that while gender is not necessarily linked inextricably to sex, it is often formed in the context of specific social situations, and can be fluid, as well as that gendered violence is real and strategic essentialism in these speculative fiction works both acknowledges social construction of gender and insists on the recognition of the social conditions which women continue to face.

Wild Seed and *Lilith's Brood* were selected for their depictions of gender fluidity and the suggestion that sexuality, like gender, is produced by the conditions that constrain or enable it. Because both Anyanwu and Jodahs have the ability to change their form, they realize that there are fewer restrictions on the range of sexual options available to them. That is, the novum of

shapeshifting enables both Anyanwu and Jodahs to experience social situations that they would be less likely to have experienced otherwise. *Salt Fish Girl* and *Who Fears Death* were selected for their depictions of the differential social constrictions that women face based on their gender, and the suggestion that reproduction need not necessarily entail two people, a man and a woman, engaging in sexual activity. All four of the works engage with the concept that reproduction and care, without accompanying social support and a valued role, can constitute a burden for women.

Some constraints on the inclusion of the works in an introductory, elective higher education course include time constraints and the concern that some students - particularly students who have experienced racism or gendered violence - would find the works emotionally troubling. Because the course was only twelve weeks, the majority of the readings were excerpts, which means much of the material needed to be contextualized in class. Another reason for using excerpts was to mitigate the potential impact on students who would be more sensitive to the content depicting racism and gendered violence. Thus, excerpts containing only the gender essentialism and devaluation of women's reproductive and care work were used, and excerpts containing racist epithets and graphic gendered violence were excluded.

While the time and subject matter constraints limited the scope of the study, the material neatly corresponds to an upper level secondary education course, as there are likely to be similar concerns about the length of the unit and the subject matter at the secondary level. Utilizing mainly excerpts will reduce the length of the time it takes to cover the material, which may be more likely to satisfy secondary education administrators who are only willing to grant minimal class time to the study of speculative fiction. Avoiding coverage of graphic racism and gendered violence will also make it easier to defend the use of the material with younger students and their parents.

The reading lists and learning objectives are intended to be suggestions available for customization based on teachers' and students' learning objectives and other contextual factors, rather than a prescriptive approach to teaching the material. What follows is an account of how students engaged with postcolonial and intersectional concepts throughout the speculative fiction course I taught, including immediate and generalized responses to the course material. Science Fiction is a 200-level English course with no prerequisites. It was my first time teaching the course. The course enrollment was (after withdrawals) 16 students from first year to fourth year, encompassing a variety of faculties and programmes. Only about half of the students enrolled were Arts students, and only two were English majors. To reduce the potential of unduly influencing students towards my analysis of the material and learn how students respond to the text with limited intervention in terms of lectures and other authoritative interpretations, the course was conducted primarily as a discussion-based seminar. The only exception to the student-led, dialogic classes occurred in weeks 1, 5, 8, and 12, during which time there were lectures. In this way, the approach aligned with Ruben Mendoza's application of L.S. Vygotsky's work on an instructor's "role as facilitating mediating 'tools' for students and conceptualized mediating tools as instrumental to critical learning" (122) to teaching speculative fiction.

The content based learning objectives included that by the end of the course, students would be able to: describe postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories; appreciate the diversity of speculative fiction; identify key themes in speculative fiction literature and television; and apply postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories to depictions of race, gender, and sexuality in speculative fiction literature and television. These learning objectives meet a number of points within both the cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's

Taxonomy (“Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor”).

Identification of key speculative fiction themes falls under “remember” which is the base of the cognitive domain. Describing postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories falls under the “understand” section of the cognitive domain, just above remember. Appreciating the diversity of speculative fiction is situated in the affective domain. Using postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories to depictions of race, gender, and sexuality is two levels above “understand” in the cognitive domain, asking students to utilize information they have learned in the analysis of other texts (“Bloom’s Taxonomy”).

The transferable skill learning objectives included that by the end of the course, students would be able to: respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to writing prompts, some of which may ask [them] to question [their] worldviews and opinions; synthesize information from multiple texts, connecting themes and concepts; and argue for or against an interpretation. The transferable skill learning objectives meet higher levels of the cognitive domain, including “synthesis” and “evaluation.” One advantage of including transferable skill learning objectives on the syllabus is that it may contribute to the efficacy of convincing students, parents, and administrators of the value of the course.

During the first four weeks, students responded to each set of content (consisting of one theoretical reading and one to two fiction selections or vice versa, as well as one television episode representing each concept) with daily writing prompt responses, a short paper addressing themes apparent in each reading and linking the theoretical and fiction readings (these were due at the beginning of Weeks 2 and 3), as well as a discussion period on Wednesdays each week. The theoretical readings were “re-thinking intersectionality” by Jennifer Nash, “Cyborg Manifesto” by Donna Haraway, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” by Judith

Butler, the course handout “An Introduction to Post-Colonialism, Post-Colonial Theory, and Post-Colonial Literature” by John Lye, and an excerpt from “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness” by Gloria Anzaldua.

For the last eight weeks, weekly content consisted of one approximately 100 page section from *Children of Blood and Bone*, paired with a television episode; students responded to the material through a discussion board post prior to whole group discussions during class time. Excerpts and novels were selected to provide students with fictional examples of the theory, and for their accessibility. In certain cases, excerpts were used rather than whole texts both to avoid graphic descriptions of gendered and sexual violence, and because the course aims for breadth rather than depth; since it was not feasible to assign five or six full novels to students in an elective course but it was important to include both foundational speculative fiction texts addressing race, gender, and sexuality as well as more recent texts, excerpts were used for the older texts.

The first week included two lectures: a history of science fiction, and suggestions for how to engage in critical analysis of science fiction. The lectures drew primarily upon Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.’s analysis and extension of Darko Suvin’s concept of the novum, as well as Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright’s recommendations for teaching science fiction. Specifically, I shared with students Sawyer and Wright’s suggestions to students for analyzing speculative fiction differently than they would other genres. My pedagogical rationale for discussing the novum was based not only on Sawyer and Wright’s recommendation that students taking a science fiction course begin with a basic knowledge of the terminology of science fiction theory as well as Atteberry’s recommendation of the same, but also to meet students’ expectations for a science fiction course. Further, covering Csicsery-Ronay’s exposition of the novum - that though

Suvín demanded a “rational” and scientific novum as opposed to a “quasi” or “pseudo” scientific novum (73), the novum must also “extend beyond the physical world to the ethical and social” (55) - allowed me to assert that fantasy often meets the latter criterion just as well or better than works which can clearly be categorized as science fiction. During these first two lectures, I also covered distinctions between fantasy and science fiction, my reasons for including works which may be regarded as fantasy on the syllabus, the rationale for using the term speculative fiction, and the struggle for science fiction and speculative fiction to be recognized and taught in secondary and higher education. Finally, prior to our first viewing of a speculative fiction television episode, I briefly noted Csicsery-Ronay Jr.’s argument that in speculative fiction film and TV, the novum or novums are often much less obvious and less likely to be fully developed to meet Suvín’s criterion of a rational novum and that students should be mindful of the differences between speculative fiction literature and speculative fiction television when attempting to analyze the episode.

Week 5’s lecture covered depictions of race and gender in contemporary speculative fiction television, including how discriminatory attitudes based on gender and race contribute to the fictional representation of racialized female characters, how racialized characters in speculative fictional colonialist situations are portrayed as being ignorant of their history or dedicated to a colonialist mission and thus “model minorities,” the discrepancy in the portrayal of children’s relationships with their parents depending on whether the parent is white and human or racialized, and the ways in which the ubiquitous replication of white characters in a range of North American speculative fiction television programmes are evident of the pathological dominance of whiteness and imperialism.

Week 8's lecture briefly reviewed the Week 5 lecture and made explicit some of the postcolonial, gender, and intersectional concepts expressed in the works the students had already read and watched - drawing upon the essentialism evident in the portrayal of B'Elanna Torres in "Faces" as possessing a human and Klingon side which can be separated from each other with the use of genetic engineering, I segued into a discussion of the racial and gender essentialism I address in the second and third chapters, covering only *Wild Seed*, *Who Fears Death*, *Imago* (the third and final book of the *Xenogenesis* trilogy), and *Salt Fish Girl*. Throughout the lecture, I asked students for their interpretations of and evidence for racial and sex essentialism in the novels, and condensed my arguments on race and sex essentialism.

The final lecture, in week 12, covered the ways in which postcolonial, gender, and intersectional concepts are apparent in the last two course readings, *Children of Blood and Bone* and *Trickster Drift*. The lecture was written at the end of Week 11 in order to avoid repetition and to ensure coverage of key themes missing from the discussion; in future iterations of the course, that lecture will be reviewed and revised if necessary, depending on students' responses to the material.

By lecturing on the concepts following the conclusion of major texts and sections of texts and the corresponding assignments and class discussions, I provided students ample opportunity to make their own interpretations and draw their own conclusions about the material, and yet still achieved the goals set out for coverage of theory and contextualization of the material.

To encourage participation and support students who may be reluctant to participate in the traditional method of whole group discussion, I occasionally used other strategies, including

but not limited to: think-pair-share, inkshedding, and a Google doc upon which students were able to anonymously ask questions, suggest discussion topics, and offer analysis of the readings and television episodes. In the last eight weeks, I occasionally provided students with time in class to reply to other students' discussion board posts.

In terms of general course design, readings were only assigned on Wednesdays, to give students an appropriate amount of time to read and consider the material. With some exceptions, mainly during lecture weeks, students viewed television episodes on Mondays during class and discussed the readings for the past week alongside the television episode on Wednesdays. As the instructor, I provided introductions to content and interventions into student discussion as needed. I informed students that my approach would be to utilize their response papers and discussion board questions as a way to source themes that they noticed, and that I would use them to begin conversation if necessary, but would first give them the opportunity to suggest a topic, theme, concept, or scene to discuss. When students did not lead the conversation, I intervened in a scaffolded fashion: first suggesting specific passages or scenes to discuss, and then asking students what they noticed about the employment of race and gender in the passages and scenes. Early in the course, I intervened in more specific ways; for instance, I noted the impact of colonialism on Gul'Dukat's relationship with his daughter in the *Deep Space Nine* episode "Sons and Daughters." I also noted, employing visual discourse analysis, how in "Sons and Daughters" the way lighting alters from scene to scene and character to character. The scenes on the Klingon ship are darker than the scenes on *Deep Space Nine*, a difference which might simply be attributed to the rugged nature of the Klingon ship; however, the lighting differs significantly when the camera shifts from Major Kira, a protagonist, to Gul'Dukat, an antagonist. When the camera centres on Kira, she is bathed in light; Gul'Dukat is in shadows in the same

room, during the same scene. It was likely that discussion or a similar one which prompted one student to note of course strengths in the course evaluation, “Heavy reliance on familiar media but with a new mindset going into it. Even watching an episode of a TV show I have seen, I was able to pick out points from the class which I hadn't noticed before.”

Later in the course, I devised ways to avoid the necessity of informing students of my analysis of the content. I found that students rarely had difficulty with thoroughly discussing the assigned reading; however, they often needed prompting in order to address depictions of race and gender in television episodes. Further, there was not enough time in an 80 minute class to watch the episode and discuss it thoroughly. For that reason, beginning in Week 8, I provided students with time following a viewing to write questions about the episode that they would discuss during the next class.

I utilized Google Docs for the creation of discussion questions, allocating at least 10 minutes and sometimes as many as 15 minutes. Utilizing Google Docs, by which students can respond anonymously, had a major impact on how students engaged with class discussions, resulting in a significant increase in the number of discussion questions submitted for consideration, as well as improvement in the detail and applicability of those questions to consideration of race and gender depictions in the texts.

Outside of the class, students were responsible for submitting a response paper in weeks 2 and 3, and at least one discussion board post each week thereafter until week 12. The rationale for beginning with the two response papers was that it gave students time to become accustomed to the material and to analysis of the material. I provided students with feedback on both of the response papers, regarding interesting arguments and compelling rationale as well as

opportunities for growth. In the response papers, I asked students to identify the novum or novums, drawing on their current understanding of Csicsery-Ronay's Jr.'s elaborations on Suvin's concept of the novum. Students were also asked to summarize their understanding of each assigned theoretical text and significant themes, and to write about any connections they could detect between the theoretical and the speculative fiction readings. In order to reduce the likelihood that students would feel compelled to write about connections when they had not gleaned them from the readings, it was made clear to students that they would be marked only on the identification of the novums in the speculative fiction texts and the summaries of the theoretical texts.

The prompts for the discussion board posts on speculative fiction readings were intentionally broad. Broad prompts allowed students to address what most interested them in the reading, and mitigated the potential for my prompts to bias students towards specific aspects of or approaches to the texts. The first prompt for each reading asked students to identify the novum and two themes in the reading; subsequent prompts for each reading asked students to identify at least two or three themes. Each post was required to be 300 words minimum, with the exception of weeks in which students were required to post an initial response as well as a reply or two to other students' responses; for those weeks, the initial post was required to be 200 words, with a reply of 100 words, or two replies of 50 words. Following a students' suggestion that the prompts differ from week to week, I solicited discussion board prompt suggestions from students. From the suggestions students offered, I selected prompts that were still sufficiently broad as my initial prompt to address two or three themes, so that students with a variety of insights into the text would be able to respond thoroughly.

Students consistently raised questions and made observations relating to setting (both geographical and time period), novum, and genre. For instance, in the first discussion of a reading, students noted the interplay between traditional customs and roles, technology, post-apocalyptic tropes, and the suggestion that older technology played a part in seemingly magical and otherwise inexplicable abilities.

In the fifth week of the course, a student asked of the first section of *Children of Blood and Bone*, to what extent Inan's development as a maji could be understood as an allegory for people who experience marginalization and oppression internalizing those experiences and seeking to subdue others with similar experiences. The week following, a student made connections between the representation of Inan and the article we read on intersectional feminist theory, noting that Inan's activation as a maji makes him subject to discrimination, but as a result of his privilege, he uses his powers to subdue people and kill with impunity. He also knows that even if he uses his magic in service of the kingdom, he will be reviled. Another student noted the parallels between the portrayal of enforced loss of language, records, and tradition in *Children of Blood and Bone* and in our own world, pointing out the suppression of the magic language through the murder of all elders who could teach it to the children, and the destruction of religious sites and sacred artifacts. The student noted that these plot points are representative of the significance of heritage, and the devastation of its loss.

In Week 9, a student suggested a discussion question regarding the impact of the novum or novums on characters' thoughts and actions, citing the frustration that Zelig's brother expresses with her lack of cooperation regarding her own safety. The student proceeded to wonder how the novum might prevent characters' worldviews and actions from being perceived as relatable.

In Week 10, when asked to write and respond to discussion questions that put the last section of *Children of Blood and Bone* in conversation with the series finale of *The 4400* and the first 114 pages of *Trickster Drift*, one student posed a question about the interplay between setting and the novum of superhuman abilities, asking what affordances and restrictions a familiar modern setting offered.

The two students who responded to the question answered that a more familiar setting was not only more relatable - for instance, a world in which the narrative was structured around a recent or current set of circumstances in the real worlds - but also made the fantastical elements more striking. They also argued that though the distant future setting and science fictional elements of *Lilith's Brood* assisted in imagining sex and genders beyond our familiarity, the similarities in relationships between parents and children aided in a reader's ability to find the narrative - and thus, the differentiation of sex and gender roles - credible.

By that point in the term, it was reasonable and meaningful to intervene in the discussion with my commentary on the connections between setting and the social and ethical implications of the cognitive estrangement. I commented first that Eric D. Smith, drawing on Jameson's analysis of magical realist films, argues that magical realism is a response to the overlap between pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production and ways of life (11), whereas science fiction features a contention with full immersion in capitalist modes of production. I ended the class with a note perhaps more relevant to the students' discussion - that though Smith states that though science fiction "assumes a definitively utopian vocation through its inevitable failure to imagine a radical future that is not simply an [...] [extension] of [...] the present in which it is written" and that Jameson proposes such failure is a "necessary failure constitut[ing] the most important pedagogical function of the utopian genre" (7) because it is important to

situate the cognitive estrangement and consideration of race, sex, class, etc. within their historical contexts and the factors that produced them, it can be just as or more important to construct a setting in which race, sex, and class relations are far removed from their present and historical context, as Joshua Yu Burnett argues is the case in *Who Fears Death*, resulting in a realization of postcolonialism “in ways not possible in mainstream literature” (137).

In addition to the discussion question referencing the effect of the mundane setting on speculative fiction, students also considered the portrayal of race and gender in the speculative fiction texts and the use of supernatural abilities as a metaphor, critiquing the use of people with superhuman abilities as a metaphor for actual oppressed classes and asking what could be inferred from the fact that *The 4400* concludes with two superhuman characters – a white man and a Black woman – sacrificing themselves for the common good.

In the last week of the course, I intervened minimally in students’ concept mapping activity. I had instructed them to write down and link concepts on three poster boards. With nine students in attendance that day, I asked the students to move into groups of three. I assigned each group a topic. The topics included: the novum, cognitive estrangement, and social and ethical implications of cognitive estrangement; themes within *Trickster Drift*; and themes within *Trickster Drift* that could also be applied to other texts we covered in the course. After each group had approximately 15 minutes to concept map on a topic, I had the groups switch poster boards, so that each group was able to read the previous contributions, and add to them. By the time that each group had their third poster board, I noticed that the poster board on the novum addressed only social and ethical implications which could have been present in the text even without a novum; that is, the novum either had little impact on the social and ethical implications listed, or the connections between the novum, the cognitive estrangement performed by the

novum, and the social and ethical implications were missing. In response, I requested that the last group to receive the poster board explicitly address social and ethical implications that were direct results of the novum and its cognitive estrangement.

One particularly interesting discussion was in response to genre categorizations of these novels. Because the course's official title was Science Fiction, I felt it necessary to justify why we were reading so many novels that were more likely to be categorized as fantasy. At the beginning of the course, we had a few conversations regarding whether a work should be categorized as science fiction or fantasy, and why. The exercise of classification and justification, according to Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s elaboration on the novum, also fit neatly with Wright and Sawyer's recommendations for teaching science fiction.

Initially, the exercise was merely to ascertain coverage of genre-specific approaches to analysis of speculative fiction, and to mitigate students' potential concern that I was focusing so heavily on fantasy literature in a course titled Science Fiction. However, the exercise soon revealed interesting and productive questions for further analysis. For instance, when I shared with students Octavia E. Butler's statement that "*Wild Seed* is more science fiction than most people realize. The main character is dealing with medical science, but she just doesn't know how to talk about it" ("An Interview" 496), one student commented that to call *Wild Seed* science fiction without providing the scientific rationale within the text seemed like a short cut.

To address the student's response, I asked the following question on the discussion board: "During class, we engaged in a very brief consideration of differences in genre between *Wild Seed* and *Lilith's Brood*. Both engage in detailed world building, but in *Lilith's Brood*, the focus is on scientific rationale for character's abilities. At least one student noted that the presence of

aliens in a future setting could be feasible. Why are aliens in a future setting more plausible than characters who can shapeshift and take over bodies in the past? Regarding Butler's comment that Anyanwu 'doesn't know how to talk about' her abilities, what function does being unable to articulate an ability or a sort of knowledge serve?" No students responded to the optional prompt, but the question that arose from the student's objection is a valuable addition to future renditions of the course.

For the final project, students could select from four options: a traditional research/argumentative essay, a multimodal expressive essay/argumentative essay, a speculative fiction story, or a speculative fiction syllabus. The rubrics were written in such a way so that though students are required to engage with the concept of the social and ethical effects of the novum, they need not engage with postcolonial, gender, or intersectional feminist theories or concepts. Rather, students were required to incorporate "at least two themes central to the course, one of which needed to be relevant to speculative fiction tropes and devices. Students were also offered an additional option to propose their own project and develop a rubric for the project.

One benefit of the syllabus option is that students could suggest alternate readings and course activities; because students were required to select different texts from the ones used in the course and explain their reasoning for selection of readings and course activities, their pursuit of the syllabus option resulted in student achievement of high levels of the cognitive domain of Bloom's Taxonomy, synthesis and evaluation ("Bloom's Taxonomy"). Students who wrote a short story incorporating a novum which results in cognitive estrangement and social and ethical impacts reached the highest level of the cognitive domain, creation.

The following are my recommendations for teaching speculative fiction courses following the approach I outlined above, or using a similar approach, based on my observations of efficacy and on students' suggestions. First, retain the daily writing prompts, as they provide a low stakes assessment of students' comprehension of the material, and a record of their progress in identifying the novum and making connections between the speculative fiction texts and the theoretical texts. Second, in a change from the original course design, ensure balance between texts which are typically considered "hard" or traditional science fiction and texts which are typically considered "soft" science fiction or fantasy, which will appeal to students seeking to read and analyze the former texts but also enable students to recognize the blurring and boundary crossings between genres within texts that Freedman discusses. In terms of texts, another change I would make is that I would either assign the first book of Eden Robinson's Trickster series rather than the second so that students had proper context, or I would assign a different book which more clearly and consistently engages with the concepts I am teaching - most likely the latter. The lectures and the assignments would remain largely the same, except that I would assign additional theoretical texts, including articles analyzing the speculative fiction texts; I would have students read the articles only after they had read the speculative fiction text and responded with a preliminary analysis. I would also assign more response papers in lieu of some of the discussion board responses, which would provide students with the opportunity to engage more thoroughly with the connections between speculative fiction texts and theoretical texts; students would still be able to share their analyses with their peers through class discussions.

By the end of the course, it was clear that most students had a better understanding of the way that speculative fiction texts often both challenge and reproduce systems of oppression. The theoretical texts enhanced their comprehension of the speculative fiction texts, and vice

versa, leading to nuanced analysis of the texts themselves, and critical connections between the texts and students' experiences. There is considerable potential for much more impact: that by providing a framework for reading the texts through postcolonial, gender, and intersectional feminist theories, students will apply their understanding of disparate and destabilizing representations as a tool for critically examining new speculative fiction media, leading to an ongoing transformation of "reader" response.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I analyzed speculative fiction portrayals of characters' experiences of being raced, gendered, and subordinated – both sexually and culturally - by ethnocentric powers, with the aim of demonstrating that the critical distance provided by the novum results in the genre being particularly generative for depicting and understanding such experiences. A core premise of my argument is that the tropes of speculative fiction – as a genre separate from and yet broader than magical realism, fantasy, or science fiction – often realize a distinct potential for destabilizing worldviews that position history (and its associated injustices) as inevitable, the Western privileging of rationality above lived experience, and philosophies which consider characteristics related to race, sex, and sexuality to be innate as opposed to socially constructed. The novum, alongside the associated critical distance, can forestall reader expectations in its address of topics such as genital mutilation, rape, medical consent, and cultural genocide. The indirectness and implicit nature of the argument – with the reader sharing the protagonists' lack of awareness and sudden recognition – both mitigates the didacticism and foregrounds the crux of the matter. Such destabilization occurs through tropes such as shapeshifting and transgenerational memory, with the tropes operating not just as narrative devices, but instead as crucial critical instruments of analysis. Though these destabilizations are not without inconsistencies and ruptures – some of which result from the rift between the representational strategies utilized by authors to combat essentialist readings and the tendency of popular media to implicitly and insidiously reproduce essentialist representations which are aided by speculative fiction tropes and made palatable through a distant setting - they provide an additional model, a speculative framework, for combating the “naturalization” of these categories and modes of domination. Conversely, the texts posit situations in which the modes of

domination are weakened through alternate ways of knowing, whether that is the embodied memory of Anyanwu and Onyesonwu or the Oankali-human hybrid Akin's empathy for the aspects of humanity which he cannot quite understand but which nevertheless compel him to advocate for humanity despite his Oankali forebearers' insistence that humanity is irredeemable on a genetic level. Speculative fiction echoes and expands upon a central premise of the postcolonial ideals of Bhabha, refusing to blithely accept fixed distinctions between self and other or positioning of worldviews as necessarily diametrically opposed. Instead, speculative fiction considers what results from fissures and fluidity, examining the tension between "natural" versus "social" and between hybridity and essentialism.

Chapter one focuses on how speculative fiction such as Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, bodies function as sites of resistance to Western rationalism, universalism, and patriarchal knowledge systems. Centreing the speculative fiction tropes of embodied knowledge, transgenerational memory, and magical inheritance, these texts use strategic essentialism to reclaim marginalized identities, while simultaneously exposing race, gender, and sexuality as socially constructed. Through speculative tropes that destabilize linear time and fixed identity, these texts challenge colonial systems of knowledge production and propose alternative epistemologies rooted in the body, cultural memory, and lived experience. Western forms of knowledge - linear time, historic progress, rationality, scientific experimentation, and written record – are mediated by embodied knowledge, including transgenerational memory and shapeshifting. The juxtaposition of far past and near-future dystopias, experienced by characters who have lived through multiple times, challenge Eurocentric narratives which equate rationality with progress and a better way of life. Through transgenerational memory and unexpected breaches in the scientific process, oppressed

characters successfully combat the colonial weaponry of forced forgetting and the subjugation of their bodies through scientific mechanisms and narratives which justify their subjugation, aligning with Bhabha's notion of "exceeding the performative" in colonial contexts as well as with strategies for recovering suppressed and destroyed knowledge. These representations assert the potency of other modes of knowing and demonstrate a viable challenge to Western wills to truth and power.

Beyond demonstrating the social situatedness of gendered experiences, the speculative fiction trope of shapeshifting enables a novel challenge to the categories of race and gender themselves. In these texts, characters who shapeshift – particularly immortal characters who can shapeshift – experience gradual shifts in attitudes and behaviours based on the body or bodies they have occupied and the times and spaces in which they have lived.

In the second chapter, I retain the focus on the way speculative fiction tropes enable resistance to concepts of biological determinism and subtle critique of colonialist control, within the narrower context of the ethics of consent in Octavia E. Butler's *Lilith's Brood* and *Fledgling*. These texts utilize speculative fiction tropes such as aliens' ability to detect desire, "read" genes, and use biochemical substances to keep humans subservient in order to underscore how power is socially constructed and maintained through coercion, deception, limited choices, and force. The chapter traces clear parallels between the aliens' subjugation of humans and historical and ongoing forms of colonialism, especially in the use of colonised subjects for labor and the control of their reproduction. In particular, the alien breeding projects – legitimized by their supposed indisputable superiority to humans and their claims that they are doing the humans a kindness – recall historical colonialist projects. In both novels, the ethics of consent correspond to rape discourse, medical autonomy, and colonial mechanisms of control, demonstrating

Butler's fiction as a critical lens for comprehending patriarchal and colonial systems' strategic manipulation of consent and agency.

Chapter three again takes up the speculative fiction tropes of shapeshifting and cloning in the texts of Butler, Lai, and Okorafor, arguing that these texts contest – to varying degrees – biological determinism as it pertains to sex and gender, the conflation of sex and gendered caregiving roles, the devaluation of care giving labor, and the representation of men and non-binary characters as exclusively suited for diplomatic and leadership roles. In some cases, speculative fiction tropes such as shapeshifting and parthenogenesis are employed to reclaim gendered bodies as sites of knowledge and power, particularly in Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* and Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*. In a form of strategic essentialism, the limitations of shapeshifters who appear to be and are perceived as women to change their sex results in a necessary encounter with sexism and intersectional discrimination, enabling characters in such a position to demonstrate the social situatedness of gendered experiences. In other cases, essentialism is unequivocally reified, such as with the Oankali's unchallenged ability to link nearly universal behaviours by men to their genetic code. Further, these texts fail – in most cases in association with the premise that men (or, at least, people socialized as men, such as in *Who Fears Death* and *Salt Fish Girl*) are unsuitable for care giving and indeed perhaps even to a non-violent, communal society – to leverage speculative fiction's potential to imagine a world in which care giving is not exclusively or nearly exclusively the responsibility of birth giving people.

In the fourth chapter, I examine how racist, colonialist, and ethnocentric ideologies are promoted and sanctioned through the use of speculative fiction tropes and plots, such as alien breeding schemes, cloning or doubling, genetic engineering, and the equation of alien species with human ethnic groups. In particular, these ideologies are evoked through reproductive

processes and acts, parenting, and family life. These representations mimic – while rarely challenging – such beliefs as people of colour are less human, are stronger in an animalistic way, and feel less pain than white people; these traits attributed to alien characters who stand in for people of colour can be isolated to their genetics; mixed race people have extreme conflicts over their parentage and heritage, especially in their relationships with their parents and their treatment of their children; children who are racialized or colonised are better off being parented by, mentored by, and eventually subsumed by the majority white culture; only white or white-coded children are unburdened of anxieties regarding their heritage and its standing in society; and only white or half white children can function as “chosen ones” or saviours. *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* insidiously promote these ideologies in alignment with the racial politics of the era. Later speculative fiction television programmes, such as *Fringe*, *Haven*, *Continuum*, *Orphan Black*, and *The Flash* follow in a similar vein. In these shows, the primary trope is doubling, enabled by various tropes, including time travel and cloning. These tropes are prominently employed to pathologically reproduce white bodies and centre white motherhood. Though some speculative fiction television during that time period was more nuanced and inclusive and that is increasingly the case in more recent years, it is still necessary to advocate for reducing these limiting and uncritical representations, and to teach ways of engaging with racist, colonialist, and ethnocentric speculative fiction in a critical way.

As I discuss in chapter five, this mode of questioning can be applied to popular speculative fiction media which sometimes deliberately critiques colonial fetishism and ethnocentrism but more often perverts the potential of speculative fiction tropes, employing them to assert the enduring dominance of colonialist powers and to reify concepts of biological determinism in a way that recalls the dangerous rhetoric of “scientific” racism. Recognizing the

framework for inclusive, affirmative, and expansive representations of alterity in the speculative fiction of Butler, Lai, Okorafor, and others, the ubiquitous use of speculative fiction tropes to reproduce the (usually white, male self) and justify the subsumption of colonised children into the colonisers' worldview and practices – resulting in a refusal to contend with cultural difference in the purportedly egalitarian future – can be confronted and interrogated.

To engage with speculative fiction – as creator, consumer, or curator – is to engage with the potential of having one's worldview eroded and extended. This is especially true of speculative fiction which deliberately subverts common concepts of biological determinism, and which invites its audience to identify with characters whose differences across space and time leave them striving for solidarity, establishing safe spaces for others who exist on the margins, though identification with the other is still elusive. Even in the texts which only partially decry limiting and harmful essentialist concepts, the potential remains; the *process* of interrogating commonly held worldviews through speculative fiction tropes which enable new forms of otherness provides a model for an extended mode of questioning regardless of whether the representation itself is an entirely productive or complete criticism.

Returning to Bhabha's contention that "[h]ope doesn't address itself to what already exists" but rather "is committed to change rather than repetition and incorporates the element of chance" and his evocation of Arendt's solidarity based on recognition and affirmation of the other, it is imperative to continue to seek out and examine the enduring possibilities of speculative fiction in recognizing, nurturing and celebrating alterity – that alterity which has existed, which exists in the present, and which could exist. In the words of Nnedi Okorafor, "[s]cience fiction ... [l]iterally ... has changed the world." Let us continue to change.

Works Cited

- “_____ Means _____.” *Tumblr*, 8 Apr. 2014,
http://persephoneholly.tumblr.com/post/82100763066/means#=_. Accessed 29 Aug. 2015.
- “The Abandoned.” *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by D. Thomas Maio and Steve Warnek, directed by Avery Brooks, CBS, 3 Oct. 1994.
- “The Abandoned (episode).” *Memory Alpha*. *Memory Alpha*, n.d. Web. 21 June 2015.
- Ackerman, Erin M. Pryor. “Becoming and Belonging: The Productivity of Pleasures and Desires in Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* Trilogy.” *Extrapolation*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2008, pp. 24–43.
- “Acquiel.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Jeri Taylor, Brannon Braga, and Ronald D. Moore, directed by Cliff Bole, CBS, 3 Feb. 1993.
- “Acquisition.” *Star Trek: Enterprise*, written by Maria Jacquemetton and Andre Jacquemetton, directed by James Whitmore, Jr., UPN, 27 Mar. 2002.
- Adeyemi, Tomi. “Meet Tomi Adeyemi, the YA Breakout of 2018.” Interview with David Canfield. *Entertainment Weekly*, 5 Mar. 2018, <https://ew.com/books/2018/03/05/tomi-adeyemi-children-of-blood-and-bone/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.
- “Alter Ego.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Joe Menosky, directed by Robert Picardo, UPN, 15 Jan. 1997.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.
- Atteberry, Brian. “Teaching Gender and Science Fiction.” *Teaching Science Fiction*, edited by Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright.
- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Anchor Books, 1998.
- Baccolini, Rafaella. “Gender and Genre in the Feminist Critical Dystopias of Katharine Burdekin, Margaret Atwood, and Octavia Butler.” *Future Females, the Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, edited by Marleen S. Barr. Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, pp. 13-34.
- Balter, Michael. “Geneticists decry book on race and evolution: More than 100 senior scientists sign a letter distancing themselves from book by former New York Times writer.” *Science*, 8 Aug. 2014, <https://www.science.org/content/article/geneticists-decry-book-race-and-evolution>. Accessed 21 Sep. 2025.

- Barnett, Brian. "Netflix Will Make Sci-Fi and Fantasy Shows and Movies Its Main Focus". *IGN*, 28 Apr. 2018, <https://www.ign.com/articles/2018/04/28/netflix-will-make-sci-fi-and-fantasy-shows-and-movies-its-main-focus>. Accessed 1 Apr. 2019.
- Barry, Simon, creator. *Continuum*. Reunion Pictures et al., 2012.
- Bast, Florian. "I Won't Always Ask': Complicating Agency in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*." *Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies*, vol. 11, 2010, <http://copas.uni-regensburg.de/article/view/128/152>.
- "The Begotten." *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by René Echevarria, directed by Jesús Salvador Treviño, CBS, 27 Jan. 1997.
- "B'Elanna Torres." *Fandom*, n.d., https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/B%27Elanna_Torres. Accessed 17 Jun. 2019.
- Bell, Linda A. *Rethinking Ethics in the Midst of Violence: A Feminist Approach to Freedom*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1993.
- Bernardi, Daniel Leonard. *Star Trek and History: Race-ing toward a White Future*. Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Bhabha, Homi. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *Race Critical Theories*, edited by Philomena Essed and David Theo Goldberg. Blackwell Publishers, 2002, pp. 113-122.
- Bhabha, Homi. "The Burdened Life: On Migration and the Humanities." *Northeast Modern Language Association*, 22 Mar. 2019, Washington, D.C. Keynote Address.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Blake, John. "The post-racial revolution will be televised." *CNN*, 23 Mar. 2014, <https://www.cnn.com/2014/03/23/showbiz/sci-fi-post-racial>. Accessed 21 Jun. 2015.
- Block, Sheila, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, and Ricardo Tranjan. "Canada's Colour Coded Income Inequality". *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, 1 Dec. 2019.
- "Bloom's Revised Taxonomy: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor." *Arkansas State University*, n.d., <https://www.astate.edu/a/assessment/assessment-resource-links/files/Revised-Bloom%20s-Taxonomy-All-Domains.pdf>. Accessed 25 Sep. 2025.
- "Bloom's Taxonomy." *Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering: Learning and Teaching Hub*, n.d., <https://lth.engineering.asu.edu/reference-guide/blooms-taxonomy/>. Accessed 25 Sep. 2025.

- Bluhm, Robin, Anne Jaap Jacobson, and Heidi Lene Maibom, editors. *Neurofeminism: Issues at the Intersection of Feminist Theory and Cognitive Science*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.
- “Booby Trap.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Michael Wagner, Ron Roman, and Michael Piller et al., directed by Gabrielle Beaumont, CBS, 30 Oct. 1989.
- Bonner, Frances. “Difference and Desire, Slavery and Seduction: Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis*.” *Foundation*, no. 48, 1990, pp. 50–92.
- Brake, Mark and Neil Hook. “Teaching Science and Science Fiction: A Case Study.” *Teaching Science Fiction*, edited by Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright. Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- brown, adrienne maree. *Pleasure activism: the politics of feeling good*. AK Press, 2019.
- “Bumper Robinson.” *IMDB*. Internet Movie Database, n.d., <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0732436/>. Accessed 31 Aug. 2015.
- Burnett, Joshua Yu. “The Great Change and the Great Book: Nnedi Okorafor’s Postcolonial, Post-Apocalyptic Africa and the Promise of Black Speculative Fiction.” *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2015, pp. 133-150.
- Butler, Judith. “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion.” *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- Butler, Octavia E. “An Interview with Octavia E. Butler. Interview with Randall Kenan. *Callaloo*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1991, pp. 495-504.
- Butler, Octavia E. “Bloodchild.” *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. Seven Stories Press, 2005, pp. 33-68.
- Butler, Octavia E. “The Evening and the Morning and the Night.” *Bloodchild and Other Stories*. Seven Stories Press, 2005, pp. 33-68.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Fledgling*. Seven Stories Press, 2005.
- Butler, Octavia E. “Interviewing the Oracle: Octavia Butler.” Interview with Kazembe Balgun. *The Independent*, 13 Jan. 2006, <https://indypendent.org/2006/01/interviewing-the-oracle-octavia-butler/>. Accessed 19 Sep. 2025.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Kindred*. Doubleday & Company, 1979.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993.

- Butler, Octavia E. "'Radio Imagination': Octavia Butler on the Poetics of Narrative Embodiment." Interview with Marilyn Mehaffy and AnaLouise Keating. *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2001, pp. 45-76.
- Butler, Octavia E. Interview by Rosalie G. Harrison. "Sci-Fi Visions: An Interview with Octavia Butler." *Conversations with Octavia Butler*, edited by Consuela Francis. University Press of Mississippi, 2010.
- Butler, Octavia E. "The Science Fiction of Octavia Butler." Interview with Carolyn S. Davidson. *Sagala*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1981, p. 35.
- Cahill, Ann. *Overcoming Objectification: A Carnal Ethics*. Routledge, 2011.
- Canavan, Gerry. *Octavia E. Butler*. University of Illinois Press, 2016.
- Card, Orson Scott. "Books to Look For: Fantasy & Science Fiction February 1990." *Hatrack River*, Feb. 1990, <http://www.hatrack.com/osc/reviews/f&sf/90-02.html>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.
- Chesnutt, Charles. "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 1 Sep. 1900, p. 24, cols. 3-4. 4.
- Chow, Rey. "Against the Lures of Diaspora." *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, edited by Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur. Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Chvany, Peter A. "'Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?: Star Trek's Klingons as Emergent Virtual American Ethnics.'" *The Race and Media Reader*, edited by Gilbert B. Rodman. Routledge, 2014.
- Cliff, Michelle. *No Telephone to Heaven*. Penguin Books, 1987.
- "Community of Dreadful Fear and Hate." *Orphan Black*, written by Sherry White, directed by Ken Girotti, Space, 30 May 2015.
- Constant, Isabelle and Kahiudi C. Mabana. *Negritude: Legacy and Present Relevance*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1, 1989, pp. 139-167.
- Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan Jr. *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

“Darkling.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Rick Berman and Michael Piller, directed by Alexander Singer, UPN, 19 Feb. 1997.

Data’s Day.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Harold Apter and Ronald D. Moore, directed by Robert Wiemer, CBS, 7 Jan.1991.

Davies, Cara. “Protecting Women or Peddling Stereotypes? Bill C-510 and the Influence of the Woman-Protective Anti-Abortion Movement.” *Journal of Law and Equality*, 2011, pp. 1–26.

Davies, Cara. “Stereotyping and the New Women-Protective Antiabortion Movement.” Paper presented at the John and Mary Yaremko Forum on Multiculturalism and Human Rights: Student Symposium on Women’s Human Rights, Toronto, Ontario, 6 Mar. 2009.

Delany, Samuel. *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts & The Politics of the Paraliterary*. Wesleyan University Press, 1999.

Díaz, Junot. “Junot Diaz Aims to Fulfill His Dream of Publishing Sci-Fi Novel with Monstro.” *Wired*, 3 Oct. 2012, <https://www.wired.com/2012/10/geeks-guide-junot-diaz/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.

“Die Trying.” *Star Trek: Discovery*, written by Bryan Fuller and Alex Kurtzman, directed by Maja Vrvilo, Paramount+, 12 Nov. 2020.

“The Disease.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Rick Berman and Michael Piller, directed by David Livingston, UPN, 24 Feb. 1999.

Donaldson, Mark. “Star Trek: Discovery Reveals Another Iconic DS9 Connection.” *Screen Rant*, 14 Apr. 2024, <https://screenrant.com/star-trek-discovery-ferengi-bartender-ds9-connection>. Accessed 25 Sep. 2025.

Due, Tananarive. *My Soul to Keep*. Harper Collins Publishers, 1998.

“Elogium.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Jimmy Diggs, Steve J. Kay, and Kenneth Biller et al., directed by Winrich Kolbe, UPN, 18 Sep. 1995.

“Endgame.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Rick Berman, Kenneth Biller, and Brannon Braga, directed by Allan Kroeker, UPN, 23 May 2001.

“The Ensigns of Command.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Melinda M. Snodgrass, directed by Cliff Bole, CBS, 30 Sep. 1989.

Ernst, Sam and Jim Dunn, creators. *Haven*. Big Motion Pictures Productions, et al., 2015.

“Envoys.” *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, written by Mike McMahan and Chris Kula, directed by Kim Arndt and Juno John Lee, Paramount+, 13 Aug. 2020.

- Eyal, Nir. "Informed Consent." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 20 Sept. 2011, plato.stanford.edu/entries/informed-consent/. Accessed 2 Aug. 2015.
- Figlerowicz, Matylda and Lucas Mertehikian. "An Ever-Expanding World Literary Genre: Defining Magic Realism on Wikipedia." *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, vol. 8, no. 2, May 2023.
- Fink, Marty. "AIDS Vampires: Reimagining Illness in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*." *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2010, pp. 416–432.
- Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* O Books, 2009.
- Fortier, Mary-Anne. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space, Identity*. Routledge, 2000.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Classics, 2017.
- Geraghty, Lincoln. *Living with Star Trek: American Culture and the Star Trek Universe*. I.B. Taurus and Co Ltd, 2007.
- Gobineau, Arthur. *The Inequality of Human Races*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915.
- Gomez, Jewelle. "Speculative Fiction and Black Lesbians." *Signs*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1993, pp. 948-955.
- Govan, Sandra Y. "Homage to Tradition: Octavia Butler Renovates the Historical Novel." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 13, no. 1/2, 1986, pp. 79-96.
- Greco Larson, Stephanie. *Media & Minorities: The Politics of Race in News and Entertainment*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.
- Greywolf, Cynthia T. and John R. Lowe. "Colonization and the Introduction of Alcohol to Native Hawaiians: Why Cultural Safety?" *Journal of Indigenous Research*, vol. 10, 2022.
- Greven, David. *Gender and Sexuality in Star Trek: Allegories of Desire in the Television Series and Films*. McFarland & Company, Inc, Publishers, 2009.
- Hadyniak, Kyle. "Star Trek: Prodigy Episode 7 'First Contact' Review: Strange New Worlds." *Trek News*, 13 Jan. 2022, <https://treknews.net/2022/01/13/review-star-trek-prodigy-107-first-contact/>. Accessed 15 Sep. 2025.
- Hamadi, Lufti. "Edward Said: The Postcolonial Theory and the Literature of Decolonization." *European Scientific Journal*, vol. 2, 2014.
- Hampton, Gregory Jerome. *Changing Bodies in the Fiction of Octavia E. Butler: Slaves, Aliens, and Vampires*. Lexington Books, 2014.

- Haraway, Donna. "Comments." *Paradoxa*, 2016, <https://paradoxa.com/no-27-the-futures-industry-blurbs-and-reviews/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s." *Socialist Review*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1985, pp. 65-107.
- Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991.
- Harris, Geraldine. *Beyond representation: Television drama and the politics and aesthetics of identity*. Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Hayes, Rebecca M. *Defining Rape Culture: Gender, Race, and the Move Toward International Social Change*. Emerald Publishing Limited, 2023.
- "Heart of Stone." *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by Ira Stephen Behr and Robert Hewitt Wolfe, directed by Alexander Singer, CBS, 6 Feb. 1995.
- Hill Collins, Patricia. "Black Women and Motherhood." *Black Feminist Thought*. Routledge, 2000.
- Hill Collins, Patricia. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- Hood, Anna M., Staja Q. Booker, Calia A. Morais, Burel R. Goodin, Janelle E. Letzen, Lisa C. Campbell, Ericka N. Merriwether, Edwin N. Aroke, Claudia M. Campbell, Vani A. Mathur, and Mary R. Janevic. "Confronting Racism in All Forms of Pain Research: A Shared Commitment for Engagement, Diversity, and Dissemination." *The Journal of Pain*, vol. 23, no. 6, 2022, pp. 913-928.
- "Homestead." *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Raf Green, directed by LeVar Burton. UPN, 9 May 2001.
- Hopkinson, Nalo. "Introduction." *So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004.
- Hunt, Darnell, Ana-Christina Ramon, and Zachary Price. "2014 Hollywood Diversity Report: Making Sense of the Disconnect." Bunche Centre for African American Studies at UCLA, 2014.
- Hurd, Denise Alessandria. "The Monster Inside: 19th Century Racial Constructs in the 24th Century Mythos of Star Trek." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1997, pp. 23-35.
- Iaccino, James F. *Jungian Reflections within the Cinema: A Psychological Analysis of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Archetypes*. Praeger Publishers, 1998.
- "Indigenous People & Settler Colonialism." *Dartmouth Libraries*, n.d., <https://www.library.dartmouth.edu/slavery-project/indigenous-people-settler-colonialism>. Accessed 14 Jul. 2025.

- “Indiscretion.” *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by Rick Berman and Michael Piller, directed by LeVar Burton, CBS, 23 Oct. 1995.
- “Insolvent Phantom of Tomorrow.” *Orphan Black*, written by Russ Cochran, directed by Vincenzo Natali, Space, 13 Jun. 2015.
- “In Theory.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Ronald D. Moore and Joe Menosky, directed by Patrick Stewart, CBS, 3 Jun. 1991.
- Isabella, Jenny Blake and Trevor Von Eeden, creators. *Black Lightning*. Berlanti Productions et al., 2018.
- Jackson, Zakkiyah Iman. “Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2013, pp. 669-685.
- Jesser, Nancy. “Blood, Genes, and Gender in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* and *Dawn*.” *Extrapolation*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2002, pp. 36-62.
- Jeyapal, Daphne. “Since when did we have 100,000 Tamils”: Media representations of race thinking, spatiality and the 2009 Tamil diaspora protests.” *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2013, pp. 557-578.
- Jones, Cassandra L. *Black Speculative Feminisms: Memory and Liberated Futures in Black Women’s Fiction*. The Ohio State University Press, 2024.
- Joo, Hee-Jung Serenity. “Reproduction, Reincarnation, and Human Cloning: Literary and Racial Forms in Larissa Lai’s *Salt Fish Girl*.” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 55, no. 1, Aug. 2013, 46–59.
- “Journey’s End.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Ronald D. Moore and Shawn Piller, directed by Corey Allen, 26 Mar. 1994.
- Katz, Sarah. “Across Galaxies: How Science Fiction Echoes the Jewish Experience Under Colonization.” *Jews in Popular Science Fiction: Marginalized in the Mainstream*, edited by Valerie Estelle Frankel, Lexington Books, 2022, pp. 169-183.
- Khandaker, Tamara. “Phony Abortion Clinics in Canada Are Scaring Women with Lies.” *Vice*, 26 Jun. 2013, www.vice.com/en_ca/read/i-went-to-a-phony-abortion-clinic-in-toronto.
- Kim, Christine. “Troubling the Mosaic: Larissa Lai’s *When Fox is a Thousand*, Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, and Representations of Social Differences.” *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*, edited by Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, Wilfried Laurier Press, 2008, pp. 153-177.

- Koehler, Sezin. "From the Mouths of Rapists: The Lyrics of Robin Thicke's 'Blurred Lines,' Using Images from Project Unbreakable, an Online Photo Essay Exhibit." *Pacific Standard*, 19 Sept. 2013, www.psmag.com/books-and-culture/mouths-rapists-lyrics-robin-thickes-blurred-lines-66569.
- Krebs, Christopher P., et al. *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*. U.S. Department of Justice, Oct. 2007, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf.
- Kwan, Allen. "Seeking New Civilizations: Race Normativity in the Star Trek Franchise." *Bulletin of Science, Technology, & Society*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2007, pp. 59-70.
- Lai, Larissa. "Familiarizing Grist Village." *Canadian Literature*, no. 240, 2020, pp. 20-39.
- Lai, Larissa. "Future Asians: Migrant Speculations, Repressed History & Cyborg Hope." *West Coast Line*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2008, pp. 168-194.
- Lai, Larissa. *Salt Fish Girl*. Thomas Island Publishers, 2002.
- Lai, Larissa. *Slanting I, Imagining We*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014.
- Lai, Larissa. "The Sixth Sensory Organ." *Bringing it Home: Women Talk About Feminism in Their Lives*, edited by Brenda Lee Brown, Arsenal Pulp Press, 1996.
- Lai, Paul. "Stinky Bodies: Mythological Futures and the Olfactory Sense in Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, vol. 33, no. 4, Jan. 2008, pp. 167-187.
- Lavender, Isiah III. *Race in American Science Fiction*. Indiana University Press, 2011.
- LeFanu, Sarah. *Feminism and Science Fiction*. Indiana University Press, 1988.
- LeGuin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Ace Science Fiction Books, 1969.
- Levinson, Melanie. "'To Make Myself for a Person': 'Passing' Narratives and the Divided Self in the Work of Anzia Yezierska." *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, vol. 13, 1994, pp. 2-9.
- "Lineage." *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by James Kahn, directed by Peter Lauritson, UPN, 24 Jan. 2001.
- Logan, Elliott. "'Quality television' as a critical obstacle: explanation and aesthetics in television studies." *Screen*, vol. 57, no. 2, 2016, pp. 144-162.
- Mackenzie, Catriona and Jackie Leach Scully. "Moral Imagination, Disability and Embodiment." *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2007, pp. 335-351.

- Martins, Nicole and Kristen Harrison. "Racial and Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Children's Television Use and Self-Esteem: A Longitudinal Panel Study." *Communication Research*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2012, pp. 338-357.
- Mastro, Dana and Riva Tukachinsky. "The influence of exemplar versus prototype-based media primes on racial/ethnic evaluations." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 61, no. 5, 2011, pp. 916-937.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Meier, Brian P., Simone Schnall, Norbert Schwarz, and John A. Bargh. "Embodiment in Social Psychology." *Topics in Cognitive Science*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2012, pp. 705-716.
- Mendoza, Rubén. "Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Science Fictional Teaching: James Tiptree, Jr. and China Miéville as Sophistic Pedagogues." *Paradoxa*, no. 27, 2016, pp. 137-158.
- Merril, Judith. "What Do You Mean? Science? Fiction?" *Extrapolation*, 1966.
- Mohn, Elizabeth. "Great Replacement Theory (white replacement theory)." 2024. *Research Starters*, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/political-science/great-replacement-theory-white-replacement-theory>.
- Moody-Adams, Michele M. "Gender and the Complexity of Moral Voices." *Feminist Ethics*, edited by Claudia Card, University Press of Kansas, 1991, pp. 87-108.
- Mora, Miriam Eve. "Making a Jewish Case for Ferenginar: Redeeming Star Trek's Worst Archetypes," in *Jews in Popular Science Fiction: Marginalized in the Mainstream*, edited by Valerie Estelle Frankel, Lexington Books, 2022, pp. 131-150.
- "Mugato, Gumato." *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, written by Mike McMahan and Ben Rodgers, directed by Jason Zurek and Barry J. Kelly, Paramount+, 2 Sep. 2021.
- "The Naked Now." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by D.C. Fontana and John D.F. Black, directed by Paul Lynch, CBS, 3 Oct. 1987.
- Narayan, Uma. "Colonialism and Its Others: Considerations on Rights and Care Discourses." *Hypatia*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1995, pp. 133-140.
- Newman, Michael. "Quality TV as Liberal TV." *Western Humanities Review*, vol. 70, no. 3, 2016, pp. 70-98.
- Ngom, Ousmane. "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Aesthetics in African and Afrodiasporic Literatures." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 47, no. 2, Jun. 2020, pp. 196-214.

- Nott, J.C. "The Mulatto a Hybrid – Probable Extermination of the Two Races If the Whites and Blacks Are Allowed to Intermarry." *The New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 29, no. 2, 16 Aug. 1843, pp. 29-32.
- Nurhidayah, Sri and Rahmat Setiawan. "Traversing Magical Realism in Postcolonial Literature". *Notion Journal of Linguistics Literature and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 1, May 2022, pp. 23-33.
- Nyong'o, Lupita. "Why Black Panther is a Different Kind of Superhero Movie: The Daily Show." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Daily Show, 24 Feb. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-KB5QbOS4s4>.
- "The Offspring." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by René Echevarria, directed by Jonathan Frakes, CBS, 12 Mar. 1990.
- Okare, Fisayo. "Tomi Adeyemi's Debut Novel *Children of Blood and Bone* Scores a Publishing and Movie Deal: Black Girl Magic Meets Black Lives Matter Meets Avatar." *Native*, 31 Mar. 2017, <https://thenativemag.com/children-blood-bone-new-african-fantasy-novel-connects-magic-orisha-black-lives-matter-movement/>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. "African Science Fiction is Still Alien." *Nnedi's Wahala Zone Blog: The adventures of writer Nnedi Okorafor and her daughter Anyaugo Okorafor*, 15 Jan. 2014, <https://nnedi.blogspot.com/2014/01/african-science-fiction-is-still-alien.html>. Accessed 18 Sep. 2025.
- Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2011.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2015.
- Omry, Keren. "A Capital Alternative: Alternative Histories and the Futural Present." *Paradoxa*, no. 27, 2016, pp. 89-108.
- O'Neill, Onora. "The Moral Perplexities of Famine Relief." *Matters of Life and Death*, edited by Tom Regan, Temple University Press, 1980, pp. 260–298.
- Ott, Brian L. and Eric Aoki. "Popular Imagination and Identity Politics: Reading the Future in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*." *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2001, pp. 392-415.
- "An Overview of Abortion Laws." *Guttmacher Institute*, 1 Aug. 2015, http://www.guttmacher.org/statecentre/spibs/spib_OAL.pdf. Accessed 29 Aug. 2015.
- Oziewicz, Marek. "Speculative Fiction." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Pahl, Miriam. "Time, Progress, and Multidirectionality in Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2018, pp. 207-222.

- Palmer, Dale. "Redefining the Masculine Hegemony: Gender and Sexual Politics in Star Trek." *Electric Sheep Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Speculative Fiction in a Postmodern World*, edited by Harry Edwin Eiss. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- "Parth Ferengi's Heart Place." *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, written by Mike McMahan and Cullen Crawford, directed by Brandon Williams, Paramount+, 5 Oct. 2023.
- Pickens, Theri A. "'You're Supposed to Be a Tall, Handsome, Fully Grown White Man': Theorizing Race, Gender, and Disability in Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2014, pp. 33–48.
- "Prime Factors." *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by David R. George III, Eric A. Stillwell, and Greg Elliot et al., directed by Les Landau, UPN, 20 Mar. 1995.
- Rakatansky, Herbert. "My Turn: Herbert Ratatansky: Confronting racial inequity in medical treatment." *Providence Journal*, 18 Oct. 2017, <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/opinion/2017/10/18/my-turn-herbert-rakatansky-confronting-racial-inequality-in-medical-treatment/1>. Accessed
- Ramírez, Catherine. "Cyborg Feminism: The Science Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Gloria Anzaldúa." *Reload: Rethinking Women + Cyberculture*, edited by Mary Flanagan and Austin Booth, The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 374-402.
- "Requirements for Ultrasound." *Guttmacher Institute*, 1 Aug. 2015, www.guttmacher.org/statecentre/spibs/spib_RFU.pdf.
- "Revulsion." *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Lisa Klink, directed by Kenneth Biller, UPN, 1 Oct. 1997.
- Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin Books, 2011.
- Rhodes, Jane. "The visibility of race and media history." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, vol. 10, 1993, pp. 184-190.
- Rieder, John. *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- Roberts, Adam. *The History of Science Fiction*. 2nd ed., Palgrave MacMillan, 2016.
- Roberts, Robin A. "Science, Race, and Gender in Star Trek: Voyager." *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, edited by Elyce Rae Helford. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000.
- Robinson, Eden. *Son of a Trickster*. Knopf Canada, 2017.
- Robinson, Eden. *Trickster Drift*. Knopf Canada, 2018.

- Robinson, Eden. *Return of the Trickster*. Knopf Canada, 2021.
- Rousseau, Nicole. *Black Women's Burden: Commodifying Black Reproduction*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf, 1993.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Penguin Books, 2019.
- Salvaggio, Ruth. "Octavia Butler and the Black Science-Fiction Heroine." *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1984, pp. 78-81.
- Sanchez-Taylor, Joy. "Indigenous and Western Sciences in Carlos Hernandez's *The Assimilated Guide to Quantum Santeria*." *The Routledge Handbook of Co-Futurisms*, edited by Taryne Jade Taylor, Isiah Lavender III, Grace L. Dillon, and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyah, Routledge, 2023.
- "Sarek." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Marc Cushman, Jake Jacobs, and Peter S. Beagle, directed by Les Landau, CBS, 14 May 1990.
- Sawyer, Andy and Peter Wright. "Introduction." *Teaching Science Fiction*, edited by Andy Sawyer and Peter Wright, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Schiappa, Edward. *Beyond Representational Correctness: Rethinking Criticism of Popular Media*. State University of New York Press, 2008.
- "Second Chances." *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Michael A. Medlock and René Echevarria, directed by LeVar Burton, CBS, 24 May 1993.
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar. "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- Sherwin, Susan. "Feminist and Medical Ethics: Two Different Approaches to Contextual Ethics." *Hypatia*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1989, pp. 57-72.
- Shinn, Thelma J. "The Wise Witches: Black Women Mentors in the Fiction of Octavia Butler." *Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition*, edited by Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers, Indiana University Press, 1985, pp. 203-215.
- Smith, Eric D. *Globalization, Utopia, and Postcolonial Science Fiction: New Maps of Hope*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Smith, Stacy, Marc Choueiti, and Katherine Pieper. *Race/ethnicity in 500 popular films: Is the key to diversifying cinematic content held in the hand of the Black director?* USC Annenberg School of Communication, Media Diversity & Social Change Initiative. 2013.

- Sons and Daughters.” *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by Bradley Thompson and David Weddle, directed by Jesús Salvador Treviño, CBS, 16 Oct. 1997.
- Spellberg, Claire. “Netflix Just Released First Ever Top Ten Charts Of Their Most Viewed Movies and Shows”. *Decider*, 9 May 2019, <https://decider.com/2019/05/09/netflix-top-10-uk-april-our-planet/>. Accessed 10 Jul. 2019.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution.” *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Routledge, 1990, pp. 1-16.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Methuen, 1987.
- Star Trek: First Contact*. Directed by Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures, 1996.
- Staszak, Jean-Francois. “Performing Race and Gender: The Exoticization of Josephine Baker and Anna May Wong.” *Gender, Place, and Culture*, vol. 22, no. 5, 2015, pp. 626-643.
- Stowe, Dusty. “Star Trek Voyager’s Chakotay Native American Controversy Explained.” *Screen Rant*, 20 Mar. 2023, <https://screenrant.com/star-trek-voyager-chakotay-native-american-controversy/>. Accessed 14 Jul. 2025.
- Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. Yale University Press, 1979. Print.
- “Tacking into the Wind.” *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by Ronald D. Moore, directed by Mike Vejar, CBS, 12 May 1999.
- Takeshita, Chikiko. “Cyborg Feminism: Feminist Utopia in *Athena’s Choice*.” *Technologies of Feminist Speculative Fiction: Gender, Artificial Life, and the Politics of Reproduction*, edited by Sherryl Vint and Sümeyra Buran, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 173-193.
- Taylor, Taryne Jade. “Introduction”. *The Routledge Handbook of Co-Futurisms*, edited by Taryne Jade Taylor, Isiah Lavender III, Grace L. Dillon, and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyah, Routledge, 2023, pp. 1-8.
- Tesfaye, Alemu and Truphena Mukuna. “Understanding the links between coloniality, forced displacement and knowledge production.” *Integration and Implementation Insights: A community blog and repository of resources for improving research impact on complex real-world problems*, Aug. 2023, <https://i2insights.org/2023/08/>. Accessed 12 Jun. 2025.

- “Thirty Days.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Scott Miller and Kenneth Biller, directed by Winrich Kolbe, UPN, 9 Dec. 1998.
- Thoennes, Nancy, and Patricia Tjaden. *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey*. National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, July 2000, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/181867.pdf.
- “Transfigurations.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by René Echevarria, directed by Tom Benko, CBS, 17 Jun. 1990.
- Tuerkheimer, Deborah. “We Preach ‘No Means No’ for Sex, but That’s Not What the Law Says.” *The Guardian*, 12 Jan. 2014, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/12/rape-definition-use-of-force.
- Ty, Eleanor and Christl Verduyn. *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*. Wilfried Laurier Press, 2008.
- Van Engen, Dagmar. “Metamorphosis, Transition, and Insect Biology in the Octavia E. Butler Archive.” *Women’s Studies*, vol. 47, no. 7, 2018, pp. 733-754.
- Varsam, Maria. “Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Its Others.” *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, edited by Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan. Routledge, 2003.
- Veracini, L. *The Settler Colonial Present*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- “Victims and Perpetrators.” *National Institute of Justice*, 26 Oct. 2010, <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/rape-sexual-violence/pages/victims-perpetrators.aspx>. Accessed 20 Aug. 2015.
- Villanueva Jr., Victor. “Maybe a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Comp Community.” *Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1997, pp. 183-190.
- Vint, Sherryl. “Introduction: Sociotechnical Design and the Future of Gender.” *Technologies of Feminist Speculative Fiction: Gender, Artificial Life, and the Politics of Reproduction*, edited by Sherryl Vint and Sümeyra Buran, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, pp. 1-17.
- Vint, Sherryl. “Introduction to ‘The Futures Industry.’” *Paradoxa*, no. 27, 2016, 7-20.
- “Violations.” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, written by Shari Goodhartz, T Michael, and Pamela Gray et al., directed by Robert Wiemer, CBS, 3 Feb. 1992.
- Waite, Stacey. “Becoming the Loon: Queer Pedagogies and Female Masculinity”. *Queer Masculinities: A Critical Reader in Education*, edited by John C. Landreau and Nelson M. Rodriguez, Springer, 2012, 169-189.

- “Waltz.” *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, written by Ronald D. Moore, directed by René Auberjonois, Paramount Television, 8 Jan. 1998.
- “Warlord.” *Star Trek: Voyager*, written by Andrew Shepard Price, Mark Gaberman, and Lisa Klink, directed by David Livingston, UPN, 20 Nov. 1996.
- Weinbaum, Alys Eve. “The Afterlife of Slavery and the Problem of Reproductive Freedom.” *Social Text*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2013, pp. 49-68.
- West, Robin. “A Comment on Consent, Sex, and Rape.” *Legal Theory*, vol. 2, 1996, pp. 233–251.
- Winn, J. Emmett. “Highly Offensive Ferengi: Racial Issues and Star Trek’s Multicultural Deep Space Nine.” *Kinema*, 10 Apr. 2003, <https://openjournals.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/kinema/article/view/1046>. Accessed 31 Aug. 2015.
- Wolmark, Jenny. *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism, and Postmodernism*. University of Iowa Press, 1994.
- Young, Robert J.C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*. Routledge, 1995.
- “You Say You Want an Evolution.” *Extant*, written by Mickey Fisher and Pamela Davis, directed by Kevin Dowling, CBS, 5 Aug. 2015.
- Ziemke, Tom, Jordan Zlatev, and Roslyn M. Frank, editors. *Body, Language and Mind*, vol. 1, DeGruyter Mouton, 2007.
- Zoboi, Ibi. “Kiss the Sun.” *A Phoenix First Must Burn: Sixteen Stories of Black Girl Magic, Resistance, and Hope*, edited by Patrice Caldwell. Penguin Random House, 2020.