

## The Paradigms of “Trade” in Octavia Estelle Butler’s *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987)

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**Abstract:** This essay questions the concept of trade in Butler’s *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987). It examines the paradigmatic declensions of the sociopolitical agenda conceptualized by the politics of trade. The analysis has been made with the lens of the Postcolonial theory as developed by Bhabha K. Homi in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) where he describes spaces where cultural borders are broken to engender hybrid culture. This delineation of the cultural essentialism in its complex interaction with cultural differences has framed the analytic rationale of this essay. Therefore, it has been proved that the concept of trade foregrounds the politics of cultural domination and exploitation for the implementation of the politics of trade paves the way to the cultural castration of the colonized or dominated people and reduces them to mere exploitable resources in total disrespect of human rights.

**Key Words:** Trade – Postcolonialism – Cultural Castration – Cultural Essentialism – Nativism – Hybridity

**Résumé:** Cet article questionne le concept de commerce dans les romans *Wild Seed* (1980) et *Dawn* (1987) de Butler. Il examine les déclinaisons paradigmatiques de l’agenda sociopolitique conceptualisé par la politique du concept de commerce. L’analyse a été faite sous le prisme de la théorie Postcoloniale telle que développée par Bhabha K. Homi dans son œuvre intitulé *The Location of Culture* (1994), œuvre dans laquelle il décrit les espaces où les barrières culturelles sont brisées pour donner place à des cultures hybrides. Cette délimitation de l’essentialisme culturel dans ses rapports complexes avec les différences culturelles constitue le cadre analytique de cet article. Il a été subséquemment prouvé que le concept de commerce met en avant la politique de la domination culturelle et de l’exploitation. Preuve en est que la mise en application de la politique du commerce fait le lit à la castration culturelle des peuples dominés ou colonisés et les réduit qu’à de simples ressources exploitables au mépris total des droits de l’homme.

**Mots Clés :** Commerce – Postcolonialisme – Castration Culturelle – Essentialisme Culturel – Nationalisme – Hybridité

### Introduction

The present essay examines two novels by Octavia Estelle Butler, namely *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987). The two science fiction narratives are centered on the concept of “Trade” that occurs when aliens invaded the earth in *Dawn*. This novel is the story of the awakening of humanity from a global chaos caused by a nuclear war that has almost swept out life on earth. Following the apocalyptic event, the Oankali, an extraterrestrial community, comes down in order to save the remnant of this decaying humanity. The story in *Dawn* continues into *Wild Seed*, and both fictions deal with the

planned vision of the aliens who try to manipulate humans' genes and blend with their own. The Oankali recognize that the name of their community means life traders in their own language (*Dawn in Lilith's Brood*, 2000: 41). The analysis of the two novels emphasizes the implementation of the agenda of the politics of trade. The aliens' trade crystalizes the interactions between the human beings whose territories are visited. The subjugating politics of these travelers takes the form of an imperialistic superpower.

The interest of this analysis of the two novels *Wild Seed* and *Dawn* is to expose the metaphor of trade as politics of cultural domination. The essay contends that through this metaphor, a system of imperialism takes form in Butler's science fiction novels that parody any politics of colonization of other people. Like colonization that has always pursued mercantilist interests, the Oankali's trade is associated with a type of ideology fueled by an all-out mercantilism. For the extraterrestrials, there is no important motivation than the "trade" of life. Their ideology is one by which culture, civilization and even technology are at the service of life trading. This mission fosters their travels throughout the constellations.

Advocating a commitment for the betterment of the life condition of indigenous communities has always been a deceitful propaganda of released by imperialism. By this way, imperialism seeks first to hide its real motivation that is exploitation. An edifying example of the use of that deceitful propaganda that lurks the travels of imperialistic forces to new territories is provided by James Cameron's *Avatar* (2010). *Avatar* (2010) portrays the invasion of blue aliens' territory by white humans at the quest of unobtainium, a precious natural resource. In his article entitled "Don't It Make My Black Face Blue: Race, Avatars, Albescence, and the Transitional Imagery" (2013), John Russel comments on Cameron's *Avatar* stating that:

The plot of the *Avatar* film parallels with the historical ways that Europeans sought out new countries to colonize for their resources, such as parts of the jungles in the African Congo. The idea that there is a historical parallel is strengthened throughout the film with glimpses of the scenery, tribal dress and the Na'vi language. The Na'vi people speak in a dialect that could be easily mistaken for a mixture of the Khoisan and Bantu language that is spoken countries throughout present day Africa, with its distinctive click consonants. (Russel, 2013: 192)

According to John Russel, the story recounted by James Cameron's *Avatar* (2010) is an allegorical demodulation of the history of colonialism in Africa. In fact, the tragedy of colonialism as well as imperialism rests on the fact that they have deprived Africa from its substantial and material resources necessary for its development. Then, while in real history colonialism aims to dominate

African territories, in *Avatar* (2010), the Whites go to dominate the blue aliens' territory. It is the same process with which in real history imperialism boasts to bring civilization to barbaric-like people. Besides, in *Avatar* (2010), the narrative describes these aliens as living a very tribal and savage life. On this point, there is an evident link between the storylines of James Cameron's *Avatar* (2010) and Butler's science fiction narratives on Oankali aliens' mission down here on earth. While they feign to heal humankind from a certainly mournful end, they give them no choice and they source human genes as raw materials for their own realization. As merchants of life, their politics can not be accepted if ever they do not adorn it with a saving discourse.

In the same way, in his article entitled "Estranged Invaders: The War of the Worlds" incorporated in Patrick Parrinder's *Learning from other World: Estrangement, Cognition and the Politics of Science Fiction and Utopia* (2000), Peter Fitting states that: "SF<sup>1</sup> accounts of meetings with alien others have usually been modelled on the European narratives of voyages of discovery of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (127). This assertion brings into light the highly political agenda inscribed in the paradigm of travel in works of science fiction. As far as Octavia Estelle Butler's science fiction novels are concerned, the narratives of aliens' travels to other worlds have always been charged with imperialistic agenda.

Imperialistic domination is the real impulse of travels in Butler's science fiction novels as exemplified by *Wild Seed* ((1980) where Doro and Anyanwu, the two protagonists, are in a relentless fight for domination. Doro is a male immortal spirit with no physical body. He unceasingly renews his physical appearance by preying on others, and he takes on the bodies of his victims. By so doing, Doro intends to be the sole patriarch of the large community of humans who are endowed with special qualities and powers that make them immortal. He takes advantage of the Atlantic slave trade to achieve his goal of reunifying that community of immortal people in America. Doro's thirst of power results in the dislocation of family ties. Anyanwu, Doro's concubine is also immortal and lives for centuries. Unfortunately, her children are not immortal like her. Doro wants her to be the matriarch of his community of immortal super humans. The obstacle to reach that objective is their discontinuous relationship. In fact, their cohabitation is hindered by a permanent struggle for domination because the will of domination and sexual exploitation between Anyanwu and him makes the bulk of the storylines of *Wild Seed* (1980).

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<sup>1</sup> Science Fiction

Like Doro in *Wild Seed*, the Oankali colony in *Dawn* (1987) needs other people to perpetuate their life. The basic difference between Doro and the Oankali is that the Oankali do not kill and take their victims' body while Doro does. Indeed, the Oankali need to blend with Humans to make a new hybrid race. Consequently, they appoint Lilith to convince her fellow Humans on the necessity to blend with them if they want to continue to live. From then on, she suffers rejection by her fellow humans. The Oankali also make use of some subtle psychological pressures on her to accomplish their will. Lilith finds herself compelled to coax her people into accepting the Oankali's proposal to unify with them. By so doing, *Dawn* deals with the issues of capitalist domination and commodification of humankind through the image of Oankali.

All these narratives of domination and resistance pinpoint the very useful playground that science fiction offers to the discourses of postcoloniality. As Langer states: "there are two main uses of science fiction: to support imperial ambitions of expansion, othering, etc., or to counter these ambitions through narratives that highlight the ill consequences of imperialism (e.g. dystopian narratives)" (Langer in Bajaber, 2013:411). This statement shows enough the importance of the reading of a science fiction text through the lens of the Postcolonialist criticism.

Postcolonialism is a theoretical approach developed initially by Edward Said in his *Orientalism* (1978), a book in which he denounces the stereotypical images released by the Eurocentric standpoint against the Asian and mostly the Middle West Arabic peoples. The scientific pertinence of this criticism in the description of the complex relationship between colonizers and colonized, and the conflicting relations between their cultures, offers to Postcolonialism a very interesting appraisal among the intellectual of former colonized countries. It thrived very quickly namely with the development of the concept of "hybridity" by Bhabha K. Homi in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) where he describes spaces where cultural borders are broken to engender hybrid culture. This delineation of the cultural essentialism in its complex interaction with cultural differences will establish the analytic rationale of this essay.

For a thorough examination of the paradigms of trade in Butler's *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987), this work will firstly study the paradigm of trade as a strategy for the implementation of Oankali aliens' politics of cultural castration upon humanity. Then, it will insist on dehumanization as aliens' political means to support their concept of trade. The argumentation of this essay will finally demonstrate the totalizing politics inherent in Oankali aliens' ideology of trade.

## 1 –Trade as a Strategy for the Implementation of Cultural Castration

In the deployment of their political agenda that consists in tailoring a new species made up of a blending of human genes with their own cells, the Oankali aliens postulate that the possibility to reach that scientific goal can not be a success without winning the cultural battle. For the Oankali, the cultural and ideological victory is factually consubstantial to the deployment of the biological transformation. Therefore, they proceed to applying trade as a strategy for the cultural castration of the humankind. However, what policy covers the concept of cultural castration?

The notion of castration evocated here must be understood as a process of voiding from a dominated community, the pride and confidence in their own identity and culture. It is, in some way, the re-appropriation of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic concept of castration. Freud developed that concept in a series of conferences delivered to the students of the University of Vienna's Faculty of Medicine. These conferences were published in his *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1921). Freud unfolds the concept of castration in these terms:

The sexual curiosity of children begins very early, sometimes before the third year. It is not connected with the differences of sexes, which means nothing to the child, since the boy, at any rate, ascribes the same male genital to both sexes. When the boy first discovers the primary sexual structure of the female, he tries at first to deny the evidence of his senses, for he cannot conceive a human being who lacks the part of his body that is of such importance to him. Later he is terrified at the possibility revealed to him and he feels the influence of all the former threats, occasioned by his intensive preoccupation with his little organ. He becomes subject to the domination of the castration complex, the formation of which plays an important part in the development of his character, provided he remains healthy; of his neurosis, if he becomes diseased; of his resistance, if he is treated analytically. We know that the little girl feels injured on account of her lack of a large, visible penis, envies the boy his possession, and primarily from this motive desires to be a man. This wish manifests itself subsequently in neurosis, arising from some failure in her role as a woman. (Found in the English Version: *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud*, Dodo Collections, [www. bookos-z.lib.org](http://www.bookos-z.lib.org), p190)

This observation by Freud describes the handicapping functioning of the psychical process of castration. In fact, castration refers to the phase in the child's sexual development when the little boy discovers that unlike him, the little girl has no penis. On the one hand, the mind of the little boy cannot understand this lack of the penis that he associates with so powerful utility. By then, the little boy develops a sentiment of anxiety relative to the eventuality of the loss of his own penis. This scares him a lot. On the other hand, the little girl is upset by the discovery of her lack of penis. She finds in this a

sentiment of incompleteness. According to Freud, there starts the idea of the inferiority of the female before the male.

This ancient and handicapping sentiment of the little girl before the little boy can be projected in the dynamism of the cultural fact. When two cultures interact, there is a conflicting relation that spurts out. This happens because of the unceasing battle of consciousnesses for domination that is one of the instinctive natures of human cohabitation. But the overwhelming domination that occurs after a process of cultural assimilation foregrounds the deprivation of the owners of the culture deemed inferior from their pride, their far consciousness, and their cultural background. This process of voiding off a given human community from his history, identity, and culture resulting in the loss of their self-reliance is what is theorized in this essay as cultural castration. In this vein, cultural castration becomes an ideological instrument in the hands of overpowering powers to cure an inherent fear; a downfall anxiety.

Similarly, Tina Chanter examines the notion of castration in cultural realm by revealing its ideological impact on politics of racialization in her article entitled “Abjection, or Why Freud Introduces the Phallus: Identification, Castration Theory, and the Logic of Fetishism” (2004) by stating that:

The white man knows that the racialized other is castrated—without power—but nonetheless attributes to him a mystical, magical, transcendent, threatening aura. This transference of the discourse of fetishism to race neglects the underlying problematic dependence of the discourse of sexual difference upon racial difference—a dependence that sometimes becomes a counter dependence—thereby risking the importation of phallic assumptions in the discourse of race and racialized assumptions into the discourse of sexual difference. (Chanter, 2004: 50)

In this analysis, Tina Chanter presents racialization as a discourse underpinning the will of domination. She exposes Whites’ trend to demonize racial difference into something appalling while nourishing this fear of difference by discursive assumptions on sexual difference. For Chanter, racial impulses as well as a phallogocentric view conduct the relational approach of Whites to people of other races. In this way, white men subordinate the other that they regard as a “racialized other”. The racialized other is looked down on as a “castrated—without power”. But curiously and as developed sooner, the dominant forces tend to be afraid of the permanent presence of the dominated subject for his presence recalls their own fragility and the possibility to fall down. This fear of the tenants of dominant cultures may found their violent and intolerant politics against those they dominate.

Following the politics of cultural colonization, trade is established as an imperialistic method in the general perspective of reinforcing the colonized people's cultural castration. The reasons of the implementation of such kinds of methods partake in the politics of subversion of the colonized community's social and cultural values so that they can be infiltrated and submitted more easily to their own sociopolitical agenda. Owing that the subversion of a whole community's mores and values equates to the voiding of its people's identity, the deployment of the methods of cultural imperialism will methodically tackle the cultural and civilizational foundations of the colonized people.

Concretely, the deployment of imperialistic politics always starts by pinpointing the frustrations of the targeted people while exacerbating the tensions existing amidst the communities in the sole intention to present a redemptive solution that it brings. But in reality, all the approaches adopted by imperialism aim only to withdraw a profit of the social dissensions existing between the members of the targeted community before dominating it. An example of that deceptive approach of imperialism appears in this passage:

In the benign atmosphere of the ship, all the slaves were recovering from their invariably harsh homeland experiences. Some of them had been kidnapped from their villages. Some had been sold for witchcraft or for other crimes of which they were usually not guilty. Some had been born slaves. Some had been enslaved during war. All had been treated harshly at some time during their captivity. All had lived through pain – more pain than they cared to remember. All had left kinsmen behind – husbands, wives, parents, children ...people they realized by now that they would not see again. (Butler, *Wild Seed in Seed to Harvest*, 2007: 64)

This account explains widely the different stories of those who have been sold in slavery. For fair, it is a more credible explanation on the different cases since it differs from the metanarratives. In fact, this account reveals the personal stories of snatched people from the ancestral land of Africa to be sold in slavery. There are so many reasons, many causes evocated in this account that it brings more details on the reality of the Atlantic slave trade.

But more importantly, this story paves the way for the understanding of the causes of the cultural castration of those kidnapped Africans. In fact, their rapture from their homeland and cultural sphere to the unknown places of the New World, uprooted them enough to void them from their habits and customs. Trying to avoid that cultural castration, Doro follows his fellow people to the ship to make sure he will be able to save them from that danger. Unfortunately, this brutal change of space and cultural sphere causes them to lose attachment to their cultural background. They “had begun to accept unfamiliar foods and strange companions, they must accept new customs” (63). This observation made

by Okoye, Anyanwu's grandson, is the confirmation of the use of trade as a strategy for the implementation of cultural castration.

Indeed, the passage above outlines the acculturating effect of massive exile of a given people. Truthfully, exiling a whole community equates to separating them from their landmark because their ancestral land is the receptacle of their customs and their traditions. It is worth precisizing that customs are a set of rules set up by a people inscribing their life experience throughout time and space. And these rules dictate their mores and lifestyles; this is what we call tradition. Tradition is thus, in some way, a tacit agreement on the way of living of a community, their appreciation of the good or the evil, the allowed or forbidden things. It also contains a notice of their ceremonials and rituals. Therefore, the total upsetting of all these receptacles of knowledge deriving from the ancient ages that make a people's own identity, is clearly a destruction of their identity and their existence as full humans.

Moreover, in Butler's *Dawn* the politics of trade highlights an ideological expression of cultural domination. In fact, the concept of "trade" here utters the overpowering political and technoscientific domination of the Oankali that represent a very highly advanced civilizational power over a poorly decaying humanity. The motif of the domination of human beings by Oankali appears clearly in the implementation of their own agenda to the human species. This includes what they intend to do of human beings and the way they want to achieve their objective. Actually, they do not let any choice to humans:

You'll Awaken a small group of humans, all English-speaking, and help them learn to deal with us. You'll teach them the survival skills we teach you. Your people will all be from what you would call civilized societies. Now they'll have to learn to live in forests, build their own shelters, and raise their own food all without machines or outside help." (Butler, *Dawn* in *Lilith's Brood*, 2007: 32)

This dialogue between Lilith, the black woman and first awoken among the survivors of the apocalyptic chaos of the nuclear world war, and Jdahya a Oankali representative figure, reveals the authoritarian voice inherent in the Oankali's plan of restructuration of human civilization. It shows that these extraterrestrial beings have a very condescending apprehension for humans' civilization. In reality, this relationship between the Oankali and the humans constructed on the basis of a politics of othering and subalternity reinforces the idea that contempt is the fundamental philosophy underpinning all imperialist interventions. In fact, they deny humans all capacity to restructure their existence on earth.

## 2 – The Politics of Trade and the Agenda of Dehumanization

The politics of trade observed in the Atlantic Slave Trade<sup>2</sup> as well as its theorization by the Oankali aliens functions as a means to materialize the human beings into raw materials handled to satisfy the colonizer's objectives. In reality, the use of violence under all its forms (physical, psychological, and cultural) is instrumental to the success of the politics of trade. Indeed, in the works of Butler, the ideology of trade is underpinned by a totalitarian discourse of dominant foreign forces that come and try to implement their own sociopolitical agenda upon the native people without their consent. Factually, the notion of consent has never been important to imperialist foreign forces. On the contrary, it is through mass violence and all kinds of abuses that the Oankali deploy their agenda. In this sense, trade mirrors the practice of slavery in the history of human cultures and interactions inasmuch as the institution of slavery has worked only by the legitimization of violence and the total violation of the Human Rights.

As a matter of fact, *Wild Seed* opens the way to the reader for a voyage back in the past to apprehend the horrors of the experience of the rapture of African people from Africa to the dire destinations of the route of trade; the market of slaves. This passage informs enough on the mass violence used as a method of the mercantilism inherent in imperialism:

With their guns and their greed, they had undone in a few hours the work of a thousand years. Those villagers they had not herded away, they had slaughtered. Doro found human bones, hair, bits of desiccated flesh missed by scavengers. He stood over a very small skeleton—the bones of a child – and wondered where the survivors had been taken. Which country or New World colony? How far would he have to travel to find the remnants of what had been a healthy, vigorous people? (Butler, *Wild Seed in Seed to Harvest*, 2007:5)

This passage not only portrays the extreme violence exerted by the slavers on the African communities for the purpose of the Atlantic Slave Trade. In addition, it demonstrates the unthinkable handle of the scorched earth policy by slavers. In fact, for them the mass killing of the native people inscribes their overpowering domination in the foreign territory. Therefore, terror plays for them a capital function as far as it announces the fate reserved for the communities that would dare withstand the deployment of their policy.

Unfortunately, this use of mass violence on native people partakes in the cultural castration of the colonized for the trauma of those brutal raptures and the erasing of the traits of the victims' cultural

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<sup>2</sup> The mass commerce of African people that took place between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

backgrounds work as an act of cleansing of the victims' cultural identity. As a consequence, this implementation of cultural castration uproots individuals of whole communities. For instance, when Doro was wondering: "Which country or New World colony? How far would he have to travel to find the remnants of what had been healthy, vigorous people?" (5), it was, in reality, their cultural existence he was worrying about.

Above all, it is worth pointing out how despising the politics of trade is for human rights. Indeed, the politics of trade as a social agenda is a scathing violation of human dignity. The fact is that in the use of manipulation and torture is consubstantial to the process of trade. In reality, it can be observed that in its application, the politics of trade is the sociopolitical agenda designed by a foreign imperialist power that proceeds, in a first stage, by a cunning and subtle invasion of a territory, a culture while prompting the upheaval of its foundations. Then, the second stage consists in choosing influence figures amidst the targeted community whose psychology is modelled. And finally, they serve as the intermediaries in the imposition of the new sociopolitical agenda to the masses.

In *Dawn*, in addition to Lilith, the first awakened woman from the nuclear war's chaos, Oankali want to choose Leah Bede as a surrogate mother and associate her to Lilith to play the mothers of this new start for the post-apocalyptic humankind. But Leah Bede does not consent even if it should cost her a lot of sufferings. Deeply rooted in the ideology of the bioconservatism, she does not want to play the role assigned to her by the Oankali amidst her fellow humans. Her resistance is recounted in this passage:

Leah Bede. Quiet, religious, slow-slow-moving, not slow-witted, though the Oankali had not been particularly impressed by her intelligence. It was her patience and self-sufficiency that had impressed them. They had not been able to make her obey. She had outwaited them in stolid silence. Outwaited Oankali! She had starved herself almost to death when they stopped feeding her to coerce her cooperation. Finally, they had drugged her, gotten the information they wanted, and, after a period of letting her regain weight and strength, they had put her back to sleep. (Butler, *Dawn in Lilith's Brood*, 2000: 119)

This account showcases the highly nativistic standpoint of Leah Bede. Her radical refusal to help the imperialistic agenda of trade to destroy or shift human integrity into something hybrid costs her some brutal tortures by the Oankali. However, she stood her ground because for her nothing is worth her community as well as her own human identity.

From another angle, this narrative about Leah Bede in *Dawn* allows the reader, through a thorough analysis, to seize the psychology of the Oankali. In fact, as an eminently imperialistic and

elitist community, they can not imagine their relationship to others with the prism of equality and respect. Consequently, they are motivated by the instinct of domination and this is manifested by the ability to use any kind of means to achieve their objective. In this way, torture and mind manipulation implying the fact of intoxicating their victims partake in their process of constraining to consent. Thus, in Oankali's view, consent is forced and provoked but not given. This particular psychology is nourished by an obstinate will to impose their civilization to humankind. Besides, for Oankali even science and technology must be at the service of their instrumentalization of the human body.

### **3 – Miscegenation and the Totalizing Politics of the Ideology of Trade**

The philosophical framework behind the Oankali's sociopolitical agenda of trade is highly essentialist and totalizing. As a result, it tends to praise their offer as a therapy against civilizational loss. But contrastively, trade is more assimilationist than tolerant for the politics of trade implies not only the creation of hybrid species, not only the blending of culture, but rather it foregrounds the assimilation of the other. In its implementation, trade postulates that the betterment of human beings is compulsorily linked to the loss of their original identity. The ideology of trade puts forward that the human original identity is defiled by a natural trend to hierarchization and violence. Therefore, the Oankali propose, as a key for human salvation, that humans surrender to their pride in their biology and their civilization. That is what Nikanj, a representative figure of the scientific community called the ooloi among the Oankali declared to Lilith: ““Our children will be better than either of us,” [...] “We will moderate your hierarchical problems and you will lessen our physical limitations. Our children won't destroy themselves in war” (Butler, *Dawn in Lilith's Brood*, 2000: 247).

This statement unfolds the content of the clause of Oankali's trade. For Oankali, it is essential to have at their disposal the Humans' body in order to extend their physical abilities and continue to survive. In exchange, they assure humans from what they diagnose as the root of their conflictual trend. This theorization by Oankali of their interactions with other species is the ideological foundations of their numerous voyages through ages and through the constellations. However, it sounds very much like an essentialist perspective for it deprives from human beings any good ability for peaceful and coherent cohabitation while praising outer intervention as the sole possibility given to humankind to know peace.

No matter their alleged redemptive mission, the questioning of the basis of their intervention is quite justifiable. Admittedly, Oankali's theory of trade is exclusionist, it demonizes the other as insane and, of course, it projects a totalizing perspective of the relationship to the other. In so doing, Oankali's theory of trade akin a lot to the Eurocentrism inherent to the enterprise of imperialism and colonialism. For such totalizing politics, the process has always been the same; nourishing a peripheral discourse on indigenous populations, presenting them as incapable to come out of their mournful situation by themselves and presenting one's own generosity and moral duty to help them escape their indigeneity. Unfortunately, the outcomes of imperialistic enterprises have always proved to create other sources of sorrows instead of struggling against the obscurantism they presuppose to fight.

Moreover, in Butler's narratives of *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987) the sociopolitical agenda of trade exploits the violation of human rights as a means to reach its goal. This is the incentive of the appropriation of the human body that the Oankali aliens presuppose as a normal process in the accomplishment of their redemptive mission on the post-apocalyptic earth. In this vein, in his *Changing Bodies in the Fiction of Octavia Butler: Slaves, Aliens, and Vampires* (2010), Gregory Hampton comments on Judith Butler's essay entitled "Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscription," stating that in the narratives of Octavia Butler, the body represents "a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves in a location that seems to be pre-given" (27).

This comment made by Hampton tells much on the instrumentalization of the body as a location for the demonstration of power at the expense of its owner. In reality, in Butler's science fiction novels, the body serves as a field where all the games of powers are played unbeknownst to the proprietors of the bodies in question. Meanwhile in *Wild Seed* (1980) Doro unceasingly needs his fellow people's body to reinitiate himself in his sempiternal quest for power and immortality, in *Dawn* (1987), it is the turn of the extraterrestrial community of Oankali to perceive human bodies as raw materials of vital importance. Indeed, they use human bodies for the perpetuation of their species, for scientific experiments, and for the implementation of their sociopolitical agenda that revolves around trading lives. Knowing that trading lives for Oankali means shifting live forms into interspecies beings, creating hybrid species part human part Oankali, and changing humans' mores and values concerning identity, sexuality, and parenthood, this activity is the vital reason for their existence.

In this context of demonstration of techno-scientific power, the principles of the most powerful becomes the better. Such exploitation of the dominated people extends its influence to the most

intimate domain of life. It touches to the choice of the individual concerning reproduction. This reality is exposed by Nikanj in this clarification to Lilith: “They won’t have children without us. Human sperm and egg will not unite without us” (Butler, *Dawn in Lilith’s Brood*, 2000: 245). This passage shows the extreme level of alienation undergone by the Humans. In reality, the Oankali have arranged to make it unavoidable for the Human beings to reproduce themselves without their contribution. This extreme form of alienation is clearly against the human rights as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>3</sup>. In its article 1, it is stipulated: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”, concerning article 3, it is said: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person”. But clearly, an overpowering domination led by imperialistic powers like the Oankali has always ignored the appeals to respecting human rights.

As a consequence, Humans’ sexuality and even their perpetuation as a whole and distinctively living species is alienated by the Oankali. Evidently, beyond the symbolic figure of Oankali, it is all the systems of political, social, economic, and techno-scientific dominations that are pointed here. Admittedly, the sociopolitical agenda of trade recalls the capitalist over-weighty domination on the lives of the individual in the consumer societies. In fact, the propaganda and deceitful advertisements to which the individual is exposed along the days in the consumerist society fight his faculty to soberly choose what is sound for him. Therefore, capitalism, in its deployment, fights the individual’s consent as the Oankali work to annihilate Humans’ consent. Nowadays, any single aspect of our life is subjected to the control of governments through the means of technology and science. From fashion to accommodation, from health to services till our reproductive mode, every single domain is under the control of capitalism. Capitalism trades with all, arrange our living conditions to be dependent of its offers. Capitalism is the current declension of imperialism and its totalizing politics of trade is fiercely at work in our societies.

## Conclusion

This essay has made a reflection on the paradigms of trade in the science fiction narratives of the African American science fiction author Octavia Estelle Butler namely the narratives in her *Wild Seed* (1980) and *Dawn* (1987). Through a thorough study of the conceptualization of the notion of

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<sup>3</sup> Source : [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

“trade”, it has been demonstrated that trade bears a particular meaning in these narratives. In fact, trade functions as the ideology of exploitation of imperialist powers on the dominated peoples.

Factually, trade has been used as a strategy for the implementation of cultural castration. Defined as the process of voiding a given human community from his civilization, history, and cultural background till to lose self-confidence and confidence in these elements of identity patterns, cultural castration is used by imperialistic powers as an ideological tool in the penetration of dominated societies. This relentless strategy works for them as a method of chaos before instituting their own cultural domination. This is how the extraterrestrial community of Oankali proceeded to intervene down here on earth to establish their domination on the post-apocalyptic human societies.

In the deployment of their strategy of domination, the Oankali proved very much that the use of violence under all its sociopolitical, psychological, and even techno-scientific forms keenly partakes in the strengthening of overpowering domination. The aim of these policies goes from the appropriation of the human body to its manipulation as raw materials at the service of a new sociopolitical agenda. Unfortunately, this is done willingly in all disrespects of human rights.

Finally, in Butler’s narratives trade is depicted as one of the paradigms that reinforces cultural essentialism for it functions as a propaganda against otherness. The ideology behind the sociopolitical agenda of trade is an ideology of othering and exploitation. It pretends to praise hybridity and miscegenation. However, this ideology positions the culture and the agenda of the dominant culture as the norm while handling the colonized or dominated peoples just as resources for the accomplishment of their own objectives. In this way, in Butler’s novels trade reinforces the essentialism inherent in Eurocentrism and imperialism. Besides, the ideology of trade enlarges the range of cultural domination to the restructuring of human culture and civilization touching their mores and values concerning the sense of family, identity, sexuality, and reproduction. Trade postulates the upheaval of all these notions that build human moral.

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