REDEFINING HUMANITY: POSTHUMANISM IN THE AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION NARRATIVES OF OCTAVIA BUTLER'S *DAWN* AND ANN LECKIE'S *ANCILLARY JUSTICE*

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ABSTRACT

Science Fiction enables us to explore alternative notions of gender, identity, and biotechnological advancements. A potential new futuristic universe may depict societies that might have different social norms. Anthropocentrism limits our imagination in that humanity becomes the vantage point from which we judge other forms of existence. The notion of posthumanism challenges human exceptionalism, thus constructing a narrative based on post-anthropocentrism. This article addresses the issue of displaced discriminatory power structures with special attention to reconfigurations of humanity that challenge the Self/Other dichotomy. The cyborg as a hybrid identity disrupts the traditional dualisms of embodiment (mind/body) and identity (organism/machine). It examines Octavia Butler's *Dawn* (1987) and Ann Leckie's *Ancillary Justice* (2013) in order to show how the protagonists deal with power struggles that are quite different from conventional narratives of power in Western scholarship such as white patriarchal capitalism. The protagonists of both novels become posthuman cyborgs by moving beyond the normative human condition, with gender as a key aspect. Butler's Lilith biologically transcends her human self by fusing with an alien Other, thus representing biological posthumanism. Leckie's Breq merges an enhanced human body with an AI consciousness and becomes an exponent of technological posthumanism. I argue that the anthropocentric issues of racism and sexism are not supplanted by post-anthropocentrism, the protagonists rather subvert anthropocentrism in different contexts of posthumanism. This project sheds new light on Science Fiction narratives written by female authors—with a focus on Afrofuturism, in the case of Butler—and explores how the protagonists are exponents of unique non-binary gender configurations.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Science Fiction, Collective Will, Hybridity, Cyborg, Transformation.

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I. INTRODUCTION: ADVANTAGES OF SCIENCE FICTION

The age-old question of what it means to be human is prevalent in almost every field of study. Whether it is the evolution of the modern homo sapiens in biology, pivotal events in human history, or sociocultural aspects of spirituality in theology: despite ongoing debates in the course of philosophy, the mysteries of humankind have yet to be unraveled. Speculative fiction in literature becomes a tool for writers who seek to explore the privilege of calling oneself a human being. Science fiction (SF) in particular is a genre in which a plethora of possible futures can exist, presenting readers with interesting alternatives to the present real world. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), an exponent of Gothic fiction, is also regarded by some scholars as the first real SF narrative because it includes scientific and ethical issues in a story about a mad genius creating a being that wreaks havoc upon society: an unholy monster that confronts its maker with the harsh reality of its (in)human nature.

Humanity as a concept can be understood in two different contexts. On the one hand, it is the whole of humankind on Earth as in a bipedal, intelligent mammal that has populated the planet. Its biological constitution (humanness) includes a developed consciousness, advanced intelligence and an s-shaped spinal cord. On the other hand, humanity represents the virtue of acting on kindness, compassion, and benevolence. The concept of becoming "more than human"—moving away and beyond humanity—is represented by the notion of posthumanism. The two primary texts analyzed here, as it is shown through close reading, deal with the transcendence of humankind in two different ways.

In Octavia Butler's *Dawn* (1987) humanity comes in direct contact with an otherworldly intelligence called the Oankali. Protagonist Lilith Iyapo wakes up on an unknown spaceship which turns out to belong to the aliens who kept her and other humans asleep for 250 years in suspended animation after a nuclear war rendered planet Earth uninhabitable. Having been rescued from a gruesome death, Lilith and the other survivors are to become part of a plan to re-colonize Earth. Lilith is chosen to teach a group of forty humans how to survive on their former planet as well as to mentally prepare them to meet their alien saviors. With genetic engineering and biological modification as key themes, this novel is a great example of how popular culture representations of STEM and gender operate within different ideologies and in terms of power struggle.

Ann Leckie's *Ancillary Justice* (2013) tells the story of a rogue soldier by the name of Breq who seeks revenge on the leader of the Radch empire. Nineteen years before, she had been in the service of the Radchaai as an artificial intelligence (AI) in the warship Justice of Toren. After an act of betrayal which leads to a traumatic incident resulting in her new posthuman existence, she now seeks revenge, traversing the empire in search of her enemy. This narrative revolves around augmented cyber bodies, militarized AI, and a far-reaching conflict while featuring a prominent female protagonist. Thus, it fittingly portrays the interrelationship between STEM, gender, and popular culture.

I argue that the two novels feature characters that transcend human standards in favor of enhanced bodies. In that sense, both narratives convey the notion of posthumanism in terms of biology (in Butler's case) and technology (in Leckie's). The two novels are both the first installments of a trilogy and can offer new ways of evaluating two different decades of American SF writing. Hence, a comparative reading of both narratives is useful in revealing similarities or even crass differences in depictions of leading female characters.

In order to examine the extent of posthumanism and its realization in American SF, it is necessary to define the concept more clearly and develop three main aspects significant for its further analysis: the existence of a collective will, the transformative process of becoming posthuman, and finally, the state of being more than human. Prominent scholars such as Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles have analyzed different conceptualizations on decidedly the most well-known figuration of posthumanism, namely, the cyborg. This article utilizes their theoretical frameworks along with critical perspectives from other academic writers (such as Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter; Francesca Ferrando; and Cary Wolfe).

The following analysis is founded on three aspects concerning posthumanism in American science fiction: a collective will, transforming into a posthuman subject, and the consequences of hybridity. In terms of a collective will, both novels feature a type of overarching authority that seeks to unite humans under a collective mentality. This is either a benevolent alien civilization, or an expanding military power. Arguments concerning the construction of a collective will center on the idea that an individual can only thrive if they find their place in a collective culture. As a second aspect of posthumanism, becoming posthuman involves abandoning one's humanity in order to become a posthuman subject. Technological fragmentation represents one way of transforming, while biological and social assimilation in the form of alien kinship represents the other. Finally, the third aspect entails the consequences of existing as a posthuman cyborg. Hybridity means either worrying about cyborg anxiety or having a new sense of identity by dismantling dualisms and embracing non-binary modes of existing. Essentially, it is crucial to question whether a supposed non-hierarchical society truly liberates individuals who are disadvantaged by prejudice and discrimination, or if it constrains them even more so.

II. DEFINING POSTHUMANISM

Posthumanism refers to the notion of going beyond the normative definition of being human: a different body, species, or perception. Generally known as critique of the liberal humanist subject from the Age of Enlightenment, this interdisciplinary field has scholars drawing connections to known critical theory terms such as postmodernism or poststructuralism. For Cary Wolfe, posthumanism "comes both before and after humanism: before in the sense that it names the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world" (xvi-xvii). Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter define

posthumanism as "the cultural condition occasioned by twenty-first-century biopolitics, technoculture, lifescapes and all the desires and anxieties arising therein, as well as the discourse that studies all that" (145). There are two consequences to moving beyond the human condition. On the one hand, posthumanism poses a threat to humanness—human nature, in an anthropocentric sense—, which might lead to its rejection. On the other hand, however, the idea can be embraced based on the positive implications of a posthuman condition that encompass a better future for all life on Earth. A closer look at different contemporary critical, philosophical, and cultural approaches to the concept contributes to clarifying what this key term means for the present literary analysis.

Human exceptionalism establishes a primacy of human over non-human animals, while also creating social hierarchies within the human realm. Posthumanism as a concept dismantles human power structures entirely and alternatively creates a non-hierarchical environment. Thus, it challenges human exceptionalism and reimagines "particular modes of inquiry from perspectives that do not privilege human needs, human ideas, and the general bias toward human centrality" (Pilsch 312).

In this sense, humans are not put above animals but are rather regarded as equals to them. Postanthropocentrism replaces anthropocentrism in that human social issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia are supplanted by speciesism, which then becomes a new form of distinction, or worse, prejudice and discrimination (Callus and Herbrechter 150). New differences emerge as the humans become obsolete: exotic Others such as the robot, the extraterrestrial, and the cyborg challenge the dualistic nature of the human condition (Ferrando 30). Yet, the question remains if a non-hierarchical society can truly exist without a new authority rising to take control. The extent of postanthropocentrism in the novels must be further examined in the context of a collective will.

Posthumanism breaks down boundaries and the barriers of traditional binaries. One figure that embodies the blurring of strict separating lines is the aforementioned cyborg. Commonly known as a cybernetic organism, this figure can also act as a link between polarizing concepts. Two leading scholars in this field, Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles, have published works concerning this iconic paradigm. Both see its significance for the posthumanist discourse, albeit in slightly different contexts.

In Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985), the cyborg is a political myth which explores boundaries that "have resulted from post-World War II technoscience: those between human and animal, organism and machine, and the physical and non-physical" (Leitch, "Donna Haraway" 2188). Within the framework of feminism, an oppressed individual (e.g. women) becomes a liberated posthuman subject, freed from constraints of the conventional narratives of power like Western white capitalist patriarchal society (Csicsiery-Ronay Jr. 396). In reference to Ferrando's non-hierarchical future, Haraway's cyborg transgresses certain dualisms such as self/other, mind/body, and even male/female (Leitch, "Donna Haraway" 2217). Posthumanism offers a future society that abolishes distinctions based on binary systems,

creating a world in which we, as posthumans, are all hybrid identities, either cyborgs (human/machine) or maybe chimeras (human/animal) (2191). Hybridity in both novels is depicted differently, with one narrative focusing on various blurred concepts and the other highlighting the anxiety arising from the merging of the Self/Other.

Hayles's approach to the posthuman incorporates aspects of information theory and cybernetics. In her groundbreaking theoretical framework *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), Hayles touches upon several terms that describe the steadily increasing virtual quality of human life and social interactions. For her, the emergence of the posthuman is due to the scientific developments since the Second World War that transformed the liberal humanist individual (Leitch, "N. Katherine Hayles" 2161). This shift in favor of virtual existence privileges a disembodied state of existence over a materially embodied one: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism" (Hayles 3). These material-informational beings do not possess a will of their own as there is "no a priori way to identify a self-will that can be clearly distinguished from an other-will" (4). This leads to the construction of a collective will.

III. COLLECTIVE WILL: ALIEN SAVIORS AND IMPERIALISTIC RADCH

In the fictional worlds of both novels, a new authority seeks to unite humans under a certain mentality. It can either be the benevolent exotic Other, as is the case in Butler's alien Oankali, or it can appear in the form of Leckie's militaristic Radch empire. Both factions are characterized by a specific drive to ameliorate humanity in terms of existence and culture. In this sense, the new authorities dismantle individual autonomy and become all-embracing omnipresent systems (Callus and Herbrechter 145). In other words, human self-will fuses with the authorities' other-will resulting in a collective will (Hayles 4). The following sections deal with two different conceptualizations, one where individuality is negotiated and one where it is unwillingly suppressed.

The premise for *Dawn* deals with a planet Earth that has been devoid of human civilization for nearly three centuries after a human-induced nuclear war rendered it uninhabitable. The only humans who are left in this postathropocentric scenario are on a space vessel floating just in proximity to the planet. Protagonist Lilith wakes up in a strange room in which she feels like a prisoner. After some time one member of the alien species keeping her there eventually reveals himself to her. This is the first time Lilith comes in contact with the new Other. The male humanoid being with an androgynous voice and strange worm-like tentacles all over his body triggers xenophobia, or rather speciesism, in the protagonist due to the "pervasive need to alienate from oneself those who appear to be different—i.e., to create Others" (Zaki 241).

In the conversation with the Oankali male, Lilith learns more about the aliens. They have three sexes: male, female, and ooloi, with the latter being gender neutral and playing a crucial role in Oankali reproduction (Butler 22). The ooloi are genetic engineers, their bodies being living science laboratories where they mix their species' male and female genes to create offspring. Physiologically, they differ from the other sexes with their four arms and two elephant-like trunks. As a people, the Oankali regard themselves as gene traders whose existential purpose involves collecting genetic material from various sentient and intelligent species in order to create new forms of life: "We trade the essence of ourselves. Our genetic material for yours … It renews us, enables us to survive as an evolving species" (40). This practice of genetic engineering from an alien Other exemplifies biological posthumanism.

In their opinion, humans are erroneous beings who need guidance. The destructive nature of humanity apparently stems from the combination of a high level of intelligence and the tendency to fall into hierarchies (Ferrando 28; Butler 38). To avoid a nuclear war from ever happening again, the Oankali seek to correct the human flaw in order to establish a peaceful togetherness. In exchange for the humans' willingness to mate and produce hybrid offspring, they will be offered the chance to return to Earth to restart a posthuman civilization: "That's part of the trade … to the rebirth of your people and mine" (Butler 42-43). Already, the collective will set for Lilith and the other survivors seems like a good alternative to letting the human species go extinct.

This human-alien partnership "suggests the birth of something new through the fusion of two previously separate entities" (Bollinger 37). Both sides would mutually benefit from each other by surrendering an aspect of their Self (self-will) in return for a part of the Other (other-will). However, not all humans on board agree to this collective will. Social hierarchies based on discrimination and difference reappear, hence confirming humans' need to constantly create Others in order to reassert one's own true human self (Zaki 241-2). This can be observed later in the novel when Lilith starts mentally preparing the other humans to meet the Oankali. After a couple of days, the group is divided into two factions: those who trust Lilith and those who outright reject her leadership while accusing her of conspiring with the enemy (Butler 159). The Oankali represent the new exotic Other that seeks to create a postanthropocentric future without hierarchies that would lead to conflicts and violence. The collective will is therefore established on a positive note: the aliens are a helpful authority wishing to help humanity in order to ultimately help themselves. However, the universe of *Ancillary Justice* paints a different picture.

This plot takes place in a far-away future in which humanity has moved on from Earth into the outer reaches of space. Militaristic conquest of the imperialistic Radch empire has thus shaped the galactic community in this narrative. For nearly 3000 years, this empire has been

led by the entity known as Lord of the Radch, Anaander Mianaai.[1] Unlike Butler's alien narrative, this collective will is mainly based on obedience rather than benevolent guidance and can be observed in two ways. The first involves the Radchaai society, while the second refers to the construction of military warships with their artificial intelligence systems. The latter specifically constitutes technological posthumanism.

Using violent annexations to expand its space territory, the Radchaai seek to bring civilization to planets and assimilate the respective cultures into the prevalent Radchaai society. In their language, Radchaai means to be civilized and any member of the Radch is addressed as citizen (Leckie 62). Here, then, the binary labels citizen/noncitizen replace binaries known to us such as male/female, abled/disabled, or heterosexual/homosexual. People are either Radchaai or non-Radchaai, civilized or not civilized.

Although this new authority seeks to unite humanity into one great collective through space conquest, the Radchaai society is not inherently egalitarian. A class system divides Radchaai citizens into privileged and less privileged houses. Therefore, the Radch does not represent an ideally non-hierarchical society (Ferrando 30). The large military arsenal includes various spaceships called Swords, Mercies, and Justices which are used for annexations. The Justices function as troop carriers and the built-in computer system of the ship is completely automated; AIs control every part of the ship, which includes up to twenty technologically modified humans that act as extensions for the military unit.

This clearly represents technological posthumanism, as the cyborg segments are hooked onto a collective unit in which they are completely under the other-will. The self in this case is the AI program in the ship, a sort of technological nervous system that controls various connected bodies. These ancillary segments are a part of a powerful operating system (Clark 133) and have no will of their own due to AI-controlled brain implants. The fusion of self-will and other-will results in a perfectly cohesive collective will, like a virtual puppeteer who controls the former human cyborg segments with invisible cybernetic strings.

Prior to becoming Breq, the protagonist used to be the AI of the ship Justice of Toren One Esk. Both names refer to one subjectivity,[2] it is only the form of existence that has changed. Flashback chapters date back nearly two decades, recounting the events that led up to the birth of Breq including the AI self and its service under Lieutenant Awn. With the AI being everywhere, the ship as an entity floats above the planetary orbit while also being

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[1] The nature of this being is not defined more closely. It would be plausible to assume that this character might also be an artificial intelligence or a powerful human who has managed to create a large empire: "When most people spoke of the Radch they meant all of Radchaai territory, but in truth the Radch was a single location, a Dyson sphere, enclosed, self-contained" (Leckie 235).

[2] Given the first-person narrator in the novel, Breq and One Esk (the AI as well as the actual space ship Justice of Toren) essentially represent the same identity with the same subjectivity. The only difference is the 19/20 year time jump and the material manifestation. During the analysis, I refer to one as the other but in different contexts. I will refer to the AI as "it" and use the pronouns she/her for Breq.

omnipresent on the ground with its many ancillary bodies "I stood at the entrance … I also stood some forty meters away … I saw all of this, standing as I did at various points surrounding the temple" (Leckie 13-15). With its distributed cognition and multiple points of perspective, the AI is comparable to a surveillance camera. It is in a constant state of simultaneous embodiment and disembodiment best described as a "new posthuman ontology of simultaneous corporeal substance and cybernetic disembodiment" (Leitch, "N. Katherine Hayles" 2162).

The ship, its brain (AI), and the external connectives constitute one being that corresponds to Hayles's concept of the posthuman subject. She defines the latter as a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo a process of continuous construction and reconstruction (Hayles 3). When a new segment is attached the configurations change, a new body must adapt to the collective will. As One Esk recounts: "Things were always a bit clumsy while I got used to a new segment. Sometimes [it] simply would not function properly, and then it would have to be removed and replaced" (Leckie 172). Like a computer that needs fixing, the construction of AIs and ancillaries combines cybernetic elements with biological components. The enslaved victims of the Radchaai imperial conquest are used as military equipment, acting as parts in a machine that operates under a collective consciousness. In this sense, the whole system is comparable to the Borg, a recurring antagonist from the popular television series *Star Trek*.[3]

What Callus and Herbrechter refer to as an omniscient "all-embracing system" (145) is represented on the one hand by sympathetic alien Oankali, who do not mean any harm to the human survivors. On the other hand, *Ancillary Justice* only depicts technological posthumanism to some extent, including the dehumanizing aspect of slavery. Compared to the aliens' plan to eliminate humanity's proclivity towards hierarchies, the Radch empire still adheres to social ones in the form classism.

IV. TRANSFORMATION: BECOMING POSTHUMAN, ASSIMILATION, AND FRAGMENTATION

The process of becoming more than human entails a transformation from the normative human condition into a posthuman one. On the one hand, seeing as "technology frequently operates in science fiction to dissect or disassemble the body for purposes of reconstruction and modification" (Seed 64), a change in terms of technological posthumanism appears in the form of a computer malfunction or a disrupted flow of information codes. Biology, on the other hand, works with modification, where the subject adapts to a new way of life through posthuman kinship, intimacy, and physical enhancements.

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[3] The Borg travel through space (and occasionally time) enslaving species they might find useful for their ever evolving collective.

In the alien narrative *Dawn*, the humans on board of the ship become posthuman through assimilation into Oankali culture. This happens through interdependency and scenarios of strange intimacy between the species. The following sections deal with the protagonist's journey into a posthuman existence which consists of her familiarization with members of the alien species and the attainment of certain capabilities. The plot takes a turning point when the ooloi reveal themselves to the Awakened[4] humans, a pivotal moment that marks a point of no return from humanity.

Lilith starts becoming posthuman when she starts bonding with the family of the Oankali male that she had first met upon waking. Slowly but surely, she starts to feel more comfortable among them by living with them and learning about their culture. Her relationship with the gender neutral ooloi Nikanj grows stronger, which ends in them becoming mates in the course of the novel. The ooloi develops external sexual organs—sensory arms that encase a starfish-like sensory hand—in an apparent Oankali puberty during which Lilith stays close to it providing food and emotional support. This level of intimacy reaches a climax when a human male is brought into the relationship. When the male and female Oankali mates arrive to bring their gender neutral ooloi partner into their home, Lilith joins them (Butler 82). Being in this polygamous alien-human relationship signifies Lilith's transition into a posthuman existence.

Not only does ooloi Nikanj facilitate the protagonist's social posthuman condition, it also enhances her physical capabilities: ooloi drug-induced brain chemistry change allows Lilith to speak and understand the Oankali language (Butler 79-81), a heightened perception had her efficiently navigate of the ship's plant-like walls (102), rapid healing prevents injuries. Biologically speaking, Lilith is human no more.

Yet, there is also a rather negative aspect attached to that. After spending more time with their designated alien, the humans start to rely on them and, as a result, cannot "tolerate the nearness of anyone except their human mate and the ooloi who had drugged them" (193). The scenario evokes a comparison to drug withdrawal. In this case, the ooloi let the humans become addicted to their biochemical and olfactory signals. By adapting to the otherworldly culture with their bodies (sex) and minds, the post-Earth humans acquire a posthuman sense of self: "The choice to embrace the society of the Other (the alien) means that the individual, of necessity, rejects his or her own centre (Earth)" (Kerslake 15).

Despite the Oankali's apparent dominance, posthuman intimacy also works the other way around. The ooloi themselves are also dependent on their Oankali male and female mates as well as their human ones: "Ooloi did not endure well when bereft of all those who carried their particular scent, their particular marker … Metabolisms slowed, they retreated deep

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[4] Both the adjective "Awakened" as well as the verb "Awaken" in its other tenses are deliberately spelled with a capital letter throughout the novel. It signifies a specific group of people who have been kept in suspended animation and are now waking up to a new future.

within themselves" (Butler 206). The relationship between the species is thus interdependent. With each moment both species spend together, the lines between Self/Other dissolve. From the humans' perspective, they move beyond the normative category of "humankind." Thus, they become posthuman by becoming an Other.

The protagonist of *Ancillary Justice* is not human and never has been, which is why her transformation involves moving from an imitation of the human condition to a posthuman existence. One Esk's connection to the ancillaries dissolves and the AI manifests in one single cyborg body, namely Breq, a process I will refer to as fragmentation. In order to determine her posthuman condition, it is vital to ask whether an artificial human condition in terms of cognition (psychology, emotion) is a necessary prerequisite for becoming posthuman. This is done by finding evidence for (near) human qualities exemplified by the AI and its relationship to Lieutenant Awn.

A partial transformation of the AI One Esk occurs in a scene set in the Temple of Ikkt. The Lord of the Radch pays a visit to the city Ors, currently under control of Lieutenant Awn. A false accusation involving conspiracy theories among two citizen groups results in the brutal execution of innocent civilians. Unfortunately, The Lord of the Radch does not tolerate accusations lacking evidence and orders the citizens' execution by the ancillaries of One Esk. A mysterious signal interference renders the AI temporarily powerless as it becomes partially disconnected from its segments:

> Four hours before dawn, things went to pieces. Or, more accurately, *I* went to pieces. Each segment could see only from a single pair of eyes, hear only through a single pair of ears, move only that single body … From that moment I was twenty different people, with twenty different sets of observations and memories. (Leckie 112)

Although the segments are not entirely detached from the collective will of the AI, the collective subjectivity still suffers from a form of disembodiment. The cessation of the information flow results in a fragmented subjectivity (Leitch, "N. Katherine Hayles" 2162). Yet, the former human victims do not truly reclaim a sense of their selves; the incident merely resembles a technical malfunction.

The final fragmentation of One Esk's subjectivity leads to the creation of single cyborg Breq. After the debacle in the Temple, the Lord of the Radch confronts the Lieutenant about the incident. In a turn of shocking events, it is revealed that Lieutenant Awn had served her purpose as a pawn of the Lord's inner conflict. For some time now, the alien Presger have been corrupting a part of Anaander Mianaai's identity, which resulted in the Lord's split personality: "I am at war with myself … I have been for nearly a thousand years … At war over the future of the Radch" (Leckie 245). This puts ancillaries like One Esk in a predicament, as it cannot disobey the Lord. But obeying one part means automatically disobeying the other. Lieutenant Awn is caught in that crossfire, and having done nothing wrong, she is still betrayed by one Anaander Mianaai. The Lord orders ship AI One Esk to execute its own

superior. Yet, due to the ship's loyalty to Awn, its segment One Var immediately attacks one of the Lord's bodies in an act of retribution. This ultimately leads to the fragmentation of the ship AI: "I formed intentions, transmitted orders to constituent parts … And then I fell to pieces" (248-49).

Segment One Esk's decision to rebel is an expression of free will that turns into a "mutation within a paradigm of pattern/randomness" (Leitch, "N. Katherine Hayles" 2162). It is this segment that would then become Breq. In this case, the fragmentation is a technological malfunction, a disruption caused by the informational overdrive of the ship AI. Its bond to Lieutenant Awn is so strong that the guilt of executing her caused the sudden detachment of one ancillary body from the collective. Here, Breq defies Hayles' concept of the posthuman cyborg because from that moment on, the protagonist develops a self-will that is distinguishable from an other-will (4).

What Hayles refers to as the "displacement of organic presence by information pattern" (Leitch, "N. Katherine Hayles" 2163) cannot be applied to the transformation that creates Breq. In her case, the shift is reversed as the information that used to flow from AI to the different bodies is permanently disrupted; pattern/code (information flow in ship) is replaced by an organic/mechanical presence (ancillary cyborg body). After the single segment escapes, the ship explodes, on board the corrupted part of the Lord and the other Radchaai soldiers. The collective consciousness of Justice of Toren is destroyed, or deconstructed, but not entirely lost due to the fragment that becomes Breq.

Moving from the artificial human condition, she is now reconstructed in a posthuman condition. Following Haraway's principle of the cyborg subject, "[a]ny objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly" (Leitch, "Donna Haraway" 2204). The destruction disassembles the ship as an entity, but the posthuman emerges as the fragment of one segment detaches just in time. Likewise, Hayles' concept of construction and reconstruction (3) is also exemplified in this scenario: the ship is deconstructed and put together again in a different manner. This complex process of fragmentation in *Ancillary Justice* aptly represents technological posthumanism.

In spite of her insistence that she is not human, Breq/One Esk does show feelings of love and devotion, even if they are just an imitation of human emotions. These sentiments persist after the fragmentation, which is the sole reason for Breq's quest for revenge. Having the courage to face the all-powerful Lord to avenge Lieutenant Awn. A temporary lover of Awn, Lieutenant Skaaiat, points out the strong bond: "You're the ancillary, the non-person, the piece of equipment, but to compare our actions, you loved her more than I ever did" (Leckie 370). Love out of loyalty is equally as valid as romantic love in human relationships.

Compared to the "true" human Lilith who biologically transitions into a new being, the protagonist of *Ancillary Justice* moves from an imitation of the human condition to a true posthuman one. Whether it is posthuman intimacy or fragmentation, Lilith and Breq must come to terms with their new situation. To further analyze how each form of posthumanism

is conveyed in both novels, it is imperative to examine the state of being more (or less) than human.

V. HYBRIDITY: BEING POSTHUMAN, CYBORG ANXIETY, AND BLURRED CONCEPTS

Hybridization in posthumanism is "both a notion of human-machine merging and the rather specific nature of the merging envisaged" (Clark 131). Haraway's cyborg is either a being that blurs dichotomies such as human/machine or human/alien, and transgresses binaries which have, in the Western world, resulted in categories like male/female or masculinity/femininity. While dismantling these dualisms might liberate an individual, it can also lead to negative reactions when blurring distinct entities means abandoning a part of one's identity, an aspect represented by the Self/Other paradigm (Mack 194).

The protagonist of Butler's *Dawn* exemplifies a blending of the human Self and the alien Other, hence, she is a posthuman cyborg. While this hybridization liberates Lilith in multiple ways, it also has the negative consequence of alienating her from fellow humans. During her time teaching the group survival skills, Lilith is met with open hostility because of her alien advantage. In the final battle scene, she must choose a side in the conflict between humans and nonhumans.

Lilith must defend her leadership along with her posthuman identity when specific members of the group revert to old patriarchal modes of dominance and prejudice like racism, homophobia, and misogyny (Butler 159). Retaining one's humanity becomes a battle cry for the resisting humans. Binary dichotomies reappear as a reaction to cyborg anxiety, which is simply the fear of humanity becoming impure through means of an Other influence: "[I]n times of genetic breeding, the boundaries between human, animal and machine are being eroded, questioning traditional 'purities' and provoking new visions of hybridity and anxieties about purity as a result" (Callus and Herbrechter 150). In the context of Butler's *Dawn*, the term cyborg anxiety describes the fear of anyone who is not truly human attempting to contaminate human purity. Contamination connotes illness, toxicity, and even poison (Mack 191), therefore it is not beneficial for the human self.

Three men from the group challenge Lilith's leadership and by doing so they reject the merging of Self/Other. Curt, Peter, and Gabriel openly antagonize her by accusing her of not being human enough, even insinuating that she might just be enjoying her sick privilege with the Oankali. In contrast to a non-hierarchical posthuman society, these three male characters symbolize toxic patriarchal masculinity. In terms of gender dynamics and performativity, protagonist Lilith transgresses traditional behavioral concepts of gender roles only to a certain degree. She questions her leadership skills as a woman and thus contemplates her own femininity. She feels like she is too vulnerable and not mentally prepared to be responsible for parenting a group of forty humans. She imagines if a man were to be chosen as leader: "He

could undermine what little civilization might be left in the minds of those he Awoke[5]. He could make them a gang. Or a herd. What would she make them?" (Butler 118). Lilith is self-conscious of her womanhood and slightly frightened by the prospect of dealing with violent men who openly challenge her authority.

In one scene Lilith exemplifies typically masculine traits when she uses violence to end violence within the group. Lilith quickly intervenes to stop a sexual assault by fighting the aggressors with her enhanced strength. While the men use violence to assert patriarchal superiority, Lilith uses it to reinforce human decency by protecting her fellow woman: "Nobody here is property … There'll be no back-to-the-Stone-Age, caveman bullshit! … We stay human. We treat each other like people, and we get through this like people" (Butler 178). Lilith urges everyone to remember the virtue of humanity—compassion and respect for one another—an aspect that might also be interpreted as a call for a posthuman way of going beyond binary distinctions.

One could go ahead and call her androgynous as she exemplifies both feminine as well as masculine characteristics (Zaki 246). Yet seeing as she no longer fits into the normative definition of human, she need not adhere to any of the aforementioned categories. A compromise might be achieved by employing the neutral dichotomy of assertive/reserved. It would be even more fitting to say that as a posthuman Lilith is non-binary due to the influence of the alien Oankali.

The conflict between benevolent aliens and human aggressors reaches a climax in the final parts of the novel. Human extremist Curt radically labels those who willingly choose the Oankali's protection and anyone who displays posthuman capabilities as traitors. He is responsible for the tragic death of the protagonist's mate Joseph, after seeing the ooloi Nikanj heal him (Butler 220-23). Joseph's posthuman condition is seen as a threat, genetic modification represents alien corruption: "This conflict is expressed in xenophobia on part of the humans, and the idea of the posthuman, the blurring of boundaries between the human, the animal, the machine, the male, and the female … poses a threat, a dystopia, to the human character" (Georgi 263).

In the face of an increasing hostility from the humans, the people in the group start accusing each other of cooperating with the Oankali and thus betraying the human species. It is here where Lilith boldly solidifies her posthuman identity by accepting her Self/Other union during the final battle: "Lilith found herself standing with the aliens, facing hostile, dangerous humans" (Butler 227). Her conscious decision confirms her cyborg identity: she possesses human and alien elements by supporting the Other.

Even though Lilith the cyborg transcends the human/alien dichotomy, this affirmative hybridization is only temporary. Lilith herself feels cyborg anxiety and feelings of abjection when she learns of how the ooloi Nikanj had inseminated her through its genetic engineering

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[5] Spelling in novel, see footnote 4.

skills. The protagonist realizes how she truly feels about the collective plan to create a hybrid species and calls her unborn child a monster. Her attitude reflects some of the other humans' stance when she wishes for the human condition to end with dignity and not to become a messy posthuman condition (Butler 246).

Consequently, the "question of hybridization versus purity becomes a matter of species survival, asking whether any process of genetic manipulation, no matter how well intended, should be permitted to triumph at the exposure of another species' extinction?" (Roof 129). This pregnancy is not entirely consensual: for the sake of a collective will, Lilith was gently pushed into a risky leadership but is met with hostility and rejection due to cyborg anxiety. With this "monster" growing inside of her she rather unwillingly abandons her human condition. Moreover, by challenging her leadership the Awakened survivors challenge her humanity.

Breq as a cyborg embodies the traditional merging of human/machine, albeit in a different manner: she is not a human subjectivity inside a machine (Hayles 238) but rather an artificial subjectivity in an enhanced female body. *Ancillary Justice* is exemplary for "texts that have served to disrupt or challenge normative cultural understandings" (Merrick 241) by creating a gender-neutral society and featuring a protagonist who challenges the dichotomies of sex (male/female) and gender expression (masculinity/femininity).

Radchaai society does not adhere to the strict gender binary, every aspect is quite ambiguously gendered. This is reflected by the language: "Radchaai don't care much about gender, and the language they speak … doesn't mark gender in any way" (Leckie 3). Breq has some difficulty when she meets people from cultures that have linguistic markers for gendered identities. In one instance she tries to assume a non-Radchaai perspective when she observes a crowd of people:

> I saw all the features that would mark gender for non-Radchaai – never, to my annoyance and inconvenience, the same way in each place … Thick-bodied or thin-, faces delicate-featured or coarse-, with cosmetics or none. A profusion of colors that would have been gender-marked in other places. All of this matched randomly with bodies curving at breast and hip or not, bodies that one moment moved in ways various non-Radchaai would call feminine, the next moment masculine. (283)

Radchaai gender norms go beyond the set dichotomy of femininity/masculinity. There is not opposition or distinction between the two, blurring or even escaping the categories is normalized. As a result, it would be fitting to consider the Radch empire a cyborg society not only in terms of their military technology (AI and segments), but also in reference to their cultural gender ambiguity. Technology then becomes "a site of cultural anxieties about gender" (Merrick 246) by adding inorganic elements to organic bodies and having former humans transcend gender. It cannot be ignored that this is quite negative seeing as the ancillaries are crudely objectified.

The cyborgs Lilith and Breq both transgress gender and identity dualisms. The pivotal scenes mentioned above solidify their posthuman condition. Hybridity in technological posthumanism works with the oscillating flow of information and the constant change of perspective, whereas the biological posthumanism in Butler's alien narrative revolves around the anxiety of becoming Other and abandoning one's (human) Self.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Butler's *Dawn* (1987) and Leckie's *Ancillary Justice* (2013) depict two future scenarios in which humankind exceeds its normative condition. With the help of posthumanism we can question humanity's centrality in the universe as well as become aware of the possible consequences of a post-anthropocentric world through literary narratives. It might be non-hierarchical under the guidance of an alien species and therefore a positive prospective. Another possibility entails the emergence of a new military power with the need to civilize space. This may include uniting different places on many planets under a negative collective will, annexations, and technological slavery.

The protagonists of both novels become more than what they once were, acquiring skills but also losing some they might have had before. Their transformation gives them enhanced capabilities which solidifies their hybrid identity and existence. In sum, the narratives of Butler and Leckie exemplify biological and technological posthumanism concerning the aforementioned aspects of an omniscient authority, a change of physical constitution, and the transgression of boundaries resulting in a liberation from certain social hierarchies. As such, the core arguments of this essay develop Haraway's and Hayles' work on the posthuman cyborg further in that hybridity can also be regarded in a biological context. Regarding other genres of speculative fiction, this new approach to Science Fiction, horror, or even fantasy narratives opens up new methods of interpreting characters who have hybrid identities that go beyond the typical human/machine cyborg.

Posthumanism offers a path to redefine humanity in ways that liberate some people in terms of physical and social dualisms, whereas it may evoke anxiety in others at the mere mention of nonhuman entities. It is effective because it challenges our understanding of what it means to be human.

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