

An Analysis of Sexual Agency in Octavia E. Butler's *Dawn* and *Fledgling*

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Abstract:

This paper aims to analyse some of the relationships found in the novels *Dawn* and *Fledgling* by science fiction author Octavia E. Butler. It draws insights from not only sexuality studies but also from Marxist theory to understand these relationships in the context of the economic conditions of the worlds in which they occur. It also attempts to show how we can extend Marxist analysis of human-relations to the cases of alien-human pairings in *Dawn* and vampire-human pairings in *Fledgling*. In its analysis of *Dawn*, the focus is on the hierarchy within the Oankali family and later in the composite Oankali-Human pairings. A crucial goal is to depict the alienation from sexual choice that the main character, Lillith, experiences in the novel. Similarly, in the analysis of *Fledgling*, the paper focuses on the agency and the limits of consent as they appear in relationships between Shiro, the protagonist of the novel, and the partners she takes throughout the novel. Hopefully, the study will show the amenability of Marxist analysis to providing a richer understanding of agency and alienation in the fantastical relationships found in these novels while also showing how they are applicable to the broader context of human relations in the broader world.

Keywords:

Sexual agency, Marxism, Science fiction, Octavia E. Butler, Sexuality studies.