Posthumanism in “Amnesty” by Octavia Butler: A Feminist Theological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the tension between the humanistic, eugenic concept of identity and that of posthumanism in Octavia Butler’s “Amnesty” (2005). Using Daphne Hampson’s feminist post-Biblical perspective, the article argues that the story exposes a posthumanist perspective where the existence and subjectivity of human kind is defined based on a mutual, non-hierarchical relation between the human and nonhuman worlds. This article suggests that “Amnesty,” reflecting an unorthodox perspective of life through an unorthodox theological perspective, illustrates the potential for a more humanitarian life on Earth.

Keywords: “Amnesty”, Daphne Hampson, Octavia Butler, post-Biblical feminism, posthumanism

INTRODUCTION

“Amnesty” focuses on a mission from plant-like Communities for a black woman to connect them to human societies. In “Amnesty”, Butler is obsessed with a concept of survival, which embodies a postmodern “dialogic” interaction between post-Biblical and African-American slavery discourses, as well as “sociobiological” determinism, to use a phrase by Cathy Peppers (1995, p. 48). By adopting these discourses, “Amnesty” creates a context which represents a feminist ecotheological sensibility, which beyond the traditional Christian hierarchical view on woman and nature, puts nature and woman on par with men.

In an interview with Frances M. Beal, Butler denies that there are utopian tendencies in her writing, “I don’t believe that imperfect humans can form a perfect society” (1986, p. 14). Zaki (1990) believes

1 Refer to Hamson, 2002, pp. 6-9.