ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Octavia Butler's Dialogue on Race and Gender in Speculative Fiction
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ABSTRACT: Octavia Butler was a prominent speculative fiction author and also one of the first female African American writers to be successful in the genera. Butler unflinchingly critiques racial and gender issues that affect African American women. A textual analysis of the novels Wild Seed, Kindred, and Parable of the Sower, as well as the short story "Bloodchild," reveals Butler's unique expression of empathy and how the abuses of women in the past affect the present and future. Butler's works also allow for an uncommon interpretation of patriarchal ties that challenge women's ability to create a history of their own. Through a constant process of transformation, Butler provokes her readers to face complex, patriarchal hierarchies found in society that are often riddled with unescapable power inequalities. Cooperation is preferred to subjugation as her protagonists bravely assume their roles. Butler challenges society to acknowledge the heightened trauma inflicted on women, particularly on women of color such as rape and violence, and whose abuses allowed the concept of the nation's identity to flourish. Her message embodies a need for both masculine and feminine characteristics in the construction of personal identity. The author's extensive dialogue on slavery and power disparity in gender roles finds itself naturally embedded within her narratives and not forced upon her audience. In doing so, she "makes black normal" thus allowing the divine feminine spirit of African American women to be emphasized instead of condemned. An analysis of scholarly research reveals that Butler's speculative fiction expresses fluctuating ideas of economic status, race, and sexuality. In her fictions, Octavia Butler demands that these historically significant and ever-evolving ideas include diversity that can be applied to the societal needs of today.