

CARLOS/ISHIKAWA

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Patternmaster

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When I hear the English word “Pattern,” four images emerge: clothing, parenting, psychological, and gradation. After reading *Patternmaster*, written by Octavia E. Butler, I added one more meaning: power (the rotten dick power). This exhibition features five diagrams of patterns. Two pieces are invisible. The diagrams are painted in basic painting techniques such as glazing, grisaille, wash, and so on. The diagrams are metaphorical images of “powers” residing in the process of creating an image and their hierarchic ranks. I painted in a deep brown color because Butler’s novel mentions the desert, Amber’s skin and hair, and the color of the Housemasters’ compounds.

Amber is a healer. Butler created a strictly hierarchal society – a dystopian future – and depicted the character of Amber as someone who is independent, attractive, strong, brave, humorous, badass, all whilst indicating she is the one who has suffered the most. There is a price to pay for anyone who doesn’t submit to power, or follow the rules. She can’t even heal herself when she has to deal with two males, Coransee and Teray, who both are eager to gain power over her. Her body is heavily wounded by the Clayarks’ attack in the desert; boyish Teray wants her to become his housewife; and Coransee wants to kill her because she ran away from him. Amber has no time to concentrate her mind on healing.

I am not sure if Butler created this boy-become-man protagonist of Teray successfully. Even upon finishing *Patternmaster*, I still can’t grasp who he is, what character he is. Perhaps this is what Butler intended: an empty dick. Teray’s dream is to run his own house. It seems like he can be an exception, that he not only wants power but also is ready to take responsibility. But the big question is: after he seizes this power called Pattern, will he also become a corrupt? Like other Housemasters, like Coransee? If so, Amber (the healer) is going to be a Frog Princess who witnesses everything.

When Iray (wife of protagonist) breaks up with Teray, they are in the garden of Coransee’s house (Housemaster, brother of Teray, who fought for Power of the Pattern). This garden dialogue is the only scene in novel that takes place at an in-between area like a garden – it is neither an interior narrative nor an adventure. Later, following Teray’s journey through the desert, Butler cuts a clear line, marking the end of the relationship and its mental links. Iray makes a decision for herself to stay in House of Coransee – “now feel home” – and leaves Teray because Teray betrays their relationship, prioritizing his struggle for survival and power over their partnership. This painting has two areas: 1st, an impressionist painting of an imagined garden; and 2nd, an imitation of De Kooning’s motif, neither a figurative female body nor an abstraction of landscape.

Patternmaster depicts future-humans (creatures) that can communicate via telepathy or “mental link.” Those who cannot perform mental links comprise a low slave rank – the servants at a Master’s house. They usually ended up as objects tortured by higher rank members in the house. One of the paintings in this exhibition depicts an imaginary scene: a painting class in which myself and my classmates are all neighbours from different countries; we are learning European painting skills, and doing gossip, and suddenly my new bookkeeper appears in front of us by introducing herself as my new bookkeeper. I don’t want to have any mental links with tax officers and accountants, it is too much.

The word “Leash” refers to a mental control in *Patternmaster*. From one hand, a leash (even a very, very long leash that you almost don’t feel) indicates a semi-freedom or compromised independence; and from the other hand, it provides rescue, for if ever you are lost, or in danger, you can always come back. The protagonist Teray dreams that he is the same as his enemy, the Clayarks. Inspired by painting *Oedipus and the Sphinx* by Ingres, I gave a feminine face to a Clayark; as she stares at herself in a mirror, there is a very, very long leash on her neck.

Butler's concept of the mental link inspired me to make a false poster painting of the vintage film *Solaris* (by Andrei Tarkovsky) by creating an image of a Dutch window, in oil on canvas. The painting depicts a 16th-century Dutch window from an unknown castle that might resemble any touristy, old Dutch town. At the right lower side of this painting, in the window glass, a yellowish sunshine- reflection can be seen. The intense reflection is generated by bright sunlight shining on solar panels on the roofs of residential buildings opposite. In the film *Solaris*, a psychologist is sent to space to understand why the cosmonauts were reporting mental problems – it was a planet called Solaris. The Japanese character used in the poster means “Star of Confusion” in Chinese too. Dutch tax – and its rules that have changed unexpectedly many times – for the consumption of solar panel energy, has caused many confused consumers.

–Evelyn Taocheng Wang, 2024
