

THE GUILD:

PLAYER'S GUIDE

This document is meant to give you all essential information that you might need before playing the Guild, the larp portion of the Xenosomatics series held at the Martin-Gropius-Bau as a part of the Welt Ohne Außen exhibition. PLEASE read this document to its end, and in advance of the larp: We won't have time to review all this information during the workshop.

SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

An Alien race have rescued humans from their destruction of the earth, but it comes at a cost: each human has to decide to mate with the aliens or be rendered sterile. Constructs- alien/human mixed-offspring with divided sympathies- have formed a group called The Guild to try to help the Resistors: humans that want to stay human. Will the Resistors accept their help? Will the Constructs' tremendous attraction and curiosity to humans hinder their efforts?

Themes explored include: what defines humanity, survival, agency, perception, the senses, "other" and "othering", alien consciousness/different forms of consciousness: explored especially in the forms of *hyperobsesrvation*, *hyperempathy*, *ideokinesis*, *interfacing*; healing, community, and possibly issues around race, nationality and gender intersecting the other themes. The themes broach on sexuality and especially procreation, but from a non-human perspective.

The Guild is a black-box style larp (live action role play) influenced by the nordic/progressive larp tradition: <https://nordiclarp.org/what-is-nordic-larp/>. There will be a pre-larp workshop, the larp run-time, and then a post-larp debrief where participants can come together and talk about their experiences. It is very influenced by non-verbal forms of larping. "Black Box" larps are usually materially independent, but with lighting, sound, etc like a theater piece might be. We won't be faithfully recreating the environments as they are in the novels, or how the aliens physically look: this will be left mostly in the participants' imaginations. There will be some simple elements of scenography, lighting and sound to differentiate space and create ambiance.

PRACTICALS

date/time:

July 31st, 2018

10:00-19:00

Martin-Gropius Bau

Niederkirchnerstraße 7, 10963 Berlin

(Please enter in the side/staff entrance as the museum will be closed to visitors.)

Basic schedule (times are approximate)

10:00 check-in, sign waivers and communicate photo preferences, etc

10:15- 13:00 pre-larp workshopping: go over structure of larp and runtime, build up characters, relationships, culture/s. Practice mechanisms, especially consent mechanisms.

13:00-13:50 lunch: we will all go outside the MGB to have lunch (cost is not included in larp), this is also a time to work on character relationships, negotiate scenes you might want to play out during larp run time, etc.

14:00-18:00 larp run time

18:00-18:45 debrief

18:45-19:00 clean up/tear down

Optional food/drink after for those that want to keep informally de-briefing/socializing

PLEASE BE ON TIME: in order to have the most time to workshop and play.

WORKSHOP IS MANDATORY: one MUST workshop with us to play the larp.

WHAT TO BRING WITH: water bottle, comfortable clothes, black or gray colored items would be preferred if possible, with no texts or patterns. A portion of the costume will be provided for everyone. Any snacks you will need in between meals.

Please join the Xenosomatics facebook group for more information, and a way to stay in touch with other participants: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/270961490324531/> . If you have any questions at any time please write Susan at: ploetzly@gmail.com

LARP STRUCTURE/PLAY

There is a goal to the larp: human survival. How that happens is unknown, and perhaps what "human" means will shift dramatically over the course of the larp. Most of the larp is about interactions: between humans and aliens, amongst their own kind and with the "other". These interactions will only be slightly structured. A lot of the play will be structured by the different spaces of the larp, one of which is more "human" and one of which is more "alien".

The larp will have a loose three-act structure: act one is for exploration, act two for intensification, act three for resolution (of one sort or another, individually and collectively). We will give cues for this that are recognizable but don't interrupt play (to be introduced in the workshop).

The larp will have many body-based mechanisms but will not be strictly non-verbal. This larp will contain space for consensual touch, but it will not be forced on any participant (resistance is built into game play), and can be negotiated in different ways. There will be extensive workshopping before gameplay, which will include practicing both gameplay and consent mechanisms. In terms of plot and drama, the larp is built mostly around actions that flow from

the characters and their motivations in the given circumstances. You will need to create your story and all action in character, together with your fellow players. A bulk of the content of the larp is interesting SENSORY experiences: changes in sensing and internal felt-states is AS important as story, dialogue, and "action".

WORKSHOPPING

The pre-larp workshop will cover world and cultural calibration (to develop two distinct groups: aliens and humans, but make sure there is enough common ground to larp together), character building, relationship building, and mechanisms for game play and for negotiating scenes/consent/personal safety. We will go over any practical information you'll need during the run-time, and in general start to build the feeling and ambience of the larp.

CHARACTERS

You will be given a basic outline of a character in the pre-larp workshop: designed enough to create intrigue, but will be filled out by your own input. There are two basic groups: aliens and humans. Within these groups there are different subsets: the aliens will have different genders for example, which have different roles (explained in the scenario/world sections below).

If you have been attending the Xenosomatics sessions before July 31st, you will be asked to be an alien in the larp. You can opt out and be a human if you prefer, but it will be great to have a strong group of aliens! Please contact Susan as soon as possible if you have a strong preference for playing human or alien (ploetzly@gmail.com). If you want to play alien then it's strongly advised to attend a Xenosomatic session if you haven't yet!

Some characters will be characters from the books or adaptations of them, some will be made up. Some humans will have more fear of the aliens, some less. Some aliens might also doubt humans and some might be completely overwhelmed by empathy towards them. Some might have secrets, that come out during the course of the larp. Some information is known to you as a player but not to the character. This all is designed to create tension, intrigue and interesting play. If there is some element of your character that doesn't feel right to you, let Susan (or Magnar) know right away during the workshop so we can calibrate.

CULTURE/S

In the pre-larp workshop, we will be split into aliens and humans, to work out further the aims and protocols of these two cultures. From there, much must be improvised: the goal is to use the books by Butler as a starting point, but to cultivate our own understanding of who these beings are. Within each culture, there will be a spectrum of individual response to the other group. The overall sentiment of the Constructs is to want to help the humans (but might have different ideas as to how this could happen, approaching the humans differently). The

overarching sentiment of the Resistors is one of suspicion and desperation, but some Resistors might have overcome their cultural programming to be more open and curious of the aliens.

RACE, NATIONALITY, GENDER: Butler uses these books to explore issues around “other” and othering, race (especially the traumatic legacy of transatlantic slavery), and gender. The books are from the 80s and may feel a bit dated in *some* aspects to these subject matters to some participants. I would encourage that participants play a nationality/ethnicity that is one they are very familiar with (their own most likely). The main focus of the larp is the alien/human dichotomy, but we are all products of our cultural environments. In the books, nationality comes up a bit, so these conflicts can be in the larp as a reflection of our current world. The improvised nature of larp means sometimes people fall back on stereotypes, so it’s best (especially if you are not so experienced at larping) to play “close to home”: a character that might share similarities with you as a player. Especially as a body-based larp you also might find this easier to work deal with the content of the larp if you are playing a character that has physical features similar to your own (especially again, if you are new to larping). You are welcome to play with this though!

Concepts of gender fluidity to be explored if this is of interest to any participants, and we can work out what this means for us as a group and for the world in which the larp takes place. There is no specific blueprint for this from the books, other than the aliens who have three biologically different genders. So I think it would be interesting to update ideas around gender/gender expression, on the human side as well as the alien side.

MECHANISMS

There are mechanisms that create an alien consciousness: *hyperobsesrvation*, *hyperempathy*, *ideokinesis*, *interfacing*. We won’t workshop these together as the aliens have already been learning these, but there are some mechanisms to simulate the alien’s abilities that we will cover together as a group. They will be ways that the aliens gather information non-verbally, look into genetic information, heal and possibly drug/sedate humans (if necessary). The most important mechanism, however is the mating act.

“MATING”

A main focal point of the book is the mating of aliens and humans. This will be present in the larp as well, and is designed to be a very pivotal moment in a character’s experience (one may chose not to, as a character or a player, but the fact that it is an act of heightened importance holds true for everyone: this is how one loses one’s humanity after all (or for the alien is the last rite of passage into adulthood). One apt metaphor is truly the “embrace” of a vampire’s bite: at once seductive and destructive, frightening and exhilarating: a transformative experience that is unknown to a human until they experience it. We are not simulating or engaging in humans sexuality, but in an unknown, alien act. It will involve the imagination, and

touch . We will practice the negotiation of these scenes together and some elements that help facilitate them, so that you feel comfortable as a player and also progress the story of your character. It is **not** sexual in a **human** way, not physically: although it provokes sensory and emotional responses that match and actually go beyond the most heightened sexual experience one might have had.

TIPS FOR GAMEPLAY

- Scenes are improvised, We workshop together some common views on culture and world, but the rest is up to the participants. Remember to say “yes, and” or “yes, but” : surf the waves of your fellow co-creators generosity (and remember to be generous!). Think of the larp as a sandbox to explore a variety of different experiences, as a player and as a character.
- PLAY TO LOSE: have the most INTERESTING experience, which doesn’t always mean your character “wins” or gets their way. You are larping to explore your characters’ relation to who/what they are, how this changes with contact with the “other”: what seems like an ideal outcome to your character at the beginning of the larp might be drastically different than at the end.
- Four hours of larping this scenario is enough time to pace your play and build intensity. As a player and a character don’t be afraid to make bold choices, reveal secrets, plot and scheme, take risks so as to see the consequences.
- If you get bored as a player (and it’s important as well, to let yourself get bored!), then so does your character. Ask yourself what they would do to break that, then do it.
- Also let sensory experience guide you: do things to physically feel/perceive differently. Be open to your senses, and any changes in them or your bodily state, and how this affects perception.
- Some behavior and actions might be new to you if you haven’t done the Xenosomatics sessions. This is a part of the play: as a player, embrace the unknown, and the unknown unknowns: and the conflict this might cause your character. If you are human, does your perception start to change even just through contact with the aliens?

SCENARIO/WORLD

The setting of *The Guild* is based on the scenarios laid out in Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis* trilogy, also called *Lilith’s Brood*. A synopsis of the novels can be found on wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilith%27s_Brood

“The first novel in the trilogy, *Dawn*’s story begins after a terrible nuclear war that left the earth uninhabitable. Humans are all but extinct. The few survivors are plucked from the dying earth by an alien race, the Oankali. The protagonist Lilith Iyapo awakens 250 years after the war on a living Oankali ship. At first, she is repulsed by the alienness of her saviors/captors. The Oankali have sensory tentacles over their bodies, including locations of human sensory organs, with which they perceive the world differently than humans. The Oankali have three

sexes: male, female, and Ooloi. Oankali have the ability to perceive genetic biochemistry, but the Ooloi manipulate genetic material to mutate other beings and build offspring from their mates' genetic material. Lilith eventually bonds to Nikanj, an Ooloi. The Oankali have made earth habitable and obtain Lilith's help in awakening and training humans to survive on the changed earth. In exchange, the Oankali want to interbreed with the humans to blend the human and Oankali races, a biological imperative they compare to a human's need to breathe. They perceive the interbreeding as mutually beneficial; in particular, it will solve what the Oankali think is the humans' fatal combination of intelligence and hierarchical tendencies."

The setting of the larp is more similar to the last two books of the trilogy: *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*. By now the earth has been restored by the aliens and combined human/alien villages exist there, as well as human "Resistor" villages: humans that refused to mate with an Ooloi, and were then rendered infertile by the aliens. The mixed alien-human children are called "Constructs". There is a violent black market trade of kidnapped Constructs that look like humans, highly valued by human Resistor villages that suffer from an existential depression from not being able to bring up future generations. Many constructs feel sympathetic to the human resisters, as they are themselves half human, and they have one or two human parents. A few of them have been lobbying with the aliens (many of them still live in space in bio-ships) to allow the humans to be fertile even if they chose not to mate with the aliens. The Oankali are worried the humans will continue to be hierarchical and violent and once again destroy themselves and the planet.

The larp happens between a group of Constructs that have been in contact with and gathered some Resisters they have deemed the best hope of the human race, either because of their characteristics, or perhaps they seem more open to human-alien collaboration. The object of the larp then is to find some sort of solution to this problem: how can the humans continue to exist? Can they convince the aliens they "deserve" to, as they are? OR perhaps by adapting alien characteristics, will they prove worthy of being saved, without having to mate? Can there be a strain of human that remains pure (as some Oankali elected to do because of their overwhelming fear of the Human Conflict)? How much are the Resisters willing to give up to survive past this current generation? And can the Constructs overcome their insatiable curiosity and attraction towards the humans in order to help them without making mate-pairings with them?

The earth itself is very wild again, the big metropolitan cities that once existed are mere ruins. All beings live in pretty rudimentary villages: one assumes the Oankali limits the humans' access to former industrial and technological means as a way of preventing the same horrific outcome as before. Almost everything on the planet is augmented by the bio-technology of the aliens, and in fact the earth's surface is mostly an alien bio-ship, that will one day leave the earth's surface, leaving just the rocky core the float around the sun. In The larp, the world is represented symbolically in two rooms, one which represents a more "human" space (somewhere on earth), and one that represents an "alien" space (a bio-ship or wholly alien, augmented space on earth) .

THE ALIENS

They value “life” above all things: their technology is all completely biological, they have long lives, and they do not seek to destroy other life forms but instead merge the best qualities of both, and instrumentalize what is seemingly destructive for other more life-affirming uses. They are non-violent and non-hierarchical (although this is more complicated than it seems), almost never kill, even in very dangerous situations with other creatures: preferring to seduce or perhaps incapacitate/drug other beings into submission/compliance. They are powerful observers and healers. They are deeply intrigued and attracted to humans and their “Human Conflict”: how they are both highly intelligent and highly hierarchical, violent, destructive. Some of the aliens were so frightened that they chose not to mate with humans at all. Others, especially many ooloi, are so primally attracted to humans that they sometimes behave against the collective consensus/decisions of the other Oakanali, and even the ooloi that are not constructs often have a deep sympathy for the humans because of this profound attraction.

Some quotes from the Xenogenesis Trilogy about the aliens:

How the aliens communicate non-verbally (hyperobservation, ideokinesis, hyperempathy):

IT WAS NEARLY DARK when they reached the settlement. People were gathered around fires, talking, eating. Nikanj and its mates were welcomed by the Oankali in a kind of gleeful silence—a confusion of sensory arms and tentacles, a relating of experience by direct neural stimulation. They could give each other whole experiences, then discuss the experience in nonverbal conversation. They had a whole language of sensory images and accepted signals that took the place of words.

Lilith watched them enviously. They didn't lie often to humans because their sensory language had left them with no habit of lying—only of withholding information, refusing contact.

Humans, on the other hand, lied easily and often. They could not trust one another.

An ooloi explaining how they heal and study (hyperobservation) to Lilith:

“How do ooloi study?” She imagined dying humans caged and every groan and contortion closely observed. She imagined dissections of living subjects as well as dead ones. She imagined treatable diseases being allowed to run their grisly courses in order for ooloi to learn.

“They observe. They have special organs for their kind of observation. My relative examined you, observed a few of your normal body cells, compared them with what it had learned from other humans most like you, and said you had not only a cancer, but a talent for cancer.”

“I wouldn't call it a talent. A curse, maybe. But how could your relative know about that from just ... observing.”

“Maybe perceiving would be a better word,” he said. “There's much more involved than sight. It knows everything that can be learned about you from your genes. And by now, it knows your medical history and a great deal about the way you think. It has taken part in testing you.”

“Has it? I may not be able to forgive it for that. But listen, I don't understand how it could cut out a cancer

without ... well, without doing damage to whichever organ it was growing on."

"My relative didn't cut out your cancer. It wouldn't have cut you at all, but it wanted to examine the cancer directly with all its senses. It had never personally examined one before. When it had finished, it induced your body to reabsorb the cancer."

"It ... induced my body to reabsorb ... cancer?"

"Yes. My relative gave your body a kind of chemical command."

"Is that how you cure cancer among yourselves?"

"We don't get them."

Lilith sighed. "I wish we didn't. They've created enough hell in my family."

"They won't be harming you anymore. My relative says they're beautiful, but simple to prevent."

"Beautiful?"

"It perceives things differently sometimes. Here's food, Lilith. Are you hungry?"

Lilith explaining to Tino (new human mate) how the ooloi stimulate and simulate with the nervous system, and heal (hyperempathy, ideokinesis, interfacing):

"Can it read minds? Can you?"

She did not laugh. At least she did not laugh. "I've never met anyone, Oankali or Human, who could read minds. It can stimulate sensations and send your thoughts off in all sorts of directions, but it can't read those thoughts. It can only share the new sensations they produce. In effect, it can give you the most realistic and the most pleasurable dreams you've ever experienced"...And what it gave you, you won't ever quite forget—or quite remember, unless you feel it again. You want it again. Don't you."

It was not a question. Tino swallowed and did not bother with an answer. "I remember drugs," he said, staring at nothing. "I never took any. I was too young before the war. I remember other people taking them and maybe going crazy for a little while or maybe just being high. I remember that they got addicted, that they got hurt sometimes or killed ..."

"This isn't just a drug."

"What then?"

"Direct stimulation of the brain and nervous system." She held up her hand to stop him from speaking. "There's no pain. They hate pain more than we do, because they're more sensitive to it. If they hurt us, they hurt themselves. And there are no harmful side effects. Just the opposite. They automatically fix any problems they find. They get real pleasure from healing or regenerating, and they share that pleasure with us. They weren't as good at repairs before they found us. Regeneration was limited to wound healing. Now they can grow you a new leg if you lose one. They can even regenerate brain and nervous tissue. They learned that from us, believe it or not. We had the ability, and they knew how to use it. They learned by studying our cancers, of all things. It was cancer that made Humanity such a valuable trade partner."

Lilith speaking to her construct child Akin:

"Human beings fear difference," Lilith had told him once. "Oankali crave difference. Humans persecute their different ones, yet they need them to give themselves definition and status. Oankali seek difference and collect it. They need it to keep themselves from stagnation and overspecialization. If you don't understand this, you will. You'll probably find both tendencies surfacing in your own behavior." And she had put her hand on his hair.

"When you feel a conflict, try to go the Oankali way. Embrace difference."

THE HUMANS:

The humans have been saved from a deep tragedy, albeit of their own doing. They carry with them the memories and trauma of the destruction of their kind and the earth, as well as the as being "saved" by beings so completely different then them as to be repulsive (at least at first). Some humans had accepted their new circumstances and realized the advantages of joining the Oankali: to be taken care of, to be able to have children and families, to feel a certain harmony and communal way of living amongst themselves, the earth, and life in general.

Mating with an ooloi (always done in three: an ooloi with two others, human/human, alien/human, alien/alien), once a human can get over certain repulsions of being near the aliens, is an experience so pleasurable, it is beyond any human experience of ecstasy. It can become strangely addictive. It, like many of the Oankali's gifts, comes at a cost: when you mate with a human and an ooloi, you can never touch that human again without a deep repulsion. One can never again be held or comforted by your human mate: Your contact with your human mate will always be mediated, non-physical. Some humans don't know this, some resistors had friends that did mate with Oankali and may have some knowledge of it. There are certainly a lot of rumours, as to what this ritual is like: and your character might have some deep-seated fears about it (or some unspoken secret curiosities towards it)

Resistors are the humans that have refused any contact with the aliens (as much as is possible on an earth that is wholly controlled biologically by the aliens and their bio-technologies). They make themselves busy with activities, but in the end, there is a depression that falls over these villages, many descend into violence and chaos caused by existential dread, boredom and aimlessness. Some resistors are beginning to question this stubborn refusal of the Oankali, and think about at least trying to appeal to them for help.

Two Oankali speaking about the "Human Conflict":

"When you have Human mates," I told it, "you have to remember to let them be Human. They've killed fish and eaten them all their lives. They

know we hate it. They need to do it anyway—for reasons that don't have much to do with nutrition."

Aaor let me soothe it, but still said, "What reasons?"

"Sometimes they need to prove to themselves that they still own themselves, that they can still care for themselves, that they still have things—

customs—that are their own.”

“Sounds like an expression of the Human conflict,” Aaor said.

“It is,” I agreed. “They’re proving their independence at a time when they’re no longer independent. But if this is the worst thing they do, I’ll be grateful.”

A construct Ooloi describing its first encounter healing a human:

I held the female close to me and sank as many head and body tentacles into her as I could, but I couldn't get over the feeling that I was somehow not close enough to her, not linked deeply enough into her nervous system, that there was something missing. Of course there was—and there would be until my second metamorphosis. I understood the feeling, but I couldn't make it go away. I had to be especially careful not to hold her too tightly, not to interfere with her breathing. The beauty of her flesh was my reward. A foreign Human as incredibly complex as any Human, as full of the Human Conflict—dangerous and frightening and intriguing—as any Human. She was like the fire—desirable and dangerous, beautiful and lethal. Humans never understood why Oankali found them so interesting.

A description of a mating experience between two humans and an ooloi:

He did not lose consciousness. Nikanj did not want to cheat itself of sensation. Even Joseph was conscious, though utterly controlled, unafraid because Nikanj kept him tranquil. Lilith was not controlled. She could lift a free hand across Nikanj to take Joseph's cool, seemingly lifeless hand.

“No,” Nikanj said softly into her ear—or perhaps it stimulated the auditory nerve directly. It could do that—stimulate her senses individually or in any combination to make perfect hallucinations. “Only through me,” its voice insisted.

Lilith's hand tingled. She released Joseph's hand and immediately received Joseph as a blanket of warmth and security, a compelling, steady presence.

She never knew whether she was receiving Nikanj's approximation of Joseph, a true transmission of what Joseph was feeling, some combination of truth and approximation, or just a pleasant fiction.

What was Joseph feeling from her?

It seemed to her that she had always been with him. She had no sensation of shifting gears, no “time alone” to contrast with the present “time together.” He had always been there, part of her, essential.

Nikanj focused on the intensity of their attraction, their union. It left Lilith no other sensation. It seemed, itself, to vanish. She sensed only Joseph, felt that he was aware only of her.

Now their delight in one another ignited and burned. They moved together, sustaining an impossible intensity, both of them tireless, perfectly matched, ablaze in sensation, lost in one another. They seemed to rush upward. A long time later, they seemed to drift down slowly, gradually, savoring a few more moments wholly together.

Noon, evening, dusk, darkness.

Her throat hurt. Her first solitary sensation was pain—as though she had been shouting, screaming. She swallowed painfully and raised her hand to her throat, but Nikanj's sensory arm was there ahead of her and brushed her hand away. It laid its exposed sensory hand across her throat. She felt it anchor itself, sensory fingers stretching, clasping. She did not feel the tendrils of its substance penetrate her flesh, but in a

moment the pain in her throat was gone.

"All that and you only screamed once," it told her.

"How'd you let me do even that?" she asked.

"You surprised me. I've never made you scream before."

She let it withdraw from her throat, then moved languidly to stroke it. "How much of that experience was Joseph's and mine?" she asked. "How much did you make up?"

"I've never made up an experience for you," it said. "I won't have to for him either. You both have memories filled with experiences."

"That was a new one."

"A combination. You had your own experiences and his. He had his and yours. You both had me to keep it going much longer than it would have otherwise. The whole was ... overwhelming."

She looked around. "Joseph?"

"Asleep. Very deeply asleep. I didn't induce it. He's tired. He's all right, though."

"He ... felt everything I felt?"

"On a sensory level. Intellectually, he made his interpretations and you made yours."

"I wouldn't call them intellectual."

After/effects of the mating process on humans, the role of touch for aliens/humans:

Both Ahajas (Oankali female mate of Lilith) and Akin tried to tell him what it was like to touch the growing child and feel its response, its recognition, its intense curiosity. The two had talked Nikanj into trying to simulate the sensation for him. Nikanj had resisted the idea only because Tino was not one of the child's parents. But when Tino asked, the ooloi's resistance vanished. It gave Tino the sensation—and held him longer than was necessary. That was good, Akin thought. Tino needed to be touched more. It had been painfully hard for him when he discovered that his entry into the family meant he could not touch Lilith. This was something Akin did not understand. Human beings liked to touch one another—needed to. But once they mated through an ooloi, they could not mate with each other in the Human way—could not even stroke and handle one another in the Human way. Akin did not understand why they needed this, but he knew they did, knew it frustrated and embittered them that they could not. Tino had spent days screaming at or not speaking at all to Nikanj, screaming at or not speaking to Lilith, sitting alone and staring at nothing. Once he left the village for three days, and Dichaan followed him and led him back when he was ready to return. He could have gone away until the effects of his mating with Nikanj had passed from his body. He could have found another village and a sterile Human-only mating. He had had several of those, though. Akin had heard him speak of them during those first few bad days. They were not what he wanted. But neither was this. Now he was like Lilith. Very much attached to the family and content with it most of the time, yet poisonously resentful and bitter sometimes.

DESIGNER'S INTENT AND INSPIRATION:

I read Butler's trilogy after it being mentioned in a talk by Luciana Antonia Majaca and Luciana Parisi, the talk is encapsulated here:

<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/77/76322/the-incomputable-and-instrumental-possibility/> .

They see Lilith instrumentalizing her instrumentalization by the aliens, and starting to use the logic of the aliens as a way of survival (and in their minds, transcendence of her circumstances, which I actually don't agree with). Parisi and Majaca then apply this to the technological and political forces at play in our "post-cybernetic age" as a possible strategy of not succumbing to "the overwhelming logic of control, data positivism, and the paranoid reasoning of the algorithmically enhanced white-man cogito" of our current times.

Once I started reading the books, I was struck by how familiar the logic and behavior of the aliens were to what I have experienced by studying somatics

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somatics> : mind-body centering practices that are both therapeutic and creative. I had always sensed something body-based in the Parisi and Majaca talk, even though I am sure this is not what they had in mind. Nonetheless, I became curious if I could use somatic techniques to simulate this alien race with bio-driven technologies, and a life-loving culture: something that seems very alien in the patriarchal, destructive yet driven by unendless "growth" culture we still live in. Could somatics, a training of perception, also be a (alien?) technology? Can there be a redefinition of "humanity", of "technology"?

I've run the larp twice before, and since those runs I participated in my first vampire larp: End of The Line, by the Participation Design Agency (<https://www.participation.design/>). It was a very profound experience for me, and since then I've wanted "aliens" to become the next "vampire": a way for us to examine what it means to be human, by losing humanity. With vampires, it is through blood and being the "undead", with these aliens it is through touch and losing a (western sense of) individuality and human genetic uniqueness.

Working with Butler's books and this larp always leaves me with as many new questions as it does with new answers, and I hold this larp as an important site of my continued research into embodiment, technology, politics and being-ness. I think this will be the best, most fun run yet and am excited to have a great group of players involved!

THE GUILD

Designed by Susan Ploetz, based on scenarios from Octavia Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy This run includes scenography and organizational/design contributions/feedback from Magnar Grønrik Müller. I want to thank Magnar, Kristoffer Thore, Brody Condon, and Elvia Wilk for their feedback and thoughts as I've worked on this larp. And a huge thanks to all the participants that have brought so many amazing creative energies, impulses and presence to the larp, that have also helped me develop it further each time.

Previous runs:

Berlin March 2017

Minibar, Stockholm, April 2017