

Power and Identity in Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti*

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Abstract

Afrofuturism as a vast landscape is a movement that combines science fiction, historical fiction, and Afrocentricity, and has garnered the attention of various scholars. Consequently, this study presents the interconnection of futuristic elements and cultural symbols. It fundamentally explores the intersection of power dynamics and identity formation in Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* with the tools provided by Cultural Studies Theory. The subtle forms of resistance that are employed by marginalized groups or societies are also revealed through analysis of the binary conflicts and hegemonic forces present in the novella within Antonio Gramsci's framework of cultural hegemony. This research, therefore, aims to offer a deeper understanding of how marginalized voices resist dominant power structures and assert their identity, bringing to light the importance of African cultural heritage in contemporary science fiction.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Cultural Studies Theory, Power dynamics, NnediOkorafor, Cultural symbols, Resistance

Introduction

Afrofuturism is generally regarded as a literary, cultural, and artistic movement that combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and Afrocentricity to redefine the past and visualize the future through the eyes of black people. This establishes the fact that Afrofuturism counters dominant narratives about blacks and offers a platform for their voices to be heard by incorporating African cosmologies, myths, and cultural practices. Over the past few years, Afrofuturism has attracted many scholars and sparked debates and ongoing conversations about its impact and relevance. While some scholars

such as Kodwo Eshun, have explored how Afrofuturism deviates from the norms and conventions of science fiction by foregrounding African perspectives and experiences (2003), other scholars centre their discussions around themes of identity, technology, and the reimagining of history. These themes can be found in works such as Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, and N.K. Jemisin's *The Broken Earth Trilogy*. Considering the arguments of critics on how Afrofuturism has provided an important framework for understanding how marginalized communities envision alternative futures and resist hegemonic forces, creative works have thus been instrumental in advancing Afrofuturistic studies. This creative approach sets the stage for analyzing Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* as a novel that embodies the essence of Afrofuturism through the journey and cultural identity of the protagonist.

Okorafor's *Binti* is a novella that explores power dynamics and binary conflict while focusing on the colonizer versus colonized concept. The protagonist's interactions with different species (non-human creatures from the Khoush) and cultures expose the intricacies of hegemony and the resistance of marginalized groups which hinges on power and identity, as *Binti* faces challenges and is marginalized in a different universe. Several studies on Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* have explored themes such as postcolonialism, intersectionality, and diaspora using frameworks like postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and science fiction studies. However, this paper will specifically utilize Cultural Studies Theory to explore the interplay of power and identity. Drawing on Stuart Hall's theory of cultural representation and hegemony, it argues against cultural hierarchies and examines how dominant narratives marginalize others like *Binti* in a world characterized by power struggles and conflicts. It will also single out the cultural symbols and practices that inform her resistance and self-redefinition, giving a different perspective that has not been extensively explored before.

Cultural Studies Theory emphasizes the role of culture in shaping societal structures, relationships, and individual identities by focusing on concepts such as binary conflict, hegemony, and symbolic representation. This allows for an in-depth examination of how power operates within different cultural contexts. This is evident in *Binti* where binary conflicts occur in the protagonist's interactions with various alien species and the power imbalances she encounters. Hegemony is also explored through the dominance of certain cultural norms and the resistance to these norms by marginalized groups. Additionally, the symbolic representation of identity through cultural artefacts like *Binti*'s hair, the edan, and the otjize serves as a crucial point of analysis. Understanding these symbolic elements within the framework of Cultural Studies Theory sheds light on how *Binti*'s identity is constructed, negotiated, and contested.

Binary conflict and hegemony are important concepts when examining the power dynamics in the novella. In the interactions between different species and cultures in the novella, binary conflicts such as the colonizer versus the colonized, which are central to post-colonial narratives are evident, lending credence to Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony which explains how certain groups maintain their status of rulership and dominance through cultural institutions and ideological means rather than brute force (1971). The analysis of binary conflict, hegemony, and symbolic representation within the novella will reveal how *Binti* navigates and resists dominant power structures which ultimately redefines her identity. This approach through Cultural Studies Theory, not only fills a gap in existing scholarship on *Binti* but also enhances our understanding of the broader themes of Afrofuturism. Therefore, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of power and identity in *Binti*, contributing to both Afrofuturist studies and the critical examination of the author's work.

The concept of power, as analyzed by scholars like Michel Foucault, is seen as dynamic rather than static. Foucault describes power as a web of relations that shapes behaviour and knowledge, while Homi Bhabha suggests that it embodies both oppressive and liberatory potential. This ambivalence is reflected in Homi Bhabha's idea of cultural hybridity, particularly in colonial contexts, where colonized cultural identities resist dominant narratives. Judith Butler adds to this discourse by highlighting that identity is performative and is shaped by power dynamics. Furthermore, theorists like Achilles Mbembe and Giorgio Agamben introduce the concepts of "necropolitics" and "biopower," respectively, to analyze the regulation of life and bodies in post-colonial societies as a form of power.

In reviewing studies on Identity in literature, various theoretical lenses, including Critical Race Theory (CRT), Postcolonial Criticism, and Queer Theory have been used to examine the different dimensions of identity. Cultural identity becomes a battleground for power and race when Kimberlé Crenshaw applies Critical Race Theory to literary analysis. As for Religious identity, theorists like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak show how it influences historical development after exploring the tensions created by colonial authorities. This is exemplified in works such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* where the tide of Christianity disorganizes the traditional belief system.

The text also explores other themes such as technology, cultural hybridity, and gender issues where technology symbolizes cultural continuity, though V. Y. Mudimbe addresses the alienation caused by modernity. However, Bhabha's concept of cultural hybridity is exemplified in how Binti navigates her Himba culture within a cosmopolitan university, while Hall Stuart highlights the challenges of reconciling tradition with modern influences. Additionally, Binti's role as character challenges stereotypical gender roles through her independence and strength, with scholars like Arit Oku emphasizing her resistance to societal expectations and emphasizing Okorafor's feminist portrayal of her character.

Power Dynamics in Okorafor's Binti

In Binti, there is a clear structure of binary conflict between Binti's Himba culture and the dominant Khoush culture. This conflict mirrors a classic colonizer-colonized relationship where a dominant group – the Khoush clan – imposes cultural norms and values on the marginalized. In this case, Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how dominant groups maintain power by promoting their culture as the norm without necessarily using force and expecting other groups to accept it as natural. For Binti, the pressure to conform to the Khoush customs is an attempt by the Khoush to reinforce their superiority and cultural dominance over her. However, just before she meets with the rigid clan of Khoush, her 'Otherness' is revealed first when she leaves her home for Oomza University. She acknowledges this in her words, I was defying the most traditional part of myself for the first time in my entire life... Everyone looked at me as if the sun was his or her enemy... Binti gets these reactions because of her outlook and skin highlighting the growing pressure mounted on her by everyone around her for being different from them. Her decision to go against the norm in terms of dressing is greeted with disdain. She even begins to reconsider her decision to stand out as a Himba girl when she asks, "What am I doing? I whispered" (Binti, p.10). And expresses how she feels,

...Stupid stupidstupid,I whispered. We Himba don't travel. We stay put. Our ancestral land is life; move away from it and you diminish. We even cover our bodies with it. Otjize is red land. Here in the launch port, most were Khoush and a few other non-Himba. Here, I was an outsider; I was outside. What was I thinking?I whispered. (Binti, p.11)

This hegemonic pressure as evidenced in the Khoush passengers' reaction when they first meet Binti on her journey to Oomza University, irritated by her appearance which is significantly marked by her otjize-covered skin and her traditional hairstyle that sets her apart, makes the Khoush view her as inferior. It all reflects Antonio Gramsci's idea that hegemony operates by defining what is civilized practice and often marginalizing cultural practices that do not fit into the dominant group's worldview. Binti's culture is labelled as a minority and her traditions make her take the position of the 'Other' or what Gayatri Spivak calls a subaltern.

Cultural Studies Theory also seeks to question assumptions about the superiority of culture. This critique is based on Stuart Hall's Theory of cultural representation and hegemony which asserts that no culture is superior, and cultural narratives which project their dominance are made to marginalize others. For example, when the Khoush passenger openly comments on Binti's otjize-covered skin as dirty, she fails to see it as a significant cultural symbol and rather reduces its value to the dirt of the earth. This Khoush's dismissive attitude toward Binti's heritage also creates a tension within her that begins to influence her identity. She says,

My mother had counseled me to be quiet around Khoush... I shrugged, too aware of the people behind me waiting in line and staring at me. To them, I was probably like one of the people who lived in caves deep in the hinter desert who were so blackened by the sun that they looked like walking shadows. (Binti, p.13,15,23)

Although Binti is deeply connected to her Himba roots; she experiences a kind of crisis within her that makes her question the place of her culture in a universe that is dominated by the Khoush. This is also evident in her thoughts as she says:

I stood there, frozen, hearing my mother's voice in my head. There is a reason why our people do not go to that university. Oomza Uni wants you for its own gain, Binti. You go to that school and you become its slave. I couldn't help but contemplate the possible truth in her words. (Binti, p.11-12)

To Cultural Studies Theory, identity is mostly influenced by external power dynamics and this makes the marginalized struggle to discover their sense of self within the constraints of a dominant and repressive society. This inner struggle reflects what many individuals experience when they are faced with oppressive opposition. As the journey progresses, Binti's form of resistance manifests in the form of re-enforced self-assertiveness because she realizes that the only way to defy the Khoush cultural hegemony is to embrace Himba customs.

The issue of power dynamics is significantly at play in Binti so much that it becomes an important factor that contributes to the protagonist's evolving sense of self. This illustrates how external forces can influence identity formation. Cultural Studies Theory suggests that identity is not just fixed but is

constantly shaped by interactions with societal ethos and social structures, like the structures of power as creatively explicated in the text. In Michel Foucault's theory of power and subjectivity, there is an idea that proposes that power is not just external but also internalized and affects the individual's perception and how they define themselves. Binti's encounter with both the Khoush and the Meduse—another alien culture that confronts Binti—challenges her sense of identity as she is forced to navigate between different cultural expectations and this interaction paints a clear picture of who she is before and after her identity begins to change. It changes in such a way that she tries to reconcile her Himba traditions with the gradual transformation into someone from another culture, especially that of the Meduse which she encounters on her journey.

The power dynamics between these two groups, the Khoush and the Meduse, become crucial in shaping her evolving identity which according to Foucault's idea on Power and Knowledge, are particularly useful in understanding how Binti is exposed to the different knowledge systems like the Khoush and the Meduse. They both come together to contribute to her identity transformation. The dominant culture which is the Khoush attempts to impose the world view and educational system upon her and this creates a sense of alienation but it does not make her succumb to the external pressures. She testifies to this when she says:

The Khoush built the lessons into history, literature, and culture classes across several regions. Even my people were required to learn about it, despite the fact that it wasn't our fight. The Khoush expected everyone to remember their greatest enemy and injustice. They even worked Meduse anatomy and rudimentary technology into mathematics and science classes. (Binti, p.20)

However, rather than compromise, she draws strength from her Himba heritage and begins to integrate aspects of the Meduse culture into her self-concept. The blending of cultures reflects Stuart's idea of the fluidity of identity which suggests that identity is constructed through a continuous process of negotiation and reinterpretation, especially about the power structures an individual comes in contact with. In the case of Binti, this cultural exchange allows her to reshape her identity and adopt elements from each culture while remaining firmly rooted in her Himba origin.

Binti's transformation as projected in the narrative reflects how power relations shape the way identities are formed especially in intercultural contexts. Initially, this identity is the strong title of a Himba girl who never goes out of her planet and views traditions as central to who she is. But as the narrative progresses and she comes to a point of interaction with the Khoush and the Meduse, she begins to challenge and expand her understanding of self. In line with Cultural Studies Theory, the process of evolving for Binti can be seen as a response to the power structures which she encounters. It comprises both the oppressive force of the Khoush cultural hegemony and the liberating influence of the Meduse. Her identity becomes less Himba and more complex as she integrates the new knowledge and practices of the Meduse while still holding on to her Himba heritage. This instance portrays this when she says, "For a moment, I was two people – a Himba girl who knew her history very well and a Himba girl who left Earth and became part – Meduse in space" (Binti, p. 138). This tension between the old and the new reflects Stuart Hall's assertion that identity is never static but is constantly in flux and shaped by the power dynamics at play.

Symbols of Identity as a Form of Resistance

Furthermore, Binti's commitment to cultural symbols such as her hairstyle, otjize and edan shows how her identity is deeply entwined with the practices and each symbol is a tool of resistance. Instead of yielding to chosen expectations, she displays her heritage and it stands out as a quiet but significant challenge to dominance by the Khoush. This resistance aligns with what Hall calls the silent rebellion that preserves cultural integrity. Through Binti's journey, she becomes aware of how her appearance is a contrasting difference that sets her apart and then understands the social risk of staying true to her heritage, yet every time she chooses to keep her otjize and hairstyle, she reinforces her cultural pride and shows that identity cannot be compromised even when faced with superior forces that attempt to erase it.

The heroine's journey is intriguing as it is marked by her strong attachment to her Himba heritage and this becomes a powerful form of resistance against the pressure to assimilate into the Khoush. This again echoes Hall's concept of counter-hegemony; an assertion of identity that directly challenges the dominant culture's attempt at erasure. Hall suggests that marginalized groups can maintain their own identity by strongly clinging to their practices and beliefs even when it is seen as oppositional. This is demonstrated by Binti when she continues to use her otjize— a clay paste Himba people use for cleansing and cultural significance— as her way of asserting her cultural pride and resisting the subjugation of the Khoush. For her, this ritual is more than just a habit it is deeply rooted in her tradition and connects her to her family and Himba tribe and each time she applies it, she reaffirms her commitment to her culture just as can be seen in her language, “I considered finding a lavatory and applying more otjize to my skin...simply because she wanted to stand out in sea of Khoush...the rest of the world” (Binti, p.12).

Her hairstyle accentuates a statement of identity and announces spoken rejection of any form of assimilation. Such acts of cultural resistance according to Hall challenge hegemonic power by reaffirming the individual's connection to his/her roots and this aspect of Binti's appearance often draws comments from people who view it as peculiar or primitive. For instance, a woman's reaction to her hair reeks of disdain when she touches it.

The woman who tugged my plait was looking at her fingers and rubbing them together, frowning. Her fingertips were orange red with my otjize...Is her hair even real? Another woman asked the woman, rubbing her fingers. I don't know. These dirt bathers are a filthy people, the first woman muttered.(Binti,p. 13).

Through this derogatory language use, Binti faces discrimination but this does not weaken her resolve to maintain her status quo as a black Himba girl. Her actions further reflect Hall's perspective of cultural representation which explains how physical symbols such as hairstyles serve as outward expressions of a person's identity and the pride of their culture. Binti embodies her connection to her people and her values by keeping her hair in a traditional Himba style despite her migration to other environments that do not appreciate her hair. Her hair becomes a marker of her resistance against any form of cultural assimilation that allows her to remain rooted in her heritage.

The narrative also illustrates her cultural resilience and reassertion. For instance, when Binti encounters the Meduse, the effect of Okwu's stinger stabbing into her back to become one of them is only revealed when she begins to notice the changes in the colour and texture of her hair. Gradually it begins to resemble the okuoko (a jelly-like kind of hair) of the Meduse. When she tries to cover it up

by using her traditional otjize, she becomes aware of the fact that it is not just hair but a part of her that is sensitive to touch. “I flaked more otjize off my okuoko. My left eye twitched and I grabbed one of my okuoko. It hurt”. (Binti, p. 97). This also explains the shock of her people when she returns home and they notice that okuoko is not just hair but has a mind of its own. Her hair becomes a dominant cultural symbol and this is why a slight change in her hair is immediately and easily recognized by her people and she is confronted with the question, What is that on your head? What has happened to you? (Binti, p. 143).

Another powerful cultural symbol is Binti's edan which is more than a cultural symbol; it is also a mysterious artifact which ties Binti closely to her heritage, family, and community. This object which she finds in the desert embodies values, wisdom, and continuity of the Himba ancestry. The concept of material culture which is a category under Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital considers how physical objects like Binti's edan carry meanings beyond their practical use and serve as symbols of identity, memory, and connection. For Binti, her edan serves as a protective talisman and the constant reminder of where she came from and even as she ventures far from home, she uses the edan to defend herself against the Meduse. When she is attacked by the Meduse, it becomes her weapon as seen in this instance:

L . . . leave me alone! I screamed, grabbing my edan . . . No weapons, except the edan . . . and I didn't know what made it a weapon . . . I picked up the edan, looking for what I'd seen. I turned the edan over and over before my eyes. The blue object whose many points I'd rubbed, pressed, stared at, and pondered for so many years. (Binti, p.29)

She holds firmly to this object as it symbolizes the strength and resilience that her culture is still within her. Through this symbol, Okorafor illustrates how cultural artifacts hold both personal and collective significance and empowers Binti to stay grounded in her identity regardless of the challenges she faces outside her world.

Furthermore, another very interesting cultural symbol is Binti's otjize which is made from clay and red ochre in the Himba culture and symbolizes the bond between the people and their ancestral land. Binti religiously applies this substance on her skin not only to connect her land but also represents the visible marker of her resistance against cultural erasure. However, in his work, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, Hall states that cultural identities come from somewhere, and have histories. But, like everything historical, they undergo constant transformation (1994, p.392-403). This aligns with Binti's making a new batch of otjize from the new soil in Oomza University in her attempt to remain a core Himba girl while adapting to new environments.

The depiction of Binti's hair, edan and otjize gives an intellectual depth and insight into the importance of cultural symbols in representing African identity. These symbols somehow come to challenge the stereotypical representation of African culture in Western narratives which demean or simplify the richness of African traditions. Hall's theory of cultural representation is not just a reflection of reality but it is also a means of shaping how people perceive and understand what cultural identity truly means. This is what the narrative of Binti does; it reframes African symbols as powerful and significant in a futuristic context and critiques the Western notions that reduce the value of African identity to just premodial stereotypes. The importance attached to Binti's hair, edan, and otjize not only celebrates the culture of Africans, but in the broader scheme of things, it highlights

African identity as valuable and relevant in a speculative high-tech universe. So, the African identity through cultural symbols is represented as not just a relic of the past but vital, evolving and thriving in a futuristic context.

Cultural Representation and Afrofuturism in Okorafor's *Binti*

Okorafor's *Binti* consists of core elements of Afrofuturism that merge African cultural identity with the future of technology, alien worlds, and speculative themes. The idea of Afrofuturism is to imagine futures that centre Black and African experiences and counter the Western narratives typically seen in science fiction. Cultural hegemony is critiqued here as Afrofuturism challenges the exclusive treatment given to African narratives in speculative fiction. In the words of the author, the art of setting *Binti*'s journey in a universe that celebrates African cultural heritage—such as her Himba practices, values, and traditional symbols—positions African identity as integral to the future. *Binti* is reimagined as an African hero who models how solid African culture is; though she gains new knowledge through her intergalactic experiences, she never becomes subservient to others. Thus, in *Binti*, there is a reclamation of the African identity within a speculative genre that has often marginalized Black voices and narratives. The juxtaposition of *Binti*'s reliance on both her Himba traditions and her expertise in mathematics and scientific experiments showcases a balanced integration of tradition and modernity. In this case, it does not simply spell out the cultural hybridity of the colonized imitating the colonizer; rather, it embodies the Afrofuturistic themes of reconciling ancient African practices with the future – a future where Black voices are not excluded but integrated.

Additionally, *Binti* is a distinctive narrative as it distinguishes Afrofuturism by planting its speculative elements on the soil of African knowledge systems and traditions. Its emphasis projects the idea that technological advancement does not necessarily result in cultural erasure. This focus is different from other Afrofuturistic works such as N. K. Jemison's *The Broken Earth Trilogy* where the cultural connections of the protagonists are often implied rather than explicitly tied to a specific African background. In the narrative, focusing on *The Fifth Season*, the protagonist, Essun, is part of the marginalized groups of Orgenes who are powerful individuals who can manipulate cosmic energy and are feared and controlled by the society around them. Both works examine the theme of the struggles associated with being "othered" but *Binti* diverges in its approach to the source of its protagonist's power and identity. Where *Binti*'s sense of self and strength lies within her connection to her Himba heritage and religious use of cultural symbols like her edan and otjize, Essun's power is biological and is seen as a threat by society rather than a cultural asset. This places her at the mercy of an oppressive structure and leads to a case of exploitation by this governing body that controls the Orgenes and enforces submission through psychological and physical violence. Jemisin's narrative is therefore concerned with how systemic power controls marginalized people by pathologizing their natural abilities, whereas Okorafor's *Binti* presents *Binti*'s identity markers as a source of pride and continuity rather than a burden. This cultural connection is what distinguishes *Binti* from other works in the world of Afrofuturism which emphasises African traditions as both a core of one's identity and a tool for resisting hegemonic forces.

Moreover, the analysis of *Binti* through Cultural Studies Theory helps to build a well-layered exploration of resistance to power as seen in her intercultural diplomacy and alliance with Okwu, a

Meduse who represents a bridging of cultural divides in the narrative. Binti is transformed from a vulnerable outsider to an honored heroine mediating peace between two conflicting species as a harmonizer. This reconciliation aligns with Hall's counter-hegemonic idea, which suggests that the marginalized can resist dominant ideologies through alternative narratives and alliances. Conversely, Essun's resistance to power is rooted in systemic defiance as her mentor, Alabaster, acts as a revolutionary spirit that propels her to challenge the oppressive fulcrum. They combine forces to destroy the structures of exploitation, which in this case symbolizes a colonial system of power and is quite different from the type of resistance found in Binti.

When examining Binti within the sphere of Afrofuturism, the clear distinction of how she treats the issue of identity is unique. Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* tries to weave its narrative around the themes of cultural integrity and self-discovery amid societal collapse and transformation, but the protagonist in this narrative, Lauren, creates a new belief system that helps her adapt to the brutal realities of her life in a new environment. Thus, while Binti's journey projects the idea of preservation and assertion of cultural heritage within an intergalactic space, Lauren abandons her traditional religious norms. Binti brings along her Himba identity, symbolized by her otjize, edan, and traditional hairstyle, into her interactions with alien societies and refuses to assimilate despite the weight of the pressure from the supposedly dominant culture, while Lauren's identity is transformative and based on adapting to her dystopian world by envisioning a new belief system. In essence, this picture of an unshaken African identity sets the text apart from the adaptable and fluid identity constructed in Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*.

In comparison with these other works, Binti is one work with a distinctive reading experience because of its unique approaches to identity and power within the Afrofuturistic genre. Binti's African narrative is not mediated by Western identity constructs but upholds African roots. While many Afrofuturistic works tend to focus on hybrid identities or assimilation of alien cultures in a Westernized setting, Binti remains consistent throughout the narrative in celebrating a specific, grounded African identity that resists change even within an alien and technologically advanced context. Thus, by situating a purely African identity in outer space, Nnedi Okorafor's Binti not only challenges the conventions and tropes of science fiction but stretches the tentacles of Afrofuturism to accommodate the perspective that African culture belongs to the global and even interstellar stage.

Conclusion

The Afrofuturistic literary landscape has opened up avenues for various explorations of African identity. Within these discussions, numerous thoughts and interpretations regarding the meanings of identity and power have emerged. This research is significant as it has focused on Okorafor's Binti, a work within the Afrofuturistic literary canon and an excellent subject for analysis using Cultural Studies Theory. Through the journey of the protagonist, the analysis revealed the exploration of identity as shaped by power dynamics, cultural symbols, and resistance. This theory served as a veritable tool for examining how power dynamics manifest in the protagonist's interactions with the Khoush and Meduse, investigated the phenomenon of cultural symbols as acts of resistance, and discussed the reclamation of African identity within Afrofuturism. With the utility of Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Foucault's ideas on power dynamics, the analysis interrogated Binti's resistance to hegemonic norms. Through these tenets, Binti's journey illustrates how power shapes and reshapes identities, enabling her to bridge cultural divides between the Khoush and the Medusa while maintaining her core Himba sense of self. It also emphasizes the importance of her cultural

symbols as markers of embracing cultural heritage, providing a framework for understanding the broader implications of African identity in global discourses.

This paper has demonstrated through the lens of Cultural Studies Theory that the character Binti's commitment to her cultural practices and the conscious use of symbols, despite the alien pressures, illustrate what Judith Butler calls the "theory of performativity", which argues that identity is performed and reinforced through repeated actions and choices. Thus, the only way Binti resists the dominant power structures around her and defines herself on her terms is by continually reminding herself of who she is and where she comes from. She reaffirms that her identity is neither static nor superficial but deeply rooted in meaningful traditions and historical preoccupations. This also echoes the Afrofuturistic goal of placing the African cultural identity at the forefront of Western civilization through narratives as exemplified in Okorafor's Binti.

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