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Pigs,plants and parallel processing: an exploration of the tensions between Western liberal humanism and critical post humanism in dub steps

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2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27109

Worster, Amy Loureth (2018) Pigs, plants and parallel processing: an exploration of the tensions between Western liberal humanism and critical posthumanism in Dub Steps, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27109

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ABSTRACT

This research report presents a critical thematic analysis of Andrew Miller's science fiction (SF) novel *Dub Steps* with the intention of demonstrating that the book's central themes are interrelated and evoke various tensions between the ideological projects of western liberal humanism and critical posthumanism. Furthermore, this study examines how the novel's setting of Johannesburg articulates with its themes and complicates the unfolding drama of the liberal humanist subject in crisis, especially in connection to South Africa's troubled history of colonialism and apartheid. Representations of race – specifically blackness and whiteness – are at stake in the interactions between Johannesburg and the central themes of *Dub Steps*, and the historical and material politics of race in South Africa are brought to bear upon the novel's depiction of a posthuman future. This study finds that *Dub Steps* may be read as a posthuman SF fantasy in which the vestiges of colonialism and apartheid are finally undone and socio-economic inequalities persisting in the post-apartheid sphere are finally rebalanced. However, it is also the view of this research report that the progressive potential of the novel is undermined by its technophobic ethos and a reversion to harmful stereotypes about black people in its vision of a new world order.

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MA Digital Arts by coursework and research report