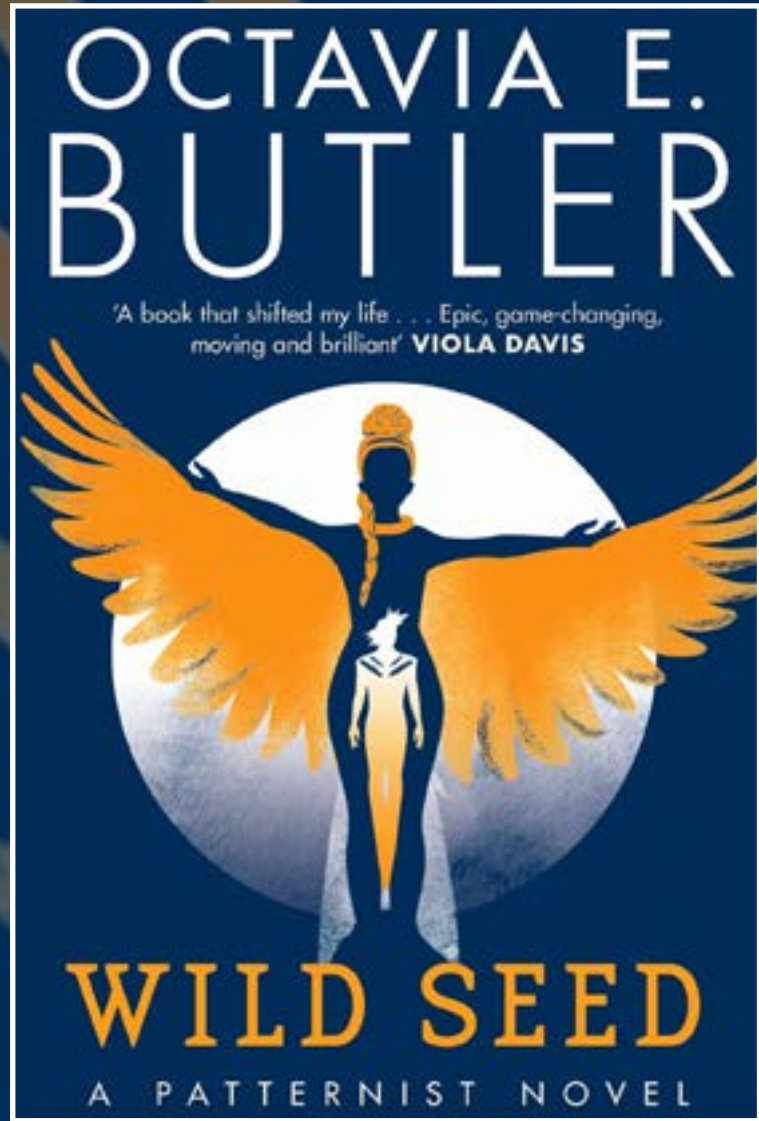


Octavia E. Butler's *Wild Seed*

THE PORTALIST

“Civilization is the way one’s own people live. Savagery is the way foreigners live.”



WHAT IS IT?

Octavia E. Butler's 1980 fifth novel, originally published by Doubleday. [Read an excerpt here.](#)

WHAT'S THE SYNOPSIS?

The first novel—in chronological order—of the Patternist series, *Wild Seed* introduces two immortals, Doro and Anyanwu. Doro feeds his own power by stealing the bodies of humans, whereas Anyanwu uses her extraordinary abilities to heal mortals. *Wild Seed* follows the contentious connection between the pair, from their first meeting in Africa to their eventual reunion on a pre-Civil War Louisiana plantation.

WHAT KIND OF RECEPTION DID IT RECEIVE?

- [Writing for *The Washington Post*](#), Elizabeth A. Lynn praised Butler's prose in *Wild Seed* as “spare and sure, and even in moments of great tension she never loses control over her pacing or over her sense of story.”
- Tom Easton wrote for *Analog* that “Butler's story, for all that it is fiction, rings true as only the best novels can.”

IS IT PART OF A SERIES?

Yes! *Wild Seed* was the fourth book published in the Patternmaster series (also referred to as the Seed to Harvest series). It was preceded in publication by Butler's 1978 novel *Survivor*, which is now out of print at Butler's request.

However, the chronology of the series differs from publication order. The reading order for the series is *Wild Seed* (1980), *Mind of My Mind* (1977), *Clay's Ark* (1984), *Survivor* (1978), and *Patternmaster* (1976).

WHAT ARE ITS ADAPTATIONS?



Wild Seed—the first book in series order—is being adapted into an Amazon series by Viola Davis's production company, JuVee Productions. Nnedi Okorafor and Wanuri Kahiu are co-writing the show.

Speaking to *The Portalist* in 2019, [Okorafor shared her own relationship with *Wild Seed*](#): “I’ve been an Octavia Butler fan since 2001 [...] It was while perusing the science fiction and fantasy section that I saw something I’d never ever seen before. There was a novel that was turned face out and that novel had a Black woman on the cover. Not an illustration, but an actual photo.

“At that time, I’d never seen a real Black woman on the cover of any book in that section. I bought the book for that reason alone, I didn’t read the synopsis or anything. That book turned out to be *Wild Seed*. I started reading. It started in Igboland with an Igbo woman (note: I’m Igbo) who couldn’t die and had the ability to shapeshift. Clear, smooth, fast moving prose that told a hell of a story. And it was written by a Black woman. Oh my God.”

Image credit: Nnedi Okorafor, via Wikimedia Commons.

WHAT ARE SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT *WILD SEED*?

- [Butler described writing *Wild Seed* as her “reward”](#) for completing her fourth novel, *Kindred*, a standalone book about a modern-day woman transported back in time to the pre-Civil War south.
- *Ender's Game* author Orson Scott Card uses excerpts from *Wild Seed* to demonstrate successful elements of craft in his 2001 book *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*.
- The 1978 novel in the series, *Survivor*, is out of print at Butler's request. Butler said of her third book, “When I was young, a lot of people wrote about going to another world and finding either little green men or little brown men, and they were always less in some way. They were a little sly, or a little like “the natives” in a very bad, old movie. And I thought, “No way. Apart from all these human beings populating the galaxy, this is really offensive garbage.” People ask me why I don’t like *Survivor*, my third novel. And it’s because it feels a little bit like that.”