THE LANDSCAPE OF AFRICAN SCIENCE FICTION: TECHNOLOGY AND AFRICANFUTURISM IN THE WORKS OF NNEDI OKORAFOR AND LAUREN BEUKES

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Dedication

To researchers and lovers of African Studies, and in memory of the numerous Cameroonians who have lost their lives in the ongoing Anglophone Crisis since 2016, may God have mercy and accord you a place of eternal rest in His Heavenly Kingdom. Forever in our hearts and memories!

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Abstract

This thesis examines the landscape of African Science Fiction (ASF) as a genre of African Literature (AL) from the lens of technology and Africanfuturism. African literature is often written and read from the past, positioning Africa as a backwater continent with no future technology and devoid of humanness, humaneness, and indigenous knowledge, yet African epistemologies and ontologies exist and portray new technologies in the present and in the future for the valuation of humans. The growing corpus of ASF employs African epistemologies and tremendous technology in mapping African futurity: contemporary ASF initiates a means of (re)imagining, (re)writing, and (re)reading African literary works. Specifically, this thesis shows how the explosion of the genre of ASF has shaped and distorted the modes of reading African works in a digital age, how it has dramatically brought fluidity to character identity as it found itself buffeted by flux and mutation, and above all how ASF has drastically altered the African concept of memory. The above is illustrated with a focus on the African humanist philosophies of *Sankofa*, *Ubuntu*, and *Ujamaa*, as they face new technologies, electronic information, multivalent identities and memory in the works of Nnedi Okorafor and Lauren Beukes, mainly in *Who Fears Death*, *Moxyland*, *The Book of Phoenix*, *Binti*, and *Slipping*.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> My tribe is obsessed with innovation and technology, but it is small, private, and, as I said, we don't like to leave Earth (*Binti* 21).
>
> You can pre-program patterns to add dimension or words. 'Peace'. 'Love'. 'Ubuntu'. 'Revolution'. It's easy to embed other things in magnetic paint too. *(Moxyland* 165).

Science Fiction (SF), a literary genre coined by Hugo Gernsback in 1926, refers to any literature that has speculation, estrangement, and futurity as frames and is set in an imaginative, technological and scientific world. Adam Roberts has traced the origin of Western SF to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and before that to Johannes Kepler's German *Somnium* (1634) and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1526), with More's text exploring a voyage to an imaginary land with a systematic better society out of planet Earth. Moreover, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) and Gibson and Bruce Sterling's *The Difference Engine* (1990) are seen as pioneer texts of modern SF in the subgenres of Cyberpunk and Steampunk respectively. If Adam Roberts traces the origin of general SF to "the tradition of fantasy" in Kepler's German *Somnium*, then Africa has a long-standing tradition of SF since he concludes: "Almost all the oldest and greatest works of human culture contain 'magical' episodes," and Africa, being the birthplace of humanity and epicentre of fantastic and magical realist literature, is most probably the cradle of SF. As Kepler wrote SF and devised planetary laws from the earth to the moon (Roberts, *New Critical Idiom* 38, 39), Africans like Onyesonwu were possibly shape-shifting spirits and avatars, maintaining their gender boundaries but criss-crossing physical and invisible realms.

Mary Shelley, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling are seen as pioneers of modern SF indeed, but Tutuolas's ur-text (an original/earliest literary text), *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952) "is a pioneering work of African science fiction" (Moonsamy, "Rereading" par. 3)

because Tutuola crafted a language that transports readers to what is expected of SF, and thus placing his story within believable African experience. I shall return to this later in the thesis. According to Theodore Sturgeon, "Science Fiction" is a derivation from the Latin word "*scientia*" which is construed as knowledge, thus "The concept of SF as "knowledge fiction" and it is, in addition, "the science in [its] science fiction" (Roberts, *History of SF* 10, 16) that gives it the name. It is also a kind of literature that gives an imaginative and scientific outlook of the universe. SF differs from realist literature in that its imaginative framework is not based on empirical evidence but on its extra-realist, scientific and technological norms of framing the world. According to Roberts, due to SF's belief in change and utopia, its DNA is often traced to Catholicism and Protestantism in the Western world (41, 42, 505).

In the chronology of SF, the Golden age from 1940–1960 plays a great role in the developments in human technology, especially with Isaac Asimov's pioneer robot novel, *The Caves of Steel* (1954). Asimov and John W. Campbell formulated the triple laws of robotics in order to guard the ethical issues around human and scientific progress, a point I shall return to, especially with concerns raised by James Lovelock and Corey S. Powell. These laws have led to the current debate in SF as questions are posed about the future of humans vis-a-vis technological progress in robotics, eugenics, spaceships, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and LifeGen technologies, points that I will examine in chapter two. The 21st-century polemics of SF is construed as patently suited to examining these major shifts in the changing parameters of human life with the advent of cyberpunk, steampunk, biopunk, jujutech and Africanfuturism as SF categories with dominant cultures. Africanfuturism comes into African Literature because futurity is an ineluctable leitmotif throught which Africa exhibits an angst for futurity.

Delphi Carstens and Mer Roberts, on protocols in African Science Fiction (hereafter ASF), argue that Africa is a continent that "time supposedly forgot" and "relegated as a tech-

nological backwater" (79). Formerly believed to be bereft of human agency, futurity, and technology, the new narratological discourse as expressed in the epigraphs above vindicates the continent and, as the "birthplace of humanity" (Carstens and Roberts 91), Africa has been committed to technology as a facet of human progress from ancient times. The second epigraph mentions Ubuntu, the fabric that binds Africans together into one communocracy. Ubuntu in Africanism is the "compassion and consideration for others" (Asante and Mazama 13), the African belief that: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,' (13) a dictum from John S. Mbiti that accentuates the African communalistic disposition. According to George Kapuire et al., Ubuntu philosophy "emphasizes principles of humanness and connectedness in human interactions" (212) in society, thereby voiding the erasure theory of Africa from Western science fiction which fell prey to what Chimamanda N. Adichie calls "the danger of a single story," as it ignored humanism as the overt characteristic of Africa. Adichie argues, "stories matter" because they "have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity" (7). This is the case with the contemporary ASF stories as they empower and humanize the world through indigenous epistemologies.

The epigraphs above are linked not only to Ubuntu, but also to Sankofa and Ujamaa African philosophies of cultural heritage, philosophies of dignity, probity, and integrity in dealing with human beings and the universe. According to Molefi K. Asante and Ama Mazama, Sankofa is an African-Akan-Adinkra word which etymologically comes from three lexemes: "san (return), ko (go back), and fa (fetch/retrieve). It is a symbol and principle that serves to remind us that the past is a 'resource' and not merely a 'reference" (587) and therefore ripe with meaning. It is a reminder to get back to the past and recover it, learn from it, and never forget it in the path to the future. In the words of Quarcoo A.K., "there must be movement with the times but as the forward march proceeds, the gems must be picked up from behind and

carried forward on the march" (qtd. in Temple 127). Sankofa is a five-fold theory: it suggests the value of a reflection on the past, a pensive entity on a decision, self-definition, identity, and individual, collective vision and destiny of a people (Asante and Mazama 587). Ujamaa is Mwalimu J. K. Nyerere's African philosophy derived from the Swahili word meaning "Familyhood," and describes African indigenous socialism. It is based on the principle of "extended family," the true belief that an "African socialist does not look on one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. . . . He does not form an alliance with the brethren for the extermination of the non-brethren" but "regards all men as his brethren - as members of his ever extending family." It is "the recognition of society, [continent, and the world] as an extension of the basic family unit" (12–13). With Asante and Mazama, it the philosophy of hospitality, solidarity, and "morality without borders" (288) in building familyhood, nationhood and continental synergy.

Ubuntu and Ujamaa can be used interchangeably, but they are not synonyms; Ujamaa focuses on a classless human society, animated by the largess of a mega-extended family spirit, an African socialist model of constituting a self-reliant future where the nation is a family, uniting and sharing everything in common. According to Immanuel Ness and Zak Cope, Ujamaa's political and social view is about "the dignity and well-being of human being[s]. The people are at the heart of the society; everything must be done to ensure their well-being" (194). In Kingsley Okoro's words, Ubuntu is the "Holy-grail that binds traditional African people together in an inseparable manner" (1) and can lend itself to universal humanity. In 2006, the leader and Ubuntuist Nelson Mandela, when asked to define Ubuntu for the launch of Ubuntu Linux, said: "Ubuntu is an idea from the South African region which means human-ness and is often translated as humanity towards others but is often used in more philosophical sense to mean the belief in universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity" (Okoro 3). Mark Shut-

tleworth, the South African, UK-based developer, digitalized Ubuntu into Ubuntu Linux technology which has not only brought a rebirth, but also a dynamic blending of old and modern philosophies in an era of exponential digital technologies (McClune 163). The desire to have a compassionate technology that has humaneness as a core value within technocracy as opposed to the relativization of humans within their social existence is fundamental. I will use Ubuntu, Sankofa, and Ujamaa as guiding themes in this thesis in order to interrogate the present and project the future landscape of contemporary ASF as seen through the lens of technology, Africanfuturism, and Africanjujuism.

The above indigenous African epistemologies and the agencies of ASF and technology are focal in supporting and verifying the African heads of state's aspirations for the continent contained in the 2015 document "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want." It is an agenda envisioned by the African Union and born from the angst for a united future Africa "rooted in Pan Africanism and African Renaissance" to provide "a robust framework for addressing past injustices and the realisation of the 21st Century as the African Century" (AUC, African Union Commission 1). This Pan-African voice and vision aims at creating and maintaining "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena" (AUC 1). Africa, therefore, has the task of amending the errors of the past and proceeding towards a future enhanced by humane technology, thereby making the forces of scientific knowledge serve the purpose of humans. This is because technology and science may not necessarily be a panacea to human issues but need to associate with African indigenous epistemologies. I agree with Jessica Langer's hypothesis that "indigenous . . . systems of knowledge are not only valid but are at times more scientifically sound" (131) than Western scientific thought as Africa glances into its future. Thus, African Literature uses these epistemologies and attracts interest in 21st-century ethics.

African Literature (AL), being a mirror of life and societal endeavours, helps humans teleport and traverse worlds and realms, functioning as a gateway to an imagined future of possibilities; to Simon Gikandi, it has become a "lamp of knowledge, a symbol of enlightenment and a path to immeasurable freedom through sometimes violent encounter . . . [a] poison and the cure" (20). As a lamp, ASF opens the reader to an encounter with the text and the human world; it helps readers surmount their painful past, their anxious present and their uncertain future. Indeed, AL, and ASF in particular, create moments of grief by exposing painful historical memories and "memory [is] the enemy of progress" (Gikandi 17) but also the vehicle toward a progressive future. As a result, ASF, as literature to at least 1.3 billion inhabitants across fifty-five African nation-states plays a major role in shaping the African worldview, culture, philosophies, historicity, and futurity. Due to global attention, African *littérateurs* and scholars like Ben Okri have predicted: "The Future is African Literature," and therefore ASF, suggesting that as the ancient Pangaea was the cradle of human life, global scholarship and readership is coming back to Africa in the 21st century. Okri argues that Africa has the gift of giving the world a "new kind of literature" that is seemingly "changing the possibilities of what literature can be" as all genres are "[n]ow tackled" (par. 9). Okri's proposition contextualizes this thesis as it straddles ASF, Africanfuturism, and Africanjujuism, genres that offer novel literary forms and readings of AL. To Okri, AL "comes out of life and feeds back into it, in an endless circularity, the big question is: how can we create a great literature that is true to us and yet universal" (Okri interviewed by Aihnehi, par. 25)?

Expatriate and Africanists hold the same view; Douglas Killam argues that AL "gives to readers an understanding of places, peoples, [religions] and cultures that have a vital and influential place in a global context . . . to say that the best literature breaks down prejudice, and promotes understanding . . . contains the truth" (xii). AL specifically debunks the Euro-

centric myth of a dark continent and *tabula-rasa* of 'savages' because to Taban Liyong, "traditional Africa was not all darkness. We had enough sagacity to keep ourselves alive, without aspirin and penicillin. The only things we did not have were guns and gun-powder" (18), because endogenous African medical technology was advanced as it retained the population in stable health conditions. This shows in Beukes' *sangoma*, her *muti* (medicine) and patient rendezvous through the exchange of emails over the cyberspace in *Zoo City*. This is equally shown in Okorafor's *Who Fears Death,* where Najeeba's broken arm is treated by a woman "who knew how to set broken bones" (20), an instance of Africanjujuism, a theme I will examine in chapter one. Contemporary arguments on African writinghood acknowledge it did not start with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958); it was pioneered by speculative fiction with fantasy and magical folkloric stories in the works of Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa's *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irúnmalé* (1938), translated by Wole Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1939).

In legitimizing ASF and ASFF works and writers like those mentioned above, Carstens and Roberts assert it is "time for Africa, the birthplace of humanity and its stories, to engage once more with the destiny of our species by crafting myths of the future" (91) and contribute its quota to the literary world, a suggestion I concur with. In describing the landscape of ASF, Okorafor argues "[SF] is one of the most relevant and potent forms of storytelling. Science fiction carries the potential to change the world" (BlogSpot). ASF like Okorafor attests has significantly altered African reading, identity and memory, because of the "portents forms" it has brought to African story-telling. Ben Okri, Kojo Laing, Okorafor and Beukes draw inspiration from orature (African Oral Literature), folklore, folktales, tradition, and magic which interlock with technology—jujutech. African speculative fiction blurs the boundaries between technology and humanity through the use of extra-terrestrial voyages and mythologies involving human spirits, cyborgs, ancestors, and humanoids. In doing this, African SF writers use

Africanfuturism, a SF genre that distinguishes ASF from Western SF, and Afrofuturism from Africanfuturism.

This angst about futurity in ASF is what Nnedi Okorafor coined "Africanfuturism" which, according to her, is an African discourse on the future. In the introduction to *Africanfuturism: An Anthology* (2020), she writes:

> Africanfuturism is specifically and more directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view as it then branches into the Black Diaspora, and it does not privilege or center the West. Africanfuturism is concerned with visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa. (Talabi, par. 5)

In Okorafor's description, Africanfuturism thrives on the wisdom of Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa, debunking the long-standing philosophical debate initiated by G. W. Hegel, which depicts Africa as a place devoid of evolving humanity and future. He argues that proper Africa is "land of [perpetual] childhood . . . enveloped in the dark mantle of the Night" (109, 112). This concept was partly taken up by Mbiti, who claimed that Africans have no capacity of conceiving a future of their own. In *African Religions and Philosophy* Mbiti wrote: "[T]here are no concrete words or expressions to convey the idea of a distant future" (17), meaning, Africans only think in terms of past and present. Contrary to this, Okorafor and Talabi argue for the disruption of Hegel's hypothesis and the resurgence of Africanfuturism that contextualizes and problematizes African-rooted issues. Okorafor, writing from a liminal zone of Euro-American and African backgrounds, reconciles the conundrum between African and Western works of literature by arguing: "I write Africanfuturism. I do not write Afrofuturism. I write Africanjujuism. I do not write Afrofuturism; I write Africanfuturism" (@ Nnedi). In distinguishing the two termi-

nologies, Okorafor explains: “Africanfuturism is a sub-category of science fiction. Africanjujuism is a subcategory of fantasy that respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative" (Blogspot). Africanjujuism is then the tapping of African “magical” forces embedded in the universe to influence the course of events and realities of human life. It is inseparable from jujutech—“the fusion of indigenous practices and new technologies” (Adejunmobi 270). Africanfuturism springs and takes inspiration from resources of orality, wielding magical realism which according to Ato Quayson is “proffered as that mode of [African] representation that challenges the Western tradition of realism, positing instead an alternative universe in which fantastical elements are placed side by side with the real in a process of establishing equivalence between them” (160), as I will show in chapter 3 of this thesis. Therefore, according to Bettina Burger, Africanfuturism is a genre of ASF that is “taking up these [old and] ‘new’ findings, which often affirm African epistemologies, and can be seen as an innovating force within the entire genre” (372) of SF.

This separation from Afrofuturism stems from Mark Dery’s 1994 essay “Black to the Future” which acknowledged only African-American black issues. In Dery’s vision, “speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth-century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future” (8) is Afrofuturism. As such, writers and thinkers of non-African-American origins “both love and hate Afrofuturism; they iterate it,” with new appellations and adjectives that contextualize and serve their purpose (Lavender and Yaszek 4).

Hence, Okorafor’s severing links with Afrofuturism is a separation that I subscribe to, because individual and collective futurisms have cropped up since Filippo T. Marinetti’s 1909 "The Futurist Manifesto.” Consequently, according to Isiah Lavender and Lisa Yaszek, while

Afrofuturism gained universal popularity in imagining the future of humanity, it equally "helped legitimize racial concerns in SF" (4). To Okorafor, though "Africanfuturism is similar to 'Afrofuturism' in the way that blacks on the continent and in the Black Diaspora are all connected by blood, spirit, history and future," it differs because it is rooted in African lore, history and mythology (*Africanfuturism Anthology*, "Introduction" par. 5). Mohale Mashigo clarifies this further by saying "It would be disingenuous of me to take Afrofuturism wholesale and pretend that it is my size. What I want for Africans living in Africa is to imagine a future in their storytelling that deals with issues that are unique to us" (par. 12). She equally believes that "Africans, living in Africa, need something entirely different from Afrofuturism" (par. 4), namely Africanfuturism and Africanjujuism. Besides, to African writers like Okorafor and Mashigo, the African experience is the nodal point in enlivening human hopes and fears, soliciting African epistemologies, and adapting them to technology, "magic," and visions of the future to rewrite narratives outside colonial modes of reading, Apartheid and slavery. In Ivor Hartman's suggestion, Africanfuturism "enables African writers to envision a future from [the] African perspective," because failure to "relay an understandable vision of the future" means the African future "will be co-opted by someone else's vision, one that will not necessarily have [Africa's] best interests at heart" (Introduction, par. 5), a phenomenon that has plagued Africa. Hartman's articulation confirms Andy Sawyer's concern "that [Africans] are part of a common future history—one that may simply have coalesced (as many do) through the feeling that imagining the settings for one story allows enough useful material to be reused elsewhere" (489) in mapping the future. This schism between Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism is pivotal to this thesis because the authors I have chosen fall within the Africanfuturist and Africanjujuist subgenres with Africa as the centrifugal and centripetal force of their narratives, allowing for blends of African cosmogonies, ontologies, spiritualities, and *bricoleur* technologies. The new

paradigm in contemporary ASF presents Afrocentric and anthropocentric communal foundations per the tenets of Ubuntuist *avant-gardistes* like Julius Nyerere, Léopold S. Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Kenneth Kaunda, and Desmond Tutu.

Contemporary ASF offers a platform through which it addresses "the problematic clash between past, present and future mode" (Carstens and Roberts 80) in line with African values. This movement back to the traditional and its interrogation of the modern present and the cybernetic future is to be in synergy with technology. To attain the dream of a united and buoyant Africa that safeguards its future generations, technology and its forces should be mitigated and mediated through the agency of African humanist tenets. Because as the West perfects its military technologies, "the great gift still has to come from Africa—giving the world a more human face" (Biko 47). Ubuntu posits that "a human being is human because of other human beings" (Chuwa vii), and that humanity is one race and one planetary entity. Thus, to condone humanity's entanglement in the enslaving mesh of technology is to accept the replacement of humans by robots, cyborgs, machines and clones, a phenomenon alluded to by Corey S. Powell. Powell argues that the future will not be humans, but robots, and cyborgs will be "our planet's final inhabitants" (par. 22). Referencing James Lovelock, Powell writes that humans should prepare to "hand the gift of knowing on to new forms of intelligent beings" (par. 24). This calls for a reflection on Isaac Asimov's three laws on the nexus between humans and robots mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. Carstens and Roberts offer another answer on how the human nexus with technology should progress and articulate, saying that ASF supports "connections between the deep-time of the past, the present in flux, and the distant future. Combining the mythic mode of folklore with future-shock, it maps the fever-dreams of modernity and its motifs of relentless and unstoppable change" (83), a hypothesis I agree with.

African writers like Beukes, Okri and Okorafor, therefore, subscribe to Wole Soyinka's thesis that Africa is a human society "whose great declaration of uniqueness to the outside world is that of a super-abundant humanism" (353–354), and the decisions their protagonists and foils will take will be screened from these African philosophies. Kenneth Kaunda writes:

> I am deeply concerned that this high valuation of Man and respect for human dignity which is a legacy of our (African) tradition should not be lost in the new Africa. However 'modern' and 'advanced' in a Western sense the new nations of Africa may become, we are fiercely determined that this humanism will not be obscured. African society has always been Man-centred. We intend that it will remain so. (qtd. in Gyekye 141).

An important question is thus raised: What should Africa's nexus with technology be? Writers of African black descent have articulated that taking journeys backwards "may prove fructifying as they ensure not only continuity into the future, but also a possibility of cross-cultural pollination," deploying technology as a "transformative potential," a "magical ritual," and a "voudoun" (Carstens and Roberts 84) that can effect phenomenal changes in society. The cross-pollination of values in ASF narratives crafted by Lauren Beukes and Nnedi Okorafor expound an equation of technology and mystery, and allude to Jessica Langer's argument that in the postmodern era, magic is not only equated to technology but linked with divinity (128), a phenomenon that will be made obvious in Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* (hereafter *WFD*). In *WFD* Ani as a "deity is figured as a being so advanced"; "indistinguishable from magic," and a *deus ex machina* (Langer 128) intervening in human history and affairs, posing as an embodiment of creative and destructive powers. This intersection of technology, magic, and divinity according to Ian P. MacDonald makes religion a form of *techné* (from Greek, meaning technology) (189), and a performance for the divine. Onyesonwu in *WFD* ponders about such a goddess that creates and promulgates the *cutting* of girls and establishes enmity in a society

such as the Seven Rivers' Kingdom. Because Onyesonwu doubts her divinity, she concludes that the "Creator who'd recreated me . . . was a weak human idea" (*WFD* 326). This interdisciplinary reading of *WFD* will be examined in chapter one.

Adam Roberts explores machines and technology which "are what we most associate with SF, just as we have now grown utterly accustomed to having a wide range of machines and technology surrounding us in our everyday lives" (110), and Beukes' and Okorafor's matrices blend machines, African mystery and magic that fuse into jujutech. ASF, therefore, exhibits a polarity in its intersection with technology concerning the future, thereby foregrounding the maxim that "[a]ll technology is a double-edged sword" (Baran and Davis 215). This dictum engenders a significant question: what does technology do to humanity and what does humanity do to, and with, technology? Gyekye Kwame's argument is that "[t]echnology was made by man, and not man for technology" and "that human beings should be the centre of the focus of the technological enterprise" (140). I will explore this issue in chapter two of this thesis in the context of *Moxyland* and *The Book of Phoenix*.

The African technological development is a distinctive and salient feature of ASF stories with the penetration of The Internet of Things into the continent, making Jean-Pierre Bekolo acknowledge that "[i]f technology has been a medium of our utopias," it should be the role of writers "to invent with fiction the reality that we will live in tomorrow," hence mastering the new science of technology "so that machines don't take over our existence" (2). Amid spaceships in *Binti*, surveillance as extensions of the human sight ending human privacy, presentation of biologically altered humans in *The Book of Phoenix,* aliens, nanobots and cyberspace in *Lagoon* and *Moxyland,* totting humans with special animal powers in *Zoo City*, portables and jujutech in *WFD,* where is the space and future of humanity?

If Jujutech in ASF is "the fusion of indigenous practices and new technologies" (Adejunmobi 270) for the advancement of bioengineering for a post-humanist world of techno-

science, what would be the salient identity of humans? In an era of *technophilia*, African writers invoke Sankofa, Ubuntu, Ujamaa, jujutech and technology as quintessential themes in offering answers to human dilemmas. Okorafor and Beukes' contemporary ASF mythic storytelling is, therefore, similar to William Gibson's and Neal Stephenson's cyberpunk fiction with characters (Zinzi, Ayodele, Phoenix, and Binti) peregrinating the metaverse, cyberspace and galactic realms, shape-shifting as avatars, mutating and acquiring multiple identities yet evincing African aesthetic modes.

In *The United States of Africa*, an ASF text on futurology, Abdourahman A. Waberi puts Ubuntu and Ujamaa into the practice of medicine, saying that a writer is a recorder and the voice of a people and their mores (356) and also that the writer "is the guardian of the future, not [only] of the past" by inscribing a vision into a paper of "clay, stone, and bronze for centuries and centuries to come" (71–72). Lauren Beukes in her ASF fuses digital Ubuntu connectivity into what William Gibson, in *Neuromancer* (1984), calls a consensual interaction and hallucination (56) of humans in cyberspace. Beukes writes:

> Science fiction often explores the interaction between people and technology. In Africa, that theme plays out in surprising ways, from making an appointment with a traditional healer over email, to women in remote villages collecting water while chatting on their mobiles. It's this mix of magic and technology, challenge and innovation that shapes the science fiction coming out of the continent. ("BBC Documentary" pars. 3, 4)

This intersection of technology, African indigenous medical technology and communication devices enhance Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa as they allow families, patients, traditional healers and herbalists, and denizens from contiguous cities and nations to virtually connect, communicate, relate and make binding *rendez-vous* in cyberspace. Beukes equally invokes Africanjujuism by allowing her sangoma (traditional healer) to tap the forces of the universe to impart healing on the patient through the aid of the Internet. I agree with Rajesh Shukla that

technology "reflects a human propensity that seeks the betterment of all humanity" (178), but in the networked society, it equally cuts off individuals, separating them from their source of life, the communocracy (Castells, Vol. I, xxxv and Samuelson, "Reading" 814), a double-edged situation that situates this thesis' claim.

ASF, like any Science Fiction (SF hereafter), is, according to Mark Bould interested "in the future and life beyond the Earth" (20–21), a leitmotif that drives the narrative of Okorafor's *Binti Trilogy* that focuses on Africanfuturism and Africanjujuism through the *edan*, a mystical technology that saves her *en route* to Oomza intergalactic university. Okorafor's use of technology in imagining and attaining the future, which according to Fredric Jameson is the mark and vocation of SF and mystery writers (*Future* 101), opens a boundless space for humanity—giving ASF a non-monolithic and fluid character. In Okorafor's words in "Sunrise," "the future [is] bright, comfortable, and magical" (18), but also techno-enhanced because Africa is the sun-rising continent of SF. Essentially, the ASF landscape interrogates what it means to be humane in the 21st-century and beyond.

In addition, according to Achille Mbembe, 21st-century humans inhabit zones where their lives are like those of the living-dead due to biopower exhibited by capitalist greed. Technological escalation in wars of all forms threaten human existence and turn humanity into artefacts that are surveyed, recorded and stored as future data, signalling an end to privacy. The wars between the Nurus and Okekes in Okorafor's *Who Fears Death*, the war over Nigerian oil in *Lagoon* and the Meduse-Khoush wars in *Binti* can be described, in the words of Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux and Michael Pauron in their endorsement of Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, as "not an exception but a permanent state" that Ubuntu and Ujamaa advocate against. The breathing spaceship in *Binti* is an existential space and also a death world where Binti survives because of the power of her African magical techno-apparatus, the *edan,* an ancient Yoruba technology. ASF, the focus of this thesis, is "indeed contaminat[ing] the canon in the most

positive of ways" (Moonsamy, "Life" 343) as it probes and challenges the frames of reading SF in the 21st-century.

ASF is unique literature emanating from writers whose roots trace back to Africa; it deals with human stories where African science, magic, mystery, folklore, lore, technology and mythology dynamically interlock, unravelling a future full of cornucopia and escapades to terrestrial and extra-terrestrial realms filled with adventure and dangerous mazes and labyrinths, like in Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954). ASF as a genre originated from speculative fiction, fantasy and magical folkloric stories in the works of Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa's *Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irúnmalé* (1938), translated by Wole Soyinka as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1939*)*. The continuum of texts followed from Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952*)* to Cyprian Ekwensi's *People of the City* (1954). In reading AL with a SF lens, Moradewun Adejunmobi argues that AL "has been on the cusp of science fiction" (267) from Fagunwa and Tutuola's precolonial works to Okri's postcolonial text, *The Famished Road* (1991). Equally, Sony Labou Tansi's *Life and A Half* (1977), the works of Kojo Laing: *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (1988) and *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* (1992) are veritable texts of ASF. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, though not SF *per se*, "do[es] science-fictional things" (Bould, par. 11), making it a travelling and extroverted text, a hypothesis postulated by Eileen Julien and Nathan Suhr-Sytsma who explain why some texts get published internationally and others stay local—thereby invoking the current tropes of glocalization and the *problematique* of language in ASF which I will be examining in chapter one. Nedine Moonsamy, in her reading of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* writes: "Wielding language as the ultimate form of technology, Tutuola has reassembled it and built a vocabulary for his pioneering work of [ASF] that can easily be read as a worthy participant on the global stage of popular genre fiction" ("Rereading" par. 20), making it a classical text of ASF. When Matthew Omelsky asserts that besides teleporting readers to SF realms by "borrowings from Yoruba oral

tradition, Tutuola presents a global constellation of objects and goods—from radios to footballs to televisions—rupture[ing] the conventional notion of an insular, primitive Africa" (66), he attests to the fact that ASF has an indubitably long-standing culture in the continent. Adejunmobi argues that ASF worlds created by Fagunwa, Tutuola, and Okri are "indebted to indigenous myth and folklore," and "these speculative worlds are not depicted as incompatible with the technologies of modernity such as telephones, televisions, bombs, and cameras" (267), a phenomenon that is obvious in *WFD*.

Jane Bryce noted that the chronopolitical act of "speculative fiction has its roots in African modes of storytelling that draw on myth, orality and indigenous belief systems"; engendering the rewriting of African history "in the light of the future realities . . . [with] magical phenomenon as part of the everyday" narrative, a phenomenon taken by Africanfuturism in texts like *Zoo* City and *Lagoon*. Bryce says that "futurism has been a strain in African writing from its inception" (1) since the use of extra-realist elements by Tutuola. Maria Mies supports her views and explains that for people to develop a sustainable future lifestyle, the combination of "contemporary science, technologies and knowledge with ancient wisdom, traditions, and even magic" (Tong 264) is essential, a trope that drives the narrative plot of Beukes' *Zoo City* and Okorafor's *WFD* as they relate to Sankofa. ASF also draws from the wells of ancient African wisdom, and *Orature*, as Beukes' *Broken Monsters* (2014) replicates African oral ogre stories retold in the 21st-century.

Tade Thompson, the 2019 winner of the Arthur Clarke's Prize with his novel *Rosewater* (2016) categorically declares: "Please Stop Talking About the 'Rise' of" [ASF]" because it has always been there. He traces the genealogy of ASF, addressing issues of dating and notes that "African-American [SF] dates back to the 19th century [*The Huts of America, 1859*], [whereas] the first [African Science Fiction Fantasy] ASFF books are arguably *Gandoki* (1934) and *Nnanga Kon* (1932)—with honorable mention to Thomas Mfolo's *Chaka* (1925)" (par.7).

Thompson mentions the work of the Cameroonian writer Jean-Louis Njemba Medu, such as *Nnanga Kon/ Le Phantom Blanc,* translated as “White Ghosts” or “Albino Phantom” from the Bulu language in the centre of Cameroon. This literary work won the International African Institute Competition in 1932 in France as an ASFF text and describes the colonial white intruders “as technologically advanced supernatural beings” (Thompson, par. 8). Thompson says that *Gandoki* (1934) by Muhammadu Bello Kagara explores the themes of invasion and voyage by colonizers, a trope found in Okorafor’s *Lagoon* (2014) and the *Binti Trilogy*, where "travel to other realms, [galaxies] and phantasmagorical experiences with djinn[s] [and other species” (par. 9), present in monomyths and African mythologies resurface in ASF. This echoes Samuel R. Delany’s assertion that SF can stretch outside the current world, allowing its authors to deploy syntactic structures that enhance imagination and effect a leap from the human universe into an alternative cosmos of other species (104–112). The Drinkard’s adventure to Deads' Town is synonymous with Binti's perilous journey to Oomza University, surmounting difficulties, bringing forth a boon and wisdom that support the community; a phenomenon that augurs the African concepts of Ubuntu and Ujamaa where individuals find their essence in a benevolent, humane community.

Moreover, Uppinder Mehan writes that “postcolonial writing has rarely pondered that strange land of the future and warns that if we do not imagine our future, postcolonial peoples risk being condemned to be spoken about and for again” (“Final Thoughts” par. 4), and postcolonial ASF writers have heeded this call with Thompson’s novel, *Rosewater* portraying Nigeria in 2066 in a post-apocalyptic frame. Yet, Matthew Eatough writes that SF “never secured a solid foothold in Africa’s developing print cultures” (237), and though he problematizes ASF as a genre of AL, I disagree with his thesis, because Fagunwa’s and Tutuola's Nigerian texts and South African SF have a long-standing tradition in print culture and have gained standing ovations even outside Africa. ASF has seen a growth in the

publication of anthologies, remarkable hallmarks in the ASF landscape: *AfroSF: Science Fiction by African Writers* (2013), and later *AfroSFv2* (2015), then *Africanfuturism: An Anthology* (2020) and *The African Speculative Fiction StoryBundle* (2020).

The exponential boom in Anglophone, and Francophone ASF encouraged the emergence of indigenous language-based ASF in Hausa, Zulu, Lingala, Shona and Swahili. At the same time, remarkable breakthroughs are made in African SF novels, especially in Shona with the Zimbabwean writer Masimba Musodza's *MunaHacha Maive Nei* (2012) and the recent Swahili volume *Dunia Yao: Utopia/Dystopia in Swahili Fiction* (2016) edited by Clarissa Vierke and Katharina Greven. In reading ASF literary works from the Afrophone spectrum, Alena Rettová opines that Shona and Swahili languages "have stepped into the terrain of novelistic experimentation and assumed the implications of such departures from realism" (163). Borrowing from their past, African authors construct a present and project a future with powerful utopias. As a result, these chronological arguments establish the fact that ASF in its speculative and fantasy stage predates the realist fiction and is not alien to Africa.

Although this thesis restrains itself to contemporary ASF, it takes a look at the exponential growth in the African film industry as directors extrapolate African futures via technology like in *Pumzi* (2009) by the Kenyan filmmaker Kahiu Wanuiri and *Afronauts* (2014) by Ghanaian-born Frances Bodomo. Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Les Saignantes* (2005), translated as "*The Bloodettes*," is the first African SF film set in 2025 by a Cameroonian director, with *Naked Reality* appearing later in 2016. In Bekolo's *Naked Reality*, a terrible virus, "Bad Luck," like Beukes' HCV virus in *Afterland* (2020), is a societal plague. Unlike "Bad Luck" and Covid-19 sweeping the world, Beukes' HCV kills only men, establishing a feminist world mediated through women's agency. *Black Panther* (2018) stormed the world following the ingenuity of Okorafor, with the Kenyan actress Nyong'o Lupita taking a lead role. The movie expresses African aesthetics through spirituality, rituals, folklore, and *jujutech* and human

discoveries. Bodomo's *Afronauts* (2014) is an ingenious film with African rockets powered into space with African bricolage consisting of urine-steamed engines, and South African filmmaker Michael Matthew's *Sweetheart* (2010) and Amy van Houten's *Elf*, (2015) are films focusing on the future of humanity.

In using the African humanist philosophies of Sankofa, Ubuntu, and Ujamaa, in facing new technologies, electronic information, and multivalent identities in the works of Nnedi Okorafor and Lauren Beukes, I seek to contribute to the dialogue on ASF by reading and interrogating the representation of human identity at this critical juncture in the history of humanity.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will focus on the great shift in reading contemporary ASF which altered traditional modes of reading African literary works, moving from the leit-motifs of colonialism, slavery and Apartheid to themes of intertextuality, language polemics, surviving rites, electronics, cyberspace, critical theory, interdisciplinarity and, above all, the conflict between print and digital literacy that is evident in the reading of *WFD*. I will read Okorafor's *WFD* as a palimpsest, an intertext, and a matrix that creates references, allusions, and quotations in collage-like manner. Its seamless interlocking of jujutech via the *bricoleur* "Mystic Points" subverts the western categorization of African literature as a mere ethno-graphic mirror devoid of techno-science.

In the second chapter I will explore fractured human identities in a networked society in the age of "LifeGen" bio, nano, and digital technologies driven by corporate entities. Kendra, Lerato, Tendeka and Toby in *Moxyland* oscillate between multifaceted online and physical identities similarly to Mmuo, Phoenix, Saeed and Vera in *The Book of Phoenix*. I will show that human society is possibly at the cross-roads of an identity crisis and may need the philos-ophy of Ubuntu to recover jettisoned human identities and values. Thus, the way Okorafor and Beukes engage Ubuntu in resisting DNA alteration is critical.

In the third and final chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the trauma and resilience of African memory and the multidirectional approach acquired in the course of its contact in *hellocaust* (colonization) and the history of Apartheid, culminating in a post-crisis, apocalyptic/post-apocalyptic Africa. I use *Binti* and its protagonist Binti Ekeopara Dambu Kaipka as a precursor, a witness of traumatic memory, and a harbinger of the multidirectional memory that is contemporary and futuristic in its model. I will use Beukes' short stories in *Slipping* as depicting a near-future postmodern South Africa with technology as the only key issue to watch for in post-apocalyptic Africa. The eponymous Binti becomes an Ujamaa building bridge between galaxies, introducing the memory of harmonious coexistence that reclaims its past and focuses on systematic peaceful future.

In a nutshell, the thesis outline is suggestive of how the explosion of ASF has shaped modes of reading African works in the digital age, how it has brought fluidity to character identity as it finds itself buffeted by flux and mutations, and above all how ASF has drastically altered the African concept of memory, all through the prism of the African humanist philosophies of Sankofa, Ubuntu, and Ujamaa.

Chapter I

African Science Fiction and the Great Reading Shift: *Who Fears Death* and Reading Modes

> Today I tell you a piece of the past, present, and future. . . . This first story we know from the Great Book. We retell it to ourselves time and time again when the world doesn't make sense.
>
> (*Who Fears Death* 99)
>
> But this place that you know, this kingdom, it will change after today. Read it in your Great Book. You won't notice that it has been rewritten.
>
> (*Who Fears Death* 410)

A. Introduction

The reading debate in AL has been an issue due to the external eyes of critics who construe colonialism, slavery and Apartheid as grand narratives of African *Écriture.* The claim was that AL has to hinge on realities of anti-struggle and Eurocentric modes, with De Witt Douglas Kilgore arguing: "Social realism, the mode that best captures the texture and meaning" of reading the African experience is "certainly not" in vogue since there are rich "influences, conversations, and movements that are remaking contemporary [ASF]" (119), and thus broadening the reading of African texts. A thesis on ASF makes the reading debate pertinent because Delany writes, "SF is as much a *reading strategy* as it is anything else" (Roberts, *History* 2). These new conventions incarnated in ASF engage in imaginative African futures, exhibiting the refusal that African texts are void of aesthetical value and are only ethnographies and sociological mirrors of the anti-protest struggle against the colonial masters. By this, contemporary ASF authors have dramatically altered "what and how we read" (Kilgore 120) African texts in the 21st-century.

Wendy Grisworld et al. correlate reading and literacy, arguing that reading "is a concept that embraces the cultural resources of a literate tradition—including writing system(s) of this tradition—and the ensemble of abilities necessary to exploit these cultural resources" (132). They remark that writers craft texts and "readers handle them [in] different ways" (135) because texts are palimpsests, read horizontally and vertically. Eileen Julien supports their argument by observing that "[P]erhaps all readers—depending on history, circumstances and venue—[are] capable of reading in multiple ways" (373) depending on their education, culture, and personality; Jean-Paul Sartre concluded that reading was a transactional analysis framed in connections of "induction, interpolation, extrapolation," and "a pact of generosity between author and reader. Each one trust[ing] the other; each one count[ing] on the other, demand[ing] of the other as much as he demands of himself" (60–61). ASF authors present reading modes in texts read not only as counter-hegemonic, but also as texts construing apocalyptic, and post-apocalyptic African alternative futures embedded in techno-science and mysticism.

According to Miriam Pahl, Okorafor's *WFD* "offers different readings to different reading communities," perpetuating "the differences that readers bring to an interpretation of a text" (213), thereby unveiling a distinctive form of reading one's society by using literature as "a means for cultural and social value" (Aras 251). *WFD* challenges first and second generational African reading modes where colonized societies mainly engaged in anticolonial *Écriture*. In Christopher L. Miller's proposition, "good reading does not result from ignorance" but bringing "other texts . . . into the dialogical exercise" (446) because a book is "an assemblage" and "has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs" (Deleuze & Guattari 4). The 21st-century paradigms of reading ASF have shifted the reading modes within AL because the African worldview, tradition, religion, philosophies, cultures, literary aesthetics, prior texts, stylistics, authorial and heuristic values have broadened. I will examine Okorafor's *WFD* from a multi-nodal approach as a product of other texts, cultures

and traditions that produce it, thereby inducing a shift in African reading modes reflective of the 21st-century African corpus that concentrates on Afrocentrism, Africanism, cultural specificities, and context-dependent schemas present in ASF, along with postmodern and post-structuralist reading strategies. The polysemic reading modes incarnated by *WFD* are fundamental in projecting major shifting parameters in reading modes.

My reading of *WFD* as an ASF text is guided by Daniel R. Schwarz's hypothesis that "reading is an evolving process requiring attention to what the text is saying and not saying, to the structure of effects the text generates, and to how [Okorafor] make[s] conscious and unconscious choices to create their structures of effects" (xv), and how she "reveals human motives and psyches through the intricacies of language" (xii), along with myths, history, rites, theory, intertextuality, autobiography, grand narratives and micronarratives. This is because the text's unfixedness, in Roland Bathes' argument, gives *WFD* writerly attributes that resist unitary ways of reading. *WFD,* like Beukes' *The Shinning Girls* (2013), is a novel that has a new form with three postscript chapters with a final chapter titled "Chapter 1 Rewritten," and depicts Okorafor's way of bringing novelty into writing and reading, rewriting this chapter in her voice as opposed to the third person that dominates the text's narration. *WFD*'s heroine Onyesonwu and her story take place in a post-apocalyptic Sudanic-Africa that incorporates modern and indigenous-*bricoleur* technologies of the Mystic Points, capture stations, computers, and portables. Okorafor's text engages in revanchism of African literary aesthetics and epistemologies that bespeak Africanism and futurity as ways of writing and reading African texts in contemporary times and, as an atypical ASF text, its lead character is created on the concept of bildungsroman but trained in sorcery, a formation that helps her rewrite the metanarrative of the "Great Book" which keeps Okekes and Nurus in bondage with no alternative future. The Great Book is a sovereign narrative exuding a theological and teleological message for the Seven Rivers Kingdom. Its authorship is claimed to Ani, the goddess of creation, and

to a "sorcerer who believed he was a prophet wrote the Great Book" (156) thus, a reference handbook for Okeke-Nuru livelihood.

To Okorafor, "African women and girls [are portrayed] as being invisible, voiceless, or marginal" (Barr 131), creating an invincible Onyesonwu with a voice of rationality for humanity, and undermining the male dominance in AL, as Onyesonwu is created within the contemporary feminist tradition and contemporary ASF is largely composed of. Onyesonwu's rewriting of the Great Book which establishes a new technocracy driven by jujutech, Ubuntu, and Ujamaa, and changes the fate of women by bringing out their subaltern voice: "All the women, Okeke and Nuru, found that something had changed about them" (413). I believe that, like Romeo and Juliette in Shakespeare's play, Onyesonwu unites with Mwita in order to end the enmity between their tribes. Onyesonwu in essence rereads the "wretched book" (*WFD* 156) and, discovering its incongruence, rewrites it through the aid of technology and magic. Onyesonwu describes it as wretched because it sanctions practices that degrade fellow humans: slave-hood, circumcision, and institutionalized patriarchy. Her belief is: "As we were doomed in the past, and are doomed in the present, we will be saved in the future" (*WFD* 102) from the "crafty lies and riddles" (*WFD* 190) of the Great Book, an apt reflection of the angst that exists at the heart of Africanfuturism. Against this background, I utilize Okorafor's novel to argue that ASF has dramatically altered the reading of AL, demonstrating the continuing shift from teleological to rhizomatic modes of reading. I will start by exploring the indigenization of context and text incarnated in Okorafor's text.

B. Language, Translation, and Africanization

Okorafor in *WFD* believes that there is no single mode that is the "sole organizer of World-view" (Zabus xv), and she therefore "uses language as . . . an alibi to convey ideological variance," and to display "a whole panoply of devices" (Zabus xvi) that enhance African fu-

turity. She supports Goksen Aras' argument that literature is a "social institution that uses language as a medium" in the representation of life and social reality (251) and by this, Okorafor shows language decolonization-communication diversities in reading *WFD* as languages express their generosity to one another, subverting the hegemonic patterns like the erasure theory of non-Western languages. Hugh C. O'Connell opines that Okorafor's works subvert and decentre the SF genre from its hegemonic position, making it inclusive, rather than being predominantly white. Okorafor "is part of a growing vanguard of global" SF authors "currently challenging the hegemony of SF as a purely Western, metropolitan genre" (291), answering Octavia E. Butler's concern on the absence of black characters in SF; Okorafor includes the peripheries of Sudan and the Himbas of Namibia in *Binti* along with the use of oral story-teller mechanism typical of African languages; a new reading in which minorities and their stunted codes are given a chance to dialogue amid other codes. O'Connell notes that this growth in ASF "is indicative of an uncertainty as well as a sense of possibility in African futurity" (291), problematizing the polarity in ASF. Onyesonwu and Mwita in *WFD* combine spiritual power, knowledge and technology in order to re-structure the future of the Okekes and Nurus, effecting change by subverting the old modes of writing and reading, establishing a futurity that believes in the "re-traditionalization of African life" (Quayson 161) by rewriting the Great Book in Nsibidi.

Pahl writes, "Nsibidi scriptures are an ancient system of graphic communication indigenous to the peoples of south-eastern Nigeria," an ancient script "believed to have evolved before the sixteenth century—that is, before the arrival of Europeans" (220). Unlike the Nsibidi system of writing that unites, the code of the Great Book disseminates incongruent readings to Okeke and Nuru communities, making the reading narrative fraught with discrepancies as it treats Okekes as slaves (*WFD* 17, 100), Nurus as superiors, and women as subordinate to men:

"That's how it's always been between a man and a woman" (274), thereby legalizing patriarchy. Since language functions as a heterogeneous vehicle of discourse, Okorafor's *WFD* permits the dialoguing of codes, that is, it allows multiple languages to borrow from and lend to one another. Okorafor asserts Mbembe's claim that the writing and reading discourse about Africa has been fraught with problems, and writing Africa from a new mode changes the purported narrative because to write in a certain code is to say and form something, and "[t]o a large extent, to write is to bring to the surface something that is not yet there" (Mbembe, "Writing" 348). By this, Okorafor acknowledges that if the lion does not write its own narrative, "the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter" (Julien 371). Onyesonwu, through reading, meditation, and listening to the fraught narrative of the Great Book, ushers in a new form and structure by rewriting the Great Book in Nsibidi and by being thus cognizant of African indigenous folklore and the epistemologies of Ubuntu and Ujamaa as prime movers of African societies. By rewriting in Nsibidi, Okorafor and her heroine showcase the argument that the language we use and how we use it signify a broad system of value transmissions which, as a writer and educator, she sees lacking from the metanarrative of the Great Book which she deems necessary for the post-crisis and post-apocalyptic African societies where Ubuntu normalizes social relations. According to Leonard T. Chuwa, Ubuntu culture is "an ideal and meaningful life" and "a product of inner peace, which results from harmonious relationships among individuals, between individuals and society, and between people and their environment (1). That is, Ubuntu which means exercising humanity towards others, is not evident in the Great Book's decreed Nuru-Okeke relations, hence Okorafor's establishment of a "live and let live" philosophy, positing "humanity as one" based on the principle that "[y]ou need to treasure your neighbor because you *are* your neighbor" (Chuwa 12).

WFD, besides "its freedom from fixed readings and its ability to merge myth and modernity," "offers the hope of bridging cultural divides" (Carstens and Roberts 80) which I believe blends the Okeke and Nuru into an Ujamaa communocracy founded on the tenet of family-hood, uniting both Western and African reading modes. *WFD* bridges the gap between orality and the written by proving that Africa has always been both oral: the Vah people's communitarian oral celebrations and songs as well as the Great Book that is orally retold by the Storyteller (*WFD* 96–103), and written: the Nsibidi writing system. Okorafor's *WFD* strives at being "both truly local and universal" in the reclamation of indigenous languages while seeking international viability" (Zabus 1) through "subvert[ion] and insert[ion]" (Zabus 2) of the project of African languages. By this, Okorafor's text exudes a reading mode where the foreign code is not the sole carrier of the message but exists in a dialogue with the indigenous Nsibidi. My conjecture is that by rewriting in Nsibidi, Onyesonwu uses what Mbembe calls "a language and a voice that cannot be imitated because they are, in some sense, authentically Africa's own" ("African Modes" 244). Chantal Zabus argues that Nsibidi is a literary West African indigenous script of literary tradition like Vaï which "[w]e will never know how they would have fared, had colonization never set in" (xii–xiii).

Okorafor's omniscient story teller says without mincing words, "There is no word in Okeke for the flesh cut from me" (97), referring to the excised clitoris (yeye); yet these words have more meaning to Igbo readers than to foreign ones who will obviously fail to get the parlance, and this makes Okorafor's SF a problem due to untranslatability and the "untransferability of the African *logos*" (Zabus 8). Nsibidi, in which Onyesonwu rewrites the Great Book, is difficult to decipher because of its graphical semiotics and semantics. Indeed, African indigenous and pidginized words like *Ifunanya*, *Oga*, and *ewu* (*WFD* 239, 105) give nuanced meanings which elude the reader who does not understand the local vernacular.

To Ting, "Writing scripts are my center . . . What I'm most gifted at" (*WFD* 283), attesting to a plethora of writing systems as an African gift after the "post-Babelian" era (Zabus 13–14) which cannot be ignored by readers of *WFD* because SF is primordially a reading strategy. Okorafor, therefore, employs SF language that induces imagination, transliterations and code-switching. When Onyesonwu says the girls are *cut*, she is using a transliteral appellation to represent the physical act of introcision and incision, that is, genital mutilation in females and males and also expresses her desire to avenge the raping of her mother by incising the penis of her aggressor. Okorafor believes that she communicates better with code-switching and transliterations to the target audience. Okorafor makes her text a post-Babel event with a multilingual and multicultural approach through dialoguing languages (Vaï, Bassa, Menda, Nsibidi, Igbo, Pidgin, Ssufi, Nuru, Sipo, Vah, and English), code-switching and oral transliterations as mentioned above thereby, institutionalizing novelty in the SF reading modes. Okorafor's retrospective journey to Nsibidi as an ASF writer is thus guided by Sankofa, a philosophy that believes the African continent is "a place where real people possess a respected past, [with a spoken and written code] and a potentially interesting future" (Kilgore 122).

Okorafor deals with the issue of language in AL by allowing for the conversation in multiple languages in her SF writing—*WFD* is a "sumptuous mélange of language" (interview with Uche Ogbuji). Besides, rewriting in Nsibidi, a salient question is asked: What language should an ASF writer use? In Achebe's words, "It looks like dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling" (*Morning* 83*)* when a writer abandons the mother-tongue because if language is a cultural signifier and transmitter, incorporating African indigenous languages as Okorafor does is significant. The enterprise of language in *WFD* is, therefore, "symptomatic of [Okorafor's] desire to be both truly local and universal" (Zabus 1). The Shona ASF texts by Masimba Musodza's, *MunaHacha Maive Nei* (2012) and the recent Swahili volume *Dunia Yao: Utopia/Dystopia in Swahili Fiction* (2016) edited by Clarissa Vierke and Katharina Greven are

responses to the African language problem. Indeed, Rettová observes that Shona and Swahili languages "have stepped into the terrain of novelistic experimentation and assumed the implications of such departures from realism" (163). In addressing the language problem, Okorafor rewrites the Great Book in the mysterious Nsibidi and also adopts diglossia and polyglossia; Igbo and Pidgin are the diglossic codes to the textual dominant English (Zabus 13–18). Okorafor's SF language and its components offer a way out of the language problem in African *Écriture* through Achebe's project of Africanization, and alter the foreign code "to suit its new African surroundings" (*Morning* 84*)* so that it tells the African reality, a feat achieved by Okorafor.

C. Rites of Passage and Cultural Practices

Sartre admitted that ordered societies that meditate on eternity revere rites as invaluable (127), thus African survivalist rites of passage and cultural practices are significant events surrounding the reading of *WFD*. Sartre also argues that the writer has a mission "to dispel preconceptions, prejudices and legends" (71) and above all to eradicate ignorance in society through literature. I argue that Okorafor influences society through her SF by acting as a "guardian of ideal values" (Sartre 69), a claim held equally by Waberi when he argues that "the artist is the guardian of the future" (71–72) as they inscribe values for centuries to come. Okorafor acknowledges that rites are generally "life's markers" (*WFD* 37) with established parameters that individuals engage in deliberately in order to gain transferable knowledge that can augment individual and community fortunes. Okorafor's screening of African rites offers a unique form of reading one's surroundings and commenting on the practices therein, and to achieve this function through African folklore, Okorafor uses heuristic education through cultural practices/rituals that are the prime movers of African society. She uses an oral storyteller who is versed in cultural practices as a voice of novelty, making of her a reliable and veracious narrator whose remarks create a need for change, as with the idea that the Great Book deserves

arson for sanctioning female genital mutilation: "I'm going to burn my copy of the Great Book, . . . It's the cause of all this" (*WFD* 31), a strong indictment "that a piece of flesh was cut from between our legs and that circumcision didn't literally change who we were or make us better people. But we didn't know what that piece of flesh *did*" (*WFD* 35), a reference to Okorafor's tenacious examination of the "Eleventh rite." Onyesonwu rejects the nonrationality of the rite for the sake of rationality and by doing so she brings what Gayatri Spivak called the subaltern's voice, here the feminine voice in ASF which undermines the binaries of male/female through Okorafor's role as a writer and educator. Essentially, Okorafor critiques the well-known "notion of the feminine" as the subaltern and "the ideological construction of gender [that] keeps the male dominant," thus refuting the androcentric belief that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 82–83), the shadow of total silence under patriarchy. The ritual symbols of chain and diamond under the tongue are patriarchal tools of subjugating the female to a voiceless situation in the face of her abused rights, something which prompts Luyu to ask: "We'll never tell, right?" (*WFD* 46).

Okorafor employs the Derridean approach of exposing binaries of male/female in society, a feminist issue I will examine in chapter two because ASF feminist writers undermine the phallogocentric society that demands conformity, not rationality - that the girls in the Kingdom are infibulated and reclitorized through jujutech does not justify the performance of the rite without an explanation. In essence, this is Okorafor's way of giving women the power to mystically mend, and break the juju placed by Aro that enslaves them in the premarital sexual act, a semblance of what Niklas Juth and Niels Lynöe refer to as modern-day hymen restoration after the loss of virginity (215) in females. In using *WFD* as a medium of change and a voice for the voiceless through her heroine, Okorafor opposes this cultural rite and the phallocratic socialization of women who are led to condone abnormality as normality, and makes her readers part of her envisaged transformation as enshrined in Thaddeus Metz's Ubuntu maxim: "An

action is right just insofar as it respects a person's dignity; an act is wrong to the extent that it degrades humanity" (328).

Mbiti argues that the initiation of the young as a rite of passage is "one of the key moments in the rhythm of individual life, which is also the rhythm of the corporate group of which the individual is a part" (118), while Carstens and Roberts note that "African story-telling can contribute significantly towards the contemporary world and the task of positing a possible future for the human species and the planet it inhabits. For example, "rites of passage are lacking and shadowy in the West" (91); these rites are essential in Africa. Initiations are "a way of forging identity through empowerment" (91), and this is why Onyesonwu's identity crisis is settled after she performs the rite, for "at eleven, I still had hopes. . . . I could be made normal. . . . The rite would put a stop to the strangeness happening to me" (*WFD* 36). The common denominator that binds Onyesonwu and Mwita is *ewuhood* as it parallels the rite that brought Luyu, Binta, Diti, and Onyesonwu in the "Eleventh Year Rite" in which female genital mutilation took place.

In the words of Ada, an "imposing old woman" (*WFD* 38), and the custodian of "proper traditions" (*WFD* 37), the essence of the rite is to help the "girl protect her honor. . . . Girls need to be protected from their own stupidity and not suffer the stupidity of boys. The juju forces her to put her foot down when she must" (*WFD* 93–94), a sign that the Eleventh Rite is not patriarchal and anti-feminist because both undergo circumcision. I argue that Okorafor's choice of women as custodians of this rite is significant in that women emancipation largely depends on the realization and acknowledgement of their contribution and perpetration of female subjugation in society. Ada ("Nana the Wise") the priestess, Abeo Ogundimu, Lady Abadie, Ochi Naka, and Zuni Whan believe they are guardians who hold the keys of "womanhood and girlhood," for "[o]nly through us can you move freely between the two" (*WFD* 38) that is, between girlhood and womanhood. By this phallocratic socialization, the women perform a rite

that simultaneously brings pain and joy to their kin without asking the "why" questions, just as Tia in the novel sacrifices for Zoubeir voluntarily. Inasmuch as Okorafor critiques the Zoubeir/Tia story for its phallus orientation, she presents excision as a moral door of support for ewu kids. Onyesonwu as an ewu admits that the rite was respected and powerful: "*Every* girl here has it done. . . I'm Ewu . . . To not do it would bring more shame" (*WFD* 48). The emphasis on the word "*Every* girl" shows how binding the rite is, it is imposed on them by imposing women. Onyesonwu's pain for being an ewu-child makes her accept clitoridectomy to avoid stigma and gain acceptance in society. Okorafor interrogates, "In many cultures, women view the clitoridectomy as a bonding experience. They share pain, fear, risk infection and heal together. This shows the power of Ujamaa which unite them to heal as family that supports one another thereby lightening the pain. Ujamaa family spirit becomes a support system for the excised girls. Consider Onyesonwu's friendship with Luyu, Binta and Diti" (Blogspot). The reader discovers that Onyesonwu rallies her cohort in the Eleventh Rite and their male counterparts of the "Thirteenth Year Rite" into the project of rewriting the Great Book.

Okorafor draws her inspiration from the myth of Amma that explains the genesis of excision amongst the Dogon people of Mali. Ismahan S. Diop writes, in the beginning, God (Amma) "had to unite with the earth to create the world, and the earth's sex was an "anthill and the clitoris, a termite nest" (7–10) which was blocked as God approached it, so God slaughtered the mound, and united with the excised land and created the world and thus life. According to David Damrosch, Okorafor plays the author's role of not "making things up but observing and reflecting on" (19) in-depth. Although the performers of the rite think they are performing a divine act—"Oh praise Ani" (*WFD* 44), I contend they have failed to observe human rights as inherent in Ubuntu values, "inalienable individual rights in the context of societal common good" (Chuwa 36). Okorafor indirectly requests from Ada's crew that has shifted attention from the backdrop of the original act of excision to re-evaluate the rite with regard to its origins

instead of teaming up with patriarchal Aro in placing juju on the scalpel used during the rite. However, Onyesonwu as an ewu, and unlike others, has the freedom to disregard it, but the urge to save her family image counts more than her rights: "I brought dishonor to my mother by existing. I brought scandal to Papa by entering his life . . . My parents carried enough shame" (*WFD* 35–36).

Societal conditioning affects girls psychologically and performing the rite is the only option to be accepted within that society. A girl lacking the symbols of the ritual, the gold chain and the stone, the "white shirt and veil, the symbols of our new adulthood" (*WFD* 41), remains a child in the eyes of others. These are cultural insignias of sorority and identity and are emblems of a certain achievement. However, such a rite, according to Ubuntu proponents, "hampers human dignity and compromises the very essence of human nature and its essential rights, the greatest of which being the right to life" (Chuwa). The rite in essence changes the girl's status "[a]fter a girl goes through, . . . she is worthy of being spoken to as an adult" (*WFD* 33, 41), and girls are, then, prepared for the institution of marriage, hence Onyesonwu goes for a definitive engagement with Mwita. The African bioethicist Godfrey B. Tangwa agrees that circumcision "is primarily an initiation ritual, a rite of passage towards adulthood" ("Circumcision" 185) as it allows the girls "to share in the full privileges and duties of the community" (Mbiti 118). The rite gives the excised a powerful voice in society: "Your words will finally matter" (*WFD* 41). Without it, Binta cannot break the silence of her sexual abuse by her father. Carstens and Roberts say, the "future of humanity requires such initiation rites" from birth to death, that is, what Okorafor calls "all of Life's markers" (*WFD* 37) in order to evolve to a more holistic and responsible civilization" (91). *WFD,* as an ASF text, gives readers a foretaste of that possible future by changing the Great Book for society and its posterity, after Onyesonwu undertakes the rite and rewrites the future of the Seven Rivers. Okorafor's *WFD* proves that ASF is an agent of change and transformation for societal practices. In 2020, the Sudanese

parliament criminalized FGM, confirming Walter Mosley's argument that SF is a genre "made to rail against the status quo," a genre that "can tear down the walls and windows, the artifice and laws by changing the logic, empowering the disenfranchised" of human society. Okorafor's use of science fiction elements in treating the Eleventh Rite creates cognitive estrangement, agreeing with Lynette James that the "future history [of humanity is] in the process of being written" (159) and rewritten for a better future where life-threatening cultural practices are eradicated, a core leitmotif of Africanfuturism which I will show in the next chapter.

For George C. Denniston et al., the excruciating pain of circumcision and the trauma of hymen and foreskin restoration, and the number of deaths resulting from circumcision (386) affect both women and men. R. Wayne Griffiths' statistics show that the restoration of the prepuce affects the sex drive of 53% of men circumcised in adulthood (299). Of those who consulted a physician, 62% were either ridiculed or treated with indifference, and 17% were told to go and get psychological help (300). Dirk Schultheiss writes that circumcision has been a practice since the "beginning of recorded history" (285) and that the babies lost annually to circumcision are under-reported. This is a humanistic and multi-faceted issue that should be holistically confronted because no non-life-threatening surgery should be performed on a person's body, irrespective of their sex, without consent. ASF has the potential to imagine an egalitarian humanistic future that treats circumcision as a menace because in Ubuntu philosophy, the fundamental life principle is: "An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an act is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows without violating rights" (Metz 3030), a maxim that both rites break. Though Okorafor describes the Eleventh Rite and Thirteenth Rites as performed by "a healer and architect" (*WFD* 42), disinfecting the scalpels like modern sur-

geons with the "cleanest cuts" that are "cauterize when necessary" (*WFD* 42), Okorafor disapproves of the acts for their betrayal of the struggle for inalienable human rights in a society which Ubuntu supports, namely, "Human rights based on human dignity" (Chuwa 1).

D. Interdisciplinary Readings and Death Rites

Traditionally, ASF encompasses psychology, religion, history, philosophy, and sociology, and the interdisciplinary nature of *WFD* cannot be avoided. Goksen Aras argues: "There is a very strong correlation between literature and psychology for the fact that both of them deal with human beings and their reactions, perceptions of the world, miseries, wishes, desires, fears, conflicts and reconciliations" (251), and I believe that Okorafor establishes a strong link between ASF, African Traditional Religion (ATR), death rites and techno-spirituality. This is evident in the burial and eulogies given to Binta by her friends, and her Ujamaa community's prayers resound with her spirit: "We buried our beloved friend there in the desert . . . Luyu read a prayer from the electronic file of the Great Book in her portable. Then we each took turns to say something about Binta" (*WFD* 260). The reading from the electronic file is reminiscent of the strong link between technology and religion as Christopher Helland explains:

> Although it seems paradoxical, religion in all its forms and functions is transferring and blending with the digital world. This new relationship is altering how we do religion and also how religion impacts and influences the society and culture. Digital religion is an intermingling of our modern mediated society with contemporary religious beliefs and practices. Digital religion is not just about having 'religion' on digital media, rather it is a blending of all of the societal and cultural components we associate with religion with all of the elements we associate with a digital society. (177)

The above proposition is actualized in Binta's funeral rite as traditional beliefs of the Okekes are intertwined with the digital world, also materializing in the present time where religion and its rituals have become digitalized on the screen—a phenomenon that cascades into Beukes'

Zoo City (2010) with the *sangoma* "SMS-ing" the ancestors as venerated mediums of ATR through his brand-new iPhone. If there is one thing that cannot be rewritten from the oral, hard and digital versions of the Great Book, it is prayers, since in ATR each moment of life is "dedicated to the Master Creator" (Amanze 297). The revelation at the gravesite that "Binta had never known the loving touch of a man" (*WFD* 261) makes the reader empathize with her as the cohort prays for her happiness in the world beyond. From the abuse of her biological father to the pain of never hearing "Ifunanya" (the deepest utterance of a man's love) said to her is all the more tragic since her silence in death is the symbol of the silent subaltern's voice that needs to speak and break the silence of human abuse. Binta lies dead as a victim and "a figure of Woman," "one whose minimal predication as indeterminate is already available to the phallocentric tradition," a representation of the relationship between woman and silence" (Spivak 82) and ultimately only overturned by women themselves.

Nevertheless, that Binta commits patricide by poisoning her father and thereby setting herself free, is what Onyesonwu's eulogy cannot wave aside as it brings no fulfilment but underlines her tragic flaw. Binta's patricide falls below the Ubuntu yardstick of honouring and promoting human life because, to use the words of Mariama Bâ, the one "[w]ho decides death and life [is] God, the Almighty" (82), and not Binta. In the Ubuntu and Ujamaa society that Onyesonwu seeks to create, Onyesonwu makes it clear that such deeds have no place. This is because in Ujamaa, "[H]uman life is sacred," but "what should be done when [an abuser, and] a psychotic murderer's life threatens the safety of other people" (Nyerere 78) depends on the Ujamaa community and not on individuals because "men must be prevented from exploiting each other. . . . such that man's needs and progress can be co-operatively secured" (Nyerere 79).A community tribunal, therefore, summons Binta's parents in an attempt to get justice before her unfortunate demise.

Okorafor's vivid description of the pericope of Binta's burial should be read through an interdisciplinary lens that engages with anthropology, namely, the African theory on the living dead (Mbiti 25–26, 81–89), and with Claude Lévi-Strauss' studies on the narratives pertaining to the origins of death (31–32, 199) in which the deceased are venerated and propitiated. *WFD*, therefore, presents an interplay of an African tradition where indigenous religion, practices and philosophies strive "to make people sensitive to the invisible world which dovetails with the physical world" (Carstens and Roberts 85). Binta, after her death, becomes an intermediary expected to carry human requests, afflictions and wishes to the supreme deity (Mbiti 145–161), along with concerns about the Great Book's influence on women and fellow humans from the Sasa (the now/earthly) to the Zamani (eternal/celestial) world (Mbiti 21–27). Onyesonwu tells her departing spirit: "Ah, Binta, when you return to these lands, you'll rule the world" (*WFD* 261), showing the ATR belief in reincarnation enshrined in the Igbo worldview of which Okorafor is a native. Even though Ada is the custodian of all rites (*WFD* 37) it is the young generation who usurp, in *WFD,* that prerogative as they bury their comrade without her knowledge, a clear rebellion against traditional authority and the bitter memory of the circumcision rites they had to undergo, a phenomenon similar to memories of trauma that I will examine in chapter three.

E. African Cosmology, Jujutech, and Folklore

Reading *WFD* is to read against the backdrop of African cosmology and bricolage, that is, the Igbo cosmology of the Mystic Points, and Lévi-Strauss' theory of the *Bricoleur*. Okorafor admits in her interview with Uche Ogbuji her twisting and transforming of Lévi-Strauss' theory into a "magical concept" ("Fantastical Language" par. 6). Okorafor reverses the limitations Onyesonwu faces into a positive, non-hierarchical meaning: 'One who uses all that he has in order to do what he has to" (214); a facet I will return to later. The Mystic Points is an aspect of African traditional mystical technology—a bricolage that Okorafor employs in its

application of various aspects of life: the architectural designs and construction of the House of Osugbo, and the Vah people's tents. African cosmology is a new paradigm Okorafor employs to alter the reading of AL through ASF's fidelity to Sankofa. Okorafor writes: "The Great Mystic Points are derived from central Igbo (Nigerian) traditional beliefs" (Blogspot). In using the Mystics Points, the Okekes "built towers that they hoped would be high enough to prick Ani . . . They built juju-working machines . . . and invented among themselves" giving fame and identity to themselves, and for this "Ani laid a curse on the Okeke" (*WFD* 100). Ani is depicted as an enemy of science, technology and jujutech by the Okekes. Their Osugbo House in Old-Africa was the tallest building in Jwahir, the modern skyscrapers in megacities, a "strange structure" (*WFD* 8) entirely built of stone, a resemblance of The Tower of Babel that occasioned the end of the envisaged tower and the fall of man's attempts to measure up with his creator. This equally brings about the fall of the Okekes synonymously creating intertextuality with the biblical narrative of Genesis 11:1–9, since "[u]nder the new sun, most of what the Okeke built crumbled" including the "computers, gadgets, items, objects in the sky that sometimes speak to us" (*WFD* 100). The crumbled computers gave caves a new function as computer labs because Ani indicts the Okekes over-commitment to technology. The Okeke's constructions and inventions parallel those of Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*.. However using jujutech to construct becomes symbolic of the Old-Africa Era where Randi Barndon argues, "[M]agic begins where technology ends" (43). But in the 21st-century's indigenous futurism depicted by Okorafor, the two fuse into jujutech, for "Magic is not primitive science or a confusion of natural and supernatural" that is destroyed at will by Ani, but "works with and is additional to practical knowledge and technique" (43). I understand that for Okorafor to craft a new reading and identity, African writinghood has to go back through Sankofa, reclaim and rehabilitate those crumbled African indigenous Okeke magical and technological inventions,

and establish synergy in the present and in the future. Kilgore emphasises that "such fully realized African pasts" (Barr 122) should be used by ASF in shaping the destined human futures. This angst to attain an African identity not decreed by the Great Book, but which stems from the marriage of both old and modern ontologies, is Okorafor's message in *WFD:* "magic" and "portable" are possible realities of human life in post-apocalyptic Africa, where ASF according to Madhu Dubey would "deploy magic in strikingly convergent ways to revaluate a whole set of gendered and racialized dichotomies" ("Becoming" 35).

This explains why the mixed-race couple Mwita and Onyesonwu integrate the Mystic Points and portables to rewrite the grand narrative of the Great Book. In creating a mixed-race couple that achieves this task by employing western and African technologies, Okorafor brings in a new convention of making SF inclusive of black and white, minorities and majorities, thus introducing miscegenation as a contemporary ASF leitmotif that undermines binaries of white/black, and West/Africa, that is, the metaphorical West represented by the Nurus as a superior race and the Okekes as victimized Africa. As a modern *bricoleur* with African bush-craft, Mwita makes money on his way to the east by "working idiotic bits of sorcery like making dolls dance and children levitate" (66) having been an unsuccessful child soldier. Onyesonwu can become "ignorable" (meaning partly invisible) in the face of danger because of her formation in the Mystic Points, becoming an avatar (spirit) version in towns, intertextually linking her to Butler's *Wild Seed* (1992) shape-shifter, Anyanwu. This confirms Deleuze and Guattari's postulation of individuals who "continually transform themselves into each other, cross over into each other" (249), because "sorcery always codifies certain transformations of becomings" (250) in humans. I find the Mystic Points to be an Okeke survival technology in the face of the over-domineering Nurus. Onyesonwu's desire is to use this protective technology for her daunting task of rewriting the metanarrative of the Great Book, and the toppling of

Daib's hegemony, a metaphor of the daughter as the new-jujutech-savvy personality against the analogue-juju broken father.

In Okorafor's argument, the Mystic Points and bricolage show the "artist is both a scientist and a bricoleur" (Lévi-Strauss 22), who equally constructs her characters as both *bricoleurs* and engineers capable of solving the plethora of human issues in the Seven Rivers Kingdom through magic and techno-science. Okorafor writes: "The Mystic Points are aspects of everything. A sorcerer can manipulate them with his tools to make things happen. It's not the 'magic' of children's stories. To work the Points is far beyond any juju" (*WFD* 155). Thus, in my reading, the Points are a holistic science, a technological web and an enterprise through which the holder navigates like a cybernaut surfing, hacking, and developing new codes in order to change the world as a mystical scientist and *bricoleur*. Okorafor, in alluding to Lévi-Strauss admits, the Mystic Points are a form of bricolage technology. She argues that a *bricoleur* is a person who "uses all that he has in order to do what he has to do" (*WFD* 154, 389). Reading this, the reader establishes a theoretical reference to Lévi-Strauss but discovers a distinction between an engineer and bricoleur as opposed to Okorafor's fusion. When Onyesonwu claims "[she] was [a] bricoleur" (*WFD* 221) and sorcerer opening her sorcery bushcraft bag and using the tools of the Mystic Points to save humanity, she stands uncontested because of the change she occasions in the Kingdom through her rewriting. Importantly, Onyesonwu ensures no "Ewu woman was dragged into the dark alley and raped" (*WFD* 221) by actualizing the weather point and shape-shifting to the "most terrifying creature" (*WFD* 222) of the Great Book, the sphinx, and finally rewriting the Great Book. In essence, Onyesonwu is a *bricoleur* who *reclitorisizes* her Eleventh Rite mates, cures Nuumu, who eventually dies, performs magic, saves women, and stops the war between the Okekes and the Nurus. Following Judith Mirril's argument, Onyesonwu is equally an engineer because an "engineer is a man who converts scientific reasoning into functioning technology" (Latham 34), and this not necessarily

using machines. Onyesonwu is not only a contemporary engineer but a polymath: a *bricoleur*, techie, a medic, and a savior using mystical powers (jujutech) to shape-shift, heal and bring back to life. By using the Mystic Points as part of Onyesonwu's sorcery formation, Okorafor confirms Deleuze and Guattari's proposition that taking journeys backwards through the strata of history as demanded in Sankofa helps humanity recover mythos of conjuring and sorcery in human society, permitting individuals through sorcery to "possesses a special introductory power" of becoming "cellular, molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible" (248). As a bricoleur, sorcerer, engineer and scientist, Onyesonwu is, to use Lévi-Strauss' metaphor, a social creator of change and knowledge (Lévi-Strauss 16–37). Onyesonwu's creation of social justice, peace, liberty and harmony for the Seven Rivers Kingdom after the magical rewriting of the Great Book is the highest invention she realized for the Okekes and the Nurus.

F. Narrative Mythology

Reading for myths is a novelty incarnated by *WFD* as an ASF novel based on feminine mythology; Ani the goddess who wields power exerts numinous effects on the Seven Rivers Kingdom, and Okorafor frames the flight of her characters across swathes of African territory from East to West and Onyesonwu's magical flights in the shape of a vulture as an ancient African flying myth. According to Okorafor, "The flying Africans were said to be Igbos. I too am an Igbo. I once told my uncle about the flying Africans myth . . . [and his response was] people can fly" (Barr 131). Onyesonwu makes flying an integral part of her formation in the Mystic Points, and taking flights across realms is historically reminiscent of the African flying myth discussed by Katherine Thorsteinson who explains how uprooted Africans seeking freedom in slave lands would mystically fly to Africa to be with their families (259–262). Instead of using the SF icons of Western spaceships, flying planes and pilots, Okorafor uses the bird and spirit icons to craft an African way of interstellar and intercontinental travelling based on indigenous spiritual and magical practices (Barr 471–475) reminiscent of shamanistic practices

of inter-connectedness between the realms of the visible and the invisible. Onyesonwu's shape-shifting into animals is reminiscent of Dubey's observation that "[w]omen becoming animals are not unfamiliar in mainstream [SF], but this trope serves vastly different purposes in [SF] written by men and women. Male writers have largely employed the trope to convey the genre's endemic hostility toward a nature conceived as menacing to human rationality" ("Becoming" 33). Okorafor, in making her heroine fly and unite with the animal world, uses ASF as a feminist tool to subvert the "stability of masculine identity [in SF] . . . by the power of reason" (Dubey, "Becoming" 33). Onyesonwu's closeness to the animal world, for example to Sandi the camel, signifies the trust she bestows on nature, a trope that finds a parallel in *Zoo City* with Zinzi's pre-animaled abilities. Reading *WFD* and Onyesonwu's flights, the reader establishes an intertextual reference to Phoenix's flight from New York's Tower 7 to Ghana in Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix*. Phoenix thinks she has bird DNA and, "like an albatross, I quickly learned how to fly without flying" (58). She escapes from the technological and biological slavery—an issue I will explore in chapter two—in USA's New York 7 towers in order to reach family-hood (Ujamaa) in Wulugu Ghana. The juxtaposition of mystical and nanotechnology is an important paradigm shift incarnated by ASF and, according to Kilgore, the ASF writer "imaginatively engages mythic and historical pasts in order to describe livable futures" (Barr 120), a process I will examine in chapter three.

G. The Theological Approach to Origins through Myths (Cosmogony)

The Great Book is a grand narrative whose elements in postmodern times disintegrate into micro-narratives since, according to Jean-François Lyotard, humans are at a point that heralds a crisis in which master-narratives of science have become not only obsolete but also burdensome (xix). I find in Okorafor's *WFD* a postmodern narrative which posits that we live in an era of alterity with the world as a rhizome, and in which characters construct their interpretive schemas of the Great Book despite, and against, its teleological orientation; Mwita and

Onyesonwu, symbolizing the new generation, challenge the Great Book theory. However, Okorafor's text also posits the concept of a theological approach to origins, assuming a beginning and an author of life, beginning at point zero with Ani and explaining the cosmogony of the Okekes and the Nurus (*WFD* 100) in the Seven Rivers Kingdom. Diop defines a myth as, "[T]he story of the beginning" (7) with all-powerful gods whose acts affect generations. This is relevant to *WFD* because Ani's acts pose a formidable force on the Okekes and the Nurus, for Ani, the "Almighty and All-knowing Goddess" (*WFD* 49) dictates her followers' modus operandi because their genesis is in her as she is the goddess of creation (*WFD* 99-103). The mythic model of origins is a great paradigm shift incarnated by ASF in *WFD* although the text eludes the linear narrative despite the myth of origins. *WFD* is a non-linear narrative with the last "Chapter 1: Rewritten" (*WFD* 417–419) presented as a re-writing, an ending-beginning, a second version, an alternative narrative in which Onyesonwu emerges triumphant and not stoned to death, something reminiscent of Roland Barthes' description of the writerly text as "the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (142).

WFD, from the perspective of a postmodern literary text, has no closure, but there is an implicit *dénouement* to the tensed relations between the two warring tribes, for Onyesonwu deletes all reference to the superiority of one over the other from the Great Book, effectively removing it from the people's memory: "The curse of the Okeke is lifted. It never existed, *sha*" (*WFD* 410). The book within a book is rewritten, achieving the efficacy of authorial intrusion and creating a new micro-narrative where the "Nuru, Okeke, and two Ewu children in school uniforms" (*WFD* 419) are spotted playing together, a transformative event brought about by the new possibilities of the rewritten Great Book, thus dismantling its grand narrative as prophesied in the novel (*WFD* 102).

H. Reading the Great Book Hermeneutically and Intertextually

Reading *WFD* is to read the double nature of the Great Book hermeneutically and intertextually. As mentioned in the epigraphs the reader discovers that the "Great Book" has a teleological dimension in the fulfilment of an orthodoxy. The Great Book is an emblem of what Dubey calls "The Book of Life," that is, a book that "is disseminated in a variety of ways to an audience" *(Signs*, 81). The Great Book in *WFD* is a symbol of the way the Quran describes itself, a book "wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the godfearing who believe in the Unseen" (Arberry 2). Joshua Yu Burnett argues that the Great Book holds a double nature in *WFD*: "it is beautiful and horrible, liberatory and oppressive, familiar and unknowable, embodied and othered, containing both print and oral traditions, reading and listening" ("The Great Change" 147) and above all spiritual and unspiritual. Its sacredness is acknowledged depending on skin colour and its pledge gives the Nurus the audacity to maltreat the Okekes as "[u]gly filthy slaves" (*WFD* 19). The Great Book gives two un-tallying created accounts of Okekes as "created ones," those who "sprang from the sweet rivers," "aggressive like the rushing rivers, forever wanting to move forward," and also of the Nurus as created from the stars and plucked from the sun (*WFD* 17, 100), both origins are contradictory. Patrick writes that Daib believes the Great Book so piously that he feels "God has given him the right to force sex on an innocent woman" (86) like Najeeba, Onyesonwu's mother, and that is why the rape occurs when Okeke women are praying, that is, holding a conversation with Ani their goddess. Onyesonwu repudiates the telos of the Great Book and challenges its sovereign narrative by showing that the new race will no longer believe in historical teleology and that what Lyotard calls "master-narratives," buried underground must give birth to micro-narratives (xii). This breaking up of sovereign narratives has effected the decentring of society and the creation of new social bonds in *WFD*.

Schwarz argues that a text does not "advance teleologically" (xi) but advances through "close reading—with its emphasis on form—and . . . how language works in specific literary

contexts" (xii), a technique Onyesonwu employs as she challenges the telos of the Great Book in a way reminiscent of Stuart Hall's decoding of the message in triple ways: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional models (*Essentials* 269–275). Okorafor's texts depict two different epochs: the "Old Africa Era" of "peaceful times" (*WFD* 17) with Okeke at the prime of their scientific achievements (*WFD* 364), and the new era in which the greater narrative takes place with waring Okekes and Nurus and Okorafor's promise of a post-crisis and post-apocalyptic Africa that is systematically peaceful and united as per the Ujamaa tenet of family-hood. That the Great Book validates with teleological veracity the enslavement of the Okekes by the Nurus is something Onyesonwu cannot condone, but, while acknowledging the dominant reading of the text, she presents her own oppositional reading. To Okorafor and her heroine, Ubuntu teaches: "Man is free only among equally free men.' Ubuntu recognizes the fact that 'the slavery of even one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all" (Chuwa 36). Using Mwita and Onyesonwu as hybrids and miscegenational characters, Okorafor evokes a future that initiates a peace deal between the Nuru and Okeke races. Mwita and Onyesonwu's oppositional reading of the Great Book dismantles the dominant reading amongst the Nurus, prioritizing rationality over prophecy, science over magic. Before Rana's prophecy materializes, Onyesonwu feels the Great Book should be burnt for poisoning human coexistence (*WFD* 31) and Onyesonwu becomes a *provocateur* who enlarges consciousness—a role Phoenix, Kendra and Tendeka will assume in chapter two, enlarging human consciousness against overcommitment to technology. Since Okekes and Nurus hate each other, Okorafor suggests that miscegenation is the gateway to attaining peace.

In this context, Burnett suggests that religious texts and scriptures have been "selectively interpreted to slaves . . . and the colonized as justifying their enslavement and colonization" ("The Great Change" 142), with religions having remarkably instituted inferior and superior relations as in the caste system in India and in Africa where Fundamentalist Bible

preachers assisted in instituting the Hamitic myth (Gen 9: 24–26) in which Africans were signed with the indelible mark of cursed Cain. Knowing the tremendous power of myths, Lyotard's assertion of the "breaking up of the grand Narratives" (15) has led to the loss of a grand meaning in divine texts. This has given birth to arguments about religion's inability to help humanity find meaning amidst the vicissitudes of life. In my reading of *WFD*, Okorafor, as a writer who believes in religious freedoms, crafts a mode of reading that reveals how contemptible acts of historical inhumanity are justified to fellow humans through religious texts.

The prophet Rana, who prophesied the coming of a Nuru man (*WFD* 102), is a harbinger of micro-narratives that assures Nurus and Okekes "there was life *outs-side* the Great Book" (*WFD* 311); a correlation to what Abrahamic religions hold as the "Second Coming," where the Messiah, Jesus and El-Mahdi (Israfil and angel Gabriel) will sound the trumpet of restitution and justice for all; and it also hints to William B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" where "anarchy is loosed upon the world" (line 4,1 86). This reading of the coming of the prophet is not a piece of welcome news for Nurus, whose fate becomes uncertain once their supremacy is challenged. The relationship between Okekes and Nurus in the Great Book is symbolic of the Israelites' Biblical narrative in Egypt when the Israelis were enslaved by the Pharaoh. Daib is the symbolic Pharaoh who does not want to see the Jews (Okekes) free. From Ani's creation story, also found in Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix*, the Okekes multiplied like the Biblical Israelites:

> As centuries passed, they spread over Ani's lands and created and used and changed and altered and spread and consumed and multiplied. They were everywhere. They built towers that they hoped would be high enough to prick Ani and get her attention . . . They bent and twisted Ani's sand, water, sky, and air, took her creatures and changed them. (99–100)

Okorafor's description of the Okeke high towers is also a reference to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Onyesonwu, a woman with Nuru and Okeke blood, metaphorically materializes the rewriting project, bringing the Okekes and Nurus to a common home, an "Enuigwe; that is an old word for 'the heavens,' the home of all things, even the Okeke and Nuru" (*WFD* 180), a home constructed on the Ubuntu and Ujamaa philosophies of human communion. In emphasizing the importance of such communion, Desmond Tutu asserts that, "Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum honum*—the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague" (31). That Okeke and Nuru cannot live together makes Onyesonwu force upon them Ubuntu's philosophical paradigm as she states: "The Golden Rule is to let the eagle and the hawk perch. Let the camel and the fox drink" (*WFD* 155), implying humans can coexist relationally in accordance with the Bantu philosophy "of community living," that is, "social living in everyday life of the African person in particular and global community in general" (Okoro 2). In using the ASF animalistic elements of the fox and camel, Onyesonwu reminds us of her close relation with nature, and also presents the Vah people living at the margins of the Nuru-Okeke society as communally happier beings, sharing everything as a central modus vivendi and operandi and showing how indigenous knowledge and people can contribute to a better universe. Historically, the Vah people (Red People) are the Himbas whose generosity is manifested in offering shelter and food to a stranger exemplifying the highest form of authentic human communitarianism.

WFD as a writerly text unveils a new reading mode through the re-traditionalization of technology. Okorafor resurrects and references Tutuola's ur-text, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and writes: "He is like palm wine to the Palm Wine Drunkard in the Great Book" (*WFD* 340). She also references the forest trope in the same text, and D.O. Fagunwa's *Ògbójú Ode nínú Igbo Irúnmalé* (1938). When Onyesonwu hopes to find Mwita in the green forest, a green place of

hope which the mother had shown her (*WFD* 418), Okorafor correlates *WFD* to Tutuola's pioneer text mentioned above and her first young-adult novel *Zahrah the Windseeker* (2005). She directly mentions *The Forbidden Greeny Jungle Field Guide* (*WFD* 363), a book Zahrah and Dari are prevented from reading while in the library. Okorafor, therefore, acknowledges the relationship her texts have with prior texts, showing her readership of the ASF *avant-gardistes* from which she is developing her type of ASF, namely *organic fantasy*, that is, "fantasy fiction that emerges from the very nature of its story" ("Sunrise 275"). Thus, Okorafor evokes a literary heritage and a writing as "interviewing of different voices (heteroglossia) and a text's identity being constituted by the discourse that it draws on" (Pahl 214). Okorafor by this premise agrees with Barthes that "writing is not 'telling' but . . . assigning all the referent ('what one says') to this act of locution; which is why part of contemporary literature is no longer descriptive, but transitive, striving to accomplish so pure a present in its language" (114) that reflects the spectrum and literary prism of the past, the present and the future.

By making intertextual relation to *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, a text that "offer[s] us a better, stronger and more memorable insight into the problem of excess" (Achebe, "Truth" 110), Okorafor follows in the footsteps and tradition of pioneering African speculative fiction texts. Indeed, Okri claims that

> the real literature of a people begins with the passing of writers into the realm of ancestors. Literature begins with the dead. Their body of work derives new authority from death. Then a literature begins to cohere. The books read us. They move from their fixed sphere of time and come alive in a new way in ours. They are no longer what we thought they were. . . . They take us up with them. . . . Often they have to perform the feat of resurrection: being forgotten and then being re-discovered, or being neglected and being read in a new way. (*New Kind of Literature"* pars. 3–4)

Unlike the Great Book in *WFD* that loses its grand narrative and value, Tutuola's ur-text remains a feat in ASF, because according to Pahl, Tutuola's text, "[b]esides frequent recourse to magic or juju . . . deviates from a realist conception of the world in that it imagines a place—the forest—where the dead reside before they go to heaven" (217), a future world that is systematically better, and portrays the Africanfuturist angst in ASF, that is, creating a post-apocalyptic and post-crisis Africa with technology and indigenous futurist elements rooted in Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa values. This cross-reference creates new modes of reading texts as an assemblage, and *WFD* is thus a palimpsest which contains not a singular monolithic message, but allows for multiple readings in a hypertextual manner reminiscent of the way the Internet works. Like Barthes in "The Death of the Author," Okorafor is declaring the death of colonialism, Apartheid and slavery as grand reading modes, making *WFD* a "tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture[s]" (Barthes 146) that produce it. *WFD* thus succumbs to Barthes' dictum that the locus of writing is reading, because the Death of the Author is co-terminous with the Birth of the Reader, that is, "we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148).

I. Double Biographies and Autobiographies

Again, the trajectory of double metaphors, cross-genre, autobiographical and metatextual readings are evident in *WFD* and ASF in general. Okorafor and Beukes' lives as, a former athlete and a journalist, respectively, are found as a palimpsest in their works. According to Elsie Cloete, Zinzi in *Zoo City* is a former journalist with journalistic skills like Beukes (354–355), and Beuke's style of writing shows the investigative journalist she is, hence crime and detection intertwine in her works. When the narrator in *WFD* opens the story with these words: "My life fell apart when I was sixteen" (*WFD* 3), this is an autobiographical reference to Okorafor's life, namely, her scoliosis that necessitated an operation that left her paralyzed in 1993,

an event explained in her *Broken Places and Outer Space* (15). When Okorafor references Nuumu's "aggressive curvature of her spine . . . 'Scoliosis,' Mwita said. Curvature of the spine" (*WFD* 228), she injects a real-disease from her life as a SF element. This also leads to the struggle between Mwita and Onyesonwu about who the best healer is, with Mwita imposing a masculine and patriarchal mentality: "I should be the sorcerer, you should be the healer" (*WFD* 274). This also recalls the discipleship and apprenticeship struggle where Aro refuses to teach Onyesonwu the Points just because she is a woman: "Aro refused you because you were an *Ewu* female. . . . His stupidity will give you a chance, I think" (*WFD* 174). Eventually, Onyesonwu's insistence and burgeoning mystical qualities prove to be equal to the masculinity demanded by Aro. When Onyesonwu says in *WFD*, "Papa died. He had such a strong heart, yet he died" (*WFD* 3), one can surmise that Okorafor is referring to the death of her biological father, a cardiovascular surgeon. When Onyesonwu touches her father's dead body and draws strength from it, this is a parallel to Okorafor's own wake-keeping experience as retold in "Africanfuturism: Disrupting Science Fiction." When Okorafor writes with rage about racial segregation between Nurus and Okekes in *WFD*, I believe it is her own lived experience as a person of dual heritage, a "Naijamerican" in Chicago, where blacks and whites live unequal circumstances, exacerbated by children of mixed marriages, the ewus in *WFD*. This is also reminiscent of South Africa's Apartheid segregation in Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* (2016) and Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (1961) in which racial tensions push children born of mixed couples into liminal zones where laws from both divides aggravate their social problems; Mwita and Onyesonwu are pushed likewise to their limits but become, by the same token, agents of change, desegregation, transformation and civility for the feuding parties, a replica of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliette, whose deaths reconcile the Capulets and the Montagues, and society re-forms in a sort of "mega-family" under the philosophy of Ujamaa with the aim

of establishing an extended family where another person "does not look on one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies" (Nyerere 11).

J. The Conflict between Print and Electronic Reading, Cyberspace, and the Internet of Things

Reading *WFD* as ASF is reading for the rift between print literacy versus the electronic reading culture represented by Aro the technophobe and Luyu the techie. In using James O'Sullivan's argument, I argue that "technology has come a long way since then, and so too has our ability to capture the hallmarks of good literature in digital forms" (4). The contemporary mode of reading ASF in *WFD* is to question the old ways through the presence of electronic portable devices as a means of writing and reading. According to Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed, the digital space is envisioned as the market for ASF writers and readers with the genre undergoing a "revival of African SFF, both on- and off-line" (383), thus the narrator's observation that "even my long story will fit on that laptop of yours" (*WFD* 6) shows the new model in which African narratives are scripted and read. Collective and individual digital platforms like *Omenana, Kugali, Bahati* and *Bakwa* are providing SF content that reclaims AL from its oral to the written and digital phase, inducing the great reading shift from the print medium. Pahl adds that this migration is evident in the reading of the Great Book which first existed as an "audio file that is subsequently written down and ultimately rewritten in Nsibidi, an ancient Nigerian writing system" (219). Luyu and Onyesonwu assault Aro's print-elitist reading culture, forcing a shift in the reading mode through their electronic portables, and presenting the reader with a narrative that is congruent with electronic/cyber-literature. The reader is captured by the flashy portables that enhance the close reading of the Great Book within and outside the socio-cultural and socio-historical context of Ani's mythology, echoing Sherry Turkle's hypothesis that in the progress of human life on the screen, "it is our children who are leading the way, and adults

who are anxiously trailing behind" (10), that is, it is Aro, Ada, and Daib the technophobes who are trailing behind and who are subsequently forgotten.

In this context, Onyesonwu says: "There is a portion of the Great Book that most versions exclude. The Lost Papers. Aro had a copy of them" (*WFD* 364), and it is this provincialist, hidden, and secretive nature of print literature in the Great Book which threatens the Ujamaa spirit of equality and borderless solidarity by creating self-styled "chiefs" and "superiors" like Daib, Ada, and Aro. The combined efforts of Onyesonwu and her crew (community) defeat the individualistic approach of Daib, and reconcile the feuding communities under the auspices of Ujamaa and Ubuntu by reclaiming the wisdom of the past to map a liveable future for the kingdom after reading, listening, and rewriting the Great Book. The hard copy of the Great Book and the "Lost Papers" are still binding grand narratives, but for Onyesonwu and Luyu, grand narratives have no place in the era of digitalized micro-narratives. In my reading, even though print threatens Ubuntu in *WFD* because the print copy is only in a few hands with distorted oral transmissions, electronic literacy revamps it by connecting multitudes in cyberspace, a theme I will examine in the next chapter. I believe the different versions in the digital database are evidence of the postmodern feature of micro-narratives and open-endedness, because "[i]n the postmodern period, print culture is often deemed to be on the verge of extinction insofar as it is associated with individualist, elitist, and hierarchical ideologies, whereas the new technologies are said to be more amenable to the claims of diverse social constituencies" (Dubey, *Signs* 84). This binary conflict is pivotal in *WFD,* because ASF prioritizes issues of "digital technologies of text production and transmission threaten[ing] to dissolve the solid materiality of the printed book" (Dubey, *Signs* 186); in a world lived largely on the screen, this rift between electronic and print reading cultures induces fluid identities, a change that will be examined in more depth in chapter two.

WFD, therefore, presents techno-savvy characters who, through their beliefs and actions, are facilitators of cyber literature, and represent the great shift in writing and reading AL induced by ASF. These characters, like Onyesonwu and Luyu, use technology and know-how to try and ameliorate the life of not only Okekes but of Nurus as well, and utilize capture stations to harvest atmospheric water and gel-coated clothes to accommodate the arid Sudanese weather; these are set in opposition to Ani's society which lets technology rot and crumble in faraway caves and curses Okekes for being mad scientists. In the prequel to *WFD*, *The Book of Phoenix*, Okorafor challenges this attitude that technology is to be forsaken. As a Naijamerican writing from a liminal perspective, Okorafor uses her access to technology to craft her text and to create contemporary characters whose lives are inseparable from the screen, because she believes in Nesbitt-Ahmed's claim that Africa is the fastest-growing region of the world with electronic technologies (380). For James Yékú, contemporary AL grows in cyberspace, and the website *Brittle Paper – Explore African Literature* has created a virtual literary space where democratic and decentered reading is encouraged, giving both the reader and the writer roles with "digital tools to [read, write], rewrite and revise the margins of textual authority" (Yeku 273).

This is a great shift in reading African texts, because according to Turkle, "[I]t is on the Internet that our confrontations with technology as it collides with our sense of human identity are fresh, even raw. In the real-time communities of cyberspace, we are dwellers on the threshold between the real and virtual, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along" (10).The double nature of cyberspace finds ground in Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen's postulation that the net is a space of anarchy, "the world's largest ungoverned space," full of "tremendous good and potentially dreadful evil" (3).

ASF texts, according to Meg Samuelson, are undergoing a phenomenal shift in writing and reading textualities, "becoming-global . . . multi-directional and . . . exert[ing] a shaping

force rather than being trapped in the performance of subversive mimicry" ("Textualities" 4) and, as I have argued in this chapter, ASF through its reading paradigms is shaping and changing the African literary scene by dealing with issues of mythical and historical past, mixed-race characters, African cosmology and cosmogony, print versus electronic media, minority issues, and others. I believe that the conventional colonial and postcolonial tensional narratives of colonialism, slavery and Apartheid nested in African writinghood and reading have become subverted in a world that has become a global village, mainly thanks to technology. While reading modes are the basis for Okorafor's vision of ASF, slippery identities induced by biotechnology, nanotechnology, and digital technology in relation to Ubuntu are the focus of Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix (TBP)* and Beukes' *Moxyland (ML)*.

Chapter II

African Science Fiction: Human Identity and Technology in *The Book of Phoenix* and *Moxyland*

> Sunuteel had been fascinated and quietly proud of just how *far* human beings had gotten in their technological pursuit. Nevertheless, his school-teacher had discouraged him from further research. . . . This was what led us to receiving Ani's wrath. And so the young Sunuteel turned away from the past and looked mostly toward the future.
>
> (*The Book of Phoenix* 4)

A. Introduction

The subject of reading ASF as examined in the previous chapter overflows to technology and identity as an existential issue, the plurality of postmodern identities caused by DNA alteration and the network society with humans experiencing multiple forms of identities. Michael Hardey's the "embodied self, and disembodied, multiple cyberselves" (581) with virtual co-presence equate with Donna Haraway's "contradictory, partial, and strategic identities" ("Cyborg" 311) that have no unity. I shall read human identities as presented in *TBP* and *ML*, in relation to Ubuntu, thereby showing, in agreement with Hiedegger's view how technology , is "pervasive and fundamental . . . so much so that [humans] cannot opt for technology or opt out of it" (309). According to Turkle, identity "refers to the sameness between two qualities, in this case between a person and his or her persona" (12), but in digital times, "[a]dults learn about being multiple and fluid—and so do children" (256), leading to the conclusion that there is no quintessential unity of self. From another dimension, Jess Feist et al. present Erich Fromm's conception of the sense of identity as an existential human need, "the capacity to be aware of ourselves as a separate entity." This, in contemporary times, appears to be in disarray as we are "torn away from nature" by technological forces. Feist et al. draw a link with Ubuntu because

to them, most people do "not see themselves as individuals existing apart their group" (235) since their sense of identity resides in their rhizomatic connectivity to others.

Manuel Castells argues that "the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity," as in Ubuntu philosophy, is challenged today by "proactive movements, aiming at transforming human relationships at their most fundamental level" (Vol. II, 2), with the new feminist frontier "degendering society, canceling[*sic*] the dichotomy man/woman" (257) and leading to a paradigm shift in the identity of men and women's traditional gendered identities. In Sara Suleri's thesis, the "feminist discourse remains vexed by questions of identity formation" (246), which interplay in my selected texts. Even so, in *TBP* and *ML*, it would be disingenuous to dispute that Okorafor's and Beukes' characters are not in thrall and "under siege, with severely limited options for agency" (Byrne & Levey, "Identities" 72). Mmuo, Vera, Kendra, and Tendeka (with his death) are bereft of their human agency. Their cyberpunk resistance underlines Turkle's claim that humans "have to be something very different from mere calculating machines" (24), a belief extolled by Ubuntu, a philosophy "centered on the ideals of human worth, human-ness, community living, cooperation and compassion" (Okoro 2) towards others. I argue that both authors present technology as neutral, but its application in human life is intrusive, and this is contrary to Karl Jasper's understanding that "[t]echnology is the procedure by which scientific man masters nature for the purpose of moulding his existence, delivering himself from want, and giving his environment the form that appeals to him" (qtd. in Shukla 176).

The above argument and chapter's epigraph connect to the previous chapter where technological pursuit by mad Okeke scientists incurs Ani's wrath. However, *TBP* and *ML* resurrect the abandoned, dusty computers in the cave in mapping the near future. I believe that LifeGen technologies in *TBP* are the resurrection of the forsaken Okeke computers because Okorafor writes: "Ani had not pulled a star to the earth when the Okeke people . . . crossed the lines of

morality" (*TBP* 226), since "[s]cience has always been aligned with Ani" (*TPB* 116). Despite this alignment with Ani, Enno Park explains that in pursuing technology, "human beings have become more and more repairable" as "part of their bodies," are welded into "biological machine[s]" (303).. In my reading, Okorafor and Beukes find consensus in Shukla's claim that technology in "its most untarnished form, reflects a human propensity that seeks the betterment" (178) of human beings, a claim that makes technology synonymous with Ubuntu as it fosters the ideal human identity; technology, therefore, cannot be abandoned. Essentially, the uses put to technology have provided ample medical benefits but have also ensured a shift in human identity: Toby will survive the virus because of Kendra's transmitted nanobots. However, when Park defines the cyborg as "a human being with an electronic device . . . permanently attached to their body for the purpose of enhancing their individual senses or abilities beyond the occasional use of tools" (304), he puts the ideal human identity at stake. Sunuteel's future-oriented view in the above epigraph indicates Okorafor's concern "that the past, present, and future are intertwined and cannot be separated" (qtd. in James 173) from technology as mankind plans for a post-apocalyptic world illustrated by the Sankofa touchstone mentioned earlier. Therefore, Okorafor is concerned about post-apocalyptic Africa, as Sunuteel "looked mostly toward the future," a reminder of J.M. Wise's argument that "[t]echnology is a socially active hybrid that connects with others and bends space while being at the same time coded with abstract forces" (Shukla 176), a facet Kendra exemplifies in Beukes' post-apocalyptic story "Branded" as I will show in chapter three. Based on this premise, Okorafor and Beukes invite readers to reflect upon whether they should accept technology or not, and whether distorting one's bio-structure, as is the case with Kendra, is warranted. I see Fred Davis' "Technology Acceptance Model" (TAM) of "perceived ease of use," "perceived usefulness," and "attitude toward using" technology (Marangunić & Granić 85–87) as significant, for it is a

theory Kendra fails to apply alongside Ubuntu in her decision to accept nanotechnology, thus her tragic demise at the hand of the advertising company.

Essentially, Ubuntu is a Nguni word consisting of the "augment prefix *u*-, the abstract noun prefix *bu*-, and the noun stem–*ntu*, meaning person." It bespeaks the essence of being a human person who recollects his collective personhood in communocracy. Ubuntu is "a comprehensive ancient African worldview based on the core values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a spirit of family," that is, "respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective shared responsibility, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism" (Chuwa 12–13). Ubuntu is about the "weness [of a] shared identity" hinging on the belief that "a person is a person through other persons" (Metz 323, 338). Beukes' *ML* lays a strong claim to Ubuntu, referring to patterns and dimensions: "'Peace'. 'Love'. 'Ubuntu'. 'Revolution' . . . . The words UBUNTU appear above it . . . forming lightshow patterns" (*ML* 165, 269). Immediately after the claim, Beukes refers to the globe, and the heart, a human organ from which Ubuntu as a humanist philosophy of life and humanness resonates towards others in the globe. To Lauretta Ngcobo, Phoenix's humanist claim: "Let them see how human beings are supposed to treat one another" (*TBP* 207) to Vera her surrogate mother expresses the care for each other and the "special place of honour for motherhood" (533) as the bearer of humanity. In Ubuntu, "[t]he entire universe belongs to the realm of 'other' without which the 'self' can never be. Care for the 'other' is an ethical imperative for each human person" (Chuwa 3), and is integral to the individual and collective identity. To Abdul Bangura, "ubuntu defines the individual in terms of his/her relationship with others," that is, "[t]he word individual signifies a plurality of personalities corresponding to the multiplicity of relationships in which the individual in question stands" (37), a phenomenal issue that Phoenix embraces while in Wulugu Ghana:

> the people of Wulugu were flush with wealth. They built me a small two-story house and even equipped it with a solar panel, so I had enough electricity for dim lights. Some women helped me cultivate a garden. The people invited me to their meetings, marriages, parties, and burials. For the first time, I was part of a community. I relaxed, putting America behind me. What a weight that place put on my shoulders; a woman with wings should never be so burdened. (62)

Phoenix's declaration extolls African hospitality, whereas living in isolated labs to advance biotech and nanotech is an un-ubuntu endeavour, because "[i]dentity [a]s people's source of meaning and experience" (Castells 6 *Vol. II*) is gained in interconnectedness. Therefore, *TBP* and *ML* grapple with the reality of our age, the pursuit of new identities and immortality as "[e]ach of the characters is shown to be in process, incomplete, and en route to somewhere else" (Byrne & Levey, "Identities" 85) in the post-humanist world. William Haney II writes: Posthumanism is "a human-technology symbiosis. Many see the biology-machine interface as a positive development, but many also fear its potentially negative consequences," due to the "irreversibly damaging . . . effect it may have on human nature, particularly through invasive technologies" (2) as clearly shown in *ML* and *Slipping.*

To begin, Okorafor and Beukes delve into identity issues by engaging in DNA interrogation:

> Every speciMen, creature, creation in the building had a diagnostics chip implanted beneath his, her, or its fingernail, claw, talon, or horn. . . . How could those people cultivate these once normal children to lose the ability to speak? Why? So that they wouldn't complain when their organs were continuously harvested . . . . How many Americans walked around with fresh young organs harvested or grown from the cells of these children who could regenerate what was taken from them?" (*TBP* 16, 198)

The emphasis on the human body shows the gravity of the USA's New York 7 towers, especially Naperville, Illinois Tower 1, the nucleus of "abominations." For Okorafor to ensure Phoenix achieves her goal as an agent of Ubuntu and change, she writes about Phoenix: "you are change . . . Wherever you go, you bring revolution" (*TBP* 180). Okorafor creates Phoenix as a cyborg, a transgressive creature of resistance that "skips the step of original unity" (Haraway 308) of body to subvert LifeGen's activities on humanity. Phoenix understands she is "doing God's will," by freeing humans: "All creatures of the world want to be free" (*TBP* 101) since "Man is free only among equally free men" (Chuwa 36). That is, human freedom is achieved only in the total free consent of the expanded liberty of fellow brethren in communocracy, because "the slavery of even one human being violates humanity and negates the freedom of all" (Chuwa 36) as it will be shown in chapter three. *ML* opens with Kendra, an amateur photographer, taking an injection with no hospital involvement and, even though according to Tangwa, "there is nothing wrong with technology, as such. In itself, it is morally neutral, neither right nor wrong," the important part is "the uses to which any technology is put, [it] is a moral issue" (*Bioethics* 102). Therefore, I argue that the way Okorafor and Beukes engage Ubuntu in resisting DNA alteration that induces identity crisis is critical. Indeed, my analysis follows Hall's claim that presently, "what we really are; or rather – since history [and technology] ha[ve] intervened - what we have become," is both "a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past" ("Cultural" 394). This is the reason why a fictional post-apocalyptic Africa, as I will show in chapter three, will grapple with the legacy of biotechnology after the traumatic memory of genocide and Apartheid.

B. LifeGen Technologies, Biotechnology and DNA Resistance: Ubuntu and Gender Discourse

The African bioethicist Tangwa contended that "[h]uman scientific and technological knowledge has advanced to the point where scientists and technologists are able to play real

games with God/Nature, manipulating the building blocks of living things at will" (*Bioethics* 103), thereby distorting human identity. Humanity in its technological pursuit has become a creator instead of a co-creator. Hence, "Human beings make terrible gods" (*TBP* 162) in the name of technology, failing to recognize the "essential global unity of humankind" and the connection between the "human race and its environment, [and] the planet earth," as a "core belief of Ubuntu philosophy" (Chuwa 5). Phoenix's choice as Ani's soldier to clean up and remake the human race is similar to Ani's vexation with the Okekes as shown in chapter one of this thesis. To explore free-floating biological and digital identities, I will use Mmuo, Lucy, Phoenix, Vera, Bumi, and Saeed; and Kendra, Tendeka and Toby to argue that ASF has dramatically changed the African conception of human identities through DNA manipulation and virtual space activities initiated by corporations over netizens. Okorafor underlines the fact that the towers are mazes, labyrinths, and rhizomes where boundaries of animate things are "both contained and pushed" (*TBP* 9) through "advanced and aggressive genetic manipulation and cloning"; labs where kidnapped humans are altered, and deformed with implanted "diagnostics chip[s]" (*TBP* 16) by Big Eye agents.

C. Mmuo's Nanomite Communication System, Jujutech and Sexuality

Mmuo, as a mutated/manipulated "speciMen" in Tower 7, runs a nanomite communication system that is able to hack the Big Eye surveillance system and alter the DNA nanite-code in Phoenix. He is a victim of LifeGen's genetic manipulation with a peeled off skin that is injected with a "sentient molecular shifting compound and then grafted" (*TBP* 145) without anaesthesia. His urgency for change is clear: "I really did want to change Nigeria" (*TBP* 117), a desire he replicates with another change agent, Phoenix, by dismantling the towers with the aid of his nanomite communication system. As a believer in jujutech, Mmuo thinks that "the spirit world rules the physical world" (*TPB* 116) and he uses his abilities after being initiated into his father's "masquerade secret society," helping him to "make a man hurt, forget his

name, and stop chasing women; and [he] could speak to the goddess Ani, that's the goddess of the land" (*TBP* 116) as well as making shea butter that stops bullets. His ability to stop men from chasing women draws an intertextual reference to Beukes' *sangomas* who churn-out "love *muti*" (*ML* 39), for men and women, and his initiation makes him the embodiment of a mystical identity similar to that of the *edan* in Okorafor's *Binti* which will be examined in chapter three.

Moreover, Mmuo's identity reflects his belief in a gender discourse based on the Ubuntu norms of human sexuality. He exemplifies Bujo Bénézet's opinion that "sexuality is not a private matter. The goal of sexuality is to keep together the community entrusted to us by our ancestors and to bestow ever new life on this community," thus "[p]rostitution as such or sex for mere pleasure was seldom heard of in traditional African society" (qtd. in Chuwa 20). As women portrayed in *The Book of Phoenix* "behave worse than whores" (160), Mmuo offers a different view of sexuality by abstaining for seven years.

D. Lucy and Universal Motherhood (Mitochondrial Eve) and African Proto-ancestry

Lars Schmeink writes that "[t]he impact of genetics is everywhere" (5), such that "life-altering progress and radical inventions . . . allowing the identification and mapping of the complete set of DNA in the human body" (4) have culminated in biopunk SF. Lucy is a ten-year-old adopted Ethiopian girl undergoing genetic modification in Tower 1, the epitome of "abominations"—a term borrowed, according to Jude Aguwa, from Igbo cosmology (540–545)—and is presented as the Mitochondrial Eve and a "complete genetic blueprint of the entire human race" with a hyperthymestic memory that makes her remember "every moment of her entire life" (*TBP* 97, 98). By giving her the name Lucy, Okorafor invokes the origins of humankind and universal motherhood, as Lucy is the identity code name of the African proto-ancestress. Tracing the birthplace of humanity to the Hadar region in Ethiopia, Richard Leakey,

in his work on human origins, writes: "Lucy, who was a mature adult when she died, stood barely 3 feet tall and was extremely apelike in build, with long arms and short legs" (29–30),

To Ngcobo, Lucy is the symbol of African "motherhood as beautiful and joyous" (533) and, to Okorafor, also an emblem of the "complete Great Book of Humanity" (*TBP* 98) which LifeGen wants to modify, a fact Lucy blatantly refuses as she enacts a metaphorical liberation through suicide in order to continue her life-giving mandate as the mother of humanity, echoing Rebecca Gibson's postulation that, "[t]o bear children is in a way to seek immortality—to accept one's own inevitable death while attempting to ensure that one's own contribution to the world continues after we are gone" (62). Lucy's death, in Dracilla Cornell's view, is the ethical resistance "against a process of othering that drops human beings below the bar of what purportedly constitutes our humanity" (125) in an era of biotech. In my reading of identity, Okorafor in tracing Lucy's DNA to that of humanity's first mother, the biblical Eve, critiques post-humanistic eugenic attempts to go back to a prelapsarian Eden where things maintained their origins. Okorafor's use of the Great Book theory as shown in chapter one of this thesis is a way to take humanity back to the myth of origins. Lucy is a representative of Ubuntu, humanity towards others and thus she must avoid entrapment, and her enacted suicide is metaphorically that of the subaltern voice challenging phallogocentric restrictions, constructions and practices.

E. Lucy, Regeneration, and the Trade in Human Organs

In using Lucy's metaphor, Okorafor agrees with Beukes that "[t]he stories we tell ourselves about ourselves shape who we are—and who we can be" (Beukes 330, "*Power*") in the near-future, thus their recourse to myths of origins through Sankofa as a way of writing human history anew. At first, to convince her readers, Okorafor presents Lucy's story and identity as the human story, a story that the reader relates to, because each human is born of a woman. Lucy is also presented as a girl-child making her a representation of the Ethiopian and Sudanese children whose organs are harvested to lengthen the lives of Westerners, and thus Lucy is a

symbol of HeLa from India who "was purely natural . . . until they accelerated her" (*TBP* 191) and her blood brings life and immortality to the human race, a twisted parallel to Ubuntu which gives vigour to human life. In naming her HeLa, Okorafor invokes the role of history in SF: Henrietta Lacks was a black American lady whose "cancer cells were harvested and used to advance science beyond the imaginable after scientists learned that those cells were immortal" (*TBP* 186). HeLa's blood is bought by seven billionaire men: "The Big Eye came and got me because . . . I have life in my blood" (*TBP* 187). This is Okorafor's way of condemning the unethical commercialization of women's blood for men to skip senescence, an abominable act: "They will never die" and "the world would be theirs" (*TBP* 188), they "would live forever, infecting the world to its very soul" (*TBP* 199). The aim of HeLa's and Lucy's resistance is the creation of an egalitarian society that valorises Ubuntu. This aim is aligned with Phoenix's desire for a return to the beginning: "[l]et it all start from the beginning. In the right way" (*TBP* 199) without drinkers of HeLa's blood and buyers of female harvested organs—a post-apocalyptic society/world governed by the Ubuntu ethics of respect for the human species.

In essence, HeLa, the Indian, like Lucy, the Ethiopian, shows her resistance to nefarious men and LifeGen alteration by asking for death as liberation, "[y]ou have to kill me before they get more of my blood" (*TBP* 188). Her cry is that of Ubuntu adherents against human ventures that disregard Ten Have's claim that "[t]he future of the human species can only be guaranteed if humanity itself is regarded as a collectivity or a 'global community" (Chuwa 7) and not in the kidnapping of indigenous human species like HeLa, the last of the Jarawas, for scientific experiment. To Shital Pravinchandra, the trade is "fully institutionalized, smoothly operating under control of an entity embodying all the rapacious forces of global capitalism" (89) and, according to her, Okorafor depicts the way the first - world multinational corporations "cannibalize and exploit the third world populations who remain excluded from the endless

wealth promised by global capitalism" (Pravinchandra 87). In this context, Metz describes Ubuntu as "An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an act is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows without violating rights" (328, 330). Indeed, HeLa challenges LifeGen's credibility by proving her original Indian identity: "Phoenix, they didn't make me. I was born in India, I am Jarawa, the last of my kind" (*TBP* 187). Thus, Okorafor seeks a future where indigenous minorities have equity in protection and can practice their unique ways of life, like Mmuo's shea-butter and Binti's otjize and *edan* which are not only valorised, but also used to heal and protect humankind.

Therefore, Okorafor's protagonist in *TBP* seeks to create a better future technocracy by wiping the slate clean as Onyesonwu did after liberating the Okeke and Nuru women, "endowing them with abilities they never previously had" (Bryce 11), and prefiguring the role Binti will assume in liberating the Meduse and the Khoush from their senseless wars as she forces Ujamaa (family-hood) on them. Phoenix seeks a future society where the male has no corporate biopower which, to Nawal El-Saadawi, is "against the female who is conquered and subjugated and broken in advance" (523) against the norms described in Ubuntu.

F. Hybrid Identities and Cyborgs: Phoenix, Vera, Surrogate-African Motherhood, and Saeed

Phoenix is Okorafor's narrator, prodigy, and ABO, an "accelerated biological organism," a "speciMen," and an "abomination" (*nso-ani*/*nso-ala*) with "titanium alloy bones" (*TBP* 93). She says "I was their weapon. . . . for nuclear or biological warfare. . . . a failed project, a rogue prisoner" (*TBP* 41), mixed, "grown and finally birthed here on the 28th floor" (*TBP* 9). She is a portrait of the disparity in time and identity resulting from bioengineering: "I was two years old, and I was forty years old" (*TBP* 26), a fact that demonstrates LifeGen's functional, post-humanistic view described by Katherine Hayles as "embodiment in a biological substrate

. . . an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life" (2). That Phoenix is genetically engineered with a hyper IQ and reads a 500-page text in two minutes, heats up and glows like a firefly shows she is an actual creature of the scientific community that went beyond natural boundaries. Phoenix is a hyper-representation of what Beukes sees as the age's "plotted chemical warfare and sinister bio-experiments," and whose labs "grew out of control, [and] clogged up its incubation system" (*ML* 312, 314). Phoenix's developed wings give her the hybridized identity of a human-bird and a sign that Western science cannot predict with exactitude the result of human experiments, in contrast to the spiritual aspect of Ubuntu where "reality is unity in which God is both imminent and transcendent . . . [and where one] who pays heed to the dignity of the human person also pleases God, and the one who acts against the human person offends precisely this God" (Chuwa 13, 14). Phoenix's biotech identity recalls Lovelock's speculations in "Our Place in Their World" as he writes: "we shall be parents of the cyborgs and we are already in the process of giving birth" (par. 1). At the same time, Phoenix's identity fits Haraway's "fabricated hybrids of machine and organism," in which a new type of a post-human being in "a post-gender world" ("Cyborg" 307) is engineered. Thus Turkle's argument that in the face of teeming biotech, "we ourselves have become cyborgs, transgressive mixtures of biology, technology, and code," with "[t]he traditional distance between people and machines . . . harder to maintain (21).

Notably, Vera challenges LifeGen's scheme of falsified information in the towers, while also confirming the African adage that it is the mother who knows the true identity of her child. By tracing her parentage through affiliation and not filiation, Phoenix solves her parental identity problem, and Vera's confirmation that she was ready to die and deliver Phoenix through one of the best technological and health facility, brings forth the fact that "African motherhood is about children" (Ngcobo 533), and shows how motherhood is in disarray with

technology and capitalism which have "successfully transformed the mystery of human reproduction into a mechanical process of production controlled by corporate finance, free market forces and the calculative manipulations of the super-powerful nations of the world" (Tangwa, *Bioethics* 136). According to Priscilla M. Ndlovu, "motherhood means consciously accepting the responsibility of caring for one's biological children, the extended family, and community" (109), a tenet that materializes in Vera's care of Phoenix. Phoenix narrates Vera's sacrifice of motherhood with clarity and vividness: "this was the woman who pushed me into the world. Alone. This was the woman who was willing to die for me. This was my mother" (*TBP* 205).

Phoenix and Vera exhibit femininity/motherhood differently and, according to J. Feist et al., their expression recalls Carl Jung's Great Mother archetype, a "loving and terrible mother . . . capable of producing and sustaining life" (116) but also negatively affecting life. Both are pro-life but Vera, through her surrogacy, sustains life (Phoenix) and destroys herself in the process as she becomes insane, while Phoenix, at a deeper level, in trying to save life, realizes she is a harbinger of death: "All I could bring her was death . . . It was in my DNA" (*TBP* 214). However, Phoenix reverses her life-taking DNA, enacting a new identity as an elixir of life, and becomes an Ubuntu agent, the harbinger of justice for societal underdogs. Therefore, Okorafor creates Phoenix as an invincible indigenous futurist heroine establishing the "vital role of young women in coming worlds," representing "community, scientific exploration, [and] social consciousness" (James 152).

Saeed, the Egyptian from Cairo, moves from the rough life of a street urchin and orphan to a speciMen in the towers with "[h]is original teeth," replaced with "more durable stuff," such that eating a piece of bread kills him as opposed to "crushed glass" (*TBP* 11, 12), rubble and metal. This recalls Asimov's, *The Complete Robot* (603) with Andrew Martin, "a metal creature with a positronic brain" (Roberts, *History of SF* 14). Saeed is engineered in such a way

that he is "resistant to radiation" and can "never die of cancer" (*TBP* 146). However, he metaphorically disappears by eating Phoenix's apple, giving him the attributive identity of the Biblical Adam as Phoenix becomes Eve. When he speaks for himself, it is for the purpose of "claiming full personhood" (James 158), that is, reclaiming his lost humanity and self. To show his resistance to human engineering, he forms a trio with Mmuo and Phoenix to free everything that bears life from the towers, especially the regenerating kids. That Saeed survives after supposedly being the first character to be assumed dead in the novel gives hope for a better future where his efforts and those of Phoenix will confront LifeGen's deadly activities, thereby instituting a new identity and a new beginning for humanity. His re-emergence and intimacy with Phoenix, a forbidden act for speciMens, is the highest form of resistance to LifeGen's DNA alteration, and also hints at humanity's movement toward the acceptance and normalization of cyborgs in SF (Gibson R. 109).

G. Nanotechnology, DNA, and the Complexity of Identity

Nanotechnology, according to Karen Barad, has "the potential to reconfigure the materiality of our being all the way down to the very atoms of existence, and beyond, to a point where individuality is itself undone by the specific entanglements of becoming that transcend the distinctions between bios and technics, organic and inorganic, artificial and natural, mind and body" (362). To Elizabeth Grossman, nanomaterials are "synthetic materials engineered at the microscopic scale of one to 100 nanometers," exhibiting a lot of promises, but also "potential perils" as they "penetrate skin and cell membranes" (143), altering the human configuration. From this understanding, Beukes argues that "[t]he most interesting [SF] examines what it means to be human through the lens not only of what technology does to us, but also of what we do with it" (330 "The Power"). In *ML*, Kendra, a school dropout, seeks the everlasting wholeness of the body after the demise of her father from cancer, and is recruited as the "shiny brand ambassador. . . . Sponsor baby. Ghost girl" (3) through a sinister contract with "Inatec

Biologica" (*ML* 8). She is then jabbed with a nanotech compound that alters her genetic configuration and reduces her to a form of "proprietary technology" (*ML* 4). Beukes, as an Ubuntu writer, interrogates "the Inatec nanotechnology [that] cleaned her up like a catholic confession" (*ML* 273). In Ubuntu, advertisements based on competitive tendencies are not acceptable because in Ubuntu ethics, "to create wealth largely on a competitive basis, as opposed to a cooperative one" (Metz 325) ignores the communocracy's welfare.

Paul James and Freya Carkeek have argued that "our relationship to our body is being mediated and penetrated to its core by a myriad of technological incursions" (qtd. in Richard Feist et al. 183–184), and intrusive hyper-capitalism has invaded Ubuntu societies. To be relevant in the post-modern corporate world, Kendra has to be inoculated against injury and infections, and has to be recreated as a "postmodern [individual] capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world" with a specific identity, along with the "structure and objective features and requirements" (Jameson, *Logic* xv) of hyper-capitalism. Unfortunately, Kendra's return to the company to reverse the jab signs her death warrant: she is terminated by Dr. Precious; this act stands in total in disregard of Ubuntu that "provides us with an ethic of what it means to be an ethical human being . . . a form of belonging together that is not based on a social contract" (Cornell 13).

Byrne and Levey opine that Kendra exemplifies the commercialization and objectification of women's bodies by corporate entities, as these bodies become advertising and marketing tools. She wilfully "accepts nanotechnology injection that turns her into a corporate advertisement," and "retain[s] her youth and health, demonstrating her allegiance to the media ideal of the young, white, thin female" ("Identities" 78) celebrity, an image of media capitalism (Jameson, *Logic* xviii). However, Byrne and Levey see Kendra's demise as signalling "the dangers of over-commitment to technology and warns readers that embodied existence is not

technologically inviolate" ("Identities" 78–79); This connects with the discussion in my previous chapter around the Okekes' "mad scientists" over-commitment to technology and their creation of abominable creatures, that is, "terrible gods" (*TBP* 162) in the name of techno-science – a commitment that attracted Ani's curse. Kendra's resistance to biological alteration by seeking a return to the original body after "the virus attempts to contaminate her biological makeup" is a wish for a "return to a pre-technological body" (Byrne & Levey, "Identities" 78), a wish that is unfortunately not granted. Thus, Kendra realizes, maybe too late, that the socially accepted and conventional features of beauty come at a cost, inviting readers to critically think of the effect technology may have on their lives especially since Kendra is ultimately disposed of like a terminally sick animal.

In addition, this feminine exploitation of Kendra is comparable to the exploitation of Ghanaian Wulugu women at the hands of Big Eye agents in *TBP* who use grooming, fondling, rape and violence on women. Unlike Kendra who believes her sexuality and youth depend on signing a contract to alter her natural DNA, Sarah thinks her sexuality is meant to titillate Big Eye agents. The Big Eye man who grabs Sarah believes he has a right to women's bodies and claims that he has "paid her" (*TBP* 73), but in Ubuntu ethics, human beings are not objects of commodification; their dignity is not purchasable, it is inalienable. Under Ubuntu ethics, "to have sex with someone without [their] consent" (Metz 324) is un-ubuntu, a *nso-ani*, an abomination in Aguwa Igbo cosmology. However, Sarah's silent naïveté is unpardonable, for she later "did the unthinkable . . . . throw[ing] herself at his feet," but he kicks her and walks "off leaving her there" (*TBP* 71), an abject display of women in androcentric cultures.

In contrast, Kendra's understanding of female sexual identity hinges on Turkle's conception that a "rapidly expanding system of networks, collectively known as the Internet, linking millions of people," is "changing the way we think, the nature of our sexuality, the form of our communities, [and] our very identities" (9). Kendra sees Toby and Jonathan as equals with

inherent humanness like hers and not as men her sexuality should depend on. She is a stark contrast to Sarah who is probably socialized on phallocentric memes to believe she has no right over her sexuality/body unless the man gives her sexual value, which is why Robyn Wilkinson and Cheryl Stobie argue that gendered structures are challenged in *ML*, with Beukes using female characters appearing as a "transgressive blending" cyborg "of technology and biology . . . outside the conventional lens of the masculine gaze" (59). The Ghost soft drink corporation and LifeGen that recruit Kendra and Wulugu girls are symbols of "multinational capitalism" that is part of "the world systems" (Jameson, *Logic* xviii) in postmodern times just like Okeke technologies in Old Africa that abused technology, incurring Ani's wrath and then crumbling in order for a new beginning to start, this time with humane technologies.

H. Digital/Virtual Technologies

As a matter of fact, Wendy Moncur sees that the physical, biological, social and digital lives of humans are incrementally more complex and so are their offline and online identities which are becoming "synchronous and asynchronous" (108) in nature. Beukes' narrative delineates the human body from biopunk to cyberpunk in Cape Town's networked society through her four main mutating characters: Kendra, Lerato, Toby and Tendeka. Biopunk, according to Schmeink's contextual understanding, "is cyberpunk's 'successor,' dealing with 'biotechnology and hacking the gene pool,' once more drawing the connection to cybertechnology and hacker subculture," a claim that engenders an "overall sentiment of a looming threat of bioterrorism" (26) as in Kendra's and later in Pearl's story in "Slipping" as I will show in chapter three. To Jessie Daniels, this is the "subversive potential of human/machine cyborgs, identity tourism, and disembodiment within a global networked economy" (101) that has historically collapsed identity boundaries since Turkle's *Life on the Screen* (1997). Turkle's exploration of life on the screen gave "people the chance to express multiple and often unexplored aspects of the self, to play with their identity and to try out new ones," making "possible the

creation of an identity so fluid and multiple that . . . one can be many" (12). On this premise, I argue that human identities are porous and edgy in digital *ML*, showing the same self in multiple forms due to networked virtual reality.

I. The Networked Society and Digital Identities: Gamespace and Ubuntu

Underneath Beukes' use of online video games/gamespace in *ML* is the portrayal of the double nature of technology, with virtual games engendering manipulation, collusion, control, but also discovery amongst players. Indeed, *ML's* gamespace is a simultaneous virtual space of meeting significant others, sharing, improving lives, creating meaningful virtual communities of bonding, and playing video games for cash and amity. According to Chris Milk, the power of virtual reality is tremendous:

> It connects humans to other humans in a profound way that I've never seen before in any other form of media. And it can change people's perception of each other. And that is how I think virtual reality has the potential to actually change the world. . . . we become more compassionate, we become more empathetic, and we become more connected, and ultimately we become more human. (qtd. in Bystrom 88)

This delineates *ML*'s gamespace as a virtual reality that offers a digital equivalent to an *Ubuntu space* of connection, of realizing our humanness and a sense of "belonging together" (Cornella 13). Gamespace is also similar to the Metaverse that creates fantastic identities in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992), characters with virtual bodies and assets that may not exist in real life: "FallenCity™ is not real. FallenCity™ does not have any real-world affiliations" (*ML* 159). Jane is the digital avatar whose cyberspace activities connect characters to display other forms of the self. For instance, Byrne and Levey claim that Toby and Tendeka, like Lerato, "adopt virtual personae when playing games, indicating their capacity to segue into other forms of self-representation. Their real-life identities are also multivalent, porous, fractured and

edgy" ("Identities" 72). Beukes portrays the pervasive nature of cyberspace identities and activities thus: "There are twenty-three people crammed in with their laptops, all monitoring the datalines, killing the most damaging of commentary before it gets out, because anything is allowable when it comes to national security" (*ML* 253). Jane's Monomotapa-Avalon virtual reality, "[w]ith 59.3 million registered users . . . makes it easier to blend in unnoticed" (42–43) giving an Ubuntu space for humans to connect and share in order to find the we-ness of Ubuntu identity. Yet that space does not only foster a healthy oneness or we-ness and Beukes' seems to concur with Gibson's description of cyberspace as "[a] consensual hallucination experienced daily" (56) by netizens. Lerato's cynical activities depict the internet both as a "source for tremendous good and potentially dreadful evil," and "[a]s this space grows larger . . . every aspect of life will change, from the minutiae of our daily lives to more fundamental questions about identity" (Schmidt & Cohen 4). The reader realizes that it is in cyberspace that Tendeka is tricked by Jane (skyward*) to hold a protest against the system. Lerato's emails are hacked, expressing "[t]he potential for someone else to access, share or manipulate parts of our online identities" (Schmidt & Cohen 32–33).

Nonetheless, I believe that *ML's* gamespace and mobile network construct an Ubuntu virtual space that successfully connects people together in virtual cyberspace despite Mishack Gumbo's assessment that Ubuntu's indigenous values of "togetherness, brotherhood, equality, caring, sharing, sympathy, empathy . . . kinship, group solidarity, conformity, human dignity, humanistic orientation and collective unity" (67–68) are either waning or have become superficial, and not as valorised in the traditional physical Ubuntu society. This is because the Internet is "the world's largest ungoverned space" (Schmidt and Cohen 3), and Jane, Lerato, Tendeka, and Toby are "intertwined with . . . each other" such that the reader questions whether they are "living life on the screen or life in the screen?" (Turkle 12). Despite the chaos on the net in *ML* and *Zoo City* with 419 scams, Caitlin McClune argues that "[t]he Ubuntu operating

system brings the spirit of Ubuntu to the world of computers" with the uniting slogan "I am what I am because of who we all are" (171). This is an acknowledgement that human connectivity, according to Tegan Bristow, is real on the Internet because

> technology has helped to restore something of our culture, as since we have started living in silos, we have started becoming a bit more individualistic . . . You can be living in the same city with your relatives and see them once in a year . . . [In this situation] technology has started to restore Ubuntu, these days people are concerned about working together, every morning you are on Twitter and saying hello to the community . . . I mean it won't completely restore what has been lost in that sense of community and the whole African concern. It excludes certain segments like the older people and the poor, those are sometimes the most vulnerable, the ones that need the most care. So, I mean in getting us together to that degree it could do more. (287)

This is the duality of the networked society illustrated in *ML, Lagoon* and *Zoo City* where digital technology is transforming the individual and communitarian identities, bringing about a new understanding of collective life.

J. Digital Technology, Ubuntu and Male discourse: Tendeka, the Debordian spectacle, Humanitarianism, Pansexuality, and Anti-Education

Tendeka, a firebrand-utopian activist, calls for an Ubuntu society, as he believes activism and revolutionary tendencies can change a corporate apartheid system into enacting policies for "a more humane world" (Cornell 138). He exhibits the typical cyberpunk features of resistance and rebellion; he is an out-cast who fights capitalist corporations that destroy the poor, and is an example of the micro-voice in Lyotard's description of the postmodern society as he seeks micro-narratives for the helpless kids through graffiti and anti-establishment education. He is determined to expose the multinationals that are anti-human: "'I'm thirty-two. I'm

dying. It's the only way to show…I've been infected with the M7N1 virus as an act of government-corporate censorship. Repression. This is human rights violation taken to its worst. They are wilfully killing their citizens" (*ML* 293), and he wants Toby to videotape his dying moments and broadcast them to the world. His activism and belief in crowd psychology make him gullible to skyward leading to his tragic end and loss of humanity, "someone turn on a liquidizer inside him" (*ML* 305), stripping him of human dignity. Tendeka's humanist quest falls within the "political and an ethical struggle against hegemonic meanings and institutions that deny the being of anyone as fully human" (Cornell 125), and he runs an NGO that cares for the neglected and abandoned kids in society.

Tendeka probes *ML's* technology that undermines "our way of life," and damages humanity. The "flaw in the design code" (*ML* 270) is that it does not situate "technology design in the African philosophy of Ubuntu," a philosophy that emphasises the "principles of humanness and connectedness in human interactions" (Kapuire et al 212) as part of individual and collective identity. His spectacular death is the hallmark of the ongoing shocks of postmodern technology that destroys and obliterates human bodies through biopower, causing trauma in human memory, as I will show in more detail in chapter three. Tendeka's death creates a Debordian spectacle as the copy of the original in Tendeka is lost, and his dissolved life "is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles" (Debord 1, 2) before Toby who intends to upload the horrible demise on the net for willing payers. I argue that Tendeka's belief in "the power of social justice's concept of the beloved community, the power of transformative collective action by marginalized peoples to remake and re-envision the world" (James 168) makes him an Ubuntu adherent who dies in fidelity to his humanist cause. Beukes argues that "today's activists don't work in the kind of isolation he did. It's about community" (*ML* 311) and synergy, reminding the reader of teamwork and cooperative principles as part of the African *Holy Grail*. Beukes stresses the significance of that Ubuntu framework and writes that since the

novel made its first debut in the world, inventions such as the creation of "packs of robots that could search for and detect a non-cooperative human" (*ML* 313) have emerged, showing how transformative SF can be to human societies. To an extent, Tendeka forms a micro-ubuntu group with Lerato, Toby and Ashraf but fails to enlarge the group due to pervasive technology that violently cuts him off: *"*We're talking relegated to homeless, out of society, cut from the commerce loop, no phone" (*ML* 93). His fate and identity are those of individuals in networked societies where "everything, and everyone, which does not have value, according to what is valued in the networks, or ceases to have value, is switched off the networks, and ultimately discarded" (Castells, Vol. I, 134) at will.

As a result, Tendeka's situation finds a parallel in Mbembe's seminal argument that today's "technological devices that saturate our lives have become extensions of ourselves" (108 "*Necropolitics"*) with ongoing transmogrifications such that we become incomplete beings with fractured identities without them. Tendeka stands severed and cast out from his life-wire by "The Mobile Telephone Network" (MTN), a multinational-billion dollar corporation that uses phone technology to squash protests. The mobile network is a 24/7surveillance system that monitors the citizen's movements, trailing, tracking, recording and the uploading of their records; in many ways it is a Foucauldian panopticon. It is worth noting that South Africa's MTN mobile company appearing in *Zoo City* and *ML* is a real-life multinational company with the slogan "everywhere you go" and wields tremendous corporate power. The mobile power in *ML* coincides with Lyotard's description of the power that multinational wield. Lyotard posits that "the circulation of capital that go by the generic name of multinational corporations" (5) has led to a "general paradigm of progress in technology and science, to which growth and the expansion of socio-political power seem to be natural complements," as "scientific and technical knowledge is cumulative[ly]" (7) never interrogated, yet it affects the lives of communities and individuals like Tendeka and Ashraf disastrously. It is unfortunate that in the era

of a "cell phone boom as [humans] are logging on at an alarming rate" (McClune 161) for a sense of virtual belonging and identification, Tendeka is cut off as a punitive-biopolitical regulation that reprises his Cape Town anti-corporate activities against the Apartheid state. According to Moncur, though Tendeka dies, he still retains a digital identity, a post-self-identity that lingers "on in cyberspace indefinitely," because in the era of digital existence, we are unable " to terminate our digital life" (109). Traces of his former identity continue to linger in accounts activated and shared across social media sites (Moncur 110) like Google, Skype, Instagram, and Facebook.

Even so, Tendeka exhibits androgynous sexual tendencies with his Muslim gay partner Ashraf and with the pregnant Zimbabwean refugee, revealing a pansexual identity. I believe that Beukes, through Tendeka, presents a post-postmodern view of sexuality, one that is de-territorialised; and de-normalized, with sexual identities always in process in a post-gender world. Tendeka still believes African sexuality is an act of generating life, actualizing the fact that Africa has no history of "openly known homosexuality" (Chuwa 20). His marriage to the refugee woman attests to Bujo's hypothesis that "one is a human being only in the duality of man and woman, and this bipolarity generates the triad man-woman-child, which leads to full community" (Chuwa 21), a central tenet of Ubuntu ethics. In the Africanist view, heterogeneity is a richness, however, if a "couple could not procreate, the community improvise a way of helping childless couple participate in the life of the community by adoption of children of relatives" (21), a choice Tendeka is opting for so as to be in communion with the communocracy. This communal approach stands in contrast to the ethos of cyberpunk, which Wilkinson and Stobie believe "endorses heterosexual masculinity in its narratives, while repressing or marginalising the feminine and homosexual relations" (59). Beukes thus opens the debate around these postmodern issues, stretching the frontiers of gendered and sexual discourses through biopunk, and thereby opening new dimensions for cyberpunk and Ubuntu adherents.

K. Toby, Digitality and *Flânerie*

Toby is a young roguish blogger, drug addict, clown, and an amoral character, one of *ML*'s characters with the most slippery identities and an emblem of digitality, a digital *flâneur*. Louise Bethlehem writes that Toby "is a *flâneur* for the digital age, his interiority a mere reflex of the screen that he wears . . . [he] broadcasts images but also records them for his video blog" (524). His techno-savviness is displayed in the possession of a "new illicit phone that's immune to defusings *and* capable of reading illegal downloads . . . . free to loot and plunder without the digital rights malware blowing up" (*ML* 74, 75). To Ken Barris, "[t]he technologisation of Toby is therefore an exterior matter," but to me, it is also an internal matter, especially with the sexual affair with Kendra that transmits the nanotech to his bloodstream. Toby is a cyberpunk hero with a quest, using his computer skills to hack the systems of corrupt conglomerates governing the world, and his moral compass is thus ultimately aligned with Tendeka's. He is a representation of multifaceted online identities with "aspects of an individual's identity through the user's real name, and through pseudonymous and anonymous identities that are not necessarily tethered to the individual's physical identity" (Moncur 109).

At first, Toby emerges in the text with a dubious identity, hooking up with Tendeka to plot a criminal adventure, an insurrection (*ML* 11, 18), and *ML's* gamespace gives him a space of belonging to an Ubuntu-virtual community that accepts and allows him to create a new online identity. Toby's identity is reflected in his streamable and camera-infused coat that creates a Debordian spectacle of celebrity. Byrne and Levey write that Toby's identity is about excess, a "BabyStrange coat, which functions as a detachable persona," and a blog "androgynously and offensively entitled Diary of Cunt to create a celebrity identity as a front for expressing various obsessions in a stream of consciousness"; he is basically a "walking media device, an example of Haraway's 'cyborg identity,' where human consciousness is prosthetised but emptied of authenticity" ("Identities" 82). However, his biological identity is altered

through his sexual activity with Kendra and moves from being a digital *flâneur* to a nanotech individual, confirming Terry Colins's claim that nanotech particles "[a]t the molecular scale . . . can permeate our bodies relatively easily," causing "unbelievable number of interactions" (Grossman 149) in the genetic blueprint. Incidentally, another phase of Toby's polyvalent identity appears in his engagement with drugs which lead to his seclusion from society: "My parents cut me off. Again" (*ML* 60), which in my view is probably a rehabilitation process in line with the Alcoholic Anonymous Program, thereby making of the Internet a haven of healing where Toby, to some extent, reconciles his criminal, promiscuous and druggist identities and finds a "space for growth" (Turkle 263). Overall, unlike Kendra whose resistance to identity distortion ends in death, Toby successfully navigates towards his freedom, but his internally fractured identity could be representative of the distorted memory I will deal with in chapter three. To Bethlehem, it is Toby's sexual activity that offers him transmitted immunity, it is Kendra's "parting gift" from "her addictive Ghostly nanotechnological bequest" (531) that helps Toby chart a post-Apartheid era as I will show in chapter three.

In conclusion, this chapter addressed the human pursuit of technology as a polarity which Sunuteel was discouraged from in order to avoid Ani's wrath, but both Okorafor and Beukes have shown that scientific progress through technology can be unambiguously embraced when and wherever it serves the need of humanity. However, in my reading, both authors also believe that resistance to corporate destructive technology must be spectacular, hence their fronting of invincible protagonists like Phoenix and Tendeka who are out for cleansing society of inhumane technology. In my view, the protagonists' confident rebellion against DNA alteration is guided by the fact that in the face of pervasive technology, Ubuntu offers a humanistic approach on how we can relate to technology through African core values. Notably, both authors use characters like Phoenix, Saeed, Toby, Tendeka and Kendra to envision a post-apocalyptic Africa with corporate entities emulating and bringing into technology the spirit of

Ubuntu to others. As *TBP* and *ML* examined technology from an African perspective of Ubuntu in order to confront the past, present, and future human identities, Okorafor's *Binti (B)* and Beukes' short story collection *Slipping* examine human memory, trauma, and futurity from the perspective of African socialism, Ujamaa, with Okorafor's placement of an African socialist genius in space attending an intergalactic university, and Beukes' creation of an Ujamaa global world with no racial identities, re-echoing post-colonial memory drawn from the colonial *hel-locaust* and Apartheid, yet repressing these subversive memories for a viable post-apocalyptic memory, and the mapping of a post-crisis global memory via Ujamaa, multi-directionality and technology.

Chapter III

African Science Fiction, Memory and Futurity: Ujamaa and Africanfuturism in Okorafor's *Binti* and Beukes' *Slipping*

> They say, apartheid is over and done, leave it behind. But the past infests everything, like worms . . . The memory of what happened came in Polaroid flashes of the action.
>
> (Beukes *Slipping*)

> Memory is never lost. Only the art of forgetting.
>
> (Eshun 287)

A. Introduction

As indicated in chapters one and two, the debate on reading and on identity in ASF naturally flows onto the issue of memory. Okorafor and Beukes appear to suggest the human nexus with technology is not only undermining human identity but also human memory, hence the functioning of memory is distorted in our digital age as machines become extensions of human selves, curating information for future retrieval. The identity vacillation as examined in the previous chapter via technology equally affects human memory because of the symbiotic relationship between the human mind and memory. Thus, Nyerere argues, Ujamaa is essentially an African "socialist attitude of mind . . . which ensured people care for each other's welfare" (1) as the bedrock of communal memory since the human mind and memory are inseparable. Be it biological, digital, historical, cultural/traditional, voluntary, involuntary, individual, or communal memory, Sebastian Groes argues that we are in a period of "complexification of memory, which is increasingly becom[ing] collective, shared and thus relational but also a conditional process. Biological memory is increasingly just one part in the make-up of this distributed cognition, which is aided by non-biological forms of memory." He adds, however,

"[t]his does not mean that suddenly we become mindless zombies blissfully adrift in cyber-space; instead, it means that we use our minds differently" (80), for the human mind has to be retrained as the working memory is impaired and the movement from rote learning to retaining knowledge by multiple indexing finds its home in digital, or curated, memory. To Groes, "memory and the human mind are evolving rapidly" because the "storage of memories is taken over by machines," thereby "outsourcing the very nature of our existence" (25, 78). Groes further says that "[h]uman memory is increasingly competing with non-biological forms of memory, but new techniques such as multispectral imaging should be seen as the tools that aid consciousness and memory, and that recover what we thought was lost" (25), attesting to Eshun's concern in this chapter's epigraph that memory is never lost and only encounters the act of forgetting since recollection and retrieval are easy in the digital age. However, since the act of remembering is traumatic, horrendous events on the human body induce a kind of realism which "provides an aesthetic and cognitive solution to the conflicting demands inherent in representing and understanding genocide" (Rothberg, *Traumatic* 9) as in *Binti*. In this context, Byrne and Levey write: "The burgeoning interest in trauma studies in the past two decades has seen a commensurate increase in studies of human memory as a fragile repository of notions of self, community and the relationship between them. Memory has repeatedly been shown to be unreliable and vulnerable to disturbance" (*Memory* 60) as evident in *Slipping* and *Binti*. In my interpretation, both texts are searing narratives grappling with the traumas of Apartheid and genocide as their authors try to remap the future from referential memories of the Namibian and South African pogroms of colonial times.

To Timothy J. Stapleton, "European technological innovations such as rapid-firing and more accurate firearms, which granted military superiority" (ch. Par. 1), led to the Namibian genocide of October 2, 1904, when the German Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha, directly

acting under high instructions from Kaiser Wilhelm II to crush native rebellions without negotiations, "issued an extermination order" against the Herero and Nama people of Namibia, and proceeded to bomb them. by March 1907, 7,600 Herero and 2000 Nama died of torture in camps, which were also sites where German guards violated female inmates. In these camps, which housed 17,000 inmates; in Shark Island (Death Island), 1,000 and 3,000 Herero and Nama died of cold and starvation alone (ch. 1 par. 12). In total, Stapleton estimates that 60,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama, representing 80% and 60% of their entire population respectively, were wiped out (ch. 1, par. 9, 12).

In this chapter I will examine memory from the perspective of traumatic realism, a theory in trauma studies that critically engages in literary exegesis and focuses on the necessity of remapping the traumatic event to create a better tomorrow. Traumatic realism "revives the project of realism—but only because it knows it cannot revive the dead" (Rothberg, *Traumatic* 140), and addresses the post-traumatic context to pave the way for a better present and future. It is a theory that "combines aesthetics, historical cognition, and a transformative social project" aimed at establishing a new understanding of the colonial *hellocausts* (Rothberg, *Traumatic* 129) and in this case, of slavery and Apartheid that fundamentally distorted the African Ujamaa memory of family-hood in African communocracies. I will also show how Namibians and South Africans received a different orientation after the pogroms. To situate Apartheid, Michael Dingake, in a detailed memoir, evokes the memory of Apartheid as "the colour bar" (12) system, a racial concept that "sounded ominous and unspeakable" (39–40) for positioning Africans as "subhumans" (184) to the white minority in South Africa (SA hereafter). Beukes constantly plays with this colour syndrome in her *Slipping*, referring to the binaries white and black from Apartheid memory—"all those zeroes insistent above the grinning faces of white children" ("Adventures" par. 24). In "Smileys," the utterance of the Apartheid fighter shows that Apartheid and the struggle against it formed a traumatic experience:

> the roots of the past are still there, can still tangle round your feet, trip you up. They go deep. 'You know why they call me Soldier?' '[I] fought in the struggle" in the "APLA. The Azanian People's Liberation Army. But when I came back from the fighting, when we were free, I applied to the police for work. But they said I didn't have matric and what-what, so now what was I supposed to do". (par, 22)

Thus Beukes' words in "Ghost Girl" that "[t]here is a line of people in various states of trauma" (par. 57). These are remnants and actual symbols of what Dingake calls "the trauma of a spate of apartheid legislation" (185) in SA.

Contemporary Namibia and SA, as presented by Okorafor and Beukes, are nation-states that emerged from the traumatic memory of racism, dehumanization and genocide. Beukes in "Inner City" evokes the traumatic memories of Apartheid: "I had to evict this old black guy . . . . And I had to hit him with the baton . . . . And it made me feel swak ["bad"], like he must think of old times, like apartheid, this young white oke ["mate"] beating him" (par. 17). Mandela attests to the verity of Beukes' recollection of Apartheid, a harsh, vicious "cruel system" that virtually imprisoned and "robbed the African people of their dignity" (25, 75), making them live in racially segregated squalor, in townships like the Soweto ghetto. This makes Gregory Hampton concern over memory and body pertinent to the Apartheid experience since according to Hampton "locating the source of memory outside of the body begs the question of how the process and loss of memory affect the body," and this is vital "when considering a marginalized body or black body that has historically been subjected to great physical and memory loss" (262) – in our case, by colonial technology of trauma—the crux of *Binti* and *Slipping.*

Underneath *Binti* and *Slipping* is the Namibian genocide and Apartheid memory. Both texts usher in Michael Rothberg's "multidirectional memory," that is, the "convoluted, some-

times historically unjustified, back-and-forth movement of seemingly distant collective memories in and out of public consciousness" *(Multidirectional,* 17). The Himba cross-referencing of memory commences with Binti sneaking out of the Root, suddenly plunging into the trauma of the massacre (symbolic of the Namibian genocide) in the ship en route to the Oomza University planet. Using the words of Jenn Brandt, one could argue that Oomza Uni for Binti "becomes a site for the exploration of what one considers a utopia" for the Himba tribe that has lived in isolation "from the modern world in order to live by the adapted traditions" (88) for three hundred years. Binti carries her pure Himba identity and memory with a body and dreadlocks covered in otjize—a mixture of "sweet smelling red clay" (*B* 9). Using *Binti*, I will analyse how Okorafor presents the eponymous Binti, constructs the Ujamaa African socialist memory of family-hood that is void of trauma and wars. Likewise, I will use Beukes' *Slipping* to show how Beukes engages Post-Apartheid memory to transform Apartheid into a future multidirectional and global Ujamaa memory that reflects and mirrors the past in both its negative and positive incarnations.

B. Ujamaa as African Precolonial Idyllic Memory

Groes believes that memory "is a physical process that takes place, often spontaneously, in the bodies and minds of people as isolated biological units living in societies and cultures" (6), a view that firmly anchors together the human psyche, body, time and history in exploring memory in the Namibian and South African context. A key aspect in this chapter is Ujamaa, what then is the role of Ujamaa that Beukes and Okorafor seek to implement after the pogroms? One answer is Nyerere's Africanist-socialist and political philosophy from Kiswahili: "*Binadamu woteni ndugu zangu, na Afrika ni moja,*" *translated as:* "I believe in Human Brotherhood and the Unity of Africa . . . . family-hood [Ujamaa] . . . describes our socialism," and the human recognition that "the family to which we all belong must be extended yet further—

beyond the tribe, the community, the nation, or even the continent—to embrace the whole society of mankind" (Nyerere 12). This existential philosophy is what prompts Binti's departure for another planet to form an extended family. Jasmine Moore writes that Binti participates "in an intergalactic vision of socialism" in which "no race, class, or ethnicity" (56) is beyond reach, as humanity maps the post-apocalyptic future where African socialism encompasses multi-species as seen on the university planet. Binti, Okwu, Professor Haras, Okpala and the Meduse chief are ready to engage others in what Haraway calls "a knot of species coshaping one another" as they are tangled in "situated companion species" (*Species* 42) in space.

Binti is a personal narrative in family-hood that ends with Binti placing a family call through her interstellar phone-astrolabe, an action Moore argues is a way of "honoring family as a sacred African tradition that prioritizes . . . the function of community" (76), the family as an institution and social unit of community and nation-building as expressed in Ujamaa. I contend that this Sankofa moment symbolizes the family to family wisdom as a holistic and fructifying venture for the global future memory: "I had left my family. I thought I could return to them when I'd done what I needed to do" (*B*, 65). Unfortunately, the reader is not privy to the communication between Binti and her family, but the second and third book of the *Binti* trilogy informs us of her homecoming to reunite with them, undertake the Himba pilgrimage, and discover her extended desert lineage. The name Binti is etymologically from Arabic "binte or Binti" meaning "daughter" or "daughter of" or "my daughter." To Mahvesh Murad, Okorafor's Binti is "more than just the daughter and representatives [sic] of her gifted parents and of the Himba" (par. 4); she is the daughter of a particular nuclear unit, the Bitolus family. By leaving, she is making an unpalatable decision against her family, and admits that if her prospects of marriage into another Himba family "had been 100 percent," "now they would be zero" (*B* 13), adding: "No matter what choice I made, I was never going to have a normal life, really" (*B* 13)

within the Himba larger family-hood. She is aware that this singular decision to leave for Oomza Univeristy would may ruin the life she was meant to live.

According to Bettina Burger, Okorafor's *Binti* is Africanfuturism *par excellence* because of its overt futuristic world connection and rootedness in "African cultures, histories, and spiritualities"- a specific African minority race "playing a significant role in the future of humanity" (365) and creating a global family memory rooted in an African conception of future family-hood. Therefore, *Binti* and *Slipping* are texts in which ASF, memory, Africanfuturism, trauma and the angst to create a universal family-hood are tested, subjected to distortion, and augmented via diplomacy as species meet to co-shape one another. Binti is clear about her desire for a universal family: "The people on the ship weren't Himba, but I soon understood that they were still my people. . . . And by the second week in space, they were good friends" (22), indeed, they became an extended family.

Beukes' *Slipping* evokes the post-Apartheid word "simunye" in "Branded" meaning "We are one," signalling the idea of joining all South Africans into a rainbow family nation and suggesting the Ujamaa angst for a post-Apartheid Africa united under the slogan: "Treat us like human beings" ("Inner City" par. 32), an issue I shall return to later in this chapter in the context of traumatic and post-crisis memories. Binti is indeed the initiator of Ujamaa memory in the text, as she begins her story by asserting her unique identity and memory, and by frequently asserting her direct affiliation to the Himba family-hood through the constant use of "We Himba," "my people," "my tribe" (*B*, 11, 12, 21), phrases that exhibit her Ujamaa belief. According to M. Mawere and Tapuwa R. Mubaya, the African sees himself as "communitary in thinking and . . . living. He is not a member of a 'commune,' some artificial unit of human beings; he is a member of a genuine community or a brotherhood" (155). The barriers of distance and space cannot cut the umbilical cord between communal ancestral heritage and the individual. In my view, constantly referring to "We Himba" and to her father's tutoring in

the family tradition gives Binti a strong identity which stands against the porous identities examined in chapter two. Her declaration: "I am Binti Ekeopara Zuzu Dambu Kaipka of Namib" (*B* 31) shows the importance she attaches to herself and her people. Jess Feist et al. postulate that the identity and memory "of most people still [reside] in their attachment to others" (235) as well as interconnection to other fellow humans of various social groupings. The word family appears twenty-three times in *Binti*, indicating how Okorafor valorises family and seeks to construct a macro-family that encapsulates humanity into a rainbow world with a diversified technical and global memory. Thus, to Emily Davis, Binti grafts other species into "her original and expanded chosen family . . . expand[ing] her understanding of family as she allows herself to be stung, a process Okorafor has described as her becoming 'not other but more" (45, 52) as she becomes part of the Meduse alien family by virtue of her ambassadorial position. Being stung is a reflection of Haraway's writing on *When Species Meet* (2008), since by allowing herself to be stung she becomes biologically altered by the okuoko natural technology and she acquires the double DNA of Meduse-Himba, a counter to DNA manipulations in *TBP* as examined in chapter two. Binti says, "I felt the stinger plunge into my spine . . . . My last thought was to my family, and I hoped it reached them" (*B* 66). The natural alteration prompts the memory of her family at the Root, thinking of how they will react with her new "biological entanglement" of being "permanently changed" (Burger 372). Though not synonymous to LifeGen and Inatec alterations examined in chapter two, Vajra Chandrasekera argues that "[t]hese are functional organs allowing for communication without the use of the edan, so they're not just replacements for her hair but integrated in alien ways with her brain and nervous system," and they effect "tremendous changes made to her body without her consent or knowledge" (par. 15). However, Binti uses this opportunity to deploy her harmonizing abilities in "broker[ing] a peace agreement between the dominant Khoush from her planet and the Meduse species, whom the Khoush have written off as mindless terrorists" (Davis 45–46), thereby

solidifying family-hood by helping the Meduse " live in society as a free [alien] able to lead a decent life in conditions of peace with his neighbours" (Nyerere 92) through Binti's role as "a respected negotiator and family member" (Davis 52) within the new cross-cultural grand family.

In accepting the sting and her DNA alteration, Binti seems to embrace Haraway's tentacular thinking in connecting with other species since Himba "people can no longer figure themselves as individuals and societies of individuals in human only histories?" but as species engaged "in generative joy . . . and collective thinking" (*Staying* 30–31) within the multispecies family seeking multidirectionality and global memory. Binti, as a representation of the Himbas, acquires "a kind of thinking that allows for a concept of the human as part of a larger network of beings and entities . . . forg[ing] multiple connections with various non-human creatures but start[ing] her process of becoming part of a 'multispecies muddle" (Burger 368) of the Ujamaa-family network that shares and cares. In Okwu's interchange with Binti, Okwu confirms the family-hood narrative: "It means we are family. . . .You are the first to join our family in this way in a long time" (*B* 90). Amal El-Mohtar further writes that the central message of Binti is to believe in "love between family members who want different things of each other and the world; communication . . . between warring parties; change enabling friendship and discovery" (par. 5), a message that resonates with Binti's Ujamaa philosophy that dissolves the divide between Meduse and humans, between Meduse and Khoush via dialogue, mediation and negotiation; a reminder of what would have been a genuine reunion between the Okekes and the Nurus as explored in chapter one of this thesis.

C. Himba Indigenous Theocentrism and Religious Memory in *Binti*

Incredibly, Binti's first sentence expresses her Himba religious memory, "[I] said a silent prayer," in the hope the transporter will work, while equally alluding to the "prayer stone" (*B* 9), a sign of how even the techno-savvy Himbas cannot forsake their faith in their technology

Creator. While at Oomza Binti says: "I shut my eyes and prayed to the Seven. . . . I prayed to my living parents and ancestors" (*B* 86), attesting to Ujamaa's theological understanding that an individual is a cog in a community whose memory revolves around the Absolute. However, the reader realizes that Binti's presence at Oomza starts a subtle distortion of the Himba religious memory: "I hadn't done this since arriving on the planet" (*B* 86), "When I left my home, I died. I had not prayed to the Seven before I left. . . . I had not gone on my pilgrimage like a proper woman" (*B*, 65). "This" refers to prayer which grants communion and dialogue with the Absolute through the seven divinities that make-up its nature in the African religious worldview. This is a stark contrast from her religious memory on the ship en route to Oomza Uni. In praying to ancestors as intermediaries in the African belief system, Binti recalls the fact that the world belonged to generations of ancestors before and after us. Astride Berg defines ancestor reverence as "archetypal representations of the collective unconscious" (194) memory, a memory that believes "[a]ncestors are revered, God is worshipped" (Berg 196) for the protection of body and mind. In praying through the ancestors, Binti brings to mind Corneliu C. Simuț's argument, in the context of indigenous African religions, about the necessity of ancestors who are venerated in communal customary rituals through incantations (49) because they are thought to bestow blessings and protection on the living from their ancestral abode. Binti articulates the Himba's religious memory even through her father's supplications: "Then he'd say a little prayer to the Seven to keep war away and then another prayer to seal his words" (*B* 16). This closeness to the Seven, is informed by Ujamaa's socialist belief that "the human equality before God which is the basis of all the great religions of the world is also the basis of the political philosophy of socialism" (Nyerere 79).

The Himba's understanding of, and relation to, their land is theologically informed by the Ujamaa tenet that land is sacred and is "one of God's gifts to man" (Nyerere 2), and Binti says "we live in the region where there is sacred red clay" and she spreads it on her skin

"[b]ecause my people are sons and daughters of the soil" (*B* 47), a reference to the Biblical story of Creation (Gen 2:7). Binti, like every Himba, knows that her "ancestral land is life; move away from it and you diminish. We even cover our bodies with it. *Otjize* is red land" (*B* 13). To display the authenticity of her religious memory, Binti makes the *edan* a sacramental object, confirming Denis Williams' claim that the *edan* is a Yoruba ancient hieratic icon representing "a manifestation of eternal principle" (139). By referring to the sacred, Binti in effect invokes the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane as expounded by Mircea Eliade, for her conception of the *edan* confirms Eliade's view that the "sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a wholly different order from 'natural' realities" (10).

D. Indigenous Technologies in *Binti* and Modern Technologies in *Slipping*

Burnett argues that, though "Binti is one of the very few Himba who have ever left Earth," she and her compatriots "are no technophobes. Instead, they are master craftsmen of devices called astrolabes" ("Realist" 128) and *edans* which are part and parcel of their technological memory. Okorafor, therefore, employs indigenous futurism as a theoretical approach that incorporates "[n]ative/indigenous" (James 151) elements to dovetail indigenous memory.

Underneath the Himba memory is the technological and scientific prowess of artisans "obsessed with innovation and technology" (*B* 21) and the mythological *edan,* unlike the astrolabe, is a technology with magical and sacred features that challenges the Western notion of modern technologies. The *edan*, a stellated cubed indigenous Yoruba metal that predates Himba civilization, is a mystically coded technology that vibrates and emits current as a spaceport security device; it is an "inert computer apparatus" (*B* 19) and an emblem of luck in Himba memory. According to Williams, the Yoruba *edan* is "humanistic in its identification with life" and, as an Ogboni art, it is "sacred and worshipped as the actual vessel of the spirit" (139). Asante and Mazama add that the *edan* is made of brass, possessing an "incorruptible quality, a metaphor for the immortality of the Ogboni society" (480), and hence Binti's deification is

plausible as it guarantees her immortality amidst imminent death. It is also a weapon as it can poison the Meduse warriors attacking the ship, and is defined by Vajra Chandrasekera as "both a translator and a weapon" (pars. 7, 8). From another perspective, the *edan* in acting as a translator recalls Itiel Dror's concern that "technology has in many cases taken over what humans have done in the past" such as translation functions, telling us in real-time humanity will be left "with only minimal human involvement" (Groes 81) in certain life contexts.

In contrast, the reader of Beukes' *Slipping* realizes that technology distorts biological memory through biotech and, according to Kola Tubosun, in "Slipping*"* "advertising companies have figured a way to promote their products by branding it on luminous flesh of the human billboard. . . . for 'small' cost of permanent flesh disfiguration" (par. 5), confirming Haraway's concern that humans "are bodies in technologies" and that "technologies are organs, full partners . . . [with] infoldings of the flesh" (*Species* 249). This shows that biological memory which "is anything but a database," is rich in its contingency as myriad of "facts, experiences, emotions contained in our minds" (68) and bodies, human cognition and genetic blueprint are altered. Thus, the person who accepts and uses the New Technologies becomes a "cyborg who integrates digital memory and biological memory with technological implants" (Groes 222) as shown in "Slipping" and in "The Green." Hence, the reader realizes that indigenous technologies in *Binti* are a counter to *Slipping, TBP* and *ML* with their DNA manipulation. In the short story "Slipping," Beukes writes, "[t]hey have back-up meat in the lab, they can grow a tendon. But it's not a good long-term strategy" ("Fearful Tautologies" par. 4), and adds this description which is bound to raise traumatic memory in the reader: "Tomislav twists off the valves on either side, unplugs her stomach and eases it out of her. . . . she is already spooling up the accordion twist of artificial intestine" ("Packed with" par. 12, sec. 2), showing how biotech is distorting biological memory. In "Exhibitionist," Beukes writes, "the only angst child ever to embrace the distorted body image" (par. 29), a distortion of "biological memory

which has been shown to be essential in planning and anticipating the future" (Groes xi), a display of the tussle between digital, analogue and biological memories as the child's self-portrait and biological image diverge endlessly due to biotech. Ro's story parallels the narrative found in "My Insect Skin," with Beukes invoking Franz Kafka's insect metaphor and presenting an existentialist issue in the mechanical capitalistic world of *The Metamorphosis*, with Gregor's gigantic insect rendering his memory unproductive to the company.. In my opinion, this is how postmodern conglomerates exploit humanity to a level where it loses agency and, more importantly, memory. Joanna J. Bryson argues: "Memory is the stored form of everything we have ever learned," and experience "is stored in our genes to be passed on to our children" (Groes 205), but now that genes and DNA are constantly engineered as in "The Green," they posit a dystopian future: "The first thing they do when you land is strip you, shave you, put you through the ultraviolet sterilizer, and then surgically remove your finger- and toenails. It's a biologically sensitive operation" (par. 17). This is in stark contrast to *Binti* where "the magnificent piece of living technology" (*B* 19) of the shuttle, transporter and the breathing Third ship, *edan*, astrolabe, and otjize technologies are meant to save lives. Binti notes that "my otjize had really been what saved me" (*B* 76), "the strength of my people" (*B* 42) and this is what nanotech and biotech fail to do for Kendra, Pearl and Ro in *Slipping*. I assume this is Okorafor's conviction that indigenous technologies contribute to pro-life initiatives and mitigate biopower technologies in the present and near-future global world. In Burnett's analysis, the *edan* is "an ancient technological device" that accords with Binti's survival, for "the other humans on the ship, from the (fictional) Khoush culture, have no interest in *edans*, and thus they die" ("Realist" 132). This is a call for the valorisation of ancient technologies for the salvation of the postmodern human, as I showed in chapter two. To Biko, our cultural and social memory is constructed on "a true man-centred society" that must "reduce the triumph of technology over

man" (96), since the divergent application of technology in both texts gives evidence to justify Nyerere's claim that "modern technology . . . is not always and everywhere appropriate" (83).

Moreover, according to Groes, the GPS device that appears in *Slipping* in "Riding" (par. 9) as a location tracker "is nothing new. Its precursor is the astrolabe, a technology used to find our way in the world since classical antiquity. The etymological origin of astrolabe is 'star-taker', and it uses the firmament to predict local time and the locations of the planets and stars, cast horoscopes, and determine latitude" (81). That Binti uses the astrolabe in her inter-galactic voyage confirms the significance attached to it by Okorafor who, by injecting African Himba technical science of the geometry of braiding, also explores Binti's relationship with her community's collective memory. Indeed, Himba memory deals with algorithmic codes of family hair braiding that act as technical, historical and cultural codes; Binti has "exactly twenty-one" codes braided into her "family code pattern" telling "the history of [her] people" (*B* 23, 87). The Himba code system is what Mandamokgethi Setati and Bangura call mathematical tiling/tessellation (16, 111) that makes braiding a technology due to its weaving of procedural patterns as in Binti's dreadlocks. Heru can read Binti's bloodline and family code from her braiding pattern, and this hair coding style confirms Emma Dabiri's argument in "*Ancient Futures*": "Africa is home to mathematical bodies of knowledge so vital they provide the bedrock of modern [science]" (par. 4). Indeed, in the African Himba memory of hairstyling, "maths is unconsciously applied in each step of the process" arriving at "uniform braids" (pars. 34–35). Okorafor's inclusion of these indigenous elements "demonstrates the meagreness of colonial control and the durability of the spiritualities of the colonized," their understanding and "celebration of science and mathematics" as "indistinguishable, in the literal sense, from art and transcendence" (Langer 152).

E. Genocide and Apartheid: Traumatic Memories in *Binti* and *Slipping*

Historically, colonization engendered genocide and Apartheid, which left considerable amounts of trauma on the black body, and these traumas appear in *Binti* and *Slipping*. I argue that both texts replay the Namibian genocide and South African Apartheid memories as events that showed the lack of family-hood and equality amongst humans. Hence, to Eshun, it is essential "to assemble countermemories that contest the colonial archive, thereby situating the collective trauma of slavery as the founding moment of modernity" with the "[o]ngoing disputes over reparation . . . that these traumas continue to shape" (288). Moore, in her literary criticism of *Binti*, argues that the Meduse retaliation results from the suffering of a "two-fold history: the mutilation of indigenous bodies in the name of progress and the troubled history of internal conflict between modern African societies leftover from colonial stratification" (70–71), an argument that fits SA under Apartheid. Binti represents the witness/survivor of a traumatic memory that of the German slaughter of thousands of Namibians during colonial times. Binti's sudden experience of trauma through the Meduse attests to the fact that the "trauma of colonization takes many forms. . . . imposition of an external culture and worldview along with the demand that the colonized hew to it in every way—physically, mentally and spiritually—does produce productive resistance, but also a cultural wound" (Langer 110). Textual evidence in *Binti* confirms how Binti develops physical, psychological and cultural wounds: "Heru's chest burst open, spattering me with his warm blood" (24), "I jumped up and the rush of blood made me nearly collapse and crash to the floor" (40), then "I gasped, bracing myself for pain and then death" (45) from the external attack by the Meduse. This was the situation of South African and Namibian natives who had to resist and "work for the good of [their] own communities, to build and develop and practice [their] own spiritualities and own cultures" (Langer 110), as their fundamental rights were abolished by colonial authorities.

In using first-person narration, Okorafor, unlike Beukes, engages the fragmentation, trauma and dissonance in postcolonial ASF memory, allowing *Binti* to examine ways in which

boundaries were "transgressed and hybridity activated—on every level, and in every aspect, of society—and how the trauma of . . . the *city*, of the *body* and of the *mind*" (Langer 110) were experienced—a show of how memory was distorted. The trauma of the city flashes in "Inner City" as Beukes directly references Apartheid South African cityscapes, indicting its leaders: "[T]he blacks. Always the blacks. As if apartheid's (white) secret police . . . didn't meet at the Quirinale Hotel on Kotze street of Hillbrow to orchestrate atrocities, assassinations . . . . As if a hundred years before that, Cecil John Rhodes and the (white) mining magnate Rand Lord's didn't scheme . . . to bring the colonial empire . . . and the corpses of countless dead" (par. 8). "Inner City" is a non-fictional story that tells the truth of SA's Apartheid under Rhodes, the British prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896 and a staunch believer in Apartheid (Mandela 139). Dingake writes: "Any black anywhere in the world who cherishes human dignity must feel insulted and indignant against the policy of apartheid" (239), a racial concept that even "progressive whites in SA and everywhere in the world must feel ashamed and morally disfigured by an ideology which seeks to identify them with the discredited barbarism of the 1930s-Nazism" (239). Like the Namibian pogrom, Mandela equally acknowledges the South African case: "News of the Sharpeville massacre spread across the world. Suddenly, the horror of apartheid was there for all to see. [SA] was never to be the same again" (46–47). On March 21, 1960, the police opened fire on unarmed civilians, killing 69 and injuring 400, in an attempt to coerce them to accept unfair and unjust Apartheid laws. However, Beukes' short story "Branded" aims at overturning Apartheid demarcations of black/white, thereby creating the rainbow nation through the *simunye* (par. 22) slogan, a slogan that emphasizes the oneness, brotherhood and family-hood of the rainbow nation after Apartheid.

Ellie Hamrick and Haley Duschinski observe that "the site of Orumbo rua Katjombondi, one of the German concentration camps where thousands of indigenous Herero and Nama people were held, tortured, and killed as prisoners of war during the German colonial period" (1–

2), symbolized in *Binti* by the chambers in Third ship, is today a monumental site in Namibia's Windhoek capital. Indeed, Okorafor rewrites the traumatic memory of Namibia in the novella's Meduse-Khoush's wars, the "mooj-ha kibira," the "great wave of death" (*B* 61), a replica of the ethnic cleansing and scorched earth German policy in Namibia, 114 years ago. Chandrasekera writes in this context: "In our world, between 1904 and 1907 imperial Germany wages a war of extermination in Namibia. Under Lothar von Trotha, the Germans kill tens of thousands, including people of the Herero and Nama ethnic groups, and the Himba too" (par. 7). In 2007 Germany acknowledged and apologized for the genocide, to which the Herero chief Kuaima Rirauko responded: "I am not here to refuse your apology and admission of guilt," but "[t]here must now be dialogue to finish the unfinished business" (Hasian 131). Haras' Apology in *Binti* (*B* 78) replays a true historical reality, and Rirauko's response shows the need for transitional and restorative justice.

The experience of Apartheid and genocide "opens the doors of memory to intersecting pasts and undefined futures" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional, 35)*; in this context, I believe that the Namibian and South African traumatic memories happened due to colonial disregard for the family-hood ethics found in Ujamaa and enshrined in African socialism, whereby no true African socialist should regard "one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. He does not form an alliance with the 'brethren' for the extermination of the 'non-brethren'. He rather regards all men as his brethren—as members of his ever extending family" (Nyerere 11–12). Colonialists failed in this regard, thus post-crisis, post-trauma, and post-apocalyptic writings recognize Ujamaa as a humanizing philosophy; indeed, the presence of Binti in Oomza aims at transforming it from an institution that creates weapons "for taking every form of life" (*B* 57), to initiating diplomatic missions that culminate in inter-human rapports instead of wars. Importantly, Binti leaves a universal message for humanity: "*Think think think.* No weapons, except the *edan*" (*B* 37), the ancient life-saving Yoruba technology. Okorafor,

and Beukes in her novels, evoke traumatic realism not as an attempt to call for retribution for the pogroms in Africa, but as "an attempt to produce the traumatic event as an object of knowledge" for humanity and to "transform its readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to posttraumatic culture," indicating that "the stakes of traumatic realism are both epistemological and pedagogical" (Rothberg, *Traumatic* 103). Consequently, to El-Mohtar, *Binti* is an intergalactic "shape-shifting story of adventure, trauma, transformation and communication . . . . We see Binti dealing with the aftermath of her trauma" (pars. 1, 3) as a reflection of what happened to the real Himbas: "Okorafor is not portraying a generic 'African' culture but a very specific cultural tradition—that of the current-day Himba people of Namibia, transposed into the far future," and a reality "that is typical for contemporary Himba women" (Burger 365) in Namibia. Binti is unambiguously clear that it was a genocide: "Everyone in the dining hall was dead. . . . I was the only Himba on the ship, out of nearly five hundred passengers" (*B* 21, 25). Beukes is not writing pure imaginary fiction: South Africans have had their traumatic encounters just like Binti. Martijn Meeter asserts that "[w]itnessing horrible things may leave a person scarred for life . . . as psychological trauma . . . worms its way into our psyche" (343). Beukes' invocation of Apartheid memory in "Smileys" is a malevolent trace that infests the future like worms..

Heloise Weber and Martin Weber argue that Germans, like the Meduse, relied on the normative inversion theory that gave them supreme moral authority to civilize the Namibians and South Africans, justifying colonial atrocities as vital for "those subjected to colonial violence and genocide—as barbarians, and perpetrators of such violence as harbingers of civilization" (93). This brings to mind the colonial rhetoric of "savage" black Africans as "perpetual pupil[s]" (Biko 24) cast as permanently immature and "incapable of intelligent self-governance and who must be brought to heel through force for the safety of colonizers" (Burnett, "Realist" 124). Okorafor, by creating a humanist lead character like Binti condemns these wired notions.

Indeed, the Himba contact with the German/British/Dutch colonial rules distorted the idyllic communitarian-cultural and collective memory of its inhabitants, hence Nyerere's belief that colonial memory was "totally foreign to our own way of thinking" as from the old days, Africans "never aspired to . . . the purpose of dominating any of his fellows" (6). Binti as a humanist protagonist cannot stay oblivious, and immediately assumes the function of ushering in an apocalypse as Onyesonwu and Phoenix did. In Mbembe's analogy, Binti's witness of alien cruelty to humanity "presupposes the existence of a survivor . . . whose task it is to recount what he has seen" (*Necropolitics* 64). Binti is spared whereas men like Heru are torn-apart, showing how Okorafor constructs the memory of tomorrow's leadership in society via invincible women like Binti,. Beukes, like Okorafor, shows her contempt for theories that trivialize human injustice and says: "Let justice be done or the heavens fall" ("Judging Unity" par. 25).

Both authors express readiness for restorative justice, for the restitution of stolen artefacts, and for a forward movement toward ending future "moojh-ha ki- bira[s]" (*B* 26, 61). Okorafor's and Beukes' approach is an invitation for humans to cultivate coevality as a principle of existential harmony; a principle that confirms Dabiri's concern in "The beginning and the end" that if Ujamaa and "*uBuntu* were practised, ethnic discrimination, patriarchy and the marginalization of people on the basis of class, sexuality or race would be rendered meaningless" (par. 3), and Apartheid and genocide would never re-occur. In referencing traumatic memories, both authors recall the profound concept of Sankofa that remind "African descendants of their moral obligation to remember and recognize the sacrifices of the past, the countless number of souls and ancestors who worked and suffered tremendously" like Mandela, Biko and Dingake against Apartheid and Mama Penee's parents who were brutally murdered (Weber & Weber 94–95) under colonial Namibia "so that we could live the lives we want and deserve to live" (Asante and Mazama 587) today and in the future. They also remind us that our "past

is not all shameful and that the future may profitably be built on aspects of the past" by picking up the gems "from behind and carr[ying] forward on the march" (Temple 127) to a better future.

F. Post-Crisis, Post-Apocalyptic Africa, and Global Memory in *Slipping*

Rebecca Gibson argues that "[a]s important as it is to know our past, so too must we look to the future" (109); if we are oblivious of our past, our vision of the future is blurred, hence the urgency of Sankofa and Africanfuturism in ASF. Both Okorafor and Beukes seek to recreate a better universe after genocide and Apartheid since traumatic realism is "primarily interested not in the question of reference and knowledge of the event, but rather in the question of the proper ethical stance to take in relation to the past" (Robthberg, *Traumatic* 24). Rothberg's claim agrees with the fact that Sankofa is "a process and principle of recovering history functions as a reminder that the past is not merely a referential source of origins and artifacts, but a source of paradigms," with "exemplary models of thought, reason, morality, and practice. The past, then, offers us a model of excellence, whereas history provides us with many lessons that inform our current self-conception and social identity" (Asante and Mazama 587) as part of our future memory. Okorafor and Beukes aim at restoring the humanity of South African and Namibian peoples while laying bare the ongoing existence of the leftovers of colonialism. The subtext of *Binti* and *Slipping* "speaks specifically to the injustices perpetrated by colonialism in all its forms, melding science fiction with other forms of cultural production—indigenous literatures," giving a "specific response to specific historical, and potential future" (Langer 151–152) as they map African futurity. Beukes forces us to reflect on the possibility of the future, reconstituted life after the binaries white/black, human/nonhuman, human/cyborg, human/machine and human/alien are seen as issues of the postmodern world. *Slipping* combines fiction and non-fiction in exploring a futuristic world that is utopian-dystopian as in "Riding," an unsettling projection of the human cyber-future. In "Branded," Kendra becomes a "type of human-cyborg advertising," a tool of "multinational capitalism" whose "humanity

is, in this scenario, subsumed to the goal of advertisement" (Burnett, "Realist" 131) due to her new acquired bio-structure.

In envisioning a post-Apartheid and post-genocide global memory, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Orumbo rua Katjombondi and Windhoek become memorial sites covertly harnessed by both Okorafor and Beukes in their attempt to "defamiliarize commonsense readings of Africa" (Mbembe, "Writing" 352) from Western default reading modes to Africanfuturist ones as outlined in my first chapter. By their interpellation of Sankofa and Ujamaa in mapping a future global memory, Beukes believes that "in our own past there is very much which is useful for our future" since Sankofa taps the past wisdom for the future as Ujamaa is a self-reliant philosophy "for the near as well as the distant future" (Nyerere 91, 92). When Beukes writes, in "Inner City": "but I worry about the humanity of people in this place . . . . Treat us like human beings" (pars. 31, 32), I interpret this as her eagerness to create a post-apocalyptic "rainbow nation" continent that valorises humanity and erases Apartheid memory for an Ujamaa-Ubuntu driven universe. The rainbow analogy she alludes to and seeks to create through *Slipping* is historically acknowledged by Mandela in his *Long Walk to Freedom*: "Now the gardens were filled with all the colours of the rainbow nation" (151), a display of an inclusive SA founded on Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa policies disregarded by colonial Dutch and British authorities.

Beukes, as a writer and journalist, uses her stories to simulate the reality of both past and future, cautioning humanity not to jettison the indigenous epistemologies and technologies such as the *edan* as they are necessary for the post-crisis and post-apocalyptic world of cyberpunk, biopunk and steampunk. For example, "Branded," as one of the speculative cyberpunk stories, takes place in a nameless utopian setting, showing the eminent need for global memory. In the story, Beukes' characters are not allotted racial identities of white/black that were typical of Apartheid SA. Burnett poses a question: "does Beukes' decision to leave the story's South

African setting unstated imply she does not care about race, nationality, or the project of developing African futurity?" ("Realist" 129). In my view, Beukes treats the story as a writer who believes in the family "Unity of Africa'" (Nyerere 12) and, in crafting a global memory from the traumatic past. She selectively represses the setting and subversive Apartheid memory and presents, in "Branded," a more palatable and comfortable narrative but also an allegorical story narrative set in a futuristic setting representing the future universe. The use of "We were at Stones, playing pool, drinking, goofing around" (par. 1) is a veritable sign that the writer is creating an inclusive "We" of all humans for the future, a reflection of *I am because we are, and because we are*, *I am*, African philosophy of existence and life. The reality suggested by the short story is that, in the post-apocalyptic world, distinct human identities, nations and races are useless, for "every individual man and woman, whatever colour, shape, race, creed, religion, or sex, [is] an equal member of society, with equal rights in the society and equal duties to it" (Nyerere 78). This conceptual framework in Beukes and Okorafor transforms the Apartheid and genocide memories into a multidirectional global memory that advocates for a better human future built on equality and diplomacy.

G. Interplanetary Voyage and the Future Global Memory: African Diplomacy in *Binti*

Indeed, Binti, after being accepted at Oomza University and establishing a somehow peaceful *entente* between the Meduse and other races, heralds a new form of diplomacy based on the belief that inhumanity to a fellow human, like genocide and Apartheid, as "matter[s] of international concern must be fought by all men and women in the world who believe in human dignity and world peace" (Dingake 239), because both affect humanity as a whole. Hence, Okorafor and Binti's universal call for humanity to imagine and reflect on the possibility of a world of "No weapons" (*B*, 37), a call to emulate Himba people who exist in an Ujamaa *entente cordiale*, "uninterested in weapons and war[s]" (*B,* 30), and always "pray[ing] to the Seven to keep war away" (*B*, 16) from humanity so that peace can diplomatically and universally reign.

Moore even argues that "fraught with injustices, the novella proposes that centers of knowledge should lead the charge in progressively making things right" amongst nations, hence the conclusion of Okorafor's *Binti* "is satisfyingly open. After resolving the war between the Meduse and Koush, Binti and her newly made Meduse friend Okwu, who has become a student at the university as an agreement to open diplomatic relations between the formerly warring nations, settle easily" (75) into student life and friendship. Okorafor and her heroine's belief in a new diplomacy of hope conforms to that of Mandela who envisaged "a new generation of South Africans, for whom apartheid [like genocide] would be a distant memory" with "[a] better life for all" (111, 147). Binti's new construction of a future world seemingly previews a mega-organ that surpasses the real-world United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, governing through the ethics of Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa that incarnate common humanity and would not allow pogroms such as the South African and Namibian ones to happen. A diplomatic planetary organ that truly believes in Tutu's rendition of Ubuntu as the framework in which our "humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up," and which affirms: "We belong in a bundle of life" and a "person is a person through other persons" (31) because they are human, belonging, participating and sharing in the universal web of common humanity. Okorafor in her exploration of diplomacy places the fate of humanity in the hands of a marginalized Himba girl who brings to fruition the diplomatic goals of humanity in an amicable way as opposed to the militarized "diplomacy found in the ever-popular *Star Trek"* (Moore 73*)*. In my perspective, together with the parody of think-tank, armchair professors, Binti's diplomatic model posits a revolution of planetary relations through tentacular, a diplomatic feat that feels distant from our current reality as it presents a utopian universe that comes through the weaving of webs of understanding in all directions.

This is a model Binti borrows from traditional African diplomacy that thrives on the ethics and principles of Ubuntu and Ujamaa, the constant search for and finding of amicable

consensus amongst people. I also suggest that acknowledging and taking responsibility for past injustices, as Haras does in *Binti*, is a moral obligation for 21st-century diplomacy. Equally, in fronting Binti as a successful diplomat, Okorafor suggests that the interest of minoritized people/nations, especially those of the global south, are an integral part of international and interplanetary diplomacy. Okorafor's advocacy for women's role in diplomacy is clear as the feminine touch appears effective in attaining global memory where we are "all remixes of every influence we've ever come across?" with "[n]othing belongs to anyone anymore" ("Confirm/Ignore" par. 7).

Using the principle of reciprocity, that is, beckoning to all states and species to cooperate mutually with equivalent rights and duties, Binti becomes a key figure in the family of global and interplanetary diplomacy. Therefore, Binti's strategic diplomacy and philosophy provide hindsight to multidirectional memory that is not "being situated—either physically or discursively—in any single institution or site" but "is irreducibly transversal" cutting across interplanetary contexts, space, multispecies, "periods, and cultural traditions," and above all is "open to continual reconstruction" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional,* 5, 18*)*. In the digital age, where "much of memory is taken over by technology and programs outside the human body," with "outside forces . . . shaping our memories" (Groes 356–357), Beukes equally projects through *Slipping* a continuous process of global mutation on both the personal and the corporate levels.

This final chapter has shown that texts and their exegesis are rooted in memory and branch out from idyllic, to traumatic, to multidirectional, and finally to global consciousness. Both Okorafor and Beukes embark on a "sociological transformation of understanding and compassion required to humanize the Other" (Moore 73, 74) in the universe, and both authors, in drawing inspiration from trauma, indicate that traumatic realism/memory "is not turned only toward the past" but also that this kind of writing "possesses a future orientation" (Rothberg,

Traumatic, 140) for a better world. This final chapter explored Apartheid and genocide memories with the emphasis on how both authors agree on the principles of family-hood, coevality, restorative justice and future peace as vital ingredients for bonding in an era where each citizen should be a harbinger of harmony and a contemplator of alternative utopian futures, inviting the reader to a more complete version of the post-apocalyptic universe. Okorafor and Beukes' conception is that every human being of whatever colour, shape, race, creed, gender and religion should exist within a mega-socialist family that applies technology and African ontologies to support peace-building initiatives in the present, near and distant worlds.

Conclusion

This thesis' exploration of the landscape of African Science Fiction from the lens of technology and Africanfuturism indicates that, far from being against technology, Okorafor and Beukes are bent on interrogating the momentous changes that have marked the new digital landscape, and on allowing readers to make informed decisions regarding technology's nexus with humanity and (African) futurity. Their probing of technology hinges on the fact that African epistemologies may drive our post-apocalyptic planet and that "[f]or all the possibilities that . . . technologies represent, their use for good or ill depends solely on people. Forget all the talk about machines taking over. What happens in the future is up to us" (Schmidt and Cohen 11). Thus, portraying the potential each protagonist in Okorafor's and Beukes' novels, namely, Onyesonwu, Mmuo, Phoenix, Pearl and Binti, can bring to bear on the present and the future is paramount to understanding this responsibility. Based on this premise, Beukes and Okorafor incorporate African indigenous technologies of futurism, thereby changing the writing and reading modes in AL, altering and distorting the reading of ASF in AL through identity and memory, while envisioning a systematic post-apocalyptic Africa shrouded in hope as it is driven by the ethics of Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa.

In developing novel modes/genres of writing and reading, both Okorafor and Beukes are reversing the colonial days of visionary white male heroes in mainstream SF, and by using indigenous futurist elements of SF, both reclaim pristine African indigenous cultures and *knowledges* that were stunted by colonization, thereby "peeping ahead from a backward glance" (Adeoti 2), and presenting the contemporary reader with the African humanist theories of Sankofa, Ubuntu and Ujamaa as vehicles for creating a harmonious, better world of tomorrow.

In chapter one, I used *Who Fears Death* to argue that there are frames from which the writing and reading-discourse of ASF and AL should commence, a fact demonstrated in the

novel by Onyesonwu's rereading of the fraught narrative enshrined in the Great Book that necessitates its rewriting from Hegelian historical teleology to postmodern practices of micro-narrative production. Such changes offer a novel reading reflected in the coming together of the Okekes and the Nurus into an Ubuntu-Ujamaa driven society.

In chapter two, I showed through the main protagonists in *The Book of Phoenix* and in *Moxyland* that the New Tecnhologies have brought us to a new questioning of what identity in the digital age means. Kendra, Toby, Lucy, Vera, and Saeed exemplify a profound reflection on aggressive DNA manipulations that result in split identities; hence Phoenix and Tendeka's decisive stances regarding apocalypse-as-solution and wiping the slate clean for a future human fraternity, for each character comes, after all, from a different African nation and together they form a united Africa where technology becomes neutral and humane.

My chapter three culminates with the question of how African idyllic memory encounters traumatic memory caused by genocide and Apartheid and tries to re-establish the African pre-colonial value of family-hood (Ujamaa) in the post-crisis future global memory. Hinged on Sankofa, characters in *Who Fears Death*, *The Book of Phoenix*, *Moxyland, Binti,* and *Slipping* apply indigenous science and knowledge, but also modern technologies in mapping the future. This is because of ASF's belief that endings in indigenous futurist novels are also beginnings since human life is cyclical and connected to past, present, and future. In using African ontologies, Okorafor and Beukes assure humanity that tomorrow's life will be different because technocracy and communocracy are about rhizomatic relationships in a social network peopled by young, pro-life characters like Onyesonwu, Phoenix, Zinzi and Binti.

Above all, I have consistently tried to show that Sankofa, Ubuntu, and Ujamaa are Africanist trump-cards exuding African humanism in the face of a technological world that is fixated, through its textual productions, with issues of reading, identity and memory. Okorafor and Beukes are writers who believe in indigenous epistemologies as tools to map humanity's

tomorrow through a blending of modern technoscience, magic, jujutech, and African values. In doing so, Okorafor and Beukes agree that Africa may yet be the hub from which answers to the pressing questions will arise. Their writings posit a technologically advanced Africa reclaiming the memory of African indigenous technologies as a gateway to a near-future universe where Kendra, Phoenix, and Pearl would not compromise their humanity and integrity for beauty standards and soulless technologies.

I believe this thesis has added to the previous studies in ASF as it proposes novel strategies for reading African literary texts, understanding the nexus between technology, human identity and memory and at the same time showing that humanity cannot forsake science and technology, but should measure their efficacy through the lens of African epistemologies. In this thesis I intentionallychose acclaimed female authors whose craft in ASF distinguishes Africanfuturism from Afrofuturism, and I repeatedly made the point that ASF is not alien to Africa and that ASF can be a powerful force in the global literary community as it blurs and injects the canon of global SF with a unique African-flavoured agency.

Finally, I hope that this thesis will open horizons of dialogue on AL, SF and ASF that can pave the way for addressing other trajectories in African studies and firmly anchor Africa and ASF as part of the world's literary canon.

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