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AFRICANFUTURISM AS DECOLONIAL DREAMWORK AND DEVELOPMENTAL REBELLION

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The Afronauts and Alternative Developmental Trajectories

In 1964, Edward Mukuka Nkoloso trained astronauts for the Zambian space program. Nkoloso described his organization in newly independent Zambia as the National Academy of Science, Space Research and Astronomical Research, providing his own title as the Director of Science, Space Research, and Philosophy. Calling his trainees Afronauts, Nkoloso revealed that Zambia planned to beat the United States and the Soviet Union in the race to the moon. The Afronauts trained rigorously, rolling down hills in oil drums and swinging around trees to simulate the experience of low gravity. Many Western journalists regarded Nkoloso and his Afronauts with derision and disbelief, and even today, clips from the Zambian space program can be found on YouTube under categorizations such as "Well that Sucks" ("The Time When Zambia") and "Not Exactly Normal". In one such interview, the camera cuts from the teenage Afronauts doing calisthenics to Nkoloso calling out commands, before landing on the white British journalist standing with a sardonic lean, who concludes, "To most Zambians, these people are just a bunch of crackpots. And from what I've seen today, I'm inclined to agree" ("Zambia's Forgotten Space Program"). Such ridicule says more about how Western systems understand Africans than it does about the Africans themselves.

As Zambian writer Namwali Serpell elucidates, dismissing Nkoloso as simply ridiculous required overlooking many aspects of his Space Program ("The Zambian 'Afronaut'"). Over his military fatigues, Nkoloso donned dramatic capes of silk and velour. The Afronauts sometimes wore green silk jackets and yellow pants—not for space, they explained, but for their band, "Dynamite Rock Music Group". And Matha Mwamba, the Afronaut scheduled for flight to Mars, was to take with her two (out of 12) trained cats—and a Christian missionary. For, as Nkoloso wrote in an op-ed, "We have been studying the planet through telescopes at our headquarters and are now certain Mars is populated by primitive natives". But, he reassures the reader, "I have warned the missionary that he must not force Christianity on the people in Mars if they do not want it" (Nkoloso).

As Nkoloso's obvious parody of colonization makes clear, the Afronauts were not a paltry imitation of the Western space race, but rather a mocking satire of it (Serpell, "The Zambian 'Afronaut'"). Here, I am particularly interested in how the Afronauts' mimicry undermines the assumption that the Western journey in relation to space and time exemplifies the only path of

development, one based on exploration and conquest. Nkoloso and the Afronauts *were* continually misread as desiring—and failing—to imitate the West. In part, I believe this misunderstanding stems from the inability for white Westerners to imagine futures designed by anyone but themselves. That is, interpretations of the Afronauts have fallen into the Western-centric trap of assuming development can take only one course, has only one possible future—that set by the West.

On the contrary, the Afronauts demonstrate that Africans have long imagined development in ways that do not fit Western normative trajectories. For one, their entry into the space race brings into sharp relief the contradictory logics required to justify the large financial burden to place, as Gil Scott-Heron put it, "Whitey on the Moon" for the supposed global and universal goal of upholding "freedom" (Kennedy). Nkoloso continually returned to monetary inequity, requesting millions and billions of dollars from Israel, the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Arab Republic, and UNESCO, as Serpell relates ("The Zambian 'Afronaut'"). None of these correspondences were met with approval, let alone any indication that the pointed jab leveled at funding the further expansion of white, Western conquest was recognized or understood. The Afronauts created space for alternative epistemologies of development beyond coloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom* 9), but only for those able to dream the possibility.

In this sense, the Afronauts demonstrate two key concepts that I argue throughout this chapter are found within Africanfuturist imagination and creation: decolonial dreamwork and developmental rebellion. I define decolonial dreamwork as the labor of imagining beyond the limits the West has erected around possibility, a labor that unlocks liberatory futures by refusing to capitulate to the suppression of African dreams, instead leaning into the transformative potential of desire. Developmental rebellion then emerges from this imaginative labor as an alternative form of development that resists, rather than acquiesces to, Western modernity and coloniality.[1] Together, decolonial dreamwork and developmental rebellion undermine the ways that coloniality acts to structure African futures and realms of possibility.

Coloniality exists as a global system of Western epistemological and ontological oppression that arose coincidentally with modernity and continues to ideologically undergird global political contexts. African scholars in particular are concerned with the epistemological function of coloniality, and how it obscures African knowledges and undermines subject formation.[2] Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains that to delink from coloniality is to divest from the Western logics that make African epistemologies unintelligible, centering instead on epistemic justice: the "liberation of reason itself" (*Epistemic* 3). Delinking from colonial epistemologies of development is required to liberate African-centered futurities, as the West has claimed a "monopoly of the future" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic* 243) that erases them (Eshun 292). Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains the need for an African response:

> Capturing the future for Africans and all other people who experienced colonialism and who are today living under global coloniality entails fighting to create another world and to set afoot a new humanism. It is a search for meaning after centuries of been pushed to meaninglessness. A lot of daring to invent the future is needed.
>
> *(*Epistemic *245)*

The Afronauts demonstrate the decolonial dreamwork required in daring to invent the future, and how it allows for a form of development that functions as rebellion against colonial structures.

For one, the Afronauts depict the labor of imagining futures beyond and against white Western imaginaries. By daring to dream beyond what was normatively considered possible,

that Zambia could have a space program, the Afronauts not only offered a trenchant critique of white Western capitalistic developmental logics, but also put forth a claim that space and the vast imaginaries that come with it are not only the terrain of white, Western, "developed" subjects. They declared that space was also for Africans. In addition, the Afronauts form part of an alternative trajectory of development, one that recognizes what Julius Nyerere (485) argues: that for Africans and other impoverished peoples of the world, "development of peoples means rebellion". It is a mistake, Nyerere says, to equate development with "new factories, increased output, or greater national income statistics" (485). Development as rebellion is not simply economic, but based on social and political organization premised in "equality and human dignity of all those involved" (Nyerere 488). This liberatory vision of development is antithetical to the Western developmental logics of individualism and linear progress from primitiveness to enlightenment through competition. It requires rethinking futures of development delinked from coloniality.

In this chapter, I examine how Africanfuturism performs this same decolonial dreamwork, daring to invent futures for Africans by Africans in ways that reconceptualize development as rebellion. Naijamerican author Nnedi Okorafor coined the term Africanfuturism to refer to creative work that "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 … Its default is non-western; its default/center is African" ("Africanfuturism Defined").[3] Those in power often narrate future possibilities in ways that constrain imagination and agency, attempting to defuse developmental rebellion before it occurs. In particular, white, Western, corporate technofuturists describe Africa as the "zone of the absolute dystopia", in order to make resistance to Western developmental logics seem futile (Eshun 292). Africanfuturism rebels against Western-centric futures that erase Africa—as well as the undermining of African agency in the present that enables such futures—by imagining beyond and against neoliberal conceptualizations of global development. Drawing from Africanfuturist fiction and film, this chapter examines how Africanfuturism offers an opportunity to delink from the ontologies and epistemologies of Western coloniality encapsulated within logics of development, and imagines radical futures by centering African agency and liberation.

Centering Africanfuturism in Africa

Although Afrofuturism has been an object of scholarly investigation for decades,[4] critics have now started to investigate how the generalizing use of "Afrofuturism" has often erased African work through its primarily diasporic concerns. As Somali-American author Sofia Samatar argues, "the lack of attention to the diverse streams of Afrofuturism threatens not only to obscure possibilities for rich discussions, but to imply a development narrative that assumes there were no African futurists before 2000" ("Toward" 176). Samatar believes that Africanfuturist work should be included within a redefined Afrofuturism, but other African authors disagree. For instance, Samatar cites Nigerian British writer Tade Thompson as claiming "Afrofuturism is specifically American … and 'geopolitically inappropriate' as a descriptor of speculative fiction from the African continent" (175). At CoNZealand, Nigerian author Oghenechovwe Ekpeki described Afrofuturism as "mostly pertain[ing] to the broader diaspora to the *exclusion of* stories from within the African continent itself", and Suyi Davies Okungbowa, also a Nigerian writer, agreed that African-centered stories diverged from Afrofuturist concerns (Bacon, emphasis in original). Many African authors agree that African science fiction requires its own moniker.

Yet, as Nigerian writer Chinelo Onwualu explicated in "FIYAHCON State of: Black SFF" at the inaugural FIYAHCON for BIPOC+ speculative fiction, there is no singular authentic

African speculative fiction, but rather works that demonstrate differential degrees of relatability to African life. There *is* no clear line demarking what counts as Africanfuturism and what does not. However, Onwualu recognizes that some uses of African contexts do not reflect African interests. For instance, even though Nnedi Okorafor's representation of Lagos in *Lagoon* (2014) as a frequent visitor to the city feels less intimate than that of resident Suyi Davies Okungbowa in *David Mogo, Godhunter* (2019), both of their works occupy a distinctive space in relation to African audiences than that of others such as Nigerian American novelist Tomi Adeyemi, whose novel *Children of Blood and Bone* (2018) takes city names from Nigeria and places them in a fantasy land where they hold no correspondence to the geography of Nigeria itself. Reading Adeyemi's work proves disorienting for those who live in the cities she has thrown into a mixed-up landscape, implying that the primary audience for this Nigerian-inspired work is not in fact Nigerians ("FIYAHCON"). Africanfuturism may have degrees of correspondence to African lived experience, but it must start from Africa rather than from the West.

Okorafor defined the term "Africanfuturism" on her blog in October 2019 out of frustration that African continental concerns and material realities were being obscured through labeling African work "Afrofuturist". Africanfuturism requires its own concept, as it has different stakes from the Western-centered Afrofuturism. South African author Mohale Mashigo argues that Afrofuturism often uses the African continent "as a costume or a stage to play out … ideas" rather than dealing with African materialities and situated cosmologies (xi). Afrofuturist work conjures a fantasy of Africa—sometimes literally, as in the case of Adeyemi—that enables diasporic imaginaries, but can stunt the ability of African authors to situate their stories in continental perspectives. Recently, the importance of Africanfuturism has even entered the popular sphere, as Africans simultaneously recognize the (diasporic) racial value of, and yet look askance at, popular Afrofuturist renderings of Africa in films such as *Black Panther* (2018) and Beyoncé's *Black Is King* (2020).[5]

By dis/connecting Africanfuturism and development, I hope to flesh out the material importance of futuristic renderings of the continent. How Africa is imagined to relate to development in the future *is* intimately connected to African lives in the present. As Thompson explains in an interview by Samatar, "it is … not the case that SFF is exclusively about the future. It is about the present, and it is about reclaiming narratives of the past" ("Interview"). Thompson particularly concerns himself with those "foreign actors who believe sci-fi should be a tool for driving development in African nations" (Samatar, "Interview"). Rather, as Mashigo exhorts, Africans need writing that "predicts … Africa's future 'post-colonialism'" (xi). Africanfuturism posits differential trajectories of futures against coloniality by imagining decolonial forms of development and demonstrating the dystopian effects if Western developmental trajectories continue to dominate imaginations.

Africanfuturism Against and Beyond Developmental Coloniality

I trace four ways that Africanfuturism activates decolonial developmental trajectories. First, Africanfuturism demonstrates how Western corporate capitalist developmental trajectories rely on a suppression of radical desire. Second, Africanfuturism reminds the reader that alternative futures are never lost—even in the environmental ruin left by Western development, the activation of desire can recreate ecological contexts. Third, Africanfuturism posits how alien technology—often the handmaiden of colonial developmental conquest in science-fiction tales—can be used in anti-colonial ways, enabling liberatory futures. Finally, Africanfuturism limns alternative possibilities for life itself that function outside of Western competitive logics that underlie capitalistic understandings of development.

Radical Desire Against Neoliberal Capitalism

Africanfuturist authors use radical imaginings of desire to respond to colonial and neocolonial contexts of dream and feeling suppression. In order for Western corporate capitalism and neo-liberal governmentality to maintain control over futures of technology, development, and resources,[6] African dreams must be hindered from flowering. Tade Thompson's *The Wormwood Trilogy—Rosewater* (2016), *The Rosewater Insurrection* (2019), and *The Rosewater Redemption* (2019)—demonstrate how Western capitalist trajectories of growth and control are based in suppression of feelings, even to the point of finding mass suicide preferable to change. Likewise, Zimbabwean author Tendai Huchu's "The Sale" (2012) points readers to the potential for desire to challenge capitalist trajectories of growth and control. Radical desire can derail colonial plans for occupation and control.

The aliens in Thompson's trilogy, called Homians, do not invade in the typical manner—they are not physically boarding starships bound for Earth. Rather, the invasion is a slow kind. The Homians sent biological probes, called footholders, to a massive number of planets, hoping to find one that was suitable for them. Multiple footholders landed on Earth and slowly and subtly began changing the human physiology through fungus-like xenoforms, until human DNA becomes entirely alien. At that point, the Homians can begin to download their consciousnesses into human bodies, slowly replacing all human life on Earth. The Homians exist only as consciousnesses, data uploaded into a quantum server. Lifetimes ago they destroyed their own planet, and committed a sort of mass suicide, uploading their consciousnesses and destroying their bodies until they could find a new planet to take over.

Through the Homians, Thompson analogizes the future of humanity if we continue to follow trajectories of environmental degradation and collapse. Thompson explains:

> The Homians themselves actually represent the human race. They represent the end of what we've done to ourselves, and what we're doing to ourselves now. They are a reflection of *us*. All right? They are what we will become if we become technologically advanced and we can't keep our planet alive and we can't get our philosophy right.
>
> *(Hopeton Hay Podcasts)*

Thompson notes that the aliens represent humanity—if it continues along the worst of environmental trajectories set by the West. Importantly, he demonstrates the suppression of feeling and desire that is required to maintain such a destructive trajectory. The Homians have so completely exterminated the desire for alternative ecological paths that they gave up even on their own bodies and selves, ultimately resulting in mass suicide. Thompson deftly connects the suppression of radical desire through the acceptance of normativity to slow planetary death, to self-death, and to the colonial conquest of others.

Tendai Huchu takes desire a step further in his short story, "The Sale" (2012), demonstrating how radical desire can overwhelm mechanisms of suppression, and open alternative pathways. In "The Sale", all Zimbabwean "natives" are forced to take a cocktail of drugs to maintain acceptable levels of various hormones and other bodily readings. These levels are maintained by "public health drones" controlled by CorpGov, which has, the Zimbabweans are told, "an *unwavering* commitment to native health" (35, emphasis in original). CorpGov is run by a state named Chimerica; Huchu clearly asks us to think about a future where corporate control over governments extends so far that China and the United States have merged to form one, large corporation-state. Zimbabwe has "*voluntarily*" ceded its national governance to CorpGov (34, emphasis in original)—but only because it was left with no alternative, as the nation was unable

to pay off its debt from aid and neoliberal restructuring loans. Under the oppressive system masquerading as benefiting human health, the drugs—which are administered forcibly by drones in the form of publicly administered enemas if one fails to take the pills at home—keep Zimbabweans in a numbed state of acceptance.[7] However, the rage that the main character feels at the sale of Great Zimbabwe, the ruins of the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Zimbabwe, to Chimerica, where it will be placed in a theme park outside of Beijing, overwhelms the sedatives and hormone suppressants he has been fed. He cannot allow the sale to happen, and he throws himself between the machinery and the ruins.

These works examine both how the suppression of radical desire is required to countenance colonial futures, and how the activation of desire can challenge capitalism's developmental goals. Desire overwhelms and upends colonial futures.

Environmental Connection Against Dystopia

The activation of desire also reimagines environmental futures, responding to contexts of environmental degradation stemming from coloniality. Elsewhere, I explore in detail how this is demonstrated in Okorafor's novel *Lagoon*.[8] *Lagoon* is a first-contact story. Aliens land in Lagos, Nigeria. However, instead of coming to take what they desire, they come to inquire about ours. Throughout the novel, the aliens only ask: "What is it you want?" They activate desire, both human and nonhuman, bringing decolonial futures into being. Notably, the book begins with a swordfish who desires the strength and size of a monster that she might destroy oil pipelines. The aliens clean the air and water, activating futures based in the connections between living things and the environment around them. Here, I describe how *Pumzi* (2009) and *Who Fears Death* (2011) portray how dreams of other possible futures have the possibility to remake our environments—even when the future seems already lost.

In Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu's short film *Pumzi*, we enter a world 35 years after World War III, "The Water War", in a fully contained underground community in East Africa called Maitu. Connected to the radical possibility of desire, everyone in Maitu is made to take dream suppressants. But the museum worker Asha's dreams are too strong; they come through the suppressants anyway. The audience sees her dreaming of a beautiful tree in the middle of the endless desert, stretching for miles around the compound. However, she has always been told that there is no water, and thus no life, outside the compound. Inside the compound, all water is conserved: every drop of sweat wrung out of clothing to clean and reuse, all urine collected and purified for drinking. The energy of the compound comes from residents taking turns on treadmills, stationary bikes, and rowing machines. When Asha is mysteriously gifted a soil sample that holds an impossible level of water, she takes the seed of the mother tree kept in the museum and escapes to the outside, daring to dream that the tree she saw in her dreams is real.

In *Pumzi*, we find that dreams can change the physicality of the world. Asha takes the seed in the soil, and, collapsing finally in the desert, uses the water from her own dying body to make the tree grow. She becomes the tree in her dreams. Her dreams created a tree out of an impossibly dry desert. *Pumzi* paints a vivid portrait of the way dreams can change material conditions.

Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* extends this power of dreams by implying they can change not only materiality, but also time. Similar to Asha, the main character of Okorafor's novel, Onyesonwu, lives in and around a vast desert. However, she has visions of a bountiful, dense jungle beyond the boundaries of her known world. Onyesonwu is a powerful sorceress, able to travel in the spirit realm, known as the wilderness. On one such journey she follows a *Koponyungo*, a magical fire lizard of the desert, across the face of the world, flying farther than she knew existed. She exclaims when they arrive: "Greeeeen! As I've never seen it. As I'd never imagined

it … *Is this even possible?* I wondered. *Does this place really exist?*" The *Koponyungo* confirms that it does, but Onyesonwu realizes it is "too far to ever get to". But after a second, she adds, "Maybe someday it would not be" (310–311, emphasis in original).

Who Fears Death concludes in two ways. In the first, Onyesonwu dies the traumatic death that she knew was coming—facing it was the test she had to pass to be trained as a sorceress. Yet, as the novel reminds us, "something must be written before it can be *rewritten*" (415, emphasis in original). The book then begins again as "Chapter 1" in its final pages (416). Onyesonwu rewrote the story of the world, and in doing so, rewrote time itself. She refuses ending, and instead begins again in the green place of her dreams.

Okorafor reminds the reader that linearity of time and developmental trajectories is a Western construct, and one that does not serve African interests. As Eshun and Keeling describe, Western futurists attempt to make capitalistic visions of development seem inevitable. Kahiu and Okorafor instead demonstrate the power of dreaming beyond these limitations, and how imagining impossible worlds can rewrite African stories in ways that revive environmental flourishing and possibilities for life.

Alien Technology Against Colonialism

Africanfuturist creators also reimagine relations to alien technologies in ways that deny colonial epistemologies. In *Rosewater Redemption* and *Lagoon*, respectively, Thompson and Okorafor present futures where aliens have landed in Nigeria, and alien technology is key to decolonial futures—but do so in very different ways.

On the one hand, in Thompson's *Wormwood Trilogy*, the aliens have landed for that age-old colonial reason: to upend indigenous life, exploit indigenous bodies, and take over the planet. However, Thompson's conceptualization of alien colonization is novel in that the aliens are not physically present on Earth. Rather, their footholders have been sent out to a number of different planets to explore where they might be able to colonize. The aliens themselves are without bodies until the colonial process is complete. Settlement thus requires subtly replacing human DNA with alien DNA through an airborne fungus-like substance called xenoforms until human bodies are 100% alien. Then, the Homians can download into humanity's very bodies.

Thompson ingeniously uses aliens to analogize the process of neocolonialism ("I Don't Like Linearity").[9] In truth, Thompson tackles the problem of decolonization from a perspective that recognizes the inextricable nature of coloniality from contemporary life—it cannot simply be denied or removed—and yet does so in a way that spurs vehement rebellion, rather than complacent acceptance. In *The Rosewater Redemption*, alien technology has already irreparably replaced human DNA with that of aliens, leaving the dilemma of, as one character puts it, "how to save the world from aliens, yet keep their infrastructure". She then comments: "after the British left, we kept the trains" (90). Ultimately, the Nigerian heroes of the books use the alien technology against them, destroying the moon-base servers that hold the alien consciousnesses through the aliens' own quantum system. Thompson analogizes the process of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls epistemic freedom, delinking the technologies used by colonists from their epistemological bearings, instead operating them in direct contradiction to the ways they were intended to be used. The colonial technology that was intended to allow for the conquest of Earth instead enables its liberation.

Lagoon takes an entirely different approach to aliens landing in Nigeria, but it is no less decolonial. Rather than positing humans who must fight against alien colonization, Okorafor asks the audience to imagine an alien landing that is premised the radical potential of desire. What if aliens came not to colonize, but to create anti-colonial possibilities of relational

coexistence? Okorafor posits aliens as bringing gifts of fantastical self-actualization in exchange for a home. As I have elsewhere described,[10] the aliens activate queer desire in a way that reimagines being and life beyond what the humans had previously considered possible.

Okorafor demonstrates how alien technology becomes the means of developing anti-colonial worlds. Here, the aliens provide tools for activating nonnormative and anti-colonial desires, providing Nigerians (and the nonhuman life within and around Nigeria) with the tools through which to actualize their nonnormative desires and create a world unconstrained by colonial structures, such as the reliance on oil or strongman politics. Together, these two texts posit ways that technologies often associated with colonialism can be used instead for liberation.

Alternative Ontologies Against a Foreclosure of Life

Africanfuturist visions of life respond to coloniality's attempts to circumscribe futures of life, and what existence can be, by rethinking life beyond what global neoliberal capitalism portrays as all that is possible. Both the *Binti* and *Wormwood* trilogies, by Okorafor and Thompson respectively, present the reader with radical visions of life, radical in that these visions queer existence itself, reinscribing life as intimate relations with Otherness. Binti was dead. She should have been dead. Her existence in the normative sense was over. Oyin Da was dead. She should have been dead. Her existence in the normative sense was over. As Keeling argues, against the demands of capital, "queer nonetheless stubbornly works on and through bodies, establishing relations between them and thereby connecting them across space and time" (19). Africanfuturism queers how life itself can be thought in order to establish new relations, outside and in excess of the normative boundaries of developmental logics.

Binti's life ends. And yet. She is reborn through a sting of the alien Meduse that should have ended her existence. Instead, it reforms her life, both in body and consciousness, as now not only Himba but also part of the Meduse. Again, her life ends. And yet. She is reborn in and through connection with the living spaceship called the New Fish. Her existence again extends and changes, she is more and otherwise as her being extends through relations previously thought impossible. Binti's life is vitally and inextricably intertwined with the things previously considered "alien" and "Other" around her.

Oyin Da's life ends. And yet. She exists in and through the xenosphere created by the xenoforms: the alien particulate matter in the atmosphere around Rosewater. She can wander through memories and time, changing, if not the past itself, then people's relations to it, which can have just as profound an effect. She appears to travel through time and space, because she does not exist within it the same way as the traditionally living do. She builds a home with her wife in the ether; they have a daughter made from their spirits. Oyin Da is not alive, but she exists. Her existence is built in and through the xenoforms; her existence is enabled by the aliens.

Although these two series examine life most explicitly, Africanfuturist works consistently call into question the idea of human dominance and the developmental futures it entails. By rethinking existence as dependent upon Otherness, Africanfuturism denies colonial logics of individualism, conquest, and development as the outgrowth of competition, instead encouraging readers to envision worlds created in and through ecological and contextual relationships.

Dreaming Developmental Rebellion

Eschewing the Western developmental logics of coloniality pries open doors to futures once considered impossible. But doing so first requires dreaming beyond the limits of possibility. The Afronauts were mocked for desiring beyond what the West thought possible—a place in the race

to the stars. Indeed, Serpell describes how Nkoloso was inspired to start training Afronauts by imagining the impossible. During his first ride in an airplane, "[w]hen the pilot refused to stop the plane so that he could get out and walk on the clouds, Nkoloso made up his mind to enter the space race" ("The Zambian 'Afronaut'"). Even though Nkoloso's desire to stop a plane mid-flight to walk amongst the clouds seems ludicrous, it resonates with other challenges to the West's delineation of possibility. Africans and the African diaspora have been "historically dislocated by Western ideas of progress" (Lavender 15), written out of its narrative. When Africans dream futures that Western development claims to be impossible, they create new realms of potentiality. Nkoloso and his Afronauts may not have journeyed to the moon or to Mars, but they highlighted the colonial logic that claimed their goals to be impossible, and demanded its reconsideration.

Africanfuturism provides a means for Africans to imagine their own futures, ones that are not beholden to the colonial logics of development. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni claims, "White races claimed complete *being* for themselves and pushed African people into a perpetual state of *becoming*—a state of incompleteness" (*Epistemic Freedom* 252, emphasis in original), which then "gave birth to the colonial idea of Africans as the condemned people of the earth, the anthropos of the planet and the wretched of the earth" (*Epistemic Freedom* 253). In sum:

> All this indicates that the problem of coloniality of being has a negative and disempower-ing bearing on the possibilities of African people creating their African futures. They cannot effectively create African futures if they have not regained their denied ontological density, which enables an escape route from imposed inferiority complexes.
>
> *(*Epistemic Freedom *253)*

African epistemologies are thus key to creating futurities that move beyond and against devel-opment in the Western sense and enabling their actualization in the present—movement that is necessary not only to liberation for Africans, but for all. The Afronauts may not have left Earth, but we have yet to fully comprehend the future potentialities that have been unlocked by their claim to be racing for the moon. Africanfuturism imagines and builds futures as yet unthinkable: futures that develop in and as rebellion.

Notes

1 The idea of development as rebellion comes from Nyerere.
2 See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Empire* 10 and Tamale for further explanations of coloniality, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom* and wa Thiong'o for how coloniality underwrites epistemic injustice.
3 Okorafor's preferred national identification, a collapsing of "Nigerian American".
4 See for instance Nelson; Womack; Anderson and Jones.
5 See Asante and Pindi 222; Akinro and Segun-Lean; Gathara; Irakoze; Zeleza.
6 For more on this, see Eshun; Keeling.
7 Similarly, Namwali Serpell builds on this automated, non-consensual vision of future public health with swarms of microdrone mosquitoes (*The Old Drift*).
8 See Hanchey.
9 This process of neocolonialism is similar to what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls colonization of the mind.
10 See Hanchey.

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