

AFROTOPIES. CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SCIENCE FICTION

The call for submissions is now open for issue 3 of *Africanías. Revista de literatura*, a publication of the Complutense University of Madrid focusing on studies about literatures (including cultural and artistic traditions linked to literary production) written by authors from the African continent and of African descent.

This monographic issue aims to bring together articles, translations and reviews related to the field of science fiction written by authors located in the African continent (Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa) and by authors of African descent.

From its emergence as a genre in the 1950s to the present day, the term *science fiction* has been the subject of debate and has been confronted with other terms which, however, have not come to replace it. Speculative fiction, literatures of the imaginary, literatures of the extraordinary, literatures of the unusual —the terms follow one another without any of them being imposed on the others. The experts of different cultural traditions and the scholars of the different sub-genres which meet and diverge from such terms have not agreed on which of them is more relevant, more inclusive or more accurate —a debate that is becoming more and more acute¹.

Attempts to classify works written from and about the African continent and its societies in this genre show the dynamism of the genre and its complexities. The lexeme *science* that forms part of the denomination of this genre is particularly problematic when referring to works in which science, understood as a synonym for technological development, is, in general and for various reasons, very little present. But here, too, the names that have emerged to resolve this contradiction (Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, Africanjujism, Afro-optimism...) are subject to controversy and constant revision.

For this reason, we open this monographic issue to all those proposals that fall within the field of what readers recognise as *science fiction*, a denomination that includes works that represent worlds that differ from the real world and that incorporate, in varying proportions, fantastic, futuristic, supernatural and possible worlds. In short, works characterised by what Philip K. Dick called ‘cognitive dissonance’, an element that seems to constitute the only common essence of the multiplicity of sub-genres that make up science fiction. We encourage proposals for papers that contribute to the exploration of this genre, which is still under construction², but which has firmly established its foundations in African literatures and in literatures by authors of African descent so far in this century. Proposals may be situated in any of the sub-genres and trends that make it up. Analyses of different languages and approaches in addition to the strictly literary (cinema, visual arts, comics, hybrid genres) are also included in this issue, as well as unpublished translations and reviews of recent studies on the subject.

¹ Lorris Murail ironically refers to this when he entitles the foreword to his classic guide to the genre, *Les Maîtres de la science-fiction* (Paris, Bordas, 2003) «Les neuf milliards de définitions de la science-fiction».

² Flora Amabiamina and Alain Roger Boayéniak Bayo, *La science-fiction africaine. Questionnement et enjeux d'un genre en construction*, Éditions Pygmies, 2024.

A series of possible (but not unique) thematic axes in which the proposals can be inscribed are proposed below:

- Themes, forms and figures in contemporary African science fiction.
- Continental and intercontinental dialogues: What relations and inter-influences are established between science fiction productions on the African continent and in the different diasporas from their respective languages and cultures (Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone science fiction, in indigenous languages)?
- Film, literature, comics, visual arts and African science fiction: what bridges are being built between the different arts?
- Afrofuturism, Africanfuturism, Africanjujuism, Afro-optimism.
- Hybridisation in African science fiction: permeability and redefinition of existing genres, slipstream.
- Poetics of African science fiction: tradition and experimentation.
- African science fiction and *Afrotopia*³: How do African works of science fiction contribute to decolonising Africa's present and future, affirming, in Felwine Sarr's words, its presence and contributing to civilization in creative and alternative ways outside the dialectic of reaction and affirmation vis-à-vis the other?
- Magic vs. science? African speculative fiction plays an important role in redefining the concept of science in African contexts in the view of writers such as Wanuri Kahiu and scholars such as Abd El Khadr Hamza⁴, for whom magic and ancestral wisdom constitute an alternative science/technology. In the same vein, authors such as Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. or Rosi Braidotti see African science fiction as a field of experimentation in which Western critical post-humanism and non-Western indigenous humanism, with their alternative ontologies and their own myths, can meet and dialogue⁵.
- What roles do prizes (*Nebula*, *Nommo* and *World Fantasy Awards*), creative magazines (*Omenana Speculative Fiction Magazine*) and the publishing market inside and outside the African continent play in the current rise of the genre?
- Women and African science fiction: Numerous studies link the current rise of African science fiction to the notoriety of women writers such as Nnedi Okorafor or Lauren Beukes. How can we explain, for example, the high presence of female authors (and female protagonists) in a traditionally male genre?
- The translation of African science fiction.

³ A concept coined by Felwine Sarr in his essay with the same title: *Afrotopie*, Paris, Philippe Rey, 2016.

⁴ Abd El Khadr Hamza, *Afrique(s) et Science-fiction. Histoire(s) et représentations*. PhD Thesis in General and Comparative Literature. Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle- Paris III, 2022.

⁵ This is possible because, as Teresa Pellisa rightly reminds us, «non-Western epistemologies, such as indigenous cosmogonies and the ancestral tradition of African cultures, already started from assumptions that today we call post-humanist», in «Futurismo afrolatinoamericano y poshumanismo indigenista en la ciencia ficción latinoamericana». *Kamchatka. Revista de análisis cultural*, 2023, n° 22, p.8.

Submission of abstracts (200-300 words) and short bio-bibliography (100-200 words): 15 March 2025: anai.labra@uah.es.

Approximate date of notification of acceptance or non-acceptance: 21 March 2025.

Final submission of articles/reviews/translations: 15 May 2025. All submission information is available at <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/AFRI/about/submissions>.

Proposals may be written in English, Spanish, French or Portuguese.