UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

AFROFUTURISM: THE CHANGING NARRATIVE AND THE AFRICAN YOUTH

BY

AARON NII AYITEY KOMEY

(10459170)

THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF M. PHIL. IN AFRICAN STUDIES DEGREE

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OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except cited works, this thesis is a result of my own research work, done under supervision, and submitted to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. This work has neither in part or in whole been submitted elsewhere for another degree.

Aaron Nii Ayitey Komey

(10459170)

Sign: ..... Date: 30/08/2022

Prof. Esi Sutherland-Addy

(Principal Supervisor)

Sign: ..... Date: 30/08/2022

Dr. David Ako Odoi

(Co-Supervisor)

Sign: ..... Date: 30/8/2022

ABSTRACT

The premiere of *Black Panther* in 2018 by Marvel Studios threw more light on a genre of literature and popular art that was fast gaining popularity on the African continent. The booming success of the film drew the attention of many, especially young people in Africa and in the diaspora, to the new genre, albeit subtly. This genre's goal is to rewrite the history of black people, which is often told in a myopic western lens, as well as put a black face in the future, through the use of fantasy, speculative art and science fiction.

This is an eclectic study touching on literature, history, political studies, sociology and popular culture. It looks at the role played by the speculative imagination in the cultural emancipation narrative of the continent. The study also investigates the potential of this genre in aiding to achieve Pan Africanism.

This study is an exploratory research that uses the qualitative research tools; interviews and content analysis to collect and analyse information. Young people from across the African continent and in the African American diaspora were interviewed to examine their response to the impact of Afrofuturism in African popular culture and how it influences identity and Pan African solidarity

The study revealed that some of the objectives that the genre seeks to achieve are being met, and even being exceeded. However, there are serious concerns about the danger of promulgating an interrupted and skewed history of black people by producers and content creators especially in the diaspora. Thus, artists and others in Africa hold a different view about how the genre should develop on the continent in the future. The study concludes with recommendations on how the genre can be moved promoted to increase its impact in achieving its objectives.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Afrikan youth on the continent and young black people in the diaspora who are tirelessly working, studying, protesting, challenging and organising against oppressive systems to make sure that the Afrikan and the black person has dignity, respect and economic independence in our lifetime.

I also dedicate this work to all my teachers, mentors, colleagues and friends who have shaped my thoughts, ideologies, tenets and beliefs throughout my academic life so far. And to my father who has supported me throughout life, exposing me to books and other sources of information that have helped me build and develop strong, independent ideologies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I will like to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisors, Prof. Esi Sutherland-Addy and Dr. David Ako Odoi, for the guidance, support and supervision that they have given throughout the period and towards the completion of this work. And especially to Prof. Esi Sutherland-Addy, for the immense time and effort invested in making sure this work is of the standard befitting the degree being sort for.

I am also grateful to the Research Fellows, my colleagues and friends at the Institute of African Studies who have helped me in various ways to finish my program. I am very grateful. A special mention to my friend and mentor Kafui Otis Tsekpo for the special interest you have taken to see the progress of my academic life.

I will like to also say a big thank you to my father, Mr. Alfred Nii Ayi Komey, the financier of my ambitions. Your sacrifices have made it possible for me to do this.

Finally, *shidaa aha Ataa Naa Nyonmo. Lɛ emawje mi, ni ɛkɛ mi yɛ daa, ni edromo fa ha mi.*

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a saying, *"pelu irugbin kekere ti oju inu o le dagba aaye kan ti o kun fun ireti"* which translated means, "with a little seed of imagination you can grow a space full of hope." This is a saying that captures the fundamental importance of the power of imagination. Until recently, the power of imagining the future, projecting it on popular media along with its accompanying superheroes has been the dominated by the west and western media, projecting western ideas of a future which is centered around western identities.

The premiere of Black Panther in 2018 by Marvel Studios made a significant change to this situation and creative works on black and African futurism has since become a genre of popular art that is fast gaining popularity on the African continent. The booming success of the film came along with a popular culture, and drew the attention of many, especially young people in Africa, to the new genre, albeit subtly. This new genre is referred to as Afrofuturism.

In this work, I seek to explore how artists- that is writers, filmmakers, visualizers - are using the tool of artistic expression and creativity, under the umbrella of Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism to rewrite the narrative about Africans, and Blacks, and to create a new notion and positivist desire about how Blacks are redefining the narrative by placing black identities in the future. Is Afrofuturism a reflection of the African view of the future? Does Afrofuturism resonate with the African youth? The work explores Afrofuturism as "a kind of sociology of the future", one whose major attribute is not necessarily in its literary function, but in its "value as a mind stretching force for the creation of the habit of anticipation" and using literature's potential for envisioning new worlds to insert

themselves into scientific discourses from which they would otherwise be excluded (Eatough, 2017).

1.2 BACKGROUND

The idea of Afrofuturism as a coined concept can be said to have started from the 1960s when writers tried to produce works that bring Africa to where we currently are and how we think about Africa in a future and futuristic kind of way (CBC Arts, 2018) Afrofuturism scholars often credit jazz musicians such as Sun Ra, who portrayed himself as an alien from a different world, for the origins of the genre among African Americans in the diaspora in the late 1950s (Yaszek, 2005).

This has been challenged, with certain anthropological data showing the existence of science fiction and the construction of Africa's utopian or dystopian futures and the rethinking of Africa's past among certain African ethnic groups such as the Shona and the Swahili speaking people (Rettová, 2017). However, novels such as the early Hausa sci-fi novel titled *Taurarуwa Mai Wutsiya* [The Comet] by Umaru Dembo in 1969 have been said to not be Afrofuturistic because, like in this case, "the sci-fi elements are reinterpreted as a mere 'replacement' of more traditional themes and motifs and the novel's potential to be 'a new departure' is neutralized" (Furniss, 1996 cited in Rettova, 2017).

The science fiction world as well as fantasy literature, a genre of literature which refers to fiction with a large amount of imagination, that is unrestricted by reality, has been dominated by European and North American creatives, including writers and filmmakers. In the field of creative art – written literature, visual art, films and music – the face of the

black person in the future or in speculative fiction has been hard to come by, and the voice of the African or black diaspora has not been loud enough.

In written literature for instance, the field has been dominated by post-colonial writers who have written extensively about the ills of the era. Since the breakthrough for African literature in the 1950s, the writings of postcolonial African authors have focused largely on the oppression and discrimination suffered under colonial rule, the demonization of African values, culture and religion, and the independence struggle. Other writers that have followed this era also have written largely on romanticising the African continent. African literature has also focused extensively on the post-independence socio-political struggles of most countries and the exploitation and abuse of power by the early nationalist leaders.

In all of these periods, there has been little focus and attention on futuristic literature. There are some reasons, although not so convincing, as to why this is the case, such as, the lack of investment from international publishing houses into this form of literature, as compared to the norm of writings about the past that is filled with oppression and discrimination. Also, there are the stereotypical views, including the doomsday narratives like the popular western promulgation that Africans have no technology and are a backward people who cannot invent their own products to solve their peculiar challenges, as seen in Polish-British author Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* where he defines Africa in various derogatory terms, especially as "primitive" (Conrad, 1950).

This view comes from a stereotypical, yet repeated narrative that Africans are viewed as still busy looking for their place in history and unable to plan for a future and only take what is given to them by the west. Such a diagnosis was, for example, articulated by former French President Nicholas Sarkozy when he claimed in a 2007 speech given in

Dakar, that, "Africa's tragedy emerges from the fact that the African man has not yet found his way into history […] Africa's problem is that it lives too much in the present, in the nostalgia of a lost Edenic childhood […] in this imaginary where everything always starts over, there is no place for human adventure or the idea of progress" (Nyawalo, 2016).

Also, this stereotypical narrative is premised on the historical basis that the perceptions Europeans have about Africa are in European notions, and thus the misconception that one cannot fathom what the thinking of an African is (Legum, 1962). This history has not been a fair representation of previous lifestyles and has for a long time presented Africans and African Americans in a discriminatory way, ignorant of the reality of the social nature of Africans and how they lived. The field of literature and creative arts is not excluded from this bias and skewed stereotypical narrations. This stereotype is premised on the view that African history begins from slavery, turning a blind eye to the decades and centuries of many great civilizations on the continent, such as the civilization of the Kemets, the Songhai Empire, the Great Zimbabwe etc.

In the new world where Blacks found themselves, the situations they faced meant that they were compelled to become innovative, succumbing and adapting ways to be able to cope and rebuild what was left of their former lives and traditions (Brooks, 2018, p. 101) especially those who were taken to the Americans and those who were directly victims of slavery, exploitation and colonialism.

By the 20th century when science fiction had evolved into its own distinct genre, having noticeable authors and publishers, African American writers were still not publishing science fiction. It was not until after the World War II, when science and technology had witnessed new inventions from the introduction of things like the atomic bombs that

writers started to see the radical future differently, as it was viewed as an increasingly popular and respectable way to "make sense of these changes" (Yaszek, 2006).

Indeed, Octavia Butler asserts this view, and once stated in a February 1996 interview that, "the space program of the sixties really was part of the general hopefulness of the decade, part of our sense that anything was possible if we strove together as a people" (Potts & Butler, 1996). Eventually, Afrofuturist storytelling became a regular aspect of, first, popular music in the 1970s and 1980s and then in the works of authors such as Octavia Butler.

Furthermore, in the 1990s, a new term was coined and made popular by musician Mark Dery in a collection of interviews such as *Black To The Future, Interviews with Samuel R. Delany* (Dery, 1993). This term is known as **Afrofuturism.** This new term was meant to use science fiction and cyberculture in a speculative manner, to escape the discriminatory definition of what it means to be Black (or exotically African), especially in western culture (Bristow, 2012).

Afrofuturism is an evolving field of black cultural studies whose theories and scholarship are heavily influenced with particularities in science fiction, speculative fiction, new media, digital technology, the arts, and Black aesthetics all situated and focused on the continent of Africa, the Diaspora, and its imaginaries (Dean & Andrews, 2016, p. 2). Afrofuturist writers started writing science fiction in the 19th century in a diverse range of fantastic and proto-science fictional forms. No matter the forms they worked in, the earlier generations of Afrofuturists were bound primarily by the primary goal of showcasing the changing relations of science and society, especially with relation to African America history (Yaszek, 2006).

Afrofuturism seeks to reclaim black identity through art, culture and political resistance. Eshun (2003) reiterates Toni Morrison's point that, "the African subjects that experienced capture, theft, abduction, mutilation, and slavery were the first moderns. They underwent real conditions of existential homelessness, alienation, dislocation, and dehumanization that philosophers like Nietzsche would later define as quintessentially modern" (Eshun, 2003). African Americans, thus, started to picture and talk about a future without the existence of all the acts that had characterized the period of slavery, colonisation and oppression.

Afrofuturism could also be defined as theories and scholarship heavily influenced with particularities in science fiction, speculative fiction, new media, digital technology, the arts, and Black aesthetics all situated and focused on the continent of Africa, the Diaspora, and its imaginaries (Dean & Andrews, 2016, p. 2).

Afrofuturism gives us a space for negotiation between the unresolved past and the impeding, potentially bright future. It is also the expression of multiple identities of blackness through popular media. In the words of renowned Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, "Literature, whether handed down by word or in print, gives us a second handle on reality" (Achebe, 1988b).

Afrofuturism, as such, appropriates the characteristics and attributes of science fiction to place a black representation in the future (Yaszek, 2005), thereby allowing the creative content creator the leeway and ability to give a second handle on the "realities of the future" (emphasis mine).

Afrofuturism (and Africanfuturism) are not just about the ability to picture a different future. The authors have also tried to use the power of film, art, speculative fiction, fantasy and technology to quell and rewrite the narrative that has for a long time been

projected about them and the past. This is premised in the famous saying by British writer George Orwell in his famous novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* that, "who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past", because those who control the present will use their power to control the past in hopes of controlling and influencing the future.

These changing relations in society pertaining to African history is also evident in the writings of some indigenous Afrofuturist writers. Ayivor (2003) opines of Ayi Kwei Armah, "that Armah's Pan-Africanist visionary re-ordering of African history and ontology projects Africa's history as the only key that could unlock the door to the continent's pristine cultural values and civilizations – the magical searchlight that could help the global African community become conscious of Africa's ancient great civilizations and regain its lost dignity and self-image" (Ayivor, 2003, p. 41).

With the advent of global communication and information technologies in the 1970s and 1980s, Afrofuturist artists broadened the scope of their attention to encompass both outer space and cyberspace (Yaszek, 2005). This era also witnessed an outburst of Afrofuturist authors as science fiction became popular and was being woven into the aspect of everyday life, with the authors also increasingly allying themselves with the science fiction community (Yaszek, 2006). Some of the authors of this time include Octavio Butler and Samuel Delany.

More recently, Afrofuturism has been projected in digital art and through film. Movies such as Ryan Coogler's brilliant inception of Marvel Comics' landmark black character *Black Panther*, Cameroonian Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Les Saignantes* and Kenyan Wanuri Kahiu's *Pumzi* have advanced the propagation of Afrofuturism on the African continent.

There is a strong effort by African writers, artists, musicians and filmmakers to change the stereotypical representation of Africa in fantasy and futuristic literature.

This form of art achieves two main objectives; firstly, it rewrites the narrative about the perception of Africa. Indeed, as Chinua Achebe put it in his 1987 novel *Anthills of the Savannah,* "It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story … that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns and directs us" (Achebe, 1988a, p. 75). Adichie asserts to the point about the importance of a story rewriting the narrative in her text *Danger of a Single Story,* she said, "Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories 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" (Adichie, 2009, Oct 7). In particular reference to telling the story of the future by Africans, Nyawalo (2016) writes, "Bekolo's questions emphasize the level at which the social imaginary both shapes and is shaped by local and global structures of power. This emphasis is imbued with iconoclastic potential.

Since the 1970s and 80s, Afrofuturism has continued to grow to and has become the toast of many African writers, such as American-Nigerian author Nnedi Okorafor. The field has also evolved in terms of its political mission, as was seen in the 2018 Marvel movie *Black Panther.* As Kodwo Eshun proposed, modern Afrofuturism can be represented under three closely related sources which will together make what he refers to as "futures industry" and which I will elaborate upon more in subsequent chapters. These sources are, the big science source, the big business source and the global media source (Eshun, cited in Yaszek, 2006).

Imagining African bodies in technologically enhanced futuristic landscapes reveals and questions the ways in which such spaces have typically connoted the assumed teleological progress and implicit superiority of white supremacy. In fact, just the ability to imagine the future of Africa through the eyes of its own people, home and abroad, about a people who are not a poor, war stricken and in dire need of help but an advanced, technologically advanced people, powered by their own natural and human resources and deeply rooted in its art, culture and progressive traditions is a reshaping of the norm about a constantly degraded people, who have been portrayed as a continent that is to be looted and exploited and not a major game player in the affairs of the world. Rettova (2017) argues that this perception is enforced by precolonial European explorers who had written about Africa, like Hegel, whose reading of Africa was very influential in Europe's intellectual and political history, feeding directly into justifications of the colonial enterprise. Afrofuturism challenges the normalization of Black marginalisation within society itself (Rettová, 2017).

Also, Afrofuturism is the reimagining of a future filled with arts, science and technology seen through black lens. In other words, it is the representation of the future of Africa, by Africans and through African literature, arts and media. It represents a re-imagining of the self beyond the limitations imposed by society in both Art and 'real' life in expressing themselves in 'unexpected' ways. Films, for instance, can function as "heterotopias" because they 'create' worlds that are other than the "real world" but that relate to that world in multiple and contradictory ways (Nyawalo, 2016). That is, through Afrofuturism, the African child, student, artist, film maker, author etc. can envision the future they want for themselves and the continent, what the superheroes would be like and the problems they will be solving, and can give a such mental picture to society. African youth can also have other stories of their history, rather than the narrow, cliché, unidirectional story of

an oppressed past, capturing the heroic stories of mythological heroes. In addition, though all the definitions of Afrofuturism vary, all of them stress the connection of the imagination of the future with the lives of black people in an active role (Rettová, 2017).

Undoubtedly, the biggest promoter of Afrofuturism in recent times is the largely successful Marvel Comics' 2018 film *Black Panther.* The movie made half a billion dollars worldwide within a few days after its release, and has been a widely and impressively received by black people, especially by black women and people in the diaspora (Yusuf, 2018, Feb 24b). The reception of the movie, and especially the cultural display and characterization of a black superhero is proof again of how starved and thirsty black people were for a character that looks like them and that is relatable to their culture. Thus, *Black Panther* is the refusal of the pejorated image of a lazy, malnourished, corrupt and retrogressive African, promulgated in the white world and subscribed to by many, including some people in the black world.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The independence of African countries from colonialism in the middle and late 20th century was expected to cause an emancipation of the continent, and project the African unto the world stage, with their cultural heritage and identities being revered similar to those of Europe and North America. This independence period was also expected to cause a unification of all black people, both in the diaspora and on the continent. This clarion call was championed by leaders from all over the continent and diaspora, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Juluis Kambarage Nyerere, Sekou Ahmed Toure among others. However, the political emancipation has not positively affected the cultural and economic transformation of

black people. Afrofuturism seeks to help correct this narrative. Thus, this work examines the efficacy of Afrofuturism as a cultural tool for black and African emancipation.

Afrofuturism has been used as an identity tool to place a black image into the future. Again, it attempts to connect the African Diaspora by addressing common themes in a techno-culture and science fiction perspective, while embracing a multimedia range of artistic communities with shared interest in envisioning a Black past, current disposition and a future connected by common experiences (Tarik, 2018).

It is also used as an aesthetic material to rewrite the narrative of the past and propose an alternative history. Also, it has been widely accepted by the youth in the diaspora, and has become a channel to begin a movement or sustain and empower existing racial the youth in Africa and the diaspora.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to look at what Afrofuturism is, and what the sub-themes in the genre are. The study seeks to find out at what various writers say about the genre, as well as how the ordinary African youth understand and relate with the genre, especially with respect to the pan African agenda of cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics. This is an eclectic study touching on literature, history, political studies, sociology and popular culture. It looks at the role played by the speculative imagination in the cultural emancipation narrative of the continent. That is, the development of theories, the critique of white supremacy and the promotion of black superheroes in re-imagining the future of Africa. This study will explore the framework for characterising a piece of creative work as Afrofuturistic, Africanfuturistic etc.

Furthermore, this study aims to:

- examine how popular culture is influenced by Afrofuturism.
- undertake in-depth study into the current discourses in the field of Afrofuturism.
- understand how the historical predicaments of Africans and black people socially, politically, culturally and economically serve as a basis to re-imagine the black concept of building a utopian future.
- interrogate out how the media could serve as a tool to change the existing stereotypical narratives against Blacks and help reinforce black culture and futuristic themes.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions below address the concerns of the study:

- What are the themes and characteristics that qualify a novel, film or piece of art as Afrofuturistic? Thus, what makes a work Afrofuturistic/Africanfuturistic?
- How do these themes demonstrate a changing narrative in popular art and literature?
- How do African youth and the youth in the African diaspora relate to works of Afrofuturism and African futurism?

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This research is an exploratory research, that is, the researcher seeks to research a phenomenon, to provide a better understanding, especially when little is known about it. It is not designed to come up with final answers or definite solutions, rather it seeks to gain a deeper understanding of emerging concepts. This study is exploratory in nature,

that is, it seeks to gain insight into and a deeper understanding of the growing and evolving concepts of Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism, their impact on the youth in Africa and their potential for helping achieve the goals of Pan Africanism.

This research is a qualitative study based on interviews and content analysis. Primary data was gathered from interviews. Interviews were conducted via telephone and other online telecommunication platforms such as Zoom. Interviews were constructed in a semi-structured manner; this allowed the researcher to find out more far beyond the responses that are given to the prepared and standardized questions (BERG, 2001). Telephone interviews were also employed in this research because the sample population was in geographically diverse locations. Also, owing to the COVID-19 situation that was prevalent at the time of data collection, telephone interviews were the safest and most viable option.

It is further based on content analysis of a text and analysis of audio-visual materials. "Context analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from texts to the context of their use." Additionally, the researcher adopted the approach because it is flexible, and allows a researcher to look into new insights, explore the subject area further and increases his or her understanding of particular phenomena (Krippendorf, 1989).

Content analysis was also done through the examination of social media data. Social media data refers to information that is gathered from a person's social media activity (Segal, 2017), which includes posts, comments, shares, retweets, mentions etc. This data was mainly collected from the social media platform Twitter, even though data from Facebook was also studied. This helped the researcher to understand how people were engaging with a particular topic or issue.

A research design refers to the plan for how a study will be conducted (Berg 2001). Purposive sampling was used in this study, which means that only targeted samples which have a specific trait or purpose related to the research was selected. The interviewees were sampled from **four countries, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and the United States.** These respondents were chosen to represent the population that is under study, that is, the African youth. For the purpose of the study, the political definition of Africa was employed, thus the youth in the African diaspora, which is located outside the boundaries of the continent were also considered as Africans (Edozie, 2012).

The interviewees were selected as representatives from different parts of Africa. The interviewees were selected because the researcher wanted a Pan African response, that is, to sample views from different Africans across different places in Africa. The respondents from Ghana and Nigeria were to represent West Africa, while the respondent from Kenya was to represent East Africa in the study. The last respondent, a respondent from the United States, was chosen to represent the African diaspora in the study. The number of respondents in total was eight (8), and this enabled the researcher to have an in-depth discussion with the respondents for the essay.

A convenient method of sampling, known as the snowballing sampling technique was also adopted for this study, to aid in the purposive sampling. Snowballing is sometimes the best way to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics that are vital for a particular study and involves first identifying people with relevant characteristics and having them answer a some questions, thereafter, these subjects are then asked for the details of other people who have the same characteristics as they do and can be of more significance to the study (Berg 2001). Before some of the respondents were interviewed, the researcher interviewed some respondents and spoke to a number of others on the continent on the issue. These initial respondents led the researcher to other respondents

who were eventually interviewed for the study. This method was adopted in order to get suitable respondents for the study, especially in relation to the respondents from outside the researcher's home country of Ghana.

In this case, the researcher draws data from a content analysis of *Kindred* by Octavia Butler, and an analysis of the movie *Black Panther* by Marvel Comics.

For the content analysis, novels such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising* and *Utopia Unbound*, Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* and Namwali Serpell's *The Old Drift* were considered for the study. However, the researcher settled on Octavia Butler's novel because of the novel's timeless relevance, her interests in the hybridity of the human race and her ability to envision an alternate future.

With regards to the movie *Black Panther,* the researcher selected it among a list of other movies considered including works like *Pumzi* by Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu, *Sankofa* by Ethiopian filmmaker Halie Gerima and *Afronauts* by Ghanaian filmmaker Frances Bodomo because of the worldwide popularity of the film and the relation that many people across the African space worldwide have with it. The film also formed a basis for the study, exposing the genre to many people, especially in Africa and giving the chance for other works in the genre to be developed around it. Therefore, the researcher found it wise to select this material in order to examine how a widely successful film can spur such an influence among popular culture.

The study was limited to two (2) sources of data in order to do an in-depth study of the materials, explore more on the phenomena and better understand a genre that is still growing on the continent, and not come up with final answers about the area of study.

1.7.1 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Research ethics deals with how we treat those who participate in our studies and how we handle the data after we collect them (Vanderstoep, S. W., & Johnson, D. D., 2008, pg. 12). Among the most serious ethical concerns that have received attention during the past two decades is the assurance that subjects are voluntarily involved and informed of all potential risks (Berg, 2001, pg. 53). In this work, ethical obligation was taken seriously to ensure the rights, confidentiality and privacy of the people that form the focus of the study.

The data collected is confidential, with records available to only the researcher and the supervisors of the researcher. no one else will be given access to the data. This is to protect the confidentiality of the study.

The researcher did not also ask any questions that have to deal with the intimate privacy of the interviewees. Personal questions were limited to the basic demographics of the interviewees, that is, the name; age; level of education; nationality and profession of the respondents.

The research was also on a voluntary basis and participants gave their informed consent. People who participate in a research study usually have the right to know that they are part of that study (Vanderstoep, S. W., & Johnson, D. D., 2008, pg. 14). Participants in the study were informed of the details of the research study and were informed of the opportunity that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

1.7.2 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

Language barrier was a problem in trying to interview more participants for the study. The researcher could not interview people from North Africa especially because of the language barrier.

The researcher would have wished to interview more people but there were some limitations the researcher faced that were beyond his control. In spite of these limitations, the researcher was able to conduct some interviews, but there was the capacity to do more. Some respondents opted out of the study after certain connectivity challenges while conducting the interview, so the researcher could not include the responses in the work. This affected the researcher's interviews with some of the respondents. He had to cancel some scheduled interviews with people from Southern Africa, specifically respondents from Malawi because the internet connection was not good on either side. The respondent eventually opted out of the study.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The work seeks to examine how Afrofuturism has a tendency running through popular culture, recreating what people think about black identity, what it is and what it looks like through popular art, print and electronic media.

This work examines whether the recent increase in black futuristic literature and films has in any way influenced lifestyle trends in the popular art. With works of popular culture bringing a visible change or addition to popular culture, in terms of dressing or language or mannerisms, it is worth investigating if the same effects have happened in relation to Afrofuturism. With the field continuously growing, this work will provide a foundation to help investigate in future how through Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism certain socio-cultural domains such as gender, religion, indigenous knowledge systems among others are perceived and projected in these works.

This work also seeks to establish the importance of imaginative and speculative fiction as a genre that has significant advantages for the self-identity of black people, especially

children and young adults, who will have icons they can adore, and see a future of the place they find themselves.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The work is presented in five chapters. Chapter one gives an introduction to the topic and background of the study, states the problem statement, state the objectives of the study and explains the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 2 of the work contains the literature review on Afrofuturism and other relevant discourses that are connected to the Afrofuturism. This section explores what scholars have written about in the area of study and probes what the major issues that influence the genre in contemporary times are, from the perspectives of different scholars, artists etc that are involved in the field of study. Also, the key terms in the field of study are defined. This section also includes the theoretical framework that I will use as a structure in analysing this study.

In chapter 3, the researcher does a content analysis of the novel *Kindred* by Octavia Butler, as well as the content analysis of Marvel Film's movie, *Black Panther.* This will be done by analysing the critical issues in the text that show the characteristics of Afrofuturism in both works.

Chapter 4 entails the findings and discussion of the data analysed. This chapter will elaborate and expatiate on the research findings as well as discuss the findings from the data collected through the in-depth interviews.

Chapter 5, will be the conclusion of the work, where I sum up the entire work and give a summary of the points and arguments from the work, draw conclusions and give some recommendations.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing about the future also has an effect on how the present and the past are crafted (Rettová, 2017), and the concept of Afrofuturism, a concept that seeks to critique the present status quo in order to imagine alternative futures (Nyawalo, 2016) is a long held concept which has been developed and presented differently from different contexts. In this chapter, I explore how the concept of Afrofuturism has been espoused in literature from writers in Africa and writers outside the African continent.

As the concept of Afrofuturism has developed over the past few decades, what happenings in histories and which images or representations in the present status quo do they seek to change? What are the various imagined futures from different writers and various sections of society? This review will also help to find the lacuna in literature that makes this study necessary and important. The second part of the chapter also comprises a discussion on the theoretical approach for the study.

2.1 PERSPECTIVES

The arrival of the Europeans on the shores of Africa in the 15th century and the accompanying happenings of slavery, colonization and oppression also caused the interruption of an evolving culture and subsequently the infiltration of various African cultures. Before then, Africans were a people with their own civilization and acculturation, as well as their own ambitions for the futures of their various nations. According to scholars such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Africa's role in history must be emphasised, including its contribution to the world's great civilizations, and the achievement of its people in the arts and sciences, to stress on what it has given to the

world, not what it has lost (Armah, 1995; Ayivor, 2003). However, this section takes a look at what it has lost which has resulted in the backward, discriminatory definition of what it means to be black that Afrofuturism seeks to escape and change, and the also what Africanfuturism seeks to rewrite.

The trans-Atlantic slave trade which involved the transportation of over 10 million enslaved African people to various parts of main land America, the West Indies and Latin America from the 15th to the 19th centuries is regarded as one of the darkest times in world history. Ayi Kwei Armah posits that "the destruction of African high-cultures after massive and continuous invasions of Europe left many Africans surviving on the periphery or outer ring of what constituted the best in African civilization" (Armah, 1995; Ayivor, 2003).

Since Afrofuturism focuses on traveling through time and space (Yaszek, 2006), the story about reconnecting the unmemorable part of black history with the present and the future presents writers the opportunity to reimagine this period. The conditions of the invasion and the subsequent slave trade, how Africans experienced conditions of homelessness, alienation, abuse, oppression and dislocation is what appeals to the Afrofuturists, and presents an opportunity of a historic recovery project (Gilroy, 1993; Yaszek, 2012). The ability to travel through time will thus present the artists the opportunity to re-narrate the happenings of the past through the lens of the global African, as well as place them in the future light that is glorifying of the status that fits a people who seek to regain their role as the makers of civilisation.

The invasion of Africa also resulted in dire consequences for the Africans that were left behind. After the violent dislocation of cultures and lifestyles and the loss of skilled labour, colonisation – the successor to slavery- also resulted in the mental degradation of

the identity of Africans. Thus, the invasion of Africa, according to some writers such as Armah (1995) is the point at which the history of Africa took a negative turn for the worse, a time which was subsequently used as a strategy for keeping Africans useably underdeveloped (Adeoti, 2005; Armah, 1995) and in travel ahead of time and speculative fiction, that is the focal point at which the past (and future) are reimagined to influence a different present and future for the African and the black person.

Secondly, another problem that Afrofuturism tackles is the lack of representation or the misrepresentation of global Africans, black culture and black settings in the future. As Soyinka writes, one of the social functions of literature is the visionary reconstruction of the past for the purpose of a social direction (Soyinka 1990, quoted in Adeoti, 2005; Soyinka & Wole, 1990). Nkrumah, for instance, postulates the situation in clear terms when he states that the history of segregation, colonisation and the demonization of African values, art, literature, science and social systems has resulted in the shunning of most of these fields in Africa, and among black communities, and has even resulted in African-Americans in the diaspora and other Africans on the continent having a mentally negative perception of these ideas (Nkrumah, 1963, Oct 25). The mental effects of this era are as bad, if not worse, than the physical effects. Due to this history, the identity of the global African is one that is generally looked down upon, especially by the west, riddled with clichés such as poverty, segregation, war, and more recently, terrorism (Esteve, 2016, Mar 22) and this is not different in speculative fiction.

Hence, in its broadest dimensions Afrofuturism is an extension of the historical recovery projects that black Atlantic intellectuals have engaged in for well over 200 years. The African diaspora histories insist both on the authenticity of the black subject's experience in Western history and the way this experience embodies the dislocation felt by many modern peoples (Yaszek, 2006).

African futuristic fiction and art seeks to change the discriminatory narrative of Africans and blacks, and as Ayivor (2003) also argues, "all Armah has done (in Osiris Rising) is to cloak in fictional fantasy the millennial history and the existential actuality of Africa and its Diaspora. To achieve this purpose, he has clothed countless fragments of African and Diasporic religion, mysticism, myths, culture, millennial ethno-history and contemporary existential realities in a fictional garb" (Ayivor, 2003). This, the writer further argues, is a tool that writers can use to challenge the inferiority complex that has been created through many years of discrimination and segregation, and to serve as a tool which would be used to change the narrative. Indeed, Ayi Kwei Armah also posits that, "In a world where we get served lies as truth on a daily basis, war as peace every hour, and impoverishment as development all the time, it is only just that a writer should choose to offer truth disguised as fiction" (Ayivor, 2003) in order to tackle the discrimination and misinformation about blacks and African futures.

Ali Mazrui also argues that the discrimination that Africans and blacks suffer is "a product of its interaction with other cultures" and that "it took Africa's contact with the Arab world to make the black people of Africa to realize that they were *black* by description" while adding that "to Europeans, *black* was not merely descriptive, it was also judgemental" (Mazrui, 2005). This is another instance which shows that the history of Africa's interaction with other forces in the world, and subsequently the colonization of its land and people, introduced and perpetuated a false narrative about a backward and feebleminded people, with no history and as such no chance in the future (Hegel, 2001). It is this narrative that requires a reinvention of Africa and what the works of Afrofuturism seeks to do.

In his popular TedTalk in 2017, American based Nigerian author Efusa Ojomo claimed that "innovations always precede development" (Ojomo, 2017, Aug 14) and that if

African countries want to develop, then they would have to first seek out innovative ways of tackling its issues. It is this concept of innovation, that is one of the core aspects in the promotion of science fiction, and in this sense, Afrofuturism on the continent and the diaspora. Continuous engagement and conversation about Afrofuturism will lead to an increase in the interest generated in science and technology, fused with African mythology, a phenomenon that will generate interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and could raise interest in the study of the field among the global African youth. This is premised on the fact that, various existing 'simple' means have been used to promote Afrofuturism by the youth especially, such as the use of the internet, being a main tool and a predominant factor in bringing all the people together, discerning the beginning of a new era in black history (Lee, 2016, Oct 17).

In the post-World War II era, science fiction became increasingly popular and an increasingly respectable way to make sense of the emergence and proliferation of new science and technologies, including everything from the atomic bomb to the automatic coffeemaker, that seemed to propel Americans into a brave new future (Yaszek, 2006, p. 45). It is this same increasing popularity in science and technology, this time through the framework of Afrofuturism that it is hoped will cause a social change (Lee, 2016, Oct 17) and propel Pan Africanism and the emancipation of the future black race globally .

Since the emergence of sci-fi movies in the 20th century, there have been attempts to treat black people as the victims of a wholly dystopic technoscientific modernity, where Afrodiasporic people are the unlucky descendants of slaves upon whose backs modern Western nations were built, and Africans are the victims of colonization practices that have wrought nothing but disease and famine (Yaszek, 2012, p. 10). Though sci-fi stories, as well as the very capacity to conceive a distance future, are a popular concept among

Africans and is represented in the grammar of some African languages (Rettová, 2017) there has been a glaring exclusion of black people from works of science fiction and futuristic art especially movies. Most science fiction movies which project the future limit the setting of the future to western settings, and until about a decade ago superhero films were almost universally about white male characters.

Thus, Afrofuturism presents an opportunity and a space to host African innovations, promote black innovation and showcase black futuristic, sci-fi and speculative art as well as place the black person in the context of the future and how they wish to see themselves in it. It affords global Africans the opportunity to have superheroes that look like them, that come from where they are, and that solve problems relatable to them. Dugst-Apkem posits that it affords blacks the opportunity to represent blackness and black people within every realm and that there is the need to see that imagination is key, and representation has to do with allowing yourselves to be able to let imaginations take flight with that creative impulse. And that is what is essential (Dugst-Apkem, 2018). Mich Nyawalo also shares similar views about the social impact of speculative imagination and representation. He argues that, "if the social imaginary is construed as the range of representations, images and discourses that 'produce and reproduce meaning' in a given society, then the possibilities and limitations of these representations within creative works are constrained by, and can also push against, normative cultural and institutional boundaries that dominate (Mountian, 2012; Nyawalo, 2016). Lisa Yaszek adds from the diaspora view that, Afrofuturism provides both "apt metaphors for black life and history" and serves as an inspiration for "technical and creative innovations", and by so doing, the genre creates new audiences for the stories that are created: those primarily young, white, Western, and middle-class men who comprise the majority of science fiction fans and

who might never otherwise learn much about the history of their country save what they haphazardly pick up in the high school classroom (Yaszek, 2006, p. 47).

Therefore, the mental image that the Black, especially the African, can have about their role in the affairs of the future is shaped by the images they see of themselves, and how they are perceived. In other words, the social imagination both shapes and is shaped by local and global structures of power, and thus, it is by dismantling an imposed reality (used to interpret phenomena) that Africa (especially) can be transformed (Nyawalo, 2016). And the way that this is going to happen, is by creating an innovative content, a creative spectacle to rival the superimposed and discriminative notions that exists currently. The future world or the world in outer space can be a projection and construction of an ideal society, and while some works deal with the future and project an alternative reality, others introduce advanced technology and construct an alternative reality in outer space (Rettová, 2017).

Indeed, much of Afrofuturism's humour and playfulness derives its power from the irony of the visual image of African Americans engaging in futuristic activities that have too often been coded as white in American media culture (Rollefson, 2008). As such, the works of the Afrofuturist, be it in music, movies, art, or literature, help to create the notion that they are also present in the future, and so is their art, cosmology, philosophy and crafts. In Afrofuturism, as well as Africanfuturism, there is a chance to envision a radical and progressive vision of blackness – one in which justice reigns in superheroes and where black creativity is mystical and fascinating. In this space, Black life matters (Peters, 2018, March 6).

It is worth noting that there has been an attempt at growing such mystical and fascinating scenes not only in the diaspora, but in some countries in Africa too. For instance, Mawuli

Adjei in talking about evolution and the search for identity in the video-movie flourish in Ghana makes mention of *2016,* a Ghanaian movie produced in 2014. He describes it as, "a quasi-futuristic science-fiction film themed on alien invasion, in which robotic aliens from space invade Ghana in their quest to conquer and dominate the entire country" (Adjei, 2014, p. 66). Adjei adds that "these technologically-induced images have enthralled and appealed to a large percentage of unsophisticated patrons who now have concrete visual expressions of the occult and other narrative tropes which exist in folklore and popular theatre, but are confined to the imagination."

2.2 DEFINITIONS

The term **Afrofuturism** as stated earlier, is a term that was coined by writer Mark Dery in his 1994 work "Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture" (Dery, 1993). Though the idea remains constant, that Afrofuturism has to do with the connection of the imagination of the future with the lives of global Africans (Rettová, 2017) many artists and authors have different opinions that they use to describe the term.

With some pre-colonial African societies already having the concept of telling stories about the future, it has become contentious whether or not stories from such societies can be considered as Afrofuturism, or Africanfuturism, as some argue that Africans do not have the capacity to conceive of a "distant future" (Mbiti, 1990). Though such arguments have been proven refuted, the definitions are therefore very important to helping us understand the concept.

Yaszek in a sentence defines the concept as appropriating "the narrative techniques of science fiction to put a black face on the future" (Yaszek, 2005, p. 297). Since the future of the Black is mostly a dystopian tale, Afrofuturism "uses the vocabulary of science

fiction to reconfigure the relations of race, science and technology " as well as "disrupt, challenge and otherwise transform those futures with fantastic stories" (Yaszek, 2005, p. 301). Yaszek (2006) reemphasises Dery's description of Afrofuturism in the work, "Afrofuturism, science fiction, and the history of the future" when she describes the concept as "speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th-century 'techno culture' – and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" to explore how people of colour negotiate life in a technology intensive world" (Dery, 1993; Yaszek, 2006).

British-Ghanaian writer Kodwo Eshun describes Afrofuturism as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection and as a space within which the critical work of manufacturing tools capable of intervention within the current political dispensation may be undertaken (Eshun, 2003). This definition does not only take into consideration the lives and works of Africans in the diaspora, but also posits the African artist that researches this dimension will find a space for distinct kinds of anticipatory designs, projects of emulation, manipulation, parasitism" and that as a tool kit, "the imperative to code, adopt, adapt, translate, misread, rework, and revise these concepts, is likely to persist in the decades to come" (Eshun, 2003).

Furthermore, leading Afrofuturist scholar Ytasha L. Womack defines Afrofuturism as "an intersection of imagination, technology, the future and liberation, in which Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future by combining elements

of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs" (Womack, 2013).

The study also extensively focuses on the importance of Afrofuturism to the youth. Youth is a term used often when making referring to young people, someone with the vitality of a young person or people before the stage of maturity. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted the African Union Commission's African Youth Charter definition of a youth as the population under study. Thus, youth refers to persons who are between the ages of 15 and 35 years old (African Union, 2006).

2.3 AFROFUTURISM AND IDENTITY

Afrofuturism is very strong on the image it projects for the black person. As Yaszek (2005) posits, the genre is focused on having a Black face in the narrative of the future. For most creatives, the aim is to reclaim a lost racial identity in a dynamic and inspiring way (Lee, 2016, Oct 17) through the formation of a new, fluid identity that has had to be shaped after years of having a pejorative connotation to the black race (Esteve, 2016, Mar 22). Esteve (2016) argues that the term 'black' for long time had been associated with negative actions such slavery and inferiority, and as he quotes Eshun, slavery meant that black people had been existing in an alien-nation for about three centuries. Thus, there was the need for the creation of a new narrative about Blacks, where the people of African descent start writing alternative history and modelling the future (Lee, 2016, Oct 17).

Since the origin of black people in the American diaspora is Africa, Afrofuturism is framed, albeit gradually, within the field of an African identity, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century (Esteve, 2016, Mar 22). Many of the creatives who

consistently shaped the genre in the diaspora especially at the formation held the view that the men, women and children shipped to the West Indies and North America from Africa during the slave trade era belonged to glorious empires and kingdoms that were eventually destroyed by raids and attacks from colonialists, and hence the destruction of their places of origin was done together with the destruction of the identities and their self-esteem, and this calls for the re-invention of Black Identity (vhedza1, 2018).

Thus, Afrofuturism can also be classified as passably political, one that directs its effort towards the interruption in the process of Black identity formation that resulted from the violent disruption of African culture (vhedza1, 2018), and which seeks to inspire hope for the future (UKEssays, 2018). Hall Stuart describes this kind of identity as:

> *a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation (Hall, 1990, p. 225)*

The above excerpt shows that identities are created over periods of time, through various processes, continuously undergoing change, influenced by the past, a situation that results in a group of people as conferring on themselves something that they identify themselves with what they relate to after a time.

Furthermore, the emergence of new media has also contributed massively to the formation and promotion of a new black identity, and one that can be viewed in the future. Film is cultural activity and an identity-marker (Adjei, 2014, p. 67), reaching and attracting a large and diverse audience, while providing iconic breakthroughs in cultural representation (Sweeney, 2019, Mar 1). New media has brought about a cultural

influence which can be a two-way affair, with the Africa influencing the rest of the world and vice versa. Film, like the theatre, employs the creative and aesthetic elements that are invoking to the visual, verbal and indeed all the sense that awaken emotions in an audience, such that they associate with the film, own the film and want it to be theirs (Adjei, 2014).

However, Afrofuturism identity is not just limited to the diaspora. As will be established later on in this work, Afrofuturism as a concept differs based on the origin of the creative or the artist involved. Thus, artists and creatives in Africa have a slightly different approach to the concept as compared to their counterparts in the diaspora. Like Zambian-born Afrofuturist writer, photographer and activist, Masiyaleti Mbewe argues, creatives born and raised in Africa create their identities based on their exposure to folklore and myths from the different spaces they find themselves in Africa (vhedza1, 2020). The dichotomy is found in the understanding that the life experiences and contemporary history differ purely because they exists in different parts of the world (vhedza1, 2020). Therefore, when the Ethiopian creative and comic producer Beserat Debebe created the country's first female superhero comic character *Hawi*, the identity stemmed from the mysteries of the kingdoms and queendoms of Ethiopia's rich past (Kiunguyu, 2019, Mar 25) and was not influenced by slavery or any of such similar negative psyches.

2.4 AFROFUTURISM AND BLACK LIVES MATTER

Another definition of Afrofuturism is proposed in the spirit of sociology. That is, Afrofuturism is a literary style which puts Black experiences in the central premise which is demonstrated through fantasy and science fiction (Huddleston, 2016). UK Essays in a 2018 publication titled *Black Lives Matter Movement and Afrofuturism* argues that "the

most important common thread between Black Lives Matter and Afrofuturism is the goal to dissuade racism and white supremacy."

The essay further argues that the next common thread is the skill with which these groups utilize technology, social networks and artistic media to work together towards a common goal. Thus, the historical issues which influences the central theme of Afrofuturism, which is to portray endless possibilities to the traditionally oppressed to rise above life's challenges, are similar to issues that influence the *Black Lives Matter* movement. As the Essays material also argues, "the current mindset is that Blacks are not equal; schools are still segregated; whites are especially favoured; and the future for Blacks is bleak."

The *Black Lives Matter* movement is an example of what happens when technology and resistance merge to fight oppression. Essay posits that it is where the image of a superhero, takes on a less science fiction form and demonstrates how technology and black people can make things happen and possibly change the future. As subsequent events have shown, rather than depending on media or word of mouth on the street to spread the word or organize rallies, Twitter offers a forum upon which news of black injustice may be circulated and Facebook supports the assimilation of rallies. this also shows the point that "Afrofuturism is the mechanism that creates and then portrays endless possibilities to the traditionally oppressed to rise above life's challenges" (Essays, 2018)

Also, Afrofuturism and the *Black Lives Matter* movement show that there is an opportunity for oppressed people to also have an opportunity to achieve their potential. Afrofuturism evinces that representation matters. Afrofuturism takes the situation, the wishes and ambitions of the movement and inserts the desire for representation into a

futuristic setting. Essay (2018) states that, "Just think for a moment of the results of forces joined between Afrofuturists and Black Lives Matter members! One would have the opportunity to exposure to Black history outside the white wash. The other could contribute to changing the future by interacting with the real-time, present."

Afrofuturism and the Black Lives Matter movement give a voice to the oppressed and subjugated people in the diaspora and all other such groups everywhere. Afrofuturism, thus, provides a forum within which hope is inspired for the future.

2.5 AFROFUTURISM VERSUS AFRICANFUTURISM

2.5.1 "AFROFUTURISM IS NOT FOR AFRICANS LIVING IN AFRICA"

In recent times, there has been an ongoing debate as to how "African" the nature of Afrofuturism is. Though creatives associated with Afrofuturism have always drawn a picture that the concept is about the global African, especially about the future of the global African and how the past can impact the imagined future, not everyone agrees to the form it has been popularly presented in.

In 2018, South African writer Mohale Mashigo argued that the concept of Afrofuturism does not resonate well with continental Africans. In her write up titled 'Afrofuturism is not for Africans living in Africa', she raises an interesting points about the need to be dynamic about Afrofuturism in Africa, and even among the various countries, due to the fact that though the colonial and post-independence experiences of global Africans are similar, they are not the same and as such the future (just like the past) should be context specific (Mashigo, 2018, Oct 1).

As a continental African, she maintains that she finds it "insincere" to parrot the futuristic conceptions of writers from the diaspora as 'totally hers". She posits that, "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." She adds that "Afrofuturism is an escape for those who find themselves in the minority and divorced or violently removed from their African roots, so they imagine a 'Black future' where they aren't a minority and are able to marry their culture with technology. That is a very important story and it means a lot to many people. There are so many wonderful writers from the diaspora dealing with those feelings or complexities that it would be insincere of me to parrot what they are doing" (Mashigo, 2018, Oct 1).

The writer here maintains that the challenges of South Africa, where a small minority owns most of the land and lives better lives than the rest, will be totally different from other parts of the continent which do not have to deal with the land reform issue, but rather an issue of insurgency and political instability, such as the Sahel region of West Africa or even imperialism and neo-colonialism in many parts of the continent. Therefore, "we need a project that predicts -it is fiction after all- Africa's future 'postcolonialism'. . . because colonialism (and apartheid) affected us in unique, but sometimes similar, ways" (Mashigo, 2018, Oct 1).

2.5.2 AFRICANFUTURISM NOT AFROFUTURISM

Another ongoing debate, and very relatable in this context, is the Afrofuturism-Africanfuturism debate. Coined by Nigerian writer and professor Nnedi Okorafor, the term 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.

Nnedi Okorafor, who describes herself as an "Africanfuturist and Africanjujuist", explains the difference as Africanfuturism "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" (Okorafor, 2019, Oct 19). Okorafor (2009) also states other differences including, Africanfuturism "predominantly written by people of African descent", "rooted first and foremost in Africa", "less concerned with 'what could have been' and more concerned with 'what is and can/will be'" and that "Its default is non-western; its default/center is African and has to extend beyond the continent of Africa, though often it does." She cites an example as,

> *Afrofuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in Oakland, CA, USA.*
>
> *Africanfuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in a neighbouring African country.*

Wakanda is an imaginary country in the Marvel Films 2018 sci-fi movie *Black Panther.* Wakanda is the world's most technologically-advanced country and a far cry from typical depictions of poverty-stricken Africa. In this example, Okorafor explains how the country of *Wakanda* would be described under the various genres. Her first description is from the diaspora-influenced concept of Afrofuturism, while the second is from the continental African influenced concept of Africanfuturism. Though both definitions show a progressive, digital-first country with new technologies and ideas, the presentation of the cities is different per the genres.

Päivi Väätänen, in a 2019 article on Afro- versus African futurism in two of Nnedi Okorafor's works states the difference that, whereas an Afrofuturist text engages with American culture via direct critique of stereotypes and racist genre conventions, Africanfuturism is rooted both geographically and culturally on the continent (Väätänen,

2019, Oct 13). Furthermore, Väätänen (2019) also explains that while Afrofuturism works are actively facilitating the decolonization of genre by attacking narrative expectations in need of dismantling, Africanfuturism focuses more on the decolonized narrative that offers a reconstructed identity. However, the most significant point that can be made about African futurists is the fact that African futurists when writing their own stories, they can cut ties with the West, with the "reality" that needs to be "inverted," and establish a new normalcy that is not dependent on comparisons with Eurocentric, racist and colonialist traditions of Anglo American science fiction (Väätänen, 2019, Oct 13).

This debate has therefore raised more questions in the field of speculative fiction, Africa and science and technology. Should Africans shun Afrofuturism? Is Africanfuturism the 'future' of African science fiction?

Though these questions do arise, what we understand is that both the goals of Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism can be summarized and generally put forward as "the prospect for freedom of social transformation through science fiction and technology" (Lavender, 2011).

With these arguments made, it would be fair to agree with the arguments of Mohale Mashingo and others from section 1.0 of this chapter, that "Afrofuturism is not for Africans living in Africa" and that though the concept, in modern times, has copiously benefitted from the emergence and popularity of the Afrofuturist concept, the aims, goals and aspirations of both, though they might sound similar, are definitely not close to being the same. The concepts can however benefit from each other, especially with Africanfuturism now feeding from Afrofuturism and taking it a step further.

2.5.3 AFRICAN JUJUISM AND AFRICANFUTURISM

African Jujuism is an aspect of Africanfuturism which was coined by American-Nigerian writer and scholar Nnedi Okorafor, who as stated in section 2.0 of this chapter describes herself also as an "African Jujuist".

In November 2018 while speaking at an event held at Liberty Hall, Kansan University, Okorafor explained that African Jujuism is not just any kind of fantasy literature because it "sort of complicates the idea of fantasy because it weaves in real beliefs" and further added that "the magical society in the book is based on a real society in Nigeria, and this is something I knew about even before I wrote books, so when I sat down to write them, I was pulling from the culture that I am of" (Paige, 2018).

Okorafor reiterated this point in her address to Highland Park High School in February 2019 during the school's literary festival. She said, "This is not Harry Potter – this is African Jujuism. One can read it like it is fantasy, but there are people who actually believe these things. It's important to understand that to understand the literature" (Kelleher, 2019, Feb 27).

Hence, the concept of African Jujuism, may be characterised as the adoption of real belief systems in the writings and other works of fantasy and science fiction, especially in the works of Africanfuturism.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To answer the research questions posed in Chapter one of this work, I propose Pan-Africanism as a theoretical framework for the study. And in this section, I define what Pan-Africanism, identify the key concepts of the theory and explain them. I then offer a brief background to the concept and ideology of Pan-Africanism and how it has evolved

over time. Finally, I explain how it fits into my study and show why it is an appropriate framework for the study.

Former African freedom fighter and Professor of African American Studies, Horace Campbell (1988) postulates that Pan-Africanism was a manifestation of nationalist consciousness and that this concept is internationalist in so far as it seeks the unity of people living in a large number of juridically independent states.

Another acclaimed Pan-Africanist, Dr St. Clair Drake defined Pan-Africanism as a "worldwide Black consciousness that has a psychological reserve that can be mobilized to achieve local ends as well as to aid others as the liberation process continues" (Tarik, 2018).

Most importantly and for the purposes of this work, Tarik (2018) also posits that Pan-Africanism exists within the global Black world as an imaginative return to Africa, a practical platform and as a futuristic theory for global Black freedom.

From the above definitions, I deduce that Pan-Africanism is built on the notion that the people of African origins and descent have interests in common. Also, the emergence of the global Africa idea constituted a major breakthrough in the search of an oppressed people for self-emancipation.

The main reasons for choosing this theory, and this framework as a structure to support my analysis of afro/African futurism is that Pan-Africanism as a theoretical framework seeks to promote the rediscovery and reconstruction of the African identity and projecting the black person as worthy of esteem and respect (Middleton, 1970). In the quest to rediscover Africa and define the identity of Africans in the contemporary world, works of creative art such as music, films, paintings etc serve as a vehicle which can be used to transport the message of Pan-Africanism. As a framework to analyse Afrofuturism, the

study looks at the relationship between the genre as a tool for reconstruction of the African identity and the dignity of the black race, and how it promotes Pan-Africanism such rediscovery, especially of traditional values, myths, ideologies and technologies.

July (1983) proves that the desire to restate in modern times the verities of traditional African values is expressed in varied fashion; in the novels of Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah; in the choreography of A. M. Opoku and his Ghana Dance Ensemble; and in the plays of Efua Sutherland. He further argues that "political freedom would thrive best when accompanied by a parallel autonomy of cultural expression" (July, 1983, p. 119). The proponents of Pan-Africanism just as in the case of Afrofuturism, however, must not stringently be continental Africans. July (1993, p. 126) throwing more light on cultural Pan Africanism and the rediscovery of Africa through art further posits that, "Soyinka sees epic drama as the means through which the African returns to his sources… African civilisation is its own civilization." Thus, he later adds, "What is essential, however, is a technology expressly designed and adapted to African requirements."

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier by Tarik, Pan-Africanism exists within the black world to prove the possibility of its rapid development through the introduction of modern techniques and to find some synthesis between the needs of modernization and the preservation of African society and culture (Geiss, 1969). What the framework seeks to interpret and explain is the proof of Afrofuturism to the rediscovery of Africa and the Black race. Afrofuturism as a genre aims to prove the rapid development through the introduction of modern techniques and project blacks and Africans out of the abyss of the plethora of challenges it faces. This phenomenon can be made possible through the introduction of modern techniques, and the synthesis between the need for rediscovery and the preservation of African society and culture.

Culture is composed of the general lifestyle of a group of people. Mawuli Adjei posits also that, "like folklore and music, film is a cultural activity and an identity-marker" (Adjei, 2014, p. 67). During the long periods of oppression, the Europeans tried to erase the African memory and instil a sense of shame attached to their culture and within the community (Zulu, 2017). Thus, for most African Studies scholars, the history of Africa is doctored, misinforming and narrow, beginning from the point at which there was an attempt to erase the African culture and memory, which is the colonization period and often told from the point of view of the oppressor. This ignores the Africa that was before the demeaning period of slavery and exploitation of Africa and puts the black race in a disgraceful minority. For instance, in *The Image of Africa*, Achebe in describing the writings of Conrad states the dehumanizing way the African was characterised as follows, "Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Of course, there is a preposterous and perverse kind of arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one petty European mind" (Achebe, 1978, p. 9).

Furthermore, it is widely agreed, that the origin of Pan Africanism begins from the Diaspora communities in the late 1800s (Agbeyebiawo, 1998; Edozie, 2012) before it was later brought to Africa in the mid twentieth century. The word Pan Africanism is also recorded to have been birthed or first used in 1900 during the first Pan African conference organized by Sylvester Williams in London (Agbeyebiawo, 1998). The ideological sibling of Pan Africanism, Negritude, was also first expounded by Aime Cesaire, a revolutionary, poet and political leader of Martinique (Middleton, 1970). From this background, we can commence by stating that a concept that focuses so much on the African and black person must not compulsorily be birthed by Africans on the continent,

but can be brought forth by any black person both on the continent and in the diaspora. As Du Bois stated in a letter to Kwame Nkrumah, "the bond is no mere colour of skin, but the deeper experience of wage-slavery and contempt" (Agbeyebiawo, 1998). The African diaspora,

> "is the result of at least three major movements of peoples; The first movement is that which we associate with the Atlantic slave trade, beginning in the mid fifteenth century, this stream brought upwards of 200,000 persons to Europe and twelve million or more to the Americas before it ended in the nineteenth century. The second movement is associated with the East African slave trade to Asia, which roughly concluded with the era of the Atlantic slave trade. The third stream is the contemporary movement of Africans and peoples of African descent to various societies of the globe" (Palmer, 2000).

Another construct is that Pan Africanism as a concept is for the identity and re-invention of Africa, and is one that is supported by famous Pan Africanists, especially the freedom fighters and nation founders. In *Revisiting Nkrumah: Pathways For the Future*, Frehiwot posits that, "much like Amilcar Cabral of Cape Verde in his book Return to the Source, Nkrumah believed culture played an active role in the liberation and development process and called on the realization of an African personality to assist with the cultural transformation (Frehiwot, 2017). He (Nkrumah) agreed with (Ahmed) Toure and (Amilcar) Cabral that culture encompassed much more than dancing and singing; it was the totality of life and it influenced economics and politics" (Frehiwot, 2017, p. 133). She further adds that to Nkrumah, culture could be used as a revolutionary force to change the mindset of Ghanaians and Africans alike. In this case, Pan-Africanism is the structure that is supporting the themes of Afrofuturism to find out how this can be possible.

Horace Campbell posits, "in the context of the twenty first century, Pan Africanism will continue to mean the struggle for emancipation through diverse means; seeking unity and expressing the common purpose of fighting white domination and restoring African community (Campbell, 1996, p. 90). Thus, one of the key principles underlying Pan Africanism, is the unity of all African peoples. Therefore, the works of all Pan-Africanists should not seem to divide or pitch Blacks or African groups against each other, but rather such works should show and promote the unity and beauty in diversity of Africans. As Campbell (1996) further argues that, "Pan Africanism must develop a new pedagogy, in essence, a new way for the reproduction, transference and use of knowledge". During Nkrumah's installation as Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 1961, he also stated that, "It is important for every student to maintain his links with the African scene, and thus understand the great cause of African Unity to which we are committed. All Africa is moving closer and closer together" (Obeng, 1979).

Furthermore, as a theoretical framework, Pan Africanism is valid in an academic discourse because it challenges us to produce the kind of imaginations and ideas which can inspire people to look forward to a great future, that helps create a dynamic society with equal opportunities for all and where the aims and needs of the society adjust and adapt to reflect the societal change (Nkrumah, 1963, Oct 25). These ideas, though propounded to academics, do not and should not only involve or be applicable by an elite group like political leaders or scholars, but involve artists, creatives, the youth and indeed all African people wherever they find themselves.

One such example is the work of the Rastafari as it relates to Pan Africanism. The Rastafari and their Pan African activism points to forms of social organisation and social movements among oppressed Africans at home and abroad, where the ideas of racial

superiority circulated widely in the twentieth century, became popular among all, and led to the widespread assertion by Africans that, "so long as there are people who deny our humanity as blacks, then for so long must we proclaim our humanity as blacks" (Campbell, 1988).

Campbell (1988) also echoes Eusi Kwayana's views that, "the power of art that Bob Marley's music represented had done more to popularize the real issues of African liberation than several decades of back breaking work by Pan Africanists and international revolutionaries. Campbell further argues that at the level of consciousness, the appeal of artistic people like the Rasta was not embedded only in the conceptions of liberations, but in the admonition that the youth should emancipate themselves from mental slavery.

Thus, Pan-Africanism as a concept, offers an opportunity to redefine the relationships between identity, oppression, resistance, unity and emancipation. Adeyemi (2009) argues that African cinema, in the service of cultural nationalism, must be seen and used as a revolutionary weapon fashioned to provide concepts of leadership, community collaboration, economic structures and socio-political mobilization capable of engendering radical change which will help Blacks define their own culture, based on their heritage and history.

To conclude, Pan-Africanism in the twenty first century continues to mean the relationship between the struggle for emancipation through diverse means, seeking unity and expressing the common purpose of liberation, specifically fighting and restoring African community (Campbell, 1996). It deals with the idea of how we define identity and the re-invention of Africa, not just in a local concept, but one that is inclusive of an existing diaspora. Therefore, under the lens of Pan-Africanism, Afrofuturism is analysed

as a potential force, and most importantly cultural tool that is able to serve as an instrument for emancipation from the stereotyped and looked-down-upon narrative of the 21st century.

CHAPTER 3 - FINDINGS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Moving on from the ongoing debates in the field of Afrofuturism and other related sub-fields, this section looks at the findings and analysis of some of the data taken for the study. This chapter looks at the common issues that run through both the novel *Kindred* and the movie *Black Panther.* The researcher intends to find out how issues such as power, gender and time intersect with race to develop the Afrofuturistic phenomena that results in black people seeing themselves in a better future despite a troubled past and present. This will be done in the framework of Pan Africanism. This chapter begins with an introduction to the writer Octavia Butler, the author of many Afrofuturist novels, including *Kindred,* the novel being analysed. A brief background and summary are also given about the movie *Black Panther.* This is to give an introduction to the personality of an Afrofuturist writer. The researcher then analyses the issues in the novel, as well as those in the movie, and intends to unearth other factors that promote the genre of Afrofuturism.

3.1 BIOGRAPHY OF OCTAVIA BUTLER

Amanda Prahl in her 2019 article states that Octavia Estelle Butler was born on June 22, 1947 in California and she is the first and only child to a mother who worked as a housemaid and a father who was a shoeshine man (Prahl, 2019, Nov 27, p. 205). Her father died when she was seven years old, and she was raised by her mother and her grandmother for most of her young age. There were many times she followed her mother to a clients' homes, and she witnessed how disdainfully her mother was often treated by her white employers.

Prahl (2019) also narrates that, "Outside of her family life, Butler struggled. She had to deal with mild dyslexia, as well as having an intensely shy personality. As a result, she struggled to form friendships and was often the target of bullies. She spent the bulk of her time at the local library, reading and, eventually, writing." With her passion in creative pursuits, she read more and eventually begun writing, submitting short stories for publishing as early as the age of 13.

In an interview with Stephen Potts in February 1996 when asked who her "authorial influences" were as an apprentice writer, she remarked to Potts:

> "I read a lot of science fiction with absolutely no discrimination when I was growing up-I mean, good, bad, or awful [laughs]. It didn't matter. I remember latching onto people and reading everything I could find by them, people like John Brunner, who wrote a lot. . . I tended to read whatever was in the house, which meant that I read a lot of odd stuff. Who was that guy that used to write about men's clubs all the time? John O'Hara. It was Mars for me. I like British between-the-wars mysteries for the same reason. They take place on Mars; they're different worlds (Potts & Butler, 1996, pp. 333 - 334).

While in college, she Butler was exposed to classmates involved in the Black Power Movement "who criticized previous generations of Black Americans for accepting a subservient role" (Prahl, 2019, Nov 27), a time which would later influence her writing.

Butler's breakthrough came when she attended a program held by the Writers Guild of America to facilitate the development of minority writers. One of her teachers there was Harlan Ellison, a science fiction writer who had written one of the most famous *Star Trek* episodes, as well as several pieces of *New Age* and science fiction writing. Ellison was

impressed with Butler's work and encouraged her to attend a six-week science fiction workshop held in Clarion, Pennsylvania. Not only did she meet lifelong friends such as Samuel R. Delany, but she produced some of her first work to be published (Prahl, 2019, Nov 27).

Butler, often referred to as a godmother of Afrofuturism (Gibson, 2018, Jun 22), has 18 novels and several short stories to her name, including bestsellers like *Kindred (1979), Wild Seed (1980)* and *Parable of the Sower (1993).* She acknowledged that she has three audiences, "the science fiction audience, the black audience, and the feminist audience" (Potts & Butler, 1996).

Potts referred to Butler as "a woman of colour working in a genre that has almost none", and in her conversation with him (Potts), she stated that, "science fiction is supposed to be about exploring new ideas and possibilities" (Potts & Butler, 1996). Crossley in his critical essay of the novel wrote that, "In all her fiction she has produced parables that speak to issues of cultural difference, whether sexual, racial, political, economic or psychological, and to issues of mastery and self-mastery. *Kindred* shares imagery with Butler's futuristic novels, in particular with *Parable of the Talents,* whose electronically controlled collars and neurological 'lashings' are but science-fictional extrapolations of the plantation owners' coffles and whippings" (Crossley, 2003, p. 268).

One of the few women of colour publishing in a genre dominated by white men, Butler won the coveted Hugo Award and Nebula Prize twice each for her novella *"Bloodchild,"* her short story *"Speech Sounds,"* and her novel *Parable of the Talents*, respectively, as well as being the first science fiction writer to ever receive the MacArthur Fellowship (Gibson, 2018, Jun 22).

3.2.1 BACKGROUND OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

The name *Black Panther* is was made famous in the 1966 when a pro-black group was formed in Oakland, California to confront politicians and police violence against black people, and to also protect black citizens from police viciousness in America (NMAAHC, 2020). Founded by young political activists Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, the group was initially referred to as the *Black Panther Party for Self-Defense* and attracted widespread support among young urban blacks, who were often seen clad in the party's black leather jackets and black berets distinctive costume, and were also often seen carrying weapons (Carson & Carson, 1990).

The *Black Panther Party (BPP)* was formed from the Civil Rights Movement which was headed by civil rights activist Dr Martin Luther King Jnr. The BPP thus was made up of a young generation that had given up on Martin Luther King's non-violent tactics, and while the Civil Rights Movement sought equality with whites and was mainly a middle-class group, the BPP assumed equality and saw an opportunity to express that equality. For them, they saw black power as a global revolution, that they were tired of the inferiority complex that the white society had for a long time put on black people and linked their liberation activities with other movements in Africa and South East Asia (NMAAHC, 2020).

In an interview granted in the late mid 1960s, Huey Newton explained why they used the black panther as a symbol:

> *"We used the panther as our symbol because of the nature of panthers. Panthers do not strike anyone but when he is assailed upon that he will back up first, but if the aggressor continues, then he will strike out." ~ (The New York Times, 2015, Jan 23)*

The party's appeal among young people was due to its willingness to challenge the police power by asserting the right of armed self-defence for black people (Carson & Carson, 1990) and their ideas were more in line with the ideology of African American human rights activist Malcom X, that non-violent protests could not truly liberate black Americans or give them power over their own lives.

The *Black Panther Party* was also involved in certain community services providing critical assistance to the people. They organized voter registration drives, a free breakfast program for 20,000 children daily, sponsored legal aid offices, clothes distributions, health clinics etc (NMAAHC, 2020) making their reputation increase significantly in black communities nationwide. Most black people in their communities were experiencing their own problems with racism, racial discrimination, police profiling and brutality and were not receiving equal justice under the law. Black communities were also predominantly poor and did not have access to certain medical facilities, and when they did, could not afford the high charges being charged them.

Culturally, members of the *Black Panther Party* aside the distinctive black leather jackets and black berets which characterized their clothing, also kept an afro as a way to embrace their Afrocentric personality and as a form of cultural liberation. They saw their nationality as Afro-American and promoted the belief and saying, "black is beautiful." These actions were spurred on by other activists such as African American musician James Brown with his 1969 hit song "Say it Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)". Some of their member also opted for local African names as against the pro-western and European names that they had. For instance, a one-time Panther's prime minister Stokely Carmichael would later change his name to Kwame Toure in honour of the first Presidents of Ghana and Guinea.

Gender empowerment was also at the forefront of the party's activities. Almost half of the members of the *Black Panther Party* were women, with a some of them holding certain key positions including the national chairperson, which was held by Elaine Brown in 1972 (NMAAHC, 2020).

Internal schisms, legal problems, external attacks (Carson & Carson, 1990) as well as other activities such as police raids immensely affected the activities and weakened the BPP in the late 1960s and early 1970s. some panthers like Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed and many others including Panther's founder Huey Newton and six female Panther's in Connecticut were arrested and imprisoned by the various federal and national agencies.

Black Power till date remains a movement that still challenges police brutality and racial injustice. There still is a need for change. Though there are many forms that these protests take currently, such as taking the knee or the black lives matter protests, the core issues which the black community outside Africa and in America especially race remain, and hence the black power movement.

3.2.2 THE FILM BLACK PANTHER

The film follows Prince T'Challa whom after the death of his father King T'Chaka, returns to Wakanda to ascend the throne as king.

His right to rule is established after the defeat of M'Baku, leader of the Jabari, one of the ethnic groups in the land, in ritual combat. After his coronation, he sets out to go after Ulysses Klaue, a man who stole a rare Wakandan mineral from them and killed some people in order to escape. On this avenging mission, he encounters a man with a Wakandan royal ring who aids Klaue to escape. He returns to Zuri, the royal priestess, to

inquire about who this man could be. He learns of the evil his father committed in the past, killing his own brother (T'Challa's uncle) and leaving his brother's son behind. This man, who happens to be his (T'Challa) cousin is Erik Killmonger, also known as N'Jadaka, soon comes back to fight him and take the throne as king, defeating T'Challa in the ritual combat and killing Zuri in the process.

Erik Killmonger, although fuelled by rage, is a relatable villain because he sought to liberate people, especially those of African descendants and many others who were being oppressed around the world in a global revolution to prevent them from having everything they loved taken away like he had. This was against the Wakanda foreign policy of keeping to themselves, not sharing their knowledge and resources with the outside world and not providing aid or accepting refugees, though they had developed their nation more than any other country in the world and had the capacity to grant aid to neighbouring countries in need as well as receive refugees.

After regaining his throne and country, T'Challa realizes that he must lead his people into a novel future where Wakanda will share its wealth and technological advances with the rest of the world. The film ends with King T'Challa setting up a Wakandan International Outreach Center in California to share the knowledge and resource with the outside world.

3.3 COMMON THEMES THAT RUN THROUGH THE WORKS

A theme refers to recurrent ideas in a piece of work. Some sub-themes have been identified in the two works that were analysed for this study (*Kindred* and *Black Panther*) that characterize a work as works of Afrofuturism. these themes will be examined within the framework of Pan Africanism. As stated earlier, Afrofuturism refers to putting a black face on the future through the appropriation of science fiction.

3.3.1 BLACK PROTAGONISTS

First and foremost, a key theme in the works of Afrofuturism is the use of Black Protagonists. Protagonists are principal characters in a work of fiction. The main characters of both works are Black characters, and the story revolves around them. They are the superheroes of the stories, and they are usually endowed with supernatural powers or may have special abilities.

This is mostly the case because the plot of the stories, films or music is most often couched to resist oppression, see across time or escape from a poor state, a metaphor of the colonisation and exploitation of Africa (Esteve, 2016, Mar 22). This is also done to have a black face in the genre, to communicate a story, or to deepen the cultural appreciation of Black people.

Since the science fiction-futuristic scene is a white male dominated scene, this change is a crucial change from the norm. In *Kindred,* the main character Dana is a black young woman. We first see Dana talk about her identity in an altercation with Rufus, the son of a white slave owner in the opening chapters of the story. Butler describes the altercation as:

> *...Rufus drowned. "Why?"*
>
> *I stared at him.*
>
> *"What's wrong?" he asked. "Why are you mad?"*
>
> *"Your mother always call black people niggers, Rufe?"*
>
> *"Sure, except when she has company. Why not?"*

> *His air of innocent questioning confused me. Either he really didn't know what he was saying, or he had a career waiting in Hollywood. Whichever it was, he wasn't going to go on saying it to me.*
>
> *"I'm a black woman, Rufe. If you have to call me something other than my name, that's it." ~ (Butler, 1979, p. 25)*

Early in the novel, we see Dana trying to earn herself some self-respect in a period when there was little to none for black people. Though the story starts with her saving Rufus, the son of a white plantation owner, she is paid back with gross disrespect and the arrogance meted out to people of her colour during that time.

As soon as Dana finds out she has ancestral ties with Rufus, she does all she can in her power to make sure that her family link is not extinguished. She is particularly concerned about Alice, the daughter of slaves, who will be the source through which her ancestry will be kept intact, live as a free people and escape the dire situation that Alice was facing as a slave. She makes sure that by the end, this happens and her ancestry is saved.

In *Black Panther,* the characters are predominantly a Black all-star cast, as well as a Black director, Black screenwriters, and to a large extent, a huge Black supporting cast and crew (Yusuf, 2018, Feb 24a). The movie is set in a fictional African country called Wakanda, and is about a conflict between T'Challa, who becomes King after the death of his father King T'Chaka, and Killmonger, a young black man from the diaspora who we soon discover is a cousin to T'Challa and a nephew of King T'Chaka. Notable characters in the story also are Ramonda, the Queen Mother of Wakanda and mother of T'Challa and Shuri, the sister of T'Challa.

In the movie too, there are fictional ethnic groups which have been symbolically carved out of certain ethnic groups on the African continent. This increases the amount of

African cultural display in the movie. The Merchant Tribe is symbolic to the nomadic ethic groups, a people that were once referred to as "Lords of the Desert" and are located in areas that stretch from the Sahara in countries like Algeria, to places in south of the Sahel like Mali and Niger (Lecocq & Klute, 2013, p. 424). One example of such people is the Tuareg people. The Border Tribe, a group made up of warriors disguised as peasant farmers that protects the country's borders and mostly represented in the movie by W'Kabi, are often seen dressed in the traditional gear of the Basotho people of Lesotho (Chutel & Kazeem, 2018, Feb 19), who are a Bantu-speaking people in Southern Africa. The River Tribe, typified by the elder mostly seen with the lip plate (and the ear ring plate), is representative of the culture of the Surma and Mursi people of Ethiopia. Lastly, the Mining tribe, whose women are seen with red clay known as the *otjize* paste used on their bodies and to plait their hair to thick locks, often leaving ends to puff, are representative of the Himba ethnic group of the northwest of Namibia (Chutel & Kazeem, 2018, Feb 19). With these instances and many more, we see a conscious attempt to have a blend of African images, culture and lifestyle on the world screen. As typical of Pan Africanism, and in this particular instance cultural Pan Africanism, there is a variety of cultures of African tradition represented in the movie.

This is also very significant point to make because with the production of *Black Panther,* and all the inclusive Black and African characters involved, this tackles the narrative that science fiction is primarily a "white male genre" (Potts & Butler, 1996, p. 338).

From the imagery projected in *Black Panther,* through the colours, the natural hairstyles, the fashion and the languages used, there is a complete promotion of African culture and lifestyles. To put black images on the international scene, in all the shine and glory, not only as a minor character, but as a major character in the production, puts a black face on the future and challenges the existing white genre narrative.

The creation of both narratives gives the sense of a Black and an African race that can believes in recreating societies and rewriting narratives about where they currently are in world affairs. Creating a space for black people to dream, the insistence on black humanity about the past, present and future, and recognising that these are happening simultaneously is a visionary space that the Pan Africanist of the twentieth century believed in creating to reclaim power, his history and culture (Onyango, 2018; Whaley, 2018, Feb 27).

3.3.2 SUPERPOWERS/SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

In addition to the above theme, another common theme that runs through the works of Afrofuturism is the *superpowers/supernatural abilities* of the characters. As typical of science fiction, characters possess certain levels of super powers that enable them to perform certain actions and activities. As Octavia Butler stated in 1996, "science fiction is about exploring new ideas and possibilities" (Potts & Butler, 1996). In these texts, humans, especially the main black characters are given more powers than they naturally have.

In *Black Panther,* Shuri is an innovator who is gifted with such intellectual abilities that she can create and manufacture certain technologically advanced weapons. In Wakanda, "beads made of 'vibranium' heal bullet wounds, and a bulletproof suit absorbs and stores the energy of hostile blows" (Reese, 2018, Feb 27). Shuri's super intelligence serves as a catalyst for developing the tools that the people and army of Wakanda use to fight against forces of intimidation. With Shuri being one of the most intellectually gifted characters in the superhero world, she is able to come up with inventions that protect the people of

Wakanda, people such as her brother T'Challa and the army generals, and give them some power in times when it becomes necessary.

Also, the availability of 'vibranium' mined in the region allows them to invent certain incredible gadgets and tools of technology. The 'vibranium' makes Wakanda the most advanced nation on the face of the earth. Shuri's technological prowess is evident across many different scenes in the movie. One of such times is when she is able to heal Everett Ross, a CIA agent who T'Challa brought to Wakanda after he was seriously injured while trying to save Nakai from being hit by a bullet during an attack. Everett Ross, who is astonished and cannot believe he had been healed in a day, and has this dialogue with Shuri;

> *Everett Ross (ER): How long ago was Korea*
>
> *Shuri (S): Yesterday*
>
> *ER: I don't think so. Bullet wounds don't just magically heal overnight.*
>
> *S: (Smiles) They do here. But not by magic, by technology.*

In *Kindred,* we see that Dana has certain special abilities that enable her to appear at a times when Rufus needs her, though she has very little control about whether to reject such requests or not. Dana goes to the rescue of Rufus because she is responsible for keeping the lineage of her ancestry alive.

When Dana helped heal a dying Alice, Tom Weylin made the following comments about her:

> *…You're something different. I don't know what – witch, devil, I don't care. Whatever you are you just about brought a girl back to life when you came here last, and she wasn't even the one you came to help. You*

come out of nowhere and go back into nowhere. Years ago, I would have sworn there couldn't even be anyone like you. You're not normal! But you can feel pain – and you can die. ~ (Butler, 1979, p. 205)

Dana possesses an attribute that allows her to move between times, and while in the eighteenth century, she is gifted with the knowledge of someone in the twentieth century, which enables her to treat sicknesses and wounds much faster and safer, much to the awe of those who benefit but the disgust of people like Tom Weylin. These special abilities given to the black characters enables them to stand out. It can be presumed that this is the way the artists and black creatives see themselves getting out of a situation they find themselves in. This is because, they do not see themselves getting out of such an oppressive and subjugating times just by their natural abilities or efforts, but the by aid of some supernatural power, strength or intellect.

3.3.3 TIME TRAVEL

Furthermore, this 'supernatural' power of Dana leads to another common theme in Afrofuturism, that is, time travel. Time travel refers to the concept of movement between certain points in time by an object or a person. Afrofuturism serves as a vehicle with which lost history may be recovered (UKEssays, 2018), first by shedding light on the forgotten and subjugated history, and reimaging the past, in a bid to reclaim the lost identity and self-esteem within the context of cultural dislocation.

In *Kindred*, Dana, the main character in the novel discovers at the beginning that she has the time travelling ability. She is celebrating her 26th birthday when she is suddenly thrown into the past for the first time. Dana then frequently begins to alternate between Los Angeles where she lives, in 1976 the year she was actually in, and the antebellum

South, starting from the year 1815 onwards, on a plantation for Blacks who are working as slaves in Maryland.

Dana recounts the exact moment at the beginning of the story when she says:

> *The trouble began long before June 9, 1976, when I became aware of it, but June 9 is the day I remember. It was my twenty-sixth birthday. It was also the day I met Rufus – the day he called me to him for the first time. ~ (Butler, 1979, p. 12)*

Dana subsequently makes several trips to the past, with each trip lasting a bit longer than the previous time. This also allows her to fervently prepare for the tasks ahead anytime she comes into the present, a task which ironically happens to be she saving her own existence.

3.3.4 AFRICAN MYTHOLOGY

Another theme evident from both texts is the predominance of African mythology in the works. Mythology, or myths, are the body of stories associated with a culture. In various African societies, myths and mythology have different meanings and omens.

In *Black Panther,* T'Challa and Killmonger are made to drink the nectar of a mystical flower which gives them enormous strength beyond the imaginations of any other man. This flower is from a mythical belief carried down from their ancestors. The monologue at the beginning of the movie captures the history of the herb as follows:

> *"The tribes lived in constant war with each other, until a warrior shaman received a vision from the Panther Goddess Bast, who led him to the heart shaped Herb, a plant that granted him super human*

strength, speed and instincts. The warrior became king, and the first Black Panther."

The drinking of this historical flower by the kings of Wakanda, which has been a source of strength, coupled with the technological gadgets of the super intelligent Shuri, meant that T'Challa was virtually indestructible.

In addition, the belief in life after death and in the ancestors is prevalent and evident in the movie. We see in both the case of T'Challa and Killmonger that after they drink the heart-shaped herb served, they are transported into the land of the dead, where they meet and interact with their fathers. This mythical imagery captures the belief in many African ethnic groups that the ancestors keep watch over the living and they can be looked up or prayed to for advice. However, it is interesting to note that it is only in the case of T'Challa that he is able to see his father and the older members of his family in the land of the dead. Killmonger returns to his childhood and meets his father, in the same setting, their flat in California.

3.3.5 EMANCIPATION

Another common theme that is found to be running through the works is emancipation. Emancipation refers to the process of freeing someone from certain restrictions. Works of Afrofuturism are a means through which there is liberation from oppression, subjugation and disrespect. Since black people have for a long time been made to feel inferior to other races, and have been taken through many years of slavery, colonisation, segregation and other forms of inequality, Afrofuturism offers the opportunity to balance these imbalances and reconstruct a different identity and self-esteem for black people.

In *Black Panther* the setting of Wakanda is an imaginary African country which has not come into contact with the rest of the world. It is an advanced African civilization, with its own system of governance and it is thriving in isolation, not engaged in civil wars and has not come into contact with colonisation. While Wakanda was thriving, the world around them was descending into chaos. This shows that, politically and economically, the notion is that, an African nation would have been flourishing if they were free to do so without the interference of colonialism and exploitation.

Furthermore, by the end of the movie, Wakanda had been able to keep her sovereignty, against all the threats that it came up against. Wakanda, despite the various challenges it faced from outside and within, is able to overcome all these difficulties to remain a sovereign people. The elders of Wakanda led by King T'Challa however agree to have an international program that will seek to provide aid to other black people in need and those facing oppression. Hence, T'Challa returned to the California district where Killmonger and his father had stayed, and who witnessed many unjust acts in African American communities, including black community leaders being assassinated, black communities being overly policed and incarcerated and being flooded with drugs and weapons. Informing Shuri who was on her first visit to California, he told her;

> *"This will be the first Wakandan International Outreach Center. Nakai will oversee the social outreach. And you will spearhead the science and information exchange."*

In *Kindred,* Dana goes back frequently because she has to save her family ancestry. Through Dana the lineage of Alice, and by extension her great, great grandparents are saved from the excruciating ills of slavery. Dana is able to in the long run negotiate for the freedom of Alice's children after their mother commits suicide. Dana also aids in

them getting educated. By this act, she emancipates her lineage from the shackles of slavery and oppression, enabling them to live as free people thereafter. Octavia Butler goes into the past to rewrite the history of a black family in the antebellum south, using the character of Dana to rewrite the story of a black family in the time of slavery.

Not only did Dana win freedom for her ancestors, she and her husband Kevin were able to aid others gain their freedom. As a black person, this can be linked to the need not just for the emancipation of oneself, but Octavia Butler showing the need to help others gain their freedom. After Dana and her husband Kevin returned from one of the time travels, she enquired of Kevin, who spent more time in the past if he had helped free slaves:

> *"One more thing. Just one."*
>
> *He looked at me questioningly.*
>
> *"Were you helping slaves to escape?"*
>
> *"Of course I was! I fed them, hid them during the day, and when night came, I pointed them toward a free black family who would feed and hid them the next day." ~ (Butler, 1979, p. 193)*

Afrofuturism is engrossed in the spirit of sociology, thereby putting black experiences in the central premise which is demonstrated through fantasy and science fiction (UKEssays, 2018). Thus, the social and cultural experiences of black people, especially Blacks in the diaspora, is explored extensively, while there is also an effort through the use of fantasy and technology to reclaim the self-esteem and reconstruct a new identity within the framework of the Western cultural experience. This utopian view of an emancipated Africa by the Black and African imaginary is part of the goal to reshape the modern world, not based on the hope of an African resurgence alone, but also on a vision of

Africa's transformative potential and one which is going to be achieved as the teleological and political system of the west are gradually overturned (Ashcroft, 2013).

3.3.6 GENDER

The gender narrative is also a core issue that runs through both works. In Afrofuturism, there movement is not only a political movement, but also a feminist movement. As a world of fantasy, there is justice also in opportunity for Black women, and girls, are given the freedom to be just be, in whatever form they want, such as the freedom to wear their wear and the type of clothing that they want (Yusuf, 2018, Feb 24a). Women suffer extra subjugation in times of oppression. But in both the text and the movie, we see young women being given liberating roles and traits. Racism, class oppression and gender identity go hand-in-hand, and women are the most affected by all these issues of oppression. However, the attributes attributed to women in both novels show the power of women to thrive despite the odds of existing gender narratives, especially the notion of playing second fiddle to men.

For instance, in *Kindred,* the story is centred around Dana. The task of saving a family blood line rest on the shoulder of the twenty-six-year-old Dana. Dana who is the main character in the story had to suffer the unpleasant, horrible experiences of the antebellum period to fulfil this task. Dana was whipped, and had to live in the slave house, and even had to work on the plantation. Furthermore, she had to pretend to be a property of her boyfriend, Kevin, and was resented because she could read and write, as seen in a conversation they had when Dana wanted to know the story Kevin told Tom Weylin about their relationship:

> *"I'm supposed to be a writer from New York," he said finally. "God help us if we meet any New Yorkers. I'm travelling through the South doing research for a book. I have no money because I drank with the wrong people a few days ago and was robbed. All I have left is you. I bought you before I was robbed because you could read and write. I thought you could help me in my work as well as be of use otherwise."*
>
> *"Did he believe that?"*
>
> *"It's possible he did. He was already pretty sure you could read and write. That's one reason he seemed so suspicious and mistrustful. Educated slaves aren't popular around here." ~ (Butler, 1979, pp. 79 - 80)*

In spite of this, she was the person who had to save Rufus Weylin every time he got into trouble and called upon her. Rufus admitted that he could barely live without her.

Also, the one responsible for keeping the family lineage going in the past is Alice. Alice, who like many black girls of the time, loses the man she loves, and is beaten to the point of death herself, after they were caught trying to escape. Alice has to bear many travails, including marrying a man she had no interest in to produce children who keep the lineage alive. This highlights the plight of women in the slavery era, and the subjugation they had to go through. While Dana can be referred to as the liberated woman, the point at which the past is corrected in the future, Alice is a typical example of the struggles and problems that black women faced in the time of slavery, which including becoming chronically depressed, or as in the case of Alice, committing suicide. Dana details this state of slumping when she described the life of another woman, Sarah, the older woman who ran the house at the Weylins:

> *"She had done the safe thing – had accepted a life of slavery because she was afraid. She was the kind of woman who might have been called "mammy" in some other household. She was the kind of woman who would be held in contempt during the militant nineteen sixties. The house-nigger, the handkerchief-head, the female Uncle Tom – the frightened powerless woman who had already lost all she could stand to lose, and who knew as little about the freedom of the North as she knew about the hereafter." ~ (Butler, 1979, p. 145).*

Alice's character might have been influenced by the struggles that Octavia Butler saw her mum go through. As a girl, she saw her mother maltreated by her white employees. When asked about this phenomena, Octavia Butler responded saying, "perhaps as a woman, I can't help dwelling on the importance of family and reproduction. I don't know how men feel about it. Even though I don't have children, I have other family, and it seems to me our most important set of relationships. It is so much of what we are. Family does not have to mean purely biological relationships either. I know families that have adopted outside individuals; I don't mean legally adopted children but other adults, friends, people who simply came into household and stayed. Family bonds can even survive terrible abuse" (Potts & Butler, 1996)

In *Black Panther* women have a more dominant role. They play roles even as important as the men in the movie. General Okoye, Nakai and Shuri are women who play a vital role in protecting Wakanda militarily and technologically. While Okoye is the general of the army, one of T'Challa's most trusted allies and a very loyal servant to the nation of Wakanda, Shuri, T'Challa's sister is probably the most intelligent person in the whole world. With her technological prowess, she is able to invent many military gadgets, tools and some medical equipment to help in making Wakanda the strong nation it is.

The concern that women show is exhibited by the concern that they show for their people and the general world around them. For instance, when we are introduced to Nakai, she is on an undercover mission to bust a ring of human traffickers operating in Nigeria. But T'Challa "rescues" her, she is peeved at him for ruining her mission. To Nakai, her experience in poor countries across the continent has put in her a desire to put the wealth and knowledge of Wakanda to good use in liberating other neighbouring countries.

Also, during the shoot-out to rescue Nakai, Nakai stops T'Challa from shooting and killing a young boy, saying, "T'Challa, no! This one is just a boy. He got kidnapped as well." The concern and worry shown for the boy is significant because she takes into consideration the naivety and innocence of the young boy and prevents him from being killed. From these acts, it shows that the care and motherly love associated with women was at the forefront here, even with a woman warrior like Nakai.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, we looked at the central themes, issues and sub-themes that run through works of Afrofuturism and its related fields, using the novel *Kindred* and the movie *Black Panther* as the materials for analysis. This chapter analyses the issues that were raised in the previous chapter. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of Afrofuturism in African popular culture and how it influences identity and Pan African solidarity. I analyse how the youth in Africa have responded to Afrofuturism, especially to the movie *Black Panther* that made waves across the African continent and the diaspora when it was released in February 2018. This chapter also analyses what the African youth think about speculative literature as compared to the popular genres, as well as the importance or otherwise of the genre in helping achieve Pan Africanism. The views of Africans on the continent and in the diaspora were sourced through interviews for this analysis. The analysis of the issues is done by subjecting the issues raised in the previous chapter to the responses the interviewer received.

4.1 CHANGING NARRATIVES

One of the main aims of Afrofuturism is that it is to portray endless possibilities to the traditionally oppressed to rise above life's challenges. Afrofuturism is also meant to put a black face on the future, and to tackle the narrative that the future of Africa looks bleak, or that African writers, filmmakers and artists do not and cannot create the future. African writings and films are said to be more dominated by slave history and the issues of political instability, social injustice among others. With the emergence of many African publications during the mid-20th century, most of these publications have been preoccupied by themes of the colonial invasion and the accompanying deleterious effects,

as well as writings about the attainment of independence and the period of disillusionment when the promise of a better Africa for all Africans has not been realized (Abrahams, 1978, p. 119). Abrahams further laments how these themes were particularly repeated, and by the time Amu Djoleto published *Money Galore,* he posits that the theme of corrupt politicians in developing countries had run its course (Abrahams, 1978, p. 124). These writings have gone on since, especially since much has not changed in the socio-political happenings in these places. It is some of these narratives that Afrofuturism seeks to, intentionally or otherwise, shift from. From the analysis of the respondents, this happens in a number of ways as indicated in the following paragraphs.

4.1.1 STRONG CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity makes reference to a culture that is shared, and what Stuart describes as a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common (Hall, 1990, p. 223). It also refers to the self-conception and self-perception that people have about themselves in relation to their nationality, ethnicity, religion etc. which has a different culture of its own.

The feeling of belonging to the black race has for a long time been stereotyped to mean negative news and inferiority such as being associated historical events like slavery, colonisation, segregation and in recent times racism and racial discrimination.

That notwithstanding, African Intellectuals have long proposed that a shared sense of broadly conceived African identity is a prerequisite to true independence for the continent and Black people at large (McCall, 2007).

However, from the findings it shows that black people felt a strong feeling of a positive self-identity after the popularization of Afrofuturism. For instance, Cameroon-born artists and comic book enthusiasts Reine Dibussi and Joëlle Epée Mandengue narrate how important it is, especially for persona; pride, to be able to see oneself in the pages of a superhero character and in a story which is respectful and was not about the stereotypical issues of hunger or poverty or wars or drugs or others which are associated with Africa and black people (Brown, 2020, Aug 05; Ho, 2020, Jul 1).

The popularity of the movie *Black Panther*, served as a strong factor for improving the image of black people. The black superheroes on screens, fighting to save a black nation is a phenomenon that resonated well with a lot of people around the continent and in the diaspora. Africans and black people saw themselves in the film, owned the film and made it theirs.

After the release of the movie, many people worldwide thronged to movie theatres and cinemas to catch a glimpse of it with the film making over $420 million worldwide in the first four days (Yusuf, 2018, Feb 24b). In Accra, large crowds filled the Accra Mall Cinema on the first few days of the premiere with people, especially young people, who were enthusiastic to see the first black marvel superhero movie, and some were seen attending the premiere clad in various African traditional clothing, as well as some dressing to match people in the blockbuster (Spark, 2018, Feb 18). The global success of the film, even in previously unaccommodating places like Saudi Arabia, which opened theatres for the first time in 35 years with a public screening of the blockbuster movie to its largely youthful population (France-Presse, 2018, Apr 20).

The views shared on the effects of the movie on the cultural identity were mostly positive. As a tool to promote the image of black people all over the world, Sarah Joelle, a 22-

year-old African American university graduate who lives in the United States of America (USA) said;

> *"I loved that they chose very prominent, powerful African American actors to do it. I feel the story line had a very solid plot…it really showed both sides of the African American culture. How there is the darker skin versus the lighter skin, how there is an issue with that and colourism in the African American community and on top of that how we are united but also divided in a lot of aspects."*

The representation of black people as starring casts in a superhero role and in the limelight was also not lost on the audience as well. Ghanaians Fui Can-Tamakloe, a short story writer, poet and editor and Liz Johnson, a 28-year-old writer and producer for the Writer's Project radio show both acknowledged how important it was for inclusion with the addition of black people in a superhero role;

> *"I think it was time for a black superhero, and the movie did fantastic in that regard." ~ (Fui Can-Tamakloe)*

> *"They (the black community in the diaspora) were crying out for a black hero in these movies, there is Superman, there is Batman and these are all whites, and they want diversity. (There was) a call for diversity and inclusion and all of that. And so, the creators, (since) already had the Black Panther existed, even in comics in the 1960s, I think. So, it was a good marketing strategy too, because it was called 'Black Panther', just have a black character and make it into this whole (so called) African themed movie. And it worked because, not only in the diaspora, but all over the world Blacks were so excited, it*

cashed in, it did its work as a movie and as an entertainment thing." ~ (Liz Johnson)

Furthermore, Tabitha Mwangi, a Kenyan researcher in National Security issues, who has studied in different African countries and was in Israel when the movie was released felt the representation of the entire continent was one that excited her. She said;

"I liked how representative they tried to be of the continent, because you could see things from East Africa, from West Africa, from Southern Africa, in terms of things like the dressing they had. I think that was very good because it could have been very easy for them to just base it in one region of the continent, say east Africa or West Africa and that will only perpetuate the notion that Africa is a country and we are all similar, dress the same way, talk the same way, eat the same food. So, I think that the fact they tried to have different regional representations for me was very good. And the part that it showed Africa in a different light from what we are used to, there is often the notion that Africa is this poor continent that needs to be saved by a white saviour." ~ (Tabitha Mwangi)

Tabitha's point raises the issue of the social power of Afrofuturism. Social power refers to the potential for social influence, that is, it is the available tools one has to exert influence over another which can lead to a change in that person. People are the constant targets of the influence attempts of others. Sarah Joelle also confirms this point;

"I think it (the movie) went well, honestly. I think a lot of people went to see it. I know that they almost tripled the box office and it was one of the higher-ranking movies of that year, it definitely resonated with a lot

> *of people. . . and black people have used the 'Wakanda Forever' (a lot). They made shirts; they say it all the time etc. It definitely left a mark."*
>
> ~ (Sarah Joelle)

In Afrofuturism, people have been influenced into creating a different picture of an African superhero and about African culture. This social power seeks to influence a new narrative that there is a black superhero, and that Blacks can rely on his or her superhero to save their part of the world.

Also, the existing narrative in speculative fiction and movies is that the imaginary space often captured as the world was limited to North America or Europe. With the imaginary world in *Black Panther* being Wakanda, a country 'somewhere' in Africa, the narrative also opens the door for more of such creative work. It also exposes more people to various parts of Africa and addresses the "African is a country" narrative. Though the setting is fictional, the geography of the fictional location offered some education about some actual places on the African continent. Tabitha recounts;

> *"When the movie was released, I was in Israel. I went to watch it at a theatre in Tel-Aviv with some friends and they were talking to me about how the original comics mentioned the story being based from some place in Kenya. Some fictional place that is supposed to be near Kenya and stuff."* ~ (Tabitha Mwangi)

Furthermore, the strong cultural identity that the movie developed among young people became evident in the popular culture that grew afterwards. Popular culture can be defined as culture that is largely favoured and well adored by a lot of people (Storey,

2006). Among Blacks across the world, the salutation “Wakanda Forever”, as shown in Fig. 1 became a symbol of solidarity.

The salutation has since become a tool of popular culture. As shown in Fig. 2, Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 the salutation has been widely used in many fields of everyday life, including sports, in movies, in protests, at awards shows and a lot of other social events by a wide range of people on the African continent and in the diaspora.

Image 1 Black Panther stars Chadwick Boseman, Danai Gurira, Lupita Nyong'o, and Michael B. Jordan do the ‘wakanda forever’ pose on stage together at the 2019 Golden Globe Awards

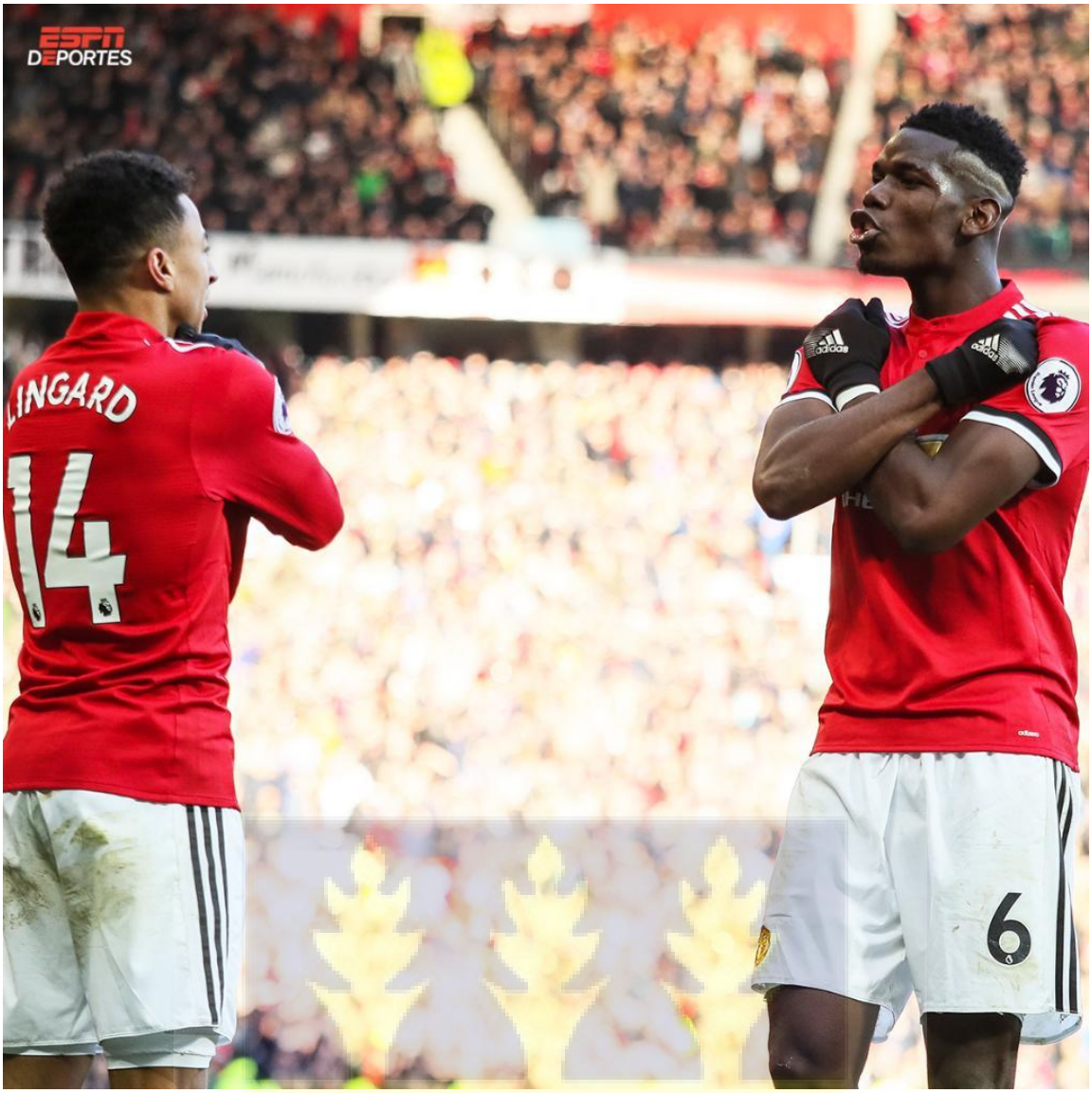

Image 2 Jesse Lingard and Paul Pogba do the 'Wakanda Forever' pose

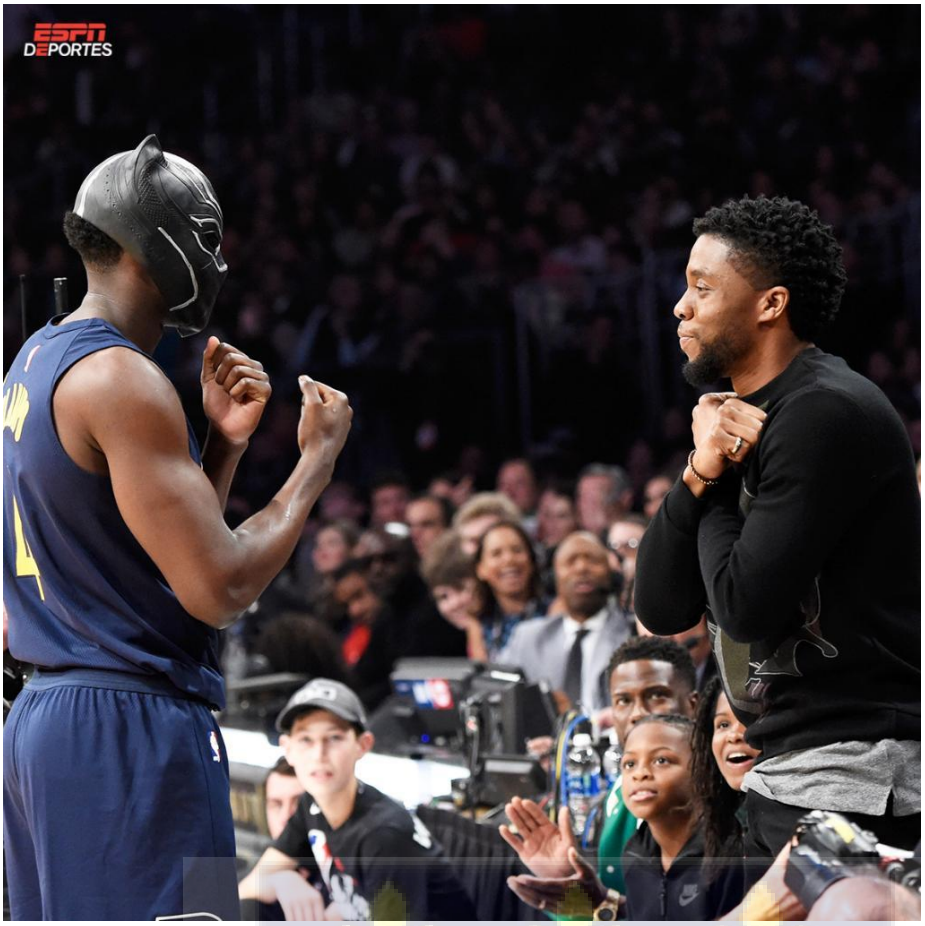

Image 3 Victor Oladipo and Chadwick Boseman do the 'Wakanda Forever' Pose at a basketball game

Furthermore, the biggest testament of how big Afrofuturism and especially the movie *Black Panther* was as a marker of cultural identity came after the death of actor Chadwick Boseman, who played the role as the main character T'Challa in the film. With numerous tributes going out to the actor who played the role, the official handle of the social networking site of the social network company, Twitter *(@Twitter)* announced that the tweet announcing his death on August 29, 2020 had become the most liked tweet in history in less than 24 hours, with over five million likes.

The reaction to the death on social media, especially by young people also showed how deep the effects went as a cultural marker in the diaspora. In figure 4, we see a young black man in a mock funeral for his fallen hero, who is laid in state, and surrounded by other superheroes. As the only globally recognised black superhero, this was heart-breaking for a lot of people.

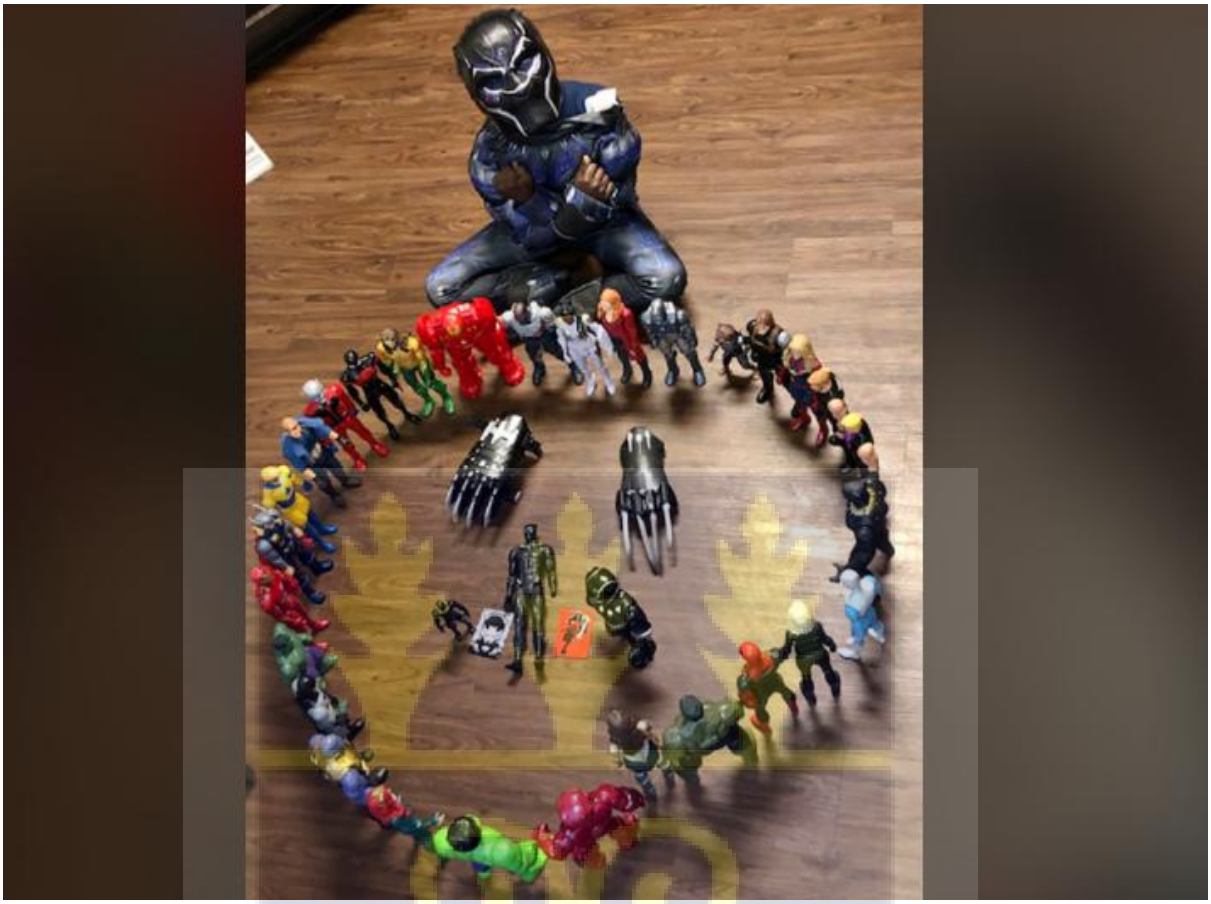

Image 4 Gavyn Batiste, 7, dressed as Black Panther and surrounded by action figures in Lafayette, La

4.1.2 AFROFUTURISM AND PAN AFRICANISM

Afrofuturism as a genre also serves as an avenue for political, social and cultural movements. As a cultural mechanism for reclaiming black self-esteem (Onyango, 2018) it aids in making a statement about the collective unity and upliftment of black people

everywhere. Politically, Afrofuturism promotes or seeks to promote the goal that the potential to complement each other is tremendous when groups utilize technology, social networks and artistic media to work together towards a common goal of liberation from white supremacy (UKEssays, 2018).

As Onyango (2018) posits, "the film's resonance with Pan Africanism defined broadly to include a conscious identification with Africa and mutual responsibility for people of African descent to work in solidarity to liberate themselves from varied forms of oppression and exploitation" as well as, it "essentializes Pan Africanism of twentieth century activists who believed in creating societies in which reclaiming power, history and culture would be possible."

Respondents acknowledged the importance of Afrofuturism, especially in relation to the popularity of *Black Panther*, and acknowledge the role that the film plays in the promotion of a Pan Africanist agenda. Sela Adjei, popularly referred to as Efo Sela in the art scene, a Ghanaian multidisciplinary artist and an art educator acknowledged the importance of solidarity in this work. When the researcher asked him if in his opinion the genre promotes and can help achieve Pan Africanism, he responded;

> *"Certainly. Definitely. That is what I spoke about earlier but I didn't specifically talk about Pan Africanism. But of course, some of the things I highlighted are deeply rooted in Pan African concepts. The issues of racial solidarity and back-to-Africa campaigns, repatriating Africans in the diaspora back to the continent to help build the continent with whatever skills and expertise they come with. Afrofuturism is not just a form of cultural expression or cultural aesthetics, there is a lot of philosophy embedded in the Afrofuturism. it*

is a carryover of our indigenous knowledge systems and the carryover of our cultural ideologies and the carryover of our racial aspirations. And all these can be linked to very strong Pan African philosophy. You see a lot of these Afrofuturist cultural producers and artist borrowing from people like Marcus Garvey, Nkrumah, Haile Selassie, Walter Rodney and all those people. These are deeply embedded in an African ideology and for me I personally see that it has the potential to really revive or advance this whole notion of Pan Africanism." ~ (Efo Sela)

Liz Johnson also agrees with this notion and acknowledges the unlimited potential it offers African writers and creatives;

"Going back to Black Panther, I made a point about how the Black Panther is just an imagination of what Africa would have been like without the invasion (in quote) of the Europeans. Even in literature and popular culture, it has created a sense of the African creative or the black creative being able to imagine an African world or an African character who hasn't been influenced by certain things that have been forced down their throat. It has given creatives the freedom to express their thoughts on Africa without Europe or without the European or western influence or colonization. . . it has also helped uncover African history because to be able to imagine the future without a certain element in your reality, you have to go back and read what it was, when that particular thing wasn't there. That is why I mentioned Mansa Musa and the likes, the Ashanti kingdom and their warriors etc. having a sense of how they used to survive before the whites came in, is

what would help the creative to have a sense of what it could be like now" ~ (Liz Johnson)

Tabitha Mwangi also acknowledged the important role that the film especially played in promoting cultural Pan Africanism;

"The issue of it trying to represent different geographical aspects of the continent, so as in, the blankets from Botswana, that thing that women in South Africa wear on their heads, the gulls whose dressing was inspired by the Maasai culture. I think for me that was very good because it shows that at the end of the day much as we are different as African people, we have our own differences, in terms of culture, at the end of the day they can all co-exist, we do not have to pick one over the other. That fact that the film tried to be as representative of the continent as possible, for me that is good and it shows that they kind of have an understanding about what Pan Africanism should be all about. All African people coming together because of shared ancestry and aspirations for a similar future as a group of people." ~ (Tabitha Mwangi)

But Nigerian engineering students Emmanuel Etenwa (24) and Ngerebu Azi Tamunotonye (24) do not think that Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism purporting to aid in Pan Africanism is as easy as it looks or is being said.

"For me, I am still trying to understand what the whole concept is. So, I feel like if it is for our Africans in the diaspora, maybe it might work

for them, but for Africans in Africa, I don't think it is something that we might witness anytime soon." (Emmanuel Etenwa)

"Pan Africanism currently is the theory that we have not been able to prove that it can happen currently. We are still too diverse individually as countries in Africa to now be able to push the total African identity to the rest of the world. So, while I can appreciate what the African Americans are doing, it is for them. If a Nigerian story comes up, and it now shows kind of a futuristic Nigeria and it makes sense, I will surely be happy with it. If someone from Ghana does something that relates to Ghana, I'll also understand it. Everything has to come from the people in those different spaces. Even if you want a total African idea, I don't think it is easy to put together currently." (Tamunotonye)

Thus, the prospect of Afrofuturism works acting as a medium for the promotion and achievement of Pan Africanism does not resonate well with all, and though there may be some prospects more needs to be done, especially by local creatives to grow the genre in the various countries.

4.1.3 AFROFUTURISM AND THE YOUTH

Participants in the study were asked if the genre resonates well with the youth, since the youth are the main connoisseurs of popular culture in a particular place. Also, the researcher sought to find out how the youth in the various countries reacted to the popular works of Afrofuturism and speculative fiction/science fiction.

Sarah Joelle responded that the youth accepted it well because it was well marketed and highly promoted among the African American community. She added;

> *"I think the youth took it well too because they (saw) people that they really support. I know Michael B. Jordan was a big part of it and a lot of people watched it and enjoyed it because of him. They see him on the box screens more and I think that is why they are more attracted to him."* (Sarah Joelle)

From her statement, we can say that the presence of black icons as superheroes and in starring roles also played a significant role in arousing interests and popularity in black communities especially in the diaspora. When they see people, they admire and look up to starring in these roles, they tend to relate more and accept it proudly.

Fui Can-Tamakloe has a different opinion on why speculative fiction is popular among the youth in Ghana. To him, the stories that are often told to children when they are young is largely made up of speculative fiction, so it will be easier to relate to speculative fiction as youth. He adds;

> *"general stories we grew up with have to do with more speculative fiction than any other genre. Growing up, you hear stories like Madam High heels and Madam Walk and there is a lot of juju that features in our Kumawood/Ghanaian movies and then you find these stories fascinating."*

Not all respondents were fascinated as youth by how Afrofuturism is projected on the African continent. Efo Sela from Ghana and Emmanuel Etenwa from Nigeria had views on why they thought the youth have not really grasped the concept, especially more as a science fiction concept. They stated;

> *"I think there is a mismatch in so many ways. We have very dreamy, idealistic ideas about the African future, yet when you come to the*

grounds, it doesn't reflect the ideas on the ground. I think a lot of the portrayals of Afrofuturism in relation to the current state that the youth find themselves is more of a projection of the 'Africa we want' mantra, but there still is more grounds to be covered. . . for me it's purely fantasy that needs a bit of work for the youth to come to the realities on the ground." ~ (Efo Sela)

"People are limited by the environment they grew up in. Most of the amount of ambition you can have is dependent on where you grew up, and where you find yourself. A lot of people their dream is just to try to survive, to escape poverty. How many people could have gone to the movie for example to see like Black Panther? Too many people don't have the luxury to say I want to grow up to be an engineer, I want to be educated. People just grow up and want to survive and make ends meet. For people to be able to relate, there is a practical threshold that has to be met. When majority of the youth are not educated to a certain level or don't find themselves in an environment that encourages them to have an ambition, this kind of thing is far-fetched to them because they just wake up and want to make ends meet." ~ (Etenwa)

From these two statements, we understand that the idealistic nature of science fiction can be far-fetched from the realistic nature on the ground, and that there is much work to be done to bridge the widening gap, especially on the African continent. There must be a starting point where the youth can relate, or must even be in the position to relate to the genre before it can become a popular culture.

4.2 INTERRUPTED IDENTITY

Mashigo (2018) put forward that "Afrofuturism is not for Africans Living in Africa" because the themes, plot and concepts do not resonate well with Africans on the continent. This argument has been echoed loudly by others with the argument that Afrofuturism is not the product of direct African cultural experience, with a manifestation of this phenomenon seen in the use of Western Industrial technological motifs in combination with African aesthetics. Some of the respondents raised the concern that Afrofuturism, especially works from the diaspora largely involve contentious actions, such as manipulation of history to glorify a certain narrative, and the controversial philosophy filled in a movie like *Black Panther*, including twisting the real meaning behind the revolutionary Black Panther Party.

In this sub-section, the researcher examines and analyse the issues of interrupted identity and discords that Afrofuturism creates between Africans in the diaspora and Africans on the continent and if a strict distinction really exists between 'African American/Diaspora' and 'African' Afrofuturism per their interpretations.

4.2.1 DISCONNECTION BETWEEN THE DIASPORA AND AFRICA

Most of the respondents felt that there was a disconnection or a degree of exaggeration in the popular works of Afrofuturism. As works that are about Africa, or include the space referred to as Africa, the respondents felt it was to a large extent unrepresentative of the situation on the African continent and the realities on the ground.

Ghanaians Fui Can-Tamakloe and Liz Johnson, and Nigerian Eric Thomas all raised concerns about the seeming disparity existing within the context of Afrofuturistic works and the reality on the ground.

"(With Black Panther) it did quite a good job for representation in the diaspora, especially for people of African descent in America and possibly beyond. But the representation was in westernized views and it didn't translate to Africa. So, there is a huge disconnect in enjoying Black Panther as an African as supposed to enjoying it as an African American. . . Even the concept of Wakanda is not African-like. I don't think there is any African country or civilization, in the past and now, who will have access to mad technology and hoard it. That is western thinking. Even the concept of a country would not exist in Africa if it were in Africa."

"I also hated their accent. I felt it was abysmal. But I understand what they were going for, and I understand that there is only so much a white man is willing to do for you to tell your story. . . If I get Afrofuturism correctly, it is championed by African people in the diaspora, right? So, it is always going to be from western lens. Again, I found out that not a lot of Accra writers are able to properly envision futuristic texts in an African lens. It is always in a western lens." ~ (Fui Can-Tamakloe)

"The issues that I have with it is that, when it comes to diversity and inclusion which is something that people in the diaspora are calling for a lot, there is a certain ideology of Africa that the African in Africa doesn't connect to that. . . there are people in the diaspora, let's use the African American, they have a certain idea of what life would have been if there wasn't slavery and if they hadn't been forced to go into the lands of these foreigners. There is a sense of a certain kind of

Africa they think we would have been in without slavery, and this goes into what we saw in Black Panther. . . that kind of narrative is what a lot of people are feeding on. Another example is Beyonce's latest movie, 'Black is King'. It still has that ideology if Mansa Musa and his likes were left alone to rule Africa." ~ (Liz Johnson)

"...I feel like they just picked up materials and cultures that they read off the internet. They is no actual study of Africa, they just added our attires and stuff like that. We don't do some of the things that were portrayed in the movie. They just put things together and be like 'this is Africa if technology is added', no. That's not where we are. . . There was no starting point for us to relate with, us from here. . . most Africans did not even get to see Black Panther in the cinema, it is just like a global movie, for people in the west. . . generally I don't feel like the movie did any justice for us or even represented us well." (Eric Thomas)

The respondents all seem to agree with Mohale Mashigo's (Mashigo, 2018, Oct 1) argument that the description of an African future might not be unique to Africans on the African continent, due to the differences in the historical narratives that exists between Africans on the continent and Africans in the diaspora. The challenge is that though a representation and a black superhero is generally pleasing to Blacks everywhere, the producers of Afrofuturism exists in a world where they are the minority, suffer exclusion and are cut off from their roots, so they dream of an imagined future of "freedom back home". This narrative makes it very one-dimensional. Whereas on the other hand, Africans on the continent want a black superhero that solves problems like land

ownership in Southern Africa, defeating diseases like Ebola in central Africa among many other examples.

Sarah Joelle, who lives in the diaspora, seems to concur to this argument. When the researcher asked her what in her opinion was the reception to some of the works of Afrofuturism like Black Panther, she responded;

> *"I kind of get the feeling that you guys (Africans) might (have been) kind of offended by some of the things that happened. I feel like you'll probably feel it was a little overdone. Like 'naahh this is not how it is in Africa, you'll are doing a little too much.' You might have thought it was a little sensationalised, maybe." ~ (Sarah Joelle)*

4.3 OTHER NARRATIVES AND THE FUTURE

With Afrofuturism, science fiction and fantasy growing as a genre in Africa, there are other discussions happening around the genre. The field is still new for creatives and artists, and as a developing field, there are still many angles that are being explored on the continent. In the course of discussions, the researcher sought to find out, after it was mentioned by a respondent, the influence of mythology in how Africans view speculative fiction, and also what the future is for Afrofuturism.

4.3.1 AFROFUTURISM AND MYTHOLOGY

In his introduction to the book *Perspectives of Mythology*, the seasoned musicologist and Emeritus Professor Kwabena Nketia posits that the various conceptions and beliefs makes it difficult to conclude on one definite sentence definition of what mythology is (Nketia, 1999). However, Okpewho states that, myth is a type of tale which stands

midway between history and fiction (whether folktale or literary fiction) (Okpewho, 1983). Sutherland-Addy (1999) asserts that "a myth is often mistaken as an untrue story of a most unsavoury kind, often founded on a superstitious piety that is often vague, and seeks to entrench political, religious and economic power."

Some respondents argue that for Afrofuturism to bridge the gap between the diaspora and the continent, and even grow as a genre on the continent, then it is necessary to include the existing mythologies in African folktales in the creation of futuristic works of art. Afrofuturism must be connected to the African way of life if it is to remain African, or relate to the Africa.

The use of local ancient mythology in sci-fi movies and speculative literature is rife. An example is the repackaging of the story of Thor by Marvel comics. Thor, a superhero who is often seen wielding a hammer emblematic of the thunderbolt, is the god of thunder and rain and farming and is rooted in Norse mythology, but when on the film screens is presented as pure entertainment by the time it is put out in comic form (Ho, 2020, Jul 1). Afrofuturism provides the opportunity to showcase works by Africans, about African mythology from across the continent.

Myths are common all over the continent, with different stories on creation, animals, behaviours etc. that commonly end with a kind of moral lesson or seek to explain some present behaviour seen in the world (Finnegan, 2012). Tabitha Mwangi states;

> *"we have a story to explain how the Kikuyu community came to be, which was a man called Kikuyu and his wife called Mumbi, who had daughters, which are the nine clans of Kikuyu, who are married off and became the founders of the tribe (ethnic group) as it is today. I know other communities also have such stories which they talk about. For*

instance, the Maasai talk about their God, whom they call Nkayi, dropping the first Maasai man with his wife from the sky with livestock because they are the livestock people. So, there is a lot of such stories from East Africa which we were taught when we were in school and people still talk about them, though not as much."

Fui Can-Tamakloe and Efo Sela argue that for the genre to thrive, it needs to be grounded in African mythology to make it connected to the African way of live, especially since as a genre it is meant to bring emancipation and liberation and envision an African continent that rises above all inferiority complexes, including inferiority complex attached to the folklore of Africa.

"The reason why it seems to be an underground sort of thing and also kind of a taboo subject for a lot of writers in Ghana, it has to do a lot with colonization and Christianity. We try not to talk of the supernatural, because we make it look like 'it is bad'. The demonization of your culture, labelling of other worship aside Christianity and possibly Islam as pagan or heathen has caused a lot of people to walk away from that."

"Because of our lack of interaction with our spiritual/supernatural part, we tend to sensationalize it. Instead of talking about a god in capacity of a god or a deity in capacity of a deity, we will look at the deity as a surd to a human person. So, the function of the deity would show in the form of a curse or torment somebody. So, it is always a good versus bad, where the supernatural is bad, as supposed to we being the forces of good, which is kind of like a Christian doctrine. And so, it has a dual

effect over creative emancipation, further entrenching ourselves in this neo European colonial ideals. So, before people write more about it, they need to read about it. And read about through a black lens not a white lens. We need to understand that our culture has always been side-by-side with spirituality. . . the kind of reverence we give to elderly people (for example) is because we believe we are closer to the world of ancestor then we could ever be. So, it is engraved in our culture." (Fui Can-Tamakloe)

Efo Sela also shares similar thoughts;

"For me personally, I think for Afrofuturism to thrive, or for us to have an authentic style of Afrofuturism, it needs to be well grounded in African mythology and African spiritual ideas of the future. That I see lacking a lot in some of the artistic ideas I see in Afrofuturism. There is this Nigerian author, D. O. Fagunwa, he wrote a lot of these fantasy tales before this whole Afrofuturism became popular. . . Fagunwa really wrote extensively on Yoruba mythological themes. He wrote exclusively in the Yoruba language; I think it was Wole Soyinka that translated most of his work. He has an essay which was published online some time ago, and he also saw the same problem back in the early 1900s when he was writing fantasy tales deeply rooted in Yoruba mythology and Yoruba fantasy ideas. All these things that we think that we imported to us from the west that is being given an African trait already existed within our legends, our folktales, our performances, our theatre, our religious practices and all that. He made this observation that a lot of these artistic productions, he was mainly

> *speaking of literature that has been carried over into the contemporary times, is lacking in many ways because it is not deeply rooted in our beliefs, in reincarnation, in the afterlife (etc). Because if we are to talk about Afrofuturism, and concepts like that, it has to be connected to our African way of life.*

The issues raised here suggests that there is a need for creatives, African creatives especially, to look at developing a genre through the African orientation, and not the global black lens, influenced by African mythology and thought systems, seeing the future through an African cultural worldview. Myths are not only stories that are speculative, but they also have a way of redefining reality.

Indeed, Nketia (1999) in his introductory chapter in *Perspectives on Mythology* titled, *Mythology in the World Today* advised that when we become aware of mythology as something that has creative validity in the world in terms of its continuing definition of mankind's universe of experience, we can look at what lies, for the present, within the world of imagination but beyond the reach of human power and levels of consciousness.

4.3.2 FUTURE OF AFROFUTURISM

The interest that Black Panther generated for science fiction and speculative fiction around the world has brought a new sense of optimism to African creatives around the world, especially with regards to what the future holds. The attention given to the genre gives creatives the chance to capitalize on the excitement and interest being generated and grow the genre among the Africans.

Liz Johnson agrees with this assertion and highlights that the benefits of this genre are huge;

"it is also creating an interest in reading, because you know how well sci-fi does when it comes to movies. And so, it has created people who will generally watch a movie, (and) be interested in reading a book because, 'wow, there is an African writing about this. Who would have thought?' And so, they are reading and that is why writers like Tomi Adeyemi and Nnedi Okorafor have become such huge success, because there is a shift from people consuming movies into literature. And we all know that the reading scene is not as big worldwide, not as big as people who watch movies. So, that has helped with boosting literature in diversity and getting your voice heard as a writer.

I think it has grown because it has been able to create its own spaces. So, huge festivals in Africa and in the world, globally, who are focused on black literature, they would theme their festivals around Afrofuturism or African sci-fi writers. African sci-fi writers will be headlining big festivals in Africa and globally. We have festivals that are only focused on that genre, we have discussions around it and every festival, there is a panel discussion, or there must be a reading for this particular genre."

Fui Can-Tamakloe agrees with Liz Johnson on the promising future for the field, and reemphasises that there are more people and platforms growing to accommodate the genre, meaning good prospects for the future;

"I have seen people come out, more people are writing speculative fiction and I know of even one platform that hosts only speculative fiction, Jalada Africa. It is a genre; genres come and go. Previously,

> *everybody wanted to write hardcore fiction, and nobody wanted to write speculative fiction. But I feel like more rapidly, African writers are developing into multi genre writings. They don't stick to a genre when they are writing stories or a book."*

Tabitha Mwangi also posits that the growing interests in self-identity, such as wearing local fashion and natural hair, as well as the awareness of alternative history among the youth means that the genre is going to continue growing.

Sarah Joelle though feels that there should be more Africans or African American writers writing about this genre. She said;

> *"I feel there is a bright future for it, but I also feel we need to get more African American writers to be the ones telling the story. A lot of the time we are having issues connecting with the movies we see surrounding African American or African life because it is not Africans or African Americans writing this. This is white people writing these stories, so it is just their interpretation of our lives and no one can tell our stories better than us. So, it is important for us to push out the writing and people getting more in fields like science fiction and African Americans getting more into screen writing. Because the percentage of African American screen writers are like thirty percent in Hollywood. So, you can imagine the small percentage compared to all the other stories being told."*

Tamunotonye agrees that the narration of the stories should be centred around more local content as well as be in the reach of Nigerians, and to the larger extent Africans, and

though as fantasy it should not be real, it should not be far-fetched from our realities neither.

In this chapter, the findings from the previous chapter have been analysed and discussed through the response given out by the respondents from various parts of the continent and the diaspora to find out the trending issues in the genre especially in relation to the African youth and Pan Africanism. The findings, under the various sub-themes show that though the reception of the genre is strong and growing, the excitement does not cut across all parts of the African continent. Whereas the African youth might be happy about the new genre, the 'westernization' of the genre for now makes it difficult for the ordinary African youth to relate to 'Africanising' the genre more would make it more relatable to the youth of Africa, but the fact remains that this the genre is still growing across the continent.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter sums up all the arguments made in the four chapters. In the previous chapter, we were able to dissect and analyse the findings from the data collected in chapter 3. The findings were then organised under various sub-themes. Afrofuturism, as we have seen throughout the study has become a very important tool for decolonization and the representation of black people globally. In this chapter, the researcher will summarize the arguments made from all four chapters, as well as the main points discussed, and then suggest recommendations on what should to be done going forward.

5.1 AFROFUTURISM; THE CHANGING NARRATIVE

Indeed, the emergence and acceptance of Afrofuturism in recent times is testament of some good work being done by people in the field. In music, art, literature and film, the works of Afrofuturism are being appreciated by the black community as a necessary light in a relatively dim and dark world of the black person. What the image of Africans and Blacks in the future does is that it implants black people in the past in manner that affects and transforms the modern times (Ashcroft, 2013). The aim of Afrofuturism, to put a black face in the future and to have the representation of black culture and identity in main stream media, is one that has in recent times proved a highly successful, especially among black communities. As Ashcroft (2013) argues, the concept of an ideally perfect state, especially in its social, political and cultural aspect should not only be seen as mere wishful thinking, because that is "the only place from which ideology can be countered."

The study tried to find out the importance of putting a black face in the future, and how it appeals to the youth especially and its potential as a tool for helping revive Pan Africanism in the 21st century.

The plethora of novels that have been published from a few decades ago has served as a basis to build the genre upon, and with movies such as *Black Panther,* the genre has now reached worldwide popularity among black people. In the study, the researcher analysed how Marvel's *Black Panther* film and Octavia E. Butler's novel *Kindred* have contributed to the growing popularity in the genre. Furthermore, with the advent of social media, the channel to carry such works have become simpler and can reach more people in areas far and wide. As we have shown in the work, the role of social media and Afrofuturism has potential to be used in racial movements in countries and places where racial discrimination exists. The euphoria generated is not only about a mental picture about a future of hope for Africa that has been couched in a Renaissance, but projects a perception about the influence of the black person on the world in the future (Ashcroft, 2013, p. 94).

Also, we have seen from the study that the genre is big, and differences in experiences among Blacks have resulted in certain African writers developing multi genres. Some of such sub-themes are African futurism and Pan African futurism which have grown out of the work. The genre is so big, different conversations have risen out of the work, a practice which helps in growing the work to fit the history and culture of different societies. Once the ideology has been formed and reaffirmed, the different conversations around it will help breed different ideas and forms that can be developed from the genre. From these conversations, even better forms of the genre may probably be developed. Pan African icon and first Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah noted (as quoted in Frehiwot) that "If an ideology is integrative in intent, that is to say, if it seeks to introduce

a certain order which will unite the actions of millions towards specific and definite goals, then its instruments can also be seen as instruments of social control" (Frehiwot, 2016, p. 2).

Furthermore, we have seen from the study that the multi-disciplinary nature of the genre, that is, the fact that it is not just about art or film, but has to do with culture, race studies, philosophy, mythology and history means that in its totality it also serves as a decolonisation tool. From the study, we find out that the gestures, art and costumes used have become gestures in popular culture, especially in predominantly black communities around that work were racial inequality is prevalent. Most of these popular cultures are also being mainly carried out by the youthful population. One such example is the relation between Afrofuturism and the #BackLivesMatter campaign, where both share a common goal to dissuade racism and white supremacy, using technology, social networks and artistic media to work together to achieve these aims

In the study, we also find out that Afrofuturism has the ability to conscientize the youth in various ways. As science fiction and speculative art are genres that are very popular among the youth, the study found out that the youth tend to relate with these contents more. The emergence of superhero characters especially, resonates well with younger people and the youth, who tend to develop an affection for these characters.

As a tool to help achieve Pan Africanism, the study finds out that though some of the existing themes in the works studied are broadly defined to include a conscious identification with Africa and the shared solidarity to aid in liberation from all forms of oppression (Onyango, 2018), this particular objective has not yet settled well and been accepted by the continental Africans. In *Black Panther* especially, respondents agree that there was the effort to imbibe as much "African-ness' as possible, including the portrayal

of people from all parts of the continent working towards the betterment of the continent. But in the opinion of respondents, the themes showcase more of a diaspora conception of Africa than an African conception of Africa, making it very difficult to relate to. However, it cannot be denied that Afrofuturism has created an avenue for black creative persons to also express their thoughts on speculative fiction and fantasy. The emergence of more creatives from the continent trying to project a future of Africa is evident, and that also is a critical factor in the promotion of the genre as a popular art. Indeed, works by creatives from the continent, such as Ghanaian musician M.anifest and filmmaker Haile Gerima from Ethiopia, to name a few, are a good example of the kind of works that young people especially relate to people on the continent and yet also showcase the presence of unique African culture to the world (July, 1983).

In addition, the emergence of Afrofuturism has also created a different conversation from what was becoming a boring, tiresome and one-way reflection of the African storyline, which was characterised by slavery, oppression, poverty, war, bad leadership, failed governments or spiritual warfare/conflicts. This new genre presents a story filled with hope, anticipation, technology, intellect and superpowers that would help deal with modern challenges. The narrative also speaks about how the past is rewritten by time travellers, and in cases like *Kindred*, how they were able to change the destinies of their generations through their actions. Speculative and fantasy filled as it is, the new narrative is refreshing against what was becoming a cliché.

5.2 INTERRUPTED IDENTITY

The study revealed that there are cases of interrupted identities in some of the works of Afrofuturism, especially in the film *Black Panther.* There are certain instances where the

concept of a futuristic Africa is represented in a western lens and feeds the western narrative in terms of what a future African city should look like, which is a description largely influenced by how cities in the western world look like and how they perceive and speculate about their future.

A dominant critique of this form of representation is that there is more to an African character than the hero being a royal. This representation of African characters as royals, i.e. kings, queens, crown princes' etc is narrow and repetitive to say the least, and is a diaspora skewed idea of how an African hero can be portrayed. From music to film to art, there is often the skewed, western created portrayal that black means royalty and a reincarnated ancient kingdom filled with all the glitz and glamour of royalty. This was also seen in the famous 1988 film, *Coming to America,* where the crown prince of a fantasized African kingdom Zamunda travels to America to search for a bride as he was opposed to the one preselected for him (Ferguson, 2018, Jun 29). This, as well as many other such representations is what has given rise to alternative forms of the genre, or sub-themes, that tend to relate more with Africans on the African continent.

Africanfuturism showcases a different narrative to the very one-dimensional view projected by the African diaspora. It tends to explains that even though we are all black people, and there are many shared values and systems and have faced similar situations in the past, there are also varied experiences from different peoples in Africa. African futurism is Afrofuturism for Africans living in Africa. This sub-genre contains African mythology, beliefs and folklore, and are intersected with African experiences.

The sub-genre tends to be more representative of the local experiences on the continent while the main genre happens to be a representation of the experiences and ambitions of the African diaspora.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The genre can only grow from this point onward. The superior technology and resource power of the African diaspora can enable black filmmakers, musicians and other artists to create speculative fiction, fantasy and sci-fi that puts the Black image in the future and develops black superheroes on the world stage. As a genre still growing, especially in Africa, interest among the youth must be maintained with the production of content such as the creation of new superheroes that can match the same enthusiasm that characterises other superheroes, including the availability of paraphernalia for young people for those they idolize.

The inclusion of more African cultures, mythology, values and languages will help in the quest to make it a cultural tool for attaining Pan Africanism. Having a black superhero, in Africa, who fights the ills and challenges that characterizes most places in the continent, and works with others from the continent, with the display of various traditional costumes, languages, places and people will endear many to the vision that there is more that unites Africans than what divides them. Indeed, it would also be another learning platform, because one of the biggest problems about Africa is our ignorance of it.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been made by the researcher.

Firstly, writing competitions in Africa should introduce topics around the genre to help nurture the creativity of children on the continent in the field. This would help generate interests in the genre among young people, and also help in the development and nurturing of new ideas in the field. Also, in forming these new ideas in the field, cultural

identities will be strengthened due to the fact that these identities will have to be centered on the quintessential elements of Black life to bridge the gap between the old and new world (Tarik,2018).

Secondly, more works of Afrofuturism and the related sub-fields should be shown at exhibitions, film festivals and read at book readings. While those in the cinema industry are aspiring to make the genre become prominent at film festivals abroad, there should be an effort to equally make it basic at such events in Africa, especially during (though not limited to) film festivals such as the bi-annual Festival of Pan-African Film and Television in Ouagadugu, Burkina Faso.

Thirdly, Afrofuturist and Africanfuturist should not succumb and truckle to the westernized creatives in their conceptions of an African future. Since technological and industrial societies are a by-product of the evolution of western capitalism, futuristic ideology set in western lens is inevitable. Thus if creatives cast the image of a Black future in the western lens, it will fail in reflecting a unique image for Africa and Blacks. Artists, filmmakers, musicians and other creatives in the sector should therefore develop an indigenous concept of an African future, one which is void of the Eurocentric or western lens.

Also, further research should be carried out by scholars to continuously keep the debate in the field trending, share new ideas and throw more light on new issues that may rise on the genre. The field of Afrofuturism should be intentionally managed with the aim of making it a popular or trending genre. McCall (2007) advances this argument with the use of Theodor Adorno's 1944 theory, *Dialectics of the Enlightenment*, that any culture that is robust, is capable of transforming anything – including its authenticity, identity and political resistance – into a marketable product. Thus, the debate and research in the

field should aim at setting a clear view, a cogent agenda and a pertinent ideology in growing a genre as a catalyst for futuristic studies and the Pan-African discourse (McCall, 2007).

Last but not least, African history can be taught through the use of comics and sci-fi characters especially for children and young adults. This can be a phenomenon that would make the learning of history fun and informative, especially in certain places in Africa, where the syllabus and teaching of history is a subjective, dodgy topic.

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