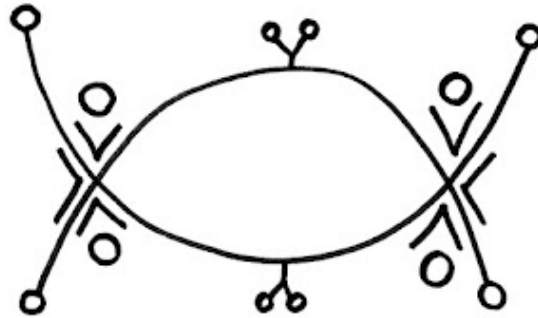


19th October 2019

Africanfuturism Defined



[https://blogger.googleusercontent.com/img/b/R29vZ2xl/AVvXsEiATu9Ls4UL4-q5hWz-8UpA6pN9vnpqokelB4noDqclidWEFuwXx04YFmZ-j5L9CONzcuECUwzLU5U01HikiY_nVZRrKZhRZ31025-vjSK3ALCHhs4IUUnqscFmu4iuyXbGc0aR_F/s1600/New+Scan0018+-+Copy.jpg]

I started using the term africanfuturism (a term I coined) because I felt...

- 1. The term afrofuturism had several definitions and some of the most prominent ones didn't describe what I was doing.**
- 2. I was being called this word [an afrofuturist] whether I agreed or not (no matter how much I publicly resisted it) and because most definitions were off, my work was therefore being read wrongly.**
- 3. I needed to regain control of how I was being defined.**

For a while I tried to embrace the term (which is why I used it in [my TED Talk](https://www.ted.com/talks/nnedi_okorafor_sci_fi_stories_that_imagine_a_future_africa?language=en) https://www.ted.com/talks/nnedi_okorafor_sci_fi_stories_that_imagine_a_future_africa?language=en), but over a year ago, I realized that was not working. So here goes:

I am an africanfuturist and an africanjujuist. Africanfuturism is a sub-category of science fiction. Africanjujuism is a subcategory of fantasy that respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative.

Reminder: Africa is not a country, it's a diverse continent. I'm also aware that it's a construct (and an ethereal thing who travels across space and time); I'm just rolling with it.

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. The difference is that africanfuturism is specifically and more directly

rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view as it then branches into the Black Diaspora, and it does not privilege or center the West.

Africanfuturism is concerned with visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa. It's less concerned with "what could have been" and more concerned with "what is and can/will be". It acknowledges, grapples with and carries "what has been".

Africanfuturism does not HAVE to extend beyond the continent of Africa, though often it does. Its default is non-western; its default/center is African. This is distinctly different from "afrofuturism" (The word itself was coined by Mark Dery and his definition positioned African American themes and concerns at the definition's center. Note that in this case, I am defining "African Americans" as those who are direct descendants of the stolen and enslaved Africans of the transatlantic slave trade).

An example:

Afrofuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in Oakland, CA, USA.

Africanfuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in a neighboring African country.

If you want further explanation, you won't get it from me. Of this, I am not a scholar, I am a writer, a creative. This is as far as I will go on the subject. I hope what I have written here gives some clarity. The last thing I will say on this is that africanfuturism is rooted in Africa and then it branches out to embrace all blacks of the Diaspora, this includes the Caribbean, South American, North American, Asia, Europe, Australia...wherever we are. It's global. Africanfuturism is not a wall, it's a bridge.

I revel on one of the branches, being Naijamerican (Nigerian-American), a Diasporan. One need only look at my work, my road to writing science fiction and my inspirations to understand why I felt the needed to create this word and category.

My middle name is Nkemdili, which means "Let mine be mine". This was inevitable, lol.

Other non-central points: Africanfuturism does not include fantasy unless that fantasy is set in the future or involves technology or space travel, etc...which would make such a narrative more science fiction than fantasy. There are grey areas, blends, and contradictions, as there are with any definition. Some works are both africanfuturist and afrofuturist, depending on how they are read.


Africanfuturism (being African-based) will tend to naturally have mystical elements (drawn or grown from actual African cultural beliefs/world views, not something merely made up). Lastly, africanfuturism is spelled as **one word** (*not* two), no hyphen and the "f" is *not* capitalized. It is one word so that the concepts of Africa and futurism cannot be separated (or replaced with something else) because they both blend to create something new (just like the word "Naijamerican"). As one word, it is one thing and no one can change the subject without starting a different conversation. Like the terms "science fiction" and "fantasy", africanfuturism is a neutral word, therefore it is not capitalized.

And there it is.

Sincerely,

Nnedimma Nkemdili Okorafor, a.k.a. Nnedi

Posted 19th October 2019 by [Nnedi Okorafor, PhD](#)

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Uzo chi 2:02 PM

Thank you for the clarifications. I am planing to write my Phd dissertations on your works.

[Reply](#)



S. Greg Wilson 3:44 AM

Beautiful!!! Clear definitions help true understanding. Just finished "The Complete Trilogy - w/a Brand-New Binti Story"; rich. Thank you!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 8:52 AM

Thank you! I have definitely referred to you as an Afrofuturist, and I appreciate the education. I have been selling your books to students, and I am glad I can speak about them more accurately now. Bless.

[Reply](#)



Vera 12:44 PM

Thank you for this!

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 2:00 AM

Thank you for never forgetting the history and culture of Africans. Not many African authors in SFF. You've cleared the way for aspiring African authors/readers to embrace our stories. We are spiritual, our ancestors are alive, so fantasy and magical realism will always feature. I query under Africanfuturism, because I'm pretty sure I'll write a novel set outer space, it's inevitable ;)

[Reply](#)



The Woman Out of Time 10:45 AM

Thank you so much for this. My MS dissertation revolves around Binti and another Indian work. This definition is exactly what I was looking for.

[Reply](#)



Gaari Karu 9:47 AM

Like this very much. Rooms of one's own.

[Reply](#)