

## CFP: Nokoko special issue

### **African Futures: Ambiguities, contentions, and connections in African speculative fiction and beyond**

The terms used to describe uniquely African or diasporic literatures of the future are contested. In her article, *The Speculative Turn in African Literature* (2019), Michelle Louise Clark considers science fiction to have poorly served those who have felt excluded from the genre, yet terms like Afrofuturism are hardly universally applicable either. New categories to describe African diaspora literature have been created, rejected, taken up or defended in both academic and more open literary spaces: In her 2019 essays titled “Africanfuturism defined”, Nnedi Okorafor’s creation of the term Africanfuturism makes a clear distinction between sci-fi and speculative fiction written from a continental vs. diasporic point of view. Yet Sean Guynes (2021) points out that Afrofuturism does not necessarily hold water for Caribbean and South America writers, or for Africans in the European diaspora. Clark (2019) identifies still other, more contextually-anchored categories including Black Speculative Arts Movement, Black Quantum Futurism, Afrofuturismo, Afrofuturista, Astro-Blackness, and Afro-Surrealism, to name but a few.

Clark (2019) further notes that science fiction and speculative writing are longstanding features of African writing and cultural production. However, as Guynes (2021) points out, recent discussions around categorization, genre and labels have produced a wealth of new approaches, theories, and explorations into African futurity in literature. Futurity itself remains up for debate. Scholars like Amir Eshel, author of *Futurity: Contemporary Literature and the Quest for the Past* (2013) have used the term to describe a general literary turn towards imagined futures and to describe “the potential of literature to widen the language and to expand the pool of idioms we employ in making sense of what has occurred while imagining whom we may become.” Likewise, Guynes (2021) identifies futurity as engaging with a text or practice that draws upon the present to explore the possible nature of one’s subjectivity in the future. Though definitions differ, debates over the concept share a belief that in the here and now, futurity offers imaginative space towards new tomorrows.

The vast array of possibilities and discussions bring to mind an island emerging from the ocean, with a yet unknown geography encircled by bubbling and raucous waters. We are at a unique moment in the history of African science and speculative fiction, one that defies narrow canonization, embraces the ambiguities of the moment and acknowledges difference as a concept worthy of exploration. What is clear, is that these emerging genres do not pretend to weave new realities without context, history or cultural politics. Nnedi Okorafor (2019), makes this clear in her definition of Africanfuturism, a point of view that “will tend to naturally have mystical elements (drawn or grown from actual African cultural beliefs/world views, not something merely made up).” As Nwankwo and Egbunike write in their introduction to *ALT 39*’s issue on Speculative and Science Fiction, works by authors who are less-well known internationally, and written in African languages, are being recognized as inspiration for contextual, grounded and nevertheless speculative works by their contemporaries and their literary successors. Lastly, the possibilities of African science and speculative fiction extend beyond literature. Music, photography, film, dance,

and the fine arts have all been influenced by the debates around afro/africanfuturism and no doubt are fomenting their own terms and philosophies to best articulate their visions.

The goal of this special issue of *Nokoko* is to explore the still unfolding discussions around African science and speculative writing and fantasy. The special issue also seeks to examine where futurism rears its head in disciplines beyond Literature. We welcome:

- articles that examine contemporary works of science and speculative fiction
- articles that examine diasporic debates around science and speculative fiction
- articles that trace the history of futurity or future thinking in an artistic practice or artist's trajectory on the continent or in the diaspora
- articles that explore the relationship between African spirituality and science and speculative fiction or arts creation
- articles that explore language debates and the speculative turn
- articles that examine non-literary yet cultural phenomena that are impacted by or are impacting concepts of futurity
- articles that examine the role of technology, information networks and bio-tech in African science and speculative fiction
- articles that explore taxonomical debates in African science and speculative fiction
- articles that explore the connections between contemporary science and speculative fiction and Africa's rich oral narrative heritage and its association with myth and fantasy.

Abstracts of 300 words due by **November 21, 2022**. Scholars whose abstracts are approved by the editors will be required to submit papers that critically engage with any number of these issues. Submissions should be no longer than 8,000 words. We also welcome shorter contributions, such as poetry, art, short fiction and creative nonfiction, as well as photo essays. Articles should follow *Nokoko*'s <https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/nokoko/information/authors> We encourage potential authors to discuss articles in progress if they seek advice on preparing a successful submission. Please contact us if you wish to propose a particular book for review(s) and we will assist in finding a review copy. Book reviews have a 1,000-word limit, although extended book reviews of two or more books may be longer (see, for example, the extended review by [Heffernan](#) in Issue 7). We also continue to accept articles outside this theme-specific area.

**Submission Deadlines:** Draft paper due by **April 1, 2023**, to be submitted through *Nokoko* portal at <https://ojs.library.carleton.ca/index.php/nokoko/about/submissions> or by email to: [nokoko@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:nokoko@cunet.carleton.ca)

**For clarification on any part of this CFP please contact Issue editors:**

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