‘Jujutech’: exploring cultural and epistemological hybridity in African science fiction.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to respond to the rise in the production of science fiction in Africa over the last decade, and to show how what I describe as the juju orientation of many of these works does not disqualify them from the genre of science fiction. Rather, I advocate for the recognition of juju ontologies as genuine sources of knowledge about the world, which have been overlooked by the globally dominant scientism that has informed science fiction theorisation to date. In my introduction I outline the theoretical frameworks of juju, science fiction and epistemology with which the thesis is in communication. In my second chapter I re-read Amos Tutuola's novel *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, showing the inherently science fictional structure of the juju-based storytelling that characterises colonial and pre-colonial African literature, as well as the essentiality of science fictional modes to Tutuola's own prose. My third chapter considers Ian MacDonald's theorisation of a jujutech aesthetic in African science fiction, wherein the speculations of the genres are rooted in both technoscientific and juju ontologies simultaneously. I account for the role this literary aesthetic plays in Ekari Mbvundula's "Montague's Last" to blur the divisions of worldly knowledge enforced by global epistemological inequalities, before showing how Dilman Dila's *A Killing in the Sun* presents a critically frontier African epistemology in literary practice, and the value thereof. My fourth chapter considers the role of popular culture and consumption, and how the global literary industry resists juju-based texts. I conclude that juju-based nova and the jujutech aesthetic are not only essentially science fictional literary modes, but important players in science fiction's role in being epistemologically productive in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

New Epistemological Frontiers: Reclaiming "Science Fiction" in African Literature

"Maybe we need to keep looking at the world with new eyes."
Ben Okri *Songs of Enchantment*, 23

The past decade has seen a significant increase in the amount of African science fiction and fantasy (SFF) texts being created, published and consumed. Several anthologies of African SFF stories have been published, such as *Lagos 2060*, *African Futures*, and three editions of *Afro SF*, and African SFF writers and filmmakers such as Nnedi Okorafor, Lauren Beukes and Wanuri Kahiu have received high-profile international awards for their works. Okorafor and Beukes have published several science fiction novels and short stories between them, as have several others such as Kojo B. Laing, Chinelo Onwualu, Tade Thompson, Deji Olutokun and Dilman Dila. These SFF texts have similarly received significant critical attention; in 2013 Mark Bould published *Africa SF*, a collection of critical material about African science fiction and the *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* issued a special issue on African science fiction in 2016. Even more attention has been paid to African SFF on alternative internet platforms such as blogs, online publications and social media. These platforms often tend to suggest that this decade has paid witness to the "rise of African science fiction" (Ryman; Thompson), but this is not precise. The genre has a long, rich and unique lineage, dating back indefinitely into the continent's precolonial literary culture. This science fiction lineage often goes unrecognised because it is aesthetically different to the canonical science fiction of the global North, and has thus not been recognised as fitting into the genre by the European and American academics who have shaped the vast majority of science fiction theorisation over the last century. This has led to some questions about the appropriateness of the term 'science fiction' when discussing African texts, because they are so intrinsically different from the Euro-American science fiction canon, as to be seemingly generically incompatible (Okorafor, "Is Africa Ready?"; Selasi).

This thesis contends that African science fiction texts should not abandon the descriptive term 'science fiction' because at a structural level these texts are clearly science

fictional, and have been for a very long time. The difference between African science fiction and Euro-American science fiction is not the way the texts work, but the epistemologies from which they are born. African science fiction relies more heavily on ontologies of juju, animism and Afromythology – ontologies that are central to any attempt to define African science fiction as a genre – while Euro-American science fiction is essentially born from the ontologies of post-Jacobean industrial rationalism. These differing ways of knowing the world do not constitute wholly different genres, because both involve texts projecting their systems of knowledge into the unknown, often with similarly wondrous results.

In the second chapter of this thesis I show why texts that are born of these juju ontologies must be considered science fictional. I do this by analysing a prominent example of this kind of text – Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. This was one of sub-Saharan Africa's first internationally published novels, that was at the time – and often still is – seen by Europeans as a window into the static, irrational, 'backward' beliefs of African people, and avoided by the African elite for the same reason. The chapter argues that a more nuanced reading of the novel shows its reflection of a complex juju-orientated epistemological system, and that the text itself is inherently science fictional once the reader stops questioning its legitimacy by the standards of Euro-American rationalism. The chapter also hints at moments in Tutuola's text where aspects of post-industrial modern technology play a role in his tale of the mystical African bush, suggesting that this juju-oriented ontology is not static, but being continually re-enchanted by what is new. This is a trend that has become far more common and emphasised in contemporary African science fictional texts. In fact, the new "rise of African science fiction" might be better described as the coming-together of the canonical conventions of the science fiction of the global North, and the previously unrecognised science fictional aesthetics of African texts, in a way that similarly re-enchants both genres. Contemporary science fiction being produced by the continent and the diaspora tend to rely on the aesthetics of both these bodies of literature in their speculation. I argue that they thus show an epistemological hybridity in entangling these two different kinds of knowledge about the world. Ian MacDonald, in his doctoral thesis "Alter-Africas: Science Fiction and the Post-Colonial Black African Novel", coins the term "jujutech" to describe these kinds of instances in African science fiction that "dissolve the borders that typically separate the spheres of tradition and modernity, magic and science" (42). I extend upon MacDonald's argument to suggest that the jujutech aesthetic does not present two different epistemological perspectives, but that its very existence shows how indivisible technoscience and Afromythology are from a modern, African epistemological basis; both are fundamental to the knowledge of the world in

twenty-first century Africa. Developing on MacDonald's theorisation of jujutech is central to my argument in this chapter and this overall thesis, because it clearly reveals the epistemological hybridity not only characteristic of the new wave of African SFF, but of twenty-first century Africa.

The third chapter of the thesis addresses one complication in applying science fiction theory to juju-oriented texts. This is the idea of the 'novum,' termed by Darko Suvin to explain the essential distinction between science fiction and other genres. Suvin writes:

> A novum of cognitive innovation is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality. Now, no doubt, each and every poetic metaphor is a novum […]. However, though valid SF has deep affinities with poetry and innovative realistic fiction, its novelty is 'totalizing' in the sense that it entails a change of the whole universe of the tale, or at least of crucially important aspects thereof (and that it is therefore a means by which the whole tale can be analytically grasped). (Suvin 64)

The "novum" thus describes the innovative element of a science fiction text that makes the speculation possible. As a globally familiar example, being bitten by a radio-active spider is the "novum" of the Spider-Man comics, since it is what rationalises the estrangement of the story by granting Peter Parker his superpowers. It is the 'new thing' that explains the difference between the fictional universe and reality. When Suvin insists that the novum must necessarily be "cognitive," he means the accumulative, progressional and absolute logic of Euro-America, rather than the collective, animist and juju-invested cognitive system notable in African popular culture. Furthermore, Suvin's suggestion that the author's and/or implied reader's "norm of reality" is essential in analytically grasping the novum makes science fiction a genre dependent on locale, belief and identity, which contradicts the notion of genre in a post-Barthesian era. The chapter addresses these apparent contradictions by showing in detail how juju is used in "Montague's Last," a short story by Ekari Mbvundula published in the online magazine, *Omenana*. "Montague's Last" exhibits how juju interacts with the progressional approach to scientific knowledge emblematic of the theorisation of the novum, and how the result of the use of juju in the novum is the jujutech aesthetic described by MacDonald. The chapter then goes on to analyse Dilman Dila's short story cycle, *A Killing in the Sun*, the first single-author collection of science fiction stories published from Africa. I argue that the collection uses the jujutech aesthetic throughout, and the result is a critically hybrid, future-oriented approach to understanding the world.

The fourth chapter argues that this kind of epistemological hybridity and malleability is emblematic of African popular culture and modernity, and that it is essential that the epistemologies of Africa be more globally considered in the production of culture. I argue that the barriers to the production and dissemination of literature from the Global South in "the era of multinational capitalism," as analysed by Frederic Jameson, have resulted in both a state of cultural and epistemological inequality between the West and the rest. Developments in technology and the recognition for the need for diversity in entertainment in the last decade have since presented more opportunities for the global dissemination of African popular epistemologies, through science fictional visual media, such as comic books and films. I use Martin Heidegger's theorisation of the "world picture" to suggest that science fictional comics and films are producing and encouraging popular African epistemologies appropriate to twenty-first century Africa. The chapter shows this first in the most prominent science-fictional comic book produced in South Africa, *Kwezi*, but also where the comic falls short in this goal, and reproduces the idea that Africa is epistemologically static, and somewhat dependent on Western approaches to knowledge and existence. This is not solely a fault of the comic, I argue, but of the literary industry's insistence on the globally imbalanced canon in the production of media, which favours the transmission of Euro-American genre conventions, and restricts the dissemination of those associated with the global South. I point out how *Kwezi* is thus restricted by the canonised norms of the superhero comic genre. While the comic does attempt to both recreate and criticise these norms through a reliance on epistemological hybridity, this is somewhat problematically reliant on global, stereotypical perspectives of the continent. I suggest that there is space in the comic to better epitomise a constructive and aspirational global epistemology for the future, one which recognises the importance of knowledge as collective rather than absolute, and that the comic may be moving in this positive direction in later issues.

The wizard's instrument: an explanation of 'jujutech'

As the title of this thesis would suggest, MacDonald's theorisation of 'jujutech' is essential to my argument, and so it is necessary to explain it in greater detail. Jujutech is a style of science fiction in which the fabulism of writers such as Tutuola, Syl Cheney-Coker, and Ben Okri absorbs hyper-technological paradigms with the result that, as Brenda Cooper explains, 'technology is magical and . . . magical inventions are scientific' [*sic*]" (315). African science fiction is often reliant on juju in some way, but, to quote MacDonald, this juju "always

contains a mechanical element so that the magic [performed] never stems solely from spiritual energies, or more precisely, natural catalysts" (MacDonald "Alter-Africas" 191). I differentiate between juju and magic here in the sense that the former is a practiced reality, such as various forms of shamanism, while the latter is fantastical, such as in the Harry Potter series. This is not a perfect distinction, but it is generally useful in understanding why jujutech texts should be considered science fiction rather than fantasy – juju is cognitive, to borrow Suvin's theoretical terminology again, while magic is make-believe.

While using jujutech to refer to African science fiction, and making several inferences to and conclusions about Africa as a continent throughout this thesis, I do not mean to suggest that Africa is a homogenous space, nor that jujutech should be understood as aesthetically or philosophically identical across the whole continent. While Africa is an enormously diverse space, the popular influence of juju ontologies is relatively apparent across the continent, even though that juju itself is diversely understood, practiced and valued. Despite the variability in the kinds of juju practiced in different parts of Africa, the fact that its popularity is evident across the length and breadth of the continent makes discussing jujutech in Africa feasible. This thesis aims to show juju's place in fiction from Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda and South Africa, and while the differences in the influence of juju on each of these regions are evident in the discussion, the commonality of juju unites them for critical discussion. It is this ubiquitous juju influence that, I believe, makes the term 'African science fiction' usefully descriptive as well, because the influence of and speculation from juju ontologies in science fiction from Africa differentiates it noticeably from canonically Euro-American science fiction. This is because of science fiction's generic insistence on reimagining the world, based on the known, and because what constitutes the known world for the majority of Africans includes juju.

Of course, juju is not cognitive to everyone, not even every African. However, this is not necessarily relevant to jujutech's advocacy of epistemological hybridity. Jujutech does not insist on absolute belief in anything, but rather on always rejecting absolutism in attempting to know the world. The epigraph of this introduction, which is taken from Ben Okri's *Songs of Enchantment*, the second book in *The Famished Road* trilogy, exemplifies the attitude towards the world that the jujutech aesthetic requires. Azaro, the protagonist of the trilogy, is at one point recounting how his father and he go into the village's nearby forest looking for a group of beggars. While searching, the forest becomes suddenly and completely dark, and strange, terrifying events start happening around them, culminating in them climbing out of a "pit of darkness" (*Songs* 22) that has opened up to swallow them. They are unable to find the beggars,

and to Azaro it seems that "another realm ha[s] swallowed them up […] as if they ha[ve] stepped out of this reality, and into another" (23). His proposition that we need to "keep looking at the world with new eyes" is in response to this, and aligns with the recurring themes of sight and blindness in the trilogy, as metaphors for truth and reality, and how these concepts are blurred by perspective and knowledge. Azaro himself is frequently able to identify spirits acting in the real world around him only because he is an abiku, a devilish spirit continually reborn and generally destined to die very young (Mobolade 62). Being simultaneously both child and spirit, Azaro describes himself and all abikus who have chosen to live on as "the strange ones, with half our beings always in the spirit world" (*Famished* 5).

Many of his encounters with the spirit world occur in the village's tavern, which, as the trilogy progresses, becomes more and more a site of gluttony, lustfulness, greed, addiction, alcohol abuse and generally sinful behaviour. It is here that one scene of the novel clearly employs a jujutech aesthetic with the intent of critically considering how one navigates knowledge of the world. One evening Azaro hears music coming from the tavern for the first time, and goes to investigate. It is a particularly rowdy evening, primarily because the tavern has just become the first building in the village to have electricity. Azaro narrates:

> That was when I located the source of the music. On the counter was an evil-looking instrument with a metal funnel that would have delighted the imagination of wizards. There was a disc which kept turning, a handle cranked round by a spirit, a long piece of metal with a needle on the whirling disc, and music coming out of the funnel without anyone singing into it. It seemed a perfect instrument for the celebration of the dead, for the dances of light spirits and fine witches. I fled for a second time, fled from the inhuman thing, and fell backwards, tripping. (Okri, *Famished* 313–4)

This is a clear example of Azaro – and thus the reader – looking at the world with new eyes. The gramophone, an object of techno-scientific innovation, has been animated with juju, resulting in a new way of understanding it. Azaro does not specifically call it a gramophone, but Okri describes it in such a way that the reader makes this inference. The handle becomes a source of demonic, supernatural energy. The funnel becomes eerie by virtue of it not being sung into, further elaborating how "inhuman" a thing it is. His descriptions function to align with the reader's knowledge and let them know that it is a gramophone, while simultaneously

defamiliarising the reader from their own knowledge of the object. It becomes both a gramophone and a piece of sorcery, both technology and magic, both cognitive and estranged[1].

Okri's text is practicing a type of science fiction here, by providing a translation between reality and fantasy, or the known and the unknown. Reading this passage in this way suggests that there are two apparent epistemological groundings in Okri's gramophone passage, one being technoscientific, and the other Afromythological. The gramophone itself is a technoscientific invention, described by its mechanical parts like the handle, the funnel, the needle and the disc that it is spinning. However, all of these elements are known to Azaro – and thus narrated to the reader – as supernatural mechanisations. The handle is "cranked round by a spirit". The funnel is uncanny because music emerges "without anyone singing into it". The disc "kept" spinning of its own accord, and the needle atop it protrudes from a "long piece of metal", sinister and cold in its description. The entire machine becomes "inhuman" and "evil-looking," its uncanniness "perfect […] for the celebration of the dead, for the dances of light spirits and fine witches."

This extract highlights a central aspect of jujutech that qualifies it as a science fictional aesthetic: its plausibility. Okri makes the machine plausible within a juju ontology, while simultaneously rationalising the interaction between the spirit world and reality to the juju sceptic, resulting in a hybridity of these two different ways of knowing the world. This analytical emphasis on plausibility is essential for any argument about jujutech literature being science fictional. While opinions regarding the precise classification of science fiction may vary, a clear thread of continuity between science fiction genre theorists follows this sentiment: that the story necessarily depends on plausibility.

It would be prudent here to suggest some differentiation between jujutech and other similar aesthetic trends which also present magic not as fantastical, but as real. Magical realism is perhaps the most commonly used term in this regard, often used with reference to modernist African texts, not least of all Okri's *The Famished Road* trilogy. In describing his theory of animist materialism, Harry Garuba explains that the "major strategy adopted by these writers is to ascribe a material aspect or existence to what are perhaps only really ideas or states of mind in the manner in which animism imputes a spiritual dimension to material objects" (272). Magical realism attempts to reconsider how we know our world by suggesting the real existence – whether overt or implicit – of magical and/or supernatural agency and activity

[1] "Cognitive estrangement" is the term Darko Suvin uses to define science fiction, as will be discussed later in this introduction. I think this can come in text, it does not belong in the footnote.

within it. Animist materialism realises magic unconsciously, thus not merely reframing how we know our immediate reality, but of speculated worlds as well. This distinction points to a fundamental mis-categorisation of much African fabulist literature, which does not aim to obscure our immediate reality as much as it is simply operating from an animist unconscious. While magical realism is a reaction to realism as enlightenment or knowing, animist materialism is the realism of an animist cultural positionality. Magical realism consciously presents instances of magic intervening in reality; animist materialism does not see itself as magic, but as a central and real fabric of hegemonic African modernity.

This coincides largely with Okorafor's description of "organic fantasy," a term she uses to name her style of writing (278). Organic fantasy, she (characteristically) cryptically describes, "blooms directly from the soil of the real" (278). To explain the term, the American-born Okorafor describes two incidents that occurred when she visited Nigeria, the country from which her parents emigrated. First she tells of walking through an Abuja market and feeling like an alien, because she is holding a video camera, at which many children are staring agog, and wearing shorts, at which many of the Hausa men are "pointing, exclaiming, some laughing [and] some sneering" (278). Secondly she narrates her feeling of "flickering back and forth" (277) between being Nigerian and American while driving in a bus as a child through south-eastern Nigeria, suggesting that the most accurate way to describe how she felt was like "a shape-shifter who can become anything she tastes and analyses" (278).

She writes that:

> To describe myself as an actual alien in this Abuja market incident is to most clearly and honestly portray how I experienced it. To write myself as a shape-shifter in that van to the village most accurately shows just how jarring the cultural shifts were to me. It is the most truthful way of telling the truth. For me, fantasy is the most accurate way of describing reality. (278-9)

Okorafor recognises that she is subconsciously framing her experiences fantastically because this ironically allows for a more truthful representation of those experiences. This, it would seem, is as a consequence of the storytelling culture that arises from an unconscious animist relationship with one's surroundings. Discussing Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Wizard of the Crow*, Okorafor argues that Ngũgĩ did not "set out to write a fantastical novel" but rather that he simply "set out to write a book about Africa and in writing about Africa the magic naturally, organically sprouted" because, quoting Okri, "Africa breathes stories" (284).

To summarise (and likely oversimplify) then: Magic realism presents the known world deliberately uncannily with magical intrusions into realism, at a level that deliberately hints at their plausibility though normalisation. Organic fantasy is the tendency to relate the real world, but through juju ontologies that do not recognise magic as uncanny or strange at all. There is no deliberate attempt to hint at magic in reality; magic simply is real. Jujutech is an aesthetic trend that appears in this latter kind of fiction, which animates technoscience from an Afromythological positionality, and suggests an epistemological hybridity in African epistemologies, and in Africa science fiction. All three of these literary techniques result from an animist unconscious which is culturally dominant on the African continent, and helps to very generally distinguish African science fiction (as well as other African genre fictions, perhaps) from their globally dominant European counterparts.

What remains common between African and global science fiction, perhaps more than anything else, is the insistence on the simultaneous estrangement and plausibility of the fiction. In fact, this is the central defining attribute of science fiction, and since this thesis is aiming to orientate jujutech in the genre, a brief history of its theorisation is essential in clarifying what "science fiction" means, and why plausibility has been a central contention in theorising the genre. This will also be important in preceding my argument about why texts that speculate from the basis of juju ontologies are inherently science fictional.

Arguing about imagination: A short history of science fiction theorisation

The emphasis on plausibility can be traced back to the first attempt to define it in 1926, when Hugo Gernsback, editor of the *Amazing Stories* magazine, coined the term "scientifiction" in his introduction to the magazine's first volume (3). "By 'scientifiction'," he writes, "I mean the Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story – a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (3). The "charming romance" of science fiction is certainly inconsistent, especially with the popularity of apocalyptic and dystopian fiction in the twenty-first century. That science fiction offers a prophetic vision is generally agreeable, although not without exception – Philip K. Dick's 1962 novel *The Man in the High Castle*, a Hugo-Award-winning classic of science fiction, depends on the premise that the Nazis won World War II, a revision of history that seems incompatible with the future-orientation of prophecy. Similar stories, loosely defined as "parallel-world" stories, similarly frustrate attempts to define science fiction.

It is the central part of Gernsback's definition, regarding scientific fact, that has since been most interesting in theorisations. On this point, arguments vary from a complete dependence on scientific fact, to absolute indifference. It is interesting that Gernsback should equate Verne and Wells in this iconic definition, because they themselves disagreed on this point. Verne wrote, after reading Wells's *The First Men on the Moon*:

> I make use of physics. He fabricates. I go to the moon in a cannon-ball discharged from a gun. There is no fabrication here. He goes to Mars [*sic*] in an airship [*sic*], which he constructs of metal that does away with the law of gravitation. That's all very fine, but show me this metal. Let him produce it. (qtd. in Amis 39)[2]

For Wells, as one early reviewer noted, "[p]recision in the unessential and vagueness in the essential are really the basis of Mr Wells's art" (*Athenaeum* 837). For Verne, to the contrary, science fiction is dependent on the mechanical details of the story being central to it, and appropriately grounded in verified scientific knowledge. If an element of one of Verne's stories is not scientifically possible, then it is at least plausible based on the scientific knowledge of the day. In *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Se*a, for example, Verne achieves scientific verisimilitude by framing his narrative from the first-person perspective of Professor Pierre Aronnax of the Museum of Paris. Aronnax is taken prisoner on a gigantic submarine called the 'Nautilus,' by the craft's commander, Captain Nemo. He spends the majority of his time on the Nautilus having Captain Nemo explain to him the precise functioning of the vessel, and documenting every subaqueous creature he encounters in painstaking detail.

Perhaps most telling of Verne's enslavement to absolute rationality is the final words of an academic paper Aronnax presents, arguing that the strange and humungous thing damaging ships at sea can only logically be an as-of-yet undiscovered giant narwhal, a "sea-unicorn of colossal dimensions" (9). To conclude this assessment, Aronnax writes:

[2] Verne's criticism – that the extraordinary elements of Wells's speculative fiction are not grounded in plausibility – is not restricted to *The First Men on the Moon*. In *The Time Machine*, Wells's best known novel, the time machine is described only aesthetically, without any indication of how it functions (8). At one point in the tale of his adventure into the future, which he is narrating to a group of dinner guests, the Time Traveller (who remains unnamed) discovers that his time machine has disappeared. He feels certain that it could not have moved in time without him, because he had kept two levers in his pocket integral to the machine's time-travelling capabilities. He says to his guests: "The attachment of the levers – I will show you the method later – prevented anyone from tampering with it in that way [time-travel] when they were removed" (44). He never does show them the method later, and so the functioning of the time machine remains a mystery.

> Thus may this inexplicable phenomenon be explained, unless there be something over and above all that one has ever conjectured, seen, perceived, or experienced; which is just within the bounds of possibility. (Verne 9)

Even when Aronnax allows himself the freedom of fantastical speculation with this final sentence, it is concluded with a reference to remaining "within the bounds of possibility", to constrain himself to viable verisimilitude.

Verne's insistence on describing the functional elements of his stories results in his science fiction telling unbelievable stories as believably as possible. As opposed to Verne's insistence on scientific fact, Kingsley Amis writes, "Wells's main interest was not in scientific advance as such but in its effect on human life" (39). In a letter to Grant Allen in 1895, Wells characterised his own writing as "scientific romance with a philosophical element" (Smith 245–6). He used science fiction not to speculate about the future of scientific endeavour in and of itself, but rather the future of humanity, using technology and his background in Darwinian biology only frugally to enable his plot.

For some time after Gernsback's coinage, theorists generally adopted a position similar to his and Verne's doggedness. J. O. Bailey, for example, said it was essential that a science story be "something that the author at least rationalizes to be possible to science" (10). Stories that followed in this vein began to emphasise "ideas over character," falling into a sub-genre commonly referred to as "hard science fiction"[3] (Gibson 1). However, the looming popularity of the alien adventure started to complicate any insistence on scientific specificity, because describing with verisimilitude the technicalities of scientific advances of a different planet, with different natural conditions, is at best a restriction of the imagination, and at worst impossible. Requesting for the scientific exactitude in a story set on a different, life-accommodating planet cannot be reasonably expected of a Terran writer because such alien planets are not (at least, at the time of writing) known entities, and so "the narrative pressure of such inventions is likely […] to be weak" (Amis 139–40). While stories of alien encounters and planets are undoubtedly works of science fiction, it cannot be because of their scientific exactitude. Using that detail as a way of wholly defining the genre was inadequate. A

[3] Hard science fiction is more of a niche subgenre than stories about time travel, superhumans, or the end of the world, which characterise the most widely consumed contemporary science fiction. Its practitioners are generally as resolute as Verne about the precise scientific detail of the story being front and centre, rather than more conventionally central elements of fiction like character, metaphor or didacticism. In the words of Isaac Asimov, perhaps hard science fiction's most prominent writer, "[i]f someone is going to take the trouble to write science fiction, why should he feel he must bow down to the little tin god of characterisation?" (qtd. in Gibson 1).

definition needed to take into account the inherent unsureness of fictional speculation, the fact that it is plausible rather than possible.

It is from this vein of thought that Amis wrote that science fiction treats "a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which is hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science[4] or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in nature" (18). Later in the same book, Amis suggests that, when considering the "idea" at the centre of a science fiction text, "an idea of scientific interest, or even of scientific respectability, is no requirement, provided as always that conceivability is not outraged" (137). Science fiction, then, should not be described as a text "intermingled with scientific fact," but rather as one that extends upon knowledge of the immediate world, scientific or otherwise, to achieve an extraordinary yet plausible tale. This definition is thus accommodative of both technoscience and juju, two different but really practiced rationalisations of the world. It also creates an avenue through which they can intersect, and thus the suggestion that jujutech texts are science fictional is wholly sensible.

A complication arises with Amis's argument though. His suggestions of pseudo-science and pseudo-technology imply that the unknown can somehow be thought to be known, and thus convincingly speculated from, which seems illogical. Moreover, his pseudo-science refers both to real rationalities beyond his own, such as juju, and fictional, invented ones such as alien technologies. The distinction between pseudo-science and make-believe is subjective in his definition, and so science fiction and fantasy blur as genres. Because of this apparent contradiction, John Clute insists that science fiction must be plausible in accordance with the objective knowledge of the world, arguing that science fiction does not intend to estrange, but rather to make plausible and familiar that which is otherwise incredible (Nicholls 160).

Knowledge is power: Global epistemological discrepancies and their consequences for an acceptable theorisation of science fiction

Clute's dependence on the existence of some objective knowledge about the world is disagreeable for various reasons[5]. Most notably, for the concerns of this thesis regarding

[4] It should be noted here that, by "pseudo-science," Amis is not using it in the same way as it is sometimes used in scientific discourse to refer to a falsely conclusive proposition, or what Austin Hughes better describes as "a theory that purports to be scientific but is in fact immune to falsification" (34). Rather, he uses the term to refer to a novum in a work of fiction that is plausible at the subjunctive level of the text, but does not correspond precisely to real scientific knowledge.

[5] At the most extreme of these, as René Descartes famously first posits, any knowledge of our immediate reality cannot truly be infallible. Descartes's first principles propelled an epistemological scepticism of the same

epistemological hybridity in science fiction, is the fact that knowledge about the world is obviously not objective. Knowledge of the world is simply too dependent on context, subjective experience and many other factors. Clute's referral to objective knowledge is thus more usefully understood as practicing epistemological relativism. This approach considers knowledge to be that which is widely accepted to be true amongst all people, even if it is not entirely verifiable by the standards of the Cartesian sceptic (Neta & Pritchard 499). The tangible, immediate empirical basis that Clute insists upon for science fiction, then, would include known truths about the world around us, those things that are true for all people, rather than only true for some. This is known in the field of epistemology as "objective knowledge," as opposed to "subjective knowledge," which varies between people, such as one's favourite flavour of ice-cream (Neta & Pritchard 499). In their explanation of objective knowledge, Neta and Pritchard offer the example that the Earth orbits the sun, because it is true for all people regardless of perspective, and is true independently of us, since it is how the world around us objectively operates[6] (499).

The fact that objective knowledge need not necessarily be universally agreeable complicates the proposition that the physically explainable describes the cognitive strategies of science fiction writing. If science fiction is dependent on its plausibility in relation to reality, but there is no such thing as universally agreed upon objective knowledge, then: either the genre of a text is dependent on each individual reader's beliefs, which is counterintuitive to the intentions of genre, or; no science fiction text has any genuine cognitive relationship with reality at all. The latter would make more sense, especially considering the plethora of science fictional inventions and advances that have not – at least, as of yet – been realised in reality. To suggest that a time-travel story cannot be called science fiction until time travel is empirical knowledge is to quite baselessly exclude some of science fiction's most prominent texts from generic consideration. Juju is not a globally held belief, and so Clute would suggest that it cannot have a role in science fiction, because science fiction must necessarily ground its extraordinary elements in reality.

This is a problematic theoretical approach though, because it only accounts for a Northerncentric idea of reality. The plethora of science fiction theorisation has been similarly

severity, that any and all claimed knowledge is fallible, which is still philosophically dominant (Neta & Pritchard 431). If nothing can be known, then nothing can be proposed as a realistic novum. This level of epistemological scepticism is perhaps too severe to be applied to the reading of fiction though.

[6] Importantly, the distinction here for the epistemological relativist is not reliant on every single human person agreeing with the truth of the piece of knowledge (of those who do not believe that the Earth orbits the sun, perhaps the most notable is the infamous Flat Earth Society) – after all, very few (if any) beliefs suit that condition completely.

compromised because it has historically allowed only for a conception of reality that correlates with Western Cartesian, rationalist epistemology. This has been at the expense of things like juju, spirituality and the occult (which ironically have been major motifs of the Western science fiction canon for decades [Bergson 15–7], despite the predominant ontological distaste for such things). The problem for applying these pre-existing theorisations about the genre to popular African science fiction is that juju is an important part of popular African epistemologies, and an unavoidably composite factor in accounting for many African ontologies.

African science fiction then, as a genre, is inherently differentiable from other subgenres of science fiction by virtue of the author's knowledge of the world around them, their own personal modernity. It is different to canonical science fiction because the understanding of the world shown by African science fiction texts is often somewhat different to that shown by texts from Europe and North America. However, they are still science fictional, because they speculate beyond the present bounds of that ontology in a way that is still plausible to it.

Quantifying what differentiates an African understanding of the world from a Euro-American – or indeed any other – ontology, has been a focus of several African academics in recent decades. Garuba, for example, identifies the dominance of animist metaphysics in Africa, as opposed to the traditional dominance of monotheistic religious beliefs in Europe and the Middle-East. "Instead of erecting graven images to symbolize the spiritual being," he explains, "animist thought spiritualizes the object world, thereby giving the spirit a local habitation" (267). This has led to the presence, he argues, of an animist unconscious in postcolonial Africa, "a form of collective subjectivity that structures being and consciousness in predominantly animist societies and cultures, […] embedded within the processes of material, economic activities and then reproduc[ing] itself within the sphere of culture and social life" (269).

Garuba observes a tendency towards the "re-traditionalisation" of postcolonial Africa, and hence the propagation of traditional practices in modern African political, social and economic practices, where emphasis is made on traditional practices such as having praise-singers present at important community and state events, making sacrifices to bless the acquisition of new property and vehicles, and the induction of "ancestor worship" into some African churches. It should be noted that Garuba specifically uses the word 'unconscious':

> to emphasize that this does not necessarily mean that the individual has to believe in magic or animism. In predominantly animist societies, the animist

> unconscious conditions being and structures subjectivity beyond the level of religious belief. One of the most important ways in which it does so is to elide the either/or orientation of monotheistic religions and their logic of binarism and exclusivity (270).

Animism, Garuba argues here, is an unconscious societal way of conceiving of the world that institutionally influences even those living in Africa who do not believe in the reality of the occult.

An important aspect of this, is the rejection of absolute, exclusive knowledge about the world, which he believes to be characteristic of Western philosophy. Because of the resultant emphasis on knowledge as collective, fundamentally incomplete and fluid, he claims that animist materialism allows for a "continual re-enchantment of the world" (265). Wole Soyinka follows a similar argument when he differentiates between European and animist modes of modernity:

> European scholars have always betrayed a tendency to accept the myth, the lore, the social techniques of imparting knowledge or of stabilising society as evidence of orthodox rigidity. Yet the opposite, an attitude of philosophical accommodation, is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded most African deities, attributes which deny the existence of impurities or "foreign" matter, in the god's digestive system. Experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition are absorbed through the god's agency, are converted into yet another piece of social armoury in its struggle for existence, and enter into the lore of the tribe (53–4).

Newly realised modernities such as technoscience do not replace mythologies and traditions in animist cultures, but become assimilated into them. It is this philosophy of accommodation that allows for the popular existence of jujutech aesthetics, which assimilate technoscience and juju into the same ontology.

Garuba uses the example of Sango to explain how this assimilation occurs in Yoruba culture specifically. Sango was a sixteenth-century ruler and anthropomorphic deity "who was in his lifetime reputed to have had the ability to 'call down' lightning to destroy his enemies and burn their houses and homesteads" (261). Sango, writes Garuba, is "not only a figure from the historical past; he [is] more importantly a symbol of the meeting point between 'tradition' and 'modernity.' He was a mythological figure whose incipient scientific consciousness was demonstrated in his ability to harness the electrical charges of lightning to serve his own sometimes undisclosed purposes" (262). Sango is even sometimes credited in Nigeria with the "discovery" of electricity, "a discovery extrapolated from the myths of his dexterity in the

manipulation of lightning. It is this association with electricity that has made Sango the patron god of electricians and the deity who presides over Nigeria's power corporation" (263). This is a fine example of what Soyinka means when he explains that "[t]he deistic approach of the Yoruba is to absorb every new experience, departmentalize it and carry on with life" (9). The same attitude, I argue, is adopted by animist societies such as those in Africa, when devising or encountering new technologies, as my discussion about the jujutech aesthetic in later chapters will show.

Moving towards a frontier African epistemology

The most important theorisation for my aims, and one which I refer to throughout this thesis, is Francis Nyamnjoh's idea of frontier African epistemologies. In his 2017 book, *Drinking from the Cosmic Gourd: How Amos Tutuola Can Change Our Minds*, Nyamnjoh criticises contemporary African scholars for rejecting these attitudes of conviviality and epistemological accommodation in favour of predominant Western modes of exclusivist thought. He proposes that this tendency is born out of an elite Europhilia consequent of colonial strategies of invalidating Africans and their knowledge systems, and suggest that academics who practice in this way have failed to recognise "popular modes of knowing and knowledge making" because of their indebtedness to Western modes, and thus failed to produce "relevant, inclusive, negotiated, nuanced and complex social knowledge" of African communities (3). Nyamnjoh theorises a "frontier African" epistemology, reflective of:

> the frontierness of ordinary Africans in how they collapse dichotomies and build bridges of conviviality between nature and culture, the visible and the invisible, tradition and modernity, Africa and Europe, god, spirits, ghosts, animals and kindred creatures of the bushes, and humans" (6–7).

These frontier Africans resist ambitions of absolute autonomy, with a predisposition for collectivity, humility, and opposing anthropocentrism.

In this epistemological vein, one which this thesis attempts to emulate as far as possible, it is fair to say that the assimilation of modernity and Afromythology in the dominant animist unconscious is not a replacement of one for the other. In fact, it is imprecise to recognise any epistemological hierarchy at all. The new simply "re-enchants", rather than disenchants, the old. This, I think, is the key difference between the assimilation of tradition, mythology, and modernity in animist and monotheistic traditions, and is so reflected in the jujutech aesthetics

of the texts discussed in this thesis. For the animist society, new inventions re-enchant old mythologies just as innovative juju re-enchants technology. Exploring how this is achieved in African science fictional texts is key for understanding not only the epistemology but the popular imaginaries of African modernism.

In contrast to this frontier methodology of ontological inclusivity, the approach to dividing technoscience and occultism into two different kinds of literature – an approach taken historically by (predominantly white European and American) genre theorists – has distinguished explanation from "pseudo"-explanation based on what corresponds to the logic of Jacobean scientific rationalism, which has been the dominant epistemology in the field of science for the past century. This can be attributed to the rise of scientism, the claim that "natural science does or soon will constitute the entire domain of truth" (Hughes 32). This attitude has led to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge production – most notably philosophy – which Austin Hughes argues has led to a deficiency in intellectual pursuit. Hughes offers various historical examples of where the practice of science without the consideration of other disciplines has had serious, negative consequences that are "obvious upon philosophical reflection" (50). Almost all of Hughes's examples are based on uncritical implementations of scientific moral relativist implementation of Social Darwinism, from the eugenics that led to Nazism, to anti-welfare capitalism (43–9). While these are perhaps too limited in their emphasis on unchecked Social Darwinism, they hold definite, terrible weight in arguments against scientism. Ultimately, it would be naïve to believe that science is, or indeed can ever, account for complete knowledge of the world, and so Hughes concludes that scientism is ultimately, and ironically, unreasonable, because it inherently believes that "science has already resolved questions that are inherently beyond its ability to answer" (50). Hughes shows that many contemporary proponents of scientism believe that natural sciences have rendered philosophy obsolete, perhaps most notably Stephen Hawking. Hughes believes the contrary: "Rather than rendering philosophy obsolete, scientism is setting the stage for its much-needed revival" (50).

Boaventura de Sousa Santos shows a similar sentiment when he warns that researchers need to recognise the difference between "science as a monopolistic knowledge and science as part of an ecology of knowledges" (193), or between excluding unfamiliar knowledge and embracing it as constructive to global philosophy, science and discovery. Science fiction from Africa, I argue, is generally invested in this same insistence on the development of an ecology of knowledge characterising global epistemology. It generally presents a philosophical

alternative to the problematics of scientism and the search for impractical epistemological completeness, by rather confronting, questioning and lauding the incompletenesses of reality.

The second chapter will show these frontier science fictional ecologies of knowledge in operation in Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. The third will argue that the jujutech aesthetic is particularly apt for presenting such epistemological hybridity in literature, with reference to Ekari Mbvundula's "Montague's Last," and Dilman Dila's *A Killing in the Sun*. The fourth chapter contemplates some of the challenges posed to epistemological hybridity in published science fiction texts by the capitalist literary industry, with reference to Loyiso Mkize's *Kwezi*.

Chapter 2

The Bush, the Deads and the Future: Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* as Science Fiction

This first chapter rereads Tutuola's first novel *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* (hereafter referred to as *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*) by paying particular attention to the text's science fictional elements. Critics have been in relative disarray in attempting to define the genre of the text, due to the unorthodoxy of Tutuola's writing – it has been called fantasy, folk tale, fabulism and absurdism. My argument, that the text is science fictional, should not only be read in reference to Tutuola's text, but to the kinds of fabulist/folkloric/magical/absurdist texts iconic of precolonial African literature, to which Tutuola is much indebted. In addition, I argue that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is a useful epistemological deviation from the exclusionary, Northerncentric, and rationalist empirical basis that has informed the past century of science fiction theory. Instead, Tutuola prefers a convivial, inclusive and global epistemological approach, largely in line with Nyamnjoh's theorization of the 'frontier African'.

This in an important consideration to make before studying contemporary African science fiction because Tutuola's stories, and the oral storytelling culture it hints at, undoubtedly anticipate the kind of science fiction that has since been produced on and about the continent. This is partially due to their representation of the kind of fabulism characteristic of the African folk tale, and partially because of the author's engagement with and presentation of the modern, a primary concern of science fictional literature. The ontological foundation of Tutuola's fabulism reflects and generates an insistence on popular Yoruba ways of knowing and understanding modernity and the world at large. Furthermore, reading Tutuola's novels through the lens of science fiction illumines much of the value they have for conceptualising a popular African epistemological framework for approaching questions of knowledge production from the continent beyond the scope of the academy[7]. Science fiction is a genre undoubtedly rooted in knowledge of the world. More than that, it reimagines the functioning of modernity. Tutuola's novels present an understanding of the world that is very different

[7] The ironies of conceptualising a popular epistemological framework, that is resistant to the exclusionary, one-dimensional appreciation of knowledge found in institutes of tertiary education, in a thesis written for a degree from one of these very institutions, one that is currently named after one of history's most doggedly Europhilic colonial educators, do not go unnoticed by the author.

from the rest of the science fiction canon, but just as subjunctively plausible to one practicing a frontier African epistemology. This narrative technique allows Tutuola to reimagine a world just as distantly familiar as Frank Herbert's planet of Dune, William Gibson's cyberpunk underworld, or Margaret Atwood's dystopian prophecy, if not more so.

Reviewers of the book both abroad and in Africa have attributed it to various genres since its publication – fantasy, folklore, fabulism, magical realism – but never science fiction. The earliest reviews showed a general obsession with attempting to define its genre, but together they could not decide whether the book was "folktale fantasy, or novel (as the dust jacket insists)" (Schneider 919). Some reviewers were hesitant to call it fantasy because of its obvious indebtedness to folklore. Cid Corman preferred to recognise it as "a volume […] of West African legends" and "tales of the African bush" (85), while Mary Danielli called it "a work of fiction […] based upon a traditional narrative and the content of African minds" (309). In fact, it does not seem any of Tutuola's works have ever directly been called science fiction in any published form[8]. This may indeed be because, as Patrick Sharp explains, "discussions of whether a text is 'science fictional' enough to be included in the genre have been left behind, along with taxonomic definitions of genre that supported them" (117). Rather, "a text that includes science fictional elements is now understood to be engaged with – and a part of – the genre, whether or not science fiction is the 'primary' or 'dominant' genre of the text" (117). But even this more tolerant argument has never been suggested. This oversight is due to the unhealthy predominance of Northerncentric texts in the theorisation of the genre in the last century, and the global predisposition for Eurocentric, exclusionist ideas of reality, modernity and science.

I will start by explaining the novel's initial critical reception, showing how responses to it were problematic because the novel's evasion of epistemological exclusivity left critics unsure of it, and ultimately derisive of the text, both in Africa and in Europe. This unwarranted disdain is a result of the unequal global epistemological divide between previously colonial and previously colonized peoples, which was even more emphasized in the 1950s when the novel was released. The chapter then evaluates the novel's conformity to three major theoretical approaches to defining science fiction, to show how his text – when considered from a frontier perspective that recognizes African popular epistemologies as worthwhile – is

[8] While not in print, it should be noted that Nedine Moonsamy made this equation in a presentation at the "Hypertravel in the Bush of Ghosts" colloquium at the University of Pretoria in September 2017. She is drafting a paper on these ideas called "Faster than Before: Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* as Science Fiction" for publication in *Afrofuturism in Time and Space* in 2019.

science fictional. I do this not because I consider these theoretical approaches the pinnacle of defining the genre, but rather as a means of criticizing Western-centric theorisations for their exclusions. I show how they have overlooked African science fiction for nearly a century only because of a restricted and biased attitude to what constitutes valid knowledge of the world – an epistemological exclusionism of which Tutuola's text is precisely and allegorically critical.

The first of these theoretical approaches is Suvin's heavily influential theory that science fiction operates by a process of "cognitive estrangement". The second definitional approach I will look to situate Tutuola in, is at the subjunctive level of the language used, based on Samuel Delany's argument that there are four subjunctively distinct types of writing: reportage, naturalistic fiction, fantasy and science fiction. Finally, I argue that Tutuola's prose adopts a future-oriented and didactic philosophy that theorists have agreed informs the science fiction's role as social commentary.

These various lenses of understanding the genre allow for a wholesome, kaleidoscopic understanding of how Tutuola's texts operate in the same way. Then, by looking at the more specific philosophies, allusions and metaphorical postulations of his visionary universe, I will map the various ways in which reading his texts as science fictional allow one to understand the prophetic, anti-colonial, and wholly modernist value of Tutuola's work for both his contemporaries as well as the modern reader. This approach will also develop a methodological scaffold with which to read the epistemological contributions made by various contemporary science fiction texts from Africa, which will be done in later chapters.

While this chapter – and the thesis at large – will continually and actively be accounting for the presence of juju as a lived experience of reality, rather than as imaginative fantasy, this will be done from my personal positionality of an outsider to Yoruba culture. Because of this, the majority of conclusions I make about the role of juju in the texts have been taken second-hand from other scholars' insights – for example, the real kinds of juju that Tutuola borrows and/or innovates in his universe. I have done so because, as Kacke Götrick points out:

> The way we interpret what we perceive depends on our competence, that is on the degree of our knowledge of the background to the object or event encountered. Thus every message presupposes a certain competence. If the sender and the receiver do not have the same competence, the receiver will have difficulties in decoding the message. Some signs will be wrongly decoded or not even perceived, and, consequently, the message is misconstrued. (137)

A lack of recognition of this, and of this different empirical bases that can be considered as reality based on the subject's positionality, is what has allowed for texts subjunctively situated

in juju to be considered more fantastical than science fictional for the past century of critical engagement with the science fiction genre. While "not every member of the Yoruba society has the same competence," and it is thus "impossible to establish a normative Yoruba competence," meaning that "no one interpretation [of Tutuola's fiction] can claim to be 'correct'" (Götrick 137), referring to and comparing the thoughts of scholars with more intimate knowledge of Yoruba epistemologies and ontological realities is certainly a more responsible methodology.

The epistemological positionality I adopt is akin to that described by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in *Juju Fission: Women's Alternative Fictions from the Sahara, the Kalahari, and the Oases In-Between*. Describing her relationship with juju and its role in her scholarship on the subject, Ogunyemi writes:

> I know nothing about juju, but I am writing a book about it, that is a book about the nothing that is something. I do not practice it, but I am immersed in it, mesmerised and enchanted by the idea that intrudes upon my thoughts, and the thoughts of many who come into contact with me, since we keep dismissing it. Our constant references to juju thus betray the fact that we protest too much. My relationship with it is that of the believing skeptic, viewing juju cynically but not dismissively, and straddling the issue like an insider-outsider. (11)

I too attempt to adopt the position of the insider-outsider, the juju agnostic, not only because it reflects my real relationship to juju beyond my scholarship, but also I consider it to be the most responsible scholarly way of accounting for juju as cognitive, and critiquing exclusivist epistemological positionalities.

"An overwhelming sequence of fantastic events": Early criticism of the novel

Despite all the praise he has received, and the academic debate he has caused, Tutuola was "a writer almost by accident" (Lindfors, "Debts and Assets" 307) according to Bernth Lindfors, the most dedicated scholar of Tutuola's work. Tutuola describes doing well at school until nine months into his standard six year, when his father passed away suddenly, without whom he could no longer afford to further his studies (128). He tried his hand at farming crops quite unsuccessfully before joining the West African Air Corps as a coppersmith and blacksmith (129)[9]. Struggling to find employment after the war, he found an "unsatisfactory

[9] While enlightening, his testimony should be taken with a pinch of salt. In describing his experiences of his third school in Abeokuta in 1938, he explains that his father lived "a distance of 23 ¾ miles to Abeokuta," and that if he "needed something from" his father, he would travel the distance to see him on weekends (127–8). Because

job" (129) as a messenger for the Nigerian Department of Labour. "The trouble with his new job was that often there was nothing at all for him to do. So to keep himself busy during office hours, he began to write down on scrap paper the stories he heard on Sundays from an old man on a palm plantation" (Lindfors, "Debts and Assets" 306). He was doing this for his own amusement, and did not initially intend to have anything published (306–7). The idea occurred to him to try to publish when he came across an advertisement for the United Society for Christian Literature in 1950, and so he sent them a manuscript entitled *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and his Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town* (307). I would argue that the 'accidental' route to writing is some of the reason for his texts' generic and prosaic unorthodoxy, because of the resultant sincere spontaneity of his works.

This unusual nature of Tutuola's prose is immediately evident in the text. The novel begins:

> I was a palm-wine drinkard since I was a boy of ten years of age. I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life. In those days we did not know other money, except COWRIES, so that everything was very cheap, and my father was the richest man in our town.
>
> My father got eight children and I was the eldest among them, all of the rest were hard workers, but I myself was an expert palm-wine drinkard. I was drinking palm-wine from morning till night and from night till morning. By that time I could not drink ordinary water at all except palm-wine.
>
> But when my father noticed that I could not do any work more than to drink, he engaged an expert palm-wine-tapster for me; he had no other work more than to tap palm-wine every day. So my father gave me a palm-tree farm which was nine miles square and it contained 560,000 palm-trees, and this palm-wine tapster was tapping one hundred and fifty kegs of palm-wine every morning, but before 2 o'clock p.m., I would have drunk it all; after that he would go and tap another 75 kegs. (7)

From the comma splices and seemingly arbitrary capitalisation, to the improper use of prepositions and precision of minor details, it is no wonder why reviewers were perplexed by his style. Even more astounding is the tale itself: one day, the tapster falls out of a tree he is tapping wine from, and dies. The narrator tries to tap his own wine, but cannot collect enough to sustain his appetite, so he sets out to find his tapster in the Deads' Town – the place all dead souls travel to. Being "the Father of the Gods Who Could Do Anything in This World" (10),

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he did not want to use the little money he had on transport, he would trek the distance. "If [he] left home at 6 o' clock in the morning, [he] would reach the village at about 8 o' clock in the same morning" (128). Considering the world record time for a marathon, less than four kilometres longer than that distance, was 2:26:42 in 1938 (IAAF 614), this claim is highly improbable.

he takes "all [his] native juju and also [his] father's juju" (9) to combat the spirits he is sure to encounter. What follows is a series of other-worldly adventures, encountering extraordinary spirits and monsters, all of whom he defeats with a combination of cunning, wit and magical power. These encounters occur in a manner of procession that emphasises their distinction from one another, as if telling a collection of many shorter stories, and so being reminiscent of African folk tales. However, by virtue of its maintenance of one story overall, as well as the continuity of themes and motifs across the text, it is still identifiable as a novel.

On the way to the Deads' town the narrator marries a woman he rescues from a devious skull, magicks himself into a ferry in order to make money, is excruciatingly tortured by the people of a town who do everything incorrectly, is entranced by Song, Drum and Dance personified, and even defeats Death itself, before eventually reaching the deads' town. He is unable to convince his tapster to return to the world of the living, but does acquire a magical egg, which grants its owner "anything [they] wanted in this world" (101). He takes it back to his village and uses it to supply himself with endless palm-wine, as well as to stave off a great famine that is killing off many of his townsfolk, caused by a hunting argument between Land and Heaven. By supplying the starving townsfolk with food and water from the egg, the palm-wine drinkard becomes a local hero, deserving of his title.

The United Society for Christian Literature were understandably in awe of the manuscript, not just because of the extraordinary tale it presented, but also because it seemed to offer something truly unique and interesting from a colonial anthropological perspective: an insight into an African mind largely untouched by the influence of European education, but written in English. While they did not have the capacity to publish a novel, they sent it to Faber and Faber in 1951, who published it in 1952 (307). The publication spurred Tutuola on greatly, and he sent them another manuscript just eighty days later, which was published as *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* in 1954 (307).

Faber and Faber cited the reason for publishing *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* as "possibly more anthropological than literary" because it "is the unsophisticated product of a West African mind" (qtd. in Lindfors, "Search for a Publisher" 127). It is clear from this description that European readers were more concerned with the novel as an opportunity to discover the obscurities of African otherness than to consider it as epistemologically and culturally equal, which reflects the epistemological inequalities the novel had to navigate. This fascination with creator rather than investment in content is what motivated Faber and Faber not to edit the book's many errors of conventional grammar and spelling, so as not to take away from its "charm", since they considered many of Tutuola's "expressions […] more graphic than the

correct expressions would be" (qtd. in Lindfors, "Search for a publisher" 118). Ulli Beier has argued that the "the publishers intentionally left misspellings and such so as to make the novel a way for Europeans to laugh at a stupid, primitive African, another part of the colonial freak show" (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 11-2).

The book's immediate critical reception in the West reflected a similar condescension of the African mind's literary and linguistic validity. David Schneider's review, tellingly published in American Anthropologist, treated the book quite like the results of an experiment on an infantile mind, rather than as a genuine piece of literature. He writes:

> English is a culture and a language which some people have been learning for some years now. If this is a good sample of what will become of them, the future is in excellent hands indeed. Meanwhile, students of acculturation will be interested in what happens to West African folktales after six years of schooling and a spell in the Air Corps, students of language and literature will find the processes of blending worth studying, while any reader of English of any background will find the book a sheer delight. (912)

Schneider's concerns are more on the development of the author's language abilities than the book as a literary text. While the language use contributes intentionally to the book's method of meaning making, as will be discussed later, Schneider is interested with it as a reflection of "the processes of blending" colonial education with a perceived precolonial Yoruba primitiveness. His reading reduces the text to experiment, rather than embracing it as a form of ontological experience. As a story, therefore, it becomes little more than sheer delight, rather than the rich and layered adventure of science fictional adventure it truly is, when considered from a frontier perspective.

The majority of early reviewers from Europe and America similarly celebrated the text only for its remarkably imaginative graphic description, interesting reflection of Yoruba folklore, and/or anthropologically fascinating linguistic deficiency (Corman; Danielli). This kind of engagement with foreign literature is concurrent with Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, which:

> discusses how the East – the Orient – is created through Western discursive practices (anthropology, tourism, fiction, to say nothing of imperialism), and constructed as an 'other' which can, however, be known by the dominant discourse of the West, and thus be assimilated into its practices and pronounced inferior in so far as it does not come up to these (Tambling 7).

While Said's theorisation focussed on the relationship of power between East and West, his description of "Western discursive practices" is useful in understanding colonial arrogances towards understanding Africa. In reading Tutuola's early fiction for anthropological interest, these reviewers showed their imperial attitude towards the African[10] mind as "ultimately a mind that does not respond to changing times, but that must stay faithful to the primitive savagery badly needed for the colonial project to imagine and re-imagine itself through a mythical, contrived and linear past" (Nyamnjoh 81). Dylan Thomas's review, the most widely publicised review of Tutuola's first novel, applauded the author's "bewitching literary prose" (7), and so bucked the trend of anthropologically essentialising Tutuola's novel. Largely due to Thomas's praise, a result of a more frontier approach to the text, the literariness of Tutuola's prose was better reflected in reviews of *My Life in the Bush Ghosts*, his subsequent publication (Africa Today; H. V. L. S.; Corman; Lewis).

Tutuola's reception in his own country, on the contrary, was far more antagonistic. Nigerian literary critics were embarrassed by his 'broken English', and the way this fuelled racist Western beliefs of African intellectual inferiority (Achebe 113). More than this, African intellectuals at the time were intentionally distancing themselves from the traditional belief systems of the continent, because of their association in the colonial mind-set with primitiveness, barbarism and stupidity. Nyamnjoh describes how the African intellectual elite perceived Tutuola's representation of this very past to be furthering racist beliefs about African backwardness, which they believed themselves to be working tirelessly to combat:

> Tutuola was considered a priori, as beneath human because of the perceived savageness of his mind and its primitive imagination by an African elite aspiring for full humanity by means of whitening up in the eyes of their European colonisers. Such Africans […] felt that Tutuola was pulling them down and back to the status of bare or incomplete humanity of the dark caves of their dark continent that they were determined to escape. (Nyamnjoh 69)

Ironically, those very intellectuals did so by entrenching themselves in the Eurocentric tradition, and distancing themselves from the very Africans they believed themselves to be representing, a tendency Nyamnjoh laments observing even in contemporary African intellectualism:

[10] I use 'African' here rather than 'Nigerian' or 'Yoruba' to reflect the homogenization of the continent from the colonial perspective.

> Often, the ways of life cherished by ordinary Africans are labelled and dismissed too eagerly in broad daylight (even if not consistently under the cover of darkness as well) as traditional knowledge by some of the very African intellectual elite they tend to look up to for development as a process of bringing change and continuity into creative conversations. (Nyamnjoh 15–6)

The author himself often spoke of his discontent with his reception in Nigeria, and the argument that he was negatively influencing European conceptions of Nigerian intellectual prowess. In an interview with Mike Awoyinka, Tutuola decried that foreigners:

> know Nigerians are well-educated. They know Nigeria has so many educated people like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Dr Omotoso, Dr Ogunbiyi and so forth. How could they because I am writing my own book be laughing at us and saying we don't know anything? Don't you see that is wrong? (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 74).

He was critical of his country's preference of its Western-educated elite, later conjecturing that "the Nigerian government does not give [him] any honour […] because of [his lack of] education" (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 74).

This is not to say that reception of Tutuola's novel in Nigeria was only negative. Cyprian Ekwensi, a contemporary of Tutuola's, was the first to contemplate the novel from a more critical standpoint. He remarked that "in the stories of the Red men, and the man who did not know the meaning of the word 'poor' one can only wonder whether a warning finger is not being pointed at the present-day Western World, and the ultimate goal to which it is drifting" (258). It is with this story and Ekwensi's contemplation that I shall begin analysing the text's science fictionality.

The Palm-Wine Drinkard and science fiction theory

Ekwensi here hints at Tutuola's use of Afromythology translated to this modern form of literature. The story "of the Red men" Ekwensi is referring to here takes place when the narrator and his wife come upon a town where everything – from the people to the buildings to the plants and even the food – are "as red as red paint" (74). They meet the king of the town, who explains how his town was cursed to redness, and a state of liminality between life and death. The manner in which the king tells this story is reminiscent of myth, and its role in cultural production. Once, long ago, "in the olden days when the eyes of all the human-beings were on our knees, when we were bending down from the sky because of its gravitiness, and

when we were walking backwards and not forwards as nowadays" (75) the king caught a red bird in a fishing net and a red fish in a trap in a bush. His family told him to return the bird and the fish where he got them, but not wanting to walk all the way back to where he caught them, he simply burnt them in a fire. The fire produced a cloud of red smoke that turned him red, and followed him back to his town, where it turned everything red. Ever since, the townspeople have had to sacrifice one person every year to the fish and the bird, or be all be damned to eternal death. The palm-wine drinkard offers himself as this year's sacrifice, but takes a gun with him, and uses it to kill the two creatures when he encounters them. The people of the red town are at first terrified, thinking he will be their new oppressor. When they realise he has freed them of their curse, they thank him and give him a big house and some land in the town, where he and his wife live for a year.

By introducing the story as telling the origins of the human race – with a quite monstrous description of early man – Tutuola establishes the Red-king's story as a form of myth, which Saradashree Choudhury argues "emphasises the veracity" of the story, the text as a whole, and Tutuola's broader fictional universe, since the motif of creatures with eyes located in their knees continues across his early novels (6). Through this creation parable, the red people become a new union of people, who are commonly different from the drinkard, in their visual appearance, cultural heritage, and immediate concerns (the two red monsters to whom they must make sacrifices). When the drinkard slays the red bird and the red fish, the people of the red town transform into two great red trees, burn down their village, and flee from the drinkard, but accidentally take his wife with them. It takes the drinkard dozens of miles and several weeks pursuit to eventually catch up with and persuade the red people – who are now no longer red, because the fish and the bird have been vanquished – that he means them no harm, and merely wants his wife returned. Understanding this to be true, the red king offers the couple a large house, and some land to farm, where they live happily for more than a year. The drinkard becomes very wealthy in this time, and in an effort to improve the output of the town's agriculture, hires workers from outside the town to work the fields quicker and more efficiently.

What Ekwensi is suggesting is that this extended fable presents something of a cautionary colonial allegory to Western readers. The townsfolk's redness distinguishes the drinkard and his wife from them, and their arrival in the town reflects that of colonial forces in many ways. That the drinkard defeats the bird and the fish with a gun, rather with the juju he uses to defeat monsters throughout the novel, distinguishes this encounter as allegorical of the colonial encounter, of which the gun is a major motif. The townsfolk flee from him when he

has defeated the beasts, recognising him as a new and greater threat rather than as a saviour, suggesting an incongruency in the opinions of the colonial project between coloniser and colonised. In settling into the town and amassing a great wealth, the drinkard becomes allegorical of the colonial settlers, and the economic inequalities they cultivated in colonised areas. When this economic superiority becomes arrogance, the drinkard tries to reinvent the entire agricultural system of the town, because he believes he knows what is best for the townsfolk. His arrogance leads to incalculable disaster for the red people, when he accidentally hires GIVE AND TAKE, "the most powerful [evil spirit] in the world of the Bush-creatures" (89), who wreaks devastation on the town and its people, ultimately killing them all. The drinkard and his wife are able to simply leave once devastation has been wreaked, having accumulated relatively few personal losses.

This "warning finger" Tutuola speculates about the future, allegorised in the form of the GIVE AND TAKE, is obviously and awfully relevant to the problems in the post-colony left by the interference and subsequently careless withdrawal of the colonising Europeans. The drinkard enters into another society while traveling, uses a technological element novel to that society to vanquish some of that society's problems, gains great wealth and power over that society. He then tries to forcibly change that society's ways for what he perceives as its great benefit[11], ends up causing different and far-worse problems for the citizens, and then is able to vacate the situation with little personal detriment and some personal gain, while the Red people's society have to do deal with their deteriorated society, and in this case ultimately being destroyed for it.

What is important to note here is the considerable didactic value of the tale, and the fact that this didacticism is a consequence of a science fictional narrative framework. The anticolonial cautionary effect described by Ekwensi is clear, and the manipulations Tutuola has made to Yoruba folklore serve the clear and effective purpose of anti-colonial satire.

I argue that this didactic, future-oriented, and ultimately frontier approach to the situation of 1950s Nigeria pervades the whole of the text; that it makes it fundamentally more worthwhile literature than at the level of anthropological fascination described by early European reviewers; and that what enables this approach structurally in the novel is Tutuola's use of the narratological conventions of the science fiction genre, whether knowingly or not. This results in Tutuola's novel operating at the level of science fiction. I will demonstrate this

[11] Whether the drinkard is acting out of a desire for his personal betterment or the betterment of the Red people's society is not clear, as was the case with colonization, evident in the missionary projects and simultaneous capturing of resources.

with a focus on the three different approaches that have ostensibly been most dominant in academic attempts to define the science fiction genre: cognitive estrangement, science fictional subjunctivity, and future-oriented philosophy. All three, although different, will be shown to ultimately hinge on questions of the empirical, and what kind of knowledge can catalyse a science fiction novum. They are not compatible with Tutuola as science fiction if they were applied from the exclusionary ontology of scientism and Western rationalism that has characterised the vast majority of science fiction theory to date. In reconsidering them from a perspective of embracing the conviviality of frontier African epistemological thought, however, I show Tutuola to be essentially science fictional in his innovations on pre-existing stories and storytelling modes, in the relation the text has with the Yoruba reader's empirical reality, and in the sense of wonder, futurity and didacticism of the philosophy of his literary universe.

Cognitive estrangement

The first and possibly most influential of the three theories of science fiction I will be discussing in Suvin's idea of "cognitive estrangement," which I showed in the introductory chapter to have been one of the most essential and referred to advancements in the theorisation of science fiction. Suvin claimed in his 1979 book *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* that science fiction operates in the interaction between "cognition" and "estrangement". This interaction allows science fiction authors to use something logically plausible to present something beyond logical comprehension, which results, says Suvin, in a kind of empirically situated uncanniness. Importantly, Suvin's "cognition" reaches beyond the empirical basis of the author's immediate environment to include all convincingly conceivable empirical bases. Like Amis's dismissal of the requirement that a science fiction idea need be scientifically respectable, Suvin's cognition is not restricted to scientific knowledge. Both are willing to allow any plausibly knowable reality to be the basis from whence to speculate, and thus pose fewer limitations than Clute. What Suvin adds to Amis's definition here is the necessity of the uncanny in science fiction, a literary device reliant on the reader's recognition of the known in the unknown. For science fiction to function from a pseudo-cognitive novum, Suvin argues that it must in some way reflect back on reality in a usefully philosophical, prophetic, or self-reflexive way in order to be effective. This is something which an extra-terrestrial scientific system, radically different from Earth's, would be unable to achieve. Our human cognition itself must in some way be estranged, even if pseudo-cognitive cognition catalyses that process.

This does not immunise the definition from complication though. Suvin's loose definition of "estrangement" blurs the division between science fiction and fantasy, since that is a genre similarly dependent on estrangement. That one is able to fly is incredible, but to be able to fly on something as everyday as a broom or a carpet specifically situates that incredulity in one's own mundane reality. Suvin somewhat addresses this overlap into fantasy, arguing that science fiction uses "imagination as a means of understanding the tendencies latent in reality," while fantasy, myth and folktale use imagination "as an end sufficient unto itself and cut off from the real contingencies" (8). This, he argues, makes fantasy texts "manifestly impossible," and science fiction the opposite (8).

For Suvin, writing in the late 1970s, notions of what was manifestly possible, are very different from the digital and internet based society of the new millennium. Indeed, Suvin recognised that technological developments had somewhat muddied his original theorisation in a 1997 essay reflecting on the theory. His theory was specifically related to the dominant Western imaginary of the time, and suiting it to other epistemological bases – such as that of the heavily digitised twenty-first century – necessitated more theorisation. So too must it be improved to account for the epistemologies of the global South that are excluded from globally dominant scientism. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is a good example of this, because the novum of Tutuola's speculation, is predominantly Afromythological. To argue that this disqualifies his novel from being considered science fiction is imprudent though, because it would be based on a narrow and misguided definition of what science fiction is, that ignores what science fiction does and is based rather on a subjectively preferred exclusionary ontology.

This is not to say that European technoscience plays no role in Tutuola's fiction, as the use of the gun to slay the fish and the bird in the story of the Red people shows. There are also several elements in the text where these kinds of scientific inventions are central to the text's speculations. One of the most critically considered of these actually takes place in Tutuola's second novel, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. Towards the end of the novel, roughly twenty-four years since the protagonist found himself trapped in the Bush of Ghosts as a young boy, he is in a hut, taking refuge from the endless terrifying and torturous spirits he encounters in his adventures. Quite suddenly, a most repulsive spirit enters. The narrator describes her as such:

> I noticed carefully that she was almost covered with sores, even there was no single hair on her head, except sores with uncountable maggots which were dashing here and there on her body. Both her arms were not more than one and

> half foot, it had uncountable short fingers. She was crying bitterly and repeatedly as if somebody was stabbing her with knives. (155)

He asks her what she is crying about, and she replies that she is crying because she has finally met him. She explains that no sorcerer has been able to heal her wounds, but "every one of them was telling [her] that there is an earthly person who had been lost in this Bush of Ghosts," and that if he "will be licking the sore every day with your tongue for ten years it would be healed" (156). The narrator is understandably repulsed by the suggestion. However, the spirit tells him that should he do this, she will be able to transport him back to his family in the physical realm. The narrator is torn and asks for proof that she will do this for him if he agrees. The spirit tells him to look into the palm of her hand:

> [W]hen she told me to look at her palm and opened it nearly to touch my face, it was exactly as a television, I saw my town, mother, brother and all my playmates, then she was asking me frequently — 'Do you agree to be licking the sore with your tongue, tell me, now, yes or no?' (157)

The presence of a television in the narrative contrasts quite sharply with the story's rootedness in African mythology and folklore, because it is an innovation of European science and technology. This instance in the story hints at the novel being, at least in part, science fiction. The author has taken a scientific instrument and innovated it so that it is portable, makes the spirit something of a cyborg, and has the ability to see things in other realms. The speculative adaptation of science and technology is seemingly present here, albeit enacted in the spirit world, because the novum of the incident is the television, and what it could conceivably become.

Considering the television, the novum here is somewhat presumptuous. Lindfors argues that while "Tutuola appears to be stepping outside his own culture to make use of foreign materials, he may in fact be operating entirely within a Yoruba aesthetic framework" (69). Being able to see and/or contact the supernatural realm through some instrument of divination is a recurring cultural reference in Tutuola's geographical area, and the narrator in this scene is merely doing the exact opposite – seeing reality from the Bush of Ghosts, through the spirit's divination. Lindfors cites a first-hand encounter of an Ibo diviner using a "supernatural television" that allows the viewer to see the nether-world, an Ashanti tale about a young man who "has a magic mirror in his hand that allows him to see his home village when he is travelling", and the documented Yoruba belief in communication between the living and the deceased (75–6). While only one of these three pieces of evidence is directly of Yoruba origin,

there are understandably overlaps between the belief systems and cultural motifs of closely geographically situated West African ethnic and cultural groups.

Lindfors further mentions that Tutuola's television-handed ghostess cannot be modelled on the writer's encounters with television because he had never seen one. In Geoffrey Parrinder's foreword to the 1954 edition of the novel, he asserts from conversations with Tutuola that despite his description of the ghostess, Tutuola had "never seen television" (12). Ian Mundell notes that although many writers "are happy to repeat it as fact," Parrinder's assertion is "misleading" (para. 4). While the television had not reached Nigerian shores by the early 1950s, when the novel was being written, its existence and essence were common knowledge. Mundell cites several verifiable appearances of the television in movies, newspapers and magazines distributed in Nigeria in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the use of the word "technicolours" to describe the lighting of a hall in Tutuola's first novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (para. 5–9). He concludes that it would "be more accurate to say that Tutuola had not watched television" (5), but that "the way Tutuola refers to the Television-Handed Ghostess assumes that his readers will know what he is talking about" because "the concept, if not the experience, was common enough in Nigeria in the early 1950s" (8).

It would seem that Lindfors's and Mundell's arguments fill in each other's gaps. Lindfors correctly accounts for the folkloric roots of Tutuola's speculation, but neglects to consider critically his use of the word "television" which contrasts the supernatural nature of the novum. Mundell accounts for the use of the word in the context of 1950s Nigeria, and when combined with Lindfors's research, it becomes clear that Tutuola has used the word 'television' as a way to describe an element of traditional Yoruba folklore in English. Not only that, but it has been done to transport myth to modernity, to "dissolve the borders that typically separate the spheres of tradition and modernity, magic and science" (42) in the way MacDonald suggests jujutech describes, and to allow tradition to be continually re-imagined by new experiences, new knowledge, and new invention, as Garuba suggests to be characteristic of animist societies.

While the role of this key aspect of Suvin's theorisation – the idea of the 'novum' – for conceiving of African science fiction and the jujutech aesthetic will be more thoroughly explored and developed in my third chapter, the interplay between cognition and estrangement that resulted in the term have been at the essence of the theory of science fiction since Suvin's

book was published, and it has been widely adopted and praised ever since[12]. It is immediately clear why, from the exclusionary rationalist ontological perspective of the science fiction canon, Tutuola's prose would not be considered science fictional: it relies on the myth playing an important and tangible role in a civilisation's present and future operations, which is not cognitive to the epistemological positionality of canonical science fiction theory. What this perspective fails to take into account is that myth *is* a lived reality for a vast proportion of Yoruba readers, Nigerian readers, and African readers more broadly, through the contemporary belief in and practice of juju, as well as the practical role ancestors play in Yoruba and many other African societies. As Nyamnjoh explains, "popular ideas of what constitutes reality in Africa are rich with ontologies of incompleteness" (2). Juju functions as a response to this, since it "stands at the intersections of Anthropology, Medicine, Political Science, Psychology, Religion, and Sociology; from this vantage position, it permeates these disciplinary areas. Juju ambiance is consistent, and exhibits subliminally tremendous power in everyday life" (Ogunyemi 10). Soyinka argues that European scholars – and thus the majority of science fiction theorists – miss this point because "they bypass the code on which this world-view is based, the continuing evolution of tribal wisdom through an acceptance of the elastic nature of knowledge as its only reality, as signifying no more than reflections of the original coming-into-being of a manifestly complex reality" (qtd. in Garuba 263).

The uncanniness of Tutuola's prose unmistakably estranges the reader from what they know of reality, and makes them ask what lies beyond their empirical valley. This is true both for the unbiased non-Yoruba reader, because of their access to the juju-oriented futuristic untangling universe Tutuola creates, but to the Yoruba occultist also, by virtue of Tutuola's reimagining of Yoruba mythology. Considerable effort has been paid by academics to situate Tutuola's work not only in Yoruba folklore, but in the immediate reality of the author, and this has shown that the text has a situationally cognitive basis in a Yoruba occultist ontology. Lindfors's essay, "Amos Tutuola: Debts and Assets" gives an excellent summary of this, suggesting where Yoruba mythology, Tutuola's personal experiences, and his extraordinary imagination and speculation variously inspire sections and stories in the text. Structurally, the formal organisation of the entire novel reflects "the folktale about the hunter who ventures into the bad bush or the wrestler who takes his mortal challenge to the denizens of the spirit world" (Obumselu in Lindfors, "Debts and Assets" 309). The drinkard spends the duration of the

[12] Suvin himself noted in 1997 that the massive "critical consensus" on the "beneficence" of the novum made him untrusting of his own theorization, because he is politically a self-described "inveterate enemy of the solid majority" (1997: 16).

novel "travelling from bushes to bushes and from forests to forests" (*Drinkard* 9) in search of the tapster, encountering and defeating various such "denizens of the spirit world" as he goes. The structural organisation of the text itself is thus borrowed from the storytelling traditions of the Yoruba, which is easily recognisable to anyone familiar with this heritage.

Aesthetically, his novels "preserve two essential qualities of the native folktale: its dramatic spirit and its identity as lived experience integrated into the whole of life as seen and felt by the writer" (Ramsaran in Lindfors, "Debts and Assets" 309). The style of the novel is essentially oral (315), and many of his tales pre-date his novel's publication in Yoruba oral tradition in some form (316). The changes he makes to these stories allow them to have didactic, allegorical and (in some cases such as the story of the television-handed ghostess) aesthetical relevance in the 1950s, when he was writing, but they are structurally and imaginatively traditional. Eric Larrabee, who once interviewed Tutuola, explains that:

> Tutuola does not think of himself as the creator of his stories. Stories exist objectively; he merely sets them down. When I asked him if he planned to write more, the question had no meaning to him. 'But there are many stories,' he said. (qtd. in Lindfors "Debts and Assets" 311)

This reveals that the structural crafting of his stories predate his texts, and are distinctive of Yoruba oral traditions. I will now show how these aspects are subjunctively science fictional, by referring to Samuel R. Delany's theorisation of science fiction as subjunctively distinct from all other forms of writing.

A science fictional subjunctivity

In "About 5,750 Words", Samuel Delany undertakes to account for what this strategy of composition might be on a technical level. He theorises four distinct kinds of word series, differentiable because of their use of four different levels of subjunctivity, which he describes as the "tension on the thread of meaning that runs between (to borrow Saussure's term for 'word':) sound-image and sound-image" (10). This "tension" refers to the expectation that the series establishes with regards to its reasonability. He lists these four kinds as 'reportage', 'naturalistic fiction', 'fantasy', and 'science fiction' (10). The first of these, reportage, is informed by the "indicative tension" that "this happened" (10). In other words, a piece of reportage has a specific mood about it that relates to the real world entirely directly, and so works with the least tension in its relationship with reality, because it accounts for a really

occurring event/object/thing. One can thus identify a piece of writing as reportage if it itself displays a mood of having happened. The second, naturalistic fiction, works at the level of subjunctivity defined by: "this could have happened" (10). This allows for some more narrative freedom, because such a word series does not directly relate to the world as it is, but is restricted in the sense that it must conceivably be able to exist in the reader's personally observable world without logical inconsistency. The third level of subjunctivity Delany defines is a word series that "could not have happened" (11). Such a word series is at complete tension with reality, not simply because it did not really happen, but because it is logically inconceivable that the narration could have, or could ever, occur in reality (11). It is marked by any and all inconsistencies with the laws of the reader's personally observable world, making "visual corrections" during the meaning-making process of reading (12). By this, he means that the word series is progressing our understanding of what it is telling us from how we understand the real, observable world around us, to show us something that is not a part of it. He uses the example "winged dog": we understand the words "winged" and "dog" separately as particular images, because they are part of our observable world. Thus, even though the combination of the two as an image does not correlate to our empirical basis, we can visualise it because of the two words' grounding in the observable. This distinguishes fantasy from images in nonsense literature, such as Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" poem, or Noam Chomsky's nonsensical observation that "colourless green ideas sleep furiously" (*Syntactic Structures* 16).[13]

The fourth kind of word series, and most important for both my and Delany's argument, is science fiction, which he argues operates at the subjunctive level of: "did not happen" (11). At face value, this description seems to account for all fiction, and accumulatively describes both word series that could have happened, and word series that could not have happened. To explain this as a distinct category, Delany differentiates science fiction from these two in detail. What distinguishes science fiction from fantasy, he argues, is how the visual correction is explained in the word series. He specifically uses the word "pseudoexplanation" to suggest the ways visual corrections are explained in fantasy texts, and suggests that no matter its meaningfulness in terms of our personally observable world, "we *must* accept any pseudoexplanation we are given" (12, emphasis in original). Science fiction, however, "not

[13] Interestingly, Delany argues that once anything that "could not have happened" occurs within a word series, "it informs *all* the words in the series" (11 *sic*), moving the entire series from the subjunctive level of naturalistic fiction to the subjunctive level of fantasy. For Delany then, magical realism is a subgenre of fantasy, rather than of naturalistic fiction, since even the most minor of fantastical elements delineates it as such. This seems an oversimplification of the divide between these two kinds of writing, and prompts a more thorough assessment of the subjunctive distinction between fantasy and naturalistic writing, which lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

only […] throws us worlds away, it specifies how we got there" (12). In specific contrast to the pseudoexplanations definitive of fantasy, Delany argues that in science fiction, "we must make our correction process in accord with what we know of the physically explainable universe" (12).

The difference between science fiction and naturalistic fiction is that the meaning-making process of the latter "must be made in accordance with what we know of the personally observable [and] the physically explainable has a much wider range than the personally observable" (11–2). Delany's argument here eliminates the problems of relating the text's plausibility to objective real-world knowledge, problems that have plagued science fiction theorisation, as shown in the introduction to this thesis. For Delany's definition, the "personally observable" refers to immediate reality. The "physically explainable" describes what is plausible within the reality that the text itself creates, at a subjunctive level. It refers to physical explanation beyond the bounds of our own real knowledge of the world. This would suggest that Delany means that naturalistic fiction is restricted to plausibility in our immediate reality, taking into account only the actual past and present, while science fiction must be plausible in imagined but reasonable realities, such as speculated futures, alternate pasts, extra-terrestrial worlds and parallel universes.

This allowance for alterity, and dependence on the text's creation of its own plausibility, is useful in avoiding the more exclusionary suggestion of theorists like Clute, for whom the text's plausibility is dependent on the author's empirical environment. For Clute, a text cannot be science fictional for the reader who is a juju sceptic. That a palm-wine drinkard, when being chased by a horde of rolling skulls through a forest, transforms the woman he is saving into a kitten, puts her in his pocket, and then changes into a sparrow and flies away (27–8), is fundamentally anti-cognitive from the juju sceptic's Jacobean-empirical perspective, whether because of the living skulls, the protagonist's transformative abilities, or because of the question of what happens to the kitten in his pocket when he turns into a sparrow. I argue that the subjunctive verisimilitude of the text is rooted in the text's reliance on myth, and the methods Tutuola uses to translate the Yoruba folktale into English.

The presence of juju in the text is real, by being rooted in sincere Yoruba ontologies, and the protagonist's identity as the "father of gods who could do anything in this world" (39) gives him the extraordinary ability to achieve these kinds of feats. Many of the tales in the novel are common to Yoruba folklore before the 1950s. Amongst others, these include: the story of the complete gentleman that turns out to be merely a skull borrowing perfect body parts to lure people into the bush; the terrible half-bodied baby that becomes a great and evil

burden on its parents; and the egg he brings home to his town near the novel's climax that gives its possessor an abundant amount of anything they ask for, but can also turn into millions of whips that flog people for their greed (Lindfors "Debts and Assets" 316–7). That the verisimilitude of the novel heavily relies on its grounding in myth does not counteract the novel's subjunctive empiricism, but roots it in a mythical ontology. Ursula le Guin offers two definitions of myth, both of which show that myths are a system of knowledge production. The first, which she claims to be outdated, is that myth "is an attempt to explain, in rational terms, facts not yet rationally understood" (61). She claims that it is an outdated definition because "the rational and explanatory is only one function of the myth" (61). Her revision, to account for this, is that myth "is an expression of one of the several ways the human being, body/psyche, perceives, understands and relates to the world" (61–2). In similar vein, Armstrong distinguishes between Myth, capitalised, and myth. On the one hand, Myth, he argues, "is supracultural. It is […] that special and very basic level of pertinence" (16). On the other hand, "myth" is "a [cultural] belief whose function is to 'validate' action" (16). The former definition presents myth as a form of assumptive knowledge, while the latter as subjective, experiential knowledge. They are both forms of empirical knowledge about the world. By borrowing and referring to recognisable Yoruba mythology, the universe in which Tutuola's stories are grounded is an empirical system.

This shows that, while the plausibility of the drinkard's adventures is informed the reality of juju in the text, this reality is informed by Tutuola's identity as a modern Yoruba. This is not to say that the text is only science fictional for other modern Yoruba readers, because the text subjunctively establishes this reality. In a way not incongruent with Western science fiction's imagination of other planets and dimensions, the universe of juju Tutuola creates is arranged with some form of consequentiality. The points of reference between his texts and Yoruba mythology suggest a relative conformity to a pre-existing system of logic in the supernatural realm. For example, when the narrator does something extraordinary, he often refers to using a particular juju acquired from a certain person or previous activity. Examples of this in the text include a juju "which was given [him] by a kind spirit who was a friend of" the drinkard (39), protective concoctions prepared when the drinkard sees "leaves which were suitable for the preparation of [his] juju" in the bush alongside the Deads' road (107), or the "native juju and also [his] father's juju" that he takes with him when he first sets off on his journey (9).

There are also, at the level of subjunctivity, specific linguistic turns Tutuola uses to grant his story extra verisimilitude (from a juju epistemological perspective) beyond the

folktale origins. Nedine Moonsamy explains how the aforementioned scene of the complete gentleman is a good example of the figurative being made literal in Tutuola's descriptions. In the scene, a young woman has disappeared after a "complete gentleman" lured her away in the market, and her parents ask the drinkard for his help in finding her and returning her home:

> When the drinkard initially states that "he was a beautiful 'complete' gentleman, he dress with the finest and most costly clothes" (Tutuola 2014: 15), he plays with our easy interpretation of the phrase 'complete gentleman' to mean a 'total gentleman'. When the unwitting young lady follows him into the forest, however, we realise the literal intent behind the statement as the narrator states that "all the parts of his body were completed" (Tutuola 2014: 15) and so he "began to return the hired parts of his body to the owners and he was paying them the rentage money" (Tutuola 2014: 16). The figurative phrase, the 'complete gentleman', is thus modified to describe a commodified and mechanical assemblage of human body parts into a complete and fine figure. (Moonsamy 7)

The novel uses similar means to highlight the danger of the road to the Deads' town as the drinkard and his wife approach it. One of the many subtitles of the novel reads that "TO TRAVEL IN THE BUSH WAS MORE DANGEROUS AND TO TRAVEL ON THE DEADS' ROAD WAS THE MOST DANGEROUS" (107). The first half of the sentence leads the reader to believe that the bush on either side of the road is more dangerous for the travellers than the road itself, but when the second half of the sentence shows the road to be even more dangerous than the bush, it highlights the severity of the situation for the travellers, and how helpless they are to avoid the many dangers they face. It serves as a good interlude for the next scene, when they come upon a "hungry-creature" whose appetite cannot be sated, even after he eats the drinkard, his wife, and all their loads, and they must cut their way out of its stomach with a cutlass (108–10).

It is difficult to suggest how much of the linguistic adaptation that lends to the subjunctivity of science fiction comes from the original way these stories were told orally, and how much is dependent on Tutuola's translation of the stories into his unique and entrancing style of English. The fact that the effects of awe in the stories are dependent on these turns, such as can be seen in the story of the complete gentleman, suggests that they are necessary to and thus part of the original tales. However, Tutuola's use of an English that somewhat translates Yoruba linguistic patterns suggests that he recognised that this subjunctive level of storytelling needed to be maintained in his English language novels, in order for this effect to

be had. It is his very use of English in this frontier way that situates his text structurally in a future-oriented philosophy, which is anticipating and raising didactic questions about what the future of the postcolonial subject might, could, and should hold. This philosophy, I will argue, functions in both the novel's use of the English language, as well as its employment of anti-colonial allegory and metaphor that is specifically focussed on what the future holds for the colonised subject, with both a seeming awareness of the imminence of independence and a questioning of what the post-colony could be.

A future-oriented philosophy

While obviously not specifically regarding the novel's science fictional subjunctivity, many researchers have shown that Tutuola's prose works as an English translation of oral Yoruba, which in large parts accounts for the peculiarities of his English. Robert Armstrong argues that, for the most part, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is written in a way that presents "authentic Yoruba narrative 'behavior' which is in many significant respects traditional and yet written in English" (Armstrong 20). For Armstrong, Tutuola's English is "as authentic a presentation of the language uses of the Yoruba in the achievement of narrative as is a presentation in Yoruba" (Armstrong 20). The conclusion Armstrong draws from this point is to draw a distinction between Tutuola and his contemporary intellectual elites, who wrote in as high-brow a form of English as they could, to "give an appearance of modernity, maturity, competence and sophistication" (Lindfors, "Debts and Assets" 331). Armstrong wonders "what innovations might have been wrought in the perpetration of narrative if the writers of West Africa had pursued and developed their craft in accordance with the dictates of their traditional aesthetic," like Tutuola did (34). The obvious suggestion here is that Tutuola was practicing more of a frontier epistemology than many of his more elite contemporaries, because it accounted better for the imaginaries of his cultural, ethnic and national populace. That Tutuola's use of language is arguably more forward-thinking than the "perfect" English use of his contemporaries can be seen in the plethora of sheng, pidgin, and other forms of non-traditional English texts that have been published in Africa since, many of them to great acclaim.

Armstrong here presents a specific and contentious attitude towards translation. By suggesting that Tutuola's writing is 'authentic Yoruba written in English,' Armstrong believes that one language can be translated into another in such a way that can eliminate sociocultural and linguistic differences between the two languages. Translation theorist Juliane House

theorised the concept of a "cultural filter" in the practice of translation to explain this. She describes the cultural filter as "a means of capturing sociocultural differences in expectation norms and stylistic conventions between the source and target linguistic-cultural communities" when a text is translated (537). While this is arguable with regards to perfect translations, the altering of the English language by African writers for the purposes of better articulating their thoughts and fictions is certainly a good example of the cultural filter being put to affect, as Chinua Achebe notes in a 1965 essay, "English and the African Writer". Achebe describes how African writers, writing in English, have been able to use English not as imitation, but as a tool for their own creation and communication. Of Tutuola, Achebe says that a "good instinct has turned his apparent linguistic limitation into a weapon of great strength – a half-strange dialect that serves him perfectly in the evocation of his bizarre world," the narrative excellence of which is "proof enough that one can make even an imperfectly learned second language do amazing things" (348). Molara Ogundipe-Leslie argues that Tutuola is able to do this because he is able to present the "linguistic patterns and literary habits of his Yoruba language using English words as counters [thereby] speaking Yoruba using English words" (151). Tutuola:

> Forced the English language to accommodate Yoruba syntax and subject matter alongside a multitude of clippings from English literary culture. In so doing he became a 'translator' in the most creative sense of the word, reworking Fagunwa's oral and folkloric material into English, as well as borrowing items from English literature, updating and embellishing Fagunwa's own models while also abandoning the older man's didactic Christian framework in favour of a more secular and amoral universe. (Newell 82)

While calling Tutuola's English a perfectly precise translation of Yoruba storytelling through a cultural filter is surely an overstatement, Tutuola's manipulations of English undeniably locate his story to a great degree in a metaphysical Yoruba universe otherwise largely inaccessible to English speakers[14]. His style of English thus also importantly maintains the subjunctive "sense of wonder" essential to both science fiction (Bergson 9) and oral folklore.

This kind of linguistic manipulation goes beyond simply translating his stories, but is an essential part of his texts' scepticism towards the colonial establishment. Emeka Okeke-Ezigbo argues that Tutuola's ability to reflect one language in another is in itself part of the novelist's creative response to the colonial situation he found himself in. She cites a part of the novel as a metaphorical representation of this, namely that of the drinkard's evil child.

[14] Indeed, in translating the novel into German, Tomi Adeaga (2008) argues that the German translator needs to manipulate the German language in order to best hope capture the intricacies and uniqueness of Tutuola's text.

While living with his wife's family for several years, his wife's left thumb starts to swell "as if it was a buoy, but it did not pain her" (31). One day, she pricks her swollen thumb on the thorn of a palm tree, and suddenly they see a three-foot tall "male child come out of it and at the same time that the child came out from the thumb, he began to talk to [them] as if he was ten years of age" (32). The child tells them that his name is 'ZURRJIR,' "which means a son who would change himself into another thing very soon" (33). The child causes terror in the town, drinking and eating all the food that he can see, and flogging anyone who tries to stop him. Whenever anyone tries to fight him for taking all the town's food, "[a]s he was fighting with them he was smashing everything on the ground to pieces, he even smashed all the domestic animals to death, still all the people could not conquer him" (33). He eventually starts burning down people's houses, and the drinkard and his wife decide to burn down their own house at night while the child is sleeping inside. He is presumed dead, but "the middle of the ashes [of the house] rose up suddenly and at the same time there appeared a half-bodied baby" (35). This evil spirit creature that the child has become continues to eat all food it sees, and blind people or stop them breathing on command from its devilish voice, as he does to the drinkard and his wife if they try to desert him. They are forced to carry his immense weight on their heads on their journey from the town, from which they are chased for the evil spirit they have brought upon the townspeople. He eats all the food they come across, and no one they encounter will aid them for fear of its evil.

Okeke-Ezigbo calls the English language "Nigeria's Zurrjir," because it "came to Nigeria through an irregular, illegitimate route, like Zurrjir […] Yet it has straddled [Nigerians]; and [they] carry it, in spite of [them]selves, even at the risk of being strangled" (7). It, first and foremost, "conditions the thinking of the Nigerian elite, influences their utterances and determines their actions" to the point that, "[l]ike Pavlov's dogs, their mouths are always watering and leaking grammar" (7). This has had negative results for "ill-educated Nigerians," he argues, because this "teeming population of embarrassed people would normally have preferred to use the vernacular or Pidgin for communication; but because of 'official demands,' they are forced to use English" (7). The adversity of this situation is heightened by a disdain for their entrapment by the English language, meaning they can only "speak English with about as much ability as a disgruntled butcher would perform an operation for appendicitis" (7). Yet to learn English is not a perfect option out of this conundrum, because "[n]o matter how intimately the Nigerian writer has befriended English, he still has the nagging feeling that in improving English he is in fact promoting an alien culture and carrying 'the white man's burden'" (15).

Tutuola's response to this problem of language is to use English in a way that suits the needs and literatures of the Yoruba. Nyamnjoh argues that this use of English vernacular is a brave and important move towards the formation of the frontier African, because it aims to globally acknowledge the "popular modes of knowing and knowledge-making" that have been largely ignored by the African and European intellectual elite (3). The culmination of Zurrjir's part in Tutuola's novel suggests that the author has a similar opinion about how colonial languages should be used by postcolonial subjects. While still burdened with Zurrjir, the palm-wine drinkard and his wife come across Drum, Song and Dance, beings who are personifications of three elements vital to Yoruba orature, history, culture and storytelling. Their power over the three travellers, and anyone else they encounter, is overwhelming:

> When "Drum" started to beat himself it was just as if he was beat by fifty men, when "Song" started to sing, it was just as if a hundred people were singing together and when "Dance" started to dance the half-bodied baby started too, my wife, myself and spirits etc., were dancing with "Dance" an nobody who heard or saw these three fellows would not follow them to wherever they were going. Then the whole of us were following the three fellows and dancing along with them. So we followed the three fellows and were dancing for a good five days without eating or stopping once, before we reached a place which was built in the form of a premises by the creatures with mud […] N.B. We did not want to follow them up to that place, but we could not control ourselves as we were dancing along with them. (38–9)

The drinkard and his wife are prevented from entering the premises with the three creatures, but they allow the half-bodied baby in with them, and so the protagonist is freed from the burden of Zurrjir.

It is significant that this trio of Yoruba culture and communication personified are able to alleviate the couple of their burden in the same way that the frontier African's embracing of popular epistemologies alleviates the deprecating effects of the colonial Zurrjir as described by Okeke-Ezigbo. This part of the tale subtly critiques the burdensomeness of colonialism for Nigerians, and suggests a useful alternative way of navigating the cross-cultural interaction so imbalanced by colonial aggression, righteousness and absolutism. It is enabled by another instance of the figurative subjunctively becoming literal, as Moonsamy describes having occurred in the scene with the complete gentleman. In this case, it is the notions of drum, song and dance that become personified into real, joyous, and heroic creatures that rescue the protagonists from an evil weight. That the evil here is figuratively emblematic of a colonial burden, and the rescuers of Yoruba traditions and culture, shows how Tutuola's use of the

subjunctive level of science fiction enables a rich postcolonial criticism within a wondrous narrative.

A telling contribution to this reading from the description of the half-bodied baby is that when it gives supernaturally irrefutable commands to those around it, it does so with "a lower voice like a telephone" (35). The specific use of the word telephone to describe the voice suggests distance between Zurrjir and the members of the town he encounters, as well as an impersonal and unclear chasm in this one-way communication. The manner of its birth suggests a horrific otherworldliness, and it is his voice's distance and coldness that maintains his representation as an evil being, as though his voice is offering commands from another hellish, 'lower' dimension, being related through him in a similar manner to the way a telephone carries voices from afar. His voice takes Zurrjir beyond the typical trickster trope, suggesting a true evilness at the heart of the half-bodied baby.

Like the television-handed ghostess, this is another incident of technological terminology being used to describe something supernatural, and so another example of Tutuola's use of a cultural filter in translating his Yoruba tales into English. It might be useful and precise, though, to call these translations actions of an epistemological filter, in that words describing one kind of world knowledge are being used to convey another. What is perhaps unfamiliar in this filtering, argues Lindfors, is the prioritisation of Africa over Europe:

> Tutuola is considered odd because in marrying Europe to Africa, he allows Africa to stand as the senior partner. He does not surrender unconditionally to European culture. Unlike his better educated compatriots who write realistic novels in the manner of Hardy or Hemingway and poetry echoing Eliot, Pound and Hopkins — voices which any well-bred Westerner can recognize — Tutuola seems immune to specific foreign literary influences. A few critics […], desperate for familiar touchstones, have attempted to compare him to great fabulists such as Dante, Blake and Bunyan, but the lines of comparison always have to be drawn oblique rather than parallel. For Tutuola, though obviously Westernized, is not a Western writer; he is *sui generis*, a rare aberration separated from the rest of literary mankind by his stubborn Africanness, his unremitting orality. (Lindfors, "Television-Handed Ghostess" 69)

Notably, Tutuola's "stubborn Africanness" separates him from "the rest of *literary* mankind," in Lindfors's words, because it further shows the disparity between literary Africa and the rest of the continent. This is not only a commentary on the 1950s, because this disparity in representation has continued into the twenty-first century: Emeka Okeke-Ezigbo's suggestion that colonial languages act like Zurrjirs for African people is by no means outdated, while Nyamnjoh decries "an African literature shy of and embarrassed by its mythical and folkloric

past" because it "impoverishes itself through such an uncritical and elitist embrace of the one-dimensionalism of colonial education and its palatability regimes" (16). Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani argues quite self-reflexively that literary Africa's abandonment of the popular can be attributed largely to the accessibility to publishing being so weighted towards the global North. Because of this, African writers must necessarily have Western readers in mind when writing if they plan to be financially successful. This cyclically contributes to the perpetuation of a certain kind of Africa being depicted globally, and the only way to fix this is significant investment in publishing on the continent itself. Until this can occur, the deferment of European, colonial values and preference for African ways of knowing, writing and storytelling in literature from and about Africa will continue to be a rare occurrence.

Conversely to the African literary establishment, Tutuola's investment in allowing "Africa to stand as the senior partner" (Lindfors, "Television-Handed Ghostess 69) is clear in the story of Zurrjir, his demonically technological voice, and the Yoruba icons of Drum, Song and Dance ridding him for the salvation of the Yoruba people. When Tutuola says that a ghostess is "television-handed," or that a spirit has a "voice like a telephone," he is using familiar English technoscientific terms to describe something beyond the English language. This is not a subscription to Western ideas of science fictional fabulism, but linguistically acts as an epistemological filter for his creation of a Yoruba narrative in English, one that values the African against the European, and thus an African equivalent of science fiction. However, the specific use of something technological rather than more common fantasy terms like 'looking glass' or 'magic mirror' is subtly suggestive of the role of tradition in modernity and modernity in tradition for the 'frontier African'. Tutuola does not rule out Englishness, just humbles it in the formation of a cross-cultural modernist epistemology that is more relevant to the majority of African people than the discourse and literature presented by the intellectual elite.

Beyond the level of micro-linguistic subjunctivity, the overall structure of the novel suggests a science fictional subjunctive superstructure, by its manipulation of the bush as a location that is both real and outside of the laws of the everyday. Armstrong observes a distinction between the introduction of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and the rest of the novel's adventures, in that what occurs in the real world in the introduction conforms with the logic of natural reality (apart from the protagonist's gargantuan appetite for palm wine), while the adventures are beholden to a different, marvellous subjunctivity (16–7). This change occurs when the palm-wine drinkard takes "all [his] native juju and also [his] father's juju" and begins "travelling from bush to bush" (Tutuola, *Drinkard* 9). Rooted in popular Yoruba

conceptualization of "the bush" as "zones of possibilities and activation […] not confined to spatial reality" (Nyamnjoh 20), the bush is a place in Yoruba mythology where "spirits etc. were just like partners" (Tutuola *Drinkard* 9), and so crossing into it acts as "a functional equivalent of 'crossing the Styx'," (Armstrong 16) as one world's system of logic replaces another. This divide is even more noticeable in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*; when the protagonist enters alone into the bush under a fruit tree, while fleeing from slave-traders, he narrates: "This fruit tree was a 'SIGN' for me and it was on that day that I called it – THE 'FUTURE SIGN'" (5). These crossings, from one reality into another, are marked in both texts by entering into a bush, which is significant in Yoruba literature. Armstrong explains that "to the Yoruba the bush has traditionally been a place of mystery and often of fear. One encounters again and again in the fiction from the region accounts of experiences and of beliefs which would indicate a certain awe toward the bush" (16). This marker of a mythical world comes with its own established mythical system of logic and narrative continuity. It is this crossing over between systems of knowing and being that allows the text to subjunctively not have happened, rather than to be impossible.

What is interesting about this world of the bush is that it itself is translated to the circumstances of modernity under which Tutuola lived and wrote. This is often done with the use of satire to enhance the anti-colonial and cautionary didacticism of the text. Steven Tobias argues that Tutuola's satire accounts for the many changes he made to the traditional Yoruba oral tales that he manipulates in his narrative, in order to make them more relevant to the social conditions in which Tutuola found himself. Tobias argues that:

> Historically, African oral tales have always been adapted and molded by their tellers so that they would have particular relevance to the specific social and moral climate in which they were told. Therefore Tutuola's modifications cannot be criticized legitimately for being either "untraditional" or "inaccurate." Admittedly, he alters traditional plots; however, he does this intentionally in order to speak more directly to the particularized concerns of the African setting in which he wrote. Despite the fact that most of the incidents of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* appear to constitute little more than silly farce, many of them are in fact covert jibes at colonialism and the social conditions that it engendered. Through a sustained use of sublimation and metonymy, Tutuola creates an episodic allegory through which he can vent his personal frustrations with life under British domination" (67).

This satire is perhaps most notable in Tutuola's repeated use of very specific measurements of size, distance, time and monetary value, especially in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. A giant captures the drunkard and his wife in a very large bag, "woven with strong

and thick ropes, its size was about 150 feet in diameter and it could contain 45 persons" (103). The distance they travel between adventures is often quite precisely considered, be it "about 12 miles" (73), "about 36 miles" (92) or "about 40 miles" (95) at a time. On the very first page of the story, the drinkard narrates that his palm-tree farm "was nine miles square and contained 560,000 palm trees," that his tapster "was tapping one hundred and fifty kegs of palm-wine every morning," but that the drinkard "would have drunk all of it before 2 o'clock p.m.", and so the tapster would have to tap "another 75 kegs in the evening" to see the drinkard through to the next morning. In her book length investigation of the history of popular culture in Africa, Karin Barber explains that this was quite a common aesthetic feature of popular art forms produced by those Africans living in missionary colonies in the twentieth century. "To implant their evangelic message," she explains, "Christian missionaries had to get at everyday life. They introduced social regimes built around literacy and faith" and "introduced new disciplines of space and time" (*History* 37–8). Rigidity and uniformity were emphasised in all areas of missionary-facilitated society, from preferring square buildings to the round houses common across Africa, building them in "orderly rows," and organising seating in schools and churches in "uniform rows" (38). "Disciplines of time were equally emphasised [since] clock time was associated with self-regulation," (38) something that colonial ideology suggested Africans to be lacking. Barber writes:

> These new ideas of spatial and temporal regulation were taken up and partly adopted, partly satirise, in popular cultural forms throughout the colonial period. Numerous comic scenes in twentieth-century Ghanaian concert party and Yoruba popular theatre show characters excessively preoccupied with telling the time by clocks or enormous watches strapped to their arms, or people obsessed with making lists or reading memos, or people determined to make others line up in orderly queues […]. Fiction referred to dates and precise times of day. All this was on a knife's edge between emulation and mockery, where it was never certain which prevailed. (Barber, *History* 38)

Tobias argues that Tutuola is practicing mockery rather than emulation, and that this is particularly evident in a scene where the drinkard turns himself into a ferry for a month. After freeing themselves from the clutches of the tireless cruelties of the half-bodied baby the drinkard and his wife find themselves "penniless" in a small town, and wondering "how could [they] get money for [their] food etc." (*Drinkard* 39). There is "a large river which crosse[s] the main road to that town" (39), and so the drinkard carves a paddle out of a nearby tree, and hands it to his wife. The drinkard then "command[s] one juju which was given [him] by a kind spirit who was a friend of [his] and at once the juju change[s him] to a big canoe" (39). His

wife ferries people across the river in the canoe, charging three pence for adults and half fare for children. On their first day they make "£7: 5: 3d," and by the end of the month they have collected "£56: 11: 9d" (39–40). This scene serves "as an autobiographical confession of the real grief Tutuola felt at becoming a virtual object in service of an alien bureaucracy" (Tobias 67), because he wrote it while at his boring colonial job. Tobias explains that:

> Despite the great abilities and wondrous accomplishments of Tutuola's hero, in this incident he is reduced by an externally imposed economic system to struggling subhumanly – yet in a way that appears vaguely, almost cryptically bourgeois – for a modest sum of British money. Such a belittling and objectifying occupation is a severe drop in stature for Tutuola's hero: he has just a short time earlier not only done battle with powerful monsters but bravely conquered Death itself (68).

In fact, in coming up with his plan to make money, the drinkard "remember[s his] name which was 'Father of gods who could do anything in this world'," which inspires his ferrying idea (39). This reminder of his full and mighty title, placed just before his one-month stint as a cash-strapped canoe, serves to highlight the severity of this drop in stature, and signals clear satirical criticism of the protagonist's extraordinary talents being wasted by financial pressure. The repeated and precise measurements of British currency included in this section thus serve to mock colonial impositions on the Nigerian individual, and would have been recognisable signs of anticolonial mockery because of their prevalence functioning as such (Barber, *History* 38).

Amos Tutuola, a writer of a future moment

The anticolonial satire laid into Tutuola's stories depend on the stories being recognisable to a contemporary Yoruba reader, but altered in ways that serve this purpose, and so Tutuola borrowed a great deal of his material from pre-existing folklore and fiction, particularly that of Daniel O. Fagunwa (Nnolim). The example of the ferrying scene provides a system of cognition within which the novel's claims to verisimilitude must operate. These stylistic alterations to folklore allow the stories to maintain the subjunctive verisimilitude of Afromythology, and to simultaneously maintain a cautionary relevance to the imminent postcolonial moment. While folklore is inherently future-oriented because of its inherent didacticism and role in the formation of popular culture, Tutuola's postcolonial caution is a

second future-oriented layer, largely enabled by his manipulation of the English language to reflect Yoruba ideology, folklore and ontologies.

Investigations into Tutuola's writing that do not consider the didacticism of the text have marked his writing as somewhat unimaginative English rehashing of pre-existing Yoruba literature. The high level of attention paid in this regard has somewhat overshadowed the author's own imaginative faculty. His tales undoubtedly come from local folktale and mythology, but importantly, they go beyond these, to create original, captivating, and extraordinary fiction. His universe is a consequence of an imaginary that both exemplifies the extraordinary pre-existing Yoruba folktale imaginary, *and* is enhanced by Tutuola's translations, adaptations, and syncretic epistemology. This imaginary resulted in a prose that embodies a Yoruba-centred modernity, rejecting the glorification of Eurocentric attitudes to knowledge practiced by the majority of his more elite contemporaries. Stephanie Newell, for example, in discussing the relationship between Tutuola's texts and Daniel O. Fagunwa, his Yoruba-language predecessor, explains that while Tutuola did borrow heavily from Fagunwa, "his transposition and translation of Fagunwa's material into an English format involved new and conscious decisions about content, language, and grammar, decisions which Fagunwa did not confront in the same way in his Yoruba language work" (82). Lindfors concludes Tutuola to have been an "innovator" rather than a plagiarist, going so far as to call Tutuola "the father of experimentation in Nigerian fiction in English" ("Debts and Assets" 334). Yoruba storytelling is by its very nature syncretic in this way (Nyamnjoh 75), and his translation of these pre-existing stories leads Ogundipe-Leslie to call him "the genius of the Yoruba language" (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 76) despite writing in an apparently broken form of English.

In fact, beyond the satirical edge given to many of his manipulations to recognisable Yoruba tales, the not-wholly-literate English that gives Tutuola's novels their iconic style, as mocked by the colonial West and disparaged by the Nigerian elite, in and of itself serves to intentionally undercut the values of the Western educated from which he was excluded. Discussing twentieth century popular literature, George Ogola summarises Stephanie Newell's claim that "popular writings necessarily 'pollute form'" in order to reconstruct their realities in opposition to the realities valued by canonical, elitist and exclusionary works (10). That some popular writers defy European literary conventions "is often deliberate and should not be taken as a mark of literary incompetence, but as an indication that fictionality has been marginalised in favour of the didactic, problem-solving approach to narrative" (10). Tutuola's writing style is a recognition of the inefficacy of the dominant social expectations of colonial Nigerian life

that dictated who could and could not tell stories, of what kinds of ontologies did and did not matter, and which voices should and should not be heard.

Tutuola is thus, by virtue of his innovation, his rootedness in Yoruba folklore, his embodiment of a modern world that is Yoruba-centred, and his extraordinarily rich and captivating literary universe, evidently playing the game of cognitive estrangement, albeit not quite in the way envisioned by Suvin. Tutuola's text is remarkable in that it rejects the exclusionary rationalist epistemologies that informed Suvin's theorisation, while still maintaining the narrative strategies that Suvin's theory describes. This is done at the subjunctive level of the text itself, in that the text's plausibility is not at the level of our immediate reality, but is an inherent property of the science fiction text itself. This subjunctivity is inherent to the folk tales that inspired Tutuola's novel, as well as in the author's original, unusual and ground-breaking use of a Yorubacentric English. This language style is part of the text's future-oriented philosophy, along with its encouragement of epistemological hybridity, and its postcolonial didactic perspective. This not only shows how his fiction is inherently science fictional, but how African oral folkloric traditions are science fictional in nature, by virtue of how heavily Tutuola's novel relies upon retelling them. The juju aesthetics that characterise these literary traditions encompass techno-scientific and Afromythological ontologies, because they are and always have attempted to account for the world from a wider range of knowledge available to humankind.

Chapter 3

Conceiving of a Juju-based Novum: Jujutech Aesthetics and the Hybridisation of the Global Production of Knowledge

In order to account more closely for how science fictional texts incorporate juju into their cognitive estrangement, in this chapter I will argue that Ian MacDonald's theorization of the 'jujutech' aesthetic offers a new epistemological angle for theorizing the novum, and the genre of science fiction. The novum is an essential technical device in science fictional storytelling, and its usage in these jujutech stories precisely displays the attitude of epistemological frontierism that I consider characteristic of juju aesthetics in African storytelling. I will start by exploring the possibility of conceiving a 'juju-based novum', showing how Ekari Mbvundula's "Montague's Last" exemplifies an African text promulgating a juju ontology through a science fictional lens. This short story is specifically chosen because it is an example of an 'alternate history' science fiction text, a narrative common to the science fiction genre, which writes an alternative version of history based on the supposition that something different occurred in the past to what happened in reality. By analyzing a story with such a familiarly science-fictional structure – and for which the novum is very clearly essential – I am able to elucidate how a juju-based novum operates to achieve a science fictional outcome. I will then provide a close reading of some of the stories in Dilman Dila's 2013 short story collection, *A Killing in the Sun*, to expand on MacDonald's theorization of the 'jujutech' aesthetic. Dila's collection is the first and (at time of writing) only single-author collection of science fiction stories published from Africa. Dila uses the form of the short story cycle to offer a single epistemological standpoint interrogated from various positions, making it abundant for the discussion of modern, hybrid African epistemologies. I argue that it exemplifies the epistemological modernity of the "frontier African," in that it accommodates the seemingly disparate ontologies encountered popularly on the African continent today.

This is an important step in the advancement of the theorization of science fiction, because the Western emphasis in the production, discussion and dissemination of science fiction has left the majority of its theorization with regard to non-Euro-American texts limited. This has primarily been due to the Eurocentric insistence on distinguishing the cognitive from the unreal, and a resultant unwillingness to consider the incompletenesses, contradictions and inexplicable aspects of reality as springboards for science fictional exploration. In contrast to

the Western science fiction canon, the majority of contemporary African science fiction welcomes the strange and inexplicable aspects of reality as science fictional devices. It does so not by presenting the occult and magical as elements of fantasy, as make-believe and imaginary ideas incongruent with realism. Rather, these incompletenesses are real, in a similar way to the magical realism iconic of twentieth-century South American novelists.

Suvin suggests that what sets science fiction apart from other genres (including magical realism) is the implementation of a novum, a new thing that is plausible but unattained in the empirical present, from which to speculate. It is a "novelty validated by cognitive logic" (Suvin, *Metamorphoses* 63), "a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (64). Perhaps more clearly, it is "information recognizable as not-true, but also as not-unlike-true, not-flatly – (in the current state of knowledge) – impossible" (Shippey 14). Well-known examples of nova include the radioactive spider that gives Marvel's Spider-Man his powers, the transforming alien that brings otherworldly technology to Lagos in Okorafor's *Lagoon*, and the radioactive fallout from an apocalyptic nuclear war that makes animals rare and valuable status symbols in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

It is undoubtedly true that the novum sets science fiction apart from all other genres, but this theoretical masterstroke has as of yet been used by science fiction theorists in quite a limited manner, by focusing solely on the novum as a scientific novelty, a newness predicated on scientific knowledge and its development. Since Suvin's "novelty validated by cognitive knowledge" refers to those things new to the worldview of the modern, Western, post-Jacobean rationalist, a novum predicated on the existence of juju is incongruent with Suvin's definition, because juju does not correlate with his idea of "cognitive logic" (63). Many contemporary African writers such as Kojo B. Laing, Nnedi Okorafor, Dilman Dila, Tade Thompson and Chinelo Onwualu are applying these kinds of real, magical nova to science fictional works though, which means that the definition needs reconsideration.

Making a case for juju in the theorization of the novum

Suvin first used the term "novum" in a 1968 lecture at Yale, which later became "On the Poetics of the Science Fiction Genre," an article published in *College English* in 1972, and finally morphed into the opening chapter of his 1979 book, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. Suvin introduced the novum as a "strange newness" which presented one end of a spectrum of literary subject matter, with its binary being "the ideal extreme of exact recreation of the

author's empirical environment" ("Poetics" 373). This "strange newness" (373) is ideally still as plausible/realistic as the exact recreation, but is an entirely novel detail to that environment. The novum thus offers "the liberating tradition which contends that the world is not necessarily the way our present empirical valley happens to be, and that whoever thinks his valley [sea, ocean, solar system…] is the world, is blind" (373). It thereby binds the "thrill of knowledge" with the "thrill of adventure" (373), constructing an imaginative reality (rather than an imaginative fantasy, which is not plausible from the perspective of the reader's empirical environment) or, as Suvin famously calls it, "cognitive estrangement".

Considering the cacophony of contradictory opinion that generally typifies academic discussions of theoretical terminology, "novum" is a term that has been rather stagnantly understood since its first use in the theory of science fiction. Twenty years after first using the term theoretically, Suvin himself notes a "critical consensus" on the "beneficence" of the novum that makes him, as a self-described "inveterate enemy of the solid majority, […] question that beneficence" ("Novum is as Novum Does" 16). What hampers the theory's practical beneficence is that it operates only from an understanding of knowledge as a single line that humans progressively discover their way further along, through scientific discovery. This is the epistemological grounds that qualify the parentheses in Tom Shippey calling the novum something "not-flatly-(in *the current state* of knowledge)-impossible" (14, emphasis my own). Knowledge, in this Jacobean sense, is not broadly experiential, but strictly verifiable. It is not an endless web assembled of existential phenomenological accounts, but a single thing that gradually becomes more apparent to the scientific mind. This is why Joanna Russ argues that science fiction:

> […] writes about what is neither impossible *nor possible*; the fact is that, when the question of possibility comes up in science fiction, the author can only reply that nobody knows. We haven't been there yet. (22)

For Russ, then, science fiction is inherently agnostic. However, to include in that agnosticism time-travel, and alien technologies, but exclude spirits and juju, is inherently arbitrary.

Thus, to suggest that the dominant Eurocentric idea of reality is the only kind of knowledge from which a novum can blossom is imprecise, as the short stories referred to in this chapter can attest. I will argue that the novum is not necessarily a scientific literary device, because these stories speculate with juju novelties. It is therefore necessary to recalibrate any understanding of the novum so that it necessarily accounts for the use of juju as novum. I insist

on recognizing the novum as inclusive of novelty in juju, and on occult newnesses, rather than the presence of the occult itself being the newness, because I attempt to incorporate non-canonical ontologies into the theoretical discussion about science fiction – ontologies to which juju is real – rather than to offer a new device for those ontologies already prevalent in science fiction scholarship. This is not to say that there is no science fiction that uses the presence of magic as novelty in-and-of itself, nor to suggest that it is in any way inferior or superior in its novelty. After all, if the novum is dependent on an implied reader's ontology, and if it is fair to say that these ontologies are completely distinct for the juju believer and the sceptic, it follows that there must be a type of juju-based novum that is applicable to both of these readers. Since the novum is a "novelty validated by cognitive logic," any attempt to describe a 'juju-based novum' must thus be twofold, because juju is cognitively divisive.

A good example of this kind of reader-dependent novum propelling a text is Ekari Mbvundula's "Montague's Last," a short story published in the third edition of *Omenana* magazine, and later in the international weekly magazine, *Strange Horizons*. The story uses juju as novum to revise a piece of industrial history to give the black body greater agency as a historical producer – rather than merely a consumer – of industrial innovation. More than that, it is "a searing tale about the struggle for redemption and what it costs us to undo the wrong we've done" (Onwualu para. 11). The juju-based novum employed by Mbvundula gives the story an eerie plausibility that encourages the reader to reflect on their own assumptions and understandings of the role of black people and juju in history and in human industrial progressivity. This is only achieved by reading the story from a perspective that recognizes the reality of juju in the world. For the juju sceptic, the story has no novum per se, but rather is an idealized fantasy. This in itself metatextually questions global assumptions about African innovation.

"Montague's Last": History as an agnostic science

The protagonist, Montague, is a black slave and mechanical inventor who has been imprisoned for life for torturing children with his machines by order of his master. In the story, which is set in an early 19th Century French prison, Montague is frantically assembling a new contraption with the scraps available to him in his prison cell – it is comprised only of "wood from the window sill and a bench leg, and metal from the food trays. It [has] been hammered together using a second bench leg and shaped using a corner of a tray and his bare hands" (17). In the act of building his device, he is racing against his own eminent demise, as he is coughing

up blood, and feels sure that death is just a moment away. At one point, "even with the risk that it might finish him," (15) he must use magic to complete his contraption, using it to turn a wooden splinter into a metal needle. As he completes the machine, three prison wardens come into his cell and beat him to death for disobedience. He manages to magically conceal his new contraption from the sights of the guards just before he takes his last breath, by casting a spell that will only reveal it to the undertaker. The undertaker, Barthélemy Thimonnier, arrives to collect Montague's corpse, as well as the machine. Thimonnier also collects two silver coins hidden along the window sill, revealing that he has been collecting money from prisoners to smuggle contraband in and out of their cells. Montague's final invention is revealed to be the world's first sewing machine, an invention credited in reality to a man named Barthélemy Thimonnier, suggesting that a marvel of the industrial era may have been invented by a forgotten black slave.

While the story hinges on the pretence that this piece of historical revisionism might be plausible, its author believes it to be "highly unlikely". In an interview with Geoff Ryman of *Strange Horizons*, she explains:

> It's an intriguing thought that there are these secret major contributions black people made to history that were hidden, intentionally or not, by historians. Granted, it is highly unlikely that Montague's particular invention really was created by a black person, but I liked to explore the sense of surprise the reader gets when they learn something against their initial assumptions. This surprise is natural in most of us, because we are conditioned into assuming black people are nothing more than consumers. (qtd. in Ryman para. 7)

Despite Mbvundula's own skepticism, the story itself seems to offer an eerie plausibility to the notion that the first sewing machine was invented by a black man who was not in a position to take the credit. This is achieved primarily by the narrative structure of the novel, which plays on the reader's implied presuppositions, and the use of a variety of familiar literary tropes.

The story begins with a vague parable – "[t]hey say great things are achieved in the dead of night" (14) – which by use of the term "great things" instills the ensuing actions with a sense of heroism. This heroism made desperate by Montague's mechanical actions being performed "with all the life that was left in him" (14), which lends a sense of drama, urgency and empathy to the protagonist's plight. The setting is described next as a "wretched dungeon which had been his home for the last five years," illuminated only by a "slice of moonlight shining through the window" (14). While the typecast character of the prisoner in this setting does not necessarily evoke the reader's sympathy, the next few paragraphs establish this for

Montague. This is achieved by detailing his dilapidated physical health (he is stereotypically coughing up blood, and each cough leaves him "crouched helplessly [with] uncontrollable shakes" (14)), the toll his invention has had on his body in that crafting it has "rewarded him with splinters so imbedded they had become a part of his hands" (15), as well as by highlighting the "charcoal sketch" of his daughter "on a yellowing sheet of paper that [lies] amongst his tools," which he routinely "dr[aws] strength from" to complete his machine (14). He believes that this as-of-yet unnamed invention may allow his daughter to "at the very least, be freed" (14). The text is scattered with further allusions to his desperation to complete his invention for this purpose. When his vision blurs because his eyes are welling with tears, he "smear[s] them away" because "He ha[s] to finish!" (15). He is aware that "he may not survive" the "punishment" he will receive from the prison guards should they find his invention, but he doesn't "allow those matters to concern him just now," focusing rather on the project at hand (15). Valuing his daughter's freedom over his own life establishes Montague as both prisoner and martyr, a kind of heroism subconsciously identifiable to the reader by virtue of its common recurrence in anticolonial history, in political icons like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rosa Parks. The reader is thus enticed not only into empathy for Montague, but his own tense and urgent determination to finish his ambiguous machine.

Eventually, Montague comes to the final stage of the machine's assembly:

> Now one more attachment was left, the most fragile component. Even with the risk that it might finish him, he would have to use magic… Over the years he had developed his own brand, some Bantu mysticism he had learnt in the Homeland, long before he and his countrymen were taken, mixed with French alchemy which he had imbibed from his second master. (15)

Montague's magical act is extensively described. He feels along his palm until he feels the largest splinter he accumulated in turning parts of his meagre workbench into this invention (15). He pushes this splinter as deep as he can into his skin, even though he fears the pain threatens to send him "into unconsciousness – and perhaps never wake up" (15). Hereafter, he begins that incantation, "spoken in a grinding mix of French and Chewa." It reads:

> 'You who were once a tree became this bench. You who were once my bench became the tool in my hands. Now you will change… from mother tree to father silver. Your life of wood is no more.' (15)

Feeling "coldness spread through his capillaries into the back of his head," he wills it "to flow into this left hand, […] to accumulate on his thumb, then into his palm" (15). When he is done, he extracts the splinter from his hand, but it has become a "perfectly straightened" needle (16). The story here resorts to a jujutech aesthetic to blur the distinctions between technology and juju. In introducing magic into the narrative, Mbvundula introduces division between the skeptical reader, and the reader for whom juju is a reality, and so, since I am discussing the performance of a rationalizing novum in the story, it becomes necessary to describe the different effects this has for the both the sceptic's and the believer's reading of the story thus far.

Since the sceptic does not recognize juju to be real, they will understand a cognitive novelty involving juju to be a proof that juju exists. As juju is fundamentally non-cognitive to the sceptic, the juju-based novum seems impossible for such a reader. Indeed this is the case for such a reader when they read magical realism; the magical occurrence that is incongruent with their ontology can exist for the sceptic only at the level of allegory, and not as 'real' realism. The difference with science fiction incorporating a juju-based novum, I argue, is that the text subjunctively suggests the plausibility of the juju occurrence even to the sceptic. The impossible that is made plausible, for the sceptic reader of a story propelled by a juju-based novum, is juju itself.

In the case of "Montague's Last", this effect is achieved by the narrative's strategically gradual release of information. For one thing, Barthélemy Thimonnier's name is withheld for most of the story, in a way that adds a weighty intrigue to the man's identity. For example, when Montague is casting the spell that will conceal the machine to everyone but Thimmonier, he hurriedly whispers the concealing spell, narrated as: "You who are manifested from my mind, shall be revealed to no one else, but one," but the narration does not reveal this person's identity just yet, only narrating that "[t]hen he spoke the man's name" (17). Even when Thimmonier arrives on the scene, he is described as "the undertaker" (18), "a large robed man" (18), and "the mysterious figure" (18), before eventually being named. Delaying the revelation of his name allows it to hold more considerable weight. The sewing machine itself also goes without being specifically called as such, right up until the last two words of the text, before which it is only referred to as Montague's "creation" (14), his "work" (15), his "invention" (15), "the machine" (16), or – more often than not – simply "it" (15).

This air of mystery allows the text, unlike other works of science fictional alternate history, to not be obviously fictional. For example, the novum of Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle,* one of the most well-known and revered alternate history texts ever written,

is that the Axis powers won the Second World War. It is the novum because it is the novelty that both drives and rationalizes the plot, makes it subjunctively clear that the story did not happen (because it does not quite conform to the implied reader's empirical background), and grounds the fiction in plausibility. Mbvundula's story, on the contrary, does not operate on the same subjunctive level, because the gradual demystification employed grants the text an emphasized plausibility that does not make it clear that the story did not happen, but rather that it might very well have.

This narrative technique makes the story engage with and challenge the implied reader's presumptions about technological invention and production. By the end of the extended mystery, the idea that a black inventor had been able to perfect the sewing machine – which had been worked on by multiple people for decades before Thimonnier's marketable prototype – and that a white man used his privileged position in society to take claim for that idea, becomes not that unthinkable really. Because the story concludes with an air of plausibility, its plot is, in hindsight, granted some plausibility as well, including Montague's use of juju. The story does not need to have necessarily converted the sceptic in order for the novum to have played its part; it is the mere suggestion of plausibility granted to juju in this reading that allows Mbvundula's juju-based novum to successfully challenge the sceptic's insistence, in a way that Jacobean rationalism cannot.

The occultist already recognizes juju to be real, to some extent, and so this is not the function of the story's novum for them. Rather, the occultist will understand a cognitive novelty of juju to be some newness to their pre-existing juju ontology, an addition to their already existing knowledge and understanding of juju, to which the newness corresponds as being "not-flatly-(in the current state of knowledge)-impossible" (Shippey 14). This kind of reading cannot exist for the sceptic, because of an epistemological divide between the text and the reader. Joanna Russ writes that the "modern critic attempting to understand science fiction without understanding modern science" necessarily produces inferior criticism to a critic who has "knowledge of or appreciation of the 'theology' of science fiction – that is, science" (6–7). In order to critically consider fiction of speculation to its fullest extent, the source of that speculation, its rationalization and its implications must necessarily be considered. In the same way, the sceptic reading a story initiated by a juju-based novum cannot plausibly appreciate a newness to a juju ontology, beyond (possibly) the level of allegory.

Nevertheless, a newness to a juju ontology is inherently different to the nova of Western science fiction, because the two systems of thought are fundamentally different epistemologically. A juju-based novum is a newness to the very convivial, sidestepped and

accommodative traditions of knowledge representative of the majority of the African continent. This idea is thus not a carbon copy of the existing theorization of the novum, done by simply replacing every use of the word "scientific" or "cognitive" with "magical" or "convivial", because it cannot be. The novum, as applied to science, clearly operates on the basis of science being a progressive ontology, since in science, one newness follows another according to a logic of development. While there is some logic of development inherent to juju, it is one very different from that of technoscience. Where technoscience is consequentially rational, the rationality of juju is one that accommodates juju's malleability, indefinite nature and eternal truthfulness. After all, what can be both new and estranging to Nyamnjoh's "frontier African", they who accommodate all honest knowledge of the world into their personal ontology? For them, is the "not-flatly-impossible" knowledge that indicates the novum in itself an impossibility?

It is here, I argue, that the role of the science fictional narrative strategy is to be accounted for. That the story is still inherently fictional, still subjunctively "did not happen" as Delany would put it, is what allows for a juju-based novum to allow for novelty, estrangement and fictional plausibility simultaneously from a frontier perspective. Contemporary African science fiction texts that speculate from a juju-based novum do so by using the aesthetic and narrative norms of science fiction to establish the text as both plausible and fictional. For the frontier reader, the introduction of juju does not shift the text into the realm of fantasy, but allows the text to create newnesses within juju ontologies, and thus offer the texts the futurist, necessarily didactic philosophy that typifies science fiction's extraordinariness as a genre.

A Killing in the Sun: Frontier imagination in practice

For the rest of this chapter I will proceed to make a close analytical reading of four of the ten stories in Dila's 2014 science fiction short story cycle, *A Killing in the Sun*. I will argue that the short story cycle as a whole uses a mixture of juju-based and technoscientific nova throughout. This results in the operation of an overall jujutech aesthetic to present a fictional work not only in line with Nyamnjoh's theorization of the frontier African, but transcendent of it. The result is a collection that accounts for a critical, thoughtful and "new" ontological foundation that typifies an African (or perhaps more specifically, a Ugandan) modernity, the outlook of which is Nyamnjoh-esque frontier-ism, but of a more collective positionality than even Nyamnjoh's original description. I will start by outlining the implementation of juju-

based nova and technoscientific nova in the first two stories of the collection, showing how they introduce a frontier epistemology fundamentally based in modern Uganda (and perhaps more broadly, modern Africa), which is carried across the entire collection. These first two stories draw clear distinctions between these two kinds of nova, and thus these two kinds of knowledge, but that as the cycle goes on these distinctions dissolve, and the collection takes on an epistemologically syncretic attitude. This is enabled by and emblematic of the jujutech aesthetic, and implementing epistemological hybridity in science fiction in this way results not only in the rejection of epistemological absolutism, but a frontier attitude to knowledge of the world as collective and endless rather than definitive and objective.

Dila is a writer, filmmaker and blogger, born in Tororo, Uganda. He had released a romance novella, made some short films, and had some stories published in various places, before releasing *A Killing in the Sun* in 2014, his first collection of speculative short stories, and what "may well be the first single-author collection of African SF" (Bould, "If Colonialism" para. 10). The collection has been relatively well received by critics, who have in particular applauded its jujutech aesthetics, though not necessarily described as such. Mark Bould, for example, appreciates the collection's "intersections of [science fiction] and fantasy, science and belief, superstition and traditional/indigenous knowledge, and the intersectionality of identity" (para. 10). Penny de Vries suggests that the fact that "[a]liens, zombies, magical realism and futuristic technologies skitter through the stories, remind[s] us that despite the trappings, there is nothing new under the sun" (para. 1). K. Kamo notes how, in some of the stories, the technology described "is quite specifically indistinguishable from magic" (para. 6), but suggests that this results in "the SFFnal framing […] occasionally distract[ing] from necessary subtleties" in the collection's representations of unequal power dynamics (para. 17). Most of the stories are set in ambiguous contemporary African settings, where epistemological intersections such as those between juju and techno-science are commonplace. Three are set in speculated African futures, where jujutech technologies are part of everyday life, while one establishes a centuries-long conflict, set in a somewhat medieval agricultural landscape, between two invented ethnic groups that culminates in a battle between two sorcerers.

Along with these modern African settings comes a focus on modern African concerns, from corrupt government officials and public distrust of the military, to environmental degradation, disease and decoloniality. All ten stories operate from individually hybrid epistemological positionalities, and when combined they provide a vortex of thoughtful, convivial and modern knowledge that exemplifies Nyamnjoh's description of a frontier African epistemology. The protagonists of the stories are all male, but their characters are otherwise

as diverse as the stories themselves, from medical doctors to traditional healers, painters to professional divers, and hired assassins to serial killers. While the protagonists have differing relationships with magic and/or science, the mirage thereof allows the collection as a whole to present a rich, convivial, and modern frontier epistemology.

The conflicts and conglomerations of magic and science are at the forefront of the collection's thematic concerns from the first few pages. The first story, "The Leafy Man", is set in the vicinity of a small rural village in Uganda called Abedo, and is immediately established as a disaster zone. It opens by describing the protagonist and a two-year old by "starving under an orange grove," but unable to get food from the nearby town, because "everyone in that town was dead. If he went there, he would see the rotting corpses of people he had grown up with, his neighbors, his friends, his loved ones" (1). The cause of this disastrous state is ambiguously called "Miss Doe" (1). Japia does not know whether his own family had "escaped the bloodbath" and "horror" (1), but is too afraid to leave the orange grove to investigate, because, it is only "the scent of oranges" (2) in the orchard that have protected him and the two-year-old from Miss Doe thus far. Eventually, Japia decides he must confront this horror and ride out to nearby Abedo for food. As he prepares himself and his bicycle for the journey with a thick coating of orange leaves, the narrative reveals Miss Doe to be a mutated form of mosquito, which gathers in groups large enough to entirely cloak a house, and has the "eyes of an eagle" which means that "she could spot prey a mile away" (2). When he begins cycling to the town, the insects surround Japia "at a radius of about ten metres, encasing him in a cylinder as it looked for a chink in his shield," in such a number that he "cannot see beyond the black of the cylinder" (3).

This style of initially offering ambiguous information and then gradually explaining it across the course of the story is common to just about every story in the collection, and is a common narrative strategy of science fictional texts to initially estrange the reader before gradually grounding it in their cognitive realities. The story thus far only estranges the reader, and but soon uses a novum to explain the advent of Miss Doe. A foreign company called Pest and Germ Control Corporation (PGCC) has developed the ability to genetically modify mosquitoes to not carry malaria parasites. They use Abedo as a trial site for their new genetic creation, which they name Miss Doe. Miss Doe quickly outnumbers the regular mosquitoes in the area because it needs "only a day to mature from egg to adult" (5). In programming Miss Doe to have no need for blood, PGCC accidentally make them bloodthirsty enough to drain a bird completely, many of which are found dead and drained of blood one morning. Later that day they kill and drain two cows, and then a child is killed, "a million holes in her skin and not

a drop of blood left in her veins" (5). PGCC responds by spraying insecticide over the village to wipe out Miss Doe, but the chemical triggers off a mutation in the creatures, that make them grow "into a monster as big as Japia's thumb," and "no longer [look] for food as an individual, but in swarms that [sweep] over the village like dark clouds" (5). They proceed to attack all the people in the area. Japia sees "a cloud swallowing up a woman," causing her to fall, and "her screaming stop[s] before she hit[s] the ground" (5).

Miss Doe's sinister nature is a negative reflection of scientific knowledge, since a combination of genetic mutation and chemical interference has resulted in disaster. This is especially noticeable when contrasted with Japia's identity as a protagonist, and his response to the malaria epidemic. Japia has been a traditional healer serving his community "for nearly thirty years, from the age of ten when he inherited the healing spirits after his father died" (4), and a very successful one at that. He has made it his goal to change the attitude of the Ugandan government, who do "not recognize herbalists as proper doctors and scientists" (4). Eventually:

> The government gave him the bicycle to promote insecticide treated nets, but he added his own agenda to the campaign. He knew of plants that repelled mosquitoes with their smell. He promoted growing these plants near homesteads to combat the disease, on [*sic.*] addition to simple control methods like cutting bushes, draining stagnant water, and rubbing orange peelings on the skin as a repellent (4).

Japia's work as a traditional healer is narrated so as to valorize the achievements of indigenous responses to problems, driven by community and homegrown sciences. This is emphasized by the narrative setting it up against a capitalist, corporate, scientific response to the problem.

The story thus establishes a contention between indigenous and foreign forms of science, knowledge and problem-solving, through the use two different nova, that are ethically binary opposites. PGCC, on the one hand, offers a technological quick-fix, designed to solve the problem of malaria immediately and with as much conviction as possible. While haste in eradicating a disease that kills thousands of Ugandans every year should not be discouraged (WHO 124), their motivation for the rapid efficacy of Miss Doe is more commercial than compassionate:

> Her creators, to protect the technology and ensure maximum profits, fix […] her genes so that she [cannot] travel beyond a certain radius from the breeding site where the first egg of the generation hatched. This way, PGCC [can] charge governments per square inch of land that they had freed of malaria carrying mosquitoes (7).

PGCC approach the region's malaria problem with a colonial ideology that combines infantilizing heroism and capitalist interests, and as such does not allow for the agency of the Ugandans to be considered.

On the other hand, Japia's gradual, communal approach to stopping the spread of malaria, while slow-going, is achieving results, and also enabling residents to take control and have agency of their own circumstances, and is motivated by Japia's moral obligation to bettering his community, based on him being personally invested therein. His use of indigenous knowledge is presented as patient, considered and rational, while the Western scientific thought of PGCC is presented as rash, spontaneous and dangerous, an intentional reversal of the relationship between these two ways of knowing as presented by dominant global ideologies. The reversal seems to suggest that knowledge is, by nature, rationally accumulated, and it is the widespread nature of Western thought (as a result of imperialism), rather than its correctness, that makes it globally dominant. The collection is thus able to immediately criticize the epistemological imbalance that is globally dominant, and suggest a positive place for knowledge about the world that falls outside of the mainstream.

He thus advocates for the global adoption of "ecologies of knowledge," which Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes as:

> finding credibility for non-scientific knowledges [which] does not entail discrediting scientific knowledge. It implies, rather, using it in a broader context of dialogue with other knowledges […] The point is, one the on hand, to explore alternative conceptions that are internal to scientific knowledge and have become visible through the pluralist epistemologies of various scientific practices (feminist epistemologies in particular) and, on the other, to advance interdependence among the scientific knowledge produced by Western modernity and other, nonscientific knowledges (189)

Japia is a good literary example of ecologies of knowledge being put in practice. Japia takes into account various and different kinds of knowledges about preventing the spread of malaria, and puts them all into practice in his community. He combines the government provided netting with a knowledge of plant based remedies, community projects to make the area less habitable for mosquitoes, and using the scent of oranges to combat them. This is a combination of knowledge from outside of his community, from inheriting "the healing spirits after his father died" (4), and from his own personal research. It is this combination of knowledges that

means he is solely able to survive Miss Doe's onslaught, a somber gratification of the practice of the ecologies of knowledge.

This is not to say that this epistemological approach is uncritical. While in opposition to globally dominant thought, Japia's shamanism is not necessarily entirely juju-based. Japia "became an expert in plants and diseases" after his father's passing, by "dropp[ing] out of formal school, and acquir[ing] knowledge the ancient way" (4). While he indeed becomes "a gifted shaman," he "disassociate[s] herbal medicine from spirit worship […] to the dismay of the community" (4). He does this because he "believe[s] mixing the two had hindered the proper research and development of native medical science" (4). He is at first rejected by his community as a healer because of this, but "Eventually, when they saw him performing greater miracles outside the shrine, they accepted him as a medic only" (4). "The Leafy Man" thus offers a space for the hybridization of epistemologies to be neither exclusionary like scientism, nor be uncritical in its adoption of knowledge.

Although Japia's and the PGCC's different responses to the problem of malaria reinforce the epistemological binary of magic and science, Japia's unusual and modern approach to shamanism does the opposite, complicating the binary once more. Indeed, it may seem that the first story in the collection is advocating a fusion of regional scientific methodologies, but refuting magic as having a role in scientific advancement and problem-solving.

In contrast, "The Healer" opposes any advocacy for the abandonment of juju ontologies, because its protagonist is a shaman who practices juju heroically, and thus through whom the story draws respect for the practice of magic. "The Healer", although more reliant on analogy to achieve this, is similar to the first in that it presents a conflict between Western and African forms of culture, technology and epistemology. It also aligns its sympathies with Africa in these conflicts – primarily in the establishment of a colonial allegory – but again not without complication of their binarism. However, while the narrative perspective of "The Leafy Man" seems to sympathize with a mixture of global but secular sciences, "The Healer" is anti-secular, since the heroism of Benge, the story's protagonist, is enabled by his use of magic to solve problems, benefit others, and act against evil when he encounters it. In analyzing this second story, I will show how its apparent reversion of narrative sympathy from "the Leafy Man" is still enabled by the use of the jujutech aesthetic though, thereby suggesting that the aesthetic does not inherently advocate for any ontological hierarchy, but rather for the formation of ecologies of knowledge, as described by Santos.

Benge is described as an "ajwaka" (16), meaning spiritual healer and diviner. The story establishes a fictitious world with a history of conflict between Benge's people, who are called the Twa, and the Cuku, who have traveled from a distant land over "impenetrable desert" with "flying machines" to "conquer and enslave" the Twa (17–8). In addition to these flying machines, the Cuku have several technological advancements that they use in their oppression of the Twa, such as guns and "metallic horses" (18). Despite some attempt at revolution on the part of the Twa, the story is set at a time when Cuku control and Twa enslavement is severe. Benge is one of few Twa who remains free, because he "use[s] juju to hide himself and his home" (18). The colonial allegory is quite obvious in this setting, and the physical descriptions of the two peoples – which somewhat liken the Cuku to white Europeans and the Twa to black Africans – locates that colonial allegory in Africa; the Cuku have "skin the colour of ripe bananas, and bright red hair that [grows] straight and stiff like grass," while the Twa have skin "the colour of roasted coffee" and hair that grows "thick like sheep wool" (17).

Specific narrative attention is paid to the spiritual imperialism practiced by the Cuku. They practice a religion called Oksism, meaning that they believe themselves to have been created by a god named Oks, who had "given them dominion over all living things" (16), including the Twa. The Cuku have forced the Twa to accept Oksism and reject their precolonial god, who is called "Wiir". The colonial allegory here is evidently referring to the imperialism of Christian missionaries and the colonizing countries' intentional and strategical overthrowing of indigenous religious belief systems. It is thereby critical of colonialism's role in many African people abandoning indigenous belief systems, and so suggests this attitude to go against the project of developing frontier African epistemologies.

Benge disavows Oksism, preferring the precolonial religions of the Twa that have empowered his juju all his life, and so the Cuku "never sto[p] hunting for him" to stifle his implied paganism (18). By virtue of his practice being obviously for the betterment of those around him, many of the more liberal Cuku members of the community have grown sympathetic to him, and help him stay well supplied enough to be able to practice his spiritual healing and sustain himself physically. In fact, some Cuku come to him for spiritual guidance and ritualistic healing, even the mayor, who "secretly visit[s] Benge in the wee hours of the night to talk to his dead wife" (20). Generally, across the kingdom, the Twa ajwakas "d[o] not practice evil magic" and use "their powers only for good, with utmost restraint and secrecy" (25), despite their people's enslavement. When a Cuku boy is kidnapped in a "juju carriage" (18) reminiscent of Benge's own though, he is suspected of the crime and must use his juju to track down the real culprit before he can be arrested. After several confrontations with the

town's law-enforcement, who use guns and ride on "robot horses," Benge uses a "psychic current" to discover that the kidnapper is a Cuku, and one of the town's "most holy Oksians" (30), named Kasito.

Kasito is the only Cuku farmer who does not own Twa slaves, because he uses robots to work his farm, and this has made him one of the wealthiest men in the town. The robots working his farm, Benge discovers, are actually zombies. Using juju, Kasito has reanimated the dead bodies of his kidnapped victims to work his farm, and magically disguised them to look like robots. The use of the jujutech aesthetic here to blur the biological and the synthetic is clear, although the two ontological systems do not necessarily enmesh in the way MacDonald describes jujutech as doing, because one is clearly being used merely as a disguise for the other. Nonetheless, the aesthetic purposes of using jujutech are still clear, because its use probes the distinctions between the two separate ontological systems in some way. This happens in other aspects of the story as well. Benge and Kasito both travel with "juju carriages," which blur the distinction between the mechanical and the biological. They are drawn by "six […] real flesh and blood horses [which] charge out of a dust devil, dragging a green box with gold-framed doors [and] no driver" (18). The horses ridden by the Cuku are conversely described as "robot horses," (20) another synthetically biological aspect to the invented world of the story.

By initiating two distinct ontological systems, the story structurally suggests a binary. By then placing them in an allegorically colonial relationship, where one ontology is that of the oppressor/colonizer/enslaver and the other that of the oppressed/colonized/enslaved, Dila points the reader's sympathies towards the Twa and Wiirism, rather than the Oksian Cuku. The narrative sympathy thus falls unavoidably with those practicing magic, since the focal character practices 'good' juju, and is the hero of the story empowered by magic against a technological social hierarchy that is endlessly trying to suppress him regardless of his inherent goodness. Even the more likable Cuku characters, such as the mayor, somewhat embrace juju, while the more detestable characters, such as the Oksian priest, are more fervent in their denial of the Twa's magic.

Yet the twist in the story – that juju is being used for evil by Kasito – complicates that sympathy. Kasito's use of juju to kidnap people, kill them, and enslave their zombified corpses plays into the trope of evil black magic, suggesting that juju is not necessarily an inherently better ontology than technoscience. Although the novum of the story – which in this case is the world it invents – is dependent on both technoscience and juju in the form of the competing ideologies and ethnicities, neither is established as fundamentally better than the other. The moral approach of the story is more consciously critical. The story is thus able to ultimately

advocate good over evil, rather than any select ontology, democratizing the value of different kinds of knowledge in a fundamentally frontier way.

This is made clear in the final scene of the story, wherein several concluding instances of epistemological conviviality occur. The scene takes place three days after the climactic confrontation, where Kasito admitted to his crimes, and threatened the mayor and other authorities to let him escape without persecution or be cursed, but Benge's ward, Acii, killed him with a lightning bolt before he could escape. This leaves Kasito's three sons orphaned, and the town's council meet to discuss what should become of the boys. They worry that the boys may be "evil" (37) because they have learnt to practice magic under their father's care, and so decide to consult Benge for his professional opinion of the matter. They ask the mayor to summon Benge to a council meeting, and he does so by burning some incense into a clay bowl and chanting a phrase, which "waft[s] to Benge like a prayer" (36). This is how the mayor has, in the past, covertly contacted Benge under the cover of nightfall, and asked him to perform juju for him. Benge is confused to be receiving his call during the day, and in front of the rest of the council, many of whom are "radical conservatives" (37), and worries it may be a trap. As it turns out, the council have simply become more convivial in their approach to the epistemologies around them in light of the events of the story, embracing juju even without necessarily practicing or fully approving of it. These small moral growths made by some of the story's side characters didactically advocate for convivial approaches to leadership, and in the moral choices made in the post-colony on a daily basis.

Benge's verdict on the three boys is that they are not evil, but impressionable, and only practiced magic in an evil way because they were "under the influence of their father" (38). He offers to mentor the children in the practice of magic, because he thinks they "could be valuable allies in the campaign against Oksism" (36), because of the distaste for the religion they have accumulated due to their father. Kasito's evilness was primarily out of hatred for the religion:

> […] because it destroyed the world. Forests were vanishing, animals were becoming extinct, the climate was changing at an alarming rate, all because Oksism made people believe this world was not their home. Kasito wanted power to defeat Oksism, to make people see that paradise was the world they lived in, not a mythical place beyond the stars. The dramatic kidnaps were his first shots in the war against Oksism. His cause was noble but he thirsted for the power of the gods. He wanted the power to make the sun stand still, to wipe out stars and change the shape of the moon. He believed he could achieve it through human sacrifice. (35)

Like all good villains, Kasito's cause is certainly "noble," but his methodology is morally flawed. Somewhat stereotypically, his lust for power leads him astray, a didactic condemnation of absolutism consistent with the story's and the collection's advocacy for conviviality. The sons also practice juju and strongly condemn Oksism, but do not value absolutism – Benge says that they "had never been comfortable with their father's quest to gain more power using human sacrifice" (37) – which is what specifically marks them as innocent in contrast to their father's evilness.

In doing this, the story pointedly condemns absolutism and venerates conviviality. Of course, the denunciation of Oksism seems fundamentally unaccommodating of an epistemology different to his own, but Benge dislikes it specifically because it is absolutist, adding to the story's – and the collection's – overall preference for epistemology hybridity and denunciation of epistemological despotism. Moreover, Kasito's quest for supreme power is a quest for self-serving absolutism in and of itself, and its villainisation is a further move made by the story to critique this attitude towards the world. This is especially emphasized in the contrast with Benge, who practices humility in helping the townsfolk despite their hatred for him, and in the fact that he disagrees with Acii's vengeful belief that they should favour "all out war with the Cuku," (19) and use their juju aggressively to overthrow Cuku and Oksian rule. In the three months she has been under his tutelage, he has "struggled to restrain her, to teach her that revenge [is] evil" (18). This advocacy of humility as a criticism of absolutism is also evident in Japia's community-centered solutions to malaria, especially in its opposition to the PGCC's attempt at monopolized eradication.

The fact that these are the first two stories in the collection seems relevant in introducing the collection's epistemological attitude, because in them, the reader encounters the epistemological binary between juju and science being introduced through the stories' nova, before that binary is ultimately criticized as being overly simplistic. They express good and evil as applicable to both systems, and then further complicate the goodness or badness that can be ascribed to each. Both stories therefore have the ultimate effect of delegitimizing any superiority of one system of knowledge over another.

This can be seen in almost every one of the collection's ten stories. "The Doctor's Truck," for example, tells the story of a doctor's truck being inhabited by an evil spirit that runs over and kills a young girl, before ultimately revealing that the truck had been mechanically tampered with to become remote-controlled by a second doctor, who is trying to make money from the death. In "The Yellow People," an alien mixes chemical insecticide with his own otherworldly technology to reanimate corpses into zombie workers, slowly

creating his own underground society that is hierarchically structured similarly to a bee hive, with the alien as its queen. Dila's short story cycle constantly finds new ways to amalgamate different ontologies in their nova, villainizing and glorifying their outcomes in different ways, but consistently complicating any epistemological hierarchy between the systems. This is exemplary of the practice of creating ecologies of knowledge that are collectivist, non-exclusionary and frontier in nature, and the use of the jujutech aesthetic to blur the ontological bases of their nova is central to it.

The Bito stories: Non-hierarchical frontier knowledge ecologies

The stories best suited to this argument are perhaps the only two stories of the collection that are related. They are both set in the fictional Bito Empire[15], and establish a working science indistinguishable as either juju or technoscience[16]. My emphasis in this analysis will be more on the idea of the Bito Empire itself, how it is described and what its concoction seeks to offer the collection as a whole, at the expense of analyzing the plot and characters of the story (although these will be described in places where necessary). The reason for this is that my interests here are with the Bito Empire itself as the novum for these stories, one that is predicated on an interweaving of juju and technoscientific ontologies.

Both Bito stories describe a heavily militarized techno-autocratic state controlled by an ambiguous "Emperor" (87), who enforces the country's complete segregation from the rest of the world. The empire seeks to reestablish a 'pure' precolonial African way of life, and thus valorizes blackness and demonizes people of other races as well as rejects cultural and technological novelties brought to Africa during colonialism. The empire's idea of precolonial purity is inherently problematic, however, as both stories set in the empire go to show. The reason for this with regards to the stories' and the collections' philosophical aims is to reject epistemological hierarchy and exclusion of any kind, not just when enacted by the colonizer upon the colonized.

The protagonist of the first story, "Lights on Water", is Songo, a very skilled painter hired by the government to produce images of the monsters and demons that live on the outskirts of the country. These are a state fabrication, used to discourage civilians from trying

[15] The final story in the collection, "A Bloodline of Blades," is also set in this fictional kingdom, but at a time considerably before it became the empire described in "Lights on Water" and "A Wife and a Slave," and so it does not present the same techno-autocracy described in the latter tales.
[16] Hereafter, I refer to these two stories together as the 'Bito stories,' for clarity.

to escape the state, and embracing it as a site of good in an ocean of evil. Songo's paintings are an integral part of this propaganda machine, since photography is outlawed, and civilian travel to the country's borders is strictly prohibited by military patrol. Songo is allowed to go to the outskirts of the country in order to paint realistic backdrops, upon which he inserts monsters and demons from his own imagination. The state's fear-mongering and reversion to monstrous imagery reveals its repressive ideologies.

The reason for the empire's self-segregation is a similarly obvious colonial allegory to that employed in "The Healer," although mixed with Christian mythology. The "Book of Life," a holy text created by the state's Ministry of Spiritual Affairs, tells:

> "…the tale of Mojech, who led the people of Jok out of slavery from a land called Hamerikah. The Book never talked of who enslaved them, but people interpreted it to be white creatures that were half human and half bird. Their king, Wasiton, raided Jokland and took slaves in great ships. They worked for him for a thousand years until Jok sent Mojech to free them. King Wasiton refused to release them, so Jok struck Hamerikah with a hundred plaques [sic.] until he succumbed. Unable to sail the ships, Mojech parted the waters of the sea with his magic staff and the slaves walked back home. It took them forty years." (91–2)

As "Hamerikah" and "Wasiton" are phonetically reminiscent of "America" and "Washington," the story recalls the reality of slavery in the United States of America. The name "Mojech" is similarly reminiscent of the biblical Moses, who also freed slaves and led them back to their homeland by parting a sea. It is unclear in this story whether the phonetic changes are put in place by the Bito government, suggesting that the story is a future speculation of reality, or whether these are accurately spelt distinct places in the universe of the story, and the phonetic similarities are meta-textual. Regardless, the allegory is clear, although the former option does further implicate the state for its xenophobic and repressive exclusionary practices.

"A Wife and a Slave" is also set in the Bito empire, recognizable by the fact that the civilians all live in enormous pyramids in both stories, that people with lighter skin are socially stigmatized, and by the 'ornithopters' or 'brukas' which civilians use for transport. This second Bito story reveals with greater clarity the origins of the empire, confirming that it is a speculated projection of reality rather than a separate temporal universe. The protagonist tells his experience of the establishment of the empire, suggesting that it is set some time chronologically prior to "Lights on Water". He and his fiancée were in their early twenties and planning on emigrating to Sweden, when:

> "[O]ne day, a month before they were to board the plane, they heard a name on the radio, in a strange broadcast from the heart of the chaos that their homeland had become. Someone called himself the Emperor [and] explained that, in the space of one month, he had vanquished all the warlords, […] declared peace, and urged all refugees to return home. […] But rumor that he used very powerful juju began to spread. They said his soldiers could fly, that they did not use guns but gadgets that looked like bananas and flashed like a torch. A single flash could kill scores of people. Nobody believed these rumors until scores of winged men flew over the camp in broad daylight" (118).

The land is "magically transformed into a paradise," with "city building taller than mountains" (118). All citizens are given "a well furnished three bedroom home" and a "flying machine" (119), everything is free and people "only ha[ve] to work for food" (119).

The explanation for the Emperor's achievements and the Bito kingdom's newfound socialist utopia is ambiguous throughout this explanation. While at first he is described as using "powerful juju," making people "fly" and using weapons that are not "guns" – all of which suggests an occult technology – the new weapons are called "gadgets," the flying is enabled by "machines" and the state is best described as a techno-cracy (or technological autocracy) because of the many technological implements used by the military to maintain power, from air scanners being used to find lost ornithopters, to the paint Songo uses being technologically manipulated to move on the canvas. The ornithopters logically seem to be mechanical flying machines for individual use, but do not seem to use any kind of fuel, and are described as looking "like primitive toys from a folktale" (120). None of these advancements are given any tangible explanation in juju or in technoscience, and this remains deliberately mysterious, not only to the reader, but to the Bito civilians as well:

> How the Emperor had come upon this fantastical technology became a source of great speculation. Most Africans simply put it down to magic, to knowledge from the ancestors. They said that their gods had finally woken up to fight against the foreign gods. The Emperor acknowledges these superstitions. He said the gift came through an old man, who never went to school but who was blessed with the ability to design flying machines, modify DNA, blend materials and chemicals to create new kinds of materials, all to benefit mankind without hurting the environment as the white people had done. (119)

Dila's deliberate blurring of the binary is clear here, from the phrase "fantastical technology," to the Emperor acquiring his knowledge via the intergenerational passing down of juju knowledge. Juju is commonly described as being inherited in this way, not least of all when Tutuola's drinkard takes his "father's juju" with him on his adventure, suggesting an

intertextual nod to older juju stories and the formative role juju plays in African cultures. Dila also refers to juju being passed down between generations in many of his other stories, including "The Leafy Man", "A Bloodline of Blades" and "The Healer". What is unique about this story though is that the description of this knowledge uses the terminology of physics, mechanics, biology and chemistry associated with Western scientific study. The deliberate ambiguity in the source of the Bito Empire's power means that the novum of its creation must inevitably be jujutech, because juju and technoscientific ontologies are so inseparable in the description of the Emperor's rise to power. The allusion here may even be that the Emperor's power comes from his own heightened use of epistemological hybridity in his research, and thus suggest the power inherent in the ecologies of knowledge that jujutech emblemizes. Despite this, I would not suggest that the Emperor is an example of an ultimately all-knowing frontier African, because his exclusion of all that is inherently African is a fundamentally non-frontier attitude.

When Western powers try to discover the Emperor's secrets with the threat of war – they believe he must be "an agent of a species from outer space" (119), suggestive of Western reluctance to consider African ontologies as tangible – their invading airships and assassin drones "vanish mysteriously" (119), their nuclear weapons have no impact on the country, and the Emperor's own technology allows him to defeat the invaders "within twenty-four hours" (120). Dila's diction deliberately establishes the Bito Empire as employing epistemologically syncretic technologies, and these overwhelm all others, suggesting a didactic advocacy for embracing epistemological syncretism. At the same time, these stories once again criticize the abuse of absolute power, and thus criticize absolutism at all levels, by describing the disastrous effects of the state's technocratic supremacy. The Emperor "wipe[s] out New York to demonstrate the he possessed something more powerful than nuclear weapons[17]" (120), "Africans involved in interracial relationships [are] shot dead for betraying their race" (120), and whites are "rounded up and thrown into slave camps" (120). The story goes on to describe a white woman's escape from one of these camps, in a way to which the narrative ascribes bravery and heroism, an evident criticism of Bito and its ruler by the text itself.

The state's attempt to eliminate colonial influence entirely, is described as "a mad attempt to return to the African way of life before the Europeans came, or to what they believed were authentic African cultures and values" (120). This quite appallingly includes colorist

[17] While the horrendousness of this act furthers the criticism of the Emperor's own insatiable hunger for power, the clear allegorical reference to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 indicates a criticism of American exceptionalism at the same time.

social persecution of people with lighter skin tones, the subjugation of females to being servants of their husbands, and the outlawing of sex and intimacy unless for procreation. This "mad attempt" at cultural purity is yet another example of anti-absolutist sentiment in the collection, which ultimately advocates frontier conviviality.

Throughout the two Bito stories, and the collection as a whole, Dila deconstructs binaries that present one system of knowledge as superior to another, be they juju and technoscience, occultism and skepticism, tradition and extra-cultural influence, and the state and the civilian, to name the most thematically prominent. At times – and arguably when Dila's fiction is at its didactical best – his fiction is able to completely syncretize conflicting epistemologies, embracing knowledge of the world as collective, convivial, endless and democratic. While his entire collection is a fine demonstration of the potential for jujutech aesthetics to reimagine the way we understand the world around us, and address the imbalances in power that problematize epistemological hybridity, it is his moments of syncretism that perhaps best show the value of the aesthetic for contemporary science fiction, and many more disciplines beyond.

Chapter 4

Kwezi: South Africa's Foremost Superhero and the Difficulties for Epistemological Hybridity in a Global Capitalist Literary Industry

In this chapter, I account for jujutech as a visual aesthetic in two primary forms of visual media, namely film and comics. This is an important step, because science fiction is most popularly consumed through visual media in the twenty-first century, and because visual media has come to account for the overwhelming majority of media consumed today (Mirzoeff 1). Visual media presents an important opportunity for jujutech texts because the way that jujutech translates to visual media indicates more about its epistemological function than can be deftly communicated by texts written in English. The intangible nature of juju has resulted somewhat in the deficit of both the presence and epistemological validity of juju ontologies in English writing (and possibly many other written languages), as was made evident in the debates around Tutuola's use of the English language in Chapter 2.

The most prominent opportunity for visualising jujutech has been in comic books, because they are far more accessible (although still relatively inaccessible in Africa) and easier to produce than films or video games, the two most prominently consumed visual texts today. I thus start the chapter by analysing a relatively new comic book series that has dominated the South African comic market since its inception, Loyiso Mkize's *Kwezi,* showing how jujutech is presented in the text, where the comic presents greater opportunities for the conception of jujutech than written texts, and where there are still shortfalls. *Kwezi*'s unparalleled success when compared with other science fictional comic books in South Africa suggests an appetite for it above and beyond that of those others among publishers, book sellers, and readers, and it is this popularity that makes the comic a useful catalyst for discussing the role of the capitalist industry in the production and dissemination of jujutech texts.

I will be approaching the text as an example of popular fiction that is able to be both reflective and productive of popular epistemologies because of the contemporary critical consensus that this is the case for popular art, especially in Africa. I will thereafter criticise the limitations the publishing industry places on the opportunities for non-canonical, hybrid and frontier epistemologies and ontologies to be represented in South African literature, and suggest that a new, convivial attitude towards publishing should be adopted.

The comic book as popular art form in Africa's restricted visual media industry

In her extensive 1987 essay, "Popular Arts in Africa," Barber argued that "popular arts are also much more than constellations of social, political, and economic relationships – they are expressive acts. Their most important attribute is their power to communicate" (2). She posited the position – which has since been adopted by the vast majority of research into popular culture in Africa and beyond – that popular art should be recognized as "a productive rather than a reflective field of activity" (Newell & Okome 4). Prior to this groundbreaking research, popular art in Africa was generally understood to be simply reflective of the norms, values, beliefs and everyday lives of certain people. As discussed in Chapter 2, for example, many European reviewers of Tutuola's first novel recognised it merely as the presentation of the African mind in English, and ignored the didacticism, anti-colonial satire, and epistemological development it offered. However, it was Barber's essay that changed the focus of the field, to place emphasis on how popular art influences, changes and produces everyday life. More recently, for example, Till Förster observes that popular art, by virtue of having multiple individual producers, is socially productive. He concludes this in his study of recollection "re-collection" or "*récupération* [emphasis in original]" (38) art in several big African cities, whereby artists make sculptures out of trash found in dumps. Förster found that re-collection exemplifies both the individually perceptive and the contextually reflective nature of popular art, and thus its inherent social productivity. My analysis in this chapter endeavors to show that jujutech is a similarly socially productive aesthetic.

Ranka Primorac further postulates that African popular art plays a role in constructing social ethics, in her musings on the social influence and reception of texts written by Stephen Mpashi, arguably Zambia's most popular and recognisable author of the twentieth century (among Zambians). Mpashi's novels rest on a "complex, witty, and knowing" moralism that exemplifies the possible cultural and epistemological productivity of popular cultural art forms (296). Primorac suggests that this has made Mpashi popularly "inspirational" (301) because, in Mpashi's own (translated) words, it "would not be aesthetically pleasing to write a book from which, when one is done with the reading, one does not retain a worthwhile message at all, because then, the writer will have failed" (qtd. in Primorac 301). When aesthetics and ethics are so inseparable, the art form undoubtedly becomes not only socially productive, but part of the production of social ethics. This is of course not to say that "the popular" definitively generates "the everyday" ethics of "the people". But regardless of the simplicity or density of the cause-and-effect relationship here, that there is one means that the crux of

Barber's argument would seem to stand: popular culture is a socially productive – perhaps even more than a reflective – field of activity. African popular art forms "do not simply mirror sociopolitical conditions nor should they be celebrated as the naïve voice of 'the people' in everyday contexts" (Newell & Okome 7).

Contentious here is what terms such as "the people," "the everyday" and "the popular" actually mean. Such terms are further complicated by the tendency to homogenize the continent when trying to specify them. These questions are further complicated by the modes of production and circulation of visual media, which is why the details of the circulation of the comic will be discussed in this chapter. The contemporary study of African popular culture has been useful in navigating these homogeneities since 1987. This is because of the collective formation among theorists of "a continent-wide theoretical framework for the positive identification and analysis of popular art forms, both as recognizably African and also as locally situated and distinct from one another" inspired by Barber's reformative essay (Newell & Okome 1). Barber was dissatisfied by previous studies negatively narrowing the idea of African popular culture into unproductive and homogenized brackets, particularly by a lack of thoughtful and positivistic engagement with these sweeping terms. It is tempting, for example, to reduce "the people" to a naïve mass sentiment, made subaltern by capitalist forms of inequality, which fails to consider the far-reaching influence of elite and sub-elite popular art forms, such as soap operas and comic books. Simplistic notions of "the people" disallow for contention, individuality and intersectionality in the popular imaginary. It is similarly tempting to reduce "the everyday" to something akin to "internationally mainstream economic analyses of Africa, where the emphasis is on poverty, political corruption and suffering" (Newell & Okome 14). David Hecht and Maliqalim Simone argue that doing so neglects "to locate complex and fundamentally ambivalent African social conditions" created by the "anamorphic matrices of conflicting knowledges and desires" produced both for and often by Africans (8). This risks homogenizing African subjectivity to a single lived experience, and thus a continentally-conformed popular imaginary, which is nonsensical. It is also tempting to reduce "the popular" solely to locally-produced material.

Not only is the notion of locality fluid, and increasingly so in an ever more globalized reality, but the popular must include the consumption and/or creolization of globally produced art forms. Primorac, for example, gathers from her research into post-independence popular Zambian literature that the narrative of colonially-published texts studied at schools were being reworked into stories told orally by what she somewhat ambiguously calls "people sitting around fires" (300). She deduces from this that "at the moment of independence, Zambia's

literary practitioners did not want to 'write back' to the literary discourses of the colonial past. They wanted, instead, to build on their achievements" (300). While most studies, like Förster's and Primorac's, focus on a selection of texts from different pockets of the continent, the general consensus across the field of study points to African popular art as a productive space for social aesthetics, ethics, sociality and epistemology.

Despite being a field with such indefinite limits, both in its terminology and its practice, the fact that popular art forms are socially productive merits intellectual engagement with them not as secondary to other sociological and cultural studies, but primary because they "play a crucial role in formulating new ways of looking at things" (Barber, "Popular Arts in Africa" 4) within societies. Because of this, "African popular art forms offer us a vital archive of desires and imagined possibilities" (Newell & Okome 4). Jujutech, as I will argue through the analyses in this chapter, is a similarly productive popular aesthetic, one which reflects and (re)creates a modern popular imaginary for twenty-first-century Africa, because of the essentiality of juju, scientific modernity, and their interconnections to everyday Africans. This is especially pertinent to visual representations of the jujutech aesthetic in the twenty-first century because the "swirl of imagery" that typifies twenty-first century media consumption "is not just a part of the everyday, it is everyday life" (Mirzoeff 1).

It is not necessarily novel to suggest that juju is an essential part of popular African epistemologies, as it has been suggested and debated variously by many prominent African scholars for decades. In *Concerning Violence*, Frantz Fanon identified a "magical superstructure which permeates native society [and] fulfills certain well-defined functions in the dynamism of the libido," namely to terrify its citizens, and thus integrating them "in the traditions and the history of [their] district or of [their] tribe, and at the same time it reassures [them], it gives [them] a status, as it were an identification paper" (23–5). The terror of juju, as described here, is quite prominent in mid-twentieth century African literature such as the prose of Tutuola, described in the first chapter, but the critical understanding of the relationship between popular Africa and juju epistemologies has shifted in theoretical discussions from the exoticism notable in Fanon's essay to more nuanced consideration of it as a social system of thought.

While this is somewhat due to the works of Western theorists gradually practicing cultural relativism in thinking about Africa, such as in Peter Winch's 1964 essay "Understanding a Primitive Society", the majority of progress here has been made by African scholars. This is largely due to the attitudes presented by these scholars towards the traditions and beliefs of African people. Soyinka explains that:

> European scholars have always betrayed a tendency to accept the myth, the lore, the social techniques of imparting knowledge or of stabilising society as evidence of orthodox rigidity. Yet the opposite, an attitude of philosophical accommodation, is constantly demonstrated in the attributes accorded most African deities, attributes which deny the existence of impurities or 'foreign' matter, in the god's digestive system. Experiences which, until the event, lie outside the tribe's cognition are absorbed through the god's agency, are converted into yet another piece of social armoury in its struggle for existence, and enter into the lore of the tribe. (*Myth* 53–4).

Rather than presenting juju ontologies as exotic, irrational, static and backward, as Soyinka believes European theorists have predominantly done in discussing Africa, his own theorisation presents these ways of gaining knowledge about the world as inherently modern in their unending flexibility and openness to progression, assimilation and novelty. By accommodating experiences "outside the tribe's cognition," Soyinka is hinting at the frontierism described by Nyamnjoh as being inherent to African juju epistemologies. Rather than outdated notions of culture as a static, deterministic identity marker, this view follows Christopher Waterman's description of cultural identity as "relational and conjunctural, rather than self-constituting and essential" (377).

Garuba also recognises this epistemological tendency towards the "continual re-enchantment of the world" (267), and so dubs the term "animist materialism" which he defines as:

> […] a process whereby 'magical elements of thought' are not displaced but, on the contrary, continually assimilate new developments in science, technology, and the organization of the world within a basically "magical" worldview. Rather than "disenchantment," a persistent re-enchantment thus occurs, and the rational and scientific are appropriated and transformed into the mystical and magical. (267)

Garuba's animist materialism is thus an epistemology of companionability, of adopting a kaleidoscopic worldview of interconnections, assimilation and mutual understanding. To understand the world as continually animated is to understand it from the view of a host of animators, all those who have and collect knowledge of it. It is thus inherently modern, convivial, and emblematic of Nyamnjoh's frontierism in its tendency towards a collective knowledge of the world, and as shown by the arguments of Nyamnjoh, Soyinka, Garuba, Barber, and the majority of African cultural theorists, this attitude is inherently a popular African one.

Jujutech is the aesthetic representation and production of epistemological modernity in African popular literature, and is ever more common in visual media from Africa as the possibilities of visual media expand exponentially with technological innovation. As visual media increasingly becomes the most prominently consumed form of media globally, so too grows its influence on the everyday imaginary. Martin Heidegger theorised the idea of the "world picture" as being essential to epistemological and cultural studies in an increasingly visually mediated world. He defines it as "not […] a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture" (130). Nicholas Mirzoeff describes this effect more practically when he says that "visual culture does not depend on pictures themselves but the modern tendency to picture or visualise existence" (5). Since knowledge of the world is becoming an increasingly visual imaginary, it is important for globally excluded epistemologies to be represented visually in the production of media in order to play a part in the 'world picture' at either an individual or societal level, thus validating their practitioners' epistemological legitimacy and allowing for a convivial global approach to the production and dissemination of knowledge. My development in this chapter is to show how, through the production of science fictional visual texts in Africa, the jujutech aesthetic allows juju ontologies to combine with technomodernity in a way that suits Nyamnjoh's frontierism and the continual re-enchantment that typifies tradition's relationship with modernity. I do so because visual texts are some of the most exciting spaces for the presence of jujutech aesthetics, because bringing to visual life these complex and overlooked ontologies is an extraordinary venture, and essential in the contributing to the 'world picture' that is central to the creation and dissemination of knowledge about the world in the twenty-first century.

However, the uneven global access to the technologies that produce visual media has frustrated the production of visual texts in Africa. This is especially true of science fiction, which requires some of the most demanding technology among film genres. Dila's filmmaking career exemplifies this problem. Dila has started making science fiction and fantasy short films, but describes it as "a difficult genre to crack since it requires visual effects" ("Bio" para. 8), and has started crowdfunding initiatives to try and garner the funds to create these films. Several short science fiction films have been quite successful, including Wanuri Kahiu's *Pumzi*, Kibwe Tavares's *Jonah*, and the NEST collective's virtual reality film, *Let this be a Warning*. Feature length science fiction films produced in the last decade include Neill Blomkamp's *District 9* and *Chappie*, Miguel Llansó's *Crumbs*, and Likarion Wainaina's *Supa Modo*. While these films clearly show the production of science fiction films in Africa is growing, their production, circulation, consumption and revenue are very significantly dwarfed

by science fiction from Europe and America. What is also noticeable about this list of films is the dearth of juju aesthetics and ontologies within them; all of them almost entirely adopt the genre conventions of Euro-American science fiction, and locates them in the African continent only at a fairly superficial level, without reflecting popular epistemologies.

The other gargantuan industry for the production and dissemination of science fiction and fantasy texts is the video game industry, which is projected to be worth nearly two trillion rand in 2018 at the time of writing (Takahashi para. 1). Unfortunately, hardly any video games are produced in Africa, other than a few mostly small-scale mobile, free and/or educational games (Fripp; Kiro'o Games, "The Video Game in Africa"; Patel). Again, this is largely due to the inaccessibility of video game making technology and capital investment in Africa. One somewhat notable exception is Kiro'o Games's 2016 2D mash-em-up RPG, *Aurion: Legacy of the Kori-Odan*. In the game the player plays the role of Enzo Kori-Odan, who has recently inherited the kingdom of Zama from his father. His position as king is challenged by a coup started by his brother-in-law, and Enzo and his wife Erine must fight to reclaim their throne. The characters are able to call on their ancestors to aid them in battle, offering a juju ontology within the traditionally Eurocentric form of mash-em-up fighting games. While the game hints at juju being central to the African video game in a future when it is a notable part of the worldwide industry, Kiro'o Games seems likely to move away from developing console games like this one – which offer more room for textual complexity – and towards mobile gaming (Patel para. 13), which is a more lucrative industry for smaller developers because the games are far simpler to create and can generate advertising revenue, which further evinces the capitalist restriction on video game development on the African continent.

Another challenge to juju's place in the global 'world picture' is the capitalist market that moderates what visual literature is globally disseminated. This of course affects the publication and creation of written texts as well, but to a lesser degree, because the capital investment needed to visually portray the extraordinariness of juju through visual effects and/or animation is far more than that required. This means that, even when visual texts do receive sufficient investment for effects and animation, those need to comply with the canonized 'world picture' in order to guarantee return on investment, and since juju ontologies have been excluded from that 'world picture,' there is a deficit of willing investors.

With films and video games – the two most consumed forms of visual media – largely inaccessible to juju ontologies, a recent flourish in the comic book industry on the continent has provided a space for creative ways of exploring many science fiction aesthetics visually, jujutech not excluded. This is not to say that comic books are new to Africa; comics were

already being created, developed and read by Africans in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa (Pijnaker, "A Historical Perspective" para. 1). Tessa Pijnaker details how the means of production of many of these were largely controlled by colonially-minded white publishers (para. 1), to the detriment of their quality and sustainability; these publishers would deliberately create "simplified" comics on the "patronising" assumption of African consumers being "illiterate" (para. 11), or – in the case of South Africa – used to "propagate[e] compliance of black Africans to the Apartheid government" (para. 17).

While these comics have almost entirely disappeared into oblivion, some comics designed by independent African creators such as Andy Akman's *Captain Africa* are still in popular circulation today – albeit in lazily recycled formats (para. 9) – suggesting there is some popular longevity in the African comic industry (Pijnaker, "A Postscript"). Indeed, the genres, themes and issues of that age of comics are "re-explored" in the contemporary resurgence of the comic book in Africa (Pijnaker, "A Historical Perspective" para. 19). The availability of computerised animating technologies in the twenty-first century has allowed for these ideas to be re-enchanted with modern colour, vibrancy and novel design. It is worth noting though that this industry too has regrettably been limited by a lack of funding, with many comic writers having to rely on crowdsourcing to produce their work, with the result that there is a small plethora of incomplete first editions scattered across digital platforms, all ending with the optimistic but unlikely promise, "To be continued…" There is promise in this industry though; South African footballing comic *Supa Strikas* is, after all, the largest monthly comic in the world in terms of circulation (Le Roux para. 1). Africa clearly has a complicated relationship with and industry for comics, the economy of which could fill a dissertation in and of itself.

What is of interest to me is the spaces in contemporary African superhero comics where frontier epistemologies can be found, and how they are used to address and reimagine African concerns and stories. One example of this is *Phala*, a comic created by Phemelo Helleman, Nompumelelo Kubheka and Bianca Levin, and launched at the 2018 African Feminisms (Afems) Conference at Rhodes University. *Phala* tells of a young woman who uses her superpowers to "fight against gender-based violence [and blow] a whistle on normalised behaviours and practice of harassment" (20). These superpowers are descended from her lineage, and particularly her female ancestors who were known as the "Aluwani Warriors" (7), "guardians and protectors of [their village]" who "grew out their long and beautiful manes […] to ward off any invaders" (7–10), as shown in Figure 1. Phala's grandmother tells her that their "hair is [their] strength. Take care of it and it will take care of you" (11). The Aluwani warriors are all presented with different hairstyles, as shown below in Figure 1, and thus the comic

becomes an empowering celebration of the hair, beauty, communion and power of black women, specifically in response to the terrors of gender-based violence. Figure 2 shows the introduction of the primary villain of the piece, Phala's great-uncle, Uncle Shongo, who is resembled as a shadowy figure in Phala's nightmares, with sharp spindles sticking out of his silhouette, and prominent, groping hands (5). Casting a family member in the role of primary villain, and presenting him visually in way resembling an unknown and nightmarish threat, reflects the troubling reality that the majority of perpetrators of gender-based violence are people known to the victim. One page of the comic is designed to look like a newspaper headline in the "Aluwani Times," which reads: "Aluwani women name and shame" (13), which subtly advocates for the empowerment of women against gender-based violence, the might and necessity of communal responses to the epidemic, and a clear space for the re-imagination, re-conception and retaliation to a major social issue in South Africa. *Phala*, and comics like it, are clearly using the medium to respond to local challenges in a frontier and future-oriented manner.

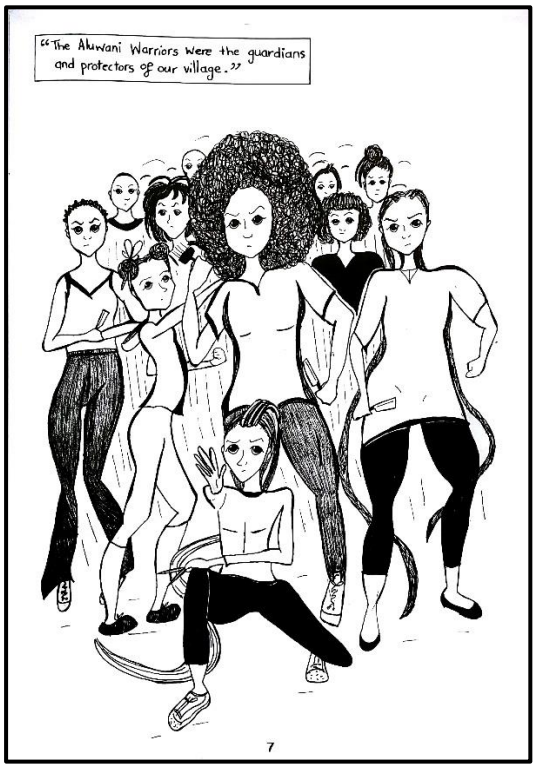

*Figure 1: The Aluwani Warriors (*Phala *7)*

*Figure 2: Phala fights Uncle Shongo in her nightmare (*Phala *5)*

While not necessarily so in the case of *Phala*, these frontier reimaginings in science fiction comics from Africa are often dependent upon visual representations of the jujutech

aesthetic, because of the epistemological hybridity it offers. While this style can be seen in many contemporary African comics, my analysis focuses on the most successful superhero comic in South Africa at the moment, Loyiso Mkize's *Kwezi*. I aim to show through my analysis how the publishing industry is currently unsupportive of frontier, non-canonical and epistemologically hybrid science fiction, which threatens the dissemination of socially valuable comics like *Phala*.

Slow-release jujutech: *Kwezi* and marketability

The eponymous character and protagonist of *Kwezi* is a nineteen-year old Xhosa man living in Johannesburg, who discovers he has superhuman strength, and the ability to fly. He uses his abilities to stop the hijacking of a cash-in-transit vehicle, and becomes something of an overnight celebrity. An older Basotho man named Mohau with superpowers of his own comes to visit Kwezi, tells him he is a "child of the star" (16), prophesied to one day heal the world when needed most. Mohau encourages him to fulfil his destiny, but Kwezi resists Mohau's guidance with an arrogance brought on by his newfound abilities, with starry-eyed dreams of celebrity and wealth in Johannesburg. The comic has published nine issues at the time of writing, and this analysis will focus primarily on the first three. The key tension of the story is whether or not Kwezi can outgrow his immature ambitions and save Johannesburg from the sinister clutches of the power-hungry Mr Mpisi, who can turn into a huge and monstrous hyena-like creature, and wants total control of the city.

Structurally, this is a quintessential plotline for a superhero comic. The protagonist is a young male living in a big city who by virtue of an extraordinary event – the novum – develops superpowers which he uses to fight crime in the city and keep the citizens safe. The opponents he comes up against are similarly extraordinary, and he must develop not only his powers but his character over the course of the story in order to overcome these wrongdoers. It is a story that has been told by superhero comics since their conception, and this reliance on generic conformity leaves *Kwezi* with little opportunity for a more frontier African epistemological perspective to navigate this genre. While my argument heavily criticises this, I do mean to suggest that this is, or should be, the aim of the comic. Rather, by recognising it as the most successful superhero comic in South Africa at present, I am arguing that the market caters more favourably to texts stereotypical of Euro-American epistemologies than African ones. The text does attempt to rewrite this conventional genre in a way that is more local to South Africa and its readership, as I will show can be seen in the plot, the visual stylisation,

and the comic's didacticism. The reliance on the globally Northern epistemological roots of the genre undercuts this effort though, making any "African-ness" the comic presents to be disappointingly superficial.

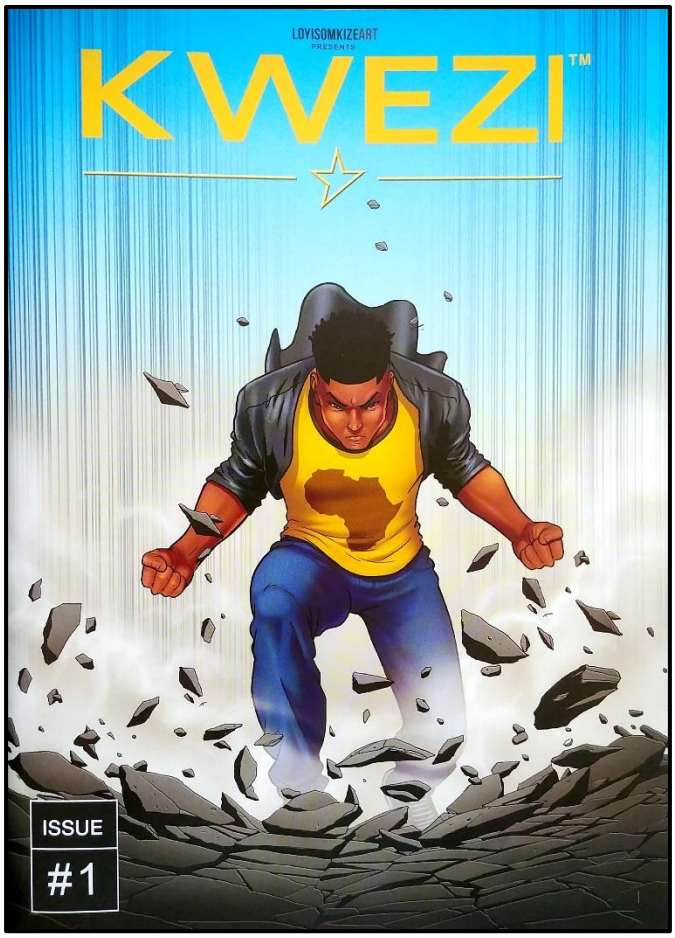

Figure 3: Kwezi performing a 'superhero landing' on the front cover of the first issue of Kwezi.

The comic's attempts to break the mould of the superhero canon – and thereby create a story that is better situated in African minds, experiences, and ontologies – are more recognisable in its more recently published issues. However, this is not how the comic is immediately introduced. On the contrary, the first issue is ostensibly as stereotypical of the global superhero comic canon as possible, aside from the use of Johannesburg slang, and the issue's final frame. The first issue of the comic introduces the character of Kwezi in a formulaic way for a superhero, and the plot generally follows suit. On the first issue's front cover (Figure 3), Kwezi is facing directly at the reader, leaning forward (3). His fists are tightly clenched, and his arms are angled forward alongside his body, and bent at the elbow to suggest that he is flexing his arm muscles. Both his legs are bent at right angles at the knee, one foot in front of him and the other behind. There are thin vertical lines on either side of him suggesting that he

has landed on the ground at a considerable speed, emphasised somewhat by the tail of his jacket flailing upwards behind his head, and more so by the chunks of tar or concrete breaking away from the spot where he has landed, which has become a small crater. This pose is what the film *Deadpool* humorously refers to as a "superhero landing" (1:21:40–1:21:55) a term used sarcastically in reference to how common a feature it is of superhero comics and films. By initiating the comic in this way, *Kwezi* is thus immediately established generically as a superhero comic.

I argue that this reversion to genre archetypes is deliberate in ensuring the comic gains readership and investment – aspects that are reliant on the canon's subservience to the capitalist market – but that once these had been established, the creators gradually explore beyond that canon, and into ideas, themes and aesthetics more uniquely associated with popular African epistemologies, such as tribal identity, Afromythology, and postcolonialism.

Figure 4: The first three panels of Kwezi, *Issue 1.*

The opening scene of the first issue follows a similarly stereotypical superhero plotline. The first two panels, which are included in Figure 4, introduce the setting of a big city, first

with a bird's eye view of the city's many skyscrapers, and then with a shot of a bustling street, including passengers getting into a minibus taxi, a street hawker selling sunglasses, and a man with a tie and a formal sweater talking on a cell phone as he walks (4). A square, golden speech box in each frame indicates a narrating voiceover, by Kwezi himself, which continues across the first five pages of the scene. The first two panels read:

> This is Gold City. My city. My playground. Home to nearly 3 million people, this place is the ultimate melting pot. Home of the hustle. Here we strive, we hope, we dream./ It's the age of the hustle, all of us working hard, going through our daily grind to make it in this jungle. (4)

The term "Gold City" is a euphemism for Johannesburg, and the descriptions of the city as "the ultimate melting pot," "[h]ome of the hustle," with its "3 million people […] working hard, going through [their] daily grind to make it in this jungle" all emphasises the big city setting, and the lifestyle characteristic of it. This setting is the second element of the comic's introduction that is stereotypically superhero.

Somewhat in contrast to generic norms, the comparisons with a jungle emphasise the comic's Afrocentricity[18], the first instance of this in the comic. While this is done in a way that destabilises the canonical superhero setting, it unfortunately uses quite a generic conception of Africa as a hyper-natural utopia with little emphasis on human civilisation and agency. This jungle comparison forms a primary thematic concern of the series, namely the idea that big city life is about survival of the fittest in the same way as the natural order, and the suggestion that the fittest gain power while those unfit are oppressed by it. For instance, Kwezi goes on to say that the "jungle needs a new breed" and introduces himself in this narration as "a real **game changer**" (6). Later, in the third issue, Mr Mpisi takes a wealthy investor, Mr Dlamini, to a game reserve and releases a lion out of a cage near a herd of zebra (39–43). Mr Mpisi criticises people who are "**doomed** to the natural order of things" (40). When the lion kills a zebra, Mr Dlamini remarks in wonder that the lion is surely "**King** of the Jungle!" (41). Mr Mpisi responds that he "always had a problem with the theory" because it was "undisputed!" (41). This final line is delivered in its own frame, which depicts Mr Mpisi leering mincingly towards the reader, villainising his power-hungry attitude.

By relating the city and its residents as power-hungry, relentless and morally questionable, *Kwezi* might be read as critical of the big-city setting, and its place in the

[18] By this, I mean African-centred-ness, and not necessarily the greater connotations and debates given to the term by the work of theorists such as Molefi Kete Asante, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Mary Lefkowitz.

superhero canon. Part of the development of Kwezi's character that is necessary for him to fulfil his destiny is to return home to his family who live in the rural Transkei. Mohau tells him that he must "consult his elders" and "get [his] blessings" from his family while there (36). When Kwezi resists, Mohau tells him that his "fear of returning home will fog the future" (36). He tells Kwezi that "if all goes well [he] will not return the same as [he] went" (36). This proves to be the case, as after his arrogance is somewhat humbled by facing the reality of his family's life and the emotional and physical distance he has allowed to grow between them, he returns willing to help Mohau and the others to rescue the world from the imminent danger it is in. While superhero comics generally thrive in the quickness of metropolitan life, *Kwezi* is critically considerate of it, and suggests that destiny lies beyond the hustle and bustle. This is not necessarily unique, but does point to the creators being careful to both incorporate *Kwezi* into the comic canon, and to challenge it.

The opening scene of the comic, following the introduction of setting, is again overt in its mimicry of the canonical superhero storyline, not only in the sequence of events, but in the visual details used to portray it. A cash-in-transit vehicle has been hijacked[19], and a police chase has ensued. The two robbers in the vehicle are muscly, chiselled men, dressed in dark clothing, and are introduced celebrating being "in the big time now," having stolen "5 million in cash" (4). The vehicle is flanked by two motorcycles and a quad bike, whose riders are wearing helmets with dark visors, and also sporting dark clothing, canonical depictions of urban thuggery in crime and superhero fiction (see Figure 4). They start an exchange of gunfire with the police, and seem to be outgunning the law enforcement, with one robber exclaiming: "HAHAAAA! I love the smell of **pork** in the morning!! We're the ones with the big guns now **pigs**!" (6). Kwezi's voiceover is similarly belittling of the police, commenting that they are "uninspired" (5), and merely "play their part [in] the same old […] cat and mouse games," (5–6). From the physical appearance of the "baddies," the presentation of the police as comparatively powerless, and the use of a car chase in general, this scene is stereotypically that of a superhero comic in every way.

Kwezi's physical entrance into the scene also abides by this canonical formula. It is initially comprised of various frames of him dismantling the criminals in combat. In all of these frames, Kwezi is unclear, making his identity mysterious and awe-inspiring. He can be seen vaguely in the reflection of one of the motorcyclist's visors, but the sun is glinting off of

[19] Having the thugs hijack a cash-in-transit vehicle, rather than commit a bank robbery as would be more iconic of 'baddies' in superhero comics, is another minor localization of the comic's plot, but has little relevance for a discussion of the text's epistemological orientation.

the visor, which blurs the image. Each of the next three panels shows a blur of colour knocking the motorcyclists off their bikes, before something crashes down in front of the cash-in-transit van in a cloud of dust. The next panel presents Kwezi clearly, with a low-angle shot, columns of dust in the background, and the single word "Kwezi!" in larger, bold letters in its own text box alongside him (6). In the next frame he abruptly stops the speeding van with his bare hands, yet another overtly canonical superhero moment in the comic's introduction.

The only real apparent divergence from canon for the majority of the first issue is the use of Johannesburg slang, specifically by Kwezi himself. His narration derisively describes the police with the phrase "stomach in, chest out"[20] (5), and using other familiar phrases like "majita" (9), "bafwethu" (10), and being called a "laaitie" (10) by a policeman. Even this is no divergence though, as superhero comics set in real world locations generally adopt the lingua franca of the location to add verisimilitude, local relevance, and youth appeal.

What is a striking contrast from stereotype is the introduction of Mohau in the final frame of the first issue, shown in Figure 5 below (13). The frame takes up an entire page, the only one to do so in the issue, granting Mohau a sense of grandeur and resonance, which is aided by the low angle of the shot. He is riding an enormous black horse, and sits very upright with his shoulders set, one very muscular arm exposed, and a knobkerrie thrusted towards the reader. His telepathic conversation with Kwezi leading up to this frame puts him in the role of the guardian of the hero, associated with wisdom and respect. The fact that he is wearing particularly magnificent Basotho apparel – in the form of a golden hewed mokorotlo hat, a royal blue blanket draped around him as a cape, and a knobkerrie that is jet black and perfectly straight – enhances this grandeur, and casts Basotho culture in this role of heightened wisdom and respectfulness. Again, the comic is simply casting a character that is a trope of the superhero comic in the guise of a traditionally adorned Basotho man, which again localises the text only superficially, and does little to reimagine it from a non-canonical epistemological perspective. It does show respect and ovation for the relevance of local epistemologies though, by framing the most 'traditionally' African character thus far as a wise sage.

[20] This phrase was used in 2010 by then (and recently reinstated) Minister of Police Bheki Cele when criticizing the lackluster physical condition of members of the police force, whom he described as "stomach out, chest in". The phrase has since been used in popular culture to mock state officials for being more concerned with appearing to be doing their jobs competently than with genuine productivity. For example, Cele's words were synchronized with a house beat by DJ Excess. The video for the resultant song, which has received more than one hundred thousand views on YouTube, shows a man dressed as a police officer monitoring a physical exercise routine being performed by four other individuals, while he eats doughnuts, struggles to adjust his belt buckle, and performs a ludicrous dance that involves rubbing his palms on his chest and thrusting pelvis out while his shoulders are hunched.

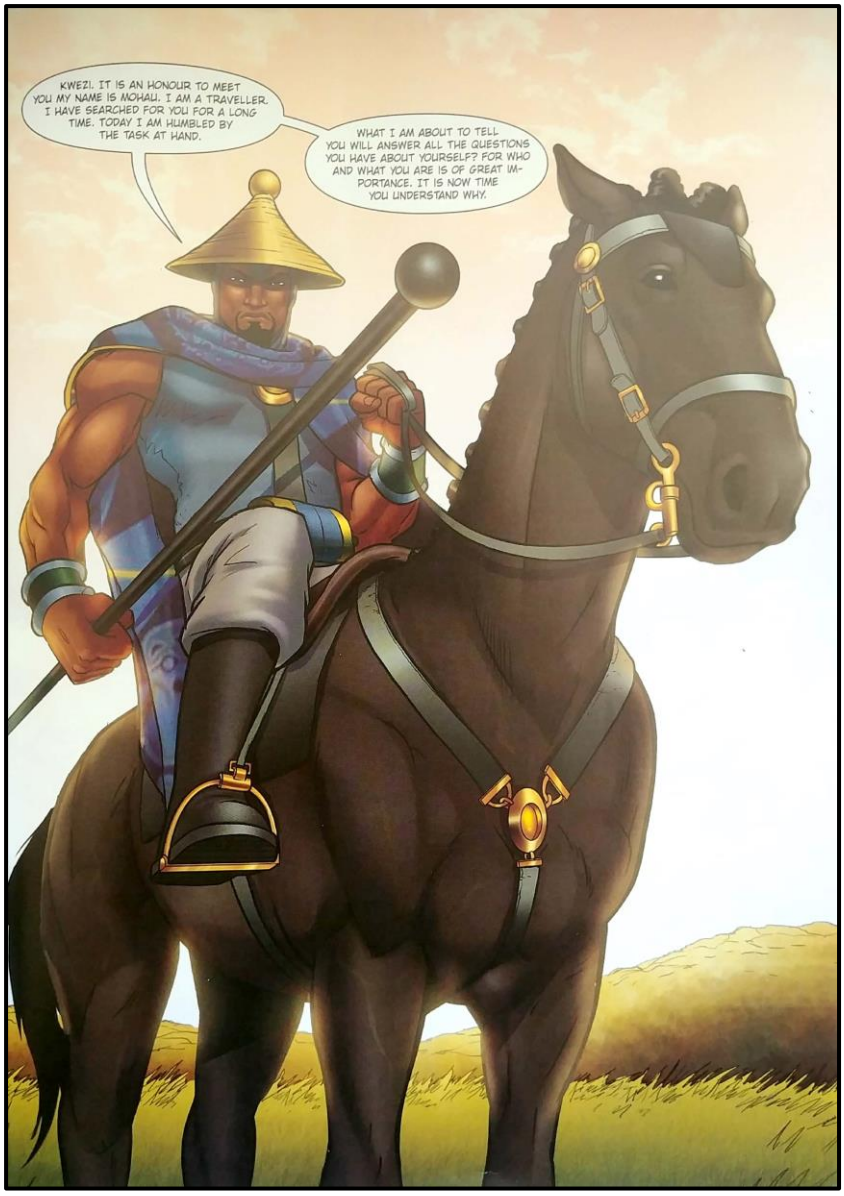

*Figure 5: Mohau's introduction (*Kwezi *13)*

This is advanced in the second issue, when the primary novum of the comic – the origin of Kwezi's superhuman abilities – starts to be explained. While the explanation of how Kwezi's stereotypical superpowers have come about has not been entirely revealed in the series, Mohau tells Kwezi in the second issue that he is one of the "star people" (16). The myth goes that many years ago, wars, greed and death were plentiful. A very bright star appeared in the sky one night, and with it came people with superhuman abilities, who healed the world and inspired a moral revolution towards goodness. Mohau explains a closely guarded prophecy that when a specific star returns to the sky, when the world is again in dire straits, the star people will return to heal the world once more. Afromythology here takes the role of the novum, rather than the radioactive spider, advancement in the technology of weapons, and

nuclear exposure that commonly empowers the comic superhero. It does so without necessarily changing the plausibility of the novum, nor any other aspect of the story.

The frontierism of this novum is emphasised by Kwezi's sardonic response to Mohau telling him about the prophecy. Kwezi's first response, delivered with a look of bewilderment, is "Umm… That's epic bruh" (17). He goes on to say that he is not "gonna listen to lama 'fairytales' wakho" (18). When Mohau tries to further convince him, Kwezi responds with arms outstretched: "**Star people**? C'mon mdala. I didn't exactly fall out of the sky bruh" (18). Once Kwezi gains a sense of humility, he seems to set aside his scepticism and accept his destiny[21], suggesting that part of his personal growth is adopting a more frontier attitude to knowledge about the world around him, and to the epistemologies of the people around him.

The necessary supervillain, hinted at in the third issue of the comic, also shows a tendency towards being born of a hybrid, frontier African epistemology. Mr Mpisi is a fantastically wealthy man looking to purchase as much land as he can with the intent of taking control of it. While the explanation of his ability to turn in to a humungous hyena at will is unexplained in what has thus far been published, this power lends itself clearly to MacDonald's description of jujutech aesthetics as "initiat[ing] slippage in the space dividing the biological and the synthetic" (193). This notion of the synthetic, I would suggest, points to a clear distinction in the epistemological difference between African animism and Western animism in science fictional literature. For example, the European cyborg, Yoruba abiku and Igbo obanje are all examples of the human body enhanced to another dimension beyond the biological, but the cyborg scientifically reorients biology, while the abiku and obanje intertwine the biological with the spiritual and the magical. This points to an epistemological difference in the understanding of the human and of the self in animist forms of speculative fiction – primarily those from Africa.

Mr Mpisi's slippage appears closer to the former, because of his disdain for the supernatural. In a meeting with two men in his office, Mpisi remarks that he has "received news recently of strange 'supernatural people' on our city streets," calls Kwezi a "sickness" and a "threat" (29). The second issue concludes with his menacing warning, that "the last thing we [unspecified] need is people believing in superheroes" (30). Aversion to the supernatural and the wondrous is an exclusivist positionality, and the fact that the practitioner thereof is villainised in the comic suggests that *Kwezi*'s creators intend for the comic to didactically advocate epistemological frontierism. Mohale Mashigo, one of the writers for the comic,

[21] The story is only hinting at this thus far; it will take the publication of further editions to confirm this plotline.

clearly recognises this in her essay, "Afrofuturism is not for Africans living in Africa," when she reasons that African science fiction necessarily imagines the continent differently than science fiction about Africa from outside of the continent, such as Afrofuturism. She argues that Africans' "needs, when it comes to imagining futures, or even reimagining a fantasy present, are different from elsewhere on the globe; we actually live on this continent, as opposed to using it as a costume or a stage to play out our ideas" (para. 3). She suggests that in the fiction she creates, "imagining a future where our languages and cultures are working with technology for us in order to, as Miriam Tlali says, 'expose what we feel inside'," is only possible when "draw[ing] from South African folklore and urban legends" (para. 4). However, the fact that this had to be gradually introduced in the comic, and that the first issue stuck rigidly to a canonical epistemological positionality, suggests an industry unwilling to allow deviance from these oppressive epistemological norms.

What *Kwezi*'s journey as a marketable comic would seem to suggest is that jujutech's place in global science fiction is frustrated by an unwilling market, combined with the access to science fiction's largest forms – films and video games – being limited on the African continent. While the benefits of the jujutech aesthetic for the formulation of globalised and frontier ecologies of knowledge is evident, this will not be realised without some fundamental shift in the imbalanced global industry of cultural production. The conclusion of this thesis looks towards the future of this market with a little more optimism than shown here.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Welcome to Wakanda: Marvel's *Black Panther* as Prophetic of a Jujutech Future

In this thesis I have shown why texts that speculate from juju-based nova are science fiction texts, structurally, didactically, generically and philosophically. It has reasoned why the recognition thereof is important for the formulation of truly globalised ecologies of knowledge within science fiction and its theorisation. It has also argued through an analysis of the jujutech aesthetic how epistemological hybridity in several African science fictional texts creates an avenue for the positive practice of frontier African epistemologies. The only way this is possible is with the genuine global recognition of juju-based science fiction as relevant and common to the global theorisation and consumption of science fiction.

If the fact that *Kwezi*'s necessary transformation from canonical superhero text to juju-based comic suggests a market resistant to transformative texts based on African popular epistemologies, then the popularity of Marvel's 2018 film *Black Panther* suggests the complete opposite. What sets *Black Panther* apart from the texts discussed in this thesis is its global influence. The film shattered a plethora of records for its box-office grossing, viewership and social media influence across the globe, far beyond even its predictions as an instalment in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Yet it still speculates from the bases of juju ontologies that are inherently local to the African continent, and this shows that the desire to formulate a global imaginary predicated on more than just the epistemological status quo is not a niche desire, but a globally popular one. While also indebted at times to stereotypes of both the superhero genre and the essentialisation of the African continent, *Black Panther* is able to present significant epistemological frontierism, and the film's extraordinary global popularity attests to the global eagerness for the extension of the epistemologies normally given access by big-budget films. Part of the reason for this is the film's use of the jujutech aesthetic in crafting its novum, in order to allow for epistemological hybridity. The Black Panther is empowered simultaneously by the mechanical and digital superiority of vibranium, a mineral found only in the fictional state of Wakanda, as well as the juju-oriented mythology of Wakanda, through the consumption of a heart-shaped herb that allows the Black Panther to consult his ancestors, and thereby inherit superhuman physical abilities from them. This results in the various epistemological aspects of the film granting one another a level of plausibility, blurring the lines between ontologies

and belief systems, and globalising knowledge of the world in a way unlike and preferable to the science fiction canon to date.

Parallels can be made between *Black Panther* and all of the texts discussed in this thesis. The jujutech aesthetic is central to the story's novum, one which relies on innovatively imagined juju and technoscience, just like the nova and aesthetics of *A Killing in the Sun*. The hero must use his awesome abilities to confront many evil enemies, just like the palm-wine drinkard. Just like Kwezi, his power and identity are rooted in tradition, myth and the cultures of his society, but he must learn to adapt them to overcome the problems posed by an era of globalised modernity. Ascribing such extraordinary inventions as Wakanda's to Africa questions viewers' pre-determined notions of Africans as primarily consumers rather than producers in the world, as does "Montague's Last." The final moral of the film uses the idea of the African jujutech utopia to valorise using one's own power to help those without it, which is the same moral message present in the Bito Empire stories. The string tying all of these texts together, and their differently frontier epistemological bases, is not just the jujutech aesthetic, but what it inherently means: that the differently produced knowledges of the world should be reckoned fairly, critically and without indoctrinated prejudices.

One can only hope that this means that *Black Panther* will pave a path for the globally popular consumption of literature with ontological roots in juju, indigenous knowledge systems, and communally built ecologies of knowledge. This applies significantly to science fiction, but to other genres of literature as well. The future may see the literary canon take a significant step outside of its epistemological restrictions, and as Azaro reminds us in Okri's *Songs of Enchantment*, be encouraged to "keep looking at the world with new eyes" (23). Beyond the central argument of this thesis, I hope it will encourage future researchers to adopt the project of building global ecologies of knowledge into their research, so that the world's intellectual future accounts for the epistemologies of as many global citizens as possible, including that majority that have been historically ignored, both in Africa and beyond.

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