Kuntanshi yamikalile **(The Future): speculative nonconformity
in the works of Zambian visual artists**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

(Art History)
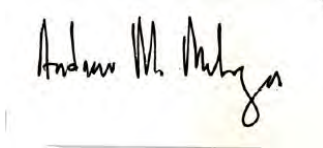
at

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

Andrew Mukuka Mulenga

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Abstract

In recent years, select African visual artists practising on the continent as well as in its diaspora have increasingly been attracted to themes that explore, portray or grapple with Africa's future. Along with this increasing popularity of the 'future' or indeed 'African futuristic' themes by visual artists, such themes have also attracted academic consideration among various scholars, resulting primarily in topics described as 'African Futurism' or Afrofuturism. These are topics that may be used to disrupt what some scholars – across disciplines and in various contexts – have highlighted as the persistent presumptive notions that portray Africa as a hinterland (Hassan 1999; Sefa Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg 2000; Simbao 2007; Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010; Moyo 2013; Keita, L. 2014; Green 2014; Serpell 2016).

This study makes an effort to critique certain aspects of 'African Art History' with regard to the representation of Africa, and raises the following question: How can an analysis of artistic portrayals of 'the future' portrayed in the works of select contemporary Zambian artists be used to critique the positioning of Africa as 'backward', an occurrence at the intersection of a dualistic framing of tradition versus modern. Furthermore, how can this be used to break down this dichotomy in order to challenge lingering perceptions of African belatedness? The study analyses ways in which this belatedness is challenged by the juxtaposition of traditional, contemporary and futuristic elements by discussing a series of topics and debates associated to African cultures and technology that may be deemed disconnected from the contemporary lived experiences of Africans based on the continent.

The study acknowledges that there is no singular 'African Art History' that one can talk of and there have been various shifts in how it has been perceived. I argue that while currently the African art history that is written in the West does not simplistically position Africa as

backward as it may have done in the past, there appear to be moments of a hangover of this perception (Lamp 1999:4). What started out as a largely Western scholarly discourse of African art history occurred in about the 1950s and the journal *African Arts* started in the 1960s. Even before contemporary African art became a big thing in the 1990s for the largely US- and Europe-based discourses there were many discussions in the US about how the 'old' art history tended to freeze time and that this was not appropriate (Drewal 1991 et al).

In order to advance the discourse on contemporary African visual arts I present critical analyses of the select works of Zambian artists to develop interpretations of the broader uses of the aforementioned themes. The evidence that supports the core argument of this research is embedded in the images discussed throughout this dissertation. The artists featured in the study span several decades including artists who were active from the 1960s to the 1980s, such as Henry Tayali and Akwila Simpasa, as well as artists who have been practising since the 1980s, such as Chishimba Chansa and William Miko and those that are more current and have been producing work from the early 1990s and 2000s, such as Zenzele Chulu, Milumbe Haimbe, Stary Mwaba, Isaac Kalambata and Roy Jethro Phiri.

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Introduction

Evoked visual portrayals of the future in the work of a select group of contemporary Zambian artists envelope the principal theme of this study. The thesis also argues that an analysis of the work of this select group of Zambian artists with respective themes and representative approaches can create counter-narratives to dominant framings of the way Africa is viewed in such a way that it can help break down contested dichotomies between concepts of tradition and futurism. In so doing, lingering perceptions of African belatedness are disrupted, as the artists' selection of thematic subject matter straddles tradition and futurism with elements of African cultural motifs, Science Fiction and fantasy tropes that are a-spatial and disconnected from the contemporary lived experiences of Africans based on the African continent.

But while the work of a select group of Zambians remains the core focus of the thesis, it is also mentioned that they are not the only ones whose work can be classified in this manner as demonstrated by the works of Credo Mutwa (1999) of South Africa, Bodys-Isek-Kingelez (1996), Pierre Bodo (2011) and Monsengo Shula (2014) from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gerald Machona (2012) a Zimbabwean artist based in South Africa, and Wangechi Mutu (2013) a Kenyan-born artist. The above mentioned artists are selected bearing in mind that there are many artists across the continent that have not been addressed.

Through an in-depth analysis the thesis also decodes the dimensions of Afrofuturism while it interrogates what various African Futures might look like in the work of these artists. Why "Afrofuturism"?, I argue that Afrofuturism can serve not only as an apt primer for my arguments that present "speculative nonconformity" as a theoretical lens that describes African futurity as a counterpoint to backwardness, but also as fitting frame of reference. Tobias C. Van Veen and Reynaldo Anderson (39:2018) suggest in *Future Movements: Black*

Lives, Black Politics, Black Futures—An Introduction that the term Afrofuturism "has acquired different meanings, resonances and valences as it transforms itself through the diverse cultural contexts of the Afrodiaspora". Arguably, however, it strikes intricate resonances with the African Futures or indeed the "Speculative nonconformity" of the Zambian artists discussed in this thesis.

The thesis also interrogates how various scholars have analysed artworks that relate to such concepts. It investigates what visual forms and narratives of science fictions have been developed by African artists and how they can be used to dispel notions of the continent's belatedness. In the process the study questions who generates knowledge about Africa, and what are the different languages we use to speak about Africa's political, technological, and cultural futures.

In the selection of artists, the study also posits Henry Tayali and Akwila Simpasa as artistic forbears of Zambian futurism, forming a basis for "Confronting the antinomies of contemporaneity" (Smith et al 2009) and challenging myths about Africa's past present and future. Using these artists as an underpinning for the discussion, the study introduces other Zambian artists whose works are also analysed in an effort to break down the dichotomy of tradition and futurism and challenge the lingering perceptions of African belatedness.

One way to read the artworks selected for this study is to interpret them as allegories, particularly when arguing that the images can be used to challenge lingering colonial hegemonies and ways of seeing. To borrow from Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007:7) in postcolonial studies, "Allegory has assumed an important function in imperial discourse in which paintings and statues have often been created as allegories of imperial power. Consequently, one form of post-colonial response to this has been to appropriate allegory and use it to respond to the allegorical representation of imperial dominance."

The thesis also investigates the use of space travel and science fiction as metaphors to challenge these same presumptive notions of African backwardness. Through the image of the Afronaut, this thesis argues that artists are making definitive statements about their past, their current lived experience and their future. It also proposes that situating the Afronaut in contemporary art and Afrofuturism is about finding an imaginative space for speculative nonconformity.

The vibrant discourse vis-à-vis the politics of representation and the theme of modernity in an African context is also brought up, and whereas the contested debates on various African modernities have been entered into by scholars across a number of disciplines (Jules-Rosette 1978; Mazrui 1996; Mhlope 1996; Gilroy 1993; Hassan 1996; Ferguson 1999; Geschiere, Meyer and Pels 2008), within the context of Zambia – particularly within the visual arts – there is still is very little available scholarship.

1.1: Methodology

This study focuses on analysis of artistic representation and textual analysis from cultural and art historical perspectives, and rather than empirically-grounded methods from a sociological point of view. The fundamental information-gathering research for this study was conducted through trips to Zambia; Lusaka, (20/01/2017 to 22/11/2017) to interview Zenzele Chulu, William Miko and Isaac Kalambata and Livingstone (24/11/2017) to interview Chishimba Chansa and Roy Jethro Phiri. This enabled data collection through recorded interviews resulting from semi-structured questions. The above-mentioned artists also responded to questions posed regarding particular images of their artworks.

The narrative within the artworks in the dissertation is also integral to analysing what the artists say, and how this links to their respective work in relation to the argument of dispelling notions of Africa's belatedness. Analysis of the semi-structured field interviews

also helps develop the underlying thrust of the thesis alongside selected scholarly texts relevant to the core arguments.

The dissertation is made up of several analyses concerning what I argue as important data and discussions surrounding culture and technology in Africa: Afrofuturism, African Futurism, Afro Pessimism, mythology and faith, the Afronaut and Science Fiction, which also includes cyborganism and robotics, perhaps most crucially questions around modernity in Africa.

While debates about Afrofuturism and African Futurism are well known and have been discussed in various texts (see Nelson 2006; Yaszek, 2006, 2013; Womack 2013; Anderson, and Jones 2015), it is important to bring these discussions together and to read Eshun (1998, 2003) Gbadamosi (2015) and others in relation to these debates. The methodological intention of addressing so many topics is to exhibit how they can easily speak to the issues raised in this dissertation. Key among them is an attempt to argue against Africa's "belatedness".

Apart from data collected in the above manner, relevant data was also collected through the participation in recent symposia and conferences that partially focused on Afrofuturism, a new area of scholarly discourse. Among these gatherings was *Black Portraiture[s] III: Reinventions: Strains of Histories and Cultures Conference* (2016) in Johannesburg. At this conference Ingrid LaFleur, a Detroit-based cultural producer, arts advocate, curator and founder of *AFROTOPIA*, an evolving creative research project using Afrofuturism as psychosocial healing, was interviewed and recorded, as well as emerging Paris-based scholar and writer Mawena Yehouessi.

Useful feedback was also gathered in September 2017 when part of Chapter 3 of this thesis was presented in a paper titled "Speculative nonconformity: a Zambian consideration" at a postgraduate colloquium designated *Speculative Freedoms and Alternative Futures: Afro*

SciFi, Fantasy and Spec-Fic in the English Department at Rhodes University, which included participants from visiting universities. This feedback from the many participants at the event was very beneficial in helping formulate certain aspects of the thesis. Another of such symposia that was beneficial in providing data was the Live Art Network Africa symposium hosted by The Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at the University of Cape Town, which afforded the researcher access to a public lecture given by Mwenya Kabwe titled *Astronautus Afrikanus: Performing African futurism*.

The research approach to the study was qualitative, seeking to find an understanding of the various artistic genres and visual imagery generated by Zambian artists about imaginings of the future. These ranged from painting and sculpture, to illustration, the graphic novel as well as live art performance. All of this was in reference to the artists mentioned above, all of whom were born in Zambia and had lived – and still do live there.

As a fundamental process of the research, original visual analyses of the artworks and performances were conducted, creating new knowledge on the resourcefulness and creation of imagery that responds to science fiction, technology, ancient history, mythology, spirituality, customs and traditions.

The interviews with these artists, as well as well as in-between tête-à-têtes over the past two years or so reveal that media and popular culture may have had an influence on their work but there has been a very minimal role played in contemporary Zambian art concerning scholarship, revealing also a sense of intuition in the manner of artistic production. This may be attributed to the fact that there has been very little infrastructure development concerning the academy – colleges, universities, museums and galleries – on the visual arts scene in post-independence Zambia.

In the course of this research, several texts, including website articles, newspaper cuttings, journals, catalogue essays as well as video clips and books have been used to complement the arguments alongside the transcribed text of the recordings from the artists who generously participated. As for the few artists who could not be reached by the time of the final analysis for several reasons, fair usage of available written materials on their works has been applied.

Although this research is hinged on a qualitative methodology that seeks to identify with unique ways in which the select work of Zambian visual artists can be used to argue against Zambian belatedness and in essence project the artists as speculative nonconformists. Afrofuturism and African Futurism, the theoretical frameworks from which this study draws are still emerging fields of study (Van Veen and Anderson 2018:10). The constantly shifting nature of these two emerging fields of study is another challenge that cannot be overlooked, as there continues to be a steady stream of conferences and exhibitions around the world with similar themes. As Van Veen and Anderson (2018:13) point out "Afrofuturist conferences, symposia and festivals have multiplied over the past few years, including Astroblackness, Afrofutures UK and the Afrofuturist Affair with a number of events taking place under the banner of the Black Speculative Arts Movement (BSAM)". Nevertheless, in our present academic contexts, which are charged with the rethinking of knowledge production in the field of African Art History and perhaps in the broader humanities, the structure and methodological layout of this research is speculative and nonconformist in itself. This thesis is itself a case study on how an emerging African art historian based on the African continent can seek other ways to think through first-hand modes of presentation and participation, different ways of rethinking genealogies such as "African Futurism" and "Afrofuturism" – in this case – and new methods of vocabulary and critique.

1.2: Literature Review

Within scholarly writing on the contemporary arts of Africa – particularly writing produced by scholars based on the African continent – Afrofuturism is still in the process of gaining ground, and the political and theoretical frameworks with which to analyse its art are is still being defined. Womack's book entitled *Afrofuturism: the world of black sci-fi and fantasy culture* (2013) provides a sufficient disambiguation of the term through a series of chapters. Apart from this book, there has continued to be a steady stream of descriptive and analytical conference papers, journal editorials and book chapters that are valued contributions to the Afrofuturism body of literature (Nelson A. 2002; Eshun, K. 2003; Palmer 2004; Yaszek 2006; Bristow 2012; Yehouessi 2016; Akpem 2011; Anderson and Jones 2015; Gbadamosi 2015; Gaskins 2016).

The Afrofuturism phenomenon has attracted a critical mass of scholars from different disciplines; authors such as Dery (1994), Eshun (2003), Womack (2013), Frederick (2015) as well as Anderson and C. E. Jones (2015) also offer resources from which topics that resonate with Afrofuturism can be analysed. They collectively describe Afrofuturism primarily as an African-American cultural aesthetic that emerged in the early 1970s and is linked to musicians such as Sun Ra and George Clinton as well as writers like Octavia Butler and Samuel R. Delany, as will be discussed in later chapters. Mutually their texts argue that Afrofuturism is predominantly focused on the reinvigoration of Afrocentricity in an African diasporic context. On the other hand, at present, there appears very little in-depth scholarly critical literature on African Futurisms; that is, futures as envisioned by contemporary artists living and working on the African continent today. Only a few but notable descriptive articles are currently available, such as those published in *African Futures: Thinking about the Future Through Word and Image,* Heidenreich-Seleme, L. and O'Toole, S. (eds.) (2016) which features notable essays; for example, "Leaping out"*,* Sunstrum (2015), and "Of Wastelands and Landfills", Gbadamosi (2015). Meanwhile, African Futurism's key concerns can be

argued to "include post colonialism, neo-colonialism, trans global identities, transcultural identities … the de-defining, de-writing, and transcendence of the historical, geographical, national, political, economic, and temporal specifiers" (Sunstrum 2015).

While themes concerning science, fiction come to the fore in these texts, Afrofuturism's representations of the past-present-future dynamic, as well as the juxtaposition of what can described as traditional and contemporary motifs raise thoughts around spatial politics concerning the African continent in the broader realm of art and globalisation. Since the Afrofuturism texts may not provide sufficient explorations around these themes, I draw from Appiah (1992) Mudimbe (1998) and Fitzgerald (2003) concerning referential frameworks for the legitimacy of the perceptions of skewed constructs of 'Africa' and 'Africanness' particularly for my analysis of speculative possibilities that "challenge prevailing notions – fictions – about Africa and the largely Western desire for an authentic Africa" (Fitzgerald 2003:1). Similarly, on the question as to whether the 'contemporary' in the discourse of 'contemporary African art' is about time (contemporaneity) or a particular aesthetic that is valued as 'contemporary art' I draw on texts such as *Inventing Tradition* by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983); *Art in Its Time: Theories and Practices of Modern Aesthetics*, Mattick (2003:9); "The myth of modernity in popular African art: Symbolic representations in popular carving and painting" in *Qualitative Sociology*, Jules-Rosette (1978); *Stephen Kappata, Artist with A Democratic Vision*, Macmillan H. (1994); *Culture and Customs of Zambia*, Taylor (2006); *Art and Art from Africa: The Two Sides of the Gap*, Nicodemus (2009); *The State of Research on Performance in Africa*, Drewal (1991) as well as Nelson in Okeke-Agulu (2010: 101) as I concur with Nelson who asserts that there is a "porous, unstable boundary between the contemporary and the 'traditional'". In terms of lived experience on the African continent, many artists, performers or ritual practitioners, for example, would refute the idea of such a rigid separation between 'traditional' and

'contemporary'. On the subject of tradition not being static in the visual arts context I also engage with the text of Nooter Roberts (2012); *Tradition is always now: African Arts and the Cultural Turn* as well as cross-referencing Vogel and Ebong's (1991:31) *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art* (eds.) and *The Modernist Experience in African Art: Towards a Critical Understanding* by Hassan (1996) among other texts.

The artworks selected for this study are embedded in decolonial political views and explore politico-spiritual elements of time and place within an African and, in particular, a Zambian context. The works employ an aesthetic that merges traditional and futuristic elements in order to navigate a non-linear timeline as a "chrono-politics" (Mignolo 2011:178). Mignolo's *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* as well as Kanneh's (1998) *African Identities* provides a scholarly dialogue around the idea of 'time' and subjectivity. Literature that is concerned specifically with issues around space and place are also significant for the purpose of this study such as *Space, place and gender*, Massey (1994) and *Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization*, Escobar (2001). Most literature that contends with Western epistemological frameworks of space and place tend to be falsely dichotomised, with space being perceived as free and unbounded and place being stereotyped as fixed (Massey 1994:265). People outside this dominant framework, such as many African artists, have been stereotyped by the Western-driven art discourse as being "place-bound" (Escobar 2001:141).

As I navigate the scholarly gaps of Afrofuturism and African Futures concerning art, I use the discipline of art history as a frame of reference. I draw from authors and scholars who uphold the Euro-American customary assumptions of art history that were established centuries ago but remain the dominant yardsticks for art discourse in postcolonial Africa and Zambia in particular. Art – as a Euro-American construct – particularly in the Zambian context, has largely remained formalist in nature and it is valued for certain attributes among

predominantly expatriate collectors: collectors informed by nuanced aesthetic and conceptual understandings of authenticity concerning the arts of Africa, as highlighted in *Contemporary African*, Kasfir (1999), *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*, Vogel and Ebong, (1992), *The Modernist Experience in African Art: Toward a Critical Understanding*, Hassan (1996) and *Contemporary African Art since 1980* Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu (2009) among others. Further considerations concerning authenticity are drawn from my own previous research and literature namely *Contemporary Zambian Art, Conceptualism and the 'Global' Art World*, Mulenga (2016) and *Germinating in the cracks: the identity of contemporary Zambian art*, Mulenga (2016) to consolidate my argument.

1.3: Thesis Structure

Excluding the introduction, this study is made up of five chapters. The first chapter primarily takes into consideration mapping, or rather defining, African Futurism and introduces two Zambian artists with the purpose of cross-examining the composite notions of the 'traditional' and 'contemporary'.

The thesis examines how these have been framed in certain dominant and Western-driven discourses of "African art" in the field of African Art History, and how juxtapositions of tradition and futurism can meaningfully reframe this discourse. Analysing ways in which these themes are created and experienced in the visual arts of Africa with a particular focus on work produced by Zambian artists is also of importance.

Chapter two addresses the current resurgence of 'Afrofuturism' in the visual arts, and assesses the value of the term Afrofuturism, cross-referencing it with African Futurism; it opens up the discussion of the label in relation to the rise of futurism portrayed by artists based on the African continent today. Reflections on both Afrofuturism and African Futurism are essential to this study not just as theoretical frameworks, but also to evaluate whether they can be used as lenses with which to filter, or rather re-evaluate, the manner in which select

works of African art can be utilised to dispel outmoded notions of African belatedness within African art historical studies.

Chapter three proceeds to unload how the juxtaposition of 'tradition' and 'modernity/futurism' can be used as a tool for reframing the dominant discourse of African art, in particular contemporary Zambian art initially, in tackling notions of time and, furthermore, in notions of place which invent a perspective in which 'the future' – *kuntanshi yamikalile* – is not just a flight of fancy but can be used to argue against the normalised, spatial authenticity. Chapter four continues the argument, as it addresses the use of space travel as metaphor in delinking from Western-driven notions of time and space, as time and space are key elements in the invention of tradition, culture and nationhood, and how these are all constructed and interpreted in the framing of contemporary African art. The fifth and final chapter examines how technology as thematic content in relation to futurism in the visual arts of Zambia can be used to debunk impressions of Africa's backwardness, as even today there is an "ever-present suggestion that Africa is defined by the continuity of its presumptive primitiveness" (Dadi 2010:193).

Each chapter has a short summary that serves as a signpost leading on to the next chapter, all of which are collectively reconciled in the conclusion.

Chapter 1 – Searching for the future in the past: The works of Henry Tayali and Akwila Simpasa as artistic forbears of Zambian futurism

"There are three times: a present time of past things; a present time of present things; and a present time of future things" — Saint Augustine[1]

As implied in both the abstract and the introduction of this thesis, it can be argued that there is a subtle distinction between the terms 'Afrofuturism' and 'African futurism', the former being a "global aesthetic movement" (Yaszek 2013:1) that encompasses art, and the latter as a more located undertaking with similar concerns. This chapter begins to discuss the concerns surrounding the latter in art that has been created in Zambia from postcolonial times, beginning with select works of two individuals considered among the forebears of modern and contemporary art in Zambia. These artists are Henry Tayali (b.1943-d.1987) with his work *Destiny* (1964) (Fig. 1) and Akwila Simpasa (b. 1945–d.1988) with his work *The Dawn* (1973) (Fig. 2) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is important first of all to place these artists within the context of this thesis.

Tayali is considered one of the foremost artists from Zambia to have achieved major recognition on the international art scene. In his formative years, he trained under Alex Lambeth, who ran the African Affairs Department of Bulawayo City Council, recognised the boy's potential and encouraged him to pursue a career in the arts. Tayali also developed a strong social and political conscience as a teenager and matured into a well read, hard-working and talented young man. Shortly after attending Makerere University in the late 1960s, he earned a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) scholarship and did his master's in fine arts from the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, West Germany. After

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[1] Augustine, Confessions, book II, chap. 20: "*tempora sunt tria, praesens de praetertis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris*". See Smith, T. 2008 p. 18.

completing his education, he held exhibitions all over Zambia and in other parts of the world. He was a brilliant artist, and also a keen photographer and lecturer – Tayali's influence on the development of art and culture in 20th century Zambia has been immense. He also served as the president of the International Association of Artists in Zambia (which fell under UNESCO) and headed the Art Centre Foundation, the National Craft Council of Zambia, and the National Museums Board.

Simpasa was an enigmatic multi-disciplinary artist called "the message man", whose gourd-shaped, tribal mask-inspired heads with jutting lips would also influence the work of a later generation of artists, particularly prominent sculptors, key among them Flinto Chandia (b.1958 – d.2017), as well as his contemporary Eddie Mumba (b.1953). His work often involved "blending abstract and cubism styles where drums, beads and masks were prominent symbols. In other drawings figures were rhythmically curvy and superimposed, leaving viewers to decipher hidden meanings" (Koloko 2015:17). As a youth Simpasa was a political activist who gained notoriety for covering tavern walls with charcoal drawings that had coded freedom messages whose meanings would elude the colonial regime, yet he would gladly explain them to his fellow locals (Miko 2019). In 1962, the United National Independence Party (UNIP), a political party that would later govern Zambia from 1964 to 1991 under the presidency of Kenneth Kaunda, engaged him to illustrate their posters and other party material. In 1963 partially sponsored by his father and the World Council of Churches, he was the first Zambian to study art at the newly opened Africa Literature Centre (ALC) in Kitwe in the Zambian Copperbelt Province. Shortly after graduating he joined the *Zambia Daily Mail* as a graphic artist but shortly afterwards he returned to ALC as assistant director and in 1967 Longman and Green sponsored him to study for a BA in Fine Art at the University of London; in London he also attended the Byam Shaw School of Art. Simpasa would later obtain a master's degree in Fine Art from the Academia di Belle Arti di Perugia

in Italy where it is unconfirmed that he was commissioned to create a wooden Madonna that is said to be in the Vatican collection. Among his legacies Simpasa is also credited for conceiving the iconic Freedom Statue in Lusaka, a Zambian Landmark.

1: Confronting the burdens of modernity and contemporaneity

The term 'postcolonial' within the context of this research is drawn from the context of intellectual discourses[2] following what Nigerian-born professor, poet, and literary critic Niyi Osundare (2002:42) suggests:

> 'Post-colonial' is a highly sensitive historical and geographical term which calls into significant attention a whole epoch in the relationship between the West and the developing world, an epoch which played a vital role in the institutionalization and strengthening of metropole-periphery, centre margin dichotomy … a term which brings memories of gunboats and mortars, conquests and dominations, a term whose accent is blood stained … a term whose 'name' and meaning are fraught with the burdens of history and the anxieties of contemporary reality.

The terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' may be used interchangeably through the course of the chapter, following early formulations of Saint Augustine[3] as borrowed by Terry Smith et al. (2008) in the edited volume *Antinomies of Art and Culture*. Smith (2008:7) posits that according to Saint Augustine there are multiple seams of time that can be amalgamated to describe what we now experience as both modern and contemporary. But while these terms may be used interchangeably within this thesis, the conversation on what is 'contemporary' is primarily being used to place the Zambian works outside the constructs of European modernism.

While Augustine lived in what is identified as the 4th century AD, 'modern' (*modernus*) "distinguished a mood" and not specifically the passage of a certain time, Smith (2008:7)

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[2] See Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010:24) referenced towards the end of this chapter
[3] St. Augustine of Hippo was an Africa born Christian theologian and philosopher whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. (see Catholic Library online: https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=418)

argues that "in the expanded modern world … 'modern' became the core of a set of terms that narrated the two-centuries-long formation of modernity in terms of novelty, pastness and futurism". Despite definitive artistic currents, the vibrancy of "modern", argues Smith, aged and "became the name of its own period, one that would, it was presumed, become increasingly modern, without end" (Smith, ibid).

> In art world discourse for most of the twentieth century—especially in the 1920s and the 1960s, when modernist attitudes prevailed—'contemporary' served mainly as a default for 'modern'. In his proposal for the symposium, Boris Groys pointed out the main reason: 'Modern art is (or rather, was) directed toward the future. Being modern means to live in a project, to practice a work in progress. Because of this permanent movement toward the future, modern art tends to overlook, to forget the present, to reduce it to a permanently self-effacing moment of transition from past to future.' Nevertheless, a number of the most engaged contemporary artists are redefining what it means to live in a project, and doing so in terms that acknowledge the power of the present (Smith 2008:7)

In this context, this chapter fits into place Tayali and Simpasa as ground-breaking modern Zambian artists, or rather Africans who ostensibly possessed futuristic concepts and produced unconventional works of art. Tayali and Simpasa are described here as modern, borrowing from Salah Hassan who suggests that:

> The majority of modern artists in Africa belong to the first or second generation of a Western-educated elite class that emerged in many African countries after the second decade of colonial rule. That group was a minority—even today—due to the limited education made available by the colonials. Many of these elites lived in colonial or postcolonial capitals and urban centres and experienced the influence of the colonial power's culture—an influence that was almost nil beyond the urban centres. (Hassan 1996:50)

Tayali and Simpasa's modernist attitude leaned towards the future, making their present a work in progress. In a way, they redefined what it meant to "live in a project." Being active

through the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s they, like many artists around the world, were part of – or at least existed within – a shift that is still occurring. A shift that lends itself to the broader contexts described again by Smith (2008:7) who suggests: "The shift has been occurring since the decline of modernism in the 1980s, and has appeared in institutional naming—of galleries, museums, auction house departments, academic course and textbook titles—which however, tend to use 'contemporary' as a soft signifier of current plurality." This, argues Smith, has led to the use of the word "modern" surrendering its currency to the term "contemporary". He furthermore posits that: "The word 'contemporary' has always meant more than just the plain and passing present. Its etymology, we can now see, is as rich as that of 'modern'. The term calibrates a number of distinct times, even of being *in* and *out* of time, even of being in and out of time at the same time" (Smith 208:7). Granted, the characterisations borrowed here from Smith give meaning to modernity and contemporaneity, however, it should be concluded that these are the only rationalisations; the concepts will continue to be developed during the course of the chapter as well as throughout the progression of this study. Furthermore, it should be noted that the notion of modernity within the African context is in itself a complex minefield that cannot merely be generalised. African modernity is a broad and complex subject that some of the most eminent African thought leaders of the end of the last century have studied, theorised and grappled with: from Leopold Sedar Sengor to Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere to Thabo Mbeki, and including Achille Mbembe and Kwame Anthony Appiah, all of whom are featured – among others – in *Readings in Modernity in Africa*, edited by Peter Geschiere, Birgit Meyer and Peter Pels (2008). In their opening remarks to the book, which attempts to give "a selective but substantive sketch of the genealogies of modernity in Africa" while admitting the paradoxical task of doing so, they propose that:

Before addressing these genealogies and manifestations of modernity in Africa, however, a word of caution: while we have tried to make our topic as accessible as possible, it remains fraught with contradictions, paradoxes, and practical dilemmas. The term 'modernity' confuses, whether we want to or not, the analytical and the empirical levels, if only because the academic theories of yesterday have been cumulatively incorporated in African popular consciousness – whether as inventions of the tradition of colonialism, as the desire for national identity and autonomy of the 1950s and 1960s, or as the widespread faith in NGO-entrepreneurship of the 1980s and 1990s. There are no easy solutions here: one only has to ask oneself whether we can think of improving people's lives without defining them 'backward' or 'not yet developed' to see that these dilemmas are not merely theoretical. (Geschiere, et al. 2008:2).

These genealogies and manifestations of modernity are described here, as the chapter opens up issues surrounding how Africa has been viewed in the past, how it is viewed now and how perhaps it will continuously be viewed in the future without scholarship such as this thesis and works of art that challenge the perceptions with which Africa is viewed.

The chapter also considers issues around the invention of tradition in relation to modernity. As such, in the following chapters the research will continue referring back to this chapter to rationalise questions around tradition as well as culture.

In a modern and contemporary visual art context, the impulse to juxtapose traditional and futuristic elements is not a new thing, as will be demonstrated by an analysis of the works of the Tayali and Simpasa. These two artists are perhaps the most famous in the history of modern and contemporary Zambian art history and certainly the most influential. A fresh look at their selected works in a present-day context may imply that they tried their hand at this visual language of juxtaposition. This context is not just about how Africa has continued to be portrayed visually, but also how it has been regarded in terms of media coverage, as well as how it has been regarded as backward epistemologically.

Reflecting on the last of these points, in particular, is an attempt to root this study in some theoretical grounding. In other words, the study also serves as a contribution on the discourse of reframing the African continent in a better light: a reframing in this instance from the manner in which Africa has been framed by the dominant West or Euro-America, as it were, in the wake of colonialism and the so-called rise of globalisation. In this light, reference is drawn from texts such as April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon's *Understanding Contemporary Africa* (2013) and Peyi Soyinka-Airewele and Rita Kiki Edozie's *Reframing Contemporary Africa* (2010. Other texts considered in the same vein are *Africa-centred Knowledges* edited by Brenda Cooper and Robert Morrell (2014) as well as *Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, edited by George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (2000). These texts are selected not only because they are current, but because they identify problematic perceptions of the African continent and yet try to reframe the continent in a more positive light. They also bring out the complexities of Africa as a continent and not just something to be brushed over in a simplistic manner.

Likewise, the select works of Tayali and Simpasa visualise complex environments that that cannot be ignored as simplistic and decorative or fixed specifically to the time in which they were created. The works are in many ways timeless and complex imaginings of Zambian or rather 'African' worlds portrayed while superimposing various elements that help defy notions of time (past/present/future) as well as notions of locatedness. Furthermore, an examination of these works in this context will lead the discussion into the implications of juxtapositions of tradition and futurism by later generations of artists in Zambia; they can be used as a springboard to take a broader look at artists practising today in order to meaningfully contribute to alternative ways of seeing.

1.1 Using Tayali and Simpasa's respective works to critique visual art practices/static notions of tradition

Considering the complexities of African art history perspectives, this section engages in an in-depth conversation of how Tayali and Simpasa's respective works can be used to critique visual art practices – or perceptions – that not only regressively portray Africa as backward but that also locate Africa within static notions of tradition. It is important to tease out how Africa's past, present and future have been portrayed and by what means these portrayals have been painted, the established practices and perceptions of art that I argue Tayali and Simpasa do not conform to in the works discussed. In other words, the two artists are being proposed as not just nonconformists but speculative nonconformists, the latter, as I will argue, being one with a speculative characteristic pointing towards futurity or futurism. It is important perhaps to do so using an example that looks from the outside, such as Gordon and Gordon (2013) who suggest that whenever Africa is in the media, it is usually because of some event or adverse situation on the continent, and that people in the United States know very little about Africa. They give an example of an American context within academia stating:

> After years of teaching undergraduate students about Africa, we continue to find that many of them refer to the 'country of Africa' as though it is a homogenous entity rather than the immense and varied continent of fifty-four countries it actually is. Most students are familiar with only a few of the countries of Africa and have even less familiarity with its rich mosaic of peoples, cultures, languages, political systems, economies, and geography. It is also not uncommon to hear students think about Africa as a place where mainly war and other pathologies exist. The fact is that what most people in the United States, even college graduates, think about Africa is only partially correct or based on stereotypes and an inadequate historical or conceptual framework for understanding and interpretation. (Gordon and Gordon 2013:1).

These misconceptions, observe Gordon and Gordon, are reinforced by the media who tend to focus almost exclusively on negative news such as civil wars, drought, famine and widespread poverty. Likewise, Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010:8) argue that it is necessary to challenge and probe the intellectual traditions and myths that impact knowledge

around Africa as well as the way in which the continent is perceived. The world of scholarly writing on Africa, argue Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010:14) is not immune to fictive lenses and philosophies, and yet the crisis of scholarship on Africa is unlikely to be addressed until scholars acknowledge the need for increased breadth and depth in explorations of the continent. Similarly, Brenda Cooper and Robert Morrell (2014:13) also suggest that there is a "stubborn and continuing dominance of theory, methodology and research practice originating from Europe and North America. This dominance is what could be read as a bad place. It is a bad place because it perpetuates the legacies of colonialism and of racism; it buttresses privilege and presents obstacles to education for emancipation and local relevance." Again, returning to Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie, they argue that while American students at first college level are introduced to American Politics courses contextualised by prior years of formal and informal study, access to media and a robust awareness of popular culture, by contrast (2010:13), "few western-based scholars have a context from which generalizations, misrepresentations, and scholarly errors on Africa can be challenged. Thus, the illusion is maintained that before colonialism was a void and after colonialism, the immolation of a self-destructing continent". There is a tendency, they argue, to succumb to an organised way of classifying Africa which is quite pervasive:

> [O]ne study of Africa… featured a continental map with countries labelled apparently to characterize the country's dominant realities. Thus, South Africa is "apartheid," and Nigeria is "corruption"; other African nations are reduced to single-word depictions that borrow heavily from Western social science discourse on Africa: "bureaucracy," "dependency," "civil society," "personal rule," "socialism," "state collapse," "Islam," "class," "legitimacy," "race," "ethnicity," "irredentism" (that, in the Horn of Africa), "predatory rule," and so on. Such labels are generally considered objectionable when defining the complex "essence" or "identity" of the nations of the global core—for instance, the United States, France, Japan, and Canada—and should be even more unacceptable when describing countries in Africa. (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010:14)

These characterisations of Africa are very much at the core of how notions of tradition may entail having opened up and taken note of how Africa is framed by the West as regards "reification of oppositional images of Western self and African Other" (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010:14).

Similarly, much of how the arts of Africa have been framed can be attributed to Euro-American scholars often described – by themselves mostly – as 'Africanists', a category of researchers who have dedicated their careers to studying Africa's cultures and societies. Generally, what the Africanists, mostly from American universities, have researched and published for decades in authoritative periodicals such as *African Arts*, and in particular in research and conference papers delivered at the Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA) is generally what has repeatedly framed, placed, and categorised the arts of Africa. But conceivably what has helped frame the arts of Africa more than conceptual semantics is perhaps the mindset that has accompanied Africanists of an antediluvian academic bearing whom Harvard professor Suzanne Preston Blier describes as having the "GOGAG syndrome … Good-Old-Gals-and-Guys" (Blier 1999:9). This labelling by Blier – which will be explained later – was published in a dialogue, in response to an article by Yale professor Frederick Lamp which carried a tone that offers an insight into the deprecating mindset of an Indiana Jones-esque old-school Africanist. While all may not be indicted for the voice of one, when Lamp shared his views, he shared them for many so-called Africanists. In an article titled "Africa Centred"[4], published as late as 1999 he portrays the African continent as a place ravaged almost absolutely by political and economic instability and genocide where at the time, he (Lamp 1999:4) was writing Nigeria – to start with – seemed to be:

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[4] See *Special Issue: Authorship in African Art, Part 2 (Spring)*, pp. 1,4,6,8-10

… perpetually locked into its tragedy of corruption and oppression. Foreign researchers are stopped at government roadblocks and robbed or harassed. In the Congo (Kinshasa) large sections of the country alternate between government and rebel rule … Brazzaville's inner city has been destroyed in the throes of a civil war. Rwanda and Burundi have gained the horrendous distinction of conducting what is probably the most thorough and swift case of genocide … Lesotho is under anarchy, with the capital, Maseru, in ruins. In Angola … a countryside full of unexploded land mines … Sudan has waged a devastating war against its own people in the South for more than a decade … unrest has spread to Uganda. The border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea has destroyed a fragile peace … [in] South Africa, with its relatively stable government, Black African communities are seeing an outburst of political bloodshed. Civil strife also grips … Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Western Sahara, the Central African Republic, Somalia, and Kenya. Even aside from armed conflict, the situation throughout is alarming. The 1998 Corruption Perceptions Index, produced by the German financial advisory group Transparency International, listed Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world, with Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda all close behind; not a single African country outside southern Africa rated even a 4 out of a "highly clean" 10. Exceptional food emergencies, based upon fighting, bad weather, poor harvests, and economic sanctions have been reported by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization for Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Congo (Kinshasa), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia. Unemployment throughout the continent's mushrooming cities is extraordinary at 75% ... AIDS continues to ravage the continent: a devastating 25% of the population of Zimbabwe and Botswana is infected with HIV … Nevertheless, we, the Africanists, must press on. The horrors notwithstanding, we cannot afford what seems to be somewhat of a retreat from research in Africa. Especially not now (Lamp 1999:4-6).

In a way the above statement – granted it is cited at length here – lends itself to the earlier-mentioned anxieties of Africa being framed in a certain way (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010; Gordon and Gordon 2013; Cooper and Morrell 2014). Furthermore, Lamp's opinion implies that despite Africa's obscurity it still remains to be "discovered", and might as well have been written from the same ignoble inkwell that the dogmatic German ethnologist Leo Frobenius used to pen *Die Kunst Afrikas* (Reflections on African Art) almost 70 years earlier.

Frobenius was responding to self-reflexive ideas of what Africa meant to "us" – obviously referring to Europe – in the middle of the 20th century, making reference also to the century before his, "a period in which a heroic band of defiant warriors set out, and in the teeth of disregard, fever and cannibalism broke through the shell encapsulating the heart of the continent" (Frobenius 1931)[5], writes:

> The destiny of this continent is a harsh and solemn one. The cliché of the luxuriant splendour of the tropics does not fit, and in particular, it does not apply to the African. His destiny is labour, earnest arduous labour. From the cornucopia of painlessly acquired abundance, not one drop has fallen to his lot … [I]t is ancient and austere, this soul of Africa. But its forms are full of dignity. Africa still has much to give us. (Frobenius 1937:76).

However, perhaps it might be befitting to extend the benefit of exoneration towards Frobenius's outmoded perceptions because he was a man of his times, when most of Africa was still under colonial rule and the results of the bids for the partition of Africa vis-à-vis the Berlin Conference were still firmly in place if only for a few more decades. Nevertheless, if a senior scholar and expert on the arts of Africa such as Lamp who is operating in present times should still be on the same page as Frobenius and share such ominous views of the African continent, one can imagine the influence such views may have on his students through lectures, publications and conference papers. The fact that Lamp's lamentations could be published in the "First Word" segment, which serves as the editorial comment in *African Arts*, gives his words even more weight. The influence of *African Arts* is unquestionable and is echoed in the words of a more recent "First Word":

> Fifty years – more or less a generation – is a significant landmark for *African Arts*. The journal is now an elder, with all of the gravitas the role entails, and yet it is reborn with each new issue. Like all the best elders, *African Arts* is embracing change without adopting the trends of any particular moment. With apologies for the layers of self referentiality, we note that in his First Word for the first issue in this year's

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[5] See *Leo Frobenius 1873-1973 An Anthology*, Haberland, E. (ed.), 1973 p. 58.

fiftieth anniversary commemoration (vol. 50, no. 1), Tobenna Okwuosa cited Mary Nooter Roberts, who had observed in her own 2005 First Word that African Arts is "synonymous with the study of African Art"… For young researchers as for prominent scholars, engaging with *African Arts* is a direct route to the current discourse in the field. (Homann, Magee, and Rovine 2017:1)

While this does seem to mitigate Lamp's tone, *African Arts* goes on to admit that in recent times "it has become more urgent to grapple with an apparent shift in research topics, away from the perceived foundation of the field – so-called traditional or classical African arts – in favour of 'contemporary' topics, particularly among the emerging generation of scholars" (Homann et al. 2017:1).

Nevertheless, there is no telling whether swift condemnation of his words by Blier and also remarks such as those by Chika Okeke (1999) would be prompt enough to quell such perceptions of Africa or its art. In response to Lamp, Okeke comments in part that "I had the sense that the state of affairs on that continent sounded too much like a cross between a CNN news report and Hollywood film script for a Technicolor sequel to the *Heart of Darkness*"(Okeke 1999:85), in reference to the 1899 novel by Polish-British novelist, Joseph Conrad, about a voyage to the Congo in colonial times: an appropriate comparison from Okeke to the Hollywood Technicolor movie era, which played a critical role in how Africa is portrayed, pretty much in the lines of Lamp or even Frobenius's descriptions of Africa. Hollywood Technicolor narratives of Africa classified its indigenous occupants as savages or playing submissive roles. Indisputably, Technicolor storylines were wrought with codifications of masculinity and colourism that endeavour to reinforce the supremacy of white males. A look at the posters from popular movies can attest to this, such as *Latuko* (1952) with a blurb that reads "we saw primitive man" right next to an African warrior wielding a spear; or *Killers of Kilimanjaro* (1960) which claimed to be "more savage than most savage Africa", or *Ivory Hunter* "actually filmed in the heart of darkest Africa".

Art historians and critics Evelyn Nicodemus and Kristian Romare point out similar perceptions of Africa and its art within Euro-American lines of thought when they critically reference the French-American artist Arman who, like the earlier-mentioned scholars, conveys the notion that Africa has to be saved from itself in all its wanton chaos. Nicodemus and Romare[6] write:

> Interviewed in a programme on the television channel *Arte*, the French artist, Arman, talking about his collection of African sculptures, boasted about western collectors rescuing valuable art objects from being destroyed by neglect or by intertribal conflicts in Africa. His patronising air revealed an ignorance not at least about his own part of the world. It has been estimated that 99% of what is called the western material cultural heritage, from classical antiquity to the early Renaissance, has been lost due to destruction through negligence, wars, religious intolerance, simply greed, or recycling, for instance, marbles lost to lime-furnaces or bronze sculptures to weapons production. (Nicodemus and Romare 1998:54)

Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu (2009) also examine an ethnographically focused reflection on Africa and its artistic traditions as articulated by Marshall Mount in his book *African Art: The Years Since 1920*, referring to it as "an alarmist view of the dying traditions of Africa"[7] and further pointing out that "Marshall Mount foregrounds paternalistic grumbling, laced with bracing sarcasm, to focus on the idea of a disappearing African past, while minimizing the complex artistic experiments being developed by contemporary African artists. … However, framing the art of contemporary African artists around the dialectic of a wholesome past and a degenerating present, as Mount does, is a common trope without irony and full of self-assurance" (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009:4) – not unlike the earlier-mentioned authors.

The reason for belabouring here Lamp, Frobenius, Arman and Mount's somewhat calamitous aspersions on Africa is to show how easy it is to invent ill-informed and enduring notions of a

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[6] See Nicodemus, E. and Romare, K. 1997-98, Africa, Art Criticism and the Big Commentary in *Third Text* 41, Winter
[7] See Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, 2009. *Contemporary African Art since 1980* (Preface), Damiani Publishers

place to an audience that has not yet or may never travel there – in this case the place is Africa – and how such perceptions can become not only the dominant, but the most generally accepted ones by those being 'othered' and the ones doing the 'othering'. Nevertheless, if Africa is still perceived as and subsequently fictionalised as a "dark continent" in important academic journals, how then is the art produced here perceived? Clearly, it is in the annals of publications such as the eponymous *African Arts* journal that African art has continuously been classified and categorised as tribal, classical, traditional, but more importantly, modern or contemporary – modern and contemporary here being referred to following the earlier elaborations of Smith (2008). It is also worth noting – if only in passing – that even the very editorial page of the edition that served as an intellectual battleground for Lamp vs. Blier et al. had an advertisement for a New York gallery whose banner read "Tribal Reality African Art" (*African Arts* 1999:4). What is classified as African art, much like Africa itself, is an invention, and much of the inventing has been and continues to be done in such journals as *African Arts* as well as exhibitions, conferences and biennales as much as in newly liberated African states themselves on a mission under new leadership to 'invent' their own identities. Ery Camara[8] perhaps tones this down – drawing from Annie E. Coombs' *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* in a similar context – by saying that "it is useful to relate this problematic situation's genealogy to practices developed in the West that fabricate a fiction around other cultures—an otherness that suits its ambitions to dominate and exploit them" (Camara 2003:79). Within the context of art, these practices of invention and subsequently their validation have also been proliferated through the design of 'Africa-themed exhibitions that have been based on "anthropological, ethnographic, philosophical, scientific and political theories of which the impact and institutionalized mode of understanding has spread throughout the world and affected the way all of us perceive

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[8] See Camara, E. 2003, "Demystifying Authenticity" in *A Fiction of Authenticity*, Mosaka, T. and Fitzgerald, S. (eds), Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis.

Africa." (Camara 2003:79). Nevertheless, as earlier suggested, it is not just the Western scholar and institution that has fostered invention of Africa vis-à-vis its identity in the arts. In the case of Zambia for instance, the postcolonial government embarked on a short-lived arts and culture festival tailor-made for the task of 'identifying' and situating Africa in the world:

> After gaining independence in 1964, the next move for Zambia, like most newly born African states at the time, was nation-building. Among the new government's first steps, one of the key objectives was to assert an outwardly generic cultural identity that would purposefully renounce and supersede that inherited from her British colonisers. (Mulenga 2016:61)

Apart from the arts and culture festival, there were also initiatives such as the Exhibition of Modern Zambian Sculptural Art (see catalogue cover in Fig.3) which went on a tour of South Africa, the United States and Europe, in which Lewis Changufu, the government minister overseeing the project, made a distinction between the 'traditional' and the 'contemporary' in Zambian sculpture – while applauding Traditional Arts (Africa) Limited, a company run by a Dennis Erwin to facilitate the project – declaring:

> The survival of our traditional sculpture is largely dependent upon the European and American customers who collect African works of art. Unless efforts are made to present to them only works of good quality, there is a danger to these patrons buying anything that may be offered to them, thereby allowing bad works to go outside the country as representative of Zambian art. This exhibition shows three types of Zambian sculpture. The first is what I may call classical Zambian sculpture, consisting of old pieces from the Livingstone Museum. The second part consists of contemporary sculpture that, although based on the traditional style, has new concepts, which is what the Traditional Arts are trying to promote. The third and last group shows examples of the mass tourism art. (Changufu 1966: 2 in Mulenga 2016)[9]

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[9] See Mulenga, A. *Contemporary Zambian Art, Conceptualism and the 'Global' Art World*, MA Art History Thesis, Rhodes University in which Changufu, L. (1966) is quoted from the Exhibition of Modern Zambian sculptural art exhibition catalogue.

Ruth Kirkham Simbao[10] also underlines this phase in Zambian history while reviewing an exhibition in Zambia and points out that the country's first president Kenneth Kaunda introduced a strategy of "Zambianization to combat the cultural erosion brought about by colonialism. He banned the import of foreign cultural materials" (Simbao 2005:79). A similar claim is made in the exhibition catalogue *Space: currencies in contemporary African art[11]*, in which Simon Njami alludes to this 1960s[12] African identity dilemma implying in a certain context that not only has the 'invention' of Africa been a Western undertaking, but also an African one. Concerning "the invention of Africa" in the 1960s, there appeared to be a prerequisite for achieving a new humanity that would involve reinventing a "strong, radiant Africa, a rich and fascinating Africa, in a distant echo of the approach adopted by the inventors of Negritude" (Njami 2012).

The creation of:

> [this] New Africa was often political, didactic and could not exist in any other way. A new impetus had to be created, a new lyricism that could consolidate a consistently mythical freedom and unity. Bogged down in the continent's vitality, questions of aesthetics all revolved around the attempt to actually define an African aesthetic – an impossible challenge. (Njami 2014:02/22)

This invention of Africa has also been promulgated by a great many international exhibitions and has contributed, alongside the scholarship published in *African Arts*, to framing the so-called discourses on what is labelled as "the arts of Africa". However, the reason for overemphasising how Africa has been invented, perceived and continues to be identified to a

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[10] See Simbao R. K. 2005, Lechwe Trust Collection, (review) in *African Arts*, Volume XXXVIII, Number 3
[11] curated by Thembinkosi Goniwe and Melissa Mboweni
[12] Also see Fall, N., 2003. *Power Game*, in Abale (exh. cat.), Rockston Studio and Gallery, Lusaka, Zambia, Fall, N., 2006. "State of Emergency: culture in Africa is at a crossroads". *Art South Africa*, Volume 4 Issue 3, Autumn, Cape Town, South Africa, and Mulenga, A. M. 2017. "Germinating in the cracks: the identity of contemporary Zambian art" in Kreienbaum, M. A. and Pillmann, R. (eds), *Sambia - 72 Volksgruppen bilden einen Staat: Einblicke in eine postkoloniale Gesellschaft*, The University of Wuppertal is a German scientific institution, located in Wuppertal, North Rhine-Westphalia, Budrich UniPress Ltd, Germany

very large extent, is to foreground these views and notions in order to show how the works by the artists discussed in this thesis help counter these ways of seeing Africa. Nevertheless, as will be indicated in this chapter, such ways of countering these outmoded notions of Africa are not new. The following section will therefore lead on into the impulses of framing 'traditional' or 'the traditional' in the art of the continent.

2: Considerations of framing the 'traditional', 'modern' and 'contemporary'

In relation to the arts of Africa, the concept of 'traditional' has repeatedly been linked to all things nascent or primaeval, whether something visual or something physical. However, there have been historical and intellectual discontinuities and political negotiations of African traditions which in turn offer what Congolese philosopher Valentin-Yves Mudimbe[13] (1994: 206-207) describes as "fabulous acculturations", which, in other words, may involve the invention of Africa's past – an invention of tradition. Cooper and Morrell (2014: 4-5) similarly argue, following Mudimbe, that "'Fabulous acculturations' is an evocative phrase. It resonates with ruptures, compromises and negotiations that are not exclusive to, and predate, European drives and interests; it insists that tradition, as a source of unmoving and solid indigeneity, is a fabrication". Cooper and Morrell further suggest that tradition as "fabulously acculturated", challenges what Mbembe 2002 critically calls "nativism".

One observation in terms of use of the term 'traditional', in relation to the art of Africa is that it has often been used to frame something that is old and hence backward or archaic as opposed to something that is new, for example "the old and the new: the traditional and the modern" as Angelo Kakande (2009:5) puts it in the context of contemporary art in Uganda. In other reductive framings the "traditional" has also been pitted against the "contemporary" not only in the context of scholarship but also in the international art market and, while it may be

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[13] Mudimbe, V, Y. 1994. *The Idea of Africa*, London, James Currey.

argued that the traditional versus contemporary debate has subsided in recent years and research on a variety of topics that do not fit in these categories appears to be intensifying (Homan; Magee and Rovine 2017:1), Cooper and Morrell (2014:17) also suggest that when it comes to the question of gatekeeping regarding the basis on which knowledge is admitted or excluded, there appears to be a "false binary between 'tradition' and 'modernity' ".

In a journal article entitled "Tradition Is Always Now" in *African Arts*, art historian Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts makes similar assertions of how the notion of tradition can be disrupted, at the same time arguing that much of the framing of the arts of Africa can not only be attributed to scholars per se but also to exhibitions as a channel; however, she does imply that if the same exhibitions were used to frame the arts of Africa in a certain way, exhibitions again can be used to correct the way in which the arts of Africa are seen and have been labelled. She argues that:

> A defining aspect of the field of African art history is the degree to which exhibitions have shaped an understanding of the arts of the continent. For a seminar she was teaching at UCLA, Zoë Strother invited me to present some thoughts on why it is that so many signal contributions to African art studies have been realized through museum exhibitions and related publications, rather than through strictly academic monographs. A number of answers can be considered. First, the performative, multisensorial, kinetic nature of much African art may be better apprehended in an exhibition format and an accompanying book, rather than through a book alone. (Roberts 2012:5)

Roberts argues that exhibitions can challenge assumptions and stereotypes about Africa in a far-reaching manner. Here of course this research defines these "assumptions and stereotypes" of Africa as the ones that have earlier been described by the previously mentioned scholars (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010; Gordon and Gordon 2013; Cooper and Morrell 2014). Roberts further contends, "Curators can create messages to reach broad publics rather than narrow academic communities and employ or defy ideological

construction so as to present new domains of thought—and so effect a turn. By challenging norms of museum practice, even within these same contexts, we can inspire transformations of consciousness and that these dynamics resonate with creative work in Africa today" (Roberts 2012:5).

The 2010 *Nka Roundtable II: Contemporary African Art History and the Scholarship*[14], featured thought-leading scholars in the field of African art history and curating, namely Okwui Enwezor, Dele Jegede, Sidney Kasfir, Dominique Malaquais, Steven Nelson, Ikem Stanley Okoye, John Peffer, John Picton, Peter Probst, Colin Richards, Frank Ugiomoh, Susan Vogel and Jessica Winegar and Elizabeth Harney. Harney, who is also author of the award-winning publication *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960–1995*, argues that the "tradition-modernity" distinction is tired and that it has become a staple of postmodern discourse that "tradition is a product of, not an antecedent to, modernity". She also stated that:

> [T]he long-standing arguments over the traditional–contemporary divide have run their course for many of us and seem to be a distraction rather than a key to building more productive methods and languages to deal with artistic practice in and of Africa.
>
> Recognizing the evolving nature of "traditions"… teaching about the "modernity" (not the modernism) of the so-called traditional as it came to be canonized, and speaking of the linkages, as well as the tensions, between ongoing traditions and contemporary practices can productively complicate these issues for our students … these issues are our own, not those owned by artists or practitioners. We cannot dismiss these long-standing debates, but we need to put them in some historical perspective. (Harney 2010:117)

The above statement may imply that debates around the binaries of tradition and modernity are problematic, it may also imply that not only are the definitions and comparisons tired and outdated, but they may be false dichotomies, which in turn should be corrected by means of

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[14] *Nka Roundtable II*: Contemporary African Art History and the Scholarship, Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art, Number 26, Spring 2010, (Article), Published by Duke University Press.

scholarship and the curating of exhibitions. In a similar vein and under the umbrella of the same *Nka Roundtable,* Probst (2010) points to the difference between modern and contemporary; the two are concepts that he contends are:

> …a self-reflexive palimpsest consisting of multiple layers of historical experiences and sedimented knowledge. The issue is a conceptual one. Thus, it is one thing to acknowledge the difference in the (historical) experience of the contemporary; it is another to actually explicate this difference on a conceptual level. That is to say, we have learned how to pluralize modernity in terms of "entangled," "divergent," "alternative," "double," or "para" modernities. But how does one pluralize "contemporary" as a state or condition? After all, 'contemporary' invokes sameness, not difference. And yet it is difference and not sameness — or rather, the dialectics of sameness and difference — to which we keep coming back. (Probst 2010: 139)

Moving forward in agreement with much of the above, it is still worth noting – for argument's sake – a few outlinings of tradition in the context of art in Zambia, citing one example here. This serves as a bolster to the above-mentioned sentiments and a way of seeing how some notions of tradition, modernity, and contemporaneity have been handled in the past.

In a Zambian context, the traditional – and in broader terms African – contexts are "(non-Western and nonimitative) African cultural forms" (Taylor 2006:28); such as traditional dress, gender, marriage, family, lifestyles, social customs, music, and dance. Similarly, in the context of art, while referring to the work of Zambian artist Stephen Kappata and dividing it into "Traditional Themes", "Colonial Themes" and "Contemporary Themes", Hugh Macmillan (1997)[15] describes the "traditional" in relation to topics that concern ceremonies, customs and costumes of the people of Western Zambia, the Lozi, to whom Kappata belonged. According to Macmillan, paintings that roughly fall under the 'traditional' heading are those that portray village life. "One sees village crafts such as pottery making, basket

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[15] See Macmillan, "The Life and Art of Stephen Kappata", *African Arts*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter)

making, wood carving, a blacksmith at work, or domestic activities such as the shelling or pounding of maize and the winnowing of rice. These paintings can be seen as timeless, nostalgic, and as presenting an idyllic view of rural life," (Macmillan 1997:27). In an earlier text he observes that Kappata's paintings, which reference ceremonies and dances, "are timeless representations of traditional practice, others show tradition in a modern context and show an awareness that tradition is neither static nor unproblematic" (Macmillan 1994:16). Similarly – although looking at it from a more technical perspective – concerning traditional elements and concepts in the arts of Africa, Julie Killian (1983)[16] suggests that some "of these elements are rhythm, balance, design, two-dimensionality and limited space, frontality, narrative, a cyclic time-concept, anthropocentricity, and ontological orientation" (Killian 1983:2).

In this thesis, however, while the term "traditional" is continuously used, it is engaged in a somewhat unfastened sense more liberated from the traditional–modern debate described earlier (Harney and Probst 2010) – which may accommodate oversights and contradictions.

As much as the liberty is taken to do so, reflection is also made on the other ways in which the term has been used within the context of the arts of Africa. To a great extent the term "traditional" or the phrase "traditional African art", when used, is not only in the manner earlier alluded to (Smith 2008) at the beginning of this chapter, but also in a similar context to that put forward by Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu (2009) in the book *Contemporary African Art Since 1980*, following Salah Hassan (1996;1999) in *The modernist experience in African art: Toward a Critical Understanding* and *The modernist experience in African art: visual expressions of the self and cross-cultural aesthetics* who argues that:

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[16] See Killian, J. 1983. "Traditional and Christian Elements in Contemporary African Art in South Africa with special reference to the works of John Muafangejo, Azariah Mbatha and Dan Rakgoathe", MA Fine Art essay, Rhodes University, South Africa

The confusing implications of 'traditional' versus modern or contemporary arts can best be explored by raising several related questions. How, for example, can we classify as 'traditional' forms of African art that continue to be produced presently in Africa? Are they not 'contemporary' art too? The usual dichotomy creates illusions that forms of African art designated 'traditional,' or studied as such, are artefacts of the past, although in reality traditional forms of art continue to be produced today within the burgeoning urban as well as rural sectors of Africa. Another methodological question that arises is how to classify these 'current' traditional forms? Is the designation 'neo-traditional' critical enough to distinguish such forms from either the 'plain traditional' or new art of the educated elites? Still more relevant is the paradoxical realization that so-called 'contemporary' art has in fact been in existence for more than a half century—that it is to say, since at least the 1920s, if we accept the position that the genesis of contemporary art was associated with the second decade of colonial rule. Is not that sufficient time to label these forms 'traditional' in the original sense of the word or enough time to establish a 'tradition'? Alternatively, as some would have it, are 'traditions' more often than not actually 'invented'? (Hassan 1996:44-45)

Hassan continues, "The field of African art in general requires new frameworks for understanding its forms and [the] aesthetics that engender them" and that concerning the arts of Africa, essentially Western yardsticks of authentication and acceptance are still in use today and that "racial determinism" as well as "the demand for the display of authenticity and spectacle" (Hassan 1999:2017), in particular should be left behind or revised in order to move forward. Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu contend that they do not refrain from using the term traditional African art because it represents:

A storehouse of powerful artistic achievements that continue to exert influence beyond Africa. But we are less sanguine about the claim that traditional art is the end of achievement in the African creative cycle. To us, tradition – in the best and most rigorous employment of the term – never designates a state of cultural stagnation. Nor does it promote a fixed point of historical stasis in an endless cycle of repetition and mimicry of the past. Rather, tradition always has a forward motion to it, and with that constant, dynamic pitch into the future. … Tradition in fact denotes the continuous flow, change, transformation, evolution, continuity, and discontinuity that enlivens and strengthens the archive of all cultures. It is in this condition of dynamism that's

we speak about archives and tradition. … As important as this [traditional art] may be, it is high time to notice that Africa is alive and in movement. A dialectic of acceptance and refusal, of give and take, always typifies colonial and neo-colonial situations. (Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009:13)

Following Hassan, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu's (2009) implication, tradition is therefore not static, and their application of the term complicates the notion of time. In the same manner the artists who are discussed in this thesis do so with their juxtapositions of tradition in relation to futurism[17] in their artworks. Furthermore, it is open to argument that to complicate or challenge tradition is to challenge time itself; in addition, the placing of the traditional or traditional elements in a work of art can also be used or seen to challenge the perceived dichotomies of tradition and contemporaneity.

In this thesis, however, the contested notion of tradition is analysed in the context of thematic subject matter rather than style. This means that the focus in a painting, for instance, maybe its portrayal of one of the many cultural ceremonies of Africa rather than a style of painting that may be prominent within a particular ethnic grouping.

2.1: How can juxtaposing the traditional and the modern (futuristic) complicate hegemonic notions of time and the backwardness of Africa?

People[18] are reluctant to think about the future, something I believe is a remnant of colonial rule and its top-down power dynamics. In many conceptions of the future, there is a desire to connect tradition and modernity, or at least a desire to reconcile beliefs. In imagining African futures, it is also impossible for people to erase the past. Our present-day realities are informed by the past our projections of the future are also re-imaginings of alternative histories. In this way, time is not linearly expressed. (Jepchumba 2015:162)[19]

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[17] See chapter 1

[18] "People" here refers to members of the public from Johannesburg. Kenyan-born Jepchumba worked with creative young people to investigate the notion of 'Futurist Thinking' for Johannesburg. They developed a "future selfie booth" in a museum to which they invited members of the public to leave messages to their future selves. In the citation, Jepchumba refers to the many responses that were received.

[19] See, "How do we speak about the future?" in *African Futures*, Heidenreich-Seleme, L. and O'Toole, S. (eds.), Kerber Verlag, Germany. Jepchumba is an award winning a Kenyan blogger, author and the founder and creative director of African Digital Art, an online creative platform.

What is important about an aesthetic that merges traditional and futuristic elements in this research is its ability to navigate a non-linear timeline as a "chrono-politics" (Mignolo 2011:178), potentially disrupting a colonisation of time. As Mignolo (2011. 177) points out, "Once you control (the idea of) 'time', you control subjectivity and make the many march to the rhythm of your own time". In this case, Tayali, Simpasa and the other artists to be discussed in later chapters of the study, exemplify how by the earlier-stated juxtapositions they are able to control their own idea of time. By so doing, they are not conforming to the dominant structures or notions of time. This nonconformity to time is in essence an argument against African belatedness if not a nod to futurity at the same time. This is unravelled not only in the artists' works, but in their responses to questions during the research interviews, which provide a primary resource concerning their individual notions of time. For African artists to create work that can be interpreted as being able to complicate the outdated traditional–contemporary dichotomy lends itself to chronopolitics and also helps question time and theories of temporality within the conversations of the art world today. The very essence of contemporary art discourse is in many ways centred on concepts of time. Following the scholars mentioned earlier, Michael Holly, Harry Harootunian, Pamela Lee et al. (2010:63) suggested that:

> A rethinking of temporalities was the most promising way to break the grip of some influential theories of modernism and postmodernism, because they depend on uncritical senses of time. An initial question was how the senses of time that informed early twentieth-century modernism might have resonance with the senses of time that drive narratives of modern and postmodern art.

In their work Tayali and Simpasa reasonably complicate 'time' and notions of temporality within the broader discourse of contemporary art, particularly within the contexts addressed earlier. The works resonate with questions raised by Michael Holly, Harry Harootunian, and Pamela Lee et al. who speculate "whether the art world's static, eternal present – the present

of international contemporary art – might be effectively questioned by a closer reading of the kind of temporality it seeks to exclude" (Holly, Harootunian, Lee et al. 2010:63).

In the book *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures,* African studies scholar Kadiatu Kanneh contributes to this discourse and addresses the politics of time in relation to tradition and the hegemonic sphere of influence that may be applied to contemporary African artists and the Zambian artists in this research, suggesting, "The linear model of time where tradition remains antithetical to modernity relies on a figuring of Africa as the fulfilment of (often)-American ideas of cultural origins" (1998:64).

However, this is not to say that certain framings of tradition and culture concerning Africa should be completely discarded. Kanneh argues that these differences cannot be an "outdated preoccupation which needs to be pushed aside in favour of a more 'universal' or 'innocent' field of communication. Having been perceived and mapped by colonialist anthropologies, difference still operates in terms like 'modern' and 'traditional', which have become metaphors of contested space within and between societies, nations or 'cultures'"(Kanneh 1998:10). Similarly, eminent social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey (1994:265) in her book *Space, Place and Gender*, contends that western epistemological frameworks of space and place tend to be falsely dichotomised, with space being perceived as free and unbounded and place being stereotyped as fixed. In a book chapter entitled "Space", cultural and historical geography scholar James Kneale points out that within the question of space–time, there are "alternative propositions about the nature of space … each with progressive political implications." (Kneale 2009:424). Massey's propositions for the alternative nature of space are, first, space is relational; second, space is multiple and heterogeneous; and third, space is in process. Unpacking these three suggestions from Massey, Kneale starts with the first proposition in which space is described as relational: "It is not anything in itself but

derives its apparently natural characteristics from its relations with other places, people, and things. This argument is attractive for its anti-essentialism, challenging nationalist and racist assumptions" (Kneale 2009:424). The second proposition is that "space is multiple and heterogeneous. There are many different narratives within one place and many experiences of it; the cultural politics of identity and difference become spatial metaphors of "position" (Kneale 2009:425). In the third and final proposition, drawing from Massey (2005), Kneale points out "space is in process, becoming rather than fixed. The agonistic relations between and within places ensure that their futures are always open, allowing us to resist teleological arguments and to derail apparently similar narratives (like globalization)" (Kneale 2009:425). Kneale argues that taken together, the three propositions "offer an escape from the paralyzing assumptions of many arguments about space" (Kneale 2009:425). He builds on this suggestion, again drawing from Massey (2005) who suggests that:

> What is needed … is to uproot 'space' from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; rationality; coevalness… liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape (Massey 2005:13)

Space is also crucial to this study , but not necessarily space as in the measurements of height, width and depth, that is an area, land or room that can be either vacant or occupied, but space as in the expanse beyond the earth's atmosphere, as well as perhaps its various metaphoric manifestations in the art of the select Zambian artists on this study. Analysis, therefore, of how the work and artists tap into non-physical space and multi-dimensional spaces in order to express themselves is also taken into consideration. Through observing their work, these elements are explored and translated to contribute to the broader discourses that complicate the traditional-modern or contemporary-future dichotomies.

The select works in this chapter, namely Tayali's *Destiny* and Simpasa's *Birth of Independence* lend themselves to the discussion of a re-examination of the contested ideas of tradition and Africa as earlier identified by previously cited authors as well as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Mattick (2003:9), including tradition specifically in relation to the visual arts of Africa (Jules-Rosette 1978; Macmillan H. 1994; Taylor 2006; Nicodemus 2009; Drewal 1991). Using elements of tradition, future-thinking and social-fiction, artists appear to construct to construct an imaginative retreat that is unique and does not reflect what is perceived as the present-day Zambian "social customs and lifestyle" (Taylor 2006:109) that is popular among local viewers. One can argue, therefore, that the works are located at the crossroads of speculative nonconformity and normative notions of time and place and their juxtaposition of past, present with 'futuristic' elements embellished in "traditional themes" (Macmillan 1994:16). African concepts of time and space are specific (Killian 1983:27), having an extensive past, very tangible present and a future that is indecisive. The reason "African concepts" of time are mentioned here is again to destabilise – but not in detail – the dominant Western notion of time by allowing the artworks to also be read through an African lens as well as Euro-American one. However, before taking a brief look at some African time concepts, it is important to underscore why it could be important to do so within the context of knowledge production, and for this, one may again borrow from Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie. Citing the post-structuralism movement of the 1960s and following Michel Foucault,[20] they propose that:

> Such a penchant for deconstructing and destabilizing meaning and for interrogating
> the reader and the text has in many ways liberated the space for contrary thinking
> constrained by the cultural Othering and rigidities of the liberal school and the

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[20] In this study an attempt has been made to avoid the most influential scholars such as Foucault et al. favouring some emerging voices that are inclusive of gender and that are recent, hence the selection of scholars such as Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie where it is possible. It can be argued that likes of Foucault feature at length in every other thesis that mentions African scholarship; Achille Mbembe is another more recent scholar who has been avoided for similar reasons.

multiple institutions, policies, and crises the school spawned in Africa. On the other hand, there is a strong feeling among many scholars that the school has also generated a crisis of permissibility, particularly in the arts and humanities as scholars read, redefine, and distort literary, visual, and cultural arts and artefacts with little appreciation for how such readings facilitate the continuity of wilful cultural dispossessions in a continent grappling with postcolonial self-definition, and ownership. Indeed, it opens up voices for the voices of subjugated knowledges but calls into being a larger debate among several African scholars on whether the emergence of the 'post-' theories—postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial—simply represent Western license for new hegemony and inscriptions of the African continent. (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010:24)

As earlier suggested, African concepts of time, in as much as they are complex and not one single concept, may be selected as generic for such a broad and vast continent with varying traditions and belief systems. A useful context for this research can be drawn from one of a suggestion by John S. Mbiti, a Kenyan priest of the Anglican Church and Christian philosopher, in his 1969 book *African Religions and Philosophy*. It was decades ago that Mbiti summarised the African concept of time, drawing from his vast experience studying the many time concepts from across the continent. He proposed that:

> When Africans reckon time, it is for a concrete and specific purpose, in connection with events but not just for the sake of mathematics. Since time is a composition of events, people cannot and do not reckon it in a vacuum. Numerical calendars, with one or two possible exceptions, do not exist in African traditional societies as far as I know. If such calendars exist, they are likely to be of a short duration, stretching back perhaps a few decades, but certainly not into the realm of centuries.
> Instead of numerical calendars, there are what one would call phenomenon calendars, in which the events or phenomena which constitute time are reckoned or considered in their relation with one another and as they take place, i.e., as they constitute time … for example, the rising of the sun is an event which is recognised by the whole community. It does not matter, therefore, whether the sun rises at 5 a.m. or 7 a.m., so long as it rises. (Mbiti 1969:19)

This African reckoning of time that Mbiti alludes to makes for interesting enquiry when applied to the analysis of the works of Henry Tayali and Akwila Simpasa in this chapter, as well as the artists whose work is discussed later within the context of chronopolitics.

3: A glimpse into the future through Tayali's *Destiny*

Henry Tayali was arguably one of the most prolific artists of his generation, leaving a large oeuvre that ranges from sculpture to painting. *Destiny*, the one painting selected for this study was picked because of its pioneering thematic content that also appears to fit firmly within the argument of this study. It is open to question whether there is anything distinctively African within the illustration, as opposed perhaps to works by two other artists that predate Tayali's work, namely *Buyani* (1950s) by Samuel Katilungu (Fig. 4) and *Witchdoctor* (1955) by P. S. Kasenya (Fig. 5)[21]. However, the subject matter in Tayali's painting *Destiny* from the early 1960s is arguably so ahead of its time that it can be endorsed as representing very strong elements of futurism considering the time and place in which it was painted[22]. The work might as well be labelled as an early iteration of Afrofuturism as the mode of expression that was described in the previous chapter.

The title itself, *Destiny*, lends itself to the word "future", it could be suggested that the composition of the painting also seems to support notions of futurity, as regards moving forward, of being opposed to stasis, being opposed to what can be perceived as "traditional". Tayali's painting does not give the impression that "Africa is the land that Time forgot, a veritable museum where there are to be found the relics of the race, the human race, that is: hence the anthropological preoccupation with hunting down (very apt phrase) exotic practices, primitive rituals, superseded customs," to borrow the words of Olufemi Taiwo

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[21] Note there is no biographical information about the two artists in the catalogue that was published by the Lusaka National Museum, which may open an avenue to more research outside of the context of this study.
[22] Albeit it may not be easy to imply any notions of the "traditional" within the paintings thematic content beyond perhaps its medium, oil on canvas which along with easel painting was adopted as the "traditional" modern medium for art production. See Gabriel Ellison, G. (2004); Mulenga, M. A. (2016;2017),

(1998:3), philosopher and professor in Africana Studies in his *Exorcising Hegel's Ghost: Africa's Challenge to Philosophy*.[23]

The composition gives the impression that the painting is split in two horizontally. The lower part shows a multitude that is apparently absorbed in commotion while the upper part reflects the wheels of industry – concrete silos, industrial chimneys, and sprawling buildings – prominent among them an imposing edifice towering above the rest, above it the menacing clouds of smoke blanketing it into a relief. With squinted eyes, it almost appears like a landscape, the tall buildings being a rock face and the multitude, a sea of people, being the sea; it is as if the sea is rising with the tide above a shoreline. These two elements, the multitudes and the buildings are separated by a locomotive that appears to be coming in from one end of the canvas, heading towards the bottom right corner on a railway line that is still under construction. Rail transport was one of the key instruments during the colonial spread of 'civilisation' and the transportation of the continent's natural resources in bulk for Europe's industrialisation. It can also be read as a key mechanism in the pillaging of Africa's wealth; in this regard the railway evokes the binary of a double-edged sword, one which builds and yet destroys at the same time. A reference to the railway further speaks to a geopolitical imperative, particularly on the African continent during colonial times, as Remi Jedwab, Edward Kerby and Alexander Moradi highlight in the paper *Out of Africa: Colonial Railroads, White Settlement, and Path Dependence in Kenya*[24] . Jedwab et al. speak to the critical role the railway played in the colonial era, observing that:

> Raw materials, for example ivory, were the primary exports until the introduction of
> the railways. The peculiarities of railroad placement led to the curious situation that
> the railroad traversed a sparsely settled territory with no freight to transport. European
> settlement was encouraged to generate economic development, justifying the railroad

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[23] See Taiwo, O. 1998. *African Studies Quarterly* | Volume 1, Issue 4
[24] See: Jedwab, R. Kerby, E. and Moradi. A, 2013. "Out of Africa: Colonial Railroads, White Settlement and Path Dependence in Kenya", Department of Economics at Stellenbosch University

infrastructure and geopolitical imperative of 'effective occupation' (Jedwab et al. 2013)

In *Destiny*, the horizon comprises towering, industrial buildings with massive chimneys gushing ominous, dark clouds of toxic waste. With these buildings, Tayali announces the commencement of a new industrial age on the African continent – a new, fully mechanised, technologically advanced African future in the horizon – at the same time conjuring a harbinger of the industrial pollution the world faces today, with Africa continually becoming a dumping ground. On the left and the right, the painting is bordered by two close-cropped high-rise buildings whose occupants seem to be in relative comfort compared to the masses below – perhaps the elite living off the labour of the grassroots. The building on the left could be a penthouse apartment block, owing to the luxurious curtains that drape its windows, some of them fluttering with the wind; most of the visible rooms appear sparsely occupied with just one or two occupants, its design too is worthy of note as it can be considered quite futuristic – like the painting in general, as earlier supposed – if the time in which the painting was created is to be taken into account, it appears to have be a multi-storeyed building whose main structure appears to rest on a much smaller, pillar-like base, not unlike the Findeco House, a landmark in Lusaka that was built between 1971 and 1974, and at 23 floors above ground level still holds the record as the tallest building in Zambia. The building on the right appears to have rooms that are more crowded; if anything, they look like bars or nightclubs, owing to the visible crowds within the curtain-less windows as well as the dress and interaction of the people entering and leaving the building. The building and activities within it resonate with the many new shopping malls, hotels, and casinos that have mushroomed across the major cities – more so in Zambia's capital in recent years.

It is as if with *Destiny*, Tayali could envision the future and imagine what Zambia would be like in the next 50 or so years, not to mention that his skyscrapers in the painting predated

Findeco House by possibly a decade. Between Findeco-like buildings and a futuristic vehicle with a robotic arm and a basket-like container holding half a dozen construction workers is an arched exit from all this commotion and through it, in the far distance, is a single person (see fig. 6), walking towards a different, and almost invisible set of buildings that is easy to miss without close scrutiny. This person is the only loner in this painting – save for the one who appears to be holding up a wine glass in one of the penthouses – pictured as if walking away from all the chaos towards a distant skyline of tall buildings. While this is one of Tayali's earliest paintings, he continued to employ this visual of multitudes throughout his career, manipulating it as a language to speak to the politics during given moments in history, which again speaks to Mbiti's earlier-mentioned notion of African time concepts, where events are underscored more than dated time periods themselves.

> Tayali's paintings, however, showed frenzied scenes of African social life in the city and townships, as well as people at bus stops, beer halls, and markets. These abstract representations of crowd scenes, just as the multitudes in *Destiny*, were political statements. This time the masses represented the silent majority – the electorate. The time in which the paintings were created marked the beginning of one of the most repressive periods in post-colonial Zambia. The first president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, was not taking kindly to any opposition, even from his closest comrades from the liberation. It was a time of tightened national security, as Kaunda had just become the president of the frontline states whose mission was to liberate Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia from white supremacist rule. Commenting on the economic and social challenges of post-colonial nation states was avoided by many intellectuals, artists, and patrons. Not just for safety reasons, but also in order to maintain that the liberation movements were a resounding success. Tayali chose a different approach by using abstraction as a vehicle to expose but veil the concerns of the silent, 'suppressed majority'. (Mulenga 2017)

A similarly outsized crowd can also be seen in *Village Bar* (late 1960s) (see fig. 7) a later painting by Tayali in which Kakande (2008) suggests the artist "used a fauvist palette to articulate a narrative of activities in a bar including socialisation, alcoholism, drunkenness,

etc."[25], although in a later iteration, Kakande (2017) suggests of these crowds that Tayali, among other artists of this period used them as a "metaphor to represent a sense of community through productive (and sometimes populous) spaces."(Kakande 2017:54). Notwithstanding that the usage of crowds can be argued to be commentaries of the times in which the artist lived in, and the times he perceived in the near and distance future, ultimately, the crowds are mentioned here using Kakande's reference, to underscore a political adeptness in the work of Tayali also. In *Destiny*, among the crowd of labourers are a few awkwardly placed individuals and clusters of people who appear misplaced in the crowds because they are not dressed for manual work, such as the cluster of women admiring a sculpture of Cupid or the man in a suit – perhaps a supervisor taking a break – casually reading a newspaper while seated on a heap of rubbish, surrounded by labourers in a mine wagon. Tayali is perhaps saying something about a few of the elite being able to mingle with the lower classes if not to view art, like the group of ladies, perhaps to oversee the workers like the gentleman in a suit? All the figures appear ethnically ambiguous, and at a glance, there is no telling their race (see Fig. 8), this complicates the locatedness of the scene; it could be in Africa, it could be anywhere, even though it was done by an African located on the continent. The painting is certainly politically charged and it perhaps reflects Tayali's existential experience, himself the son of an indentured worker from Northern Rhodesia Zambia's colonial predecessor; the things in the painting are the things he used to see and he attempts to put them all in one picture.

Destiny can also be read, among other things, as a critique of progress and rapid industrial development, citing the insidious instruments that drive it, such as interminable labour, environmental degradation, pollution, and ethnic, racial and social differences all of which appear in the painting. The painting may also be seen to be set in an industrial dystopia, as it

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[25] Kakande, A.2008. *Contemporary Art in Uganda: A Nexus between Art and Politics*, PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

was during this time that, according to Godfrey Setti (2002:40), Tayali was generating "his social conscience, which began to emerge in his art". He developed radical points of view, with a "commitment to African liberation and the welfare of the common man". Setti (2002: 4) asserts that Tayali developed "intense dealings against racial prejudice, injustice, and poverty" and these views "found expression in his work". However, while on the subject of optimism and modernity, what comes to mind is yet another text that speaks directly to so-called modernity in the Zambian context. In *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* James Ferguson writes:

> In the mid-1960s, everyone knew, Africa was "emerging." And no place was emerging faster or more hopefully than Zambia, the newly independent nation that had previously been known as Northern Rhodesia. The initiation of large-scale copper mining in the late 1920s had set off a burst of industrial development that had utterly transformed the country; by the time of Independence in 1964, that industrial growth seemed sure to propel the new nation rapidly along the path of what was called "modernization." From being a purely rural agricultural territory at the time of its takeover by Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company in the 1890s, the modern nation-state of Zambia had by 1969 arrived at an urban population of over 1 million (nearly 30 percent of the of the population), with total waged employment over 750,000 (of total population of 4 million) … and a vibrant industrial economy that made it one of the richest and most promising of the new African states. (Ferguson 1999: 1-2)

Worthy of note here, concerning urbanisation and modernity in Zambia, is a citation from Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe's autobiographical book *Shalapo Canicandala* in which he writes, in part, about how he left his home in a rural setting to seek employment in the city. Written in his mother tongue the book brings into question the challenges that colonialism brought, and among them are *ubulofwa* – Western notions of unemployment. The term may perhaps be an appropriation of the term "loafer" – *ilofwa*. He argues that idleness, unemployment or joblessness was a colonial construct perpetrated by urbanisation and the creation of waged jobs in the mines and so on. According to Kapwepwe (1967:72):

Ubulofwa bulofwa, kano na pa kulofelwa. Ubulofwa lishiwi lya cisungu nga taulebomba ncito mu kalale uleikala fye mu mushi uli mulofwa. Ku mishi kumwesu takwaba malofwa, pantu umuntu onse alikwata impanga apakulima no kutema. Kanshi uushala mu mushi munangani fye imilimo tayabula. Lelo ku kalale nge ncito yabula nangu uli wakosa nakalya ninshi uli mulofwa ne li shina talyakafume pali iwe, kano fye waingile ncito.

What Kapwepwe (1967) submits above is that 'loafing' is an English word that refers to someone who is not working and just staying home while living in the city – a loafer. Kapwepwe (1967) argues in our villages there are no loafers, because everyone has a portion of woodland for cultivation or chopping wood (agroforestry). Therefore, one who stays at home is merely lazy, there is always something to be done. But in the city if you have no work (are jobless or unemployed) no matter how strong – or hard-working – you are, alas you are a loafer and this label will never leave your person until you find work."

What Kapwepwe brings to light here can also be read as a manifestation of the challenges that Africans may have endured during their transition from rural to urban life in search of labour. It therefore speaks to what might be described as a Zambian modernity – or a continuous process thereof – the case being that modernity is aligned to industrial development and so on: a period that may be described as stretching from the colonial times of Northern Rhodesia to the earliest postcolonial times of Zambia.

The times in which Tayali is observed to have fully developed his style in paintings with large multitudes, however, coincided with the start of an authoritarian era in Zambia's postcolonial history under the rule of the first president, Dr Kenneth Kaunda. Commenting on the economic and social challenges of postcolonial nation states was avoided by many intellectuals, artists, and patrons. Not just for safety reasons, but arguably in order to justify that the liberation movements were a resounding success. Tayali, it may be argued, chose a

different approach by using abstraction and semi-abstraction as a vehicle to expose but also veil the concerns of the silent, 'suppressed majority'.

After his studies at Makerere's Margaret Trowell School of Arts in Uganda, Tayali returned to Zambia where he held several government posts, including one in the Department of Cultural Services. In 1972, he became a fellow at the German *Staatliche Kunstakademie* in Düsseldorf, where he completed a master's in Fine Arts. He was the first southern African artist to be awarded a scholarship by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service). Back in Zambia, Tayali was involved in seminars, international workshops, and research projects, continually putting forward his ideas of the University of Zambia (UNZA) developing its own school of fine art and suggesting a collection of good quality masks, sculpture, and pottery to be systematically and critically analysed. (Hanne Kabungo, Margaret Plesner and Faustin Kabwe 1989)

Tayali encouraged the interplay of 'traditional' and 'contemporary' art, placing emphasis on the necessity of traditional African cultures as a contribution towards modern development in an international dialogue. In line with this, he would often be seen making sketches at the crafts markets (see fig. 9). His many travels abroad, where he vouched for the benefit of international cultural cooperation, were proof of his conviction, not least, because he wanted to see art discourse and pedagogy in Zambia advance to international standards.

His ideas were, however, met with opposition, as his fellow scholars, particularly those at UNZA, may not really have acknowledged his perspective or status as an intellectual but rather regarded him a 'mere' artist. Therefore, until this day, there is no department of fine art at the University of Zambia (Kabungo, Plesner and Kabwe 1989). The implication that Tayali was able to keep pushing his ideas without "conforming" to the standards of his fellow

scholars in other disciplines suggests that Tayali, like Simpasa was not only of his own time, but of a time beyond.

4: *The Dawn (Birth of Independence)*: Simpasa's mystic glimpse into the past, present and future

Simpasa's *The Dawn* – also known as *Birth of Independence*[26] – provides a haunting, and enigmatically cryptic image, which despite its name can also appear dark, perhaps even menacing and cataclysmic, for which any translation to be offered here may not serve adequate justice, as many interpretations may be given to this abstract work. That stated, despite its seemingly woeful side that may conjure Simpasa's pessimistic sentiments, this could perhaps speak to the conditions of a post-independence, modernist storyline, in Zambia having an uncertain direction by the time it was painted in 1973. In the wake of independence Zambia was still in the process of adapting its black citizenry to 'first class' status, as this was a privilege formerly held only by white people, and nationalism was expected to overturn this "by overturning the colonial system, and banishing forever the insulting idea that Zambians should be second class citizens in their own land" (Ferguson 1999:139). Ferguson's text perhaps lends itself to a promise that may be portrayed in *The Dawn*:

> The early years of Zambian Independence seemed on the verge of delivering on that promise. The colour bar dropped as educated black Zambians rose to unprecedented positions of power and responsibility; a booming economy and strong labour unions meanwhile helped even ordinary workers to enjoy a new level of comfort and prosperity. Zambia as an 'emerging new nation', appeared poised to enter the world of the 'first class'. It would be like other modern nations—right down to its state-of-the-art national airline … Zambia was no exception. With a rising standard of living, bustling urban centres, and such symbols of modern status as suits made in London … membership in in the 'new world society' seemed finally to be at hand.

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[26] During the exhibition *40 years of visual expression* held at State House in Lusaka, Zambia the artwork was captioned as *Birth of Independence* (see Mulenga, "A splendid display of good Zambian art", *Weekend Post*, Friday October 22, 2004, p. VIII), however in recent times it is displayed as *The Dawn* in the Lusaka National Museum.

It was the faltering of the 'industrial revolution' that changed all of that. For no sooner had the blitzkrieg of industrialization turned the world upside down for millions of Central Africans, than rapid industrial decline set in motion another, even more devastating blitz. … Zambia in the good times, had been on the map—a country among others in the 'modern world'… recent history has been experienced not—as the modernization plot led one to expect—as a process of moving forward or joining with the world, but as a process that has pushed them out of the place in the world that they once occupied.

As much as Ferguson – so extensively cited here – depicts what may described as a gloomy era in the in Zambia's history, *The Dawn*, on the other hand also appears to summon an optimistic vision owing to its title; "dawn" can represent new beginnings, as in "a new dawn", one that is expectant and yet to come, one that lies in the future. Observed with an optimistic lens, the work seems to beckon a bright future; by so doing it fits well into a chronopolitical conversation, where an African is envisioning a better future or is optimistic of a metaphorical road ahead.

The sunburst that is the key focal element from which the work perhaps draws its name similarly represents the break of day. However, the composition of the work is one of the most curious components of *The Dawn*.

Like Tayali's work, discussed earlier, *The Dawn* can also be visually demarcated into two, divided by a horizon line that delineates the cluster of images that provides a second focal point besides the sunburst – from which they seem to be exploding. The viewer's gaze steals to the right-hand side of the work, appears to rest, if not float above a horizon from which the said sun is overflowing and throwing its pronounced rays across the whole panorama. Here the use of a horizon as a visual element again evokes futurity; a horizon can symbolise the future, better things to come, as in the idiom "new horizons". The horizon is at the edge of a bleak and barren landscape covered only in the rays that emanate from the sun disk. The fact that the work is not bordered off entirely – save for on the left, which has the likeness of a

'traditional' African woodcarving standing almost the entire length of the picture – gives the viewer the feel of standing inside the artwork and not necessarily viewing the scene, say, from a window. This aspect of the artwork might be argued as a play on 'place' similar to that which Tim Creswell (2004) reflects upon while proposing the idea of "place and landscape"[27]; he observes, "In most definitions of landscape, the viewer is outside of it. It differs from place in this primary way. Places are very much things to be inside" (Creswell 2004:10). It is therefore open to argument that not only does Simpasa complicate notions of place by optically allowing – at least in theory – the viewer to be placed inside the 'landscape', but also the landscape itself does not place or situate the artist who created it. Anyone who does not know where the work was created may have no indication that it is from Africa, save for the so-called traditional carving and mask references[28] represented in the images that take prominence floating above the horizon. In short, the issue of being place-bound is obscured in this artwork.

Again, positioning these depictions of traditional African carvings prominently in the artwork represents a juxtaposition of the traditional – the old – and the futuristic, arguing that the sunrise, the dawn, the new horizon represents the future. Although the concept of masks and the masquerades are particularised more elaborately in later chapters when discussing the works of Sampa, Haimbe and Phiri respectively (see chapters 4 and 5), concepts of the African mask and its significance can be briefly highlighted here, following Soyinka-Airewele who explains "For those unfamiliar with the concept of masquerades, it is important to note that in many parts of Africa, masquerade performers do not merely entertain their audiences, they play a vital role in the social, spiritual, and cultural life of their societies. Often disguised flamboyantly to represent ancestors, animals, or ordinary human beings, their

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[27] Cresswell, T. 2004. *Place: a short introduction*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd. United Kingdom.
[28] It is now generally accepted in an art historical context that European modernists such as Picasso and others were heavily influenced by sculpture from Africa.

musical and dramatic rendering of narratives of societal histories, popular legends, and stories conveys and affirms social values, religious beliefs, or political ethos and utilizes dance as commentary on life, wisdom and special knowledge" (Soyinka-Airewele 2010:15).

Moving forward, through this juxtaposition also, this artwork is emblematic of timelessness, in that time does not seem to have a meaning in the work or, furthermore, the Western concept of time may not have a meaning. Time also seems to be conceptually flattened in the artwork. This may be compounded additionally by the supposition that although the work is called *The Dawn* and does seem to represent the break of day or sunrise, it may also be read as a sunset, an ending, fortifying the earlier suggested apocalyptic element of the artwork. Its element of timelessness can also be pitched into the 'traditional' versus 'classical' framing of art from Africa or the "traditional vs. contemporary" (Homann et al. 2017) that has been argued by scholars such as Steven Nelson, for instance. This is because if what is commonly referred to as traditional African art is labelled 'classical', the classical in generic art terms is timeless. Take for instance what Paul Mattick suggests in the book *Art in Its Time*:

> Eighteenth-century versions of art history tell a story of peak and decline, with classical Greece being one high point, equalled only by the High Renaissance. Art is exemplified by the Antique, whose products represent a timeless ('classic') standard of value against which the present is to be judged. The embodiment of social virtue and rationality, not only independent of but older than the Christianity of the immediate feudal past, the Antique figures as the non-historical, nature within the domain of culture.
>
> Modernity, in contrast, is seen as marked by the increase of social and individual fragmentation, implying the definitive loss of the (imaginary) unified social world of the ancients, due to the division of labour and the market system. By the early nineteenth century, art has begun to be seen as an ideal sphere in which the reintegration of the individual personality and of the social totality, unachieved in concrete reality, can be attained. Art is gradually redefined also as the search for beauty in individual experience.

And experience is of necessity present-day experience. Thus, art becomes oriented to modernity; it becomes not just an art of its time but also an art of this time; it ends by becoming "modernist." Art as such, not just the "classic" art of the past, is now to be the embodiment of the Antique, of the eternal, of higher values than the mercantile ones of vulgar life. Thus, it works by finding otherwise secret correspondences between the elements of fragmented experience, and by discovering classical beauty amidst the chaotic movement of the modern city. (Mattick 2003:12)

Nevertheless, if a single artwork may be read as both a sunrise and a sunset it may allude, one might suggest, to a cyclic notion of time, one not confined by a calendar, perhaps in the African concept of time mentioned by Mbiti. Consequently, it complicates the arbitrary way in which time is generally perceived as linear in the normative Western-influenced manner. As such, in theory, the work can be read clockwise or anti-clockwise and in practice, the picture can be turned upside down (see fig. 10) and still be read as a sun bursting into the horizon, except the plane moves, making the cluster of mask and embryo motifs – which will be discussed soon – now appear in the foreground. Obviously turning the artwork upside down may not have been among Simpasa's thoughts when he created the work, however, the fact that one of the mask's motifs at the centre of the picture is upside down, inspires the viewer – with a curious eye at least – to turn the work upside down and see how it will look when the mask is the right way up. Thus, in theory to look at the artwork upside down and the right way up sequentially, in a way raises notions of continuum.

When the picture is inverted, the menacing mask motif, which was previously upside down, is turned the right way up. With its sharp, fang-like teeth showing from a gaping round mouth, a similar misplaced mouth and vertical all-seeing eye floating above it, complete with cowry shell-shaped tears rolling down its face, invokes a horrific, nightmarish aura that is characteristic perhaps of a spirit. Imaginably, the artist is conveying a warning with this image: a warning of things to come, darker, woeful days ahead that will be filled with tears and horrors. What horror is Simpasa implying? Is it one that has already passed or one that is

yet to come; will this spirit devour the two foetuses represented in motifs – one small and one large — that flank it on both sides? This scenario also evokes death: are the foetuses stillborn, dying or being devoured while still in the womb? It could be an allegory for Zambia, one might argue, being a country that had recently been granted its independence at the time the work was created. Did Simpasa perceive Zambia as a new country that was dying in its postcolonial infancy? Alternatively, perhaps it is depicting Africa's freedom as a whole at the time; was its freedom stillborn?

Again, if the mask does not symbolise a demon, it clearly may represent a spirit of sorts if its uncanny likeness to *Chikungu,* a *Makishi*[29] character (see fig. 11) is anything to draw from, owing most emphatically to its gaping mouth and jagged teeth and seemingly shut eyelids. The mask represents a chief and symbolises wealth among the Lunda-Bachokwe peoples (Bleakley 1978:34) in the southern parts of the Congo, north-eastern parts of Angola and north-western parts of Zambia. Describing it, Bleakley (1978:34) iterates that:

> Known as *Chikungu*, these masks were originally only worn by sons of chiefs at *Makishi* initiation dances, the enthronement of kings and in fertility rites. … Over the past century, the original function of these masks has been obscured, with the ritual use declining in importance. They have been used in displays of wealth and status on the part of the chief and even just to entertain European visitors. Naturally, the ritual significance of the mask has decreased, so too has the quality, and fine old examples as this have become increasingly rare.

Turning the artwork the right way up again, the other mask-like face – the one which is the right way up as the work is hung in the Lusaka National Museum – appears to be more emphatic, almost rendering the previously mentioned mask motif invisible. This possesses what can be perceived as a female character. On closer inspection, it resembles another *Makishi* character called *Mwana Pwo* (see fig. 12). *Mwana Pwo* is one of the most celebrated

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[29] The *Makishi* masquerade is performed at the end of the *mukanda*, an annual initiation ritual for boys between the ages of eight and twelve https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/makishi-masquerade-00140

among the masked characters that represent the "ideal young woman" or "purest maiden" (Mulenga 2014)[30]. Bleakley designates *Mwana Pwo* as the female counterpart to *Chikungu*, which is used in conjunction with it in the *pwo* fertility dance. Bleakley points out that:

> The mask represents a young woman freshly emerged from the initiation schools in the bush and ready for marriage. Like other *Bachokwe* sculpture, the form is fleshy and substantial, combining dignity and force to produce an image of deified humanity. It is said that frozen facial expressions, such as that on the mask, are used to portray a revered state of quietude, which is supposed to attest to a harmonious relationship between the individual and the vital force of the universe. (Bleakley 1978:35)

Simpasa's work thus far can also be read as a critique of modernism, the death of tradition at the hands of modernism. The stylistic nuances that reference masks can also be seen in some of Simpasa's 1972 works currently in the Lusaka National Museum, such as *Drummer* (see fig. 13) and also his sketches for the *Freedom Statue* in Lusaka, Zambia (see fig. 14). Simpasa's placing of *Chikungu* and *Mwana Pwo* together in the artwork reiterates that the two are perhaps a couple, as they do perform together, as Bleakley suggests, in the fertility dance ceremony, and perhaps the embryos are their offspring, imaginably dying at birth or while still in the womb. Are *Chikungu* and *Mwana Pwo* shedding tears because of the death of 'tradition' towards the dawn of a new Zambia, a modern Zambia? Did Simpasa hypothetically look inside his crystal ball and see a future, a new dawn, in which tradition – customs the way most would like to understand them – will die as Zambia continues to embrace 'modernity' in the course of the march for progress.

Yet another reading of *The Dawn* alludes to the liberation movements – and the African freedom struggle. To the right of the artwork, flanking the larger foetus motif is a hand that appears to be bursting right out of the sun. It resembles a raised hand, and more so a clenched

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[30] See Mulenga, M. A. 2014. "Of Makishi Mona Lisas and Last Suppers" in *Bulletin & Record Magazine*, also 2017: http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.co.za/2017/06/of-makishi-mona-lisas-and-last-suppers.html

fist. The clenched fist is emblematic of strength, unity, defiance, solidarity, resistance and, possibly most importantly, it is the official symbol of the Black Power movement and its variants. Although made particularly during the civil rights movements of African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, the raised clenched fist has been used and continues to be used among Black activists across the globe. Conceivably, among those who have helped make it famous in an African context is the late Winnie Mandela with whom the gesture became synonymous.

Then, finally, on the left-hand side of the picture is the lone figure standing tall, as if taking in the whole scene, with the likeness of a carving; he too has a facial expression similar to those on the masks. In his only visible hand is an implement, perhaps a weapon, tool, a traveller's staff or some such. On his back is what is almost unmistakably a drum.

Is this perhaps a self-referential image of Simpasa himself journeying into the uncertain future? His alias was after all "The Journeyman"[31] and he was also known to play the African drum and is said to have carried one around wherever he went. It is again as if he is taking in the view in front of him while the horizon on which he stands can be likened to a ladder that leads up to the sun, especially when the line on which he stands is paired with a second line, a ray from the sun. One would be led, with much imagination, to conjecture that it is as if Simpasa's work was set to the lyrics of the song *Talk* by the British rock band Coldplay released 32 years later, giving the artwork not only a universal, but a timeless element. In the song, the lead vocalist Chris Martin sings about being afraid of the future and not knowing what to do, while all the while calling upon a brother or a friend. "You can paint a picture of something you see, in the future, where will I be, you can climb a ladder up to the sun…" (Coldplay 2005). The video of the song features the band in a barren landscape not unlike that of the moon, a landscape that resonates with Simpasa's *The Dawn*. Simpasa, assuming

[31] See biographical details

the image of this lone figure in the artwork, is climbing a ladder into the sun; but where will he be in this uncertain future on this ladder that he is climbing into the dawn, the birth of a nation?

Chapter 1: Summary

While it remains open to argument, through analysis of the visual elements within the select artworks by Tayali and Simpasa respectively, the findings in this chapter suggest that these artworks can lend themselves to discussions around artistic portrayals of the future. This is also bearing in mind that during the analyses the visual elements were of paramount imporatance, and not the style or materials used to create the works.

By entering the artworks into a discussion around portrayals of the future by African artists – shortly after their nation's independence – it opened up questions around what the implications were when African artists grappled with this type of thematic subject matter during that period. The works, it has been argued here, appeared to suggest elements of 'timelessness' and the artists themselves have been suggested to have engaged intentionally or otherwise in chronopolitics that remain relevant today regardless of the period in which they were made in according to the Western calendar, which is the one dominantly accepted and ascribed to. To grapple with questions around time, it has been argued here, is to grapple with questions around 'contemporaneity' which further connects to questions around 'modernity' and what this could be perceived as from an African perspective. Within all this, came also questions around the invention of tradition; 'tradition' or notions of it, also particularly arose because of the suggested juxtaposition of 'traditional' African elements and 'modern' ones in certain elements of the artworks, or at least arguing against the false dichotomy of the said concepts. By looking at works from the 1960s and 1970s, the chapter also suggests that the contemplation of the future as a narrative form might be drawn from long-established artistic practices that can still be read as relevant today. In addition, through

examining the artworks and having an understanding of their creators, a discussion can be built around the sociopolitical situation in Zambia during the times that they were created. The chapter also examines several themes that formulate an argument challenging the lingering perceptions of African belatedness, particularly concerning the Western hegemonic license with regard to indigenous knowledge systems. This has been done by first suggesting how certain schools of thought have perpetuated the view that Africa is a faraway hinterland. It is this argument that flows into continuation with the next chapter. Finally, as much as it draws from multiple disciplines – having cited sources from philosophy, Africana studies, anthropology and political science – in relation to African art history this chapter serves as a means of knowledge production, in that modern and contemporary artists from Zambia are only now beginning to be written about and theorised. Notwithstanding, the investigation of topics and debates presented in this first chapter, primarily associated to culture and technology, are relevant to the futurity of Zambian art and in this attempt to situate it outside of the imposed dualism through the key debates. Furthermore, as a preamble to the rest of the artists' work that will be presented in the study, Tayali and Simpasa's works open up the exploration and situation of time. Finally, the content in this opening chapter acts as the argument structure that links to the trajectory and outcome of the arguments against "African belatedness" or rather, in what ways this perceived belatedness can be challenged.

Chapter 1: Images

Figure 1. Henry Tayali, *Destiny*, (early 1960s) oil on canvas, 58cm x 89cm; Lechwe Trust, Lusaka, Zambia, (donated by the Zukas family, reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue 2009).
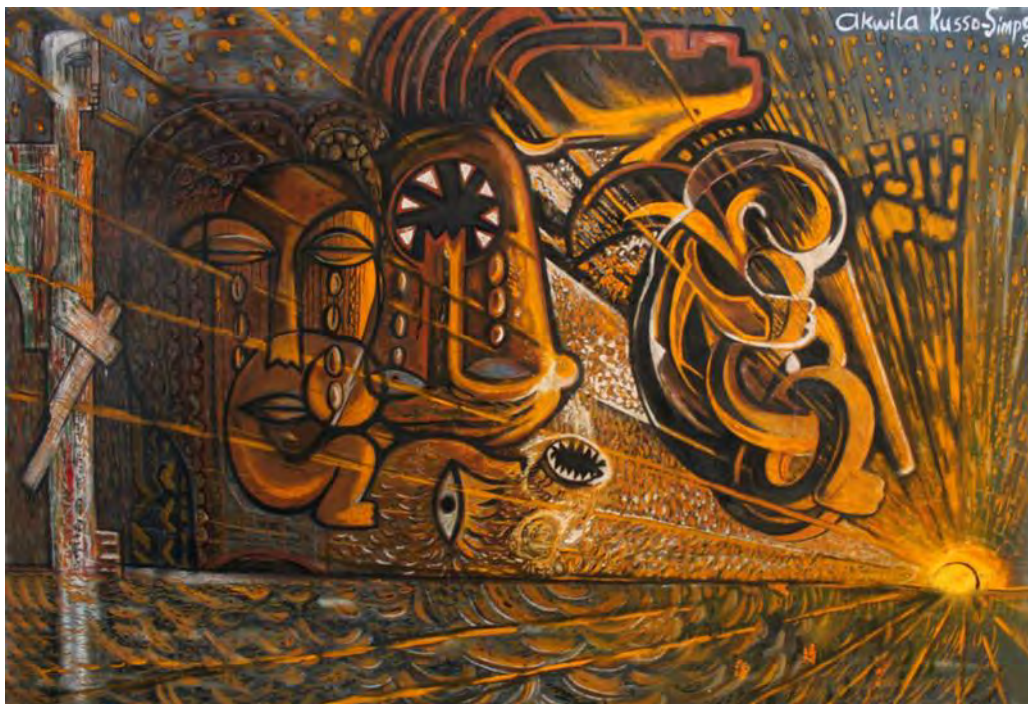
Figure 2. Akwila Simpasa, *The Dawn (Birth of Independence)*, 1973 mixed media, Lusaka National Museum (Reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue (2009).
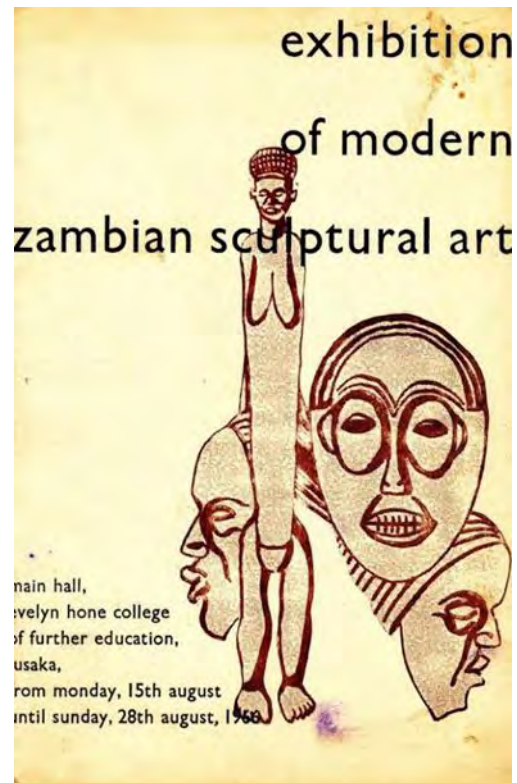
Figure 3. Catalogue cover from the 1966 exhibition held at Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka. (Reproduction taken from catalogue cover)

Figure 4. P. S. Kasenya, *Witchdoctor*, Watercolour on paper, 1955, 93.5 x 70.5 cm, Livingstone Museum Collection on loan to Lusaka National Museum. Purchase funded by National Museum Board. Source: Lusaka National Museum Catalogue.

Figure 5. Samuel Katilungu, *Buyani*, watercolour on paper, 1950s, 95x72 cm, Livingstone Museum Collection, Purchase funded by National Museum Board. Source: Lusaka National Museum Catalogue.

Figure 6. Henry Tayali, *Destiny*, (detail) showing a lone figure walking towards a distant cityscape (Reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue (2009).

Figure 7. Henry Tayali, *Village Bar* (late 1960s) Oil on board, 100 cm x 100 cm (reproduction taken from Kakande, A. 2017. "Reimag[in]ing the Village as a Portrait of a Nation-State in Uganda", in *African Arts*, Summer, Vol. 50, No. 2)

Figure 8. Henry Tayali, *Destiny*, (detail) showing a "raceless" multitude (Reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue (2009).

Figure 9. An undated photograph showing Henry Tayali sketching a live scene from a crafts market in Lusaka. (Reproduction from Visual Arts Council of Zambia documentation centre). (6/10/15).
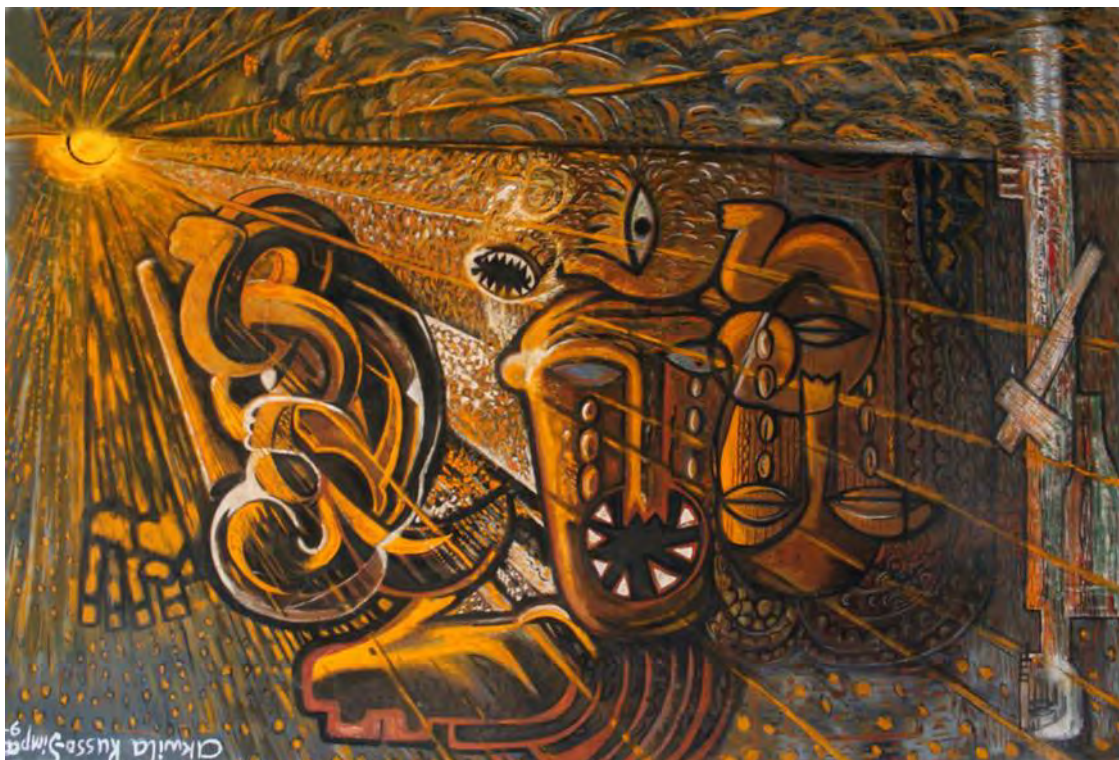
Figure 10. Akwila Simpasa, *The Dawn (Birth of Independence)*, 1973 turned upside down (Reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue (2009).
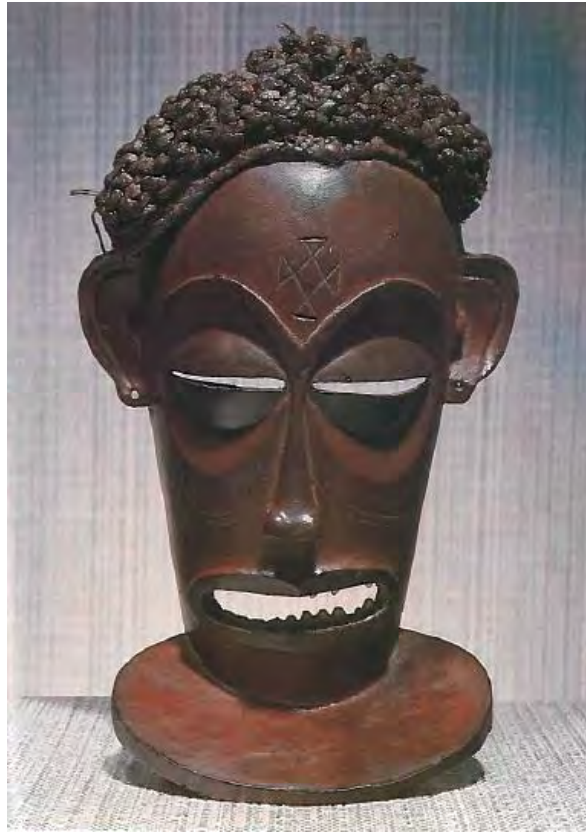
Figure 11. *Chokwe* mask representing *Chikungu*, wood and fibre, 28cm, London, Collection Lance Entwistle (reproduction taken from Bleakley, R. *African Masks*, Thames & Hudson 1978)

Figure 12. *Chokwe* mask representing *Mwana Pwo*, wood and fibre with brass studs. 25.5 cm, London, Collection Lance Entwistle (reproduction taken from Bleakley, R. *African Masks*, Thames & Hudson 1978)

Figure 13. Akwila Simpasa, *Drummer*, 1972, charcoal on board, 182 x 189cm, Lusaka, National Museum (Reproduction taken from Lechwe Trust Catalogue (2009).

Figure 14. Akwila Simpasa, *Freedom Statue* drawings, 1973, Michael Siegel collection, Washington DC, USA. (reproduction taken from the *Bulletin & Record*, Lusaka, Zambia June 2015)

Figure 15. Akwila Simpasa, in an undated photograph possibly from the early 1970s, *Zambia Daily Mail*, (reproduction taken from the *Bulletin & Record*, Lusaka, Zambia, June 2015)

Figure 16. Zambian artist Mwamba Mulangala (2012) wearing a T-shirt with the silhouette and name of Akwila Simpasa in the Amazon rain Forest of Peru during an artist's residency at *Centro Selva*. Image courtesy: Mulanga, M., photograph taken by Dulce Vilasana (Mexico)

Chapter 2 – Decoding the dimensions of Afrofuturism

> *What might various African futures look like? How do artists and scholars imagine the future? What forms and narratives of science fictions have African artists developed? Who generates knowledge about Africa? And, what are the different languages we use to speak about Africa's political, technological, and cultural tomorrow?*

The above quotation from Lien Heidenreich-Selem and Sean O'Toole (2016:16) may serve as a suitable segue into the question: How can an analysis of artistic portrayals of 'the future' portrayed in the works of select contemporary Zambian artists be used to break down the dichotomy between the tradition and the future? By extension, how can these artworks and analyses be used to shift outdated notions of Africa and of African belatedness. To propose the protagonists of such artworks as nonconformists. Artists who neither conform to tradition as it is perceived by certain viewers nor to notions of time. This chapter in particular opens up the conversation on how, in reference to Afrofuturism, contemporary Zambian artists' portrayals of the future can be utilised to conceptually critique visual practices that locate Africa within a static time and place.

Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (2016: vii-viii) suggest that

> What is presently called Afrofuturism was originally a techno-cultural perspective accompanying engagement in a form of cultural production, originating in practices of black urban dwellers in North America after World War II and popular examples emerged in the works of Jazz musician Sun Ra. … Although the practices that form the black artistic matrix and practice of what we call Afrofuturism can be traced back over 100 years, its current trajectory can be connected to literary engagement between writers … surrounding the relationship between science fiction and Black music. The recently popularized term 'Afrofuturism' was coined in the early 1990s by writers like Mark Dery in an interview, with Samuel Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose.

Yitashi Womack (2013) alludes to a worded journey of exploration into the cosmos on a ship named *Freedom*; this thesis also embodies an allegorical journey that explores speculative

freedom in the work of various artists and anchors their imagination around various issues that are inspired by themes drawn from science fiction, technology, ancient civilisation and mythology.

In recent years there has been a significant rise in the artistic portrayals of 'the future' by African artists, as seen in exhibitions such as *They Came from Outer Space* (Johannesburg, 2015) and *Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism* (Tel Aviv, 2017). The term Afrofuturism seems to have recently been adopted as the default terminology applicable to African artists who grapple with future-themed art works while being a manifestation that continues to materialise in numerous exhibitions and symposia as a speculative and intersectional prism and as a global aesthetic movement that encompasses art, film, literature, music, and scholarship (Yaszek 2013:1). In this chapter, it is important therefore to analyse the value of this term today. This can be done by asking in what ways, and why it is being used to classify the work of African artists whose work relates to futurism that challenges the perception that "science and technology sits uncomfortably alongside general perceptions of Africa as 'a place out of time'" (Gbadamosi 2015: 183). Also eligible for critical analysis here is the resurgence of Afrofuturism in the visual arts, and to assess the value of the term 'Afrofuturism' in relation to the rise of futurism portrayed by artists based on the African continent today. Apart from defining a distinction between the terms 'Afrofuturism' and 'African futurism' this chapter suggests that there is an emergent enthralment, as can be noted in a series of exhibitions and symposia held on the African continent in recent years whose themes are chiefly grounded in the aesthetic of technological advancement and the juxtaposition of 'traditional' and 'cultural' elements, as well as elements of space travel borrowed from science fiction attributed mostly to Afrofuturism in an African-American context. Also inspired by these themes drawn from ancient civilisation and mythology among

other things, these exhibitions include but are not limited to: *They Came from Outer Space*[32] (Johannesburg, 2015) and the *Afrofuturist*[33] series organised by the Goethe Institute also in 2015 and held in Accra, Ghana, Johannesburg, South Africa and Nairobi, Kenya and *Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism* (Tel Aviv, 2017), (see Fig. 17 and 18 respectively). A number of symposia and conference panels in the humanities and the visual arts have similarly been exploring this topic: *Speculative Freedoms and Alternative Futures: AfroSciFi, Fantasy and Sci-fi* (Rhodes University 2017), *Alternative and Current Visual Discourses in South Africa and the Continent* (SAVAH and Tshwane University of Technology 2017) and *African Utopias, Afrofuturism, Afropolitanism: Imagining and Imaging, African Futures* (Council of the African Studies Association Triennial in Ghana, 2017). These were foreshadowed in the programmatic arena by events such as the Afrofutures UK (2015) salon organised at Mad Labs in England and the Afrofuture Festival (2015) organized by WORM in the Netherlands.

1: What then is Afrofuturism?

In a comparative definition of the term Nettrice R. Gaskins (2016:38) suggests: "Afrofuturism is the 'Space Age', ancient African iconography, cosmology and metaphysics, psychedelic artwork, cultural heritage artifacts, and electronic soundscapes that reflect the techno-vernacular creative practices of an idiosyncratic, visionary, and creative community of makers."

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[32] "They Came From Outer Space, an exhibition curated by Raimi Gbadamosi, deals with questions regarding conceptions of Africa and the future. According to Gbadamosi: "The idea of science and technology sits uncomfortably alongside general perceptions of Africa as 'a place out of time'." See "They Came From Outer Space" in SA Creatives: https://sacreativenetwork.co.za/event/they-came-from-outer-space/ accessed on 19/09/2018

[33] This series of events can be considered as very successful, particularly in terms of knowledge production, as they also culminated in an accompanying book of essays, an edited volume of the highest standard that will serve as a resource and catalogue for many African futures scholarships for years to come. A much needed contribution towards futurist literature that is produced on the African continent, counterbalancing the possibility of all Afrofuturistic texts being written in North America.

Lavender III (2009:190) condenses Afrofuturism to a race-based journeying of technology that explores "both the innovative cultural productions enabled by technology and the ways in which black people have been the subjects of techno scientific exploitation". He suggests that slavery – vis-à-vis the transatlantic slave trade – and its structures have imposed a science-fictional existence on the descendants of African slaves figuring them as "cyborgs in a white man's world" (Lavender III 2009:190). In possible reference to Afrofuturism in relation to the African-American diaspora, Sharp (2013:153) goes on to suggest, "[a]s a sub-genre, Afrofuturism doesn't require any reference to classical African civilizations"[34]. Van Veen and Anderson (2018:13) posit:

> On the one channel, Afrofuturism is often described as an inventory of black futurist aesthetics—androids, cyborgs, black superheroes and alien motifs—with little thought as to how its aesthetic symbols and their hybrid identities potentially question underlying paradigms of race and identity that inform (and deform) cultural assumptions concerning blackness. On the other channel, Afrofuturism is viewed as a futurist extension of Afrocentricity, where its authenticity is indexed to the politics of representation, and its symbols recuperated toward essentialist notions of black culture.

Against this backdrop, I assess the value of the term Afrofuturism in relation to the contemporary visual arts of Africa and in particular Zambia. This chapter begins to unpack the relevance of labelling artists on the African continent who employ a 'futuristic' aesthetic as Afrofuturists. Without seeking to imply simplistic dichotomies, the argument chooses to align the work by the Zambian artists with African Futurism as opposed to Afrofuturism, although their work – just like the work of many artists working on the continent – can easily be aligned to the latter owing to their respective aesthetic sensibilities. The distinction is drawn in a consideration of the commonalities between Afrofuturism and African Futurism

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[34] This is the opposite with Zambian artists such as Zenzele Chulu (1994-1997) whose core frame of reference with regard to subject matter is centred on ancient African civilisations, as is evidenced in their paintings *Afreenaissance* (1994-1997) as will be demonstrated in Chapter 3.

"in order to locate an African sensibility in the imagining of African futures," as Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum (2013:113) suggests in her distinction between the two. Afrofuturism, although being readily adopted as a term to classify works by African artists on the continent, is primarily an African-American cultural aesthetic that emerged in the early 1970s and is linked to musicians such as Sun Ra and George Clinton as well as writers like Octavia Butler and Samuel R. Delany (Yaszek 2013; Dery 1994; Eshun 2003; Akpem 2011; Womack 2013; Nelson 2013). Raimi Gbadamosi, curator of the earlier mentioned exhibition, *They Came from Outer Space* (2015) at the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg, suggests that "The world has stacked all the odds against blackness. This is not a pity party; I am just looking at the realities … there has to be something else" (Gbadamosi in Zvomuya 2015). According to Gbadamosi, something has to emerge, and that is 'Afrofuturism', the default term that has generally been accepted to classify the work of African artists whose work relates to futurism.

Anderson and Van Veen (2018:11) suggest that "the nascent field of Afrofuturist studies has yet to unpack how it converges with – yet challenges – the fields of Black and Africana studies, critical posthumanism, process philosophy, alien phenomenology" and science fiction studies.

Afrofuturism is focused on the reinvigoration of Afrocentricity, whereas African Futurism's major concerns "include postcolonialism, neo-colonialism, trans global identities, transcultural identities … the de-defining, de-writing, and transcendence of the historical, geographical, national, political, economic, and temporal specifiers" (Sunstrum 2013). However, as Tobias C. van Veen (2014) suggests:

> While Afrocentrism and Black Nationalism battle Alien Nation with the 'historical recovery' of cultural authenticity and tradition, Afrofuturism embraces its science fictional production. Afrofuturism thus operates by way of paradoxically embracing

figures of the past while eschewing claims to authenticity or tradition. But with both strategies, acknowledged and not, the past is but an archive for repurposing, a timeline to be sampled, and a chronology to be upset with intervention.

It is, therefore along the lines of these sensibilities that the Zambian artists selected for this study reconstitute the way in which Africa is generally portrayed in contemporary art. The influences of the sci-fi genre and references to advanced technology in their art practice expand the representation of Africa by means of a speculative freedom. "Speculative freedom" here, is in reference to a proposition by American scholar Dr Reynaldo Anderson[35] (2018) who suggests "We call it speculative because before you actually physically pursue freedom or build a better future you have to imagine it first. It always starts with your imagination. And so, the way you imagine freedom or a better life or a future, will start from your imagination first."

By borrowing representations of imagery that has come to be accepted as futuristic, they respond to the hegemonic spectacle that is rooted in colonialism and has been adapted by Euro-American expatriates in a Zambian context. In addition, collectively, the artists do not limit their creativity to the Eurocentric evaluations of tradition and identity in contemporary Zambian art that necessitate their environment to be depicted in a particular way. The chapter concludes by arguing that where Afrofuturism's main concerns with regard imaginings of the future focus on fantasy, inspired by an escape from a horrific past, African Futurisms major concerns in this regard focus on reality, inspired by the hope for a brighter future. With Afrofuturism presumably being an African-American construct, and African Futurism being a concept that is intuitively born and created on the African continent and not its diaspora, African Futurism, it can be argued, is the product of "African postcolonial imaginings" (Sunstrum 2013:118). Furthermore, it is open to doubt that the Zambian artists interviewed

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[35] "Looking to Afrofuturism" 3.0 https://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/looking-afrofuturism-30

during the course of this research – as will be seen in chapter 3 – had ever heard of Afrofuturism before the research interviews, as the transcriptions indicate; moreover, it may not seem necessary for many artists assigned to Afrofuturism to unequivocally deny such affiliation.

1.1: The rise and rise of Afrofuturism as the default term for African futurity

It can be suggested that there is a renewed rise of interest in art being produced by artists currently based on the African continent rather than that being produced by artists in its diasporas. In the late twentieth century, diasporic African art or " 'African diaspora art'… a generic label, presently applied with the purpose of broadly situating modern and contemporary artwork by people of African descent in discussions of African" (Jacqueline Francis 2013:405) was the sweetheart of the international art world, artists featuring in these shows being exhibited and peddled as representations or representatives of Africa. While this culminated in developments such as the founding of the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) in San Francisco in 2002 and there is still a residual preference for diasporic artists, focus today seems to have shifted, or focused directly, rather, on the continent itself. In light of the rising interest in art from the African continent and its diasporas, there also appears to be an indisputable increase in the number of articles, symposia, performances and exhibitions addressing ideas envisaging alternative African futures, as has already been highlighted in the introduction.

The term seems to have been endorsed by creditable scholars currently based on the African continent such as Gbadamosi[36]; however, should 'Afrofuturism' continuously being listed as a sub-theme in these various high-level conferences go without being questioned or at least scrutinised when being applied to African artists?

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[36] See Introduction

It would be unrealistic in terms of scope to pinpoint where the framings of such artists and scholars is occurring worldwide, neither would it be truthful to acknowledge or claim that one can attempt to name all of those whose input can be said to be shaping labelling and the perspective of Afrofuturism in recent years within the context of academia[37]. However, as this is a relatively new area of study, a few of them are listed here – those who at least may appear more relevant to this study. The first of these, *Black Portraiture[s] III – Reinventions: Strains of Histories and Cultures*, in 2016[38], a gathering of predominantly African-American artists, scholars and curators featured panels such as *Pan African Futures: Exploring Race as Technology, Afrofuturism as Methodology*[39] as well as *Afrofuturism and Art Activism*, featuring eminent and emerging Afrofuturists from within Africa, the United States and Europe. The moderator's abstracts' for these two sessions respectively suggested:

> From W.E.B. Dubois' story, "The Comet," to Octavia Butler's novel, "Dawn," the black speculative tradition offers a critical approach to understanding how black bodies materialize in the future. Panellists draw upon this lens to reimagine race as a kind of technology, one that relies on constant innovation and upgrade, producing parallel universes. (Benjamin 2016) Afrofuturism is described as a music (Sun Ra and George Clinton), and sci-fi literature movement (Mark Derry in dialogue with Butler, Delany, Rose). However, recent initiatives give it a more comprehensive understanding, both as an artistic and performative (Philips/Duplan), but also political (LaFleur/Mbembe) and metaphysical (Womack/Deruisseau) tool to question – if not redefine – our contemporary world (France 2016).[40]

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[37] Institutions such as Rhodes University introduced Afrofuturism into a course in the undergraduate curriculum of 2018

[38] See Fig. 19. I attended this symposium held at Turbine Hall in Johannesburg, South Africa from 17-19 November 2016 and interviewed (recorded) eminent Detroit-based Afrofuturism Ingrid LaFleur, the founder of AFROTOPIA "an evolving creative research project that investigates the possibilities of using the arts movement Afrofuturism as psychosocial healing". I also engaged in a presentation (and recorded with consent) by Beninese-French Afrofuturism Mawena Yehouessi, an emerging scholar and founder of the 'Black(s) to the Future' website (www.blackstothefuture.com) with whom I also conversed at great length, although informally, on the subject of Afrofuturism.

[39] Moderated by Ruha Benjamin (Princeton University); Panelists: Achille Mbembe (University of the Witwatersrand), Lynee Denise (Los Angeles-based scholar and deejay) and Ingrid LaFleur (Detroit-based curator)

[40] Panel moderator Monroe France (NYU)

Afrofuturism was also listed as a sub-theme at the South African Visual Arts Historians (SAVAH) conference in 2017[41] themed "Alternative and Current Visual Discourses in South Africa and the Continent" and the call for conference papers stated in part:

> The advent of the post-colonial epoch in Africa during the mid-twentieth century ushered in a wave of revisionist and African-based theoretical prisms of seeing and reading the art of the continent, such as Negritude, Afrocentrism, Black Aesthetics and so on. Since their emergence, these theories or 'registers of inquiry' (Taylor 2016) have dominated visual arts praxis as well as scholarly dialogues on the complex and vibrant aesthetics of Africa. (SAVAH 2017)

Similarly, the earlier mentioned postgraduate colloquium[42], *Imagined Futures: Speculative Freedoms and Alternative Futures: AfroSciFi, Fantasy and Specific*, which had among its topics "utopia/dystopia", "post-human" beings and "the futures of race, gender and sexuality" also featured a specific panel entitled "Afrofuturism in South Africa". The colloquium was specifically interested in papers on artistic projects in the genres of literature, film, fine art, digital media and graphic novels that "might productively challenge and expand each other, reimagining relations of place and belonging, the interpretation and representation of agency and activism, and the positioning of Africa within speculative futures" (Africolloquium 2017). Similarly, the Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA) Triennial 2017[43] held in Ghana featured a round table entitled *African Utopias, Afrofuturism, Afropolitanism: Imagining and Imaging, African Futures*, where again Afrofuturism featured notably. The term also featured in exhibitions such as *The Shadows Took Shape*[44], (Harlem New York

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[41] See 2017: call for papers, the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Faculty of the Arts, Tshwane University of Technology, 28-30 September, SAVAH Conference 2017.
[42] See 2017: call for papers, English Department at Rhodes University and the Mellon Urban Connections and African Popular Imaginaries Project, 29 September. I was also one of the speakers at this event where I presented the paper "Speculative nonconformity: a Zambian consideration".
[43] This is considered the premier Art Historians conference for scholars of "African Arts" or the arts of Africa; ironically the majority of them are based in the USA and have never lived in Africa before save for the periodic research trips. This was in fact the first time that the conference was being held on the African continent.
[44] The exhibition 14 November 2013 to 9 March 2014

2013:14) which draws its title from a Sun Ra poem and a posthumously released series of recordings:

> [A] dynamic interdisciplinary exhibition exploring contemporary art through the lens of Afrofuturist aesthetics. Coined in 1994 by writer Mark Dery in his essay "Black to the Future," the term "Afrofuturism" refers to a creative and intellectual genre that emerged as a strategy to explore science fiction, fantasy, magical realism, and pan-Africanism. With roots in the avant-garde musical stylings of sonic innovator Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount, 1914–1993), Afrofuturism has been used by artists, writers and theorists as a way to prophesize the future, redefine the present and reconceptualise the past (Golden 2013)

As mentioned earlier, *They Came from Outer Space* (Johannesburg, 2015) and *Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism* (Tel Aviv, 2016-2017)[45] curated by Ruth Direktor, Curator of Contemporary Art at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (TAMA) may also be inventoried as further initiatives. The catalogue summary from the latter states:

> This large-scale group exhibition presents art being made today in, or about, Africa, from an Afro-futurist perspective that challenges traditional divisions: fantasy, imagination and cosmology, usually associated with past mythology, are incarnated into science fiction and futurist representation. The various narratives span between colonialism and its ramifications to a re-examination of the African body, landscape and culture—through utterances that shatter the usual distinction between truth and fiction, between myth and science, between technology and spirituality (Direktor 2016).

A similar exhibition that is currently on display in Dortmund, Germany and was presented by German curators Inke Arns and Fabian Saavedra-Lara (Interkultur Ruhr) is *Afro-Tech and the Future of Re-Invention*[46]. While the exhibition features the work of twenty artists from various backgrounds and cultures most of whom are not based on the African continent, the

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[45] The exhibition ran from December 9, 2016 – May 27, 2017. See http://www.africa-tamuseum.org.il/ accessed 28 January 2018.
[46] The exhibition has been running at the Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV) in Dortmund from 20 October 2017 and will close on 22 April 2018. See https://www.hmkv.de/. Accessed on 28 January 2018.

exhibition abstract places Afrofuturism at the fore and brings it the forefront of the dialogue stating:

> The speculative narratives unfolding in the artworks on display are confronted with actual inventions from maker scenes in different African countries. This creates a double shift of perspective: while the artworks project decidedly African and diasporic sci-fi visions, the real devices appear as evidence of a technological development that is already underway. The exhibition thus presents Africa as a continent of technological innovation (Arns and Fabian 2017).

The exhibition poster (see fig. 20) bears striking similarities to the album cover of Sun Ra's *Space Is the Place* soundtrack (see fig. 21). Whereas the latter features the bust of Sun Ra wearing a reproduction of an ancient Egyptian headdress attributed to the Pharaohs, the stylised bust of what appears to be an android can also be seen wearing one on the exhibition poster. In both images, the busts are suspended above titles and appear to be descending from space, against the backdrops of barren landscapes reminiscent of popular science fiction movies. This galactic, science-fiction themed poster may also have been used to emphasise the content of the exhibition, which featured work such as *Mpumzi*[47] and *The Afronauts*[48] (see fig 23) alongside *Ogun* (see fig. 24) from the photograph series *The Prophecy* (2013–2016) by Fabrice Monteiro and Wangechi Mutu's animated video *The End of Eating Everything*, (2013) (See Fig. 25).

Nevertheless, with the aforementioned exhibitions and symposia it is clear that there seems to be an impulse for re-engaging with African legacy and recollections, not merely as an artistic springboard to contemplate the present African condition but as a tool for imagining the future. Furthermore, there is an indication that the work of a good number of artists and scholars engaging in imaginative juxtapositions of the past, present and future are robotically

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[47] Mpumzi also featured in the exhibition *Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism in Tel Aviv* (2017)
[48] This is a 2012 film by Cristina De Middel, the term "Afronaut" by which it is called, is unpacked in chapter four which looks at the metaphor of Space travel in the work of Zambian artists

– for lack of a better term – being attributed as 'Afrofuturism'. However, one question worth asking here is how and why artists and scholars have arrived at the term 'Afrofuturism' when addressing a particular aesthetic; or to be more specific, assessing the value of the term 'Afrofuturism' in the visual arts of Africa today. What is more, is it reasonable to assign 'Afrofuturism' to artists who have been working on the African continent in the past and in the present and may never even have heard of the term? What is the value of this? By further probing the term, one might be able to assess its relevance. How can one define the term in order perhaps to re-contextualise it and to give it a new understanding based on African ideas and lived experiences that may have nothing to do with the continent's diaspora yet still be of value in unpacking perceptions of the future? These questions need answering with the forethought that the 'Afro' in Afrofuturism may be measured in different ways as regards creativity and resourcefulness of by Africans – and others – less familiar with a lived experience on the continent than perhaps contemporary Zambian artists, who have lived and worked on the continent for their entire careers. For example, how do these Zambian artists imagine their own future and, by extension, the future of a continent whose prospects may currently be perceived as being lodged at the centre of an economic cold war between Euro-America and the Far East?

In responding to these questions, the argument in this thesis does not seek to vilify Afrofuturism with regard to its inclusion or exclusion of African artists, but to acknowledge cruxes of convergence within the discourse on Afrofuturism and how these cruxes of convergence may be considered to be at the core of challenging outmoded notions of Africa's belatedness.

There is an importance in teasing out these questions relating to this all-inclusive descriptor, as Sofia Samatar (2017) points out in reference to Ytasha L. Womack's 2013 book

Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture[49], which embraces a number of African artists, such as novelist Nnedi Okorafor and filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu. They are, argues Samatar: "absorbed seamlessly into the flow of Afrofuturism as Womack presents it, without a discussion of how their relationship to the African continent, obviously different from that of most artists in the diaspora, informs their engagement with the field" (Samatar 2017: 176). As much as this all-embracing quality of Afrofuturism can be seen as a good thing, it may have its seemingly inadvertent flaw, as this thesis will continue to show, borrowing again from Samatar (2017:176):

> On the one hand, this embrace of black futurists without regard to their position on the planet aligns with Afrofuturism's emphasis on blackness rather than nationhood and its orientation toward outer space, in which Earth figures as one star among others rather than a map carved up by borders. On the other, the lack of attention to the diverse streams of Afrofuturism threatens not only to obscure possibilities for rich discussions, but also to imply a development narrative that assumes there were no African futurists before 2000. Such a narrative runs counter to the philosophy of Afrofuturism, which distrusts models of progress and development, prizing instead time-traveling leaps, sidesteps into alternate universes, and the reanimation of history.

Indeed, the lack of attention to the diverse streams of Afrofuturism can truly obscure African futurists with rich narratives who have produced work before 2000, as the following section suggests. Samatar (2017: 177) argues that Afrofuturism opens up a space that becomes "impossible to see it as confined to a narrow geographical or historical track. This open space of Afrofuturism suggests several interesting points about black futurisms today and the potential for productive transnational conversations. Such conversations cannot happen, however, unless one recognises that different voices are speaking, nor can the value of Afrofuturism as an imaginative space is fully understood without attention to the variety of artists it attracts."

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[49] Samatar, S. 2017 describes the book as: "the first comprehensive primer on the subject" of Afrofuturism.

1.2: The blurry dichotomy between "Afro-" and "African" futurisms

It is not the purpose of this thesis to engage in an exhaustive analysis of all or a great many of these artists and their work in the visual arts, as the emphasis is on a select number of Zambian artists. However, a few of them are worthy of note and will be mentioned before engaging in the work of the Zambian artists in much detail in later chapters. These are South Africa's Credo Mutwa and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s Bodys-Isek-Kingelez whose works predate 2000; Pierre Bodo (DRC), Monsengo Shula (DRC) and Gerald Machona (Zimbabwe/South Africa) whose post-2000 works fit suitably into the concerns and arguments of this thesis owing to particular themes of futurism or futuristic tropes, as it were, and are returned to in reference in later chapters. Nevertheless, emphasis on some Congolese artists is because of the DRC's historic and cultural connections with Zambia, particularly its close ties with the origins of the Luba-Lunda Kingdom or *ubwanga*[50].

Mutwa, who is often viewed foremost as a traditionalist – a Sanusi, a carrier and keeper of ancient knowledge – draws on concepts of African cosmology derived from his Zulu ethnicity, blending them with personal recollections of interaction with extra-terrestrials (Mutwa 1996:150). In the painted portrayals of his visions, he juxtaposes a technologically advanced future and humanoid robots with depictions of dinosaurs (see fig. 26). Whereas Mutwa is afforded some respect for his knowledge of ancient African cultures, his visions and representations of the future are labelled by some as outlandish "as if knowledge of an African past precludes him from having any interest in and knowledge of the future" (Simbao 2007:43). As Simbao (2007:43) points out, it is problematic that depictions of the future, particularly in the genre of science fiction are "often viewed as the white man's frontier."

Bodys Isek-Kingelez had been creating such portrayals for decades, his *Ville Fantôme* (Ghost Town) (see fig. 27) is just one of many examples, and Pierre Bodo's aptly named *Africa of*

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[50] Loosely translated as 'witchcraft'.

Tomorrow (see fig. 28). These works arguably dislodge presumptive notions of African belatedness and project Africa beyond pre- and post- colonial visualisations as a technologically advanced utopia. Also, they portray representations far removed from descriptions by Gordon and Gordon who suggest that: "Perhaps the worst large city in Africa is Kinshasa in the strife-torn DRC. Kinshasa has been described as an 'urban hell' and a dysfunctional city that shows 'just how bad urban life can get.'… Conditions in Kinshasa are appalling, and the scale of human misery is hard to imagine" (Gordon and Gordon 2013:222). Despite this seemingly disheartening framework, Kinshasa has been home to some outstanding African futurists whose portrayals of urban dwellings are far from what can be described as an "urban hell".

Again, while they both portray sprawling metropoles, they can both be individually read as sending unique subliminal messages. Particularly concerning the latter because it is a painting, popular themes in urban Congolese paintings range from "idyllic representations of rural life in an unspecified time, to parables of the colonial condition and postcolonial dictatorship" (Kasfir 1999:28).

Also from the DRC, Monsengo Shula's space-themed painting *Ata Ndele (mokili ekubalaku) Sooner or Later the World Will Change* (see fig. 29) raises similar complications around the perceptions of Africa, for someone who lives in an "urban hell" to visualise space travel by the use of African motifs juxtaposed with space travellers clad in space suits, surrounding a satellite, can be read as powerful visual devices. With Shula's painting alongside Isek-Kingelez and Bobo's cityscapes, it is as if because of these artists' materiality, or rather their lived everyday lives, they take futurism to the most passionate extremes with unquestionably convincing results. Zimbabwean-born, South African-based artist Gerald Machona, who references the "African tradition of masked performance, re-imagined with an Afro-Futurist motif, to shape his work" (Mabandu 2014), has also adopted "Afronaut" a word attributed to

Nkoloso. In *Ndiri Afronaut (I am an Afronaut)* (Fig. 30) Machona skilfully references the *Nyau*, a secret society of the Chewa people from the southern Malawi, eastern Zambia, western Mozambique and areas where they migrated to in Zimbabwe. His use of the astronaut motif provides a counter-image not to challenge the West, but turning the aesthetic on Africa itself, South Africa to be specific. He uses it as a device to confront the "xenophobic attacks visited upon non-South African nationals" (Mabandu 2014). Furthermore, his "use of decommissioned currency as a key material enables the artist to examine the impact and significance of historical migration on the African continent, linking the events of the past with contemporary issues of diasporic migration, xenophobic intolerance and violence in South Africa." (Sydney Biennale 2016). Machona uses *Nyau* tradition, therefore, to ideologically address contemporary issues around space, migration, and commerce. By using diverse range of mediums, and a space age motif to reference the past and present, one would argue that he succeeds in dislodging outdated notions of tradition, identity and sociopolitical conditions that conservatively close down spaces and borders.

Nevertheless**,** the power of agency held by African artists on the continent, specifically in Zambia, has created new ways of thinking and visual narratives that can open up futuristic multiplicities without necessarily labelling them as Afrofuturism. Therefore, going forward, it is necessary to analyse a number of definitions of Afrofuturism and if possible, trace its etymology, in order to see whether the terminology is applicable to the artists who are examined in this study. The next section therefore, partially analyses the history Afrofuturism. This analysis permits the study to determine and set the stage and lay out questions pertinent to the understanding of the term Afrofuturism – in particular in relation to art – from its earliest mention by other writers and scholars, opening the unpacking of the

term with its many characterisations and definitions (Samatar 2017, Reynold and Jones 2016, Gbadamosi 2015, Womack 2013, Yaszek 2006, Eshun 2003, Rockeymoore 2000).

1.3: Afrofuturism: Movement, fad or genre?

Essentially, the prominence of envisioning the future is intimately articulated in the philosophy, or notions rather, surrounding the concept of Afrofuturism. As such, it should by no means be associated with Futurism in the art historical context, which is regarded as "the first movement of the twentieth century to aim directly and deliberately at mass audience" (Tisdall and Bozzolla 1985:7) and the aim of the Futurists was "to transform an anachronistic society" in an Italian context. Gaskins (2016:30) elaborates this as she argues that:

> Afrofuturism is not a black version of the early twentieth-century Italian futurism since it is not solely concerned with the future. Instead, Afrofuturism navigates past, present, and future simultaneously. Afrofuturism is counter-hegemonic and not concerned with representing the mainstream or the canon of Western art. Afrofuturism advocates for the revision of accepted, long-standing views, theories, historical events, and movements.

With regards a departure point vis-à-vis defining distinctions Anderson and Jones (2017: ix) go on to elaborate that: "An important distinction between concepts such as futurism and Afrofuturism is that the former began as an avant-garde movement among European intellectuals and artists, and during and after WWII in the ideas and work of Isaac Asimov, Claude Shannon… and others".

The characterisations of Afrofuturism fluctuate, but what all of them seem to agree upon is the imagination of the future by black people, whether it be imaginings of an actual lived future or fantasy. Numerous authors (Womack 2013, Yaszek 2006 et al.) link Afrofuturism to the United States or the African diaspora and give emphasis to the element of race – black people to be specific – within its various aspects. As emphasised by Samatar (2017: 175):

> The idea that Afrofuturism is American derives from etymological history: mark Dery, an American critic, coined the term in his 1993 essay "Black to the future," defined it as "African-American" speculative fiction and signification, and interviewed the Americans Samuel r. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose. While "Black to the future" hints at a wider Afro-diasporic archive, mentioning, for example, the Jamaican Lee "Scratch" Perry, Dery does not glance toward Africa except as a lost realm, the site of the massive alien abduction of the slave trade.

While Dery, who is generally accepted to have coined the term, for the greater part restricts it to the transatlantic African diaspora as "African-American culture's appropriation of technology" (2008:6), Eshun broadens the periphery, stating "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures created in a century hostile to Afrodiasporic projection" (Eshun 2003: 301). These counter-futures, that is, futures imagined outside the normative Euro-American hegemony, are futures imagined by the Zambian artists discussed in this thesis; Afrofuturism can help to recover these histories of futures. The importance of these counter-futures cannot be over-emphasised. Although Alexis Lothian refers to the concept in the context of "Afrofuturism as an alternate history and future for science fiction" she suggests that "counter-futures must continually be imagined without the colonizing mind-set that a singular future could overtake every incipient possibility. However, to what extent is it possible to rewrite the hegemonic futurisms that operate to produce and maintain the uneven, unequal world, as we know it?" (Lothian 2018)

Nevertheless, it is Eshun who, in his book *More Brilliant Than the Sun, Adventures in Sonic Fiction*, interestingly traces a pre-Dery course to British music writer, journalist, and former editor of *The Wire*[51] magazine, Mark Sinker, in terms of writing on Afrofuturism from a UK-based context, stating: "Afrofuturism comes from Mark Dery's '93 book, but the trajectory starts with Mark Sinker. In 1992, Sinker starts writing on Black Science Fiction; that's

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[51] *The Wire* is a British avant-garde music magazine publishing out of Hackney, London

because he's just been to the States and Greg Tate's been writing a lot about the interface between science fiction and Black Music," (Eshun 1998). Mark A. Rockeymoore (2000) asserts that it is Afrofuturist Alondra Nelson who declared that her colleague Dery was the first to use the term Afrofuturism in his edited publication *Flame Wars*, among other places (Rockeymoore 2000). Rockeymoore goes on to point to the now famous and almost canonical text in Afrofuturism circles by Dery (1994):

> Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture — and more generally, African American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future — might for want of a better term, be called "Afro-futurism".

Rockeymoore argues, "Afrofuturism has expanded to embrace the entire, colourful world" (2000), which is a paradoxical statement, open to debate, because the authors who often claim the universality of Afrofuturism often return to the same names but occasionally add new ones. For instance, after suggesting the universality of Afrofuturism in this instance, in the same breath Rockeymoore (2000) proclaims:

> The soulful intonations of Sun Ra, DJ Spooky, Busta Rhymes, the Wu-Tang Clan, Public Enemy and others who straddle the razor's edge of the digital divide; the visual and aural artists redefining the way we think about ourselves by adding layers of contextual blackness in a multi-media format, accessed by varying levels of understanding and acceptance.

Such a listing of American musicians may be the reason why Eshun (2014)[52] argues that Afrofuturism had become "super-identified" with a kind of African-American perspective. By saying so, it can be implied that Eshun observes an outwardly African-American leaning with regard not only to the etymology of Afrofuturism but also its axis. Eshun, like Samatar

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[52] See Cox, C. 2014. An interview entitled "Afrofuturism, Afro-Pessimism and the Politics of Abstraction: A Conversation with Kodwo Eshun". Cox is a Professor of Philosophy at Hampshire College and a faculty member at the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS), Bard College.
faculty.hampshire.edu/ccox/Cox.Interview%20with%20Kodwo%20Eshun.pdf

is one of the scholars who observe there has often been a general narrowing down of Afrofuturism to an African-American context. Nevertheless, by definition Rockeymoore proposes that it is questionable whether Afrofuturism possesses specific traits or characteristics because "its expressions are as diverse as the Afrikan diaspora and the experiences shared by those who compose it. The only framework that can possibly contribute to an understanding of what Afrofuturism is would be the overarching cultural system within which it has gestated" (Rockeymoore 2000). For argument's sake, this statement can perhaps be countered if one were to consider "Afrofuturism as a mechanism" (Hamilton 2017:17)[53], a recently devised theory. Rockeymoore suggests that because Afrofuturism is "transnational – disdaining place and localized adaptations for a more holistic global extent" (Rockeymoore 2000). An all-encompassing cultural system may only be defined as "Marimba Ani's global white supremacy system. In this view, cultural icons like Nat Turner, Akhenaton, Nkrumah, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Martin, Malcolm, and countless others were the Afrofuturists of their day." (2000).

On the other hand, just as Rockeymoore's statement implies, the majority of authors consulted in this thesis declare that Afrofuturism also examines problems that blacks and people of colour face, doing so as an epistemology that "critiques interpretations of the past and the future" (Morris 2012:146).

Before the question of what Afrofuturism is can be addressed and more comprehensively answered, it is important perhaps to find out its earliest usage by looking at the writings of the above-mentioned authors, among others. Again, there are limitations within the context of this research that will allow for an acknowledgement of all the writings that have attempted to uncover similar arguments in recent times because of the frequency with which

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[53] This concept is unpacked later in the chapter

Afrofuturism as a broader topic is continuously being covered in fora such as conference presentations, performances and online publications.[54]

Nonetheless, from most of the available texts consulted, as well as discussions and presentations attended as preliminary research for the thesis, Afrofuturism appears to be a cultural movement that originated in the United States in the 1950s, faltered and gradually returned to a considerable rise globally over the past few decades, particularly within popular culture. Notwithstanding, the earlier mentioned symposia and exhibitions seem to indicate that now African-based artists and scholars are fully engaging the dialogue. In her essay "Afrofuturism, science fiction, and the history of the future" Yaszek, who specifically explores how Afrofuturist literature has developed over the past century in tandem with science fiction, also briefly reviews the history and aesthetic mission of Afrofuturism as she considers what she sees as some of the central texts of literary Afrofuturism. She points out that "one of the primary ways that artists project black futures in writing is by adopting the tropes and narrative techniques of science fiction or by writing from an Afrodiasporic perspective from within the science fiction community," (Yaszek 2006:43). In a way these African diasporic narratives make use of folklore and stories that converge with characteristic

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[54] Three examples that can be cited here are: the Afrofuturism Symposium at the University of Chicago, in October 2018, described as a "two-day Afrofuturism Symposium [that] bridges concepts in the creative worlds of Afrofuturism and science. The fluidity of time and space captures the imagination of Afrofuturists harnessing threads of time to create new futures, an enlightened past, and a great present. Day 1 celebrates the influence of Ancient Egyptian and Nubian cultures in the mythos of comics and Afrofuturism. Day 2 explores the wonders of time travel in Afrofuturist art, narratives, and life aptly termed Black Quantum Futurism. Together, these events aim to reveal the symbiotic relationship between the intuiting creative and the science that provides insight into our lives and universe." (source: https://graycenter.uchicago.edu/projects/two-day-afrofuturism-symposium-at-the-university-of-chicago accessed on 02/10/18); "The Museum as Performance at the Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art" which featured Hannah Catherine Jones a.k.a. Foxy Moron. Hannah Catherine Jones is a London-based artist, researcher and composer. Under the pseudonym Foxy Moron, she creates works that juxtapose ancient musical modalities with sci-fi timbres. These "sounds in opposition" are a vehicle to think through the painful legacies of slavery, but also the conceptual possibilities of Afrofuturism." (source: https://www.serralves.pt/en/ accessed on 02/10/18); and the ICA Live Art Festival which took place from 1 to 16 September 2018 and featured "Writer Bongani Madondo [presenting] Zulu: Credo Mutwa's Fantasia in Praxis, a performance lecture, in which Mutwa's extensive legacy around Afrofuturism is ritualised and integrated with several musical forms, archival video footage and testimonies from a range of African scholars." (source: http://www.ica.uct.ac.za/ accessed on 02/10/18).

of narratives that emerge on the African continent without necessarily having direct contact: the works of Mutwa (1964. 1996, 2000) and his creation epics bear to mind.

Recently, artists and scholars have continuously framed Afrofuturism over the past three decades or so in relation to the largely American scene; however, it is both science fiction and Afrodiasporic scholars that have become increasingly interested in what Sheree R. Thomas calls "speculative fiction from the African diaspora." (in Yaszek 2006: 41). Yazsek recounts that throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was little discussion of this type of fiction as a literary mode with its own distinct themes, techniques, and relations to other kinds of black cultural production. She proposes that:

> This situation changed with the emergence of Afrofuturism studies in the 1990s, when cultural critics including Mark Dery, Greg Tate, Tricia Rose, and Kodwo Eshun first drew attention to the centrality of science fiction themes and techniques in the work of many black authors, artists, and musicians. The term is generally credited to Dery, who, in his 1994 edited collection Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture, introduces the term "Afrofuturism" to define 'speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th-century technoculture – and more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future' to explore how people of colour negotiate life in a technology intensive world (Yaszek 2006: 41-42).

Similarly, in 2014 as a graduate scholar at McGill University Tobias C. van Veen suggested there had been some two and a half decades of Afrofuturism specifically around scholarship itself leading to the commonly accepted definitions of today – starting in the late 1980s with Mark Sinker in *WIRE* magazine (1992), Greg Tate in *The Village Voice* (1992), "establishing its namesake with Dery's 1993 interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Tricia Rose, and Tate (1994a), and undergoing an inventory of its 'Sonic Fictions' in Kodwo Eshun's *More Brilliant Than The Sun* (1999) — the conceptual elaboration of the field remains somewhat nebulous."(van Veen 2014: 43-44).

As mentioned earlier, African-American musicians Sun Ra and George Clinton respectively, are associated to the idea of Afrofuturism – in most cases heralded as the forebears of Afrofuturism – although it is not apparent that they may not have identified themselves as such. However, it is only in recent times, from what Yaszek's text suggests, that Afrofuturism is being defined as an emergent cultural aesthetic that combines elements of Afrocentricity, fantasy, magic and cosmology to critique and revise or re-examine historical perceptions pertaining to people of colour. In this case, Yaszek refers specifically to African-Americans, addressing their concerns while encompassing a wide range of media among artists and scholars with a common interest of imagining the future.

Without necessarily attempting to dichotomise the diaspora and the African continent it can be argued that in the essay *Africa As an Alien Future: The Middle Passage, Afrofuturism, and Postcolonial Waterworlds*, authors such as Ruth Mayer do not even make any attempt to link Afrofuturism to the African continent at all; perhaps the only connection is a diasporic one, otherwise Afrofuturism is almost an entirely African-American affair, as she declares "Afrofuturism is an artistic and theoretical movement which has become a vital part of contemporary black diasporic (pop) culture. Afrofuturism artists turn to black history in order to recreate it in a markedly fantastic mode. Mixing up the imagery of the Middle Passage with contemporary experiences of displacement, migration, and alienation, they turn the project of recuperating the past into a futuristic venture." (Mayer 2000:555).

1.4: The triumvirate: Sun Ra, George Clinton, and Lee Scratch Perry

Both Sun Ra and George Clinton merged their thoughts about the African-American condition with an obsession with outer space. Sun Ra did so as far back as the 1950s but also with his film *Space is The Place* where he implied that he came to rescue African Americans from earth and take them to another planet because they did not belong here, hence their continued oppression. Where Sun Ra inspired his philosophy with jazz music, Clinton did so

with a genre called psychedelic punk, and his band P-Funk and one album even bore the name *Mothership Connection* in relation to space travel. Both these 'patriarchs' of Afrofuturism, were also inspired by a fascination with Egyptology and all its ancient symbols juxtaposed with imagery of science fiction and interstellar travel on their album covers, their costumes and stage performances. This is also exemplified by an insight from Yaszek who indicates that "Indeed, many Americans first encountered what we now call Afrofuturism in the work of 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s jazz musicians such as Sun Ra and Lee "Scratch" Perry, who depicted themselves (and by extension all Afrodiasporic people) as the descendants of aliens who came to Earth to prepare humanity for its eventual destiny among the stars." (Yaszek 2006:46). According to Samatar, Sun Ra's electronic jazz, George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic and "the layered dub technique of Lee "Scratch" Perry are touchstones for twentieth-century Afrofuturistic expression in the Americas. The work of these three artists is emblematic of the field in the way it combines the use of technology and images of space travel with an eclectic mythology that draws on African cultural forms, particularly those of ancient Egypt. The technologically advanced future, represented by electronic music, blends seamlessly with the distant past: for George Clinton and Parliament-Funkadelic, funk is not a new musical style but a force as old as the universe." (Samatar 2017: 178). Again, similar to Sun Ra's album covers, the Afrofuturistic aesthetic goes beyond the music and makes way to the cover art of both George Clinton and Lee Scratch Perry, as can be seen on the albums *T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M.* (*The Awesome Power of a Fully Operational Mothership*) (see fig. 31) and *Mad Alien Dub* (see fig. 32) respectively.

Around the time these musicians were getting a foothold in their careers and notions of a dual consciousness that Afrofuturism represents. Yaszek points to authors in the 1960s and running through the 1970s, as she mentions "pioneering black authors such as Samuel Delany, Octavia Butler, Charles Saunders, and Jewelle Gomez" (Yaszek 2006:46). She

elaborates that "Today, this community is home to dozens if not hundreds of black authors from around the world. And indeed, science fiction and Afrofuturism have come together in a number of other ways through the rise of conferences" (ibid.), as well as exhibitions and publications such as the ones that have already been mentioned. As a result, Afrofuturism has evolved, and is still evolving into "a coherent mode not only aesthetically but also in terms of its political mission." (ibid.). Here, if not in a geopolitical approach to reasoning, one might suggest, to borrow from Lewis R. Gordon's "African-American Philosophy, Race, and Geography of Reason", that "[o]ddly enough, *black*, seems to encompass this diasporic group more than would the term 'Afro-American' or 'African American'" (Gordon 2015:18).

1.5: Matters of Dark Matter

Yaszek (2006) points out that Afrofuturism is more than a subgenre of science fiction and that in recent times, scholars such as African-American sociologist Alondra Nelson have been among the most influential in advancing Afrofuturism as a "coherent mode of critical inquiry" and perhaps pulling it away from a rootedness in African-American culture. Yaszek identifies Nelson and multimedia artist Paul D. Miller who in 1998 created the Afrofuturist listserve[55] (which includes scholars, musicians, authors, and artists) as Afrofuturists. In 2000 the listserve was followed by the launch of www.Afrofuturism.net, and two years later Nelson introduced her group's work to academia in the journal *Social Text*, "which demonstrated how the insights generated by members of the Afrofuturist listserve could open up new areas of scholarly inquiry" (Yaszek 2006: 42). Yaszek proposes that it is Nelson who indicates that the task of the Afrofuturist scholar is to "explore futurist themes in black cultural production and the ways in which technological innovation is changing the face of black art and culture" (Nelson and Miller 2006). Therefore, "because this kind of cultural production crosses conventional aesthetic boundaries (including the hypothetical boundaries

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[55] An electronic mailing list software

between canonical and popular culture), Afrofuturist scholars must be prepared to work both within and without the academy" (Nelson 2006:42). Tobias C. van Veen similarly expands on the exploration of the scholarly aspect of Afrofuturism in his thesis: *Other Planes of There: the MythSciences, chronopolitics and conceptechnics of Afrofuturism* where he likens Afrofuturist scholarship or thought to 'dark matter' a hypothetical type of matter that is popular in science fiction. Van Veen suggests that wherever the question "What is Afrofuturism?" emerges:

> there yields the astrophysical effects of dark matter, as if its invisible forces deflect exploratory inquiry: where its imaginative unearthing might yield its secrets, there shimmers in space only the uncanny effects of its cosmic gravity. Dark matter, as a metaphor for both black identity and black sf, holds double meaning in Afrofuturist scholarship; for it signals not only a neglected corner of what appears to be literary, cultural, or media study, but an elusive entity that is all too often tamed and defined by the instruments of disciplines bound to ethnonationalist apparatuses and confining approaches, leaving the language, concepts, and force of Afrofuturism unthought."
> (van Veen 2014: 43-44).

What comes out here, interestingly, is Afrofuturism's apparent inability to be defined or its mercurial ability not to be placed in any specific realm of definition, scholarly or otherwise, which is perhaps its most redeeming quality as something that challenges dominant discourses in the literary, performance and visual arts. Here again one is reminded of the major features within the concept of "prophetic pragmatism", in that "[p]rophetic pragmatism draws much from postmodern poststructural thought, in which theory is rejected as a master narrative but criticism is preferred as a proverbial speaking of truth and power" (Gordon 2006:18). There is a gravitational effect of absence that pervades Afrofuturism scholarship, as van Veen (2014) observes and one is inclined to agree that "everywhere Afrofuturism is uttered, yet there remains an (albeit, alluring) absence of inquiry into its conceptual dark matter — its historical, philosophical, and esoteric inheritances, sociopolitical linkages, conceptual operations, ontogenetic transformations, and performative forces." (van Veen

2014: 44). Hassler-Forest similarly alludes to this when he points out that "the forms within which Afrofuturism was articulated and circulated have been as destabilizing as the speculative pasts and futures they expressed … in this way Afrofuturism presented an important and influential challenge to the authoritative white discourses." (Hassler-Forest 2016:178).

Meanwhile, Ingrid LaFleur (2016) stresses that it should be understood that as regards Afrofuturism, not everybody that intentionally creates work – be it film, book, or painting – with Africans or African Americans in relation to the future had the concept of Afrofuturism in mind. It is only recently, now that Afrofuturism appears to be appealing to many, that people are beginning to study it and, as they continue to learn, to invent its philosophy. This is why there is so much freedom in terms of what passes for, or what can be labelled as Afrofuturism; in simpler terms one might observe that there is no dominant body in charge of labelling Afrofuturism. LaFleur, is also the founder of an Afrofuturist library in inner city Detroit, the city where she also ran for mayor in 2017, although the campaign was unsuccessful. Part of the mission of the library is keeping the youth off the streets and it encourages them to read the many texts and multimedia that she has gathered on Afrofuturism over the years. "Everyone, anybody, I don't want to get into that kind of space of privileging academia to do the labelling, I think people just do the labelling, the average person. What is interesting with Afrofuturism is when you talk to them (people), they will say, hey, I am into Afrofuturism too, especially when they learn about the aesthetic." (LaFleur 2016). Van Veen (2014) again touches on this when he suggests that despite the above-mentioned and other isolated attempts, "the study of Afrofuturism is hampered by confusion over who or what is an 'Afrofuturist', to where, what, or when the concept 'Afrofuturism' ought to be applied, and above all, what the concept signifies beyond a sociohistorical descriptor that reflects the general statement of black science fictional media

production." As if perhaps in a direct dialogue with this observation, Womack (2013:16) proposes that at the heart, "Afrofuturism stretches beyond the imagination far beyond the conversations of our time and the horizons of expectation, and kicks the box of normalcy and preconceived ideas of blackness out of the solar system. Whether its sci-fi lines or radical eccentricity, Afrofuturism inverts reality".

2: Implementing Afrofuturism 2.0 as a solution to the 'fad'

Afrofuturism can be considered as part of a fad that exists for placing 'Afro' in front of words in order to homogenise 'Africanness', which might raise the question, how African is Afrofuturism really? This brings to mind "Afri thing is not what it seems" an article by art historian Ruth Simbao (2008:58). Speaking within the context of contemporary African art, suggesting that it was "time for curators and critics to move on from their habit of plucking artists with all sorts of African connections and presenting them under fashionable rubrics that limit their work" (Simbao 2008:58). She indicates that prefixes 'Afri-' or 'Afro-' may have limitations in terms of the meaning they can hold. Simbao suggests – and one is inclined to agree – that:

> While the prefix "Afro-"has been used in the USA in historically important terms such as "Afro-Futurism" and "Afro-American Studies", the attempt to utilise it (along with the prefix "Afri") on a global scale in order to uncritically encompass all "African" connections to art –from the most personally passionate to the most arbitrary and remote – reveals a reluctance to sufficiently unpack the largely American and European label "Contemporary African Art", which Lairi Firstenberg aptly suggests is more about western perceptions than artistic expression. Similarly, Salah Hassan views the early years of African art as being historically monolithic, and despite numerous attempts to complicate and diversify the "Africa" in "African Art", this very signifier "Africa" – albeit now wobbly – persists. …While I am not suggesting that a personal connection to Africa is not relevant to an artist's work, I am suggesting that to hang an entire exhibition on the tender hooks of the Afri-fad is no longer ground-breaking, but simply to go along with the flow. (Simbao 2008:59)

Simbao goes on to explain that in the flurry of the "Afri-fad" which has plucked artists with all sorts of African connections from multiple creative and ideological spaces in order to engineer mega-Afri-shows, many artists who are adamant that they do not want to be labelled as "African artists" have been pushed into small corners. Concerning the 'Afri-' prefix and Afrofuturism, South African filmmaker and writer Phetogo Tshepo Mahasha[56] raises some pessimistic concerns, although he does point out they should not be of immediate worry stating:

> The prefix 'Afro-' as used in art criticism modifies existing manifestos … it does not promote the generation of wholly new ideas and manifestos, but only the modification of the creativity of others. The prefix 'Afro-' has acquired a parasitic character, leeching off manifestos: Afro-Surrealism, Afro-Punk, Afro-Futurism and Afro-etc. … it has the capacity to arrest African imagination, so that the African imagination only follows other manifestos, only to attach itself to them and never coming up with an original of its own. I wouldn't have a problem with it because creativity is about modifying elements that are already there to create something new, but given what's out there at this point I have an objection. Just a quick internet search reveals that the movie The Matrix is listed as Afro-futurism on some websites. It can go to the point where Afro-futurism can only be about a person of colour in a future space, when in fact for a project like 'The Matrix', the faces and races are interchangeable, it would still be what it is without black people in it (Mahasha 2013).

In a direct response to this, pointing perhaps to the amoebic nature of Afrofuturism more than anything, Rasheeda Philips[57], one of the key voices within Afrofuturist thought (see fig.33)

[56] https://thisisafrica.me/art-criticism-prefix-afro-afro-futurism-arresting-imagination-manifesto-salesmanship/
[57] See: Philips http://afrofuturistaffair.tumblr.com/post/56361777518 accessed on 13/10/20. Rasheedah Phillips is a public interest attorney, author, advocate and Afrofuturist based in Philadelphia she is the founder of The AfroFuturist Affair. The AfroFuturist Affair provides friends, supporters, historians, and aliens with archives on the first event, updates on Afro-future events, present goings-ons, and to exchange language, images, memories, notes, and energies with other Futurists… to "practice and revere Ancient Wisdom, Mythology, Liberation, History, Future, Metaphysics, Sacred Math, Prophecy, Science, Trippy, Music, Gods, Art. Anything that one could use as a tool to survive yesterday, today, and tomorrow".

re-joined with a polite reminder of the freedoms with which Afrofuturism can dominate, in a post on the Afrofuturist Affair website:

> Afrofuturism is a word that labels, identifies, categorizes, and with any word that does the same, it has its limitations and it has its opportunities. The opportunities come with having a name for something that is visceral and immediately connects people to a concept, and then using that concept and building a community around it. The limitations are some of which you mentioned above, that it does become a marketing tool (which is not necessarily a bad thing, depending on intent), it does become overused and overbroad, it does create something of a bandwagon culture. But I see nothing wrong with that. I see nothing wrong with Afrofuturism being a bandwagon or, in some interpretations, a reactionary concept because it is overwhelmingly a positive thing that bolsters people's self-image and confidence, as they have a platform and conduit by which to imagine themselves in future landscapes, or alternative historical narratives, or a reimagining of their power and agency in the present. And it is, as with many things, an interpretive genre. People can have many different interpretations and definitions of what Afrofuturism means to THEM. (Philips 2013)

Phillips (2013) also disagrees with Mahasha's assertion that the "Afro-" prefix limits the imagination; in her opinion the only limit to someone's imagination is that person. She further argues that people should be, and are, responsible for their own creative output and they are at liberty to call it whatever they want to, or call it nothing at all, emphasising that "Afrofuturism or afro-anything is a very specific concept connected to the experience of Blackness" (Phillips 2013). Phillips further argues that the term 'Afro' in Afrofuturism automatically locates it in African-American culture; it does so with very clear affirmations and connections to African roots. She convincingly stresses that the term "derived in America as a term of identity (Afro-Americans – African Americans), particularly in opposition to the terms negro and nigger, to instil a sense of pride and political awareness in Blacks in America, and likely as a means of connecting our identities back to Africa and recognizing our place in the African diaspora" (2013). It can therefore be read as a declaration of

belonging. In her practice of Afrofuturism, she argues, she finds that it is fundamentally about Africa, about African Americans seeking to connect themselves back to Africa, back to their ancestors, and back to their lessons and stories, "through the vehicles of sci-fi, spec-fic, and all things that fit under that umbrella" (Phillips 2013).

Nevertheless, she does admit the drawbacks that such thoughts may carry without being scrutinised declaring that "To use Sun Ra again, his aesthetic, sound, and theory was very clearly and intentionally influenced by the Motherland. So, we really should be careful when we are talking about Afrofuturism in Africa and Afrofuturist manifestations in America and the western world. It can be two different things. Again, all in context." (Phillips 2013).

The foregoing is why, as Afrofuturism is embraced on the African continent – as is being done in this thesis – it is important that other pioneering heroes on the African continent should be recognised and be brought into the conversation. This is where pioneering seers such as Mutwa and visionaries such as Nkoloso come in, their experiences being of apartheid and colonialism respectively, because these are their contexts of their production just as the civil rights and the Atlantic passage were the context of Sun Ra's inspiration.

Nevertheless, the issue here has more to do with labelling, an almost self-imposed responsibility in which scholars and art historians alike take much pride. It is more or less as if art historians are often in competition to name and frame artists, periods and concepts, often at the expense of the artists involved in creating the said work being discussed, labelled or framed; this is pretty much the case with Afrofuturism.

Here one may ask what is it that happens to artists on the African continent who grapple with futurity when they deny being labelled as Afrofuturists. But perhaps Afrofuturism has to be unravelled and reconvened, bringing in new voices or – in this case new artists – about whom not much has been written, such as the select group of Zambian artists that will be the focus

of later chapters in this thesis. Most of these, as the research will show, had never heard of the term Afrofuturism before they were asked to respond to research questions during the field interviews conducted in Lusaka and Livingstone.

South African art historian, Tigan Bristow (2012:25) also questions the relevance of the term as she writes, "Unlike what it suggests, Afrofuturism has nothing to do with Africa, and everything to do with cyberculture in the west. Bring on Sun Ra; techno mashups of DJ Spooky and the American in outer space." Because some authors, such as Womack and Yszek, made seemingly subtle emphasis of the universality or indeed the global reach of Afrofuturism, it is hard to argue with Bristow's observation; however, responding directly to Bristow's assertion, Anderson and Jones argue:

> This assertion is misplaced due to the fact that 1) Africa and its diaspora are connected via cyber-culture and have exchanged ideas, art, politics and more recently remittances since the nineteenth century; and 2) the African diaspora has been institutionally designated the sixth zone of the African Union and similar to early developments of Pan Africanism starting in the African Diaspora, Afrofuturism is now a Pan African project. Moreover, this concern may reflect more of a Post-Cold War/ Post-Apartheid existential crisis of some White South Africans and some of their former "clients" living in the midst of a predominantly Black African society than the "Africanity" of an emerging global Afrofuturism. Therefore, contemporary twenty-first century Afrofuturism, or what is now called Afrofuturism 2.0, a term initially discussed at the Alien Bodies conference at Emory University in 2013, is moving in the direction of a more applied, theoretical, critical, and transdisciplinary approach in regards to the future of African peoples. (Anderson and Jones 2016: ix)

Foreshadowed here, the concept of 'Afrofuturism 2.0' and its implications are expanded upon at the end of this chapter. Besides this iteration of Afrofuturism there is also idea of Afrofuturism 3.0, which Nettrice R. Gaskins (2016:34) describes as "The combination of cultural data—images, artifacts, sounds, and spaces—and virtual worlds".

Nevertheless, presenting preliminary research for a paper entitled "Undercover Afrofuturism" at the *Black Portraitures [III]* conference in Johannesburg 2016 [58], Paris-based, emerging scholar and writer Mawena Yehouessi raised similar settings and elaborately broadened them to the context of Africa's Francophone diaspora. Opening up the discussion, Yehouessi (2016) explained that as a Beninese-French millennial she found herself seeking something that would help her navigate her "experience as a black girl in France" (Yehouessi 2016) until she came across the concept of Afrofuturism. According to Yehouessi (2016), as she researched, she observed that Afrofuturism was usually described as a music and sci-fi literature movement – as has been demonstrated in the earlier referenced texts by Womack et al. While she too observes that recent initiatives have given Afrofuturism a more thorough construction, both as an artistic and performative movement, with the ability to be used as a political and metaphysical tool that can help question or redefine the contemporary world, like Bristow (2012) she too raises certain concerns as regards Afrofuturism's locatedness, stating:

> By embracing alternative narrations instead of a systematic one, Afrofuturism would further on show the limits of the sacramental definitions of mankind (regarding genders or technology), time (historical, scientific or spiritual) and culture (through sociology, economy and ecology). It would no longer try to seize the world, but perform it, thus standing as an alternative paradigm. Yet, is Afrofuturism even/truly unifying what is its effective/tangible impact worldwide? In addition, how is it not an impetus circumscribed to a certain 'community' (black-America, an intellectual elite, trend prescribers etc.)? First, the idea would be to look all over the world for expressions, which would be explicitly intended as Afrofuturist, and see how/why they might appear as almost anecdotal compared to other proposals, which would appear to follow the same drive, but without claiming any "affiliation". How come so few people (afro-related but not only) know about Afrofuturism (moreover in its larger meaning) if it was really that paradigmatic? The second issue revolves around

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[58] Presented at the Turbine Hall in the session "Afrofuturism and Art Activism" on 18 November 2016, which I attended. It might be worth noting that despite the title of this panel only one of the five panelists presented a paper on Afrofuturism.

the "Afro" prefix. If "Afro" more widely covers blackness concerns how does Afrofuturism develop among other diaspora (in France for instance, where the Negritude already seems to have played the part of this "new" black oriented vision of the world)?

Nevertheless, drawing from the above in relation to the Zambian artists selected for this study, none of them have been identified as Afrofuturist per se, although as earlier seen LaFleur et al do indicate the freedom of labelling and definitions within Afrofuturism. However, one may reason that Afrofuturism is a suitable investigative device with which to bring the artists and their select works into the discussion – without necessarily labelling them as such.

While Afrofuturism itself was generated from the 'othering' of African Americans who felt left outside of 'history' and 'futures' narratives, and as Tiffany E. Barber (2016:11) puts it, "Current manifestations of Afrofuturism share similar impulses with the expressive modes of post-blackness. Afrofuturism has become an umbrella term for considering how science fiction, fantasy, and technology can be used to imagine and reimagine lost pasts and new futures for alienated, black, 'others'; but as she and as the earlier authors have indicated this is the reason why Afrofuturism's direct or tangible 'link' to Africa is constantly coming under question.

However, this direct linking of the African continent to Afrofuturism is very important to the conversation. It can also be noted that linking Zambia directly to Afrofuturism is not entirely new; not too long ago, writing about Zambian artist Stary Mwaba's 2014/2015 exhibition with KfW Stiftung at Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, German art historian Kito Nedo posed the question: "What does the Afrofuturist spirit of departure mean to Zambia today?" (Nedo 2015:083). Interestingly, Nedo addresses Nkoloso as "the father of Afrofuturism" (Nedo 2015:083) in contrast to the generally accepted Sun Ra narrative. While it cannot be said whether Nkoloso is considered as an important figure in the African-American axis of

Afrofuturism, equally, "It is largely unknown in the West that Zambia was also part of the space race in the 1960s" (Nedo 2014:083) that was dominated by the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Nkoloso declared "We're going to Mars! With a space girl, two cats and a missionary" (Nkoloso 1964), which may have been perceived as ironic coming from a newly independent African country. He coined the term 'Afronauts' to describe his cadets, a label which has been popularised in recent times because it has influenced an outer space inspired 'Afrofutirstic subgenre' even among artists outside of Zambia, such as Zimbabwean artist Gerald Machona, who negotiates the condition of xenophobia within Africa through the cultural aesthetic of Afrofuturism with his own 'Afronauts' after Nkoloso, and Zambian artist Stary Mwaba whose art residency and exhibition "We are still going to Mars" was an ode to Nkoloso. Mwaba uses the concept of Nkoloso's space programme to allegorically place himself in an art world that is seemingly alienating. Cristina De Middel, a UK-based Spanish photographer, has also created work inspired by Nkoloso's Afronauts and has been lauded for "her discovery of the 1964 Zambian Space program" (Mabandu 2014), a claim deserving of a counter narrative. I contend that by being a young physics teacher himself, Nkoloso must have been fully aware of the mechanics that are involved in sending a ship into space. Moreover, he seemed to have harboured knowledge that may have been beyond that of his 'rivals', considering that among the motives of his mission was to control "the seventh heaven of interstellar space" (Nokoloso 1964) this again has to be seen as a "liberatory detour" – in a sense an act of sarcastic defiance. Furthermore, because Nkoloso[59] would roll his afronauts down hills in empty oil barrels as part of training for zero-gravity. Conceptually I would also like to look at him through the lens of performance arts, by suggesting that he was either willingly or unknowingly a performance artist, in that "space travel conjures a powerful counter-narrative, which sees Africa merely as a backward,

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[59] As a futurist, Nkoloso is also said to have advocated for the changing of the Lusaka (Zambia's capital) skyline from that of unsophisticated townships to sprawling skyscrapers of a metropolis.

chaotic, low-tech part of the world" (Nedo 2015:084). Nkoloso was not the only Zambian grappling with space travel during the period before and immediately after independence.

The Zambian Psychedelic Rock band WITCH[60] (an acronym for We Intend to Cause Havoc) – widely regarded as the most popular band of the mid to late 1970s – was formed during Zambia's golden post-independence days and dabbled in metaphors of space travel, as can be heard in their song "Black Tears" from their 1975 album *Witch - Lazy Bones*. The song opens with the lyrics "We are all in a melting ship/heading for the planet Venus/waiting for the ship to melt any day" (WITCH 1975); these lyrics are reinforced with the haunting and certainly ominous drone of an electronic guitar. The song almost sounds as if it was written as a science fiction film score. In later years, the band would have their music banned because of its veiled political content; this particular song can be read as suggesting that after independence Zambia had become a melting ship with its occupants not knowing where the ship is heading or whether it will get there. Venus is suggested perhaps as a utopia away from planet earth, similar to the philosophy of Sun Ra who often declared that African Americans do not belong on planet Earth; it is hostile to them because they are aliens and should therefore return to outer space.

Again because of the free nature of labelling within Afrofuturism one cannot dispute outright Nedo's statement; perhaps not onlyt Nkoloso, WITCH and all the artists that will be discussed here could be labelled Afrofuturists. As LaFleur mentioned, anyone is free to label what they feel is Afrofuturism, and as Womack argues "whoever wondered why black people are minimized … conspicuously absent from the history of science, or marginalized in the roster of past inventors and then actually set to do something about it could arguably qualify as an Afrofuturist as well" (Womack 2013:7)

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[60] "We Intend To Cause Havoc, with its vibrant vocalist Emmanuel 'Jagari' Chanda, drew inspiration from the Rolling Stones and Deep Purple. In fact Chanda derived his nickname from the Rolling Stones front man, Mick Jagger" (Koloko 2018:66).

3: [Afro-] Pessimism for Afrofuturism

This section uses a sceptical lens in the guise of pessimism towards Afrofuturism by flagrantly abridging the concept "Afro-pessimism" but remaining alive to the idea that "importantly … rather than a fixed ideology, Afro-pessimism is better thought of as a theoretical lens for situating relations of power, at the level of the political and the libidinal. Afro-pessimism, in many ways, picks up the critiques started by Black revolutionaries in the 1960s and 70s, elaborating their shortcomings and addressing their failures." (Wilderson III et al. 2017: 7)

Present day Afrofuturism – it may be argued – appears to have found a safe space in popular culture, becoming more and more complacent, and less challenging. This can be said because there currently seems to be a bandwagon effect with regard to Afrofuturism, particularly in the wake of the Hollywood film *Black Panther*[61] (see fig. 34). The film is celebrated for being the first Hollywood film to have broken so many records, such as having grossed close to $1 billion in global ticket sales in its first two weeks in theatres, beating *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and being the highest-grossing film made by an African American, Ryan Coogler[62], together with a predominantly black cast[63], and rightly so. *Black Panther's* influence on the popular imagination of Africans across the world is something that has not been seen – at least not in recent times – where entire groups of children were sponsored to have the opportunity to watch the film. The opening of the film in cinemas was also unusual in that it inspired audiences to dress in African attire (see fig. 35). In Kenya one of the film's actresses, Lupita Nyong'o, raised money for 1,200 schoolchildren[64] to see the film; similar groups of children were sponsored to see the film in Zambia (see fig. 36). It is also no

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[61] See appendix I which is an unpublished blogpost written by the author on 03/29/2018
[62] https://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/films/921553/Black-Panther-Star-Wars-8-Last-Jedi-beats-box-office-gross-record-breaking
[63] Some of the actors are from the African continent
[64] https://face2faceafrica.com/article/1200-school-children-in-kenya-to-watch-black-panther-in-lupitas-name

surprise that the film caught the attention of the corporate world; if for instance a BMW (see fig. 37), a luxury automobile maker can leap on the Afrofuturism bandwagon, it is a cause for concern. In an article entitled "Afrofuturism is now"[65]*,* the German car brand gives its own interpretation of Afrofuturism, referring to the film:

> The runaway success of the film Black Panther has introduced the concept of Afrofuturism to the mainstream. But what does the advanced African city of the future really look like? … The exciting thing about the explosion of Afrofuturism as a cultural phenomenon is the injection of imagination and possibility it creates for the ways we might re-imagine African cities during this phase of rapid change and development. (BMW Magazine SA 2018)

One might argue that BMW, along with other luxury brands, embodies the zenith of Euro-American material culture; it might be read as one of many pinnacles of Western elitism, which seems to be in absolute contrast to the various ideals of Afrofuturism. In other words, a capitalist driven entity should not be welcomed at the table of Afrofuturism; its involvement will merely encapsulate the eroding of the deeper conversations and purpose of Afrofuturism beyond aesthetic gimmickry: conversations in line with the "Afrofuturist Mechanism" (Hammilton 2017) vis à vis 'Black liberation', 'materiality', 'temporality', and 'transformation' among other concepts. In this regard, one can be pessimistic about Afrofuturism's future, particularly around the conversation of appropriation, where Afrofuturism can merely end up being something to be exploited by the corporate world. Here it may not only be the appropriation of Afrofuturism for commercial gain but the appropriation of the arts of Africa. Take for instance how the *BMW Magazine SA* article further reads:

> Black Panther represents the most comprehensive and fully realised mainstream representation of the aesthetic, which reimagines advanced technology through the lens of traditional African design and artistic influences, rather than through the more

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[65] See http://bmw-onlinemag.co.za/afrofuturism-is-now/ published JULY 2018, accessed 08/10/2018

common Western bias. As well as including South African actors, the film's costumes drew on aspects of Basotho blanket design and Zulu bridal attire. BMW itself reprised one of its own early fusions of traditional African aesthetics and technology when, last year, the company collaborated with Ndebele artist Esther Mahlangu to launch the new BMW 7 Series Individual. (BMW Magazine SA 2018)

No matter how well a company handles its corporate social responsibilities, public relations or marketing, it is hard to discern whether corporations really have any values aside from making profits. Is it possible for a corporation to be concerned with issues such as ethnicity, diversity, racism and gender discrimination; traumatic histories and turbulent present perpetrated by particular hegemonies in which it – the corporation – is rooted.

Nevertheless, one point that is hard to argue against is where *BMW Magazine SA* (2018) suggests the Black Panther film has brought Afrofuturism to the main stream. It has earned headline after headline, with dozens of articles in some of the largest international media, such as CNN "Afrofuturism: The genre that made Black Panther"[66]; *TIME* magazine "It's Not Just Black Panther. Afrofuturism Is Having a Moment"[67]; *The New York Times* "The Afrofuturism Behind 'Black Panther'"[68]; *The Independent*, "*Black Panther* brings Afrofuturism into the mainstream"[69]. These headlines more or less speak for themselves in terms of what the authors of the articles think of Afrofuturism; all the articles have a positive outlook but understandably, because they are written for popular reading, may not go in detail with regard to the deeper discussions that can be brought out of Afrofuturism – the multifaceted and deep-seated politics. They skirt around the etymology of the term and highlight the importance of Afrofuturism and the film as proponents for perceiving Africa in a more positive light. While it is important to give the film as much publicity as possible,

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[66] See https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/12/africa/genre-behind-black-panther-afrofuturism/index.html
[67] See http://time.com/5246675/black-panther-afrofuturism/
[68] See https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/24/opinion/afrofuturism-behind-black-panther.html
[69] See https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/black-panther-afrofuturism-ryan-coogler-definition-explainer-watch-release-date-a8209776.html

there are certain aspects of it that need to be extracted and continuously propounded, such as the issue the reparation of African artefacts plundered during the colonial era[70]. As much as there is no such thing as bad publicity, this phenomenon of Afrofuturism being adopted or appropriated, rather, by luxury brands and being heavily exposed in the media only fuels the aesthetic craze, whereby individuals and artists adopt Afrofuturism because it is in vogue, overlooking its deep-seated values or uses. This concern can also be observed in the way that artists may be creating art just because they are excited about the "stock tropes" (Eshun 2014), portraying Africans in space, or the juxtaposition of advanced technology against ancient African backdrops and so forth, at the expense of pressing sociopolitical issues.

This concern, or pessimism, is one that is shared and was foreseen by Eshun and manifested in an interview with Cox (2014). While Eshun might be regarded as one who is generally optimistic about Afrofuturism, he is also a sceptic as regards its trajectory: where it is coming from, where it is now and where it might be heading. Eshun (2014) states that contemporary Afrofuturism generally seems "satisfied with a set of stock tropes, largely about space and the alien," and that this pursuit of tropes has become a preoccupation within Afrofuturism. In conversation with Cox, he elaborates:

> The search for tropes, the topological search for notions of space, notions of extraterritoriality, notions of identification with the alien, all of that is fine, but it does not go far enough. It is not intriguing enough. … [T]here should be some resistance. The work should push back against you. It should not be quite so legibly transparent. And the question of hermeticism is about that. It is about the work retreating from you when you go towards it. This whole way of thinking also does not seem to have penetrated the overly easy optimism of Afrofuturism in which a search for virtuous objects to be retrieved is somehow this self-congratulatory project. It is an easy affirmation, which has not taken any notice either of Cassel Oliver's project of abstraction or of the arguments going on inside of Afro-Pessimism. It seems to be totally separate from those; but it is happening simultaneously. To me, these things

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[70] There is a scene in *Black Panther* that raises the reparation of artefacts question, which is highlighted in chapter 3 of this thesis. See also Zenzele Chulu's *Afreenaissance* (Chapter 4).

need to be brought into alignment with each other in a way that they have not been so far. (Eshun in Cox 2014)

Evidently, for Eshun, Afrofuturism should be about "affect or desire rather than trope or image" (Eshun in Cox 2014). He contends that perhaps the art world is bound to visual tropes and it may be satisfactory to settle for that in a certain context. However, he stresses that the art world always congratulates itself on its sense of discovery. A lot of it, according to him, feels like "re-treading grounds". He states:

> I'd like to see a rapprochement between Afrofuturism and Afro-Pessimism. I'd like to see the two meet each other head-on. The kind of exorbitant seriousness of Afro-Pessimism and the same exorbitant seriousness of Accelerationism, the kind of Prometheanism of Accelerationism, which is the aspect I really like very much. Ray Brassier's recent turn to Prometheanism I find totally compelling. And then Afro-Pessimism's struggles with negation and its preference for the ontological, I find all those really, really compelling. And my wish is that both those forces put pressure on Afrofuturism. (Eshun in Cox 2014)

Eshun believes that Afrofuturism should be broken down and disassembled so that it "reforms in unrecognizable shapes, so that, you know, the triumvirate of Sun Ra, Clinton, and Perry cannot be easily invoked" (2014). As has already been indicated, these are the three names that keep surfacing whenever various scholars put forward claims about the genesis of Afrofuturism. This is an invocation that needs to be checked so that other things can emerge – perhaps other names one might add; Africans who were grappling with futurity as well as space travel in the late 1950s and early 1960s right here on the African continent, such as Mukuka Nkoloso in Zambia, and Credo Mutwa in South Africa). Eshun goes as far as saying that Sun Ra, often glorified, was in fact a sort of benevolent dictator. "He's a despot. That was something I always insisted on in writing about him; but it's amazing how that keeps slipping away. People want to render him as this benevolent, charming old southern queen (though people would not even really call him that). However, you can have it all. He can be

a benevolent queen and a despotic monarch. And that's clearly what he aspired to be." (Eshun in Cox 2014).

Eshun supposes that scholars are only just gearing up to take on some of these concerns and states that after a while one realises that, if you do not do it, nobody will. Such is also the purpose of this thesis, to broaden the discussion on Afrofuturism in the context of the African continent in general as well as in Zambia specifically. The next two sections will therefore look briefly at scholarship around Afrofuturism, beginning with a short inventory of citations that continue to define Afrofuturism, followed by a theoretical mechanism that can help in the dismantling of Afrofuturism in order to put it back together with the inclusion of some new parts. However, it is worth noting like Guthrie observes that the American science fiction film *I-Robot* (2004) provides ample opportunities to consider Afrofuturist visions that might counterbalance the extremely pessimistic depictions of a rapidly declining American metropolis (Guthrie et al. 2016). The film's story is set in a future Earth (AD 2035) where robots are assistants and workers for humans. The lead character, "Dell Spooner (Will Smith) represents a type of Afro-Pessimist whose cynicism gradually reflects a turn towards Afrofuturism's merger of black cultural ethos and commitment to struggle" (Anderson and Jones 2016: xvi). The main lesson of the film according to Guthrie (2016) is that: "Spooner's Afro-Pessimism, which provides an optic for visualising the irreconcilable antagonism of race, is gradually transformed through action into a type of Afrofuturism. Spooner reveals the problematics of blacks, art, and technology in a future that echoes racial hierarchies of 'the past.' He does not have 'the answer,' but he, nevertheless, reckons with the 'ghosts in the machine'—black people, and their racialized past/present as well as the persistence of racism that can never be fully erased" (Guthrie 2016:52). In the film, Spooner continuously manifests his displeasure and distrust for the robots, robots who work as human slaves. As someone who literally acknowledges his blackness in the film, it is interesting to see this

descendant of slaves represent the 'master' and treat the 'slave' – the robot – in a manner that his ancestors were once treated; this can be read as empowering. But before moving on to the next section, it is important to mention here – in a section that mentions sci-fi cinema, corporations and pessimism in no particular order – that German car manufacturer, Audi, placed their concept cars in *I-Robot*. The cars, one of which Spooner was driving, were in fact a prelude to the design language that Audi is using on its current models. There should be no surprise therefore, if we see BMW – which has already shown an interest in Afrofuturism – placing a few of their concept cars in the recently announced sequel to *Black Panther*. One can only wait and see what the future holds.

4: Defining Afrofuturism through curriculum: a few considerations

As one might expect, universities are already beginning to take interest in this proclaimed resurgence of Afrofuturism and there is very little room for doubt that the books, listservs, videos and other such resources that institutions will be selecting as reference material for their students are likely to become the canon of Afrofuturism. Listed here are three outlines from American universities that have introduced Afrofuturism into their syllabi; the University of Chicago[71], Johns Hopkins University and Sarah Lawrence College. These course outlines are cited here in full to give an indication of what shape Afrofuturism may be taking in academia at the moment, starting with the University of Chicago's which states:

> Afrofuturist creative and theoretical production has exploded in recent years,
> emerging as a significant intellectual framework for understanding the history of race
> and identity, the legacies of colonialism, theories of science and technology, and the
> making of the modern world. While the term "Afrofuturism" was not coined until the
> 1990s and remains a controversial label, this course traces the historical roots and
> contemporary expressions of this diverse global genre (or set of genres). Taking a
> transdisciplinary approach, we will examine the contexts and debates that shaped and

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[71] See: https://english.uchicago.edu/courses/afrofuturism accsessed 02 Fenruary 2018. The full syllabus is also available on www.academia.edu

were shaped by works of speculative fiction, science fiction, and futurism from across Africa and the African diaspora. (Fransee 2016).

A critical look at the syllabus will indicate that there is still not much in terms of specifically 'Afrofuturist' writing, which is perhaps why the university takes a transdisciplinary approach to examine the contexts and debates that seem to be shaping Afrofuturism. However, they are also using resource material such as YouTube videos from Alondra Nelson – for instance one where she is casually attempting to define Afrofuturism in an interview. Similarly, Johns Hopkins University is running a course entitled *The Political Thought of Afrofuturism*[72] under Christopher J. Lebron – Associate Professor of African American Studies and Philosophy. Cited here in full the outline reads:

> The discipline of political theory attempts to understand the complexities, injustices, and potentialities of our world through the examination of social and political idea and ideals. Usually, political theorists turn to canonical texts to understand the foundations of political society and in doing so, often side-line, if not entirely erase, black thinkers as well as racial politics. The politics of race is itself complex with a history as deep as it is tragic. But it is also one that continues to weigh heavily on the future of black American and brown peoples around the globe. This course turns to a resource that is scarcely used in political theory or political philosophy—the genre of Afrofuturism. One aim of this course is precisely to get a better grasp as to what Afrofuturism is, but it's worth saying here that it is a genre the main concern of which is to re-imagine racial political narratives of the past, re-frame present racial political narratives, and radically re-orient readers to possible racial futures with politics that may or may not diverge from the politics that guide our racial attitudes and policies today. (John Hopkins University).

On the Johns Hopkins University "required texts" list, texts such as *Womack's Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* appear, alongside those by pioneering black sci-fi authors Octavia Butler and Samuel Delany. One is inclined to suggest here that, contrary to the earlier declared unrestrained nature of Afrofuturism (Womack; LaFleur et al.),

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[72] https://www.academia.edu/30389976/The_Political_Thought_of_Afrofuturism_-_Spring_2017_Syllabus accessed 02 February 2018.

these universities are attempting to home in on specific texts and generate a 'canon' for Afrofuturism, or at least to streamline the study of Afrofuturism in relation to various interdisciplinary studies such as literature, politics and philosophy that encourage abstract thinking or critical reflections. It also does appear to be making its way into the 'Africana studies' departments in the US education system; Africana studies being the multidisciplinary study of the histories, politics, and cultures of peoples of African origin in both Africa and the African diaspora. This might be a move that one may imagine purist Afrofuturists such as LaFleur would not be too pleased about, as it seemingly defeats the laboratory agenda of Afrofuturism. The Sarah Lawrence College's course of 2017 was entitled *Reimagining Race in Science Fiction: Afrofuturism and Other Visions of Tomorrow*[73] and resembles the two previous outlines although it has a more specific focus on science fiction, perhaps because it is offered under English Literature. The outline is briefly cited as follows:

> In the early 20th century, the audience of the emerging genre of science fiction was assumed homogenous in race and gender: namely, white and male. Yet, as early as 1920 — several years before the launch of the first science fiction magazine — African-American writer and activist W.E.B. Du Bois published his own SF story, "The Comet," which examines the racial consequences of an apocalyptic astronomical event…Early in the course, we will read some of the fiction and scholarship of Samuel R. Delany, one of the first African-American authors to achieve prominence in the science fiction community — as well as one of the first openly gay writers to do so. The majority of the authors on our syllabus belong in some way to the African diaspora, and we will devote a substantial portion of our time to studying a phenomenon that has sometimes been called "Afrofuturism," an aesthetic more than a movement that uses science fiction to address issues facing people of colour.

Again, in terms of scholarship there has been a steady flow of books or journals dedicated to the topic of Afrofuturism; however, most of the contributions have been outside of the

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[73]https://www.academia.edu/27168498/Syllabus_for_Reimagining_Race_in_Science_Fiction_Afrofuturism_and _Other_Visions_of_Tomorrow_ Accessed on 02 February 2018.

Africana Studies discipline. However, authors and scholars such as Kodwo Eshun (1998), Alondra Nelson in (2002). Alondra Nelson, Alex Weheliye (2005), Finally, Marlene Barr's (2008), Sandra Jackson and Julie Moody-Freeman's (2011), Ytasha Womack (2013) and Rasheedah Phillip (2015) have continued to introduce the concept to the broader public.

5: Afrofuturism as a mechanism

More recently, Elizabeth C. Hamilton formulated "Afrofuturism as a mechanism" (Hamilton 2017:17), a valuable concept that can be drawn upon for theorising Afrofuturism and may have just provided a very useful tool for the teaching of Afrofuturism within the context of academia[74], even if this may not have been her intended purpose.

Hamilton's observations will help segue the discussion into examining Afrofuturism in relation to the visual arts, which she does persuasively along with a diagram (see Fig. 38). Her diagram resembles a miniature solar system with a sphere labelled Afrofuturism at the centre, encircled by smaller spheres labelled "Black Liberation," "Materiality", "Temporality" and "Transformation". These elements are linked by a purple circle, which may be read as a planetary orbit that is keeping them within a steady gravitational pull around Afrofuturism. Although she describes it as a casual graph that addresses the interdependence of certain terms of Afrofuturistic thought in the visual arts (Hamilton 2017:19) the diagram helps unpack Afrofuturism in a very accessible and yet practical way. It can also be used to debunk the many definitions of Afrofuturism, as she remarkably describes the concept as the injection of futurity, fantasy, and technology in the arts of Africa and the African Diaspora, although she has expanded this definition over the past five years observing that the contemporary situations in art and contemporary events are in constant flux (Hamilton 2017). What is important here is an inclusion of "Africa" – as in the continent – alongside its diaspora. She further defines Afrofuturism as a "mechanism" for understanding "real world

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[74] The author of this thesis has the intention of expanding on this concept with the hope of introducing a course in Afrofuturism at the Zambian Open University in Lusaka.

situations of oppression in the contemporary world in the context of the ever-present past, while charting the future situation through the arts." (Hamilton 2017:19). Hamilton contends that her aforementioned characterisations of Afrofuturism were defined by "recovery and optimism" (2013:6) but insists also that she is currently open to the possibility that neither of these options exists. She explains that:

> To understand Afrofuturism as a mechanism relies on not just the injection of futurity, fantasy, and technology, but also an ever-present orientation toward black liberation that draws its strength from liberation movements in the past. There is a tendency to romanticize here though. Other characteristics that keep Afrofuturistic visual arts grounded are reliance on the material (materiality), the manipulation of temporality, and the impetus for artists to demonstrate all sorts of transformations. (Hamilton 2017:19-20)

Despite this shift in definition, Hamilton submits that her earlier definitions in line with "recovery and optimism" still remain relevant, albeit an expansion was necessary to accommodate what she describes as "the moving target that visual speculation and visual science fiction narratives encompass".

Womack, who describes herself as being an "Afrofuturist before the term existed" (Womack 2013:6), and states that "Afrofuturism continues to serve as this intersection between imagination, technology, the future, and liberation (Womack 2013) has an excerpt from her book that stirs thoughts of intersectionality where a society – of blacks or Africans – moves away from perverse stereotypical notions of identifying and being.

> Afrofuturism is an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation. …Whether through literature, visual arts, music, or grassroots organizations, Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future. Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-western beliefs. In some cases, it is a total envisioning of the past and speculation about the future rife with cultural critiques. (Womack 2013:9).

Eshun questions all these efforts of attempting to define Afrofuturism uprightly, as he suggests that there seems to be a kind of search for the virtuous object of Afrofuturism, a search that he argues is for the obscure and good object that can be archaeologically excavated and affirmed. He argues that Afrofuturism has "predatory dimensions, that it's not inherently virtuous, that Afrofuturism has to be understood as an intervention into a chronopolitical matrix. I was trying to explain how Afrofuturism has no inherent virtue and how the continuous excavatory search is not the most powerful or dynamic aspect of it." (Eshun n.d.)[75]. Although he may not describe himself as such, Eshun is one of the eminent scholars and critics of Afrofuturism and in many ways its very embodiment.[76] The subtext on the opening page of 1998 book *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*: perhaps amplifies many of the thoughts highlighted in this section of the paper, most of which this study concurs with. Eshun's excerpt reads:

> *More Brilliant Than the Sun* is a machine for travelling at the speed of thought, a probe for drilling into new levels of possibility space. Its mission is to undermine the concepts this present has of "Health" and "Culture" and to excite mockery and hatred against these hybrid monsters of concepts. (Eshun 1998 -01)

Because the next section probes where Africa lies within the Afrofuturism discourse itself it may be useful to explicitly try to trace the concept's genealogy in Eshun's remarks, because he is known to often question why the 'midpoint' of Afrofuturism in general seems to lean mostly towards the United States and African Americans. For instance, in his interview with Cox he declared "Afrofuturism had become super-identified with a kind of African-American perspective" (Eshun 2014).

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[75]See Cox, C. 2014. "Afro-Futurism, Afro-Pessimism and the Politics of Abstraction: An Interview with Kodwo Eshun." http://faculty.hampshire.edu/ccox/writing.html accessed 02/02/2018

[76] At 17, Kodwo Eshun won an Open Scholarship to read Law at University College, Oxford. After eight days he switched to Literary Theory, magazine journalism and running clubs. He is not a cultural critic or cultural commentator so much as a concept engineer, an imagineer at the millennium's end writing on electronic music, science fiction, technoculture, gameculture, drug culture, post war movies and post war art for *The Face*, *The Wire*, *i-D*, *Melody Maker*, *Spin*, *Arena* and *The Guardian*.

Any concerns about the origins of Afrofuturism and whether it truly does apply to Africa, pessimism as to whether Afrofuturism will all but fall into the irretrievable trajectory of becoming a fad, concerns about how Afrofuturism can be used within the field of academia and finally reservations as to whether Afrofuturism should continue to be used as the default terminology for any activities artistic or otherwise that deal with Africa's future, are all dilemmas that can find solutions within a strict adherence or at least an attempted application of the many aspects within 'Afrofuturism 2.0'. According to Anderson and Jones (2016):

> Contemporary Afrofuturism 2.0 is now characterized by five dimensions, to include metaphysics; aesthetics; theoretical and applied science; social sciences; and programmatic spaces. The first Afrofuturist dimension of metaphysics includes and engages ontology or the meaning of existence, relations between the ontological and epistemological or the truth-functional aspects of knowledge, cosmogony or origin of the universe, cosmology or structure of the universe, an example of this are naturalistic Afro-Diaspora traditions, Rational Panpsychism (or Animism) and indigenous African spiritual practices such as Okuyi or Dogon cosmology in West Africa. … The second Afrofuturist dimension of aesthetics includes anthropomorphic art, music, literature, and performance; examples in this sphere include the performers. … The third dimension of Afrofuturism is in the areas of theoretical and applied science; for example, archaeology, math, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy; and applied areas such as computer science, architecture, engineering, medicine, and agriculture. … A fourth dimension of Afrofuturism is in the social science disciplines to include sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, history. … A fifth and final dimension of Afrofuturism is in the programmatic arena such as exhibitions, community organizations, online forums, and specialized salons or labs…

Engaging different aspects of these five dimensions for the analysis of the select works of Zambian artists chosen for this study, is hoped to result in a re-education; efforts to regain African character and empower the creators of the art and the viewers to acknowledge that Africans have made meaningful and positive contributions towards humanity in the past, the present and will continue to do so in the future. In other words, aspects of these five

dimensions can be used for the interpretation of Afrofuturism, and become a foundation of hermeneutical aesthetics as a probability for decoding the dimensions of Afrofuturism. It is also important that using these dimensions, this thesis encourages abandoning ways in which Africa is looked at as a place out of time. In addition, Africans should not look at themselves through the colonial lenses in which all things African, such as indigenous knowledge, are bad, but must seek to express their own vision, untainted by these occidental prejudices. New interpretation of African history through Afrofuturism can play as important a role as any decolonial project in shaping how Africans perceive the future. Some of the referenced subject matter in the artists' works analysed in the coming chapters draws from intellectual heritage and is a reminder that Africa has made meaningful impacts to world advancement and that what Africans have done before, they can do again. In a world in which boundaries are shrinking exponentially because of technology, resulting in a borderless globe, globalisation is a concept that remains far from a tangible reality because, in many ways, there lingers a perilous backdrop of restricted movement through artificial borders on the African continent, anchored by many other dubious problems that are the legacy of colonialism.

Chapter 2: Summary

This chapter has attempted to outline Afrofuturism and to analyse whether there were valid epistemological justifications to use it as a background with which to critique ways in which Africa is viewed as backward. The chapter examines the rise of Afrofuturism as the default term for African futurity and examines how certain schools of thought have labelled Afrofuturism as something foreign and "un-African", linked primarily to the African diaspora and particularly North America. It offers an analysis that blurs the dichotomy between "Afro" and "African" futurisms. Offering a thorough examination, the chapter's findings indicate that Afrofuturism may not necessarily be something delinked from the African continent, but

something that speaks to, or rather can lend itself to, not only the imagination and thoughts of artists on the African continent but also its aesthetic, accents and visual languages inspired by science fiction, indigenous knowledge systems, spirituality, ancient symbols and so on. It offers analyses of whether Afrofuturism is a movement, fad, or genre. The chapter has examined different components of Afrofuturism, such as the triumvirate of Sun Ra, George Clinton and Lee Scratch Perry, and [Afro-] Pessimism for Afrofuturism. In the process, it has attempted to define Afrofuturism through a few examples of academic curriculums and has also looked at Afrofuturism as a mechanism for the examination of different methods of awareness and how they can be ideologically aligned in order to challenge the dominant, prevailing Euro-American discourses on Africa. Moreover, in light of these findings, it may be argued at this point that there is ample room and reason to dismantle Afrofuturism in the African-American context and assemble it anew, infusing conversations that are rooted in and may be specific to the African continent in particular as the research moves on to the next chapter. However, bearing this in mind, it is important to consider, that as one explores African futurity, it so happens that it, like "Afrofuturism" grapples with "the counter power of the black imaginary" (van Veen and Anderson 2018:7) and addresses thematic concerns "with black speculative futurity as a means for healing, redress and care" (van Veen and Anderson 2018:7). In this regard, the discussion joins questions around African mythology, witchcraft and metaphorical knowledge and common debates around the question of technology and knowledge in Africa. This observation in turn develops arguments around knowledge transfer or the lack thereof during the colonial period as will be discussed or indicated rather, in the next chapter. Arguing against an imposed belatedness that has persisted in art historical and other epistemological terms but can be challenged in the imaginative work of Zambian artists.

Excursion (I)

Of Wakanda, Nalakiwanda and Mulenga Wampanga

By Andrew Mulenga (03/29/2018)

When my younger sister Priscilla walked out of the movie theatre, the first thing she did was send me a WhatsApp message, "I walked out so proud. My head was so big coming outta that cinema, it couldn't fit through the door", read the text.

She sent it because she watched the movie before I did, and I had asked for her opinion following all the media hype and online deluge that had preceded and followed its premier across the globe.

Adapted from Marvel Comic books, the film is set in Wakanda, an imaginary African kingdom that disguises itself as an impoverished "third world" country that does not accept aid or engage in international trade. In reality, it has vibranium, a precious metal that is the key to making it the most technologically advanced nation on earth, with futuristic monorails, skyscrapers and space age aircraft. It is ruled and protected by its king The Black Panther, T'chala, one of the Marvel Avengers.

Understandably, for Priscilla, as a woman of colour living in Europe, there was reason to be proud especially when a Hollywood blockbuster has an all-black cast some of whom like her, have direct links to the African continent. This is a shift from the usual Hollywood blockbuster recipe, which has always been: add black actor, stir, bring to the boil, and serve.

Furthermore, to me it is the women that are the heroes in the movie, collectively; I see them as the real Black Panthers so much that they should have labelled the movie Black Panthers —plural. When T'chala is down and out, it is the Queen Mother, Ramonda (Angela Bassett) who musters all his loyal supporters resuscitates him from a coma with some herbs. T'chala's younger sister Shuri (Letitia Wright), a nerdy princess, genius and tech-wizard is to the Black Panther what Q is to James Bond. T'chala's love interest, Nakia (Lupita Nyongo) an undercover Wakanda agent who protects the nation's interests around the world and is often on the odd refugee rescue mission, Okoye (Danai Gurira), a general and leader of the of the Dora Milaje, the all-female kings guard regiment, also plays a key heroic role throughout the movie. Shuri, Nakia and Okoye are all warriors who also fight fearlessly during the epic battle scene to save Wakanda.

By depicting these characters in such a manner, Coogler disrupts the dominant Hollywood narrative that classifies darker hued black women in submissive roles. Indisputably, Hollywood storylines are wrought with codifications of masculinity and colourism that endeavour to reinforce the supremacy of white males. However, these women on the other hand, pose a challenge to this supremacy especially that as internet hype dictates, they have garnered legions of fans spanning across the globe. They can also be seen as new proponents of the "black girl magic" phenomenon; with scenes such as the one where Okoye while under cover in South Korea gets irritated by her wig disguise; she describes the wig as ridiculous to which Nakia replies "It looks nice, just whip it back and forth neh" – the straightened hair wig really did look nice on her – just as similar wigs look nice on the many black women that buy them by the dozen, promoting a million-dollar industry. Nevertheless, Okoye was so

relieved when she had the opportunity to aggressively toss it away in order to kick butt in an epic fight scene.

No doubt, these powerful female characters have inspired a sense of confidence in some moviegoers like Priscilla because they saw African women in authoritative roles. However, this black women empowerment narrative has also attracted online backlash among some "woke" African American males who see the bolstering of black female characters in a movie of a male black super hero as a continued Hollywood ploy to feminize black males; a scheme they argue that has also been perpetrated through African American actors and comedians wearing dresses. In reality such sentiments sound like black folk are pissing on their own parade, why not just celebrate this record-breaking movie without trying so hard to find fault in it, faults—if there are any—which have been outweighed by its successes. For instance, if we are looking for subtle political elements in the movie, why not focus on the likes of the character Erik Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan), a revolutionist banished from Wakanda who considers T'Challa a weak ruler and overthrows him. Every time he speaks, he spews verbal heat rocks, from the first scene in which he appears accusing the British Museum curator's ancestors of having stolen artefacts from Africa, until his last scene where he makes open reference to the transatlantic slave trade. With just these two examples he not only reopens the argument of Western museums' dubious acquisition of African artefacts through colonialism but offers a perspective to the view of traumatic African Americans

However, despite being an imaginary place within an Africa inside the Marvel Universe, Wakanda shares typical similarities with many African countries and cultures, including my own – Zambia. Much like Priscilla, this gives me a sense of pride too, for me, as the barges with sculptures of Panthers atop of them ferry people down a river towards T'chala's coronation ceremony at some waterfalls, I'm reminded of the Nalikwanda, the royal barge of the Litunga, King of the Lozi people in the south-western part of Zambia. The Nalikwanda has a similarly placed sculpture of an elephant atop it; as the panther is the symbol of the king of Wakanda, the elephant is the symbol of the Lozi king. The waterfalls themselves remind me not of the famous Victoria Falls, but of the many waterfalls in Northern Zambia, which – like Wakanda – are little known and hidden from the outside world.

The ritual conducted by Zuri (Forest Whitaker), a religious or spiritual figure at the waterfalls, reminds me of the legend of Mulenga Wampanga, a high priest cum deity who, according to lore of the Bemba people, conducted offering rituals at one such waterfall which is why these spaces remain sacred within Bemba tradition until this very day. I am also enthused by a Zambian voice and screen actor Patrick Shumba Mutukwa who is part of this movie. Even though he is only briefly credited as a language contributor, he also appears as an extra among Wakanda's border tribes led by W'Kabi (Daniel Kaluuya) in a miss-it-if-you-blink moment for which unfortunately some of his and my fellow Zambians have poked fun at him. Nonetheless, during some community work while back in Zambia, Mutukwa announced that he plays a similar role in the upcoming Avengers movie. This does happen in Hollywood, some actors who start out as extras playing lesser roles end up landing bigger roles; Belgian actor and martial artist Jean Claud van Damme comes to mind. A young, leotard-clad Van Damme was barely noticeable clapping and

dancing in *Breakin*, a 1984 American breakdancing-themed comedy-drama, but he would later become a global super star, and yet the lead actors in *Breakin* never really flourished as household names; for all we know they have perhaps played extras in some of his blockbuster movies. The grass that was at the bottom will be on top as the saying goes in my mother tongue. Speaking of which, the word Wakanda loosely translated in Bemba means "You've hit hard", to "kanda" is to "hit hard," "Wa" means, "You've" therefore "Wakanda" means "you've hit hard."

Chapter 2: Images

Figure 17. Kimathi Donkor – *For Moses had married an Ethiopian woman*, (Digital image accessed from: https://sacreativenetwork.co.za/event/they-came-from-outer-space/ on 19/09/2018).

Figure 18. Wanuri Kahiu, video still from *Pumzi*: "The film deviates from all that is perceived as stereotypically African: there are no nature or jungles, no exoticism and villages. On the contrary: there is a sophisticated futuristic society administered by technology and alienated from nature. The female protagonist has nothing to do with masks or voodoo rituals." (Tel Aviv Museum of Art website: http://www.africa-tamuseum.org.il/artist/wanuri-kahiu/ accessed on 19/09/2018)

Figure 19 - The Author, Andrew Mulenga in an interview with Ingrid LaFleur at the *Black Portraiture[s]* Conference in Johannesburg. Ingrid is a Detroit-based cultural producer, arts advocate, curator and founder of AFROTOPIA, an evolving creative research project that investigates the possibilities of using the arts movement Afrofuturism as psychosocial healing (Photo courtesy of Andrew Mulenga)
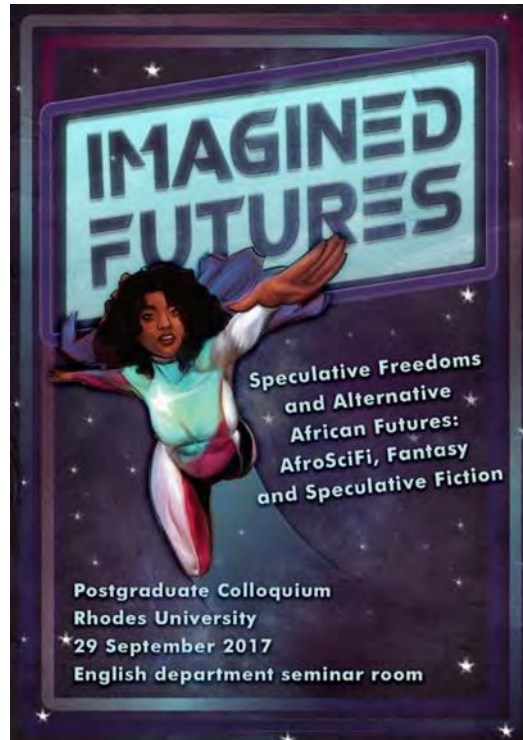
Figure 20 - The poster for *Imagined Futures* displays one of the typical tropes of Afrofuturism (Photo reproduced from the poster by Department of English Language and Linguistics Rhodes University)

Figure 21. Design for the exhibition *Afro-Tech and the Future of Re-Invention*" 21 October 2017 – 22 April 2018, HMKV in Dortmund. Design: KoeperHerfurth. Image courtesy HMKV (Accessed from https://newpoeticsoflabor.com/2018/04/14/afro-tech-and-the-future-of-re-invention-visions-of-afrofuturism-at-hartware-medienkunstverein-dortmund/ on 24/09/202018)

Figure 22. Album Cover, *Soundtrack to Space Is the Place* by Sun Ra, Vinyl, LP, Album, Limited Edition, released: 2015, "This deluxe, double LP pressing of Space Is The Place (not to be confused with the 1973 album on Blue Thumb) contains the mythical soundtrack to the avant-garde film in its entirety. The sessions were recorded in San Francisco early in 1972" (Accessed from: https://www.northendrecords.com/new-products/soundtrack-to-space-is-the-place-by-sun-ra accessed on 24/09/2018)

Figure 23. Cristina De Middel, 'Jambo' from "The Afronauts", 2012, six photographs, various formats. Image courtesy of the artist and Hartware MedienKunstVerein. © Cristina De Middel. (Accessed from: http://artradarjournal.com/2018/04/07/afro-tech-and-the-future-of-re-invention-visions-of-afrofuturism-at-hartware-medienkunstverein-dortmund/ on 25/09/2018)

Figure 24. Fabrice Monteiro, 'Ogun', from the series "The Prophecy," 2013-2016, four photographs, 150 x 100-cm. Image courtesy of the artist. © ADAGP. (Accessed from: http://artradarjournal.com/2018/04/07/afro-tech-and-the-future-of-re-invention-visions-of-afrofuturism-at-hartware-medienkunstverein-dortmund/ on 25/09/2018)

Figure 25. Wangechi Mutu, 'The End of Eating Everything', 2013, animated video, colour, sound, 8m:10s. Commissioned by the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC. © Wangechi Mutu. Image courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, and Victoria Miro Gallery, London. . (Accessed from: http://artradarjournal.com/2018/04/07/afro-tech-and-the-future-of-re-invention-visions-of-afrofuturism-at-hartware-medienkunstverein-dortmund/ accessed on 25/09/2018)

Figure 26. Credo Mutwa, mural, 1999, 'Painting by Credo Mutwa depicting strange alien creatures' in 'Credo Mutwa Painting/Figurines', Linda Smith Inspiration, 'By Flying With Eagles I Learnt To Soar'. (Accessed from https://lindasmithinspiration.wordpress.com/strange-facts-of-africa/credo-mutwa-painting/ accessed on 25/09/2018)

Figure 27. Bodys-Isek-Kingelez, Ville *Fantôme*. (Ghost Town) 1996, (Reproduced from Beauté Congo – 1926-2015 – Congo Kitoko The Exhibition Album, Publication Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris - accessed on 25/09/2018)

Figure 28. Pierre Bodo, *Africa of Tomorrow*. 2011 (Reproduced from Beauté Congo – 1926-2015 – Congo Kitoko The Exhibition Album, Publication Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris)

Figure 29. Monsengo Shula, *Ata Ndele (mokili ekubalaku) Sooner or Later the World Will Change* 2014 (Reproduced from Beauté Congo – 1926-2015 – Congo Kitoko The Exhibition Album, Publication Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris)

Figure 30. Gerald Machona, *Uri Afronaut* (*I am an Afronaut*), 2012, decommissioned Zimbabwean dollar, foam padding, fabric, wood, perspex, rubber, plastic tubing, nylon, gold leaf 180 x 70 x 50 cm. (Photo: Iziko Gallery – source: https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/booksandarts/biennale-image-5/7251078 accessed on 13/022020)
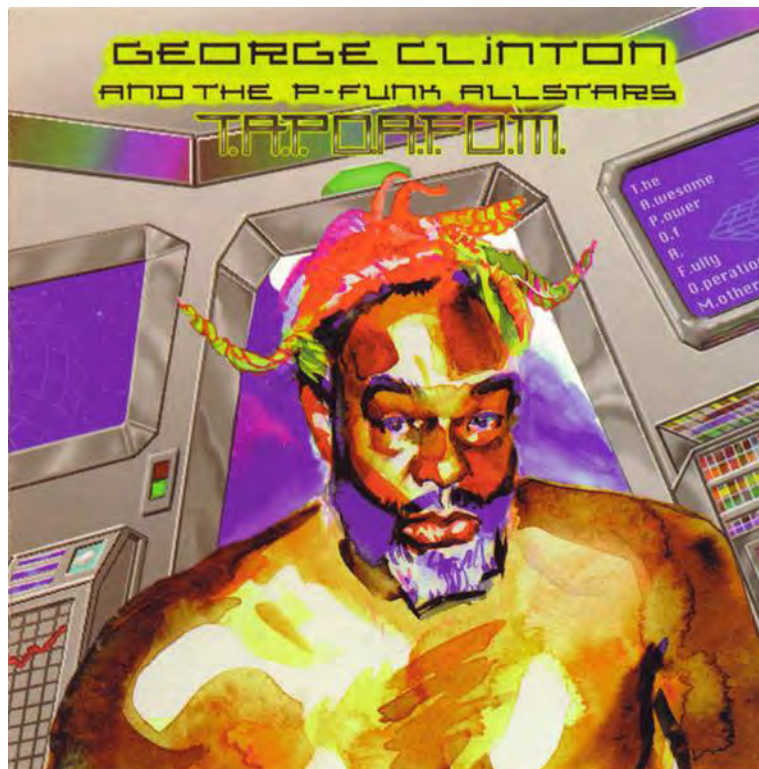
Figure 31. George Clinton & The P-Funk Allstars* – T.A.P.O.A.F.O.M. Accessed from: https://genius.com/albums/George-clinton/T-a-p-o-a-f-o-m

Figure 32.   Album cover for Lee "Scratch" Perry's record "Mad Alien Dub". Source: https://www.discogs.com/Lee-Scratch-Perry-Mad-Alien-Dub/release/8002030
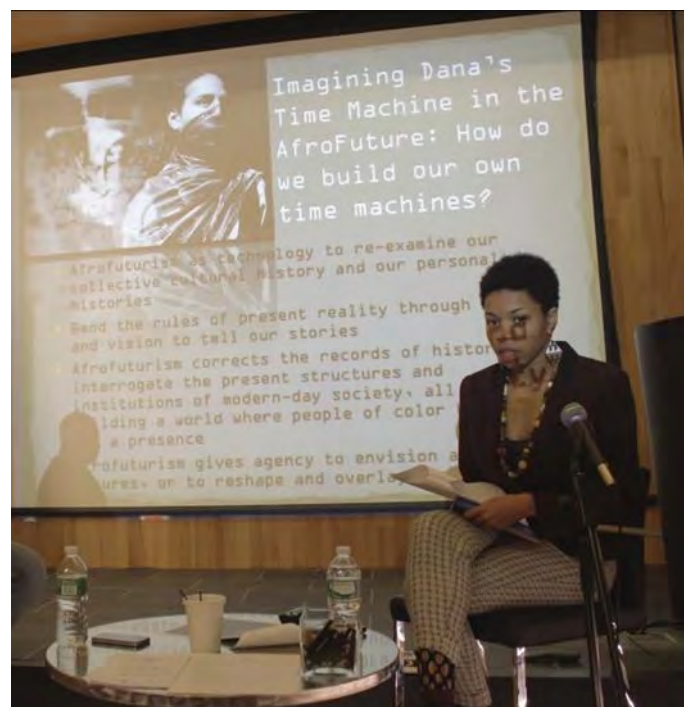
Figure 33. Rasheeda Phillips - source: *The Afrofuturist Affair*:
file:///D:/New%20PhD%20images/Rasheeda.webp accessed on 13/10/2018

Figure 34. Theatre poster for the *Black Panther* movie. Source: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1825683/

Figure 35. The influence of *Black Panther* on popular culture is so much that viewers would come in Africa-themed dress to the theatres. Pictured here are a Tanzanian, South African and Zambian in Port Elizabeth, South Africa during the first screening. (Photo: Kazike Sakala)

Figure36. A Zambian None-governmental organisation alongside Ster-Kinekor sponsored Zambian school children to watch the *Black Panther* film in theatres. Source: Ster-Kinekor - Zambia

Figure 37. "The BMW 7 Series Individual" by Esther Mahlangu showcases the level of craftsmanship BMW Individual Manufaktur has among its resources, making possible one-of-a-kind vehicles that uniquely reflect the owner's unmistakable character." (Source: BMW Magazine SA 2018)
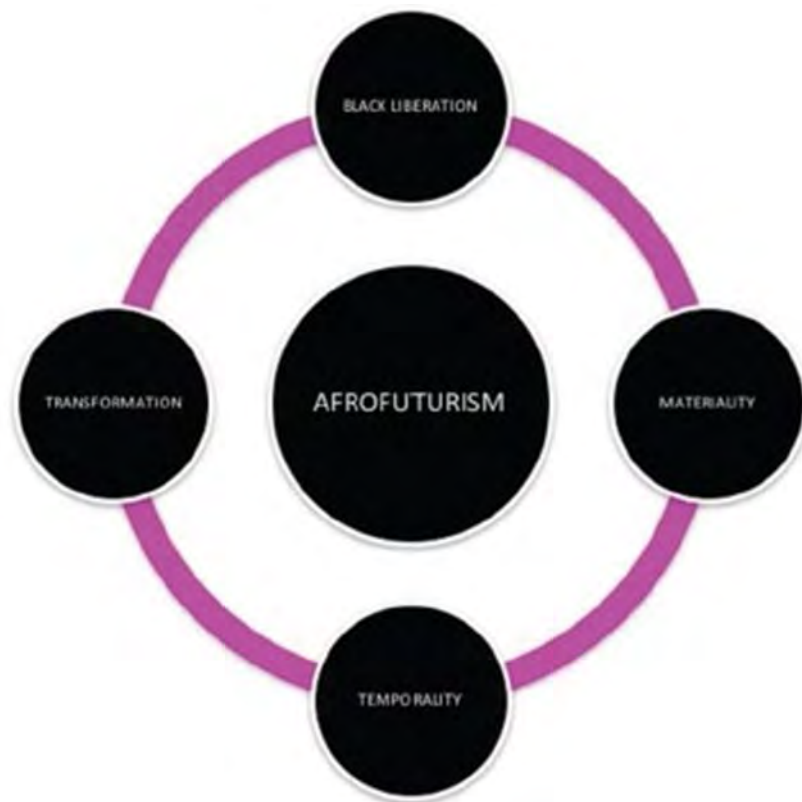
Figure 38. Elizabeth C. Hamilton, diagram: Afrofuturism as a mechanism (source: *African Arts* Vol. 50. 4. Winter 2017, p. 19)

Chapter 3 – Confronting the antinomies of contemporaneity: Challenging myths about Africa's past present and future[77]

Using the two preceding chapters as an underpinning for the discussion, this chapter forms the midway point of the thesis, introducing Zambian artists whose works can be analysed to break down the dichotomy of tradition and futurism in order to challenge the lingering perceptions of African belatedness that had been suggested earlier.

The works by the hitherto discussed artists, Tayali and Simpasa, which I argued represent speculative nonconformity, serve as precursors to the works analysed in this chapter, suggesting that there is a traceable visual tradition of grappling with themes that can be used to challenge lingering perceptions of African belatedness and it is nothing new within the Zambian visual arts context.

Without purposely placing them within any form of chronological order, the works of artists discussed are by those that have lived and worked in Zambia, namely Chishimba Chansa (b.1956), Ignatius Sampa (b. 1991 – d. 2014), Zenzele Chulu (b1968) and Isaac Kalambata (b.1983). The chapter examines how the composite portrayals concerning the juxtaposition of tradition, which might allude to the past, and contemporaneity, which might allude to the present moment, enliven the dialogue in which artists conjure these representations with regard to the underlying themes of tradition, culture, time, place and space, and how these elements complicate the issue of Africa's belatedness: a belatedness inherited from colonial times as briefly highlighted in the summary of the last chapter. This thesis argues that when these themes overlap, they tend to complicate the various arguments around what it is to define them within the context of visual arts in works produced by African artists. Like the previous chapter, this one also draws from various texts to defend this argument, while

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[77] The title borrows generously from the book Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity (2009), Smith, T., Enwezor, O., Condee, N. (Eds), Duke University Press

returning to some of the same authors and texts already introduced. It also draws upon questions, such as those proposed by Indian physicist and feminist Vandana Shiva. Shiva gives an example that extends beyond Africa stating, "Colonialism had from the very beginning been a contest over the mind and the intellect. What will count as knowledge? In addition, who will count as expert or as innovator? Such questions have been central to the project of colonizing diverse cultures and their knowledge systems" (Shiva 2002: vii). Notwithstanding, traditional knowledge systems, it can be argued, have existed alongside so-called modern ones, as will be examined in the works in this chapter. This again lends itself to what postcolonial theorist Bill Ashcroft[78] elaborates concerning modernity in the African novel:

> Afro-modernity is one model in which the past is folded into the present in much the same way that contemporary writers transform literary discourse. Traditional knowledges either inform or exist alongside the modern, in ways that demonstrate the irrepressible adaptability and transformative agency of cultures. Far from a sense of fracture or brokenness, which we might assume to be the effect of colonialism, the key to an Afro-modernity is a multiple or layered sense of time (Ashcroft 2014:64)

In a manner similar to that suggested above, the select artists in this chapter manipulate imagery and symbols in ways that imply a progressive energy, either of their own invention or inspired by fantasies of ancient or precolonial pasts while leaning towards 'futuristic' tropes associated with science fiction, in a way paralleling the tropes exemplified in the Afrofuturistic works described in chapter one.

The artworks considered in this study are richly textured and can be used in arguing a reframing of perceptions of art from Africa and ultimately the various discourses around such themes as tradition for instance. Therefore it can be suggested that the artists use these elements in terms of uncommon but complementary communicative touches, often times

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[78] Ashcroft, B. is a post-colonial theorist who has co-authored 16 books and has written over 150 chapters in books and journals. He is cited here from "Knowing Time: Temporal Epistemology and the African Novel" in Cooper, B. and Morrell, R. (eds) *Africa-Centred Knowledges: Crossing fields and worlds*

conjoining the past and the present with the yet to come, the future. Ultimately the goal is a "democratization of knowledge"[79] (Soudien 2014: xv) on the part of Africa, not necessarily a pursuit of validation. Much of the imagery in the select works seeks also to reinstate the dignity of beliefs and traditions that were held dear before the encounter between Europe and Africa, which forced Africans to look down on their own values as well as achievements. Much of this was done by the use of language vis-à-vis the cultural flow from Europe to Africa, as Lansana Keita (2014:25) aptly puts forward, maintaining that: "In brief, colonial languages were structured and employed to establish, as fact, both the biological and cultural superiority of the colonizer. This assumption of general superiority was then used to justify the idea that indigenous technological practices and metaphysical beliefs should be replaced by those of European origin".

Worth noting is that the works of these artists may fit comfortably into many of the earlier discussed tropes of Afrofuturism; however, this does not imply that all work created in the context of Africa's future automatically makes its creators Afrofuturists in the manner attributed to Mark Dery (1994). Theirs, however, is neither a fantastic venture into escapism nor a quest for validation, but perhaps a newer definition of authenticity that is not entirely centred on a salvaged past (Hassan 1996:460). Hassan comes to mind here as he states: "Rather, authenticity is reconceived as hybrid, creative activity in a local present-becoming-future. Non-western cultural and artistic works are implicated by an interconnected world cultural system without necessarily being swamped by it. Authenticity in that sense is something produced, not salvaged." The works of these artists also can be read as a quest for parity, if not a manifestation of equality with problematic notions of superiority that have continuously placed their continent in a constant realm of perceived belatedness.

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[79] Although this is drawn from a none-artistic context it is used here to suggest that through referencing certain African traditions artists can embody a sense of pride in these traditions and not look down upon them as something belated or backward

Furthermore, the artists' collective work implies that artists on the African continent have been grappling with progressive notions of the future without being aware of the persistently circulated label of Afrofuturism and may continue to do so long after the label is spent and someone re-labels it as post-Afrofuturist or something similar. All the while, their work lends itself to a myriad of everyday contexts and suppositions that speak to tradition, culture, technology, education, knowledge, gender and religion that may have been illicitly impressed on them as postcolonial Africans – as will be demonstrated under the subheadings of this chapter.

1: An airport on the hill: Chishimba Chansa's *Ukupupuka pa Lusengo*

Belief in the supernatural is considered eccentric in the western world, unless the magical beliefs happen to be your own. As often as not, the person whose superstition prevents him from walking under a ladder is the same one who scorns fear of witchcraft. (Holland 2001)

The above quote is taken from the book *African Magic: Traditional ideas that heal a continent* by Heidi Holland[80], as much of what is written in the book may provide context for the work of Chishimba Chansa[81], which is discussed and analysed here. For instance, Holland (2001:2) questions why Africans should be vilified for having certain supernatural beliefs while Europeans are free to do so. Another such comparison can be drawn from Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie (2010:14-15) who observe that:

Beyond the characterization of politics in Africa, the reification of oppositional images of Western *self* and African *Other* through language that inscribes difference in similar social constructs—between, for instance, Halloween, psychics, and tarot-

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[80] Holland was a SouthAfrican-born journalist and author, most noted for two books *The Struggle: A History of the Africa National Congress* (1990) and *Born in Soweto: Inside the Heart of South Africa* (1994). As a freelance journalist she wrote for a wide range of publications including the London *Sunday Times*, *International Herald Tribune* and *The Guardian* as well as research for leading British television documentaries.
[81] Born in 1956, Chansa was trained at the Kwame Nkrumah Teachers College in Kabwe, the Evelyn Hone College of Applied Arts and Commerce in Lusaka as well as the Baltic School of Arts and Design in Skone, Sweden. He developed his papaya medium in September 1982 when he started experimenting with different types of trees and techniques of processing tree bark-fibre cloths. He interprets life as he perceives it and communicates to reach human minds through the original artistic statements he produces on each artwork he creates.

card readers versus African tribal superstitions and beliefs; designer cosmetics versus native face paint; bikini-clad women versus half-naked maidens; and Hollywood's in-vogue 'labio-vaginal sculpting' versus 'African female genital mutilation'—help maintain a sense of logic regarding structures of global hierarchy and unspoken convictions of racial difference and cultural superiority. Tragically, they evolve into structures of seeing that silence the historical legacies of Africa's leading contributions to technology, architecture, medicine, algebra, the arts.

This section that analyses the work of Chansa allows for an exploration of ways to challenge some of the above-mentioned classification systems and structures of seeing that contribute to the framing of Africa as backward, in which for the most part 'traditional' is read as outdated. This includes classifications like 'traditional knowledge'. Although not linked directly to Africa, the words of Marlene Brant Castellano in "Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge" provide for an interesting definition of traditional knowledge that may help counter the vilification of belief systems, African included. Castellano (2002:23) suggests that:

> *Traditional knowledge* has been handed down more or less intact from previous generations. With variations from nation to nation, it tells of the creation of the world and the origin of clans in encounters between ancestors and spirits in the form of animals; its records genealogies and ancestral rights to territory; and it memorializes battles, boundaries and treaties and instils attitudes of wariness or trust toward neighbouring nations. Through heroic and cautionary tales, it reinforces values and beliefs; these in turn provide the substructure for civil society. In some of its forms, it passes on technologies refined over generations.

Despite it being perhaps a broad-brush stroke in that it refers to Australian aborigines, the above citation cannot be dismissed as not being applicable to many aspects of traditional knowledge systems across the world, more so on the African continent.

Ukupupuka pa Lusengo (*To Fly on a Tusk/horn*) (Fig. 39), a 1991 painting in which Chansa unreservedly employs the juxtaposition of imagery that relates to 'traditional' African beliefs and knowledge systems – that are often frowned upon as backward – provides for a suitable

departure point to start the argument. Additionally, Chansa is considered one of the foremost traditionalists in the contemporary Zambian art context. His subject matter is informed by deep-rooted cultural underpinnings, and he uses material considered unconventional in the context of contemporary art in Zambia, such as traditional bark cloth. His titles and artist's statements too are written in his mother tongue *Icibemba*. Before a closer examination of the artwork, attention can be drawn to the title of the work itself. It is in his own mother tongue or 'traditional' language as it were, an inclination that is not quite popular in the Zambian contemporary art context.

Although a few of Chansa's works are highlighted, only one is singled out and discussed at greater length for the scope of this research. His paintings for the most part are alive with movement and momentum either of his own invention or inspired by African belief systems and myths inclined towards futuristic tropes. His works and thoughts recorded during fieldwork for this thesis also indicate that he is very critical of what he describes as "Western culture". As a result, cultures develop prejudices towards certain 'traditions' including their own; Africans, in this instance, Zambians, are a case in point, frowning upon any notion of the 'traditional' about mystical air travel. This will be demonstrated in the following sub-section.

1.1 Ukupupuka Akasuba (To fly by day) – Out of the dark into the light

In *Ukupupuka pa lusengo*, Chansa depicts an aircraft that has just taken off; however, this is no conventional aircraft, as in the 1905 invention, Kitty Hawk, attributed to the Wright brothers. The aircraft comprises a large horn or perhaps tusk[82] of a mammal, also unlike an aircraft in the generally accepted sense, its passengers – perhaps a dozen or so – are straddled across the length of it. While one may dismiss the actuality of people flying on a horn or tusk,

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[82] Tusk and horn are interchangeable in the Bemba language

Chansa (2017) does not regard it as a figment of the imagination and he therefore did not paint it as such. In the artists mind, the painting is by no means a parody of an aircraft.

If one were to argue in terms of size, there is no horn of any mammal that would fit a dozen people on it. However small, horns used for flight are believed to be able to fit one or more adults: a self-confessed 'witch' interviewed in the *Zambia Daily Mail* by Zambian journalist Charles Chisala (2018) was reported to have crashed but survived while travelling in a "puku horn" aircraft, which is quite small.[83]

Likewise, if the proportions of the *Indeke* (aircraft) in Chansa's painting appear unusual, it may be of no consequence, in reality, as the aircraft may be said to shrink or expand accordingly. If museum specimens are anything to go by such as an 'aeroplane'[84] (see Fig. 40) as that currently on display at the Livingstone National Museum in Zambia brings to mind the thought that either the aircraft is able to expand or its passengers are able to shrink by means of magic. The Livingstone Aeroplane is relatively small, and what may serve as its fuselage comprises a small "tortoise shell" (Livingstone Museum 2002)[85]. Worthy of note also is the museum text that accompanies the object (see Fig. 41). The plaque reads that the object was donated by "Witch-finder Alvin Nyawa Siachitema alias 'Dr Chimuka' Age: 32 years old, Experience: 10 years" (Livingstone Museum 2002). What might be problematic here is neither the age nor the years of experience of the "Witch-finder," but the labelling of his title itself. Understandably, he is a bounty hunter of witches, but because witches are associated with malevolence, such an object as the aeroplane in question may not stand any positive chance to be seen in a progressive light, as it has already been branded as evil. The

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[83] Chisala, C. "How I became a cruel witch" *The Zambia Daily Mail*, 18 March 2018, accessed on 15 May 2018: https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/how-i-became-a-cruel-witch/

[84] Dated 13 August 2002, and labelled "Aeroplane", the specimen is on display at the Livingstone National Museum and is recorded to have been in use since 1967, it was donated by witch-finder Alvin Nyawa Siachitema alias "Dr. Chimuka"

[85] Details on the display. Note that this type of aircraft is known to be made from different types of material and is not just restricted to a tortoise shell, some specimens at the Copperbelt Museum are created from basketry. In the case of Chansa's work, his reference is made of a tusk.

negativity attached to witches or anyone who practises witchcraft, or indeed is able to create such aircraft, is briefly highlighted by Zimbabwean theologian and scholar, Bishop Ambrose Moyo (2013:344):

> Witchcraft beliefs are widespread in contemporary Africa even among educated Christians and Muslims, typically as a response to the insecurities of modern life. … Even children are being accused and in rising numbers, as reported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in a report on West and Central Africa. … It is generally believed that witches can fly by night, can become invisible, delight in eating human flesh, and use familiar animals such as hyenas or baboons as their means of transport. Witches are believed to be wicked and malicious human beings whose intention is simply to kill, which they do by poisoning and cursing their victims. Witches, sorcerers, and angry ancestor spirits are usually identified as the major causes of misfortune or death in a family.

The above citation is quoted at length because it lends itself to the traditional–contemporary Africa conversation, within the context of this chapter. Whereas so-called witchcraft may be considered as traditional and old, it is still practised today in contemporary (new) times and will surely continue to be practised in the future. However, a question also arises here as to whether, in the near future, the creators of such aircraft will continue to be called witches, even if they use them for travel purposes without causing any harm to others. Associating such technology specifically to witches perpetuates perceptions that frown upon African innovation.

Nevertheless, returning to the discussion of the aircraft in Chansa's painting, it does not seem to have a pilot but is presumably being controlled to its final destination by the lone figure that remains on the ground in the airport building; this person is perhaps responsible also for launching it into the air. The architecture of the building itself is unlike what you will find at a conventional airport, there are neither any airport traffic control towers nor aircraft rescue and firefighting equipment. It is constructed more or less like a cattle kraal, with wooden beams driven into the ground in a circular shape leaving an entrance from which the lone

person is visible. Before him or her is a large calabash, perhaps used for preparation of launching the aircraft – along with a few gourds hanging at the entrance, perhaps containing fuel with which to fly the aircraft? On the side of the figure is a wooden bench, which conceivably serves the same purpose as the stainless-steel benches that can be found in departure lounges in airports across the world.

Watching the aircraft leave, in the foreground, outside the building, appears to be a family, occupying centre stage in the picture. They witness the take-off as families do at airports and heartily waving goodbye at the aircraft as if sending off some visiting relatives. The whole scene is set on the hilltop of a rural settlement, and gives an impression of daybreak or sunset; apart from a slightly blue sky the colours are subdued browns and oranges and the distant landscape itself appears like a flat-bottomed valley with visible huts in the distance rendered as silhouettes, a place where the family will be returning after seeing off their visitors at the airport on the hill.

Ukupupuka pa Lusengo questions convention and challenges conformity by suggesting the supernatural use of objects believed to be used for flight. When asked for a short commentary on the work during a preliminary enquiry before responding to the semi-structured questions posed during the field research interview Chansa (pers. comm., December 2016) suggested: "I was addressing the unexplored Zambian (African) sciences in our villages. You and I have heard of people travelling long distances at night. Let's build airports that can be used during the day." Chansa implies that in the future, the use of esoteric sciences should benefit the masses, if there is surely nothing to hide. In this light, Chansa's work can be read as an inversion of Euro-American inspired thought as he projects an African futurism, allowing his work a quality of subjectivity that lies "somewhere between myth and fact" (Gaskins 2015:27).

When further probed as to what was the inspiration behind depicting a 'traditional' aircraft, when flight is often associated with the Western invention of the aeroplane, he states:

> The message is that Zambian 'nocturnal' knowledge which was researched by our ancestors and proved to be working, it must not be ignored. … I wanted to educate the Zambian people telling them that it exists, it is real, it works, let us not pretend. Personally, I do not agree that flight is western invention, maybe if you said that flying during daytime enclosed in a metal container was started by them. Zambians (Africans) had already been flying in open air from one place to another, without being seen. They started before the aeroplane was created. (Chansa pers. comm., 21 November 2017)

In one interpretation, the painting, as well as Chansa's statement, implies that in the future, Africans should use their 'concealed' indigenous knowledge for everyday use in broad daylight not as some hidden, nocturnal activity. This, one might suggest, may be made possible through the use of diviners or traditional healers as they are called interchangeably and can also be found in every African community, urban or rural (Holland 2001:3). Their role after all is "to search for esoteric knowledge in order to provide solutions where moral choices have to be made among individuals" (Holland ibid). Further elaborating on this she suggests:

> Acquiring herbal expertise is a protracted vocation: traditional healers experiment lifelong with plants and animal parts to achieve remedies they sometimes claim to have been given by their ancestors in dreams. Often, there is an empirical rather than a mystical basis to these cures, hence the interest of the international pharmaceutical industry in some traditional remedies. (Holland 2001:12)

Chansa suggests that all policies discouraging the development of indigenous knowledge must be discarded, and a research institute be set up and personnel be identified, with documentation both audio and visual being kept and preserved in a strong room (Chansa pers. comm., 21 November 2017). By making such a suggestion, Chansa is declaring that so called indigenous knowledge should not be immediately relegated as something backward or

archaic, but should take pride of place in modern times. But before going further, it will be important to contextualise "indigenous knowledge" within the framework of this study, first of all by pointing out that it speaks to what will be described here as a politics of knowledge or knowledge politics, much as the traditional–modern conversation was described in previous chapters as chronopolitics. In *Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, edited by George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (2000), the authors elaborate this by stating:

> We conceptualize an 'indigenous knowledge' as a body of knowledge associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience of knowledge of a given social group, and forms the basis of decision making in the face of challenges both familiar and unfamiliar. (Sefa Dei et al. 2000:6)

In the book chapter "African Development: The Relevance and Implications of 'Indigenousness'", Sefa Dei (2000:72) takes this further by suggesting that "the notion of 'indigenousness' highlights the power dynamics embedded in the production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination of global knowledge about 'international development'". To this one might add, the ones with the upper hand to produce, validate and disseminate knowledge – in many cases Euro-America or the West – hold sway on determining what is old or backward and what is modern and contemporary. This feeds into an observation by Patience Elabor-Idemudia (2000:109) who argues that: "Modernization theory is based on the assumption that that there is a unilinear route to development and that the social and economic 'fixes' applied in the West ought to be applied in developing countries as well." This again, one might argue, depends on who decides which is a so-called developing country and whose indices they use. Cooper and Morrell (2014:5) capture this in a suggestion that states: "knowledge is not made in an egalitarian way; not all voices make the same (or equal)

contribution or have the same authority. Some voices are louder, some marginalized and others inaudible" when it comes to the authorial voices in knowledge production.

Notwithstanding, indigenous forms of knowledge can be used as a means of rebellion, as a few scholars highlight. Elizabeth McIsaac[86] (2000:37) posits that "While indigenous forms of knowledge drawn from experience traditionally have been passed on for purposes of understanding nature and ways of being in the world, this knowledge can also be understood as articulating a cosmology that contradicts forms of domination such as patriarchy, racism, militarism, scientific and economic colonialism, and imperialism." In a similar consideration with a specific focus on academia, Joseph Couture[87] reiterates that "indigenous knowledges are a way to recover from the artificial split between mind and body brought on by the theorizing of the Western Enlightenment, and a challenge to the ways in which Western knowledges have become hegemonic. Such works can be taken up in work on health, the environment, and spirituality, and indeed at all levels of academic reflection" (Couture 2001). This ties into the argument that Chansa proposes with his painting *Ukupupuka pa Lusengo* as well as his concept of 'nocturnal' knowledge. As much as this discourse provides for a politics of knowledge that is African knowledge systems (or Afrocentric knowledge) and Western hegemonic knowledge systems (Eurocentric knowledge), perhaps caution also has to be observed through the handling of the subject among scholars or purveyors of knowledge, as in artists such as Chansa. As Cooper and Morrell (2014:5) persuasively suggest:

> While there are obvious differences between them, the immovable rock and the bad
> place are also the same; they are flip sides of each other. In other words, Afrocentric
> and Eurocentric knowledges may appear to be at loggerheads but, in fact, they are
> structurally similar. They both have a single, monolithic benchmark by which to
> judge and value the world; they share a view of history that denies multiplicity, as
> well as the movement of people and things in more than one direction. Eurocentrism

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[86] McIsaac is an ethnographer, researcher and co-author of the book *Reconstructing 'Dropout': A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School* (1997)
[87] Couture is an educational psychologist.

deludes itself that 'the West' has lit a path to a universal state of advanced humanity, technology and religion, under the umbrella of so-called modernity. Afrocentrism peddles myth that Africa cradles the origins of all knowledge, and that, although denied by colonialism, these knowledge sources may be unearthed and reused in their original forms.

Chansa's work and sentiments in this regard also speak to what Handel Kashope Wright (2002:186) highlights within the context of African literature studies, declaring that "We live in a time when the common sense of what 'valid knowledge' is, is being strongly challenged by newly emerging discourses of identity politics (such as feminism and Afrocentrism), and by postmodernist, post-structuralist, and postcolonial reconceptions of the world"

His suggestions resonate with what Lesley Green describes as "demythologizing illusions of objectivity"; in the context of the traditional and the modern, he suggests: "Once one can begin to recognize the ways in which regimes of knowledge transform traditional medicine into TM™, it becomes possible to recognize that while 'indigenous knowledge' takes its rhetoric from tradition, it operates and stands very firmly within the frameworks of modernity" (Green 2014:47).

What further bolsters Chansa as a futurist – as well as a traditionalist – is that 26 years after he painted *Ukupupuka pa Lusengo*, there is an indication that the Zambian government may begin supporting scientists to investigate the alternative usage of indigenous knowledge which is framed as "witchcraft". Journalist Chimwemwe Mwale wrote an article in the *Zambia Daily Mail*[88] with the heading *"Luo challenges scientists on witchcraft"*[89] (see Fig. 42*)*, in which the Zambian Minister of Higher Education, Nkandu Luo, had suggested that Zambia should consider the research and "study of witchcraft as a science that can be used productively for the benefit of the country" (Mwale 2017). Prof. Luo, herself a microbiologist

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[88] *The Zambia Daily Mail* is one of two state-owned papers of the Zambian government, and a mouthpiece that was a critical "instrument in nation building" shortly after independence.

[89] Mwale, C., 2017,"Luo challenges scientists on witchcraft", the *Zambia Daily Mail*, News, 21 November, p. 3. The electronic version can be found at: https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/luo-challenges-scientists-on-witchcraft/

who previously served as head of pathology and microbiology at the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, carrying out extensive research in immunology and HIV/AIDS, made the statement during the commemoration of the World Science Day for Peace and Development under the theme "Recreating interest in science, technology and innovation" in 2017. While there has not since been any official confirmation of her suggestion, it may have been taken seriously in the sphere of popular opinion among Zambian citizens because it was reported in a state-owned newspaper that is distributed countrywide and considered by many as one of the major government mouthpieces.

In response to Prof. Luo's declaration, Chansa comments, "I am for that. However, you see it has come after more than twenty years when I had created that *Ukukupupuka pa lusengo* artwork. But you see it may take maybe two or three generations before her statement is implemented" (Chansa pers. comm., 21 November 2017). Chansa's statement implies that his artwork is a conversation on the transformation of traditional practices in order to be constructively used in the future. Although, as he indicates above, it may take a long time before this is done, considering that aircraft such as the one in his painting have long been associated with the arcane, and specifically witchcraft, as their main purpose is often reported to be the transportation of witches[90]. It has already been established in this study through Mbiti's earlier remarks that this type of aircraft does exist: the examples in museums are also tangible evidence of this. Nevertheless, unlike the passengers in Chansa's painting, in order for them to fly, the passengers must strip naked (see Fig. 43) and use human blood or other substances that might be considered bizarre, as fuel. In the context of indigenous knowledge or nocturnal knowledge (as Chansa posits) itself, the use of animal horns and nakedness are also acknowledged by Holland, who suggests their ritual usage stating: "Other types of witches, invariably women, knowingly rise naked from their beds during the night and blow

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[90] See Mulenga, M. 2001, "Zambians Traumatized by Crash-landing Flying Wizards", 6 January 2001, Pan African News Agency, 6 January, http://www.panapress.com/

magic substance in an animal horn in the direction of the person who is to be harmed or killed" (Holland 2001:9).

Furthermore, as suggested above, there are other seemingly less palatable elements of the traditional aircraft, such as the use of human flesh and blood in the case of the specimen from the Livingstone National Museum. Equally unsettling might be the other uses of these aircraft; just as the 'modern' aircraft, they can have multiple functions, serving as communication devices and weapons, but not of the sort that one would expect to find in a military air force. The Livingstone 'aeroplane' also served as a lethal weapon as its "owner used this object against his son to make him suffer from incurable pneumonia" (Livingstone National Museum 2012).

In his painting, Chansa contends that although he was addressing *Amanga, Ubuloshi ne Imiti.* (witchcraft, sorcery and traditional medicine), part of the reason indigenous knowledge that is used to produce such things as the Livingstone aeroplane is condemned by the West without compromise was because it is something they do not understand. But it is not just the West that may condemn knowledge that they do not understand, as Chansa highlights, a considerable number of Zambians for instance were not pleased with Minister Nkandu Luo's announcement in the Daily Mail. A few responses retrieved from the *Zambia Daily Mail*'s social media page[91] are shared bellow:

> **Milton Kalenga Sr**.: Did she forget we are a Christian Nation. What is she smoking on these days; it's definitely stronger than weed.
>
> **Charles Millioni**: Is this true? This woman has run out of ideas. Please Mr. President dismiss this woman from office. She is an agent of Satan. She will discredit you and your government.
>
> **Diana Chikuwile**: May God forbid this! I thought Zambia was a Christian nation

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[91] https://www.facebook.com/ZAMBIADAILYMAIL/

Enock Samakupa: She is a witch!! No Christian minister would think of pushing for that agenda. And where is Godfridah Sumaili? As a standing Christian she must resign from this government. How would she advance her Christian morals under such an environment where other ministers are advancing witchcraft and Satanism?

Chileshe Musonda: she needs to retire, then reflect then start going to a bible believing church. Age is catching up with her.

Ricardo Musonda Mukuka: Witchcraft in a Christian nation? This Minister!

"The western world is very uncomfortable with knowledge that is beyond their understanding. That is why they call it all sorts of names. Let us affirm ourselves as Zambian thinkers, researchers, etc. In addition, maximize the benefit of our ancestor's knowledge" (Chansa pers. comm., 21 November 2017). What Chansa is doing with this work may also in a way lend itself to magical realism[92] in a visual arts context and in a sense challenge the dominant narrative of ways in which Africa is perceived negatively. Chansa, it can be argued, invokes what can be described by some as the occult, in order to question viewers' understandings of their own beliefs, many of which have been whitewashed by colonialism; it resonates with the considerations of curator and academic Nkule Mabaso (2017) who, while addressing the 'magical' and the 'fantastic' within the context of art by African artists suggests, "Magical realism can also provide a way to fill in the gaps of cultural representation in a postcolonial context by recovering the fragments and forgotten histories from the point of view of the colonized" (Mabaso 2017:05). Chansa's work, by suggesting the use of an aircraft linked to sorcery and witchcraft in the future, can also be read as a defiant act of demystifying African magic, as well as delinking African knowledge systems from those of the West as has been discussed earlier in the description of the airport depicted by Chansa, and the aircraft flying during the day and not the night with which it has long been associated. Furthermore, it may also be read as a commentary on the challenge of poverty; while air

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[92] See Mabaso, N. and Makhubu, N. 2016, "Magical realism is a literary genre far more than anything and its application to and implications for African literature in general." In *Fantastic*, an exhibition catalogue published by Michaelis Galleries, University of Cape Town.

travel is often regarded as the preserve of the wealthy, clearly the backdrop of Chansa's portrayal suggests the travellers as people who live a life of subsistence in a rural area. "Discourses around witchcraft in sub-Saharan Africa are materially developed around colonial politics and post-colonial neo-liberal capitalism. Witchcraft and "black magic" are then used to explain the severity of living conditions and the contradictions (excessive wealth alongside poverty) that exist" (Mabaso 2017:19).

According to Chansa, he has also been regarded as a fantasist within his own artistic community and by colleagues who have obviously become accustomed to residual methods of viewing the world in ways that colonialists or the Western world handed down to them. "The westerner's conviction that his own worldview is the only valid one: what he fails to understand is therefore rejected as superstition" (Holland 2001:4). Chansa has been told: "*Filoto, ifyamba, ama artist ba bufi bushe ni kwisa wa mona abuntu balepupuka mu mwela*. These are dreams, or the result of smoking of cannabis, where did you ever see people flying in the air?" Chansa 2017). Such an experience on Chansa's can again relate to what Mabaso describes as "the skewed perceptions about magic and the African continent [that] have obscured the 'magic' of systematic power and make it difficult to write about magic and Africa on the same page. Yet, there is the very magical, fantastic character of defiance" (Mabaso 2017:20). This by no means suggests that magic or witchcraft have not been studied and documented extensively on the African continent. Similarly, in line with power relations concerning witchcraft and magic on the African continent; "Few countries in Africa have legislatively challenged the assumption of colonial lawmakers that witchcraft does not exist and the way to deal with witchcraft belief is, therefore, to suppress it." (Holland 2001:49).

1.2: It came to pass: a visual artist's conjecture of the future

Chansa (2017) argues, if Africans "discovered flying in open air without being seen by others, who knows what shall be there (in the future)? Visual artists help visualize

tomorrow's world." What is more, Chansa's *Ukupupuka pa lusengo* critically encapsulates a visual juxtaposition of the traditional, the futuristic and fantasy. In more ways than one, it draws parallels with Afrofuturism in that it combines elements of fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs (Womack 2013:9), parallels which will lead the discussion into the work of Zenzele Chulu, whose work is to be discussed next. But before examining Chulu's work, it is worth here pointing out a few works that support the claim of Chansa's hands-on juxtaposition of the traditional, the futuristic and fantasy in his art production although these will not be analysed in detail.

Among Chansa's most frequently produced work are his paintings on homemade *Pachilundu* (papaya) bark fibre which he often uses in place of canvas for his paintings (see Fig. 44). Although this is inspired by a traditional form of making bark cloth fabric that has diminished in popularity among various communities in Zambia, it can still be seen during traditional ceremonies, as it is worn by the sedan chair carriers of the paramount chief Chitimukulu (the head of *uLuBemba*, the Bemba peoples of Northern Zambia) during the *Ukusefya pa Ng'wena* traditional ceremony (see Fig. 45). For his paintings on backcloth, Chansa uses acrylic but also uses *ulupemba*, a symbolic white powder, derived from clay, often used for ritual. While *ulupemba* has been adopted for various uses within contemporary society, such as in *Ichimbuya*[93] where people attending funerals[94], weddings, graduations or those celebrating appointments to public office are doused with the white powder (see Fig. 46), Chansa refers to it in a more traditional manner as he indicates on his website homepage:

> *Ulupemba lulepilibula finshi: Nga chakutila mwabelenga no kumfwa ifyo cali ta balati ba fyalwe. kanshi kuti mwa sambilila po icalenga bale ibukisha intambi sha*

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[93] The concept of *chimbuya* or 'cousinship' - a playful form of, 'ethnic sparring' enjoyed between Zambian tribes that were at war at least a century ago; a mouse represents the Ngoni from the east, whereas a monkey represents the Bemba from the north. See Mulenga, A. 2012 Last kicks of a dying mouse and monkey in *The Post* newspaper, 26 May or http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.co.za/2012/05/last-kicks-of-dying-mouse-and-monkey.html

[94] Also see Kalichini, G. 2017. *Fyamoneka: Exploring the erasure of women within Zambian History*, MFA thesis Rhodes University.

kale isha kwisuba ulupemba pantu efyo aba fyashi babo bale bacita cilo mweshi nga
wa moneka mukukula kwabo bale shinshimuna imipashi yabo ba Chansa na ba
Chishimba pakuti ile basunga bwino elyo nokubenshya umutende. (Chansa n.d.)[95]

Loosely translated, Chansa responds to the question of what *ulupemba* means in the context of his work, and explains that as children, his parents were often doused with *ulupemba* if they appeared despondent or weary, in order to conjure ancestral spirits to cheer them up and protect them.

Chansa therefore uses the medium in commemoration of such customs and in a way keeps the tradition alive through his artwork. The reason he is quoted directly in *IciBemba* here is, in a sense, to indicate how deeply entrenched he is with his traditional roots. Concerning his mother tongue Chansa does not feel himself obliged to follow the trend of satisfying the dominant gatekeepers of knowledge.

1.3: Riding into the unembroidered realm of 'a-spatial' fantasy

Horse Rally (Fig. 47), another Chansa's works from the early 1990s, is a work that would fit comfortably in any science fiction or fantasy exhibition, owing to the otherworldly nature of its subject matter. It depicts four riders clad in outfits that could be a cross between a space suit and a motorcycle outfit, complete with futuristic helmets and visors. However, it is what they are riding that is the most bizarre or fantastic element of the subject matter. They are riding horses[96] that not only have wheels but horns and the horns serve as handlebars. The painting complicates Chansa's subjectivity as an African artist whose work is often inspired by African tradition as has been demonstrated above. Neither the fantastic horses nor their space-age riders seem to possess anything that would fit them into the popular tropes of how Africa is perceived, subsequently complicating the location of Africa as a place that can be identified by certain aesthetic nuances. Furthermore, it is almost as if *Ukupupuka pa Lusengo*,

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[95] See Chansa's artists statement on his homepage: https://chishimbachansa.weebly.com/about.html
[96] This is borrowed from the painting's title

Horse Rally and the papaya fibre paintings were all done by different people, although they were done by the same person, underscoring Chansa's art practice as a whole having the ability to encapsulate the traditional, the futuristic and the fantastic. Also, while Chansa's work may draw some parallels with Afrofuturistic tropes mentioned in chapter one, before the interview held with him during the field research for this study, he had never heard of the term Afrofuturism, and when asked what he thought if his work were to be labelled as such by art historians, scholars and curators, his response was: "Art historians, curators and scholars from which part of the world? If they are Zambian it is a good foundation that they are laying but must find an appropriate terminology because this one sounds more Western. However, art historians, curators and scholars from the Western world, I say keep it up, you are becoming enlightened in the areas of our traditional science and technology" (Chansa 2017).

2: Problematising tradition and contemporaneity: Antinomies of culture in the work of Ignatius Sampa[97]

> *One of the by-products of Europe's irruption into Africa was cultural diffusion. Thus, traditional modes of knowing and acting in various African cultures were much impacted by the diffused technologies (Keita 2014: 23).*

The argument around portrayals of the future and how they can be used to break down the misleading dichotomies in the traditional–modern–contemporary argument and how these can be used to challenge outmoded and lingering perceptions of African belatedness are continued in this section. This is done through the analysis of artworks by Ignatius Sampa[98]. Regarding the juxtaposition of traditional African elements alongside modern motifs that supposedly resonate with African contemporaneity in certain contexts, the paintings of Sampa have many such examples and most of them have the word "culture" in their titles. Of course, the use of the term culture as a concept itself fluctuates depending on the context. In

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[97] The title borrows directly from the book
[98] Ignatius Sampa was an artist who lived and worked in Lusaka, Zambia.

the context of this study of Sampa's work, a reference drawn from a chapter in *The Muse of Modernity* (in Altbach and Hassan) from Tanzanian author Walter Bgoya appears convincing albeit within context of arts in broader terms – literature and music.

> Culture is about reliving our past—reworking material from the past while facing the present. In Africa at the present, the major cultural thrust appears to be mostly the reconceptualization of culture following western trends. To be valid 'internationally,' it is not sufficient that music and literature are African; they must also be 'universal,' and if they are not, they are vilified in language that does not hide the deep prejudices of the critics as agents of the colonial legacy or the discomfort of African critics as apologetic victims of the latter. (Bgoya 1996:158)

The aforementioned might be the result of years of what Keita (2014) describes as "cultural diffusion" from Europe on Africa. Keita (2014:25) argues that:

> Cultural diffusion from Europe to Africa was far more influential in material and psychological terms. Consider for example the exogenous creation of the nation states of Africa with no clear input from the populations' territories that were increasingly structured to include terms and meanings that normatively devalued the lifeworld of the peoples involved. In brief, colonial languages were structured and employed to establish, as fact, both the biological and cultural superiority of the colonizer. This assumption of general superiority was then used to justify the idea that indigenous technological practices and metaphysical beliefs should be replaced by those of European origin.

Cultural globalisation media theorist John Tomlinson (Tomlinson 2004:18) suggests that "culture can be understood as the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation". Culture may also refer to mundane practices that directly contribute to people's ongoing life narratives and stories with which they chronically interpret their existence (Tomlinson 2004:20).

Libertarian author and theorist, Tom G. Palmer points out that "the term is used in a multitude of ways, often in the course of the same essay or consideration. They include: the cultivation of certain human capabilities; art (typically the term is reserved for 'high' art;

reaction against that reservation of the term has fuelled much academic study of 'popular culture'); and the concrete forms of life that people lead in common." (Palmer 2004:4)

The celebrated Kenyan scholar Ali A. Mazrui in the introduction to *The Muse of Modernity* (Altbach and Hassan eds.) confronts the topic of culture by suggesting that 'culture' is relevant for development. As such, one might suggest that if African culture – in this instance – is relevant for development, then it is a conduit of progress, progress identified also as modernity, modernity which lends itself to contemporaneity and subsequently the future; therefore, the future is dependent on culture. Mazrui (1996:1-3) proposes that in its relevance for development, culture has seven functions, which are outlined in brief here:

> When culture functions as a lens of perception, it influences how people view themselves and their environment. … Another function is when it serves as a spring of motivation. What people experience as incentives or disincentives for certain patterns of behaviour is greatly influenced by culture.

Culture, argues Mazrui:

> also serves as a standard of judgement. What is right and what is wrong, what is virtuous and what is evil, what is beautiful or ugly are all greatly conditioned by culture. What constitutes corruption? Why is taking a chicken to a chief in traditional society acceptable as a form of salutation but rejected as bribery in modern society?"

According to Mazrui (1996:2):

> Culture concerns its role as the basis of stratification. Rank, caste, and class are all profoundly conditioned by—if not created by—culture. There is, in addition, traditional gender stratification. In most sub-Saharan traditional cultures, for instance, women were thought to have a triple custodial role—as custodians of fire, water, and earth… culture is as a means of communication. Culture provides all sorts of nuances in communication and intimation. But above all, culture provides language in the literal sense of the legacy of words and lexicon… culture is precisely in defining and

influencing production and consumption. Cultures differ widely in productivity—not only in the world as a whole but also within Africa…culture as a basis of identity. Culture is crucial in defining who 'we' and 'they' are and in marking the frontiers of solidarity.

Throughout the analysis of Sampa's work, a generic use of the term 'culture' is applied without necessarily ignoring the complementary uses of the term, however, the framing of the term, or rather, the concepts, lend themselves to Mazrui's seven functions. In addition, the usage will be moderately aligned to the thoughts of Taylor, who suggests:

> The uses and definitions of "culture" vary, reflecting its prestigious association with civilization and social status, its restriction to attitude and behaviour, its globalization, and the debates surrounding issues of tradition, modernity and postmodernity. (Taylor 2006: vii)

Sampa, it is suggested here, uses the framework of culture within an African, and in particular a Zambian, context by shrewdly juxtaposing elements of what he perceives as African culture with those of what he regards as Western elements and he does so with thought-provoking results, as he grapples with elements of religion, technology, modernity and education using the *Makishi*[99]. However, an in-depth reading of his work speaks to a broader questioning of modernity and contemporaneity. Hassan (1996:44) provides a convincing suggestion in this regard when it comes to the arts of Africa – particularly its production.

> The confusing implications of 'traditional versus modern or contemporary' arts can best be explored by raising several related questions. How, for example, can we classify as 'traditional' forms of African art that continue to be produced presently in Africa? Are they not 'contemporary' art too? The usual dichotomy creates an illusion that forms of African art designated 'traditional,' or studied as such, are artefacts of the past, although in reality traditional forms of art continue to be produced today within the burgeoning urban as well as rural sectors of Africa. … The predominance of this dichotomy in the field of African art, despite the clear contradictions and

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[99] Masked characters, representing the spirits of a deceased ancestors who are believed to return to the world of the living to assist boys completing the *mukanda* initiation rites.

paradoxes it entails, is partially due to an outdated sense of terms such as 'tradition,' 'authenticity,' and 'originality.' In recent scholarship, the concept of 'tradition' is no longer viewed n a 'naturalistic' sense as it had been previously.

In the above statement Hassan implies that students or scholars of 'culture' have concluded that 'tradition' is no longer an 'authentic' body of knowledge. Nevertheless, the application of the term is used more in line with the concepts of Smith, Endeavor and Condee et al. (2008) as well as Cooper and Roberts et al. (2014) whose arguments on contemporaneity are more directly linked to the visual arts: considerations that are one way or another theoretically applicable to Sampa's work. By portraying traditional *Makishi* characters using modern smart gadgets such as phones, tablets and laptops, sitting in a classroom, visually challenges the dichotomy between tradition and modernism, tradition being representative of the past and modernity being a leitmotif for the future.

By so doing not only does the work challenge lingering perceptions of Africa's belatedness but it also speaks to contemporaneity: not contemporaneity as in being in the moment of the work's creation, in the now, but contemporaneity as in two things happening or existing at the same time. In the case of *Culture Lessons* (see Fig. 48), the work encapsulates contemporaneity with regard to traditional cultural beliefs and so-called modern practices being portrayed in a single painting.

2.1: Envisioning the critical necessity of epistemic parity

Culture Lessons is set in a classroom that has its wall plaster peeling off; the learners are all appropriations of several *Makishi* masquerade characters. To a certain extent, the work implies a lampooning of Africa's Western-stimulated education systems, where pupils are indoctrinated with Western-style knowledge at the expense of indigenous knowledge systems administered by the likes of the *Mukanda*, and the *Makishi* masquerades themselves. The crumbling classroom may also be read as a taunt about how incompatible Western-style

knowledge production and dissemination in the name of education is, and that it may not always be relevant to the existential circumstances of the learners to whom it is being delivered.

Imaginably, the notebook pages strewn on the floor around the classroom could be read as a casting away of foreign or Western knowledge. At the back of the classroom, lying on the floor there is a broom, usually fashioned from stiff dry grass – common among many African cultures. The purpose of the broom, of course, is to sweep out the pages, symbolically; this suggests indigenous African knowledge and traditions sweeping out Eurocentric knowledge and traditions. The artist is perhaps encouraging the African viewer to choose what they need from a European education and discard the rest, using their own knowledge systems.

In the painting, the rotating globe is paused on the map of Africa, and there is a supplementary map of the continent stuck on the wall. This may speak to the learners being instructed in a Eurocentric view of Africa, which is often hegemonic in favour of Western viewpoints: viewpoints that often give credence to myth more than to reality, as Oyekan Owomoyela (2010:47) elaborates: "Half a century into the era of African independencies and by the end of the first decade of the new millennium, the place and fortune of the continent and its people in the contemporary world remain as tested as they were in the days of high colonialism. Africa is prominently in the news in its accustomed pose, that is, as the epitome of qualities the shedding of which would confer civilization."

In Sampa's painting, the teacher in front of the class writes on the chalkboard "Zambia has 73 ethnic groups", and one is reminded here to ask the question; who was it if not the colonialists that came to the decision that the landmass currently called Zambia has so many ethnic groupings? *Culture Lessons* can also be read as a gesture against an education rooted in Western epistemology, which, since colonial times, has been the default mode of schooling

and therefore regarded as formal education. Any education delivered outside this framework is held in low regard, and people who have not had such an education are held in even lower regard. Although not speaking directly to the visual arts, historian Anene Ejikeme reflects on this, pointing out that:

> In our contemporary world, formal education is seen as a prerequisite for success and sometimes even the ability to think rationally … being poor or 'uneducated' should not be equated with being stupid … we live in a political world in which the west is dominant (Ejikeme 2010:199)

In a geopolitical context, the education themed, *Culture Lessons* also brings to mind the concept of "extractive globalization" (Gordon and Gordon 2013). Perhaps inadvertently perpetuating Africa's subjugated position while doing so, they argue that:

> A facet of extractive globalization not discussed often enough is the devastating brain drain, from Africa to the rich world. Africa's investments in the education of its people are in many cases benefiting the economic advancement of already developed countries more than countries in Africa (Gordon; Gordon 2013:48)

This citation correlates with the fact that a number of leading scholars in the field of art history and curatorship, such as Oguibe, Hassan, Okeke-Agulu, Ogbechie, Njami and Okediji – all originally from the African continent – are based in universities and museums in the United States and Europe.

There is an intertextuality within concepts of knowledge and power; those with a certain type of knowledge are deemed more powerful than those without it, more so, those with knowledge based on a Western education are regarded as of higher status than those without it. However, it can be argued that those with indigenous knowledge also hold sway with power over those without it. Sampa's depiction of *Makishi* with smart devices such as laptops

brings to mind a device called the *lukasa* (see Fig. 49), a mnemonic[100] device that has been used for centuries among the Luba people of the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo. "Usually, the *lukasa* has a similar size to that of a smartphone. It is also adorned with beads and shells that remind one of a phone's touches which transmit information to the user" (Chichi 2018). However, the *lukasa* has a much deeper meaning that can relate to intertextuality of knowledge and power. Another of its uses is spatial, as it can be used as a map (see Fig. 50). Historian Thomas Q. Reefe (1977:49) questionably describes it as "an esoteric memory device that was created, manipulated and protected by the Bambudye, a once powerful secret society of the Luba". He may have described it as esoteric because it was a device beyond his Eurocentric understanding and because it is such, it may therefore be warranted as some inferior form of knowledge, Western hegemonic knowledge being of course often regarded as the default. Nevertheless, of the *lukasa*, Reefe (1977:49) goes on to elaborate that:

> [I]t was an integral part of the inventory of carved artifacts that served the needs of the political and religious system. Very few examples of Lukasa came to light during the early colonial period because their secret functions caused them to be hidden … The story of the Lukasa is intimately associated with the history of the Luba Empire … No candidate for political office could receive his title without first becoming a member Bambudye society, and the ruler of the Luba Empire held the highest ranking Bambudye title.

The above states the importance, as well as the exclusivity of the device, which might in turn be used to subvert the notion of Western knowledge being superior, in that someone who is educated in the use of the device may have been held in higher esteem in Luba society than one who cannot use it, just as one who has received formal education may be observed as being higher on the social scale of contemporary Western society than one who has not. Interestingly, as a religious-political and memory device, the *lukasa* can be equated to a

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[100] A device or system that is used to store memory using things such as patterns of letters, ideas; used to remember things

Bible, albeit the latter is a book; both have a distinct relationship to the notion of divine rule in their individual contexts. In comparison of the *lukasa* and the Bible in this regard, Drew Walker asks: "What exactly is the difference between the Lukasa and the Bible?" (Walker 1996:154). Paraphrasing Reefe, he argues that "The Bible or 'the good book' is an esoteric memory device that was created, manipulated and protected by the Church, a once powerful secret society of the Christians" (Walker 1997:154). Much like the *lukasa*, the Bible has been central in the service of political and religious systems of Africa's colonisers.

> The *lukasa*, I would say, mimics our object of understanding (our Bible) and creates a dialectical estrangement of that understanding. We can see the *lukasa* defying the imposition of our understanding if we look closely enough. In looking closer, we see both understandings working to negate one another, moving together in synthesis. This is a view of the everyday syncretic reality of those people forming the Luba, and (though unacknowledged) moving together, or desperately begging to, in our everyday reality as we read about African arts. (Walker 1997:154).

In Walker's comparisons of the *lukasa* and the Bible as mnemonic devices that help remember something much larger "like tradition", he argues that traditions that should never be forgotten are essentially oral traditions. He elaborates that "when we look at the Bible or *lukasa* as mnemonic devices we see objects which, through the patterning, design and general arrangement of smaller units, divisions and so on, have had memories attached to them which facilitate remembrance of tradition." (Walker 1997:157).

2.2: Generating egalitarianism with regards matters of faith

Walker's comparison of the *lukasa* and the Bible at this point brings to mind Sampa's painting entitled *Culture and Religion* (Fig. 51). Without unduly implying that one is better than the other, he places two focal points of the subject matter on a par, as contemporaries; as he depicts a Pope in a friendly embrace with a *Likishi*[101]; each with one arm across the shoulder of the other, their backs towards the viewer while waving at a multitude from a

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[101] The singular form of *Makishi*

balcony. As the work's title suggests, Sampa poses a question with regard to culture and religion. Although the painting may not directly articulate a breaking down of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, and by extension futurism, it is used here to demonstrate how the juxtaposition of certain elements may be used or read in a way that elevates portrayals of Africa in order to complicate and challenge lingering perceptions of African belatedness. What Sampa does with *Culture and Religion* and other works resonates with what British social anthropologist Henrietta Moore observes in the context of some Zambian and Kenyan youths who she suggests are seeking ways of cultural production that will leave[102] a mark on the world and project them into history.

> The world of transnational capitalism, transnational faith and interconnected geopolitics is now the world these young people inhabit. Their aim is not to resist modernity or western culture, or even to appropriate it or subvert it, but rather to take up their place as producers of culture within a new set of cultural possibilities. (Moore 2011:7)

Likewise, it is suggested here that by juxtaposing a likeness of a pope alongside a *Likishi*, Sampa is reminding us that there is unfinished business with regard to reconciling matters of belief where Western faith meets its African counterpart. In the Catholic faith for instance, it is a time-honoured tradition for the Pope to stand on the balcony and wave to the crowds at the Vatican. The faithful are known to travel from all over the world to receive this blessing; would they do so if the lead *Likishi* stood by his side and waved at them too? With this single work, Sampa is declaring that African beliefs are not backward or belated, they are very much relevant today as they were in the past and will continue to be in the future. Why, therefore, should African belief systems be perceived as something esoteric? As much as the ritual of the *Makishi* enmeshes divination, a conjuring of the spiritual realm, so too the likes of celebrated Victorian art critic John Ruskin are said to have been involved in summoning

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[102] Sampa died aged 21 and his work has not been studied or theorised as of now, an assumption held in the context of contemporary Zambian art as well as this research

spirits of the dead, but have never been vilified for so doing. Concerning Ruskin this is evidenced in Hewison (2004:82) who states that "Ruskin attended his first séance in February 1864 and in April had séances with the American Medium Daniel Dunglass".

If Ruskin can get away with becoming one of the most significant art critics in Victorian society and by extension modern times despite his occasional involvement in what can be considered the occult, there should be no reason to victimise Africans who occasionally straddle the mystical with the secular vis-à-vis the traditional with the modern. Another question that comes to mind here is: what difference is there between Santa Claus, also known as St Nicholas and Father Christmas, and a *Likishi*, if the former represents a mythical figure associated with a Western, religious and cultural holiday and the latter represents any of a number of mystical associations with an African traditional ceremony?

Another painting by Sampa that seemingly grapples with this is *Moving Culture to Another Level* (Fig. 52)[103]. In it, a *Likishi* can be seen midway on a journey from the traditional African village set-up, complete with thatched houses, to modern dwellings, a cityscape with skyscrapers[104]. The title itself suggests progress, a moving forward, advancement into the future. It also suggests a moving forward while upholding one's own cultural heritage. If 'the next level' is city dwelling, tradition or cultural heritage must not be abandoned, Sampa seems to suggest: they should exist side by side with modernity. Perhaps in another reading, Sampa's work can be understood as a response to Papastergiadis's (2017:71) geopolitical question: "Can the culture of the South produce new understandings of equality in the context of cross-cultural dialogue?" along with one that interrogates cosmopolitanism, where he asks "Is a cultural view that starts from the South and then moves both inwards and outwardly a restricted, or at best a strategic, adoption of cosmopolitanism?". Sampa's work, along with

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[103] Used here merely to show another sample of Sampa's work.
[104] Note the Lusaka landmark, Findeco house is again visible here

that of others in this chapter may be tapping into "an aesthetic sensorium that is delinked from western tastes and sensibilities, and co-opted to justify a new geopolitical order that is led by the BRICS" (Papastergiadis 2017:72). Perhaps this is a suggestion that aligns well with *Moving Culture to Another Level*.

3. Revisiting ancient Egyptian concepts of time and eternity through Zenzele Chulu's *Afreenaissance*.

> *The Egyptians believed that in the beginning their land was ruled by a dynasty of great gods, of whom Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, was the last. He was succeeded by a dynasty of semi-divine beings known as "followers of Horus," who in turn gave place to the historical kings of Egypt*
>
> Selim Hassan, *The Sphinx*, Cairo, 1949

From the title itself, Zenzele Chulu's[105] *Afreenaissance* (Fig. 53), essentially appears to merge 'Africa' 'free' and 'renaissance' – although he does expand on this more in his own words, as will be shown further on. The imagery of the painting in itself appears to conjure ideas of the lost and forgotten African civilisations. The painting therefore also lends itself to a reflection on Africa's once sophisticated past and age of enlightenment, imbued with sovereignty, profound spirituality, higher learning and advanced architecture, which is having, or will have, a renaissance – a revival, a restoration of dignity from the temporal place of turmoil the continent has been, and may still be in, to some extent. It beckons the return of Africa's dignified place in the world in the future. In the painting, Chulu juxtaposes historic ancient themes borrowed from kingdoms such as ancient Egypt, Kush, and Axum, alongside present-day and futuristic ones. This also lends itself to the earlier discussed Afrofuturistic language (see chapter one).

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[105] Born Kenneth Zenzele Chulu in 1967, Chipata, Eastern Province, Zambia. Has an Art Teachers Diploma from Evelyn Hone College of Applied Arts. He is also a product of the *Imiti Ikula* (Future Forest) Weekend Workshops, from Henry Tayali Visual Arts Centre in 1994 to 1995. He regards himself as a self-taught Pan Africanist and art administrator. He has also worked as Henry Tayali Gallery Manager on three occasions, while serving with the Documentation Project. During the course of his own artistic research, he has visited several ancient rock painting sites in Zambia which he refers to as ancient galleries.

Reading Chulu's painting *Afreenaissance* in one sitting does not seem to do it justice; it may have to be returned to time and time again, and in this process, the viewer discovers something new in the painting each time.

Afreenaissance is congested with multiple vanishing points and so many infinitesimal images hidden away that the viewer may have to stop and take in images that may need to be dissected without a fixation on the central figure, which appears like a crucified African man with muscular features in an elevated position against the top of the heavens or the top of the painting.

Except the figure is not crucified, this suggested 'crucifixion' gives the impression that it represents some concealed symbolic gesture. The figure's dreadlocked head, with flowing hair faces the sky and his arms are stretched out triumphantly, a gesture of liberation and freedom. In its right hand the figure holds an *ankh* – the looped cross that has been adopted from the Egyptian hieroglyph symbolising life, life-giving power or the idea of rebirth (Wilkinson 1999). Here Chulu can be seen as alluding to the earlier-mentioned non-linear notions of time – alluded to by Mbiti – that are prominent within African societies and cultures; although he may also be doing so in reference to any of several ancient Egyptian concepts of time. According to Egyptologist John W. Tait (2003:8), the ancient Egyptians in particular had a special tendency to perceive time in terms of repeated cycles; time concepts that are dissimilar to those of the Western world. The ancient Egyptians simultaneously observed a multidimensional time system (Baines 2007; Tait 2003). Another Egyptologist and academic, John Baines, says of the ancient Egyptian time concepts:

> Time is part of the ordered world, whereas 'eternity' as construed in western terms—
> a complete transcendence of time—is not. As a positive concept, however, eternity
> has its counterpart in two much-discussed Egyptian terms *nhh* and *dt*, which are
> mostly used synonymously, but when distinguished appear to refer to cyclical and

linear time respectively. Although *nhh* and *dt* are neither infinite nor non-time, they
are words for indefinitely extended and positively evaluated time (Baines 2007:181).

Thousands of years ago, ancient Egyptians used global time concepts similar to those used today; however, these coexisted with complex calendars, that is, two lunar calendars for religious purposes and a schematic calendar for civilians. Their civil calendar of 365 days resembles the conventional calendars that are in use in most parts of the world under Western influence.

In Chulu's painting, read downwards, the left leg of the central figure has its foot resting just above the head of a baby clutching on to its mother's breast in readiness to breastfeed. Here the image takes on the semblance of abstraction, as the child's gaze is fixed where the mother's head is supposed to be, but in its place are other dimensions of the painting comprising flat planes. Besides the mother's breast, and her right arm, which is clutching a decorated drinking gourd, there is not much to show her presence, yet she seems also to be draped in a silky, flowing and somewhat regal robe; her arm too is embellished with jewellery, implying she may belong to some form of royalty. This mother and child figure is flanked by two working men. Unlike the matriarchal figure, these two are naked, like the central figure with outreached arms. The one to the left is crouched, hammering away at a chisel while the one on the right is standing and has his arms raised up holding on to two beams, which may either be part of a construction process, or they could be the beams of a sedan chair, as they lead to where another majestic-looking female figure is seated on a throne. These three naked male figures in fact create a triangle around the mother and child figure, as if protecting them in a way, placing them at the centre of their universe. The backdrop of this scene can be divided in two halves bordered off by some runes, or lettering – probably Ethiopian, Kushite or some such – and the two beams that are being held up by the figure on the right.

Resting her notebook on this lettering is yet another well-robed woman, also adorned with jewellery, her dreadlocked head revealing two large golden earrings as she stares intently on the words that she is writing. She may be a scholar, representing Africa's rich and often overlooked heritage of scholarly writing, as the continent's peoples have often been accused of not leaving any written records but have been known to hand down knowledge through oral tradition. Furthermore, sophisticated ancient societies such as the ancient Egyptians themselves have been purposely erased historically from having invented complex mathematical formulae. This is an argument about which Cheikh Anta Diop[106] was so emphatic in his book *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*. In the book, Diop dedicates an entire chapter to what he labelled "Africa's contribution: Sciences", the first section "Egyptian Mathematics: Geometry", which opens as follows:

> It would be very edifying to underscore, as a matter of introduction to this chapter, the undeniable connections that exist between Egyptian mathematics and the so-called discoveries that made celebrities out of Greek scholars, such as Archimedes and Pythagoras, just to cite these two. (Diop 1981:235)

Diop (1981:136) proceeds by stating that as for his method of investigation, "Archimedes, the greatest representative of Greek intellectualism in antiquity" only learned of an empirical-theoretical method of calculating the formula for the surface area of a sphere ($S=4\pi r^2$), two thousand years after the Egyptians. In this chapter, Diop accompanies his argument with numerous illustrations from Egyptian hieroglyphs juxtaposed with numerical diagrams and calculations from modern-day mathematics. However, one thing that may need to be underscored here is that in his bolstering of African intellectualism within the context of the ancient world, Diop was very emphatic about the racial identity of ancient Egyptians. In the opening of his book, he argues that the purpose of his work was also to "elevate the idea of a Black Egypt to the level of an operational scientific concept" (Diop 1981:1). He states that:

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[106] Clarke, J. H. 1991, "Cheikh Anta Diop is considered to be one of the greatest scholars to emerge in the Africa world in twentieth century."

For all the writers who proceeded the ludicrous and vicious falsifications of modern Egyptology, and the contemporaries of the ancient Egyptians (Herodotus, Aristotle, Diodorus, Strabo, and others), the Black identity of the Egyptian was an evident fact that stood before their eyes, so obvious that it would have been superfluous to try to demonstrate it. … Imperialism, like the prehistoric hunter, first killed the being spiritually and culturally, before trying to eliminate it physically. The negation of the history and intellectual accomplishments of Black Africans was cultural, mental murder, which preceded and paved the way for their genocide here and there in the world. So that between the years 1946 and 1954—when our project for the restitution of the authentic history of Africa and the reconciliation of African civilizations with history was elaborated—the distorted perspective caused by the blinders of colonialism had so profoundly warped intellectuals' views of the African past that we had the greatest difficulty, even among African, in gaining acceptance for ideas today are becoming commonplace (Diop 1981:1-2).

In line with Diop's philosophy, Chulu's work takes the viewer back to when Africans were not regarded as savages but as dignified scholars. His work therefore speaks to the restitution of African intellect and its misrepresentation in a historical context – perpetuated, as Diop has demonstrated, by Western scholars from as far back as the acclaimed Greek scholars of ancient times. In a similar manner, concerning the reconciliation of African significance within world history, Tanzanian author and lecturer of theology Rev. Prof. Laurenti Magesa (1997) aptly points out while mentioning 16th century scholar Ahmed Baba[107], that indeed the contribution of Africa to world civilisation cannot be limited to antiquity, but that there are even more recent contributions.

The Sudanese scholar Ahmed Baba may be cited as one example. Before the city of Timbuktu was conquered and pillaged by the Moroccans in the sixteenth century, it boasted of the famous University of Saknore, which had been in existence for five

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[107] Ahmed Baba was one of the greatest African scholars. Amongst the Songhai, he was known as the "The Unique Pearl of His Time". According to John Henrik Clarke, "his life [was] a brilliant example of the range and depth of West African intellectual activity before the colonial era." Ahmed Baba was born on 26 Oct. 1556, in Arawān, near Timbuktu, to the teacher, Ahmad bin al-Hajj Ahmad bin Umar bin Muhammed Aqit. He moved to Timbuktu at an early age, to study with his father. He eventually came under the tutelage of a great scholar known as Mohammed Abu Bekr, who would have a profound influence on his intellectual development. Ahmed Baba spoke highly of his professor as being "one of the best of God's virtuous creatures" [and that] "his like will never be found again." Source: http://kentakepage.com/ahmed-baba/ date of access?

hundred years. Ahmed Baba, a professor there is described as 'a scholar of great depth and inspiration ... [and] the author of more than forty books on such diverse themes as theology, astronomy, ethnology, and biography'. He had a library of more than sixteen hundred volumes (Magesa 1997:27-28).

Chulu's *Afreenaissance* encapsulates the aforementioned in its reference to African scholarship by means of the pensive figure consumed by her work in the act of writing. Behind her, is another reference to ancient Egypt, with a stately woman wearing a Nemes, the striped, royal headcloth worn by pharaohs in ancient Egypt, similar to the one found on King Tutankhamun's sarcophagus or the one on the head of the Sphinx. Further on, behind this queenly figure is another figure in the distance that appears to be walking through a portal, perhaps a time gateway that implies the possibility of travelling back and forth through time. The ancient Egyptians for instance, are said to have believed in the concept of a 'Time-Bridge'. They envisioned this as a portal that helped link the world of the gods to the world of men, today to yesterday and 'now' to the beginning of time (Bauval and Hancock 1996:212). The portal in Chulu's painting also resembles a computer screen and the symbols leading up to it in linear perspective resemble a keyboard, except they do not have letters of the alphabet as they appear on conventional computer keyboards but miniature Egyptian hieroglyphics; again, a tiny ankh is visible among them. In the furthest corner above the portal is an abstract motif of a drum player. Shifting the gaze past the central figure to the top right of the painting is the large portrait of a man wearing a Nemes, clearly the representation of a kingly character, although it is not fully visible as it flows behind the earlier-mentioned female figure who is seated majestically on a throne or sedan chair in another layer of the painting. The gold stripes on the top part of the headdress serve as bars in another dimension of the painting and the central figure actually has his hand clasped around one of them in a fist. This half-faced portrait, with his chin resting on the halfway point of the painting is the largest face in the whole composition. With an imposing facial countenance and gaze that is

slightly off the chaotic scenes in front him, he appears to be watching over everything, like a guardian, a patriarch of sorts of sorts: a king watching over his dominion.

3.1: Time and Eternity: The Ancient Egyptian Dualism in Chulu's Afreenaissance

Chulu's placement of a kingly figure in the work can also be read as quite a powerful symbol, even as a statement, within the politics of time – or chronopolitics, as described in previous chapters. This is because the king or ruler in ancient Egypt was linked to the ancient Egyptian concepts of Time and Eternity, also identified by the terms *nhh* and *dt.*

The king's function in ancient Egypt is well known and fits neatly into notions of an intermingled or juxtaposed past, present and future in which the Egyptian terms *nhh* and *dt* play a role.

> With an authority delegated from the creator god, he establishes and maintains 'order', or the created world. In a 'treatise' on his role in the solar cult, perhaps of the Middle Kingdom (c. 1975 -17000). There is a wonderfully succinct function of what he does. The creator placed him on earth 'forever and ever' (*nhh dt*) in place of disorder … despite the king's dependence on the gods, his role minimizes the creators and is 'everlasting (*nhh*)', while it also stands between this world and other worlds—the gods and the spirits—and between the present and the past. Yet concern for the past is directed away from the ideological core of this world since the king's position is everlasting, the definition of his role is oriented primarily toward the future (Baines 2007: 181-182).

The king in Chulu's work, however, is only shown partially, the rest of the figure's body is not visible, save for what might be a hand. Thrust somewhere between the sedan carrier to the right and the suckling baby to the left, it is clutched around an Egyptian obelisk as one clutches a spear, throwing proportion to the wind, as real specimens of Egyptian obelisks are colossal monoliths towering several stories high. To him the obelisk serves as a spear, as if to protect the sight before him from harm.

Again, does the obelisk have any symbolic meaning in the painting? The obelisk[108] and clutching thereof may encapsulate the current and ongoing debate about African art restitution, the conversations around the returning of looted African artefacts – similar to those conversations that Nigerian artist and scholar Peju Layiwola from the University of Lagos is involved in. Layiwola, who, in the context of the sacking of the Benin Kingdom by British Soldiers in 1897, "recounts the colonial encounter and the plundering of bronze works from the palace of the king" [109] through her sculptures and research papers – culminating in exhibitions and a book. In the preface to Layiwola's book, Professor Tunde Babawale (2010) from the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) points out that it has not been easy to negotiate with those who are currently in possession of looted artefacts, stating that:

> There is no question about the fact that Africa (Nigeria inclusive) has had her artefacts mindlessly looted by her colonial masters and in the Nigerian instance, the British. This is why the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) has demanded the return of artefacts looted from every part of the African continent. This has met with responses (especially from the British Museum) that appear not only insulting to our collective sensibility but which fail to recognise the imperative of moving with time, away from the stereotype of flaunting expertise in being custodians of the wealth of others (Babawale 2010: ix).

The dialogue has also been brought into the spotlight by popular cinema, as seen in the record- breaking Hollywood movie, *Black Panther,* where in one scene the character, Erik Killmonger (Michael B. Jordan), a revolutionist banished from Wakanda, is seen accusing the British Museum curator's ancestors of having stolen artefacts from Africa. Of this scene, Sarah Cascone, an associate editor for *Artnet.com* an art market website, not only points out that the scene "brings up thorny issues of colonialism and restitution in connection to the

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[108] A number of obelisks removed from Egypt are spread across Europe, perhaps the most famous being the one at St. Peter's square in Rome, also known as the Vatican Obelisk and sometimes referred to as Caligula's Obelisk: http://stpetersbasilica.info/Exterior/Obelisk/Obelisk.htm

[109] See Benin 1897 accessed on 30 May at http://benin1897.com/peju.html

display and ownership of African artefacts,[110]" she goes on further to connect the scene with the 1897 Benin question:

> Black Panther's Museum of Great Britain appears to be based on the real-world British Museum, which is contending with its own restitution issues. The institution is currently facing calls from Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments to return the Benin Bronzes, looted by British soldiers during an 1897 raid (Cascone 2018).

Similarly, to linger slightly more on the subject of restitution before returning to the analysis of Chulu's *Afreenaissance*, in an essay published in the *Hopkins Exhibitionist*, Johns Hopkins's Casey Haughin (2018) wrote that *Black Panther* "presented [the museum] as an illegal mechanism of colonialism, and along with that, a space which does not even welcome those whose culture it displays."[111]

Returning to the analysis of Chulu's image, the lower right-hand side below the kingly character is occupied by the already discussed naked worker. Placed in front of him from the waist down, if only to cover his front part, is a female character who would appear to be weaving away at a textile. The weaver's full figure is also not shown like some of the other characters that make up the painting. She is only visible up to her breasts and elbow, below her are the orange colours of a sunrise or sunset with the sun appearing as a small red disc just above the plough that is in between a farmer and his oxen, tilling away at the earth. This is at the bottom of the painting; following the lead of the oxen, the viewer's eye may be led to a cluster of abstract patterns that also form part of the legs that belong to the earlier mentioned stonemason with hammer and chisel. Behind him are rows of pillars that, although

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[110] See Cascone, S. 2018. "The Museum Heist Scene in 'Black Panther' Adds Fuel to the Debate About African Art Restitution", 5 March in Artnet.com NEWS, accessed on 30 May 2018 at https://news.artnet.com/art-world/black-panther-museum-heist-restitution-1233278

[111] See Haughin, C. 2018. "Why museum professionals need to talk about Black Panther", 22 February in The *Hopkins Exhibitionist*, Online Museums Journal, Johns Hopkins University's Program in Museums and Society, accessed on 30 May 2018, https://jhuexhibitionist.com/2018/02/22/why-museum-professionals-need-to-talk-about-black-panther/

they appear to be Egyptian considering the capitals and shafts of the pillars, the writing on the roofing beam above them resembles Ethiopian characters.

Chulu's painting, because of its dipping into these ancient African worlds, can be said to speak to Afrocentrism, that is, a historical re-envisioning of a black pharaonic heritage, a discourse that lends itself to that of Diop, which was earlier highlighted in the chapter. Again, it can be noted here that this is not unlike the way that Afrofuturism seeks to reclaim and reaffirm a sense of dignity for blackness and the African people by celebrating sovereignty through the representation of kings, philosophy, science and learning. In Chulu's work, this is represented through the depiction of scholars, industry, the depiction of masonry, craftworks and agriculture and freedom – emphasised through the stretched-out arms of the central figure. All these are embellished with impressions of the past and the future juxtaposed. However, as Afrocentricity and Afrofuturism are mentioned in the same breath here, particularly as regards the mention of ancient Egypt or indeed any other ancient African civilisation, a quote from van Veen (2015:83) is worth noting:

> One of the key MythSciences advanced by Afrocentrism is its historical revisioning of a black Pharoahnic [sic] philosophical heritage stolen by Greek culture … the regressive compensation mechanisms of Egyptology, Dogonesque cosmology, and the totalising reversals of Stolen Legacy–style Afrocentricity… By contrast, Afrofuturism grasps the same symbols, but infuses them with science fiction. Afrocentrism's Kemetianism is transfigured by Afrofuturism into conceptual matter for new belief-systems, new MythSciences capable of upending and challenging the timeline. The mythos of Kemet replaces Greece and the Enlightenment project, but in place of Afrocentrism's battle for truth, Afrofuturism reimagines the Pharaohs as black aliens, the pyramids as black secret technologies. Whereas Afrocentrism seeks to prove the veracity of its historical claims, Afrofuturism utilizes historical revisioning to reimagine alternatives to the timeline in the production of counter realities.

It is important here perhaps to supplement the above claims with Chulu's own words as articulated from the responses to the conversation held during field research in 2017. His remarks not only give background to his thought process as an artist but also speak specifically to the painting *Afreenaissance* itself. His remarks also explain the juxtaposition of ancient Egyptian themes alongside present-day and futuristic ones, unpacking the specific messages he tries to relay.

According to Chulu, when he was an art student at the Evelyn Hone College, his political science lecturer, a Mr Phiri, gave him a book to read after noticing attributes of Pan-Africanism in the way he presented his academic understanding of issues. The book, Chulu says, happened to be his introduction to Pan-African thought and aspirations of the Africa he had always imagined[112]: an Africa that was contrary to the negative portrayals that irked him, from slavery through to colonialism. The book was one of many written by Senegalese historian, anthropologist, physicist, and politician Professor Cheikh Anta Diop, entitled *The African Origin of Civilization*, which he says:

> demystified all the fake literature that was born out of both slavery and the colonial mentality of the chief perpetrators who were assigned to play a huge part in the colonial project, to subdue African confidence by replacing its religious and cultural totems with Eurocentric fetishes. However, my message in my painting I mirror [sic] the positive aspect about African confidence, awakening and inspire those disoriented Africans towards a more just world where their culture and knowledge from the past are celebrated in colour (Chulu pers. comm. 2017).

According to Chulu, *Afreenaissance* was his own coinage, a compound word derived from a "free African-thinking school of projecting the positivity, rejuvenating our cultural pride in different art forms" (Chulu pers. comm. 2017). He argues that the painting comes forward in

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[112] Chulu has also been inspired by *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* series of documentaries written and narrated by Dr Ali Mazrui in the 1980s, jointly produced by the BBC and the Public Broadcasting Service in association with the Nigerian Television Authority as well as *The History of Africa* with Zeinab Badawi, another BBC production and many more motivational productions that are available online.

the manner of a movie montage starring Africans about Africans, talking about Africa in a positive light of hopefulness. At the same time, the process of renaissance is wide and vast, so it begins with none but Africans skilled with various talents emerging with confidence about their roots. Chulu argues that in the book, Diop particularly states that this kind of knowledge concerning Africa will be well handled by artists. That is to say, artists such as Chulu have the responsibility to help restore the pride and confidence of Africans the world over. Chulu (pers. comm. 2017), says: "hence I tend to bring into focus ancient themes in my contemporary art practice mixed with unknown elements that will happen in unlimited time and space, now and the future". His statement is derivative of one by Diop who suggests that the purpose of retelling Africa's story is "to define the image of a modern Africa reconciled with its past and preparing for its future" (Diop 1974: xvi).

Chulu reasons that *Afreenaissance* also addresses the heroism in certain African myths and legends, so African Renaissance is an ongoing process involving dynamic individuals. However, only when Africans embrace the marvels of their various cultures will fruits of *Afreenaissance* be seen. As for the reception of the painting, he declares, "the story is yet to unfold."

Chulu believes that artists' engagement not only with the past, but also the future will eventually open up new ways of thinking, seeing and portraying the African continent. With respect to this research, such thinking and portrayals of the future by African artists such as Chulu may help address the delinking of hegemonic spectacle and knowledge from the dominant West. He suggests that such was predicted by Diop, who suggested that those who look into a celebrated ancient past with pride and honour will propagate the philosophy using their talents wisely to inspire the future generations.

This section has shown ways in which a Zambian artist's work can be used to challenge lingering perceptions of African belatedness through a restitution of history. Moving on to the next section, this study examines a project by the same artist who, along with a group of like-minded colleagues, created work to inspire positive ways in which their urban dwellings can be perceived in the near future.

3.2. Visualising the future through the Imagine Zambia project

Chulu has also been involved in more plausible ways of creating a positive image for Africans in the visualisation of an African future outside the realms of what may otherwise be described as imagined flights of creative fancy that reference ancient Egypt.

As coordinator of the Insaka International Artists Workshops[113] he has undertaken projects with fellow artists that have focused on the imagined – and not too distant – future of Zambia with a focus on the capital, Lusaka. By so doing, artists can be said to be indirectly assuming a role as agents of urban planning, but most importantly within the broader context of this study these artists can be seen as not conforming to everyday convention in the manner in which they view their city.

Currently, Lusaka has been described as one of the fastest growing cities in Southern Africa, a city, one might argue, that has unprecedentedly outgrown its own capacity to function. In a research paper entitled "The case of Lusaka, Zambia" Chileshe L. Mulenga from the Institute of Economic and Social Research at the University of Zambia, published in *Understanding Slums: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, acknowledges this dilemma. In the article, Mulenga (2003) stresses that the city was initially designed as a colonial administrative centre to cater for 500 000 occupants, although today the population

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[113] "The Insaka International Artists Workshop and the Insakartists Trust was established in 1993 to cater for the practical needs of local artists, and to tap into the resources offered by virtue of being a member of a worldwide network. Their premises include artists workshops, studios, residences, exhibitions, and a computer suite."
Source: https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/partners/insaka (accessed on 27/02/2020)

may be ten times that number. He does point out, however, that the city's rapid growth is nothing new. He highlights that:

> The rapid growth of Lusaka, however, began in earnest in 1931, when it was designated as the new capital or principal administrative centre of Northern Rhodesia, as Zambia was then called. Its selection as the new capital was due to its central location on the main north-south axis of the railway line, which was expected to become the centre of development. The central location of Lusaka was also evident from being the intersection of the main roads to the north and south, and east and west. Lusaka was also within easy reach of the Copperbelt, the country's economic heartland. Furthermore, unlike other equally central locations, Lusaka had substantial underground water resources in its limestone/dolomite aquifers, which could provide the city with adequate water throughout the year. Lusaka is thus a planned city. Its original plan was made by Professor Adshead, who conceived the city of Lusaka as an administrative centre only. The original plan did not therefore provide for other economic activities other than government administration, domestic and menial services. (Mulenga 2003:2)

In relation to this, in a chapter entitled "Mega-Scale Sustainability: The relational production of a new Lusaka", Mathew Lane (2017:129) points out that today, "Zambia is recognised as one of the most urbanized countries in Africa with more than 40 per cent of its population classed as city dwellers (UN Habitat 2007)". Because of this seemingly unconscionable growth which overwhelms the initial plans for the city of Lusaka as prescribed in colonial times, plans are currently underway to adapt the city's capacity in terms of sustainability. Zambia's Ministry of Local Government has even envisioned a project to this effect, calling it Lusaka's "2030 vision master plan." Lane (2017:130) presents more detail on this:

> Presented as a comprehensive means of tackling Lusaka's burgeoning population and associated problems, the 2030 vision master plan has now been ratified and officially adopted as the long-term agenda for the city's development. Like many of its counterparts in cities across the world, the plan bases its approach to a more sustainable future on principles of redesign that look to make a dramatic change to the overall fabric and structure of the city. Simultaneously targeting both the centre and the periphery, the plans integrate the spatial problems of land use and

transportation, city and hinterland, by identifying the relationships between these two sets of issues as central to existing problems.

Labelled the '2030 vision' so as to cement its long-term commitment, the project is, at least on the face of it, primarily the product of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) who worked alongside local partners to construct a plan that would solve the city's core problems of land use fragmentation, congestion and infrastructure degradation.

The last sentence in the above statement might be where the problem lies, in line with the argument of this section of the chapter. The fact that the Zambian government still has to turn to foreign expertise, let alone funding, is one of the reasons why, from the outside, Africa is still looked upon with lingering perceptions of belatedness, perceptions which endeavours such as the *Imagine Zambia Project* can be argued to challenge.

It is as if, to a certain extent, this dependency of funding and ideas is inevitable, borrowing again from Lane (2017), who points out that: "The physical agency of the Japanese consultants and their connections to the global pool of planning knowledge and resources is of course pivotal. … However, there is also the presence of more local and regional agency in the form of the fortunes of Zambia's closest neighbours to the south and the powerful perceptions of South Africa as a nation that has developed its cities somewhat more 'successfully' than Zambia". The dependency on assistance from outside, however, may not be for the lack of trying as: "The action of seeking an external organisation to undertake the task of studying Lusaka's issues is rooted in a more embedded and long-term discourse of inadequacy and incapability on the part of the local authorities, established prior to the undertaking of this project" (Lane 2017: 135). According to Lane, the motivation for the Zambian government is not only to make Lusaka a self-sustaining world-class city but also to make it a regional economic hub, although this is not without challenges:

What Lusaka does not have, however, are the financial resources at its disposal and what is therefore required, on the part of the state, is a form of agency that works to deliver an urban

environment that is both investable and liveable at the same time. This would subsequently serve as the road to its greater recognition as a world-class, modern and thriving capital city, symbolizing the whole country and functioning as a national and regional centre for policy, culture, science, technology, education, economy, and international trade" (Lane 2017: 138).

Nevertheless, Lusaka has been developing into a regional economic hub for several decades now as Moyo (2003) illustrates:

> In his office in Lusaka, Xu Jianxue sits between a portrait of Mao Zedong and a Chinese calendar. His civil-engineering and construction business has been doing well and, with the help of his four brothers, he has also invested in a coal mine. He is bullish about doing business in Zambia: 'It is a virgin territory,' he says, with few products made locally and little competition. He is now thinking of expanding into Angola and Congo next door. When he came in 1991, only 300 Chinese lived in Zambia. Now he guesses there are 3,000.

It is, however, stimulating that the Zambian government is thinking in decades in terms of planning for the future development of the city of Lusaka, regardless of whether they are engaging assistance from overseas. However, it appears that the 2030 vision project has not been heavily publicised outside the structures of local government and scholars of town planning and urban landscapes.

Meanwhile – independently of the 2030 vision – a creative project such as *Imagine Zambia* seems to have emerged and is projecting awareness of the importance of a sustainable, environmentally friendly city of Lusaka. To "imagine", is to "speculate", not merely to speculate in terms of conjecture, but to imagine how things can or ought to be in the near or distant future. Just like the 2030 vision project, the *Imagine Zambia* project – judging from some of the artwork produced – envisions Lusaka as a 'garden city', one with self-contained communities surrounded by green belts that have vegetation alongside proportionate areas of residences and industry (see Fig. 54). It is worth noting, however, that the consideration of Lusaka as a garden city harks back to the colonial master plan, as Lane points out:

Examining the plan itself, Lusaka's 2030 vision project is ambitious (or 'mega') not only in terms of its spatial coverage but also in the aspects of sustainability it wishes to engage with (i.e., all three of the economic, social, and environmental pillars). While often collectively discussed under the banner of 'sustainability', in the context of a city like Lusaka, the different branches of this sustainability discourse provide very different issues to be dealt with. As well as creating an attractive investment environment to encourage growth and deal with the myriad of social problems, the local authority's desire to move away from the legacy of the colonial master plan is seen as a further discursive element that contributes to the direction of the plans. This, however, is a particularly important narrative to be pursued given the fact that the master plan approach to planning that lies at the root of Lusaka's infrastructure problems is being revisited and even the 'garden city' name recycled as part of the new vision. This can perhaps be put down to the sustainable connotations that the term 'garden city' invokes, emphasising the power of certain elements of sustainable cityness (Lane 2017: 134).

That considered, the *Imagine Zambia* project in a way goes back to Zambia's past in order to envision portrayals of its future, similar in a way to the revisionary mannerisms of Afrofuturism.

Chulu (pers. comm. 2017) also links the *Imagine Zambia* project to the philosophy behind *Afreenaissance*, pointing that it is a more practical aspect in that "it is part and parcel of the renaissance process to envision how the city can be transformed into a better city to live in". Through the *Imagine Zambia Project*[114] (2012 and 2013), along with a team of artists[115] (see Fig. 55) he has also been investigating designs and architectural drawings of futuristic subjects (see Fig. 56).

According to Chulu, the dilapidated and forgotten corners and sections of the city's central business district inspired the project. The artists used the surrounding features but drew new ideas rendering the Lusaka they would wish to see in the not-too-distant future. This was done by taking photographs of the current view of Lusaka city and juxtaposing them with an

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[114] See Imagine Zambia Project at https://insakartists.wordpress.com/imagine-zambia-project/ accessed on 5 May 2018.
[115] Most of them up and coming artists who have been under his tutelage

artist's impression of a future Lusaka skyline. Areas such as the popular but often heavily polluted Kamwala Market – within a walking distance from the Findeco House, an admired icon of the skyline on the city's main street – in one example (see plate 1). The illustration also depicts a skyline without the haphazard market stalls but with a complex highway interchange system. In the same way, another image (see plate 2) shows yet another altered foreground in front of a popular flyover bridge in the heart of the capital, Lusaka. However, while this one does not go to the extent of making considerable changes, it has subtle additions and omissions. The potholes and dirty wall have been replaced with a smooth paved road and ornate murals that reference traditional African masks. Correspondingly, as much as they may draw from Lusaka's past, which like many urban developments has its roots in colonialism, these two drawings from the *Imagine Zambia* project offer fantastic, utopian paradigms for a more agreeable living environment in both the distant and the near future. Responding directly to Lusaka's plan as a garden city in *Urban planning as a tool of power and social control in colonial Africa*[116]*,* Ambe J. Njoh from the University of South Florida writes:

> More importantly, planners in colonial Africa were endowed with unbridled power to influence spatial order and human behaviour in the built environment. In colonial planning, the distinction between coercion and expertise was often blurred. This was more so in the case of physical control of which zoning has always been an important part. As an instrument of land use control, zoning is empowered by the legal concept of police power. Police power connotes the right of whole communities to regulate the use of private property with a view to protecting the interests of the public. The institutional authority of planners to control people and their environments draws its inspiration from the police power of the state. The range of these interests is vast, and often captured by terms such as public health, safety and public welfare.
> With the institutional authority that was vested in them by colonial governments, planners in colonial Africa succeeded in doing more than simply controlling people

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[116] See Ambe J. Njoh (2009) Urban planning as a tool of power and social control in colonial Africa, *Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 24, No. 3, July 2009, 301–317, Routledge.

and their environments in a bid to address the public interests. More often than not, colonial planners used the pretext of protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public to craft spatial policies whose actual purpose was to buttress the power of the colonial state and to facilitate its efforts to effectuate social control in the colonies. For instance, under the guise of protecting public health, colonial planners used their institutional authority and technical expertise to craft land use plans designed to facilitate attainment of the social goal of maintaining racial segregation in the colonies (Njoh 2009:311).

What is more is that the colourful designs by the *Imagine Zambia* project teams further help to obliterate such thoughts or memory of Lusaka's past.

The illustrations portray enthusiastic alternatives to the artists' own lived experience of and familiarity with urban life in Lusaka, a city that is expanding both spontaneously and exponentially, with metropolitan development and infrastructure not always taking centre stage and often being unable to keep pace with either gentrification or illegal settlement depending on the situation and location. However, one might argue that the collective work of these artists in the *Imagine Zambia* project can be said to investigate critical queries around urban growth, economic inequality and how communities – not just in Lusaka – and societies function, as well as the rehabilitative potential of architecture, all of which are issues that reverberate intensely on the African continent today.

For this particular project, the artists visited other urban centres in Zambia, although the focus turned out to be Lusaka. According to Chulu (2017), from the experience of travelling around the country the artists learned to appreciate the essence of support for ideas of linking areas that were difficult to access or navigate. For which reason he suggests that roads as infrastructure were key in their vison because good or bad roads may affect several aspects of human activities, including education, health, agriculture, mining, and tourism. That last statement draws parallels between the 2030 vision and the *Imagine Zambia* projects.

However, where 2030 vision is still largely unknown to the general public, the *Image Zambia* project was displayed during an art exhibition that was part of the Lusaka centenary celebrations. The artworks were shown at the Manda Hill Shopping Mall, which has a daily average of four thousand visitors according to official estimates. During the exhibition, the artists were on site to explain the project (see Fig. 57 and 58).

Concluding this section, considering the term Afrofuturism itself, Chulu regards it more as not only an ideology but an actual place in the future, a utopian Africa that can only be achieved through positive imagination and thinking in order to realise a positive destination. This, he believes, can only be achieved by Africans believing in a progressive Africa by portraying visions of how Africa will look, regardless of the cost of achieving what is good for it. He sees this in the traits of Afrofuturistic thought but emphasises, however, that it is just one of many terminologies that ultimately have one thing in common for Africa, a positive outlook.

> Such classification is not strange to my Afrocentric tendencies of coining terminologies, my work has elements that border with Afrofuturism. More terms are underway such as Afropolis, Afroseum, Afronauts, Afropreneur. All may not be found in any modern English dictionary, but are terminologies most likely to emerge from the chambers of the enlightened Africans. Viewing my work under this terminology does not change my work, it actually amplifies my philosophy to another level. I welcome the reference because it displays the significance of how connected people with similar traits are with each other, it is like acknowledging possession of power, and one must be disciplined to handle it with huge sense of responsibility. (Chulu pers. comm 2017)

Chulu observes that as much as Afrofuturism in itself may involve a lot of fantasy, it should be more practical by envisioning thoughts that may actually materialise in the future. He dreams, for instance, of a Museum of Zambian Contemporary Art (MOZCA), a dual carriageway from Mwinilunga to Livingstone, from Lusaka through Chama to Nakonde to Kapiri, a solar farm in the flatlands of Central Province, a football museum near the Heroes

Stadium with statues of the Gabon Air Disaster soccer heroes: he imagines a flyover highway from the heart of the city to KK International Airport, digging a canal from Mpulungu to the sea. The dream goes with action; that is when Afrofuturism will ideologically be more meaningful and practical. It is up to the artists to interpret that future, which is where we must belong. "Hats off to the architects of the term [Afrofuturism] because it is not far from what I have always believed can be a possibility. Africa has suffered for too long, because of the colour of our skin we have been in the wrong, somehow despite the odds we need to be strong all along the way to Afrofuturism" (Chulu pers. comm 2017).

4. Isaac Kalambata's Speculative Nonconformity

Thus far, this thesis has maintained that an analysis of the select work of contemporary Zambian artists can be used to argue that these works can break down the dichotomy between tradition and futurism in order to challenge enduring pictures of African belatedness. In the process a reconciliation of modernities (Tayali and Simpasa), indigenous knowledge systems (Chansa), and African histories (Chulu) have been evoked. All of which challenge the perceptions of African belatedness that have also been highlighted. The preceding section went as far as providing a case study of how artists, through *Imagine Zambia*, are using their work in present times to challenge ways in which Africa's future may be perceived as degenerating.

An analysis of these works thus far, through reference to various texts, has demonstrated, in general, a challenge to Western hegemonic reasoning, especially that which calls up thoughts of Africa as a place of darkness and foreign fantasy engulfed by a dying traditional past. The study has also indicated the 'future'– which is often linked to 'advanced' technological breakthroughs such as cutting-edge space travel, artificial intelligence, and high-tech transportation and housing – is often distanced from Africa and that Africa is regarded as a traditional and regressed continent mostly stuck in a static period.

This section introduces Isaac Kalambata,[117] joining the dialogue on how the select work of Zambian visual artists can reference the traditional and, in the meantime, conjure representations of the future, resulting in a response that problematises the residual and hegemonic spectacle that is rooted in colonialism – as reflected in the gaze and aesthetic tastes of Euro-American expatriates concerning 'African art'. Furthermore, it addresses the question of expanding the representation of Africa by means of speculative freedom in visual arts vis-à-vis painting, by deploying futuristic touches inspired by science fiction, which complicate notions of Africa's belatedness.

It might be suggested that certain artistic themes that have encouraged this view of Africa's purported backwardness hasve been perpetuated by collectors' tastes – predominantly those of expatriates and diplomats within the context of the Zambian art scene. Themes portrayed are predominantly restricted to landscapes, portraiture, wildlife, and everyday city, township, and market scenes, which limit creativity vis-à-vis speculative freedom by using Eurocentric evaluations of tradition and identity in the arts of Africa. An artist painting outside these normative themes – such as Kalambata – could risk their works failing to be exhibited, or even sold, sales being a fundamental aspect of art production in an art scene that has very little public and private support in terms of patronage.

Kalambata argues that he strongly believes "that the past gives society their belonging and the present is the moment that determines the outcomes of the future. Past, present and future are all entwined together, and my portrayal aims to show the state of this interrelationships" (Kalambata 2017).

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[117] Isaac Kalambata describes himself as a self-taught contemporary artist, a librarian by profession and banker by day. "His work explores the futuristic African perspective that focuses on bridging the gap and harmonizing the past and future of the African continent". See: https://ikartspace.com/

Kalambata's work, just as that of the earlier mentioned artists, creatively challenges dominant themes and genres by juxtaposing traditional and futuristic in an iconoclastic gesture against the normative tastes, not only with within the Zambian context but also further afield.

He uses the ubiquitous Dutch wax fabrics that have become synonymous with the continent (see Shonibare below) known as *chitenge* in Zambia, which since colonial times has been unassumingly adopted as 'traditional' dress particularly among women – and it will be accepted as such for the purpose of this argument – above all as an alternative to Western styles of dress, as Scott D. Taylor succinctly remarks in his book *Culture and Customs of Zambia*:

> Women in Zambia are frequently clad in colourful printed cloth known as *chitenge*. These rectangular-shaped *chitenge* are wrapped around the waist as skirts or sarongs; smaller, matching pieces may be used as headscarves; and in some cases, the cloth may be sewn into a top that complements the other components. … *Chitenge* is an affordable fabric and nearly ubiquitous in Zambia. Scaling up the ladder of wealth, from poorer rural women to wealthier urban counterparts, it is possible to see increasingly lavish designs in *chitenge* or other cloth. Indeed, it is not uncommon in Lusaka, for example, to see women of some means wearing beautifully designed, expertly tailored *chitenge* ensembles for everyday use. Because the fabric is inexpensive, lightweight, and versatile, it is an African alternative to Western fashion (Taylor 2006: 87-88).

Nevertheless, as much as it is now generally perceived as the traditional fabric that defines African attire, it is hardly African by origin, as explained by acclaimed British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare MBE, known for using the fabric, making it something of an artistic brand name (Bongers 2004:8) and popularising it in the contemporary art of Africa and its diasporas. Having been questioned by his teacher[118] on the issue of "authenticity and African art" Shonibare came upon the fabric. Who better to identify the politics in this fabric better

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[118] The teacher's name is not mentioned in Shonibare's text

than Shonibare, who has done so for decades, navigating the many layers within the politics of representation that it carries:

> Although they are associated with Africa, they have their origins in Indonesia. The Dutch started to produce these fabrics industrially for the Indonesian markets towards the end of the nineteenth century, but industrially produced versions were not popular there, so they tried West Africa. There the fabrics were popular, and they were appropriated. And now they are associated with Africa (Shonibare 2009:206).

Ever since Shonibare's introduction of this material into his work at the beginning of his career it has been his staple medium. His work is often discussed in terms of postcolonial theory, with which he agrees to an extent his work does deal with the aftermath or the result of colonialism and its impact on identity; however, this is a fraction of what he does (Shonibare 2009 ibid.).

> There are other aspects to my work—the aesthetic aspects, the contradictory aspects—and those are not focused on often enough. There is an over-emphasis on the post-colonial. There is a theory industry, and it likes to categorize, but that is not a matter for the artist. Theory can be useful if you're an art historian but it's not the place of the artist to do theory in that way. Artists do not start thinking, "you know what?" I'm going to create this movement' it's the people who write about culture who frame what art is doing at certain times and then it sticks. (Shonibare 2009:209)

This quotation comes in useful before attempting to write about the specific works of Kalambata, just as it also applies to the works by the artists discussed earlier, as well as all the works by artists that will be discussed hereafter.

Kalambata's *Masquerade Series*[119] uses the *chitenge* in a way that is not commonly seen on the Zambian art scene in the representational paintings of women, in which it usually appears in the formal traditional manner of being wrapped around the waist, the head or as a baby

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[119] Masquerades even in a Western context have been considered a political device "Masquerades or masked balls played an important part in London social life in the 18th century and they frequently served to comment on the political life of the period" (Ribeiro, A. 1994:3)

sling. Instead, to conjure a new visual language, Kalambata uses an amalgam of stylistic cues from his sci-fi comic book background, while referencing the African masquerade.

Over the years in contemporary Zambian art a stereotypical visual language has been developed, and for the most part women have continuously been portrayed at work, carrying out 'traditional' domestic roles either in rural or urban settings dressed in their *chitenges*. Whether in the rural set-up in which they would often be depicted carrying out such activities as breastfeeding children, drawing water from a river or dancing bare-breasted at traditional ceremonies, or in the urban set-up, where they are often depicted as marketeers or in formal portraits, depending on social standing; the *chitenge* is a multipurpose cloth that can be used for many things.

Over the years, these have become the accepted representations of women – in a Zambian context – adapted almost without question by male and female artists alike. These images pander to the taste of the art-consuming clientele. In these paintings, women have been pigeonholed by being depicted in a way intrinsic to a regressive patriarchy that was inherited from colonial ways of seeing – a system that does not appear to have waned.

It has not always been the case that women have been perceived in a generally subservient way. However, even though imagery or indeed artistic portrayals may implicate this of women, the context of the imagery can be metaphorically misleading. A look at gender roles on the African continent may be important here. Returning to Mazrui's (1996) seven roles of culture in development, as earlier cited from *The Muse of Modernity*, he points to "traditional gender stratification", specifically in most sub-Saharan traditional culture where women were thought to have multiple, highly respected custodial roles. Mazrui (1996:2) contends that:

> In most sub-Saharan traditional cultures, for instance, women were thought to have a
> triple custodial role—as custodians of fire, water, and earth. As custodian of fire the
> African woman finds herself in charge of rural Africa's most important source of

domestic energy—firewood. She treks long distances to collect it. As custodian of water, the African woman ensures the water supply for the home and for the extended family. … As for the women's role as custodian of earth, this is linked to the concept of dual fertility—the fertility of the womb (woman as mother) and the fertility of the soil (woman as cultivator). To this day, in many African countries, women make up the majority of farmers.

Although, Mazrui's words give context to the significant role of women in pastoral Africa, this context may not be overly evident when women at work, either in a rural or urban setting, account for a great deal of the most popular imagery. The subjects may be argued to represent stereotypically domestic scenes that are a testament to an unfairly perceived patriarchal hierarchy. Owomoyela's earlier-cited text, *The Myth and Reality of Africa: A Nudge Towards a Cultural Revolution*, provides for a stimulating comment on this matter: :

> It must be argued that while there is evidence of patriarchal social relations and women's oppression in every African society from Egypt in North Africa to the Cape of South Africa, such hierarchies certainly share much in common with the realities of women's lives in Europe and other parts of the world. However, more important … is that in contrast to the tendency to assume that Africa has produced an atavistic and obdurate form of male chauvinism in contrast to enlightened Western societies, a more careful analysis reveals layers of philosophical, cultural, religious, and linguistic dimensions to gender relations that contradict popular notions of uniformly retrogressive gender relations in Africa. (Owomoyela 2010:52)

Nevertheless, depictions of rural settings are still among the most popular; African-American scholar Bennetta Jules-Rosette comments that "The women, presumably polygynous wives and sisters, may be portrayed pounding maize in front of homes while their men are away hunting" (Jules-Rosette 1978:27) – always dressed in their *chitenges*.

4.1: The Masquerade Series: There is an unsung hero in every African woman

Kalambata, in his *Masquerade* series, merges elements of tradition, modernity, and futurism. By craftily juxtaposing these binaries in his visual representations of women, he generates speculative possibilities that can be said to "challenge prevailing notions—fictions—about

Africa and the largely Western desire for an authentic Africa" (Fitzgerald 2003:1), also in line with Owomoyela's earlier remarks.

The series is in effect a triptych of unidentified women's portraits, but what are the portraits saying? Who are the individuals in the portrait and what do they represent, one might ask? An essential question for any portrait is whether it simply records the outer, visible surface of a person. The portrait should show something of someone's personal interior life; bringing out hidden information should be important to both the artist and the viewer, to borrow from the remarks of Sandy Nairne (2003:7) in *The Portrait Now*.

Kalambata's portraits are primarily replete with sci-fi references but also call to mind the zest and mystique of masked female comic book heroes such as *Hellcat*, *Catwoman*, *Batwoman* or *Jean Grey* from comic books printed in North America but available and popular around the world, and by so doing he gives his female subjects a heroic countenance. To this effect – following Jason Haslam – Kalambata's work can be argued to fracture "the lines of the hegemonic functions of whiteness in relation to gender identities" (Haslam 2015:24) prevalent not only in science fiction, but also in the contemporary art context of Zambia.

Furthermore, Kalambata's *Masquerade* series evokes several of the many African traditions of masked performances, in which various masks are worn for different functions. The most recognised Zambian versions such as *Nyau* or *Makishi* from Eastern and North Western provinces respectively are traditionally played by male performers even though some of the characters they represent are female: the "dances are performed at the time of boys' circumcision and initiation ceremonies by masked and elaborately costumed dancers" (Macmillan 1997:25). By placing masks on women, the artist can be argued to reverse the gendered role of mask-wearing, once again disrupting the belief in which gender wears masks

in certain traditional settings. By so doing, it can be implied that he is in a way empowering women with the role of wearing the mask.

In *Vintage Masquerade* (Fig. 59) the subject could pass for a masked comic book super hero who, instead of using the *chitenge* to wrap around her waist or sling a baby around her back, uses it to cover the upper part of her face, leaving the lower part of her face exposed. From her facial expression she appears focused, determined to challenge or conquer a task ahead of her, paying no attention at all to the viewer. She possesses the firm and determined gaze of a superhero character; she can be described as an embodiment womanly power. Her background is only important in the sense that the artist puts it there only to bring her to the fore, characteristically strengthening the presence of the subject; she is the star of this show and nothing else. The choice of the word *Vintage* in the title of this work, also alludes to something that is old, to the past and yet in appearance, the wearer can be said to appear futuristic. Thus, *Vintage Masquerade* can be said to be a play or a commentary, rather, on the past, present and future.

Similarly, the character in the second piece, *The Best of Both Worlds* (Fig. 60), not only wears a comparable *chitenge*, but unlike the other two works in the series, the sitter looks directly at the viewer, although she does not provide eye contact as she is seen with a pair of stylish sunglasses, not only making it look like a chic accessory but giving the impression of someone who has just stepped out of a science fiction movie. This typifies Kalambata's science fiction comic book drawing technique and yet it is imbued with what can be suggested as his painterly touch, and clearly draws inspiration from the world of fashion. In fact, with the confidence of a catwalk fashion model, the sitter can be likened to a cross between a fashion magazine cover girl and a warrior from a space-themed comic book. Unlike the previously discussed painting in the series, the background in this one resembles a tie-dye or batik texture, further emphasising or indeed celebrating the *chitenge* cloth. Coming

to the third and last character in the series, entitled *The Transfiguration*, (Fig. 61) (although this has nothing to do with a biblical scene popular among European Renaissance artists) the subject is depicted with a serious yet confident look on her face, chin-up, her gaze fixed boldly ahead – characteristic of comic book super heroes, reflecting an aura of power – indefinitely searching, petitioning, or perhaps just thoughtful; her *chitenge* only covers the upper part of her face but with much larger holes for her eyes, while much of her skin tone bears the semblance of discoloration. She stands out of the fiery brown background, which to the top left has the markings of a chemical structure diagram, the kind that scientists use to specify molecular geometry. The last element may be what lends this particular painting its name, *The Transfiguration*: it is not an apotheosis, such as that of Christ being elevated into a divinity, rather it speaks to the phenomenon of skin bleaching where darker skinned African women use skin-lightening chemicals to enhance their complexions – it refers to a metamorphosis of the face. Kalambata here clearly comments on the social question of colourism, which bolsters lighter skin and looks down upon darker skin. The artist questions the use of pharmaceutical products for the bleaching of skin and suggests that, by transforming their skin, the users cease to be themselves; they wear a mask that is skin deep, succumbing to toxic notions of beauty perpetrated by a Euro-American gaze. This last image therefore goes beyond a straightforward attempt of blending the traditional with the futuristic to make a statement.

4.2.: Re-imagining the chitenge as a symbol of empowerment

Further along within notions of the social-political, the three women in this series of paintings can be argued to speak to activism, as the manner in which their *chitenges* are worn resembles the *doek*[120]*, or *Iduku*, a headwrap that has become a symbol of women's rights movements and empowerment. Although the headwrap has a layered history from the time

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[120] Afrikaans

that African slaves on the plantations of America to domestic workers in the households of South Africa wore them in the line of subjugation and servitude, a new generation of young African women and girls have reclaimed the headwrap and embraced it as a symbol of honour and power, more so among the feminist movement. In a 2016 article entitled *"The Power of the Headwrap: From #FeesMustFall to #RespekTheDoek"*[121], feminist and writer Rufaro Samanga says of the *doek*:

> It's an integral part of my image, a bold statement to the rest of the world and a symbol of my empowerment as a young black, African woman. As I stand in front of the mirror and fuss over a brightly-coloured scarf, I think of how many other young, black women like me in South Africa are probably standing in front of their mirrors and doing much the same—a multitude of different coloured fabrics of varying texture being twirled and twisted this way and that—all a part of something much bigger than ourselves; a sisterhood of sorts (Samanga 2016)

Prior to Samanga's article, the headwrap also took centre stage in the South African students' movement when president of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Nompendulo Mkhatshwa, was photographed leading a #FeesMustFall march.

A similar headwrap has also been iconic among influential women such American musician and civil rights activist Nina Simone, Winnie Mandela and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Playwright and former chairperson of the National Arts Council in Zambia who is a well-known cultural activist and is co-founder of the Zambian Women's History Museum, is also synonymous with the headwrap and is never seen without one.

To come to the point, Kalambata's *Masquerade* series is an ode to women's empowerment. He has repurposed traditional attire from its conventional uses and empowered women through his depictions, casting them as futuristic vixens not as domesticated homemakers. He

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[121] See Samanga, R. 2016 in Okay Africa online at http://www.okayafrica.com/headwrap-fees-must-fall-respek-the-doek/ accessed on 9 June 2018

uses the traditional *chitenge* to reinstate African women to their traditional position, a position of influence and authority, one they held in their communities before the arrival of colonialism.

Professor emeritus April A. Gordon, director of Women's Studies Program at Winthrop University elaborates on this:

> African societies had diverse patterns of gender relations before Europeans intervened in their societies. During the colonial period, those gender relations were often distorted, and the sources of status and autonomy of women were undermined. Simultaneously, elements of indigenous male dominance or "patriarchy" were strengthened, and new patterns of western gender ideology and practices were introduced. After independence, Africa's male leaders continued to add laminations to the patriarchal structures they inherited from their colonizers, often with the support of western international investors and donors whose "development" assistance mostly went to men. Discrimination of women has been defended as a reflection of "culture" which has made challenges to such practices open to cultural imperialism to the west. (Gordon 2013:306)

Gordon further lays out that before and after colonialism, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, women essentially controlled the wealth; not only were they producers growing the family crops and tending herds, constructing homesteads, hauling wood and selling the surplus in local markets, they dominated commercial activities (Gordon 2013:308). Furthermore, argues Gordon, these "vital roles were normally translated into high status for women and more autonomy than was typical for women in most regions of the world" (Gordon 2013 ibid). Gordon, however, points out that with colonialism came the commercialisation of agriculture and the introduction of cash crops altered the gender division of labour, which mostly disadvantaged women, while men were forced into the wage economy to work in the mines and the plantations.

In light of the above, Kalambata's portraits therefore can be read as revisionist in a sense; by emboldening the appearance of African women he restores their dignity and place of honour

as they were in the past, before colonialism, yet he does so with elements of the future. With the self-assured facial gestures, the poses and indeed the *chitenges* worn in the manner of the *doek*, his subjects are metaphorically elevated to a position of respectf. Kalambata strips his subjects – African women – of the unexciting platitude of domesticity.

Furthermore, his reference to a sci-fi aesthetic impedes the legitimacy of the perceptions of skewed constructs of 'Africa' and 'Africanness' (Appiah 1992; Mudimbe 1998; Fitzgerald 2003:1) which encourage essentialist views that in turn propose invented binaries of 'the traditional' and 'the contemporary' in Western framings of African art. The *Masquerade* series correspondingly provides a re-examination of the contested ideas of tradition and Africa (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), as well as tradition specifically in relation to the visual arts of Zambia (Jules-Rosette 1978; Macmillan 1994; Taylor 2006; Nicodemus 2009; Drewal 1991).

4.3.: Influences from comic books

Kalambata's transition from a comic book artist to painting on canvas came about through interactions with other artists who advised that his level of detail and creativity would create good paintings.

In a way, Kalambata creates a counter-narrative that breaks down the dichotomy between tradition and futurism, and in doing so challenges, on the one hand, lingering perceptions of African belatedness and, on the other hand, sci-fi and fantasy tropes that are a-spatial and disconnected from the contemporary lived experiences of Africans based on the African continent.

Kalambata also reconstitutes the way in which women are generally portrayed in contemporary Zambian painting. The influences of the sci-fi comic book genre in Kalambata's fine art practice expand the representation of Africa by means of a speculative

freedom. By borrowing representations of imagery that has come to be accepted as futuristic, he responds to the hegemonic spectacle that is rooted in colonialism and has been adapted by Euro-American expatriates. Also, the *Masquerade* series does not limit his creativity to the Eurocentric evaluations of tradition and identity in Zambian art that necessitate women to be depicted in a particular way. The works collectively provide what can perhaps be described as a good paradigm of male solidarity, which subverts regressive gender politics and toxic masculinity that should have been phased out of contemporary Zambian art years ago.

Spider-Man and *X-Men* were Kalambata's earliest mainstream comic book inspirations, with titles by American comic book writer and film director Frank Miller and British comic book writer Warren Ellis being among his influences (Kalambata 2017). He started creating his own characters and stories and developed a futuristic African storyline titled *Silent Earth*, which he self-published in the form a few pages online – not to be confused with another existing comic book with a similar title under *The Armory Wars* franchise. In these works, he envisions a technologically advanced Africa in the distant future that has strong visual references to the continent's ancient civilisations (see Figs. 62 and 63).

In a similar vein, does this engagement with the future by African artists have any effect on the delinking of hegemonic spectacle and knowledge from the dominant West? Kalambata responds to this by stating, "The West has in modern history been spearheading the advancement of knowledge, but history shows us that Africa has been at the hub of knowledge and scientific breakthroughs. In this light, African artists can spark the drive for delinking the idea of the continent's direction and ambitions to advance. The visual language of art under the futurist theme can empower the thought of the African men and women taking charge of their future" (Kalambata 2017 pers. comm.).

While Kalambata has only recently become aware of the term Afrofuturism, he declares it a departure point but states, however, that in a more definitive sense "African futurism" is the canopy under which he prefers his work to be placed. Kalambata (2017) does so claiming it is solely from an African point of view and perspective that he creates work and not one that may speak to issues around race relations in the diaspora. He argues that "as an African artist I feel that many of our portrayals by both the West and black people that are not 'African' can create a misrepresentation due to social and cultural biases and stereotypes" (Kalambata 2017 pers. com.).

Chapter 3: Summary

Just as Kalambata indirectly disassociates himself from Afrofuturism despite his work containing inferences of its many tropes, the works of Chansa, Sampa and Chulu may also not have to be forced under the umbrella of Afrofuturism, conceivably because they have been contemplating futurity from what might be described as an African perspective – because the artists are based on the continent – some, without even coming across the terminology. Notwithstanding, Afrofuturism has inspired core aspects of this research, but it has also inspired an argument that claims African futurists have always been at work on the continent without necessarily being in contact with Afrofuturism per se. Problematising in which category a viewer may want to place these artists or indeed their works helps to investigate the ever evolving structure of Afrofuturism and African Futurisms as tools or lenses rather that can heal backward ways in which Africa is viewed. Furthermore, apart from implying an Afrofuturism/African Futurism relationship, this chapter in broader terms, stakes a claim for African mythology which is futuristic in its criticality of the present and leads on to the next chapter that engages science fiction with a heavy emphasis on cyborg theory in the manner in which African mythology has been handled here. In this chapter the consolidation of Afrofuturism and African Futurism can be said to be marked by several commonalities

with *Afrofuturism 2.0 & The Black Speculative Art Movement: Notes on a Manifesto* in which Anderson mentions Afrofuturism's "several Africanist manifestations, e.g. Black Quantum Futurism, African Futurism, Afrofuturismo, and Afrofuturista), Astro Blackness, Afro-Surrealism, Afro-Pessimism, Ethno Gothic, Black Digital Humanities, Black (Afro-future female[122] or African centred) Science Fiction, The Black Fantastic, Magical Realism, and The Esoteric." He provides a useful observation in that:

> Afrofuturism… the beginning of both a move away and an answer to the Eurocentric perspective of the 20th century's early formulation of Afrofuturism that wondered if the history of African peoples, especially in North America, had been deliberately erased. Or to put it more plainly, future-looking Black scholars, artists, and activists are not only reclaiming their right to tell their own stories, but also to critique the European/American digerati class of their narratives about cultural others, past, present and future and, challenging their presumed authority to be the sole interpreters of Black lives and Black futures. (Anderson 2018:230)

While this chapter indicates that African Futurism and speculative nonconformity have an embeddedness in everyday life rather than fantasy, certainly the works discussed herein indicate a political vitality. A vitality that concerns the politics of identity, the politics of time and knowledge production. Therefore, as African Futurist studies continue to develop as frames of inquiry, certain aspects or threads discussed in the works of Chansa, Sampa, Chulu and Kalambata can be expanded upon.

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[122] Which not only resonates with Kalambata's earlier discussed *Masquerade* series (see figures 59 to 61), Mwaba's, *Martha Mwamba* series (Fig. 69 and Fig 70), Kabwe's, *Astronautus Afrikanus* (see 71) and Haimbe's *Ananiya* (Fig. 78)

Chapter 3: Images

Figure 39. Chishimba Chansa, *Ukupupuka pa Lusengo*, 1991, Acrylic on canvas (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 40. "Aeroplane," Livingstone National Museum, Livingstone, Zambia (Courtesy of Livingstone National Museum, Zambia)
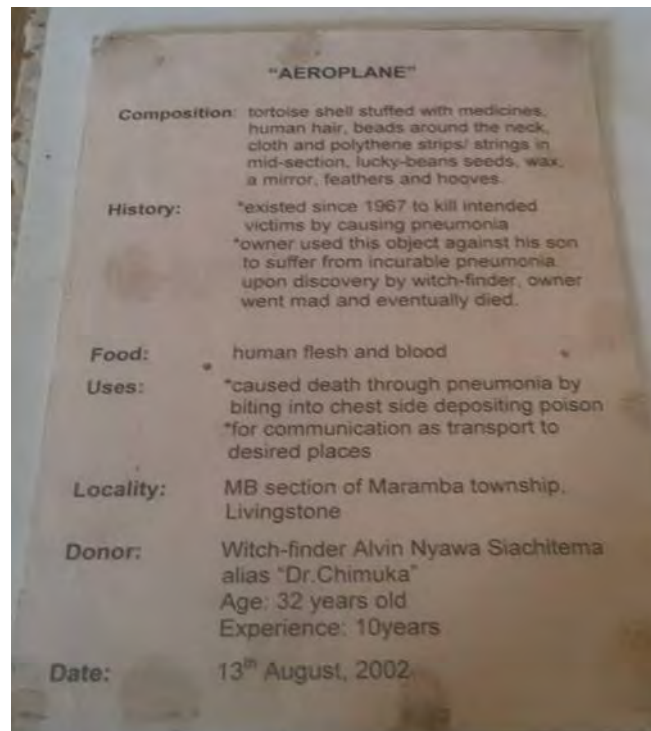
Figure 41. The descriptive plaque that accompanies the display of "Aeroplane," Livingstone National Museum, Livingstone, Zambia (Courtesy of Livingstone National museum, Zambia)
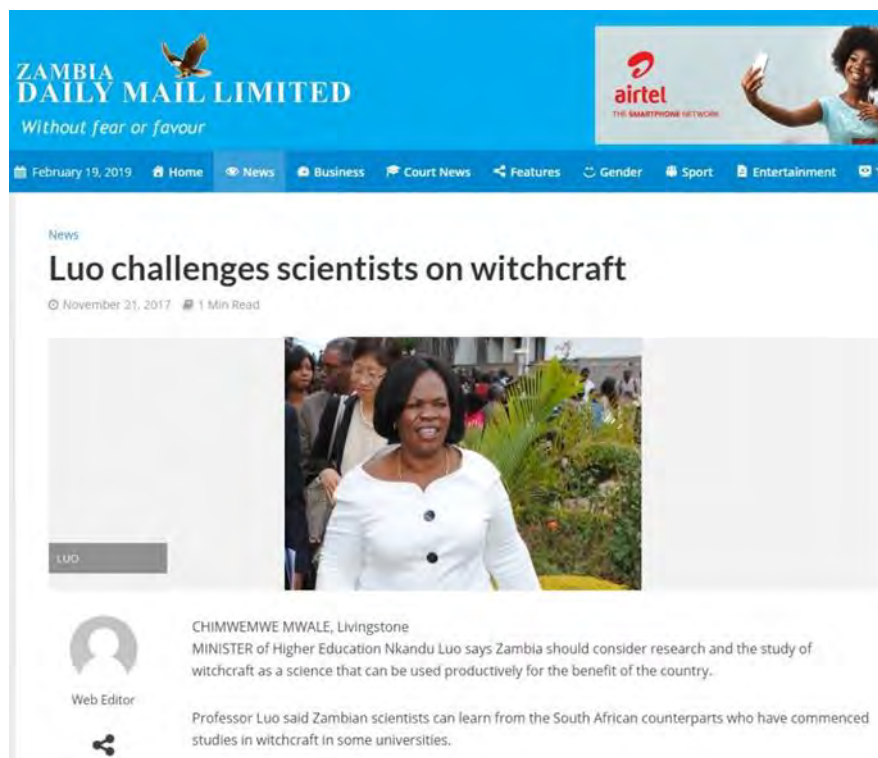
Figure 42. A screenshot of Higher Education Minister Professor Nkandu Luo's statement as published in the *Zambia Daily Mail*, November 21, 2017. Source, *Zambia Daily Mail* online: http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/luo-challenges-scientists-on-witchcraft/?fbclid=IwAR2NFj7NxzX7Jherr8PYR-oF636L14OQvNt_1mEPs7k5ql3tVgryKcV7DIQ

Figure 43. Suspected witches after crash landing near Solwezi in Zambia (Source, *Tumfweko*: http://tumfweko.com/2016/10/04/witchcraft-family-crash-lands-in-solwezi/ accessed on 07/09/2018)

Figure 44. Chishimba Chansa, assorted paintings on papaya fibre, acrylic, undated (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 45. *Ukusefya pa Ng'wena* is a traditional ceremony of the Bemba people of Paramount Chief Chitimukulu of Kasama in Northern Province of Zambia (Source: Zambia National Tourism Board, https://www.zambia.travel/event/ukusefya-pa-ngwena/2018-08-04/ accessed 07/09/18

Figure 46. A Ngoni woman identified during a burial process is showered with some white powder, (Source: *Lusaka Times* https://www.lusakatimes.com/2015/12/29/mateo-phiris-burial-in-pictures/ accessed on 07/09/2018)

Figure 47. Chishimba Chansa, *Horse Rally*, Oil on canvas, early 1990s (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 48. Ignatius Sampa, Culture *lessons*, 2014, oil on canvas (Source: http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2017/06/of-makishi-mona-lisas-and-last-suppers.html accessed 07/09/2018)

Photo Credit: Mary Nooter Roberts & Allen F. Roberts

Figure 49. A Luba court Historian touching a *lukasa*, photographic reproduction taken from https://www.nofi.media/2018/07/the-lukasa-african-smartphone/56221, accessed on 07/09/2018 (Photo Credit: Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts)

The Lukasa can also have a spatial function as the one below which was used to remember the map of the Luba royal palace.
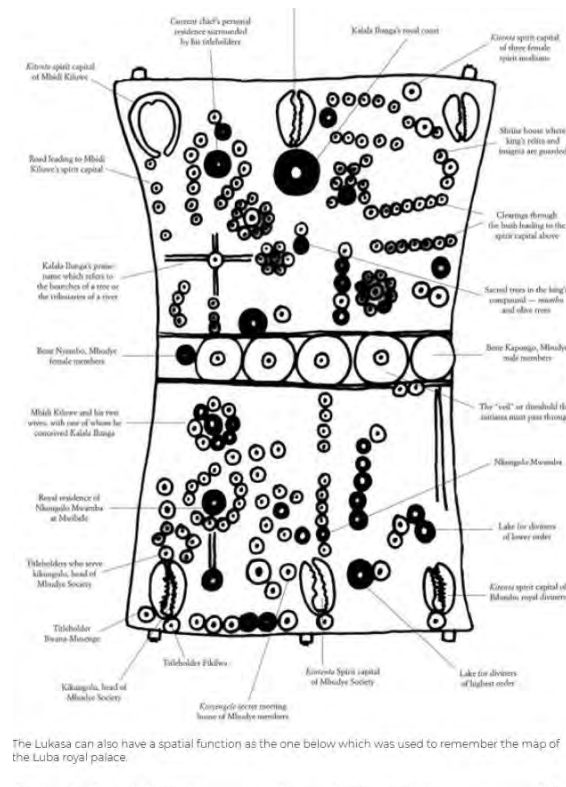
Figure 50. The *lukasa* can also have a spatial function as the one above was used to remember the map of the Luba Royal Palace (Source: https://www.nofi.media/2018/07/the-lukasa-african-smartphone/56221 accessed on 07/09/2018)

Figure 51. Ignatius Sampa, *Culture and religion*, 2014 oil on canvas (Source:
http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2017/06/of-makishi-mona-lisas-and-last-suppers.html accessed on
07/09/2018)

Figure 52. Ignatius Sampa, *Moving culture to another level,* 2014 oil on canvas, (Source:
http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2017/06/of-makishi-mona-lisas-and-last-suppers.html accessed on
07/09/2018)

Figure 53. Zenzele Chulu, *Afreenaissance*, 1994-1997, oil on canvas, 297 x 195cm (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 54. Above is a 2010 photograph of the Kabwata Apartment flats showing effluent from a blocked sewer pipe flowing freely into the streets of the suburbs, below is a reimagined digital illustration of the flats that shows them elaborate palm trees and a colourful design. (Courtesy of *Lusaka Times* and Insaka Artists Trust)

Figure 55. Artists Zenzele Chulu and Mulenga Mulenga look at some sketches during the *Imagine Zambia project* (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

Figure 56. Part of the Task Force, Chifuchi Kandala and Hassan Yassini preparing for a drawing demonstration during an *Imagine Zambia* meeting (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

The current view of Lusaka City skyline from Kamwala Shopping Centre
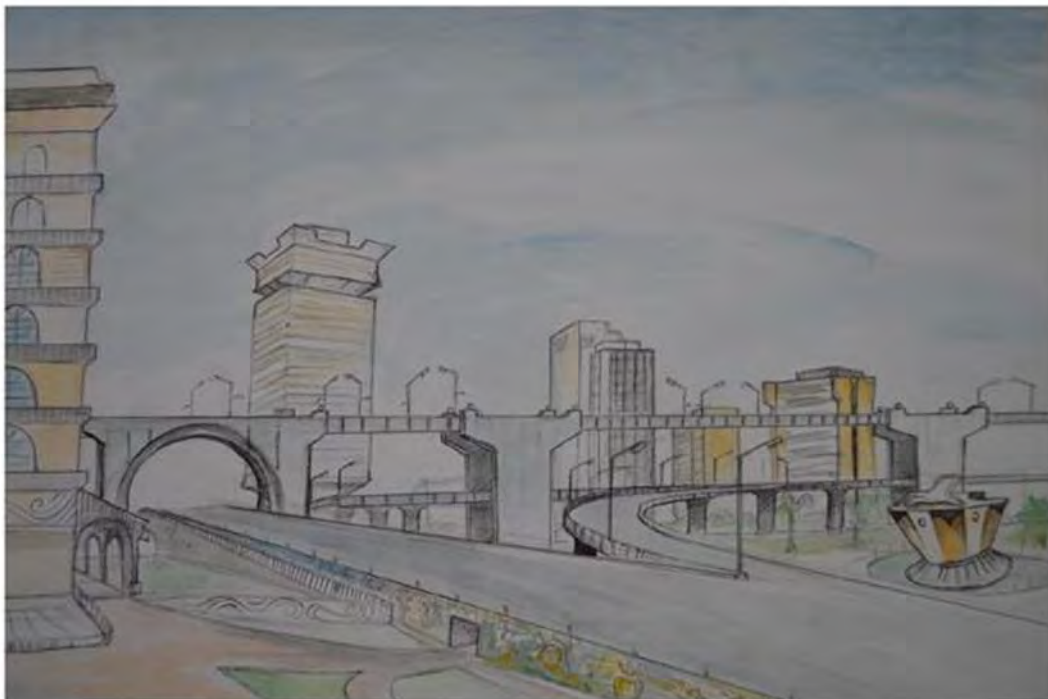
The artists impression of a future Lusaka skyline

Plate 1: Top - a photograph of the Lusaka skyline from Kamwala Market. Bottom – an artist's impression by the *Imagine Zambia* Group (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

Plate 2: Top – a photograph of one of Lusaka's flyover bridges. Bottom – an artist's impression by the *Imagine Zambia* Group (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

Figure 57. Work from the *Imagine Zambia* project were exhibited to the public at one of Lusaka's busiest shopping malls, Manda Hill Mall in 2013 allowing shoppers and passers-by to engage with the work (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

Figure 58. Chifuchi Kandala (far-right) an artist from the *Imagine Zambia* team guide some visitors through the project during the Lusaka centenary exhibition held in the corridors of Manda Hill Shopping Mall, Lusaka, Zambia (courtesy of Insaka Artists Trust)

Figure 59. Isaac Kalambata, *Vintage masquerade*, 2016, acrylic on canvas (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 60. Isaac Kalambata, *The best of both worlds*, 2016, acrylic on canvas (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 61. Isaac Kalambata, *The transfiguration*, 2016, acrylic on canvas (courtesy of the artist)
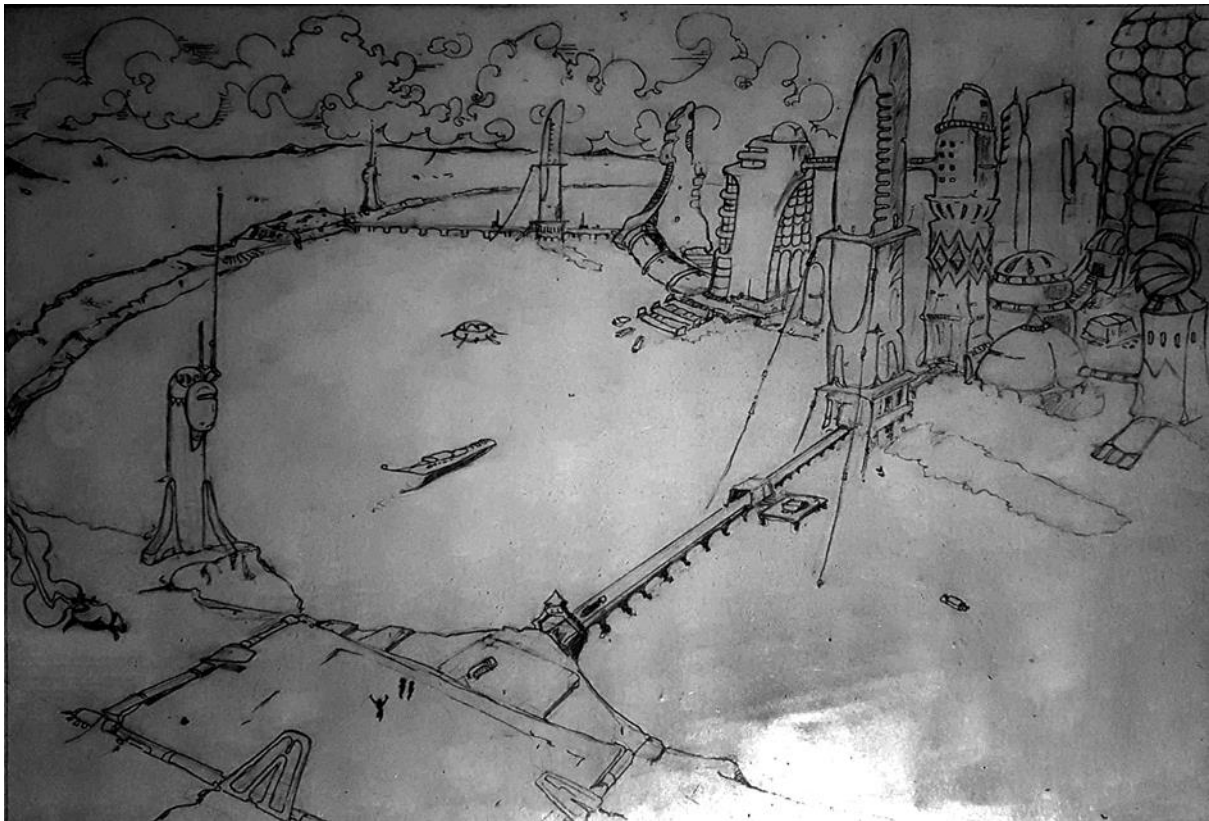
Figure 62. Isaac Kalambata, *Untitled*, 2005, graphite on paper (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 63. Isaac Kalambata, *Untitled*, 2005, graphite on paper (courtesy of the artist)

Chapter 4 – Using the metaphor of space travel and science fiction to challenge presumptive notions of African backwardness

Situating the Afronaut in contemporary art and Afrofuturism is very much about - finding safe spaces for black life. It is about exploring and protecting and preparing the body for hostile environments. In an Afrofuturist vision that stakes out black space in the future, black life is often obscured and simultaneously endangered. This obscurity is the result of the over determination of the past on black future spaces, namely the baggage of colonialism and apartheid, slavery and Jim Crow, and legacies of displacement. Through the image of the Afronaut, artists are making definitive statements about current situations of liberation, freedom, and oppression, while simultaneously referencing the past and staking a place for black life in the future. **Elizabeth C. Hamilton[123]**

Undeniably, just as the above citation from Hamilton (2017) states, through the image of the African in space, or the 'Afronaut'[124] as she or he has come to be called, artists have been making authoritative statements about the past as well as "current situations of liberation, freedom, and oppression". Zambian artists have been no exception. In recent times not only have Zambian artists made reference to the Afronaut but several artists outside Zambia such as Jim Chuchu of Kenya, the Zimbabwean-born Gerald Machona, Daniel Kojo Schrade of Germany, Robert Pruitt of the USA and Spanish filmmaker Cristina De Middel have adopted the term "to describe the subjects in their projects, while others have applied the label loosely to those subjects in art that convey the theme of space travel." (Hamilton 2017:18). However, regardless of its origin:

> Afronaut is an obvious play on astronaut that reveals the ethnic identity of the space traveller. There are deeper implications, which also indicate an eternal tension between African identity and technological stasis. In a linguistic sense, the Afronaut is a tense construction, an oxymoron in a sense: afro-naut, when taken in

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[123] See Hamilton C. E. 2017. *Afrofuturism and the Technologies of Survival*
[124] See Hamilton C. E. 2017. "The word "Afronaut" is a neologism, so it is difficult to pin down its roots or know when and where it was first used. For the purposes of this research, the Afronaut is a person of African descent who travels through outer space. The term seems to have gained popularity with the advent of African space programs, like the one in Zambia in the 1960s (De Middel 2012)."

consideration with stereotypical notions of African-ness and technological advancement. (Hamilton 2017:19)

A select few of these Zambian artists will be the focus of this chapter, which looks at how they have appropriated the image of the African in space as well as where they have drawn their inspirations from and what media they have used. While it suggests Mukuka Nkoloso's[125] space programme in Lusaka (Fig. 64) as being one of the key catalytic muses, it also brings to light, or makes mention rather of Zambian rock band, WITCH.

The band's references to space travel may not have deeply inspired later musicians, but are worth mentioning in that, by bringing seemingly forgotten narratives into the discourse of African futurity – or Afrofuturism if you like – it helps shift the predominantly African-American dominance of African futures, providing an impasse, as it were, to any linear mapping of say, Afrofuturism.

Afrofuturism as a popular aesthetic movement centred on seemingly fantastic tropes, such as the encounter with the alien other and travel through time and space. Yaszek (2006: 47) uses these metaphors for something deeper than artistic embellishments in the manifestation of the creative imagination. As discussed in chapter one, space travel and the alien from outer space have been recurring motifs in Afrofuturism from the time of the African-American jazz musician Sun Ra, as Samatar points out: "Afrofuturistic expression in this mode includes Sun Ra's embrace of alien identity and insistence that "Space Is the Place" for black people" (Samatar 2017: 148). The tropes have been credited as a response to reasoning such as that suggested in Hamilton's quote above – but also as Bristow (2013) suggests, "By placing the black man in space, out of the reach of racist stereotypes, Afrofuturism allows for a critique of both the history of the West and its technoculture".

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[125] Nkoloso was a Zambian freedom fighter and also World War II veteran, having served in the British army under colonialism, like many Africans of his generation. He would later become a physics teacher and teach in secondary school.

Space travel is a recurring motif in the aesthetic of African futurism. In this chapter, I continue the argument by discussing the thematic category of space travel as a metaphor in delinking from Western perceptions of Africa. However, the lens also takes a navel-gazing approach and will therefore occasionally be ferociously introspective, where the artists can be seen as Africans examining Africa, questioning their own existence on their continent. The majority of artists introduced in this chapter draw meaningfully from Zambia's historical engagement with the international space race, thereby contextualising African Futurism in a locally embedded way. By way of making "a kind of tactical extension of the past"[126] (Harootunian 2010:65), they make reference to the largely unknown Nkoloso, who aimed to send 'Afronauts' to the moon and Mars in the 1960s (Nedo 2015) using what was perceived as rudimentary technology and scanty scientific knowledge. An ITN news reporter from the United Kingdom was recorded as saying: "To most Zambians these people are just a bunch of lunatics and from what I have seen today I am inclined to agree"[127] when he visited the facility where Nkoloso trained his 'Afronauts' in the 1960s, where he was told by Nkoloso himself that "We will fire it from Lusaka and it will go straight to the moon"[128]. Of course, the British reporter made fun of Nkoloso because in his colonial mindset he may have observed the African as being on a low rung in terms of "eugenic hierarchy" (Wasielewski 2009:68) and outside the dominant Western "scientific discourse and practice construct ideas of truth" (Reid 2009:262) ignorant to the possibility "that ideas of science, technology, and medicine were not unidirectional, but developed in cross-cultural changes and mutations" (Reid 2009:263). In the reporter's mind, there could be no truth concerning advanced space travel in the words of an African based in a country that was merely on the countdown to

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[126] This is similar to what Harootunian (2010:65) observes, particularly in the language of conceptual art in Japan where the institution of emperor is re-appropriated at a certain moment in that country's modern history like a tool that can be applied to a new situation. The emperor is made into something they need "even though he is still retains all the marks of an archaic society."
[127] www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL5gEpkATTA, 19.12.2016
[128] Ibid. YouTube.

independence from British rule.[129] It is tempting here to note that the paradigm of the 'mad scientist' as progressive protagonist was just gaining popularity within the science fiction genre in the West, as Wright indicates: "The conception of the scientist as sociopolitical redeemer achieved its apotheosis in the itinerant and eccentric protagonist of the original *Doctor Who* (1963)[130]"(Wright 2009:97). In many ways, Nkoloso's eccentric character can be likened to the main character in the *Doctor Who* storyline. The Afronaut itself is a motif for imaginings of the future, which in a Zambian context can be quite useful if it is to be considered that "the act of imagining the future can still become tactic in navigating precarious landscapes of power" (Sunstrum 2013:119).

1: Lusaka Ground Control Base to D-Kalo 1

The black person in space, or Afronaut, has become a fairly popular character in the art of select Zambian artists in recent years. The key and foundational protagonist of the terminology being Nkoloso, who in many ways can be regarded in the same way as Sun Ra is within the African-American spheres of Afrofuturism. Nkoloso has in many ways become a catalytic figure in the creative arts, as will be demonstrated in this chapter. Nkoloso's intention was to be the first to send a human being into space, and he envisioned manufacturing a spacecraft called D-Kalo 1, which he intended to rival the USA's Apollo and USSR's Sputnik spacecraft.

It is obvious that the prevailing colonial government of then Northern Rhodesia would not have encouraged or allowed Africans to engage in anything close to the development of rockets, let alone be part of a space race alongside the USA and USSR. Even to approach any of the two rival nations might not have yielded any results.

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[129] Nkoloso was interview shortly before the independence of Northern Rhodesia in 1964
[130] An eccentric yet compassionate extra-terrestrial Time Lord zips through time and space to solve problems and battle injustice across the universe, travelling via the TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimensions in Space) – Source: https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/dont-trust-the-b-in-apt-23-afterbuzz-tv-aftershow#/

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that there was no guarantee at this stage that Africans would be given the mandate to rule themselves and that 'Zambia' would be allowed to exist in 1964. The footage of Nkoloso being interviewed by a British journalist a month after Zambia's independence in 1964[131] revealed that Nkoloso's initial plan was to launch his rocket into space as part of the Independence Day celebrations. He was never able to do so because the Zambian government as well as UNESCO did not respond to the request for funding towards the US$7,000,000 that Nkoloso needed for the project at the time. While it may have sounded comical or like a flight of fancy, the reality was that the colonialists and by extension the West considered Africans to be second class citizens, therefore Nkoloso's suggestions of a Space Project can be read as a response to the Black and African predicament. Nkoloso's visions, however, did put him in the spotlight even years after his attempted moon mission. One such example of his recognition is a newspaper article published as far away as Blytheville in Mississippi County, Arkansas, United States in 1970. Published in the *Courier News*, a local newspaper (see Fig. 65), the story, entitled "Support Your Witch Doctor, Zambian Says" by a Kenneth L. Whiting (1970) was acquired through the international news service, Associated Press, and fascinatingly, despite the delicate topic, the reporter does not seem to use disparaging language regarding Nkoloso but just conveys the actual story. As such, the short article is used below almost in its entirety to hint how Nkoloso was being read outside of Zambia five years after his space project and how he himself was asserting himself concerning the politics of knowledge. In the newspaper article, Whiting (1970:8) writes:

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[131] A video of the newsreel can be found on www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9Do3dz9TR0. The reel was also used by CCTV News [Chinese National TV English Language News] which produced a documentary in September 2013 titled "Makuka Nkoloso, the Afronaut" that re-assesses Nkoloso's significance: http://english.cntv.cn/program/facesofafrica/20130909/100179.shtml..

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP) The man who aspired to put Zambian astronauts on the moon has a new cause. He says African witch doctors deserve government support and should be encouraged to take their rightful place beside modern physicians.

Mukuka Nkoloso does not practice witchcraft himself, although he admits having 'a mystic vision whenever I ponder the subject'.

He is best known as leader of an abortive effort in space. Nkoloso insists that only lack of funds allowed Apollo 11 astronauts to beat Zambia in the lunar race. This shortage of money hobbled the training of spacemen here five years ago. …

Zambia's version of the national Aeronautics and Space Administration is dormant now, but Nkoloso promises 'a Zambian will walk on the moon sooner than people think'.

He is currently acting as President Kenneth Kaunda's personal representative at Liberation Centre. This is a Lusaka Compound providing offices for various 'freedom fighter' movements devoted to overthrowing white rule in Southern Africa.

Nkoloso recently submitted a report suggesting witchcraft as an antidote to Christianity, which has debased Africa's medical skills. He also blamed British colonial rule for using missionaries and the Bible to outflank witchcraft. …

Nkoloso is not appealing on behalf of a dying craft. Millions of Space age Africans are involved in that old black magic. Sometimes the modern and traditional clash.

Whiting's article has been cited generously here because it fittingly abridges the story of Nkoloso's space programme. By linking it to Nkoloso as an advocate for the recognition of indigenous African knowledge systems while highlighting him as a decolonial thinker, this research concurs with Nkoloso that Christianity and the Bible were Britain's colonial tools and weapons. This corresponds with arguments such as the ones raised by Chishimba Chansa in the previous chapter, where he reasons for the impartiality of indigenous African aircraft in his painting *Ukupuluka Palesungo*. The article by Whiting (1970) also asserts Nkoloso's continued involvement in the liberation of the African countries that were not yet free.

All this encapsulates Nkoloso's thinking and posits him as someone who knew exactly what he was doing when he declared he would conquer space. He was an intentional rabble-rouser whose purpose was to irk the British in particular, and Western hegemonic thought in general, long after the so-called independence of Zambia. Nkoloso's story continues to be told and unfolds within this chapter through the analysis of the works that his narrative has inspired.

2: The melting ship heading for planet Venus

The above title is borrowed from a song by the Zambian Rock group WITCH[132] if only to fuel the conversation on how the metaphor or trope of the African in space can be used to reassess ways in which Africans are viewed as backward.

Whereas Nkoloso's project can be viewed as a response to earlier stated factors, WITCH's song was released 10 years after the height of Nkoloso's space programme, a time when independence expectations were dwindling, not materialising as envisaged. Their visionary song "Black Tears" from their 1975 album *Lazy Bones* – as briefly highlighted in chapter one – opens with lyrics that suggest the singers are in a perilous spaceship hurtling towards the planet Venus and heralded harder days to come, lamenting the insecurity of the journey ahead. The implication was that whoever was in charge of the ship might not know what they were doing at this stage, but were possibly confident when the ship was launched into space.

This was undoubtedly a jibe not only at Zambia's ruling one-party state, but also at the leadership of several other African countries that had also gained independence and seemed to be on trajectories towards becoming failed states. The song almost sounds as if it was written as a science fiction film score. WITCH played a genre called Zamrock[133] which was popular from the early 1970s until the early 1980s, at a time Zambian music journalist and historian Leonard Koloko (2018: 66) describes as being when "Zambia was shattered by a number of socio-economic woes which included plummeting copper prices, a high cost of living and an escalation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the latter sadly leading to the rapid demise of a number of prominent musicians in the late 1980s and mid-90s." Presumably, these conditions may have influenced the almost imperceptible politicking in the band's

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[132] See Chapter 2, 2: Implementing Afrofuturism 2.0 as a solution to the 'fad', page 113

[133] The popularity of Euro-American rock music and the rise of the "flower power" movement led to Zambia's president Kenneth Kaunda "passing an edict that 90% of the music played on national radio should be Zambian. "The musicians' immediate reaction was to crossbreed traditional folk music styles with Western rock rhythms, thus giving birth to a new genre which was immediately given the moniker Zamrock by a University of Zambia medical student cum radio DJ – Mannaseh Phiri."(Koloko 2018:16).

music. The song can be read as a response to the sociopolitical conditions at the time. Ferguson (1999: 136-137) sheds light on this epoch of Zambian history:

> The apparently inevitable process of proletarianization was replaced by mass layoffs and 'back to the land' exercises – the 'unmaking', rather than the making, of a working class. And now, with the privatization of the state-held mining company, it seems that even 'Zambianization' (the nationalist policy of replacing white management with qualified black Zambians) is being replaced by what is now being called 'de-Zambianization', the rehiring of white, expatriate management. A new generation of Zambians, then, has come of age in a world where the modernist certainties their parents grew up with have been turned upside down – a world where life expectancies and incomes shrink instead of grow, where children become less educated than their parents instead of more, where migrants move from urban centres to remote villages instead of vice-versa. It is the modernization story through the looking glass, where modernity is the object of nostalgic reverie, and 'backwardness' the anticipated (or dreaded) future.

This "anticipated (or dreaded) future" that Ferguson alludes to above, has manifested in a future still rife with uncertainty. Although much has changed in Zambia from the time Ferguson wrote this 20 years ago, much of the legacy he summarises continues to repeat itself.

Arguably, the only thing that most Africans across the continent have had ever since the independence era of the 1950s and 1960s is a dream of a better life. This is understandably due to dictatorships, civil wars, corrupt practices and atrocious human rights abuses, gender inequality and over-packed prisons, which most Africans have been facing across the decades. It is as if African citizens in general press self-destruct buttons because of their belief in so-called leaders who apparently use them to get into power, only to establish autocratic governments.

There are many such examples strewn across the continent; Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Uganda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Zambia – the list of countries is almost interminable.

There is almost no difference between the corrupt African leaders – living in unfathomable luxury while the citizens live in abject poverty – and the colonial rulers who had given them independence. In creative circles, therefore, an option is for artists to open their imagination and respond to their autocratic or insufferable environments in a creative manner. Rather than dwelling on the idea that they will never develop or enjoy reasonable standards of living, they find solace in thinking about the future or delving into speculative sojourns of space travel.

Particularly inspired by Nkoloso, Zambian artists have continued metaphorically conquering [outer] space, the final frontier, as it is so often called. Among them are Stary Mwaba, Mwenya Kabwe, and Milumbe Haimbe, eminent artists of the same generation who have used the space travel or alien planet narrative in their works or have at least engaged with outer space tropes. The thematic backdrops of their work speak to imaginings of the future almost in similar ways to authors of science fiction, although the works speak to everyday concerns of the African present, as will be demonstrated in this chapter.

These artists may also be said to evoke notions of temporality in that the works themselves are being created by individuals who are merely visualising the future as well as visualising outer space and imagined landscapes that also represent an unfolding of ideas in pursuit of boundlessness. A speculative nonconformity, as it were. As with the Zambian artists mentioned in previous chapters, their creative force is also embellished in the conversation between the traditional and the modern. The idea is however, not to categorise the artists within a single classification, as they all work in various mediums, but to analyse their work

individually under the umbrella of futurism or, by extension, the established lenses of Afrofuturism that were unpacked at length in chapter one.

3: We're still going to Mars!

The title of this section is derived from the first in a series of exhibitions by Zambian artist Stary Mwaba[134] (b. 1976). Mwaba's selection of the title for this exhibition can also be attributed to the newspaper article by Nkoloso that appeared in the Zambian *TIME Magazine* in the 1960s (see Fig. 64), which described Nkoloso as the self-proclaimed Director of the National Academy of Science, Space Research and Philosophy. Nkoloso wrote: "We're going to Mars with a space girl, two cats and a missionary".

Held at the Lusaka National Museum (2015), one of the most important and prestigious venues in Zambian, this exhibition was a collaboration with the museum and involved several coordinated school visits by learners from various schools (Fig. 66). With this exhibition, which was informed by some archival research by Mwaba, the artist was able to introduce the story of Nkoloso to a new generation of Zambians, and later on in a similar exhibition entitled *Life on Mars*, he was able to retell the story to a European audience at the *Künstlerhaus Bethanien*, Berlin, Germany, a gallery with a global reach. The renamed exhibition not only introduced or reintroduced the story of an African space project to a European audience, it also tackled one of the issues that this thesis proposes, that of dispelling notions of Africa's belatedness.

The work encompassed ways in which artistic portrayals of Africa in a certain way can shift the outside world's perceptions of the assumedly backward continent. In an interview with

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[134] Stary Mwaba is currently a Master of Fine Art Student at Rhodes University and a member of the SARChI research group Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa. Mwaba's work, research and current working process highlight specific subjects that engage with archive materials as components of his work, and these then function as the starting point for the works to engage with the current sociopolitical circumstances in Zambia. https://www.ru.ac.za/artsofafrica/people/mastersresearchers/starymwaba/ accessed on 06/11/2018.

German journalist and writer Magnus Rosengarten[135] (2015), in the art magazine *C&*, Mwaba was requested to contextualise the work and asked, "Who is your work addressed to?" to which he aptly responded:

> I come from a background where I do a lot of social work. … In addition, I did a small workshop where I showed a video to young girls. In that group we started imagining what Mars is like: "Let's create Mars!" That's a different audience and I make work with them. And I think being here in Germany, the work really addresses the ongoing misconception of the African continent and its people. It is also for me to talk about my inspiration. This was a race: USSR and the US were both competing to go into space. It was a big thing and we were in the race too. It really talks about my inspiration, as an African, as a Zambian, and as an artist. (Mwaba in Rosengarten 2015)[136]

What is important here in terms of Mwaba's exhibitions in retelling of an African history is the fact that as part of the prestigious one-year KfW Stiftung artistic residency in both Frankfurt and Berlin, his exhibitions were well documented in a catalogue by art historians as well as magazines and journals by German authors; texts that can be considered important seeing that Mwaba comes from an art scene that has been sparsely documented or theorised over several decades. Going by the texts by David Elliott (2014), Laura Bohnenblust (2014) and Kito Nedo, the authors portray the whole Nkoloso story in a less disparaging and more encouraging light than the likes of the British ITN News crew in November of 1964. For instance, Elliott (2014:9) initiates the catalogue essay by stressing:

> Until recently, history has treated Nkoloso's serious, continent-wide ambition for Zambians to be the first Africans to land on the moon or fly to Mars with a mixture of hilarity and embarrassment. Admittedly, the Academy was far from high tech in its facilities; the anti-gravity training through calisthenics or being rolled down hills in oil barrels seemed quaintly dated. But in November 1964, one month after Northern

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[135] Magnus Rosengarten is a filmmaker, journalist and writer from Germany. He lives in New York City and has an MA in Performance Studies from NYU.
[136] See "aiming for the stars" from the online version of the magazine:
https://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/aiming-for-the-stars/ accessed on 06/07/2001

Rhodesia had achieved independence from British rule as the newly fledged country of Zambia, a British ITN news team made a short film on Nkoloso depicting him, his students and their training programme as little short of demented. The complacently patronising tone of the interviewer is echoed in the words that sign off the piece: 'To most Zambians these people are just a bunch of crackpots and from what I've seen today I'm inclined to agree.' It was a short-sighted, dismissive description that was typical of an engrained colonial mind-set that tried to keep Africans firmly in their place, even after they had achieved independence.

The German art critic, Nedo, went on to also broaden the theoretical concerns of Nkoloso's space programme with regard to Mwaba's work, declaring that Nkoloso was also "the father of Afrofuturism" (Nedo 2015:83).

This in turn provides a parallel narrative to the cultural and aesthetic movement inspired by science fiction, which is generally accepted as having its roots in North America with Sun Ra at the helm. Nedo (2015: 83-84) writes:

What does that past Afrofuturism spirit of departure mean to Zambia today? [Mwaba] is also interested in the aesthetic–political content of the Nkoloso programme: its assertion of African space travel conjures a powerful counter-image to the dominant colonial narrative, which sees Africa merely as a backward, chaotic, low-tech part of the world.

In this counternarrative, Mwaba's work not only conjures space travel but suggests Nkoloso's predicament as a metaphor for contemporary life in Zambia to interpret his own situation of practising contemporary art in a marginalised setting (as indicated by Elliot).

In his artworks Mwaba "has investigated and questioned the absurdity of the world in which he grew up. Confronted by a spectre of Life on Mars, he has tried to understand what made it this way, as well as his place in it, both at home and abroad." (Elliot 2015: 11).

3.1: The Mission to Mars

As earlier stated, Nkoloso (1965) once declared: "We're going to Mars! With a space girl, two cats, and a missionary". It is this proclamation as has already been pointed out, that pitted

him against the world superpowers of the time USA and USSR at the height of what was called the Cold War.

As can be expected from Western hegemonic superciliousness, he was mocked as eccentric at the time, particularly by his country's former colonial masters Britain, as well as some Zambians, mostly because his rudimentary equipment and training facilities did not seem to provide the required technology that is assumed can be used to send astronauts into space.

But as stated at the opening of this chapter, Nkoloso had a Western-style education provided by the colonial regime. He was a physics teacher himself and must have been fully aware of the mechanics involved in propelling an aircraft into space. He was clearly not the naïve "crackpot" described in the British newsreel.

Judging also from Nkoloso's comment in the *Courier News* where he is cited as saying he had mystic visions (Whitely 1970:8) one may not rule out the possibility of Nkoloso possessing cryptic indigenous knowledge that might assist in the creation of flying machines or aircraft such as that seen in Chansa's (2017) painting *Ukupupuka Pa Lusengo*.

A logical argument would suggest that what Nkoloso was doing was taking a liberatory detour by making a political statement, an act of sarcastic defiance asserting that Africans after being colonised had the audacity to conquer space and colonise the beings that supposedly lived there.

But unlike the colonialist who stripped his people of religious beliefs and ideologies, Nkoloso's missionaries were going to control but not disturb those of the inhabitants of Mars "I have warned the missionary he must not force Christianity on the people in Mars if they do not want it" (Nkoloso 1964). Nkoloso's claim to space can therefore be interpreted as an act of performance art and his publishing of a full-page article in the country's biggest newspaper as the visual climax of this act.

3.2: Conquering a gendered space race through Martha Mwamba, Zambia's 'space girl', the first Afronaut

One of the compelling narratives that can be argued to have emerged from Mwaba's exhibition was the story of Martha Mwamba[137], a teenage girl who was earmarked as the person who would be the first human in space. The 17 year-old space girl, Mwamba, is the only one of the 12 Afronauts to be mentioned by name in Nkoloso's editorial announcement.

In the 1950s both the USA and USSR had sent mammals into space, but the humans that both these superpowers were training were for the most part men, although in 1963 the USSR did send a woman, Walentina Wladimirowna Tereschkowa, the Soviet cosmonaut[138] who, a year previously, was the first woman to travel to space (Bohnenblust 2014:40), but she only orbited the earth.

Mwamba's space odyssey was to see her land on the moon, according to Nkoloso's declaration. It should be noted that women still held a backseat position in Western society at the time; in the USA they had only been given the right to vote a few decades earlier. Therefore, as if claiming that Zambia will send a rocket into space was not affronting enough, sending an African girl into space can even be seen as a bolder act of wilful defiance not only to Western hegemony but also male patriarchy. By any interpretation, Nkoloso was a woman's equality activist.

Mwaba's reference to the fact that the first African in space was set to be a woman feeds very well into the notion of bolstering the African woman to the position of a hero, as has been earlier emphasised in Kalambata's *Masquerade* series[139] which seeks to reinstate the African woman on the high pedestal that she once occupied prior to colonialism. Like Kalambata, Mwaba provides an important reframing of the African woman. Certainly, sending a woman

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[137] "Mwamba" is the Afronaut, whereas "Mwaba" is the artist in reference here.
[138] Cosmonaut is the Russian description for an astronaut, a human that is sent into outer space for exploration purposes.
[139] See chapter 3

into space can hardly be considered as one of the traditional roles of a woman in African society or even Western societies at the time.

However, a speculative question might be asked here. Why have Africans become convinced that the role of a woman is that of being the domesticated helper of the man? Nigerian professor and historian Anene Ejikeme (2010) provides an apt reminder, arguing that at the beginning of the 20th century most literature on African women was written by European men who were not even qualified to do so as they were "armchair ethnographers" often "employed in the offices of the colonial bureaucracy" and they often portrayed African women as wives, mothers and lovers. She writes:

> These details about African women's intimate lives derived from sources written by people whose reliability, especially in gathering information of this nature, is now widely questioned. European men writing about African women interviewed African men, or more typically a single African man, and on the basis of statements from a single male "informant", they made sweeping statements, such as 'women believe/do/desire, etc.' (Ejikeme 2010: 292).

In relation to the aforementioned – as earlier observed in chapter three[140] – whether portrayed in urban or rural settings, women in contemporary Zambian art have often been portrayed at work, presumably attending to domestic chores or selling in the marketplace, if not performing household chores such as preparing food or tending to children. Such examples can be seen in *Mother and Child Breast Feeding* (Fig. 67) by Dabson Njobvu, and *House Wife* (Fig. 68) by Raphael Chilufya.

Although the paintings illustrate women outside the household environment there is a subjugating air of domestication about them, even though the women in the paintings are depicted as either expressionless or very happy without signs of discontent or weariness of heavy labour.

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[140] See 4: Isaac Kalambata's Speculative nonconformity, chapter 3

What Mwaba does with this work, therefore, is to counter two dominant narratives in terms of the perception of African women, the one perpetrated by the West and colonialism (Ejikeme 2010; Arnfred 2014), and the one that still lingers in the works of contemporary Zambian painting as exemplified above.

Nevertheless, as much as Mwamba did not become the first human on the moon or Mars, and whether it can be read as youthful naivety, she was brave enough to agree that she would venture where no man has been before, which does take a significant amount of courage. It can be noted also that before she had begun training as an Afronaut, she "had travelled to Tanzania to broadcast political propaganda when it was censored during Cha-Cha-Cha"[141] (Serpell 2017)[142]. Mwamba may have sunk into oblivion somehow, not to be heard of again; but, forgotten today, she has been fittingly brought to the limelight once again through the work of Mwaba.

Another interesting aspect of Mwaba's works *Martha Mwamba I* and *II* (Fig. 69 and 70) is the material quality or the substances used to create the works. As an artist, Mwaba is known in his home country as a painter[143] but for this work, he used copper wire, intermeshing it in the form of two-dimensional sculptures that can be likened to a wall hanging.

The use of copper wire can be read as a powerful statement, as copper represents Zambia's mineral wealth, the country being one of the world's largest exporters of the mineral. Also, copper is one of the important materials in the manufacture of spacecraft and satellites by institutions such as NASA[144]. One scientific journal account indicates that: "The world's most

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[141] The Cha Cha Cha uprising was the name of a movement at the height of political campaigns to rid the country of colonialism

[142] See Serpell, N. 2017. The Zambian "Afronaut" Who Wanted to Join the Space Race, The New Yorker online: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-zambian-afronaut-who-wanted-to-join-the-space-race. Accessed on 07/11/2018

[143] As an arts journalist the researcher has covered Mwaba extensively through several exhibition reviews and interviews, for one of the earliest see Mulenga, A. 2006. "Mwaba at it again… the painter takes his work to Dublin", *Weekend Post*, Friday October 6 (Zambia)

[144] See NASA Engineering Design Challenge: Thermal Protection Systems 2007

advanced rocket engine depends on copper and copper alloys. Three of these powerful engines are used in each of the four space shuttles built for the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)" (Copper Development Association Inc. 1992)[145].

Besides its use in space technologies, copper is also a mineral on which current and future technology will rely, meaning Zambia is a key component of the world's future if it continues to supply copper. However, this reference to mining also alludes to Mwaba's more recent work, which looks deeper into mining and grapples with the question of China's presence in Africa. In recent times, China's presence has been a contentious issue, with speculation that it is taking over the Zambian mines. This in turn brings about speculation as to who really does own or control Zambia's future; is it the Zambians themselves, or does Zambia's future lie in the hands of the Chinese? What therefore lies in the future? *Kuntanshi yamikalile*.

4: 'Space invasion': *Astronautus Afrikanus*

> *Several years after Astronautus Afrikanus and very far from achieving the students' demands free quality decolonized education I realized that what was sparked by the production for me is the start of a local articulation of a set of ideas that I am walking into, regarding art, theatre-making in particular and activism and the value of imagining utopias and using the future to navigate a hostile present. The starting point of the production is to reclaim Nkoloso as a utopian visionary, an African futurist ahead of his time in his ability to see the Zambian mission to the moon as a metaphor for the expansive and deeply hopeful future of an independent Northern Rhodesia. He planned to launch the rocket from the independence stadium to coincide with the very first hoisting of the Zambian flag (*Mwenya Kabwe 2018)

The play, or immersive theatrical performance *Astronautus Afrikanus*[146], devised and directed by Mwenya Kabwe[147] can be read as a multilayered plot, in that not only is it a testimonial

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[145] See https://www.copper.org/publications/newsletters/discover/1992/Ct73/shuttle_engine.html
[146] "*Astronautus Afrikanus* features the work of… creatives intellectuals: Jake Nathane, Nani Sihlali, Justine Pickering, Mmatumisang Motisi, Ciko Sidzumo, Danielle O'Niel, Georgina Makhubele, Phelokazi Mbude, Danielle van Der Merwe, Carla Franco, Molopo Lipali, Tiisetso Mashifane, Gregory Peatfield" (Rhodes University Drama Dept. 2015). As guest director at Rhodes, in the Department, Mwenya B. Kabwe collaborated with Lieketso wa Thaluki and Illka Louw. see: https://www.ru.ac.za/drama/productions/productions2015/ accessed on 10/11/2018.

but also an acknowledgement of the already discussed paradox of the African in outer space by paying direct homage to Edward Mukuka Nkoloso and his ambition of beating the US and the USSR in the space race with his band of Zambian afronauts.

In Kabwe's own interpretation of *Astronautus Afrikanus*, she applies layered meaning to it. Particularly concerning the notion of "space invasion" where she does not exceptionally mean the invasion of outer space, but also the invasion of the Rhodes Theatre complex space at Rhodes University in Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), South Africa, where the production was performed during the National Arts Festival in 2015. Kabwe gave a lecture entitled *"Astronautus Afrikanus: Performing African futurism"* at the Live Art Network Africa symposium hosted by the Institute for Creative Arts (ICA) at the University of Cape Town[148]. In her address she stated that the Rhodes Theatre multiplex:

> contributed to an interesting theatrical experiment in immersive performance against the backdrop of Rhodes Must Fall. … The immersive site-specific use of Rhodes Theatre with all its implicit and explicit codes for good behaviour took on a much more politically resonant charge in the making of the work. (Kabwe 2018)

The performance was interactive in that members of the cast would either mingle with the viewers – who were more like guests than an audience – or invite them into their various compartments and allow them to observe; often the gaze was reversed and the observers were being observed.

The theatrical piece seemingly encroached upon the often out-of-bounds and uncharted alcoves of the fairly large Rhodes University Drama Department building. During regular

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[147] Mwenya B. Kabwe is a Johannesburg-based, Zambian theatre maker, lecturer and mother. She is local in parts of Cape Town, New York, Boston and Lusaka. Kabwe has a master's in Theatre and Performance with a focus on theatre making, from the UCT, where she was a lecturer in the Drama Department. She currently teaches in the Theatre and Performance Division of the Wits School of Arts and her interests include contemporary African theatre and performance, migration, immersive and site-specific performance and collaborative and interdisciplinary creative practices. (source: https://lessgoodidea.com/mwenya-kabwe/) Accessed 11/11/2018

[148] The researcher was present at the event held from 17-20 Feb 2018 and was also among the speakers. The researcher was also among the audience members who experienced the *Astronautus Afrikanus* performance at the Rhodes Theatre in Makhanda (Grahamstown) (2015).

performances at the theatre, the audience usually has access to the front area of the foyer with its high ceilings, where the tickets, along with the coffees and snacks, are sold. Audiences are also familiar with the sprawling main stage and the smaller Box Theatre. *Astronautus Afrikanus*, however, allowed them to see and go where no audience has gone before.

Behind the scenes, storage rooms were transformed into imaginary space laboratories and control rooms (see Fig. 71) with experiments such as particle stability and acceleration tests being performed by the Afronauts, some of whom were characters in grey overalls with individualised *chitenge* details offering an African aesthetic to their space suits (See Fig. 72). The event was better described by Kabwe herself and as a consequence her own words are used extensively here:

> The audience enters the lobby of the main theatre of the University Currently Known as Rhodes. … the bright and functional lights giving nothing away; they have come to see *Astronautus Afrikanus*. They receive a name tag at the makeshift box office and might rightfully suspect at this point that the performance might not take the usual form accommodated by this theatre; each audience member is renamed with a prefixed Afro, such as Afro-Holic, Afro-Beat, Afro-Mystic – Fella Kuti plays in the lobby – perhaps only noticeable to those not engaged in conversation about their name tags, wondering out loud what form the invitation to join the characters in the programme will take, these characters are similarly named Afro-Mukulu. Afro-Cyan, Afro-Tic-Tac, Afro-Geo *plays music – Fella Kuti * the doors close and some members of the audience register that the characters have stopped, and there are characters in grey overalls with individualized Chitenge detail who have assembled at the top of each set of stairs from they hear the following security briefing:

> Welcome to the Pan African Space Station Shuttle launch of craft number PASSLC201513126. This aircraft is under the collective command of Astronautus Afrikanus, descendants of the great Edward Nkoloso's first flight crew and members of the Zambian Academy of Science Space Research and Philosophy. You will conduct your launch observation visit independently and without guidance, with this in mind we require you to pay particular attention to the following safety information, you are on board a working play station and while every effort have been made to ensure your safety you are required to responsible for your own wellbeing and

respectful of the equipment and staff that you will encounter. You may go wherever
you please. Unauthorized and dangerous areas are clearly marked. Remember there
are worlds out there that they never told you about. (Kabwe 2018)

With this performance, Kabwe provides a compelling segue to the idea that Nkoloso's story
can be reinvigorated through *Astronautus Afrikanus* as an instrument to confront present day
social ills, not only in a context confined to Zambia, but one which lends itself to a prevailing
condition in South Africa.

4.1: *Afronauts as transmitters of the #Fees Must Fall movement and purveyors of transformation*

In the quotation above, Kabwe makes what can be read as a subversive reference to Rhodes
University, in that she avoids calling it by its current name, which she associates with
colonialism and Cecil John Rhodes, who she regards as a tyrant, and decides to refer to it as
the "University Currently Known As Rhodes", implying that the name may change, should
change and will change in the future.

Furthermore, Kabwe grapples with the notion of prefixing everything with "Afro", something
that Mahasha (2013) earlier argued can be problematic. By naming the spaceship (Rhodes
Theatre) the Pan African Space Station Shuttle and by playing the music of Fela Kuti, a
rebellious Nigerian musician, she takes the Nkoloso story beyond being that of Zambia alone,
but of Africa as a whole. What is more, the participants or audience in the theatre are also
passengers on the shuttle. They too were from all over Africa and beyond, as the National
Arts Festival attracts visitors from beyond South Africa's borders every year.

Kabwe (2018) asserts that she is interested in exploring acts of transgression as well as "the
terrain of possibility, in the interaction of performance African futurism and processes of
decolonization". She is also interested "in a public sphere" and encouraging conversations
around the responsibility for reimagining social behaviour. In her work she also explores "a
broad aesthetic terrain known variously … as African Speculative Fiction, African Futurism,

African Science Fiction, Afropolitan Futurism, Afro sf. Post African futures, Afro-topia and the many other alternatives that African creative practitioners have proposed – Afrofuturism." (Kabwe 2018 ibid.)

Kabwe's interest is in foregrounding ways in which Africa is imagined and might imagine itself in and into "the future as strategies to decolonial creative practice". Hers is an exploration of the form of live performances sitting in the slippery spaces between theatre, performance, dance and fine art as artworks in which the body as a visual image is the primary medium of expression and the works are visual, durational and in conversation with the spaces in which they occur. She asserts that:

> The context in which the performances occur or within which they are reflected is the student movement known as Rhodes Must Fall that ignited South African universities in May 2015 after a student at this University [Cape Town] threw human waste on a campus statue of Cecil John Rhodes. This sparked a series of large- scale protests at universities across the country under the hashtags […] "Fees Must Fall" and which continued into 2016 and 2017 and many of us are on standby for the 2018 student movement's call to decolonize education, which has arisen from a collective mobilizing against institutional racism, sexism and used privileging of Eurocentric models of teaching and learning […] to demand free quality decolonized education […] as black students were once again fighting for their freedom from oppressive economic and educational legacies. I'm not well placed, and it is entirely too soon to make any determination, but what strategies are and will be useful for the emergence of a radical and decolonized future as envisioned by the student movement? In that direction however, I am interested in questions of what enables and sustains a place of possibility, a terrain of possibility, in a present that is urgent, dire and historically loaded. (Kabwe 2018)

Likening the South African students' movement to a predicament in the present that provides fodder for fantastical thoughts of the future as an escape, Kabwe hints at pessimism not unlike the distrust towards the prefix 'Afro' or concept of 'futuristic' as presented by Eshun, Mahasha and perhaps Bristow. In the context of performance at the Rhodes Theatre, Kabwe

cites an observation by Dery as being a critique that should be taken into consideration as she points out that:

> Several members of the cast were directly involved in the students protests and brought a hyper sensitivity to the issues of colonialization as they were presented by Nkoloso's story and by the unfolding students' movements; at the time notions of African futures were seen by the unfolding students' movement as a useful strategy for imagining alternative realities. In retrospect however, Mark Dery's critique of the potential irrelevance of futuristic thinking in a time of crisis is important to note. He says: 'The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to a troubling antimony, can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out and whose energies have been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history imagine possible futures.' The maze-like quality of the Astronautus Africanus performance space made for an understanding of a now more expansive environment as a found space, rather than one with clear designations for its use. Both in the making of the work as we rediscover the potential for the theatre spaces allocating each installation, as well as for the spectator participants who are tasked with finding the installations locked this case in generally unexplored areas in the building […] In the case of Astronautus Africanus, the space invasion performed in the theatre and at the university named after the arch villain of the day made for an important intervention into the site's colonial history and context […] to relieve the student movement's calls for transforming institutional culture. (Kabwe 2018 ibid.)

It was noteworthy to observe that at the very end of Kabwe's 2018 public lecture on *Astronautus Africanus* at the University of Cape Town (UCT), she showed images of the film *Black Panther*, which resulted in screams of excitement and applause from the audience – UCT is the heart of the Fees Must Fall movement and therefore some of the students in the auditorium during Kabwe's talk may have also been actively involved when the movement took shape in 2015. It brings to mind the sociopolitical concerns that this recent film has brought about, stirring headlines in mainstream media and rallying a sense of 'bandwagonism' not only to itself as a film, but to African Futurism and specifically Afrofuturism.

In any case, Kabwe's production, as has been demonstrated above, was able to speak not only to issues around the portrayal of Africans in popular culture but also to address current sociopolitical challenges concerning inclusivity and transformation within the South African higher education system.

It was also able, one might argue, to muster a call to Pan-Africanism and for Africans to think critically about their future, but above all it responds to its critical and core purpose, which is a re-imagining and a reframing of Nkoloso, as stated by Kabwe in her own words at the beginning of this section.

Kabwe's *Astronautus Africanus,* just as Mwaba's *Life on Mars*, portrays Nkoloso in a new light, one which corresponds to the description by Elliott when he asserts that "Nkoloso was a visionary and ironist – and perhaps a performance artist manqué – but he was also the leader of a group who were acting out the cruel limits of colonisation, and the absurdity of their position within it, by denying that it had ever existed," (Elliot 2014:9). In the same vein are Kabwe's closing remarks during her 2018 talk:

> Questions remain as to whether Nkoloso's plans were silly […] or if he was a trickster, a satirist or if his entire space programme was in fact a front for underground revolutionary activity, his cape and helmet a disguise and antics of his training programme a successful distraction from the clear-headed leadership of an anti-colonial students' movement. Regardless of what he was in fact up to, what remains for me is the possibility of imagining utopias as a prompt to stimulate one's political imagination, as a tool to demonstrate that another world is possible while critiquing present day structures. While the serious business of politics cannot just be imagined away a method for generating new tools to orient movements towards a future goal/growth I believe are valuable. I am reminded, as expressed by the Centre for Artistic Activism, that even if patriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy are doomed, it really does not matter if we cannot imagine an alternative. (Kabwe 2018 ibid.)

It is the prospect of visualising utopias as a prompt to stimulate political imagination to demonstrate that an alternative humankind is possible, while critiquing present day sociopolitical structures, that has also inspired artists such as Milumbe Haimbe whose science fiction-inspired work is discussed in the section.

And as truthfully as Kabwe puts it that politics, or in fact certain human conditions, cannot merely be fantasised into existence, certain methods for orienting movements towards future goals or growth are, however, valuable.

5: Challenging outmoded perceptions of Africa and speculating the future with Sci-Fi

> *Science Fiction provides an amazing avenue for catharsis, especially in an environment that has suffered stagnation for such a long time. Science fiction unhinges the mind and allows the writer to imagine ordinarily 'unthinkable' scenarios. The political stagnation Nigeria suffers can be interpreted within the context of a creative writing process; the nation's development has been stifled by a lack of imagination. The country remains bogged down in the present, enslaved to its past and quite shy of the future. With science fiction, writers who dare the future, give courage to others.* Ayodele Arigbabu. Lagos, Nigeria.[149]

While Zambia is a country that has never experienced civil strife per se, it has been overwhelmed by sociocultural and political uncertainty[150] every now and then, as the postcolonial regimes that followed British rule have continuously been autocratic by nature. The quote above, although borrowed from a Nigerian literary context, can apply to the Zambian context and the artistic work to be discussed in this section. As has been the case in many African countries, fantasy and imaginings of a parallel or alternative future may be drawn from "somewhat bitter local attitudes towards the competence of the postcolonial

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[149] This was extracted from a prelude to the 2013 anthology LAGOS_2060, "eight writers came together to contribute stories to an anthology on fictional / futuristic takes on the city of Lagos via a workshop tagged LAGOS_2060, conceived to commemorate Nigeria's golden jubilee. The workshop grappled with the question "What will it be like to live in Lagos 100 years after Nigeria gained independence from the British?" "The anthology that grew out of the workshop is telling in the different versions of the future it foretells."
[150] See "Zambia's slide to authoritarianism": https://mg.co.za/article/2018-11-16-00-zambias-slide-to-authoritarianism and "Zambia edges towards dictatorship": https://mg.co.za/article/2017-07-05-zambia

government" as Sunstrum (2013:118) argues. But also, such imaginings can also be used to critique certain Western hegemonic tendencies – lingering remnants of colonialism – as will be demonstrated here.

Science fiction can be used to critique a multiplicity of the above-mentioned sociocultural paradoxes as exemplified in the case of Milumbe Haimbe's graphic novel *The Revolutionist.* Haimbe's work embodies a convergence of these concerns and is classified as science fiction in this study because it fits snugly into one or several of the science fiction tropes that can be recognised as "travel to other planets, encounters with extra-terrestrial lifeforms, utopian social speculation, and futuristic extrapolation" (Roberts 2009:3)[151]. However, within this study science fiction (SF) has been adopted as it "can stand as an abbreviation for any number of generic or modal categories: science fiction, speculative fiction, science fantasy, science fiction and/or fantasy, science fictions, or other variations" (Haslam 2015:3). Haimbe's work can be deemed as important because – to borrow from Jenny Wolmark's[152] remarks in reference to SF literature – "SF is increasingly recognized for its ability to articulate complex and multifaceted responses to contemporary uncertainties and anxieties, and metaphors drawn from SF have acquired considerable cultural resonance. As a result, writing and reading SF are no longer marginal cultural activities, and feminist SF writers and critics have made a major contribution to this shift of emphasis" (Wolmark 2009:157). As much as this statement from Wolmark is valuable and fitting for this study, there are pitfalls in celebrating SF as an effective tool for cultural and social critique, particularly when studying, or rather analysing, that which tackles racial politics and the hegemonic attitudes or

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[151] See Roberts, A. 2009. "The Copernican Revolution", in Bould, M., Butler M. A., Roberts, A. and Vint, S. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, Routledge
[152] Wolmark is a lecturer in critical and cultural theory, author of *Aliens and Others: Science Fiction, Feminism and Postmodernism* (1994) and editor of *Cybersexualities: A reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*

power structures of "white heterosexual men". Mark Bould[153] also points out that SF has "a literary tradition that has hitherto been largely the product of colonial and neo-colonial powers". Also referring to SF in the context of literature, Isiah Lavender III[154] for instance, cautions that:

> Science Fiction often talks about race by not talking about race, makes aliens, has hidden race dialogues. Even though it is a literature that talks a lot about underclasses or oppressed classes, it does so from a privileged if somewhat generic white space. If science fiction is about social change, let us talk about how this change comes about from an 'other' space, a black space. This is absolutely one of the joys of sf and other speculative writings. Science fiction actually does think about the fact that things could be different and to not utilize that potential in it, I think, is limiting, if not downright disturbing. There is something to learn from investigating the black/white binary […] explorations of cultural memories rooted in the thinking of otherhood, is further proof of this potential (Lavender III 2011:8)

Lavender III may not be entirely wrong, perhaps, because his argument may be backed by a significant 612-page edited volume with over 40 articles by eminent SF scholars titled *A Companion To Science Fiction* (2005). A volume which for instance, seems to tactfully sidestep the pertinent issue of race or to be specific 'blackness'.

Nevertheless, eminent Afrofuturism scholar Lisa Yaszek argues that Africans of late have been able to use SF to combat "the 'Afropessimism' of the futures industries" who, as Eshun (2003:287-302) argues have been responsible for shaping global understandings of Africa's present as well as gloomy extrapolations of the continent's future. Yaszek also suggests that SF enables "Africans to stake claims for themselves in the global imaginary as technocultural agents rather than victims" (Yaszek 2013:50). She also contends that globally, across cultures, SF is being embraced as a way to show how the future is unfolding today in the

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[153] Bould, M. is a critic, editor and academic based at the University of the West of England. He is editor of *Paradoxa 25 Africa SF* (2013) and co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*.
[154] Isiah Lavender III, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is associate professor of English at Louisiana State University. He is author of *Race in American Science Fiction* and editor of *Black and Brown Planets: The Politics of Race in Science Fiction*.

"forgotten corners of the world" including Africa, and how they use new technologies to "shape the geopolitical destiny of our civilization on their own terms" and that "taken together, then, African artists see SF as a powerful aesthetic and political tool with which to forge new relations to themselves, the rest of the world and futurity itself" (Yaszek 2013:51).

Tiffany E. Barber (2016:11)[155] for instance, suggests that:

> Afrofuturism has become an umbrella term for considering how science fiction, fantasy, and technology can be used to imagine and reimagine lost pasts and new futures for alienated, black 'others.' While earlier expressions of Afrofuturism may have left notions of black identity formulated in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s undisturbed, current expressions of Afrofuturism center on reimagining and re-signifying blackness and black identities.

If Barber's words are to be taken into consideration, it does not mean Afrofuturism specifically concerns black Africans on the African continent.

In addition, for argument's sake, if Afrofuturism is a phenomenon of the African diaspora, perhaps Haimbe's work can be labelled as an Afrofuturist project, as she is no longer based in Zambia and has relocated to North America – although the project was initiated when she was still living and working in the Zambian capital Lusaka.

But of course, that is merely for argument's sake, as it has already been pointed out in chapter one that the African diaspora is now part of the African Union as the "sixth zone". Again, this does not necessary flatten nuances and different experiences between Africans on the continent and those in its diasporas. Notwithstanding, Afrofuturism has been demonstrated to be a black hole of sorts, a vortex that figuratively draws in anything and everything that deals with the African in space, blackness of race, technology, alien encounters with Africans and so on. Furthermore, Afrofuturism would be an appropriate lens with which to frame

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[155] Tiffany E. Barber is a scholar, curator, and writer of twentieth and twenty-first century visual art, new media, and performance. Her work focuses on artists of the black diaspora working in the United States and the broader Atlantic world. She is Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Delaware.

Haimbe's work in that Afrofuturism is somewhat more distinctive as compared to just a generalised framing of SF.

The work also plays into the subversive nature of Afrofuturism in that: "The concept of SF has also expanded to include approaches far from the mainstream of SF culture. A striking case is Afro-futurism. Afro-futurist artists have adapted SF ideas and icons as ludic symbols of cultural power—of both hegemony of white domination and the subversive play of black art" (Csicsery-Ronay Jr. 2005:57). But also speaking specifically to the visual arts, in reference to the work of Wangechi Mutu,[156] for instance, Wanuri Kahiu, an award-winning filmmaker, writer and director of *Pumzi*, a Kenyan science-fiction short film that has become a staple in Afrofuturism, African Futurism and science fiction-related exhibitions and festivals, posits that:

> Afrofuturism and speculative fiction have always existed in Africa. Indeed, they pre-date western images of science fiction. Our own unique creation myths from around the continent, be it those of the Dogon in West Africa or the Zulu seer Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, are proof enough of our Afrofuturistic aptitude. Afrofuturism has always been part of our Afrofuturistic aptitude. Afrofuturism has always been part of our cultural and social DNA, and Kenyan Afrofuturists like Wangechi Mutu are adding to the immense chorus of voices working their way through imagining the future (Kahiu 2016: 173).

While Mutu's work might differ in style, due to its clearly abstract nature, and subject matter from that of Haimbe's, it finds affinity in relation to the subjects of science fiction, race, gender and representation, as Tiffany Barber points out through the exploration of Mutu's

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[156] Wangechi Mutu is a contemporary Kenyan artist noted for her work conflating gender, race, art history, and personal identity. Creating complex collages, videos, sculptures, and performances, Mutu's work features recurring mysterious leitmotifs such as masked women and snake-like tendrils. Her pastiche-like practice combines a variety of source material and textures to explore consumerism and excess: for a 2005 work titled *Cancer of the Uterus*, Mutu employed a medical pathology diagram, facial features cut from a magazine, fur, and a heavy application of black glitter to create an eerily distorted face. The almost science fiction-like nature of her imagery has placed her work within the realm of Afrofuturism, and her practice is often discussed as providing an alternate course of history for people of African descent. See: http://www.artnet.com/artists/wangechi-mutu/

work titled *Non je ne regrette rien* (2007), (see Fig .73). In her commentary, Barber draws upon science fiction writer Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979) and raises questions around "What black female subjectivity requires a futurist context?" and what are the agential possibilities.

Barber also draws from Afrofuturism in theorisations on blackness, technology, and female humanity to illustrate how, in Mutu's work, by deconstructing and reconstructing, difference becomes inscribed on black female bodies. Making reference to Dona Haraway regarding the female cyborg body, Barber brings Mutu's work into conversation with "the liberatory presuppositions of posthumanism as feminist critique first theorised by Donna J. Haraway in 1985" (Barber 2015: 5). Before returning to Barber's commentary, however, it is important to take note of what a cyborg is. While in simple terms a cyborg can be defined as product of cybernetics[157], a being that is half robot and half human or animal, which again draws parallels to some of the key characters in Milumbe's graphic novel that are described as "synthetic female robots" (Haraway), the cyborg is suitably unpacked by Haraway in *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*[158]. What is called 'cyborg theory' has developed most directly from Haraway's "Manifesto for cyborgs"[159]. In what she describes as "an effort to build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism", Haraway goes on to explain that:

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[157] "Cybernetics is the science of communication and control of in living beings and machines. The modern study of cybernetics began around the time of the Second World War, bringing together developments in a number of disciplines. The name 'cybernetics' was coined by scientist Norbert Wiener to denote the study of 'teleological mechanisms' and was popularized through his book *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in Animal and Machine* (1948). Wiener popularized the social implications of cybernetics, drawing analogies between automatic systems such as a regulated steam engine and human institutions in his best-selling *The Human Use of Human beings: Cybernetics and society* (1950)." See Bell, D. 2007. *Cyberculture Theorists: Manuel Castells and Donna Haraway*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group

[158] See Haraway, D. J. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The reinvention of nature*. Free Association of Books, London.

[159] See Hollinger, V. 2009. "Posthumanism and Cyborg Theory" in Bould, M., Butler M. A., Roberts, A. and Vint, S. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, Routledge

A Cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, and a world-changing fiction. The international women's movements have constructed 'women's experience', as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object. This experience is a fiction and a fact of the most crucial, political kind. Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion. (Haraway 1991:149)

Barber (2015:5) points out that as in Haraway's theory, the figures in Mutu's work may seem to revel in boundary confusion, particularly because they are dismembered at times, and as such, may dispel a utopian ideal of a whole, self-possessed body which she argues is "frequently associated with a modern Cartesian humanism centred on wholeness that underscores science fiction, a genre with which Afrofuturism finds kinship and comes to play in Mutu's work". Barber further asserts that where Haraway's theorisations of the cyborg neglect an explicit examination of race, the female figure in Mutu's work assails "racialized dimensions of female humanity by critically emphasizing how black female bodies are seen and acquire meaning" (Barber 20015:5). Perhaps this can be likened to Haimbe's protagonist Ananiya, who is black – as earlier mentioned – but Freja, the female robot for whom she develops feelings is later revealed to be a green-eyed redhead. Similarly, Arusha, the member of the women's army who gives the assignment to Ananiya, also appears to be a blue-eyed blonde-haired person.

It could be suggested, therefore that Haimbe's Ananiya represents the black female body as an emblematic identification for black female subjectivity but opens up conversation for women in general; there is one white woman, the leader, one black woman the hero, and one

robot that has the likeness of a white woman with red hair – which is also to some degree othered in Western societies.

Considering this seemingly chaotic paradox, one might suggest the situation evokes the paradox of the posthuman or posthumanity. While the concept of 'posthuman' is in itself excessively broad, ambiguous, constantly shifting and uncertain, a somewhat narrow definition that will be used here because it loosely fits within the context of this study is one derived from David Bell (2007) who explains that "posthuman" is:

> The idea that either (i) the human species is at an evolutionary deep-end, and must incorporate technologies in order to evolve to the 'next level'; or (ii) that we have long ceased to be human, because of our increasingly intimate relationships with nonhumans, such as technological artefacts. Often seen as similar to arguments about cyborgs, … the idea of the posthuman provokes excitement in some, terror in others. It contains a number of variants in fields of biomedicine, science fiction and cyberculture theory (Bell 2007:24).

Barber (2015), again in reference to Mutu's work, suggests that in addition to posthumanism, because of the joining of racialised and gendered bodies with techno-mechanical parts, the work has repeatedly been considered Afrofuturistic. She explains that since its coining, "Afrofuturism has been considered a revisionist discourse in which racialized and gendered bodies in the past, present, and future use technology to new reparative ends. Bringing the discourses of posthumanism and Afrofuturism into direct engagement to analyze Mutu's collages posits new conceptions of subjecthood relative to race, gender, and sexuality" (Barber 2015: 5). In Milumbe's work, the fact that the incorporation of various modes of technology and mechanical parts as proxies for an entire human being and not merely limbs as an extension of a human being may also be said to situate her work, just as Mutu's, within a posthumanist discourse of the cyborg. As Haraway writes, "A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and generate antagonistic

dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. … Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment" (Haraway 1991, 180).

Returning to Haimbe, if it may not be necessary to frame her work under Afrofuturism, one can argue that it may not entirely be removed from the framing and will continue to be labelled so depending on the contexts of audiences; regardless of this, tools within Afrofuturism can be very useful to unpack her work. It may be noted also that Haimbe has distanced herself from Afrofuturism, as is evident in an interview with Maike Schimanowski and Magdalena Stotter (2015a)[160] for the seminar "Queer (in-)visibilities in the art of Africa and beyond"[161], whereby in their research they sought among other things to "clarify Milumbe Haimbe's association with the term Afrofuturism". Their interview in part sought to address "the reappropriation of Afrofuturist aesthetics by contemporary artists and problematize the term itself as it is used to subsume Black artists with futuristic approaches within the conceptualization of exhibitions, panels, conferences and film screenings" (Schimanowski and Stotter 2015a ibid.) According to Schimanowski and Stotter,

> Haimbe clearly distanced herself from this concept by expressing that she is 'by default and quite erroneously constantly referred to as an Afrofuturist'. 'Other than I am a black artist making art that's futuristic', she continued, 'I really do not see that my work has a direct relation to Afrofuturism.' Haimbe expressed that in her opinion 'Afrofuturism is more complex and nuanced than that'. If this genre isn't just about a Black person creating futuristic art, what is it dealing with and how is it defined?

Nevertheless, the argument in this thesis is not whether Haimbe's work can, must or should be labelled as Afrofuturistic whether she denies it or whether other scholars say so. The point is that depending on whichever context, Afrofuturism can be seen as a suitable lens with which to define her work.

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[160] See Schimanowski, M and Stotter, M. 2015. Did you say Afrofuturism? On labelling art, on Logo der Freien Universität Berlin, https://wikis.fu-berlin.de/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=646989083 (Accessed on 24/11/2018)

[161] In the seminar "Queer (in-)visibilities in the art of Africa and beyond" at the Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany, conducted during the winter semester 2014-15 by Melanie Klein. See: https://wikis.fu-berlin.de/display/queer/Home (accessed on 24/11/2018).

5.1: SF [a safe space] commentary on gender and sexuality

The constructions of gender and sexual orientation[162] as seen through Haimbe's recurring character Ananiya, the protagonist of the story, who is a 17-year-old black female hero who falls in love with a female robot – a robot who in this study is read as a metonym for cybernetic organism or indeed a cyborg – is invariably intended to challenge prevailing social constructs in her home country Zambia, as well as dominant narratives within the science fiction comic book or graphic novel genres. More so, Ananiya herself is depicted as an androgynous and masculine young woman. As Sharalyn Orbaugh points out in reference to the Japanese SF genres manga and anime[163], science fiction proves a very useful tool for suggesting gender-bending depictions of alternative sexualities (see Fig. 74) stating "[m]any cyborg narratives include an element of gender-bending, questioning or simply dispensing with the differences in sexed bodies that are thought to divide male from female. For example, Cybersix's protagonist is a genetically enhanced warrior, who has a voluptuously feminine body in her fighting persona, but a male body when s/he returns to her Clarke Kentish incognito persona" (Orbaugh 2009:121).

Haimbe's groundbreaking work explores the narrow definitions of femininity which extend into a homophobic climate, especially in her home country, Zambia, where homosexuality is still forbidden by law (Libsekal 2014). While homosexuality may exist in Zambia, it does so by means of an underground community, as society in general does not take kindly to the LGBTQI+ population especially since "same-sex sexual activity is proscribed by Cap. 87, Sections 155 through 157 of Zambia's penal code", and homosexual or "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature" is a felony punishable by imprisonment for 14 years.

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[162] A lot of people would argue that even though gender is a construction, sexual orientation is not.

[163] In particular her reference is made towards Cybersix, a series of Argentine comics first published in 1992, drawn by Carlos Meglia and written by Carlos Trillo for an Italian comics magazine. The heroine is a leather-clad genetically engineered superhero, a cyborg who disguises herself as a male high school teacher by day, and battles biological weapons that were made by her creator by night. Cybersix has also been adapted into an Argentine/Canadian/Japanese science fiction television series, based on the comic strip.

Karen E. Milbourne, curator at the National Museum of African Art, at the Smithsonian Museum elaborates:

> As a queer artist working within a city in which the first bachelor's degrees in Fine Arts were awarded in 2013 (at the Zambian Open University) and homosexual activity remains a crime for men and women, Haimbe is acutely aware of the challenges facing artists and LGBTQ communities locally and globally. She has bridged the divide between local and global by re-presenting herself as an individual who shapes both. … Cultures and expectations collide in the work of Milumbe Haimbe. Superheroes take on new origins and orientations, and the future is opened to Africa and Africans serving not as foils to the 'development' of the rest of the world but as an integrated force facing humanity's challenges, choices, and solutions (Milbourne 2016:3).

One is inclined to find what Milbourne points out above important in that she emphasises that Haimbe is mindful that challenges facing the LGBTQI+ community are neither unique to Zambia nor to the African continent.

An example worth noting regarding this, is a recent occurrence when the African-American comedian and actor Kevin Hart stepped down as host for the prestigious Oscar Awards after social media backlash concerning "homophobic" jokes that he had made about 10 years ago. The fact that he is a comedian who makes jokes about his own ethnicity did not help at all. This prompted hundreds of media articles but one that comes out strongly was published in *The Guardian* (UK) by Steven W. Thrasher[164], a doctoral candidate in American studies at New York University.

> When white liberals started to think that gay rights were cool, they imagined themselves as more enlightened on the subject than people with darker skin … even though anti-gay laws in African were imported by European colonizers. Even though most major US federal gay rights wins happened under a Black president. Even though a majority of US Muslims are for gay marriage rights while a majority of

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[164] Thrasher, who is also as a former *Guardian* writer-at-large, was recently appointed the inaugural Daniel H Renberg chair of media coverage of sexual and gender minorities at Northwestern University. Twitter: @thrasherxy

white evangelicals are against them. It is easy for white liberals to imagine homophobia as the fault of a cartoonish black character in their mind even though black people hardly wield the social, financial and legal power which drives homophobia in the world. It's difficult for liberals to reckon with how LGBT people could never be as harmed by the likes of Hart as they have been by Bush's inaction on Aids, by Bill Clinton's anti-gay marriage (the Defence of Marriage Act) and military ("Don't ask, don't tell") policies, by George W Bush's warmongering, and by the majority of white people who elected the current homophobe in the oval office. (Thrasher 2018)[165]

Taking the above statement into consideration, it might be suggested that homosexuality or rather LGBTQI+ matters are seldom spoken about in Haimbe's homeland and often avoided. In the visual and performing arts too, the topic seems to be avoided as much as possible, not to say that it is completely sidestepped, but there seems to be an unwritten code of self-censorship. There are a few instances where it has surfaced in art exhibitions such as in the paintings of the artistic couple Agnes Buya Yombwe[166] (see Fig. 75) and Lawrence Yombwe (see Fig. 76) both of whom in their individual capacities have also been courageous in exploring other subconsciously outlawed topics such as polygamy and corruption in church and government. Unlike Haimbe, neither of the Yombwe's use an SF guise to channel their work.

5.2: Further considerations of SF regarding Haimbe's work

Like other novels and narratives set in the future in faraway galaxies, Haimbe's graphic novel uses science fiction as a tool to challenge the status quo. It provides the artist with a space to project an alternative reality as "Science fiction is counterfactual literature: not things as they actually are, but as they might be, whether in the future, in an alternative past or present. Or in a parallel dimension." (Roberts 2009:9). Haimbe's work however, cannot just be seen as a

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[165] See: "Kevin Hart fueled a dangerous trope: the unenlightened black homophobe" https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/08/kevin-hart-oscars-host-unenlightened-black-homophobe-trope
[166] The image in this study was provided by the artist but also see the website of a Lusaka based gallery and art foundation: http://www.thestartfoundationtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/IMG01400-20130625-1005-400x598.jpg

narrative that encapsulates political repudiation around gender and sexuality. It can also be read as a renunciation of dominant racial hierarchies as well as global capitalism, as will be demonstrated. An article in her own words published on CNNs *African Voices* website provides a good entry point for this argument. In the article titled "Superheroes: Male, white, straight and privileged – but not this one"[167] she argues:

> In the mid- to late 1970s and before the economic decline … –superheroes like Superman, Spiderman, Batman and the Incredible Hulk were huge deals for anyone growing up.
>
> In our childhood eyes, these were powerful, all-embodying beings, and their brands were merchandised on T-shirts, caps, lunchboxes, toys, and just about everything. They influenced many aspects of the childhood experience to such an extent that I spent a lot of my formative years aspiring to become a superhero when I grew up.
>
> But then disillusionment set in. It dawned on me that I would never be a superhero seeing as most of them were male—and all of them white. The frantic search for an alternative and relatable superhero that followed only resulted in more disillusionment.
>
> So many years later, in the year 2015, it is somewhat bewildering to experience today the same disillusionment when I see so little representation of cultural minorities in popular media. …I am of that school of thought that believes that radio, television, film and other media of popular culture provide the symbols, myths and resources through which we constitute a common culture. (Haimbe 2015)

Haimbe's observation that the all-embodying beings of science fiction and fantasy had the ability to have "their brands … merchandised on T-shirts, caps, lunchboxes, toys, and just about everything" brings to mind the concept of "transmedia world building" as described by Dan Hassler-Forest in his book *Science Fiction, and politics: Transmedia world-building beyond capitalism*. Hassler-Forest argues that "Transmedia world-building … articulates fundamental elements of convergence culture: boundaries between media have blurred to the

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[167] See Haimbe, M. 2015: https://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/18/opinions/where-are-black-superheroes-milumbe-haimbe/index.html accessed on 14.11.2018.

point at which it makes little sense to foreground fundamental distinctions between contemporary media. Instead, the term helpfully foregrounds the fact that our immersion in imaginary storyworlds takes place not within, but across media" (Hassler-Forest 2016:5). He also argues that there had been an "Imperialism" in the twentieth-century media landscape concerning storyworlds and superhero characters. Therefore, this can be used to investigate a deeper understanding of how the Superman, Spiderman and Batman phenomenon arrived where it is today and where it was during the period of Haimbe's growing up, as she has pointed out that a lack of gender and racial diversity is what inspired her to develop the concept of the revolutionist. There has been, one might argue, an imperialist agenda embedded within the trajectory of development of superheroes within the mass media. Again, Hassler-Forest proposes that:

> The mass media landscape of the early twentieth century was organized in ways that reflected the industrial organization of its era's mode of production: the media companies that produced mass entertainment for film, radio, comic books, and genre literature were each centrally organized, with a highly compartmentalized … organizational form. While many popular characters would appear across a wide variety of different media, this would not be in a centrally controlled or consistently organized way. Instead, copyright holders would license characters to other media companies, which would then reinvent elements of the story to suit their own specific needs and available formats. In this way, multiple incarnations of characters and their settings would proliferate across different media platforms, each of which would define these elements in its own terms. Comic book characters like Superman and Batman are obvious examples of this cross-media logic, which resulted not in structured transmedia world-building but in highly diverse and varied histories more accurately described as a kind of palimpsest.

> The dominant approach to the development of cross-media storyworlds and narrative figures directly reflects the institutions organization of Fordist capitalism at its peak, which followed the logic of imperialism (Hassler-Forest 2016:25).

Creators of the these hero characters that became popular towards the end of the 1930s may be aligned to what Jason Haslam argues as a deliberately instituted "hierarchized, binary

systems of gender to take hold across the social spectrum, as a hegemonic form"(Haslam 2015:2), a paradigm he further describes as a "codification of masculinity and whiteness in early 20th-century Science Fiction", which one might argue still lingers today and is the reason Haimbe was inspired to create her character Ananiya. Haslam (2015:74) argues that in the early twentieth century there was a fascination with creating the so called "real man", this is "a figure who was not only white and heterosexual, but whose masculinity was unassailable". Describing it under an umbrella term he labels as "manly pulp", Haslam posits:

> Characterized both physically and in terms of particular character traits, the 'real man' is represented as serving to rescue the average man from the supposed threats of the new century: first from the encroachment of women, and second from that of other —specially 'othered'—men. The first threat is rendered as generally easy to silence, because women may threaten men, but … women also always desire men, and so the mere appearance of a 'real man' removes that threat, at least superficially. …The second threat, that of generally racialized other of white masculinity, is often pictured as more profound: the white, heterosexual man is always supposedly threatened by other masculinities, which take the usual form of 'othered' men. …In other words, the essential man of a moment ago, who seems so unchanging in the dominant story of white, heterosexual masculinity, is in fact a movable feast of masculinities in himself. Important to note however is that this 'movable feast' is still being served at a private club and to a restricted membership (Haslam 2015:74).

In the article, Haimbe (2015) argues that there is a danger in excluding cultural minorities from popular media as this may provide a limited view that starts to paint a constrained picture of "what a person should look like, how they should behave and live to the negation of alternative experiences of being human". This she argues was the basis of basis for her graphic novel, *The Revolutionist* stating that it was a work in progress (Fig. 77). "*The Revolutionist* is set in the near future, on a satellite colony that is located a little off the orbit of mainland Earth, and administrated by a corporation. Social conformity in the interest of the collective is subliminally reinforced through symbolism and iconology, while the economy is purely corporate-driven. Exploitation of human by human, and robot by human gives rise to

the resistance" (Haimbe 2015). The fact that Haimbe sets her narrative in the not-too-distant future gives it a more realistic rather than fantastic edge, also "The unstable, fragmented near futures of contemporary SF narratives have become culturally pervasive because they vividly articulate the experience of living in spatio-temporal dislocations brought about by globalization and communications technology" (Wolmark 2005:161).

The protagonist of the sequential artwork in the form of a graphic novel is Ananiya, a young black woman who works as an agent in the Covert Operations Division of the resistance movement. The resistance group calls itself the "Army for the Restoration of Womanhood" or ARW, and fights against the corporate government that has introduced sex robots capable of replacing the need for female humans. Although *The Revolutionist* is set in the (near) future, it undermines current 'cultural gaps' such as stereotyped and over-sexualised women, lack of diversity in popular media, and questions of sexuality. While Haimbe's work can therefore be read as a means of interrogating the construction of gendered identities, as it is set in this near future in which the domination of technology has made it increasingly difficult – if not impossible – to distinguish between nature and technology, it can also be read as a direct response to the lack of leading female heroes, especially black females, in popular media. According to Haimbe:

> Ananiya was only 13 years old when she joined the resistance. Now at 17, she has recently been appointed as an agent in the Covert Operations Division. In the ensuing standoff where the Corporation increasingly maintains control with an ironclad fist it is not long before the resistance galvanizes into a full-blown revolution. As the masses are thrust into a state of emergency, Ananiya's world is characterized by curfews, police raids, censorship and propaganda. Will the revolution overcome? With this literary and visual offering, I describe a world that is both like – and at the same time very much unlike – our own. As a young, black female, my protagonist, Ananiya, is the most unlikely hero for the revolution. It would, indeed, be accurate to read her as the antithesis of the typical hero who more often than not is male, white, straight and privileged. (Haimbe 2015 ibid)

As a member of the ARW, Ananiya is part of an underground revolution, and she is sent on her first mission, a mission that seeks to infiltrate the totalitarian ONE Consciousness Corporation. This corporation has the similarities to many of the world's multinational corporations that can today be seen as proponents of globalisation. "Run by three white male emperors, the corporation has produced generations of robotic perfect women whose existence will lead to the obsolescence of 'biological' women. From the fifth generation, humans could marry robots" (Makhubu 2016:11). Ananiya, who joined the revolution as a teenager, as part of her mission undertakes to stop this generation of robots from being mass produced (see Fig. 78). Haimbe's work is not only nonconformist in that the storyline goes against the usual white male dominant hero grain, but also the choice of medium is one that has been dominated by males, particularly the use of digital illustration. As art historian, Nomusa Makhubu argues in an exhibition catalogue[168] that features Haimbe's work, that the medium "once popular for generating the construct of a white superhuman hero, digital illustration in America during the inter-war years promoted war and the purchase of war bonds, reinforced conservatism. In Ananiya – The Revolutionist, Haimbe goes against the typically sexist and racist content in the comic strip or graphic novel format" (Makhubu 2016:11). Similarly, Anna Stielau (2015: 134) suggests that the character of Ananiya itself can be read as that "of placeholder standing in for a future emerging in the present. She is herself a site of utopian potential." Here one may add that, while in Haimbe's narrative, the story is set in Earth's near future, she undoubtedly creates a fictional new world, in that Earth has a satellite colony, located a little off its orbit, that is administrated by a corporation. Again, the fact that Ananiya seems to be working against this corporation projects an animated anti-capitalist sentimentality that seems to be working against a globalised culture

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[168] "Fantastic" art exhibition at the Nelson Mandela University's Bird Street Art Gallery. The exhibition hosted by the NMU Department of Visual Arts in conjunction with the University of Cape Town's Michaelis Art Gallery.

of sorts. In this regard, following Stielau's proposition, the world Haimbe creates for Ananiya presents a paradox of both a utopia and a dystopia.

> In magnifying incursions into private life, Haimbe highlights an unsatisfactory present. She encourages reflection on civil life, sexual autonomy and political power. By crafting an unrelentingly cruel world in which the machineries of social and political domination must be questioned, *The Revolutionist* imagines, through the ambitions of Ananiya, a not-yet-here. Haimbe figures the possibility of a new, queer set of social relations and role models, and drafts a blueprint for a future that legitimates a queer lived experience in defiant opposition to established norms. A dystopia can be a utopia in disguise if … one examines it more closely. (Stielau 2015:134)

Of the character Ananiya, Stielau argues that she lives in "a future elsewhere in order to throw the fears of the here and now into sharp relief" and that more than that, the protagonist is "a catalyst for radical alternatives that she both enacts and embodies. In her, the possibility that things could be otherwise is given flesh" (Stielau 2015:134). But again, there is room for some kind of courteous scepticism as things may not be all that rosy following Mabaso's (2016:06) suggestion that Haimbe's work "explicitly articulates otherness through the lens of the posthuman, apocalyptic language of the corporation takeovers and the obliteration of black female bodies replaced by androids that have reduced women to their biological essence, in order to convey a world without 'real' women". Although this was briefly highlighted earlier, as in drawing Haimbe's work along the lines of Mutu's with regard to notions of the cyborg and posthuman, it is worth being reminded of here. Mabaso (2016:7) suggests a reminder that "in the unfolding of the colonial discourse, the black body became an icon for sexuality in general and sexuality became a metaphor for domination. The extermination of this body and its elimination give evidence of an especial sense of alienation from politics when politics engagement remains hinged to 'questions of ethnicity, identity, and both their relationship to senses of place and notions of authenticity and origins'".

Similar to what has already been stated and repeated above, Mabaso argues that Haimbe's artworks are "critical of the relations of power through parody, excess and complicity, and the viewer is left with the baton of responsibility, to resolve for himself".

5.3: Chronopolitics in Haimbe's photographs Spaceship over Lusaka 2016, and Spaceship over Lusaka, 1922: the past (retrospective) and the future (proleptic).

Milumbe Haimbe's *The Revolutionist*, which has been exhibited internationally and also secured her the Blachère Foundation Prize at the 2014 Dakar Biennale, is certainly her most famous work so far. But it is not the only work that seems to suggest notions of a speculative or visionary future. There are others of which fit suitably into the discourse of this research, some of which were catalogued in the culmination of her 2015 more than six-month tour around Europe and the US. The working tour included an art residence in Apt, France, conferences in Kalmar, Sweden and Berlin, Germany, as well as a Creative Arts Fellowship with the Bellagio Center, Rockefeller Foundation in Italy. It also included an Artist Research Fellowship with the National Museum for African Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC in the United States. Of particular interest among these works, besides *The Revolutionist*, are *Dystopian Compulsions* (2016) and *Superegos* (2011) respectively.

In *Dystopian Compulsions* (2016), Haimbe uses digital 3D imaging as a medium. The body of work comprises two digitally manipulated photographs *Spaceship over Lusaka 2016*, (2016) (Fig. 79) and *Spaceship over Lusaka, 1922* (2016) (Fig. 80). The titles of these works are ingenious oxymorons, seeing that the word "spaceship" and "Lusaka" the capital of Zambia are being mentioned in the same breath. Despite the earlier mentioned Mukuka Nkoloso Space programme of the 1960s, imagining a spaceship in Lusaka, let alone in Africa, is the last thing that may come to mind. However, here is Haimbe depicting a spaceship hovering above present-day Lusaka, right on top of the iconic Findeco House and other familiar buildings, raising questions such as: Who is in it, is it being piloted by

Zambians? Or perhaps by aliens – especially owing to the seemingly ominous look that it bears. Could this be an alien invasion or visitation?

Unlike the first image, the second one shows the same spaceship hovering above Lusaka in what appears to be the 1920s, long before the city looked the way it looks today. This image is that of a black and white archive photograph that adds to its aura as a depiction of a period past. Looking at them in comparison, they can be read as implying that the same spaceship was launched from or had visited Lusaka or has been in flying in and around the city from the 1920s to date. If the vision of a spaceship in Lusaka today raises questions, how much more so in 1922, long before Nkoloso or the USA and USSR had conceived of their missions to space.

As such these works may be argued to address a type of "chronopolitics" as described by Tobias C. van Veen (2015:80) – while conceptualising what he refers to as the "Armageddon effect and Alien Nation" – following Eshun (2003: 289) within the context of Afrofuturism. Where Eshun develops an "Afrofuturist hermeneutics of (temporal) suspicion" van Veen (2015 ibid) asks: "how does Afrofuturism, with its parallel strategies that refashion and inform the past, present, and future, engage with chronopolitics, as the political structuration of time?"

This theorisation of chronopolitics or indeed the politics of time, it can be argued, can be suitably ascribed to Haimbe's work, if Afrofuturism is employed as a lens with which to read both *Spaceship over Lusaka 2016*, and *Spaceship over Lusaka, 1922* respectively. This suffices to support van Veen's suggestion that virtually all of Afrofuturism's effects are "chronopolitical" and that Afrofuturism, as he puts it, "is thoroughly invested in either imagining alternate futures or rewriting the past so as to change the present (from which futures are imagined). At stake is a recovery of past cycles of futurity and the derailing of

whitewashed cycles currently in effect" and to a certain extent while also conceptualising, the

"Armageddon effect and Alien Nation" van Veen (2015: 82) posits the following:

(i)   Chronopolitics intervenes in the production of collective memory—institutional, pedagogical, epistemic and museological histories, oral traditions and myths—as well as in the schematic projections of the future. This collective memory is inscribed in texts, cultural practices, and technological objects.

(ii)   Chronopolitics is the temporal production of countermemories and counterrealities to combat corporate, whitewashed, or technocapitalist futures of dystopia. It is also a historical recovery operation, in which erasures and evacuations of the unwanted, insurrectionary, or traumatic past are uncovered and put to use, in the 'responsibility . . . towards the not-yet' (Eshun 2003, 289). The emergent force of chronopolitics can be read in Ra's words, when he writes that: 'If a man can be tempted to think, thereby a better memory can he / create than the one implanted in his mind from the / So-called past'.

Concerning *Dystopian Compulsions*, as part of a bigger and ongoing project, Milbourne

(2016:09) contends that Haimbe developed the "Spaceship over Lusaka, 2016" (2016) and

"Spaceship over Lusaka, 1922" (2016) works as part of an allegory that includes the telling of

untold, or obscured stories like that of her own mother. She submits that Haimbe proposed to

look into the connection between the sociopolitical settings in Africa and the African space

agenda utilising the African space agency, AfriSpace, as a point of departure. AfriSpace was

an agency planned at a meeting of Africa's communications and technology ministers or

representatives by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir as a "cooperation of African States for

the peaceful uses of space research and technology in the African Union (AU)."[169] Calling it

"the biggest project", President al-Bashir declared AfriSpace would facilitate "cooperation

among African states in space research and technology and their space applications," in a

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[169] See Fischer, M. 2012. "AfriSpace: "The Biggest Project" in *National Space Programs, Space Safety Magazine*: http://www.spacesafetymagazine.com/space-on-earth/national-space-programs/afrispace-the-biggest-project/ (Accessed on 28/11/2018)

working document published for the African Union conference. On this particular aspect of Haimbe's research, Milbourne writes:

> The decade of the 1960s, significant as an era when most African countries gained independence from colonial rule, would have played a pivotal role in this proposed research. As though by some galactic intervention Haimbe stumbled upon a manuscript her mother had been writing before her untimely death in 2014. It is a memoir that spans the years 1963 to 1969. The author candidly narrates her incredible journey from humble beginnings to becoming the first indigenous personal secretary to the new Republican President by the age of twenty-one. Haimbe scoured the National Archives of Zambia, aiming to find photographs that would corroborate her mother's story in its extensive database. Out of the thousands of photographs pertaining to this period that she sorted through, only one was of her mother. Considering the significant role her mother played in Zambia's history and the odds she overcame to achieve this, what Haimbe found was the evidence of a woman written out of history. Her mother is not an exception to the rule, as many women who actively fought for the country's liberation and contributed to its development are but distant murmurings in our collective memories. (Milbourne 2016:09)

Providing context for the work in a presentation that concluded her research fellowship at the National Museum for African Art, Haimbe, according to Milbourne, loosely based her project on Africa's race to space. The artist "took-off into the stratosphere as she discussed the dystopian compulsions in a selection of her works" (Milbourne 2016) that also included the graphic novel, *The Revolutionist*. It is at the end of this presentation that she highlights a new approach to her research "where the objective was to re-write her mother's story into history using her own words" (Milbourne 2016). Once again, this is very much in line with chronopolitics, as Haimbe can again be seen here to be addressing a void in her personal history, being the history of her mother. As such, Haimbe can be read as a time traveller, as she goes back into time to retrieve something and present it in the present, while in the future, her mother's story vis-à-vis the story of Kenneth Kaunda's first personal secretary will be told differently. Following van Veen (2015: 82) who suggests that "Chronopolitics are

mobilized to revision accounts of slavery and colonialism and to rewrite its trauma by seeding not only alternate futures but recursive pasts for … subjects who have been overdetermined by 'the manufactured past.' The retrospective interventions of chronopolitics can produce as well as disassemble manufactured histories". With the "Spaceship over Lusaka" series, Haimbe disassembles the manufactured history of Lusaka, the one in which her mother is supposed to appear but then ironically does not. To borrow from Eshun, who writes, "for contemporary African artists, understanding and intervening in the production and distribution of this [temporal] dimension constitutes a chronopolitical act" (2003, 192), Haimbe intervenes in the production of a personal chronicle, that of her mother and a history of Zambia. In essence, while situated in the vantage point of the present, she veers into the past and by so doing, will alter the future. She not only veers into the past by suggesting a narrative of her mother's personal chronicles, but she reaches into the archives of imagery, as in an old black and white photograph of Lusaka. Again, the photograph that shows a later skyline of the city – the colour photograph – may not necessarily be read as present-day Lusaka, but it can alternatively be read as a future Lusaka. Haimbe's work is once again consistent with what Eshun expounds as the chronopolitical field being something of two interconnected vectors: that of the past (retrospective) and that of the future (proleptic). It is also in accord with what van Veen, following Eshun, elaborates as "Upsetting received narratives of the past constitutes not just an intervention that deprograms the coordinates of the present, but reprograms the future. Sometimes, the best way to reimagine the future is to alter the past. The insertion of a counter-narrative into the constitution of the past releases the trajectories of an unpredictable futurity. The same can be said in its inverse: depicting an alternate futurity can lead to a questioning of received narratives of the past" (van Veen 2015:81). Arguably, Haimbe's work, specifically the Lusaka series, surely nestles more securely within an Afrofuturistic lens because "In comparison to futurisms that dismiss the

past as anachronistic, arcane, or unsophisticated, Afrofuturism repurposes the past. Moreover, Afrofuturist chronopolitics draws from the past, making use of its symbols and tropes, to reinvent futuria" (van Veen 2015:82).

The back-and-forth movement in time within Haimbe's work can also be read as direct rebuttal of the normative concept of time, the "Spaceship over Lusaka" series strips time – as we have been taught to know it by the West – of all convention. Such a complication of time by Haimbe is also a perfect ingredient for allegorically revising history in that, as Eshun suggests: "By creating temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress these [Afro] futurisms adjust the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory. Chronopolitically speaking, these revisionist historicities may be understood as a series of powerful competing futures that infiltrate the present at different rates" (Eshun 2003, 297).

This chapter has hitherto been preoccupied primarily with arguments around space travel, the retelling of obscured histories, science fiction and its uses as a political tool to address concerns around the representation of cultural minorities in the individual works of Mwaba, Mwenya and Haimbe. But before the dissertation turns to the next chapter, as a postscript one last body of Haimbe's work is worthy of mention. This is *Superegos*, as was earlier hinted at the beginning of this section on Haimbe's work.

6: Enter the Superegos

Although *Superegos* predates all the above-mentioned works, having been initiated in 2011, it is discussed at the end of the chapter because it suitably segues the conversation into the coming chapter. In *Superegos* (see Fig. 74), Haimbe draws from the traditional masquerades, a strategy employed by some artists mentioned earlier in this study, although like them, she uses it to her own purposes and the viewer can read them in the light of various understandings and interpretations. In chapter two, I suggest that Simpasas work references

an uncanny likeness to *Makishi* characters that have been read as a critique of modernism, the death of tradition at the hands of modernism. In a similar vein, chapter three saw Sampa portraying traditional *Makishi* characters operating technology such as phones, tablets and laptops sitting in a Eurocentric classroom, which was read as a gesture that visually challenges the dichotomy between tradition and modernism, tradition being representative of the past and modernity being a leitmotif for the future. In Haimbe's body of work, she juxtaposes the reference of the African masquerade with popular comic book characters and titles them Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Incredible Hulk and Wonderwoman, and,

> draws parallels between the caped superheroes of popular culture and the masked spirit dancers of African cultures. Whereas superheroes are typically super beings who fall down from the sky or regular men who through some sort of freak accident gain superpowers in order to overpower villains and rid the streets of crime, the spirit dancers are pre-ordained men of the village who are possessed by the archetypal ancestral spirits that rise from the underworld. In deep trances, the spirit dancers perform such extraordinary feats as to remind wrongdoers to change their erring ways lest retribution awaits them in the afterlife. Like the spirit dancer, the superhero has a secret identity or alter ego as part of a psychological defence mechanism. He dons a mask and wears a distinctive costume whose underlying motif or theme affects his name, personal effects, and other aspects of his character. For instance, Batman resembles a large bat and operates at night, while the spirit dancer *Likishi wa Mwana Pwevo* who watches over the fertility of future generations wears seedpods, fibre, resin, and organic materials, and depicts a young woman who died at an early age. These parallels are morphed to abstract the common ideology of what I term as the Superego. (Haimbe 2016:18)

This referencing of comic book superheroes, to some degree again leans towards the earlier discussion of Haimbe's work, which challenges dominant portrayals of superheroes. Although this work does not ostensibly contest issues around white masculinity, or as it were the representation of cultural minorities within the sphere of popular media, the work can be said to parody impressions of male 'ego' as the titles might suggest.

Chapter 4: Summary

The chapter focuses on using both space travel and science fiction as mechanisms, or rather frames of enquiry, to position not only speculative futures, but to reinforce the claim for speculative nonconformity in the work of Zambian artists for the sole purpose of arguing against African belatedness. In other words, it examines to what degree and in what ways metaphors of space travel and science fiction can be used in artistic portrayals that go beyond simplistic tropes and the escalating trends that suggest revived Afrofuturism, in order to delink from Western notions of time and space not only in relation to the arts of Africa, but also with regard to certain framings within conversation between the traditional and the modern. In the first section it situates aspirations for travel into outer space being nothing new, drawing on reference to Mukuka Nkoloso's Space Programme of the 1960s situating the Afronaut in contemporary art as well as African Futurism being about finding safe spaces for African thought, imagination and speculative freedoms. The chapter contends that through the analysis of works such as those by Stary Mwaba, Mwenya Kabwe and Milumbe Haimbe that posit Space Travel or images of the Afronaut as central to their thematic content, these artists make bold statements that counter perceptions of Africa as backward. Correspondingly, their works reference the past (not only through the visual citation of archival material) and stake claims for African life in the future. Furthermore, an analysis of the works in this chapter has at least tried to challenge occidental approaches that limit the framework of the speculative to Western science, technology and philosophy. It has made an attempt to avoid alternative speculative cultural worldviews that may in a way continue to bolster a system where Euro-America, or indeed the global West assumes the hegemonic position with all other participants in science fiction, for instance, being participants of a restrained or conformed perspective. But also, science fiction aside, there is historical evidence, through the likes of Mukuka Nkoloso, that demonstrates that outside the realms of

fiction there have been instances of speculative reality that have inspired speculative imagination in African artists, all that build up into this discourse which will now be archived as an African art historical dossier. Nevertheless, the next chapter opens with the discussion of work that juxtaposes the African masquerade, the *Nyau* to be specific, alongside creations of popular media from science fiction.

Chapter 4: Images

Figure 64. Edward Mukuka Nkoloso (front) in a newspaper in the 1960s. (Reproduction of a newspaper article, re-published in the *Zambia Daily Mail* Newspaper alongside an article by Zambian journalist Kelvin Kachingwe, June 12, 2016 (Source: http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/tag/on-mukuka-nkoloso/ accessed on 13/02/2020)

Figure 65. An example of Nkoloso's recognition abroad as published in a newspaper article as far away as Blytheville in Mississippi County, Arkansas, United States in 1970. (Source: https://newspaperarchive.com/blytheville-courier-news-mar-11-1970-p-8/ accessed on 13/02/2020)

Figure 66. Learners from Cheshire Homes school take photos in front of Mwaba's painting, *Akamunga* which was part of the *We Are Still Going to Mars* 2014 exhibition at the Lusaka National Museum, Zambia. Digital photograph sourced from: http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2014/04/mwabas-going-to-mars-sends-cheshire.html accessed on 05/12/2018

Figure 67. Dabson Njobvu*, Mother and Child Breast Feeding*, 1993, oil on canvas (Courtesy of Lechwe Trust Collection, Lusaka, Zambia)

Figure 68. Raphael Chilufya, *House Wife*, 2013, oil on canvas (courtesy of the artist)

Figure 69. Stary Mwaba, *Martha Mwamba I*, 2014, copper wire (Photographic reproduction taken from Stary Mwaba, *Life on Mars*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, 2015)

Figure 70. Stary Mwaba, *Martha Mwamba II*, 2014, copper wire (Photographic reproduction taken from Stary Mwaba, *Life on Mars*, Künstlerhaus Bethanien GmbH, 2015)

Figure71. Mwenya Kabwe, *Astronautus Afrikanus*, 2015, Rhodes University Theatre. Behind the scenes, storage rooms were transformed into imaginary space laboratories and control rooms (http://www.thejournalist.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IMG_4401.jpg accessed on 05/12/2018)

Figure 72. Mwenya Kabwe, *Astronautus Afrikanus*, 2015, Rhodes University Theatre. An Afronaut performs at Rhodes University, 2015. (Digital image sourced from: http://www.thejournalist.org.za/art/enter-astronautus-afrikanus/attachment/img_4430 access 05/12/2018)

Figure 73. Wangechi Mutu, *Non je ne regrette rien*, 2007, Ink, acrylic, glitter, cloth, paper collage, plastic, plant material and mixed media on Mylar (Digital photograph sourced from https://rfc.museum/30a-wangechi-mutu

Figure 74. *Cybersix*, Issue #9, "What Happened to Frank Rabitti ?", July 1 1994, (Sourced from https://comicvine.gamespot.com/cybersix/4050-29304/ accessed 05/12/2018)

Figure 75. Agnes Buya Yombwe, Taboo Series, *Lesbian Marriage II*. 2013 Acrylic on canvas. (Courtesy of the artist)

Figure 76. Lawrence Yombwe, *Corruption Iyoo (Hetero & Homosexual)*. 2012 Acrylic on Hessian. (Courtesy of the artist) Also see "Yombwe interrogates corruption, love, homosexuality in latest show" http://andrewmulenga.blogspot.com/2012/03/yombwe-interrogates-corruption-love.html
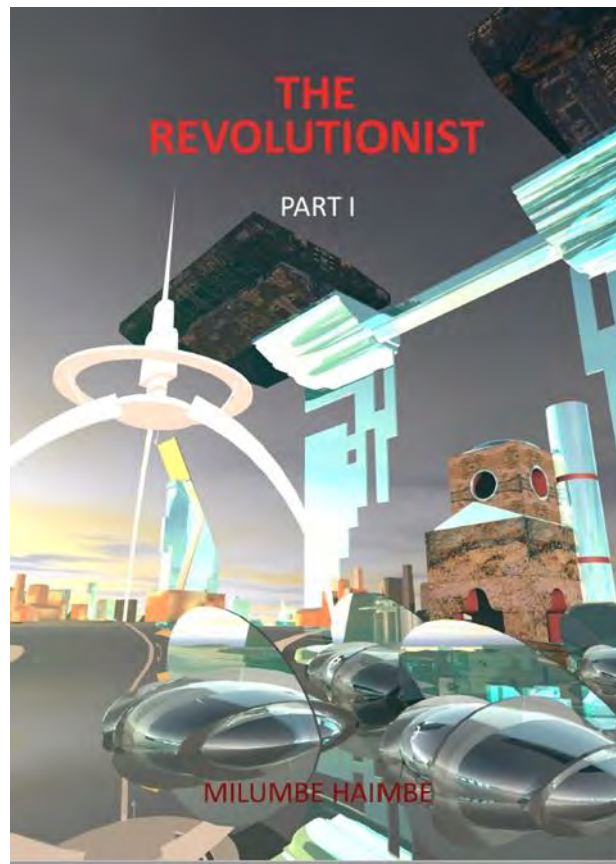
Figure 77. Cover design for Milumbe Haimbe's graphic novel *The Revolutionist* (photographic reproduction from The Revolutionist, Copyright: Milumbe Haimbe)

Figure 78. A scene depicting Ananiya and a female robot from Haimbe's *The Revolutionist* Part 1 (photographic reproduction from *The Revolutionist* Part 1, Copyright: Milumbe Haimbe)
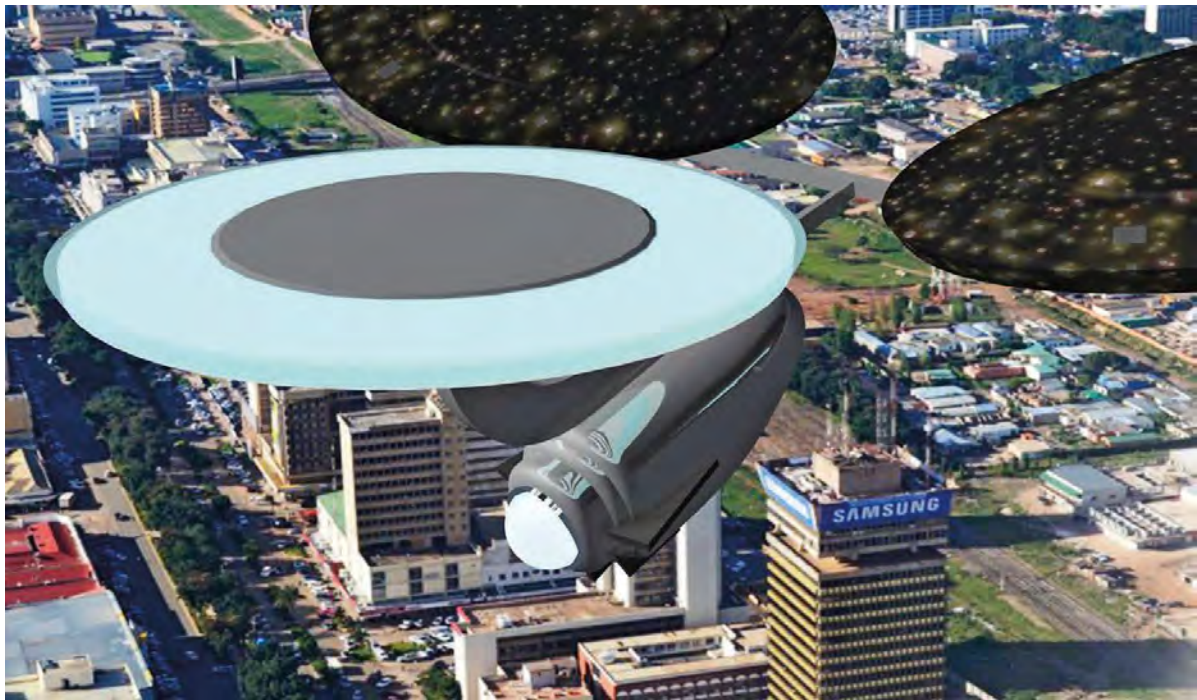
Figure 79. Milumbe Haimbe, *Spaceship over Lusaka, 2016* (Source: Bellagio Center Creative Arts Fellowship Milumbe Haimbe catalogue 2018:
ttps://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20180409162654/Milumbe-Haimbe-BCAF.pdf)

Figure 80. Milumbe Haimbe, *Spaceship over Lusaka, 1922* (Source: Bellagio Center Creative Arts Fellowship Milumbe Haimbe catalogue 2018:
(https://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20180409162654/Milumbe-Haimbe-BCAF.pdf)

Figure 81. Milumbe Haimbe, *Superegos in Conversation* (Source: Bellagio Center Creative Arts Fellowship Milumbe Haimbe catalogue: (https://assets.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/20180409162654/Milumbe-Haimbe-BCAF.pdf)

Chapter 5 – Technicity: Of cyborgs, androids and a robotic African future

> *To create an artificial being has been the dream of man [sic] since the birth of science. Not merely the beginning of the modern age, when our forebears astonished the world with the first thinking machines: primitive monsters that could play chess. How far we have come. The artificial being is a reality of perfect simulacrum, articulated in limb, articulate in speech, and not lacking in human response[170]*
>
> (Artificial Intelligence 2001).

Isiah Lavender III, an African-American scholar and author of *Race in American Science Fiction* (2011) who is also the editor of the volume *Black and Brown Planets: The Politics of Race in Science Fiction* (2014) uses the term "technicity" as he examines science fiction (SF) "for technologically derived ethnicity in a literal sense" (2011:189), arguing that in a radical way, this makes it possible to consider the future evolution of humanity.

Lavender's notions around the symbiosis of humanity, ethnicity, technology and the future within the contextual framework of SF provides an appropriate underpinning for engagement with the work of Zambian artists Roy Jethro Phiri (b.1996)[171] and William B. Miko (b.1961)[172]. Their individual works offer a crucible of narrative possibility, capturing mechanical beings that envisage life in the future: its endless possibilities – or predictable malfunctions – for an optimistic African future.

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[170] The opening quote to this chapter is taken from the beginning of the 2001 Stephen Spielberg science fiction film *Artificial Intelligence*. Set in the near future like Haimbe's *The Revolutionist*, it tells the story of a highly sophisticated robotic boy named David who hopes to become human in order to win back the affection a human mother who acquired him to replace her son and then abandoned him. It is loosely based on the fairy tale Pinocchio, and follows David as he ventures on a long journey hoping to find his "Blue Fairy", who will turn him into a real boy and make his dreams come true.

[171] Roy Jethro Phiri was born in Lusaka in 1996. He lives and works in Livingstone. He graduated from St. Raphael's Secondary School in 2013 at which time he had already started out as an apprentice at the Wayi Wayi Art Studio and Gallery run by Agnes Buya Yombwe and Lawrence Yombwe. The Gallery organises short workshops to teach various artistic skills and art clubs for children. Other young apprentices also work in the studio.

[172] William B. Miko was born in 1961 in Mwense District and lives and works in Lusaka. He received a BFA in 1998, followed by an MFA in 1999 from Middlesex University in the UK. While his early work was often inspired by dance and theatrical performance, his recent works are focused on sociopolitical issues. He was also one of the initiators of Zambia's National Visual Arts Council and contributed to the establishment of the first Visual Arts degree course at the new School of Media, Performing and Fine Arts at Zambian Open University, where he is Head of the Fine Arts Department.

Phiri and Miko have created artworks that speak to robotic technology. This chapter looks at these works, reflecting on the question: What are the implications of artists in Zambia grappling with imaginings of advanced robotic technology in relation to Africa's future? The chapter ponders the inferences of such work in relation to how Africa has been viewed in the past, how it is viewed today and how it may be viewed in the future, asking what the implications are of technology-inspired art that grapples with thoughts of the future when it is created by Africans.

For the most part, Phiri's and Miko's works may be read as more than a manifestation of technicity with a uniquely African aesthetic; they represent something subjective to the locatedness of the artists, the expressions of their situated experience. Accordingly, their works render other worldly portrayals of an elusive African future even as they depict anticipated beings. Indeed, these works illustrate awkward visions of a future that can seemingly pass for props in any science fiction movie. However, as the works fit seamlessly into categories of 'technicity' they are significant as a means for estimating ethnic and social subjugation and progressive change.

1: Artificial persons and posthumans through the lens of technicity

Lavender III (2011:190) argues that there are two broad categories of technicity superimposed on humanity and these are "artificial persons" and "posthumans". Explaining the first broad category, he argues that an "artificial person" is something manmade, displays personality and intelligence. Despite this person being artificial, argues Lavender III, it may have an "existence in legal, economic, and political senses, although this being may be thought to be lacking a spontaneous quality or genuine emotions because it is an imitation" (Lavender III ibid). He argues that a posthuman is an approximation of a future human; however, the future that Lavender predicted in these sentiments may not have been as far off as he may have imagined as, seven years later, in 2017, Neil Harbisson, a British artist, was

certified as the first legal cyborg – a technically augmented human being – following years of experimentation. He has been reported as the first person in the world with an antenna implanted in his skull and being legally recognised as a cyborg by a government. According to *National Geographic*[173] in an article "How a Color-Blind Artist Became the World's First Cyborg", Harbisson had been able to 'hear' visible and invisible wavelengths of light by use of the antenna-like sensor implanted in his head (see Fig. 82), which translates "different wavelengths into vibrations on his skull, which he then perceives as sound". According to the article he is "often called the world's first official cyborg, after the British government permitted him to wear his headgear in his passport photo, Harbisson says that such technological augmentation is a natural, and maybe even necessary, strategy for humans to adapt to an uncertain future." Harbisson, therefore, may serve as an example of Lavender III's description of a posthuman as he is a person who "has been genetically engineered or mechanically augmented and whose fundamental abilities far surpass those of humans today. To a certain extent he "may not be considered human in the present day because they [posthumans] do exceed our natural limits" (Lavender III 2011:190). On the other hand, Harbisson does not fall into the category of an "artificial person". According to Lavender III, (2011:190) artificial persons are usually programmed posthuman descendants, constructed of metal or synthetic material, that have the ability to acquire and apply knowledge to manipulate their environment.

Before looking at the second category of 'technicity' it is worth noting Lavender's definitions of AI (Artificial Intelligence) of which he suggests there are three kinds, which may be useful in categorising the works of Phiri and Miko in the later sections of this chapter. These three kinds of artificial persons, suggests Lavender III, may be categorised as AI (artificial intelligence), the robot, and the android. He writes:

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[173]https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/worlds-first-cyborg-human-evolution-science/

First, an AI is a computer program with the capability to simulate intelligent human behavior. Most sf fans would agree that to qualify as an AI the computer program must reflect self-awareness through its ability to learn or deal with new and difficult situations. Second, a robot is generally a metallic machine that may or may not have a humanoid form and that performs the various complex acts — walking, talking, manipulation of physical objects, and so on — of a human being. Third, an android, similar to the robot, is an artificial person of synthetic material thought to be void of emotion. Instead of being manufactured on an assembly line, androids are usually genetically engineered in the fashion of clones. Where android and clones differ is in the quality of emotion. Proper androids are thought to be void of emotions. They also follow their molecular programming, whereas clones have free will to control their own emotions (Lavender III 2011:191).

Returning to the second category of technicity, Lavender III suggests that posthumans consist of cyborgs and clones: "The cyborg is a mechanically enhanced human being. The term refers to biological-mechanical synthesis between human and machine wherein normal biological capability is enhanced by electromechanical devices that disrupt the boundary between nature and technology" (Lavender III 2011: 191). Lavender III follows Harraway (1991) in suggesting that a cyborg is "a hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine", he goes on, however, to suggest that there are also two categories of cyborgs as well: "functional" and "adaptive". Looking at Lavender III's unpacking of the cyborg's categories, one might suggest Harbisson – the world's first 'legal' cyborg – is technically a "functional cyborg" as opposed to an "adaptive cyborg". Functional cyborgs, Lavender writes, are people that have been slightly altered by the addition of biomedical devices to perform specific tasks, whereas adaptive cyborgs are persons who have been "genetically and technologically redesigned to function in in an alternative environment like Mars"(Lavender 2011:191).

Technicity, argues Lavender III (2011:193), prepares humanity for a future saturated with mechanical beings "by providing the knowledge of informed imagination, or science fictions

concerned with our relationships with thinking machines" and "the cyborg reinforces cultural attitudes in ways that suggest where the line is drawn between humans and machines" (Lavender III 2011:201).

Figuratively, Lavender III's description of an "adaptive cyborg" in a sense lends itself to Africans today who in many ways have had to adapt traditionally, culturally, spiritually – and so on – to live in a world that is almost alien from their ways. Since colonialism Africans have had to adapt their ways to suit those of the coloniser and this lingers on today where, as indicated in earlier chapters, things such as African knowledge systems have had to be discarded in place of Western hegemonic ones. This notion of the adaptive cyborg also allegorically speaks to the Africans who were victims of the Atlantic slave trade and found themselves in lands extra-terrestrial to their own, making them alien beings.

2: Roy Jethro Phiri's *NyauTransformers*, *Robot Police* and *The Lost African*

In a personal interview, Phiri asserts that "To begin with I would like to say that I'm not one who enjoys the fact that people think Africa only produces traditional arts and crafts which possess no present or futuristic values, that we have no vision for the future, that our intelligence is limited and that we are backward, that we are poverty-stricken when poverty exists everywhere" (Phiri 2017). He affirms that Africans are not the thieves and uncivilised, corrupt people dependent on aid they are more often than not portrayed as being, particularly in Western media. He argues that because of this, with his artwork he has:

> […]set to prove them (the West) wrong and to prove to my fellow Africans and the world over that intelligence, creativity and innovation are the qualities of every man or woman regardless of their colour or race. I believe that as long as you are a human being whatever your colour or race, circumstance or deformity it is not something that should limit anyone from doing what they want and dream of.

He asserts that people are capable of doing and becoming whatever they have set their minds to, and that he has learned and read about Africa and how at one point in the past it was home

to people who were "highly advanced and intelligent; an example is Egypt. The original Egyptians were African not Arabian, so I've learnt and I am convinced without a single doubt" (Phiri 2017). While he may not directly reference the ancient African civilisations that he mentions, it is worth noting that this is a similar fascination shared by Chulu and Kalambata, as discussed in chapter three. "Egypt, unless I am wrong – which I know I am not but I will gladly accept correction if I am – [is] where mathematics and various technologies came from as well as places like the city of Axum with its many great and beautiful structures built by African sculptors." (Phiri 2017)

While growing up, Phiri had always aspired to become an inventor, one who builds and creates all manner of advanced technologies such as "prosthetic limbs and machines to the benefit of mankind" (Phiri 2017). Phiri's (2017) influences however go beyond ancient African civilisations:

> I was driven by cartoons such as *Dexter's Laboratory*, *Megus XLR*, *Meet the Robinsons*, *Jimmy Neutron* and others. Movies such as *The Transformers*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Avengers*, and many more and I love and still love video games which give me the sense of being able to control what I build or invent, these things always stimulated my mind to want to build highly advanced technology and machinery such as robots, flying cars, cars that move without the use of petrol or diesel but magnetism, free energy, pure energy as well as testing out frequency and how it can be used. Things like anti-gravity/gravitational polarity and space travel/exploration. I want to one day build a space ship like one from the movies and personally take a flight to the moon and eventually do a Mars test (laughs). I believe that whatever a man thinks so is he and so can he become and so can it be and it's been proven throughout history with examples like the Wright brothers, Leonardo Da Vinci, Bill Gates, Dr Ben Carson etc. and I believe that what I am shown through the movies no matter how farfetched it may look it's still very possible.

On the surface, Phiri's work may be seemingly – and perhaps inadvertently – light on philosophy and narrative but they are very strong on characterisation. His works such as *Nyau Transformers, Robot Police* and *The Lost African*, however, might speak to a number

of contexts and interpretations, as will be demonstrated in this chapter as it is cross-referenced with a few Afrofuturism and science fiction texts.

Beginning with *Nyau Transformers* (see Figs. 84 and 85), Phiri provokes a sociopolitical conversation with his work. The work's analysis can be used to breakdown the contested in-betweenness; that is the dichotomy between tradition and futurism, as it challenges the perceptions of African belatedness by using SF and fantasy tropes that are arguably disconnected from the artist's own contemporary lived experience as an African based on the continent.

2.1: SF inspired Nyau: Crossing robotic technology with African culture – Nyau Transformers

Nyau is a Chichewa word meaning "mask", but is also the name used to describe a number of traditional masked performances or masquerades in Southern Africa (Chikuta, Guhrs and Mtonga, 2007: 179). Benjamin W. Smith[174] (2001) goes further, explaining that the *Nyau* is a closed association of the Chewa, Nyanja, and Mang'anja peoples of Eastern Zambia, Central and Southern Malawi as well as parts of neighbouring Mozambique. Open to initiates only, it is also observed as a religion, although it includes little that would be recognised as religious activity within a Western context. The *Nyau*, perhaps above all their traits, have entertainment value through performances that often draw visitors, including tourists and foreign researchers who have had a steady interest in the *Nyau* tradition. These are some of the factors that have ensured their survival, as Smith points out:

> All *nyau* public ceremonies involve masquerade performances, usually in a dance format. In the past, every boy would have been expected to go through *nyau* initiation; nowadays it is by choice. A young man is not considered to have become an adult member of society until he has completed the initiation. … Initiation takes place in the *dambwe*, which today is usually a graveyard. ... It is undertaken by a

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[174] See Smith, W. B. 2001. "Forbidden Images: Rock Paintings and the Nyau Secret Society of Central Malawi and Eastern Zambia", *African Archaeological Review,* Vol. 18, No. 4, 2001

group of boys together. During the process, they are punished for past misdemeanours, taught the secrets of *nyau*, including a secret vocabulary, taught how to make the *nyau* masks, and instructed how to behave as an adult. During entry to *nyau*, along with social and sexual education, a boy learns many skills. … Effectively, the initiate is provided with instruction on many of the processes that will be required later in life. … *Nyau* characters dance at three main ceremonies, the funerary ritual, *maliro*, the commemorative celebrations for the deceased, *m'meto* and *chikumbutso*, and the girls' initiation ceremony, *chinamwali*. In recent times, they have also performed at public political ceremonies, and … some of the more luxurious … tourist hotels. These new developments highlight the entertainment value of *nyau* performances—surely one of the factors that have ensured the survival of *nyau* over so many centuries. They also reveal an important dynamic of the society, a remarkable ability to react to and exploit changing social circumstances. In its traditional setting … *nyau* performance was and is far more than entertainment— the masks, dances, and rituals are infused with symbolic, often instructive, messages—some explicit, others implicit. *Nyau* characters appear at all important rites of passage. They oversee the transformation of girls into women and the dead into ancestral spirits. Their function no doubt goes beyond symbolism: *nyau* plays a crucial role in the process of these transformations (Smith 2001:191).

In this context, Phiri's *NyauTransformers* provides for interesting conversation in that, just as the *Nyau* is said to be used to oversee the transformation of girls to women, boys to men, the dead into the spiritual and the spiritual into the physical, by making reference to *Transformers* – a series of American science fiction action films – *NyauTransformers* also offer an example of how a Hollywood blockbuster film can provide fodder for a Zambian artist to imagine a futuristic, technologically advanced robot with a traditional African aesthetic: an aesthetic inspired by an ancient ceremony and its masquerade performances. Here, it can be noted that Phiri's work in this particular case draws parallels with Haimbe's *Superegos* in which these traditional African spirit characters serve the narrative as an inexorable hero or perhaps villain figure. Like Haimbe, Phiri successfully juxtaposes the African masquerade with the genre of science fiction.

Commenting on the SF film *Transformers*[175], Stacey Abbott, a film scholar and author from the Roehampton University, Media, Culture and Language Department proposes that film provides the example of synergy between SF and special effects[176]; similarly, one might argue Phiri's *Nyau-Masquerade Transformers* are an amalgamation of African spiritualism and SF.

Unpacking the narrative of the *Transformers* and other SF films within the context of the Hollywood blockbuster[177], special effects and its impact on society, Abbott suggests that:

> [The] ability to tell the story of a technologically advanced alien race that can transform from alien robots into very familiar cars, trucks and planes is entirely predicated upon the ability of special effects convincingly to represent this transformation. … Special effects are, however, not used purely to portray spectacular metamorphosis but play an absolutely vital role in creating the visions of alternative, future or imagined worlds that are intrinsic to the sf film … they can also be used to imagine futuristic versions of our own world (Abbott 2009:470-471).

On the other hand, Phiri's *NyauTransformers* provide – through art – the ability to tell the story of a technologically advanced *Nyau,* a spirit that transforms into a robot. He uses art to create futuristic versions of a traditional African masked character that is usually embodied by human beings. Is Phiri, therefore, substituting a human with a robot and by so doing implying that in the future, Africa will be so technologically advanced that there will be no need for humans to perform in these cultural ceremonies? Perhaps Africans will be so urbanised or will have distanced themselves from being initiated into secret societies such as the *Nyau* that instead such undertakings as public spectacle will be delegated to machines. If this is the case then his work lends itself to the earlier conversation around the posthuman.

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[175] See "Blockbuster SF Film", in Bould M., Butler M. A., Roberts, A. and Vint, S. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction* (2009), Routledge
[176] Also known as CGI (computer-generated imagery) these are special visual effects created using computer software that have become increasingly popular for film production
[177] Typically, a blockbuster is a Hollywood film made with a large budget and big name actors, it is an accolade given to extremely popular films which bring in a lot of money worldwide, often returning the money spent on them within few weeks of release in the cinemas.

If one were allowed to stretch the imagination, *NyauTransformers* would be well-placed as hypothetical hero figures or protagonists defending Africa from colonialism or outsiders (the West), heroes safeguarding African cultural values, in that *nyau* have historically been rebellious by nature, a subversive device as it were. Smith alludes to this when he writes:

> Even before being banned by the Northern Rhodesian Government, in what is now Zambia, *nyau* had been in open conflict with early missionary groups. The struggle between *nyau* and the missions in Malawi has been well documented. … The missions in both countries were amongst the strongest voices encouraging the colonial government to ban *nyau*. The missions and *nyau* openly competed for the hearts and minds of the youth, each trying to outdo the other by taking boys at an increasingly young age. While missionaries sought to win the hearts of children at mission schools before *nyau* could "demonize" them, *nyau* leaders tried to see that boys became included within Chewâ society before they were turned against traditional matters and "polluted" by Christianity. The missions utterly failed to eradicate *nyau*, but in some places, they forced it away from their immediate environs (Smith 2001:203).

Ruth Simbao (2012) also highlights the subversive element of the *Nyau* (see fig. 86) with regard to territoriality in reference to a series of performances[178] by Zimbabwe-born artist Gerald Machona, who uses geopolitics as a theoretical framework and explores notions of 'foreignness'. Using the *Nyau* as a motif, in his body of work, *Vabvakure* (People from Far Away) Machona responds to the first in a series of violent xenophobic attacks that began to occur in South Africa in 2008. In the performances Machona references some of the strong gestures that the *Nyau* perform, "The masquerade dancers are famous for kicking up dust, both literally and figuratively" (Simbao 2012:22). Machona did so by intentionally immersing himself in the performances as a foreign national living in South Africa in an

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[178] These are live art performances catalogued as part of a group exhibition titled 开路 *Ukuvul'indlela, Making Way: Contemporary Art from South Africa & China* curated by Ruth Simbao as part of the main programme of the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, South Africa 28 June to 8 July 2012 at various venues, namely Alumni Gallery in the Albany Museum, Fort Selwyn, Provost Prison and camera obscura tower of the Observatory Museum. Also see: www.makingway.co.za

attempt to disrupt the negative misconceptions of African expatriates and immigrants because *Nyau* performances were used by the Chewa people while living as immigrants in Zimbabwe.

The Chewa people of Malawi brought the *nyau* tradition into Zimbabwe during the 15th to 17th century Maravi invasions and later on during early 20th century labour migrations in southern Africa. Several "layers of negotiating the distance between insiders and outsiders, between familiar people and strangers are played out" (Simbao 2012:22). Simbao continues to highlight how the *nyau* has been something of a weaponised tradition in conflict with Christianity and colonialism, pointing out that:

> Chewa *nyau* masquerades often commented on strangers—both visitors who came in the form of traders, or invaders who came in the form of colonists. In this first layer of negotiating distance, *nyau* masks and costumes explore differences and at times subvert belief systems, such as Christianity, that were not only imposed onto Chewa people but also drove the *Gule Wamkulu* masquerades underground during Colonialism. The *Maria*, or *Malia*, figure is a well-known female masked figure that is gentle in her demeanour but subtly references the *nyau* tradition's battle with Christianity. The *mulungu*, or *muzungu* Caucasian settler was portrayed with bright pink, sunburnt skin, the Chinese trader was portrayed with narrow eyes, and the Arab trader was portrayed with a long narrow face and sometimes wore stilts to reflect the tall impression created by the long flowing robes worn by Muslims (Simbao 2012:22).

In line with the above, Phiri's *NyauTransformers* could fit in the discussion as figuratively being protectors of an ideal or a metaphorical territory: a science fiction inspired hypothetical hero figure as suggested earlier. Phiri's *NyauTransformers*, as his passion for popular culture and the SF blockbuster may imply, is not the only work that can be said to have an appeal to the SF film, as the work discussed in the next section will show. This work again continues with notions around robots, cyborgs and the posthuman.

2.2: Arresting the imagination with futuristic Robot Police

Robot Police (Fig. 87) also owes a debt to SF but, it can be argued, it resonates more with the character from *RoboCop*[179] (Fig. 88) a 1987 American cyberpunk[180] action film directed by Paul Verhoeven and written by Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner.

Following what film scholar Sean Redmond (2009) suggests regarding *RoboCop*, one can also argue that Phiri's *Robot Police* can be read as a commentary on the future of law and order. Discussing *RoboCop*, Redmond argues that *RoboCop:* "savagely critiques the relationship between law and order, bureaucracy and big business in crime-ridden near-future Detroit. Left for dead, his memories erased, officer Alex Murphy is resurrected as RoboCop, the fascistic future of law enforcement, in this satire of the Regan era" (2009:136).

Similarly, while Phiri's *Robot Police* predates by a year or so the heavily contested 2015 presidential election results that put the current Zambian President Edgar Chagwa Lungu into office, the artwork lends itself to commenting on Zambia's current sociopolitical dispensation. The current government has continuously been considered a deterrent to democracy and freedom of speech, with a firm grip on the judiciary, the media and, case in point, the police. It can be suggested that never have the Zambian police, particularly in their public presence, been so intimidating – at least in recent memory – bordering on the semblance of a police state. For the public, it can be argued, the presence of the police is not for their protection but their intimidation. In 2018, this perhaps manifested itself when a student died at the hands of riot police at the University of Zambia; another example was the heavily armed police presence at the High Court when the sitting President's heavily contested third-term bid for 2021 was announced as successful (see Fig. 89).

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[179] Also see *RoboCop* (2014), a remake of the original.
[180] "A subgenre of science fiction literature and film, with its origins in the 1980s… Cyberpunk centres on the impacts of new technologies such as computers and virtual reality, and with propagating popular images of cyberspace, cyborgs, artificial life forms and so on… it has split and recombined with sub-sub-genres including steam punk, biopunk and cyberprep, the latter offering a slick, clean, rosy view of the future to contrast cyberpunks dirty, grim dystopia" (Bell, D. 2007:04).

The work *Robotic Police*, like all of Phiri's other works, is created from discarded metal parts of mechanical and electronic equipment – mostly the latter – and therefore not only does his art lend itself to conversations around recycled art but also to the discourses around e-waste (see McGarry 2018), which is an increasingly contentious issue pertaining not only to the rest of the world but to Africa's future in particular.

Robot Police is one of the artist's earliest works, and like most of his earlier work it can be considered relatively small, almost miniature in scale. Later works include *NyauTransformers*, which he had not yet completed at the time of the field interviews but was most generous to share the images during the exhibition at the Livingstone National Gallery in Zambia in 2017.

Robot Police is created from a medley of close to 20 parts that served different functions on various machines and gadgets in their previous 'lives'; it is as if Phiri breathes new life into them by giving them a new collective purpose to serve, that of being a sculpture. Although it is not tall, *Robot Police* is a menacing-looking sculpture that takes a humanoid form, with two sturdy-looking legs and two arms that look as if they have embedded machine guns in them. Across its chest the word "police" is boldly embossed; the head gives an even more intimidating look as it resembles a cyclops with a gas mask and military helmet, like something that would be sent to quash rioting crowds.

While Phiri's 'robots' are created as sculptures, he emphasises that he has always wanted to study robotics or industrial design, where he could conceive products such as prosthetic limbs. It can be noted also that in 2018, a young Zambian Harvard undergraduate in the field of computer-aided machine design, Sela Kasepa[181], organised and entered some Zambian high-school learners into, FIRST Global, an annual student robotics Olympiad (see Fig. 90).

While Phiri's *Robot Police* does appear outwardly ominous, he says that he has no intention of imagining violent machines, as he sees himself as a pacifist. Commenting specifically on the work during the field research for this thesis, Phiri (2017)[182] asserted that he envisioned a time when Zambians could be able to build "highly advanced and agile robotic suits; some officers can suit up and others can be run by computer. I do not, by the way, ever want my ideas or future works to ever be used for harmful purposes. ... I believe it would be much faster, easier, and safer when the law is enforced through the use of robots under the control of man, of course; we do not want a *Terminator* situation to happen" (Phiri 2017 ibid).

> Imagine a robotic suit, highly advanced, strong and durable and very agile, capable of moving at great speeds and able to manoeuvre through just about any obstacle that comes its way/faces, car chases would be easily stopped without having to have any innocent people getting injured and so on, like stopping armed criminals with ease, they could have a sensor that can detect imminent danger or threats and prevent it or at least prevent a worse catastrophe.
>
> They could be used by fire fighters to rescue people in burning buildings without the risk of getting the fire fighters burnt and the victims from burning too and adding a hydrogen-emitting sprayer, which could be like a flamethrower with its unbreakable non-explosive tank as a backpack and a lot more capabilities.

According to Phiri, his *Robot Police* received comments such as "we only see such in the movies, it's hard to believe someone in Africa is capable of constructing such works, I've never come across anything like what you do, and can it move?"[183] from the people (Zambians) who had seen the work in exhibitions. This implies that even among themselves Africans have the tendency to regard themselves as detached from the worlds of technology or science fiction. They have inherited the gaze of looking at themselves with a lens inherited through years of colonialism followed by a global media that portrays the world from a predominantly occidental perspective, where Africa is put down. However, as *Robot Police* is

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[182] Mulenga, M. A. Interview with Roy Jethro Phiri, 2017/11/24, Livingstone
[183] Ibid

one of his earlier works, Phiri has created several others, a few of which he says attracted the attention of some German scholars, with prospects of his travelling there for study. The German prospects however did not bear fruit and the artist has since enlisted for military training with the Zambia National Service[184] although he does promise to continue as an artist.

2.3: (Re) Discovering the Lost African

Phiri's *The Lost African* (Fig. 92) may also be read as a political metaphor. First, the title itself is almost an oxymoron, in that, more often than not, whenever Africa is mentioned thoughts of backwardness are conjured (Diop 1974; Enwezor 1999; Airewele and Edozie 2010; Gordon and Donald 2013; Gbadamosi 2015; Keita 2014). Therefore, to have a robotic machine named *The Lost African* complicates matters. The work looks as if it is a prop from the set of a SF film. It features a slightly sphere-shaped body, with two long mechanical arms (or legs). It has about it an intimidating character and brings to mind similar machines from SF films, such as one from *Star Wars,* the AT-ST walker, a two-legged, two-man craft – technically a walking tank – that serves as a reconnaissance and patrol vehicle, and the *Eyeborg* (see Fig. 93) a digitigrade robot from the film *Eyeborgs* (2009). The eponymous 'eyeborg' is a type of mobile camera drone that is used to observe the 'Freedom of Observation Act' and the subsequent implementation of ODIN (Optical Defence Intelligence Network) to watch over citizens in a manner akin George Orwell's dystopian account of a future totalitarian state in his book *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Present-day Zambia is a country in which its citizens live under constant surveillance, with increased clampdowns on freedom of speech exemplified by the shutting down of *The Post* newspaper in 2016. Although it was shut down for failure to settle tax obligations it has been described as a politically motivated

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[184] In personal communication, Phiri stated that he felt his art career was not "making ends meet" and he therefore decided to join the military for a more stable income. Apart from *Robot Police*, the other works discussed here were created shortly before he left for training and therefore could not be reached to shed more light behind the philosophy of the works as he did with *Robot Police*.

move by the Zambian government in order to silence it, as it was very critical of them. Ever since the incumbent president came into power, there has been an increase in arrests of people who say anything on social media that opposes him or the government and a few of them are serving actual jail terms. Similarly, one newspaper editor was sentenced to 18 months in prison on 20 December 2018[185]. The Zambian rule of law at the moment can be said to be highly compromised.

Meanwhile, Phiri's repurposing of e-waste in his work speaks to an ongoing concern regarding Africa becoming a global site for the dumping of such garbage. This is a concern that has inspired projects such as "E-waste Funeral" at Rhodes University during the National Arts Festival in 2018 as an environmental awareness campaign using an art-based approach. In collaboration with the Arts of Africa and Global Souths research unit and Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University, Dylan McGarry organised an artistic performance and a display of sculptures produced from e-waste in the Raw Spot Gallery at the university. McGarry's (2018) concern is that:

> With changing policies governing e-waste imports in China and India, Africa may become the next major dumping ground for the world's toxic e-waste [see Fig. 94]. Recently, China created new policies regulating the entry of e-waste into the country. The scouting for new dumping grounds has led prospectors to African countries in their search for areas with unregulated e-waste dumping potential. Only Cameroon and Nigeria have enforced national e-waste related legislation, while Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya have legislation pending approval" (McGarry 2018, Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University.

According to McGarry it seems likely that: "the future of Africa has a lot to do with the future of how we decide to bury our electronic artefacts".[186]

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[185] See "Lusaka Journalist gets 18 months for contempt of court" https://diggers.news/?p=36665
[186] See Finn, C. 2018. "An e-wasted life" in *Grocott's Mail*, March 6. Also see online version: https://www.grocotts.co.za/2018/03/06/an-e-wasted-life/

Phiri (2017) asserts that he is "not really a political person" however, speaking through his work he is conveying a message that there is "nothing valueless", and that he was "concerned about the well-being of the planet and how it could end up if it's not cleaned up and taken care of". Phiri's interest in environmental conservation is what guides his selection of material.

He is very emphatic on his concern for the environment and reflects this in his choice of materials, which at times can be minuscule scraps from electronics that he intricately pieces together after sifting through heaps of garbage that he recycles (see Fig. 95). He explains this, saying:

> What guides my selection of materials is the search for compatibility, like what can it [scrap] become that will make it creative and beneficial as well as beautiful to look at and of course I just want to be able to turn just about everything I find into something new and valuable. To give it a new purpose instead of leaving it to become an addition to the pollution on my planet, to go green and help in protecting my planet from decay. I believe we can use everything we throw away for a much better purpose if we just get our heads straight and think in that direction. We can clean our planet but the problem is that we are just lazy and do not consider such matters as very important … we are waiting for government to do something about it and we forget that we are the government which inevitably never happens with our common Zambian term '*boma iyanganepo*' (the government should look into it) kind of attitude. I think telling and proving to people that using what is thrown away and turning it into something valuable once more can make them money, maybe then they will wake up. People in Chipata for example collect empty *chibuku* (beer) packs and make roofs out of them, bottles are and can be used to make beautiful chandeliers, portraits, houses and much more, so I'm driven to clean up my planet. (Phiri 2017 ibid.)

According to Phiri, envisioning the future as an African is very important and should not be that complicated when "one has a purpose, a vision, aspirations and direction, it is not hard grappling with the future when one realizes that all things exist at the same time and revolve around each other causing routine reoccurrences" (Phiri 2017 ibid.), which he says is what

brings about sayings such as "history repeats itself". He argues that it is unfortunate that Africans tend to focus so much on the West (and Europe), striving to emulate them at the expense of finding richness in their own cultures. He posits that:

> The sad part about Africa is that we have been greatly westernized and take most of our ideas from the West; we ignore our own culture and traditions that distinguish us from the rest of the world and if or when we do, it is looked at as going backward and following witchcraft, tradition is not witchcraft, witchcraft is witchcraft and tradition is tradition, culture is culture. These things are very different from one another. The whites [sic] of the past made Africans dependent on them, they made us think that without them we are not capable of advancing or growing in any way. That we are uneducated, yet our education came in a different manner. Africans today have totally lost and forgotten and do not pay any attention to or consider or pay regard to our history and culture especially the young of our great continent. All we want to do is look American/European, talk American/European and act like them because if we don't, we don't fit in and are deemed un-cool and that affects us, it's a sad sight, we discriminate ourselves in order to impress others by trying to look like them, we want to dress like them yet we have our own beautifully traditional and very artistic attire (Phiri 2017 ibid.)

These remarks not only breathe life into the title of Phiri's *Lost Africans* but they position him as an uncompromising, forward-thinking cultural activist who is compassionately and critically invested in the African continent as he joins the animated discourses on the representation of Africa. His remarks can also be read as one of the many clarion calls for the "reframing of contemporary Africa" (Soyinka-Airewele and Edozie 2010). It also follows what economics and philosophy scholar Lansana Keita (2014) describes in *Validating Knowledge: Confronting Myths about Africa*. Phiri's remarks are in line with Keita's observations on technology, Africa and the legacies of colonialism:

> The technological knowledge that facilitated the European conquest or control of most of Africa became a kind of template for a claim to a general superiority in all spheres. Thus, European technological advantage — promoted as technical superiority — was extrapolated not only as a cultural advantage but also — crucially

— as qualitative superiority. The simple logic behind this extrapolation was that superior humans produced superior (more advanced) technologies and, by further inference, superior cultures. As a result, hierarchies of humankind were established according to which the world's populations were graded, not only in terms of the evolutionary worth of their cultures, but also in terms of the evolutionary status of their bearers. … One of the by-products of Europe's irruption into Africa was cultural diffusion. Thus, traditional modes of knowing and acting in various African cultures were much impacted by the diffused technologies and modes of knowing that emanated from Europe (Keita 2014:24).

This also echoes Indian physicist and feminist Vandana Shiva in "Cultural Diversity and the Politics of Knowledge" who charges that from the onset colonialism was a contest over the mind and the intellect as she argues that: "Indigenous knowledges have been systematically usurped and then destroyed in their own cultures by the colonizing West" (Shiva 2002: vii). Similar concerns and observations by Phiri have inspired him to constantly imagine an African future that remembers the richness of its so-called past and infuses this with a technologically advanced future as demonstrated through his works that have been analysed in this chapter. At the time of the field interview, Phiri admitted that he had never come across the term 'Afrofuturism' and had quickly done an online search for it before the actual interview, as the questions were sent to him beforehand. Admitting that Afrofuturism had suddenly stirred his curiosity, he explained that "It's got a lot involving what I like and what I am passionate about and who I am all about as a person, and I feel that in some way I am an Afrofuturist who never knew I was" (Phiri 2017 ibid).

3: Miko's *Future Driver* and further considerations of the post-human future

According to Miko (2017), when he created *Future Driver* (see Figs. 96 and 97) in 1992, it was the manifestation of ideas, specifically,

a presupposition of a future mode of human movement in the era of technological advancement that humankind was and is still undergoing. I looked at mankind's

current rate of technological development and thought that in future we may not need

an engine and the entire body of the car to be able to move or travel from one place to

the other. We may just need wheels affixed to the body of a human figure and a

steering wheel, and there we go! A concept close to the idea of flying cars, but

automobile-humans!

What is unique about Miko's premonition is that he does not just suggest concepts of the self-

driving car, which has also come to known as a robot car, the autonomous car or driverless

car; this is an African artist pondering the future of mobility a decade before initiatives such

as the now defunct Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency[187] (DARPA) Challenges

(see Fig. 98), which offered prize money to encouraged the development of "driverless

robotic cars"[188]. In a country not known for having an automotive industry, it is unusual for

an artist to speculate the future of automotive transportation decades before autonomous

vehicles become a reality. Concerning autonomous vehicles, from the basic robotic cars to

more efficient and practical vision-guided vehicles, a study by Keshav Bimbraw[189] from the

Mechanical Engineering Department at Thapar University in India suggests that "Official

future predictions about autonomous cars point out that most automobile companies will

launch cars with semi- and fully autonomous features by 2020. Most cars are expected to be

fully autonomous by 2035, according to official predictions" (Bimbraw 2015: 196).

Companies such as Yamaha are currently testing robotic riders on their motorcycles that are

similar to Miko's work from years ago (see Fig.99). The subject of self-driving, or

autonomous vehicles in the near future has also in recent times been humorously addressed

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[187] The Grand Challenge was launched by DARPA in 2003 to spur innovation in unmanned ground vehicle navigation. The goal of the challenge was to develop an autonomous robot capable of traversing unrehearsed off-road terrain. The first competition, which carried a prize of $1M, took place on March 13, 2004. It required robots to navigate a 142-mile long course through the Mojave Desert in no more than 10 hours. 107 teams registered and 15 raced, yet none of the participating robots navigated more than 5% of the entire course. The challenge was repeated October 8, 2005, with an increased prize of $2M. This time, 195 teams registered and 23 raced. Of those, five teams finished. Stanford's robot "Stanley" finished the course ahead of all other vehicles in 6 h, 53 min, and 58 s, and was declared the winner of the DARPA Grand Challenge; see "Stanley: The Robot that Won the DARPA Grand Challenge". (Source Journal of Field Robotics).

[188] *Journal of Field Robotics* 23(9), 661–692 (2006) © 2006 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

[189] Bimbraw K. *Autonomous Cars: Past, Present and Future - A Review of the Developments in the Last Century, the Present Scenario and the Expected Future of Autonomous Vehicle Technology.*

by South African comic strip artists Stephen Francis and Rico (see Fig. 100), who, in a satirical portrayal of the future, suggest how human workers might be replaced by robots that will in turn be driven in autonomous vehicles. In one panel the cartoon strip depicts three workers in the back of a pick-up truck being driven by a fellow human, in another panel they are being driven by a robot. The first panel represents the present while the second one represents the future.

However, it is worth noting that if 'autonomous vehicle' means a vehicle that is self-driving, or does not need a human being to drive it, Miko's visions are not entirely those of an autonomous vehicle per se, as they go beyond. Miko's vision is that of a cyborg vehicle of sorts, a being that is part human, part robot and part automobile, making such a posthuman being arguably one of the most peculiar creatures to have been imagined. It sounds like something from the many sci-fi films discussed earlier.

Miko explains that he used two wheels and an old fridge compressor and other discarded metal parts for their functionality: "What future function do these parts represent in society today as discarded scrap metal! This art piece is synonymous with that artificial intelligence dialogue and its apparent possibilities of intellectual interrogation" (Miko 2017). Miko also gives a detailed description of how the work came about and how it ended up on permanent display at the Lusaka National Museum, as well as how it has been received as one of the exhibit staples over the years. He continues:

> Just to give you a little background, in the early 1990s, there was a British sculptor by
> the name of Vincent Waropay who was brought into Zambia under the sponsorship of
> the British Council to conduct a sculpture workshop in conjunction with the former
> Mpapa Gallery. This series of two found-material sculpture workshops took place at
> the Henry Tayali Visual Arts Centre in the Showgrounds of Lusaka. There were close
> to 25 young and old professional artists who took part in these workshops. Among us
> hovered a spirit of creativity rarely seen before in the country. Included amongst
> participants, was a special visit by a legend, Akwila Simpasa, who made two small

wooden sculptures in the workshop that were eventually collected by the late Godfrey Setti. Let me delve a little into the provenance of the 'Future Drivers', it may be of essence at this point. This sculpture was well received. After I made this sculpture, Barclays Bank Zambia Limited headed by Mr Brentnell as chief executive then, also partly sponsors of the workshops, did not hesitate to buy it from me as soon as I completed it. It was immediately displayed at the ground floor main entrance to the Bank at Kafue House along Cairo Road. Four years later, in 1994, I was given an opportunity to curate the first contemporary art show at the Lusaka National Museum. I borrowed the sculpture for the official opening and it stayed on display for quite some time. Barclays were impressed and decided to donate it to the National Art Collection housed at the Museum. It has been a great spectacle mostly to school-going children whenever they visit the Museum (Miko 2017 ibid).

In retrospect, Miko argues that his thoughts around robotic transportation at the time did not have any politically motivated philosophies embedded in them, explaining that "an artist's mind, and life is always existing in the future paradigm of his/her current time … that is why, as artists we are least understood by the society that we currently live in" (Miko 2017 ibid). He was too preoccupied with "making something that should reflect the dynamism of the prevalent technological advancement of mankind. Whether it was going to work or whether it will eventually come to pass or not, those concerns were so remotely cast aside in my preoccupation of making the 'future drivers!'" According to Miko, even so, the artist's mind must always remain "experimental and futuristic", always questioning society. Like Phiri – whom he predates – Miko (2017) has a positive outlook of the future and does not abide by thoughts of a dystopic future:

> I believe that when I walk and see things around me in time and space, I dissect them like a surgical blade and recast their existence in one or several dimensions and imagine what the future would be like. If society gave an opportunity to artists to guide or borrow some of their ideas they envision in daily thoughts, this world would be a better place to live in. Some of these ideas come to mind as a response to the environment you are living in, most times, without making so much effort at all.

Miko does, however, point out the implications of an artist on the African continent creating such technology-inspired work or engagement with the future that challenges the outmoded notions of Africa's belatedness, and challenges certain hegemonic perception that knowledge from the dominant West is superior. This argument is also highlighted in Keita (2014) who contends that:

> Euro-centered forms of control still manifest themselves in the area of human imagination, thereby reflecting the continuing psychological function of the old Eurocentric colonial stereotypes … images portrayed in certain popular films with African themes produced for western consumption. It is evident that the basis of Eurocentric structuring of knowledge about Africa is complex, but a major consideration is that its foundations are heavily motivated by economic interests. A diminished African economic status inevitably accords increased agency to others in terms of access to and utilization of African resources (Keita 2014:26).

Referring to himself as a "Concept Engineer", Miko's argument echoes that of Keita, and amplifies it by referring to the example of Nkoloso, contending that as Africans:

> We have always produced knowledge for ourselves and our environment but we have not owned the means of production, sustenance and dissemination of that knowledge to the rest of the world. A few of our discoveries that have been made by our people are not acknowledged except for a few trickles here and there, but even those little moments are only paid paltry attention in the hegemonic spectacle machinery of the West. That is why those of us calling ourselves 'Concept Engineers' who are living on the continent of Africa and some of our scholars in the African diaspora are saying that it was high time we asserted ourselves and addressed this imbalance of knowledge dominance and ownership. Look at Mr Mukuka Nkoloso, a Zambian 'think-tank' and his conception of going into space? We can safely say that Zambia was far ahead of time through this man, well before America and Russia conceived of space exploration. However, Mr Nkoloso lived in the future of his time, not even his own people or their government and society could understand him. This is the best example of our struggles in our ingenuity. How do we then deal with this phenomenon! Do we give up on creativity during our time and space or not? What do we learn from our past and traditions, do we leave our countries and move on to those

countries in the West that pay the right attention to creativity? No! We must 'correct these national anomalies' (Miko 2017)

As for his work being considered Afrofuturist, Miko responds that it is perhaps the duty of theorists to cast and recast their view of new developments for the growth of their discourses. He would probably not look at the use of 'Afrofuturism' as a pigeonholing in reference to what African artists grappling with futuristic concepts are engaging in at the moment, but as an additional term to the dictionary of describing a category of art made by artists of African origins wherever they are working and exhibiting. He argues that in that case, the use and application of this term adds to acknowledgement of Africa's contribution to the worldwide knowledge of a technological future rife with creative presuppositions. He suggests that if scholarly efforts are being addressed to challenge the Western misconception of what African artists are creating as commentary on the future, and our wish still remains focused on reducing the hegemonic power of the West on art and other fields, Africans must also make an effort to own the means and power of authenticating and renaming that which they invent. Africans, Miko argues, must see themselves as part of the world dynamics and "own the power of attorney as part of the global world" (Miko 2017). Again, concerning his work being framed as Afrofuturistic, he suggests that, "It is common knowledge that the world has always struggled with acknowledging new concepts, inventions and naming them. Today the image that you take of yourself using any cameras is generally accepted as a 'Selfie!' (Miko 2017 ibid.)

Chapter 5: Summary

This chapter has examined the possible implications of Africans articulating thoughts of the future using their resourcefulness. It looks at selected works of two contemporary Zambian artists, Phiri and Miko, who are a generation apart but have linkages in the ways that they articulate ideas, as well as their materiality. They have both demonstrated explorations of the

future in their thoughts, and their ideas have collectively manifested through robotic sculptures. It also discussed how these select artists have – in relative isolation – incorporated concepts of technological advancement in their work, disrupting uncomfortable identities of a belated and backward Africa (Dadi 2010; Airewele and Edozie 2010). The chapter also shows how these different concepts, such as technicity and cyberculture theories, lend themselves to the works and thinking of both Phiri and Miko. In a sense the chapter is linked to the previous one around issues of robotics and cyborganism. The latter is especially important in that even in Africa "we may have particularly intimate relationships with devices that become part of our everyday lives, even part of our bodies – leading some scholars to theorise the body-technology interface by using ideas of the cyborg or the posthuman" (Bell 2007:13-14). Analysing these different concepts, the chapter shows how visual images representing technology have been appropriated by these two Zambian artists, Miko and Phiri respectively, for several decades now and that such future thinking is not entirely new. Nevertheless, the works of both artists need to be explored in greater detail especially in terms of tracking the many user interfaces with which Africans, or Zambians in particular encounter or interact with technology and in what contexts.

What this chapter also does is to prompt discussion around the inventiveness of Zambian artists with regard to the potential of technology for limitless exploration around African knowledge systems in relation to the future. The artists process their imagination as a vehicle to examine or represent the plurality of existence across African space and time by asking questions about who Africans were, who they are today and who they will be in the future. If indeed "humanity is the beginning of AI" (Lavender III 2011:193), will Africa be occupied by African cyborgs in the future? Will these cyborgs be confronted by prejudice, or will there be a continuation of histories of marginalisation, alienation and displacement from a lingering hegemony that Western cyborgs may perhaps inherit from their creators? Will the ethnicity,

or the technicity rather, of cyborgs matter to them as beings? What about their gender, will this be of consequence too?

The chapter also also looks at the implications of electronic waste and Africa being a dumpsite.

Last and definitely not the least, the chapter has raised observations about how technology can have a dark side such as citizens living in an Orwellian dystopia in which they are constantly under surveillance. Present-day Zambia is a country in which its citizens live under the watchful eye of what is now appearing to be an authoritarian government, with increased clampdowns on freedom of speech exemplified by the shutting down of independent media houses. What comes to mind here, although primarily in an African-American context – that can be extrapolated globally – is The Black Speculative Art Movement as ascribed by Anderson et al. (2018:8).:

> Though the popular connection between the black speculative arts and radical black politics has emerged in the wake of antiblack police brutality in Canada and the United States (as well as across the globe), it would be amiss to see either as solely a reaction to prevailing conditions of white fragility. Contemporary black speculative arts and black political movements express decades of formative political and radical imaginaries coalescing in a number of social movements, aesthetic expressions, media, arts, music's and literatures that in themselves, and across their local, national but also global connections, reiterate a legacy of invention.

In line with the above statement Miko and Phiri's works, in all their inventiveness and embeddedness in speculative non conformity make a good addition to narratives around "black speculative arts and radical black politics" as a protest to the injustices of Africans, even by Africans themselves.

Chapter 5: Images

Figure 82. Neil Harbisson is the world's first legally recognized cyborg. Source: CNN online edition, see https://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/27/tech/gallery/cyborg-antenna-neil-harbisson/index.html Accessed on 03/01/2019

Figure 83. A typical *Nyau* face mask character. See Smith, W. B. 2001. "Forbidden Images: Rock Paintings and the Nyau Secret Society of Central Malawi and Eastern Zambia", *African Archaeological Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2001

Figure 84. Roy Jethro Phiri, 2017, *Nyau Transformers I*, Livingstone Art Gallery, Livingstone, Zambia. (Courtesy of the artist)

Figure 85. Roy Jethro Phiri, 2017, *Nyau Transformers II*, Livingstone Art Gallery, Livingstone, Zambia. (Courtesy: Artist)

Figure 86. Chewa *Nyau* masquerade masks at the Kulamba Ceremony, Eastern Province, Zambia, 2005. Photos: Ruth Simbao. (Reproduction taken from the exhibition catalogue Making Way: Contemporary Art from South Africa & China, Published by ViPAA (Visual and Performing Arts of Africa), 2012.

Figure 87. Roy Jethro Phiri, 2013, Robot Police (Source: Andrewmulenga.blogspot.com on 14/20/20)

Figure 88. Film poster for RoboCop - Copyright 1987, Orion Pictures (Accessed from: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Robocop-Borderless-Vibrant-Premium-Various/dp/B06XYP5KQ4 on 14/20/20)

Figure 89. Members of the Zambia Police arrive outside the High Court in Lusaka on December 7 2017 (Courtesy Salim Dawood, Zambia)

Figure 90. Zambia 72 – The team came from all over the country to work on the project. Their name was chosen to represent the 72 groups in Zambia. (Source CNN)

Figure 91. (CNN) At 19-years-old, Betelhem Dessie is perhaps the youngest pioneer in Ethiopia's fast emerging tech scene, sometimes referred to as 'Sheba Valley'. (Photograph reproduced from https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/11/africa/ethiopian-ai-tech-coder-betelhem-dessie/index.html?utm_source=fbCNNi&utm_campaign=africa&utm_medium=social , accessed on 27/12/2018)

Figure 92. Roy Jethro Phiri, 2017, *Lost African*, at the Livingstone Art Gallery, Livingstone, Zambia. (Photo courtesy of the artist)

Figure 93. Film poster *Eyeborgs* (2009) (Accessed from https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1043844/ on 14/02/2020)

Figure 94. Tyres burn in the background as a boy at the world's largest e-dump in Ghana repeatedly smashes a TV into the ground to break it open. Picture by Kai Löffelbein (Photograph reproduced from "E-waste Funeral at Rhodes University", Rhodes University, accessed from: https://www.ru.ac.za/elrc/latestnews/e-wastefuneralatrhodesuniversity.html on 19/12/2018)

Figure 95. Roy Jethro Phiri's worktable resembles that of an electronics engineer. Here he can be seen piecing together one of his earlier miniature works at the Wayi Wayi Studio and Gallery in Livingstone in 2013. (Photograph by Andrew Mulenga)

Figure 96. William B. Miko, 1991, *Future Drivers*, Lusaka National Museum (Photograph by Andrew Mulenga)

Figure 97. Detail, William B. Miko, 1991, *Future Drivers*, Lusaka National Museum (Photograph by Andrew Mulenga)

Figure 98. At approximately 1:40 pm on Oct 8, 2005, 'Stanley' was the first robot to complete the DARPA Grand Challenge (Accessed from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/a-At-approximately-140-pm-on-Oct-8-2005-Stanley-was-the-first-robot-to-complete-the_fig15_224773193 on 14/20/20)

Figure 99. "Yamaha's Motobot …didn't have to be safe or user-friendly. There is no human rider, and the bike's only purpose is to go fast. In a straight line, it can hit 200 kph (124 mph). When rounding the track, though, its lap time came to 117.50 seconds—nearly 32 seconds short of Rossi's best, 85.74 seconds." https://spectrum.ieee.org/cars-that-think/transportation/self-driving/watch-yamahas-humanoid-robot-ride-a-motorcycle-around-a-racetrack

Figure 100. A 2019 cartoon strip suggests that in the future, not only will workers be replaced by robots, but vehicles such as cars will be self-driving. (Accessed from https://twitter.com/madamevecartoon/status/1086128069067321344 accessed on 14/02/2020)

Figure 101. At present, many online application forms have verification systems that as whether the applicant is a robot
(https://www.google.com.bd/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwje25apvM_nA hX0xjgGHaDcBhYQMwjCASg1MDU&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.quora.com%2FWhy-is-that-CAPTCHAs-are-now-being-changed-to-selecting-Im-not-a-robot-instead-of-the-previous-version-of-typing-some-complex-text&psig=AOvVaw24w8lp36UnyQFKpU6yjyQo&ust=1581715709715461&ictx=3&uact=3)

Figure102. A poster for Ancient Egypt and Nubia and the Afrofuturist Art of Comic Book Artist John Jennings at a conference held in October 2018 (Accessed from: http://www.thevisualist.org/2018/10/afrofuturism-symposium-day-1/ on 14/02/2014)

Figure 103. A poster "Uncovering Women of Color in Time, Place, and History" held in December 2018 conference that grapples with issues around the future concerning women of colour (Accessed on http://resistance.pacscl.org/2018/12/19/uncovering-women-of-color-in-time-place-and-history-recap/ on 14/02/20/20)

Figure 104. A poster from the *Refiguring the Future* Conference: February 9-10, 2019 (Accessed from https://www.blackquantumfuturism.com/ on 14/02/2020)

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis it is possible to discern significant threads within African Futurism/Afrofuturism or speculative nonconformity in part reflecting on inter-disciplinary imperatives for example, knowledge production.

Initially the study set out to find ways in which evoked visual portrayals of 'the future' in the work of a select group of contemporary Zambian artists with respective themes and representative approaches that can create counter-narratives to dominant framings of the way Africa is viewed.

However, with Zambia as the area of focus, this research has tackled a complex, broad and diverse selection of ideological concepts, themes and narratives, within the scope, conception, consumption and display of the arts of Africa in the pre- and post-colonial Africa. Among these are: Afrofuturism, African Futurism: colonialism; modernity; technicity; gender; race; geopolitics; chronopolitics; cyborg theory, post-humanity; epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems; authenticity; and the traditional and the contemporary.

Even though the works of the Zambian artists featured in the study are characterised by these complex narratives, they are firmly rooted in the African past, embrace the present and envision unknown futures.

I have critically analysed and critiqued some of the misconceptions and misleading information that exists within the Western-driven discourse. I argue against the idea that Africa is simply following the flow, with the West at the centre and leading in developing new ideas in 'modern' art. I argue that many African artists have been and continue to be at the forefront when it comes to contributing new ideas today and for the future of art in the service of humankind.

My thesis also reiterates the fact that Africa is made up of and reflects many complex narratives that are linked to different races and ethnic communities, inhabiting geographical spaces that vary in topography and climatic conditions. Politically, Africa is a product of the Berlin Conference (1884)[190] where the West, as we know, fragmented the continent of Africa into political spheres of influence. The colonising process entailed the fracturing of the arts of Africa, projecting them as inferior to those from the West, lacking in intellect and sophistication. Of course, the postulations of the likes of Darwin and Frobenius regarding evolution and natural selection which became fashionable in the 1920s and 1930s consolidated the justification to colonise and 'civilise' Africa – albeit within controlled margins.

Certain aspects of missionary and colonial education subdued local cultural and scientific achievements in all spheres of life. Art, in a broad sense was one of those expressions where ingenuity and scientific achievements were revealed, and as such, had the potential to be used as a ground to contest Western domination and subjugation. The art schools which emerged from the 1920s in sub-Saharan Africa, founded by colonial masters, ensured that content from African life and cultures was downgraded in the art curricula[191].

The research has suggested that the formalist legacies that colonialism left in Africa would characterise art making in Zambia and many African countries for a very long time; conditions created, perpetuated by the colonists and discussed in texts by Appiah (1992) Mudimbe (1998) and Fitzgerald (2003) and Kapwepwe (1967). Artists in the early postcolonial period would work according to the Western standards and later find different

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[190] This is not to say Africa never did and does not have a politics of its own and its own agency.

[191] There is a vast array of different types of schools and agendas looking at these complexities within a Zambian context for instance, one can identify how the curriculum at Evelyn Hone College and the African Literature Centre varied. While the latter focused on training artists for "pastoral" work or the illustration of Christian publications and the decoration of churches, the former concentrated on training artists to become teachers of art in primary and secondary schools.

forms of expression when things started going wrong politically and economically under Kenneth Kaunda.

Giving credit to Eshun (1998;2003;2014), Lavender III (2009;2014), Womack (2013) and other researchers, the arguments in this thesis have been underpinned to analyse and critique selected contemporary Zambian artists' works which take different forms in relation to Afrofuturism and are connected to the past, present and future. As indicated through analysis in this thesis, these artists express themselves through different narratives, ranging from ancient history, urban myths, the modern world and science fiction among others and places the 'Afronauts' in timeless spaces without conforming to the established standards of art making in Zambia.

Supported by various scholarly texts, the thesis has justified my own preference for the term African rather than prefixes Afri- or Afro- and has discussed Afrofuturism and African Futurism in terms of identity, difference, similarities, their points of convergence, departure and the former's affinity with the continent of Africa. To somewhat broaden the subject beyond Zambia, the study has acknowledged the work of other artists within the sub-region whose works, I argue, clearly fall within the African Futurist category and some of which predate the 21st Century. Among them are the internationally acclaimed Bodys-Isek-Kingelez from the Democratic Republic of Congo and his futuristic African cities, Wangechi Mutu of Kenya's futuristic/post humanist animated videos and other works, Credo Mutwa of South Africa's murals and Pierre Bodo also of Congo's Sci Fi Paintings.

The choice of Henry Tayali and Akwila Simpasa as forerunners of African Futurism in Zambia set the appropriate historical antecedents for the discussions and analysis of works of artists who came after them. Tayali's painting *Destiny* is significant for various reasons; the time it was painted, the place, an emerging city of an early independent state and the

futuristic elements within the work. As illustrated in the thesis, the painting's title itself resonates with the future and the analysis of the painting buttresses the arguments that challenge persistent notions of Africa's stagnation and belatedness. Similarly, Akwila Simpasa's *The Dawn* also gives further credence to the title of the thesis and the research arguments as a whole. This has also been aided by reviewing and connecting *The Dawn* to the past, present and an uncertain future. Through a thorough analysis, the metaphorical elements layered in this work revealed a sort of synergy between Afrofuturism and African Futurism. Through the displacement of time and space as several interpretations may be given to the work, it has been suggested in this thesis that the painting represents a twilight, something in between, an uncertainty, such as the uncertainty or the ambiguity of the future.

The analysis of works by Zambian artists such as Zenzele Chulu, Chishimba Chansa, Ignatius Sampa and Isaak Kalambata argues about the infrastructure that underpins the works of these artists. With various texts I have juxtaposed and justified the complex layering that constitute tradition and culture in Africa. I have argued that these factors inform and inspire artists – the belief systems include 'witchcraft', folklore, magic, community and materiality in relation to the modern world and its technologies to project future possibilities akin to science fiction and the post-human world.

Discussing the work of these artists has also allowed me to echo that in Africa, art was cross-genre in form before the colonial era and that a number of systems were interwoven to produce the superstructure that encompassed several activities including performances by masquerades, which combined mask forms, body painting, textiles, drumming, dancing and so on. The artworks by the aforementioned Zambian artists are not just objects to be looked at but to be engaged critically because they are embedded with several histories and linkages. They are not only associated with different times and spaces; they do challenge the shallow dichotomy of what can be described as traditional and the modern.

I have also argued that there are still some historical and colonial undertones that some writers still propound in order to persistently ascribe derogatory terminologies to Africa as a continent of savagery, diseases and wars, as opposed to attributions of civility and development in the western world. I have countered such assertions with scholarly texts on the history of Africa, mostly written from African perspectives, which put the continent ahead or at par with other with other civilisations prior to invasions and later slavery, colonialism and apartheid . These disruptions on the continent together with their baggage of displacement and gentrification have been issues that Zambian visual artists raise. Interrogating and discussing them in this thesis have been an attempt to recontextualise them and imagine new futures.

From Chansa's fanciful flights over a technologically advanced Africa through Chulu's compositions of ancient Africa's achievements with a focus towards an emancipated future, Nkoloso's space programme of the 1960's, Mwaba's depictions of the Afronaut Martha Mwamba, representations of women in space reminiscent of the important and heroic roles of women in Africa before colonialism, to Kalambata's futuristic comic books, there are clear indications of the existence of the African futurism model on the continent which was not directly related to Afrofuturism. Related work such as that of Mwenya Kabwe and Milumbe Haimbe may also allude to Nkoloso's space projects of the 1960s and validate my position on time and space or 'chronopolitics' and 'geopolitics' in the African context.

I have also argued that certain works by William Miko and Roy Jethro Phiri who, although a generation apart, are connected contextually. I have described Miko as a nonconformist who is inspired by his contemporary environment and assembles and makes bricolages of mechanical and technological objects for an advanced and developed Africa. Similarly, while referencing African mask forms and breaking away from the hegemonic systems of art

making in Zambia, Phiri repurposes technological objects to construct robots and other futuristic sculptures for an advanced 'post-human' Africa.

In conclusion, this study has not come without critical challenges, chief among them maintaining the fast pace at which African Futurist or Afrofuturist exhibitions and conferences in particular are being organised and launched (see above, fig. 102 to 104). In this regard, and on a positive note, however, it can be suggested that this thesis will provide a meaningful contribution to many such conferences, publications and studies around African Futurism by means of the primary resource material provided herein.

For instance, excerpts from this study were summarised and introduced into a course at the Zambian Open University (ZAOU) in Lusaka in early 2019 during the residential school for 2nd, 3rd and 4th year Fine Art Students, where I have been privileged to lecture part time. Module material was also provided to the students from the same excerpts and they were examined through assignments and examinations (see Appendix I)[192]. It can be pointed out here therefore, that this study, even while it has been a work in progress, is a testimony to knowledge production on the African continent that is in line with the much-needed literature that is not produced in the global West, the main source of the students' study material. This speaks to the issues of knowledge being produced by African scholars for African students. On the issue of producing new knowledge in itself, as of course has been traditionally expected of a PhD thesis, the positioning of 'new knowledge in this thesis is anchored on the fact that in the various discourses on African Art History, Zambia is under-represented.

It should be noted here that I candidly align myself to the arguments around knowledge production on the arts of Africa as raised by Simbao and other scholars based on the African continent in a recent article. It is in this collaborative article titled "Reaching Sideways,

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[192] Question 6, Section A, Semester 1 Examination Paper 2020 is a question that was drawn from a presentation of a section of this research to Zambian Open University Students during a lecture series in Lusaka in 2019. (On page 330).

Writing Our Ways The Orientation of the Arts of Africa Discourse" published in the journal *African Arts*, that one of the contributors William B. Miko posits:

> Africa is like an absent landlord in most dialogues and discourses relating to her own arts. This African Arts discussion aims to turn a new page on scholarship and knowledge-generation, which has largely been produced and propagated by and with an "outsider's" point of view. Usually, when an opportunity for an African scholar arises to study the arts of the continent, the curriculum that is used remains foreign, thereby shrouding scholarship and keeping the knowledge of Africans in obscurity. How can an African scholar living and working on the continent today still ascribe to and perpetuate this status quo? (Miko cited in Simbao et al 2017: 13)

I argue that my research is a wholehearted response to the above question. Furthermore, this thesis has successfully questioned how notions of the 'traditional' and 'contemporary' have been framed in the dominant and Western-driven discourse of 'African art', and how new juxtapositions of tradition and futurism can meaningfully reframe this discourse. This in particular is in relation to the arts of Africa and what is termed 'the global South.'

In the course of these claims and analyses, the study can be argued to have appropriately examined to what degree and in what ways the metaphors such as that of space travel can be used in artistic portrayals that go beyond a simplistic trope and the current fashion of revived Afrofuturism in order to delink from Western notions of time and space again in relation to the arts of Africa.

The study has also pertinently analysed portrayals of futurism in a specific context (Zambia) in order to re-situate the discourse of 'contemporary African art' on the African continent in a way that is not necessarily place-bound. Furthermore, with specific examples, this thesis has argued that there is a deeper history of speculative aptitudes in art and culture on the African continent (such as in *Makishi* performances in Zambia). This has been used to complicate the

linear timeframe of Afrofuturism as a so-called movement that draws from the USA in the 1950s and is currently being revived more broadly.

Theoretically, the notions of an African Futurism within a Zambian context enable a critical approach to portrayals of the future vis-à-vis speculative nonconformity, as the analyses correspondingly interrogate the opinions and characterisations that phenomena such as Afrofuturism have borrowed from Western and particularly American contexts. The thesis has also sufficiently illustrated that the select works by Zambian artists in this study can be used to break down the dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'futurism'. By so doing it has also challenged lingering perceptions of African belatedness.

While as a researcher I argue the above, I also maintain a position that draws upon the ambiguity of the direct translation of 'the future' in my mother tongue *Icibemba* from the Northern Region of Zambia. While the translation is ambiguous, it can be loosely translated as '*Kuntanshi yamikalile*', '*Kuntanshi*' meaning 'in front', 'forward', 'ahead' or indeed 'future', whereas '*imikalile*' means 'living' or 'life'. This in turn provides the title of this thesis: '*Kuntanshi yamikalile* (The Future): speculative nonconformity in the works of Zambian visual artists.

Future Research

As a theoretical concept, African Futurism in the work of Zambian visual artists expediates an analytical attitude to the imaginings of the past, present and future across several artistic genres from painting to theatre. However, the original investigations in this thesis are admittedly inconclusive and therefore create grounds for further study. For example, the thesis can be published as a book, or selected portions could be published in peer reviewed journals based on the various thematic components.On the whole, the study has revealed that Afrofuturism and African Futurism while related are both complex and somewhat complex fields respectively and to understand and study them it is imperative to at least employ

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diverse academic conventions and theoretical points of view. Most importantly, I have attempted to explore these fields of study with an open mind.

Appendix I

TIME: THREE (3 Hours)   Thu 2nd July/PM

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. There are six questions in this paper. Answer number **(6) as a compulsory** question and choose any other **two questions** only and answer them as best as you can in an essay form. Question (6) carries 20 marks. The rest are (15) marks each.

2. Your answered question should be properly marked in your answer booklet.

3. Your answered essay should be **two and half** to **three** handwritten pages long.

4. Write as clearly as you can possibly afford to make your written essay legible.

5. Feel free to accompany your written essay with some illustration where need arises.

SECTION A

1. Working styles and approach between any two artists may differ. Identify and discuss such artists whose show(s) you recently visited and studied during your study tour of an exhibition.

2. Discuss aspects of traditional society symbols and signs that are established as methods of communication in daily life, citing two or three examples of communication forms of expression that you are familiar with.

3. Write about your own personal impressions of the exposition that you recently visited at any Art Gallery. Cast a wide personal reflection on the tour and art displays as an artistic engagement.

4. Discuss misconceptions from a Western perspective of African art and demonstrate that Africa and its Diaspora have been rich in systems of written, graphic and audio communication from a long time ago?

5. Discuss and give examples of one or two Zambian contemporary artists who incorporate text and symbols as a mode of self-expression in their artworks. Give your views about such artists who have this style of work.

6. **Afrofuturism is an intersection of imagination, technology, the future and liberation…whether through literature, visual arts, film or music. As a cultural critique, discuss how Afrofuturism can be used to challenge Western notions of African belatedness/backwardness, citing a Zambian artist as an example from the material provided during residential school.**

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