

BOOK REVIEW

Isaac Vincent Joslin. *Afrofuturisms: Ecology, Humanity, and Francophone Cultural Expressions*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2023. v + 340 pp. Notes. References. Index. \$36.95. Paper. ISBN: 9780896803299.

Joslin's book is an interdisciplinary response to institutionalized inequalities and cynical upheavals of globalization and neo-liberalism. He proposes "Afrofuturism as an alternative discourse for imagining and elaborating the ideas necessary to create a new world for all of humanity" (24). The seven core chapters deploy ecopolitics, philosophy, film, and literary texts.

In the introduction, Joslin argues that the twenty-first century has birthed global capitalism, whose enforcement engenders mass immiseration and environmental degradation, especially in postcolonial societies (2). However, to achieve sustainable and equitable development, it is imperative to formulate alternative value systems (3). For this reason, Joslin delineates interdisciplinary frameworks that accommodate both local and global epistemologies.

Chapter One interrogates the racialized privileging of Western science fiction over indigenous knowledge systems. Joslin redefines the science of science fiction by advocating its epistemic conflation with African mysticism. Ultimately, Afrofuturism becomes "a critical discourse that combines indigenous and ancient African mythologies with modern and postmodern (even science-fictional) discourses in evocative and promising ways" (26; see also 29, 35–36, 40). For if Western science fiction and African mythology speculate on possible global futures, then they are discursively syncretic.

Chapter Two enacts this discursive syncretism within the Afrofuturist context of cultural hybridity. Joslin borrows Françoise Lionnet's concept of "mixed or hybrid logics", which female writers aestheticize "to create a transformative multiverse" (50). He then applies it to the analysis of five novels: Mariama Bâ's *Scarlet Song*, Mariétou Mbaye Biléoma's *The Abandoned Baobab*, Marie NDiaye's *Three Strong Women*, Véronique Tadjo's *The Blind Kingdom*, and Werewere Liking's *It Shall Be of Jasper and Coral*. These writers explore the theme of cultural and biological hybridity through leitmotifs of maternity and infancy to imagine the birth of future African societies (50). Joslin explains that the anti-colonial contribution of women in Francophone Africa (see, for example, Ousmane Sembène's *God's Bits of Wood*) is today repurposed for Afrofuturist causes by female novelists themselves (51).

Premised on the transcultural *Weltanschauung* that "Children are a universal symbol of hope and change" (75), Chapter Three investigates the future of African child soldiers. Through the postcolonial lens of Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, Joslin shows that the phenomenon of child soldiers is relevant to and

synonymous with representational debates about Africa as a continent requiring humanitarian intervention yet central to global economy *sui generis*. From this anti-hegemonic perspective, he mounts two related arguments: ambivalent narratives of child soldiers unmask the hypocrisy of human rights policies and, by extension, the capitalist opportunism of international humanitarian aid organizations (79). Joslin draws on Ishmael Beah's autobiographical novel *A Long Way Gone*, Emmanuel Dongala's novel *Johnny Mad Dog*, Ahmadou Kourouma's novels *Allah Is Not Obligated* and *When One Disagrees, One Says No*, and Newton Aduaka's film *Ezra*.

Chapter Four highlights futurist imaginings of Francophone African migration in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous Adventure*, Aminata Sow Fall's short story "The Spoiled Party", NDiaye's novel *Three Strong Women*, Abderrahmane Sissako's film *Heremakono*, Djibril Diop Mambéty's film *Touki Bouki*, Amadou Saalum Seck's film *Saaraba*, Youssouf Amine Elalamy's novel *The Illegal Immigrants*, and Fatou Diome's novel *The Belly of the Atlantic*. Joslin enlists Edward Said's *Orientalism* to underscore "a more fundamentally humanizing understanding of the phenomena of exile, alienation, and hope that characterize the migrant imaginary" (113). In the selected texts, "the migrant's plight is one of disorientation and dislocation of a subjectivity caught in between competing experiential modes of engagement with reality, resulting in a suspension of certainties that is rich with possibilities for Afrofuturist imaginings" (114).

Chapter Five connects the Afrofuturist critique of migration to education. Both experiences subject Francophone African immigrants to alien cultural values, which intensify the fragmentation of subjectivity (163–65). Using examples from Bassek Ba Kobhio's films *Sango Malo* and *The Silence of the Forest*, Joslin contends that "indigenous knowledge systems are valuable avenues for articulating alternative economic models and developmental practices that are at once ecologically and culturally responsive and sustainable" (165). He thus invests educational and economic development with a revolutionary impulse necessarily grounded in African historiography.

Chapter Six builds on Charles Baudelaire's metaphor of "artificial paradise" to critique the injustices and illusions of consumer capitalism. Joslin traces "the trope of the lottery as a paradigmatic form of exploitative economics that impoverishes people through an illusory (and false) liberation, while explicating the subtleties of Africa's ambivalent economic position in the global economy" (195). His examples include Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Devil on a Cross*, Abderrahmane Sissako's film *Bamako*, Ousmane Socé's novel *Mirages of Paris*, Ousmane Sembène's novella *The Money Order*, Mambéty's film *French Franc*, Fadika Kramolanciné's film *Wariko*, and Imunga Ivanga's film *Dôle*.

Chapter Seven discusses the relationship between people and their natural environment based on critical pedagogies and ecopolitics of Achille Mbembe, Sarah Nuttall, Handel Kashope Wright, and Gayatri Spivak. Joslin argues that Afrofuturist ecocriticism reimagines human relations within a global ecosystem and provides alternative visions of sustainable coexistence (221–22). Sony Labou Tansi's corpus and Wanuri Kahiu's science fiction film *Pumzi* illustrate this ecological vision.

In conclusion, Joslin urges humanity to use the primordial endowment of the imagination to create alternative future societies (248, 260). Indeed, Afrofuturism holds out the hope of mitigating cataclysmic dangers of climate change, global capitalism, racial violence, and artificial intelligence.

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