



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

Re-futuring Invasion

Nnedi Okorafor & the Aliens in
Lagos

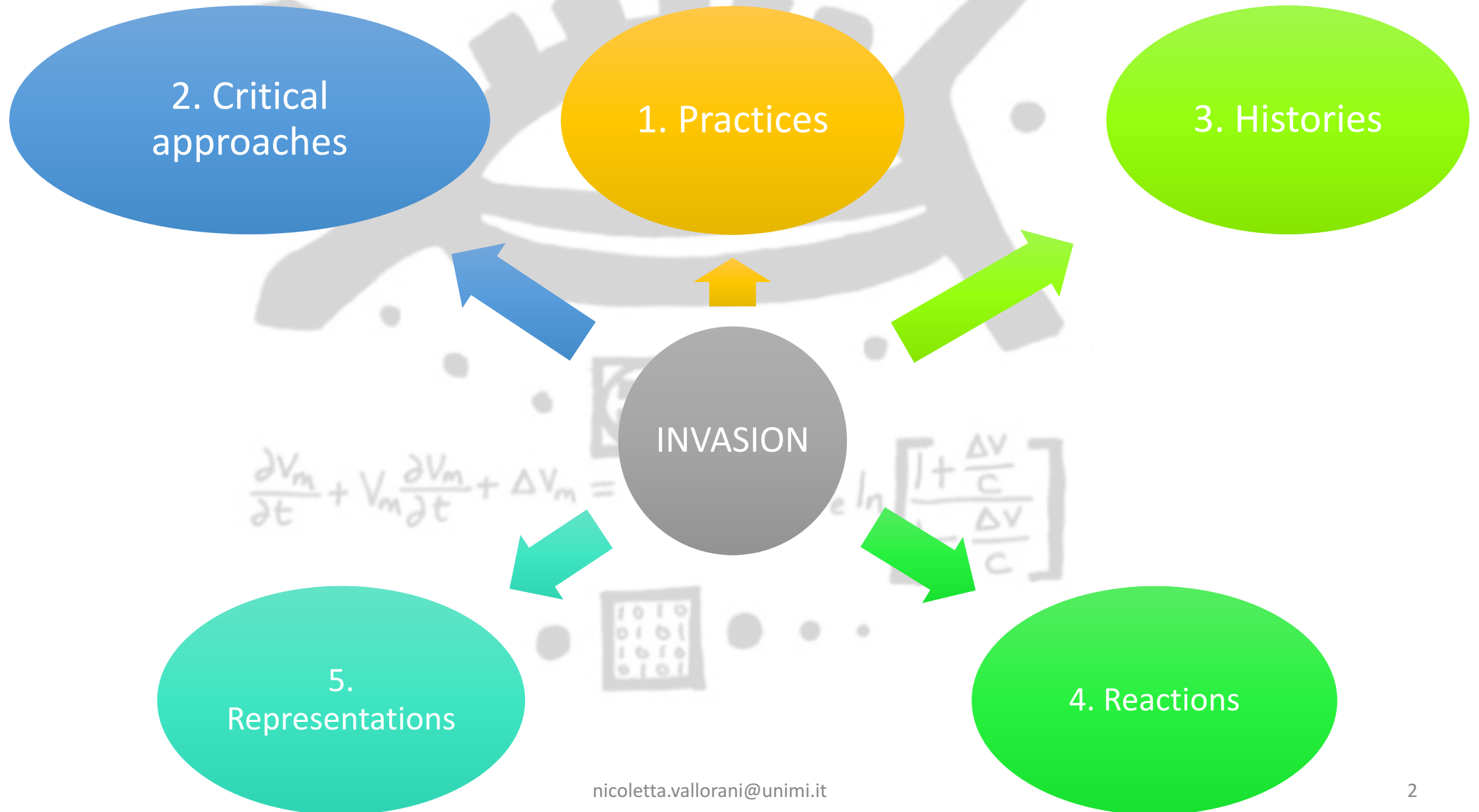
Wole Talabi, Africanfuturism.
An Anthology



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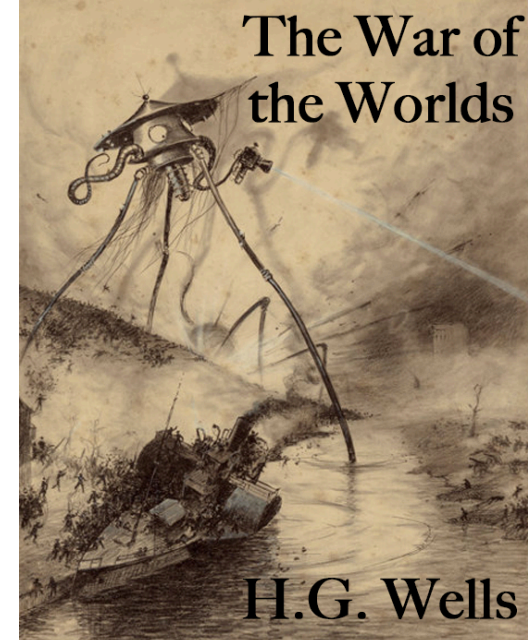


Genealogies

- H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)
- Orson Welles, *The War of the Worlds* (1938)



- Various adaptations: TV show (2019 - French & US production)



Nnedi Okorafor (b. 1974)

What about her

- Nijamerican, currently living in Arizona
- Fantasy & science fiction
- Adults and children
- Dual heritage: Nigerian & American
- Africanfuturism & African jujuism

What about Lagoon

- Three strangers (ADAORA, AGU, ANTHONY) meeting at Bar Beach
- Huge blast & tidal wave, followed by the appearance of a “naked, dark skinned African woman with long black braids”: AYODELE
- Series of strange events related to an alien invasion, throwing Lagos into chaos

Afrofuturism

“Speculative Fiction that addresses African–American themes and addresses African–American concerns in the context of twentieth-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 ‘Afrofuturism’.” (M. Dery, *Black to the Future*, 1994)

Africanfuturism

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

(Nnedi Okorafor, “Africanfuturism defined”, 2020)



“Afrofuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in Oakland, CA, USA.
Africanfuturism: Wakanda builds its first outpost in a neighboring African country”.

From London/New York to Lagos

The city

“In many ways, Bar Beach was a perfect sample of Nigerian society. It was a place of mixing. The ocean mixed with the land and the wealthy mixed with the poor. Bar Beach attracted drug dealers, squatters, various accents and languages, seagulls, garbage, biting flies, tourists, all kinds of religious zealots, hawkers, prostitutes, johns, water-loving children and their careless parents. The beachside bars and small restaurants were the most popular hangout spots. Bar Beach’s waters were too wild for any serious swimming. Even the best swimmers risked a watery death by its many rip currents” (7)

The ocean

“Bubbles tickled her ears as she tried to twist to the surface. But it was as if the ocean had opened its great maw and swallowed her and the two men. She couldn’t breathe. She heard bubbles and the roar and rush of water against her ears. And she could feel the tightness of her laboring lungs and the suction of the water. *Aman iman*, Adaora weakly thought. The phrase meant water is life” in the Tuareg language of Tamashek. She’d once worked with a Tuareg man on a diving expedition. “*Aman iman*,” had been his answer when Adaora asked how a man of the Sahara Desert became an expert scuba diver. Despite the pain in her lungs now and the swallowing darkness, she smiled. *Aman iman*.” (9)

Creatures

- 3 human (“carbon-based”) characters:
Adaora, Anthony, Agu
- A shape shifting “extraterrestrial”: Ayodele
- Animals: coequal inhabitants of the planet

Variously related to the ocean --> environment

Relating with each other → community

Issue of change & cooperative drive



References

Utopian/dystopian traditions
U. K. Le Guin
Donna Haraway
Anna Tsing
Bayo Akomolafe

Gods/goddesses

The Bone Collector

- Road monster → metaphor for the poisoned land

The spider

- Udu: metaphor for stories and storytelling

Mami Wata

- Marine witch: often coupled to Ayodele &/or Adaora



Science/art

- Adaora: a scientist & a witch



- Science and magics to heal Nigeria

The issue of time

- Past of exploitation
- Present of chaos
- Future of change



- Yestermorrow

(Jay Springett, aka Jaymo

- <https://www.thejaymo.net/>

Language(s)

- Different tongues coexisting



- Local traditions + colonization

Conclusion: where do we go from here?

Fictional Antidote

“Africanfuturism is a sub-category of science fiction. Africanjujuism is a subcategory of fantasy that respectfully acknowledges the seamless blend of true existing African spiritualities and cosmologies with the imaginative” (Okorafor 2020).

PostActivism

Post activism opens a space of inquiry about the ways that we respond to crisis and invites us to examine places of power in a situation.

This is the reason my elders say: the time is urgent, let us slow down. Slowing down is not reducing one's speed. Slowing down is noticing the others that frame us and then acting upon that framing or the new spaces of power that are opening up.

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