

Oluwafunmilayo Miriam Akinpelu

MA Student, English Literature, The University of Alabama

Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Drawing Comparisons between Afrofuturism and Anime by Reading Afro-Animatic Webtoon *Red Origins* through the Lens of Interactive Storytelling

Afrofuturism has become a rich literary landscape with sub-genres that pull from diverse forms, mediums, and literary geographies in telling stories that concern African and Afrodiasporic lifeworlds. Afro-Anime, the sub-genre that is of interest in this study, draws heavily from West African mythologies, Central Asian anime or manga literature, and Western superhero sci-fi or fantasy tropes to create narratives that reflect the mythos of a futuristic Africa. An example of Afro-Anime is *Red Origins*, a webtoon that uses texts, comic illustrations, and songs to tell the story of Nigerian-American teenagers who gain Igbo cosmological superpowers which they use to fight against war in futuristic NeoAfrica. Due to the mediatic eclecticism exhibited by Afro-Animatic works like *Red Origins*, this study argues that they should primarily be analyzed using contemporaneous interdisciplinary concepts like interactive storytelling. Although heavily mediated by gaming technology nuances, interactive storytelling in its barest manifestation means telling a *single* story by merging words, images, and sounds. It finds a place amongst concepts like transmedia, intermedia, crossmedia, all of which are gaining momentum in the fields of literature and digital humanities. This proposed discussion intends to analyze *Red Origins* through the lens of interactive storytelling. Despite arising skepticisms about the literary quality and practicability of interactive storytelling, doing a close reading of *Red Origins* using this interdisciplinary concept will yield groundbreaking results. It will allow for an exposition into how 21st-century Afrofuturist creators merge different mediums to narrativize postcolonial experiences and aspirations. Also, it will serve as a framework with which to comparatively draw connections between Afrofuturism and Asian manga/anime. By the end of this discursive study, it is hoped that scholars will consider interactive storytelling as an innovative framework for comparative inquiry into global literary products consumed in this age when literature has become more than just words.