

Earthy Visions: Organic fantasy, the Chthulucene, and the Decomposition of Whiteness in Nnedi Okorafor's Children's Speculative Fiction

Okorafor's speculative children's fiction makes important inroads in the work of decentering whiteness as a hegemonic construct. Her use of science fiction and fantasy to explore futures that resist colonization and the white imagination offer new visions of society and racialized identities. However, I argue that her fiction goes further than decentering whiteness. It begins the process of decomposing whiteness. In my paper, I use Okorafor's children's speculative fiction *Zahrah the Windseeker* and *Akata Witch* to question and extend Donna Haraway's writings on the Chthulucene—a reframing of interspecies interaction as an earthy process carried out by subterranean, “chthonic ones.” According to Haraway, this interspecies interaction is a “tentacular process” that results in sym-poises, or making-with. The human, according to Haraway, becomes humus, or decomposing matter. In viewing Haraway through the lens of Okorafor, however, I point out how the concept of the Chthulucene rests in colorblind notions of the human (or species). I adapt Okorafor's concept of organic fantasy, “fantasy that grows out of its own soil,” by connecting her symbolism of organic with Haraway's foundation of the subterranean. Soil meets soil. In this paper, I first trace Okorafor's ecological, earthy images in her children's novels and show how those images critique whiteness, white futures, and white space. I then place Okorafor's organic fantasy in conversation with Haraway, illustrating how organic fantasy unearths the colorblindness in the Chthulucene. I argue that Okorafor's visions do more than decenter whiteness. Her speculative fiction “that grows out of its own soil” becomes the context for the process of decomposing whiteness, only then allowing Haraway's sym-poiesis to take place.