



AFRICANFUTURISM AND MAGICAL REALISM IN OKORAFOR'S 'HELLO MOTO'

Africanfuturisme dan Realisme Magis dalam 'Hello Moto' karya Okorafor

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Abstract

This article uses the concepts of Magical Realism by Wendy B. Faris (2004) and Africanfuturism by Okorafor (2019) to analyze 'Hello Moto' by Nnedi Okorafor (2011). We analyzed the magical elements and concepts of African futurism in Okorafor's short stories to explain the author's intention in writing her works, which mostly use similar themes such as postcolonialism. After analyzing these two concepts, it was found that Nnedi Okorafor, through her work 'Hello Moto' reflects a postcolonial perspective on cultural hybridity by presenting advanced technology in the form of wigs and combining it with the power of black magic which can release powers such as transmission and mind control. There is a blend of Eastern and Western culture in 'Hello Moto' based on the above explanation. The contribution of this study lies in its exploration of Africanfuturism uniquely represented in Okorafor's 'Hello Moto' as a medium for postcolonial discourse, showcasing how her work reimagines technological advancement through an African cultural lens while bridging traditional and modern worlds.

Keywords: Africanfuturism, Magical Realism, Okorafor, postcolonialism

Abstrak

Artikel ini menggunakan konsep Realisme Magis oleh Wendy B. Faris (2004) dan Africanfuturisme (2019) untuk menganalisis 'Hello Moto' karya Nnedi Okorafor (2011). Kami menganalisis elemen magis dan konsep africanfuturisme yang terdapat di dalam cerita pendek karya Okorafor untuk menjelaskan niat penulis menulis karya-karyanya yang kebanyakan menggunakan tema yang serupa yakni tentang poskolonialisme. Setelah menganalisis kedua konsep tersebut, ditemukan bahwa Nnedi Okorafor melalui karyanya 'Hello Moto' mencerminkan perspektif postkolonial tentang hibriditas budaya dengan menghadirkan teknologi canggih berupa wig dan memadukannya dengan kekuatan ilmu hitam yang dapat melepaskan kekuatan seperti teleportasi dan pengendalian pikiran. Terdapat perpaduan budaya Timur dan Barat dalam 'Hello Moto' berdasarkan penjelasan di atas. Kontribusi penelitian ini terkait dengan eksplorasi Afrofuturisme sebagaimana direpresentasi dalam 'Hello Moto' sebagai media wacana pascakolonial, dimana kemajuan teknologi di kultur Afrika digambarkan dengan cara menjembatani dunia tradisional dan modern.

Kata-Kata Kunci: Africanfuturisme, Realisme Magis, Okorafor, postkolonialisme

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INTRODUCTION

Magical realism comes with two words, realism and magic. Realism is a reasoned or rational way to see the real thing and magic is a strange thing that happens in a story that contradicts reality. Magical Realism is a combined term between real and fantastical things or a combination of realism and fantasy. The genre of Magical Realism originated in Germany in 1798 and later became popular in Latin America before spreading globally (Bowers, 2004). The genre of Magical Realism allowed for the transformation of everyday commonalities into something that cannot be explained, relating to Spanish American fiction at the time. The reader should accept the non-real aspects of the text as part of its reality (Flores, 1955). Magical Realism maintains a position beyond logic, without needing psychological explanation (Leal, 1995). Sasser (2014) maps out the history and how Magical Realism developed. Magical Realism is a fluid and adaptable genre, with a definition that varies according to geographic, linguistic, and formal boundaries. By containing fantasy, magical elements, and real-life between reality and magic, Magical Realism ultimately depicts life's mysteriousness, including supernatural beings and strange situations. Supernatural phenomena are often dismissed as unbelievable due to differing cultural backgrounds and perspectives. However, the mysteriousness, strangeness, and supernatural odd in magical realism is different from surrealism that tends to be in psychological mode where the real elements is not empirical and traceable in historical place and time, not only a state of mind (Pujiati, 2024). Magical realism puts the real and the magical elements at a balance position of in-between.

To discover what is behind the magical realism strategy that Okorafor provides in the short story, the concept of Africanfuturism is needed to help identify it. The definition of Afrofuturism is necessary to identify and figure out what Africanfuturism is. Afrofuturism is a cultural and artistic movement that fuses science fiction, fantasy, and Africentricity. It arose in the 1950s and 1960s as a reaction to the prevailing social and political climate, particularly the civil rights movement and the struggle for racial equality (Yaszek, 2006). Afrofuturism also encourages the communication of the relationship between science, technology, and race in various spatial and cultural contexts. The term "Africanfuturism" was introduced by Dery (1994), in his collection *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*. The history of afrofuturism is deeply ingrained and goes back far further than the 1990s, when it was initially identified (Dowdy, 2024). Afrofuturism is defined as African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of technoculture in the 20th century. Though the name refers to the future of Black people generally, Dery's main notion of Afrofuturism was centered on Black people's interaction with science fiction and technology (Acuff, 2020).

Nnedi Okorafor is a Nigerian-American author of science fiction and fantasy books for both adults and children. She has received several prestigious awards including the Hugo Award (2020), Nebula Award (2021), and World Fantasy Award (2011). She is known for her work on *Black Panther and Wakanda Forever* (2018). The numerous Wakandan inventions seen in the movie are the artistic results of a reimagining, or reinterpretation, of a country's technical development from an Afrofuturistic or Black cultural perspective (Winchester, 2019). Okorafor prefers to be called an African futurist rather than an Afrofuturist. These two terms look similar but different in some ways. In the current era of diversity, inclusion, and equity, Okorafor's necessity to assert the idea of Africa as a significant location of Blackness in comics draws attention to the marginal status of representations of Africa in discourses of global Blackness in comics (Hodapp, 2021). What makes it different is that Afrofuturism is a cultural aesthetic which explores the ways in which African diaspora culture engages with science and

technology. Those rich Afro diasporic experience are still connected by blood, spirit, history, and the future of Africa. However, Africanfuturism is more specific and rooted in African culture, history, and mythology, and it does not privilege or center the West (Talabi, 2020). Africanfuturism is characterized by its ability to fully include the West into Africa's various existences while simultaneously rectifying the West's hegemony in determining, designing, and narrating the continent (Bello, 2021).

'Hello Moto' is a short story written by Okorafor in 2011. The story revolves around three Nigerian women (Rain, Coco, and Philo) who had been friends for a long time and share similar goals and aspirations. They had a happy life until the main character, Rain, created wigs with superpowers. Rain had hoped that the wigs would solve Nigeria's problems, but things did not go as planned, and the story ended with something terrible happening to the three women. This short story has received mixed reviews from thousands of readers. Some appreciate it for the author's ability to create a captivating world in just 16 pages. While others enjoy it simply because they understand it, some readers find the story incomplete due to the cliffhanger ending. What makes this story unique is that we have the opportunity to create our ending, a rare occurrence in an author's work.

Unlike the other Okorafor's literary work which is wellknown among literary scholars such as *Binti* trilogy (2015), 'Hello Moto' is underrated. Searching and observation have been conducted to find out academic journal article about this short story and it merely result in a simple, non-academic review about the story included in a webpage. Several broader discussions of Okorafor's works and themes related to Africanfuturism and Magical Realism include some aspects that are relevant to the story are indeed found including thematic context in Okorafor's work, Africanfuturism and Magic Realism. Hence, it can be said that this study is the first academic article discussing 'Hello Moto' though not the first to discuss Africanfuturism and Magical Realism.

Magical Realism and Africanfuturism in 'Hello Moto' are the main focus of this current research. Magical realism can be used to explore the intersection of magical and real elements in literature. Faris' theory (2004) of Magical Realism is used to analyze elements the magical realism in 'Hello Moto' and how they intersect with Africanfuturism themes. Okorafor's use of Magical Realism and Africanfuturism in 'Hello Moto' challenges the traditional Western narrative structure and offers a new perspective on African and African diasporic experiences. Her work can be seen as a form of resistance against the dominant cultural narratives that have historically marginalized black communities. Therefore, the significance of Magical Realism and Africanfuturism in 'Hello Moto' lies in their ability to provide a platform for marginalized voices and to offer a new vision of the future that is rooted in African and African diasporic experiences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Magical Realism talks about how the life of the characters of the short story is portrayed in realist style as human daily life, although the reality in the novel is mixed with some elements of magic, as Faris puts it,

"Magical realism is a literary genre that combines realism and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them. It is expression that reflects the hybrid nature of postcolonial society, both reflecting the cultural moment of postcolonialism and achieving substantial work within it. In addition, because of its discursive heterogeneity, Magical Realism has also contributed to the growth of a postmodern literary sensibility" (Faris, 2004).

Magical realism has five elements which are (1) irreducible elements, (2) phenomenal of world, (3) unsettling doubt, (4) merging realm, and (5) disruption of identity. Irreducible element is something that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in Western empirically based discourse, that is, according to "logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief" (Faris, 2004). The presentation of magic in the real world makes the story different to the fantasy story. The story usually tells about the daily life experiences just like actual life but they are blend with magic elements. Despite the fact that reality and magic contradict to each other, but in Magical Realism they coexist harmoniously and is called as Phenomenal of world. The next one is unsettling doubt, the event in the Magical Realism fiction normally looks like a dream or not feel real. They might stimulate us with the story so we categorize it as a dream. It feels like a dream because it blurs the line between what is real and what is imagined, much like the way dreams can mix the strange with the familiar thing in real life. The fourth element is merging realm. Merging realm refers to the closeness or near-merging of two different worlds or realms, often ancient or traditional and modern, and the integration of the magical and the material within a text. The fifth one is disruption of time, space, and identity. Magical realism disrupts our sense of space, time, and identity by merging different worlds, disturbing received ideas about time, space and blurring borders between realism and fantasy (Faris, 2004).

With the abovementioned five elements, one can say that people understand events and occurrences in real world then put them in mind that construct imagination and then create a new image. Given Magical Realism deals with reality, both the author and the readers have to be aware of which part of the story is real and which one is dreamy or fantasy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is based on a qualitative data. Qualitative research is defined as research that originates conclusions without using statistical procedures, and the data is chosen based on the uniqueness of reality being studied (Silverman, 2021). The data of the research are gathered from the short story as well as any other sources that relevant to the research.

Our primary data are obtained from 'Hello Moto', a 16-page short story published in the form of e-short story in 2011 by Tor Publishing Books, which are analyzed by the use of Fariz's theory of Magical Realism. Furthermore, Africanfuturism concept which occurred in the short story are analyzed through the lens of Magical Realism to reveal the narrative strategy beyond it. Yaszek's view on Afrofuturism on her book *The History of Future: Afrofuturism and Science Fiction* (2006) and the article *Africanfuturism: An Anthology* (Talabi, 2020) provide an explanation regarding to the historical roots and evolution of Africanfuturism. These works are beneficial for understanding the development of Magical Realism and Africanfuturism in literary works. Afrofuturism is a collection of artistic and scholarly works that envisions a more equitable and liberated expression of black subjectivity in the future or in different eras, locations, or realities (Sinha, 2023). Africanfuturism is a word used to describe artistic creations that leave the earth, skew optimistic, are centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (Black people), and are rooted first and foremost in Africa (Hanchey, 2023).

The data are categorized to answer the research questions set up for this research. Faris' theory on Magical Realism is used to explore the magical aspects in 'Hello Moto' and also connect it with the context of Africanfuturism. The data are related to magical occurrences or mystical objects found in the short story 'Hello Moto' that have some sort of superpowers but are also presented with factual events. The collected data from the short story 'Hello Moto' that correlate with Faris' theory Magical Realism is used to answer the first research question. To answer the second question about Africanfuturism, the data from a short story that deals with advanced technology, and social and cultural aspects of life in Africa, particularly Nigeria, is

analyzed in depth using the concepts of Africanfuturism and then combine it with Magical Realism. The analysis begins with a discussion of Magical Realism and Africanfuturism. This led to the analysis of the presence of magical events or objects which occurred in the short story. Finally, analyzing Magical Realism aspects that contained in the short story is conducted as a bridge to continue the analysis of Magical Realism and connect it with Africanfuturism, especially to find out the strategy beyond the intersection of Magical Realism and Nigeria's Africanfuturism.

DISCUSSION

1.1 Magical Realism in 'Hello Moto'

Magical Realism is a literary genre blending the ordinary with the magical. According to Faris (2004), Magical Realism is not limited to fairy tales or legends but can also be found in other narratives. Faris (2004) has identified five characteristics that can help readers identify narratives containing Magical Realism. These Magical Realism elements are Irreducible elements, Phenomenal world, merging realm, unsettling doubts, and the disruption of time, space, and identity.

1.1.1 Irreducible Element

According to Faris (2004), Irreducible element is something that cannot be explained by human reason or logic and is composed of elements like magical people, settings, objects, sounds, and events.

“With the wig finally off, Coco and Philo felt more distant to me. Thank God. Even so, because it was sitting beside me, I could still see them. Clearly. In my head. Don't ever mix *juju* with technology. There is witchcraft in science and a science to witchcraft. Both will conspire against you eventually. I realized that now. I had to work fast.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 1)

In the short story, Rain merges black magic (*juju*) with science. *Juju* was originated from West African traditions, which means infusing objects such as doll, beads, and ring with supernatural capabilities, capable of both good and bad intentions. In the short story, the black magic are infused into the wigs by Rain. With the black magic infused in this wig, the wearer can do things beyond reason, such as telepathy and pinpointing the exact location of each wearer, a phenomenon that defies conventional understanding and logic. This strange event is irreducible element because it cannot be explained scientifically.

“I opened my laptop and set it in the dirt. I put my wig beside it. It was jet black, shiny, the “hairs” straight and long like a mermaid's. The hair on my head was less than a millimeter long; shorter than a man's and far more damaged. For a moment, as I looked at my wig, it flickered its electric blue. I could hear it whispering to me. It wanted me to put it back on.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 1)

Rain was examining her wig when suddenly it started flashing with a bright blue light. This was an unusual occurrence as it indicated that the wig was not an ordinary one. Strangely enough, Rain could also hear the wig as if it was communicating with her. This experience was quite confusing because a wig is an inanimate object that lacks consciousness and a soul to communicate with other creatures. The wig is imagined to have a soul and can talk to the wearer, making this strange event an irreducible element.

1.1.2 Phenomenal World

In Magical Realism, the realistic aspect is based on the features of the phenomenal world that are rooted in history and textual reality by using a lot of information, realistic descriptions produce a fictional world that is similar to the one we live in (Faris, 2004). It represents a world where magical or extraordinary occurrences are accepted as part of everyday life without causing much surprise or disruption.

“I sat down, placed my fingers on the keyboard, shut my eyes and prayed to the God I didn’t believe in. After all that had happened, who would believe in God? Philo had been in Jos when the riots happened. I knew it was her and her wig. A technology I had created. Neurotransmitters, mobile phones, incantation, and hypnosis- even I knew my creation was genius. But all it sparked in the North was death and mayhem. During the riots there, some men had even burned a woman and her baby to death. A woman and her baby!” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 2). The occurrence in the short story was similar to a political historical fact in Jos city, Nigeria, used by Okorafor as the backdrop of the narration of the three female characters, Rain, Coco, and Philo. This riots, occurred in 1945, were a series of conflicts between ethnic Igbos (Christian) and Hausa-Fulani (Moslem) who fight for political dominance, economical status, and religious discrepancies. Plotnicov has a subtle description of this riot,

“The Easterners were utterly caught off guard by the Northerners' sudden and brutal attack at Jos in 1945. Women, men, and children's dead were scattered throughout the streets. In Jos, a multicultural city in Nigeria's Middle Belt, three hundred Igbo were brutally murdered by several Northern peoples, most notably the Hausa” (Plotnicov, 1971).

The data from the short story above turns out to be a real picture presented by the author about the dark events that occurred in Nigeria, specifically in the city of Jos, West Africa. The data show that there was a civil war caused by many cultures mixing in this city. The author includes the dark historical context that occurred in Nigeria. The setting and victims told in the short story are very similar to those in reality. In Faris theory, this is considered a phenomenal of world because it is a real setting which is the riot in Nigeria that, in the story, emerged with magical things, namely wigs with their powers. The author wants to tell a true story experienced by Nigerians wrapped in Nigerian culture so that readers feel relate to the horrible incident.

1.1.3 Unsettling Doubt

Unsettling doubt refers to the feeling of uncertainty or doubt about understanding the reality because of the fantastical of supernatural appearance in the story.

“This is a tale you will only hear once. Then it will be gone in a flash of green light. Maybe all will be well after that. Maybe the story has a happy ending. Maybe there is nothing but darkness when the story ends.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 1)

In this sentence, the author presents different potential endings for the story, leaving the story with a sense of uncertainty. The sentence "This is a tale you will only hear once. Then it will be gone in a flash of green light..." (Okorafor, 2011, p. 1), creates perplexion to the readers of the story about whether the story ends there or continues in a different plot in different dimensions. The author intentionally leaves the ending unexplained, with three possible outcomes presented. The first option is a resolution where everything falls into place, resulting in a positive ending. The second option is a happy and satisfying ending. However, the third and final option is much more ominous, suggesting that the story may end in complete darkness, leaving the story without any ending. Although darkness does not necessarily mean a bad ending, it is an unsettling one, as it leaves the story full of uncertainty and an unknown resolution. As the story revolves around three women, it is unclear whether each woman will

receive one of these endings or the author has decided something different for each of them. Frame by Faris' theory of Magical Realism, these three reasons explain why it is considered as unsettling doubt.

1.1.4 Merging Realm

In the characteristic of combining nature, realism merges the world magical (related to traditional beliefs) and the real world (modern) (Faris, 2004).

“I ran my hand over my sore head. Then I quickly tore my eyes from the wig and plugged in the flash drive. As I waited, I brought out a small sack and reached in. I sprinkled cowry shells, alligator pepper and blue beads around the machine for protection. I wasn't taking chances.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 2)

In the story, Rain connected her laptop to a wig that appeared to be alive and crackling with blue electricity. She surrounded the wig with cowry shells, alligator pepper, and blue beads to protect it. Nigeria is home to many ethnic groups, including Berome, Hausa, Fulani, Idoma, Igbo, Jukun, Mwaghavul, Tiv, and Yoruba. Among these groups, cowry shells have a long history of use as currency and for ritualistic offerings. They are sacred to deities associated with the ocean and love due to their resemblance to a vulva and their origin in the ocean. Cowry shells can also protect the evil eye or specify a particular woman. Alligator pepper is another item mentioned in the story. It is a costly spice that is often used in baby-welcoming, naming, and welcoming ceremonies. It is believed to have medicinal properties and is used to treat various ailments. Blue beads also have a deep-rooted significance in Africa. They are not just ordinary beads; they represent healing, harmony, insight, and truth. These beautiful beads are said to possess mystical powers that bring balance to the troubled mind and body. When worn, they radiate a calming energy that promotes peace and tranquility. Magic element (the wig's power) and the realism aspects (cowry shells, alligator pepper, and blue beads) are merged to blur between magic and reality so they create extraordinary events in the story.

1.1.5 Disruption of Space

In this context, "space" refers to much more than just a physical location; it is also a vast and infinite void that can be symbolic of emptiness and nothingness. The data below involves three characters who are suddenly transported to an infinite expanse or a matrix, which completely disrupts their sense of location and surroundings. This experience challenges their perception of reality and raises important questions about the nature of existence itself.

“A text box opened on its screen. Coco squinted trying to read it. It looked like rubbish. But, like Philo, Coco understood what was happening. “Oh,” Coco said, out of breath. “You want to play now, eh? Ok.” She threw her lipstick on the leather seat, the lid still off. It left a smear on the pillow. “Someone will die today, o. And it will not be me.” She disappeared.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 6)

In her book *Ordinary Enchantments*, Faris (2004) explores the impact of magical realism on our perception of space and time. She suggests that magical realism introduced a fresh perspective on space and time, replacing traditional sacred spaces and cyclical time with more structured and measured concepts. Philo was not the only one who was thrown into a dark world by Rain. Coco was also taken to a different space and time separated from the world they used to live in. This new place was completely empty, with darkness all around them. Nobody knows the time in this space is still working as it should or it is reversed or it does not even move. The three of them could only see each other. They can communicate across different timelines because there is a possibility that their timeline is not even match, creating a new space that goes beyond our usual understanding. It was impossible to determine the size of the room

created by Rain. It was unclear whether this space had an end or not. This data from short story challenges conventions of realism by exploring disrupted space and time, pushing the boundaries of what is considered real.

1.2 Africanfuturism in 'Hello Moto'

The definition of Afrofuturism is necessary to identify the meaning of Africanfuturism. As reported by Womack (2013), Afrofuturism is concerned with envisioning new futures and alternate realities, and it frequently examines themes of space, technology, and Black identity. Afrofuturism is a means of reclaiming and reimagining black history and culture, whose roots is in the tradition of black speculative fiction. Afrofuturism arose as a counter-narrative to reclaim Africa's lost past, facilitated by the protracted practice of forced migration and slavery (Sunday, 2022). This term was firstly coined by Mark Dery describing a cultural and aesthetic movement where Black creators use speculative and futuristic themes to challenge narratives of oppression and envision liberation through technology and art (1994). Black imagination and Afrofuturism interact to offer a framework for discussing potential futures and establishing areas of Black empowerment (Hill, 2023).

One of the famous writers of Afrofuturism is Nnedi Okorafor. She is an African-American writer who is known for her works on the concept of Afrofuturism and Africanjujuism (Hashemi et al., 2022). However, in her interview with CGTN America (2020) on *YouTube*, Okorafor disagrees with her being mentioned as an Afrofuturist by the media. She coins a better term that describes her works—namely, Africanfuturist. Africanfuturism achieves greater linguistic specificity by shedding the de facto colonial Western worldview and the othering of the white gaze, according to a definition developed by a Black diasporic writer rather than a white American (Wabuke, 2020). According to Ogunsiji (2024), Afrofuturism empowers Black elements of science fiction that have been suppressed, misunderstood, and ignored by literary authors. It challenges the lack of representation of Black people in mainstream science fiction, arguing that it often portrays a white-centered fantasy. Hodapp (2022) identifies that Afrofuturism is rejected by Africanfuturist. It was created to represent the concerns of African Americans about the future. However, it did not initially include Africa itself. It has been criticized for placing Africa within the African American perspective rather than the other way around. Entering the realm of Africanfuturism can resemble journeying into the future and coexisting with different species, not all of them are good or on Earth. (Iramos, 2023).

The short story 'Hello Moto' contains the Africanfuturism concept, as it connects the history, culture, and daily life of Nigerians. It is usually the African who takes the lead in the story. The following data will clarify the relationship between the Africanfuturism perspective and the Magical Realism theory used in this thesis. Before going to the data from 'Hello Moto' which are analyzed, here are the facts of Africa so we get a clear view of the condition in Africa, especially Nigeria.

According to Zuberi (2010), Africa is often viewed through complex lens that reflect several different perspectives, stereotypes, and realities. The global view of Africa is shaped by historical narratives and media portrayals that tend to focus on poverty and conflict. These portrayals simplify and generalize the condition in Nigeria and its people as shown in this quotation:

Nigeria, as one of Africa's most populous and economically significant countries, embodies both the promise and challenges that define the continent in the eyes of the world. From the bustling streets of Lagos to the vast oil fields of the Niger Delta, Nigeria's narrative is one of contrasts and contradictions, reflecting the complexities

of a nation grappling with a legacy of colonialism, corruption, and ethnic diversity (Zuberi, 2010).

Based on Zuberi (2010), Nigeria is a country with diverse cultures and a lot of natural resources. However, it faces many challenges that prevent its progress and development such as corruption and youth unemployment.

“I didn’t want to think of what Philo gained after causing it all. She never said a word to me about it. However, soon after, she went on a three-day shopping spree in Paris. We could leave Nigeria, but never for more than a few days. “Oh God, I’m so sorry,” I whispered. “I meant well.” I opened my eyes and looked at my screen. The background was a plain blue. The screen was blank except for a single folder. I highlighted the folder and pressed “delete.” (Okorafor, 2011, p. 2)

In the short story, the described problems are easy to solve for those who possess the power of the wig. The story explains that Philo was able to go on a three-day shopping spree in Paris, but with the harsh conditions in Nigeria, this would had been difficult or even impossible without the help of the wig she wore. The wig gave Philo the ability to easily obtain whatever she desired with little effort. Furthermore, it has the potential to change the world's perception of Nigeria, showing that Nigerians are not always poor and is able to accomplish the same things other countries achieve. The author portrays Nigeria as a country that does not experience the challenges mentioned previously. The author asserts that Nigeria is technologically advanced and does not encounter the challenges above.

1.3 The Author’s position regarding to Africanfuturism and Magical Realism in ‘Hello Moto’

This subchapter talks about the position of the author in the short story that regard to the Africanfuturism and Magical Realism through the characters Rain as a Nigerian female which relate with Okorafor’s life. The first step to do is identifying the background of Nnedi Okorafor as the author of ‘Hello Moto’.

Cited from *Britannica*, Nnedi Okorafor was born in 1974 in Ohio. Her parents were immigrants from Nigeria Igbo, who came to the United States. Her father was a heart surgeon and her mother was a housewife. She lives in Chicago’s suburb, Illinois. Based on the interview that she did on *YouTube*, Okorafor is very vulnerable to racism from her neighbors and even her friends at school because she is an immigrant from Nigeria. Starting from discrimination regarding skin color and friends, they even made fun of her hair which was very different because African people's hair is stiffer and harder than other people in general. Because she is a Nigerian who has the principle of moving forward whatever happens, back then she was able to endure it all, even her parents advised her to consider the teasing just a normal joke. Thanks to the advice, she could turn those unpleasant actions into something fun. When she grew up, she used this experience as fuel to strengthen her creativity in writing stories. Okorafor also experienced what could be called an identity crisis. As an American-Nigerian, when she stayed in America, she experienced very severe discrimination. When she visited her relatives and extended family who stayed in Nigeria, because she could not speak Nigerian, she was confused about her true identity. But this problem does not cover the fact that Nigeria is the place where she got her inspiration to write. Starting from the uniqueness that Okorafor found, like in Nigeria when she was nine, electricity was not evenly distributed there, but she saw that people around her were already using telephones as their means of communication. This certainly made her think, how can Nigerians not have equal access to electricity around them but already use telephones like 'advanced people'. This is like Nigerians jumped from basic technology to more advanced technology which could be said to be unnatural.

In the interview (CGTN America, 2020) on *YouTube*, Okorafor calls herself as Africanfuturism and Africanjujuism. The Africanfuturism is a subcategory of science fiction. Africanfuturism focuses on depicting a future where Africa takes the lead instead of the Western world. The second term is a subcategory of fantasy that acknowledge the African spiritualities and imagination. She is one of the biggest African writers that voices the reimagining science fiction and fantasy within African diaspora. Okorafor sees this world as a magical place. This is because she is very attached to African culture which is still strong in spiritualism. This makes this short story seem strange with the presence of magic that is presented because this represents the culture she holds, namely African culture.

According to the interview of Okorafor on *YouTube* (Fieryfilm, 2018), Okorafor likes to imagine because she thinks that African literature has a strong bond with African culture, namely believing in magical things or in other words things that do not necessarily exist. For example, the character Rain still believed in the myth that cowry shells, alligator pepper, and blue beads could ward her off any evil attacks. Wig also plays important role in this short story. The wigs in this short story symbolized African's pride. Because hair for Africans is a symbol of strength, it has something to do with what they glorify, namely the divine being. The elements of aesthetics, identity, class or status, gender, ethnic origin, leadership role, personal taste, and place in the cycle of life are identified as areas where hair plays an important role (Fashola, 2021). For Okorafor, hair is her identity as a Nigerian. In the short story, it is also told that the wigs they wear are very different from other people's hair. The three wigs have different colors and unique shapes and these represent their respective personalities and desires. Cases such as corruption committed by the government in Nigeria made Okorafor depicts the magical element in the wigs as the power of authority that controls everything. The power users were good people and once they tasted the power (corruptive elements) they changed into greedy and bad people. The interesting part in this story is the fact that the ones who are influenced by this greediness are women. This means that corrupt elements can affect not only men but also women which is similar to the real corruption case in Nigeria.

There is a mixture of Eastern and Western cultures in the short story. Okorafor's African literary works contain technological and magical elements. This is because Okorafor has a hybrid culture and a holder of two citizenships, American and Nigerian. She was influenced by American culture which is very advanced with its technology when she lives in America. On the other hand, she still has a cultural identity as a Nigerian whose culture is very strong with magic elements. Okorafor's literary works which contain her dreams about Africa that is advanced in terms of technology combined with magical elements because it is part of their culture. Culture is vital to a lively society, especially Nigeria which has many different cultures. It is shown in how the stories are shared, honor the past, enjoy lives, and envision the future. Culture helps shape someone's identity and allows them to understand the world from different perspectives. This cultural approach to futurism aims to give Nigerians an understanding of the west culture because it will be easier to adapt and embrace the culture. Okorafor aims to unite American and African cultures in Nigeria to develop together and do not leave one of them behind. She also hopes that with the story she wrote, African readers can get brilliant ideas and improve their lives because not only this short story, but other stories Okorafor wrote are tools to explore the imaginative level of African readers.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Okorafor's short story, 'Hello Moto' reveals that it incorporates five characteristics of magical realism. These characteristics include irreducible elements, a phenomenal world, unsettling doubt, merging realms, and disruption of time, space, and identity. The story weaves these characteristics into its narrative, showcasing mystical elements

such as magical events, characters, and objects.

In addition, 'Hello Moto' delves into the concept of Africanfuturism by portraying Nigeria and black people as technologically advanced and superior to other countries. The story features a powerful wig created by a Nigerian scientist who has gained influence in other countries and refers to real-life riots in Nigeria. Furthermore, culturally significant items such as cowry shells, alligator pepper, and blue beads add to the magical realism element in the story, as they are believed to have magical properties that can ward off evil.

As an Africanfuturist, Okorafor highlights the lives of three Nigerian women aspiring to solve Nigeria's problems with technology and magic. Okorafor's hybrid cultural background, blending American technological advancement and African magical elements, is reflected in the narrative. Through this story, Okorafor seeks to convey the message that dreaming big is essential for progress, even if the characters in the story fail to fulfill their goals.

The limitation of this study lies on how the analysis focuses primarily on Africanfuturism and magical realism without extensively exploring other thematic elements or socio-political contexts in Okorafor's broader body of work. Future research could expand on these limitations by exploring how Okorafor's other works contribute to the development of Africanfuturism and magical realism as literary frameworks. Comparative studies between 'Hello Moto' and other Africanfuturist or magical realist texts could also provide greater insight into these genres. Furthermore, interdisciplinary research incorporating sociological or historical perspectives could examine how African cultural symbols and technological imagination influence the broader discourse on postcolonial identity and global futures.

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