The environmental crisis and African women's displacements in *War Girls* by Tochi Onyebuchi

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In the following article, I explore several types of dislocations (environmental, war, patriarchal, to name but a few) in Tochi Onyebuchi's novel *War Girls* (2019), analysed from the methodological perspective of Africanfuturism. The aim of the article is to show how the second wave of African future-oriented literature (diasporic in this case) looks back to the past (the Nigerian Civil War) in order to seek solutions for the ongoing current problems, such as the devastation of the natural environment, climate change, the participation of underage soldiers in military conflicts, and new forms of capitalism and neolonialisation. The novel is read via historical, sociological, and frequently anthropological sources to demonstrate how the speculative discourse can be firmly grounded in the scientific context. Additionally, I propose a feminist and utopian reading of *War Girls*. The text is divided into parts where key elements of Africanfuturism—such as digitalisation, nanotechnologies, Information Technology, African cosmologies, and oral tradition—are discussed in detail and are shown as existing at the same time, entangled with the past and future simultaneously, within human and more-than-human worlds. **Keywords:** Africanfuturism, War Girls, the environmental crisis, new technologies, posthumanism.

Introduction: Displacement from speculative fiction

In his acknowledgements in *War Girls* (2019), Tochi Onyebuchi writes about the graphics of his critically acclaimed novel: "Many have remarked to me what it has meant to them to see a dark-skinned black girl staring daggers at you from the front cover of a young adult novel, a protagonist, a hero, a badass" (451). The feisty girl with an Augmented arm is Onyii, a former child soldier in the Biafran War of Independence. In the year 2172, 15-year-old Onyii, no longer active in the military, is leading a refugee camp for the Biafran girls in southeastern Nigeria. Onyebuchi's novel is set in the speculative future, but it is embedded in the past events of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970, also known as the Nigerian-Biafran War or Biafran War.

Coining the term "Afrofuturism", Mark Dery states that when "imagin[ing] possible futures", Afrofuturist authors will not look back to capitalist, mass-produced "collective fantasies" of white science fiction (180) because "African-American voices have other stories to tell about culture, technology, and things to come" (182). One such story is the speculative narrative about the Biafran War of Independence depicted in *War Girls*. Unlike the follow-up to *War Girls*, *Rebel Sisters* (2020), Onyebuchi's 2019 novel takes place entirely on earth and is not set in outer space. Speculative fiction, as Margaret Atwood claims in *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination*, embraces events that could have happened at a present time because the development of science allows for it (88). The technology in *War Girls*, such Artificial Intelligence, nanotechnology, Augmenting, etc. is widely available in the 21st century. Unfortunately, so is the possibility of nuclear war, radiation, and the complete devastation of the natural environment that plagues female protagonists of Onyebuchi's novel. What remains outside the current technological reach is creating sustainable Space Colonies and relocating human and non-human life there to avoid facing the consequences of the war and climate change, as it happens in the speculative year 2172.

Speculative discourse makes it possible to shift past (historical) events into the future, but the possibility of travelling to other planets to settle there remains within the science fiction domain. Afrofuturism is located at the intersection of science fiction and speculative literature. It shares common ground with both these genres,

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but there are also significant differences and new variables that distinguish it. Marleen S. Barr observes that, nowadays, "Black science fiction writers alter genre conventions to change how we read and define science fiction itself" (xv). In Afrofuturism, the key emphasis is put on re-conceptualising the past for the future purposes of Speculative Blackness, using André M. Carrington's concept. Isiah Lavender III defines Afrofuturism as interactions in the fields of "science, technology, and race across centuries, continents, and cultures" (2). Following this vein, Lavender III argues that, when negotiating the present, "unlike SF, afrofuturism looks to the past to move forward the aspirations of an entire race in all its cultural complexities" (2). In addition, Afrofuturism is much more than a literary movement, as it embraces various forms of art and cultural activities. With the above in mind, Ytasha L. Womack explains the broad scope of Afrocentric creations:

> Whether through literature, visual arts, music, or grassroots organizing, Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future. Both an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory, Afrofuturism combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs. In some cases, it's a total reenvisioning of the past and speculation about the future rife with cultural critiques. (9)

The third crucial difference arises from the array of writing conventions, connotations, and inspirations involving spirituality, oral tradition, myths, fables, magic, and techno-culture as observed by Dike Okoro (9–14). For him, Afrofuturism aims "to engage society and the world beyond their boundaries with narratives detailing disparate lives in conflict-laden imagined places that linked both to the real and the supernatural" (9).

Bearing this in mind, "merging history, black literature, afrofuturism, and SF require dealing with forms of psychological dislocation / disorientation / trauma / white supremacy from the safe distance offered by science-fictional speculation" (Lavender III 2). Such speculations can be traced back to the need for social justice, which Afrofuturist writers articulate in their future-oriented imaginations (Womack 41). One cannot dismiss the potential for social and political changes that speculative visions carry in the realms of "liberation, justice and freedom" (Zamalin 7). In *Black Utopia: The History of an Idea from Black Nationalism to Afrofuturism*, Alex Zamalin reminds one that "black utopian images ranged from black emigration and interracial solidarity to postracialism, Pan-Africanism, and interplanetary escape into the cosmos" (10–1). What is more, as argued by Okoro, African futurist narratives are marked by the aftermath of neocolonialism and postindependence wars and are "interlaced with themes such as gender, poverty, magic, patriarchy, war, tyranny, varying forms of human and environment exploitation and much more that have saturated the vision of authors from the continent" (9).

The first two decades of the 21st century bring about the emergence of Afrofuturism 2.0, which, according to Renaldo Anderson and Charles Jones, situates historical-cultural dislocations within the spheres of nanotechnology, digital age, globalisation, neural networks, transhumanist Augmentations, and the posthuman turn (x). Rooted in these technological changes, Africanfuturism, as defined in 2019 in a blog entry by Nnedi Okorafor ("Africanfuturism defined"), with its non-Western and future-centred speculations, embraces Africa's history, current socio-cultural conditions, and high-tech science as the foundation of creative SF visions. Furthermore, the newest strand of Afrofuturism 2.0, called Astro-Blackness, moves the "nation-state bound analog notion of blackness" into the "post-digital perspectives as a global response to the planetary and near planetary challenges facing black life in the early twenty-first century" (Anderson and Jones viii). In other words, "Afrofuturism 2.0 is the early twenty-first century technogenesis of Black identity reflecting counter histories, hacking and or appropriating" the emerging areas of biocapitalism and technoculture (Anderson and Jones x).

War Girls belongs to the newest line of Afrocentric literature and is grounded firmly in science and technology but, at the same time, as Lavender III describes it, it is seeking solutions to current problems in past events. *War Girls* has a positive attitude towards the digital and nanotechnology advances of science, seeing Augmented Black female bodies as enhanced and powerful and overcoming neocolonial and environmental injustices. Looking at a futile attempt to create a women-only community based on sisterhood in a war-ridden Nigeria, it raises the question of whether sisterly bonds can be put on par, if not above, national and ethnic identifications.

In this article, I explore African women's displacements resulting from wars, girl soldiering, social exclusions, and patriarchy that are inseparably intertwined with the destruction of the natural environment and exploitative economy of resource management. In doing so, I argue that Onyebuchi's novel speculates that the destruction of the natural environment is an outcome of both patriarchal and neocolonial disregard for more-than-human beings, which, in turn, is analogous with the fate of War Girls, whose values, goals, and needs are similarly manipulated

and abused by male military leaders depicted in the text. In each subsection of this article, I aim to explore one of the aforementioned issues, relating it to the characteristics of Africanfuturist writing discussed above: drawing upon the past and history to transform the future; drawing upon oral tradition; digital technology and Augments; spiritual lore and magic; and resisting patriarchy and devastation of the natural environment.

Africanfuturism and the past that becomes the future: The displacement of girl soldiers in *War Girls*

In *African Literature and Future*, Gbemisola Adeoti expresses his belief that literature can and even should explore the continent's present concerns and past choices, because only from this perspective may future challenges be addressed. Adeoti calls this strategy "peeping ahead from a backward glance" (2). Distinguished by heterogenous narrative patterns, traditions, and sources, Adeoti argues that African literature encompasses diasporic writing as well. American-born Onyebuchi (whose parents are both Igbo) belongs to the diaspora. In *Narrating the New African Diaspora: 21st Century Nigerian Literature in Context*, Maximilian Feldner observes that "[n]ovels written abroad engage with Nigeria but, due to the authors' international experiences and transcultural perspectives […] are marked by a combination of expressing a devotion to Nigeria without unduly idealizing it and highlighting its faults and problems while explaining and contextualizing them" (4). Furthermore, Feldner indicates that writers disclose shared elements of the Nigerian diasporic literature, such as coming to terms with the political or economic reasons why their families left the country, recognising one's own accounts of migratory displacement, and relating to the culture and literature written in Nigeria and to one's place in an international literary context (13). As Feldner shows, the new wave of African migration happens with intent to a large extent; migrants stay in touch with Nigeria either by visits or/and via digital media and are able to come back to the country of their ancestry any time due to their regulated legal status (Feldner 15–7). One of the main preoccupations of Nigerian diasporic literature is "representations of postcolonial Nigeria" (Feldner 17). What is more, referring to Ogaga Okuyade, Feldner argues that diasporic Nigerian authors are politically oriented because they wish to envisage profound social changes to improve the lives of African citizens (20). This applies to Onyebuchi as well. Such changes and their speculative visions are very much needed because economic inequality, increasing debts, and transformations in global economics amplified social imbalances in Africa, which affected the poorest and the most vulnerable citizens (i.e. children) and contributed to the weakening cultural and ancestral traditional customs in African communities (Honwana 46, 54).

As Onyebuchi declares himself, *War Girls* is more than fiction; it is entangled with his family narrative and his nation's history. The novel's aim is to help in the healing process of African war traumas (450). The writer admits that he has been inspired by his mother's memories of the Biafran War above all (*War Girls* 448). Following this vein, Feldner reminds one that the Biafran War divided people in Nigeria, and the trauma has never been processed completely because the Biafrans' arguments have never been recognised (40). Okoro seems to share this viewpoint, contextualising the Biafran War in present-day Nigeria: "Almost 60 years later, the story of the war is still being told in Nigeria, and the issue of a possible Biafran state has surfaced with the recent agitation for succession. These politicized struggles have a futuristic tie and have been visited for debate since the end of the Nigerian civil". (7)

Not only did adults fight in the wars at the turn of the century in Africa, but children as well (Onyebuchi 448). The phenomenon of underage combatants is enumerated by Adeoti as amongst the most "relevant and topical" problems that African futurist literature needs to deal with (11). Apart from involving children in military conflicts, what distinguishes post-independence wars in Africa, and the so-called modern wars, is the blurred boundaries between militants and noncombatants and the resulting atrocities committed against the civilian population on a large scale. International involvement in the form of mercenaries or weapon supply is also not rare (Honwana 32–4). In Onyebuchi's novel, international Western companies supply weapons to Federal Nigerians.

According to Alcinda Honwana's study *Child Soldiers in Africa*, these modern wars caused massive displacement of children from their family homes, villages, social roles, infanthood, education, and medical care (1–3, 16, 75).[1] In *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die like Children: The Global Quest to Eradicate the Use of Child Soldiers*, Roméo Dallaire explains that in the global war, child soldiers are regarded as the "ultimate cheap, expendable, yet sophisticated human weapon […] excellent as combatants, as bait for ambushes, as cannon fodder […] light to transport but still heavy enough to explode land mines so adults can move safely in their wake" (3–4). Following this vein, Beverly Eileen Mitchell adds that children are drafted because of their psychological predisposition: due to their malleability, the training of underage children is undemanding, and they can be manipulated to "obey without

questioning and to kill without undue scruples" (14). Accordingly, Honwana shares this view, denying, at the same time, the common misconception that the drafting of children is caused by the shortage of adults to fight (44).

While doing the research for his novel, Onyebuchi consulted historical sources and memoirs such as, for instance, *How Dare the Sun Rise: Memoirs of a War Child* (2017) by Sandra Uwiringiyimana and Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2008). In *War Girls*, Onyebuchi's protagonist, Onyii, becomes a girl soldier at the age of eight. Unlike many other children, she is not kidnapped and joins the Biafran army voluntarily. Nonetheless, for most historians and critics alike, the idea of volunteerism amongst child soldiers remains a debatable issue, as children's allegedly volitional motivations may arise from starvation, poverty, economic deprivation, immature expectations, seeking adults' protection during war, or simply because of social pressure (see Honwana 2–3, 14, 37, 54–8; Mitchell 14). Even when joining the army of their own accord, underage soldiers cannot withdraw when they may wish to, regardless of the fact that they are not professional militaries. As argued by Dallaire, "Child soldiers are not weathered warriors who have consciously, willingly and wholeheartedly committed their adult life to the use of force against others and are prepared to pay the price of the same against them" (13).

At this stage, it needs to be explained that, despite "the Africanization of the Child Soldier" as imagined in the West (Rosen), underage combatants and insurgents fought in European or American armies as well (Rosen 182–4). What is more, the recruitment and treatment of child soldiers differed by country (see, for instance, Eichstaedt). Finally, when discussing the phenomenon of child soldiers, one needs to take into account the heterogeneity of underage combatants' experiences, depending upon their age, gender, country, ethnicity, etc. (Rosen 175, 181–2; Honwana 4) and rely upon historical and anthropological accounts instead of imagined abstractions (Rosen 187).

In *War Girls*, the paths to becoming child soldiers are different for Onyii and her older schoolmate, Adaeze. Onyii enlists to be close to Adaeze, who provides her with military training and tries to shape the girl in her own image. Due to Adaeze's influence, Onyii comes to believe that "dying to make Biafra a reality" will make her life meaningful because she "would die using […] [her] skills and abilities to make an impossible thing happen" (308). Adaeze puts the Biafran future above anything else, even above her bond with Onyii, who is infatuated with her. Looking back, Adaeze confesses to Onyii: "'I was once willing to sacrifice you for the glory of Biafra. There was a time when I would have done it without question. I let you run with me on nearly every mission. Every village raid […]. [W]ar […] asks terrible things of you'" (310).

War asks terrible things, especially of women. As regards female underage soldiering, Honwana explains that girls' situations during postindependence wars in Africa were particularly dramatic. *Child Soldiers in Africa* describes that young females, both civilians and militaries, were likely to fall prey to sexual attacks, mutilation, rape, murder, or slavery. In the camps, girls couldn't count on equal treatment, were burdened with all household chores and transporting supplies or ammunition, and were coerced/drugged into having sexual contact with male soldiers. Some of them even gave birth unassisted (Honwana 2, 5, 75–6, 92–9, 102; Mitchell 14–5). Susan Willhauck states that 40% of child soldiers are girls (2), which shows that the numbers are far from marginal.

Onyii's survival strategy relies on being as skilled as possible. She distinguishes herself first as a soldier and then as a combat pilot, receiving the reputation of The Child with Demon Eyes. This notoriety protects her against the abuses that other girls could experience in camps. When the Biafran brigadier tries to force a teenage Onyii to return to active fight, he says to her: "You simply followed the smell of the Nigerians. And you killed all who crossed your path" (99). Biafran militaries prefer to view Onyii as a merciless killer and the perpetrator of violence rather than also/primarily the victim of the war machine. In consequence, adult male soldiers look at Onyii with a mixture of awe and terror.

In *Child Soldiers in the Western Imagination: From Patriots to Victims*, David M. Rosen writes: "the concept of the child soldier fuses two very contradictory and powerful ideas, namely the 'innocence' of childhood and the 'evil' of warfare. Thus, from the outset, in modern Western imagination, the very idea of the child soldier seems both aberrant and abhorrent" (175). Moreover, as observed by Honwana, in Angola and Mozambique, people may regard soldiers as impure, possessed by evil spirits of their victims, or war-polluted. Therefore, children who have fought in a war could be displaced from their communities permanently or temporarily (6, 100). What is more, underage soldiers' social status is "inherently unstable, without sanctioned cultural definition, embodying a societal contradistinction, and entirely embedded in conflict" (Honwana 3).

In Onyebuchi's novel, the boundaries between girl soldiers and civilians remain "inherently unstable". Eight-year-old Onyii recalls how the leader intimidated them: "He made me and the other girl stand with the hostages.

The rest of our squadron were young men, boys, and some older men" (406). In the Biafran War of Independence, as depicted in the novel, the boundaries are obscured not only between civilians and soldiers but also between enemies and allies. During one of the night rides, Onyii's unit attacks the village in Abia State where Ify's family lived. Abia state is situated in the Niger Delta where the division between "us vs. them" is unclear. Historically, during the Biafran War, the "people of the Niger Delta had a unique war time experience as they were probably the only minority groups or region that suffered onslaughts of violence and injustices from both Biafran and Federal armies—double occupation—right in the heart of their homelands" (Ojaruega 206). Furthermore, in *War Girls*, civilians are killed to send a message to Nigerians that Biafrans were not going to take prisoners. Recalling the slaughter in Abia, Onyii reveals that she had no idea what she should do with the village hostages: "We didn't know what else to do. This wasn't a military outpost. This place wasn't of any use to us. But it was our commander's idea to make a broadcast. To give a speech that would be shown to the Nigerians. Justifying what we were about to do" (406). Onyii's confusion regarding civilians indicates her conflicted loyalties and moral dilemmas.

Dallaire argues that child soldiers transgress any traditional classifications assigned to their biological and cultural age (157) even though age is not always the factor that identifies children in Africa but rather their "social roles, expectations, and responsibilities" (Honwana 52). Furthermore, he locates minor combatants somewhere in between adults and children, stressing that they do not fit into any of these categories (Dallaire 4, 157). To understand their status, one needs to transcend the binaries of "civilian and combatant, victim and perpetrator, initiate and initiated, protected and protector […], innocence and guilt" (Honwana 4). As argued earlier, to prove their place in the army, child soldiers are intimidated to do "more" than adults; they are forced to incite others into combat and be an example for grown-ups (Honwana 50). In *War Girls*, Onyii explains that having shot Ify's mother (during her attempted attack on the other girl soldier) "gave the others the courage. When they saw what I had done, they knew they could do it too. So our commander gave his speech, then lined up the remaining hostages from the village. And we shot them dead" (407).

In Onyebuchi's novel, the end of the Biafran War of Independence makes the existence of child soldiers problematic for both sides. Overnight, instead of war heroes, these children become common criminals who additionally do not qualify for military jurisdiction because, in the eyes of the law, they are too young for that. Honwana claims that "[a]lthough the moral responsibility of individual soldiers may be severely limited by the constraints under which they fought, it is not entirely absent. The consequences of such acts cannot be evaded. In both practical and spiritual terms, child soldiers are marked by their participation in violence and death" (50). In Onyebuchi's novel, when the war comes to end, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is set up to document the atrocities committed by both sides. In consequence, War Girls are going to be judged by "impartial" internationals from Space Colonies who supplied weapons to Federal Nigerians.

Assessing such an option, Onyii chooses death in combat to the verdicts of the commission that she does not recognise. The teenager strongly resents "[b]eing judged by people who think they're better than us? Who interfered in the war when they said they wouldn't and have caused so much death and destruction but will go free and unblamed? It is […] unjust" (308). Onyii correctly assumes that Western internationals who supported Federal Nigerians have no moral right to decide about the life and death of those who fought in the war. Adaeze comments on the neocolonial involvement of the Western companies and the whites (the *oyinbo*) that wash their hands of responsibility: "It is how the oyinbo do business. They are allergic to claiming responsibility for their actions. This is their history. *Perhaps* they know no other way" (308). Ify goes further than that, underlining that Nigeria would be better off without any foreign involvement: "*Maybe* we do not need the oyinbo. And *maybe* we do not need the Chinese. *Maybe* Nigeria can handle its problems on its own" (342). With her war experiences, Onyii looks at the world disheartened, rightly expecting that she will not survive to see the Independent Biafra: "'*Maybe* it will be always be like this […]. *Maybe* neither of us will live to see what Biafra might become. This war. It […] swallows up everything'" (401, italics added). The subsection does not accidentally finish with a plethora of *maybes*. Apart from revisioning the past, Africanfuturism and the act of "peeping ahead from a backward glance" (Adeoti 2) speculate about the potential scenarios for the future. In the case of *War Girls*, these scenarios are rendered in the concessive clauses cited-above that indicate the probable directions for Nigeria's future development.

Displaced memories of the African-American diaspora: Tradition of re-tellings in Africanfuturism

Referring to the African-American Diaspora, F. Abiola Irele argues that "An Afrocentric vision in Black literature in America thus appears as an essential element of a liberating consciousness", regarding the diaspora's drawing upon oral tradition as a form of "self-expression" and "the awareness of a particularized experience—historical, social, cultural" (20). Following this line of thought, Kwasi Wiredu comments that every written form has a trace of orality (12), which clearly contradicts the alleged superiority of writing over speech. What is more, with Frederic Jameson in mind, Isidore Okpewho calls for "contemporizing" oral tradition and "their dialogic or dialectical interface with the consumer's location in time" (183).

Ernst R. Wendland distinguishes five features of information applicable to orality: eventive, dialogic, descriptive, commentative, and collateral (47). In *War Girls*, the blocked memories experienced by Onyii are connected with her service as an eight-year-old girl soldier in the Biafran War of Independence. The eventive trait refers to the Abia massacre as "the causal-chronological chain" (47). The dialogic function involves Onyii's attempt to come to terms with her accountability by negotiating her memories with herself, which reaches its peak during the climactic conversation with Ify when she owns up to killing her mother. The descriptive feature is rendered by providing the details and context for the critical night raid on the village. Finally, the commentative function encompasses the arguments about Onyii's young age and her leader's manipulation. The collateral section is realised via Ify's reaction to Onyii's confession. From the anthropological perspective, as stressed by Wiredu, in Africa "the operative ethic is communalism" (15). Therefore, apart from amends (saving little Ify and raising her as her own sister), Onyii's open declaration of guilt is of vital importance. This way, oral literature transcends a plain text, becoming "a totality that conjoins communication and participation the affective field of a communal event" (Irele 37).

Onyii becomes fully conscious of her past actions through the process of re-telling them to Ify. In this practice, she enters the dialogue with her younger self and is able to run through traumatic memories and understand her true motivations. Sean Field claims that "how people utilize memory *and* imagination […] is fundamental to how people contain their feelings about themselves and compose their pasts into a cohesive sense of self" (3, italics in original). It is only when teenage Onyii becomes the owner of her narrative that she becomes re-connected with her emotions and can overcome the helplessness of a child who had to assume the role of an adult. To render these complex emotions, Onyebuchi follows an oral storytelling tradition prominent in African literature. Simala observes with regard to storytelling that:

> A prevailing conceptualisation of narrative is that it is one of the many modes of transforming knowing into telling. It is the paradigmatic mode in which experience is shared and articulated. Narratives assume many forms; they are heard, seen and read; they are told, performed, painted, sculpted and written. Human beings are immersed in narrative, telling themselves stories and recognising in their own stories, the stories of others. (Simala 23)

In Onyebuchi's novel, Onyii's war memories are fragmented, and they return to her in flashbacks, especially when the girl is under the influence of the Chukwu prophetic powder. Therefore, there are many gaps in what she can remember, and not all the pieces of missing information are provided to readers instantaneously—or ever. "But in all of them, she has a machine rifle in her hands and a machete strapped across her back over her bandolier of bullets. The gun is nearly as big as her. She is eight years old" (92).

In a flashback, Onyii recalls how she used to take her leader's words at face value, believing that Biafran soldiers acted only in self-defence: "Her memories come back to her as strategic manoeuvres […]. [S]he remembers the raids themselves, the people begging to be spared" (94). Over the course of time, individual corpses changed into "a trail of bodies" that nobody even wished to bury (93). This way, the girl soldier became desensitised and accustomed to death and killing. In retrospection, Adaeze reminds Onyii: "We killed so many people together, and I held you at my side the entire time. Watching as, bit by bit, your innocence bled out of your wounds. This is what war does" (310). Fifteen-year-old Onyii brings the combat memories to mind: "Moving under cover of night to the villages on the outskirts of Nigerian towns and leaving behind a trail of bodies. Her leader had called it liberation, but there was no freedom for the enemy farmers who had lain in pools of their own blood. The weeping families, the people who filled graves" (93).

By re-telling her memories, Onyii can cast doubt on the words of the Biafran military leadership. She questions the oxymoronic phrase "enemy farmers" that is meant to blur the difference between civilians and militants. The eight-year-old girl soldier trusted unquestionably what she was told, namely that in war, there were no

"civilians" in unarmed villages. Onyii's later cognitive and affective dissonance is an essential part of remembering. "Imaginative remembrance and storytelling also provide containment for a multitude of memories—at times contradictory, at times potentially overwhelming in their emotional impact. The contestations of memory are both over the form and content that is to be retained and/or recreated from our pasts […] [which] involves the co-creation of oral histories" (Field 9–10).

When faced with Ify, Onyii does not deny that she killed her mother in the Abia massacre. What is more, she assumes full responsibility for her actions like an adult whom she had not yet become. Onyebuchi envisions an epic scene in which Onyii can reply to Ify's accusations: "'I was a child!' Onyii roars. 'I was just a child.' Now tears pool in Onyii's eyes. 'I was a little girl with a gun in my hands. I did what I was told. I had no one! No family' […]. She sniffs and wipes her face" (407). The passage's conversational style is saturated with emotional exchanges, pauses, insecurities, and affective repetitions. Through re-tellings, the traumatised speaker suffering from memory loss may reconstruct the past from shattered splinters, which is manifested in the quotation's discontinuous and "broken" syntax and punctuation.

Displaced from their ethnic communities: Feminist utopias in Africanfuturism

The refugee camp for girls, situated in southeastern Nigeria, provides shelter for orphaned Biafran girls, female war refugees, and underage girl soldiers. The War Girls create the community based on their own terms, on the values that were absent in the war-torn reality but much desired by them, which practically fulfils the definition of utopia. Derived from Greek, "utopia" means the 'good place', and the female refugee camp is a good place for all the girls who stay there. Utopia is a beneficial practice in imaging the future built on fair principles, reducing social, class, or ethnic power imbalances. Onyii's recuperative goal becomes protecting the War Girls and creating a "a sanctuary where they could stay and avoid the fate that she had had to endure" (92). Displaced from their homes, the War Girls form a supportive women-only sisterly community in which they learn, work, and fight together. They grow plants in the greenhouse, the younger ones go to school, and babies are looked after by friendly androids. Fifteen-year-old Onyii describes the camp as the only place that has ever signified safety for her (42). Referring to sisterhood, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmi indicates that, in Africa, the notion of co-mothering seems to be more culturally relevant (5). Onyii performs both these roles.

Onyebuchi's narrative about two "sisters" being divided, displaced from their fighting communities, constitutes the metaphor of the divisions during the Biafran War. Onyii's (Igbo) and Ify's (Yoruba) lives are entangled throughout the novel. Overall, mutual distrust of ethnic communities and power imbalances permeate the whole novel. In *War Girls*, the civil wars originate when minorities feel excluded, disempowered, and discriminated against:

> For so long, they have visited violence upon us. It never starts with machetes. It starts with shutting the Igbo out of government. Then it becomes giving all the good jobs to the Hausa and the Fulani and the Yoruba. Then we are accused of crimes we do not commit. Called animals. They say we *infest* this country […]. We are blamed for the drought. We are blamed for the radiation. Then we are thrown in jail. Then we are murdered. (234)

Ethnicity and postcolonialism are also connected with patriarchy that, as Philomina E. Okeke-Ihejirika proves, can vary considerably not only across the African continent but also within the same ethnic groups (11, 12, 25). On the whole, Okeke-Ihejirika finds the "hybrid" of colonialism and capitalism (in changing proportions and locations) accountable for gender imbalances in Africa (4). According to Okeke-Ihejirika, the precolonial past allowed Igbo women a degree of sovereignty in the areas of kinship, healing, spirituality, farming, or politics, depending upon their social and familial status (*diala*, the advantaged women, or *osu*, the socially excluded) (12) and belonging, or not, to extended families (13–4). British colonisers that preferred male personnel "invoked its own conventions of a patriarchal tradition, which in many instances found an ally with the indigenous culture" (Okeke-Ihejirika 16). As a result, this blocked African women's access to education and advancement. Okeke-Ihejirika stresses that this mixture of male influence and women's exclusion in postcolonial Nigeria has contributed to women being perceived to be of lesser prominence and significance than men (17). She argues that "new rights and opportunities for women are often seen as inconsistent with the cultural norms to which women should adhere" (6).

Patriarchy introduces its own regulations in which, according to the classic definition by Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, women are objects passed from fathers to husbands. In *War Girls*, the brigadier general declares the act of ownership: "This camp and its contents are being seized by the Republic of New Biafra.

This is now our property" (85). If captured, War Girls could become the enemy's property, but they are equally likely to be kidnapped and "turned into nothing but a machine making their children" by their own soldiers (*War Girls* 43–4). Having been "rescued" by the male Biafran army, War Girls painfully realise that the same ethnic identification and a shared goal cannot overcome patriarchy. Authoritarian male soldiers undermine the value of War Girls' military skills and generally do not perceive them as their equals. "For over forty years of Nigeria's postcolonial history, the political climate has been shaped by a strong military presence with short interludes of civilian intervention" (Okeke-Ihejirika 17). What is more, in the novel, Biafran soldiers look down on underage soldiers, judging girls solely by the standards of physical attractiveness. Girls in the refugee camps, most of whom have limb prostheses, are called "disgusting", "dirty" runaways from husbands (*War Girls* 82). Onyii is bitterly disappointed that the Free Biafran Army is permeated with tribal misogynistic rules: a part of her can't believe this is actually the Biafran military and not some gang of rebels or random terrorists come to collect child brides. She had seen them in action over the years, prowling roads and dipping into the wilderness to snatch up unsuspecting girls to make them slaves (97).

What is more, girls begin to act in a way that is inspired by male soldiers. Under the Biafran military leadership, girls develop their necrophiliac war programme, bringing to life dead boys killed by bombs and turning them into synthetic underage soldiers. By creating zombie child soldiers whose only function is to fight side-by-side with War Girls, Onyii's protégées break the rules of sisterhood with more-than-human beings. In other words, patriarchy destroys all the loyalties that could be supportive of women.

War Girls' alliances with new technologies in Africanfuturism and bodily augmentations

Africanfuturism regards technology, especially digitality and interconnectedness, as the path to a fair and less divided future. In her 2017 TED talk, Okorafor brings to mind one of her visits to Nigeria in the 1990's during which she "started noticing the role of technology in Nigeria: cable TV and cell phones in the village, 419 scammers occupying the cybercafes, the small generator connected to my cousin's desktop computer because the power was always going on and off" ("Sci-Fi stories that imagine a future Africa"). She admits that the scale of interconnectivity and digital immersion inspired her Africanfuturistic writing. In the same video, Okorafor explains why technology plays such a profound role in African future-oriented fiction: "imagine new technologies, ideas, and sociopolitical changes it'll inspire. For Africans, homegrown science fiction can be a will to power. What if? It's a powerful question". Africanfuturist writing sees new technologies as empowering and enhancing positive transformations for all classes, races, and genders. Okeke-Ihejirika criticises Nigerian "men's exclusive access to the science and technology disciplines" (64). She perceives higher education as providing Igbo women "some degree of social mobility" and "tangible contribution to nation building" (Okeke-Ihejirika 7). In *War Girls*, Ify, who designs Accent ("turn[ing] yourself into an invisible router") (74), wants to study science to solve the environmental crisis that devastated half of the Earth:

> She dreams of building extraordinary structures that will beat back the waters that gobble up more and more shoreline with each passing month. And she will figure out how to harness energy and power entire cities with it. She will figure out how to terraform those parts of pasture in the North that the desert has conquered […]. She will make Nigeria a beacon of light on the continent. (128)

In *War Girls*, technology is all-pervasive. The refugee camp is wired, and it has its own intranet network fuelled by minerals: "All these things happening in the camp's closed network. Bright as ocean water under the sun. Data" (15). In the camp, nanotechnology provides female organisms' life supporting system. If a limb breaks, it can be repaired in in the camp in "auto-body shelters", "[w]here the girls can become Augments, given limbs or organs more powerful than what they were born with" (5). Onyii observes: "[h]alf-limbs only become half-limbs because they're trying to make someone whole. An Augment is not an ugly thing" (5). Onyebuchi's female protagonists who lost their biological limbs are not "half-human" but more, as Okorafor puts it ("Sci-Fi stories").

From fractured Black female bodies in neocolonialism to empowering posthuman Augments

In Onyebuchi's novel, fractured Black female bodies symbolise the nation split by military, patriarchal, and neocolonial conflicts. Sami Schalk argues that "black women's speculative fiction alters the categories of (dis) ability, race, and gender in ways that can be productive, instructional, and thought-provoking" (139). Furthermore, she explains that corporeal impairments ("[e]xtreme scars, missing fingers, missing ears, and mishealed bones")

are historical and material conditions frequently resulting from slavery and, therefore, they cannot be reduced solely to metaphorical signification (Schalk 44). Onyebuchi's opening sentence, "The first thing Onyii does every morning is take off her arm" (3), echoes the first sentence of Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred:* "I lost an arm on my last trip. My left arm (9)". In Butler's book, the loss of a limb refers to slavery experienced tangibly due to time travel; in Onyebuchi's novel, it is a result of the Biafran War of Independence. Civil wars in Africa need to be traced back to (neo)colonial legacy which crippled the whole continent because, as argued by Murray drawing upon Clare Barker, "the heritage of postcolonial and decolonising histories […] created numerous disabilities through conflict or political productions of poverty" (132). What is more, "the prothesis is a device that signifies the convergence of technology, capital, and the 'human'" (Mattar 86), where capital is linked with both the colonial past and neocolonial present.

Looked from a different, subversive perspective, the lack of limbs in *War Girls* is reclaimed as an enhancing commonplace and not a stigmatising condition: "War Girls have gotten used to sleeping without their arms or their legs" (3). António Fernando Cascais points out that, in science fiction literature, disability means much more than the narratives of "cure and correction", where biomedical intervention seems to be the only solution, heavily charged with cultural signification of incompleteness and helplessness (72). In *War Girls*, Augments render unapologetic posthuman transformations, "*ontological condition* in which many humans now, and increasingly will, live with chemically, surgically, technologically modified bodies and/or in close conjunction (networked) with machines and other organic forms (such as body parts from other life forms through xenotransplantation)" (Nayar 3, italics in original). In *War Girls*, Chinelo's body is such a technologically modified organism: "Cyberized, but still, she bleeds red blood" (10). What is more, humans are converged with Augments and with the whole camp-based network. It signifies the posthuman vision of the body that is no longer confined to a biological organism but co-exists with synthetic, digital, and metal forms of matter, "the human as co-evolving, as […] a network of connections and exchanges as embodiment embedded in […] cybernetics, consciousness studies, cognitive sciences and computer sciences, and the development of new domains within biomedicine, genetic science and biology such as systems biology" (Nayar 35). Corporeal augmentations raise the issue of boundaries of one's embodiment and selves. Natasha Vita-More explains that, regardless of the corporeal fragmentation, "the content within the brain—memory and nervous system data—must be intact and continuous to evidence personhood over time" (63). I refer to this in the section on re-tellings and Onyii's memories retrieval.

Posthuman identities in *War Girls* create multi-layered organic and metal assemblages with more-than-human beings beautifully rendered in an organic and nonorganic web of digital data that flows like blood in the circulatory system in "the forest of nodes and vectors" (15). War Girls perceive the bodily Augmentations as the extension of the entanglements with more-than-human beings.

Displacement from the natural environment in Africanfuturism: The radioactivity of neocolonialism

In *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making Through Science Fiction and Activism*, Shelley Streeby encourages us to "decolonize the imagination by using speculative fiction" (31). In other words, by imagining alternative environmental scenarios concerning the future of the whole planet. Such speculations might help envision the worst-case scenarios and, consequently, ways to avoid them. Taking the least desirable options into account, in *War Girls* the Japanese ambassador to Biafra enumerates them all happening in one line: "earthquakes, nuclear disasters, climate change", only to propose as a solution—leaving the earth behind and moving to Space Colonies where "they cannot follow us" (352). Although the ambassador encourages nations to leave the mess of the Anthropocene behind on earth, not all countries can afford it.

In Onyebuchi's novel, the Biafran War of Independence is preceded by a global nuclear conflict that did not start in Africa, but regardless of it, it impacted the whole continent and the rest of the globe. Western superpowers started the nuclear war with one another and, as a result, the radioactive fallout spread all over Africa. In other words, superpowers plagued the Earth with radiation and climate change, and having done so, avoid accountability and move to Space Colonies, where the most affluent Western countries built a shelter protecting them against

radioactivity. The Big-Big, the nuclear explosion, took place before Onyii's birth, therefore, she has never seen the environment unaffected by radiation:

> Onyii wasn't alive when the oyinbo went to war with themselves and the Big-Big went off an ocean away and the wind swept red clouds over the entire continent [—]. A time before the oyinbo—the whites—raced to the stars and built America and Britain and Scandinavia and other places where they were able to—were the *only* ones able to—hide from what human stupidity had done to the planet. (24, italics in original)

What "human stupidity had done to the planet" in the Anthropocene is inseparably connected with colonialism and the neocolonial attitude towards the natural environment. With regard to Nigeria, it signifies aggressive mining of natural resources (palm and crude oil). Jussi Parikka warns against "establishing neocolonial structures of corporate presence in African countries; from infrastructure to end users, Africa is the next continent of consumers for the global corporations [...] [in] the corporate rush to the energy and mineral reserves" (126).

In Onyebuchi's novel, the environmental damage both precedes and follows the Biafran War of Independence and ethnic displacements. In real life Nigeria, as stressed by Okuyade, the defence of human rights goes hand-in-hand with environmental ones (xiii), which proves how entangled and inseparable they both are. In *Nature, Environment, and Activism in Nigerian Literature*, Sule E. Egya draws attention to the uniqueness of Nigerian environmental literature, claiming that ecological concern has been present there well before the ecocritical discourse. "[...] Nigerian literature, perhaps more than any other national literatures in Africa, remains a rich resource with which to validate the argument that nature and environment, the biotic and the abiotic life forms, and indeed the relations between the human and the nonhuman, have long been thematised in Africa before the emergence of what we now know as ecocriticism" (3).

Theorists tend to agree that climate change is connected in an intersectional way with deprivation, destitution, and power imbalances (see Parenti; Egya; Poray-Wybranowska). Following this line of thinking, the regions affected by these factors tend to be the most exploited and least protected with regard to climate change consequences, such as drought or desertification. In the case of Nigeria, "[o]ne cannot talk of the environment [...] without references to the neo-imperial system of subjugation that use and abuse the human and the nonhuman, almost always in the same breath" (Egya 12). In other words, while exploring the reasons for the environmental devastation in present-day Nigeria, one needs to look back to the colonial past and the entire "catastrophic convergence".

Justyna Poray-Wybranowska refers to Parenti's term "catastrophic convergence" to demonstrate how local and global issues, overlapping with one another, aggravate environmental crises (6). In Nigeria, the natural world's "catastrophic convergence" is most conspicuous in the Niger Delta where crude oil is excavated. In the Delta area, the convergence embodies political, ethnic, and economic factors. Tanure Ojaide argues that nowadays about 20 ethnic groups for whom "the environment itself is the greatest unifier" (20) live in the Niger Delta (13). Therefore, destroying the unity of the natural environment means destruction of the groups' livelihood and their customs. What is more, "[e]thnicism supported by avarice on the part of the military leadership is a weakness exploited by the multinationals for [...] the imperialistic agenda of their owners" (Feghabo 52). In *War Girls*, to defeat the Igbo, the Federal government enters into alliances with Western companies and later allows them to seize the land with the precious mineral resources. Ify argues: "Even now, you seek to guarantee the safety of your colonizers. These oyinbo. They don't care about you. They care about your minerals [...]. You share no culture with them, and they share no culture with you. And yet you are letting them help you destroy your Igbo brothers and sisters" (237).

To imagine the extent of the ecological damage, one needs to recall the fact that the Niger Delta is called a "Global Biodiversity Hotspot" (Ogbeibu and Oribhabor). It encompasses four very different zones—"coastal barrier lands, mangrove swamp forests, freshwater swamps, and lowland rainforests" —and many species that may become extinct soon (Ogbeibu and Oribhabor). Sunny Awhefeada claims that the Niger Delta turned from a unique, ecologically biodiverse region into the global synonym for unparalleled ecocide, oil spillages, displacement of ethnic communities, a traditional way of earning an living, extreme deprivation, disease, and crime, especially sexual abuse of women living on this territory (96; Okuyade 285). Okuyade speaks of "the rape of the land" (280) which he finds analogous to rapes on women (295). The Niger Delta's oil-spills, acid rain, and the contamination of the land makes the region unsuitable for human and more-than-human living, especially fish (Mowarin 222).

To render the devastation of the environment, instead of excavating crude oil, Onyebuchi opts for the mining of rare minerals needed for fuel and digitality. In the futuristic narrative, the Western world helps Federal Nigerians to gain access to minerals which they wish to import to Space Colonies militarily. Ify comments critically on global international corporations' involvement in African countries, claiming that they "take and take and take and never to give" (336). When the Biafran War of Independence is over, the mineral trade licences are given to foreign enterprises nearly for free: "the Biafran minister for mineral development had practically given away mining concessions to the Japanese in exchange for a sum of money Onyii knows will go straight to him […] not to the people who live on that land" (351). Similarly to earlier-cited Okoro, Awhefeada observes that the Nigerian "government looks the other way, provides security […] and brutally represses any dissenting groups affected by the horrendous deeds of the foreign oil companies" (96). Apart from turning a blind eye to aggressive excavations, Egya claims that Nigerian state governors have "in most cases misappropriated" the United Nations funding for environmental protection (74), which deepened the ecological crisis.

In *War Girls*, radiation, like the neocolonial order, permeates everything and leaves a nuclear imprint on all life forms. The radioactive landscape is reminiscent of the devastated fluvial territory in the Niger Delta. The Redlands, the territory where neither humans nor nonhumans can live, has the highest rating on the Geiger index and signifies "the wound" that severs the whole of Nigeria (*War Girls* 335). In the Midland, "where prosperity begins" (77), there is no radiation, and Nigerians can grow high-taxed crops or other plants there. Historically, on the other hand, Biafrans suffered from starvation on an unprecedented scale during the war (Giovetti). Ify sums up these differences: "a world divided into the dead and the living: red with radiation and poisoned air and hard, unyielding ground; blue with breathable air and vegetation and drinkable water" (336). Radiation permeates the Biafran territory where the War Girls' camp is situated, but, unlike in the Redlands, the mutated plants remain lush and green. "The Redlands just below the Middle Belt, the land taken by radiation. There's nothing to mark it, no recently turned earth to indicate mass graves, no markings of where battles had happened or where villages had been razed or where tent cities had erupted into being. No markings where troops from either side had been stationed. Just untouched redness" (335). The War Girls have to wear skinsuits because, without them, human skin flakes off. Not only people are affected by radiation, more-than-human agents like vegetation and animals are as well: "twisted and contorted […] into unimaginable beasts. It mutates the flesh. It burns the mind" (418). As a result, mutated species come into life copiously, animals are born with extra limbs or heads, they are aggressive because of pain and radioactive disease, "skinny with radiation poisoning or thick with blight from polluted water" (76). Radiation contaminated drinking water and air, "the earth is red clay. Brown rivers run through it […]. Radiation hangs thick in the air and glows beneath the soil" (302).

Mutated animals such as "lizards that crawl on six legs like small dragons" (320), two-headed wulfus, and hooved shorthorns tend to be additionally "armored, mechanized so that their biomass melds with wiring and machinery" (111). In Onyebuchi's novel, Green-and-Whites reprogram wired animals "[k]ept alive by techs and coded to kill" (48) to become deadly weapons. Chike captures it as follows: "They have colonized the animals, even" (49). Apart from fear, the War Girls feel empathy towards these exploited more-than-human creatures who's full-of-suffering existence is artificially prolonged for combat purposes: "Plates and circuitry screwed into it, wires disappearing in its rotting flesh. A corrupted thing poisoned even further by the Green-and-Whites" (48). During her stay with Federal Nigerians, Ify learns that they treat wired animals as machines, transforming food into fuel, "controlling the populations, monitoring their intake and their health from afar" (111–2). The lives of more-than-human beings are intertwined with the narrative of pain and control throughout the novel.

The deterritorialisation of Chukwu minerals and Igbo cosmology

In Africanfuturism, cosmology and magic remain vital parts of the narrative, deriving their strength from the land and beliefs connected with it. Okorafor explains that "African science fiction's blood runs deep and it's old, and it's ready to come forth" ("Sci-Fi stories"). In *War Girls*, Onyii regains traumatic memories when she inhales the powdered minerals called Chukwu, the same name as the Igbo deity. In Igbo ontology, minerals are the blood of the soil and crystalised sacred lore of the land. Joseph Thérèse Agbasiere claims that minerals are "endowed with vital force" because "trees, rivers and even rocks as such are believed to have their own gods and goddesses". "Minerals, soil and other inanimate beings" are classified as *Uro*, animals are called *Anu*, and plants *Osisi* (Agbasiere). Minerals, like everything else, come from the supreme deity Chukwu. Emmanuel Oyiaku explains that Chukwu gave rise to both visible and invisible beings and the entire universe. Chukwu belongs to the high deities, invisible ones,

transcending time and space, mighty, superior, intervening in the affairs of the universe and providing judgement, "all seeing" (Agbasiere). Chineke, another name for Chukwu, means "The Creator or the God that created all things" (Oyiaku). Or, as Agbasiere proposes, Chileke, "the creator of the universe encompassing the sky and earth and all the things in them".

In *War Girls*, Chukwu signifies both a material and sacred network of organic and non-organic beings, connecting them with the more-than-human world. Bearing the above in mind, apart from mineral mining's commercial aspect, Onyebuchi underscores its supernatural dimension that Igbo women in his novel recognise. In *War Girls*, the mineral Chukwu, named after the deity, possesses energising qualities as it comes from the land of their ancestors. Biafrans depicted in the novel believe that "[i]f we can't access our minerals, we'll lose all power" (38). The sentence can be interpreted literally as the source of the fuel but also metaphorically as embodying the living matter of their country that they are also a part of. What is more, in Onyebuchi's book, "[i]t's been said that the minerals are the divine right of the Igbo, their blessing from Chukwu, the supreme being whose energy powers all of existence" (7). The crushed mineral has the power to healing and can also be a powerful drug. Onyii receives Chukwu from her girlfriend, Chinelo, to alleviate her physical and emotional pain after the combat in which a brigadier coerced her to participate. As a result of its therapeutic properties, Onyii has visions that bring her troubled memories back and starts a slow recovery process from her war traumas: "[…] crushed crystals. Chukwu. What they call precious minerals they mine from the ground to power their machines. What they call the powder they grind it into and ingest. The energy of the supreme being that gives strength to all things" (69).

The displacement of Chukwu minerals means being cut off from this energy. Parikka repeats after Benjamin Bratton that "we carry small pieces of Africa in our pockets, referring to the role, for instance, of coltan in digital media technologies" (46). In other words, everyone who is using modern technology is entangled in the mineral deterritorialisation process and is its direct beneficiary. Furthermore, Parikka explores interconnections between deterritorialisation of minerals and socio-political mechanisms of the Anthropocene, arguing that to follow the tracks of geological displacements is to understand how the Anthropocene works. "The Anthropocene is a way to demonstrate that geology does not refer exclusively to the ground under our feet. It is constitutive of social and technological relations and environmental and ecological realities. Geology is deterritorialized in the concrete ways that metal and minerals become themselves mobile […]" (46).

In *War Girls*, Onyii very tangibly perceives the causal chain between the materiality of metal ("old and rusted" (7)) washed out by water, like blood running to the sea and hidden in the ground and the genocide of her people. She believes that the access to blood minerals' energy that fuels Western computerisation is the true cause of the Biafran War of Independence: "the mineral derricks […] capable of leaching resources from the Delta. Their resources […]. This is what the Nigerians are killing Biafrans for" (7). Looking at minerals in a broader context, as Parikka suggests, we ought to perceive them not only as a part of the earth but a wider network of humans and nonhumans: political, historical, and social connections arising first from early capitalism and evolving constantly through contemporary Information Technology cognitive capitalism and "geopolitics of the hunt for energy" (viii, 27). What is more, the 21st century's bio-capitalism opened a new market for trading the living material. In *War Girls*, the wired living animals programmed to kill or produce fuel constituted the perfect example of how biomatter could be commodified. "[…] [C]ontemporary bio-genetic capitalism generates a global form of reactive mutual inter-dependence of all living organisms, including non-humans. This sort of unity tends to be of the negative kind, a shared form of vulnerability, that is to say, a global sense of inter-connection between the human and the non-human environment in the face of common threats" (Braidotti 30).

In other words, in the 21st century, information, knowledge, biological material, and everything that supports it (minerals) have become new tools for necolonisation and "the search for minerals, metals, and oil across the globe, including Africa; only to return in the refined form of consumer products and the continent reterritorialized as a business opportunity" (Parikka 105). This process involves the deterritorialisation of ecological catastrophes to places like the Niger Delta where labour is inexpensive and regulations protecting the environment are not strictly implemented (Parikka 100). Onyii speculates how to break this vicious cycle: the blue minerals are part of the natural ecosystem of the Delta, they belong to the people who live in this territory, to the ocean where they reside, to the land where their gods are, not to the multinationals that export them, destroying the region and leaving behind its inhabitants in paucity (7). Conflicts over the access to these minerals lead to wars in which girl soldiers fight. In the stories to be excavated are the ones about how cosmologies, geologies, and capitalism become entangled with one another.

Concluding remarks

In the convention of Africanfuturism, Onyebuchi's novel portrays dislocations resulting from the Biafran War of Independence, communal patriarchal structures, and environmental crises. *War Girls* transfers the historical into a futuristic and alternative reality after a global nuclear explosion. By means of this shift, readers are immersed into the daily war reality of girl soldiers and refugees when scientific advancement of nanotechnology is available to everyone, and the present-day digital technologies have reached even higher levels than today. Africanfuturism believes in technology and sees it as the agent of transformative changes, such as Augments discussed earlier. The novel brings a glimpse of hope, mostly via the character of Ify, born as Yoruba and raised as Igbo, whose sisterly bonds with Onyii (Ibgo) signify the possibility of reconciliation and healing.

Notes

1. Honwana (11) provides the numbers for Mozambique: circa 250,000 displaced children; between 8,000 and 10,000 fought during the war as child soldiers.

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