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Africanfuturistic Cosmovision: Tricksterism in Nnedi Okorafor's *Remote Control*

ABSTRACT

Nnedi Okorafor's *Remote Control* (2021) offers a nuanced Africanfuturist narrative in which myth, magic, and technology converge to shape a speculative vision of Ghana. This paper examines the protagonist Sankofa's journey through the theoretical lens of the technological trickster, a hybrid figure drawn from African mythological traditions and speculative technoculture. Utilizing Faucheux and Lavender III's concept of *tricknology*, Sankofa emerges not merely as a symbolic character but as an active agent of disruption, challenging conventions surrounding race, gender, and futurity. The novella redefines traditional notions of African femininity, particularly highlighting motherhood, domesticity, and submission by centering a technologically empowered Black female figure. Ultimately, the work contributes to the expanding field of Africanfuturist literature that critiques colonial legacies and systemic injustices while offering alternative knowledge systems rooted in African cosmologies.

KEYWORDS

trickster; tricknology; liminality; africanfuturism

1. Introduction

An embodiment of chaos and paradox, the trickster is an unpredictable figure known for transgressing boundaries, breaking rules, and subverting systemic structures. By disregarding normative codes of behaviour, the trickster challenges accepted regulations that constrain individuals and opens up alternative ontological possibilities. The trickster is a ubiquitous figure found in varying forms across different cultures, as depicted in mythology, folklore, and literature, inhabiting the "boundaries or crossroads, sometimes navigating them, sometimes creating them" (Maurone, 2002, p. 229), thereby allowing them to exist interstitially. As an agent of change and reformation, the trickster

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prompts us to see the perspective of the oppressed groups instead of passively accepting the social order based on dominance and suppression. Folklorists and anthropologists have studied the trickster figure through the oral traditions of different cultures worldwide, including Native American, African American, and Caribbean cultures. They may take on human or animal forms, depending on the culture of origin. In West African folklore, the most famous trickster is the spider Anansi, a symbol of resistance and survival who uses wit and trickery to gain advantage over powerful opponents. Esu-Elegbara is a trickster figure commonly found in the Yoruba culture of West Africa, acting as a guardian of crossroads that separate the divine and the profane. As a result, the "tricksters of West African origin are symbols of freedom and revolt" (Marshall, 2010, p. 190). The overturning of hierarchical roles and questioning of authority reconstruct conventional societal norms, as the "essence of tricksterism is change, contradiction, adaptation and surprise" (Ammons, 1994, p. xii). They act as a conduit for social change by advocating for freedom and using their tactics to build an equitable future for their community.

Nnedi Okorafor (2014) engages in tricksterism by redefining the potential of science fiction. She reappropriates the genre to reflect Black realities, arguing that science fiction is "practically made to redress political and social issues" by promoting inclusivity and diversity (Okorafor, 2014). She rejects the Afrofuturist label, arguing it reflects Western epistemology and centres African-American experiences, thereby overlooking those of continental Africans. Cultural critic Mark Dery (1994), who first coined the term 'Afrofuturism,' described it as a form of signification that "appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically-enhanced future" to address African-American concerns (p. 136). However, Okorafor coined the term 'Africanfuturism' to describe her fiction, which encompasses the experiences of people from the African continent while also including Black people from the diaspora. This Afrocentric subcategory of science fiction does not adhere to Eurocentric standards of storytelling; instead, it embraces the existing African knowledge systems, including histories, myths, folklore and cultural practices. The disassociation from the universally accepted Western frameworks allows writers to envision hopeful futures for Black individuals, linking cultural traditions with new technological possibilities. The Africanfuturist framework contains narratives "sometimes with aliens, sometimes with witches, often set in a recognisable, future Africa, with African lineages – that are not cultural hybrids [diasporic] but rooted in the history and traditions of the continent, without a desire to look towards Western culture" (Okorafor, 2019). The need to foreground Black people and their rich cultural legacies in a futuristic context is crucial for combating the negative stereotypes often associated with Africa or the lack of representation of African people within the science fiction canon. This form of fiction seamlessly blends science with magic and folkloric

elements taken from the indigenous epistemology to represent Africans beyond the Western influence. Africanfuturist strategies of storytelling often blend oral traditions with futuristic speculation to invoke Black creativity and agency while simultaneously critiquing the Eurocentric ideologies like racism, colonialism and patriarchy.

Remote Control (2021) is a coming-of-age novella that explores themes of loss, grief, death, childhood trauma, and identity crisis. It chronicles the journey of a teenage girl living in a futuristic Ghanaian town called Wulugu, who possesses the unique ability to summon death after imbuing herself with the power of an alien artefact. After a tragedy that renders her an orphan, she forgets her name, Fatima, and adopts a new identity as Sankofa, a symbolic figure of death. She leaves her hometown to recover the lost seed and search for answers about the source of her powers and the purpose of the unearthly green light she emits, which is lethal to living beings. Against the backdrop of an alien invasion, she grapples with her human-alien identity while confronting the impact of corporate exploitation in her native country. In keeping with Africanfuturist tradition, the novella fuses local legend, myth, and indigenous cosmologies with advanced technology. The liberatory future visualised in the novella is based on the Ghanaian concept of *Sankofa*, an Akan epistemic principle that emphasises the reclamation of the past to shape one's present and future. This concept echoes the protagonist Sankofa's literal and metaphorical embodiment of this philosophy through her quest to retrace the origin of her powers, which leads her back to her hometown, thereby emphasising the need to honour one's roots and heritage.

Using trickery and manipulation as tools for survival and resistance, tricknology, or trickster technology, serves as a framework through which people challenge the status quo in pursuit of autonomy and liberation. This freedom technology includes "any practical knowledge that helps Black people solve problems, escape oppression, and reclaim control" (Toliver, 2021, p. xxxii). The trickster uses any necessary survival tactics to subvert forms of oppression and "triggers the breakdown of race and gender anxieties leading to freedom" (Lavender III, 2019, p. 97). The stratagems used by the trickster, be it fair or foul, bring lasting transformation, often benefiting Black people. The undermining of dominant ideologies through the decolonial lens of *Sankofa* philosophy is a way for Black people to reclaim their cultural identity by critiquing the residual colonial legacies and Western value systems that often threaten to suppress or erase the existing indigenous traditions. Thus, this study examines how a young Black teenage girl utilises tricksterism as a means to achieve agency and freedom by advocating for social change. She embodies the trickster archetype by assuming the role of an underdog who triumphs over neocolonial organisations through cleverness, rather than brute force.

2. Trickster discourse

Remote Control follows the journey of a teenage girl, Fatima, who lives on a small shea farm owned by her family. She suffered from frequent bouts of malaria and found respite by gazing at the stars and drawing the constellations in the soil. Fatima had learned the names and shapes of the constellations, which she called "sky words" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 18), from her grandfather, leading her family to endearingly refer to her as a "starwriter" (p. 17). This early motif of celestial literacy not only foregrounds Fatima's liminal position between the mundane and the cosmic but also aligns her with the trickster's traditional role as a boundary-crosser, one who mediates between human and divine realms, as well as between nature and culture. In Yoruba cosmology, the trickster divine figure, Elegba, is considered "a mediator between men and gods" (Wescott, 1962, p. 337). This role aligns with Fatima/Sankofa's efforts to negotiate between the human and divine realms. Moreover, the "starwriting" and celestial literacy evoke West African Dogon cosmologies, which preserve "astral knowledge of the star system, Sirius" largely "through oral traditions" (Effiong, 2018, p. 1). Such resonances invite reading the novella in conversation with multiple African cosmologies and project a cosmovision in which rich interpretative parallels co-exist. Fatima's metamorphosis into Sankofa is brought about by a road accident while crossing a busy intersection. This impact caused a surge of heat in her body, induced by the pain. Before she could get up, a car rammed into her, sending her flying across the street. As she landed on the side of the street, her brother came barreling towards her, but before he could reach her, "the pain came. This was the moment when Fatima forgot her name. It was a pain that tumbled to her soul. Later, she would understand that it wasn't just a pain. It was a beginning. And this beginning annihilated all that came before it" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 32). Her body exudes a bright green glow, and before she could contain it, the light had annihilated the entire town in a single flash. As she recovers from the impact, she notices that "everyone was asleep" because she was not able to fathom the fact that her deadly green light had killed all the people around her, including her brother (p. 32). As a mere seven-year-old, she could hardly wrap her head around the concept of death, believing that people who lay on the road were in a deep slumber. As she tries to make sense of what had transpired, she notes to her dismay that "she couldn't remember her name" even though she could recall her family and memories associated with them (p. 33). The trauma of seeing her family's dead bodies and the extreme surge of power leads her to lose her memory of her name and only the "name Sankofa was echoing in her mind, filling empty confused crevices" (p. 39). The act of forgetting her name and identity marks a pivotal turning point in the story, altering the trajectory of her life and setting her on a path of self-discovery. This moment of trauma signifies her transformation into a posthuman trickster figure, as the erasure of her former self becomes a symbolic rebirth that disrupts the boundaries between life and death, self and other.

The Afrocentric philosophy of *Sankofa* is a concept taken from West Africa, inspired by the Akan people of Ghana. *Sankofa* theory suggests "the value of a reflection on the past, a pensive entity on a decision, self-definition, identity, and individual, collective vision and destiny of a people" (Asante & Mazama, 2009, p. 587). It is an ancient African wisdom that emphasises the fact that one cannot envisage a future without first understanding the past. The lessons and mistakes of the past serve as a guiding force for the people, enabling them to build a better future while remaining true to their African roots. This concept is visually represented by a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward, and its head turned backwards. Like the bird, the protagonist of *Remote Control*, aptly named Sankofa, continuously looks back by reflecting on the past to reclaim wisdom and knowledge for building a viable future for her community. She even draws an illustration of a Sagittarius constellation upside down, resembling an image of a Sankofa bird. When a meteor shower hits her town, one of the green streaks lands on the swirl of the Sankofa bird that she had drawn on the base of the shea tree. As she picks up the glowing seed from the soil, the "light pooled in her palm and seemed to absorb into her skin", instantly curing her malaria fever (Okorafor, 2021, p. 18). The accidental nature of her transformation, catalysed by an act as innocent as star-gazing and soil-drawing, mirrors the trickster's hallmark unpredictability and their ability to enact disruption through seemingly mundane actions. This moment marks the symbolic birth of her trickster identity, one that will destabilise established structures and question techno-colonial interventions while also illuminating new modes of knowing and being.

The trickster exists on the periphery, operating at the edge by existing "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967, p. 93) various epistemological boundaries, which is "neither this nor that, and yet is both" (p. 98). Although Sankofa is unaware of the alien seed and its power, upon touching it, she absorbs alien energy, becoming a hybrid caught between human and extraterrestrial consciousness. The symbiosis with the powers derived from the alien seed places her on the margins where she wrestles to find a sense of belonging in her liminal state. Her metamorphosis into "adopted child of the Angel of Death" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 46), the one who decimates living things with her green radiation, is essential because "tricksters are known for changing their skin" (Hynes & Doty, 1993, p. 51). Existing on the human-alien epistemological boundary gives her a vantage point to understand multiple modes of existence. As Faucheux and Lavender III (2018) assert, trickster agency in the African context is inextricably tied to race and survival: "trickster agency still depends on her default identity as a Black woman doing what she must to survive" (p. 38). This framing deepens the understanding of Sankofa's hybridity as not merely extraterrestrial or symbolic, but grounded in the lived realities of racialized survival and agency, anchoring her liminality within the intersection of technological power, Black womanhood, and systemic precarity.

A trickster thrives on duality and is fundamentally ambiguous, existing on the margin between good and evil. As a "mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox", the trickster disrupts categories and confounds the established boundaries (Hyde, 1998, p. 7). This is reminiscent of African tricksters like Esu-Elegbara and Anansi, who oscillate between being harbingers of wisdom and constructors of chaos. Likewise, Sankofa is also torn between the duality of life and death, trying to face her moral dilemma. She does not always use her power to kill people deliberately. Instead, she exhibited benevolence when people asked her to use her green light to hasten their death. In one instance, a person dying from cancer had asked her to use her green light and relieve him from the pain and agony. At another time, a woman whose son was on life support asked her to ease his suffering. By this time, she had become adept in using her powers and she "could purposely call forth her light at very close proximity, enough to take a life" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 46). She acts like an angel, relieving people from pain and misery. Other times, she summons death to defend herself and obliterate people who threaten her life. At the same time, she travels alone, earning her a reputation as both an angel of mercy and an incarnation of death. Therefore, a trickster embodies "both a creative and a destructive force" (Scheub, 2012, p. 32). This dual capacity for creation and destruction not only defines the trickster archetype but also positions Sankofa as a liminal figure who destabilises binary logic itself.

Sankofa later succeeds in decentering corporate control in her native town and advocates for change, inclusivity, and diversity. She adheres to the *Sankofa* philosophy when she undertakes the quest to retrieve the stolen seed, in order to understand the purpose of her powers. During her journey, she incorporates Ghanaian customs into her routine by wearing her mother's wig, applying shea butter to her dry skin and eating native foods. Ultimately, she comes full circle, back to her hometown to bury the seed in its original place, transforming her grief into resilience by refusing to let her past traumas affect her potential. She integrates the lessons from her journey across Ghana to cultivate wisdom, courage and a sense of purpose, practically embodying the idea of extracting knowledge from the past. The concept of *Sankofa* transcends the normative perception of time and space, as it allows for the simultaneous existence of past, present, and future. Okorafor's africanfuturist framework, which established a connection with indigenous history and culture, coincides with the *Sankofa* principle, which also aims to develop a connection to one's past. Both philosophies believe the African continent is "a place where real people possess a respected past and a potentially interesting future" (Kilgore, 2008, p. 122). Okorafor stresses the need to return to the "past to move forward the aspirations of an entire race in all of its cultural complexities" (Lavender III, 2019, p. 2). The decolonial underpinnings of this framework enable Okorafor to utilise motifs, mythology, beliefs, and settings

inspired by indigenous Ghanaian culture, which aligns with the spirit of Africanfuturism —a method of reclaiming African cultural identity. Okorafor's rendition of Africa in the novella is based on her model of tricksterism, a place where binaries coexist – past and future, science and myth, technology and magic, tradition and modernity, rationality and mysticism, good and evil, creation and destruction- all seamlessly blend to create a new reality based on assimilation and syncretism.

3. Trickstar

In the field of trickster studies, female tricksters are underrepresented, particularly those who employ subversive strategies, including deception, misdirection, theft, and mimicry, to gain an advantage. Marilyn Jurich uses the term 'trickstar' to define and represent the female tricksters who use various strategies ranging from deceit, subterfuge, lying, manipulation, duping, and stealing to outsmart the male characters and become "stars in trickery" (Jurich, 1998, p. xiv). Trickstars function as agents of transformation, often resisting male-dominated structures in pursuit of autonomy since "all the standard tricksters are male. […] these tricksters may belong to patriarchal mythologies, ones in which the prime actors, even oppositional actors, are male" (Hyde, 1998, p. 335). Historically, the figure of the trickster was always male, often considered to have a high libido and sexual appetite. In traditional societies, male tricksters had the freedom to wander and enjoy unrestricted mobility, guided by their own free will because "the criterion of masculinity and the privilege of autonomy and mobility with which masculinity is synonymous" (Landay, 1998, p. 2). However, female tricksters often diverge from traditional male archetypes, particularly in how their mobility and subversion confront patriarchal expectations commonly found in most tales. Trickster qualities of bending rules and disobeying boundaries went against the patriarchal vision of femininity, which was based on submission and compliance. The trickstars have to create therefore "a new relationship with the historical adversity and hostility found in Western consciousness toward females manifesting autonomy, agency, and authenticity as single, fulfilled, physically strong, and psychologically whole individuals" (Tannen, 2007, p. 10). Using marginality to their advantage, women could "rescue themselves and others through tricks, pursue what they need or desire through tricks, transform what they find unworkable or unworthy through tricks" (Jurich, 1998, p. xvii). As a mode of resistance, the trickstar narrative reclaims agency for women in folklore and fiction, destabilising hegemonic gender ideologies embedded in cultural storytelling.

Sankofa's otherworldly powers save her several times during her perilous journey, granting her the autonomy her patriarchal community had denied her. In her case, the quality of the trickstar involves the "notion of female tricksters as double agents, women who operate using strategies both subversive and transformative in

order to construct their own identities but also to effect social change" (Tatar, 2014, p. 46). When Sankofa decides to undertake the solitary journey to find answers to her questions, she gradually crosses the boundaries of gender expectations by constructing "new concepts of selfhood, gender and race relationship and community" (Cai, 2008, p. 276). She rejects the expected gender roles, those of domesticity, conventional femininity, marriage, and motherhood: "But she didn't want a husband like the other girls. If she had a husband, she wouldn't be allowed to travel much. I'll get my husband when I'm very old" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 31). During her travel, she dreams about her aunt Nana, a successful woman living in the West. She reprimands Sankofa for living like a vagabond and hiding from the world: "If you hide forever, you'll never find anything. And there is one thing you know you want to find. Go and find it, stupid nonsense child" (p. 42). If her aunt had done the same thing in the prime of her youth, she could not have earned a doctorate and gone on to become a physicist. If she decided to stay back in her hometown, her aunt, like countless other women, would be "shackled to a husband and children" (p. 42). Her aunt stresses the importance of a woman's identity and the need for freedom to live one's life on one's own terms. This moment brings Sankofa out of her trance, and she vows to find the seed that will help her reclaim her identity. Now that she has a clear motive, even though she was "young and alone, yet she was dangerous" (p. 43). The female trickster has to improvise in dire situations by utilising her resourcefulness in a crisis. She knows no external saviour will intervene; her survival depends entirely on her ingenuity.

Since trickstars exhibit qualities of strength and survival, they are reduced to prejudicial stereotypes. Often called a "child of devil", people across Ghana fear Sankofa and treat her with reverence as they believe that her alien powers are a form of witchcraft because she brought death and misfortune wherever she went (Okorafor, 2021, p. 13). The phrase 'Remote Control' is a Ghanaian slang for witchcraft, used to describe an object that can control people from a distance, like a remote that switches the television on and off with a single click (Okorafor, 2023). Witches used black magic and other occult practices to influence and manipulate people, even when they were not physically present. Sankofa is a "real life remote control" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 12) because her power gives her the ability to kill people without even touching them. Trickstars are often "treated as an outcast" (Jurich, 1998, p. 34). After she acquires the power of death, Sankofa is treated as an outsider, and she never fully assimilates into society again. Sankofa refuses prescribed gender expectations. Although her independence results in social ostracism, it ultimately enables her to challenge and change the damaging stereotypes associated with women. She is anything but meek and passive and is unafraid despite undergoing a series of traumatic events in her teenage life. Sankofa's defiance aids her in combating the common notion of equating "fatalism for blackness" (Womack, 2013, p. 11) since she uses tricknology as a medium

of "resistance and disruption to offset a system dependent on the near universal victimization of blacks" (Faucheux & Lavender III, 2018, p. 34). As theorised by Faucheux and Lavender III, tricknology fuses technological agency with cultural subversion, enabling Black women like Sankofa to challenge hegemonic narratives by manipulating social, mythical, and technological codes. Her alien power, misread as witchcraft, becomes a tool of epistemic rebellion, positioning her liminal and racialized identity as an active site of Africanfuturist resistance and survival. Womack (2013) challenges the trope of inevitable suffering in Black narratives, asserting that speculative fiction must offer visions of empowerment and futurity. The women characters, like Sankofa, exhibit rationality, resilience, and assertiveness in testing times, and they "do not embark on their journeys seeking treasure, but when they return, the treasure they have found is themselves" (Lindow, 2017, p. 64). The underrepresented female tricksters refuse to victimise themselves. Instead, they choose to strive for personal autonomy.

Tricksterism becomes a strategic tool for survival when "confronted with a more powerful opponent, a trickster cannot rely on traditional methods of struggle" (Szmańko, 2008, pp. 43–44). Sankofa is unaware of the origins of the alien artefact, which she stumbles upon by chance on her family's shea farm. She adored the wooden box and the seed inside because it was "a nice thing that listens" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 21). However, a politician comes to take the wooden box containing the alien seed so that he can sell it to LifeGen Corporation to get money for election campaigns. LifeGen Corporation was an American pharmaceutical giant tracking extraterrestrial activity in Ghana via satellite surveillance. They were an "international corporate-level remote control" who wanted the alien artefact for conducting unethical experiments on humans by creating human-alien hybrids like Sankofa (p. 95). They had monitored a meteor shower, an alien infiltration; they knew something had fallen from the sky and was now buried in the shea tree in Sankofa's backyard. It is only when the politician's bodyguard steals the artefact that Sankofa must pursue him across towns to acquire what belongs to her, which otherwise he was going to sell to "LifeGen, that fucking big American corporation that's probably going to eventually destroy the world" since "pharmaceuticals weren't their only focus" (p. 49). Through the eyes of a teenager, Okorafor uncovers the nexus of corporate control and the exploitation of Africans who are subjected to unscrupulous surveillance, data collection, and genetic modifications without their consent. Okorafor critiques neocolonial corporate encroachment and the political exploitation of vulnerable rural communities against the background of alien arrival. In doing so, Okorafor uses the figure of the trickster to mediate between Western techno-modernity and African epistemological frameworks, showing that technology and indigenous knowledge are not opposing forces but co-constitutive within her Africanfuturist vision.

Tricksters typically "tend to inhabit crossroads, open public places, doorways, and thresholds. They are usually situated between the social cosmos and the other world or chaos" (Babcock-Abrahams, 1975, p. 159). Even when she was little, she used to find solace near a shea tree near her family's house, often perched on the branches, reading her books. She used to play with the dirt at the base of this tree, usually drawing constellations and stars in the soil. After she leaves her hometown, she often lurks in the forest to hide from public scrutiny. Tricksters represent the innate human desire for change, so they constantly search for home because "their appetites drive their wanderings" (Hyde, 1998, p. 8). They cannot live in a state of stagnation; to grow, they move from one place to another to meet new people and explore new places. The power of death was something Sankofa never wanted, but the eventual demise of her family propels her to search for the alien artefact and understand why she was its intended recipient in the first place. She undertakes an arduous journey, travelling across towns of Ghana with her solitary companion, a fox she names Movenpick because she was "curious to see what was outside of Wulugu was curious to see why whenever she felt this strange heat, pain caused her to … flare" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 29). Her quest is crucial to understand why she became the "adopted Daughter of Death, a transformation that has unsettled her and snatched normalcy from her life" (p. 48). The power derived from the alien seed hinders her from touching any technological equipment, as her touch disables it, including drones, self-driving cars, and other automated infrastructure. Therefore, she has to undertake the journey on foot. Her ability to neutralise technology can also be perceived as a critique of widespread globalisation and technological upsurge at the cost of erasing the rich African heritage, emphasising the dangerous consequences of human over-reliance on machines. Since Sankofa has a detrimental effect on human technology, she can only overcome her anguish and change her situation by using "tricksterism as a form of technology itself" (Faucheux & Lavender III, 2018, p. 33) and aligns herself with the trickster ethos by destabilising techno-corporate hegemony. She imbibes the philosophical stance of celebrating one's culture while navigating the future to understand the implications of challenges posed by unchecked encroachments from influential organisations in the guise of development.

Sankofa's journey takes her to RoboTown, where she stumbles upon the wooden box she had searched for many years. The town thrived on advanced technology, including robots and drones, for traffic control and navigation. The artificially intelligent robots, called Robocops, spoke the native language in an automated female voice and flashed the colours of the traffic lights to facilitate vehicular and pedestrian movement. Before the Robocops, the busy intersection in town was a chaotic mess, plagued by frequent traffic jams, car collisions, and road rage incidents. The Robocop monitored Sankofa's movement as she arrived in this town, and one of the drones followed her closely to track her. The scan

returned no data about her in Robocop's database since she had "no digital footprint" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 75). As her power renders technology defunct, the moment she touches the drone, "it stopped functioning, dead in her grasp" (p. 72). The Robocop monitoring the intersection malfunctions due to the disabled drone, leading to a tragic accident at the busy crossing that results in the death of a child. A mob quickly gathers to expel Sankofa from RoboTown, hurling slurs at her – "BAD LUCK! YOU'RE BAD LUCK! WITCH! EVIL REMOTE CONTROL! SATAN!" (p. 76). As the crowd assaults her and she collapses to the ground, Sankofa desperately tries to suppress the green light within her, unwilling to harm the town she had come to see as her only home: "She would not harm RoboTown. This was the only home she had" (p. 77). However, her power proves uncontrollable. The green light bursts forth involuntarily, killing dozens around her, including Alhaja, the one person in RoboTown she had come to trust and consider a friend. The shock of losing someone dear to her propels her to flee the town with one of the Robocops still tailing her. The Robocop reveals that its primary function is to report data on individuals to LifeGen covertly. As Sankofa is missing from their database, the corporation is actively attempting to gather information about her to understand and ultimately exploit her: "LifeGen studies you. Then it will find use for you" (p. 78). She understands the suspicious activities of the LifeGen Corporation, which kept the people of RoboTown under strict surveillance and used their information for research without their consent. Okorafor (2021) critiques techno-authoritarianism by portraying RoboTown as a dystopian microcosm, where indigenous lives are subjected to extraction, surveillance, and control under the guise of progress. Through the depiction of covert data collection by LifeGen and the dehumanising effects of AI governance, she illustrates how unregulated technological surveillance functions as a neocolonial apparatus, stripping autonomy, erasing identities, and commodifying bodies without consent.

Another hallmark of the trickster figure is the ability to subvert dominant power structures using tools at their disposal, often becoming "spearheads of a cultural revolution" (Ingwersen, 2017, p. 257). After losing her dear friend Alhaja and a semblance of home, Sankofa returns to her hometown, completing a symbolic cycle of return. As she reflects, "she'd changed and grown since she left Wulugu; she had power now. It was just a matter of remembering, truly remembering and accepting" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 85), alluding to the *Sankofa* principle of learning from the past. Although Sankofa has lost everything - her family, her given name, and a sense of belonging -this loss catalyses her transformation. She asserts, "I am Sankofa, I belong wherever I want to belong", reclaiming agency over her identity and mobility (p. 53). This understanding is pivotal for her inner growth because she finally realises her self-worth despite how much she had loathed herself for killing her family. When she buries the seed back to its original spot, she can recall her name and reconcile her dual identity: "My name is Fatima Okwan.

But I'm Sankofa, too" (p. 94). Later, she witnesses a strange sight of green seeds glowing at the base of all the shea trees in her backyard. She realises that the LifeGen Corporation could misuse these alien seeds by illegally harvesting and experimenting on them. In a deliberate act of resistance, she unleashes her power to destroy the seeds, choosing to erase what could be weaponised. Tricksters act as the "*prima causa* of disruptions and disorders, misfortunes and improprieties" (Hynes & Doty, 1993, p. 35). Through her defiance, Sankofa unsettles the techno-capitalist logic of LifeGen, employing trickster strategies not for mischief but for the survival and liberation of the inhabitants of Wulugu. Her intervention exemplifies how Africanfuturist tricksterism facilitates a reimagining of power, selfhood, and the future beyond neocolonial constraints.

4. Conclusion

The trickster fosters cultural development and liberates societies from oppression by actively shaping new ways of being, ultimately contributing to a more habitable and inclusive world. These liminal figures bring about destruction by dismantling systemic institutions, resulting in chaos and upheaval; yet, this chaos often serves as a necessary prelude to transformation. The subversive trickster discourse in the novella unravels through the perspective of a Black teenage girl who becomes a "culture-bringer" by exhibiting defiance and resistance against the dominant discourses of patriarchy and colonialism (Jurich, 1998, p. 31). A trickster merges two seemingly contradictory archetypes: the selfish buffoon, driven by personal desire and cunning, and the culture-hero, a "transformer who makes the world habitable for humans by ridding it of monsters or who provides things that make human society possible" (Carroll, 1981, p. 305). Sankofa initially embodies the traits of a selfish buffoon when she vows to retrieve the alien seed to better understand her powers. However, as the "adopted daughter of death" (Okorafor, 2021, p. 48), she undergoes a radical transformation into a culture-hero, determined to protect her people from the exploitative designs of colonial Western organisations. Sankofa disrupts social hierarchies by dismantling the colonial power trying to control her native place. Their motive of harnessing the mysterious power of the alien seed forces her to reclaim her future by putting an end to their potential takeover. She subverts cultural conventions by being a wanderer and not subscribing to the expected gender roles. Moving from place to place also brings about internal growth for Sankofa, who, choosing a vagabond life, negates the spatial boundaries that bind her. Trickster technology enables Sankofa to rend the social fabric, dispelling Western categorisations and paving the way for celebrating indigenous cultural legacies by triggering the "breakdown of race and gender anxieties, leading to the end of these interlocking oppressions in one kind of Afrofuture" (Faucheux & Lavender III, 2018, p. 31). Sankofa symbolises freedom and "can never be fixed, captured, or contained" (Marshall, 2010, p. 190). The recentering

of the African worldview in *Remote Control* creates a cosmovision – a holistic and interconnected worldview where mystical, spiritual, and technological aspects can coexist simultaneously. Okorafor's depiction of Sankofa, deeply rooted in African cosmologies, presents the trickster as a hybrid figure who embodies the syncretic, adaptive nature of African cultural legacy. The dismantling of dominant ideologies, the exposure of racism, injustice, and unethical experimentation, and the championing of marginalised voices all reflect the enduring power of the trickster. Through Sankofa, the novella affirms that transgression, when harnessed with purpose, can forge paths to survival, resistance, and renewal.

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