

Nnedi Okorafor's "Spider the Artist" as a Postcolonial Call for Recreating Africanfuturist Reality Through Music and De-Realization

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines Nnedi Okorafor's "Spider the Artist" by centering the transformative power of music as the mediating force between human subjectivity and postcolonial automation. Drawing from Africanfuturism, postcolonial theory, and the aesthetics of irrealism, this analysis interprets Eme's sonic practice as a mode of relational resistance within a necropolitical landscape shaped by oil extraction, gendered violence, and techno-colonial control. Accordingly, this paper argues that Eme's music functions as a decolonial technology, a technique of freedom capable of disrupting programmed violence and activating affective, non-linear memory. Through her encounter with EA, a zombified patrol unit who responds to her guitar playing, the story stages a moment of reciprocal recognition: Eme reclaims emotional agency, while EA undergoes an ontological shift. Drawing on Ashleigh Harris's concept of irrealism, the story is framed as a response to Africa's "de-realization" under global capitalism, in which life and value are suspended in abstraction. Within this speculative terrain, Okorafor's narrative imagines music as a culturally embedded, Africanfuturist force which bridges affect, memory, and transformation. The zombie in "Spider the Artist" becomes a resonant figure of potentiality, and it is through Eme, her grief, her music, her desire that the speculative horizon of freedom is made audible.

KEYWORDS: Postcolonialism, Music, Africanfuturism, De-realization, Alienation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In postcolonial literature, questions of cultural identity, alienation, and embodied resistance remain central to how narratives respond to colonial legacies. Scholars have contributed to this conversation by exploring the political force of cultural production and the psychological effects of colonial domination. Bhabha's concept of hybridity (1993/2004), for instance, describes how colonial subjects occupy liminal spaces of identity and resistance within the structures of imperial control. Appiah similarly argues that cultural identity is historically and materially formed by "economic, political, and cultural forces" (Appiah, 1992, p. 177), rather than being essential or fixed. Postcolonial fiction often explores these tensions through not only character and plot, but also through symbolic mediums like art and music which preserve memory and articulate resistance.

Nnedi Okorafor's "Spider the Artist" (2008) embodies these concerns within the speculative terrain of Africanfuturism, a term Okorafor coined to define works of science fiction which is rooted in African culture, history and mythology without privileging or centering the West. Unlike Afrofuturism, which often draws from diasporic experiences and Western techno-cultural imaginaries with "Africa" lurking behind merely more than a decorative signifier, Africanfuturism is grounded in the material and cultural specificities of the African continent. Ashleigh Harris asserts that Nnedi Okorafor codes new criteria about Africanfuturism that include "the tendency of African magical realism to draw on ancestral spirit beliefs and animism and the tendency of science fiction to imagine highly technologized futures are combined here to create a specifically Africanfuturist aesthetics" (Harris, 2020, p. 154). Thus, tendency towards science fiction becomes a tool for African writers to respond to the colonial tradition of domination.

In the same line, Jenna N. Hanchey asserts that Africanfuturism clarifies "the decolonial dreamwork required in daring to invent the future, and how it allows for a form of development that functions as rebellion against colonial structures" (Hanchey, 2023, p. 576). Accordingly, Africanfuturism is a way of resisting colonial tradition that has burdened the Africans for centuries. As a groundbreaking work which sets the tone for later Africanfuturistic interventions, the story is set in a dystopian Nigeria patrolled by zombified robots guarding oil pipelines and centers on Eme, a grieving woman whose music becomes a bridge between herself and one of these programmed enforcers. "Spider the Artist" imagines the possibility of transformation within systems of oppression. This became a hallmark of Okorafor's literature which, according to Jenna Hanchey (2023), brings together the feminist and queer desires of the marginalized with the desires of non-human aliens to create a dreamlike plane of rebellion and liberation.

In "Spider the Artist," this dreamlike plane is provided by music, moving the narrative beyond Eurocentric sci-fi conventions. This can be explained by Ashleigh Harris' term "the aesthetics of irrealism", of which Africanfuturism is a significant part.

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According to Harris, the aesthetics of irrealism is a response to the “de-realization of Africa,” the complex processes of global economy by which the embodied reality in Africa is rendered ontologically unreal, mental clarities are rendered epistemologically unclear, “concrete resources of value are controlled so as not to make them realizable” (Harris, 2020, p. 5). Harris writes that “magical realism marks the sites of contamination between the seemingly irreconcilable spirit and political worlds [...] tinged with the nostalgia for a pre-colonial past”, whereas the contemporary aesthetics of irrealism contaminate “sanitized suburban life with the spectre of derivative life,” drawing on the double abstraction processes of derivatives capitalism “in which one is constantly required to calculate ‘the minute risks that are present within quotidian volatility’” (Harris 2020, 101-2). In other words, whereas magic realism can envision a pre-colonial past in opposition to the colonial present and reclaim what has been lost even if by means of magic, contemporary irrealist works render the distinction unclear, as the loss itself has become unidentifiable; the act of reclamation thus becomes an irrealistic and future-oriented creation. Accordingly, this paper explores how Okorafor constructs a world where bodies and lives (both human and mechanical) are suspended between visibility and erasure, value and violence. In this framework, the oppressed human and non-human entities within the context of African politics become what Harris calls a “derivative life,” produced by the abstractions of global capitalism. Yet it is through Eme’s musical performance that a moment of mutual recognition occurs, disrupting the programmed logic of both colonial machinery and emotional numbness. As a result, “Spider the Artist” should be read as an Africanfuturist text in which music enacts both cultural memory and speculative transformation. Through Eme’s sonic intervention, the story imagines a different relationality between human and machine, self and other, past and future, grounded in African epistemologies and speculative aesthetics.

2. COLONIAL EXPLOITATION IN "SPIDER THE ARTIST"

The perspectives of colonial exploitation are depicted in the story through the American companies that exploit the natural sources of Nigeria. The narrator herself depicts how oil companies have spread everywhere to invest the oil without caring for the suffering of the environment or the deprived people of Nigeria, who only suffer from the pollution that those companies produce in all areas of the country. The story critiques this neocolonial structure through the intimate voice of its narrator, Eme, whose lived experience demonstrates the relationship between personal grief and structural violence. Eme depicts that as "Cassava and yarn farms yielded less and less each year. The air left your skin dirty and smelled like something preparing to die. In some places, it was always daytime because of the noisy gas flares" (Okorafor, 2008, p. 195). Nigeria is a place of exploitation for the American oil companies that try to invest every inch of the land to steal its wealth. This ecological devastation is not an incidental byproduct of progress but a symptom of extractive capitalism, which values crude oil over human life. In this sense, Okorafor’s world is not a speculative future divorced from history; it is one in which the logics of imperialism persist through resource imperialism.

Accordingly, the suffering is not restricted to the time being that Eme indicates. Rather, the prospects of exploiting Nigeria represents the suffering of the generations for decades as asserted by Eme “My village was an oil village, as was the village where I grew up. My mother lived in a similar village before she was married, as did her mother. We are Pipeline People.” (Okorafor, 2008, p. 197). Okorafor depicts the African suffering with the colonizer, who has exploited Africa and stolen its wealth. The Nigerian land is no more a place for exploitation that Eme clarifies. This is exactly what Harris means by “de-realization” of Africa, the process of African lives being rendered ontologically “unreal” by abstracting bodies and resources into units of economic speculation in global market. In Okorafor’s narrative, the Nigerian people are not actors within the global oil economy but ghosted subjects, excluded from its benefits and policed when they resist.

More evidently, the political conflict between the colonial power of the United States and the colonized people of Nigeria is stressed in the story. Eme recognizes that the United States takes the oil of Nigeria without paying price in reward. This represents the colonial domination of the west on other nations as seen in the following:

Pipelines carry diesel fuel, others carry crude oil. Millions of liters of it a day. Nigeria supplies twenty-five percent of United States oil. And we get virtually nothing in return. Nothing but death by Zombie attack. We can all tell you stories. (Okorafor, 2008, p. 201)

In other words, The United States is portrayed as an imperial beneficiary of this asymmetrical system. The supposed benefits of development are exposed as hollow; what is delivered to Nigerians is not infrastructure or prosperity, but robotic violence and systemic dispossession. This imbalance reflects what Gayatri Spivak (1985) describes as the “creation of the enemy”: a rhetorical and political strategy through which empire defines itself by designating others as primitive, dangerous, or disposable. “Spider the Artist” literalizes this process through its depiction of zombified robotic enforcers, or “Zombies,” who act as avatars of Western imperialism. These Zombies are programmed to enforce the ideology that views Nigerians as threats to their own land. Spivak writes, "The business of creating the enemy in order that the empire might define itself by its geographical and racial others" (p. 189), and Okorafor dramatizes this process by showing how Nigerians are excluded from national sovereignty while being disciplined through technological violence.

The Zombies, then, function as more than metaphors for neocolonial control. They are posthuman enforcers of necropolitical power: they protect the flow of oil while inflicting death and fear. This framing also complicates a purely binary reading of colonizer

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and colonized. The zombie that responds to Eme's music in the story reveals a crack in this structure, suggesting that even programmed death machines may hold traces of memory, relation, and potential agency.

The collapse of a binary reading is complicated further by the naming of these robots, originally called Anansi Droids 419, as zombies, considering the origins and the meaning of this cultural motif. Indeed, the significance of the word zombie is apparent from the beginning of the story, as its epigraph is taken from the song "Zombie" by "Fela Kuti, Nigerian musician and self-proclaimed voice of the voiceless" (Okorafor, 2008, p. 147). Even though the name given to the robots reflects the Nigerians' fear in the story, things get more complicated when we consider the fact that the figure was imported to the United States from Africa, and marketed to the rest of the world as a Hollywood conception, just like raw materials extracted from the country, transformed into American products to be sold globally. According to Roger Luckhurst, the figure in African folklore was imported to Haiti during the slave trade, evolved in this traumatic context, and reconceptualized in Hollywood as an expression of the fears of the upper class white culture, representing the working class, immigrants, and the marginalized. He asserts that "Since the zombie developed from the syncretism forced by the slave trade, it seems better to end by following this circulation of meaning back to Africa" (Luckhurst, 2015, p. 194). Basically, in Africa, it was believed that religions leaders could turn dead people to zombies, or living people to zombies - it is thought that the latter was done through some drugs. After slave trade, slaves were prevented from suicide with this belief: if you committed suicide, you would offend the divine spirits, and would remain as a zombie forever, which was basically a slave neither dead nor alive. So these people continued to endure, afraid that they would be slaves forever if they committed suicide. In other words, zombies as a culturally appropriated image is already part of Edward Said's "othering" which explains both the colonizer's dealing with other nations according to the superior feelings of hate and prejudice, and the self-proclaimed right to turn cultural artefacts to exotic commodities (1993). This is directly linked to the dehumanization of both Nigerians and the zombies in the story: zombies as seen by Eme's community have already been assimilated, and they are no less "oppressed" than Nigerian people. Initially having no autonomy, they are just the consequences of the distorting power that the corporate forces reinforce both on human and non-human elements of the continent, turning the environment against the people. Therefore, it is crucial that not just android machines, but the very symbolic function of the zombie is reclaimed in the story. The zombies, therefore, blur the lines between the colonizer and colonized, representing colonial powers precisely because they are also oppressed by it. If Spivak's claim that the subaltern cannot speak is true, it is not surprise, then, that the transformative solidarity between Eme (the doubly-oppressed woman in an oppressed yet patriarchal community), and Udide Okwanka, the zombie that establishes a bond with her, is achieved not through speech but music, which is beyond the symbolic order and institutional discourse.

3. ALIENATION AND FORGED IDENTITY IN "SPIDER THE ARTIST"

To be sure, alienation is rooted, as already mentioned, in the continued technopolitical control of the country by Western corporations and reinforced through the deployment of Zombies. These machines, constructed by American companies and deployed with state support, symbolize the reinscription of colonial authority under the guise of technological advancement. The narrator, Eme, testifies to the violence of this arrangement: "The Zombies were made to combat pipeline bunkering and terrorism [...] The government and the oil people destroyed our land and dug up our oil, then they created robots to keep us from taking it" (Okorafor, 2008, p. 200). This moment captures what Homi Bhabha (2004) identifies as a fundamental postcolonial condition: the colonizer asserts cultural and technological superiority to justify domination, while the colonized are reduced to marginal figures stripped of authority, presence, or voice. The idea of identity, for Bhabha, becomes a "strategy for survival," rooted in past memory and present negotiation, rather than a fixed or essential category (p. 245). In Okorafor's story, however, this survival strategy is constantly undermined by the intrusive presence of the Zombies, whose very existence reflects a posthuman colonial occupation.

Preventing others from their basic rights like education is another perspective of the colonial domination that increases the feeling of alienation. Eme's alienation is not abstract. It is deeply embodied and gendered. Despite her education, she is rendered invisible and interchangeable the moment she arrives in the oil-controlled village. Eme explains the suffering of the Nigerian women according to the domination of the colonial authorities that seek to exploit them as follows:

No matter my education, as soon as I got married and brought to this damn place I became like every other woman here, a single village woman living in the delta region where Zombies kill anyone who touches the pipelines and whose husband know her around every so often. What did I know about Zombie intellect! (Okorafor, 2008, p. 200)

Eme's reduction to a passive role mirrors the subjugation of Nigeria as a nation: stripped of rights, surveilled, and disciplined. Like the land, she becomes something to be managed, not heard. Likewise, Nigerians suffer from marginalization and exclusion in their country because the United States have brought its machines on the form of intellectual zombies to control the country. These zombies are dangerous machines that prevent the native people from sharing wealth or having the right to get the oil of their country. Indeed, global capitalism still defines itself by inventing enemies and dehumanizing others. However, as mentioned above, there is a significant difference: the agents of order are not colonial officers, but machines serving the corporations. In this case, the enemy is not only the Nigerian population but even inorganic matter, reanimated as tools of enforcement against their own people.

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This postcolonial condition of ontological erasure is further reinforced through violence. When a man tries to take some oil of the pipeline, those zombies or the dangerous machines have punished him severely as narrated by Eme "His arm and both of his legs were broken. Government officials said that Zombies were programmed to do as little harm as possible but I didn't believe this, na lie." (Okorafor, 2008, p. 202). Thus, the Nigerians are the strangers in their country because of the colonial power that aims to steal their wealth. The dissonance between official state narratives and lived experience reflects the systemic silencing of colonized voices and the normalization of brutality in the name of security. In this order, Eme is alienated and oppressed twice: As a member of the alienated nation, and as a underprivileged woman within that nation. Yet "Spider the Artist" does not just resign itself to depicting this alienation. It offers a rupture, and that rupture is music.

4. MUSIC AS A MAGICAL POWER AGAINST DOMINATION IN "SPIDER THE ARTIST"

Music is one of the features of cultural life of nations. Sunday Nnamani (2019) asserts that music has been used in narratives to reflect the perspectives of cultural life. Personally, it is a tool that reflects "attitudes, feelings, thinking and beliefs of the people" (Nnamani, 2019, p. 1). In this sense, music is used in literature with certain purposes that writers aim to achieve. However, in "Spider the Artist," music can be seen within several distinguished roles. It is a way of escape from domestic violence, it is a way of escape from suicide, it is a way of reconnecting to cultural and parental memory, it is a form of resistance, and it is the path to transforming zombies, and Eme's way of establishing attachment to "the Other," as an interspecies, symbiotic, interconnected mode of living. By the first instance, it is a self-escapism towards freedom. Eme uses her music to escape the patriarchal domination of her husband, who mistreats her. Eme tells that by the power of her music, she has prevented her husband from beating her again. Music has increased love emotions between the couple as seen in the following:

My husband could not beat me when there was beautiful music sending his senses to lush, sweet places. I began to hope. To hope for a baby. Hope that I would one day leave my house and wifely duties for a job as music teacher at the elementary school. (Okorafor, 2008, p. 208)

Insisting on the magical role of music in the narrative is central. Women, who have been prevented from giving birth due to the colonial contamination to the water, restore their abilities as normal women that can give birth. In other words, the magical power of music becomes a cure for those women to be healthy and able to produce life again. Thus, music is the magic that encounters the colonial suppression to life in Nigeria. Eme uses her guitar to express her emotions of suffering in the patriarchal community that does not believe in women's liberty. However, music expresses the cultural identity that Eme has gained since she has been brought up in one of the Nigerian families that believes in music as a way of expressing their lifestyle. Accordingly, music is not only a tradition for the family, rather, it is a magic that can change impossible into an easy task.

Nnamani argues that "Music is a cultural heritage and serves as a mark of identity" (Nnamani, 2019, p. 4). The guitar reflects the cultural belonging of the family as seen in the following:

My father said that the timber used to create the guitar came from one of the last timber trees in the delta. If you hold it to your nose, you could believe this. The guitar was decades old and still smelled like fresh cut wood, like it wanted to tell you its story because only it could. (Okorafor, 2008, p. 196)

Apparently, the guitar is used to reflect the national belonging and the cultural identity of the family that feels proud of her belonging to the Delta in Nigeria. The smell of the wood is used to indicate the land that Eme and her family are still connected to. For William Echezona (1963) asserts that "To every Igbo, life has a melodic and rhythmic orientation, and again, no event happens that is not associated with music." (Echezona, 1963, p. 12). Accordingly, the Nigerians have believed in music as a tool to indicate and register their history.

In the same line, Eme believes in music as a way to express herself to others. Ernest Emenyonu suggests that "Traditional Igbo music reflects the inner characteristics of our culture, beliefs, philosophies and world view." (Emenyonu, 1978, p. 2). Music represents the cultural identity of the family. Moreover, Eme expresses the cultural heritage of music that she has gained from her father as in "I wouldn't exist without my father's guitar. When he was a young man, he used to sit in front of the compound in the evening and play for everyone. People danced, clapped, shut their eyes and listened." (Okorafor, 2008, p. 196). The guitar is the escaping tool that she has inherited from her father. When she is under stress and anxiety, she turns to play music to sooth her worries. Dan Agu asserts that music has basic role of soothing "the mind; body and soul" (Agu, 1990, p. 49). Consequently, music is played by Eme to escape from the repression that she feels according to her relationship with her husband.

This moment expands the meaning of music from cultural tool to ontological force. Eme's act of playing her guitar near the pipeline begins as personal solace but becomes a moment of resistance and relation when one of the zombies hesitates to listen. This moment represents a profound disruption of programmed violence. Eme's music enacts a form of agency that cannot be anticipated by colonial logics or mechanized algorithms. Sound, in this context, is a mode of being. It generates affective space where none was allowed.

As Uhide continues to listen to Eme's music, learns to imitate it and create her own, it is not only Eme's psyche and human relations that begin to change. It also initiates a disruption of programmed behavior through a slow transformation in Uhide, from

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colonial tool to relational subject. Unlike Bhabha's concept of mimicry, this reciprocal exchange is totally heterarchical. It is no surprise that no human ear can distinguish Uside's tunes from Eme's at the peak of their friendship. This shift, while intimate and almost imperceptible at first, eventually ripples outward, culminating in the rebellion of the Zombies against their human creators. The Zombies' unexpected refusal to continue to work without agency is a profound reconfiguration of power. Through this rebellion, "Spider the Artist" imagines what it means for even the most dehumanized figures of violence to recover relation beyond the limits of colonial programming which assumes that subjects (or machines) can be made purely functional, divorced from context, memory, or sensation.

When the Zombies break havoc, the entire technocratic order of the story collapses and the people frantically start to collect oil and swim in it, before the quickest and most bizarre zombie apocalypse to be ever written. These machines, once imagined as infallible guardians of extraction, now turn against the very system they were built to protect. Importantly, the narrative does not suggest that this rebellion was planted by humans. It emerges organically, through relational experience. This longing for relationality reframes the entire human-machine dynamic. At this point, Uside is no longer a colonial enforcer; she is now a figure of possibility, intimacy, and agency. The posthuman in "Spider the Artist" is not monstrous or dystopian. It is transformative.

This moment also challenges the logic of necropolitics. Achille Mbembe defines necropower as the capacity of the state to determine who may live and who must die. The Zombies were originally designed as the instruments of this power to kill Nigerians in order to protect corporate interests. But when they rebel, they interrupt necropolitical flow, refusing to serve as its agents. They disrupt the machinery of death by reprogramming themselves from within. The Zombies are neither entirely dead nor alive, neither colonizers nor colonized, neither autonomous nor obedient. It is precisely in this hybridity that they find the capacity to choose.

The transformation is also narratively tied to Eme's affective labor. Her music is not militant, not even intentional as a form of rebellion, but it seeds the revolution. This suggests that resistance, particularly in Africanfuturist contexts, may arise through relation, sound, memory, which Jenna Hanchey (2023) refers as "developmental rebellion," a reimagining of development as decolonial becoming in contrast to the Western myth of progress. In this light, the Zombie rebellion is both the failure of colonial order and the invention of another future defined by co-being, which collapses the distance between the personal and the political, the posthuman and the intimate. Uside, who once represented the alienating force of necropolitical order, now stands in for the possibility of survival through interconnectedness.

In this way, Okorafor subverts the horror genre's traditional use of the zombie as pure threat, reanimating the figure as one of potential agency, ethical emergence, and resistance from within systems of death. Through this reanimation, the story enacts Africanfuturism's project of imagining new futures through African modes of relation, rupture, and re-worlding.

This is by no means a realist, or scientifically explained transformation as one may expect from a work of science fiction. However, the irrealist logic of Africanfuturism allows for this glitch, which is necessary to turn "ontologically unreal" lives into active agents. This moment of recognition is relational and reciprocal. Uside begins to move beyond programming, turning from a "zombie" into Uside Okwanka, "the spider artist" in Eme's language and culture, or "the Supreme Artist" who "lives underground where she takes fragments of things and changes them into something else" (insert page number here). Eme herself recovers a part of her identity that had been silenced. Her music bypasses the imperial linguistic codes and reaches something prediscursive, something affective. The moment she is heard by the inhuman other is the moment she becomes present again not as a colonial subject or a wife but as a creative subject capable of altering even the posthuman terrain. This interaction points toward Bhabha's notion of the Third Space, where fixed binaries (colonizer/colonized, human/machine, subject/object) dissolve, and new hybrid identities may emerge. In that space, identity is not recovered, but forged anew, through encounter, performance, and emotion.

Furthermore, music is the protective tool that Eme has used to enhance her relationship to the machine. This way, Okorafor represents the deep effects of music even on non-human creatures. The zombie Uside -as called by Eme- protects her after it becomes more connected to her while she plays music. Eme depicts how this dangerous machine has paid efforts to save her "Everyone died. Except me. Just before the explosion happened, Uside ran to me. It protected [...] So I lived." (Okorafor, 2008, p. 214). Therefore, music is seen as an influential power that all creatures on the planet understands. Eme survives because of her music.

The other perspective of the use in music is the resistant tool that Okorafor suggests by choosing certain songs for Eme to perform on her guitar. The resistance of the colonial power is indicated in the choice of the songs that Eme prefers to perform for the zombie as she declares: "I played my favorite high-life song. 'Love Dey See Road' by Oliver De Coque. I played like my life depended on it." (Okorafor, 2008, p. 201).

More evidently, this song carries the national theme of resistance that the Nigerians believe in. In the same context, political songs of resistance are depicted in the story like "Bob Marley to Sunny Ade to Carlos Santana" and "No Woman No Cry." All these songs convey messages about the suffering of the Nigerians due to the colonial reduction. Eventually, Eme insists on Mariam Makeba's The Click Song that represents the voice of Africa against the colonizer. Rather, it reflects the feelings of rejection that the Africans feel towards exploiting their countries.

By placing this transformation within the broader framework of Africanfuturism, "Spider the Artist" expands the meaning of resistance. Africanfuturism does not seek to reclaim a romanticized precolonial past, nor does it mimic Western speculative

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tropes. It is a form of developmental rebellion, a speculative method for reimagining African futures outside of imposed global structures. Eme's music, in this light, is not nostalgia. It is an alternative form of futurity rooted in music, care, and connection. Thus, "Spider the Artist" reframes alienation and identity as fields of possibility. The story goes beyond merely mourning Nigeria's displacement. It composes new ways of being within it.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored Nnedi Okorafor's "Spider the Artist" through the intersecting lenses of postcolonial theory, Africanfuturism, and the aesthetics of irrealism. We have examined how the story reframes key postcolonial concerns such as exploitation, alienation, and identity within a speculative future shaped by both technological control and cultural memory.

At the heart of this analysis is music as a powerful epistemological tool. Eme's music is an emotional refuge from patriarchal violence, a medium through which she reclaims subjectivity, connects to her heritage, and ultimately transforms the mechanized agents of colonial power. Her guitar carries the weight of intergenerational memory and becomes a bridge between the human and the posthuman. In the figure of Uhide, the zombie who befriends Eme through music, Okorafor subverts the horror trope of the mindless automaton. Instead, she reanimates the zombie as a being capable of care, relation, and rebellion. This speculative transformation speaks directly to Africanfuturist aesthetics. Rather than restoring a lost precolonial past or reproducing Western sci-fi fantasies, "Spider the Artist" invents new possibilities rooted in African epistemologies. It imagines a world in which even the most dehumanized figures, women under patriarchal constraint, workers under extractive regimes, and machines built for violence, can become otherwise.

By positioning music as both cultural heritage and speculative force, Okorafor invites us to rethink agency, resistance, and transformation beyond conventional binaries. In "Spider the Artist," liberation does not come from merely escaping the system but from creating fugitive spaces within it, such as moments of listening, intimacy, and rupture. In doing so, the story composes a new futurity: one in which sound becomes survival, and relation becomes rebellion.

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