"How to Save the World from Aliens, Yet Keep Their Infrastructure": Repurposing the "Master's House" in The Wormwood Trilogy

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Abstract

In this essay, we examine the figure of Oyin Da in Tade Thompson's *The Wormwood Trilogy* to demonstrate how Africanfuturism uses colonial infrastructure—or "the master's house"—in queer ways to resist neocolonialism and produce decolonial contexts of queer and feminist African life. Drawing on Audre Lorde's often-cited quote, we assert that Oyin Da provides an exemplar of postcolonial realities wherein, sometimes, the master's house should not be dismantled at all. Instead, Thompson's trilogy illustrates how Africans can repurpose colonial infrastructure in queer and feminist ways for decolonial ends. We limn the figure of Oyin Da to demonstrate: (1) how the African postcolonial condition itself is a queer one, where there can be no strict separation of colonial structures from indigenous life; (2) how Africanfuturist writers use queer and feminist epistemologies to strategically alter the totality of "the master's" infrastructure; and (3) how such resistance opens up decolonial possibilities for African queer and feminist liberatory existence.

The final book of Tade Thompson's *Wormwood Trilogy* confronts the protagonists with a horrifying realisation: aliens are slowly transforming human DNA until it is entirely alien and then transferring alien consciousnesses into the bodies that once were human. The Homians destroyed their planet long ago and uploaded their consciousnesses into a quantum-server on a moonbase to escape the extinction they brought upon themselves. They sent out organic probes called footholders to search for habitable planets to populate. One footholder named Wormwood established itself in Rosewater, Nigeria, beginning the transformation of the indigenous occupants to make way for a quantum transfer that would allow the Homians to continue to live—by taking over the bodies of humans.

Oyin Da, known as Bicycle Girl, the Science Hero of Arodan, narrates the trilogy's final book. She relates how saving the world from the Homians requires no less than the genocide of their species. However, there is a problem for Oyin Da. Her very existence and that of her wife, Nike, and their child, Junior, is only possible because of the alien technology. Oyin Da is actually a ghost, the imprint of a person on the alien xenosphere, the primary mechanism through which human DNA is changed. As she describes it:

> The xenosphere is a thoughtspace connecting all humans to each other by way of alien bioengineered neurones in the atmosphere. The aliens use it to store the entire history of mankind, including the biological history, with contextual feelings, everything. Some alien consciousnessses are in there as well as some copies of personalities of dead humans. Ghosts. Like me. (Thompson, 2019: 87)

Travelling through the xenosphere's collective memory of time, Oyin Da acts as a data thief (Samatar, 2017: 175-177), collecting and moving information and even changing the past by editing the consensus of what occurred. She appears as a time-traveller to humans, using the xenosphere to activate their brains so that they think they can see, hear, and touch her. Most of the time, neither she nor anyone else realises she is dead.

In this essay, we examine the figure of Oyin Da in Tade Thompson's *Wormwood Trilogy* to demonstrate how Africanfuturism uses colonial infrastructure—or "the master's house" (Lorde 1984: 110)—in queer ways to resist neocolonialism and produce decolonial contexts of queer and feminist African life. Drawing on Audre Lorde's often-cited quote, "The Master's tools can never dismantle the Master's house" (1984: 110), we assert that Oyin Da provides an exemplar of postcolonial realities wherein, sometimes, attempts at dismantling the master's house may be an unproductive decolonial venture. Instead, Thompson's trilogy illustrates how an appropriate decolonial venture may be to repurpose the "master's house" of colonial infrastructure in queer and feminist ways. *The Wormwood Trilogy* highlights that to free humans from alien colonialisation means destroying the aliens. However, there is a dilemma for those characters whose existence depends on those same aliens, such as Oyin Da. Although she combats the aliens, alien technology also sustains her ability to live. Oyin Da's character demonstrates how to exist within complicity and

still struggle against colonization. As she puts it, "this is just another problem to solve. How to save the world from aliens, yet keep their infrastructure.... You know, after the British left, we kept the trains" (Thompson, 2019: 90). If in many Black diasporic contexts, the "master's house" must be entirely dismantled to enable empowerment, such an approach does not entirely reflect the material realities on the African continent, where the colonial infrastructure is an integral part of the postcolonial context. Instead, it is necessary to deploy alternative epistemologies that are queer and feminist to recreate the "master's house" as a space for decolonial thought and action.

We specifically draw examples from *The Rosewater Redemption*, the third book in the *Wormwood Trilogy* (Thompson, 2019), to show how the figure of Oyin Da illustrates: (1) how the African postcolonial condition itself is a queer one, where there can be no strict separation of colonial structures from indigenous life; (2) how queer and feminist epistemologies can be used strategically to alter the totality of "the master's" infrastructure; and (3) how such resistance opens up decolonial possibilities for African queer and feminist liberatory existence.

In this essay, we derive our understanding of Africanfuturism from Okorafor (2019), who defines it as:

> Africanfuturism is concerned with visions of the future, is interested in technology, leaves the earth, skews optimistic, is centered on and predominantly written by people of African descent (black people) and it is rooted first and foremost in Africa.... Its default is non-western; its default/center is African (Okorafor, 2019: n.p.).

Okorafor's definition of Africanfuturism recognises that African speculative fiction works are distinctive from Afrofuturism. Even though both Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism present important renderings of the future, they respond to different contexts and aim at different audiences. Mohale Mashigo argues, "Africans...need something entirely different from Afrofuturism" (2018: x-xi), and many African authors agree (e.g., Samatar, 2016 and 2017; Talabi, 2020; Wabuke, 2020) because the postcolonial African context requires different liberatory imaginings than the post-slavery Western context does. African authors often feel that Afrofuturism does not recognise the complexities of contemporary life on the continent, and instead uses Africa "as a costume or a stage to play

out...ideas", rather than predicting "Africa's future 'post-colonialism'" in a way that reflects the desires Africans have for their futures (Mashigo, 2018: xi).

Through the character of Oyin Da, we claim that Thompson's trilogy presents a distinct perspective on liberatory struggle, one that is particularly salient to Africans rather than the Black diaspora. We argue that Oyin Da demonstrates how Africanfuturism may depend on queering the "master's house", or colonial infrastructure, by discarding its *epistemologies* but not necessarily its *technologies*. Here, queering does not pertain to sexuality per se but acts as an analytic of non-normativity. In this way, Oyin Da's queering of the "master's" infrastructure is a form of epistemic disobedience that adopts an insurgent worldview and challenges the epistemic dominance of the West (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

African Feminism, Queer Africanness, and the "Master's House"

Keguro Macharia (2016: 502, 501) writes that the dominance of White Western "social science approaches" in studying African queerness leads to a failure of such analyses to grant Africans "a capacious imagination". Studies that examine queerness in African fiction are one way of ameliorating this issue. They inherently centre the fruits of African imagination and the power to "continually resist and disrupt heteropatriarchal power" (Asante, 2020b: 117).

Yet, Africanfuturist fiction and its imaginings exist within a postcolonial cultural milieu that cannot be fully separated from Western influences. Postcolonial African subjects live within contexts that Achille Mbembe (2001) describes as convivial, inescapably shaped by colonial structures that Africans cannot ignore. Africanfuturism thus works within the infrastructural remains of colonialism, what Lorde may call "the master's house". In her writing, Lorde (1984: 110-111) argues against using "the tools of a racist patriarchy...to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy". Lorde's comment specifically refers to the lack of representation of Black and queer women at a feminist humanities conference in the West, using that example to aver that theory developed through White patriarchy cannot be used to dismantle White patriarchy.

In this essay, we make the case that the queering of the colonial infrastructure of "the master's house" allows for both divestment from the colonial epistemologies meant to subjugate African feminist and queer liberation

and use of the same infrastructure *against* domination. As he relates in interviews, Thompson is frustrated by the under-representation of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) work in African speculative fiction (Ryman, 2017) and the elided histories of women's leadership in African resistance to colonialism (Wood and Thompson, 2017). The character of Oyin Da aligns with a long history of African queer and feminist resistance that is situated in complex localities where global forces of Whiteness and colonialism intersect with and are transformed by contextualised knowledge. Histories of African queer and feminist resistance both critique the uncritical application of Western forms of theorising and emphasise the importance of locality. The politics of locality unearth the contingent and contradictory forms that African feminist and queer resistance sometimes take.

Over the past 20 years, African feminisms have acutely observed the importance of regionally specific knowledge, setting the groundwork for Africanfuturism's deep rootedness in African contexts and lives (Cruz, 2015). Although there have been tensions around what constitutes feminism on the continent (Salo, 2001), Desiree Lewis (2001) denotes a general shift from critiquing the Whiteness of Western feminists to forging connections across differential formations of gender, race, and culture. This shift in critique focuses on regionally specific concerns that transcend "women", the Western-centric biologically-determined subject (Amadiume, 1987; Oyěwùmí, 1997), and their bodies as the only political itinerary of concern for feminists in Africa. If African feminism is "oriented towards praxis, meaning it is rooted in concerns of the everyday" (Cruz 2015: 24), then repurposing even the "master's house" can be useful, allowing for a type of societal manoeuvring that does not always lie outside the material confines of power.

In this manner, African feminist resistance that uses colonial infrastructure against colonialism may also be considered queer. Stella Nyanzi (2014: 61) understands "queer" as resisting "boundaries of inclusion and exclusion" and considers "queer" to envelop "all of us opposed to essentialist patriarchal heterosexist heteronormative binary configurations of sexual orientations and gender identities", denying the binaries that underlie much Western thought on gender and sexuality. Similarly, Abbas and Ekine (2013: 3) define queerness as a "political frame that encompasses gender and sexual plurality and seeks

to transform, overhaul and revolutionise African order rather than seek to assimilate". The focus on resisting gendered and sexual normativities as they appear in different contexts is essential.

While African feminists have centred Africanness in a way that glocalises feminism, queerness disrupts Africanness's presumed stability and fixity across space and time. Queer African scholars and activists have used the LGBTQIA acronym to draw attention to the various forms of discrimination experienced by gender non-conforming and same-gender-loving individuals, while simultaneously critiquing its inability to capture the politics of sexual nonconformity in Africa fully. For instance, Godfried Asante (2020a) introduces the concept of "queerly ambivalent". He argues that for some queer subjects in postcolonial Ghana, queerness registers how one may play with and against oppressive structures through ambivalence. Given the propensity for violence, ambivalence works as a contextualised strategy of survival and resistance. In part, ambivalent practices produce fragmented and hybridised African subjects that operate both within and against colonial structures (Pindi, 2018). Both African queerness and African feminism use the tools at their disposal in given situated contexts, even if they happen to be of Western origin. However, they do so in a way that works against colonial logics rather than for them. Doing so does not render African queerness or African feminism any less African.

Oyin Da is a remarkable character as she collapses many supposedly clear hierarchical categories of being—gay and straight, living and dead, hero and villain. Importantly, Oyin Da provides a guide to African feminist and queer appropriation of the "master's house" that can engender resistance in the present as well as the imagined future. Alien colonisation always resonates with themes of Western imperialism and colonialism, but Thompson (2019: 33, 337) makes the linkages explicit. At one point, Oyin Da states, "I hate to bring the British into this, but it's unavoidable. To understand the future, we need to understand the past, not just as context, but as the seeds of catastrophe." Later, another powerful woman character, Femi, ruminates on how her family history informed her dealings with the aliens:

> A story passed down in Femi's family told of the village's first contact with a white man, a wiry, religious specimen with a caravan of porters, whom they welcomed with food and who went everywhere examining

> battlements and shrines and food stores. One of the porters warned, in Yoruba, that the man should be put to death, but nobody listened to him. By the time more white men came with their black collaborators, it was too late. Resistance resulted in swift death. Only malaria and indirect rule attenuated the harshness of the colonists. Femi has never forgotten the story (Thompson, 2019: 337).

When the men in the series are willing to leverage the aliens for personal gain or accept their terms without struggle, the women remember their histories. The collaboration between self-serving African male leaders and former colonial powers has led Diabete to ask, "Could it be that the postcolonial era is turning out to be more lethal than the colonial?" (Diabete, 2020: 31). M. Jacqui Alexander (2006: 66) describes this phenomenon as heteropatriarchal recolonialisation––"the continuity between the White heteropatriarchal inheritance and black heteropatriarchy". Here, Oyin Da disturbs this linear inheritance by working within colonial infrastructure but against collaboration, queerly resistant in both action and embodiment.

Thompson thus writes a queer and feminist allegory that acts as a critique and commentary on the contemporary state of global coloniality, the struggles within the postcolonial nation, and the struggle for African epistemological freedom within it (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). If the aliens are already here, already inextricably connected to African lives, what is to be done? African feminist and queer praxes arise out of situated relations to the historical layers of racialisation and colonialism (Hanchey, 2019; Mougoué, 2019; Asante, 2020a; Diabete, 2020), rendering a context in which hybridity, ambivalence, and disidentification demonstrate how colonial structures—the "master's house"—can be utilised *against* imperialism.

Oyin Da and Queer Feminist Resistance

Tade Thompson's trilogy delves into the past's layers, examining how the future cannot be disentangled from memory. As the Akan proverb stipulates, "*sɛ wo were fi na wosankɔfa a, yenkyi*," meaning "it's not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten". Time is circular, not linear. Through Oyin Da, Thompson advances a future that is not disentangled from colonial *technologies* but refuses colonial *epistemologies* of their use. The trilogy uses queer, trans,

and feminist sensibilities to disrupt the contemporary postcolonial nationalist reframing of African cultural norms as explicitly heterosexual and sexual/gender nonconformity as foreign. The women and queer men are the strongest characters in this book, holding together the broken lives of the heteronormative men around them. The men are often flawed vessels that find redemption in death. And Oyin Da finds redemption in the afterlife. The afterlife, memory, and ancestors provide a connection between the dead and the living––seeking to remind those living how to harness the knowledge of the past through alien technology to seek liberation from its violent usages.

The Queerness of the Postcolonial Condition

Thompson describes how he wanted the alien invasion in *The Wormwood Trilogy* to analogise neocolonialism's current conditions, rather than emulate classical colonial takeovers (Samatar, 2016; Hopeton Hay Podcasts, 2019). In the postcolonial present, the remnants of colonialism persist through the proliferation of Christian religion, systems of education, global capitalism, and democratic forms of governance. This understanding of neocolonialism has two critical facets for our purposes: first, that the alien invasion necessarily involves complicity; and second, that the invasion is so slow and insidious that most do not realise the need to resist. In this way, the postcolonial condition is a queer one, as the ambivalence of playing both within and against normativity structures its contexts (Asante, 2020a).

If "queer" is understood "as a critical space that pushes the boundaries of what is embraced as normative" (Matebeni and Pereira, 2014: 7), then Thompson presents a queer perspective on neocolonialism—and how it can be resisted. In his novels, the xenosphere is the primary mechanism through which human DNA is being changed. Kaaro, the main character of the first book, thinks that he can stop the colonisation process by thoroughly demolishing the alien infrastructure. This binarised reaction requires the ability to draw a clear line between what is human and alien. As a powerful sensitive—a human who can access and use the xenosphere—he can launch an attack against it. He sets up a contingency plan that activates after his death, setting his ghost on a demolition spree that destroys much of the xenosphere. As he is about to eradicate it (or so he thinks), Oyin Da stops Kaaro:

> "It won't work, Kaaro." ...
> "Why? I can handle Molara. She's not big and strong, she just thinks she is."
> "Kaaro, you kill her, she'll just come back. The xenosphere is a quantum system. Molara is a Boltzmann brain. The Homians engineered this space to rapidly multiply probabilities of spontaneous self-awareness. They programmed the precise personality that would become dominant. You're not Kaaro; he is ashes and dust somewhere in Rosewater. I'm not Bicycle Girl; she is dead somewhere in Arodan.
> "Most importantly, brave Kaaro who would gladly sacrifice himself, this won't stop the Homians. They'll still be on that moon, on the servers, waiting. Wormwood is here, but there are also other footholders. How long do you think it will take them to figure out how to get back here? ...don't kill our only link to them." (Thompson, 2019: 292-293)

The ghost of Kaaro does not realise how deeply the alien technology is ingrained in the earth—even if he manages to destroy *this* xenosphere, it will just come back through one of the other footholders hidden on the planet.

In this sense, alien technology represents the pervasiveness of global capitalism started by European colonialism and eventually spearheaded by the United States after World War II. Furthermore, accompanying the expansion of global capitalism is the colonial/modern organisation of gender and sexuality that feeds capitalism's cognitive needs. Oyěwùmí's (1997) study of Yoruba culture shows us that the imposition of the colonial order did more than transform the social organisations around reproduction; colonialism imposed a binary gender system based on the body that limited women's access to political power, capital, and the labour market. We can read Oyin Da's point as analogy, taking it to mean that even if Africans can resist one global economic power, the various tentacles and influence of other emerging global superpowers such as China, India, and Brazil would take similar oppressive forms. Africa will always be somehow imbricated in its global flows and relations that destabilise and alter equitable social arrangements around gender and sexuality. Thompson demonstrates that decolonisation is needed, but the question that has stalled its implementation is how it can be done. Given the hybrid nature of African subjectivity, decolonisation needs to be strategic rather than reactionary. The fight is not a clear one, with

Black and White binarised sides, but rather a queer-feminist one, repurposing the master's infrastructure in ways unsanctioned by power.

In this manner, Oyin Da engages in queer logics of ambivalence. Godfried Asante (2020a: 166) defines the queerly ambivalent as "the everyday practices of resistance and survival that draw on dominant (colonial) cultural codes" and reframe them in alternative ways for survival and, sometimes, flourishing. Oyin Da understands that the approach to fighting against oppressive structures must shift given the comprehensive nature of global coloniality and its underpinning rhetoric of modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In this context, the colonial structures of alien technology cannot be completely eradicated without it being unproductive; they are now a part of the Earth. Every person is partially composed of alien DNA. However, *how* Oyin Da utilises alien technology matters. So, she instead comes up with a plan to use the alien xenospheric structure against the aliens themselves—repurposing the "master's house" through anti-colonial epistemologies.

How Queer Feminist Epistemologies Enable Anti-Colonial Resistance

Oyin Da tells the reader multiple times that she is the wrong person to tell this tale. Wrong, because the two people who ended up saving humanity from the aliens—Kaaro and Oyin Da—were no longer human by the time they did so. Ironically, the ghosts of Kaaro and Oyin Da were only able to exist to save humanity in and through the alien technology of the xenosphere.

Oyin Da's quest to save humanity from the aliens puts her own life and that of her wife and daughter—also constructs within the xenosphere—at risk. Her wife Nike reminds her of this:

> "Are you going to continue this crusade?"
>
> "I don't think the aliens are good for humanity, Nike."
>
> "But we're not human, honey. We are human patterns, but we're stored in and maintained by an alien organic infrastructure. Among other things, the xenosphere is a data server, in which we live, and where we can interact with human consciousnesses if we choose to. I support it's normal to be loyal to your origins, but you have a particular difficulty letting go, which is why we have this recursive argument every time you go gallivanting." (Thompson, 2019: 89-90)

Oyin Da acts in queerly ambivalent ways, using the xenospheric tools at her disposal to engender resistance to the Homian takeover. Oyin Da thus performs a queer disidentification with coloniality. Disidentifications "allow minoritarian subjects to utilise the code of majority to empower a marginalised positionality that has been historically constructed as unthinkable or impossible" (Eguchi and Asante, 2016: 175). Oyin Da is an im/possible subject, not only because she is a strong queer African woman in a colonial system, but because she is un/dead.

Oyin Da disidentifies from the structures that sustain her existence, using them in queerly ambivalent ways. Like the Homians, Oyin Da is no longer embodied, but unlike the Homians she creates her own form within the xenosphere. She thus presents a way of using the coloniser's infrastructure without accepting a colonising epistemology of bodily dispossession: she uses the xenosphere to continue to exist, creating her own idea of a body that she can project into the minds of others so that they see her—and she sees herself—as a mid-twenties woman with Afro-puffs. She does not consider stealing others' bodies—which seems to be the only answer the colonising Homians can conceptualise. The aliens render humans disposable by conceptualising them as "not real" (Thompson, 2019: 199)—similar to how the West construes Africa and Africans as the embodiment of lack (Mbembe, 2001; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). This highlights an essential difference between the alien colonisers and the human freedom fighters: Oyin Da *knows* "the rot" that she is putting "in [their] souls for all time" by suggesting the death of millions (even if they are already disembodied consciousnesses). But they are dealing with beings that do not recognise humans as real. Oyin Da knows that even though she did not create these terms, she must act to repurpose their infrastructure through a queer-feminist epistemology.

Oyin Da demonstrates that there is no easy way to exist within complicity and still fight against colonisation, but that embracing the queer potential of the postcolonial condition can allow for decolonial resistance. In particular, she and Kaaro devise a plan to use the xenosphere against the aliens: if the aliens can transfer their consciousnesses to human bodies through quantum entanglement in the xenosphere, they can use that pathway to transfer Kaaro's consciousness to the alien server. In sending Kaaro to erase the alien server holding the Homian consciousnesses on a distant moon, Oyin Da repurposes the alien infrastructure by inhabiting it as a queerly ambivalent subject who eludes detection as an

outsider ––in it but not of it––thus, disidentifying from the original meaning to both save humanity and enable the survival of herself and her family.

Opening Possibilities for Queer and Feminist Life

The alien technology of the xenosphere holds possibilities for enabling queer and feminist life in Africa where faux constructions of "African culture" (Tamale, 2011) curtail imagination. Oyin Da can only exist because of the xenosphere, but her existence is one of tremendous power. Not only can she travel through the collective memories of time, moving into the past and even through people's projections of the future, but she can appear and disappear anywhere at will. Thus, her life as a woman is unconstrained; free of restricted motion, fear of violence, or patriarchal control of any sort. In the first book, she uses this lack of constraint in a feminist manner by enabling others' liberation, bringing them into a collective commune known as the Lijad. This echoes what Mama points out in a 2001 interview with Elaine Salo: that what binds African feminists is not terminology, but how African material realities inform the deployment of terms such as "feminist" (Salo, 2001). Oyin Da's material realities as a xenosphere ghost and feminist activist inform the intellectual tools that enable her to liberate the world from the aliens. Remarkably, she often does not remember that she is not alive. Her wife Nike tells her:

> "You are the most powerful xenosphere ghost I have ever seen. You being oblivious added an extra dimension. Did you know that solid objects are mostly empty space? Through the xenosphere you can manipulate people's perceptions and make them sense you—hear, touch, taste, smell and see. You, Oyin Da, do it without thinking." (Thompson, 2019: 86)

Oyin Da's life can be one of a time-traveling feminist hero precisely because her queer praxis is elusive to alien infrastructure. The aliens built the technology with her subjugation in mind and ignored how it could also engender resistance, never considering she could adapt to their infrastructure and thrive within it. Notably, she is non-categorical and queerly ambivalent: she is "alive" but dead; she is married, but to another woman; she has a child, but neither a man nor sex was involved in her creation. These forms of queer existence threaten the heterosexist foundations of the postcolonial nation––alien infrastructure––itself an extension of the colonial state (Alexander, 2006). Thus, Oyin Da's character

resonates with queer African existence within the material contexts of many African postcolonial countries.

In the first book, Oyin Da is drawn to Kaaro, thinking herself enamoured by him. By the third book, the reader finds out that what Oyin Da saw in Kaaro was the xenosphere ghost that would become her wife, Nike. Nike was a powerful sensitive that emplaced her consciousness within Kaaro as she was dying. She was a sex worker during her life on Earth and fell in love with Oyin Da in the xenosphere. They met in the xenosphere, and together they created a child made purely out of the xenosphere. While the xenosphere was built to constrain human life and its potentialities, Oyin Da and Nike have co-opted its totalising power.

Through alien technology, Oyin Da and Nike can build a consensual life free of heterosexist and heteropatriarchal restraints. After losing her memory, Oyin Da asks Nike where they are:

> "Who built this place?" I ask.
>
> "We both did. We both are. It is constantly being rebuilt within our agreement." (Thompson, 2019: 131)

The two continually recreate their home together, challenging the colonial and postcolonial creation of the nuclear family system as the only family system intelligible to the (post)colonial state. There are diverse family systems in several parts of Africa. Nzegwu (2012) explains that "family matters in several African societies deal with different forms of family relationships such as consanguineal, nuclear, mixtures of the two, polygamous, matrilineal, dual descent, matrifocal, and patrifocal. A consanguineal family construes the family as kin while the nuclear family treats the family as a man, his wife and his children". However, the nuclear family, in particular, is usually paraded as the only family system in Africa, largely as a result of the colonial institutionalisation of capitalist and Victorian models of gender and sexuality, where the idiom of marriage is primarily about gender and is used for social stratification. Oyewùmí (1997) explains that the nuclear family reproduces colonial gendered norms where the male is assumed to be superior and, therefore, a defining category. In this vein, gender is a primary source of hierarchy and oppression within the nuclear family. Oyin Da and Nike disrupt the representation of the nuclear family home as the only family system in Africa, opening up imaginations for alternative forms of queer relations and

kinship structures. The xenosphere allows for a queer-feminist creation of the home outside the instituted colonial gendered and class systems that prioritize masculine labour while subordinating women to the private sphere.

Their daughter, Junior, is a glimpse of queer African possibilities. Nike explains,

> "Junior is pure xenosphere, has never been human like you and me. She is an idea made flesh and knows how to survive in this place better than we ever will. This isn't real, but our minds make it into a facsimile of the life we knew on Earth, so we come along with the same rules that we live with, rules that don't have to obtain here. We know that intellectually, but our minds still rail against what does not fit ontologically. Junior, on the other hand, has no such restrictions." (Thompson, 2019: 268)

The birth of Junior in the xenosphere speaks to the wide-ranging possibilities when alien technology is re-purposed and re-thought from decolonial queer-feminist perspectives and speaks to imaginable possibilities outside the heteropatriarchal phallocentric gaze on the bodies of women and sexual minorities. From this perspective, we argue that, even though there are other possibilities for the future that lie outside of alien technology and infrastructure, such imaginations of the future tend to fail in praxis as they often rely on an idealistic and myopic view of a recuperable stable mythical past (Asante & Pindi, 2020). Mbembe refutes this claim by arguing that the precolonial history of African societies is a "history of colliding cultures" and can hardly be understood outside the paradigms of mobility and displacement. Here, in an attempt to contribute to the discussion on who is and what is African or not African, Mbembe points to the inherent possibilities when we think of "Africanness" (Mbembe, 2020: 58) as an interweaving of a here and there; embracing the ambiguities embedded in postcolonial identities and material realities. Thus, Junior is symbolic of what Hanchey (2020: 120) postulates "as the pulling of yet indescribable futures into being" through decolonial queer and feminist praxis.

Oyin Da and Nike are in the xenosphere, yet firmly embedded in Nigerian culture and struggles. If Africanfuturism is "rooted" in Africa, then its concerns must take African decolonial concerns as their starting point. In African decolonial struggle, it is not the colonial *infrastructure* that cannot be used but rather the colonial *epistemologies* with which the infrastructure is normatively associated. Thompson's trilogy shows how Africanfuturism may retain the

master's infrastructure but must repurpose its tools through African feminist and queer epistemological values.

Conclusion

The Wormwood Trilogy demonstrates how African feminist and queer approaches open doors to decolonisation where the "master's house", such as legal structures, formal education, and academic terminology, need not necessarily be discarded because it can be queerly deployed to resist the patriarchy and heteronormativity of global coloniality. It offers the hope that Africanfuturist work can provide liberatory possibilities for African gender and sexual equality that have been stymied by some African nationalists who insist that LGBTQIA rights and women's equality are "foreign to African culture", and by narrow renderings of the continent in diasporic Afrofuturist fantasy.

Africanfuturism thus draws African continental histories into relation with the nuances of the postcolonial and neocolonial conditions in the present to imagine alternative futures that are deeply interventionist. Authors like Tade Thompson recognise the importance of showing the intersecting nuances within struggles for epistemic decolonisation, gendered liberation, and queer futurity, as well as the complex ways they are embedded within global structures of power. Through the character of Oyin Da, Thompson offers hope that the structures of neocolonialism and the biopolitical impulses of the hetero-masculinist postcolonial nation that sometimes feel stifling and overdetermined can not only be fought against—their very institutions can also be turned into weapons for justice.

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