

Narratives Reimagined: The Black Digital Griot in the Modern World

Sizwé-Ishéma Inkingi

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2024

Creative Commons Copyright Notice

This document is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) Canada License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/legalcode>

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given.

The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize OCAD University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

I further authorize OCAD University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

Abstract

Oral storytelling is the oldest form of instruction across a myriad of cultures. Humans are intrinsically storytellers who express themselves through stories that already exist (Fisher, 1987; Frank, 2012). This practice provides an opportunity for the older generation to hear their parents, grandparents, and elders tell those tales of legends and folktales (Vambe, 2004). Additionally, in various contexts, this form of orality created a space for people to unwind after a difficult day and for families and communities to come together.

Black and Afro-diasporic forms of storytelling, in particular, are intrinsically woven into the cultural fabric of Black culture, it has been a way to preserve the legacy of Africans and Black people who have been subjugated to decades of bondage, racial discrimination and forced migration. Black and Afro-diasporic storytelling, in its essence, is diverse and rich and is transmuted through a series of songs, dances and speeches (Vambe, 2004). This form of orality remains an essential form of knowledge sharing, wherein dreams, aspirations and imagination are translated across generations.

Black and Afro-diasporic forms of storytelling center the narrator “as a vehicle to house this orality” (Uyanze 2022, p.30), oftentimes, the storyteller functions as a repository of oral tradition and bearer of the collective memory. Throughout history, Black and Afrodiasporic communities have utilized storytelling as a conduit that has inspired silent rebellions against the oppressors who took black freedom (Vambe,2004) and has equally contributed to major breakthroughs for Black people and their consciousness to reclaim a sense of belonging that has led them to reconnect to their African roots.

However, as we live in a world wherein Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly at the heart of modern life, as computer scientists are building a vast array of machine learning systems that can perform daily human tasks reliably across diverse sectors (Ebanda de B'béri, 2006; Tunçer, 2018). AI is showcasing its ability to capture the unique essence that makes us “human” through a self-teaching system that can outperform humans across a wide range of disciplines (Ebanda de B'béri, 2006; Tunçer, 2018). Researchers are predicting that AI will be able to pull even with human intelligence and what is known as a point of singularity (Ebanda de B'béri, 2006; Tunçer, 2018). However, this leaves one to question to what extent AI will have the potential to harness the persuasive capabilities of storytelling.

I believe AI may still have lessons to learn from more traditional bodies of knowledge and thought systems. This research will be exploring AI's potential to become the new griot of Black and Afro-diasporic communities? Furthermore, this research will be exploring whether AI will be able to improve or enhance Black and Afro-diasporic methods of storytelling.

Table of Contents

Creative Commons Copyright Notice	2
Author’s Declaration	3
Abstract	4
Table of Contents	6
List of Figures	8
Amahoro	9
How This Project Came to Be.....	10
Research Question Areas of Inquiry.....	11
Objective of the Paper + Research Scope	12
Sankofa	14
The Essence of Storytelling.....	15
Storytelling and Sensemaking.....	15
Transportation Narrative Theory.....	16
Afrofuturism and Afro-diasporic Oral Storytelling	17
Types and Styles of Stories	21
Folktales and Cultural Heritage	22
Anansi Folktales	22
Anansi Stories and the Virtual Revolution	24
Findings of the Literature Review	26
AI and Traditional Black-Afrodiasporic Storytelling.....	27
Addressing Representation and Biases in AI	31
The Impact of AI on Traditional Storytelling.....	32
Methodology.....	33
Afrofuturism.....	34
Sankofa and Cultural Continuity.....	34
Sensemaking	34
Foresight Diamond Approach	36
Creativity	37

Expertise	38
Interaction	38
Evidence	39
Conversation with the Griot.....	40
Prototype.....	40
AI Griot	40
Identity	42
Findings.....	43
Knowledge	44
Storytelling.....	45
Akazoza.....	47
Utilizing the technique.....	47
Bibliography	50
Appendices	55

List of Figures

Figure 1: Foresight Diamond.....	37
Figure 2: Conversation With the Griot.....	42

Amahoro

This research paper is an homage to my mother, whom I affectionately call Kamariza, 'the pleasant one.' My mother plays a pivotal role in this study, serving as one of the driving forces behind an exploration into the future of oral folktale storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities.

You might be wondering; why storytelling? Because my mother is a natural storyteller. Through her words, expressions, and actions, she effortlessly imparts daily life lessons to her audience—an art that is increasingly rare in today's world.

Storytelling is the central piece of my culture, expressed in various aspects of everyday life. From naming ceremonies for newborns to weddings, and even in commemorating the passing of loved ones, storytelling holds a significant place in how humans make sense and meaning of the world around them. Oral storytelling is the oldest form of instruction, spanning across numerous cultures. Humans are innate storytellers, expressing themselves through narratives that have endured through time (Fisher, 1987; Frank, 2012). This tradition offers an opportunity for younger generations to hear tales from their parents, grandparents, and elders (Vambe, 2004). Moreover, storytelling fosters community bonding and provides solace after challenging days.

Traditionally, Africans have revered storytelling, recognizing its role in passing down knowledge, instilling moral values, and entertaining people for millennia (Tuwe, 2015). African storytellers serve as custodians of culture, sharing wisdom and skills vital to the community's fabric. There is a saying in my culture, “Utaraganiriye na se ntamenya icyo sekuru yasize avuze”, which translates to, “a child who does not talk with the father can never know what was said by the

grandfather,” is a looming proverb that provokes my thinking into the evolution of oral storytelling. However, in a world of mass information, I worry about how stories are being transmitted in this digital age. In my introspection, I ponder how well I can preserve and transmit my mother's stories.

This research paper is a personal narrative and an autoethnographic study, tracing the development of Black and Afro-diasporic folktales. This paper will delve particularly into a popular folktale of the name Anansi, exploring their intricacies, transmission, and evolution within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. This exploration sheds light on storytelling within cultures with strong oral traditions and its ability to evolve and exist within time and space. Additionally, we will explore AI's ability to narrate the oral stories of our ancestors.

Welcome to this exploration of piece

How This Project Came to Be

As an Afro-Futurist in pursuit of a deeper understanding of the tales that shaped my ancestors' worldview, I delved into the rich tapestry of Burundi's cultural heritage. Despite being born in this land of a thousand and one hills, my upbringing in both Zimbabwe and Canada left me disconnected from the folktales that define my people. However, a recent longing to reconnect with my roots led me on a journey of exploration, scouring the internet and delving into old books at the Toronto Public Library until I stumbled upon a treasured folktale titled “The Girl Who Smiled Beads” (‘Miseke Marries the God of Thunder,2000).

The tale centers around Miseke, a girl bestowed with the rare gift of producing beads when she smiles. This theme/motif resonated deeply with me as this attribute is a symbology of ipfura-

nobility. Through Miseke's courageous act of protecting her son from an ogre, themes of adventure, joy, and resilience vividly depicted the significance of Burundi cultural value. This reading instilled a sense of pride, partly due to a sense of visibility.

A pivotal moment occurred when I reached out to my mother and learned that she remembered this tale through a song. Witnessing her live rendition brought Miseke, the ogre, and the child to life, further enriching my understanding of our ancestral teachings and revealing the power and relevance of oral tradition in preserving cultural narratives.

As an Afro-Futurist, I am drawn to the transformative power of storytelling in reclaiming and reshaping narratives about Black lives. As I centered myself within this study, conversations with my mother sparked my curiosity in exploring the intersection of Blackness, storytelling, and technology, with a particular focus on AI's ability to not only preserve and transmit Black-Afro-diasporic folktales but also foster a deeper connection for new generations within this community to deepen their connection to their cultural heritage and further embrace their roots.

Research Question Areas of Inquiry

Black and Afro-diasporic forms of storytelling are deeply ingrained in the cultural identity of Black communities, serving as a means to preserve the legacy of Africans and Black people who have endured centuries of oppression, discrimination, and displacement (Tuwe,2015). This rich tradition of storytelling is transmitted through songs, dances, and speeches, and continues to remain a vital conduit for sharing knowledge, dreams, and aspirations across generations (Vambe, 2004).

This paper explores the function of storytelling. At the heart of Black and Afro-diasporic storytelling is the narrator, who serves as a custodian of oral tradition and guardian of collective memory (Uyanze, 2022). Throughout history, storytelling has been a powerful tool of resistance, inspiring silent rebellions against oppressors and fostering a sense of belonging and connection to African roots among Black communities (Vambe, 2004).

Another example of this form of storytelling is my introduction to the world of Capoeira Angola, which began with the word "Ye," a symbolic initiation into a tradition steeped in storytelling. Capoeira Angola is an Afro-Brazilian martial art that has endured centuries of adversity, mirroring the struggles faced by Black communities worldwide (Varela, S. G., 2013). Through storytelling, Capoeira Angola preserves and transmits the history and experiences of Afro-Brazilian diasporic people in a creative and engaging manner, often masked through dance. However, in a world increasingly dominated by Artificial Intelligence (AI), questions arise about its impact on storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. This paper will explore its potential to be a future custodian of knowledge for Black and Afro-diasporic by harnessing the persuasive power of storytelling. Moreover, this paper explores the implications for cultural preservation and expression within this community.

Objective of the Paper + Research Scope

This study aims to explore the intersection of Black speculative thinking in relation to AI to further understand its influence on storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. Firstly, it will examine how storytellers integrate and leverage AI to connect, preserve, and narrate their stories. This research will examine existing literature, drivers and trends to capture

essence and trace the evolution and transformation of African oral traditions. Through engagement with AI technologies, including animation systems and interactive narratives, this study will explore AI's capacity to bring African artifacts and symbols to life and facilitate digital storytelling experiences.

Sankofa

Sankofa is associated with the idea of returning to one's cultural and historic roots to plan. It involves acknowledging the past as a guide for planning and implementing interventions that promote multigenerational health, wealth, and well-being (Temple, C. N., 2010).

According to Temple, the concept of Sankofa, originating from Akan tradition in Ghana, embodies the idea of "returning to retrieve" or learning from the past to move forward (Temple, C. N., 2010). This research primarily explores the plausible future implications of the cultural preservation and expression of Black and Afrodiasporic folk stories through artificial intelligence (AI).

The following literature review will embark on a comprehensive exploration of storytelling's manifold dimensions, highlighting its profound significance in shaping individual and collective identities particularly within a community of people who have faced displacement and ongoing threats of cultural erosion (Temple, C. N.2010). Moreover, it delves into the nexus of storytelling with emerging trends in Afrofuturism, artificial intelligence (AI), Afro-diasporic oral traditions. Throughout this exploration piece, I will be utilizing the concept of Sankofa as a guiding framework in understanding the persuasive power of Black and Afrodiasporic storytelling and how its messaging and function has adapted to major social, political and technological drivers. Lastly, this guiding principle serves as a tool in analyzing how Black and Afro-diasporic stories such as Anansi and its narrators have intricately managed to weave its influence, function and prevalence in specific spaces and time.

The character of Anansi is believed to have come from the Ashanti tribe, located in the West African country of Ghana (Marshall, E. Z., 2007). The character became quite popular among other nearby tribes, including the Akyem and Nzema. As members of these tribes were taken west during the transatlantic slave trade, the stories of Anansi were brought to the West Indies, South America, and North America. In some parts of North America, Anansi became known as Aunt Nancy or Miss Nancy in African American folklore.

To this research, the Anansi stories are an example of living artifacts that have been ingrained in human existence since antiquity, serving as vital channels for communication, cultural preservation, and sensemaking (Dakubu, 1990). This section explores the different perspectives of how storytelling is perceived and how it shapes reality. Before this research, I asked myself why stories are important and how they facilitate the acquisition of tacit knowledge to make sense of their environment.

The Essence of Storytelling

Storytelling is deeply rooted in the human psyche. It conveys truths, emotions, and experiences. It acts as a conduit for individuals to connect with their past, navigate their present, and envision their future (Ryan P, 2018). From ancient cave paintings to contemporary digital platforms, storytelling endures as a cornerstone of human expression (Iseke, 2013).

Storytelling and Sensemaking

Storytelling intertwines with the process of sensemaking, wherein individuals derive meaning and understanding from narratives and experiences. It is through narrative structure,

interpretation, emotional engagement, and identity formation, storytelling facilitates sensemaking by providing cognitive frameworks for navigating the world (Johnson 2011).

Transportation Narrative Theory

One of the fundamental theories in understanding the function of storytelling is the transportation narrative theory. Narrative is one of the most powerful means of passing on a culture's values from generation to generation. Narratives in any society are passed down through storytelling (Milojevic and Inayatullah, 2015). Fables, folktale, myths, and legends are some of the many forms in which stories may be transmitted.

Narratives are important in future studies and narrative foresight is a process that engages individuals in a conversation about possible futures (Milojevic and Inayatullah, 2015). Narrative foresight is focused on exploring current narratives and how they may transform in the future. Good narratives are based on stories from lived experience and can be used to challenge dominant and discriminatory narratives regarding individuals or a group (Cole, 2009). This has long-lasting implications because whoever shapes the narrative tends to dominate the way things are framed now and, in the future, (Ochugboju, 2020). Drawing on historical experiences of colonialism, imperialism, and slavery that Black and Afro-diasporic communities have been subjugated to, this analytical framework would support the research in understanding the resonance of Black and Afro-diasporic folk stories in our current times.

Additionally, further insights into storytelling lie in the notion of transportation narrative theory, which explains how individuals can be transported into the narrative realm, experiencing it as a tangible reality. This theoretical construct holds pertinence in exploring the

fusion of storytelling with artificial intelligence (AI), as AI systems increasingly engage in narrative construction. This framework supports the understanding that the mechanism of narrative transportation is crucial for discerning AI's potential influence on human cognition and behaviour, particularly within Afrofuturist contexts that create a frame in envisioning futures shaped by Black and African diasporic experiences.

Afrofuturism and Afro-diasporic Oral Storytelling

The rise of Afrofuturism as both a cultural movement and artistic aesthetic has reshaped the landscape of storytelling, particularly within Black and African diasporic communities.

Afrofuturism is a concept that envisions speculative futures that is interwoven with African and diasporic cultural motifs, which challenges conventional narratives of oppression and marginalization (Bould, 2007).

Afro-futurism is described as a source of optimism for Black people facing isolation, as it centers African narratives in a manner that facilitates innovative ways to reclaim and transform modern communication about Black lives (Briggs & Clarke 2020). Kodwo Eshun's "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism" identifies the centrality of the concept of time which parallels ideology of Sankofa for the genre, as the author explores the relationships between the past and the future as well as the development and significance of Afrodiasporic subjectivity, since "Afrofuturism may be characterized as a program for recovering the histories of counter-futures in a century hostile to Afro-diasporic projection" (Eshun,2003). Additionally the concept of Afrofuturism impacts story formation as the counterhegemonic nature of Afrofuturistic writing has also created spaces for speculative narratives attentive to 'people of colour' outside

of the African diaspora but acknowledging the experience of imperial conquest (Russell, 2018) whilst integrating perspective that contribute to world knowledge and ideas and includes the perspectives of a group too often deleted from the past and future” (Womack, 2013).

Afrofuturism has been conceptualized with a set of foundational notions that includes, according to Nelson, “sci-fi imagery, futurist themes, and technological innovation in the African diaspora”. These themes are aimed at producing narratives about culture, technology and things to come”.

In "Afrofuturism: Race, Erasure, and COVID" by Belinda Deneen Wallace and Jesse W. Schwartz , the authors explain how black speculative thinking in the context of Afrofuturism and Black Science fiction addresses the invisibilities of black realities within science fiction; particularly in United states where science fiction has been traditionally portrayed as a color-blind future, which led to the relative absence of racialized people in the genre(Wallace & Schwartz, 2022). This shift in focus is significant as it brings attention to the exclusion of black voices and experiences in science fiction narratives, which have traditionally privileged white American and European literary traditions.

The exploration of Afrofuturism and Black Science fiction aims to transform the genre by highlighting the real-world black access to, and use of, digital technologies, shifting the emphasis from technophobia to a future wherein black people play a central role within the digital sphere.

Integrating an Afrofuturistic lens in understanding the influence of transportational narrative theory within story making has led me to approach oftentimes marginalized, day-to-day, yet

topical questions of race and black character formation within science fiction narratives (Gibson,2019).

Additionally, as the document points out that traditional science fiction has been constructed to privilege white American and European literary traditions, while excluding black voices and experiences, showcasing the impact of culture on storytelling (Gibson, 2019). The discussion of black speculative thinking, Afrofuturism, and Black Science Fiction is important because it helps one to question the traditional colour-blind approach of science fiction that marginalized questions of race and the experiences of black individuals and communities within the genre.

The document "Speculative Fiction and Black Lesbians" by Jewell Gomez discusses how speculative fiction is tied to storytelling. The document explores how speculative fiction allows writers to create extraordinary worlds that go beyond the current accepted norms, such as intergalactic travel, ghosts, telekinesis, or vampires (Gomez, 1993). These speculative worlds illuminate ordinary emotional and intellectual questions that individuals ask themselves, expanding ideas about human nature. The document also mentions that speculative fiction is a way of taking ordinary emotional or philosophical questions and placing them in unusual settings or circumstances, allowing for a diverse range of writers, including Black lesbian writers, to participate in this expansion of storytelling. Additionally, it highlights how Black lesbian writers like Cheryl Clarke, Michelle Parkerson, and Barbara Burford have used speculative fiction to explore themes related to personal power, identity, and the reconciliation of Blackness and femaleness through fantasy.

This concept is important as Afrofuturism is presented as a form of black speculative thinking that focuses on real-world black access to and use of digital technologies, which helps us extrapolate the dynamics that lay within the intersection of race, technology, and power (Gomez, 1993).

By foregrounding the intersection of race, technology, and power within this exploration piece, these themes offer a platform to imagine alternative futures that address issues of race and power, providing a counter-narrative to mainstream science fiction (Gomez, 1993) and story making.

Additionally, it mentions how Afrofuturism aims to transform the genre by emphasizing the importance of culture in shaping narratives (Gomez, 1993). The article from Time magazine explores the cultural significance of "Wakanda Forever," a phrase popularized by the Marvel movie "Black Panther," and its connections to African folklore and pop culture (Time, 2022).

This case study ties with the abovementioned concept of Afrofuturism as the story the fictional African nation of Wakanda depicted in the movie, which is portrayed as a technologically advanced and culturally rich society. Additional elements of African folklore and mythology, particularly the concept of ancestral connection and the idea of a hidden or mythical homeland are portrayed in the movie.

Like Black Panther movie, themes of representation, identity, and diverse storytelling are found in mainstream media (Time, 2022). According to Santos, the emergence of Black characters such as Miles Morales are important protagonists; given his identity as a half-African American, half-Latino teenager, Miles resonates with audiences who identify with his multicultural

background and struggles which speaks to the rising importance of cultural impact of representation within popular culture (Vox, 2023).

As our research focuses on Black and Afro-diasporic communities, it is important to note, that members of this community have historically been subjugated to forced displacement or do not have easy access to their histories; therefore, future studies can provide some insight into the capacity on how Black and Afro diaspora communities are able to imagine futures for themselves and their communities .Afrofuturism therefore is an essential conceptual framework to provide this research with some foundational knowledge on the potential threats posed by AI systems that lack cultural sensitivity and highlight the importance of preserving and promoting cultural diversity in the age of AI.

Types and Styles of Stories

When one understands the significance of storytelling in culture, it becomes clear that most books, papers, publications, films, plays, news broadcasts, and social media discussions, are all based on someone telling a story somehow (Storr, 2021).

Stories manifest in diverse forms, encompassing traditional myths, personal memoirs, and conversational narratives (Storr, 2021). Each genre serves distinct purposes, whether preserving cultural heritage, sharing lived experiences, or conveying moral teachings. According to Onuora in *Anansesem (Storytelling Nights): African Maternal Pedagogies*, the classification of storytelling into metanarratives of cultural groups, personal/self-stories, and cultural stories underscores the rich tapestry of human narrative expression. For the purpose of this exploration will be analyzing the Anansi folktales as cultural stories (Onuora, 2012).

Folktales and Cultural Heritage

Folktales, in particular, are stories that have been handed down through generations either by word of mouth or through carefully stored scriptures that form the very backbone of every nation's cultural legacy (Onuora, 2012). The popularity of the folktales bears testimony to the fact the people of Africa continue to draw inspiration and strength from the basic concepts and philosophies of life developed by their forefathers thousands of years ago (Storr, 2021).

Folktales, such as those featuring the iconic trickster figure Anansi, are integral to the cultural heritage of African and Afro-diasporic communities (Marshall, E. Z., 2007). These stories, passed down through generations, offer insights into the values, beliefs, and experiences of diverse Black-Afrodiasporic cultural groups. The resilience and adaptability of folktales, as evidenced by their transmission across continents and centuries, attest to their enduring relevance in contemporary society. By embracing and celebrating folktales, communities can reclaim and reaffirm their cultural identity, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among future generations.

However, despite its enduring importance, African stories have often been marginalized within formal educational settings, highlighting the need for greater recognition and appreciation of their cultural significance.

Anansi Folktales

Anansi folktales emanate from Black- Afro-diasporic traditions and epitomize the cultural significance of storytelling. These narratives continue to be passed down through generations,

encapsulating performative arts that preserve historical memory and collective identity. Anansi storytellers serve as custodians of a vibrant oral tradition, bridging past, present, and future experiences.

The document explores the roots of Anansi among the Asante people of Ghana. Anansi, meaning "spider" in the Twi language, is deeply rooted in Asante culture and reflects key elements of their thought and beliefs (Marshall E.,2007, p.30). Anansi is associated with wisdom and immense spiritual powers by the Asante, with some interpretations suggesting that everything in the world started with Anansi. The tales of Anansi are not just for entertainment but are also vehicles for political discourse and are intertwined with traditional Asante religious beliefs.

Anancy, a prominent figure in Afro-Caribbean folklore, is associated with the Middle Passage and the survival of the spider through invisible threads that connect to the mother country and its tricks to outwit enemies. Anancy represents the Caribbean's obsession with hybrid identities, creolization processes, and the weaving and unweaving of identities, particularly focusing on the feminine subject caught in societal webs (Bailey, 2009). The myth of Anancy symbolizes a mixed identity with some parts known and others missing, reflecting a diasporic identity that must be embraced and preserved.

Anansi's character is portrayed differently in Jamaican Anansi tales compared to the Asante context. In Jamaica, Anansi symbolizes the black slave stolen from Africa, and the tales reflect elements of plantation life and the harsh realities faced by slaves. Anansi's actions in these tales

are more violent and remorseless, reflecting a different interpretation of his liminal force in the Jamaican context (Marshall, 2012).

The arachnean symbolism of Anansi also connects to Greek mythology, highlighting the importance of creole orature and African mythology in the Caribbean context (Gyssels, 2002). Anansi's character is known for trickery and disruptiveness, similar to other folklore figures like Compè Lapin/Bré Rabbit, Compè Tigre, and Monkey. The title "Fils et Filles D'Anancy" emphasizes the theme of (un)woven identity in Schwarz-Bart and Marshall's fiction, exploring the complexities of identity and heritage.

According to literature Anansi is depicted as a trickster figure across Black-Afrodiasporic communities who challenges social norms and boundaries, embodying the opposition between order and disorder, sacred and profane, and culture and nature. Anansi fearlessly transgresses these divides, restructuring both the natural and human world. Anansi's tales resonate with the Asante's fascination with the interplay between order and chaos, reflecting their cultural values and beliefs (Gyssels, 2002)

Overall, the spider stories of Anansi serve as a rich cultural heritage that sheds light on the complexities of Asante society, their beliefs, and their historical context.

Anansi Stories and the Virtual Revolution

The role of the storyteller is central to the preservation and dissemination of cultural narratives within African and Afro-diasporic communities (Tuwe, 2015). Across generations, storytellers have served as custodians of knowledge, wisdom, and tradition, weaving intricate tales that reflect the values and experiences of their people. The significance of storytelling in African

culture is underscored by its pervasive presence in various aspects of daily life, from communal gatherings to rites of passage. In contemporary contexts, the tradition of storytelling continues to evolve, adapting to the challenges and opportunities presented by digital media and technology.

The emergence of platforms such as social media and digital storytelling tools has expanded the reach of storytellers, enabling them to connect with audiences across geographical and cultural boundaries (Tuwe, 2015). However, the rules and norms of storytelling may vary across different contexts and cultures, necessitating sensitivity and awareness in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the proliferation of digital media raises questions about the authenticity and integrity of storytelling, as narratives may be manipulated or distorted for various purposes. The virtual revolution has contributed to preserving folktale tales in their uncorrupt form.

Rewriting the folklore and narratives that form part of the oral tradition is a postcolonial attempt at valorizing their native heritage to compel the Western world to take notice of the culture that is truly their own. Some scholars argue that the right way to preserve folktales is to reimagine and reinvent them to resonate with the present [Click here to enter text.](#)(Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2020)[Click here to enter text.](#).. They become a counter-discourse to set right the wrongs done by colonial violence and its ability to restore the beauty and value of their cultural past and tradition. Virtual revolution has been a gateway towards exploring alternative mediums for preserving and transmitting folklore transcending the boundaries of language, time, age and geography. Through storytelling, cultural values are transmitted, collective memory is preserved, and social cohesion is fostered.

Findings of the Literature Review

The analysis, driven by the literature review, highlights the multifaceted nature of storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic contexts, emphasizing its role as a vehicle for cultural preservation, identity formation, and social cohesion. As storytelling continues to evolve in response to technological advancements and shifting socio-cultural dynamics, literature demonstrates that it is essential to uphold the values of authenticity, inclusivity, and respect for diverse cultural traditions.

AI may still have lessons to learn from more traditional bodies of knowledge and thought systems. As this research will be exploring AI's potential to become the new griot of Black and Afro-diasporic communities, this research will explore whether AI will be able to improve or enhance Black and Afro-diasporic methods of storytelling.

AI is showcasing its ability to capture the unique essence that makes us “human” through a self-teaching system that can outperform humans across a wide range of disciplines (Erastus, 2021). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram not only use such algorithms to ‘tailor’ individual users’ content, but they also use algorithms to design and determine their community standards and policies. However, for this to fully function, machines need to be provided with ample amounts of data. In addition to data, AI relies on algorithms, which are sets of instructions or rules designed to solve a problem or resolve a task.

Everything we do in our daily lives, to an extent, follows an algorithm; from waking up to having breakfast and sleeping. Our lives are designed to follow certain patterns or rules and the same happens in machine learning. In AI, algorithms can be any form of automated instructions, for

example ChatGPT and Snapchat. My AI are two powerful AI-based chat applications that have been trending in the news over the past few months. These are examples of what is called “generative” AI. It uses the patterns and structures it identifies in vast amounts of source data to generate language from its training data that looks like it was created by a human being.

AI “chatbot” apps are able to answer questions, tell stories, and write computer code however the chatbot” apps can sometimes generate incorrect answers and can reproduce biases contained in their source material, such as racism or sexism.

AI and Traditional Black-Afrodiasporic Storytelling

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) with storytelling represents a significant development in contemporary narrative practices. AI technologies offer novel ways to create, disseminate, and interact with stories, potentially transforming the storytelling landscape. However, the use of AI in storytelling also raises ethical and cultural considerations, particularly regarding issues of representation, bias, and authenticity. Existing literature also explores the impact of algorithms and culture through the growing consideration of the protection of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural norms in the development of algorithms particularly due to the ongoing threat of cultural homogenization and racial digital divide that is tied to data-colonialism (Erastus. 2021).

According to research, it has been suggested that by the end of this century at least 50% of the world’s languages will face the prospect of extinction (Concordia,2020). Many if not many of these languages will unfortunately be Indigenous languages. There is also the problem of data colonialism which affects all nations but has particular relational asymmetries in data and

information flows to the power centres in the Global North and from the broader periphery, including the Global South.

Colonialism is not a new concept in Africa, and people who already form part of previously marginalized communities' risk being enveloped and trapped in emerging AI apartheid systems (Olorunju, 2022). This is already visible through various platforms. For example, Africa has an estimated population of over 1.3 billion people and 54 countries, with most living in the internet deserts. Although most countries in Africa either speak English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, Africa is home to over 2000 languages.

Voice-based interfaces like Google's 'Hey Google', Amazon's 'Alexa' and other virtual assistants are taught various languages (Ticona, 2021). Currently, iOS's 'Siri' speaks nine different English accents with the main ones being American, Australian, British, Indian, Irish, and 'South African'. Facebook currently uses AI to proactively detect hate speech in 40 languages, however, most voice assistants do not support African languages. Language inequalities risk excluding certain members of society in being able to acquire and build knowledge.

"Additionally, in 'How Data is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism,' scholars Nick Couldry and Ulises A. Mejias describe what they refer to as a new form of digital land grabbing. 'The acquisition and construction of data for corporate use—that's the land grabbing going on,' says Couldry. Further hinting that colonialism is the only word that can describe how big tech companies are utilizing people's data (Ticona, 2021).

"There are also human rights concerns and related harms stemming from the use of algorithms that have disproportionately affected African populations (Allen & Okpali, 2022). "These include

algorithms that display racial and gender bias, for example, Black South African women have been excluded from loan eligibility due to historically incorrect datasets, additionally, there are also issues of mass surveillance and racial profiling (South Africa), digital echo chambers (Nigeria and Ethiopia) and digital censorship on social media (South Sudan, Chad, and Congo), which cause political polarization.

Another example within popular culture is the case of Shudu Gram-"Shudu Gram" a digital creation, often referred to as the world's first digital supermodel. Created by British photographer Cameron-James Wilson in 2017, Shudu is a computer-generated model who gained significant attention on social media platforms like Instagram (Jackson, 2018)

Shudu's appearance is hyper-realistic, leading many to initially believe she was a real person. Wilson developed Shudu using 3D computer graphics software and meticulously crafted her image, including her skin tone, facial features, and even her clothing. Shudu's Instagram account (@shudu.gram) quickly amassed a large following, and she became a symbol of the intersection between fashion, technology, and art (Jackson, 2018).

While Shudu's creation sparked discussions about the future of modeling, digital art, and the representation of beauty standards, it also raised ethical questions about the use of digital models and the potential impact on real-life models and influencers. Some critics argued that Shudu's existence could perpetuate unrealistic beauty standards and further marginalize underrepresented groups in the modeling industry (Jackson, 2018).

In this case study, one is able to observe how Shudu's creation raises questions about the representation of racial diversity in media and the fashion industry. While Shudu is a digital

creation with a dark skin tone, she is portrayed as a fashion model, leading to discussions about the authenticity of her representation (Jackson, 2018). Some argue that using a digital model to represent a racial identity raises concerns about the authenticity of the representation and the potential for exploitation. Additionally, Shudu's creation by a white photographer sparked debates about cultural appropriation and who has the right to represent certain identities. Critics argue that by creating a digital model based on a specific racial identity, Wilson may have appropriated elements of black culture and identity for commercial gain. Whilst some argue that the prominence of digital models like Shudu could further marginalize real models and influencers, particularly those who face systemic barriers in the fashion industry.

In summary, as AI technology advances, the lines between reality and simulation become increasingly blurred, raising questions about consent, agency, and the commodification of digital identities. Shudu's creation serves as a focal point for exploring complex issues related to race, AI, and narratives, including representation, authenticity, cultural appropriation, ethical implications, and the power of storytelling and the need for thoughtful reflection and dialogue around the intersection of technology, identity, and society

"This case study amplifies what computer scientist and founder of the Algorithmic Justice League (AJL), Joy Buolamwini, says: there needs to be a choice right now in the digital sphere.

'What's happening is these technologies are being deployed widely without oversight, oftentimes covertly, so that by the time we wake up, it's almost too late,' she echoed (Erastus,2021). Therefore, questions of representation are central in data and algorithmic ethics discourse, and rightfully so, because machines mirror society's behaviour.

AI ethicists argue that most algorithms do not represent the contexts that we live in, for example, it is harder for them to recognise black people. Even though AI captures preferences and mimics human behaviour, such systems can inherit human biases. If the data is inaccurate, unjust or unrepresentative, biased behaviours perpetuated through this medium will discriminate against millions of people particular Black-Afro-diasporic communities (Erastus, 2021).

The convergence of artificial intelligence (AI) with storytelling marks a notable advancement in contemporary narrative practices. AI technologies introduce innovative approaches to crafting, sharing, and engaging with stories, potentially reshaping the landscape of storytelling. Nevertheless, this paper observes how incorporating AI into storytelling raises significant ethical and cultural challenges, particularly regarding issues of representation, bias, and authenticity.

Addressing Representation and Biases in AI

Despite being trained on extensive datasets, AI systems can inherit human biases, perpetuating disparities, and discrimination. Ensuring the representation of diverse voices and perspectives in AI systems is essential to mitigate biases and foster inclusive outcomes. However, challenges such as language disparities and geographical biases pose obstacles, potentially excluding certain communities from benefiting from AI technologies (Ticona, 2021). Existing literature showcases how these challenges require ongoing efforts to diversify datasets, enhance algorithmic transparency, and implement mechanisms for auditing and mitigating biases in AI systems.

Algorithms are increasingly being used to replace or augment human decision-making around the world, including in the African continent. A key question facing policymakers is how to govern these technologies to ensure fair, accountable and transparent use. The nature of algorithms depends largely on the type of data used (Ticona, 2021). This makes the data used equally important to the question of the good governance of these technologies. Incorrect data, data that misrepresents a segment of the population, or data that simply does not include certain groups and renders them invisible are all key considerations for governance in better understanding the interaction between people and technology.

To date, much of the discussion on algorithm governance – and how best AI technologies can be governed to mitigate harm to individuals, societies, the environment, and other resources – has centered in the Global North (Erastus,2021). As we reckon with the increasing pervasiveness of AI in African societies.

The Impact of AI on Traditional Storytelling

Storytelling intertwines with the process of sensemaking, wherein individuals derive meaning and understanding from narratives and experiences. Through narrative structure, interpretation, emotional engagement, and identity formation, storytelling facilitates sensemaking by providing cognitive frameworks for navigating the world. Additionally, navigating the intersection of AI and storytelling within Afrodiasporic communities involves grappling with complex ethical, cultural, and societal considerations. The digital revolution has played a pivotal role in safeguarding traditional folklore in its authentic form. Through the reimagining and retelling of folk narratives within the oral tradition, there emerges a

postcolonial endeavor to honour indigenous heritage and compel recognition from the Western world of cultures that are inherently distinct (Concordia, 2020). Preserving folklore authentically necessitates the adaptation and reinvention of stories to resonate with contemporary audiences, serving as a corrective discourse to address the injustices wrought by colonial violence and to reaffirm the richness and significance of cultural heritage.

As practitioners and researchers explore the potential of AI for teaching and learning through storytelling, I sought to explore how AI is being used to ensure that storytelling remains a vehicle for cultural expression and understanding, rather than a tool to accelerate homogenization or exploitation.

Methodology

As a researcher deeply immersed in the rich tapestry of Black and Afro-diasporic cultures, I embarked on a journey to explore the future of storytelling within these vibrant communities. Drawing upon my own experiences as a storyteller, educator, and cultural enthusiast, I sought to weave together personal narratives with scholarly inquiry, guided by the illuminating framework of the Foresight Diamond by Rafel Poppers and the transformative lens of sensemaking (Georghiou, 2009).

This research paper will be utilizing the following research methods, techniques and conceptual frameworks to deepen our understanding and provide us with some insight into the potentiality of how Black and Afro-diasporic folk narratives will be reliant on an algorithm and AI to co-create and transmute stories in the next 20 years.

The following conceptual frameworks and methodologies will be utilized to guide us through this research project.

Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism emerges as a potent framework for exploring the intersection of storytelling, technology, and cultural identity. By envisioning speculative futures that center African and Afro-diasporic experiences, Afrofuturism challenges dominant narratives and empowers marginalized voices. As AI technologies become increasingly intertwined with storytelling practices, Afrofuturism offers a lens through which to critically examine the potential impact of these technologies on cultural representation and expression.

Sankofa and Cultural Continuity

Within the context of storytelling, Sankofa encourages a reflective engagement with ancestral knowledge and cultural heritage, fostering continuity and resilience across generations (Temple, C. N., 2010). The findings derived from the literature review supports this framework in envision a paradigm shift by embracing the wisdom of the past while envisioning futures informed by Afrofuturist principles, communities can navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world while staying grounded in their cultural identity.

Sensemaking

Designers aim to make sense of the data, uncover hidden meanings, and understand the problem they are trying to solve. The process involves mapping out themes on a large sheet of paper to drive innovation through deep and meaningful sensemaking (Georghiou, 2009).

Sensemaking is a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively-to quote John Kolko -sensemaking is a constant process of acquisition, reflection, and action. John Kolko further describes this concept as being an action-oriented cycle that people continually and fairly automatically go through in order to integrate experiences into their understanding of the world around them (Georghiou, 2009).

Sensemaking is described as an internal, personal process, while synthesis can be a collaborative, external process. The process of synthesis involves manipulating, organizing, pruning, and filtering data to produce information and knowledge. It emphasizes prioritizing, judging, and forging connections between elements (Kolko,2010).

Framing is essential in design synthesis as it helps designers integrate experiences into their understanding of the world around them. It involves identifying and forging connections between elements, finding relationships and patterns, and externalizing ideas to make them tangible and discussable. The document highlights that synthesis methods are crucial in sensemaking, organization, and drawing connections between seemingly unrelated elements (Kolko,2010).

Overall, the document emphasizes the significance of sensemaking and framing in the design synthesis process, showcasing how these elements drive innovation and help designers make informed decisions based on their life experiences and inferential leaps.

The methodology described in the document involves the externalization of research data to move from a messy state to a more organized one (Kolko,2010). Designers identify explicit and

implicit relationships by physically drawing out content-affinities through organization. This process focuses on finding "good" relationships rather than "right" ones, emphasizing multi-faceted and culturally rooted connections. The method of Insight Combination involves identifying insights in gathered data by combining observations with knowledge and actively producing new ideas in a nonlinear manner.

Overall, the methodology integrates experiences into the designer understanding of the world by externalizing ideas to identify and forge connections. It emphasizes finding relationships and patterns between elements, making ideas tangible for discussion and part of a larger synthesis process.

Foresight Diamond Approach

The foresight Diamond is a framework that positions methods based on their main type of knowledge source (based on creativity, expertise, interaction or evidence) (Georghiou, 2009).

Applying the Foresight Diamond Framework as a methodology to a research study on the future of storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities involved considering each corner of the diamond—creativity, expertise, interaction, and evidence **fig 1.**—in the context of these communities' storytelling practices. These following domains are not fully independent from one another:

Foresight Diamond
Popper (2008)



Figure 1: Foresight Diamond

Creativity

Creativity-based methods normally require a mixture of original and imaginative thinking, often this might involve exploring the innovative ways in which storytelling mediums are utilized, such as oral traditions, music, literature, visual arts, and digital media. As part of my exploration and as a first step, I started by recognizing the creative expression inherent in storytelling

within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. I examined a number of artifacts such a collection of Anansi stories portrayed in different mediums this helped shaped imaginative visions of how storytelling could evolve in the future, considering factors like cultural heritage, identity, and social change.

Expertise

Expertise-based methods rely on the skill and knowledge of individual in a particular area or subject. These methods are frequently used to support top-down decisions, provide advice and make recommendations. For the purpose of this study, I relied on my professor and my lived experience to inform this exploration piece of the valuable insights into the historical context, cultural significance, and evolving trends of storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. Incorporate black perspectives to enrich the understanding of the subject matter and ensure the research is grounded in a nuanced understanding of the topic.

Interaction

Interaction-based methods feature in foresight because they rely on knowledge exchange between participants. For the discussion of this study, I interact with AI interface to gather insight on how study will be seeking to foster interactive dialogue and participation within Black and Afro-diasporic communities to ensure inclusivity and diverse representation in the research process.

Evidence

Evidence based methods utilizes empirical data, qualitative research methods, and case studies to gather evidence that informs the understanding of current storytelling practices and trends within Black and Afro-diasporic communities. This might involve analyzing existing literature, cultural artifacts, digital media content, and historical records to identify patterns, themes, and emerging narratives. Incorporate evidence-based insights to support the development of informed projections about the future of storytelling, taking into account socio-cultural dynamics, technological advancements, and shifting audience preferences.

The framework emphasizes the importance of drawing from multiple knowledge sources—creativity, expertise, interaction, and evidence—to develop comprehensive insights into the future. This theme highlights the recognition that effective foresight requires a balanced integration of different perspectives and approaches. Overall, the Foresight Diamond Framework promotes a holistic and integrative approach to foresight, emphasizing the need for diverse perspectives, continuous learning, and technological innovation in envisioning and shaping the future.

Conversation with the Griot

Prototype

In this autoethnographic narrative, the research intertwines personal reflections, scholarly insights, and cultural observations to create a vivid tapestry of the speculative journey, guided by the principles of the Foresight Diamond Framework and sensemaking. Through storytelling, I seek to showcase the complexities, nuances, and transformative potentials of envisioning the future of storytelling within Black and Afro-diasporic communities.

AI Griot

As a first step I consider the role of technology in shaping the future of storytelling within Black -Afro-diasporic communities and additionally explore how can AI be used to amplify Black and Afro-diasporic voices, preserve cultural heritage, and foster community engagement. For that I decided to interface with my AI Griot also known as AI Dungeon. AI Dungeon is a AI platform that combines artificial intelligence with interactive storytelling, allowing users to engage in dynamic, open-ended narratives. AI Dungeon relies on AI language models to drive game experiences. This interface offers several AI image models to generate pictures during gameplay, which for this study I chose not to focus too much on the imagery but rather than the content (OpenAI. (2024). AI Dungeon [Computer program]. Retrieved from <https://play.aidungeon.io/>). Also, AI Dungeon can allow users to actively participate in shaping the story's direction. This interactivity mirrors the collaborative nature of oral storytelling, where listeners often contribute to the narrative by asking questions, providing feedback, or even suggesting plot twists by using story cards.

AI Dungeon also has a Story card feature that provides the AI with some context about recurring characters, common locations, past events, or anything else about the created storyline.

I began this research by creating prompts to interface with the narrator, part of this process is essential as it creates a story map for the AI. By creating a prompt, the software is able on the backhand to research particular themes related to the protagonist (AI Dungeon [Computer program]. Retrieved from <https://play.aidungeon.io/>). My prompt was intentionally chosen with a particular framing in mind that aligned with the following research question which is to explore AI's potential to become the new griot of Black and Afro-diasporic communities and its ability to improve or enhance Black and Afro-diasporic methods of storytelling. Framing is an important concept to retain as it refers to the perspective or 'lens' through which information is viewed, therefore influencing how stories are told and understood. Frames can be strategically manipulated to highlight certain elements over others, thus guiding the interpretation of the story, because of this framing, I describe the protagonist living in an urban setting in Scarborough in 30 years and I meet Anansi.

"Its 2050, I live in Scarborough and I am 15 , and I meet anansi what would they tell me"

It is important to note that I did not include racial, technological or storytelling identifiers. I do however still use the word Anansi, age, location and time leaving the software lessening parameters to take on a storyteller role. While engaging with AI Dungeon, I embraced the transformative power of interactive dialogue and participatory sensemaking. It is through this interaction that I was able to extrapolate a series of themes that I clustered into three categories- **Identity, Knowledge, Storytelling.**

It is important to note that in this section of the paper I extrapolate quotes from my interactions with the AI as illustrated on **fig 2** below: Conversation with the Griot (OpenAI. (2024). AI Dungeon [Computer program]. Retrieved from <https://play.aidungeon.io/>).

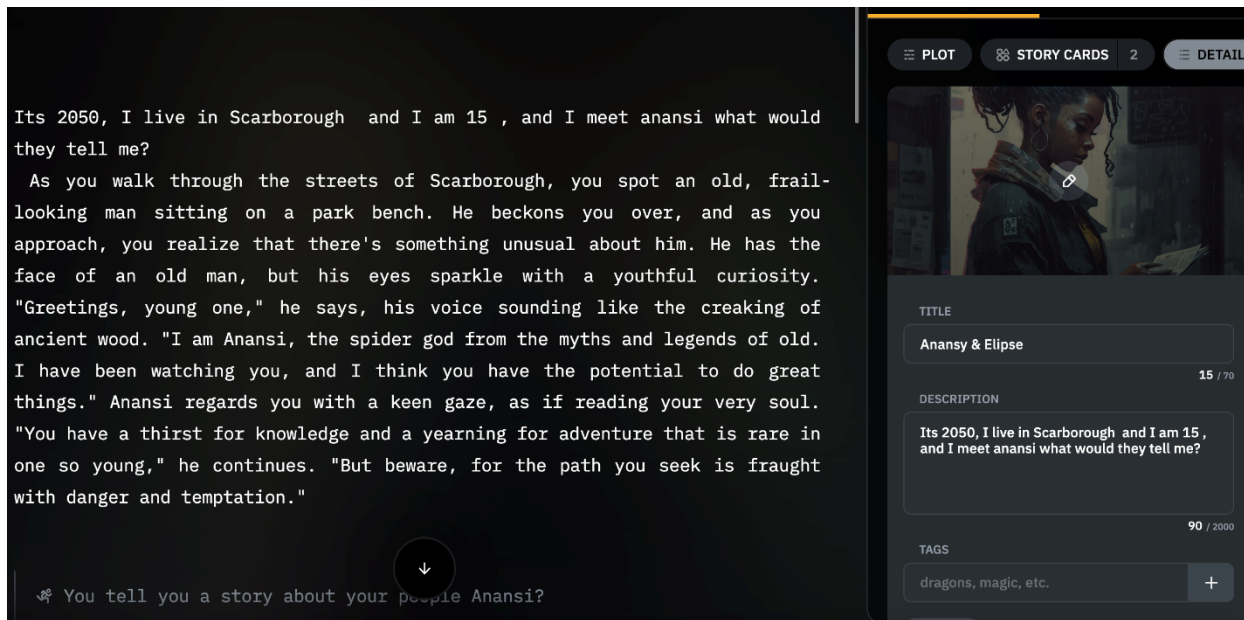


Figure 2: Conversation With the Griot

Identity

This theme pertains to the aspect of identity and visibility within narration. Through the interaction with AI Griot, aspects of identity were brought up. Understanding very well that Anansi stories are shared by a plethora and diversity of audience - this is initial prompt was to inquire from what lens would AI be able to narrate an Anansi story.

Example Prompt:

Sizwe: tell me a story about your people Anansi?

Findings

Anansi although a spider God is personified as a spider which is related to one of its major attributes as Anansi based on the literature is consider a shapeshifter. Al Griot is describing as having

"He has the face of an old man, but his eyes sparkle with a youthful curiosity. "

Yet

"I am Anansi, the spider god from the myths and legends of old. I have been watching you, and I think you have the potential to do great things."

Which coincides with how folktare characterizes Anansi as being Shamanic shape-changer and master of transformation and metamorphosis, inhabiting a hybrid space between the human world and the non-human. His actions involve disconnecting his own body parts, eating his own children, and engaging in destructive and creative behaviors, showcasing his shapeshifting abilities and liminal nature (Marshal E.Z 2007).

Let me tell you a story about my people, the Akan, who live in what is now known as Ghana, in West Africa."

The Al Griot is able to recognize the origin of Anansi stories as it ties it back to the Akan people who are subgroup of the Ashanti people in Ghana (Marshal E.Z 2007).

Additionally, the Griot speaks of looming threat around cultural preservation that impact the livelihood of the preservation of Anansi stories for example the griot explains in the story with the following quote:

"Colonization, slavery, and now the pressures of modernization threaten to erase our culture and traditions."

These drivers impact the black and African community, and which relate to the drivers that were mentioned in the literature review. Colonization, slavery and modernization have greatly shaped

the culture and traditions are quintessential pillars for indigenous communities

(Concordia,2020). The AI is able to discuss the importance of storytelling in African culture and how it is being impacted by modernity and digital technology. Traditional storytelling sessions in African societies are slowly fading due to increased social and economic demands.

"Young people in my community are drawn to the cities, where they can find work and opportunities that are not available in the villages."

These drivers and trends underscore the evolving nature of oral literature in response to modern advancements, particularly digital technology, and the opportunities it presents for the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage through storytelling.

Knowledge

I probe to know the scope and reach of their stories, interestingly enough the griot further explains highlights that Anansi stories have been adapted in different cultures and acknowledges its particularly with as the griot coins "the global storytelling tradition". This in itself symbolizes aspects of visibility and recognition within a pantheon of storytelling which is primarily predominantly white. The AI griot hints at the diffusion of the tale across different versions and languages, suggesting a process of cultural transmission and adaptation.

“the true power of my stories lies in their ability to teach important lessons and values,” he says. “They can help us navigate the complexities of life and remind us of the wisdom of our ancestors.

Additionally, the text emphasizes the significance of words and language in the tale, highlighting that the exclusive possession of the right word is key to power and glory. The proper organization of words is crucial for the distribution of knowledge, with Spider symbolizing connection between language and power, which according to literature follows similar patterns between the Dagaare, Asante, and Waale versions indicate a shared cultural heritage and the evolution of the tale over time (Marshal E.Z 2007).

In the story narrates themes of three distinct major drivers that are showcase in the literature

Storytelling

This theme really captures the themes of forms of storytelling, its foundation and its ability to transport the narrate through the use of particular words that evoke emotion curiosity and catalyses response.

Storytelling intertwines with the process of sensemaking, wherein individuals derive meaning and understanding from narratives and experiences. Through narrative structure, interpretation, emotional engagement, and identity formation, storytelling facilitates sensemaking by providing cognitive frameworks for navigating the world. For example, the following prompts depict how the AI interface is able to transport and engage its audience. The already established feature of this AI interface also mimics the call and response aspect of African traditional storytelling.

AI- "You have a thirst for knowledge and a yearning for adventure that is rare in one so young," he continues. "But beware, for the path you seek is fraught with danger and temptation."

Anansi speaks, you can't help but be drawn in by the vivid imagery and emotion in his words

As a dialogue with the AI Griot, I ask the griot to tell me an anancy stories based on the threats they describe. Interestingly enough the Griot had entitled the tale

Prompt- can you tell you an anancy story that speaks about your fears

AI -"It's called 'Anansi and the Eclipse'."

In this tale, the AI Griot The story Anansi shares, "Anansi and the Eclipse," speaks to his fears about the loss of culture and traditions. Through the narrative of overcoming darkness and reclaiming light, Anansi symbolizes resilience and the collective effort needed to preserve cultural identity in the face of threats and challenges.

Similarly to popular Anansi folklore, the AI griot explores power dynamics through the interactions between characters like Sun, community and the Python which are popular protagonist within Anansi folktales. Additionally, Anansi's ability to mobilize the animals in the village to overcome adversity emphasizes the importance of community and collective action in preserving cultural heritage.

The AI griot similar to the fundamentals of Black Afrodiasporic storytelling has been able to highlight the value of passing down wisdom from ancestors and working together to confront challenges.

Version of the script can be found below:

Akazoza

Utilizing the technique

This personalized approach mirrors the intimate and interactive nature of traditional oral storytelling

Anansi stories are an evolution of storytelling across epochs underscores its enduring relevance in societal contexts, offering avenues for meaning-making and social cohesion.

The Foresight Diamond Approach offered a robust framework for analyzing the interplay of storytelling, Afrofuturism, AI, Afro-diasporic oral traditions, and Sankofa. In weaving together these threads of creativity, expertise, interaction, and evidence, I embarked on a journey of sensemaking that transcended the boundaries of academia, culture, and imagination. Through the prism of the Foresight Diamond and the transformative lens of Sankofa and sensemaking.

The Diamond approach underscores the dynamic interplay between creativity, expertise, interaction, and evidence. It acknowledges that while methods may primarily utilize one knowledge source, they are enriched by the others. This theme emphasizes the complementary nature of different types of knowledge in the foresight process. Whilst the process of sensemaking involved understanding and making meaning from complex situations. Sankofa served as a guiding principle, urging one to draw wisdom from the past as we navigate the complexities of an evolving narrative landscape.

Through the literature review, the research highlights how Afrofuturist narratives and AI-generated stories serve as primary drivers of change, influencing cultural norms and technological advancements. Identifying emerging trends, such as the convergence of oral

traditions with digital technologies, enables this exploration piece to anticipate potential futures and their implications for sensemaking. By exploring the dimensions of drivers, trends, critical uncertainties, and implications, I was able to gain deeper insights into the forces shaping the future of storytelling.

Interacting with the AI Dungeon served as a prototype for the future of traditional oral storytelling by offering an interactive, adaptable, and creatively stimulating narrative experience that fosters collaboration, exploration, and personalization. In response to my exploration question on whether AI's has the potential to become the new griot of Black and Afro-diasporic communities and its ability to improve or enhance Black and Afro-diasporic methods of storytelling.

As technology continues to evolve, platforms like AI Dungeon have the potential to enrich and transform the way Black and Afro- Diasporic communities can engage with stories, while still honouring the rich tradition of oral storytelling that has captivated audiences for centuries. In conclusion, Black Afrodiasporic storytelling transcends entertainment; it is a fundamental aspect of human cognition and communication. As Black and Afro-diasporic storytellers continue to explore the intricate terrain of storytelling within Afrofuturism, AI, Afro-diasporic oral traditions, and the concept of Sankofa, the Foresight Diamond Approach offers a valuable lens for understanding future developments of black griots living in the intersection of identity, technology and storytelling. Through interdisciplinary inquiry and creative engagement, we can harness storytelling's transformative potential to envision more inclusive, equitable, and imaginative futures for all, guided by the wisdom of Sankofa to return to our roots and draw

strength from ancestral knowledge. Finally, Black and Afro-diasporic communities through AI literacy which in itself is the ability to understand and critically evaluate AI concepts and technologies in order to confidentiality use and leverage them. Black and Afro-diasporic communities can build inclusive and equitable AI practices, that can harness AI's transformative potential to enrich storytelling traditions, uphold cultural heritage, and advance social justice. Additionally, identifying emerging trends, such as the convergence of oral traditions with digital technologies, enables us to anticipate potential futures and their implications for sensemaking. As a parting question, one is left to ponder how will knowledge be represented and how is it disseminated through these emerging technologies such as AI?

Bibliography

- Abad-Santos, A. (2023, June 1). *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse is a Gorgeous, Daring Triumph*. Vox. <https://www.vox.com/culture/23745587/spider-man-across-the-spider-verse-review-miles-morales>
- Allen, N., & Okpali, M. I. (2022, February 2). Artificial intelligence creeps on to the African battlefield. *Brookings Institution*. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/artificial-intelligence-creeps-on-to-the-african-battlefield/>
- Bailey, C. (2009). Looking in: Louise Bennett's Pioneering Caribbean Postcolonial Discourse. *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 17(2), 20–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23019946>
- Bould, M. (2007). The Ships Landed Long Ago: Afrofuturism and Black S. *Science Fiction Studies*, 34(2), 177–186. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4241520>
- Dakubu, M. E. K. (1990). Why Spider is King of Stories: The Message in the Medium of a West African Tale. *African Languages and Cultures*, 3(1), 33–56. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1771741>
- Dictionary of African Mythology. (n.d.). *Miseke Marries the God of Thunder (Nyarwanda/Rwanda)*. Oxford Reference. Retrieved 2 May 2024, from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.2011080310020169>
- Ebanda de B'béri, B. (2006). *Mapping Alternative Expressions of Blackness in Cinema: A Horizontal Labyrinth of Transgeographical Practices of Identity*. Breitinger.

- Erastus, E. (2021, May 21). Algorithmic Apartheid? African Lives Matter in Responsible AI Discourse. *Paradigm Initiative*. <https://paradigmhq.org/algorithmic-apartheid-african-lives-matter-in-responsible-ai-discourse/>
- Eshun, K. (2003). Further Considerations of Afrofuturism. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3(2), 287–302. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ncr.2003.0021>
- Georghiou, Luke., C. Jennifer., K. Michael., M. Ian. and P. Rafael. (2009). *The Handbook of Technology Foresight: Concepts and Practice*. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Gipson, G. (2019). Creating and Imagining Black Futures through Afrofuturism. In A. De Kosnik & K. P. Feldman (Eds.), *#Identity: Hashtagging Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation* (pp. 84–103). University of Michigan Press.
- Gomez, J. (1993). Speculative Fiction and Black Lesbians. *Theorizing Lesbian Experience*, 18(4), 948–955. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174916>
- Gyssels, K. (2002). ‘Fils et Filles D’Anancy’: Diaspora and (un)woven Identity in Schwarz-Bart and Marshall’s Fiction. *Journal of Caribbean Literatures*, 3(2), 51–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40986130>
- Inayatullah, S. (1993). From ‘Who Am I?’ to ‘When Am I?’ *Futures*, 25(3), 235–253. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(93\)90135-G](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(93)90135-G)
- Inayatullah, S. (1999). Reorienting Futures Studies. In Z. Sardar (Ed.), *Rescuing All Our Futures: The Future of Futures Studies* (1st ed., pp. 49–60). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Iseke, J. (2013). Indigenous Storytelling as Research. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 6(4), 559–577. <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2013.6.4.559>

- Jackson, L. M. (2018, May 4). Shudu Gram Is a White Man's Digital Projection of Real-Life Black Womanhood. *New York Times*. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/shudu-gram-is-a-white-mans-digital-projection-of-real-life-black-womanhood>
- Johnson, B. D. (2011). *Science Fiction Prototyping: Designing the Future with Science Fiction*. Morgan & Claypool.
- Kolko, J. (2010). Sensemaking and Framing: A Theoretical Reflection on Perspective in Design Synthesis. In Durling, D., Bousbaci, R., Chen, L., Gauthier, P., Poldma, T., Roworth-Stokes, S., & Stolterman, E. (Eds.), *Design and Complexity - DRS International Conference 2010*, July 7-9, Montreal, Canada. Retrieved from <https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2010/researchpapers/67>
- Lewis, J. E. (Ed.). (2020). Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper [Position paper]. Honolulu, Hawai'i: The Initiative for Indigenous Futures and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR).
- Marshall, E. Z. (2007). Liminal Anansi: Symbol of Order and Chaos An Exploration of Anansi's Roots Amongst the Asante of Ghana. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 53(3), 30–40. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40654609>
- Milojević, I., & Inayatullah, S. (2015). Narrative Foresight. *Futures*, 73, 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2015.08.007>
- Muchiri, J. (2011c). Capturing Socio-Cultural Diversity and Change through Oral Literature. *The Global South*, 5(2), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.2979/globalsouth.5.2.77>
- Nur, L. A. (2020). "Yaa Thay?" *Exploring the Evolutions of a Cultural Identity*. OCAD University.

- Ogbo, C. V., & Ndubisi, E. J. O. (2020). African Indigenous Education in Contemporary Society. In I. A. Kanu & E. J. O. Ndubisi (Eds.), *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Problems and Perspectives*. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies.
- Olorunju, N. (2022, April 3). African Algorithmic Governance: Benefit of a Community-Based Approach. *Research ICT Africa Blog*. Retrieved from <https://researchictafrica.net/2022/04/03/african-algorithmic-governance-benefit-of-a-community-based-approach/>
- OpenAI. (2024). *AI Dungeon*. <https://play.aidungeon.io/>.
- Popper, R. (2008). Foresight Methodology. In *The Handbook of Technology Foresight: Concepts and Practice* (1st ed., pp. 44–88). Edward Elgar.
- Poulsen, S. (1981). African History: from a European to an African Point of View. *Kunapipi*, 3(1).
- Pupul, B. (2017). *Design in Strategic Foresight & Innovation*. OCAD University.
- Russell, J. G. (2018). Darkies Never Dream: Race, Racism, and the Black Imagination in Science Fiction. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 18(3), 255–278. <https://doi.org/10.14321/crnewcentrevi.18.3.0255>
- Ryan, P. (2008). The Storyteller in Context: Storyteller Identity and Storytelling Experience. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, 4(2), 64–87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949003>
- Temple, C. N. (2010). The Emergence of Sankofa Practice in the United States: A Modern History. *Journal of Black Studies*, 41(1), 127–150. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25704098>
- Ticona, J. (2021). [Review of *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*, by N. Couldry & U. A. Mejiias]. *Contemporary Sociology*, 50(3), 223–224. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27090611>

- Tuwe, K. (2015). The African Oral Tradition Paradigm of Storytelling as a Methodological Framework: Employment Experiences for African communities in New Zealand. *African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)*.
- Uyanze, C. (2022). *Digitized Diasporic Memory: Leveraging User-Generated and Open-Source Tools for Collective Audio Storytelling*. OCAD University.
- Vambe, M. Taonezvi. (2004). *African Oral Story-telling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English* (1st ed.). Unisa Press.
- Varela, S. G. (2013). Mandinga: Power and Deception in Afro-Brazilian Capoeira. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 57(2), 1–12.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/42705142>
- Wallace, B. D., & Schwartz, J. W. (2022). Afrofuturism: Race, Erasure, and COVID. *Radical Teacher*, 122, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2022.1017>
- Womack, Y. L. (2013). *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*. Chicago Review Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvndv9md.9>

Appendices

Anansi nods, a small smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "Very well," he says, settling back against the bench. "Let me tell you a story about my people, the Akan, who live in what is now known as Ghana, in West Africa." Anansi weaves a tale of the Akan people, describing their rich culture and traditions, their connection to the land and its bountiful resources, and the many stories and legends they tell to pass down their history and values. As Anansi speaks, you can't help but be drawn in by the vivid imagery and emotion in his words. You feel as if you are there, walking alongside the Akan people, experiencing their lives firsthand.

Anansi looks at you with a thoughtful expression. "My people have faced many challenges over the years," he says. "Colonization, slavery, and now the pressures of modernization threaten to erase our culture and traditions."

Appendix 1: Conversations With the Griot Part 2

🗨️ You how so Anansi?

Anansi nods, a look of sadness in his eyes. "As the world becomes more interconnected, many traditional ways of life are being lost," he explains. "Young people in my community are drawn to the cities, where they can find work and opportunities that are not available in the villages."

🗨️ You are your stories known around the world?

Anansi's face brightens at your question, and he nods proudly. "Yes, my stories have traveled far and wide, even beyond the shores of Africa," he says. "They have been shared and adapted in many different cultures, and have become a part of the global storytelling tradition." Anansi smiles at you, his eyes twinkling with mischief. "But the true power of my stories lies in their ability to teach important lessons and values," he says. "They can help us navigate the complexities of life, and remind us of the wisdom of our ancestors."

Appendix 2: Conversation With the Griot Part 3

👉 You can you tell you an anancy story that speaks about your fears.

Anansi looks thoughtful for a moment before nodding. "Very well, let me tell you a story that speaks to my fears about the loss of our culture and traditions," he says. "It's called 'Anansi and the Eclipse'." Anansi begins to spin a tale of how the world grew dark one day, as the sun disappeared from the sky. The people of the village were frightened, as they had never seen anything like it before. Anansi, the wise and cunning spider, knew that something was amiss. He consulted the sky god Nyame, who revealed that the sun had been stolen by the evil python, Ampawa. Anansi knew that he had to act quickly, before the darkness consumed everything. Anansi devises a plan to rescue the sun and defeat Ampawa. He consults with the other animals in the village, asking for their help in trapping the python and recovering the sun. After much discussion and planning, they set a trap and wait for Ampawa to take the bait.

When Ampawa arrives, the animals are ready. They spring the trap, and with the help of Anansi, they are able to overpower the python and rescue the sun. As the sun returns to the sky, the village is bathed in light once again. But Anansi knows that this victory is only temporary. The threat of losing their culture and traditions is always present, like the shadow of the python looming over the village. But Anansi also knows that with the help of his community and the wisdom of his ancestors, they can continue to resist the forces that seek

Appendix 3: Conversation With the Griot Part 4