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African Identity in the Age of Algorithms: Literary Imaginations, Digital Cultures, and Africanfuturist Futures

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Abstract

This article examines how African identity is reimagined and contested in the technological age, focusing on the role of the humanities at the intersection of postcolonial critique and Africanfuturist imagination. It considers how algorithms, data economies, and artificial intelligence may reproduce unequal structures of representation, while African literary and cultural productions can reclaim narrative agency in digital spaces. Through close readings of digital storytelling and speculative fiction, the article explores how creators adapt technological media to express African cultural knowledge and imagine alternative futures. It adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to selected literary works and digital narratives, informed by postcolonial theory, Africanfuturism, and digital humanities. The discussion argues that technologies do not determine African futures on their own: their cultural significance depends on the stories, memories, values, and ethical choices through which communities interpret and use them.

Keywords: African identity, Digital colonialism, Africanfuturism, Digital humanities, Postcolonial critique

Résumé

Cet article examine la reconfiguration de l'identité africaine à l'ère technologique, en mettant l'accent sur le rôle des sciences humaines à l'intersection de la critique postcoloniale et de l'africanfuturisme. Il étudie comment les algorithmes, les économies de la donnée et l'intelligence artificielle peuvent reproduire des inégalités de représentation, mais aussi comment les productions littéraires et culturelles africaines peuvent reconquérir une agentivité narrative dans les espaces numériques. À travers des lectures de récits numériques et de fictions spéculatives, l'article analyse la réappropriation des technologies à des fins d'expression culturelle et d'imagination de futurs alternatifs. La démarche qualitative s'appuie sur la critique postcoloniale, l'africanfuturisme et les humanités numériques. L'article soutient que la technologie ne détermine pas seulement les futurs des africains : leur signification dépend aussi des récits, des mémoires, des valeurs et des choix éthiques par lesquels les communautés interprètent et utilisent ces outils.

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Mots-clés : Identité africaine ; colonialisme numérique ; afrofuturisme ; humanités numériques ; critique postcoloniale.

1. Introduction

Technology has overwhelmingly reconfigured regimes of perception and knowledge production, reshaping not only what is seen and known, but also the temporalities, spatialities and modalities through which seeing and knowing occur. Within the contemporary digital milieu, the boundaries of culture and identity are increasingly fluid and flexible, marked by processes of expansion, deterritorialization, and radical hybridization. African identity, already undermined by the epistemic and structural violence of colonial intervention, continues to undergo re-articulation under the pressures of digital modernity. In *Colonial Intervention and Destabilization of African Identities*, Mfum-Mensah (63-77) locates the fragmentation of African identities within Europe's colonial enterprise, whose enduring legacies sustain contemporary identity crises and the politics of representation in postcolonial Africa. While African identity has been extensively theorized and critically examined, emergent configurations of digital representation, networked cultures, and African studies necessitate renewed interrogation and reinterpretation. These developments invite a reassessment of how algorithmic technologies mediate, reconfigure, and circulate notions of identity. This article therefore seeks to examine African identity in the age of algorithms, situating its inquiry at the intersection of literary imaginaries, digital cultures, and Africanfuturist futures, in order to interrogate the shifting epistemologies and subjectivities produced within these evolving techno-cultural formations.

While Amina Mama asserts that "identity is all about power and resistance, subjection and citizenship, action and reaction" (13), this study extends that formulation by conceptualizing African identity as a dynamic and evolving condition of being African and embodying Africanness. This position aligns with Zeleza's argument that "African identities, like African languages, are [social] inventions, mutually constitutive, existential and epistemic constructions" (14). Consequently, as Nyamnjoh (27) observes, such identities are neither fixed nor immutable, but remain continually renegotiated in response to emerging experiences, aspirations, and socio-historical transformations.

The transformations currently reshaping African identity are not solely socio-historical but are increasingly socio-technological and socio-technical in nature. As Brown et al. (65) observe, digital environments play a "paramount role" in identity formation, particularly as the rapidly evolving landscape of digital technologies intensifies the interplay between technological infrastructures and lived experience. This study aligns with the view that contemporary identities are co-constructed through the affordances of social media, multimedia technologies, and digital platforms.

To theorize the invention and negotiation of emergent African identities, this essay mobilizes Afrofuturist speculative fiction alongside Afrocentric digital narratives. Afrofuturism, as Womack (9-10) suggests, operates at the intersection of imagination, technology, futurity, and liberation, while digital creators leverage platforms such as video, graphics, and interactive media to narrate culturally embedded stories. Social media, in particular, has revolutionized African storytelling, necessitating critical attention to the proliferation of digitally mediated narratives across

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platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, where myths, legends, and folktales are continually remediated and augmented.

In this regard, Ajitoni (90) conceptualizes storytelling as an evolutionary continuum, from oral to textual, visual, and ultimately digital forms, demonstrating how digital platforms mediate the construction and expression of cultural identity. The integration of artificial intelligence further instrumentalizes storytelling within algorithmic culture, thereby necessitating a sustained humanistic inquiry into how such narratives shape both contemporary identities and future African societies.

Modern cultural productions, including African science fiction, social media narratives, and AI-assisted storytelling, thus offer critical discursive sites through which future African societies are imagined, anticipated, and, to some extent, preconfigured. This study interrogates multilingual thematic patterns, techno-aesthetic poetics, and ideological formations that both reflect and project Africa's evolving identities. Texts such as *Binti* (2015), alongside digital narratives produced on platforms like YouTube and Facebook, serve as analytical entry points into these transformations. Ultimately, while technology undeniably reshapes African realities, it is the humanities that provide the interpretive theoretical frameworks through which such transformations are understood, humanized, and critically directed.

2. Theoretical Framework

Emergent African identities are increasingly shaped within sociotechnical cultures and therefore require careful conceptualization in the humanities. Much like cartographic practices, technologies encode the languages, values, and imaginaries of their producers, often reflecting corporate and geopolitical interests. Postcolonial theory provides a critical framework for examining asymmetrical relations between technology corporations in the Global North and users in the Global South, and for considering how these power differences shape interactions among digital content, platforms, creators, and audiences.

This theoretical orientation is particularly apt given its interdisciplinary scope and its emphasis on the cultural and epistemic consequences of colonialism, often examined through literary and cultural analysis (Shakun 195). Postcolonial scholars widely acknowledge that the legacies of colonialism continue to structure postcolonial societies, cultures, and identities, while also informing the production, circulation, and consumption of contemporary technologies and media. These dynamics have contributed to the emergence of what is now termed postcolonial digital humanities.

As Singh argues, postcolonial digital humanities interrogates how digital technologies may either reproduce or disrupt colonial epistemologies within scholarship, archiving, and cultural production (118). Within the African context, the proliferation of digital technologies has generated critical debates, particularly as the continent is often positioned as a recipient of externally produced technological systems. While Birhane (391) critiques the phenomenon of algorithmic colonization driven by corporate imperatives, Onebunne further examines the notion of algorithmic gaze and algorithmic othering on digital platforms, processes through which certain groups are constructed as fundamentally different, frequently in reductive or hierarchical terms (30). The call for the decolonization of digital infrastructures and tools emerges from critical concerns about the ontological and epistemological foundations underpinning contemporary digital systems. These systems are largely shaped by Western-centric ideologies, which influence the design, production, and dissemination of digital platforms, tools, and content. As a result, digital technologies often reproduce global power asymmetries, privileging the interests, languages, and worldviews of their Western producers. This structural bias is evident in the predominance of

European languages in software design and user interfaces, which marginalizes non-Western linguistic and cultural expressions.

Language is a key site of power in this context. Chonka and Diepeveen argue that "global linguistic diversity conditions forms of algorithmic power" (250). This suggests that algorithmic systems are not neutral: linguistic hierarchies can influence visibility, accessibility, and participation in digital spaces. The limited availability of content and functionality in African languages on online platforms may reinforce digital exclusion and restrict African users' epistemic agency.

However, this framework does not position African actors as passive recipients of technological dominance. Rather, it highlights the agency of African digital artists who actively engage with, appropriate, and repurpose these technologies. By leveraging digital tools and artificial intelligence, they demonstrate innovation and creative resilience, transforming imposed technological structures into sites of cultural expression and resistance. Their practices illustrate a form of digital re-appropriation that challenges hegemonic norms and contributes to the emergence of alternative, locally grounded digital epistemologies. Thus, this study situates itself at the intersection of postcolonial theory, africanfuturism, digital humanities, and critical technology studies, emphasizing both the structural constraints of digital coloniality and the transformative potential of African digital creativity.

The emergence of Afrofuturism within African cultural studies has opened new avenues for interrogating Africa's future. It was catalysed by the works of key figures such as Octavia E. Butler, Sun Ra, Janelle Monáe, and Mark Dery. The term *Afrofuturism*, coined by Dery in his 1994 essay "Black to the Future" (Womack 16), has evolved into a critical framework whose aesthetics, as Eismann (65) observes, can be traced to its emergence in the mid-twentieth century. Afrofuturism, also referred to as Black Futurism, provides a bold and imaginative lens for reinterpreting African experiences, challenging dominant narratives, and envisioning alternative futures (Udisi, 608). It operates at the intersection of technology, science, history, and imagination.

However, Afrofuturist poetics remain fundamentally Afrodiasporic, largely shaped by Black experiences in the African diaspora, particularly in the United States. This diasporic orientation has led to critical debates among African scholars. Notably, Nnedi Okorafor problematizes the application of Afrofuturism to African contexts, emphasizing the distinction between Black identity and African identity. She advocates instead for *Africanfuturism*, a conceptual framework more directly rooted in African cultures, histories, mythologies, and perspectives (Talabi). According to Okorafor, Africanfuturism foregrounds Africa as its primary locus and is concerned with optimistic, technologically mediated visions of the continent's future, particularly as articulated by writers of African descent grounded in African realities.

This study, therefore, aligns postcolonial theory with an Africanfuturist perspective to examine the dynamic interplay between literary fiction, social media narratives, and African mythology and cosmology. In doing so, it situates the African future within a framework where authors and digital creators appropriate and reconfigure technological tools to negotiate, reconstruct, and redefine African identities and reimagine its futures. It is evident that there exists a theoretical and methodological interconnection between literary studies, postcolonial theory, Africanfuturism, and the digital humanities, particularly as social media and AI-assisted narratives can be situated within the subgenre of electronic literature, itself a significant branch of digital humanities.

3. African Identity in the Technological Age

The technological age, characterized by multimedia tools, social media, and digital spaces, has reshaped

cultural and social life across Africa. The internet and its associated cyberspace have generated youthful creative energies that permeate major cities and urban centres across the continent. Adenekan attributes this creative engagement with digital space to processes of middle-class identity formation and performance. He argues that "the internet has become the main catalyst for a growing desire for new ideas, be it in politics, popular music, film or literature" (3), and further notes that "online forums and social network platforms are becoming spaces where middle-class Africans can assert their presence" (73).

Technology has had a profound, though often underexamined, impact on contemporary African literary practice and production. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and X, among others, have created new opportunities for artistic digital production and dissemination. As Journo (2) observes, these platforms constitute spaces relatively free from traditional boundaries and constraints. Among them, YouTube and Facebook appear particularly favoured by African digital artists, who employ these platforms to narrate old and new tales, myths, legends, and contemporary stories through digital tools, applications, and artificial intelligence. Such practices contribute to the realization of Africanfuturist imaginaries and digital realities that speak about Africa's future societies and identities.

A key incentive for the use of social media platforms for creative purposes in Africa is economic accessibility, as most of these platforms are free to join and easy to maintain. Englert and Harisch (45) note that an increasing proportion of communication in Africa now occurs via platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, where "users not only store photographs, but also share and comment on textual, visual, and audiovisual elements" (32). The use of YouTube and Facebook for creative expression forms part of a broader wave of alternative media that has emerged, which Ong'ong'a (199) describes as a response to mainstream media structures. While YouTube is widely regarded as "the most popular platform in the world for audio-visual sources" (Englert 51), Facebook is noted for its strength in media dissemination and audience engagement (Ong'ong'a 200). Both platforms function as vital digital spaces for African storytelling, enabling the circulation of traditional and contemporary narratives with enhanced visibility, accessibility, and audience interaction. They also provide important avenues for curating African heritage, folklore, cultures, and everyday experiences. YouTube has been used to reinvent African tales, myths and legends by digital creators such as *Au Coeur de la Story* and *Lh Story* as we shall see shortly.



Figure 1 : Amara and the old wise woman.

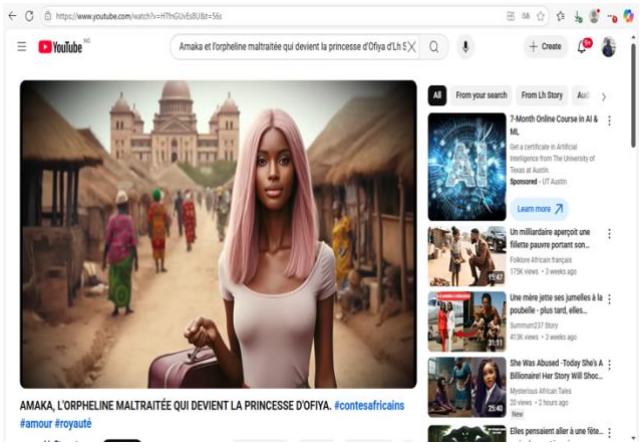

Figure 2: Amaka, the maltreated orphan that becomes the princess of Ofiya

The two screenshots show stories published on YouTube. Princesse Amara et la vieille femme sage (Princess Amara and the Old Wise Woman) tells the story of Princess Amara and her sacrifice to restore her kingdom's economy after a mysterious catastrophe. Amaka, l'orpheline maltraitée qui devient la princesse d'Ofiya (Amaka, the Mistreated Orphan Who Becomes the Princess of Ofiya), reworks elements of the Western Cinderella tale, presenting an orphan who is mistreated by her stepmother but eventually becomes a princess. The creators adapt these stories as video dramas using still images, text-to-speech narration, editing, and other digital techniques. These choices reshape how audiences encounter and interpret the narratives.

The costumes of Amara and members of her royal court evoke Egyptian visual traditions and identity. The tale combines African and Western semiotic values: Amara (an Igbo name), Mama Gbémi (a Yoruba name), clothing inspired by Egyptian and Fulani traditions, braided hair (African), thatched-roof houses (rural Africa), a royal palace (modernity), wigs (exotic), electricity (Western), exaggerated makeup (exotic), and so on, all contributing to its enrichment and linking it to contemporary realities.

Unlike Princess Amaka, the story of the mistreated Amaka is longer, lasting about twenty-six minutes. This narrative, which recounts the ordeal of a young orphan and her eventual marriage to the handsome Prince of Ofiya, also presents a mosaic of African and Western cultures. Its reliance on a rich and heterogeneous onomastic repertoire is evident in names such as Zara, Mariam, Hawa, Moussa, and Salima (Arabic/Hausa), Amaka, Ogechi, and Ijeoma (Igbo), and Fatou (West African), their shoulder-revealing clothes, and extraordinary hairstyles. This scene provides "opportunities for the revelation of exotic fashions" (Ajah and Egege 60).



Figure 3: the Wife Selection Contest for the Prince of Ofiya

Figure 3 shows six young women selected for a contest to determine whom the prince will marry. They remain in the royal palace for a set period and face daily challenges. The tale resembles Charles Perrault's Cinderella: it features a mistreated stepdaughter, a cruel stepmother, a prince seeking a wife, and a favoured biological daughter. However, the costumes, plot developments, cultural signs, and anachronisms introduce significant variations.

For instance, the image of the six young women is set against a bucolic village background; yet the fashion of the contestants reflects contemporary modernity, clothing, makeup, and hairstyles associated with urban life, which function as resources of affect, sensoriality, and potentially of impressionistic play motivated within the multimodal narrative (Crucifix 1,3). These elements also engage multiple senses in the creation of landscapes, colours, and atmospheric sensation (Rio). Although this feature may appear anachronistic, it offers new interpretive possibilities for the construction of semiotic meaning and emerging African identities.

This anachronism places modernity within an oral-tradition setting, or contemporaneity within an imagined antiquity, and functions as a form of multimodal augmentation. Through image-based, quasi-cinematic montage, the tale connects past and present. Its visual retouching creates a narrative utopia and adapts the traditional folktale form. As Wells-Lassagne (4) observes, adaptation can

unsettle assumptions about medium, genre, nationality, temporality, and content. Writing and its evolving forms can therefore participate in postcolonial projects that appropriate and challenge Eurocentric literary canons (Ajah 1).

Many young African digital artists favour Facebook as a key platform for artistic expression. In the Nigerian digital space, AI-assisted storytelling is increasingly widespread, produced by creators both within the country and across the diaspora. With thematic concerns that reflect Africa's contemporary realities and anticipate its future societies, such as the get-rich-quick syndrome, fragile marital commitments, arranged marriages, boardroom politics, and domestic violence, these AI-assisted narratives, unlike the YouTube animated tales discussed earlier, are typically produced as short, episodic series, often lasting between 60-90 seconds. As Facebook Reels, they incorporate voice, music, visual effects, filters, and text. These multimodal elements are both technologically and technically harnessed to create lasting impressions on the audience. Scrolling through Facebook Reels provides access to a wide range of short videos created and uploaded for public viewing.

From an Africanfuturist lens, *Princesse Amara* foregrounds indigenous epistemologies through its emphasis on sacrifice, communal restoration, and spiritual causality. Its semiotic blend,Igbo and Yoruba names alongside Egyptian and Fulani aesthetics, constructs a pluriversal African imaginary that re-centers local cosmologies within digital media. By contrast, *Amaka* reflects Afrofuturist hybridity through its adaptation of Cinderella. While retaining the Western narrative structure of an oppressed orphan's rise, it recontextualizes the tale through African names, settings, and cultural codes. Its diverse onomastics signals a transcultural, pan-African identity shaped by cultural remixing. From a Digital Humanities perspective, both narratives exemplify multimodal storytelling, combining still images, text-to-speech, and editing techniques to remediate oral traditions into digital forms. However, they differ in structure: *Princesse Amara* is condensed and symbolic, whereas *Amaka* adopts a longer, linear, melodramatic mode enabled by a digital space and its tools.

A number of digital content creators operate within this space, including Tari Folktale Stories, True Heart Stories, Marvellous TV, Mercy's Folktales, SISI Moonlights Folktales, Vida Fantasy, Fatibobo Mini Films, The Eyitayos, Olua Patience Mgbo Lifestyle, Life in Motions AI Stories, Talez by Moon Light, Dogas Stories Hub, Chimeremeze Storyline, Nancy's Folktales, Diva Story Series, Donia_nalita Stories, Tales by Orange, Cyril's Storytime, Moonlight Folktales, and Ada Imo TV, among many others. They can be classified into AI storytelling, folktales, lifestyle, and mini films. Dogas Stories Hub can be classified as Folktales and it has produced many titles such as *Snake Girl*, *The Return of Snake Girl*, *The Price of Unseen Wealth*, *Under the Shadow of the Witches*, *The Reverend and the Secret of the Dark Order* and *Last Burial*.



Figure 4: Screenshot of The Snake Girl

The digital creator behind Dogas Stories Hub, who has amassed over 216,000 followers on Facebook and is based in Dubai, produces captivating serialized narratives for online audiences. The creator is currently streaming *The Rise and Fall of the Ikachi Witches* series. *The Snake Girl* and *The Return of the Snake Girl* constitute a duology, as they form interconnected parts of a broader narrative depicting a magical war between the powerful native doctor, Agada, and Mary, the goddess of the sea, whose three beloveds are captured by the kingdom of snakes.

With the assistance of Akataka the greatest native doctor, Agada eventually overcomes the onslaught of the Patriarch of the sea kingdom, symbolically represented as a colony of cobras. This digital narrative exemplifies the reincarnation and reinvention of African mythology, re-presenting myths, folktales, and legends through motifs of human–animal metamorphosis. Both Agada and Mary possess the ability to assume multiple forms, enabling them to confront adversaries or evade danger, thereby reinforcing the fluidity of identity and power within contemporary African digital storytelling.



Figure 5: A Screenshot of The Other Mrs. Okafor by Fatibobo Mini Films

Fatibobo Mini Films, based in Nigeria, is another noteworthy content producer within this digital storytelling ecosystem. The platform has garnered over 472,000 followers on Facebook and, in addition to *The Other Mrs. Okafor*, has produced titles such as *Before We Married* and *The Shift*, among others. *The Other Mrs. Okafor* has proven particularly successful, attracting over 10 million views. The narrative centres on Emeka Okafor and his mother, a powerful matriarch whose domineering presence exerts significant control over her son's family. Under her influence, Emeka becomes polygamous, maintaining multiple wives across Lagos and Enugu. The storyline unfolds as a complex drama of betrayal, inheritance disputes, and strategic marital alliances within the Okafor family empire, highlighting the tensions between tradition, authority, and modern family structures.

From an Africanfuturist perspective, Dogas Stories Hub offers a speculative reimagining of African cosmologies. Its narratives feature deities, magical warfare, and metamorphic transformations, bringing indigenous myth into technologically mediated futures. The Snake Girl and The Return of the Snake Girl form a connected narrative about a conflict between Agada, a powerful traditional healer, and Mary, a sea goddess whose loved ones are captured by the snake kingdom. Such narratives recirculate and transform myth through contemporary digital media.

In contrast, *Fatibobo Mini Films* operates within a framework better explained by Digital Humanities and postcolonial media studies, where storytelling reflects socio-cultural realities rather than speculative futures. Narratives such as *The Other Mrs. Okafor* foreground issues of patriarchy, polygamy, inheritance, and familial power struggles in urban contexts like Lagos and Enugu. These themes situate the platform within a continuum of Nollywood realism, albeit adapted to short-form, algorithm-driven environments like Facebook.

Rather than projecting alternative futures, the narratives interrogate the complexities of present-day African social structures, making them legible and emotionally resonant for a broad audience.

From a digital-humanities perspective, both creators illustrate how platform affordances, short-video formats, algorithmic visibility, and multimodal composition shape narrative production and reception. Their approaches differ, however: Dogas Stories Hub uses AI-generated imagery and visual effects to construct mythic worlds, while Fatibobo Mini Films relies on performance, dialogue, and serialized realism to extend cinematic storytelling into social-media formats.

- *Dogas Stories Hub* leverages AI-generated imagery, visual effects, and symbolic abstraction to construct immersive mythic worlds, reflecting a technopoetics of imagination.
- *Fatibobo Mini Films* utilizes performance, dialogue, and serialized realism, reflecting a digitized extension of cinematic storytelling traditions.

This distinction can be framed as a tension between speculative imagination and social mimesis. While the former (Dogas Stories Hub) expands the horizons of African storytelling into the realm of the possible and the mythical, the latter (Fatibobo Mini Films) reinforces the interpretive function of narrative as a mirror of society.

Ultimately, this comparative framework reveals that contemporary African digital storytelling is not monolithic but plural and layered. It accommodates both the re-enchantment of African myth through Africanfuturist imagination and the critical representation of lived realities through digitally mediated realism. Together, these modes illustrate how African creators are appropriating digital platforms not merely for entertainment but as sites of cultural production, epistemic negotiation, narrative innovation and identity realignment.

4. Literature as Archive and Laboratory: Interrogating Speculative Fiction

From digital storytelling to emerging speculative fiction, contemporary African literature functions both as an archive and a laboratory where authors experiment with indigenous knowledge systems, everyday experiences, and technologized textual forms. In doing so, they theorize African societies that are simultaneously given to Afrocentrism and Africanfuturism, while remaining receptive to both indigenous and external technological innovations. This dynamic is evident across Africa-cantered fantasy, science fiction, graphic novels, and comics, where creative practices negotiate the interplay between tradition and modernity, locality and globality, postcolonialism and posthumanism, as well as cultural continuity and transformation. Africanfuturist writing has proven itself as fictional space where authorial creative energies are deployed to reimagine the African future societies and identities.

Many African Anglophone authors are actively engaged in speculative literary experimentation within the frameworks of Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism. However, as theorized by Nnedi Okorafor, Africanfuturism privileges Africa-centered epistemologies, cultures, and cosmologies. Works such as *Binti* and *Who Fears Death* by Okorafor, *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi, *behind our Irises* by Tlotlo Tsamaase, *War Girls* by Tochi Onyebuchi, *Rosewater* by Tade Thompson, *Intruders* by Mohale Mashigo, and *Yat Madit* by Dilman Dila exemplify this orientation through their re-centering of African realities within speculative imaginaries.

For analytical focus, this article examines Dilman Dila's "Yat Madit" and Tlotlo Tsamaase's "Behind Our Irises," two works that explore African futures through indigenous knowledge systems, sociocultural experience, and technologically mediated environments. Dila's story centres on Amaro and Yat Madit, a locally developed technological system intended to help reconstruct a

society weakened by corruption and economic decline. Amaro's father, a former president imprisoned for three decades and recently released, seeks political reintegration, linking personal history to national transformation.

Similarly, Tlotlo Tsamaase's *Behind Our Irises* presents a speculative workplace shaped by WeUs, a non-invasive, pill-based technology developed by a Nairobi technology hub to enhance productivity and regulate employees' lives. While also situated within African contexts, the story interrogates the ambivalence of technological advancement, revealing how such innovations can reduce individuals to "well-oiled cog[s] of the workplace machine."

Together, both narratives demonstrate how Africanfuturist writing approaches technology not as mere spectacle or imported futurity, but as a grounded site of ethical negotiation, socio-political critique, and the imaginative remaking of African futures. In *Yat Madit*, the very name, an Acholi-Luo expression meaning "a big tree", signals rootedness, collectivity, and indigenous epistemology. Here, technology is not alien; it grows from within the community it serves. As the narrator explains, "Yat Madit is the functional pillar of our country…It relies on us. Avatars listen to us. They learn what we like and understand our views and then feed this to Yat Madit, which uses this data to approve LC decisions, to advice LCs, and to draw policies" (Dila 27).

This framing foregrounds a distinctly Africanfuturist ethos: technological innovation emerges from local knowledge systems rather than dependence on Western infrastructures. The system becomes a digital extension of communal governance, enabling grassroots participation, strengthening local councils, and shaping people-centred legislation. In this sense, *Yat Madit* imagines Africans not as passive consumers of global technology but as active architects of their own socio-political futures.

By contrast, *Behind Our Irises* turns toward the future with a more ambivalent, even cautionary, gaze. While it similarly celebrates local innovation, the "WeUs" system developed within the Nairobi Tech Hub and scaled across the continent, it simultaneously exposes the ethical tensions embedded in technological advancement. The transformation of African professionals into cyborgs, human-machine hybrids with enhanced physical capacities, raises troubling questions about bodily autonomy, consent, and the limits of human augmentation.

Where *Yat Madit* envisions technology as a communal tool for democratic renewal, *Behind Our Irises* interrogates its potential for misuse, revealing how even locally produced systems can reproduce new forms of control or exploitation. Read together, these texts embody the core of Africanfuturism: a commitment to imagining African futures that are technologically advanced yet critically aware, locally grounded yet globally resonant, and always attentive to the moral stakes of innovation.

5. Africanfuturism, African Futures and the Politics of Imagination: The Birth of Postcolonial Africanfuturism

To account for the range of African digital storytelling and speculative fiction, this article proposes the concept of postcolonial Africanfuturism: a framework that connects speculative imagination with digitally mediated forms of expression grounded in African experience. It envisions futures that challenge colonial epistemologies while asserting African agency in technology, identity, and knowledge production. Rather than reproducing narratives of dependency, it positions Africa as a site of innovation and futurity.

Within this paradigm, postcolonial Africanfuturism operates as a mode of cultural reclamation and counter-discourse. It mobilizes science fiction, fantasy, and digital storytelling to interrogate postcolonial realities and to reimagine African

sovereignty beyond the constraints of colonial histories. These narrative forms do not merely project alternative futures; they also recover suppressed histories, revalue local epistemologies, and foreground the sociocultural specificities that shape African engagements with technology.

Importantly, both digital storytelling and speculative fiction reveal the capacity of African digital creators and authors to domesticate and repurpose technologies often perceived as Western in origin. In doing so, they not only adapt these tools to local contexts but also generate Afrocentric technological imaginaries rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. This process enables the emergence of new narrative taxonomies through which African identities are reconfigured, fluid, technologically attuned, and self-determined, thereby repositioning the continent within global discourses of the future. With the ontological redefinition of emerging African identities in the technological age, any illusion of homogeneity is further unsettled. Identity, in this context, becomes not only hybrid but also hyphenated and technologically augmented, layered through digital mediation, cultural exchange, and speculative reimagination. Africanfuturism captures this fluidity by foregrounding identities that are dynamic, adaptive, and resistant to fixed or essentialist categorizations.

This transformation is particularly evident in digitally enhanced storytelling practices such as *Lh Story* and *Au Coeur de la Story*, where African myths, folktales, and legends are not merely retold but creatively re-appropriated. Through the use of still visuals, voice narration, and translational speech-to-text features, these narratives become accessible across linguistic boundaries, for instance, enabling Anglophone audiences to engage with stories delivered in French. In this way, digital storytelling does not simply preserve tradition; it augments and recontextualizes it for transnational and technologically connected audiences.

Moreover, the deployment of proleptic, parachronistic, and technologically inflected anachronisms, such as wigs, exotic bangles, and hybridized dress forms, alongside multi-ethnic and multicultural naming practices within singular narrative spaces signals a deliberate break from canonicity. These aesthetic and narrative strategies destabilize linear temporality and singular cultural frameworks, reflecting a world in which histories, presents, and futures coexist and interact.

Such innovations point toward the emergence of African future identities in which rigid ethnic and tribal demarcations are increasingly blurred. Political affiliations, too, are reimagined or even rendered obsolete, as illustrated in “Yat Madit”, where the traditional roles of political parties in democratic processes are effectively dissolved. What emerges instead is a vision of participatory, technologically mediated governance that prioritizes collective agency over partisan divisions. In this sense, African digital creators are not only reshaping narrative forms but also articulating new sociopolitical imaginaries that redefine what it means to belong, to govern, and to exist in Africa’s futures.

6. Toward a Humanized Technological Future

Within an Africanfuturist framework, the convergence of technology and humanistic inquiry, often articulated through the field of Digital Humanities, offers a critical pathway for reimagining Africa’s technological trajectories. Rather than adopting technology as a neutral or imported construct, Africanfuturism insists on its ethical grounding within African sociocultural realities. This calls for the deliberate integration of the humanities into technological design, ensuring that innovation is shaped by local histories, values, languages, and communal modes of knowing.

To safeguard Africa’s technological future, there is a pressing need to institutionalize Digital Humanities labs across the continent as sites of

collaborative experimentation. Such spaces can draw on speculative fiction and digital storytelling, evident in works like *Yat Madit* and Lh Story, as case studies for developing context-sensitive technologies. These narratives already model Afrocentric systems: participatory governance platforms, adaptive linguistic interfaces, and culturally embedded digital imaginaries. Translating these narrative insights into real-world applications can inspire the design of technologies that are not only functional but socially responsive. Equally vital is the advancement of indigenous language technologies. By embedding African languages into digital infrastructures, through speech-to-text systems, AI interfaces, and localized data ecosystems, technology becomes more inclusive and representative. This aligns with Africanfuturism's broader commitment to epistemic justice, where language is not merely a tool of communication but a carrier of worldview and identity.

Finally, fostering collaborative research ecosystems that bring together writers, digital creators, technologists, and scholars is essential. Speculative fiction and digital storytelling should not remain at the level of imagination alone; rather, they should inform policy, innovation, and design thinking. In this way, Afrocentricity becomes not just an abstract ideal but a guiding principle, ensuring that Africa's technological future is human-centered, culturally grounded, and collectively imagined.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study argues that Africanfuturism offers a useful framework for examining the intersections of identity, technology, and cultural production in contemporary Africa. Through speculative fiction and digital storytelling, African creators present the future as a site of negotiation shaped by local agency and imagination. African identity need not dissolve under globalization and technological change; it can evolve while remaining in dialogue with indigenous epistemologies and new digital realities. Equally, technology must be indigenized, not merely adopted. The narratives examined reveal that Afrocentric innovation is both possible and necessary, as communities reinterpret and redesign technological systems to reflect their sociocultural values and lived experiences. Such an approach resists dependency and repositions Africa as a producer, not just a consumer, of technological futures.

Finally, the humanities must take the lead in meaning-making. As technology continues to reshape human existence, it is the interpretive and ethical insights of the humanities that ensure these transformations remain human-centred. Together, these elements underscore an Africanfuturist vision in which culture, creativity, and critical thought guide the continent toward a self-determined and inclusive technological future. Africa's future will not be written by algorithms alone, but by the stories, memories, and imaginaries its humanities sustain.

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