

## Echoes and Horizons: Future Story-Making in Diverse Contexts


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This paper explores the evolving landscape of story-making across Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts, emphasising narrative as a powerful medium for identity formation, resistance, healing, and future-making. Storytelling is examined as both a cultural and political practice—one that reflects worldviews, sustains collective memory, and opens possibilities for transformation. The paper investigates how diverse communities navigate historical trauma, epistemic marginalisation, and digital disruption to reclaim and reimagine storytelling traditions. Drawing on Indigenous oral narratives, decolonial theory, postcolonial literature, and emergent media technologies such as AI, VR, and blockchain, it analyses how stories are being retold, remixed, and reasserted in contemporary contexts. Through case studies involving transmedia activism, speculative fiction, ecological storytelling, and narrative sovereignty, the study reveals how future story-making must be grounded in pluralism, relational ethics, and epistemic justice. The paper ultimately proposes a planetary narrative ethic—one that honours multiple knowledge systems, fosters solidarity across differences, and reclaims storytelling as a sacred and transformative practice.

**Keywords:** storytelling, indigenous narratives, digital storytelling, futurism, epistemic justice, narrative sovereignty

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## 1. Introduction: Narrative as a Tool for the Future

Stories are more than entertainment—they are the scaffolding upon which communities build memory, identity, and vision. In times of cultural conflict and global transformation, the power of narrative becomes even more significant. It shapes how people see themselves, each other, and the futures they imagine possible. This paper examines the act of “storey-making” in different forms in various contexts with a specific focus on the Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions, their intersections, and the emergent futures that emanate from the engagements.

The title “Echoes and Horizons” implies a double-time movement. Backwards along the reverberations of the ancestral voices and forward into the horizons of what might still be. Story-making, therefore, becomes an act of remembering and an act of imagining. Various milieus, ranging from the Indigenous oral histories grounded in land to digital stories inspired by globalised media, present different yet interconnected views on what it is to create a future through telling tales.

In the face of histories of colonisation, marginalisation, and erasure that societies are grappling with, the urgency of inclusive, collaborative narrative-making has never been greater. This paper seeks to discuss how storeys can transform from tools of domination to the tools of healing and co-creation. It asks: What stories are we writing about the future? Who are the voices that are creating these narratives? And how can we make space for different visions of what is coming next?

## 2. Theoretical Foundations

### 2.1 Narrative Theory and Identity Formation

Narratives are important in human cognition and communication. For Jerome Bruner (1991), narratives are not just a means of telling stories, but they are ways of constructing meaning which determine how people and societies make sense of the world. Narrative theory holds that humans interpret reality through a storied lens; we are, in Paul Ricoeur’s (1984) words, “narrative beings.” This means that storytelling is not merely an aesthetic or cultural practice but a basic mechanism through which identity, memory, and ethics are built.

In diverse cultural contexts, stories provide coherence and continuity, linking individual lives to collective experiences. For Indigenous communities, stories are not metaphorical devices but ontological truths—ways of knowing, relating to, and existing in the world. In contrast, dominant non-Indigenous traditions, particularly in the West, have often compartmentalised narrative as fiction or entertainment, abstracted from the land and community.

Narrative theory also emphasises the performative and situated nature of storytelling. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of “heteroglossia” suggests that multiple voices and meanings always coexist within narratives (Bakhtin, 1981). This becomes particularly important when discussing story-making across cultural and political boundaries, as it allows for dialogism rather than assimilation—stories that speak with rather than for others.

### 2.2 Postcolonial and Decolonial Frameworks

Postcolonial theory, as formulated by such scholars as Edward Said (1978), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and Homi Bhabha (1994), examines how narrative has been used as a weapon in the discourse of colonisation to mark hierarchies of civilisation, knowledge, and value. Not only did colonisers occupy territories, but they also rewrote histories, redefined identities, and muffled native voices through practices of literature and the archive. The “colonial library”, as V.Y. Mudimbe (1988) would say, is not only a physical space but also an epistemic space that excludes some narratives while privileging others.

Decolonial approaches go further by questioning the very foundations of modern Western thought. Scholars like Walter D. Mignolo (2011) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) urge a return to Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies. Storytelling, in this context, becomes an act of resistance and resurgence. It is a way to reclaim memory, reassert sovereignty, and reimagine futures outside the grammar of colonialism.

In this theoretical frame, the act of future story-making is not neutral. It must contend with histories of erasure and distortion. True narrative justice requires not just inclusion but transformation of structures, languages, and assumptions.

### 2.3 Orality, Literacy, and the Digital Turn

Story-making has historically moved across three major modes: orality, literacy, and, more recently, digitality. Walter J. Ong (1982) identifies orality as a primary mode of human communication, characterised by performance, memory, and community. Oral cultures transmit knowledge through embodied practices—songs, dances, rituals, and storytelling circles. These are not merely pre-modern forms of literature but complex systems of knowledge and social organisation.

With the advent of literacy, particularly through print capitalism (Anderson, 1983), narratives became commodified, standardised, and increasingly aligned with national and colonial agendas. Written texts enabled the expansion of state control, but also created new spaces for resistance—novels, newspapers, and manifestos became tools for anti-colonial and liberationist movements.

The digital turn has opened another frontier. Today's story-making includes everything from Instagram reels and TikTok videos to interactive fiction and AI-generated plots. While these platforms can democratize storytelling, they also raise questions about data colonialism, algorithmic bias, and cultural appropriation. As Tuck and Yang (2012) caution, not all access equates to decolonisation. The future of story-making must navigate the tension between technological possibility and cultural sovereignty.

## 3. Indigenous Story-Making Practices: Memory, Land, and Community

Indigenous story-making is deeply rooted in relationality—the interconnectedness of people, place, spirit, and knowledge. Unlike Eurocentric narrative traditions that often prioritise individualism, linearity, and fictionality, Indigenous storytelling practices emphasise collective memory, cyclical time, and the sacredness of land. In these traditions, stories are not “about” the land; they are the land. They are both repositories of knowledge and living entities in themselves, guiding conduct, ethics, and social cohesion.

### 3.1 Sacred Geographies and Ancestral Time

For many Indigenous cultures, stories are inseparable from geography. They are encoded in landscapes, rivers, trees, and animals. The land speaks, and storytelling is a means of listening to and interpreting its voice. In Australian Aboriginal traditions, the concept of the Dreaming or Tjukurpa refers not to a mythological past but to an ever-present spiritual realm where ancestral beings shaped the world. These Dreamtime stories, embedded in songlines and ceremonial practices, map the terrain and instruct communities on how to live in harmony with it (Rose, 1996).

Similarly, among the Diné (Navajo) people, the stories of emergence from the underworld define both cosmology and identity. The land is not a backdrop for human action—it is a relative, a teacher, a living archive of moral and ecological knowledge. Story-making, in this context, becomes an act of environmental stewardship and intergenerational transmission.

This contrasts sharply with modern settler-colonial frameworks that view land as property and a resource. Where Indigenous narratives embody reciprocal relationships, colonial stories often enforce domination and extraction. The future of story-making in Indigenous contexts, therefore, must resist the severing of land from language and memory.

### 3.2 Oral Traditions and Contemporary Resurgence

Oral storytelling is not dead and gone – it changes, adapts and persists. Although it is based on tradition, it is always renewed through performance, repetition, and innovation. Elders as holders of knowledge are important in the process, but younger generations with new forms and platforms for traditional narratives are as well.

In Canada, the new wave of Indigenous storytelling can be observed in the writings of such authors as Thomas King and Eden Robinson, whose novels combine oral rhythm, humour, myth and social critique. In Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Māori concept of whakapapa (genealogy) shapes any storytelling as relational knowing, like harakeke (flax) storeys connect ancestors, land, and descendants in one thread.

Multimodal storytelling (voice, gesture, image, song) has also been reinvigorated through contemporary media. Projects such as First Nations Storylines or the application of apps to teach endangered languages (like the Ojibwe People's Dictionary) are examples of how oral traditions are being maintained and changed in the digital era. Resurgence, as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) asserts, is not a nostalgic return but a radical act of futurity: telling Indigenous stories on Indigenous terms.

### 3.3 Case Studies in Indigenous Story-Making

#### 3.3.1 Māori Storytelling and Whakapapa

Māori narratives reflect the interconnection of people, the natural world, and the spiritual realm. Stories of Māui, Ranginui, and Papatūānuku are foundational myths that continue to inform legal, educational, and artistic practices. Contemporary Māori authors like Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera have woven traditional narratives into modern forms, creating literature that resists colonial erasure and affirms Māori sovereignty.

#### 3.3.2 First Nations in Canada: Language, Law, and Land

Storytelling is also a legal practice in many First Nations. Customary laws for land use, kinship obligation, and conflict resolution are found in Cree and Dene narratives, for instance. The Idle No More movement and the Wet'suwet'en land defence efforts have adopted storytelling, both oral and visual, as resistance tools, the ways of communicating their messages through protest songs, public art, and social media storytelling campaigns.

#### 3.3.3 Australian Aboriginal Dreaming and Songlines

Dreaming stories, or jukurrpa, are not "myths" in the Western sense – they are ontological truths passed down through generations. These are stories steeped in the songlines, which are spiritual maps throughout the continent. The contemporary Aboriginal artists, such as Emily Kame Kngwarreye, have represented these stories in painting, reclaiming the ancestral stories in visual form. Such practices are not mere cultural practices, but claims to presence and rights in a land still being contested.

## 4. Non-Indigenous Narratives: Dominance, Disruption, and Dialogue

Narratives in non-Indigenous settings, especially those that are informed by colonial, enlightenment, and capitalist ideology, have traditionally been instruments of legitimation, domination, and cultural control. Several western traditions of story-making, which are grounded in print culture, rationalism, and individualism, have been at the centre of the construction of modernity and the relegation of other worldviews. But these traditions have also been internally interrupted and transformed, providing spaces for critical reflection, subversion, as well as intercultural dialogue

### 4.1 Literary Canons and Their Limitations

The literary canon, as it developed in Europe and the North American continent, has long been a guardian of cultural value. It has prioritised white, male, heteronormative voices, and maintained a linear, human-centred, and anthropocentric perspective of the world. These accounts have consistently marginalised, exoticized, and suppressed Indigenous, Black, queer, and diasporic voices. Shakespeare, Austen, Dickens, and Hemingway, canonically beloved, are representative of such a narrow construction of greatness in literature.

This canon formation is not just a question of taste or aesthetics; it is a cultural imperialism. At the levels of the education system, publishing industries, and academic institutions, certain world views have been normalised and characterised as "universal", and others relegated to the periphery as "folklore," "myth," or "ethnic literature." "Until the lions have their historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter," as Chinua Achebe (1975) said.

The effects for future storytelling are radical: unless these structures of exclusion are demolished, the diverse narratives will not be able to exist on an equal footing. Canon reform, translation projects, as well as inclusive curricula have been important steps to narrative justice.

#### 4.2 Evolving Forms: From Novels to Net-Native Narratives

Although the dominance of the novel as a form of storytelling in the modern Western literature has reigned, new formats such as cinema, graphic novels, podcasts, video games, and online storytelling platforms have disrupted this hierarchy. Such media forms make access democratic, and make it interactive and multimodal and allow marginalized voices to connect with larger audiences.

Modern writers such as Neil Gaiman (2001) have employed mythic intertextuality and speculative fiction to rewrite the link between ancient traditions and contemporary identities. In *American Gods*, Gaiman touches on how old gods fight for a place in the modern world that is awash with new worship forms such as media, technology, and consumerism, where the eternal fight between memory and modernity continues. Likewise, other authors like Margaret Atwood (1985) and Octavia Butler (1993) have pushed the boundaries of speculative and dystopian fiction to challenge the dominant norms, envisage alternative futures and criticise historical injustices. In graphic novels like *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (2003) or *March* by John Lewis and Nate Powell (2013), autobiography and political commentary come together to produce hybrid forms of truth-telling.

Net-native narratives, including fan fiction communities, Twitter threads, TikTok storytelling challenges, and serialised YouTube docuseries, are the new form of participatory culture. These platforms defy the authorial hierarchy and encourage group authorship. Although not without their problems (like algorithmic bias, digital surveillance, and platform monopolisation), they provide a new playground for narrative revolution.

#### 4.3 Reparation and Recognition Through Storytelling

Over the last few years, non-Indigenous storytellers have been more interested in reckoning, reconciliation, and reparation themes. These storeys do not only work to recognise historical wrongs; they work also to imagine routes to justice and healing. In the Canadian context, literature that was inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has led to non-Indigenous authors, educators, and artists to be more invested in Indigenous histories and futures.

In the United States, there has been an explosion of memoirs, documentaries, and novels that address systemic racism due to the explosion of racial justice movements. Works such as Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* (2016) or Ava DuVernay's *13th* (2015) act as narrative interventions, requiring that the past not be written out of history or scrubbed clean.

However, these attempts may turn out to be performative if they fail to be accompanied by structural change and genuine partnership with the marginalised communities. Therefore, non-indigenous storytelling that would want to be reparative should not appropriate, saviour, or tokenise. In the words of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012), "decolonisation is not a metaphor". Future story-making has to be grounded on ethical listening, material accountability, and a willingness to destabilise the power inherited.

## 5. Cross-Cultural Encounters in Narrative Spaces

The 21st century has seen an increase in the intensity of intercultural contact and exchange, propelled by globalisation, migration, digital media, and decolonisation movements. In this confusing landscape, storytelling not only becomes a cultural act but also a place of negotiation, contestation, and transformation. Cross-cultural narrative encounters have the potential to generate mutual understanding, solidarity and imaginative co-creation, but are fraught with dangers of misrepresentation, commodification and epistemic violence.

### 5.1 Translation and the Politics of Representation

Translation is one of the most instant and most controversial realms in which cross-cultural storytelling happens. Though it makes texts cross linguistic and cultural limits, translation is always a non-neutral exercise. As Gayatri Spivak (1993) observes, translation is not a transfer of language but of worldview, and it needs to defy the urge to domesticise or cancel the alterity of the original voice.

Think of the world's response to indigenous texts in English translation – the kind that has become the centrepiece of contemporary aboriginal literary studies, such as N. Scott Momaday's (1968),

*House Made of Dawn*, or Alexis Wright's (2006) *Carpentaria*. These texts have found a larger audience, but at the same time, they are in danger of being understood within the theoretical frameworks of Western literature that might not perceive their cultural particularity or depth of cosmology. That is why the translators should perform as cultural mediators, being self-aware of their positionality and power discrepancies of the cross-cultural narration.

Moreover, non-Indigenous writers who try to tell the Indigenous stories, with the best intentions, have to deal with the ethical and epistemological difficulties of speaking across difference. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith reminds us (1999), the indigenous stories are not there to be mined, extracted, or re-narrated by outsiders. The future of cross-cultural story making is not in ventriloquism but in dialogical ethics – telling stories *with* and *alongside*, not *for*.

## 5.2 Collaborative Story-Making and Participatory Models

Over the past few years, there has been an emergence of collaborative storytelling spaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices combine to co-create narratives. Such initiatives often include community-based theatre, co-authored books, digital archives or multi-media installations. The operating idea behind these projects is that of *relational accountability*, which is a concept coined by Shawn Wilson (2008) where knowledge is not held by anyone, rather it is a resource shared through relationships.

One such example is *Indigenous Story Studio*, a Canadian services provider working with Indigenous youth to create graphic novels about circumstances like mental health, cultural identity, and land rights. These are stories that are co-created with the artists, elders and community leaders to ensure that they are culturally accurate and owned by the community. Another is the *Decolonial Atlas*, which is an online platform where Indigenous cartographers and storytellers pin down traditional place names and histories, deconstructing colonial geography.

Participatory modes of storytelling are not tension-free; they demand time, trust and an ability to act upon unequal relations of power. But if taken in ethical fashion, they have the capacity to generate profoundly resonant narratives that mirror the lived experiences of culturally diverse communities.

These models suggest the direction that storytelling can take into the future, it is pluralistic, relational, and reparative in nature.

## 5.3 Storytelling Festivals, Archives, and Global Platforms

Storytelling festivals and digital based platforms have emerged as relevant media for cross-cultural narrative exchange. The *International Storytelling Festival* in Iran, the *Griot International Festival* in West Africa, the *Kathalaya Festival* in South Asia are the examples of this kind of events that act as settings where oral traditions, folktales, and modern story-tells live together and interact together. These gatherings challenge the Eurocentric literary hierarchy and affirm storytelling as a global, diverse, and dynamic practice.

In digital spaces, initiatives like *Decolonise This Place*, *IndigenousX*, and *We Need Diverse Books* use storytelling to build transnational solidarities. These platforms often operate in resistance to mainstream publishing and media structures, offering alternative archives where marginalised voices can speak back, speak through, and speak beyond imposed categories.

At the same time, the globalisation of storytelling raises questions about ownership, cultural appropriation, and digital colonialism. Who benefits from the circulation of these stories? Who controls the platforms, the metadata, the algorithms? Future story-making in cross-cultural contexts must address these structural questions to avoid replicating the very hierarchies it seeks to challenge.

## 6. Digital Futures and Emerging Story-Making Technologies

The digital revolution has transformed the landscape of storytelling. From hypertext fiction to AI-generated poetry, from immersive VR experiences to collaborative fan fiction platforms, the boundaries of narrative form, authorship, and audience have expanded dramatically. Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for inclusive, decentralised, and multimodal storytelling—but they also raise critical questions about authenticity, surveillance, intellectual property, and algorithmic control.

### 6.1 The Rise of Transmedia Storytelling

Transmedia storytelling refers to the process by which a story unfolds across multiple media platforms, each contributing uniquely to the narrative experience. Rather than being localised in one book, movie, or game, the story becomes a constellation of, interrelated texts. Theorised by Henry Jenkins (2006), this model has been popularised by global franchises such as *The Matrix*, *Harry Potter* and *Black Panther*, but also has deep implications into the cause of social justice and grassroots movements.

Activists and educators have subsequently adopted the transmedia storytelling in a manner that makes it easy to magnify the marginalised voices and generate empathy among the people, thereby experiencing it as something that has been created for the people of the region. Movements like #MeToo, #IdleNoMore and #blacklivesmatter have used blogging, podcast, video, tweets and art work in the form of storytelling to develop multiple stories of struggle. These transmedia narratives are thus not, therefore, merely a representation-thing, in and of themselves – they are media for coalition-building and cultural change.

Transmedia is being used in indigenous settings to revitalise traditional stories. *The Skins Workshops* in Montreal have programmes that teach indigenous youth how to design video games, allowing them to code their creation myths and land-based stories into the digital realm. Such practices show ways of how digital tools can be adjusted to the ancestral knowledge systems, producing so-called “Indigenous protocol and artificial memory” (Lewis et al. 2018).

### 6.2 AI, Algorithms, and the Automation of Narrative

Artificial intelligence has invaded the creative space and created such works as poetry and screenplays, as well as journalistic works and visual art. Platforms such as Chat GPT, Sudowrite, and AI Dungeon have initiated controversies on the future of authorship, originality, and labour of storytelling. Can machines tell stories? Should they?

On one hand, AI-propelled narratives may empower access and co-creation, particularly for people who are disabled or poorly literate. In contrast, the data sets that train these technologies are usually biased in systematic ways, and the narratives created can reinforce harmful stereotypes or erasures.

Further, the utilisation of Indigenous or culturally-specific information without consent provokes discussions of the digital extraction and epistemic extraction.

Writers such as Kate Crawford (2021) and Safiya Noble (2018) have criticised the racialised and gendered reasoning inherent in algorithmic systems. In the world of storytelling this means that not only do we have to look at what stories AI is telling, but who's stories are being left out, told wrong, or commercialised. Story-making in the future has to integrate indigenous and marginalised communities in decision making as well as in implementation of such technologies—not merely as users, but as epistemic agents.

### 6.3 Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Immersive Storytelling

Immersive technologies such as VR and AR are changing the way stories are consumed. Not any longer as passive consumers, audiences become corporeal players moving through story-worlds through sensory and spatial immersion. Projects such as *Biidaaban: First Light*—a VR film by Anishinaabe artist, Lisa Jackson — immerse users in a future Toronto overrun by Indigenous plants and languages, synthesising the speculative fiction with land-based teachings.

These technologies are strong means for empathy, education, and awareness of the environment. They can be used to simulate the refugees' journeys, create the visuals of the climate change scenarios or simply to recreate the ancestral landscapes. They, however, also require critical inspection of cultural protocols, narrative sovereignty, and digital ethics. Who has the right to fictionalise sacred stories? How do we avoid gamifying trauma/ the fetishisation of Indigenous cosmologies?

The future of immersive storytelling is co-creation, consent, and critical media literacy. Technologies are not neutral – they must be used intentionally and with accountability, particularly, when telling across cultures, histories, and ontologies.

### 6.4 Decentralised Storytelling and Blockchain Technologies

When it comes to Blockchain, this technology is increasingly becoming a tool that can be used for decentralised storytelling, as storytellers can prove the authenticity of their work,

manage rights and get fair compensation free of corporate intermediaries. What we have here the opportunities like projects Mirror.xyz or NFT-based publishing for writers and artists: the latter can control their narratives, and build a direct connection with an audience, especially when coming from historically oppressed communities.

For Indigenous storytellers, the blockchain could be a way of protecting intellectual property, as well as claiming sovereignty over narratives and tracing the origin of sacred stories. However, this potential needs to be tempered with regards to the environmental impact, cultural misappropriation and the speculative nature of crypto economies. Just like any other technology, the blockchain has to be tailored according to communities' requirements and values rather than an imposed one-for-all solution.

## 7. Story-Making as Resistance and Reimagination

Storytelling has always been a site of resistance and another way in which individuals and communities resist dominant paradigms, reinscribe lost histories and envision futures that have never been seen before. In Indigenous as well as in non-Indigenous situations, narrative is not a reflection of reality, but a power shaping it. Consequently, the future story-making that follows cannot just react to crisis and injustice, but create alternative visions of justice, recovery, and community flourishing.

### 7.1 Counter-Narratives and the Power of Refusal

Counter-narratives work by undermining hegemonic narratives to normalise oppression. Prevalent settler-colonial narratives often depict the indigenous peoples as vanishing, primitive or dependent. Counter-narratives throw off these tropes with claims of continuity, agency and resistance. Works such as Thomas King's (2003) *The Truth About Stories*; Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (2017) *This Accident of Being Lost* complicate linear, colonial narration using humour, disjointedness, and ancestral logic.

The same, Black feminist literature, from Audre Lorde (1964) to Saidiya Hartman (1997), rewrites historiographies from the margins, staging survival, kinship, and radical care.

These narratives do not simply "add" diversity on to the dominant discourse—they negate its premises, aesthetics, and epistemologies. By so, they demonstrate new forms of knowing, being.

Story-making in the future should develop the faculty of refusal. As Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck observes, "refusal is not the opposite of desire – it is its expression". To reject the single story is to embrace the right to be multiple, to have stratagem, and to bring on confusion.

### 7.2 Ecological Storytelling and the Return to Relationality

Environmental storytelling hitherto is now a form of resistance in the climate collapse context. Paradigmatic environmental stories tell the crisis in technocratic or apocalyptic ways, cleansing it from its colonial and capitalist origins. In contrast, Indigenous and land-based stories provide a relational sense of ecology that assumes the agency of rivers, rocks, animals, and ancestors.

The texts by Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), Tyson Yunkaporta (2019), Martín Prechtel (1999) counteract anthropocentric bias of Western environmentalism. These narratives do not just tell about the nature – they listen to it. In this way, they suggest that storytelling may be a method towards ecological stewardship, a way to reestablish reciprocal relationships with the more-than-human world.

The speculative fiction writers such as Nnedi Okorafor and Jeff VanderMeer utilize "cli-fi" (climate fiction) to create post-human futures and symbiotic intelligences. These narratives press readers to ask what it means to survive and adapt amid the planetary precarity – and whether story can be a part of the answer.

### 7.3 Futurity, Afrofuturism, and Indigenous Futurisms

Futurity has for a long time been the terrain of science fiction, a terrain that has been monopolised for a long time by Eurocentric notions of progress, conquest, and technological supremacy. Yet, Afrofuturism and Indigenous Futurisms have re-landscaped this terrain, proclaiming that the marginalised have the right to imagine themselves not only into, but as the future.

Afrofuturism, as reinterpreted by writers like Kodwo Eshun (2003) and artistes like Janelle Monáe (2018), melds science fiction with African cosmology and political commentary to engage with the themes of diaspora, memory and liberation. Indigenous Futurisms also envision a future built on the knowledge of ancestors, sovereignty, and land. These forms of movement undermine the assumption that modernity and futurity are Western inventions – and they proffer radically diverse reflexes, timeframes, technologies and ontologies.

Afrofuturist narration that imagines survival, accomodation, spiritual transformation amid the dystopian near-future, through environmental breakdown and social disintegration, is represented by Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993). The kind *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline (2017), *Black Panther* by Ryan Coogler (2018) and *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich (2017), the future can be a place where the cultures can emerge and the cosmology expand. In these, the storey is not escapism—it is insurgency.

#### 7.4 Healing and Story as Ceremony

Finally, storytelling is a form of healing. In many Indigenous cultures, story is ceremony—it binds people to place, lineage, and spirit. It is a medicine that reconnects fragmented identities and histories. This understanding stands in contrast to the Western model of storytelling as entertainment or commodified content.

Narrative therapy, trauma-informed pedagogy, and community storytelling circles are increasingly incorporating Indigenous and decolonial frameworks of story as care. Programs like the Storywork methodology, developed by Joann Archibald (2008), emphasise the story's capacity to teach, heal, and transform through respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reverence.

In a world fractured by war, displacement, and systemic violence, future story-making must prioritise healing. This means centring the voices of those most harmed, creating spaces of collective narration, and honouring the sacred dimensions of story.

## 8. Conclusion: Toward a Plural and Planetary Narrative Ethics

In a world marked by ecological collapse, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and epistemic erasure,

the future of story-making is both a promise and a responsibility. It calls upon us not only to reimagine what stories we tell, but also how we tell them, with whom, and to what end. As this paper has explored, narratives are never neutral—they are sites of power, memory, imagination, and transformation. They shape what is thinkable, sayable, and doable in the world. Thus, the ethics of future storytelling must be grounded in plurality, justice, and relationality.

### 8.1 Embracing Narrative Pluralism

Future story-making must be plural. It must recognise that no single story, language, or cosmology can capture the totality of human experience, let alone the complexity of the more-than-human world. Narrative pluralism affirms the right of all communities—Indigenous, diasporic, disabled, queer, displaced, and more—to narrate their realities on their terms.

This does not mean an uncritical celebration of “diversity,” but a commitment to epistemic justice. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) argues, we need an “ecology of knowledges” that values multiple ways of knowing, being, and telling. This includes oral traditions, mythic logics, speculative futures, and ancestral memory as legitimate forms of narrative intelligence.

To embrace narrative pluralism is to resist homogenization, appropriation, and the commodification of difference. It is to build story worlds where difference is not a problem to be solved but a gift to be honoured.

### 8.2 Re-centring Relational Ethics

At the heart of future story-making lies a relational ethic—an understanding that stories are not objects but relationships. Stories connect people to place, to pasts and futures, to ancestors and descendants, to the human and the non-human. In many Indigenous traditions, storytelling is an act of relational accountability, grounded in respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

This relationality must inform all aspects of storytelling—from research and authorship to translation and dissemination. It defies extractive modes of cultural production in which storeys are stolen, packaged and sold without permission or regard. Instead, it calls for slow, dialogical, and community-rooted approaches that honour the sovereignty of storytellers and sacredness of story.

Relational ethics also demand that we consider our positionality. Who are we about the stories we tell? What permissions do we have? What obligations do those stories place upon us? As storytellers, scholars, and listeners, we must cultivate humility, accountability, and the courage to be changed by the stories we encounter.

### 8.3 Building Narrative Futures in Solidarity

The work of future story-making cannot be done in isolation. It requires coalitions across disciplines, communities, and generations. It involves writers, educators, activists, technologists, elders, and youth coming together to imagine and enact alternative futures. These futures will not emerge from algorithmic prediction or corporate innovation—they will be born from the margins, from the cracks, from the stories that refuse to die.

Story-making in solidarity means amplifying suppressed voices, protecting narrative sovereignty, and building infrastructures of care and access. It means fighting for public libraries, Indigenous media, open-source platforms, and multilingual archives. It means teaching young people to read and write stories not just for grades, but for survival and transformation. And it means remembering that storytelling is a sacred act. As the Zapatistas say, "Another world is possible" (Klein, 2020). The story is how we get there.

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