

## **Performance Context of Storytelling Events vis-à-vis Western Civilisation and Global Influences**

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**Taku Victor Jong**

*Department of Performing and Visual Arts  
Faculty of Arts, University of Buea, Cameroon*

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### **Abstract**

Western civilisation, modernism and globalisation have created new patterns and shifts of all that were traditionally assigned to the performance context of the storytelling event. This article will expose us to recent changes of the storytelling event as far as setting and the role of the narrator are concerned. In this wise we shall observe how the upsurge of new settings and the birth of new actors and narrators have greatly influenced and informed the performance context of the storytelling event. These recent changes go a long way to debunk assertions and assumptions that Western civilisation has come to kill storytelling in Africa, especially in urban and semi urban areas. Informed by New Historicism as a sociological approach, these analyses will be founded on observations of the different channels which the modern storytellers have to tell their stories to members of an audience resident in settings void of the fireside and the fragrance of the mahogany and umbrella trees. The storytelling event, in the presence of a new setting, actors and audience, has gradually taken African cultures and traditions to a global market space where the rules are now being dictated by modern forms of communication and the internet.

**Key words:** Storytelling event, setting, narrator, new paradigms and globalisation

### **Introduction**

Africa is presently at a crossroad where the positive impact of western civilisation on her cultures and traditions have led to the growth of an educated elite who are either born in new settlements designed in the likes of Europe and America; and those who have been blown to urban

areas by the winds of rural exodus. The latter has, over the years, been civically estranged from their cultures and traditions that were regularly handed to them by their parents, elders and custodians of the culture by the fireside and in the village square. They who usually took part in rites, rituals, traditional dances and other festivals in their respective villages are now estranged from these cultural practices because of their quest for education, more lucrative jobs and better standards of living. The growth and influence of modern settlements in cities, towns and most semi-urban areas witnessed the presence of western forms of communication like the television and internet and cellular phones. After a tiring day at work, the parents and elders now sought comfort in front of the television screen, computers and cell phones propelled by the internet and satellite installations. The television and internet has hampered interpersonal communication between parents and their children and now play the role of the teacher, the mentor and the pastor. A new setting and new narrators have now seen the light of day. These recent challenges to the storytelling event obliges us to raise the following questions: Do we neglect the role played by these modern forms of communication because they are western and foreign or exploit their values to tell the same stories being told by the fireside in villages and rural areas? Can the birth of a new narrator meet the needs of his audience in a new setting? Answers to these questions will reveal the role played by the new narrator in guaranteeing the survival of the storytelling event in both rural and urban centres. These analyses will therefore expose us to notions such as the rural setting, semi-rural setting, the urban or city setting, and the new storytellers such as the television narrator, the textbook narrator and i-phone narrator. It is on this note Ruth Finnegan (1970) had pointed out that the oral literacy tradition of Africa was dying out with the impact of literate, wealthier and more progressive cultures. She affirmed that importance was placed on political songs, new versions of dance, songs and lyrics, the written word and auditory forms. She also expressed a worry that the written word may not play an important role in the development of Africa in the future. She ends by calling for further research in these subjects and finally proposes drama as one of the special forms of the storytelling event. It is this call which we have heeded with respect to the performance context approach, in order to propose ways of

giving new vigour to this culture and literary tradition once held in high esteem. In order to delve into these new paradigms, the storytelling event will be defined within the context of the advancements of oral literacy.

### **Storytelling Event**

Storytelling events are forums grouping people from individual homes, villages and communities with the aim of interacting, communicating and sharing certain values, mores and traditions that influence the individual and collective growth and development of people in a community. It involves the interaction of two or more people sharing certain linguistic, ethnic and cultural realities. The outcome of this interaction is to educate, moralise, entertain and hand down certain values to the younger generations. An individual or group of people may play the role of narrator (s) or storyteller (s) while another group, the audience or listener. The storyteller and listener operate under special and prescribed rules of their community or village. They are not allowed to go against these rules; for when they do the sanctions range from outright stripping of titles and other advantages to an invitation of a curse. In a modern setting prizes are lost and participation for future events cancelled. The storyteller and listener exhibit certain social functions that explain the roles and functions of certain individuals in the community. Tala (1999) points out aspects of social structure which include justifying or reinforcing kinship groupings, exhibiting distinctions of social class, supporting claims to particular social functions and providing a rationale for social continuities or changes. He also goes ahead to state that every storytelling event is unique occurring only once in time and space, generating unique systems of social and psychological forces. All these aspects are given impetus and particular importance based on the realities of individual communities and groups. The oral tale narrator, the audience and setting are important aspects of the storytelling event.

### **Oral Tale Narrator**

An important component of the storytelling event is the narrator or storyteller. Two people or an individual may play this role successfully. A narrator may introduce the storyteller by revealing his age, status, great exploits and other merits to the audience. In a second instance the

storyteller may introduce himself and levy all merits and praises recognised by the audience. In a third instance, the audience recounts the merits of the storyteller in unison as he mounts the front space. One of the qualities of the storyteller is that he should be open-minded and ready to accept all criticisms that will be levied on him. He should be aware of the age, interests and weaknesses of the audience in front of him. As he meets the needs and aspirations of the audience, he must be careful not to hurt their feelings. He should also be able to improvise and improve upon previous performances.

Mastery of the language and other linguistic codes of the language community is a determinant factor of a successful rendition of a tale. He should have a mastery of the signs and lexical items of the language. He should also have a rich repertoire of the proverbs, idioms and slang of his language community. His intelligence to knead these aspects into a complete linguistic whole will make him consistent and accurate in his art. His mastery of the various gestures and mimetic qualities of particular characters in the tale and his ability to invent, modify and amplify certain characters and situations will earn him more praises and admiration from the audience and the community in general. He should also employ his imagination to alter certain aspects of the plot to suit changing cultural and group realities. A storyteller today will have to adjust to changing socio-cultural and political realities in Africa and the world at large. His dressing and voice-tone should correlate with his status and social class.

### **The Audience**

Another important element of the storytelling event is the audience. The success of any storytelling session is determined by the contributions made by the audience to the storyteller. The audience is also determined by age and other social functions. It may comprise youths, women, men, children or a combination of all. They respond to the message being handed to them by the storyteller. They may be emotional, calm, or agitated based on the tale or experiences shared. The mental or psychological state of the audience will determine the continuity, adjustments and termination of the tale. Once the narrator introduces a song, the audience participates by providing the chorus. This exercise

reduces tension and enlivens the audience to continue the process of narrating the tale. Verbal exchanges on the part of the audience are based on rules governing storytelling in the particular community. Members of the audience pose questions to the narrator who provides answers without hurting the feelings of the audience. Feedback provided by the audience determines the success or failure of the tale. Views shared by the audience no matter how childish, critical, or mundane contribute to the success or failure of the storytelling process. Such feedback and reinforcements, as proposed by Mbangwana, include heated arguments, debates and protest if the tale ends abruptly or if the plot lacks logic and if undue punishment is given to one of the characters. Another reaction comprises interrogations, ponderings and remarks when certain parts of the story are obscure or when there is complete ignorance of certain things mentioned in the tale. The audience may whisper in order to crack a joke or to show their bewilderment and scepticism. Also, there are spontaneous exclamations when the audience is moved by fear, fright, surprise, astonishment and disgust. The audience may also applaud, beam with delight and respond by nodding, clapping, shrugging at exciting moments of the performance. The narrator and audience may jointly end the tale and extend ideas unrelated to the story. Members of the audience versed with the language of the tale may complete or clarify some elliptical clauses or ideas expressed as the tale is being narrated. Finally, the audience may join the narrator to sing and dance at the end of a successful tale.

### **Setting of the Storytelling Event**

Taiwo describes the setting and situation of the storytelling event vividly in the following words:

Twilight is the story time in Africa. Darkness comes a few minutes after the sun has set. As a sort of evening entertainment the children of the village gather round the feet of the story-teller to listen to his stories. Some of the children are tired after a whole day's work in the fields, in the market or in the house. After their evening meal they wait to be entertained with interesting stories before they retire to bed. They sit on mats and the story-teller

takes his place on a stool in the middle. Because some of the children are already tired the story-teller makes sure he puts a lot of life into his narration lest they fall asleep. Most of the time the narration is accompanied by dramatic and musical performances. Narrators identify themselves closely with the characters in their tales, imitating the actions and gestures described. The listeners also participate in the performance, singing choruses, beating drums and playing other instruments to heighten the drama of the story. (15)

He adds that the storyteller makes sure all the children are attentive before he starts to tell his story. The storyteller may ask them to do some work before he starts, or ask questions about the last set of stories, to be able to assess how much of the stories they remember. He may also introduce some riddles at the children and whoever first thinks of the answer gives it. All these ensure a favourable atmosphere for his stories. Storytelling in a traditional setting has assumed many forms, changes and transitions over time. In Africa, for instance, and Cameroon in particular, traditional settings include the village square, the fon's or chief's palace; around a fireside in a kitchen; the sitting or common room of an influential person in the village and in individual homes. Sometimes the setting may be on the farm, on a stream or river during farming and fishing respectively. In this section, aspects of themes, plot, characterisation, narrative techniques, diction and authorship will be examined.

During storytelling sessions in a local or village setting, the storyteller invokes thematic aspects that deal with love, peace, unity and solidarity. Most of the stories end up passing as moral fables. With the exception of myths and legends, the prose narratives serve a dual purpose of entertainment and education. At the end of the tale, the audience leave the storytelling session purged of certain unwanted or evil desires. The storyteller also hands down aspects of individual and group experiences that have a moral lesson. The songs are carefully selected so that their themes correspond with that of the tale being narrated. Knowledge of the songs is shared between the storyteller and the audience.

As far as plot is concerned, it is episodic. Here, special attention is not given to the length of the tale. A tale could last an hour or a whole week without any resentment from the audience. The audience is always prepared to listen to the tale as long as the narrator is capable of holding their attention and keeping their desire burning. Most of the tales have a chronological plot development with a beginning, middle and an end. The actions follow a rising, conflicting and falling pattern that move towards a final point of resolution. The resolution provides the audience with a moral basis or atmosphere to reflect on their individual lives and experiences.

Characters of tales usually presented by the narrator in a village setting include animal characters, human characters, spiritual and historical characters. The audience easily identifies these characters. The audience is usually aware of what a tortoise is capable of doing and the attitudes of a dog, a hawk, a pig, a goat and a sheep whenever the narrator mentions their names. The outcome of a story where a tortoise is mentioned is always predicted. The audience is always aware of the fact that he will eventually outsmart his adversary. The name of the rat if mentioned in a story immediately leads the audience to think of theft and destruction as the rat is skilled in stealing and destroying things.

As far as authorship is concerned, there is no direct person or group of persons associated with a particular tale. The whole village takes credit for composing the tale. Each narrator or storyteller is vested with authority to modify, add or delete certain aspects of the tale that have no direct relevance or influence on the audience. Authorship is therefore anonymous. The tales belong to the whole community where each member has the right to contribute or question certain aspects of style and the overall morale of the tale. There is a close collaboration, co-operation and co-ordination between the performer and his audience in the actual realisation of the tale. At the end of a storytelling session, a new tale is born and handed down to the audience who adopts it at that particular time, and experience.

The notion of transmission comes in, which is by word of mouth. The narrator is free to alter the original version and propose a new one slightly different from the previous version. To do this, he must get the approval of the audience. The role of the narrator during transmission is

unique in handing down his version. He is free to invent certain verbal and mimetic features to make the tale lively. He may moderate his voice, employ certain facial and body gestures, alter his tone and create songs that are relevant to the theme of the tale. The songs have certain messages linked to particular individual, group and collective actions generally understood and known by the audience. The audience provides the chorus and may dance to the rhythm of the song.

The setting of the tales ranges from the land of the living and can extend to the land of the dead or the spirits. In some cases the action may take place only in a specific world. Human characters are usually seen communicating with animals, spirits and ancestors. Here, the actions of these hero-like characters touch on the overall life of the community. Their exploits and encounters in the land of the living and the land of the spirits attest to their titles and recognition.

Performance of the tales in a local setting is usually take place by the fireside at twilight after the evening meal. Parents or grandparents assemble their children to share in riddles, jokes and tell stories. Other activities may include roasting corn, plantains, cocoyams, plums and cassava. The children usually sit on the ground with bare buttocks while the parents sit on the bamboo bed located directly by the fireside. The fire renders the atmosphere warm and convenient for storytelling. In other cases the performance may take place in the open village square, under a huge tree when the whole community is involved. A group of individuals in specific age groups may take a tale to the farm, on the road, on their way back home and in their individual rooms.

## **New Paradigms of the Storytelling Event**

### **Storytelling in Urban Settings**

An examination of storytelling in urban settings leads us to a study of what obtains today as far as performance is concerned. It also spurs us to examine the impact of globalisation on storytelling. It further evaluates the distance covered by this art from the local or village setting to an urban or metropolitan area. Reflections on the relevance of a modern setting were raised because of the following observations: Is storytelling only confined to villages, rural habitats and specific cultural

manifestations? Do people migrate from rural areas to urban centres with the culture of storytelling? Do these immigrant populations find time to sit and tell stories in their new abodes or are they carried away with the hustle and bustle of city and town life? Are the moral, educational and spiritual values of the tales irrelevant in a morally decadent urban centre? Answers to these questions will reveal attempts by this researcher in proposing ways of situating storytelling as part of a global modern culture. In order to achieve this goal, an attempt at adapting and modifying these tales to suit present modern realities will be clearly illustrated in subsequent chapters of this work. Tala (1999) observes:

There has been a remarkable change in the literary taste of Africans and this has meant some decline in the relative significance of orature. Furthermore, the factors that gave rise to and sustained orature are not as pressing today as they were in the remote past. Finally, modern technology is fast replacing fireside chats where orature thrived. (142)

The above immediately paints a clear picture of what the setting of storytelling in present day Africa looks like. The modern setting is replete with electronic gadgets and computer software that propagate Western and other foreign cultures. New and modern technology seems to have a strong grip on the minds of city and town dwellers. This modern setting is widening at an alarming rate as urban villages are being electrified to match with changing times. In some remote villages, the presence of generators has completely thwarted the storytelling experience. Here, some elders and youths spend long hours in front of the television screen placed in the chief's palace or the residence of a wealthy businessman or farmer. Consequently, fireside chats no longer have any relevance to them. Back to our modern setting, literacy is growing by leaps and bounds and little effort is being made by the educated class to propagate the oral culture. They sit transfixed in front of the screen even when the language of communication is alien or strange to them. Nevertheless, a conscious minority still find time to tell stories but not at regular intervals as in the near past. City and urban dwellers find it difficult to reconcile the two settings: village and urban, in relation to the influence that modern technology has on their lives.

### **The Birth of a New Storyteller**

The narrator or storyteller in an urban setting may be a father or a mother who takes upon him or herself to narrate some of the stories handed down to him or her to their children. Their task becomes easier if they fall into the category of those who migrated from the village and have settled in town. This narrator is usually ignorant of the socially prescribed rules governing narration. The formalised openings and closings do not interest him. He is more concerned with the moral behind each tale. This narrator who may be a teacher, an office worker or a businessman has little or no time to tell stories. He also places little importance on voice and other mimetic aspects. The gap between him and his audience, usually his children and close family relations, is too close. S. Okechukwu Mezu (1971) quotes Aristotle in Tome 1, book 11 of his *Metaphysics* stating that each philosopher finds something to say about nature and that from a purely structural point of view, man is indivisible and cannot realistically be divorced from his society, the collective unconscious, traditions and progress, aspirations and realizations. The narrator is therefore one who is bound to his society, replicating the world view of those who live in his society, capturing their mores and traditions, evaluating their degree of progress, assessing what they aspire for and the extent to which they have realized all what they set out for as mission. The tales under study are an embodiment of all these factors. The tales which are also products of the natural environment, are composed of rules that govern the environment and man's coexistence with his natural habitat. The narrator, while carrying out his art should be able to identify certain natural features of his society, associate them to the events in the story, the characters and their interaction with nature. It is therefore difficult to divorce a story from its natural environment.

The birth of the new storyteller is therefore urgent in Africa today torn by civil strife, disease, unemployment, wars, poverty, corruption, AIDS and stagnation. He cannot also afford to stand aside and watch politicians and economists gamble with the future of Africa. His role is therefore primordial and so must be that which mirrors society in a more or less superficial manner and it will be read as sociology in the future, not as works of art. This should also be the position of the modern

storyteller in Africa whose role should not end at barely narrating his tales, but must use the opportunity to remind his audience of the impending dangers around him and how he can be able to circumvent, prevent or avoid any future calamity. He should also go a step ahead to see that the stories shared in a closed environment are also in possession of a wider section of the population. By so doing, he becomes that warning voice to many people and a builder of the future of generations of his kin and kith.

### **The Radio and TV Narrator**

The first category of storytellers is made up of those who solicit the assistance of a radio or television house to record and televise performances of certain tales. Over the television, the presenter of a cultural programme that contains storytelling is also a narrator. Those who sit in front of a television screen, follow his narrative session keenly. This kind of storyteller is usually aware that his art is serving the interests, needs and aspirations of listeners and viewers in a wider community. The teller who goes on radio employs certain voice and sound techniques that hold the attention of the audience. Occasionally, he employs the use of traditional music instruments, which produce background noises and sounds.

### **The Textbook and Comic Strip Narrator**

A second category of storyteller is the textbook writer or novelist and comic strip narrator. He collects stories from their original settings and transcribes them. He edits and transforms them into a text of his choice. He may publish them in a magazine, a text that contains collection of tales or in a reader for primary and secondary schools. Tales for a reader are usually rendered more accessible if the authors add pictures, drawings, illustrations and questions to stimulate the minds of his readers or audience. Agnes Nzuh is one of those who can pass for a modern storyteller as she has successfully used her knowledge in pedagogy to write some tales with a bearing to the grassland and forest of Cameroon that have moral significance to students in Cameroon secondary schools. She has included picture illustrations, drawings and questions to make the process of learning and acquisition easier and

faster. The relatively short stories motivate the students to read on. Under this category are novelists who make use of tales to fit into the experience of the characters in the novel. Tala observes how modern writers like Chinua Achebe, Joseph Ngong'ikuo, Kenjo Jumban, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Wole Soyinka have adapted oral literary pieces into written literature. These writers play the role of creative storytellers as they merge human stories with other aspects of their cultural landscape to come out with long fascinating series of episodes and experiences. The audience who is distant can sit in his or her room to listen to the tale as it is being narrated through a written text. This text replaces the human storyteller who is strange in the minds of the audience and seen only through the first or third person narrative technique. The textbook narrator has come to be admired by the urban audience more than the traditional storyteller. He is richer, more socially and politically influential than his counterpart in the village. He lives in luxury and is regarded as a scholar par-excellence.

### **The I-phone Narrator**

In the present dispensation where digital technology and cell phones are gradually taking over the place of analog modes of communication, coupled with innovations that have led to the creation of i-phones that integrate radio, television, video and audio recording apps have brought entertainment to the doorsteps of millions in city, urban and semi-urban dwellers. Adept can be found with handy and mobile cell phone gadgets at different places and at all hours. They are not only distant from their parents but from their radio and television sets. Creators of modern day entertainment are exploring different outlets offered by Google and other internet gurus to speak directly to owners of i-phones. They can be considered the I-phone narrator with millions of faithfuls eager to listen to whatever tale or story created for their leisure and entertainment.

### **The Audience in Urban Settings**

The audience in an urban setting is becoming more detached from the cultural and traditional realities of what is obtained in their villages of origin. Faced with a performance over the television, the family stands as an extended audience. Their participation resides on individual

comments made as the story is being told. Since they cannot halt the performance in motion, they have no option than to watch and wait patiently for the end of the story. It is at the end of the session that the father, mother, and elder son or daughter draws lessons from the tale and then pass it on to their younger ones. In some instances there is little or no comment made after viewing the storytelling sessions. As far as tales broadcast over the radio are concerned, the listener who is usually an elderly person or parent listens to the tale with keen attention. The present generation of children does not listen to the radio. They focus their attention on the television and the Internet with the aid of compact disc, music/film technologies and gadgets. In urban villages, the proliferation of video clubs and television sets is changing the outlook of the audience which was formerly traditional. Where there is no electricity, electric generators have been bought by wealthy individual farmers that attract young people and other elders of the village towards the screen.

### **The New/Modern Audience**

The birth of a new and modern audience in urban and semi-urban areas is now an aspect of reality. Any attempt to destroy or discourage its existence will lead to untold and unhappy circumstances. What we have to do is to encourage and guide them into making wise choices from the array of television programmes and documentaries that are exhibited. This tie in with our intention to transform some of the African tales into moving images like cartoons especially for kids and young people who are future custodians of our traditional values.

### **The Classroom/ Educated Audience**

A formal audience, which occupies an important position in urban settlements, is the classroom audience. Storytelling now finds itself within the four walls of a classroom through a script. They contribute in shaping the story to address their needs and aspirations. They can alter the plot, adjust certain aspects and adapt the story with the aid of the drama practitioner or classroom teacher. Textbook writers have gone an extra mile to transcribe and publish some tales to meet the curriculum needs of the students. It is important to note that the script is the starting

point of any production. It is generally considered as a raw material that will be analysed, developed, reshaped and enacted according to the wishes of the group and to meet the specific needs of the group at a particular point in time. In this wise great care should be taken in selecting a story meant for textbooks and readers. The stories, in this light, should address the specific problems of the pupils and students in their physical, psychological and mental growth. It should also address what obtains in their societies at a particular time. The choice of myths, legends, animal and human stories should be backed with specific lessons and ideas that help in moulding them into responsible citizens. In fulfilling specific dictates of time, there is need for textbook writers to recreate stories set in distant pasts to meet the demands of present day societies. The modern textbook writer or narrator uses the tools at his disposal to modify aspects of setting, characterisation, plot and style so that the students who represent part of the modern audience are not lost in a time frame which is distant to their needs and realities. The classroom audience that identifies with certain aspects of a story set a hundred years ago is prepared to accept the reality that a change in actors, settings, dress and speech patterns does not affect or change universal values as love, fear, pity, passion, life and death.

### **The Parlour/Salon Audience**

Another phase of this urban audience comprises individual family units who possess or own modern communication and entertainment gadgets like television, video decks, compact discs and access to the Internet. They sit in front of the television screen, for example, and watch tales being narrated to them in excitement and curiosity. Their reactions to such a tale and the narrator are wide and varied. Their first and most common reaction is to watch and listen attentively. If the story is another version of what this family knows, their sense of criticism is awakened. The father or mother or any elder who is well versed in their own particular rendering of the tale, immediately identifies the differences and shares with the others. Other digressions in the use of characters, diction and plot are also pointed out. This intervention is usually done at the end of the storytelling exercise. However, if it is a recorded tale in a cassette or diskette, the father or mother may pause during the recording

to point out aspects of digressions and morale. The children are also excited in the course of the narration to identify aspects of the tale, which they have in their textbooks or other storybooks. Parents also identify versions of tales, which form part of a film or movie. They can also identify aspects of morality shared by a particular tale, which the movies also portray.

At the end of the storytelling exercise on screen, the members of audience are purged of unwanted feelings of pity and fear. Those who identified themselves with particular characters and experiences re-examine themselves and raise many questions that concern their growth and survival. Parents and elders as they provide answers to these questions, open up new debates based on the conduct of young people in society. Others may write their experiences and send by post or e-mail to the narrator of the tale, or film production house that produced the tale. This is made possible if a post office box or e-mail address is provided at the end of the tale on screen. Answers to these questions may come late but they fill a gap that could easily have been filled in a storytelling event that involved the direct participation of the narrator and the audience.

### **The Theatre/Cinema Audience**

Modern theatre and cinema halls in major towns and cities have served and continue to serve the entertainment needs of a handful of theatre and film lovers who gain pleasure from outdoor activities. Generally comprised of wealthy and influential members of the middle and upper rungs of the society, theatre and film lovers are attracted to plays, newly produced movies and movie premieres. They are generally attracted by side performances from musicians, comedians, dancers and fashion design paraders. They are usually distant from the actors on stage and contribute little or nothing to what has been designed or created by the narrators and performers for their entertainment.

### **Conclusion**

Storytelling both in a traditional and modern setting is evolving and adapting to specific needs and demands of the narrator and the audience. Identifying specific narrators and audiences is difficult today as the

stories fit themselves in various codes and modes of transmission that have greatly departed from what obtains in the past. The griots, troubadours and other specialised storytellers and musicians are gradually leaving the present scene. Even those trained to follow in their footsteps have been caught by the present whirlwind of globalisation and technological advancements in communication and entertainment. The gap between the narrator, the script and the audience is closing up. The need for special training in storytelling is no longer considered as prerequisite for the qualification of a narrator or storyteller. In spite of all these, storytelling is going to be part of the cultural experience of Africa because of its importance in the areas of entertainment, morality, teaching, and socialisation. Per Wastberg (1988) refers to Wole Soyinka who affirms that the author must not contend himself with chronicling the customs of society, but must play the part of bard and oracle, see more clearly and exactly than other people, be a visionary, a warning voice and builder of the future. There is therefore need to revisit the narratives of the past which had a more universal and global touch to life. The wise or witty individual incarnated by the tortoise is found all over the world and in different works of life, the chameleons are replicas of those who are unpredictable and ever-changing: the lion represents the strong and powerful who continue to dominate the weak and feeble around them; the pig forms the nucleus of those in society who continue to dig and search for lost opportunities, while the dog comprise those who run faster in life but are held back by a glimpse of something attractive or juicy on their path. This is not in essence recommending the narration of animal tales, but in creating universal images that reflect the lives and experiences of a wider population.

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