VIRTUAL SPACES AND THE CULTURES OF MODERNITY: REFLECTIONS ON THE CENTRALITY OF CULTURE AND THE ART OF STORYTELLING

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Abstract:

In human history, the power of storytelling and the artistic quality of the literary works had always been very influential when it comes to sharing stories with youngsters and more importantly having them around. More specifically, the fairy tale as a literary genre—though it`s an imaginary story—had captured the hearts of millions with its magical overall themes and moral objectives. Whether it features fantasy characters, the art of storytelling had always been a considerable strategy not only for teaching moral lessons or transmitting the cultural heritage of one`s nation, but a fantastic way to entertain youngsters and keep them home and more importantly away from many trivial things. However, the advances in science and technology have led to the creation of what is called now `virtual communities` in which Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat are very signatory. Thus, the immense and unprecedented use of these social media networks has given birth to new spaces and new modes of entertainments different from the ones created by the art of narration or storytelling where the voice of one`s parents and grandparents played a significant role. Apparently, and particularly in the developed countries or in countries where the technological boom is thriving and taking place, the survival of one`s cultural heritage becomes a crucial issue for anyone interested in the cultural heritage and oral literature in general and the art of storytelling in particular.
Thus, Virtual Spaces and the Cultures of Modernity: Reflections on the Centrality of Culture and the Art of Storytelling does not pillory or criticize social media and technology, because no one can deny the positive side of it. Rather it endeavors to emphasize the fact that people nowadays seem to be digitally oriented. This latter does not only marginalize the importance of culture and literature, but more specifically it relegates the literary and cultural legacies of nations to the periphery.

Keywords:

Virtual Communities, Culture, Literature, Globalization, space

In human history, the power of storytelling and the artistic quality of the literary works had always been very influential when it comes to sharing stories with youngsters and more importantly having them around. More specifically, the fairy tale as a literary genre— though it`s an imaginary story—had captured the hearts of millions with its magical overall themes and moral objectives. Whether it features fantasy characters, the art of storytelling had always been a considerable strategy not only for teaching moral lessons or transmitting the cultural heritage of one`s nation, but a fantastic way to entertain youngsters and keep them home and more importantly away from many trivial things. Thus, *Virtual Spaces and the Cultures of Modernity: Reflections on the Centrality of Culture and the Art of Storytelling* does not pillory or criticize social media and technology, because no one can deny the positive side of it. Rather it endeavors to emphasize the fact that people nowadays seem to be digitally oriented. This latter does not only marginalize the importance of culture and literature, but more specifically it relegates the literary and cultural legacies of nations to the periphery.

Oral literature has always been a very important cultural heritage; and more importantly as a space and place where every society tells its own stories. However, the advances in science and technology have led to the creation of what is called now `virtual communities` in which Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat are very signatory. Thus, the immense and unprecedented use of these social media networks has given birth to new modes of entertainments different from the ones created by the art of narration or storytelling where the voice of one`s parents and grandparents played a significant role. Apparently, and particularly in the developed countries or in countries where the technological boom is thriving and taking place, the survival of one`s favorite fairy tale becomes a crucial issue for anyone interested in the cultural heritage and oral literature in general and the art of storytelling in particular.

Culturally, oral literature has been used for different purpose. It has been used to entertain, educate, to preserve one`s culture and more importantly as a mirror of the society. For instance, most of the literary genres have been used ae modes of entertainment. In some African societies, people used to make out of this literary genre a

wonderful occasion of entertainment particularly when they come back after a long and tiring day of farming and fishing. For them, oral literature was a considerable strategy to kill boredom. Furthermore, in some under developed countries and particularly in rural areas, oral literature was used a means to educate people. As a result, old people be it men and women were considered the lecturers of their time. The stories they narrated were great inspiration for our beliefs, values and norms.

Additionally,

Furthermore, it widely recognized that oral literature plays an important role in preserving and transmitting the culture of the people from generation to generation. Frank added that "Traditional fairy tales contain vital cultural information that are stored and transmitted from one generation to the other. By so doing, fairy tales help in the preservation and transmission of our cultural heritage. The answer to what happens to a succeeding generation when the preceding generation passes away lies with oral literature. It is a veritable tool for preserving our culture and ensuring continuity". (Frank,)

Clearly, in the new era of technology, people and particularly youngsters have become digitally orientated, which in turn has completely endangered the survival of what is called fairy tales. For instance, instead of reading or listening to a fairy tale narrated to them by their mothers or grandmothers, most of the teens nowadays tend to spend their time chatting, messaging and snapchatting with their virtual friends. According to my own experience as someone in the field, most of the teens when they are asked or compelled to narrate or just name some of the fairy tales that are embedded in their culture and the lessons these fairy tales teach, few will be able to answer the question. On the contrary, when they are told to divulge or speak about their virtual life`s concerns including friends and how many stars and leading figures in social media they follow, most of them seem to have ready-made answers.

Additionally, the aim of this short article is not to pillory or criticize social media and technology, because no one can deny the positive side of it. Rather the article endeavors to emphasize the fact that people nowadays seem to be digitally oriented. This latter does

not only marginalize the importance of fairy tales, but more specifically it relegates the literary and cultural legacies of nations to the periphery.

Finally, social media could be seen as a good way to stay connected; however, what everyone should fathom is that the tremendous use of WhatsApp, Facebook and Snapchat has blemished and diminished the significance of the fairy tales and oral literature in general. Thus, one has to rescue the fairy tales as a cultural heritage or legacy from the beast of globalization and the overuse of technology.

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