

The Trickster Archetype in Oral Literature: Unravelling Universality and Pedagogical Power across World Cultures

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate character of the trickster as portrayed in oral literature while conducting a comprehensive survey to explore the universality of this intriguing figure across diverse world cultures. The investigation draws inspiration from Carl Jung's proposition that these archetypal manifestations in cultural and religious literature stem from the "collective unconscious," a profound thread of consciousness connecting all human beings and societies worldwide. The essay emphasises the distinctiveness of each trickster's personality within their respective cultures while also highlighting the common traits shared among all tricksters. Typically perceived as an entertainer, teacher, judge, and sage, the trickster embodies both humorous and serious aspects of life, encompassing a wide range of roles from rewarding to punishing. Furthermore, the study asserts that the trickster character goes beyond being a mere fictional element in oral literature; rather, it serves as a powerful tool for pedagogy and satire. The study advocates for the deliberate collection and documentation of folktales. These tales serve as valuable raw materials for future research, offering insights into the cultural intricacies and shared human experiences across the globe.

Keywords: Trickster, Oral Literature, Archetypes, Carl Jung, Collective Unconscious.

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INTRODUCTION

Trickster tales feature a clever, devious animal or character whose pranks usually cause trouble for another character. In most instances, the trickster goes away gloating and unpunished, though in some tales there is a turnabout and the trickster falls prey to the mischief he started. The trickster figure is found all over the world. Sometimes, this figure is either creative or subversive. They are mischievous, cunning, and humorous and usually have the ability to switch between animal and human form.

Almost all traditional cultures tell stories featuring specific tricksters. For example, coyotes, hares, and ravens are the featured tricksters across North America. African trickster stories star Tortoise, Anansi the Spider, Zomo the Hare (African storytellers brought the latter to America, where it was integrated with the native American hare, eventually becoming Bre'r Rabbit), or Eshu, the mischievous messenger of the gods in Yoruba (Nigeria) mythology.

In Japan, tricksters are Badger, Tengu, mischievous trickster spirits, and Kitsune, a shape-

shifter. In Europe and South and Central America, the trickster can be a Fox or Wolf. In Norse mythology, Loki is the trickster. Greek mythology has Hermes as its hero. Of course, there are more in other cultures.

In searching for the trickster's origins, many, including the famous psychologist Carl Jung, dealt with the question of the origin of the trickster's character and his animalistic side. In picaresque tales, in carnivals and revels, in sacred and magical rites, and in man's religious fears and exaltations, this phantom of the trickster haunts the mythology of all ages. He is obviously a "psychologem", an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity.

Jung's archetypal psychic structure as a type of personality that existed at the dawn of mankind, according to Jung, exists even today, but it is hidden and suppressed in the subconscious. It is revealed through irrational and senseless behaviour when it seems as if man has two minds: the mind of modern man and the animal mind. The emergence of ambiguities, or two-mind games, is well known among the tricksters of African mythology. All tricksters, such as Anansi, Esu, Legba, and Ogo-Yurugu, possess the power of two-

mindness. However, this two-mindness is not the trickster's unconscious state because of his evolutionary roots, but it is his planned goal when he wants to achieve or prove something. The appearance of duplicity is not only reflected in the trickster's actions but also in the language, which becomes extremely complex.

The archetype of the trickster embodies the existence of the unexpected as it appears in every human society, sometimes fully acknowledged, sometimes feared, and sometimes hidden. He is the opposite of order, but then he is the opposite of everything: he can turn into a she. He is the Green Man, the Jester, the clown, the witch or wizard, Mercury, a shape-shifter, and the Fool, with the potential, at times, to become a Saviour. He upsets normality and hierarchical order. He can change the expected world and therefore be an agent of transformation. (1)

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* defines a trickster as "a person who cheats people; a swindler" in African folktales. A trickster is often something of a rogue. He manages to extricate himself from intrigue and sometimes saves himself from a dangerous situation through a display of his mental ability. (Hornby, 1276)

Okpewho, in his book *The Oral Performance in Africa*, says, "The trickster represents what is feared but secretly converted." A trickster is often associated with forces of disorder within society. He breaks the laws, tramples on customary usages, and subverts established social conventions. (203)

The Characteristics as Proposed By Babcock-Abrahams State That, to Some Degree, Most Tricksters:

1. demonstrate independence from and disregard for temporal and spatial boundaries
2. They tend to inhabit crossroads, open public places (especially the marketplace), doorways, and thresholds. They are usually located somewhere between the social cosmos and the other world, or chaos
3. are frequently involved in creative, destructive, or simply amusing scatological and coprophagous episodes
4. may, in their actions and character, exhibit Trickster-Transformer-Culture Hero characteristics
5. show signs of mental and/or physical abnormality, particularly exaggerated sexual characteristics
6. have a huge libido but no procreative outcome
7. possess the ability to disperse and disguise themselves, as well as a proclivity to be multiform and ambiguous, single or multiple
8. They often have a two-fold physical nature and/or a "double" and are associated with

mirrors. Most notably, the trickster has an uncertain sexual orientation.

9. Follow the "principle of motley" in dress
10. They are frequently indeterminate (in physical stature) and can be depicted as both young and old, perpetually young or perpetually aged
11. have a human/animal dualism, appearing as a human with animal characteristics or vice versa; (even in stories where the trickster is explicitly identified as an animal, he is anthropomorphically described and referred to in personal pronouns)
12. are generally amoral and asocial—aggressive, vindictive, vain, defiant of authority, etc
13. Despite their endless propensity to copulate, they find their most abiding form of relationship with the feminine in a mother's or grandmother's bond
14. In keeping with their creative/destructive dualism, tricksters tend to be ambiguously situated between life and death, and good and evil, as is summed up in the combined black and white symbolism frequently associated with them
15. are frequently assigned to roles (other than tricky behaviour) in which an individual normally has privileged freedom from some of the social code's demands
16. In all their behaviour, they tend to express a concomitant breakdown of the distinction between reality and reflection (Babcock-Abrahams 159-160)

CULTURAL MODELS OF THE TRICKSTER Greek Trickster

An examination of two prominent figures in Greek mythology, namely Hermes and Odysseus, provides a valuable insight into the archetype of the trickster character within the context of Greek folk cosmology. Each character within mythology possesses a distinct role, so presenting a chance to not only introduce the trickster archetype, but also various manifestations of this archetype. Hermes, the offspring of the divine union of Zeus and Maia, initiates his existence by engaging in a playful deception directed at his paternal uncle, Apollo. The infant male eludes his maternal figure and exhibits a profound interest in the revelations he encounters regarding his immediate environment. Of particular captivation to him is the tortoise, as well as its formidable and weighty carapace. The individual proceeds to detach the outer covering and fabricates a musical device known as the lyre. With a sense of satisfaction, he proceeds to transport it to the field, where Apollo tends to a group of revered bovines. Without any discernible motive, the infant deity Hermes elects to appropriate the livestock, demonstrating his astuteness by recognising the imperative of avoiding detection. The individual in question employs a technique of driving the cattle in a reverse direction and

concealing his own infant footprints by utilising sizable twigs, so generating the perception that a colossal entity has absconded with the bovine livestock. Nevertheless, Apollo promptly becomes aware of the act of theft upon his return from his customary celestial journey in his chariot. Subsequently, an elderly individual recollects observing an infant guiding a herd of cattle away from the pasture. Despite finding amusement in his son's mischievous behaviour, Zeus promptly instructs his son to promptly comply with Apollo's request to return the cattle. Motivated by a strong desire for retribution, Apollo asserts his claim to obtain ownership of the lyre, which is constructed from a tortoise shell. While the primary focus of the narrative will centre on Hermes as a trickster, it will also explore many significant themes, including the interrelationships among figures in Greek mythology, the origin of the universe (specifically, the creation of the lyre), and the portrayal of the trickster deity.

In conjunction with the portrayal of gods and goddesses as tricksters, it is imperative to explore the manifestation of a human trickster within Greek mythology. In this regard, Odysseus emerges as a highly apt embodiment of the trickster archetype. During his homeward journey from the Trojan War, Odysseus encounters individuals who employ deceptive tactics, so prolonging and rendering certain segments of his voyage exceedingly challenging. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Odysseus also undertakes the persona of the trickster during his encounter with Polyphemus in the cave. In the narrative of the *Odyssey*, upon discovering an unoccupied cave, Odysseus and his companions engage in the act of appropriating sustenance, so deviating from the established principles of Greek hospitality. Upon the Cyclops' menacing reappearance, wherein he poses a danger to consume Odysseus and his companions, the resourceful Odysseus expeditiously seizes a stake, subsequently heating it within the fire, and proceeds to forcefully impale the Cyclops' eye. Odysseus, harbouring a sense of discontentment following his narrow evasion from a cannibalistic encounter, perseveres and subsequently finds himself ensnared within the confines of a cave. The protagonist employs a mystical elixir to incapacitate Cyclops, although remains unable to extricate himself from the obstructed entrance to the cavern. During the morning, Odysseus employs a further stratagem whereby his companions seize hold of the underbellies of the sheep that Cyclops is tending, thus enabling their collective evasion from the incapacitated Cyclops, who has fallen prey to Odysseus's deceitful ploy. Nevertheless, the trickster inadvertently exacerbates his predicament by disclosing his true identity to Cyclops, so prompting Cyclops to implore his father, Poseidon, for retribution. Poseidon, the deity associated with the realms of waters and earthquakes, exhibits contentment in granting his son's desires to impede the advancement of Odysseus towards Ithaca, the location of his besieged abode.

African-American Tricksters

African trickster characters and stories were brought to the southern US and Caribbean West Indies by Africans. Despite plantation owners' attempts to obliterate their language and customs, the individuals showed fortitude by refusing to give in. Orally passing down stories preserved their culture. However, people also created new personas to express their responses to their new circumstances and environment. Despite introducing new characters, slave storytellers kept some old ones. African trickster tales include an animal protagonist who uses deception and magical powers to outwit larger, more powerful animals.

Southern slave trickster narratives focus on enslaved people outwitting their plantation masters. These narratives overthrow the system that enslaved them. Hamilton (YEAR) claims that bondage victims learned about justice in a way that showed their lack of access to it. However, they were able to create stories and laugh in spite of their hardships (*A Ring of Tricksters* 9). Before slavery was abolished, slaves used animal fables to vent their rage at their oppressors. The animals in the narratives became heroes for enslaved people, articulating their very repulsive experiences and fears. In Faulkner's (xiv) view, shrewd slave storytellers exploited their supposedly superior white masters' ignorance. These owners thought enslaved people's stories were harmless entertainment for illiterate audiences or their children.

Rabbits are among the most famous tricksters. "Bruh Rabby and Bruh Gator" (*A Ring of Tricksters* 15–24) typifies rabbit legends. The rabbit symbolises enslaved people who feel excluded from daily life. The story depicts their attempts to outwit their alligator boss. Gator yells and strikes the rabbit with his tail, disapproving of rabbits dancing in this area. I dance here. Alligators live here. (16). Rabby suppresses discontent like a frightened slave. Instead, he admires the alligator's violin and dance skills and offers to play when it tyres. Rabby thinks, "I am determined to exact retribution upon you, Brother Gator, for the mistreatment I have endured" (19). Rabby knocks Gator out, preventing him from dancing. The next day, Bruh Rabby appears as a squirrel and continues to deceive Bruh Gator. Bruh Rabby lights Bruh Gator's tail, worsening the issue. Bruh Rabby fights alligators at will. Alligators will always chase rabbits. (22). Again, Bruh Rabby captures the misery of oppressed people who were powerless to fight their oppressors. They persevered by using humour and hope to express their displeasure.

Slaves used animals to vent their anger and imagine defeating their owners. After slavery ended, these people were free to humanise their trickster figures and call them "John." In "The Most Useful Slave," enslaved John's prophetic lecture impresses his owner. John's supposed prophetic talents are a result of his

covert eavesdropping and regurgitation of overheard information, unknown to the owner. The owner brags about John's talents. John must guess the contents of a locked container when dissenting owners arise. "Indeed, Mas Tom, this venerable raccoon has traversed a considerable distance, yet ultimately succumbed to capture," John says after realising his situation is hopeless and he would soon be revealed. Hamilton's "The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales" has a plantation master opening a box and being delighted by a raccoon. The master rejoices because this unforeseen event preserves his reputation and wealth. It also boosts John's status as a plantation slave (Hamilton, 160–165).

Central and South American

The rabbit, a common character in Br'er Rabbit and Tar Baby stories from Spain and Africa, appears in many Mayan trickster narratives, and ancient Mayan ceramics show that the rabbit was important in early Mayan folklore. In modern Yucatan, Juan Tul (Hohn Rabbit) is the trickster figure, according to Bierhorst and Parker (13). It is tall and slim with a lengthy moustache and facial hair. Bierhorst recounts how Rabbit, a clever and deceptive character, is caught by a watermelon grower after eating the fruit. The farmer leaves to get a scorching brand to punish Rabbit forever. Coyote gets burned instead of Rabbit after Rabbit cleverly persuades him to take his place. Coyote kills Rabbit in a deep well out of vengeance (72–76).

In this region, maize was a staple crop, hence many folktales focus on it. John Bierhorst and Juliet Piggott tell similar stories. "The Bird Bride," Bierhorst's version, shows how European fairy tales influenced numerous modern stories from the region (6). "The Brothers and the Singing Toad," Piggott's version, is more complete and certainly more real. A farmer with three unmarried sons contemplates the fate of his land after his death. The protagonist uses the maize crop's destruction to test his sons' perseverance and resourcefulness, establishing their eligibility to inherit his possessions. Each son spends a night watching the pitch for the corn-killer. However, the oldest two sons ignore a melodious amphibian with critical riddle knowledge. The third son voluntarily uses the frog's help, resulting in a happy father, a beautiful home, a charming spouse, and a successful and full life on his father's estate. Piggott and Spencer (107–116) say the eldest sons leave the farm to find success in Merida.

(1) Native American Tricksters: Overview

During the course of investigating Native American tricksters, the researcher encountered distinct factors that pertain to the recounting of these narratives in contrast to those of other cultures, which are contingent upon their own belief systems. According to Christian doctrine, it is believed that the possession of souls is exclusive to human beings. (Erdős, n.d.) Certain Native American narratives are restricted to specific

periods of the day or particular seasons for their dissemination. The narratives of certain stories are considered to be exclusive to specific families, and it is generally seen inappropriate for others outside of the family circle to recount them. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that the sexual encounters shown in several narratives should not be deemed pornographic. These accounts were not originally crafted with the intention of serving as explicit material, but rather should be seen as integral components of longstanding cultural customs and practises.

The authors observe that individuals of Indian origin have historically refrained from associating derogatory terms with anatomical body parts, which further underscores the inherent incorporation of sexual themes within their narratives. Native American trickster narratives were recounted with the intention of entertaining their audience, a significant portion of whom endured hardships such as famine, natural calamities, forced displacement, and acts of aggression perpetrated by the white settlers. According to Erdoes and Ortiz, John Fire Lame Deer, a Sioux holy man, expressed the sacred nature of trickster tales, stating that Coyote, Iktomi, and similar figures hold significance. The Indian population, like any other group facing significant challenges, relies on laughter as a means of survival (xxii).

Pacific Northwest Trickster

Raven is the Pacific Northwest's top trickster. Raven is the ultimate trickster, although Bluejay and Coyote also have stories. Raven's stories vary, but they all emphasise his royal authority. In Southwestern myths like Raven and Coyote, their constant search for food might be understood as a metaphor for their sexual appetites. Evelyn Wolfson's Raven story shows that Raven's activities, while beneficial to humanity, were mostly to satisfy his own desires and goals. Raven punishes people who don't conform even while he's gentle. The author tells "Raven Steals Daylight from the Sky." In a dark setting, the raven is hungry and has trouble finding fish in the sea. The trickster character becomes a cedar leaf and is eaten by a young woman whose family owns the enchanted daylight container. Sky Chief, the father, is excited about the young woman's pregnancy, unaware that Raven (the leaf) is the foetus. He cleverly manipulates his family to get the box with daylight in the baby's early years. He returns to Earth as the Raven. The protagonist requests food from the Frog People again across the river. He intimidates them, but they refuse. Raven's box crash on the rocks causes daylight, solving the problem. This releases daylight, which delights the Animal People. It also kills the Frog People, who ignored Raven's meal request.

In Josepha Sherman's version, the baby has a raven's tail. Due to this physical trait, his family teases the protagonist. Raven steals the ball of light, separate

from the box, and gives it to his friend Squirrel, who helps him escape. In this version, the protagonist's granddad offers a smaller ball. Raven refuses this offer to illuminate the world and display his plumage (110). The wolf aggressively lifts the spherical object, turning it into the sun. The angry grandfather launches a smaller spherical item into the sky, turning it into the moon. These two narratives show how different stories can be used to reach different age groups, skill levels, and cultural groups. The sun, moon, brightness, and obscurity also suggest how different cultures may view certain concepts and motifs.

Southwest Trickster: Coyote

Erdoes and Ortiz (year) assert in their scholarly work titled "American Indian Trickster Tales" that Coyote holds the distinction of being the most renowned trickster figure within Indigenous cultures. The authors further highlight that Coyote's mischievous exploits span a vast geographical range, encompassing regions from Mexico to the northernmost territories, and extending from coast to coast. Although Coyote is commonly linked to narratives originating from the Southwest United States, it is noteworthy that Coyote also features prominently alongside Raven in narratives from the Pacific Northwest. This association is so significant that it has led to a divergence of opinions regarding the true provider of light for the world (Sherman 111). Erdoes and Ortiz argue that coyotes exhibit both positive and negative qualities that are characteristic of humans.

In his versatile nature, he amalgamates the elements of sanctity and transgression, magnanimous actions and triviality, fortitude and vulnerability, elation and suffering, as well as valour and timidity, which collectively constitute the multifaceted human persona. Old Man Coyote assumes the role of a cultural hero, safeguarding the welfare of the land, its animal inhabitants, and the human population. He is often likened to the mythological figure Prometheus in Indian culture, symbolising the act of bringing fire and daylight to the populace. He accurately places the sun, moon, and stars in their respective positions. He imparts knowledge and guidance to individuals on the principles and practises of human existence. Regarding the character known as Trickster, it can be observed that he exhibits traits of avarice, gluttony, and thievery. According to Erdoes and Ortiz (xiv),

When engaging with Coyote narratives, it is imperative to exercise caution in order to steer clear of narratives that predominantly emphasise Coyote's sexual desires. In contrast to numerous tricksters, Coyote frequently finds himself on the receiving end of deception perpetrated by other animals. An example can be found in Sherman's rendition of "Coyote Goes Hunting." In the initial stages of the narrative, the character of Coyote, known for his cunning and mischievous nature, appears to possess a firm grasp on

the situation at hand. Mere expresses the intention to offer him access to water transportation for the purpose of reaching a location where he possesses knowledge of the presence of small creatures. Despite the predator's advantage over these animals, they employ their cognitive abilities to outmanoeuvre their assailant. The individual initiates their strategy by selecting Cottontail as their initial target, employing the method of igniting a fire and utilising the pitch substance to expel the rabbit from its burrow. Nevertheless, Cottontail also employs cunning tactics by relinquishing his vocal footwear in order to deceive the coyote. Coyote thereafter sets his sights on avian creatures and locusts, although he is once again outmanoeuvred by these entities. In the narrative at hand, Coyote assumes the role of an egotistical and imprudent predator who finds himself unable to surpass the cunningness exhibited by his intended victims (113–115).

Asian Trickster

Asian literature has human and animal tricksters like African and Native American tales. In Robert D. San Souci's *The Enchanted Tapestry*, an old widow weaves tapestries that her three sons sell to sustain the family. Her masterpiece captivates her. She persists on working on her masterpiece and not selling it. However, a wind blows the tapestry far away, and each brother, from eldest to youngest, journeys to reclaim and sell it. However, a sorceress offers gold to discourage them. The oldest and middle brothers fall for the trick and spend the gold on themselves instead of supporting the family, but the youngest brother perseveres to locate the tapestry in the hands of a beautiful fairy. When he brings the tapestry securely to his mother, it develops until it becomes real, and mother and son join the magnificent scene. Three live happily ever after after the beautiful fairy returns. The sorceress impoverishes the older brothers. Kindness, charity, and loyalty prevail.

Jon J. Muth's *Stone Soup* celebrates a unique trickster. Three Zen monks visit a village devastated by war, starvation, and floods. The peasants, feeling gloomy about their economic situation, have retreated into their homes, unwilling to socialise, work, or aid others. Monks cook soup with stones and water in town. Villagers curiously visit the soup pot and give ingredients to improve it. After finishing the soup, the monks remove the stones.

Villagers share soup and friendship after working together. After the monks go, the people promise to work together. The author mentions European, Jamaican, Korean, and Philippine variants of the narrative. Muth starts the soup with stones, while other versions utilise various items. Muth also used Asian symbols like the three deities and the holy hue yellow.

African Trickster

African folktales feature turtles, spiders, and other animals as tricksters. While trickster tales definitely spotlight the cleverness of the trickster, the tales are not limited to that single characteristic or purpose. As in other cultures, the stories explain the world around the people who tell them; creation is probably the most universal motif because it is human nature to need to understand the origin of the universe and the origin of man, and African folklore is no different.

Anansi, probably the most iconic figure in African mythology, is credited with much of the creation work by Virginia Hamilton in a version that she attributes to Togo in West Africa. In her rendition, Anansi and Wilbari the Creator are again locked in a struggle of wits. The close proximity of the earth and its inhabitants to Wulbari, god of the heavens, disturbs him. As Wulbari notes, "He became the perfect towel for everybody. And the people used him to wipe their dirty hands. But there it was, pieces of heaven—he being sniffed by the dogs and eaten by babies "(In the Beginning 53). Ananse, his guard, became very arrogant and was overheard by Wulbari boasting that he "had more sense than God" (54). Angered by the remark, Wulbari commands Ananse to get him "something," although he will not tell Ananse what the something is. Desperate to please God, Ananse disguises himself as a bird and eavesdrops on Wulbari to find out that God wants the sun, moon, and darkness. Somehow, Ananse captures these elements and successfully delivers them to God, releasing all three. An aside that Hamilton includes in the story is how some people looked at the sun and became blind, to explain blindness in the world. In the end, the weaker creature, the spider, overpowers the greater character through disguise and clever tricks. The lessons in the story are clear: don't trust a thief, and don't be ungrateful to someone who helps you.

Among the Yoruba folktales people of Nigeria in West Africa, Eshu, also known as Elegba or Legba, is a trickster god. He is unpredictable, sly, and fond of pranks that can be cruel and disruptive. Eshu, who knows all the languages spoken on earth, serves as a messenger between the gods and the people. He also carries up to heaven the sacrifices that people offer to the gods.

According to one story, Eshu became the messenger after playing a trick on the High God. He stole yams from the god's garden, used the god's slippers to make footprints there, and then suggested that the god had stolen the yams himself. Annoyed, the High God ordered Eshu to visit the sky every night and tell him what happened on earth during the day. Clearly, he is a trickster, a mischievous figure appearing in various forms in the folktales and mythology of many different peoples.

Eshu enjoys confusion. Many stories tell of tricks he plays that cause arguments between friends or between husbands and wives. In one myth, he lured the sun and moon into changing places, which upset the cosmic order. As the god of change, chance, and uncertainty, Eshu is sometimes paired with Ifa, a god representing order. In one tale, Eshu claimed that he would ruin Ifa, who laughingly replied, "If you transform yourself, I shall do the same, and if I die, you will die, for so it has been ordained in heaven." In this way, (Myths Encyclopaedia *Eshu*)

Eshu can be unpredictable, violent, and a spreader of false rumours. It is said that Eshu is responsible for all quarrels between human beings and between humans and gods. He is also known as Eleba or Legba in Benin.

Eshu is the most cunning of all the divinities. He is described as a homeless, wandering spirit who can be found in the market, at crossroads, and on the thresholds of houses. Eshu is always involved whenever there is change and/or transition.

In one myth, Eshu gets the sun and the moon to agree to change houses, which reverses the order of the day. In this best-known story, Eshu manages to break up a lifelong friendship between the two "men". The sun and the moon farm adjoining plots of land, and they have become such good friends that they are always seen together and even dress alike. Eshu decides to play a trick on them.

Eshu decides to walk down the path, which divides their farms, wearing a hat that is black on one side and white on the other. He puts his pipe at the back of his head and hooks his club over one shoulder so that it hangs down his back. After Eshu passes by, the two friends quarrel about the direction the stranger has taken and the colour of his hat. The quarrel becomes so out of proportion that the king himself learns of it and calls for the two men.

Each friend accuses the other of lying. Then Eshu comes and tells them that neither is a liar but that both are fools. The king sends his men after Eshu, and the gods outrun him. Of course, Eshu uses his trickery to save himself.

In Igbo Folktales, the role of the Tortoise cannot be overemphasised. There is an Igbo wise saying that a narrator who fails to include the name of a tortoise in his tale lacks "salt." This means that, just as salt is indispensable in our daily meals, the tortoise's role is dispensable in every Igbo folktale. The children are exposed to, admire, and, at the same time, despise the activities of tortoises. The children are meant to cultivate these traits observed in tortoises, but to use them wisely. The experiences of folktales are introduced to the

children in their infancy so that when they grow up, they continue to apply such experiences in their adult lives.

Once upon a time, animals decided to build a palace for their king. They contributed money, which the rat kept. It was the tortoise that nominated the rat as treasurer. One day, the tortoise convened a meeting of the animals and told them that God told him in a dream that all animals should pray hard or else they would not accomplish the building of the palace. He asked them to face down and said that nobody should stand up until God touched them. He rushed out and carted away the money in Rat's custody. Later, he returned and spread sand upon the animals as the touch of God on them. No sooner did they leave than the rat raised an alarm, saying that the money in his possession had been stolen.

The animals then appointed Wren as treasurer. Tortoise repeated his trick of praying hard at the square. When he climbed the tree in which the wren kept the money, he fell down and broke his back, which bears checkered scars to this day.

By trick, the tortoise invited all animals to the square, where he told them to face down to enable him to steal the public treasury in the custody of the rat. On another occasion, he tried it and fell from the tree on which the wren kept the money. This tale exposes Igbo beliefs in retributive justice. If one is practising evil, evil deeds will surely visit the person, but if one is doing good deeds, good deeds will visit the person.

PEDAGOGY

The enduring appeal of a mischievous hero who consistently manages to get away with causing trouble can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, trickster stories have a unique ability to evoke laughter, much like practical jokes that amuse people in contemporary times. However, their appeal goes beyond mere entertainment, as they tap into deeper aspects of human psychology. One significant reason for the popularity of tricksters is the intriguing blend of mischief and creativity that characterises their actions. Their cunning and resourcefulness in executing their mischievous deeds captivate the imagination of the audience, making them both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. Furthermore, trickster stories possess a profound educational aspect. Through their escapades, these characters convey valuable life lessons. These tales often serve as cautionary tales, highlighting the futility of vanity and the dangers of naivety about the ways of the world. The trickster's experiences also demonstrate the consequences that may befall those who succumb to greed and attempt to take what rightfully belongs to others. This combination of humour, creativity, and moral lessons contributes to the enduring popularity of trickster stories. Audiences are drawn to the wit and charm of these characters, finding joy in witnessing their antics while also appreciating the underlying wisdom

conveyed through their experiences. As a result, trickster tales continue to stand the test of time, enriching cultures with their multifaceted appeal and imparting valuable insights to successive generations.

CONCLUSION

As human beings, our innate drive to comprehend the complexities of the world leads us to create individual representations, often embodied in the form of the trickster, to aid in this cognitive process. Across cultures, the establishment of societal taboos further underscores the need for an outlet to release and reconcile our subconscious desires. By externalizing these suppressed desires and attributing them to the trickster archetype, we can continue our pursuit of a meaningful life within the boundaries set by society. Through the deployment of the trickster character, we grant ourselves the freedom to explore forbidden thoughts and urges, all the while imparting valuable lessons in moral righteousness. In essence, the trickster serves as a psychological mechanism that enables us to balance the inherent complexities of our human nature with the necessity of living within societal norms.

RECOMMENDATION

The timeless wisdom of the old African proverb, attributed to the esteemed Malian writer and ethnologist, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, resonates deeply: "Whenever an elder dies, a library burns down." This evocative saying emphasizes the profound value of Africa's rich oral and written traditions, urging African critics and scholars to embark on a comprehensive journey of collecting, studying, and analyzing these invaluable cultural treasures. By doing so, they can pave the way for the creation of an authentic and encompassing African poetics, narrative rhetoric, and dramaturgy.

The urgency of this endeavor cannot be overstated. The urgency to preserve and celebrate Africa's diverse literary heritage demands immediate action. Scholars must proactively seek to uncover the gems hidden within the vast expanse of oral traditions, as well as meticulously study the written works of African authors and intellectuals. This comprehensive exploration will foster a deeper understanding of the intricate tapestry that makes up African cultural identity.

While the scarcity of available resources may present challenges, it must never serve as a justification for inaction. Instead, scholars should draw inspiration from their roots, embracing the vitality of their ancestral traditions, and diligently plucking the fresh fruits of knowledge from the bountiful tree of African oral heritage. The preservation and promotion of these traditions will not only enrich the understanding of African literature but also illuminate the collective wisdom and experiences that have shaped African societies for generations.

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