

EDGAR NABUTANYI



Transplanting the Pumpkin

— Folktales in New Media Formats
for Children's Instruction

ABSTRACT

Folktales told to children remain instructionally relevant in modern Ugandan society. Yet, despite this, their performance is under threat from modernization, cross-cultural integration, and newer forms of education. The extinction of these folktales and the consequent loss of instructional folk wisdom is thus a genuine danger. However, technological innovations also contain the possibility of preserving and extending folktales' realm of performance. The fact that folktales are constructed on archetypal motifs that appeal to all people allows them to be reconfigured in a range of new media formats. This essay explores the possibility of developing archetypal motifs of task and quest to create new media versions of folktales that maintain their instructional value. The essay also explores a range of difficulties inherent in this process, in particular the retention of the original texts' instructional value and their accessibility to children in their new forms. It concludes by addressing the challenges of multi-textual translation and discussing the extent to which the new versions can claim societal ownership.

Introduction

THE REFRAIN “Do not uproot the pumpkin in the old homestead” is used by Okot p'Bitek in *Song of Lawino*¹ to underscore the importance of the postcolonial African to embrace his or her cultural heritage as a measure of having a fruitful life. Inasmuch as I am in total agreement with Okot's call for cultural patriotism, I am aware that the dynamics have changed and that we need to reconfigure a new arena for the performance of folktales. *The State of Uganda Population Report 2008*² reveals

¹ Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino* (African Writers Series, London: Heinemann, 1984): 23.

² Government of Uganda, *The State of Uganda Population Report 2008* (Kampala: Government Press, 2008).