

FIELD NOTE 0000004

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Field Notes from the Mabuhay Stories Experiment Beyond the Story Score.

DOUBLE-BLIND STORYTELLING

Storytellers have been blind before.

Sometimes literally.

Sometimes by legend.

Sometimes because a culture discovered that there are forms of sight that have very little to do with eyes.

The blind storyteller is an ancient figure because storytelling has always asked its listeners to look beyond what can simply be pointed at.

A storyteller describes.

A listener beholds.

And somewhere between those two acts, something neither participant completely controls may become visible.

Perhaps **double-blind storytelling** names a particular way of making room for that possibility.

In ordinary allegory, the storyteller knows the hidden answer.

The lion means this.

The river means that.

The journey represents something else.

Once the symbols have been decoded, the puzzle is largely solved.

But a story can work differently.

Its source can be real and important without becoming a decoder ring.

The storyteller may know the traditions, memories, scriptures, experiences, people, places, wounds, jokes, songs and acts of Grace from which a story grew.

Yet the storyteller does not require the reader to see those things.

And the reader, in turn, brings experiences the storyteller cannot know.

So both enter the story partially blind.

The storyteller cannot know exactly what the reader will behold.

The reader need not know exactly what the storyteller first beheld.

That creates an unusual freedom.

A river may be baptism to one reader.

To another it may simply be water.

Or renewal.

Or courage.

Or washing something away.

Or entering something uncertain.

Or beginning again.

A supper may be Eucharist to one reader.

To another it may be hospitality.

Memory.

Service.

Friendship.

A place at the table.

Food offered when somebody is hungry.

None of those encounters necessarily cancels the others.

Because:

The source may illuminate the story without exhausting the story.

And:

The story may illuminate the reader without requiring the reader to know the source.

That is the double blind.

Not secrecy.

Not deception.

Not hiding the “correct” answer from people who have failed to discover it.

It is a deliberate relinquishment of interpretive control.

The storyteller says:

Here is what I have seen.

But instead of drawing the picture for the reader, the storyteller leaves enough white space for another illumination to appear.

The reader answers:

Here is what I see.

And sometimes what the reader sees returns something to the storyteller that the storyteller never knew had been placed inside the tale.

That exchange is particularly important in a Mabuhay Story.

A Canonical Story Score does not exist merely to reproduce one author's private mental picture.

It is meant to travel.

Across voices.

Across families.

Across languages.

Across traditions.

Across generations.

Across differences.

And traveling stories must possess enough integrity to remain themselves while carrying enough openness to become genuinely present wherever they arrive.

Perhaps that is why fables have always tolerated mystery so well.

The fox does not need to remain merely a fox.

But neither must the fox become a theological footnote before a child is permitted to enjoy the story.

A good story can be encountered before it is explained.

Sometimes it should be.

The child may simply see a river.

Years later, the same reader may discover another river inside it.

Still later, another.

None of those earlier encounters need have been wrong.

They may simply have been the portion of the story the reader was then able—or needed—to behold.

This is not relativism.

The story still has shape.

Events happen.

Characters make choices.

Actions have consequences.

Mercy differs from cruelty.

Hospitality differs from exclusion.

Peace differs from domination.

The storyteller remains responsible for what the story actually does.

But meaning need not be reduced to a single authorized sentence printed underneath the final page.

Because illumination is not the same thing as explanation.

And sometimes explanation can arrive too early and extinguish the very encounter from which understanding might otherwise have grown.

So perhaps the Story Steward's task is not always to say:

LOOK HERE.

Perhaps it is sometimes simply to say:

BEHOLD.

Then leave enough room for Wonder.

The storyteller does not have to see what the reader will see.

The reader does not have to see what the storyteller saw.

And neither needs to possess the whole truth of the story alone.

They can meet somewhere inside it.

Blind in different ways.

Seeing in different ways.

Illuminating one another in the telling.

Which may be one more reason these stories ask their readers to bring crayons.

The page is not unfinished because the storyteller forgot something.

The page is unfinished because somebody else has not arrived yet.

Receive the Story.

Keep the Story safe.

Tell the Story well.

Leave room for Wonder.

So that another person may behold something we could never have drawn for them ourselves.

And perhaps—

through that encounter—

Help Mercy Abound.

Right on the streets where we live.

Mabuhay!

