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Storytelling as therapy: survival, resistance, transformation

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling – literary, oral, and spontaneous – exerts profound psychological, social, and existential power. Beyond its aesthetic function, storytelling can be deliberately mobilized for survival, resistance, transformation, healing, and the cultivation of sensitivity to cross–cultural understanding. It links individuals by combining *dulce et utile*: aesthetic pleasure with pragmatic implication, enabling persuasive forms of narrative therapy through allusion and parable, and fostering individual and collective consensus oriented toward human well–being. Story practices evoke memory, archetypal symbols, mythic imagery, survival instincts, personal trauma, and forms of resistance rooted in identity, politics, and history, while illuminating the unconscious. In moments of existential peril, storytelling becomes an essential human act that sustains mental resilience, social solidarity, and cultural memory. Drawing on myth, oral tradition, literature, autofiction, confession, and therapeutic narration, this paper demonstrates how stories persuade, preserve communal identity, and promote personal development. Reading, writing, narrating, and performing diverse forms of narrative therapy – such as myths, folk tales, fairy tales, koans, Zen parables, personal confessions, dream scripts, diaries, memoirs, and other fictions – activates the will toward individuation, evolution, and empathy.

Through a comparative analysis of paradigmatic literary cases (*One Thousand and One Nights*; the myth of Philomela; Boccaccio's *Decameron*; Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days*; Burhan Sönmez's *Istanbul, Istanbul*; Irvin D. Yalom's therapeutic fiction; Nossrat Peseschkian's *Oriental Stories*; and John Williams's *Butcher's Crossing*), this paper argues that storytelling is an embodied practice capable of effecting both inner psycho–mental transformation and external social change, fostering resilience at personal and cultural levels. In its aesthetic and therapeutic dimensions, storytelling evokes the fundamental human right to happiness and affirms the necessity of narration – both for oneself and for others.

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The phenomenology of storytelling

On all cultural and historical levels, storytelling – oral, literary, autobiographical stories, and even some random improvisational storytelling – has provided people and societies with the capacity to survive trauma, claim agency, and imagine the re–construction of reality. Stories are not just reflections of our experiences: they also inform how we interpret suffering, make sense of it, make meaning of our situations, negotiate identity, and hope for the future. By telling stories, personal and collective psyches connect, which enables inner integration and social identification. Mythic, biblical, folkloric, personal, and literary stories raise strong psychological resonances in people and provide symbolic systems for navigating crises. They do not just amuse; rather, they refashion identity through interaction with otherness and represent detailed systems or maps of belief (Peterson, 1999).

Stories – and specifically the act of storytelling, whether confessional, historical, or mythical – function as ancestral tools for survival and social cohesion. Even "small stories", shared in passing, can catalyze profound transformations. Through the narrative act, the storyteller transmits more than mere personal experience. Moving beyond evolutionary narrative theory and its concept of the "self as a story" (Gottschall, 2012), this work instead emphasizes the concept of the shared story. Through oral performance, writing, and reading, narrators transmit both personal and collective memories, personal and collective

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knowledge, symbolic heritage, and feelings. In this context, narrative memory serves as a collective resistance against amnesia (Ricœur, 2004). To narrate is to salvage a fragmented past, ensuring that personal and collective memory function as history, philosophy, and a psychosocial platform for fostering a more humane society.

Storytelling narratives like confessions, myths, and short fictions disseminate cultural mindsets, ethical frameworks, and aesthetic values. Storytelling is inherently dialogical rather than monological; it always gravitates toward an audience (whether literal or imagined), and thus facilitates a complex process of reception, suggestion, and influence. It serves as the fundamental matrix of society: while not all stories possess high literary merit, the act of storytelling itself consistently yields therapeutic, social, intercultural, and survivalist effects.

Literary genres – short fiction, novels, memoirs, autofiction, and drama – possess distinct healing powers. They shift consciousness, provide catharsis, and engender identification with the "Other", directing psychic energy away from traumatic repetition toward imaginative reconfiguration. By incorporating the Horatian principle of dulce et utile (the aesthetic and the useful), storytelling connects the individual to both real and imagined worlds. In doing so, it invokes dormant memories, archetypal imagery, and mythic formations, allowing for the integration of both individual and collective trauma. Linguistic articulation of traumatic experience is the first step toward consciousness and the capacity for successful narrative therapy. This articulation may vary by genre (confession, myth, short story, parable, or other narrative forms) but it is always a latent cathartic process that can evolve into a more substantial therapeutic practice.

It must be said that when the psyche is weighed down with melancholia, repression, and obsessive memory, it attempts narrative expression to reestablish the desire to live. To lose language is to lose logos – the organizing principle by which consciousness and communication are structured. In melancholia, this very loss is hazardous, because dissociation may hinder the expression of inner experience. In this context, "good words" in diaries, dreams, letters, or confessions, exert a restorative influence. As Jung (1963) shows us in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, a narrative does more than explore the self – it is a medium for psychic healing. In its most direct sense, language acts not just as a tool for human exchange; it transforms into a medium for expressing truth that reinforces psychological connection and social cooperation. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Purloined Letter* (1845), it is suggested that truth is often hidden in plain sight, available to be revealed only through interpretation. Similarly, storytelling externalizes, redeploys, emancipates psychic loads; however, not by reducing trauma to ashes, but by figuring it out, by clearing a route to understanding and to healing.

Myth–telling therapy

Myths are the oldest form of complex art: methods for memorizing truths and engaging in self–therapy. Far from relics, they function as living frameworks for meaningful life; societies drift toward existential fragmentation when mythic consciousness fades, because myths preserve the symbolic language of the soul. Jung (2007) described myths as an archaic psychological base of the human mind, expressing the collective unconscious: "the primitive mentality…does not invent myths, it experiences them".

Myth–telling is a primary narrative practice. As an early mode of storytelling, it moves between real and symbolic spaces, integrating cultural memory with individual transformation. Unlike private fantasy, myth interprets reality parabolically, offering a symbolic stage on which moral and emotional contradictions can be enacted. Thus myth–making and myth–telling operate as proto–forms of mediation and narrative therapy, providing structures that let individuals project personal pain onto a shared symbolic map. By entering archetypal narratives, personal suffering is transformed into a collective, multisensory human experience. Contemporary mythotherapy builds on this proto–therapeutic framework. Symbolic storytelling within narrative therapy cultivates inner experience through visual and affective processes, enabling narrative art to function as emotional expression and meaning–making. Myth allows individuals to navigate interior life across time, evoking archetypes (like sacrifice, betrayal, enemy, hero, sage, saviour, etc.) that create a symbolic "third space" between sufferer and wound. As Campbell (2008) emphasized, myth guides the soul through life's crises; in acute suffering, when distance collapses into dissociation, mythotherapy restores the symbolic distance necessary for psycho–mental transformation and healing.

Myth–telling therapy is a primary form of narrative therapy because myth creates distance without resorting to denial; it allows suffering to be observed, shaped, and ultimately endured. Ovid's *Metamorphoses Book VI* vividly demonstrates this therapeutic power through the tragedy of Philomela and Procne.[1] Though Philomela is mutilated and violated – her tongue excised in a literal silencing of the storytelling subject – her narrative instinct remains intact. Through embroidery, she communicates her trauma, transforming the loom into a witness. Here, the textile functions as text: the muteness of thread acquires semantic power, and silence itself becomes a sophisticated means of communication. This myth dramatizes a fundamental psychological process: the transformation of suffering into symbolic, pre–conceptual linguistic articulation, embodied in mythological or so–called "mythic images" (Freudenberg, 1997).[2] Philomela's tapestry functions as both metaphor and metonym – writing executed through weaving – where the loss of speech becomes a tool for reclaiming agency. By converting violence into testimony, she reasserts subjectivity and refuses erasure. Unacknowledged trauma threatens psychic survival, but narrative (whether verbal or non–verbal) enables endurance, resistance, and resilience. Across cultures and epochs, embroidery, painting, and performance have served as surrogate languages in contexts where speech was criminalized or impossible. In societies marked by censorship or taboo, the stitched thread or painted line becomes a vehicle for truth. Such

[1] Ovid (1977). *Metamorphoses: Books I–VIII*. FJ Miller (Trans.), 3rd ed. Harvard University Press. (Original work published c. 8 AD).

[2] Olga M. Freudenberg (1997, 454) aphoristically observed that "concepts die out, the images live." In literature, the imaginary and the conceptual alternate. In myth, unconscious images function as the generative matrix from which conceptual meaning emerges. The unconscious speaks in images first; concepts arrive later. Precisely because of the imagistic nature of the mythic mind—which is by definition pre-conceptual—myth functions as an effective therapeutic tool. Narratives that follow a logic of imagism, allusiveness, symbolism, and encoded meaning possess greater therapeutic power than narratives that are strictly conceptual or realist. Such narratives persuade directly, illuminating both the mind and the soul, much like unpretentious Zen stories.

acts function as guardians of ethical and religious (including animistic) memory, preserving experience for transmission across time, language, and culture.

Philomela's story thus serves as a powerful reminder that psychic health and moral integrity depend on the capacity to tell one's story and transform reality into myth, marked by traces of personal and dramatic experience. Restoring a silenced language is an act of survival; articulating trauma is an investment in healing. While betrayal, deception, and the terror of death persist, they become endurable when shaped into a story. Symbolic storytelling restructures traumatic experience by integrating disorganized memory into coherent symbolism (White, 2007). Survival, therefore, is not merely a biological achievement but a symbolic, linguistic, and memorial one, requiring the capacity to interpret and ethically sustain lived experience within a cultural framework.

Confession–telling therapy

Confession – spanning pre–literary, non–literary, and literary genres – represents an ancient and foundational form of both auto–therapy and clinical narrative therapy. Religions, especially Christianity, institutionalized the confessional act, transforming it into a sanctioned form of explicit communication and implicit psychotherapy. This ritualistic "yanking of the unconscious into consciousness" created a structured space for confronting inner shadows long before modern psychology. Mythic narratives and genre–pluralistic forms (fairy tales, parables, and short stories) refine that therapeutic impulse, sharing deep structural affinities that bridge communal oral traditions and the permanence of written texts. Rutledge (2016) highlights the role of narrative in identity formation and traces this trajectory into contemporary domains, such as digital marketing, business communication, and social behaviour.

Today, this evolution culminates in "digital confessions" mediated by artificial intelligence. Just as Peseschkian (1991) used the neutral territory of folktales to bypass psychological resistance, modern individuals often encounter a similar neutral space in AI interfaces, treating machines as contemporary confessionals for exploring the self. Whether through ancient myth or digital interaction, storytelling remains the primary instrument for negotiating meaning and supporting psychological well–being in a rapidly changing world.[3]

Storytelling as survival

The most significant role of storytelling is survival in times of extreme existential peril, when carrying a story becomes an act of resistance and life–preservation. Whether lying in a prison, a hospital, or a claustrophobic space for quarantine, confined to isolation, a story can stand between humans and death, political annihilation, or psychic collapse. In moments like these, the human capacity for invention, narration, and shared imagination exceeds art and becomes a lifeline. Storytelling sustains life, preserves the spirit, and keeps the pulse of human history alive.

Storytelling functions as survival, resistance, and ritual redemption. In an age marked by personal, environmental, and political trauma, it remains a foundational tool for individual and communal healing and resilience. Storytelling provides an ethical compass, facilitates relational repair, and enables intercultural dialogue; it is therefore not merely a method or technique but a natural expression of being human.

Gottschall (2012) suggests that "we are the storytelling animal", implying that we constantly need to create stories and engage in storytelling acts or performances.[4] Rutledge (2016) similarly asserts that "stories are at the centre of everything we do," so that "everything is story".[5] Under existential pressure, storytelling becomes a "vital mode of meaning–making: a lived stage of theatre or performative survival. "Narrative is essentially a Theory of Mind" (Rutledge, 2016). While not everything in human life and history is a story, everything has the potential to become one. We can speak of a "latent storyness" in humans, an intrinsic coding toward narration. One might argue that narrativity, or "storyness," is the ontological essence of history and social existence. Historically, however, we see that in certain circumstances a story can be everything: a means of saving life, protecting integrity, improving conditions, and positively influencing others and the social environment.

Not every story achieves literary or aesthetic distinction, but every act of storytelling serves enduring functions: therapeutic, social, transformative, educational, intercultural, ritualistic, and survival–oriented. Entertainment is also integral to storytelling: it captures attention, evokes emotion, and gives pleasure. By providing shared experiences, humour, and mutual projection, entertaining narratives foster social communication, identity formation, and moral reflection; they offer safe simulations of danger or taboo and deliver catharsis and respite from daily stress.

Collective narratives (oral, written, and performed) act as containers of shared meaning. When narrative is born of existential need, it moves beyond aesthetic pleasure to become essential to psychic and social survival. These hybrid narratives – part confession, part creation – are grounded in lived truth but reshaped by symbolic invention. The clash of soul and art takes place in a psycho–aesthetic terrain, a disruption that breaks habituation and eases the pain of loss, war, betrayal, imprisonment, and structural oppression. Thus, narrative performance becomes an art of survival for individuals and communities.

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[3] The 'digital confession' will be most probably the subject of research (comparatively, theoretically, and practically) in the very near future.

[4] In *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, Jonathan Gottschall (2012, 31) argues that "we gravitate to story for evolutionary reasons," concluding that "we are the storytelling animal." He contends that storytelling is a fundamental human need and introduces concepts such as "story people," the "simulation theory of reading," and "Neverland"—a parable encompassing stories in all forms and genres (mythic, religious, fictional, literary, virtual, visual, as well as personal and natural narratives)—which he describes as "our evolutionary niche" (2012, 177). This expansive claim that "everything is story," and its evolutionary grounding, has been met with critical skepticism, particularly concerning the distinction between literary reception and lived reality, as discussed by Marisa Bortolussi (2025).

[5] In the chapter "Everything Is Story: Telling Stories and Positive Psychology," Pamela Rutledge (2016) endorses Gottschall's perspective, arguing that "stories are at the centre of everything we do. How we tell our stories controls our mood, self-image, and the influence we have on others. Our stories can also dictate our future paths and successes." She therefore maintains that understanding storytelling is not only central to self-perception and social interaction but also provides "valuable tools we can use to make change." Responding to the question "What does storytelling have to do with positive psychology?", Rutledge (2016) answers unequivocally: "Everything. Storytelling—or narrative—is fundamental to how we think and make meaning of the world."

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One paradigmatic example is the Persian–Arabic classic *One Thousand and One Nights*. Scheherazade averts execution by King Shahryar through nightly storytelling, deliberately leaving each story incomplete. Over 1001 nights, her stories alter the king's cognition, encouraging him to renounce violence. For Shahryar, anticipation serves as an ethical awakening; for Scheherazade, storytelling is survival itself, a life–affirming form of resistance. She becomes an archetype of the life–giving storyteller, who disarms patriarchal violence through imagination while sustaining cultural memory and creative endurance.

From Scheherazade's tales to modern narrative therapies, storytelling functions as both a personal and collective lifeline. It houses memory, fosters resilience, and creates symbolic spaces in which trauma can be recognized, reconfigured, and incorporated into the tapestry of human existence. Scheherazade represents the creative feminine – the female narrator, performer, and transformational agent – demonstrating that moral and spiritual transformation arises not from force, but from imaginative and aesthetic experience. Similarly, in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, storytelling serves as an existential response to disaster.[6] Written during the Black Death, it recounts the stories of seven young women and three men who escape the plague by retreating to the countryside, where storytelling becomes a daily ritual of resilience, consolation, and imaginative regeneration.

Storytelling as resistance

With the novel *Arabian Nights and Days* (1982), Naguib Mahfouz provides a paradigmatic shift in the use of storytelling as a survival tool. While the original *One Thousand and One Nights* follows a strategy of physical survival – using narrative as a shield to protect the body from execution – Mahfouz's work progresses from this external threat of death to the internal threat of a corrupted life. This contemporary reimagining emphasizes the transformative role of storytelling; it serves as a mechanism for moral reckoning, where the narrator seeks to save the soul from spiritual collapse. In this context, storytelling is an act of resistance against dehumanization, a psychological battle to reclaim one's humanity and prevent the final descent from man into monster.

On the other hand, Burhan Sönmez's *Istanbul Istanbul* (2016) converges these two intentions, placing both physical and psychological survival on the narrative stage. In the subterranean depths of a prison, four inmates – the Student, Uncle Küheylan, the Doctor, and Kamo the Barber – spin tales to endure solitude, torture, and trauma. By conjuring detailed sensory worlds (vividly imagining tables, virtual brandy, and conversation) they transform their cell into a shared imaginative site. This performance is a "therapeutic rebellion". Much like the minimalist scenography of Lars von Trier's *Dogville* (2003), the bareness of the cell is counterbalanced by a fantasy performance that allows the prisoners to rehearse survival and retain their humanity against all odds.

Ultimately, these works demonstrate that storytelling is far more than a literary exercise; it is a foundational human rights act. By transforming private trauma into public witness and spiritual isolation into shared community, these narratives argue that the ability to tell one's story is the final line of defence against tyranny and nihilism. Whether it is a subject with a death sentence attempting to avert the will of a Sultan, a prisoner conjuring a world, or a civilization attempting to avert moral collapse, the act of narration remains our most potent tool for reclaiming the humanity that violence and corruption seek to strip away.

Storytelling as transformation

As the linguistic and aesthetic framework of human existence, stories can alter our perceptions, heighten sensitivity, and deepen our humanity. Storytelling reinstitutes, revises, simulates, performs, and mystifies the past, enabling us to reinterpret and rewrite it. In diverse narrative contexts, narrators produce deliberate or inadvertent simulations of reality – hence, stories "perform evolutionary functions" (Bortolussi, 2025) and storytelling can be used intentionally as a therapeutic tool for inner change (Mukba, 2022).

Storytelling's transformative power resembles a ritual of psycho–mental healing, clarifying existential and spiritual values. Through myth and narrative, wounds are transmuted into meaning as fragmented experience is woven into a sustaining, coherent fabric. Mysterious, fantastic, and allusive stories continue to shape cultural understandings, the search for meaning, and the endurance of paradox – core concerns of the humanities and social sciences. Unsurprisingly, storytelling also influences beliefs and behaviours (Rutledge, 2016).

What makes us a distinct species can also change us and spare us from pain. Storytelling makes us human; it sustains our social existence as well as our psychological and ethical integrity. Though a song may exist for its own sake, a story is a tale told to be heard and shared within a community. The plurality of human stories and experiences pluralizes social communication and fuels creative acts of narration and meta–narration. Therefore, humanity's history is far broader than any single tale; although, as Pamela Rutledge observes, behind each story lies an authentic, "human subjective experience" (2016). New stories often actualize earlier forms (myths, short fiction, self–stories, or therapeutic confessions) and, as a result, stories are powerful at both personal and collective levels: they bring order to disorder, provide pleasure, and cultivate the human imagination.

Beyond individual survival, storytelling forges pathways to human consensus and collective transformation. Similarly, in narrative therapy, the individual unconscious is brought into consciousness to unveil hidden truths. In the absence of such a shared narrative space – where human consensus is lacking – empathy fails, and tragedy becomes inevitable (White, 2007). John Edward Williams's novel *Butcher's Crossing* (1960) is a case in point. The novel's depiction of the ceaseless slaughter of buffalo represents a moral and ecological collapse grounded in a spiritual void. Williams reveals that without a shared narrative to provide meaning during existential crises, moral cohesion deteriorates, resulting in the brutal destruction of both life and nature.

Literature dramatically illustrates the consequences of living under the weight of obsession or existential overreach. In *Butcher's Crossing*, the protagonist is driven to extremes by his relentless pursuit of wealth, manifested in the slaughter of buffalo. The plot functions as a polemic against material obsession and a commentary on humanity's estrangement from nature. Storytelling here is grotesque and psychologically intense, warning the reader against compulsive, selfish, or amoral

[6] Boccaccio G (2020). *The Decameron* (WA Rebhorn, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published c. 1350).

behaviour and its tragic outcomes. It serves a protective function, awakening readers to damaging trends affecting the human psyche and society. As such, through tales, transformational change emerges—not only on a personal level but also within collective cultural trends. Narrative, in a word, transcends entertainment or memory to become a form of endurance, an arena for resistance, and an instrument of self–renewal.

To illustrate this further, let us consider a specific genre: the fairy tale. A fairy tale is both a construction of the imagination and an operation of a formal narrative blueprint, including plot, character relationships, and functional roles (Propp, 2010). A compelling modern example is *Secret's Secret* by Montenegrin author Dragana Kršenković Brković (2020), which deconstructs the genre by distilling the concept of secrecy to its core. The "Secret" in this story is not a conventional heroine but rather a force seeking to become a child's "first secret." The story sanctifies adolescent clandestine attachments, using a mirrored image to reflect the underlying processes of transformation that lead to maturity and self–realization. It demonstrates that transformation occurs through innocence and intimacy, revealing a key to self–formation that applies not only to private narratives but also to public ones.

The most significant impact of storytelling is its ability to initiate inner metamorphosis, transformation, and integration – a process Jung (2007) termed 'individuation.' Through narratives, people can transcend fear, trauma, and cultural barriers more effectively than through other means. They learn that pain is not about suffering alone and begin to see their own pain through the perspectives of others. This shared understanding encourages moral, compassionate, transformative, and ecological behaviours. Storytelling goes beyond a museum–based cultural object; it is a transcultural phenomenon that unites physical and psychological spaces. Therefore, as both a therapeutic and existential activity, storytelling is a vital tool for individuals and communities to negotiate meaning, navigate the complexities of life, and foster healthy psychological outcomes.

Storytelling as cross–cultural understanding

Throughout history, stories have been essential for learning about the Other. 'Intercultural competence' is cultivated through foundational narratives (myths, Zen stories, and biblical parables) that invite empathy by enabling us to view the world from perspectives beyond our own.[7] Compact forms such as parables and anecdotes create moments of insight and self–reflection that resonate with others' lived experience, often proving more transformative than lessons from secondary sources or conventional pedagogy. Narrative therapy exemplifies how direct engagement with others' stories fosters understanding, empathy, and personal transformation.

The concept of 'intercultural competence' forms the basis of what Iranian German psychiatrist Nosrat Peseschkian calls "story therapy" (1991), which uses parables and folktales to create a "neutral territory" where patients and therapists can communicate without cultural baggage. As evidenced in the Islamic stories about Ali and the Prophet Muhammad, narrative has the power to uncover truth where falsehood is desired, thereby overcoming psychological resistance. This idea of "truth through visibility" resonates in Western literature, notably in Poe's *The Purloined Letter* (1845), where the obvious is overlooked precisely because it is in plain sight. Through storytelling, reality is revealed not as an abstraction, but as a lived experience.

This link between reality and the narrative is exemplified in the modern work of Irvin D. Yalom. In books like *Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death* (2009), Yalom transforms clinical cases into literary narratives, bridging the gap between clinical reality and the "teaching tale." If Peseschkian uses the "Otherness" of ancient tales to impart perspective, Yalom employs the "Self" in his narratives to grapple with universal human anxieties. In *Every Day Gets a Little Closer* (1974), he and a patient present parallel accounts, demonstrating how mutual storytelling alters perception. They write kind of 'therapeutic letters' (Morgan, 2000) based on reflections and self–reflections after every session. Similarly, in *When Nietzsche Wept* (2011), Yalom employs the power of narration to facilitate individuation through dramatic portrayal. These practitioners demonstrate how storytelling can function as a transcultural bridge, enabling individuals to transcend their psychological "islands" and access the vastness of human experience.

Conclusions

Storytelling is a foundational human practice through which memory, identity, and ethical consciousness are shaped. In an era of informational saturation and interpretive fatigue, narrative enables individuals and communities to make sense of experience, reclaim agency, and cultivate resilience. From Scheherazade's nightly deferral of death to contemporary practices of narrative therapy, storytelling transforms suffering into meaning and connects cultures across historical and geographic divides.

Beyond entertainment and aesthetic pleasure, storytelling functions as a mechanism of survival, resistance, and transformation. Through acts of telling, listening, and witnessing, individuals reconstruct meaning, recover voice, and restore coherence in conditions of trauma, displacement, and disempowerment. Hybrid narrative forms – mythic archetypes, confessional discourse, ritual performance, and therapeutic narration – convert lived pain into structures of significance that facilitate psychological healing, social repair, and cross–cultural dialogue.

When narrative expression is suppressed or absent, destructive affects and social fragmentation tend to intensify; conversely, storytelling creates reflective spaces for individual and collective regeneration. Mythic narration and confessional practices may operate as literal means of survival, shielding narrators from psychic collapse and enabling processes of transformation. Narrative therapy and related approaches further confirm storytelling's efficacy in critical contexts, where it promotes mutual recognition, mitigates harm, and supports recovery.

The relationship between narrator and narrative is fundamentally affective and embodied, rooted in an intimate engagement with the act of narration itself. Storytelling is not passive recollection but an active process of self–reclamation, through which speakers reposition themselves as agents rather than victims of circumstance. In this sense, narrative practice affirms the right to voice, dignity, and well–being, suggesting

[7] The term *intercultural competence* may be more accurately reframed as cross-cultural competence and understanding, insofar as the term cross-cultural emphasizes fluidity, transfer, and shared experience, as well as archetypal and mythic imagery, even when such imagery is historically actualized within different constellations.

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that the capacity to narrate is inseparable from the capacity to remain human.

Ultimately, storytelling emerges not merely as a cultural or aesthetic practice but as an existential and cross–cultural mode of being. It converts pain into meaning, silence into articulation, and fragmentation into coherence. Reading, writing, narrating, and performing stories (myths, folk tales, confessions, memoirs, and therapeutic fictions) activate human resilience, foster empathy, stimulate positive transformation, and sustain social and cultural memory. As long as stories are told, the possibility for individual healing and collective understanding remains, affirming the *fundamental human right to narrate*, to be heard, and to pursue well–being. Each era must find its own Scheherazade – capable of transforming rupture into narrative and suffering into renewed life.

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