

# The Storyworlds of European Soccer in Eldoret, Kenya

by

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## Abstract

This article is based on a media practice in which audiences extend their reception experience beyond the confines of television rooms to other spaces where individual performers frame the said experience in oral forms comparable to oral narrative. The article uses the example of Geoffrey Ogendi, one of these performers based in Bondeni Estate of Eldoret town, to describe aspects of the structure and texture of these performances. The study is a blend of ethnography and literary research. Its analytic approach is based on the concept of oral narrative framing, informed by the view that narrative art consists in the exploitation of the resource of verbal expression to construct desired patterns out of the human experience. In this case, the paper develops the argument that individual performers are capable of subjecting their media reception experience to patterns of narrative sequence and imagery. This thrives in conditions of social engagement that follow the actual reception experiences and can be understood as an extended audience reception experience.

**Key Words:** Storyworld, Emplotment, Narrative Framing.

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## Introduction

European soccer fandom is perhaps one of the most recent additions to the repertoire of popular culture of Africa south of the Sahara. A number of studies have investigated the socio-cultural implications of this relatively new phenomenon, and among others include, Solomon Waliaula, (2015b, 2015a, and 2012), Godwin Siundu 2011, Richard Vokes 2010, Gerard Akindes 2010, Olaoluwa and Adejayan (2010), AyokunleOlumuyiwaOmobowale (2009) and Leah Komakoma (2005). One could argue that these studies seem to agree on at least two aspects in the evolution of this cultural practice. First, the fandom identities hailed in this experience is associated to the influence of media on television audiences and secondly, this media encounter is also a cultural encounter. However, the studies differ in their interpretation of this media/cultural encounter.

The differences range between two positions. On the one end we have the media/cultural imperialist oriented perspectives that consider the fandom experience as an index of the use of transnational media to skew the construction of identities in ways that resonate with what Akindes has termed as 're-colonization'. On the other end we have 'fandom-as-cultural-agency', perspective that considers this fandom experience as creatively adapted to the immediate contexts, a process that has been described by Olaoluwa and Adejayan – in relation of the South Western Nigeria experience - as 'the audacity of fandom', (2010, p81). This article traces this audacity of fandom to the context of fandom talk that is embedded in the ordinary social interaction among members of this fandom community. It focuses on one individual fan called Geoffrey Ogendi that considers himself a die-hard fan of the English football club Arsenal and also an 'expert' on European soccer. This practice is compared to an oral performance and Ogendi compared to an oral narrator. It is a comparison made against the background of a number of concepts drawn from selected theories and perspectives of media practice, popular culture and oral performance. In doing so, the article aligns itself to the fandom-as-cultural-agency perspective. We argue that Ogendi and his audiences engage in a process of cultural production. Secondly, the cultural production is located in a sort of middle ground between the reality of soccer matches mediated on transnational television and the narrative reconstruction of the said soccer matches.

Research questioning of this practice is made in a number of contexts. First, this phenomenon is perceived in relation to contemporary dynamics of sportmedia and, in this sense, Ogendi and his audiences are in the words of Elizabeth Bird (2010, p.85), defined as a mediated audiences. Secondly, considering that Ogendi dominates conversations based on a theme that is fairly well known, we investigate his practice in view of Richard Bauman's (1977) argument that performance could also be perceived as a display of communicative competence.

Bauman adds that audiences do not enjoy the thematic substance in itself but the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression, (p.11). This paper perceives these ‘intrinsic qualities’ using the concept of narrative framing as has been developed by, among others, Lee Harving (2004, pp.229-245), Hayden White (1984, pp1-33) and Harold Scheub (1975, pp.353-377). The main point drawn from these is that the narrative quality of a performance is sustained by a distinct and socially approved manner of expression that draws on modes of verbal artistic expression. I argue that Ogendi employs artistic frames of narrative emplotment and imagery to attract and sustain audiences.

The third question relates to the definition of this form in the context of both mainstream media and oral narrative. The paper perceives Ogendi’s art in the context of what John Fiske’s (1992, pp. 30-49) concept of enunciative production, which in his view is the outcome of media audience communication of their interpretation of media texts. Fiske argues that ‘talk’ is one of the most important vehicles of enunciation. But we could also take this argument further and observe that this process of enunciation, especially if it uses the talk medium, is constantly under evaluation by its audiences. Significantly, the evaluation is not so much about the content as it is about the manner of speaking; the actual style of verbal expression and connection to audience and context. It is a kind of folk tradition that has developed in the engagement between – and within - the audiences and their object of attention, European soccer.

This folk tradition is comparable to what Marie- Laure Ryan (2014) has referred to as ‘the storyworld’, which she defines as ‘covering both factual and fictional stories ... stories as true of the real world and stories that create their own imaginary world’ (p.33). It could be argued that this ‘folk tradition’ is constantly being recreated by sport media and the changing patterns of audience reception. Moreover, individual imagination and verbal expressive competence is perhaps the organizing principle in this performance. In this sense, the artist’s narrative is pitched in a way that echoes a tradition but also expresses individual creativity. A stylistic analysis of his performance is made against the background of Okpewho’s (1992, p.20) view that,

Although the artist is exposed to the various forms of cultural resources ...available to every member of the society, what generally separates the artist from the nonartist is a more than average sense of what is beautiful and exciting, a high capacity for expressing oneself with effective idioms and images, and a deep interest in practicing a particular type of art.

One could consider the ‘cultural resources’ in this case to be the various outlets of sport media ranging from live coverage of matches on cable television to the other secondary sources such as mainstream electronic and print media, New Media outlets, and even gossip and also the oral tradition, upon which the narrator consciously or unconsciously draws.

We investigate the specific techniques employed by the artist in using these resources to recreate the storyworld of European football in Eldoret This echoes Harold Scheub’s (1975, p.353) argument that the performer uses ‘common experiences’ shared with the audience but artistically constructs images that shape that experience and give it meaning. Perhaps it is in this way that an audience community in Eldoret can re-imagine themselves as part of a European experience, albeit in a different geographical space. It is the storyworlds that they narratively construct that enable them transcend their world of mediated soccer consumption.

## **Methodology**

This is both an ethnographic and literary study that uses an adapted form of participant observation, unstructured interviews, note taking and audio recording. The study examines football talk within the social interaction of a small and fairly stable community that is identified with the West Indies trading centre in the southern tip of Eldoret town. West Indies trading centre consists of a few shopping stores and other service provision stores such as butcheries, barbershops, salons, Mobile money transfer (Mpesa) outlets, tailoring shops and other related businesses, most of which have been run by the same people in a long time.

I have observed some socio-cultural patterns of life in my over ten years lived experience in the neighbourhood of West Indies. These are networks that have grown out of the wider commercial experience of urban life. Some entrepreneurs have, in my view, become centres of social interaction. I pick out three of these: Gerald Wanami has run a butchery business since the year 2000. Patrick Kivayilu has run a barbershop since 1999, and also runs a video-shop-cum-soccer-viewing-parlor. James Watani, a tailor that has been working from the verandah, shifting from one shopping store to another, since 2010. I have visited these spaces several times to obtain services, and it is in this context that I came to know Ogendi.

At the West Indies Market, it is very common to find groups of men either at Gerald’s Butchery or at Watani’s Tailoring pavement talking about European soccer. Conversations are in Kiswahili, which is the language of the Kenyan urban space. Initially, I did not stop to listen because I thought this was just the usual soccer talk that one finds in most social spaces in Eldoret. But over time, I noted that there was a particular individual who dominated these conversations and Ogendi was one of them.

This paper has focused on his performance not in the sense that he is the undisputable representative of the practice in Eldoret, but because he stood out in both my over 12 years' experience as a fan, and 3 months as ethnographic researcher on European football in Eldoret. I recorded his performances, complementing this with note taking to account for the nonverbal elements. Transcription and translation was done and the resultant "oral texts" subjected to a literary analysis.

## **Narrative Framing**

One of the characteristics of Ogendi's performance is that they seem endless. Considered in the context of conventional narrative, which according to Hayden White (1984, p.6) moves from a beginning point to a finishing point through a specific narrative space and time, Ogendi's narratives seem to be trapped in an endless motion. Consider the following example:

But you know the problem of these players that overstay with the ball. You know when you overstay with the ball, you get injured. Haven't you seen the case of Wilshere? .... You start with the goalkeeper and you want to get through all those tackles up the other end ... Chamberlain has that problem, and he has a knee problem. He has a problem similar to that of Van Persie. Van Persie's ankle, he cannot train. You see he was sent away from Manchester United? .... Van Persie is a player you just keep. You just set him free. Then if the game is on a Saturday, he comes back on Thursday and does light training ... this trick were discovered by Wenger ... you see at Manchester United Van Gaal was forcing him to train. And remember in Manchester United strikers have to struggle to get the ball ... it is not that Rooney is no longer a good player ... Arsenal midfielders know their work is to feed strikers ... you see like at Real Madrid? At Madrid Cristiano Ronaldo's work is very little. He even finds himself with an open goal to just tap in ... you know even Figo was also working hard to feed the bigger Ronaldo ... but you know Figo moved from Barcelona. That is why you see that enmity still exists. It is like the one of Tottenham and Arsenal. That was a tough game. Campbell played very well. Arsenal scored, Campbell equalized ... and that is the season he said 'playing for a club like Tottenham is dangerous. Because you can get sick. You use so much energy it is as if you are playing alone!'

This is an extract from a longer 'endless sequence'. It is possible to extract at least four narratives from it. These could be, the player that overstays with the ball and gets injured in the process, the good striker with a long term injury, playing formations between the midfield and forward, and the transfer of players between rival clubs. It is arguable that these distinct narratives are marked by what Lee Harving (2004, p229-245) has referred to as narrative frames. A dominant framing pattern here is digression.

The narrator shifts between the story and the communicative context of performance that involves his social interaction with an audience. This is comparable to Katharine Young's argument that narrative performance shifts from the taleworld to the storyrealm, (Ulf Palmenfelt, p.7-8). In this context, the narrator distinguishes his recounting of the events of the story from the face to face interaction with the researcher. He uses 'you' in this case in reference to the audience and momentarily shifts from the story to the immediate performance context. As a narrator he also adopts a commentary tone by seemingly not just reporting the event but expressing his attitude to it, as is the case in the line, 'you start with the goalkeeper and you want to go through all the tackles ...'.

We could argue that this narrative technique of shifting between frames is one of the oral resources he uses to extend his narrative space. It situates him in that vantage position of moving from one narrative to another in a way that connects the situation of one player to another and one experience to another. One could argue that since he is in charge of shifting the frames, he is able to extend the performance in directions that suit his memory and, and as a result, he unpredictably moves from one narrative to another. Sometimes the connection is not logical, but still fits within a selected frame. For instance, whereas the shift from 'the player that overstays with the ball' to the story of 'players with long term injuries' is logical, the shift from 'playing formations' to 'transfer of players across rival clubs' is not. But seemingly, having shifted the performance to a preferred direction, it is evident that he is able to inject more creativity into his performance by going back in time to refer to a specific match and - imaginatively - directly quoting the player's - Sol Campbell's - post match remarks.

We could also note that this framing also helps the performer manipulate the detail of his narratives so that, in the worlds of Paul Ricoeur (1981, p.170) the anticipated conclusion influences what is included and excluded in the narrative space. It seemed to me that he actually anticipated certain conclusions. For instance, in the narrative of Van Persie above, having fitted him within the frame of the player with a permanent injury, it was now 'acceptable' for the narrator to include exaggerated details relating to his training regime at Arsenal; that he was not training with the rest of the team and was set free to wander around until two days before a match.

Having listened to him many times, I suspected his anticipated conclusion was, 'it was just okay that Van Persie left Arsenal'. Furthermore, whereas the accuracy of his apparently detailed account cannot be easily ascertained - another historical research is perhaps necessary if that were to be done - it is logical in the context of this narrative. It is the same case with the quoted Sol Campbell's alleged post match remarks. The narrator sets the background in a way that both the detail and the conclusion are acceptable. We could understand this performance technique in the context of what Harold Scheub (1975) has referred to as 'the model'. He observes,

The key to the narrative system is the transformation of images into models ... a basic image set is established and then it is repeated, again and again. The image is thereby etched in the imagination of the actively involved members of the audience, and the plot is thus moved along, steadily, towards the point at which the performer will slightly alter the image set in order to bring the performance to a resolution, or move into another narrative image, (p.362)

One could argue that in Ogendi's performance, this 'modeling' helps him to shift from one narrative to another, using one running image as the linking device. In the process, the narratives can extend on and on, even move back to as far as over 10 years, as is case with Sol Campbell's move from Tottenham Hotspurs to Arsenal. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this expansion of an image to facilitate narrative extension is uneven in depth. In the example above, he fits Rooney's perceived poor form at Manchester united at that point in time to the playing system that does not link the midfield to the striking force. But he does not dwell so much on this, as he for instance does with the story of Sol Campbell's experience at Tottenham that supposedly made him move to Arsenal. It is apparent that Arsenal is a pet theme for him that he prefers to elaborate on, as is evident in the following example:

But *you know* that Liverpool could win the Premier League this season? Because the coach is also a man of (winning) trophies ... but according to me if Leicester retains the top spot until end of December, we get to the transfer window and he signs how many new players? (Raises three fingers) He should look for another striker like Vardy, even this Lukaku, to put on the bench. Or there is this striker at Swansea called Gomis .... In fact if Gomis was to play in Giroud's wasted position (in Arsenal) ... *you know* Arsenal midfielders are very good at feeding strikers. So this is where this team (Leicester) should be very careful. Because Wenger could withdraw all the money from his account ... *you know* the English people want him to field Walcott as the main striker. But *you know* he does not like the idea. He prefers Giroud ... the thing disturbing Wenger now is that Giroud is his countryman. And *you know* for a long time Wenger has been trying to build his French national team ... (Emphasis mine)

This sequence gets deeper when it reaches the theme of Arsenal. He uses the Kiswahili term 'unajua' which approximately translates to 'you know' to frame the statements he makes about Wenger. In Kiswahili, this one word phrase 'unajua' is a sort of 'inverted discourse marker' that on the surface says 'you know' but in real context of conversation means 'you do not know so let me explain'. It is always marked out by a tonal variation from its immediate context, putting it somewhere between a rhetorical question and an exclamation.

In this context, it highlights the narrator's own perceived expertise on all issues related to Arsenal football club and its coach. Indeed, at another level, one could argue that the narrator's deep passion for Arsenal makes the club a sort of frame narrative that holds all the other narratives he performs. This is because his shifting frames will always end up on Arsenal and Arsene Wenger, and that is where the narrative gets deeper.

## **Emplotment and Characterization**

I argue that Ogendi's performance could be in one sense seen as an emplotment of televised football match events. Paul Ricoeur (1984) defines emplotment as "the operation that draws a configuration out of a simple succession ... it transforms events or incidents into a story" (p.65). The point we emphasize from this definition is 'transformation'. This is a process that Ricoeur describes as consisting in 'the juxtaposition of various heterogeneous elements in the mode of agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstance and results', (p.66-67). Nevertheless, it could be argued that besides the basic events, the process of emplotment is also influenced by what Jason Mittel (2014) has referred to as the media paratexts, whose function is 'to hype, promote and introduce media texts' (p.254). Considering the live televised football match events as texts conveyed by sportmedia, there is so much information that is given in relation to these events in the mainstream and social media. In contemporary Kenya, sportmedia audiences have a variety of media outlets at their disposal. The information is presented in narratives forms that are circulated both electronically and in print versions. Most Commercial Radio stations in Kenya run hourly updates of European sport news. There is also Radio Jambo, part of the Radio Africa Media Group, whose programming is approximately 75% sports news, and maybe more than half of this being European Football. Thus we situate Ogendi's emplotment of European football in the context of what Mittel (2014) has described as transmedia storytelling that thrives on ongoing paratexts, (p.255).

A dominant characteristic of Ogendi's emplotment is the linking of separate events and incidences in ways that build a seemingly logical and coherent plot that fits the cause and effect pattern. Consider this sequence:

Wenger's first priority signing was (Karim) Benzema. But he was hoping to sign him as a replacement for (Thierry) Henry. Henry did not leave that year. Benzema signed for Real Madrid ... you see even Zlatan Ibrahimovich, Wenger wanted to sign him. In fact he went and talked to him thus, 'Man, you know I want you to come to my club'. Ibrahimovich replied, 'I have no problem with that'. They agreed on terms and conditions. What Wenger did not disclose to him was that the deal could also work after Henry had left. So that he (Ibrahimovich) does not sit on the bench. But Henry did not leave in good time. Finally when Henry left, Ibrahimovich had already been signed by Barcelona. You know Henry blocked ... in fact the person that really killed Arsenal was Henry.

The sequence above could be plotted as ‘Wenger failed to sign a good striker for Arsenal because Thierry Henry delayed his exit from the club’. The narrative tension here consists in Wenger’s quest to sign a striker but only on condition that Henry leaves the club. The protagonist and antagonist forces of the narrative are marked in the characters of Wenger and Henry respectively. The protagonist’s struggle is described, including an imaginary conversation between him and Ibrahimovich. A crisis of sorts is marked by the situation when Ibrahimovich agrees to sign for Arsenal, and the deal seems to have been struck, only for Henry to fail to leave. The conflict falls down to a resolution, that Henry remains at Arsenal and Wenger does not sign a new striker. Whereas we cannot ascertain the authenticity of this narrative, its dramatic structure seems logical and acceptable.

Nevertheless, Ogendi’s narratives do not seem to have fixed plot structure and characterization. The nature of the conflicts, character motivation and roles varies from one context to the next, and in some cases, even vary and expand within the same sequence. Consider this example:

There was a player called Aliediere, I think you remember him. He was sold to Middlesborough. Henry wanted a strike partner, Samuel Eto’o. That is why Aliediere had to go. Henry told Wenger, ‘these “children” cannot play with me. Sign someone like Eto’o’. Remember Bergkamp was about to retire. ‘So if you sign Eto’o, I will be fine’, said Henry. Wenger dilly dallied the way he always does and when he finally went to bid for Eto’o, he found him already gone to Barcelona. Yet he had already sold Aliediere! ... That is how he was forced to go for whom? Adebayor. When he brought Adebayor, Henry asked ‘so now who is this? Man, let me just go to Barcelona’. .... He told Wenger, ‘The way I see it, I don’t see myself winning trophies with these young players. Yet I want to win the Champions League, it is the trophy I have never won’ ... Wenger told him, ‘fine. You go’. So he released him banking his hopes on Adebayor ... Adebayor found it hard. He is not different from Giroud ... He was sent to Man City, then sent to Madrid. There he found Michael Owen, Raul Gonzalez. True? He found Rud Van Nistelroy. So he had to be on the bench ... He was sent to Tottenham. He said, ‘I will not leave again. Let them just make the move permanent. There he found Defoe ... he was moved from centre striker to deep midfield ... you hear him complain that his mother bewitched him (laughs) ... you remember that Adebayor story, I once saw it on the news ... it is said Adebayor had a brother that was a professional footballer in Europe. By bad luck, he died right on the pitch. So Adebayor was given a lot of money by the insurance as compensation. He became instantly rich. But he does not support his family at all. He even kicked his mother to the streets.

In my view, this sequence illustrates the dynamism that characterizes Ogendi’s emplotment. Here the characters are increased in number. They are situated in a complex set of circumstances with varied levels of agency and/or limitation. The motivation, anxieties and fears are represented in the narrative. I argue that the emplotment here reconstructs the dramatic structure of the conflict, both at the level of initial situation and character roles.

Here, it is Henry that is apparently on a quest to get a strike partner that will help him win titles for Arsenal. The antagonist here thus is Wenger, because he is reluctant to act in time. In a sense, one could argue that the crisis of the dramatic climax here is much more critical than in the previous narrative. It consists of the situation where a player has been released in the hope that another one will be signed, but the one to be signed is no longer available. The resolution is the signing of another striker at short notice, who is Adebayor. This time round it seems a Win-Win situation for Wenger.

But the resolution creates a new a new problem, Henry quits the club and Wenger has to rely on Adebayor, the new striker. Adebayor's quest to fulfill expectation is another quest that coincides with Wenger's plans for the success of the club. But the narrator introduces a twist to this plot when Adebayor the protagonist turns out to be a false hero and is doomed to fail because, apparently, he is a villain. This structural twist also echoes two concepts; John Fiske's (1992, p.30-49) enunciative productivity in media and Jerome Bruner's (2001, p30) concept of the tellability criterion of a story.

Ogendi admits that he heard the story of Adebayor from the media and the fact that he fits it in another context to explain another situation is significant. It could be understood to fit in Fiske's idea of enunciation, whose main characteristics are 'the production of meanings out of media content and communication of such meanings in the medium of verbal communication' (p.147). The other point to note here is that Ogendi's narrative of Adebayor and his family was widely circulated both on social media and also in the mainstream media in early 2015, having first appeared as an article in one of English Daily newspapers, Daily Mail (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-3069221/Emmanuel-Adebayor-hits-family-bizarre>). What is important for me here is neither the detail nor authenticity of the letter but the narrative that Ogendi reconstructs out of the situation that, in Bruner's phrase, makes it 'tellable'. Indeed, some detail, such as the alleged death of Adebayor's brother, is actually a distortion of what was reported in the media; it was reported that Adebayor's younger brother, not a professional footballer, is the one that died. But Ogendi reconstructs parts of the mediated detail to make his narrative 'tellable'. Bruner has observed that, 'for a story to meet the criterion of tellability, it must violate canonical expectancy, but do so in a way that is culturally comprehensible' (p.30).

In the contemporary Kenyan society, conflicts based on differing perspectives on individual's role in material support of extended family members are very common. Because the society tends to be highly unequal, members of the family that are perceived to be well off are frequently torn between responding to the call to provide unlimited material help to extended family, support them in the form of a repayable loan facility or just ignore them altogether.

Nevertheless, since the majority in society are generally poor, popular opinion is that members of the family that are relatively well off are under obligation to support the rest of the family. Thus a story that recounts the violation of this 'canon' is tellable. Although it is not really useful to say it here, Adebayor's own account of this story is different, and actually represents members of his extended family as violating the social canon of teamwork and responsible lifestyle.

## **Communal Imagery**

Imagery is arguably one of the aspects that make Ogendi's narrative performance have a strong appeal to his audiences, because it is a sort of interpretive framework that represents aspects of football match events in a new light. Commenting on the role of imagery in oral narrative Scheub (1975) argues, 'image, the basic material of oral narrative art forms, mediates between audience and reality. It is so constructed and manipulated in performance that it shapes the audience's perception of the real'. This manipulation, Scheub argues, works by way of,

Visualized action or set of actions evoked in the minds of the audience by verbal and nonverbal elements arranged by the performer, requiring a common experience of images held by both artist and audience, the artist seeking a judicious and artistic use of images to shape that experience and give it meaning, (p.353)

Significantly, Ogendi and his audience are connected in two ways. First, they subscribe to what we have referred to earlier as the storyworld of European football. Secondly, they share a socio-cultural context. Thus we could argue that the mediating function of imagery in Ogendi's performances is founded on a shared experience with his audience. The significance of a shared experience in imagery as a linguistic resource has also been observed by Lakoff and Johnsen (2003, p5) in their argument that metaphors work because they belong to shared conceptual systems. Consider the following example:

They do not have hope. They will not have any hope. Whom do they have? Their striker is Giroud, someone that actually just needs to be given a plastic seat so that he just rests because, even in the last game, if we are to count, how many times did Giroud touch the ball? ... Because Arsenal midfielders, the attacking group, they are very good, but when it gets to the finishing, it becomes a burden. It is a useless job they do. It is like you till your land, and plant. When harvest time comes and you go to check on your crop, you discover birds ate all the maize.

The narrator picks on one player, Giroud, to blame for the failure of the team. It is a tendency common to most football fans, and in this case he describes Arsenal as a good team that only lacks an effective striker. He digresses to an image shared with his audience in their immediate context, subsistence farming.

In this sense, the narrative experience gets enriched by the use of two different conceptual systems that build on each other. Whereas the first is influenced by the variety of mainstream and social media that both the narrator and his audience are exposed to, the second is drawn from the local physical environment.

Some of his imagery creates a balance between vivid representations of supposed 'real situations' involving players and coaches in Europe and local analogy. Consider these examples:

And Mata is told to stay on the bench. There is this boy they brought in called Lingard ... this is the boy playing in Mata's position 8. Mata is just told, 'relax, relax'. But you just imagine this boy is only 19 years, yet Mata is 27 years and is told to stay on the bench. So do you still think Mata has a place in the team? (Laughs) You see it is at such a point you need to think. You are 30 years old and in class 7. Then there is someone in that same class that is 12 years old. Then you are told (by the teacher) that you have a future, so what future do you have here? ... So by the time you get to Form 4, how old will you be? 42? ... That is how they are treating Mata. They tell him, 'you just stay, you will play. You will help us'. They are killing this guy's career.

You know between Koscielny and Mertasacker, Koscielny is quick and Mertasacker is slow. So Koscielny normally plays as he covers for Mertasacker. He watches over him so much because he knows any time this guy could make a blunder. So anytime it is always like a father and his child. He watches over the child so that he (the child) does not get hurt. That is, when he sees the child moving near a pit, he will say, 'hey, do not go there'. So that is Koscielny's work on the pitch is to watch over the opponent but actually mainly to watch over Mertasacker.

In the first example the narrator compares (Juan) Mata's situation at Manchester United to that of an over-age primary school pupil that still hopes to secure a bright future through academic excellence, just as his much younger classmates. The image is built on a comparison of probability of success in the context of obvious unequal opportunity. It may not be necessarily true that Mata and Lingard are in direct competition for one position in the team. This could be read as the narrator's artistic use of imagery to create a desired impression in his audience. This is an image that has to be decoded in the context of the tensions it echoes from its immediate social context. In this part of the world, it is generally believed that the only key to a 'good future' is formal education. A good future in this case means being able to secure a source of income to afford the material needs of life.

In spite of the rising number of educated but unemployed people, and an equally rising number of the not so highly educated but fairly (materially) successful people, this perception is somehow etched in the folk psychology of this society. One could argue that there is a logical imbalance between image and situation referred to in this context. The image, in the words Okpewho (1992, p.99), is dominates and overpowers the situation it refer to.

The second example could be read as a humorous image representing contrasting playing styles and strengths between two players of one team. It is comparable to Lakoff and Johnsen's (2003) concept of the orientation metaphor, which they define as, 'one that does not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organizes a whole system of concepts with respect to one another' (p.14-15). He describes a 'father-child' like relationship between the two players purely on the basis of one attribute, speed. The fact that both constitute a central defense partnership that is to watch over the strikers of the opposite team puts them in a single 'watching over' unit. However, the narrator splits this unit further on the basis of the difference in speed between the two, and in that sense one becomes the guardian of the other. The humour in the image could be read to consist in two patterns; the taller, older and more physically imposing player between the two, Mertasacker, is presented as a child that needs protection from a father figure. Secondly, when the logic of this patronage is fitted in the bigger picture, it creates the impression of a defender that needs to be defended by another defender and the irony is also humorous. Nevertheless, the humour and irony in this context is only accessible to an audience with knowledge of the two players.

It has to be re-emphasized that the aesthetic appeal of this imagery largely depends on the shared experience, which in part includes past matches watched on television. Nevertheless, there are cases when Ogendi's narrative framing takes him to matches that were played over ten years ago or even further back. In such cases, it is his use of vivid description that recreates the match events with a depth of detail that brings them forth to the present. Consider the following example:

It is like that Champions League Final (in 2006). Wenger just needlessly threw away the match. Because the left back position was then Flamini's. *You see?* And this is the guy that had carried the team through thick and thin, through the Juventus game, to get to the final ... then on that day he decided to play Ashley Cole in that position. This is a player that was coming from an injury and whose match fitness was 50-50. *You hear?* But Wenger imagined that because this was a final, Ashley Cole's experience was important. And that is the position the Barcelona forwards exploited. They were just playing from that wing. The likes of Larson, Eto'o and Ronaldinho. *Don't you see? Do you now see what happened?* (Emphasis mine)

This sequence comes as an illustration in the middle of another narrative sequence, as is evident from the discourse marker, 'it is like.' Nevertheless, it is detailed in a way that makes one imagine the narrator somehow knew beforehand that he would need to use this information. Secondly, his use of the (italicized) rhetoric questions could be interpreted as a digressive technique of shifting frames from story to performance and back to story in a way that marks this sequence as an image. In this way, he envisions that particular football match event for his audience and in a sense, it creates the impression of the narrator having used imagery to recall and 'show his audience' a match from the past. This is a technique that he uses very effectively, yet it comes off totally spontaneously, in most cases as an illustration used in another narrative.

## **Conclusion**

This paper focused on a conversation practice; football talk. An exploration of its social and cultural contexts reveals that this talk is based on European football and is dominated by certain individuals. The article has investigated how these individuals dominate this 'talk practice'. Working from an initial assumption that these dominant individuals employ framing techniques of oral narrative performance to attract and sustain their audiences, this article has undertaken both an ethnography and literary analysis of these performances. The narrator and his audience are located within their immediate social setting and the practice marked as an extension of a popular cultural form; the formation and performance of European football audiences in urban spaces in Kenya. The practice is treated as a 'secondary performance' feeding on perceived pre-framed narratives of the mainstream and social media. Interpretation of narrative texts reconstructed from the performance develops two main arguments. First, that emplotment is based on a dynamic use of narrative frames. Secondly, that the narrator taps on the repertoire of shared imagery, both from the media pre-framed narratives and from his own immediate context, to reconstruct new narratives of European football. Nevertheless, it is has to be re-emphasized that this is a literary conceptualization and analysis of a conversation practice in which the participants may not be consciously involved as performers.

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