

Trans-Crises of Igbo Cultural Values in Nelizeta Ijeoma Ekwedike's *Night Fall at Dawn*

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Résumé :

La culture est un élément clé dans la vie des individus d'un groupe social. Elle établit les normes et le mode de fonctionnement des institutions dans la société. Dans Night Fall at Dawn, Nelizeta Ijeoma Ekwedike met en exergue le modèle de transition au trône royal à travers le cadre successoral en pays Igbo. Cependant, cette valeur culturelle suscite des crises quand elle est mal acceptée par certains individus, allant même à être transgressée et à la mort. Les crises liées à la transition à la tête du royaume chez les Igbo montrent une société en proie de désorganisation et de changement culturel. L'utilisation de la sociocritique permet de décrire l'organisation culturelle royale et de montrer les bouleversements sociaux liés aux crises de succession et au renouvellement de la société chez les Igbo.

Mots clés : Crise, Culture, Transgression, Transition,
Valeurs

Abstract:

Culture is a key element in the lives of individuals in a social group. It establishes the norms and way institutions function in the society. In Night Fall at Dawn, Nelizeta Ijeoma Ekwedike highlights the model of transition through succession in Igbo land. However, this cultural value gives rise to crises when it is poorly accepted by certain individuals, leading to transgression and death. The crises linked to the transition at the highest position in the kingdom among the Igbo show a society in the throes of disorganization and cultural change. The use of sociocriticism makes it possible to describe the royal cultural organization and to show the social

upheavals linked to the crisis of succession and societal renewal among the Igbo.

Keywords: Crisis, Transition, Succession, Transgression, Culture, Values.

Introduction

Culture is a complex system of shared beliefs, values, traditions, actions, and objects that characterize a group of people. It guides how individuals relate to each other, understand the world around them, and transmit knowledge across generations. Culture impacts everything from language and art to food and societal expectations, shaping a community's unique identity while adapting over time. While it can differ widely between regions and groups, culture is the framework through which people interpret their lives and engage with their surroundings. It promotes both unity and diversity, linking individuals while emphasizing their unique traits.

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, culture is « the belief, the way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society» (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2007: 382). In other words, Culture refers to the tangible and intangible products created by groups of people within a society, shaped by their shared experiences and values. These elements, such as art, language, and customs, hold an objective nature, meaning they are recognizable and identifiable by others. Culture is formed through collective actions and can be passed on to future generations. It is adaptable, meaning it can spread, evolve, and influence different groups. Through culture, societies establish common ground and foster connections among individuals.

Culture refers to the broader, collective way of life of a group, including language, art, music, and societal values. It evolves over time, adapting to changing circumstances and influences. Tradition, on the other hand, is a set of practices, rituals, and customs that are passed down through generations, often unchanged. While culture is dynamic, tradition tends to stay more consistent, acting as a link to the past. Both are intertwined, but tradition specifically focuses on preserving the practices that define a group's heritage.

Culture, seen in that sense, helps frame the discussion of trans-crises in Igbo cultural values, as portrayed in Neli Zeta Ijeoma Ekwedike's *Night Fall at Dawn*. As culture consists of both tangible and intangible elements that shape social identity, the novel reveals how the Igbo community's traditional values once perceived as objective, stable, and deeply rooted are in fact subject to transformation under internal and external pressures. The story powerfully illustrates the disruptions brought about by modernization, colonial legacies, and global influences, which challenge the continuity and transmission of cultural norms. These shifts reflect not only a struggle for adaptation but also expose the vulnerability of cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. By depicting the community's efforts to preserve its heritage while navigating evolving societal expectations, *Night Fall at Dawn* underscores the urgency and complexity of maintaining cultural integrity. This makes the narrative especially relevant in broader discussions on cultural resilience, identity, and the consequences of socio-political change.

For a deeper analysis of the trans-crises in Igbo cultural values in *Night Fall at Dawn*, sociocriticism will serve as the literary technique. To paraphrase Duchet, a sociocritical reading involves exploring the substance of the work, creating

a space of competition where one observes resistances, constraints to sociocultural codes and models, and the demands of social expectations. (Duchet, 1979: 4). For Pierre Zima, it answers to this question of: «*comment le texte littéraire réagit aux problèmes sociaux et historiques au niveau du langage*» (Zima, 2000: 118.). This perspective emphasizes the intricate relationship between literature and society, and more specifically, how the language of a text responds to or reflects the social and historical context in which it is produced as said out by Terry Eagleton when he states that «Literature, (...), is vitally engaged with the living situations of men and women: It is concrete rather than abstract, displays life in all its rich variousness, (...)» (Eagleton, 1998: 171).

This approach enables a detailed examination of how the play portrays the influence of societal forces on the transformation of cultural identity. Sociocriticism focuses on the interaction between a community's shared values and the external pressures it faces, shedding light on how characters respond to cultural changes. It also analyzes how disruptions to traditional norms reflect larger social transformations. By emphasizing the social context, this method uncovers the complex dynamics between cultural preservation and adaptation within the narrative. Through the use of sociocriticism, our aim is to analyse the signs and symbols of division within Igbo society as presented in the play.

1. Inheritance of the Throne in Igbo Land: A Case of Transition in the Tradition

This section delves into the complex process of throne inheritance in Igbo land, examining three fundamental aspects that shape the transition of leadership. First, we explore the

method of succession, highlighting the various practices and traditions that determine how the throne is passed on within the community. Second, we address the specific conditions that govern who is eligible to succeed to the throne, considering factors such as lineage, age, and merit. Finally, we analyze the symbolic significance of the throne itself, which represents more than just political power but also cultural and spiritual authority, often embodied by the king. By examining these interconnected elements, we will gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and political frameworks that guide leadership succession in Igbo society.

The succession process within Igbo society is deeply rooted in customs and traditions. The book reveals that in many Igbo communities, the transition to the throne is determined by established rules that reflect the community's values. Depending on the specific village or clan, succession may follow a hereditary line, often passed down from father to son, ensuring that the new ruler is from a royal bloodline. This is justified by the following passage of the play where the character Nnamdimagu has a conversation with his friend Akuchieulo as follow:

Nnamdimagu: *(Draws closer and whispers into his ear)*. I have a plan to take over the kingdom after my father's death.

(Akuchieulo gasps in shock in hearing this).

Akuchieulo: *(In a lower tune)*. What are you saying?
What about your elder brother, Obiefuna?
(Ekwedike, 2022: 26)

In the passage, Nnamdimagu reveals his plan to take over the throne after his father's death, a move that shocks Akuchieulo. Akuchieulo's question, «What about your elder brother, Obiefuna? » highlights the expected norm in Igbo society that the eldest son is the rightful heir to his father's throne. This tradition is based on primogeniture, where the firstborn son inherits his father's position and responsibilities, ensuring the continuity of the family's leadership and the stability of the community. Akuchieulo's surprise indicates that Nnamdimagu's ambition to bypass his elder brother is not only unusual but also culturally inappropriate.

In Igbo culture, the succession of power is typically reserved for the firstborn son, as he is seen as the most capable to carry on the father's legacy and serve the community. The practice reinforces family hierarchy and societal order. Nnamdimagu's plan to seize the throne is a challenge to this established norm, potentially causing a rift within the family and the kingdom. By disregarding his elder brother's claim, Nnamdimagu threatens to disrupt the natural flow of leadership, which could lead to conflicts and instability in the community.

Again, the conditions and factors that influence who is chosen to succeed to the throne in Igbo land, are very clearly portrayed in *Night Fall at Dawn*. Indeed, while lineage remains a primary consideration, the qualities of the potential successor play a critical role. In the book, it is evident that the community values not just the bloodline of the ruler, but their personal virtues, leadership abilities, and wisdom. Age, experience, and even the ability to unite the people and bring prosperity are factors that are carefully considered. This is so important in the

eyes of the King that he always gives advices to his family members as in the following:

ADABUNWA: I apologize on his behalf, my king. Father, please go ahead. Will not be distracted by a son who is out to bring down the image of this kingdom.

EZE UGWU: Like I have always point out to you all, unity is the key to success, especially in this kingdom. Nnamdimagu retrace your steps. Adabunwa and Omasiri, serve the dishes. (*As they were eating the king always advise his family*). I want this honorable family to lead by example, you all should embrace peace at all time. Be each other's keeper (...). (Ekwedike, 2022: 34)

In this passage, King Eze Ugwu emphasizes the paramount importance of unity within the royal family as a key element for the prosperity of the kingdom. The king's directive, «unity is the key to success, especially in this kingdom» underscores the essential role of harmony in the family structure for effective leadership and governance. The king's advice to Nnamdimagu, Adabunwa, and Omasiri to «embrace peace at all times» and to «be each other's keeper» highlights a crucial aspect of the succession process: the ability to maintain familial unity. This unity is not just about peace within the family but is directly tied to the integrity and stability of the kingdom, which the royal family governs. Through this advice, Eze Ugwu implicitly suggests that the future of the kingdom,

including the rightful succession to the throne, depends on a family that is united and supportive, rather than one divided by rivalry or ambition.

Moreover, the passage reveals the deep interconnection between leadership, familial relationships, and succession in traditional Igbo society. By advising his children to care for one another and lead by example, Eze Ugwu is reinforcing the idea that the rightful heir to the throne must embody qualities of peace, cooperation, and responsibility. In the context of succession, these qualities are vital because they ensure that the leader not only inherits power but also commands the respect and trust of the people. The king's emphasis on unity serves as a moral framework for the royal family, teaching them that leadership is not solely about authority, but about maintaining peace and order, both within the family and across the kingdom. Thus, the passage highlights that the conditions for succession are not just based on birthright but also on the moral character and ability of the heir to promote harmony and stability.

At last, the throne in the Igbo society has a very symbolic meaning. In *Night Fall at Dawn*, the throne represents the highest form of political authority within the Igbo community. It is a symbol of the ruler's sovereignty, reflecting his or her role as the ultimate decision-maker and protector of the people. The king's seat is not simply an emblem of power but also a manifestation of divine mandate, as the ruler is seen as a chosen leader whose authority comes from the gods and ancestors. The connection between the throne and the divine is made clear in the rituals surrounding the ascension of the throne. The text underscores the belief that the king is not only a political figure but also a spiritual one, who mediates between the divine realm and the human world. Therefore, the throne

symbolizes more than just political control, it is an enduring symbol of spiritual authority that ensures the well-being of the community. This is seen in the conversation between the villagers and their king:

Villagers: Long live our king!

EZE UGWU: We thank the gods for keeping us alive to witness another full Moon. Also, you all have made me a proud king. We will all live to reap the fruits of our labor. Umuagu kingdom will continue to flourish and anyone who dares to cut off our smile, whether I 'am dead or alive, such person will face the wrath of the gods.

Villagers: (And the villagers echoed in a loud voice Isee!!! In acceptance to his prayer).
(Ekwedike, 2022: 19-20)

In the passage above, King Eze Ugwu asserts his leadership and the divine authority that underpins his reign, emphasizing his role as both a ruler and a mediator between his people and the gods. By stating, «We thank the gods for keeping us alive to witness another full Moon» he acknowledges the gods' influence over the well-being of the kingdom, suggesting that his decisions are made in conjunction with divine guidance. The king's declaration that «anyone who dares to cut off our smile... will face the wrath of the gods» further underscores the idea that his authority is not solely secular; it is intertwined with spiritual power.

This statement implies that Eze Ugwu's leadership is not just based on his personal judgment but also on the divine will, which reinforces his role as a figure who collaborates with the gods for the protection and prosperity of his people. His words assure the villagers that their king not only governs but also ensures that the spiritual forces are aligned with the kingdom's well-being, symbolizing a harmonious relationship between earthly leadership and divine intervention. The throne in this respect is the symbol of unity, responsibility, duty and continuity. That is what Adiaffi tries to explain by saying that : « Si tu veux assassiner infailliblement un peuple, si tu veux le tuer de science certaine: détruis son âme, profanes ses croyances, ses religions. Nie sa culture, son histoire, brûle tout ce qu'il adore et l'objectif sera atteint, sans que toi-même tu t'en aperçoives ». (Adiaffi, 1980: 39). For him, our ways should be kept in their totality and that is what the king is doing.

2. Emergence of Cultural crises of Succession Framework

This section examines the cultural crises surrounding succession in Igbo society, as portrayed in *Night Fall at Dawn*. The narrative explores tensions that arise when traditional succession methods are challenged, often due to external influences, generational divides, or power struggles. By analyzing these crises, we gain insight into how the throne's transition becomes a reason of conflict and negotiation, impacting the stability and cultural identity of the Igbo community.

First of all, the emergence of cultural crises of succession can be seen through transgression of values. In *Night Fall at Dawn*, the violation of cultural values plays a crucial role in the development of the story. The play portrays

how several characters defy or disrupt the deeply ingrained traditions of Igbo society, particularly those surrounding leadership, succession, and social harmony. These transgressions, often driven by personal ambition, external pressures, or generational divides, create conflicts that jeopardize the stability of the community. One key example of value transgression is the disruption of traditional succession practices. As characters attempt to manipulate the system to serve their own interests, they undermine the moral and spiritual principles that have long shaped the leadership process. This is clear in the following dialogue between the king and his son:

EZE UGWU: (...) Hear this: the fly who does not listen, follows the corpse to the grave.

NNAMDIMAGU: Is that all you have to say? Okay, I 'am leaving. (He murmurs and walks out on the king). (Ekwedike, 2022: 24)

Nnamdimagu's response to his father, Eze Ugwu, is not just a personal disagreement; it represents a serious violation of deeply rooted cultural values within the Igbo society. In Igbo tradition, respect for one's elders especially one's parents is a fundamental virtue. Fathers, in particular, are seen not only as heads of the family but also as custodians of wisdom, tradition, and moral guidance. When the father is also a king, as in the case of Eze Ugwu, his authority carries even more weight. He is not just a parent, but also a symbol of leadership, unity, and ancestral continuity in the community. By openly dismissing his father's wisdom, Nnamdimagu directly contradicts these expectations. He disregards the traditional belief that the

words of elders carry the voice of experience and should be treated with reverence.

His decision to walk out on the king, his own father is an even more blatant sign of disrespect. This act not only offends Eze Ugwu personally, but also symbolically disrupts the societal order that values hierarchy, obedience, and harmony within both the family and the community. In traditional Igbo society, a child is expected to listen to and honour their parents, particularly in public or serious discussions. Disagreeing with a parent, especially a father, must be done with great humility and care. Instead, Nnamdimagu's defiance is bold and confrontational. It sends a message of rebellion, not just against his father's authority, but also against the cultural norms that prioritize collective respect over individual pride.

Moreover, such defiance undermines the principle of unity, which is central to governance and communal life in Igbo culture. The family is seen as the smallest unit of society, and any disorder within it reflects poorly on the larger community. If a king cannot command the respect of his own son, it raises concerns about his ability to lead and maintain order among his people. In a word, Nnamdimagu's actions go beyond personal conflict, they challenge the very foundations of Igbo societal values. His behaviour dishonours his father, disrupts the traditional hierarchy, and threatens the cohesion and moral fabric of the community. It serves as a powerful example of the tension between modern individualism and traditional communal values.

Secondly, another proof of cultural crises of succession is the desacralization of the throne. In *Night Fall at Dawn* by Nelizeta Ijeoma, it emerges as a significant theme, reflecting a shift from the sacred and spiritual dimensions traditionally associated with leadership in Igbo society. The throne, which

once symbolized divine authority, spiritual connection, and the embodiment of ancestral power, begins to lose its sacredness as characters challenge and manipulate the leadership structure for personal or political gain as done by the second son of the king Nnamdimagu as follow:

AKUCHIEULO: (...) I will always be loyal to you, my prince.

NNAMDIMAGU: (...) I have a plan to take over the kingdom after my father's death.
(Ekwedike, 2022: 25)

Nnamdimagu's revelation of his plan to take over the kingdom after his father's death indicates a desacralization of the throne, which traditionally carries both political and spiritual significance. The throne is not merely a seat of power but a sacred institution, often tied to ancestral and divine authority in Igbo society. By plotting to usurp the throne, Nnamdimagu challenges the sanctity of this institution, reducing it to a mere object of personal ambition rather than a responsibility to the people and the gods. His intentions reveal a disregard for the sacred duty associated with rulership, as he seeks to claim power through deceit rather than inheriting it in a manner aligned with tradition and respect for the throne's spiritual and familial role. This shift from reverence to self-serving ambition undermines the moral and spiritual foundation that the throne is supposed to represent.

Thirdly, the greediness of the new tyrant king is not to be neglected. In *Night Fall at Dawn*, the greediness of the new tyrant king becomes a central aspect of the narrative, illustrating how the abuse of power can lead to the unraveling of societal harmony and justice. As the throne transitions to a

new ruler, the character's insatiable desire for wealth, control, and dominance becomes evident, marking a stark contrast to the moral and cultural responsibilities traditionally associated with kingship. Nnamdimagu proves it well when talking to his sister Adabunwa:

NNAMDIMAGU: (...) You don't have any share in my father's kingdom.

ADABUNWA: Says who?

NNAMDIMAGU: Me. I said so. (Ekwedike, 2022: 50)

Nnamdimagu's assertion, "You don't have any share in my father's kingdom," reveals his greed and desire for absolute control over the kingdom. His abrupt claim, "Me. I said so," demonstrates a sense of entitlement and a disregard for the collective rights of others within the kingdom. Nnamdimagu's attitude reflects a selfish desire to consolidate power solely for himself, without concern for the well-being of those around him. This behavior showcases his willingness to dismiss others' interests and claim everything for himself. His words expose his arrogance and ruthless ambition to monopolize the throne and resources.

Lastly, the assassination of the future king by his brother is without any doubt a cogent proof of crises of succession. Indeed, in the play it serves as a pivotal and tragic moment in the story, highlighting the destructive nature of ambition and the lengths to which individuals will go to secure power. This act of fratricide represents a profound violation of both familial bonds and the sacred traditions that govern succession in Igbo

society. Nnamdimagu just killed the one supposed to be the king after the death of their father:

NNAMDIMAGU: (*Target's the arrow of his brother standing behind Adabunwa and it pierces through his chest*).

OBIEFUNA: Adabunwa! (*He falls on the ground and screams in pain. Adabunwa runs away in fright*). (Ekwedike, 2022: 50)

The murder of the future king by his own brother reveals the depth of corruption and moral decay that has taken hold of the royal family. Driven by personal ambition and a desire to claim the throne, the brother's actions expose the breakdown of loyalty, trust, and respect for traditional values. This violent act not only disrupts the natural order of succession but also signals the erosion of the cultural and spiritual foundations that once guided the leadership of the community.

The assassination highlights the extent to which power struggles can overshadow the well-being of the community, as the brother's ruthless ambition leaves the society in turmoil. The murder not only creates a power vacuum but also serves as a symbol of the betrayal of the moral and ethical principles that should guide leadership. Through this tragic event, Ijeoma explores the destructive consequences of unchecked ambition and the moral consequences of violating sacred customs for personal gain.

3. Impact of trans-crises of cultural values on Igbo Society

In her play, Nelia Ijeoma underlines the profound impact of the trans-crises of cultural values on the Igbo society depicted in the narrative. The play explores how the failure of the traditional succession process, the tragic deaths within the royal family, and the overall breakdown of traditions lead to a disorganized and destabilized society. However, the book also touches on the potential for cultural renewal through the re-establishment of core values, marked by the transformation of leadership roles and a shift in societal expectations. The following points break down the impact of these crises.

To start with, the failure of the succession process is a critical moment in *Night Fall at Dawn*. The traditional methods of transferring power, which should ideally be a peaceful and culturally meaningful process, are disrupted by corruption, violence, and manipulation. This breakdown of the succession process leaves a power vacuum and deepens the societal crisis, as the community loses faith in the existing systems that once ensured stability and order. The failure of this transition marks a significant shift in Igbo political and cultural life, disrupting the continuity of the throne and the moral authority associated with it as clear in the following passage:

NNAMDIMAGU: Command everyone left in the
land to gather and give my
father a befitting burial

AKUCHIEULO: The chief and elders have all taken to
their heels. Who and who will

mourn the king? (Ekwedike, 2022: 53)

In this passage, Akuchieulo's remark reflects the fear and uncertainty that gripped the village after Nnamdimagu's ruthless actions in killing his elder brother to seize power. The chief and elders fleeing symbolizes the breakdown of leadership and the erosion of trust in Nnamdimagu's rule. The people's hesitation to mourn the king, as highlighted by Akuchieulo's comment, suggests that they were too fearful of retribution or punishment from Nnamdimagu for any form of dissent. This fear-driven exodus underscores the moral corruption in Nnamdimagu's rise to power and the consequent abandonment of the village by those who once held authority, all because of the violent and treacherous means he employed to achieve his goal. That failure caused troubles and this justifies the conception of Huntington when he states that « l'histoire des hommes, c'est l'histoire des civilisations. Il est impossible de concevoir autrement l'évolution de l'humanité (...) ». (Huntington, 1997: 37).

Huntington's assertion suggests that human history is inseparable from the history of civilizations. If you remove any element of a civilization's tradition, you risk distorting its cultural identity and historical continuity. For example, without the core values, languages, or practices of a tradition, the evolution of a civilization could lose its unique essence and connection to the past.

Additionally, the trans-crises of traditional values caused death in the royal family (King, Successor, and the Brother). The tragic deaths within the royal family further exacerbate the crisis in *Night Fall at Dawn*. First, the death of the king signifies the end of an era and the loss of the cultural

and spiritual anchor that he represented. His death left everybody in despair as described by the play through his two wives and many other people:

ULUMMA and OGODIYA: Yes, Doctor! How is my king?

DOCTOR: We tried our best, but we couldn't save the king. I 'am sorry.

(The two queens let out a high-pitched scream which reverberates all over the palace and the kingdom. The Ikoro began to sound a high mournful tone. And there was wailing all over the kingdom). (Ekwedike, 2022: 47).

The death of the king has an immediate and profound impact on both the royal family and the entire kingdom. The two queens' high-pitched screams, echoing through the palace and beyond, express their intense grief and emotional bond with the king. Their reaction signals not only personal loss but also the beginning of a larger communal mourning. The sounding of the *Ikoro*, a traditional drum used to announce important events such as death, emphasizes the seriousness of the moment. It transforms the king's passing from a private tragedy into a public event, alerting the entire community to the loss. The widespread wailing that follows reflects the collective sorrow of the people, showing that the king's death has shaken the foundation of the society. This moment represents more than just the end of a life, it marks the collapse of political stability and the disruption of cultural continuity. It initiates a period of uncertainty, as the kingdom must now face

the challenge of leadership transition and the potential redefinition of its values and traditions.

Following the king's death, the assassination of the future king by his brother as shown above introduces an even greater tragedy. The brother's betrayal and subsequent murder of his sibling unravel the fabric of the royal family, leaving the throne empty and unprotected. This sequence of deaths of the king, the rightful successor, and the brother symbolizes the collapse of the family structure and the erosion of the traditional values of loyalty, respect, and responsibility. The royal family's dysfunction directly impacts the entire community, creating a leadership vacuum and destabilizing the social order.

What is more, the trans-crises of the traditional values also caused the disfunctioning of the tradition. Indeed, the breakdown in the succession process and the violent events surrounding the royal family highlight the disfunctioning of tradition in Igbo society. In *Night Fall at Dawn*, the traditional customs that once ensured the smooth transition of power and upheld communal values are increasingly disregarded. The king's assassination, the failure to honor the spiritual and moral dimensions of the throne, and the prioritization of personal ambition over communal well-being indicate a loss of respect for the traditions that shaped leadership. Nelizeta succeeded into proving it in her play as follow:

AKUCHIEULO: (*In a lower tune*). What are you saying? What about your elder brother, Obiefuna?

NNAMDIMAGU: He is a weakling! He cannot rule the kingdom especially now that the

kingdom will soon become rich. He cannot handle the white men.
(Ekwedike, 2022: 26)

Here, it becomes evident that Nnamdimagu is actively seeking to sideline his elder brother, the rightful heir to the throne following their father's death. This deliberate attempt to subvert the established line of succession not only disrupts the natural order of leadership but also plunges the community into uncertainty and mistrust. People no longer know whom to follow, and the traditional protocols that once ensured clarity and continuity in governance begin to collapse.

The implications of this dysfunction go beyond a mere family dispute, they reflect a broader erosion of societal values and communal trust. When the legitimacy of leadership is questioned, the entire social fabric begins to unravel. In this context, the breakdown of traditional structures becomes symbolic of a larger cultural crisis, where ambition and personal gain threaten the collective well-being. The play thus critiques the fragility of societal cohesion when foundational norms are ignored or manipulated, highlighting the urgent need for systems that can both preserve tradition and respond to emerging challenges.

Moreover, the disorganization of Igbo Society is the result of the trans-crises of the traditional values. The breakdown of succession and the collapse of traditional values lead to a disorganization of Igbo society in the play. As leadership falters, the society becomes fragmented and uncertain. The people are left without a clear direction or sense of security. The power vacuum causes various factions within the community to vie for control, leading to social unrest and division. The disregard for tradition and the resulting instability

trigger an identity crisis for the Igbo people, as their long-held customs and systems of governance are no longer respected or followed. The disorganization that follows is not just political but also cultural, as the people struggle to maintain their social coherence and collective identity in the face of growing internal conflict. This disorganization can be proved through the following passage of the play:

NNAMDIMAGU: (...) Arghhh! Arghhh! Death is so painful!

ADABUNWA: (...) Umuagu people! Where have you all flown to? (Ekwedike, 2022: 67)

This passage reflects the disarray in Igbo society due to the breakdown of traditional values. The intense pain and cries of Nnamdi suggest a loss of cultural coherence, where death no longer aligns with expected customs. Adabunwa's plea for the Umuagu people's presence indicates a disconnection or fragmentation within the community. The lack of unity in responding to a crisis showcases the deep impact of societal disintegration. These elements highlight how the disruption of cultural norms led to societal confusion and disorder.

Despite the chaos and disorganization that result from the trans-crisis of cultural values, *Night Fall at Dawn* suggests the possibility of a transformation of Igbo culture through the re-establishment of core values. In the play, this transformation is symbolized by the woman as royal regent, who takes on the responsibility of guiding the throne until the rightful boy king matures into his role. This can be clearly seen in the following

passage of the play just after the death of the devil king Nnamdimagu:

NNAMDIMAGU: (Tries to grab Adabunwa by the leg but she steps backward). Arghhh! Arghh! Death is so painful! (He breathes his last breath).

ADABUNWA: (*Runs out and shouts*) Umuagu people! Where have you all flown to. Come back to your kingdom. Our kingdom! The tyrant king is gone. Our gods have fought for us. (She sobs and continues). Please, come back let us rebuild our land, the battle is over. It is morning in Umuagu again!

(The Ikoro starts a melodious tune while the palace guards carry the remains of Nnamdimagu to the evil forest as ordered by Ogbuefi. Adabunwa instructs Ogbuefi to hold the royal staff in custody for Odinaka until he grows into a man). (Ekwedike, 2022: 67-68)

The woman as regent plays a crucial role in restoring balance and stability to the community, acting as a caretaker for the throne while also embodying the cultural values of wisdom, leadership, and protection. This shift also signals the possibility of a reawakening of respect for tradition and the idea that leadership is not solely determined by male succession. It suggests that Igbo culture, while disrupted, has the potential to adapt and evolve to ensure the continuity of its values. The regent's leadership is not just about holding power, but also about nurturing and preparing the next generation of leaders,

symbolized by the future boy king. In this way, the transformation of Igbo culture is marked by a re-engagement with traditional values, while also embracing new forms of leadership and gender dynamics. The introduction of the woman regent in the continuity of the tradition reflects a transcendental phase in the leadership of the community. This transcendence breaks the patriarchal opinions of Africans on the role of women in the leading of royal affairs.

Conclusion

At the end of our analysis, it becomes evident that the trans-crises affecting Igbo cultural values underscore the deep tensions that traditional societies face in the context of rapid social, political, and cultural change. The play illustrates how the disruption of key structures such as succession, leadership, and communal solidarity reveals the fragility of long-standing customs when confronted with personal ambition, generational conflicts, and shifting social dynamics. These internal fractures contribute to a broader sense of societal disintegration, where identity and continuity are called into question. Yet, amidst this apparent collapse, the unexpected appointment of a woman as royal regent marks a turning point. Her rise to power symbolizes not only the adaptability of Igbo culture, but also its capacity to reimagine leadership and gender roles in response to crisis. Her leadership not only restores social balance and reaffirms essential values but also opens the door to a renewed, more inclusive vision of cultural identity.

Ultimately, the play conveys a powerful message: the preservation of cultural heritage does not mean rigid

adherence to the past, but rather a willingness to evolve while remaining anchored in core principles. By embracing change without abandoning identity, Igbo society is shown as resilient and forward-looking capable of navigating its own contradictions to forge a more cohesive and hopeful future.

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