

Research Article

NARRATING THE TRADITIONAL IGBO TALE: A GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHINUA ACHEBE AND NGOZI ADICHIE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the generational dialogue between Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie through their use of the traditional Igbo tale. They emphasize on the tale of the tortoise in their respective works: *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The analysis highlights how these two authors, belonging to different generations of Nigerian writers, appropriate and transmit Igbo cultural values through traditional oral narrative techniques as theorized by Isidore Okpewho (1979). Despite the generational gap, both authors maintain a remarkable faithfulness to the structures of the traditional tale, such as the opening and closing formulas, the relationship between storyteller and audience, and its didactic function. This research also reveals how the traditional tale serves as a vehicle for escapism while retaining its fundamental educational value in traditional Igbo society.

Keywords: folktale, Igbo, traditional values, literature, oral narrative.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary African literature is characterized by a constant negotiation between oral tradition and written literature. In this context, the study of the generational dialogue between Nigerian writers through their treatment of the traditional tale is said to be a particular importance for understanding the transmission and evolution of African cultural values. This dialogue is particularly evident in the works of Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Despite the generation gap, they share a deep attachment to the Igbo oral tradition. To back the aforesaid Achebe (1973: 7-13) asserts that "there is an organized relationship between writing[s] and the essence for building a better society". With this in mind, the African writer-intellectual must assume his responsibility as a consciousness-raising artist. In this context, how do Achebe and Adichie respectively use the traditional tale in their literary texts? Put simply, is the Igbo traditional tale a source of African socialization?

It is true that an amount of works¹ has been done about the tale of the tortoise in Igbo society, but this study stands out that it uses Okpewho's narrative theory (1979) and put into scene two authors from different literary generations.

This study will therefore analyze how both authors incorporate and adapt the traditional tortoise tale in their respective works: *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Through this comparative analysis, one will examine the narrative techniques employed to keep safe the traditional tale structures. On the second leg, this paper will scrutinize the way in which these authors use the oral medium as a vehicle for cultural transmission and moral instruction. The methodological framework of this contribution calls upon Isidore Okpewho's (1979) oral storytelling techniques. From this perspective, the art of storytelling in traditional African societies responds to its own specific mechanisms. The first orientation in this study is going to unveil the narrative mechanisms of the traditional Igbo tale, including opening formulas, the role of the storyteller and his relationship with the

audience. The second one explores the tale as a tool of escapism and didactic support in the Igbo tradition.

NARRATING THE WORLD OF THE TRADITIONAL IGBO TALE

One of the features of oral literature in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is the teaching of the traditional Igbo tale. These works under study have a didactic value insofar as they are perceptible with the insertion of traditional tale. It should be pointed out that these authors harmoniously combine one of the mediums of the oral genre, meaning the tale, with modern novelistic techniques. In their use of storytelling, Achebe and Adichie draw on an Igbo cultural background to build the novelistic structure of their works. In this schema, they lend an oral and symbolic character to certain passages. Through this generational dialogue about the tale of the tortoise, they demonstrate their deep understanding of Igbo tradition. This proves the importance of the tortoise in the Igbo social environment. Ruth Finnegan (2012: 335): "*The tortoise predominates in the easterly regions of the west coast, in an area extending at least from the Yoruba of Nigeria across to the Fang and others of West Equatorial Africa*". Here, Finnegan gives the reader the idea of the predominance of tortoise in African tales. They are found in Yoruba, Fang, Equatorial African societies, etc., and their abundance demonstrates how important they are used in African stories. Their fruitfulness shows just how useful they are in traditional stories. In fact, throughout ages and generations, both authors remain committed to the values of the tortoise tale and their identity. In their narratives, they use a story's opening formula, call for a traditional storyteller and his audience and the cognitive substantivity of the storyteller.

The story's opening formula

In *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*, Achebe and Adichie take up the challenge of generational and cultural identity dialogue by incorporating the traditional tale of the tortoise into their respective novels. It is worth mentioning that the tortoise, as a wild animal, remains a symbol to explain certain facts associated to traditional

¹One is thinking about Françoise Ugochukwu, Ruth Finnegan (see references), and other authors who theorized Igbo tradition tortoise tale.

Igbo society. By using this Igbo identity as a literary weapon, both authors show to the world that the oral tradition of their native society is far from being a despicable bin. Consequently, the inclusion of the traditional tale in the text serves as a reminder that this oral medium is worthy of consideration. It remains one of the most popular tales in Igbo tradition. Indeed, it explains the appearance of the animal's cracked shell.

Considered as one the baobab of African literature, Achebe uses cultural ingenuity to tell the tale of the tortoise in his literary work. It is told through a female voice: that of Okwonko's wife. Indeed, in African societies, women play a vital role in order to model a harmonious society. Put simply, the African woman in some perspectives is perceived as the core of the family. In so doing, she remains a key component of the society who teaches children about cardinal values. That is why Achebe entrusts her with teaching the art of African orality. This linguistic expression makes it clear: "Ekwefi and her daughter Ezinma, sat on a mat on the floor. It was Ekwefi's turn to tell a story. "Once upon a time" she began" (p.37). This opening formula is an essential technique, as it introduces the reader to the world of the traditional tale. Okwonko's wife, Ekwefi, as storyteller, is the custodian of this traditional showcase. The choice of a female voice to narrate the tale disavows the claim that African women are relegated to the background. In so doing, Achebe calls on readers at home and abroad to take a fresh look at the role of women in African tradition. As a prelude to the tale, it is said that all the birds are invited to the sky for a feast. To do so, they have dressed appropriately to attract each other's attention. Indeed, the animal world is facing a great famine that has reigned in the region for ages. And the tortoise, which has not eaten for months, finds in this situation an opportunity to set up his ruse to get there. However, he is handicapped by the lack of wings, which remains a non-negotiable condition for reaching the heavens. It is fair to say that Achebe, through this introductory formula to the tale of the tortoise, has a perfect grasp of the rites and traditions of his Igbo homeland.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the same narrative process emerges. The tale of the tortoise in the literary text is told by the patriarch Papa Nnukwu at the request of his grandchildren during a visit to his daughter, Auntie Ifeoma, in the town of Nsukka. The latter, holder of local knowledge and guardian of tradition, introduces the story with the opening phrase: "Long ago" (p.165). This opening formula is a special construction and an important factor in the development of the tale's fictional universe. The character of Papa Nnukwu, as guarantee of the tradition, tells the tale to his grandchildren. In the first sequence, one comes to learn that a great famine has hit the country, and the male animals are invited to an important meeting to find food before the village is wiped out. After consultation, the rabbit's idea is adopted by all: that of sacrificing the mothers one by one to feed all the animals (pp.165-166). Even if Achebe and Adichie's opening formulas take different linguistic forms, it must be acknowledged that these mediums of oral tradition artistic paradigms in their elaboration of the tale. In terms of form, not only does it give the tale an African flavor, but it also positions itself as an essential canon for introducing the oral and traditional environment. So, how does one perceive the storyteller and his audience?

The traditional storyteller and his audience

In traditional African societies, storytelling is seen as a means of socializing communities, especially children. It is through these norms that they are able to increase self-awareness and to acquire values

that will form the basis of a society built around certain human ethical values. Over and above such didactic arguments, it has to be said that, if one looks closely at the storytelling in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, one realizes that there is a first level of storytelling that bears witness of the audience's participation. In fact, the story is occasionally interrupted by Okwonko's children: "But he had no wings," said Ezinma. "Be patient," replied her mother. "That is the story" (p.32). Here, it is important to notice that these various breaks in the telling of the tale are part of the many traditional techniques for enriching the tale and making it more lively and friendly. Even so, the children's curiosity reflects their eagerness to know more. Moreover, this break for questioning from the children demonstrates how often tradition remains an art of teaching and a didactic strategy. It is clear that African oral tradition is far from being human garbage. It is from this view that Isidore Okpewho's thought in *The Epic in Africa* (1979: 149) takes on its full meaning: "the formula and the theme [...] are useful for the forward growth of the story". According to Isidore Okpewho, the opening formula is a crucial medium for the story's understanding and its unfolding. As a result, it is essential to a better comprehension of this African oral tradition.

In the traditional narrative world of *Purple Hibiscus*, the discerning reader is even made aware that the tale's diegetic structure calls for moment of breakings. One of the earliest sequences is measured at times by interruptions. These lulls are comments by the storyteller's grandchildren, Papa Nnukwu. They represent the audience in the world of traditional storytelling: "I could never eat Mummy," chima said, giggling. "It might not be a good idea, that tough skin" Obioro said (p.166). These comments by Chima and Obioro during the storytelling are an important technique for the highlight the emotional relationship between the audience and the storyteller. They also give the audience an opportunity to take part in the unfolding of the tale. These elements justify that Adichie's tale in the text is a traditional creation from African orality. The audience's participation in the tale is intended to be a holistic approach, so that the tale keep up all its oral and dramatic substance. In this way, the audience contributes to making the tale more attractive and livelier. In so doing, it (the tale) distances itself from the structure of the written word and its codes. But even if the tale is written, it keeps all its oral authenticity. With this flavor given to her writings, Adichie refuses to undergo the thought of some Western scholars that "Africa is a barbaric continent without civilization"². Beyond this, Achebe and Adichie call for a celebration of orality genre in literature. Better still, they encourage a marriage between orality and writing.

The cognitive substantivity of the storyteller

The society's histories and traditions are by no means the property of a person. Indeed, the custodians of morals, whether in traditional or modern societies, always have this ability to implement codifications and summon readers to reflection. That is why KonéKlohinwelé in, *From Oral to Modern African Literature* (2013: 108), argues that "social history and traditions are no individuals' point of views". Clearly, in human societies, collective and individual knowledge remain subsequent means of gaining a better grasp of people and the environment in which they live. In *Things Fall Apart's* management of storytelling, the observation shows that there is a sequence that is preceded sometimes by small dialogues between the protagonists without a breaking consequent effect in the narrative. In such cases, Ekwefi, Okwonko's wife, lets the audience know that the tortoise cunning, intelligence, wisdom and charisma have made him an animal to be reckoned with in such a short exchange with the birds.

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²One is thinking about some scholars such Joseph Conrad, Charles de Montesquieu, who back up that Africa is a non-civilized corner

However, the birds remain wary of the tortoise because of his malice. This dialogue is pregnant with meaning:

"We know you too well," said the birds when they had heard him. "You are full of cunning and you are ungrateful. If we allow you to come with us you will soon begin your mischief"

"You do not know me," said Tortoise. I am a changed man. I have learned that a man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself (p.32).

Here one observes that the birds do not trust the tortoise at all because they have already been told that the tortoise is a deceitful and ungrateful creature. Therefore, if they were to help it, it would not be grateful. However, the tortoise uses cunning, codified language to gain the trust of his comrades. It lets its fellow animals know that anyone who sets himself up as a worry for others is himself considered as a problem. Faced with such a persuasive speech, the birds decide to back up the tortoise in order to plead their cause. The other animals, and the birds in particular, are all convinced that the tortoise remains the best choice. In fact, in their minds, it is the animal for the issue and the change.

The big day arrived, and the tortoise was the first animal to move to the gathering place. Then, all the bird breeds gathered in the public square. The tortoise was chosen as the spokesman, and his mastery of the art of oratory enabled him to put forward everyone's problems. To ease the conscience of his friends, it still uses imagery:

"There is one important thing which we must not forget, 'he said as they flew on their way. When people are invited to a great feast like this, they take new names for the occasion. Our hosts in the sky will expect us to honour this age-old custom" (p.33).

As one may notice, the tortoise remains a very cunning and intelligent animal. It plays on the naivety of its friends to once again take advantage of them. Besides, it exploits them emotionally and psychologically. The birds have no choice but to let the tortoise steal the show on this important day. Here, it is obvious to scrutinize that the tortoise subtly forces the birds to all change their names. Even if they have never heard of such customs, they immediately comply. Thus, primacy is given to the tortoise in order to lead the proceedings. Handsomely dressed, the tortoise's unrivaled eloquence compels the other animal to accept his speech and applaud. It is thus chosen as king of the birds, even if he is biologically and physically different from them.

It is customary said in Igbo tradition that, when a person pays visit to another, the host extends the kola nut as a gesture of welcome, in keeping with the brotherhood enjoyed by traditional African societies, what KonéKlohinwélé (*Ibidem.*, 2013:109) refers to as "social practices". It has to be said here that these social values are cardinal keys for a formerly communalist African society. In this stand, the tale's narrative is interrupted by an insertion of other fragments outside the story of the tortoise. The analysis shows that Achebe uses his resilience as an enlightened author to bring together oral storytelling techniques and established canons. In so doing, he asserts an intercultural dialogue between literary modes. More attractive, the storyteller is using his memory as a cognitive standpoint so as to render beautiful his storytelling. So, one backs up that in oral tradition, memory is an important paradigm for history unfolding, but also for keeping safe the communitarian dimension of African values.

Anybody conversant with the analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, will ascertain that the patriarch Papa Nnukwu remain a great custodian of tortoise's tale. To assume his role, he informs his audience that the mothers of all animals are to be sacrificed one by one. Shortly before the dog's mother is to be sacrificed, it comes running. He enters the group moaning. He announces that his mother has just died of illness. Subsequently, she will not be eaten. At the same time, he insists on burying her alone. A few days later, when the tortoise was out walking in the bush, he met the dog and discovered that his mother was alive and going well. She has taken refuge in heaven, where her son joins her to eat from a basket suspended from a rope, and the secret code is a song (pp.166-167). Here, one points out that the animal world rhymes with wickedness, cunning and duplicity. The storyteller shows that the dog's intention is to deceive his comrades.

As far as the structure of the traditional tale is concerned, it can be said that the success of the narrative depends deeply on the mood and ingenuity of the storyteller. As a repository of local knowledge, the storyteller positions himself as an engineer of traditional artistic sciences. Admittedly, he uses his fertile memory to pass on the collective heritage of the Igbo people to future generations. Ruth Finnegan (2012: 107) argues: "In African literature one can of course encounter both the second-rate technician and the inspired artist-oral art is no exception in this". Modern African literature has always drawn on oral tradition to establish this particularity. For Finnegan, the entertainers of this ancestral knowledge are both technicians and artists. Here, one understands that oral vestiges are inexhaustible sources if one wants to better seized traditional norms and beliefs.

From this perspective, one notes that storytelling in traditional African societies meets performance standards that are specific to the art of storytelling. Thus, the opening formula, the storyteller and his audience, and the cognitive substantively of the storyteller are oral approaches worthy of consideration and valorization in the tale of the tortoise. The generational dialogue between Achebe and Adichie is pregnant with meaning, as it is been considered as the celebration of African oral tradition. What about the traditional Igbo tale as a mean of escape and a didactic principle?

THE TRADITIONAL IGBO TALE AS A MEANS OF ESCAPING AND A DIDACTIC PRINCIPLE

To paraphrase Okpewho, in *The Epic in Africa* (1979: 113), storytelling in the African oral tradition obeys certain rules and principles. For centuries, people across the continent have preserved much of their heritage from African traditions. Far from standing in the way of innovation, African folklore remains an inexhaustible source of teaching and knowledge. The traditional African tale remains a medium that strives to perceive the past, grasp the present and envisage the future. If oral tradition can be seized as a set of codes, habits and behaviors socially acquired and transmitted, it must also be admitted that it remains a place of refuge, mystification, escaping, education and spiritual elevation. That is why the African tale, in general, responds to a certain number of storytelling principles. This analysis highlights, on the one hand, the paradigm of escaping. And on the other, it lays emphasis on the tales didactic value.

The traditional tale as a paradigm of escaping

The construction of the socio-discursive world of traditional Africa calls for reflection upon the places of memory and the formation of identities. To better understand the traditional Igbo tale, one can refer to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In this work, the second sequence of the tale of the tortoise tells the reader that, after certain courtesies due to the tradition's ritual, a soup full of pieces of meat

and fish, which had just left the fire, was brought to the guests. It was accompanied by mashed yam with red oil and palm wine. When the table was set, a sky dweller was invited to taste the food before the birds helped themselves. Noticing that it was being ignored, the tortoise got down on one knee to ask the master of ceremonies if he was one of them. However, the custom was respected, and the tortoise was suitably fed to the point of being overweight. In view of such cunning behavior, the birds flew into an indescribable rage, as they were only entitled to the remains of the food. It was at this very moment that a song intervened: ojioduaruijiji-o-o! The crowd answered-"Ee-e-e!" (pp.37-38). This song in Igbo is that of the birds. It expresses the birds' discontent and dismay at the tortoise cunning. Differently approach, the inclusion of local songs in the narrative fabric of the tale shows Achebe's mastery of his tribe's oral tradition.

At the same time, he teaches his readers that this song is part of traditional Igbo society. In other circumstances, this song would have no meaning. But its inclusion in the tale shows just how often this oral medium is of great entertainment value to the audience watching the tale being told. Beyond such a perception, it (singing) can be understood as a means of cultural resistance. The argument is that every given society has its own cultural values. Consequently, they must be taken into account and never trampled underfoot. The use of song in the story reconnects the author to her community, and also enables her to identify any reader coming into contact with her story that song is part of the traditional tale of the Igbo people.

After this moment of joyfulness and criticism of the tortoise, the birds decide to get together and organize their return to the land of men. To this end, they decided to take away the garlic they had lent the turtle. Having fed properly, the tortoise no longer had a way to return to the land. So, he asked the parrot to give his wife an errand: to spread out all the materials he could find to cushion his fall to earth. The generational dialogue between the two authors is enriching, as Adichie shows that she is following in the footsteps of her elder Achebe. Alternatively, in *Purple Hibiscus*, a song is inserted into the body of the tale, interrupting the narrative. It is entitled "Nyemanze. It is sung by the dog:

Dog was singing: "Nne, Nne, Mother, Mother." Njemanze!
my cousins chorised. "Nne, Nne, I have come". Njemanze!"
Nne, Nne let down the rope. I have come". "Njemanze"
(p.167).

Here, the atmosphere is lively between storyteller and audience. The song is heard as an instrument for questioning and raising the awareness of all participants. Better still, the storyteller's singing maintains an atmosphere of suspense that might otherwise exist. As a result, storytelling obeys to its nature as an oral medium: that of bringing cheerfulness, entertainment and escape to the audience. Moreover, it must be admitted that the success of storytelling depends in part on the mood and atmosphere of the audience. Through this umpteenth technique, it is clear that the tale is traditionally told. In fact, it is as if the reader were there to participate in the telling. Adichie shows that she has the qualities of a traditional storyteller, and that the tale passed down to her through the essence of oral tradition is an artistic creation. When one remembers the centuries of denigration, rejection and suffering endured by Africa, the inclusion of the tale in the narrative takes a significant sign, insofar as the author indicates that the traditional tale of her homeland is worthy of consideration and celebration.

After a song sequence to keep the audience awake, the tale begins again. The dog is discovered, and he invites the tortoise to join him in with the dog's mother in the heavens. The tortoise feasts on fufou and onugbu soup prepared for the occasion. From then on, she visits

the dog's mother until the end of the dry season. (p.167). Once again, the narrative is interrupted by the repetition of the same song. This time, the song is initiated by the tortoise as the secret code for her attending to the dog's mother without the dog's consent, as she no longer wants to share the food. When the dog surprises the tortoise, he quickly warns his mother. She cuts the rope that leads the tortoise up into the sky. The Igbo tale is an institutional marvel, proving that pre-colonial African societies were based on intrinsic values. With this in mind, Achebe and Adichie teach the role that writers, artists and intellectuals must play in their city.

A didactic approach of the closing formula

The world of traditional African societies conveys a particular vision of the world, where cultural figures are the bearers of enriching messages that they wish to inculcate in society as a whole. Indeed, in the arena of traditional African storytelling, one observes a living, plural and dynamic word. Just as under the tree, men return pleasantries with a word, so in storytelling, the storyteller ends the tale with a word. Thus, it is customary to end the narrative with a closing formula. The latter, upstream, incorporates a set of teachings into its understanding. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe tells the reader that the tortoise, having no wings to return to earth, decides to project himself onto the ground:

And then like the sound of his cannon he crashed on the compound. "Did he die?" asked Ezinma. "No," replied Ekwefi. "His shell broke into pieces. But there was a great medicine man in the neighborhood. Tortoise's wife sent for him and he gathered all the bits of shell and stuck them together. That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth." (p.37).

This paragraph teaches the reader about two essential paradigms. The first refers to the tale's closing formula: "That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth". In every traditional African tale, the closing formula is crucial insofar as it puts an end to the tale. It is clear from these lines that the tortoise's fall was fatal. Its shell has been shattered. However, his wife's hope that he would be reborn from this tragedy led him to visit neighboring villages in search of a cure. The tortoise never ending quest to regain the health of her shell was in vain. As a result, the tortoise shell is in pieces. The second approach admits that at the end of every African tale, the moral is of great importance. In the case of the tortoise in *Things Fall Apart*, the moral is that gratitude is a divine value. And when you receive it, you must give in return. Consequently, human beings must steer clear of faults such as cunning, duplicity and greed. Such a perspective demonstrates that the author is teaching his traditional Igbo society. This valorizing view of the writer is shared by Djiman Kasimi (2013:15) when he argues that Achebe is "imparting the view that African oral tradition is far from being a despicable vestige worthy of a refusal dump". This aspect testifies that Achebe is trying to pass across a message about African culture and its personality.

The art of oral tradition developed by Achebe continues in Adichie's inescapable alternations. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the author demonstrates her storytelling skills by following in the scriptural footsteps of "the baobab of African literature". The tale shows that the turtle's duplicity led the dog's mother to cut the rope. Truly, the dog's mother had been informed of the tortoise's bad temper by her son. As a result, the turtle falls onto a pile of stones and breaks its shell (p.168). Here again, there are two levels of analysis. The first focuses on the closing formula: "To This Day, the tortoise has a cracked shell." (p.168). The linguistic syntax indicates that, since that day, the tortoise has had a cracked shell. This clearly shows that storytelling remains an artistic value in the African oral tradition. It

also shows that the African tale has its own characteristics, which differentiate it from any other tale. The storytelling process tends towards problem-solving. This stage gives the audience ideas. Children ask questions and make comments: "Don't you wonder how only dog's mother got up to the sky in the first place?" Obioro asked in English. "Or in to the wealthy friends in the sky were" (p.168). These Questions and comments are worthy of the audience's interest. That is why for Françoise Ugochukwu (2006: 55-57), "*the insertion of the tale into the narrative is [...] a reminder that tales have long served as manuals and libraries for generations, providing guidance and advice for managing daily life*". In short, storytelling is an initiation into traditional knowledge and wisdom, told mainly to children so that they can learn from it and build their own personalities. In the African oral tradition, even before the advent of the school system imported by the white man, storytelling was always considered to be a traditional educational program in the same token with other oral genres (dance, proverbs, music, oratory, etc.). Such an approach keeps alive a harmonious, and a disciplined society.

The second idea is that, in the traditional African tale, morality plays a key role. Consequently, it is eminently didactic. The tale of the tortoise in the story advocates traditional wisdom. Firstly, it teaches a skillful way of getting by in a hostile universe where the law of the strongest reigns in the struggle for survival. Secondly, it highlights the mutual love between mother and child. This is the protective figure of a nurturing mother. In this way, the genitrix remains the child's accomplice. Thirdly, it teaches about the end that awaits deviants. In the end, they are punished. From this oral narrative device, one learns that Achebe and Adichie suggest alternative views of the world: no culture is superior to another. It is clear, the structure of the tale reveals that there are occasional changes in the tortoise tale by these two authors. However, this narrative distance does not detract from the oral quality of the tale. This perception is captured by Ruth Finnegan (2012: 333) in the following terms:

the treatment and impact of stories based on the 'same' plot or motif can vary considerably, even in the same society, if told by a different individual or even, in some cases, by the same individual on different occasions.

For Finnegan, it is possible to encounter tales that come from the same traditional society, but are told differently by different storytellers. To do this, the story's narrative scheme and events are tied to principles that vary from one society to another. Better still, they may be drawn from the same cultural environment, but differ in terms of structure.

A closer look at about these works by Igbo authors, reveals a kind of generational dialogue through the telling of the tortoise tale. The literary environment remains the path through which these writers promote the rites and traditions of their homeland. On the one hand, there is a generation of authors like Achebe who have valorized the pre-colonial African context by celebrating traditional African societies. On the other hand, there is a generation that follows in the footsteps of those who have shaped their literary lives. Such is the case of Adichie, who believes that Achebe has profoundly influenced her pen and writing about Igbo culture. In so doing, both authors promote the Igbo tradition to the worldwide.

CONCLUSION

A similarly analysis of Achebe and Adichie's treatment of the traditional tale reveals a remarkable continuity in the transmission of Igbo cultural values across generations of writers. Both authors

demonstrate a thorough mastery of traditional narrative techniques, while adapting them to the format of the modern novel. This study shows that the tortoise tale, far from being a mere folkloric element, constitutes a genuine bridge between generations. It enables Igbo cultural values to be preserved and passed on. Truthfully endorsed to traditional storytelling structures, such as the opening and closing formula, interaction with the audience and the inclusion of songs, testifies to both authors' shared desire to enhance and perpetuate the Igbo oral heritage. Moreover, the didactic dimension of the tale present in both writers' works underlines the persistence of its educational and moral function in contemporary society. Far from being a useless mechanism, it has a preponderant role to play in African societies in perdition.

This generational dialogue between Achebe and Adichie through traditional storytelling illustrates the vitality of African oral tradition and its ability to adapt itself to modern literary forms while keeping its essence. It also demonstrates that contemporary African literature, far from rejecting its traditional roots, continues to draw on this rich oral heritage to enrich its creations and keep alive the transmission of cultural values. However, in today's digital age, can one say that the storytelling genre of African oral literature remains an indispensable medium?

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