AWKA JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERARY STUDIES (AJELLS)

Volume 13 Number 2
June, 2026

Igbo Cosmology, Spirituality, and Cultural Continuity in Selected Nigerian Narratives

Prince Usang Ekoro
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
princeekoro01@gmail.com

&

Onyebuchi James Ile
Department of English Language and Literature
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
oj.ile@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper examines how the Igbo cosmology has been presented in the works of Nigerian writers, and how this has helped in the reconciliation of the spiritual and physical worlds in the face of modernity. The texts selected are Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* (1983), Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Witch* (2011), and Achalugo Ezekobe's *Mmirinzo* (2022), a combination of traditional and modernized texts to show how the Igbo spiritual axioms are developed and reclaimed in the 21st century. The analysis uses myth criticism and Afrocentricism as theoretical approaches with the focus on universal archetypes such as the wise elder and threshold guardians and focuses on African epistemologies. The methodology of a qualitative approach is closed reading of texts, finding themes and incorporating other secondary sources on Igbo beliefs. The findings show the role of ancestral spirits, dual identities, and rituals as the mechanisms to maintain the culture, criticizing colonialism and globalization. The study concludes that these writings reiterate the strength of Igbo cosmology as they propose decolonial readings that incorporate both tradition and modernity in seeking identity and balance.

Keywords: Igbo Cosmology, Nigerian Literature, Ancestral Spirits, Myth Criticism, Afrocentricism

Introduction

The Igbo people of Nigeria are one of Africa's largest ethnic groups. They occupy majorly the geographical enclave that is politically referred to as South Eastern Nigeria. They primarily inhabit states such as Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, coexisting alongside neighboring tribes like the Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Ogoni, Igala, Tiv, Yako, and Ibibio (Udeala,2007) Igbos are generally known for their rich cultural heritage which also shapes their socio-cultural identity. Central to this identity is their cosmology which reflects their beliefs in the interrelations of the physical and the spiritual worlds.

Igbo cosmology hinges on the belief of the existence of a spiritual being that in one way or the other influences the affairs of life in the physical realm (*uwa*). Uchendu (1965) contends that Igbo cosmological perception "is not only their theory of the origin and character of the universe. It also contains prescription for the societal moral ethos, which dictates rules governing both inter personal relationships as well as man's relationship to his environment and to the supra sensible." Moreover, it is to be found the explanations for the family background patterns of Igbo.

Igbo cosmology and culture make up a complex system of beliefs and practices. The Igbo worldview of the cosmos has its root in the idea of '*chi*' which refers to individual divinity and spiritual guardian. Chinua Achebe (1975) thinks of this as "a basic idea of Igbo thought". Igbo cosmological beliefs relay their perception of fate and individual initiative, with the individual's 'chi' being key in defining their future. Moreover, the reverence for mother earth (*Ala*), subtly points to the relationship between the Igbo people and the physical environment.

In *Things Fall Apart* as well as *Arrow of God*, Chinua Achebe portrays '*Chi'* as a key constituent of Igbo spirituality with a decisive influence on the way the life of a human being proceeds. These novels suggest that a man's destiny is inherently tied to their *Chi*. In essence, Achebe's position lends credence to the popular Igbo dictum: *Onyekwe chi ya e kwe*. This translates as 'if a man agrees his *chi* equally agrees'. In Igbo cosmology and spirituality, a man needs a strong and supportive *Chi* as his fortune and failures as a human being is heavily dependent on it. If he is doing well in life, he has a strong and supportive *Chi* and the reverse when he faces or experiences recurrent failures.

Igbo cosmology believes in the existence of ancestors and the spiritual world. The Igbo believe that when people die, their souls continue and still have the ability to influence the living. Ancestors are viewed as protectors and guides and watch their descendants and offer them their helping hand when needed. In *The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought*, Donatus Nwoga points out that the ancestors act as a vital bridge between the living and the spiritual world. The Igbo practice different customs and rituals where the ancestors are honoured and venerated; they also ask for the ancestors blessings for major events in their lives such as birth, wedding, and harvest. This concept in Achebe's trilogy – *Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God*, and *No Longer at Ease*, as well as Obioma's *An Orchestra of Minorities* where characters often engage with ancestral spirits such as *Ndi Ichie*, who guide and bless their descendants by imparting wisdom from beyond.

This scholarly inquiry is driven by the researcher's deep conviction that Igbo cosmology remains one of the most resilient and generative spiritual systems in African literature, yet it is frequently reduced to mere "background" or exotic colour in existing criticism. Motivated by the need to correct this marginalization and to affirm the centrality of African-centred epistemologies, the study seeks to present rigorous evidence of

Igbo cosmology's profound influence on African literature at large and Nigerian literature in particular.

The thrust of this research, therefore, is to examine earlier texts like Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard*, and contemporary texts such as Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Witch* and *Mmirinzo* by Achalugo Ezekobe to establish how these writers interpret, reinterpret and restage Igbo cosmology and culture, as well as investigate the way Igbo cosmology and culture are viewed in a modern world.

Literature Review

African Cosmology is a complex worldview that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the spiritual and physical world (Mbiti, 1969). African cosmology posits that the universe is a holistic entity where the living, ancestors and deities are intricately linked. (Gyeke, 1995). The ancestors serve as mediators between the living and the spiritual realm, guiding and overseeing the affairs of their descendants.

The significance of Igbo cosmology transcends historical origins; it serves as an important yardstick to study and examine the culture, tradition and even the leadership within the Igbo community. At the center of this cosmological understanding lies the belief in a supreme god, *Chukwu,* and the strong reverence accorded to ancestral spirits, emphasizing the need for communal unity, moral behavior, and custodianship of nature in the Igbo setting and belief system. The ritualistic worships of the ancestors and the obedience to the traditions and customs represented by *Omenala* further reveal, sustain and promote unity within the Igbo people despite the challenges presented through modernization (Achalonu, 2005; Udenka, 2022).

Studies on Igbo cosmology have generated new interest among scholars, bringing to the fore an underlying conflict between the

desire to preserve ancient culture and traditions, and the need to adapt to modern realities such as colonialism and globalization. As has been observed, scholars promote the preservation of cultural heritage as a measure to offset the deterioration of traditional values, thereby promoting a harmonious integration of ancestral knowledge with current societal issues. This continued debate raises important issues regarding identity, leadership, and the role of indigenous institutions in solving societal problems.

Writers and scholars have recently begun to preserve African cosmology through literary and oral traditions. Literary works play major roles in not just preserving but also promoting African ideals. Ogbaa (1999) provides valuable insights into how literature has been instrumental in exploring and explaining Igbo cultural heritage and traditional religion. Moreover, critics continue to reveal the enduring influence of Igbo cosmological principles.

Francis Mogu examines the dual cultures of Western Christianity and indigenous traditions within Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* through his study "The conflict between the West and the centre in Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard*." According to this research, the authors perform textual analysis on the novel to examine how two distinct cultures interact when seen through two characters from various origins. The study evaluates Okorafor's literary creations by researching the selected texts starting with *Akata Witch*.

In "Afro-Science Fiction and the Blending of Nigerian Magical Elements", Elizabeth Olubukola Olaoye and Mary Bosede Aiyetoro explore the blending of Nigerian magical elements with science fiction in Nnedi Okorafor's writings. This study centres on the analysis of *What Sunny Saw in the Flames and Lagoon* although it establishes broad understanding between Okorafor's distinctive writing style and Afro-Science Fiction. The research evaluates Nnedi Okorafor's writings by investigating how she uses

fiction elements in combination with science fiction components. The study researches how combining these elements eventually produces pseudo-realistic visionary elements within the stories. Thematic analysis with close reading forms the foundation to detect Nigerian magic and science fiction elements in the storytelling texts.

Sylva Nze Ifedigbo (2022) identifies *Mmirinzo* as a successful and fast-paced attempt in magical realism that combines Igbo spirituality with contemporary life. The book establishes the credibility of Igbo metaphysics while comparing with Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard*. The author Ifedigbo appreciates how Achalugo blends authentic Igbo vocabulary with cultural traditions alongside vibrant masculine and feminine characters and basic human experiences of self-discovery. Achalugo proves his writing abilities through this impressive debut even though some storytelling shortcuts appear in the narrative.

Chioma Iwunze-Ibiam's review in "Juggling Three Balls: A Review of *Mmirinzo* by Achalugo" positions *Mmirinzo* as a novel which effectively combines ordinary and magical elements while defending traditional Igbo beliefs from negative stereotypes through well-balanced speculative and realistic storytelling. Achalugo gracefully writes in simple language and displays initiation rites while defending African spiritual traditions according to the reviewer. Iwunze-Ibiam explains how Olivia's traditional initiation as a *Mmirinzo* rainmaker advances the text's message about personal and cultural identification.

The existing scholarly discourse has a notable gap regarding how some Nigerian writers reinterpret and reclaim the timeless cosmological axioms in the context of the 21st-century challenges and therefore making them relevant even in the 21st-century. Precisely, Ike's *TheBottled Leopard*, Okorafor's *Akata Witch* and Ezekobe's *Mmirinzo* largely need critical analysis; how these

writers reinterpret and restage the cosmological and spiritual issues of the tradition of the Igbo and how they tackle the issues of the modern world.

The mix of cosmology and modern social realities such as cultural erosion, identity fragmentation, and modernity/tradition conflicts. This weakness is visible in the lack of critical interest taken in more recent literary works which re-create Igbo spirituality in more active, adaptive modes. Such more recent texts as Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Witch* and Achalugo Ezekobe *Mmirinzo* are examples of this change, re-creating themes of initiation rituals and the belief in spiritual duality of life, as well as ancestral connectivity as a way of balancing the past and the present. Such modern reimaginings are not just the continuation of cosmological traditions but explicitly put into action as a pluriversal, decolonial mechanism of imagining cultural survival and change in a modern world.

The study employs a mix of myth criticism and Afrocentricism as a theoretical framework. Myth criticism also archetypal criticism is a lens of criticism that involves a critical exploration of recurring patterns, symbols, and archetypes that are universal and ever-present in literature In a study on Carl Jung, Roland (2005) observes that this process involves a journey into what is usually called the collective unconscious, a shared pool of humanity's experience along with a storehouse of universal archetypes that speak to different cultures. These archetypes in turn have serious influence over human ideas, emotions, and behaviours in a vast range of contexts and settings that cover all aspects of humanity's existence.

On the other hand, Afrocentricism is a deliberate intellectual endeavour, which itself is an articulation of the need for Africans to be placed centrally within any exploration about Africans' experiences with history. Though formally articulated by

MolefiKete Asante in 1980, it is formally defined: "Afrocentricity is 'the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history'" (Asante, 1987). He states that '"Afrocentricity is the critique of domination and the pursuit of African liberation through agency'" (Asante, 2007). This view is affirmed Mazama, who further refines the concept of Afrocentricity by stating, "To be Afrocentric is to place African ideals at the 'center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior'" (Mazama, 2003). It is agreed among these scholars that Africans must be placed centrally within the construction of history itself rather than being subject to European observation and articulation of history. This is a radical departure from being relegated to the margins for so long.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative literary analysis. This design is considered appropriate as its goals include hermeneutic rather than quantitative data. The discussion focuses on symbolic, thematic and philosophical aspects of Igbo cosmology and culture as expressed in a body of three novels under study. Data were collected through close-reading of the texts in a systematic manner, and identified themes, motifs, dialogues, symbols and narrative events referring to the Igbo cosmological agents including *Chi* (personal deity), *Ala* (earth goddess) and ancestral spirits. The secondary data was supplemented by visiting such sources as scholarly journals, academic articles, books, online databases, and cultural essays that are dedicated to the Igbo traditional beliefs and their depictions in literary works.

Textual Analysis

Ancestral Spirits as the Wise Elder Archetype:

The portrayal of ancestral spirits in African prose fiction represents neither punitive nor judgmental guardians nor warm family members who enfold the community within their protective embrace, but as has been observed, they perform a lot more than just these roles in society such as offering spiritual protection and

providence. Achebe prepares an explanation about ancestors in *Things Fall Apart* where he describes them as "guardians of morality" who help sustain the customs and traditions of the land. Being honest and upholding morality in the Igbo worldview means possessing power.

Mbiti (1969) described how ancestors exist as "the living-dead" who "speak the language of men with whom they lived until recently; and they speak the language of the spirits and the God to who they are drawing nearer ontologically." This means they remain part of the family as forces who maintain social justice. What this entails is that the consequence of ignoring such guardians may lead to the destruction of all connections.

In Ike's *The Bottled Leopard* Grandpa Ezeudu fights to save the leopard spirit. Ifi Amadiume, in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987) observes that Igbo traditions use spirits to scold the living when they disrespect the earth. The leopard is like Amadiume's idea. Amadiume advances that it is not just an animal, rather, it is a lot more than that. It is as well a moral teacher who punishes the village for destroying the sacred grove (their ancestral "rulebook"). When Mr. Nwankwo builds a school on the grove, it is like rejecting the elders and their wisdom. African narratives on this theme, however, inform us that such behaviour usually comes with its consequences. This foregrounds Mbiti's (1969) view where he observed that these ancestors are judges to human and that they bite when provoked.

Ancestors are venerated all over Igbo land. In exchange for this, they serve as guardian angels to the communities; protecting the community from harm and making provisions for the people. Their presence is considered essential for the success and blessing of important events, from naming ceremonies to weddings and harvest festivals.Onyemobi (cited in Nwa-Ikenga 2011 n.p) observes that: The *Ndiichie* (esteemed ancestor spirits) held a high

place in traditional Igbo society. *Ndiichie* would often be consulted to offer advice to their descendants and appeal to the *Alusi* on their behalf. *Ndi* Igbo have never worshiped their ancestors, they only venerated them. We see this come into play in the novel. According to the narrator:

> Amobi had counted fourteen ancestral spirits at the ceremony, even though it was not mandatory for any spirits to be present. The number of initiated members present was said to be unprecedented, judging from the fact that not one drop of palm wine remained in the 15-gallon pot. The drinking and feasting which began in the early afternoon had continued until well after midnight. To ensure that nothing was left out, Amobi's father had presented the customary gift of two water yams, to enable Amobi to be initiated into the secrets of the nocturnal 'lion of spirits' as well (66).

The wise elder archetype manifests abundantly through ancestral spirits in the Igbo society, pointing to a spiritual force that guides moral behaviour as well as uphold the cultural integrity of the community. As is well-known in Igbo tradition, ancestral spirits are held in high place in the Igbo society. They would often be consulted to offer advice to their descendants and appeal to the *Alusi* on their behalf. This position reveals how ancestral spirits fulfill the archetypal role of the sage or wise counselor, connecting the dead and the living.

Amobi's initiation into the spirit cult is a way of proving his arrival into manhood. It means that he is now "a proud custodian of the secrets of the spirit" and so "He could now show his face in public when the spirits assembled, instead of scuttling into hiding with the women and children at the sound of the ogene" (73). This emphasizes the importance of these rituals in Igbo society where young men are initiated into adulthood. His initiation gives him the authority to invoke these spirits at will, and they not only serve as his protector, they equally serve as checks on him and as a moral

guide: "He could even invoke his own ancestral spirit to emerge from the bowels of the earth, through an ant hole, as his own spirit, and send it back there at his pleasure. He now understood the spirit language. Most importantly, he knew the severe penalties for divulging any of the secrets" (88)

Moreover, inheritance serves as a core of Igbo cosmology. An Igbo person redefines inheritance through spiritual transfers and cultural preservation as well as physical possessions. Jung's archetype theory aligns strongly with the rich Igbo concept by establishing how universal symbols operating through collective unconsciousness form cultural constants between human experiences. Jung's (1936) view is: "Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time" is foregrounded in the protagonist's inheritance of the leopard spirit. Igbo tradition strongly reveres ancestral spirits under the Ancestor archetype because those spirits act as guiding forces which determine how the living follows cultural wisdom and family obligations into new generations.

The Threshold Archetype: Navigating Tradition and Modernity

Campbell (2004) defines threshold archetype as "the moment when people confront new experiences leading to changes between different realms within their existence." Scholars as well as myth critics identify threshold as the boundary area which permits transformation while assisting individuals in their decision-making process. Within the framework of symbolical boundaries, the characters must overcome multiple trials that reveal their religious views. According to Gennep (1960) thresholds exist beyond their physical boundaries because they represent "a psychological state of crisis in which people encounter unfamiliar aspects before deciding their future directions" (cited in White, 2011).

In the narrative Amobi faces this archetype to understand the modern/post-colonial dilemma between tradition and western

cultural influences in present-day Nigeria. The leopard in the novel serves as a powerful symbol of tradition and the ancestral connections that bind Amobi to his heritage. The transformation of Amobi into a "leopard-man" signifies the awakening of his latent cultural powers, which he struggles to understand and control. Dibia Ofia, the traditional healer, explains to Mazi Eze that Amobi possesses the powers of his deceased uncle, Nnanyelugo, the last leopard-man in their family lineage. "Your son here was therefore born with the powers of a leopard-man" (115). This suggests that the connection to one's ancestors is an integral part of identity and cultural continuity.

Balancing Between the Physical and Spiritual Worlds as a Reflection of Igbo Cosmology

Akata Witch establishes parallels between human and supernatural realms which conform to Igbo cosmological beliefs that such realms coexist and impact ordinary life. The ritual admission of Sunny to the Leopard People community illustrates archetypal fusion of spiritual and physical elements. During the ritual performance Anatov enables Sunny to show her spirit face which displays "golden points like the sun" because she learns about spiritual awakening without losing her material self. The dualistic nature represents Igbo belief systems which connect *mmụọ* and *ahu* as interrelated concepts. Chichi asserts that the spirit face embodies a person more authentically than the physical face does according to Igbo beliefs. The experience of physical hardship that includes earth and aquatic passage during the ritual reproduces traditional Igbo sacred transition ceremonies where ordinary and holy domains connect.

Sunny embodies the duality between the physical and the spiritual world. Her connection between this world and the wilderness show that she "has one foot within the physical world and one foot within that which we call spirit world" (44). Through this description the Igbo people show their belief that their physical

world shares connections with the spirit world. In archetypal mythology the hero experiences these two domains which make them wiser and stronger because of their journey. The realms Sunny effortlessly crosses mark her position as someone who connects both physical realities to spiritual domains.

The spiritual aspects of the Igbo cosmology are emphasized through the concept of juju, which is described as "some good, some bad, some just is" (21). The traditional belief of dualism appears through the pairing of light and shadow alongside right and wrong belief systems. According to narrative logic Orlu and Chichi demonstrate abilities that enable them to work with juju powers. Orlu states that he can "undo bad things, bad...juju" (21), which reflects the archetypal hero's journey of confronting and resolving conflicts within both realms. The characters demonstrate their spiritual proficiency by engaging with the afterworld because their world connections give them their power which proves the value of maintaining balance in life.

Through the character of Black Hat the novel demonstrates how unbalanced contact between these worlds leads to harmful results. He seeks to "bring the head of the centipede through—Ekwensu," (101) a powerful and dangerous spirit. Through his pursuit of power Black Hat threatens both physical and spiritual dimensions in the same way he threatens the natural order. Black Hat exists as a clear antagonist archetype because ambition-driven obsession leads him to become unreasonable and bring spiritual conflict into the world. His behaviour demonstrates the harmful consequences that result from ignoring spiritual realities in the Igbo worldview thus proving the necessity of universal balance.

Sunny's journey culminates in her confrontation with Ekwensu, where she realizes that "above all things, she didn't want to die huddling away, afraid, helpless" (106). Empowerment at this point indicates that she has adopted a unified understanding of her

physical and spiritual self. Her acceptance of her dual nature challenges the disorder contained within Ekwensu and this transformation corresponds to an archetypal hero's development. Through her triumph against Ekwensu Sunny reveals the return of cosmic balance that links physicality with spirituality thus demonstrating the core beliefs of Igbo cosmology which require both dimensions for life harmony. The hero's path Sunny follows reveals how people must learn to live with and accept their spiritual nature to achieve mature development.

The narrative integrates the physical-spiritual world balance which stands central to Igbo cosmology through its characters and its plot structure. The narrative demonstrates this balance through Sunny and her friends' experiences that include both physical situations and supernatural aspects of their Leopard People heritage. Moreover, the narrative shows how spirits and juju create a link between these different realms to demonstrate the relationship between spiritual and physical realms. The process of Sunny discovering her powers gives her the ability to demonstrate core teachings of Igbo cosmology because she learns about the essential need for balance between natural and supernatural forces. Self-discovery combined with facing off against dark forces shows how Igbo spirituality teaches people to respect spiritual elements for achieving personal balance in existence.

Dual Identity Existing Between Interconnected Worlds

Ezekobe's *Mmirinzo* portrays a profound case of dual identity and interconnected worlds. The protagonist, Olivia combines the contemporary elements of practicing as a lawyer in the city with her ancestral roots from Igbo tradition. Olivia achieves a deep expression of this dual nature while she tries to fulfill religious obligations while facing social pressure. Her identity extends far beyond what you can currently envision according to the writer. This is one of the ways the writer immerses the readers into an

understanding the situation where traditional beliefs continue to interact with present-day matters.

Through her exploration of different worlds Olivia demonstrates how her spiritual growth depends on her connection with her community and her ancestors. The narrative emphasizes the importance of seeking guidance from those who share her heritage, as she learns that "there are many of us out there, living our normal lives" (226). Thanks to her strong sense of belonging she grasps both identities while handling the difficult aspects of her life pathway. The communal structure of Igbo spirituality explains that personal identity emerges from how others in community who came before have previously experienced the world. Through honouring her heritage Olivia discovers power in her dual identity because she understands that her personal growth depends on the ancestral wisdom.

Even as the protagonist undergoes her double identity as a lawyer and a rainmaker, she bears the archetype of Campbell's (1949) "threshold figure," where she is caught between two worlds and forced to reconcile them. This archetype is reminiscent of Campbell's concept of the hero's journey, where the protagonist must integrate their disparate selves to achieve wholeness. Through Olivia's journey, Ezekobe critiques cultural exploitation that occurs when traditional beliefs are dismissed or demonized, as seen in the way Pentecostal Christianity sees African traditional spiritual practices as "the ways of the devil" (Tweak 2024:np).

The use of rain as a metaphor in the novelforegrounds the critique of cultural exploitation. Rain, as portrayed in the novel symbolizes the force of tradition and the connection to ancestral spirits, deepening the significance of water spirits in Igbo cosmology (Kanu, 2021). (emphasis mine). Kanu (2013:15) further foregrounds the importance of *MmuoMmiri* (water spirits) as that:

> (she) is a female deity with variant names, and the sustainer of sea life, the bringer of hope, provider of help and protection, the bringer of gifts and exotic things. Indeed, she is said to hold the key to the gate that leads to the world of solutions. Whenever the Igbo pray, he or she does not forget to add *ka uzoanyiburuuzommiri*, which means, "May our journey follow the path of the stream". It is she who guides people to exotic lands, and chooses to permit human beings to travel and reach their destinations on top of the sea.

Ezekobe's use of rain and *MmuoMmiri* (water spirits) as simultaneously natural, cultural, and metaphysical entities refuses the modern Western nature/culture divide and instead stages what Blaser (2013) terms an "ontological conflict that is also a political ontology… where different worlds or stories enact themselves without one having the right to subsume the others." Olivia's declaration "I am one with the rain, it is like my skin" (Ezekobe 224) is not mere metaphor but an enactment of the pluriverse: the modern urban lawyer and the ancestral rainmaker are not successive or contradictory identities but co-existent worlds.

The novel presents a detailed portrayal of Igbo cosmology and spirituality using both dual cultural traditions and interwoven cosmological systems. Olivia reflects the obstacles modern people experience who must balance traditional cultural expectations with their independent desires. It reveals how community ties together with ancestral wisdom and spiritual ties to physical existence when creating individual identity. Olivia in her journey realizes that honouring her heritage supports her goals instead of being an obstacle because it plays a crucial role in her path toward self-realization and strength. This in a way emphasizes how African spirituality continues to guide African people through challenging life experiences by revealing the way to combine dual cultural identities peacefully.

Conclusion

This paper shows that Igbo cosmology is an enduring, dynamic and intellectually strong construct that keeps animating the Nigerian literature. Examining Ike's *The Bottled Leopard*, Okorafor's *Akata Witch*, and Ezekobe's *Mmirinzo,* the study shows that modern day Nigerian writers do not simply preserve the beliefs of their ancestors as fixed artefacts. It actively redefine and re-perform them - using archetypes of the wise elder, the gatekeeper, the dual-self hero - in order to address modern day 21st century issues such as cultural erosion, colonialism and identity fragmentation. It is through the prism of Igbo spiritual axioms that are placed in the myth-critical and Afrocentric interpretative perspectives that these works reestablish cosmological principles as dynamic agents of resistance, self-assertion and pluriversal possibility instead of exotic background factors.

Finally, the continuation of *Chi,* ancestral spirits, *Ala*, water deities, and ritual connectivity in all these works confirms the perseverance of Igbo epistemology and its ability to provide valuable moral, philosophical, and existential directions in an ever-globalised world and the wider project of decolonizing literary criticism and reaffirming the importance of African-centred ways of knowing as the key to cultural survival and transformation.

References

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, C. (1964). *Arrow of God*. London: Heinemann.

Achebe, C. (1975). *Morning yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London: Heinemann.

Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books.

Ezekobe, A. (2018). *Mmirinzo*. Lagos: University Press.

Ifedigbo, S. N. (2022). Dancing in the rain: a review of Achalugo Chioma Ezekobe's Mmirinzo. Retrieved from https://the lag osreview.ng/dancing-in-the-rain-a-review-of-achalugo-chiom a-ezekobes-mmirinzo-sylva-nze-ifedigbo/, on June 14, 2025.

Iwunze-Ibiam, C. (n.d.). Juggling Three Balls: A Review of Mmirinzo by Achalugo. *Creative Writing News*. Retrieved from https://www.creativewritingnews.com/juggling-three-balls-a-review-of-mmirinzo-by-achalugo/, on September 20, 2025.

Ike, C. (1971). *The Bottled Leopard*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.

Jung, C. G. (1976). *Symbols of Transformation* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 5). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.

Mogu, F. (2006). 'The conflict of the West and the centre in Chukwemeka Ike's *The Bottled Leopard'*. *Lwati: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 1.

Nwoga, D. (1984). 'The Supreme God as Stranger in Igbo Religious Thought'. *African EcclesticaticalReview*, 26(3), 171–182.

Obioma, C. (2019). *An Orchestra of Minorities*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Okorafor, N. (2011). *Akata Witch*. New York: Viking Books.

Okri, B. (1991). *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Olaoye, E. O. and Aiyetoro, M. B. (2016). 'Afro-Science Fiction: A Study of Nnedi Okorafor's What Sunny Saw in the Flames and Lagoon'. *Pivot: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies and Thought*, 5(1).

Onyibor, M. I. S. (2012). *Death in Igbo Cosmology: A Hermeneutical Investigation.* Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Uchendu, V. C. (1965). *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Udeala, B. (2007). 'The Igbo and Their Neighbours'. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(2), 115–129.

Udenka, C. O. (2022). 'Modern Challenges and the Preservation of Igbo Omenala'. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 35(2), 112-129.