

The Supernatural and Igbo Cosmology in Chigozie Obioma's *An Orchestra of Minorities*

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Abstract

The corpus of African literature has witnessed the pursuit by writers to project the motif of the supernatural and its connection with mankind, and the results of these attempts are mostly dependent on the relics of culture conjured in the memory of the writer. In this regard, this paper investigates the various manifestations of the supernatural in Chigozie Obioma's *An Orchestra of Minorities* within the Igbo cosmology using the theoretical template of Raymond William's cultural materialism. The paper engages such elements of the supernatural as reincarnation, dual identity, evil spirits, and ancestors, and also highlights how words are aesthetically used in the novel to further amplify the discourse on the supernatural among the Igbos. It reveals that even if humans were to live in constant denial of the supernatural, the inseparable connection between them and what they do not know remains unscathed. Through the Igbo cultural lens, Obioma successfully weaves the fabric of the supernatural through his representation of the inseparable bond between man, his chi, and the Creator.

Keywords: Chi, Cultural Materialism, Igbo Cosmology, Proverbs, Reincarnation, Supernatural

1.1 Introduction

Literary writings across different times and climes may share certain ideologies courtesy of intertextuality and persisting socio-religious and political issues, but they, however, bear certain overt or covert peculiarities that embody the beliefs of the writer and the society from which he emerges or depicts in the work. Although the concept of myth, for instance, taps into the universal consciousness of humanity, it is sundered by the dearth of different mythologies that stretch across the globe. The disparate ideas about the universe and the supernatural are transposed into literature, such that the understanding and representation of the universe in Greek literature that is rooted in its traditional cosmology is different from Egyptian, Roman, Yoruba, and Igbo literatures, among others. One popular reference is highlighted by Parker (2021, p.55) who admits that 'Old English literature — prose and poetry alike — is full of cosmological references. These do not form a single cosmological model, but rather testify to a plethora of divergent theories'. The references in Old English Literature do not coalesce into one unified understanding of the universe but rather demonstrate the presence of a plenitude of divergent theories that put forward multiple explanations of the cosmos.

Accordingly, a single national literature can encompass a variety of beliefs and interpretations about the nature of the universe, rather than adhering to a cosmological model. Literature, therefore, serves as evidence of this diverse range of cosmological thoughts within that specific time and place. In the words of Onyibor (2012, p.36), 'The concept of the world whether sensible or supra-sensible held by a people in a given culture has a vital influence on their attitude to and evaluation of life and death'. This vital influence is not only evinced in how people evaluate life and death but also in how they represent the supernatural in literary texts. Within the African worldview, the supernatural is one predominant aspect that has gained prominence and importance from antiquity and has propelled the proliferation of discourse on the extramundane by many writers. According to Ojiakor and Ezenwamadu (2018, p.197):

From the pre-colonial Africa to the contemporary, an African has always recognised and has also tried to strike a balance between what he knows and what he does not know; that is, things natural and things mysterious. The African man, even before the advent of external influence, had begun to order his world so that he would find harmony in it.

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The duo's position signals the fact that ideas about the supernatural precedes imperial rule in Africa — what accompanied the Western missionaries at the dawn of colonisation was not the conception of the supernatural but a different way of conceiving it.

Thus, a core characteristic of African cultures is a recognition of and attempt to reconcile the known and the unknown, the natural and the mysterious, and the pursuit to balance between the tangible and the intangible reflects a desire for harmony and order within their world. Why people revere discourse on the supernatural has remained arcane to many, and this is captured by Rossignol et al. (2022) who aver that the effects of the belief in the supernatural remain unclear, especially within the context of African traditional beliefs. They further state that 'Some have hypothesized that these beliefs are beneficial and help to sustain cooperative behavior in a setting where the state is often absent. Others have documented that, inconsistent with this argument, such beliefs are negatively associated with economic and social wellbeing' (2022). In African literary texts spanning from Achebe's first classic to Obioma's *An Orchestra of Minorities* and beyond, the belief in the supernatural helps enforce rules and maintain order, as shared beliefs in supernatural forces and moral codes incentivize prosocial behavior and discourage actions that disrupt communal life.

The striving by the pre-colonial man to understand what lies beyond the physical was not for the sheer creation of a synergy between knowns and unknowns but to also establish 'a spiritual hierarchy which reveals a cunning understanding of natural phenomena and a clever talent for manipulating them toward good for himself and evil for his enemies' (Awoonor, 1975, p.11), such that:

By the light of his own logic, the African assigns to the creator God a certain degree of distance and inapproachability, not because he considers him unconcerned, but rather because he thinks of him in his primal ancestral role as the supreme paterfamilias who must not be bothered with petty details of the universe. He, himself, appoints lieutenants and assistants who become overseers and guardians of various natural phenomena and faculties. These minor deities are the recipients of sacrifices and messages for the creator God (Awoonor, p.18).

African cognition, according to Awoonor, positions the Supreme Being as a remote, yet not indifferent, figure. This remoteness stems from a conceptualisation of this Deity as the ultimate ancestor, a patriarch whose elevated status precludes involvement in mundane earthly affairs. Instead, God delegates authority to subordinate divinities who then manage specific aspects of nature and human experience.

The lesser deities act as intermediaries, receiving offerings and communications intended for the distant Creator, effectively managing the day-to-day operations of the cosmos on the High God's behalf. This hierarchy is also extant among the Igbos and is reverberated by Ogugua (2003, p.9) who asserts that the Igbo worldview encompasses a cosmos populated not only by humans and inanimate objects but also by spirits, one structured hierarchically, with beings ranked according to their inherent vital force or life energy. In lucid terms, these strata feature 'the spiritual or ontological level; Ancestral level and the Human level' (Onwuatuegwu, 2021, p.26). The belief in the concurrent existence of the natural and supernatural worlds by Africans as indicated in Awoonor's contention is further split by such questions as who the guardians of the natural world are, where they reside, their order of command, and mode of operation. However, this paper interrogates these questions from an Igbo cosmological perspective using Chigozie Obioma's *An Orchestra of Minorities* where the supernatural beliefs of South-Eastern Nigerians aid the critique of the aforementioned novel.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of the supernatural and Igbo cosmology in this paper is anchored on cultural materialism 'developed in recent years by Raymond Williams' (Neale, 1984, p.199). Cultural materialism, as a literary theory, emphasises the connection between literature and the material conditions of its production and consumption. This theoretical model is linked to Marxism because it draws heavily on Marx's theories of historical materialism and the base-superstructure model, and also linked with New Historicism because they 'share a common preoccupation with the relationship between literature and history, and share an understanding of texts of all kinds as both products and functional components of social and political formations' (Brannigan, 1998, p.3). In this regard, cultural materialism rejects the idea of literary texts as existing in isolation, instead viewing them as embedded within specific historical contexts. This shared perspective leads to a common understanding of all texts — literary, historical, or otherwise — as being simultaneously products of their time and active agents within their social and political milieux.

One of the major points of departure of cultural materialism from Marxism is underscored by Williams (1977, p.80) who posits that 'What is fundamentally lacking, in the theoretical formulations of this important period (the classic period of marxism) is any adequate recognition of the indissoluble connections between material production, political and cultural institutions and activity, and consciousness'. Williams contested

Marxism's perceived inadequacy in addressing the relationship between material production, socio-political structures, cultural activity, and human consciousness. He argued that classical Marxism, particularly in its more deterministic interpretations, tended to oversimplify the relationship between the base and the superstructure. Williams contended that this model often portrayed the superstructure as a mere reflection or consequence of the economic base, neglecting the active role that culture and consciousness play in contouring social and historical processes. According to Brannigan, 'For cultural materialist critics ideology works in language and our deployment of language, but more than this, ideology exists in a material form through institutions like the church, the school, the theatre, the university and the museum' (p.12). Therefore, cultural materialist critics understand ideology as operating not only within linguistic structures and their usage but also as embodied in tangible social structures.

These critics argue that ideological frameworks are not just abstract concepts but are concretised through established organisations such as religious institutions, educational systems, performance spaces, centres of higher learning, and places of cultural preservation. These entities become vehicles for propagating and reinforcing dominant belief systems and power relations within society. Although 'there are no strict methodologies, rules, axioms or techniques which we are compelled to use or apply when reading texts from new historicist or cultural materialist perspectives' (Brannigan, p.132), they are steeped in 'the process by which a society organises and produces its own ideological and material practices through representations embedded in texts of all kinds' (p.132). The core idea is that texts, as earlier pinpointed, including literary works like Obioma's novel, do not exist in a vacuum but are products of specific social, historical, and cultural contexts and, in turn, contribute to shaping those contexts. *An Orchestra of Minorities* as a novel rooted in Igbo culture and cosmology accommodates beliefs about the supernatural, the role of ancestors, the concept of chi (personal god), and the interaction between the human and spirit worlds. How the dominant ideology of the Igbos within intercourse on the supernatural is reified and sustained in Obioma's second novel is the business of this paper using Williams's cultural materialism.

1.3 Igbo Supernatural Cosmology in *An Orchestra of Minorities*

Within the context of Igbo cosmology, Achebe avers that 'In a general way, we may visualize a person's chi as his other identity in spiritland — his spirit being complementing his terrestrial human being; for nothing can stand alone, there must always be another thing standing beside it' (quoted in Obioma, 2019, p.8). This is corroborated by DibiaNjokwuji of Nkpa who confirms that:

Even though humans exist on the earth in material form, they harbor a chi and an onyeuwa because of the universal law which demands that where one thing stands, another must stand beside it, and thus compels the duality of all things. It is also the basic principle on which the Igbo concept of reincarnation stands (Obioma, p.8).

It is deduced here that every human has a dual identity: the human body which is seen and a chi which remains unseen to the human eye. In the novel, the significance of the chi cannot be overemphasised. Remarkably, it is the chi of the protagonist, Chinonso, who narrates the whole story.

The novel opens with the chi's address to Chukwu (God): 'OBASIDINELU, I stand before you here in the magnificent court of Bechukwu, in Eluigwe, the land of eternal, luminous light, where the perpetual song of the flute serenades the air' (p.13). The Supreme Deity is associated with creation and is revered with many names which the chi recounts: 'You are the creator of the universe, patron of the four days — Eke, Ori, Afor, and Nkwo that make up the Igbo week — To you the old fathers ascribed names and honorifics too numerous to count: Chukwu, Egbunu, Oseburuwa, Ezeuwa, Ebubedike, Gaganaogwu, Agujiegbe, Obasidinelu, Agbatta-Alumalu, Ijango- ijango, Okaaome, Akwaakwuru, and many more' (p.14). From a cultural materialist perspective, Igbo cosmology and religious beliefs are entwined with the material and social establishment of Igbo society. The invocation of God as the creator of the universe establishes a foundational belief in a Supreme Being, a common element in many cultures. However, the specific connection to the four days that make up the Igbo week demonstrates how this spiritual belief is integrated into the practical, everyday rhythms of Igbo life. The week, a rudimentary unit of time organisation that structures economic activities, social gatherings, and ritual practices, is directly linked to the divine.

The integration indicates that religious beliefs are not separate from the material world but are embedded within its structure. Where God resides — Eluigwe, the land of eternal luminous light — is made known at the beginning of the novel. Asouzu (2004, p.146) submits that 'Supreme Being Chukwu is undoubtedly the ultimate in the hierarchy of supernatural forces and spirits... various other lower spirits and forces are at the service of this Supreme spiritual entity'. For the Igbos, the natural and the supernatural are not as distinct as they appear but intermingle across different levels, a reason Ekwunife (1990, p.18) maintains that the:

Igbo world is principally a world of two interacting Realities — the spiritual and material, each impinging on the other. It is both the world of spiritual beings and the world of man with other

animate and inanimate beings. In this world, the material mirrors the Sacred in different degrees. Though homocentric (man-centered) in practice, yet it finds its ultimate meaning in Transcendence.

The visible, empirical world is, accordingly, not self-contained but rather reflects or embodies aspects of the sacred or spiritual world. One of the lower spirits at the service of Chukwu is a chi, one that is constrained when in its host body. In there, it becomes 'nearly impossible to see or hear what is present or spoken in the supernatural realm. But when one exits one's host, one becomes privy to things beyond the realm of man' (Obioma, p.29).

Like in classical Greek tragedies where the fate of man is predetermined by the gods, Obioma, through the protagonist's chi, affirms that 'the ill luck that has befallen a man has long been waiting for him in the middle of some road, on a highway, or on some field of battle, biding its time' (p.30). Here, misfortune is not merely random or accidental but a preordained occurrence destined to happen at a specific point, a concept that aligns with the view that fate is an external force or destiny that is beyond human control. Chis communicate with each other as first observed when Chinonso, the protagonist, meets Ndali, his wife, a second time. After their conversation which bordered around the genuineness of the intentions of their hosts, Chinonso's chi says he shall return with the message to comfort his host. Obioma affirms the existence of a domain which exists between the living and dead known as Alandiichie. The existence of this domain is further confirmed by the moonlight song often sung by old mothers and their daughters in Igbo communities:

Alandiichie
A place where the dead are alive
A place where there are no tears
A place where there is no hunger
A place I will go in the end (p.271).

In this domain, great heroes and heroines long dead are present, some of which include the great Onye-nka, sculptor of the face of ancestral spirits (p.271) and 'Oyadinma Oyiridiya, the great dancer, who was synonymous with the saying at the pleasure of gazing at her waist, we slaughter a goat' (p.272). This aligns with Metuh's (1991, p.120) submission that 'Ancestors are, therefore, people who have made it to the spirit-land and are being venerated by their descendants'.

The belief in reincarnation is a significant part of the Igbo cosmology. For Nwala (1985, p.47), death is 'a transformation from this life to the yonder world with the possibility of reincarnation'. He adds that 'for an old man, there is a great need for proper burial to ensure that he lives well and happily in the spirit world, that he reincarnates into another life without any problems' (p.47). From this point of view, Obioma explains several phenomena and why they happen, including reincarnation, addressing why a child frowns at a man it has never seen before:

Do you ever wonder why a newborn child sees a particular individual for the first time and from that moment develops hatred for that person without cause?... It is often because the child may have identified that individual as an enemy in some past existence, and it an enemy in some past existence, and it might be that the child has returned to the world in their sixth, seventh, or even eighth cycle of reincarnation to settle an ancient score (p.8)!

Through a cultural materialist lens, the revelation here is how beliefs about reincarnation and pre-existing relationships are used to explain social dynamics and justify existing power structures within the community. The idea that a newborn child's inexplicable hatred for someone stems from a past life connects present social interactions to a spiritual order, making the belief system to discourage questioning or challenging existing social hierarchies by attributing present conflicts to past lives.

The chi says that 'sometimes, too, a thing or an event can reincarnate during a lifetime. This is why you find a man who once owned something but loses it may find himself in possession of something similar years later' (p.8). The belief in reincarnation can then be used to justify existing inequalities since someone born into wealth and power can be interpreted as a reward for virtuous behaviour in a past life, while those born into poverty or suffering are seen as reaping the consequences of past transgressions. This creates a system of justification for the status quo, making it less likely for individuals to oppose the established social order. Using the existence of evil spirits that roam the earth, Obioma also explains why some people run mad. These spirits are commonly found where many people gather, especially in markets, as affirmed by Chinonso's chi: 'The market was also the one human gathering that attracted the most vagrant spirits — akaliogolis, amosu, tricksters, and various vagabond discarnate beings' (p.16). Narrating one of its encounters with evil spirits, the chi says that it (*akaliogoli*) once possessed the dead body of a dog, managing, by 'some alchemical means, to stir this carrion to life and make it amble a few steps before leaving the dog to lie dead again in the grass. It was a fearful sight' (p.16).

Some of the evil spirits even sometimes try to overpower a present chi, or ones who have gone out to consult on behalf of their hosts, and ‘This is why we have the mentally ill, the epileptic, men with abominable passions, murderers of their own parents and others’ (p.16)! Erupting from the portal of cultural materialism is the intellection that by crediting these afflictions to external spiritual forces, the Igbo belief system explains phenomena that might be difficult to understand or control. This shifts focus away from individual responsibility or inherent flaws and places it within a spiritual context, thereby reducing stigma or blame directed at the afflicted individual. The belief in evil spirits and their power to influence human lives subtly reinforces the authority of religious figures who are believed to have the ability to interact with the spirit world and offer protection or remedies. It is not tangential to meaningful interpretation to say that this strengthens the social and economic power of these individuals within the community.

The belief in gut feelings is subverted in the Igbo cosmology. Highlighting the significance of the chi, the author pinpoints that chis do not interfere in every affair of their hosts — they allow humans to execute their will. Instead of interfering directly in man’s affairs, chis ‘simply put the thought in his mind’ (p.19), what is called gut feeling or intuition outside the Igbo worldview. Man always thinks that the voice of his chi originates from him because he ‘has no way to distinguish between what has been put into his thoughts by a spirit — even if it is his own chi — from what has been suggested to him by the voice of his head’ (p.28). The lines that would naturally disjoin the physical from the metaphysical, the self and the spirit, are blurred, the implication being that the chi is not an entirely external entity but rather a part of the individual’s inner being or consciousness. Obioma also explains how people are born with gifts which they call talent. Before childbirth, it is believed that the spirit of a child chooses one gift in the great garden of Chiokike. It is in this garden that the *onyeumas* (avatars/incarnate spirits) often go to find a gift that had returned there from people who had died unfortunately through accidents and prematurely through miscarriages. The protagonist’s chi says:

Before he was born, while he was yet in Beigwe in the form of his onyeuwa and we were traveling together to begin the fusion of flesh and spirit to form his human component (an account which I will render in detail in the course of my testimony), we made the customary journey to the great garden of Chiokike (p.122).

Within this garden, Chinonso’s *onyeuma* unearths a bone, an act interpreted by his chi as a portent of future success dependent on his perseverance.

As earlier posited, cultural materialist critics understand ideology as one that also operates within linguistic structures and their usage. The Igbo society thrives on the artistic use of words which also convey their beliefs of the natural and supernatural worlds, and Achebe (1958, p.3) affirms this when he says that among the Igbo, ‘the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palmoil with which words are eaten’ (3). Nwoga’s (1981) explication of a proverb as a concise, figurative statement that expresses a piece of traditional wisdom applicable to a specific circumstance infers that proverbs are not said for their sake but are agents of wisdom and truth. Some of the proverbs deployed by Obioma in his novel are accompanied by their meanings. The protagonist’s chi says, for instance: ‘... I am here because the old fathers say that we bring only the blade sharp enough to cut the firewood to the forest. If a situation deserves exigent measures, then one must give it that’ (p.14). While addressing the council of Bechukwu, the narrator says that ‘to get to the top of a hill, one must begin from its foot. I have come to understand that the life of a man is a race from one end to the other. That which came before is a corollary to that which follows it’ (p.22). This proverb spotlights the idea that past experiences are directly related to and influence subsequent events, implying a cause-and-effect relationship between different stages of life.

In Igbo cosmology, ancestors occupy a crucial position as intermediaries between the living and the spiritual realm. They are not simply deceased individuals but active participants in the lives of their descendants, influencing their fortunes and providing guidance. This connection to the ancestors is entrenched in Igbo proverbs which often invoke, with anonymity, their wisdom, experiences, and authority to convey important cultural values and moral lessons. The wisdom of the ancestors is seen in the proverb: ‘IJANGO-IJANGO, the great fathers often say that a child does not die because his mother’s breast is empty of milk’ (p.44). This means that man is conditioned to always fight for survival no matter how gory his reality is, for when one door closes, it is believed that another one opens. To underscore man’s endurance in a cruel world, it is said that ‘no matter the weight of grief, nothing can compel the eyes to shed tears of blood. No matter how long a person weeps, only tears continue to fall. A man may remain in the state of grief for a long time, but he will eventually grow out of it’ (p.33). This affirms the resilient nature of the Igbo spirit, its capacity to endure hardship, and its ultimate ability to find healing and renewal.

With emphasis on how people achieve what they desire, in line with the occasion at which it is said, the narrative voice declares: ‘The wise fathers in their cautionary wisdom say that whichever position the dancer takes,

the flute will accompany him there' (p.75), for the chi's host that evening had received what he wanted — that Ndali come to him — 'But he had achieved it by protest and dictated the tune of the flutist' (p.75). Another proverb goes thus: 'The ndiichie say that if a wall does not bear a hole in it, lizards cannot enter a house. Even if a man is troubled, if he does not become broken, he can sustain himself' (p.83). In this case, a man must guard against breaking down, for it is then that the weariness of life sets in. Commenting on the unpredictability and ephemerality of life, it is stated 'That the life of a man is anchored on a swivel. It can spin this way or that way, and a person's life can change in significant ways in an instant' (p.104). This proverb foregrounds the tragedy in the novel before its manifestation. The Igbos believe that 'a mouse cannot run into an empty mousetrap in broad daylight unless it has been drawn to the trap by something it could not refuse' (p.107); an unusual thing does not happen *ex nihilo*, but that there is a cause for it.

Making reference to a proverb that has apparently been nullified due to the rapid evolution that has engulfed humanity, the protagonist's chi says:

No matter how much a man leaps, he cannot fly. They should consider why the fathers said this before shaking their heads and thinking of the wise fathers as ignorant. Why? Because a man is not a bird. But the children see something like the plane and they are shocked at how this wisdom has been upended by the White Man's sorcery. Humans fly every day in various shapes (p.160).

When examined from a cultural materialist standpoint, this proverb reveals the antagonism between traditional Igbo knowledge and the impact of colonial encounters and technological advancements. The initial statement rooted in man's inability to fly irrespective of how much he leaps embodies a core principle of Igbo cosmology: the inherent limitations of human nature within the natural order. This capsule of wisdom as passed down from the ancestors reflects an understanding of the world based on direct observation and empirical experience. This is because, humans, unlike birds, lack the physical attributes necessary for flight. However, the arrival of the White man's sorcery (airplane) challenges this piece of wisdom, resulting in a cognitive dissonance among children who, with the knowledge of the proverb intact in their minds, now witness humans 'fly' in various shapes. Their traditional understanding of the world is confronted by a technological advancement that seems to defy natural laws. The airplane is not only a technological object but a product of specific material conditions and power structures associated with colonialism, representing the technological and economic dominance of the colonisers which now has an impact on Igbo culture and belief systems.

The proverb's internal conflict between the wisdom of the fathers and the apparent contradiction posed by the airplane accentuates the disruption of traditional knowledge systems under colonialism. The children are faced with a choice: either dismiss the wisdom of their ancestors as ignorant in the face of this new technology, or find a way to reconcile it with their existing worldview. The proverb's emphasis on the importance of considering the forefathers' original intent favours understanding and interpretation beyond a superficial reading over outright rejection of tradition. The airplane influences both the physical terrain and the ideological sphere of Igbo society, forcing a re-evaluation of traditional knowledge and igniting debate about the nature of power and cultural identity. The proverb, therefore, is not just about the impossibility of human flight; it is about the encounter between two different worldviews, one grounded in traditional Igbo cosmology and the other shaped by Western technological and colonial dominance. It substantiates how material changes brought about by colonialism can transform existing belief systems and cultural practices.

The ancestors argue that 'a toad whose mouth is full of water cannot swallow even an ant' (p.173). This is applied to how a man's mind works, for 'when it is occupied by something that threatens its peace, [it] becomes consumed by it' (p.173). To affirm the authenticity of what people call 'suspicion', Chinonso's chi says: 'OSIMIRIATAATA, indeed, as the fathers of old said, a fish that has gone bad would be known from the smell of its head. I had begun to suspect by this time that what had befallen my host was what he and I most feared' (p.194). The short-sightedness of man as compared to gods and dibias who are bestowed with the gift of seeing/telling the future is emphasised in the saying that 'a mouse cannot knowingly enter into a trap set for it' (p.204). This is because 'no one sees fire and throws himself in it. But such a man may walk into a pit of fire if he did not see that it is there. Why? Because a human being is limited in sight' (p.204). In an attempt to portray the complexity of life, it is said: 'EBUBEDIKE, the old fathers in their cautionary wisdom say that the same place one visits and returns to is often the place where one goes and becomes trapped' (p.268). Chinonso's chi explains that its host had found relief in the White woman, but this same place where he had 'found succor is where he now lay, wounded and bleeding, blinded by his own blood' (p.268). The people acknowledge the fact that one thing can simultaneously be a source for both the comic and the tragic.

1.4 Conclusion

In Igbo cosmology, the supernatural is an almost indispensable factor that cannot be evaded because it is noticeably connected to the belief system of people. As Obiechina (1975) contends, ‘Whether in folklore or mythology, in their symbolism and figures of languages, in their religious and magical beliefs, they [Africans] have a total view of the universe soon as a continuum and a perpetual flow of being and experience comprehending the visible and invisible universe, the world of nature and supernatural, and the living and the dead’ (p.131). This presents a holistic African worldview that emphasises the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence. As an appendage of a plethora of African cultures, the Igbos share a common understanding of the universe as a unified and continuous entity that rejects the sharp Western distinctions often made between separate realms of existence. In the cosmology of the South-Eastern region of Nigeria exists a dynamic and interconnected reality where boundaries between different categories are fluid and permeable. This concept of a ‘continuum’ projected by Obiechina bridges the chasm between the visible and invisible universe as manifested in Obioma’s *An Orchestra of Minorities*. In this light, Obioma successfully weaves his novel in a way that connects the Supreme Deity with his subordinates and all other supernatural entities, maintaining this connection through his representation of the inseparable bond between man, his chi, and the Creator.

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