

Annotated bibliography on masculinity in world literature



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Akingbe, Niyi, and Christopher Babatunde Ogunyemi. "Countering Masculinity: Chinua

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the Rise of Feminist Assertiveness in the Novels of

Nigerian Female Writers." *Studia Universitatis Petru Maior – Philologia*, no. 22, Jan.

2017, pp. 81–93.

This article is two-fold. While the authors do not debate that Achebe's novel was patriarchal in nature, the first part of the article highlights the importance of particular female characters in the book who were people in their own right without their association with a man. Akingbe and Ogunyemi discuss an analysis of several female characters in the novel and their contributions to the culture and Igbo clan. Among these women are Ekwefi, Ezinma, Chielo, and Ojuigo (Okonkwo's youngest wife). These female characters are given some assertive qualities and not always viewed as subservient to men. The second part of the article gives a compare and contrast with explanations as to why the women in Achebe's novel differ from those in Nigerian female writers' who focus more on female characters in their novels and whose purpose it is to counter the notion of masculinity. This article shows a progression of the development of female characters in novels as they become less dependent upon men and corresponds with the development of women in the modern world. The premise behind the difference between Achebe's novel and those of more modern-day female Nigerian writers is basic but strong. This article promises to fill in the gaps

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between subservient female characters and those who have vital roles in the family and society. Nigerian female writers have given their female characters the assertiveness they feel is necessary for combating the overbearing nature of men in contemporary Nigeria.

Ahmad, Naveed, and Tanveer Baig. " Construction of Masculinities through Stereotypical

Masculine Attributes in *Things Fall Apart* " *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* , vol. 35, no. 2, July 2015, pp. 557-571. *EBSCOhost*.

Using the character of Okonkwo, Ahmad and Baig define what it means to be masculine in pre-colonial Nigeria according to Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* . As the traits of masculinity are listed and detailed with evidence from the text, the contrast between being masculine and being womanly or feminine is also emphasized. Whereas Okonkwo is masculine for having bravery, he worries about his clan who has become soft like women. Okonkwo is masculine because he beats his wives and children, especially his oldest son whom he considers too soft and feminine. Okonkwo is successful because he is a warrior and has prosperity, meaning he is masculine; however, his father was weak and a failure, meaning he was feminine. Women are only considered important in as much as they can contribute to the masculinity of their men (e. g. the more wives a man has, the more prosperous he is). This article sets a baseline for the research of what it means to be masculine and is in direct contrast to other literature and research that shows women, not as masculine, but as people in their own right with worthwhile contributions to the pre-colonial Nigerian society.

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Anyokwu, Christopher. " Re-Imagining Gender in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* ." *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies: A Journal of Criticism and Theory* , vol. 12, no. 2, 2011, pp. 16–31. *EBSCOhost*.

Anyokwu discusses what it means to be masculine but also emphasizes not only what it

means to be feminine but also how modern day femininity is preferable to the antiquated ideas of what it takes to create and maintain a successful society. In pre-colonial Nigeria, the Igbo culture valued brawn over mothering protectiveness and nurturing. In today's more technologically advanced society, there is a greater need for intellectual insight and creativity, which are often thought of as female characteristics. In light of this use for feminine attributes to effectively transform and progress society, many of the characters in *Things Fall Apart* can be re-interpreted. Okonkwo remains as masculine as ever; however, other characters such as Obierika can be seen for both masculine and feminine characteristics. This article takes the notion of the progression of the female character in literature one step further. While female characters in *Things Fall Apart* are looked at through the lens of this re-interpretation, male characters are also looked at for their feminine attributes that provide a much needed contrast and balance to the masculine character of Okonkwo. In contrast to literature that maintains that the women of the Igbo culture played a more prominent role in society than that of servants to men, and in contrast to Nigerian female writers who write about women endowed with more assertiveness than the

women of Achebe, Anyokwu shows the reader that feminine characteristics are not only valued in the Igbo culture but can be found in male characters.

Bekler, Ecevit. “ The True Face of Pre-Colonial Africa in ‘ *Things Fall Apart* .’”

Respectus

Philologicus, Iss 25 (30), Pp 96-104 (2014) , no. 25 (30), 2014, p. 96.

In this article, which is an accurate and relevant analysis of *Things Fall Apart* , Bekler emphasizes that Achebe set out to right a wrong. His goal was to inform the misinformed about what pre-colonial life in Africa was really like. Achebe does not glamorize the tribe in his book; he merely enlightens his readers from the point of view of someone who has a reason to tell the truth about the history of his people. Before his novel was written, the history of Africa and its people had been written by white men who were not in a position to know or understand the truth of the daily life, customs, beliefs, ceremonies, etc. of the pre-colonial Africans. Achebe does not propose that these African people were civilized, but he does show that they had their own traditions and culture, which is not necessarily as primitive and negative as is shown in history and literature from the one-sided view of the colonizers. This article supports the analysis of *Things Fall Apart* from other sources (articles, videos, documentaries, etc.) in that it shows Achebe as a man with a mission to convey reality – not sugar coat it – but to educate readers and eliminate prejudice against pre-colonial African tribes. Bekler is in agreement with many of the discussions and arguments that have been presented in other sources about several components of the characters, plot, and the author’s purpose for writing the novel. He is also in agreement

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about the role of women in the Igbo culture – property of men, subordinated to men in their culture and to the British colonizers, and legally allowed to be treated violently by them.

Dar, Iftikhar, et al. “ Gender Stratification in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* .” *New Horizons*

(1992-4399) , vol. 11, no. 2, July 2017, pp. 17–32.

Dar maintains that history has mostly viewed women as subordinate. This article offers a detailed view of gender classification of the Igbo Society in *Things Fall Apart* as it existed before colonization and reveals surprising arrangements that existed in the supposedly illiterate Igbo Society to maintain gender harmony. Dar conducted a study through an analysis of the plot and most especially the female characters of the novel to show that although the society was no doubt patriarchal in nature, the women were not as subordinate or without power as history perceived them. Dar cites several examples of characters in the novel who have special status in domestic life, spiritual status in society, and even some administrative and political positions. Dar’s article follows the trend in literature that pre-colonial African women were not as downtrodden and helpless as many are led to believe. He shows that Achebe has actually portrayed female characters as having more power than a completely patriarchal society would allow. The article does a good job convincing the reader that pre-colonial Nigerian women were essential to the survival and prosperity of the tribe.

Ejikeme, Anene. "The Women of Things Fall Apart, Speaking from a Different Perspective:

Chimamanda Adichie's Headstrong Storytellers." *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2017, pp. 307-329. Ohio LINK Electronic Journal Center, rave. ohiolink.edu/ejournals/article/349614146.

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's short story "The Headstrong Historian," the reader is taken back to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Adichie's "The Headstrong Historian" is a woman's perspective on the Igbo encounter with the European conquest of colonization. In contrast to the somewhat subservient and placid women in Achebe's novel, Adichie looks at women in the Igbo culture from a woman's point of view and sees their boldness and role in battling the Europeans. By taking the reader back to the historical setting of *Things Fall Apart* and presenting a story whose main characters are women and telling the story from their perspectives, Adichie forces readers to recognize that there is not one single story of the Igbo past. Adichie directly shows readers her view that they should not be surprised to find that the narratives told by men and women are different. Adichie uses the work of historians and social scientists to create a work of historical fiction in the tradition of Igbo women who challenged British colonial rule as well as Igbo men. This article shows a contrast of how women of the Igbo culture were perceived by men and women during the same period of history. It will fill in the gaps that were present in *Things Fall Apart* by showing the perspective of similar events from a woman's point of view. It will also take the stronger and more prominent characters from Achebe's

novel one step further as Adichie delves into the Igbo women's role in history that was quite different from only serving men.

Nasser, Merun. "Achebe and His Women: A Social Science Perspective."

Africa Today, vol. 27,

no. 3, 1980, pp. 21-28. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4185940.

In her article, Nasser admits that her purpose is to dispute the portrayal of women in Achebe's novels as she believes that women are portrayed as subservient and not in a complementary role to men when this is not the reality of women in Africa. She mentions the economic role of women and the growth of female characters through the eyes of female writers and more progressive male writers. However, she maintains that Achebe has not joined the ranks of writers who portray women accurately. Achebe has all male main characters who are the heroes, and women are all subservient to men, according to Nasser. She mentions Okonkwo and how he is "allowed" to beat his wives, and no other woman can do anything about it except to complain. She gives more details from *Things Fall Apart* as well as other novels written by Achebe, but in each, she reiterates that Achebe has not truthfully told the story of African women as they really were. This article will fit in nicely with an analysis of the way Achebe portrayed women, the correctness or lack thereof of Nasser's claims, and the progression of the female characters in African writing from other points of view.

Osei-Nyame, Kwadwo, Jr. "Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and

Tradition in *Things Fall Apart* ." *Research in African Literatures* , vol. 30, no. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 148-164. *EBSCOhost* , doi: 10. 2979/RAL. 1999. 30. 2. 148.

Osei-Nyame analyzes *Things Fall Apart* from the standpoint of Achebe's attempt to clarify that pre-colonial Nigeria was not primitive or without any history. This article's emphasis is on the masculinity that is rampant throughout the novel, in his opinion. Heroes and people with titles are always male. Power and authority are only associated with masculinity. Osei-Nyame maintains that Achebe accomplishes this portrayal of masculine superiority through the character of Okonkwo. Yams are even male, according to this article. However, Osei-Nyame does mention some of the more prominent female characters in the book and how they gain status. This article will be a good companion to others that focus on the men of Achebe's novel but do give some credit to the women who play an important role as well.