



SEXUAL/TEXTUAL POLITICS: REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER IN ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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Abstract

This paper looks at the textual representations of gender in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through analyzing structural and linguistic devices, which, we argue, are emblematic of the macro-structures of African society. Research in the 90s brought forth parallel readings of Achebe's novel focusing on the undercurrents of mother lore in an overtly patriarchal narrative, while also looking at the text as an ethno-text envisaging the ideological and political struggles of African society. Notwithstanding such alternative readings of Achebe's meta-narrative, we illustrate through quantification of the textual data, by looking at the frequency of occurrence of certain linguistic items, such as generic and specific male and female nouns and pronouns, and similes and metaphors, how the text re-enacts the macro-structures of Igbo society, thereby linking the politics of textual representation to the broader socio-political formations, institutions, and structures in Africa. We contend that the use of such discrete linguistic items and certain textual devices, such as repetitions and openings of chapters, are not random, but have deeper linkages with the power struggles within African cultural politics, and, that the politics of male-centric discourse as envisaged by feminist linguists (Spender, Woolf, Showalter, Moi) is central in shaping our gendered worldviews.

Keywords

Representations; sexual politics; structure; Okonkwo; naming; patriarchy