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Samrand Avestan  
no.email@avail.able

Owen G. Mordaunt  
University of Nebraska at Omaha, omordaunt@unomaha.edu

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# Article

## The “Roaring Flame”: Pursuing *Thymos* in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*

Samrand Avestan\* and Owen G. Mordaunt†

*Drawing principally from Francis Fukuyama’s (1952–) conception of thymos, this article focuses on exploring Okonkwo’s desire and his rigid personality in Chinua Achebe’s (1930–2013) magnum opus titled Things Fall Apart (1958). This paper hopes to prove how Achebe’s most famous character, Okonkwo, attempts to gratify his thymos which is described as a ‘desire for recognition’. Consistent with Fukuyama’s notion, this research examines how Okonkwo struggles to gain his thymos in confrontation with Ibo people and how his thymos-driven emotions incite him to reject the white colonists’ dominance in the fictional clan of Umuofia in Iboland. Therefore, we argue why Okonkwo’s self-willed personality and his ambivalent desire towards his clan’s values and the white man’s presence feature him as a “thymotic man” or the “man of anger.” Ultimately, this article demonstrates that Okonkwo rebels against the white colonists’ alleged injustice to satisfy his thymos and be “unbeatable.”*

### INTRODUCTION

The setting of *Things Fall Apart* occurs during the 1890s in the fictional clan of Umuofia in Nigeria and portrays the gradual fall of Ibo’s traditional culture as an aftermath of the white colonizers’ arrival. Applying a periphrastic style of storytelling, Achebe’s *Things*

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\* Samrand Avestan is on the Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran.

† Owen. G. Mordaunt is professor of English in the Department of English, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

*Fall Apart* describes Ibo culture and emotions to the outside world. More pointedly, the novel centers around Okonkwo’s quasi rhapsodic life and his struggles for recognition that has been illustrated in his desire to take “the fourth and the highest” title of the land, which is so precious in terms of value, and is ultimately achieved by one or two men in any generation (Achebe 1994: 123). In brief, *Things Fall Apart* can be described as a clash between Okonkwo and whoever is not allied with Okonkwo. In addition to Ian Glenn,<sup>1</sup> Patrick C. Nnoromele,<sup>2</sup> Imafedia Okhamafe,<sup>3</sup> Roselyne M. Jua,<sup>4</sup> Ndiawar Sarr,<sup>5</sup> and Frank Salamone<sup>6</sup> who thematically explore Okonkwo’s heroic flaw and masculinity, this research aims to extend Richard Begam’s brief statement in *Achebe’s Sense of an Ending: History and Tragedy in ‘Things Fall Apart’* (1997) that states: Okonkwo as a “man of action” is “excessive both in high spiritedness [*thymos*] [...] and in his prideful arrogance [*hybris*]”(400). In this study, however, Okonkwo’s heroic passions will be X-rayed through the lens of Francis Fukuyama’s notion of *thymos*.<sup>7</sup>

Qua semantics, *thymos* (ΘΥΜΟΣ) is a Greek polysemic word and its English dictionary meanings according to *Liddell and Scott’s Unabridged Greek-English Lexicon* (1901) include a range of different expressions from “soul, spirit, as the principle of life, feeling and thought, especially of strong feeling and passion [to] mind, temper, will [...] spirit, courage [...] [and] the seat of anger” (685–86). Shirley D. Sullivan’s argues that *thymos* is associated with many signified emotional concepts such as “[...] anger, courage, desire, hope, love, pain, and passion. Of these, anger is most prominent” (2000: 69). Likewise, Jan N. Bremmer cites that *thymos* is “the source of emotions. Friendship and feelings of revenge, joy and grief, anger and fea- all spring from *thymos*” (1983: 54). In the *Republic*, based on Socrates’ dialogue, Plato concludes that the human soul is basically a combination of three parts, namely, “a desiring part [*eros*], a reasoning part [*logos*] and a part that he called *thymos*” (Fukuyama 2006: xvi). In his most famous book titled *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama adds that commonly “much of human behavior can be explained as a combination of the first two parts, desire and reason: desire induces men to seek things outside themselves, while reason or calculation shows them the best way to get them” (xvi– xvii). Fukuyama channels *thymos* further than Plato would do and expands it in relation to liberal democracy and in association with justice. Mainly, in this study, moreover, the aim is to explore and illustrate *thymos*— the desire for recognition—in accordance with Fukuyama’s notion. He asserts:

Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The propensity to invest the self with a certain value, and to demand recognition for that value, is what in today's popular language we would call 'self-esteem.' The propensity to feel self-esteem arises out of the part of the soul called *thymos*. It is like an innate human sense of justice. (xvii)

For Fukuyama, with reference to dignity, the subjects' passion for *thymos* is imperilled when a domineering group is not aware of its *thymos*; hence, the powerful group ignores the equal justice and rights that those who are less powerful are identified by. Fukuyama broadens the concept of *thymos* and introduces *isothymia*- "the desire to be recognized as the equal of other people" and *megalothymia* (the dark side of *thymos*), "the desire to be recognized as superior to other people" (182). Apparently, therefore, it can be deduced that any system that produces political inequality enhances *megalothymia* in some of its members and simultaneously violates justice and equity for other classes.

### OKONKWO'S *THYMOS*

Usually, in Achebe's texts, characters' thymotic passions arise from their paradoxical dispositions and attempts for self-value and dignity. Conspicuously, one of these characters, for whom there is desire to have more self-value, is Okonkwo, the novel's protagonist. The opening lines of the novel demonstrate Okonkwo's fame across the region and "even beyond." Further, Okonkwo's struggle for bringing "honour to his village" (Achebe 1994: 3) and taking "the highest titles in the clan" (172) has been clearly emphasized. There is no doubt that Okonkwo is highly great-hearted and courageous, particularly on the battlefield. Like "loud-thundering lions among beasts," *thymos* in Okonkwo's attribution "[...] functions prominently as a seat of courage and energy for the contest" (Sullivan 1993: 59). Only at eighteen, Okonkwo rises to fame by beating "Amalinze the Cat [...]" who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino" (Achebe 1994: 3). In tandem with foregrounding Okonkwo's desire for superiority or "quest for glory" (Fukuyama 2006: 183) in which Fukuyama's words are also defined as *megalothymia*, Barbara Koziak similarly comments that *thymos* "[...] represents the psychic power of a person that, when well expressed, makes him a particularly good warrior, makes him *megathumoi*, 'great-hearted'" (1999: 1081). Tellingly, Okonkwo's

physical and emotional characteristics, which associate him distinctively with the masculine features of *thymos* have been featured as follows:

He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. (Achebe 1994: 3–4)

According to *thymos*, Okonkwo has all the prominent features that a thymotic man or a “man of anger” (Fukuyama 2006: 180) must possess. Part of Okonkwo’s *thymos* is controlled by his *chi*, a personal deity. It is said that the reason for Okonkwo’s fame and success is not based on luck, but “at the most one could say that his *chi* or personal god was good [...] when a man says yes his *chi* says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly, so his *chi* agreed” (Achebe 1994: 27). Likewise, Salamone contends that in Ibo “the quest to achieve one’s *chi* guides a person’s behavior throughout life . . . an individual who is wise enough can manipulate his *chi* just as his *chi* seeks to manipulate an individual” (2010: 143). Sarr (1993) argues that Okonkwo attempts to bend his *chi* towards his own desires, hence he challenges the accepted relationship one commonly has with his *chi*. (350) Not only does Okonkwo tries to mold his *chi*, but also by force and even brutality he is willing to change his family and clan according to his own intentions (350). Parallel with the deity’s desire, Okonkwo’s *chi* propels him to satisfy his *thymos*. Ultimately, his *thymos* is accomplished by winning “the fourth and highest” title in Umoufia, a title which is only achieved by few people. The winners are alleged to become “the lords of the land” (Achebe 1994: 123). In particular, it can be deduced from John Grumley’s statement that Okonkwo’s thymotic passion is manifested as “courage and aggression, essentially the capacity to risk life” (1995: 383). Except for “emotion of anger,” which is the sign of “strength,” Okonkwo does not reveal openly any other emotions like love and “affection” that are viewed as the sign of “weakness” by him (Achebe 1994: 28). Lacking such masculine features, like anger, courage and strength, is the primary reason that Okonkwo begrudges his father, Unoka. Unlike Okonkwo, his father had no interest in taking the clan’s honor and values. He also left Okonkwo financially indebted after his death (5–6).

His father's foibles causes Okonkwo to have "[...] no patience with unsuccessful men" (4). Okonkwo is afraid of being called *agbala*, an ambiguous term signifying both a woman and an untitled man, as people (especially his playmates) would call his father. This is consistent with Bruno Snell's claim that *thymos* is "the generator of motion or agitation" (1960, 9), for fear of being called *agbala* which is in contradiction with his thymotic passions, Okonkwo is omnipresent wherever tensions and violence would break out. Okonkwo's hatred of the concept of *agbala* is justified by Fukuyama's remarks, based on Hegel's notion, that "without the possibility of war and the sacrifices demanded by it, men would grow soft and self-absorbed" (2006: 329). For Okonkwo, therefore, "soft and self-absorbed" people like his father, who were merely amused by music and conversation would degenerate Ibo society into "a morass of selfish hedonism" and finally would lead the community to "dissolve" (Fukuyama 2006: 329).

Yet, one of the heartbreaking labors that Okonkwo has to go through to prove his courage was the challenge of scapegoating Ikemefuna, a young boy who, in reprisal for murdering a woman from Umuofia by his father, was condemned to stay with Okonkwo's family till the due date of his sacrifice arrived, though, he was not notified of the arrangement. With the end of Ikemefuna's deadline, Obierika's prophecy, Okonkwo's reasonable friend and "*alter ego*" (Jeyifo 1990: 57), did not prevent him from participating in Ikemefuna's ceremony. For fear of "being thought weak," Okonkwo accompanied the group, to the extent that he himself "drew his machete and cut him down" (Achebe 1994: 61). He was deeply grieved and mournful; however, his "thymotic pride" and his "own self-worth" (Fukuyama 2006: xix) disallowed him from expressing his grief openly. In this matter, Jua contends that "the downward spiral for Okonkwo only seemingly starts with the death of Ikemefuna" (2009: 200). Subsequently, such a tragic act contributes to Okonkwo's further misfortunes and brings about a widening distance between him and his son, Nwoye. His relationship with his son deteriorates to the extreme that Nwoye rejects to follow his father's path. In actual fact, the loose relationship between Okonkwo and his father, and also between Okonkwo and his son, Nwoye, deconstructs the patriarchal hierarchy of Ibo society. In contrast, Fukuyama describes two types of family, namely Asian or Japanese-like model and Western or American-like model, which are considered as prototypes, respectively, for traditional (group-oriented) and modern (individual-oriented) families (2006: 238–39). Seemingly, Okonkwo's relationship with his father and his son negates the "paternal

authority" or traditional model of family in which the linear relationship between father and son is preserved (239). In other words, Unoka's, Okonkwo's, and Nwoye's relationships are very similar to those American-like families in which once the children pass puberty, they assert their own "identity" and openly challenge the parents' "values and wishes" (239). Likewise, in the novel, Okonkwo resents Unoka, his father. He hates him for his interest in loving the art of conversation and music, which are in radical opposition to his heroic adventures. On the other hand, for Nwoye, Okonkwo's masculinity is completely opposite to his soft nature and his inclination to new faith. Hence, one's *thymos* in Okonkwo's family is attached to an individual's self. As is stated in the text, "among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (Achebe 1994: 8). Fukuyama went on to say that, in the case of father and child's relationship, actually "[...] it is only in that act of rebellion that the child develops the psychological resources of self-sufficiency and independence" (2006: 239). In other words, the "thymotic sense of individual self-worth" is granted after his disconnection with the protective source of the family (239). Conspicuously, the child reestablishes his relationship based on "mutual respect" in which he is not recognized as a "dependent" but as an "equal" and even more (239). Okonkwo despises his father's failure and actually is "ashamed" of him (Achebe 1994: 8). Further, he regards his son, Nwoye, with contempt as a "degenerate and [an] effeminate" boy (153). On the other end of these relationships, Nwoye considers his father's dogmatic ideas as "moral degradation" (Fukuyama 2006: 169) and inferior because he finds the ultimate "thymotic pride" and "self-worth" in the new religion (xix). When Obierika asks Nwoye about his father, he unhappily replies that "He is not my father" (Achebe 1994: 144). Like his grandfather, who found relief in "the *ekwe* and the *udu* and the *ogene*" (6), Nwoye finds peace in the "poetry" and "hymn" of the new religion (147). Likewise, such family relationships are also portrayed in other characters' life stories. For example, the story of Enoch, a new convert, confirms the existence of the rift between the family bonds among the Ibo community as well. Enoch's father was the priest of the "snake cult." Enoch, however, has been cursed by his father for he has poached and then eaten a sacred python. Even Enoch goes to the extreme of using insulting remarks and actions towards his people by stating that Mr. Brown, the religious missionary, "preached against such excess of zeal" (178). It is worth saying that in Achebe's sequential novels such as *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964) which depict Ibo culture directly from inside, the same theme of "an act of

teenage rebellion” who hold their own “thymotic opinions about right and wrong” is foregrounded, as well (Fukuyama 2006: 239).

What Okonkwo neglects is that *thymos* hinges on social relationships. Kostas Kalimtzis in this matter argues that *thymos* “by nature seeks honour and this is only acquired socially”. He adds that “[...] anger must not be used to undermine the friendship ties upon which worth and honour are achieved” (2012: 17). Nonetheless, owing to his whim of hubris and also his fear of being called *agbala*, Okonkwo’s self-willed behaviors are not organized around the social feature of *thymos*. Such frantic feelings intensify his anxiety-driven activities, separating him practically from the very reality that is ongoing in Ibo community. In other words, many of the villagers do not confirm Okonkwo’s “[...] brusqueness in dealing with less successful men” (Achebe 1994: 26). Take the example of Osugo who, like Okonkwo’s father, is a man with no titles. On his entrance to a local meeting, Okonkwo teases him by stating that “This meeting is for men.” Although Okonkwo takes pleasure in shattering a less successful “man’s spirit [*thymos*]” (26), the other audience takes sides with Osugo and Okonkwo has to eat humble pie and apologize. Seemingly, Okonkwo’s description of manliness and being great-hearted does not have the approbation of all the Ibo individuals. Hence, Okonkwo’s hatred of the concept of *agbala* shows itself towards allegedly two identical classes of the society in terms of softness. He denigrates both less successful men and female individuals. Ironically, however, both subjected groups are immunized by the same systematic culture that Okonkwo tries to take its titles from. Nonetheless, his hubris and desire for superiority makes him overlook many of the same customs that are idealized in Ibo and, also, he himself advocates them. For example, albeit, according to Ibo’s elder people, “it is not bravery when a man fights with a woman” (93), he repeats it several times and once, when he is about to kill his second wife with a misfired bullet from his gun. Ironically, the narrator teases Okonkwo by saying that “although Okonkwo was a great man whose prowess was universally acknowledged, he was not a hunter” (38). In other words, if Okonkwo was a great hunter, he would have killed his wife. Even though he would be considered as a source of power for Okonkwo, Ian Glenn (1985) put it that “the gun plays a large part in his downfall” (16) as well.

As the plot of *Things Fall Apart* proceeds, in an inadvertent accident occurs at Ezeudu’s funeral. Ezeudu is assumed to be the oldest man in the village and has taken three titles out of four. Okonkwo misfires his gun and shoots the dad’s sixteen years old son.

Strictly speaking, in opposition to a male *ochu* (murder) which is committed intentionally, such an unintentional manslaughter is referred to as "a female *ochu*" (Achebe 199: 129). To murder a clansman is an offence against the "earth goddess," and whoever commits such a crime must leave the land for seven years. In addition, Okonkwo's compound and barns are burnt down and his animals are killed by the villagers. Now that Okonkwo is at the peak of his success and is about to take more titles and becomes one of the clan lords, he commits a "female" crime (124–25).

Consistent with Fukuyama's analyses, symbolically, Ezeudu's son is another "bloody battle" for Okonkwo to "seek discomfort and sacrifice" as "the pain" from it will guarantee him to be satisfied with himself and remain human being (329). Before committing such an *ochu*, Okonkwo's life symbolically has already approached what Fukuyama describes as the end of history, or "the end of wars and bloody revolutions" similar to a well-fed dog which neither bothers itself about other successful dogs that are outdoing it nor is inflicted by seeing those oppressed dogs experiencing injustice (Fukuyama 2006: 311). In the end of history, the subjects would "become animals again, as they were before the bloody battle that began history" (311). Likewise, Okonkwo has achieved "both recognition of his humanity and material abundance" (311). Therefore, Okonkwo nearly possesses all he wants. As the narrator goes on to say, "he was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars" (Achebe 1994, 8). Okonkwo or "Man properly so-called," borrowing Alexandre Kojève's term, because of the crime, "will cease to exist because he will have ceased to work and struggle" (Fukuyama 2006: 311). It figures that the tragic incident of Ezeudu's youngest son instigates Okonkwo's "thymotic passion" (214) afresh. As such, this incident gives him a cause and a new "life-spring" (Achebe 1994: 131) to fight. An analogous conclusion that Fukuyama draws is that Okonkwo's life involves an ironical paradox, "it seems to require injustice, for the struggle against injustice is what calls forth what is highest in man" (Fukuyama 2006: 311). Heroically, the end of history for Okonkwo is the end of bravery and seeking *thymos*. According to Bremmer "*thymos* can urge people on [...] sometimes *thymos* expresses hope, but it is always the hope to act, not to receive something" (1983: 54). Apparently, Okonkwo's *thymos* is not satisfied with returning to his stagnant animal life. Symbolically, he strives to drag back his life into "history" in Fukuyama's words with all its battles, wars, and injustices (Fukuyama 2006: 312).

### OKONKWO VERSUS THE WHITE MAN

After being in exile for seven years, Okonkwo daydreams about having a heroic comeback. He is delighted that new changes are coming, thus he can bring back his self-worth. More ironically, Okonkwo (who would stick to manliness and thymotic passion for recognition, for having a heroic return to his village) intends to restore to his daughters' feminine prominence that: "with two beautiful grown-up daughters his return to Umuofia would attract considerable attention" (Achebe 1994: 173). Such contrasts and ambivalence in Okonkwo's personality are evident throughout his life. Okonkwo is fully aware that after being in exile for seven years, his homeland has little to offer him as:

He had lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. (171)

Nevertheless, Okonkwo is highly determined to regain his past honors and "the seven wasted years" (171). Although being in exile for seven years has very little effect on changing Okonkwo's *thymos* and hubris,<sup>8</sup> this interval changes many standards in Umuofia. According to Harold Bloom, Okonkwo "[...] is fundamentally unchanged, but British supremacy has changed his people, particularly by conversion to Christianity" (2010, 2). Further, Sarr argues that Okonkwo neither himself "grow[s] and change[s] with age and experience" (350) and does he accept change in his clan (351). Consequently, his lack of "compromise and flexibility" prevents his "personal development" (350). Therefore, his arrival in Umuofia, in actual fact, is not according to what he expects. Okonkwo's worth is ignored by both the white man and the villagers.

Umuofia did not appear to have taken any special notice of the warrior's return. The clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that it was barely recognizable. The new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people's eyes and minds. (Achebe 1994: 182–83)

Viewing all these changes after his inhospitable homecoming, he is "deeply grieved" and he shows great sadness for the "warlike men" inhabiting in Umuofia, who now have become "soft like women" (183). Okonkwo is not able to tame his *thymos*-driven emotions.

According to Socrates, *thymos* is "the natural base for the sense of right" (440c1–d6) (Benardete 1989: 94). Okonkwo presumes that to win recognition and honour are his manly right. His thymotic passions incite him to make an assault on those who offend his honour and pride. Similar to Thrasymachus<sup>9</sup> in Plato's *the Republic* based on Jonathan Lear's (2006) comment, Okonkwo is

[. . .] a spirited, honor-loving personality. That means that his soul is organized around *thymos*. Not only does *thymos* shape his understanding of justice, it motivates him to put himself forward as someone who deserves recognition for knowing what justice really is. (458)

In such "honour-loving personality," reason is mainly controlled by *thymos*. It is *thymos* that plays a crucial role in defining the justice (458).

Principally, after his return, the major obstacle facing Okonkwo is the white man's presence and his religious pervasiveness, which act as a counterforce to Okonkwo's *thymos* and proscribing him from proving himself to the clan. Should the case of Okonkwo be considered as a model of a *thymotic* man, his anger is victimizing to those who endanger his self-worth as hero. Moreover, Allan Bloom adds that "although anger causes men to be willing to sacrifice life, it is somehow connected with preserving those things which make life possible" (1968: 355). Okonkwo learns that his desire for taking the clan's titles has been jeopardized by the white man's presence. Put more simply, the white man's presence devalues whatever is considered valuable for Okonkwo. There are, however, some principal reasons that Ibo people easily subscribe to the white colonists' influence and religion. In Ibo, there is a group of people who are called *efulefu*, "worthless, empty men" (Achebe 1994: 143), and they are treated with contempt and thus their *thymos* is ignored by their dominant fellow men. To provide a tangible illustration, Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, is one of these people whose *thymos* is neglected by his own father. Because of the degree to which he has been despised for his effeminate characteristics or soft behaviours, Okonkwo wishes Ezinma [his daughter] rather than Nwoye was a boy. In Okonkwo mind, Ezinma possesses the "right spirit [*thymos*]" (66). In another example, a prosperous farmer's wife called Nneka is offended by his family after giving birth to twins sequentially four times. Giving birth to twins is regarded as an offence by *Ani*, the earth goddess; hence, when for protection she takes solace in the white man's religion, to her family, it is a "good riddance" (151). Based on Bloom's comment on *thymos*, it can be added that Okonkwo and other titled men in the community are not "public-spirited," and

they do not care for the others' *thymos* and therefore like bad rulers, they are "perfectly selfish" (1968: 329). It appears that to the early converts *thymos* is not recognized by the more powerful indigenous people; for this reason, the unfortunate victims bend for the white man's religion and culture. In this matter, Fukuyama asserts that *thymos* "is like an innate human sense of justice. People believe that they have a certain worth, and when other people treat them as though they are worth less than that, they experience the emotion of anger" (2006: xvii).

More importantly, the arrival of the white men is not without virtues for the villagers. For instance, the construction of new stores, buildings and roads contributes to the flourishing of palm-oil trading. As the white man's economic developments bring mutual benefits both for Okonkwo and the indigenous villagers, his religion missionary gradually attracts more followers. In fact, some critics believe that the presence of dogmatic icons such as Okonkwo and many other men of titles cause the process of Ibo culture to change. People like Okonkwo polarize the society into those who have won the titles and those who are without titles. Nwando Achebe, in a section titled "Okonkwo-an example of what Ibo Society is not" (2002: 123) goes to that extreme by declaring that "in Ibo perceptiveness, Okonkwo is not and cannot be a representative of his culture, because he is unable to achieve the balance or equilibrium that his people so strongly affirm" (123–24). In brief, Okonkwo's stubbornness and his penchant for the titles alienate him both from his own folks and his desires. Likewise, Wasserman and Purdon contend that:

Okonkwo represents a type of selfish individualism that is in essence a threat to Ibo notions of clan, and culture. Okonkwo's demons are personal, private ones. He presumes that he, by acting alone against the advice of the clan, can be its personal savior, an ironic pose for a declared enemy of the Christian missionaries. (1993: 327)

The common feature shared by the white men and Okonkwo is that simultaneously both of them use "religious mastery" (Fukuyama 2006: 259) as an excuse for satisfying their *thymos* and "self-esteem" (181). Conspicuously, the presence of the missionary group and what they stood for would marginalize what Okonkwo desired for. Take the example of the sermons by Mr. Kiaga, a local "interpreter" and the head of "infant congregation" (Achebe 1994: 150) who would preach: "Blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake" (152). Consequently, the younger generations like

Nwoye who can be the heirs of the clan can be proselytized into Christianity and separate from their families. By viewing such blunt declarations from the colonists, Okonkwo's *thymos* and anger propels him to and from as "[a] sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang" (152). Self assertively, Okonkwo likens his anger and internal urge to fire that suddenly would catch the white man's church and wipe it out. Okonkwo recalls that for his "wrestling and fearlessness," he was called a "Roaring Flame" (153). Thereby, he is not easily satisfied hushing up his thematic desire for revenge. He fancies showing his "strength" and "manliness" once again (66). This question may arise that if Okonkwo comes to terms with the white man, his condition may improve much better than his continuous struggle with the white man. Based on Fukuyama's notion, what for Okonkwo takes the priority is "a dignity that is born of his freedom, self-sufficiency, and the respect and recognition he receives from the community around him" (Fukuyama 2006: 174). Conversely, Okonkwo knows if he accepts the white man's desires, he may gain a more prosperous position than what he may receive from this eroding struggle. However, if he submits to the white man's authority, he must completely rely on an authority to which he is "virtually invisible as a human being" (174). By accepting such a "normal life" under the rule of the white man for Okonkwo signifies the "acceptance of a petty, day-to-day moral degradation" (169). Similarly, Nnoromele emphasizes that Okonkwo refuses to support the white man's "appeal." He notices that accepting the white man's tantalizing offer costs what "comprised his identity and defined his values" (2010: 40). Even Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, tries to persuade him to accept the white man's faith, or the supposed religious freedom, worth and dignity. However, Okonkwo knows that, according to Fukuyama's notion, "Christianity posits the realization of human freedom not here on earth but only in the Kingdom of Heaven" (2006: 197). Nevertheless, Christianity in theory may have a right comprehension of freedom, white in reality it would convince people not to "expect liberation in this life" (197). For Okonkwo who is in search of releasing his pent-up passions, the Christian's mottos are not very much appealing.

Okonkwo's thymotic pride is well satisfied when his masculine values according to his definitions are examined. Like Don Quixote who according to Frederick A. De Armas feels happy when he envisions himself among Saracen, Okonkwo, in parallel, finds pleasure when he envisions himself among the Christians. After his previous failures, he can "acquire a new voice" that may provide him with "thymotic pride in himself" (2011:

165). In fact, it is “the absence of struggle and sacrifice” that spurs Okonkwo to fight against the white man (330). Hence, Enoch’s unmasking of a sacred *egwugwu*<sup>10</sup> in a struggle over the church triggers the tension which as result some villagers led by Okonkwo end up in prison. Humiliated by the court messenger at the courthouse, Okonkwo was “choked with hate” (Achebe 1994: 195) and according to Aristotle like a wild animal his *thymos* is “readiest to rush headlong into danger, [...]” (Crisp 2004: 52). Therefore, after being released, his *thymos* rages against those who are responsible for his degradation. Okonkwo wonders whether his people are courageous enough to accompany him to declare war against the white man and his authority. Fundamentally, he is “more directed to war than to peace” (Bloom 1968: 225) since *thymos* is related to action. This is apparent when their meeting is interrupted by a group of five court messengers who admonish them to disperse. Out of fury, Okonkwo knocks one of them down with his machete and the other four run away. Finally, their escape convinces Okonkwo that his people have changed and do not follow heroic adventures anymore. “He knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape” (Achebe 1994: 205). His alternatives are limited to either “a reasonable but ignoble attachment to life or a noble but unreasonable willingness to die” (Bloom 1968: 355). Okonkwo’s thymotic pride provides a cause for his heroic action to overcome the fear of death. Accordingly, in a downbeat assessment, Okonkwo submits to an “abomination” and hangs himself in solitude. In Ibo culture, committing suicide is a crime against *Ani*, the earth goddess, and the dead man’s corpse is considered as “evil,” even his clansmen cannot bury him (207).

*Thymos* or the desire for recognition is seemingly the psychological harbor for two highly strong passions: religion and nationalism. To Fukuyama (2006: 214), the religious believer assigns dignity to whatever his religion holds sacred—a set of moral laws, a way of life, or particular objects of worship.” Subsequently, the follower by observing insult to the dignity of what he regards sacred becomes angry. The nationalist, likewise, believes in the “dignity of his national or ethnic group, and therefore in his own dignity, a qua member of that group. He seeks to have this particular dignity recognized by others, and, like the religious believer, grows angry if that dignity is slighted” (214). In Okonkwo’s case, the combination of the religious and nationalistic features is clearly manifested in his struggles for recognition. Religiously, he values and respects the dignity of Ibo culture as he goes to this extreme to sacrifice Ikemefuna himself for the sake of “the

Oracle of the Hills and the Caves" (Achebe 1994: 57). He goes into exile, and on his return he destroys the white man's church with the help of other villagers which he views as a tangible threat to his own religion. Nationalistically, he participates in wars and competitions for the sake of his people and land. He wins some titles for his courage and bravery and also brings honor to his village by beating Amalinze the Cat. Additionally, he kills the court messenger who is an agent of the white man and is a threat to Ibo's values. Thus, "the thymotic passions of religious fanaticism and nationalism" propels Okonkwo along through "war and conflict" during his lifetime (Fukuyama 2006: 214). His thymotic desires reach their pinnacle in overcoming his most fundamental animal drives which, according to Hegel, is the instinct for "self-preservation" (xvi). Put another way, for the sake of higher values and principles, Okonkwo risks his body for what he idealizes as Ibo identity. It is only a thymotic man like Okonkwo or the "man of anger" who is able to defend his own self-esteem, and his folks' dignity, with whom he shares common values (180). Okonkwo is a man who feels that his state and dignity is obtained from something higher than "the complex set of desires that make up his physical existence" (180). Therefore, he is ready to risk his own life by standing in front of the white man's agents all alone.

By way of conclusion, Okonkwo is tantalized to win the highest titles of the clan. Indeed, "his life had been ruled by a great passion—to become one of the lords of the clan" (Achebe 1994: 131). Nonetheless, a combination of some female and male crimes brings Okonkwo's misfortune. The presence of the white man and its authority jeopardizes Okonkwo's causes and values which made him see himself in front of a kind of perceived injustice. Okonkwo's description of *thymos* is encapsulated in anger and heroic bravery; he could not accept that his community is on the brink of change. However, as Okhamafe states, in Umuofia, long before the colonists' arrival, things had started to change (1995: 134). Nonetheless, Okonkwo sacrifices himself because his *thymos* and his masculine desires would not tolerate the softness it hates the most. Harvey Claflin Mansfield claims that "*thymos* makes the soul insist on itself and, precisely when insisting on itself, offers to sacrifice itself so as to be unbeatable. The ultimate sacrifice is the ultimate defense" (2006: 207). Likewise, Nnoromele points out that a hero chooses death over humiliation and imprisonment by his rivals. He adds that "Okonkwo's death cheated his enemies, the European colonizers, of their revenge" (2010: 48). Indeed, "for the sake of higher, abstract principles and goals," Okonkwo overcame his "natural instinct for self-preservation"

(Fukuyama 2006: xvi). He had no choice but to take his own life; he wanted to be “unbeatable and not subject to fate” (Mansfield 2006: 240).

## NOTES

1. “Heroic Failure in the Novels of Achebe” (2016).
2. “The Plight of a Hero in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” (2010).
3. “Genealogical Determinism in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” (1995).
4. “*Things Fall Apart* and Achebe’s Quest for Manhood” (2009).
5. “The Center Holds: The Resilience of Ibo Culture in *Things Fall Apart*” (1993).
6. “The Depiction of Masculinity in Classic Nigerian Literature” (2010).
7. Also spelled ‘*thumos*’ and has been translated as “spiritedness” (Koziak 1999, 1069), as well. In this study both forms of spelling are used. On *thymos* see Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (2002) pp. 44–118; Rodica Frentiu, Yukio Mishima: *Thymos* between Aesthetics and Ideological Fanaticism (2010); Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness* (2006); Haroon Sheikh, Nietzsche and the Neoconservatives: Fukuyama’s Reply to the Last Man (2008); Barbara Koziak, *Homeric Thumos: the Early History of Gender, Emotion, and Politics* (1999); Barbara Koziak, *Retrieving Political Emotion: Thumos, Aristotle, and Gender* (2010); Andrei G. Zavaliy “How Homeric is the Aristotelian Conception of Courage?” (2017); Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (2008), p.8; Liebert Rana Saadi, Pity and disgust in Plato’s Republic: The Case of Leontius (2013); *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (2003) edited by Susanna Braund and Glenn W. Most; *The Republic by Plato* Trans. by Benjamin Jowett; *Thumos and Rationality in Plato’s Republic* (2015) by Christina Tarnopolsky; John P. Lynch and Gary B. Miles In Search of *thumos*: Toward an Understanding of a Greek Psychological Term (1980), pp. 3–10; James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (1994).
8. Sullivan asserts that: “Unlike *phrēn* and *nous*, we do not hear of *thymos* changing with age” (2000: 69).
9. Thrasymachus (c. 459 – c. 400 BC) was an ancient Greek sophist. He was also characterized in Plato’s *Republic* (around 375 BC).

10 . “A masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village” (Achebe 1994: 69).

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