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COLONIZED MASCULINITIES: A CONNELL–FANON ANALYSIS OF OKONKWO (THINGS FALL APART) AND MINKE (BUMI MANUSIA)

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Abstract

This study explored the construction, destabilization, and reconfiguration of masculinity in the context of colonial disruption as depicted in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Bumi Manusia (1980). It utilized qualitative comparative literary analysis and close reading, guided by R.W. Connell's relational theory of masculinity and Frantz Fanon's exploration of colonial subject formation, recognition, and violence. Passages related to themes of masculine authority, hierarchy, fear and shame, violence, relationships, and interactions with colonial institutions were identified and analyzed using an integrated analytical framework. The findings indicated that Okonkwo's authority was rooted in his achievements and the recognition he received within an Igbo communal structure, which was gradually undermined by colonial institutions. His efforts to reestablish authority through violence ultimately failed when the clan ceased to adhere to the old social order. In contrast, Minke established his masculine identity within an already existing colonial racial hierarchy. While education and writing provided him with intellectual agency, colonial law still limited his recognition and hindered his ability to protect those he cared about. The comparison indicated that colonial disruption did not create a uniform path for colonized masculinity. The concepts of anchored masculinity and positioned masculinity were introduced as context-specific terms to describe the differing circumstances in which the two protagonists navigated authority and sought recognition.

Keywords: *anchored masculinity; colonial recognition; colonial disruption; hegemonic masculinity; positioned masculinity*

1. Introduction

Masculinity is increasingly viewed not as a fixed characteristic of men, but as a relational construct influenced by particular histories, institutions, and power dynamics. Recent research on Indigenous masculinities reinforces this viewpoint by illustrating that men's identities are shaped by their relationships with family, community, and cultural practices, rather than being confined to a single model of manhood. "As mentioned by (Prehn et. al., 2025). Additionally, studies on colonial masculinity highlight the complex relationship between colonial power and gender. "It entails the violent establishment and continuous maintenance of colonial states, as observed by Smith (2021), and continues to influence masculine identities even after formal colonial rule has ended (Yusupova, 2023).

Literary texts serve as a valuable resource for this exploration, as narratives reveal the ways in which social expectations, violence, recognition, and historical change

intersect within an individual male life. Recent studies highlight the potential as Peseyie & Gaur (2025) challenge colonial representations of Indigenous warriors as "savage" through Angami folktales, and Virk (2022) illustrates how a graphic novel refuses colonial impositions of masculinity through land-based pedagogy and care. Life is deeply shaped by his fear of weakness. His downfall ultimately comes as a result of Two novels, each rooted in different colonial histories, invite a fascinating comparison. In "Things Fall Apart," Okonkwo is a distinguished Igbo man whose the arrival of missionaries and colonial administration. In "Bumi Manusia," Minke is a Javanese student navigating the Dutch colonial school system. He contacts with Europeans, Indo-Europeans, and native individuals while raising questions about the existing racial hierarchy. Each novel has been examined through the lens of masculinity.

Muhlisin & Syahid (2025) then observe toxic masculinity in *Things Fall Apart* using Connell's hegemonic masculinity, and Efrizah et.al (2026) state violence in the novel through cultural and postcolonial lenses. For *Bumi Manusia*, Karlina & Syihabbudin (2024) portray Minke's masculine qualities in the film adaptation, and Wiratama et al. (2024) examine Minke's relation to feudalism.

1.1 Terminology: Why "Colonized Masculinity"

This article refers to colonized masculinity instead of Indigenous masculinity in a strict legal and political context.The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2007) clarified that, in the African context, the term "Indigenous peoples" encompasses not only the original inhabitants of a territory but also communities that face specific forms of marginalization, discrimination, and cultural threats. In Indonesia, government officials have asserted that the concept of Indigenous Peoples does not apply, arguing that most Indonesians are Indigenous. However, this viewpoint is challenged by Indigenous organizations like the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN). The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2026) reported that AMAN estimates there are between 50 and 70 million Indigenous people in Indonesia. In this study, neither the Igbo community portrayed in Achebe's novel nor the Javanese society depicted in Pramoedya's work is classified as Indigenous in the specific legal and political context. Both novels are analyzed in the context of colonial power and the formation of the colonized subject, utilizing Fanon's theoretical framework. This study's exploration of Indigenous masculinity enhances our understanding of masculinity as relational and historically contextualized, without attributing a specific Indigenous legal status to either protagonist.

1.2 Prior Comparative Work and Research Gap

The studies mentioned in this article explore the protagonists within various or differently framed contexts.

Samarawickrama (2023) compares Okonkwo with Lao Lan in Mo Yan's Pow! through Connell's account of gender relations. Other studies discuss violence in Things Fall Apart or masculinity in the Bumi Manusia film adaptation (Efrizah et.al (2026); (Karlina & Syihabbudin, 2024); (Wiratama et al. (2024). The literature examined in this study did not reveal a direct comparison between Okonkwo and Minke that incorporates the perspectives of Connell and Fanon. This study provides a focused comparative analysis of gender dynamics

and colonial recognition, acknowledging that the novels and their protagonists have been examined previously.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How are the masculinities of Okonkwo and Minke constructed in relation to the gender order of their communities (Connell)?
2. How does colonial disruption alter the conditions of recognition and the function of violence for each character (Fanon)?
3. What contrasts and convergences emerge, and what do they imply for understanding colonized masculinity?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mapping the Field

A preliminary bibliometric mapping, run in Publish or Perish and visualized in VOSviewer, was used only to position this study within recent research on Indigenous and colonial masculinities, colonialism, and literary studies. It is not a systematic review and does not supply the empirical basis for the close readings (Section 3.1). The mapping reveals that scholarship on masculinity in this field is primarily focused on health and social sciences, while literary analysis, although present, remains relatively marginal. This creates an opportunity for a comparative literary analysis that integrates Connell's relational perspective on masculinity with Fanon's discussion of colonial recognition in texts from Africa and Southeast Asia. This study aims to address that gap (Section 1.2).

2.2 Masculinity in *Things Fall Apart* Scholarship

Recent studies consistently associate Okonkwo with the ideas of hegemonic or toxic masculinity. Muhlisin & Syahid (2025) explore manifestations of toxic masculinity in the novel, including physical violence, dominance over women, and coercion by applying Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity while Efrizah et al. (2026) discussed violence via interconnected cultural and postcolonial perspectives, Samarawickrama (2023) then distinguishes Okonkwo's hegemonic masculinity from the subordinated masculinity of his father namely Unoka. Ayodabo (2021) then highlights Igbo notions of masculinity in Nigerian children's literature, providing a cultural frame for how manhood is taught. Collectively, these studies position Okonkwo as a representation of relational masculinity, yet they often regard colonial intrusion as a contextual backdrop rather than as an analytical framework.

2.3 Masculinity in *Bumi Manusia* Scholarship

Indonesian scholarship on Minke highlights qualities such as leadership, courage, determination, and strength in the film adaptation. Karlina & Syihabbudin (2024) link Minke's position to feudal and colonial structures in line with Wiratama et al. (2024). Anas dan Anoegrajekti (2025) constructs Minke's life journey by applying Connell's categories. These works demonstrate that Minke's masculinity is intertwined with colonial hierarchy; however, it has not been examined sufficiently in relation to African literary examples or through the lens of Fanonian recognition theory.

2.4 Colonial and Indigenous Masculinities

In addition to the two novels, recent scholarship provides the necessary conceptual vocabulary. Smith (2021) conceptualizes colonial masculinity as historically dependent and closely linked to the formation of colonial states. Yusupova (2023) shows that coloniality of gender and knowledge can persist in masculine

narratives beyond direct rule. Reardon-Smith & O'Sullivan (2025) contrast indigenous queer masculinities with the colonial project of gender, while Prehn et al. (2025) describe indigenous masculinities as dynamic and relational in settler-colonial Australia. Studies on violence and incarceration by Lockwood & Williamson (2022), settler sexual violence by Juárez (2023), and queer indigenous masculinity in literature by Gamber (2021) and McKegney & Sumac (2022) demonstrate how colonial regimes shape and control men's bodies. Hidayatullah (2023) examines masculine anxiety and postcolonial space through the lens of an Indonesian text and an East African text, establishing a significant precedent for cross-regional literary comparison. Norman et al. (2025) and Ojeda Gutiérrez & Cortés Carreño (2022) further indicate that masculinity and ethnicity must be analyzed together.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Connell: Relational Masculinities

Connell defines masculinity as a set of practices influenced by the dynamics of gender relations, rather than merely a collection of characteristics. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the framework that legitimizes men's dominant status during a specific period. Within this framework, there are subordinated, complicit, and marginalized masculinities that reflect various positions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) The framework enables analysts to explore how a particular form of manhood acquires authority, identify those who are excluded from it, and examine how this arrangement evolves over time. Since the concept reflects the historical evolution of gender relations, it can be applied to colonial contexts where race and empire are considered integral to the gender hierarchy. (Smith, 2021; Yusupova, 2023).

2.5.2 Fanon: Colonial Subject Formation

(Fanon, 2017) explores how the recognition shaped by racial dynamics influences the identity of colonized individuals, resulting in feelings of alienation and a deep desire for the acknowledgment that the colonial system denies them. In "The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon (2017) examines colonial violence as a structural phenomenon and delves into the psychological and political responses it provokes in the colonized. The Fanonian perspective emphasizes an important point that Connell's framework misses: colonial rule changes who has the power to confer recognition as a man.

2.5.3 Integrated Analytical Matrix

Dimension	Connell	Fanon	Question applied to the novels
Authority	Hegemony and its legitimation	Colonial domination	Who defines legitimate manhood before and after colonial intrusion?
Hierarchy	Subordinated, complicit, marginalized positions	Racial hierarchy	Which men are excluded, and by what order?
Violence	Practice within a gender order	Structural colonial violence	Is violence enacted, suffered, or redirected?
Recognition	Social validation among men	Recognition withheld by the colonizer	Whose recognition does the protagonist seek?
Change	Historical reconfiguration of gender relations	Alienation, revolt, new consciousness	How does masculinity change under disruption?

Table 1. Integrated Connell–Fanon analytical matrix used to code both novels.

The matrix facilitates the interpretation of selected passages instead of imposing fixed labels. Tables 2 and 3 provide representative textual evidence from each

novel while Table 4 highlights a summary of the comparison. Connell is engaged in examining the structure and challenges of gendered authority across different social systems, while Fanon is employed to analyze how colonial power influences the conditions under which recognition is granted or withheld. The two frameworks complement one another, but they are not interchangeable. The analysis does not label every gender relationship as a form of colonial violence, nor does it interpret every conflict exclusively as a crisis of masculinity.

3. Research Method

3.1 Design

The study applies a qualitative comparative analysis of literary works. The close reading of the two main texts is guided by the integrated analytical framework outlined in Section 2.5. The scoping retrieval outlined in Section 2.1 is intended solely to identify relevant scholarship and define the research gap; it does not serve as a systematic review or provide the empirical foundation for interpreting the novels.

3.2 Primary Texts and Editions

The Igbo case is examined in the Anchor Books edition of the 1958 novel from 1994. The Javanese case is examined based on the Indonesian original, specifically the ninth printing of the 1980 Hasta Mitra edition (Toer, 2001) . In 1981, Indonesian authorities banned the novel, a decision that is significant in understanding its reception (Toer, 2001) . The electronic edition of Things Fall Apart lacks stable print pagination, so it is referenced by chapter. In contrast, Bumi Manusia is cited according to the printed pages of the 2002 edition. The scenes correspond to the textual evidence summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

3.3 Procedure

At the outset, each novel was analyzed for scenes that explore themes such as masculine recognition, fear and shame, violence, relationships with women and other men, and interactions with colonial institutions. Next, the scenes were analyzed through the lens of Connell's perspective on gender relations, incorporating Fanon's insights into colonial recognition and violence. Third, the protagonists were compared across the same dimensions, emphasizing both their similarities and differences. Interpretive claims are backed by textual references, which are organized by chapter for "Things Fall Apart" and by printed page for the 2002 edition of "Bumi Manusia". Tables 2 and 3 summarize key evidence, while Table 4 presents a synthesis of the findings across the various cases. The tables function as analytical tools rather than substitutes for thorough reading. The labels given to the scenes are interpretive claims that should be validated by consulting the referenced editions.

3.4 Trustworthiness and Scope

Interpretive claims are based on textual evidence and are assessed in relation to established interpretations of each novel. The study interprets Connell's categories as heuristics specifically aligned with the gender structures of Igbo and Javanese cultures, rather than treating them as universal labels. The study examines two novels, either in their original language or in translation. As a result, these findings are particular to these texts and cannot be applied universally to all colonized men.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Okonkwo and the Collapse of an Anchored Masculinity

Table 2. Textual data for Okonkwo's masculine crisis

Chapter	Textual Data (Paraphrase)	Theme	Theoretical Reading	Analytical Indicator
Ch. 1	Okonkwo's reputation rests on wrestling, titles, barns, and household status.	Public achievement	Hegemonic masculinity; recognition within the clan	Recognition is granted within the clan's social order.
Chs. 2–3	Unoka is remembered as a debtor and a man without titles; Okonkwo fears resembling him.	Fear of weakness	Subordinated masculinity as contrast; shame and self-policing	Manhood is defined through rejection of a stigmatized masculine position.
Ch. 4	Okonkwo beats a wife during the Week of Peace and is censured by the clan.	Domestic violence	Dominance constrained by communal norms; precolonial legitimacy	Dominance is socially regulated rather than absolute.
Ch. 7	Okonkwo participates in Ikemefuna's killing despite an elder's warning.	Violence and public manhood	Hegemonic masculinity; violence performed for public recognition	Fear of appearing weak overrides kinship feeling.
Ch. 14	Uchendu reminds Okonkwo of the protective significance of the mother and maternal land.	Counter-discourse of care	Plural gender order; alternative source of social recognition	The novel presents alternatives to Okonkwo's masculine ideal.
Chs. 16–17	Nwoye converts to Christianity; Okonkwo interprets the choice as a failure of manhood.	Colonial alternatives	Gender hierarchy disrupted; alternative recognition through church	New institutions offer recognition outside the clan's established order.
Ch. 23	Colonial authorities arrest and humiliate the clan's leaders.	Loss of public authority	Loss of public authority; colonial violence and humiliation	Colonial institutions displace the community that validated Okonkwo.
Chs. 24–25	The clan does not follow Okonkwo after he kills a court messenger; the colonial narrator reduces his life to a brief account.	Failed resistance	Collapse of hegemony; colonial authority claims the power to define the native	Violence cannot restore recognition once its social basis has collapsed.

Textual references to Things Fall Apart are given by chapter.

4.1.1 Manhood in the Igbo Gender Order

The novel starts with showcasing Okonkwo's prominence through his achievements: his reputation as a wrestler, the titles he has earned, the barns he owns, and the wives and children he supports (Ojeifo, 2025) . This form of masculinity is rooted in a well-defined community structure, with its legitimacy conferred by other men through titles and public recognition. Connell's framework suggests that Okonkwo occupies a dominant position within the gender hierarchy of his clan, a view that aligns with existing analyses rooted in Connell's theories. (Muhlisin & Syahid 2025; Samarawickrama, 2023).

Hegemony is fundamentally relational, and the novel emphasizes this connection through the character of Unoka. Okonkwo's father is depicted as a debtor and a musician who avoids both war and ambition. The text connects him to the term "agbala," which denotes both a woman and a man who lack titles. (Ojeifo, 2025) . Samarawickrama (2023) then states that

Unoka serves as the subordinate figure against which Okonkwo's masculinity is counted. This analysis highlights that Okonkwo's understanding of manhood is primarily defined in opposition to his father. His conception of masculinity is shaped more by a fear of being like the subservient figure than by a positive ideal (Ojeifo, 2025) . The narrator says his whole life is dominated by "the fear of failure and of weakness" (Achebe, 2017) , this frames his violence as a form of anxious self-policing rather than as a reflection of his inherent temperament."

4.1.2 Violence as the Proof of Manhood

Okonkwo's violence appears first in the household. He beats a wife during the Week of Peace, an act the clan treats as a transgression of the order he otherwise upholds (Achebe, 2017) . Recent scholarship categorizes such acts as toxic masculinity, including dominance over women and coercion (Muhlisin & Syahid, 2025). A Connellian interpretation adds two points. Firstly, the community's censure highlights that Okonkwo's dominant position has its limits; the established gender norms include certain expectations, such as respecting ritual time, which can restrict even the most powerful individuals. Additionally, Ikemefuna's death, in which Okonkwo takes part despite a warning from an elder, clearly illustrates how masculinity can overshadow familial ties. (Achebe, 2017) . The narrative portrays his participation as motivated by fear of being perceived as weak. The portrayal of the mother adds complexity to a straightforward interpretation of Igbo manhood as misogynistic. During his exile, Okonkwo's maternal uncle, Uchendu, emphasizes the significance of a mother's land and the strength of maternal bonds (Achebe, 2017) . This scene illustrates a counter-discourse of maternal values within the society portrayed in the novel, which Okonkwo rejects. His masculinity represents one position within a diverse framework rather than embodying the framework itself. This view encourages us to acknowledge hegemonic masculinity as relational rather than as a fixed cultural essence. Given that the Igbo gender order is not strictly binary, Connell's categories are used as heuristics rather than rigid labels.

4.1.3 Colonial Intrusion and the Loss of Recognition

The second half of the novel changes the context in which masculinity is recognized. Upon returning from seven years of exile, Okonkwo finds that missionaries have taken root in his village, drawing converts mainly from the marginalized community, including his own son, Nwoye. (Achebe, 2017) . The reaction is telling: Okonkwo views his son's conversion as a failure of masculinity, echoing the same reasoning that led him to see Unoka as his negative counterpart. A Fanonian perspective highlights that the introduction of the church and the colonial court brings forth institutions that establish status based on new criteria. Men without titles gain recognition within the church, while those with titles find themselves unable to define what constitutes true manhood.

Fanon's examination of colonial recognition reveals why the clan cannot respond in the manner Okonkwo wishes. The colonial administration does not confront masculinity on equal terms; rather, it reshapes the criteria for determining who has the power to settle disputes, enforce punishments, and express opinions. The colonial authorities apprehended and humiliated the clan's leaders. (Achebe, 2017) is an assault on the public aspect of their masculinity. Colonial violence manifests in physical, structural, and

symbolic ways, erasing the institutions that made Okonkwo's dominance recognizable.

4.1.4 Violence Without a Social Order and the Closed End

Okonkwo's killing of the court messenger represents his final effort to reclaim the connection between masculinity and violent action (Achebe, 2017) . The clan's lack of support for him indicates that the community can no longer be inspired by the traditional narrative. His suicide occurs after the events described by (Achebe, 2017) . A Connell reading identifies the end of a hegemonic position that cannot adapt; a Fanon reading identifies a subject for whom the only recognition available has been foreclosed. The novel's final turn to the District Commissioner, who imagines Okonkwo as a paragraph in a colonial ethnography, completes the Fanonian point: the colonizer reclaims the power to define the native man (Achebe, 2017) . Okonkwo's tragedy is the tragedy of a masculinity whose conditions of recognition are entirely internal to a community that has been displaced.

4.2 Minke and a Masculinity Formed Inside the Colonial Order

Table 3. Textual data for Minke's masculine reconfiguration

Pages	Textual Data (Paraphrase)	Theme	Theoretical Reading	Analytical Indicator
pp. 3–15	Minke attends a Dutch colonial school but remains racially marginalized among European and Indo-European peers.	Education and racial hierarchy	Marginalized masculinity; recognition sought through colonial schooling	Status within the native hierarchy does not grant equality in the colonial order.
pp. 38, 44, 81–87	Nyai Ontosoroh educates Minke through her practical knowledge and moral authority.	Female mentorship	Ambivalent masculinity; authority and knowledge supplied by a subordinated woman	Minke's development depends on a woman whose authority colonial law restricts.
pp. 131 – 140	Minke must perform deference before his father, a regent within the colonial administration.	Feudal and colonial hierarchy	Position between feudal and colonial hierarchies; alienation	Colonial racial hierarchy and Javanese status practices jointly shape his subjectivity.
pp. 118, 235	Minke writes and publishes, using the colonial language and press as tools of expression.	Writing as agency	Intellectual agency; the colonizer's medium redirected toward resistance	He turns colonial educational resources toward criticism of colonial power.
pp. 365 – 386	Colonial legal decisions override Nyai's claims and determine Annelies's fate.	Institutional violence	Marginalization through racial law; structural colonial violence	Legal procedure exposes the limits of recognition within the colonial system.
pp. 378 – 385	Minke and allies use the press to protest the injustice.	Public resistance	Reconfigured agency; resistance through discourse and solidarity	Resistance is pursued through discourse and collective solidarity rather than physical force.
p. 405	Nyai frames their struggle as dignified resistance despite defeat.	Ethical reorientation	Moral reorientation after defeat; recognition remains denied	The ending emphasizes solidarity and moral agency, not recovery of dominance.

Textual references to Bumi Manusia are given by printed page of the 2002 edition.

4.2.1 Education, Status, and Racial Hierarchy

Minke's masculinity is presented through education and social status rather than through traditional rites of passage. Being the son of a Javanese official, he attends a Dutch colonial school with European and Indo-European students (Toer, 2001) . His position is thus ambiguous from the outset: elevated within the native hierarchy yet marginalized in the colonial racial structure. Connell's concept of marginalized masculinity, which explores how class and race influence men's standings in relation to dominant forms of masculinity, is particularly relevant in this context. It aligns well with the initial phase discussed in (Anas & Anoegrajekti, 2025) study of the film adaptation. The present analysis proceeds from the novel and adds a Fanonian dimension.

Peer relationships solidify the hierarchy. Minke's rivals, who have been educated in Europe, often mock or challenge him. Meanwhile, Robert Mellema represents a different kind of marginality, grappling with a complex identity that straddles both European and native backgrounds (Toer, 2001) These relationships demonstrate that colonial hierarchies are gendered; access to European masculinity is contingent upon race, and Minke's efforts to assert this identity are consistently conditional.

4.2.2 Recognition and Alienation

Minke's inclination towards European learning reflects what Fanon refers to as the colonized subject's longing for recognition based on the colonizer's standards. He adores European science and literature and seeks recognition through them (Toer, 2001) . In the scene with his father who has become a regent within the colonial administration, Minke must perform the deferential crawl required by Javanese court custom, and he experiences it as humiliating (Toer, 2001). The scene positions Minke between two conflicting hierarchies: the Javanese feudal system that requires his physical submission and the European order that refuses to grant him equality. Wiratama et al. (2024) connect Minke to feudalism as a Fanonian reading shows how feudal and colonial hierarchies together construct his alienation.

The posture is important because the scene is intricately tied to language at every turn. In Javanese culture, etiquette assigns rank through different speech levels. Ngoko is used in intimate settings and when addressing social inferiors, while krama serves as a deferential register that elevates the addressee with honorific vocabulary, reflecting the speaker's respect (Miftahul Jannah & Purwarno, 2026) . Since the novel is written in Indonesian, these levels reach the reader through address terms and bodily description rather than through Javanese morphology, which is one reason they may be flattened in translation. The scene nonetheless marks them clearly. The police agent who escorts Minke speaks to him in krama and calls him “Ndoro Raden Mas,” honoring his birth rank even as he orders him to proceed on his knees (Toer, 2001) . Minke expects that tradition will require a gesture of respect at the end of every sentence, placing equal importance on posture and speech. Once the regent speaks, the asymmetry becomes explicit: the father addresses him as kau, while Minke answers with the humbling sahaya, Ayahanda, and beribu ampun (pp. 133–136). Minke learns that the man in the chair is his father only when he hears his voice, so abasement is demanded of him as a subordinate before it is owed to him as a son (p. 133). His protest is confined to inner speech: he curses in more than three languages as he crawls and rebukes the “little king” only silently (pp. 131–135). Dutch occupies a third position. It

is the language of his schooling and authorship, but also the language of the racial state that withholds equality from him. His elder brother even uses Dutch to reprimand him, falling back on Javanese when his Dutch runs out (p. 137), showing how the colonial language has become a marker of rank within the family itself.

Fanon's account of recognition allows this moment to be read as double alienation. In Black Skin, White Masks, (Fanon, 2017) portrays the colonized individual as being shaped from the outside by a gaze that withholds complete recognition, a process that can become internalized. Prior to the establishment of the colonial racial state, Minke's Dutch education and his accomplishments as an author position him as an individual who is overlooked by the state. Although he has received training in European knowledge, he is never recognized as European (see Section 4.2.1). Before the regent (the same individuality has to be surrendered), Minke questions what European learning is for if it ends in crawling before a petty king (Fanon, 2017) ; the sembah makes what he has learned feel lost because it honors a superior through self-abasement (p. 132). The riding whip tapped on his head, each tap answered with a thankful sembah, makes the loss bodily (p. 133). The two hierarchies meet at the investiture. The regent, who does not know Dutch, orders his son to translate before colonial officials in the hope of attracting their attention (pp. 135–136). The Assistant Resident waves aside the Controleur, who has stepped forward to translate, and designates Minke (pp. 145–146). Minke forgets the Javanese bows and speaks as if before a class, rendering his father's Javanese into Dutch in a European manner; he suspects that the official enjoys his performance as if he were a monkey in a ring (pp. 146–147). The official's praise of his Dutch, given in Malay to the regent and in Dutch to Minke, leaves the hierarchy that places him below Europeans untouched (p. 147). The feudal order uses his Dutch while demanding his submission, and the colonial order admires his Dutch while denying his equal standing. The father's authority operates within a colonial system, while Dutch rule is mediated through native aristocratic deference, so each denial reinforces the other. Minke is denied equal standing by the racial state and the freedom to exist beyond inherited rank by the feudal order; neither offers the recognition on which Fanon's account of colonial subjectivity depends. The scene therefore registers as humiliation rather than ordinary filial respect and cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between “traditional” and “modern” (see Section 4.3.4).

4.2.3 Mentorship, Gender Relations, and the Women Around Him

Okonkwo's sense of masculinity is deeply tied to his rejection of femininity, whereas Minke's understanding of manhood develops through his interactions with women who hold distinct forms of authority. Nyai Ontosoroh, an Indonesian concubine of a European man, has become an effective manager of a large enterprise, advising him on both practical and ethical matters (Fanon, 2017). Her status under colonial law, which strips her of legal rights concerning her own child, highlights how racial legislation subjugates even a competent indigenous woman. Minke's relationship with Annelies is characterized by both romance and a sense of protectiveness. However, his masculinity is challenged by his inability to shield her from the legal system that ultimately drives them apart. (Fanon, 2017) . Connell's concept of complicity is relevant: Minke benefits from patriarchal arrangements in his marriage but also relies on Nyai's agency, so his masculinity is not simply hegemonic.

4.2.4 Violence Suffered and Agency Redirected

Minke is not the primary instigator of physical violence in the story. He faces violence directed at himself and his loved ones, manifesting through social contempt, legal proceedings, and the court order that separates him from Annelies (Toer, 2001) . He responds by writing for newspapers, initially using a pseudonym and later through a campaign for which Kommer translates the texts into Malay for local publications, effectively turning the tools of colonial education against colonial injustice. (Toer, 2001) . Fanon's exploration of how a colonized intellectual shifts from simply imitating the colonizer to cultivating a more critical awareness illuminates this transformation. Okonkwo's use of violence acts as a physical manifestation of his status, while Minke expresses his agency through discourse and moral principles, particularly within institutions such as the press and the courtroom.

The ending of the novel is not one of triumph. The legal defeat is final, and Nyai's closing words, "We have fought, my child, with all our might and honor," present the struggle as a dignified act of resistance, even in the face of loss (Toer, 2001). Minke's masculinity is thus redefined instead of merely restored; it focuses on justice and solidarity rather than the revival of a lost hierarchy. (Anas & Anoegrajekti, 2025) interpretation of a shift toward hegemonic masculinity should be examined in light of this conclusion. A form of masculinity that fails to protect the person it loves may be better characterized as a marginalized masculinity with an expanded moral agency rather than as hegemonic.

4.3 Comparative Discussion: Contrasting Constructions of Colonized Masculinity

4.3.1 Comparative Findings

Dimension	Okonkwo (*Things Fall Apart*)	Minke (*Bumi Manusia*)
Source of manhood	Achievement within a precolonial communal order (titles, wealth, war)	Education, status, and intellectual agency within a colonial order
Position in Connell's scheme	Hegemonic in the clan; defined against subordinated Unoka	Marginalized by race; complicit and ambivalent in gender relations
Relation to the feminine	Refusal and fear of resemblance to the "womanly"	Mentorship and dependence on women of authority
Violence	Enacted; proof of manhood; finally futile	Suffered and structural; answered discursively and legally
Colonial recognition (Fanon)	Colonial order displaces the community that granted recognition	Recognition is sought from the colonizer and conditionally denied
Trajectory	Collapse and closed ending (suicide)	Reconfiguration toward moral and political agency, without restoration

Table 4. Contrasting constructions of masculinity under colonial disruption (author's analysis, based on the close readings in Sections 4.1–4.2).

4.3.2 Answering the Research Questions

In response to the first question, both men's expressions of masculinity are shaped by their relationships, although they reference different influences. Okonkwo is depicted as a dominant figure within a communal setting, in contrast to a subordinate male character. Meanwhile, Minke is illustrated against a racial hierarchy in which even an esteemed indigenous man finds himself beneath Europeans. This distinction explains why Connell's categories are applied inconsistently. In Okonkwo's case, the dynamics illustrate an internal gender hierarchy, while in Minke's situation, it is essential to incorporate considerations of race to accurately represent the imposed hierarchy. In response to the second

question, colonial disruption changes the conditions of recognition in contrasting ways. For Okonkwo, disruption eliminates the institutions and audiences that shaped his understanding of masculinity, driving him to violence in a desperate attempt to restore the link between manhood and action that he feels has slipped away. For Minke, disruption is the essential condition of his existence. Influenced by colonial institutions, he discovers that the real issue is not the loss of a world, but rather the conditional nature of recognition within the colonizer's domain. For him, violence takes the form of a framework rather than an action he actively participates in. Anchored masculinity and positioned masculinity represent two distinct relationships between masculine authority and the dynamics of colonial change. Anchored masculinity refers to a form of authority that depends on the continuous recognition of a particular communal order. "When that order is disrupted, the legitimacy of its authority diminishes, leading to a decline in both audience support and institutional backing." Positioned masculinity describes an individual who grows up within a colonial hierarchy and must navigate a system in which recognition is dependent on racialized institutions and norms. These are not new universal archetypes of masculinity, nor do they serve as synonyms for traditional and modern manhood. The mid-range comparative descriptors drawn from the two readings effectively clarify why the protagonists' crises unfold differently, resulting in unique yet constrained opportunities for agency.

4.3.3 Dialogue with Prior Studies

The findings extend Samarawickrama's (2023) Connell-based reading of Okonkwo by showing that his hegemonic position is historically contingent: it exists only while the communal order sustains it. They also qualify the claim that Minke's masculinity becomes hegemonic (Anas & Anoegrajekti, 2025) The current analysis, rooted in the novel, indicates that Minke's development is both moral and discursive. However, the legal outcome ultimately renders him incapable of protecting Annelies, complicating a hegemonic interpretation. This divergence may highlight the distinctions between a film adaptation and the original novel, as well as between a thesis framework grounded in the theories of Connell and Loomba and one that incorporates Fanon's emphasis on recognition. Explorations of toxic masculinity in Igbo literature by (Muhlisin & Syahid (2025) and of Minke's masculine qualities by Karlina & Syihabbudin (2024) that describe traits; the present study explains how those traits acquire meaning within different colonial structures.

4.3.4 Avoiding a Binary

The comparison should not be viewed as pitting a "traditional African man" against a "modern Indonesian man." Okonkwo's masculinity is already in conflict with the diverse Igbo society, which encompasses maternal values (Section 4.1.2), and Minke's modernity is shaped by feudal custom as well as colonial schooling (Section 4.2.2). Each protagonist is both inside and against his community's expectations. This supports the relational emphasis of recent Indigenous masculinity scholarship by Prehn et al. (2025) and its resistance to deficit or stereotype narratives, as discussed by Peseyie & Gaur (2025) while keeping the analysis within a colonized, not strictly Indigenous, frame (Section 1.1).

The study focuses on two novels, which means that its findings cannot be applied to all colonized men. Reading Bumi

Manusia in translation might diminish the subtle nuances of address and status that hold great importance in Javanese culture (Achebe, 2017) Connell's categories were developed in Euro-American contexts and are used here as heuristics rather than universal labels. The scoping retrieval relies on Publish or Perish, which draws on Google Scholar indexing, and was used for positioning only. Future research could extend the comparison to other novels, incorporate Indonesian-language criticism more fully, and test the proposed distinction between anchored and positioned masculinity in further colonial contexts.

5. Conclusion

This article examines the characters of Okonkwo and Minke through the lens of Connell's relational theory of masculinity, along with Fanon's perspectives on the development and acknowledgment of colonial subjects. Okonkwo's sense of masculine authority is deeply embedded in a community-based gender hierarchy, which is progressively challenged by the emergence of colonial institutions. When the social framework that once validated his authority no longer aligns with traditional norms, his attempts to reclaim that authority through violence ultimately prove futile. In contrast, Minke maneuvers through the very colonial hierarchy. Although education and writing offer him some limited avenues for agency, the racialized legal institutions deprive him of the recognition needed to safeguard Annelies and Nyai Ontosoroh. The concepts of anchored masculinity and positioned masculinity illustrate how masculine authority engages with colonial change in different ways. Their contribution is both provisional and comparative, as it clarifies the reasons behind the differing crises faced by the two protagonists without reducing them to a simplistic binary of tradition versus modernity. Further research should examine these descriptors in the context of other colonial narratives and provide a more thorough exploration of how women shape the boundaries and possibilities of masculine agency.

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