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Mentor's Introduction [to Kyle G. Wilson's Paper]

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Introduction by Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure,
Professor of English Language and Literature

Kyle Wilson developed “Mental Realities of the Multi-Culture: Multiple Othering in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” in my Seminar in Literature: Post-Colonial Literatures and Theory in the fall of 2008. First, he presented it as part of the conference presentations in class. Everyone agreed that Kyle Wilson had developed something truly interesting: an original work of scholarship on Achebe’s most famous, most frequently taught novel. After the presentation, I encouraged Kyle, along with his classmates, to submit a conference proposal to the National Association of African American Studies and Affiliates. Kyle submitted his proposal and was invited to present the paper in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in February 2009. Subsequently, I recommended Kyle’s work for College of Humanities and Fine Arts 2009 Graduate Student Research Symposium, where it was quite favorably received.

In “Mental Realities of the Multi-Culture: Multiple Othering in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*,” Kyle examines the difference between pre-colonial and post-colonial “othering” in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, a novel voted as one the 100 best of the past century; specifically, Kyle examines how people deemed “inferior members” of pre-colonial Igbo society (women, children, twins, and men without titles) mentally hybridize colonization. While most studies on *Things Fall Apart* have focused on Okonkwo, the main character, Kyle’s essay not only argues that Nwoye, Okonkwo’s son, is the main character, but it also focuses on minor characters to analyze how perimeter



members of Umuofia village mentally transition from a pre-colonial Igbo society to a post-colonial world. By reevaluating binaries, Kyle examines how two embodiments of otherness—the mimic and, later, the hybridized—receive colonization in a format that the pre-colonial members at the center of culture reject.

Representing both traditional research-based work in the Humanities and exemplary work in the discipline of English, Kyle Wilson’s “Mental Realities of the Multi-Culture: Multiple Othering in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*” contributes to the discipline by offering an insightful new consideration of Chinua Achebe’s novel by focusing on minor characters that have been previously overlooked in other studies. Currently, Kyle Wilson is completing his M.A. in English in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Northern Iowa, and he is applying to PhD. programs in English literature for admission in Fall, 2010.