

Chinua Achebe and Postcolonial Ambivalence: Gratitude and Revenge in *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at showing postcolonial ambivalence in Chinua Achebe's first three novels: [Achebe \(1958\)](#); [Achebe \(1960\)](#) and [Achebe \(1964\)](#). Postcolonial ambivalence appears in the wavering position the texts exhibit between taking revenge on missionaries and natives and gratitude for them, which is revealed in the way the novels treat the themes of language, tolerance, religion and cultural violence. Gratitude for the missionaries and the natives appears in praising their languages, tolerance, religions, and justifying their violence. By contrast, the novels depict the revenge position on both missionaries and natives by criticizing English language and excluding Igbo language, criticizing the mutual intolerance of natives and missionaries, criticizing Christianity and Igbo religion, and portraying the unjustified cultural violence natives and missionaries practice. The pattern is traced to illustrate different levels of ambivalence in Achebe's novels. Moreover, theories of ambivalence in postcolonial discourse and partial representation are relevant. The conclusion suggests reasons for postcolonial ambivalence in Achebe's novels, revealing an ironic twist in his fictions and exposing the writer's cynical attitude toward the difficult position of the native intellectual trapped between two cultures. Our approach is applicable to a range of recent postcolonial literary works with ambivalent attitudes, and to the works of writers living in hybrid cultures. This article also connects postcolonial, postmodern, and post-structuralist theories on the basis of their common notions of ambivalence/indeterminacy.

Keywords: *Chinua achebe, Postcolonial ambivalence, Gratitude, Revenge.*

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1. INTRODUCTION: POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE

This article argues for postcolonial ambivalence in Chinua Achebe's first three novels: *Achebe (1958)*; *Achebe (1960)* and *Achebe (1964)* hereafter respectively abbreviated as *TFA*, *NLE*, and *AG*. Ambivalence in these novels appears in the wavering between taking revenge on missionaries and natives and expressing gratitude for both of them. This wavering is revealed in the novels' treatment of certain themes like language, tolerance, religion, and cultural violence. The novels are engaged textually with relation to their evocation of postcolonial ambivalence.

Postcolonial ambivalence appears in many literary works. For example, in *Gosh (1988)* the protagonist is ambivalent. Radhakrishnan states that Ghosh describes the ambivalence the protagonist experiences "from within the double consciousness of postcolonial emergence" and that Tridib "claims the Victoria Memorial as his own in the context of independent India" (2003, p.109). Tridib's "double" consciousness—to use the term of *Du Bois (1903)*—is being torn between the (id)entities of the colonized Indian slave and the newly independent Indian who lives in the diaspora. Furthermore, the South African writer Nadine Gordimer incorporates the theme of postcolonial ambivalence in her novel (*Gordimer, 1979*). The protagonist Rosa experiences herself as divided between "subaltern and dominant, but each in a different context" (*Radhakrishnan, 2003*). However, Gordimer's split narrative is almost just to "Rosa's double consciousness," presenting her "as 'seeing' and as 'being seen' as gaze and as spectacle" (p.125). Meanwhile, Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) is a postcolonial Arabic novel with thematic ambivalence. It depicts the divided consciousness of the African intellectual in the grey liminal space. Mustafa Saeed, the protagonist, is "the product of colonial education" (*Jabbar, 2012*). His in-betweenness makes him "a menace to his native people because he no longer belongs to them" (p.132). The state of Saeed is similar to the state of the postcolonial writer who lives in the third space between cultures, where identities overlap and are negotiated.

Evidently, ambivalence as wavering between two positions has its roots in postcolonial discourse. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha defines ambivalence in postcolonial discourse in terms of "partial" presence and "double articulation," which means "almost the same, but not quite" (1994, p.86). Ambivalence is also marked by "uncertainty" and "slippage" of presentation (p.86). Bhabha explains that partial writing is both "incomplete" and "virtual" resulting in "mimicry" which is "at once resemblance and menace" (p.88). This menace lies in mimicry's "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (p.88). Thus, mimicry disrupts the authority of colonial discourse and weakens it, producing "a class of interpreters" who are not English but their tastes, opinions, morals and intellects are (p.87). Such interpreters and intellectuals, who are the living examples of complexities and in-betweenness, manifest postcolonial ambivalence in their works.

Along with Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said, Bhabha uses "global theorizing" in postcolonialism (*McQuillan et al., 1999*). Global theorizing strengthens his theory, for it becomes applicable to many texts. Accordingly, Bhabha's theorizing of ambivalence, mimicry, and double vision is likely to be applied to a wide variety of literary texts, including Achebe's novels. In the forward to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Bhabha writes that the ambivalent individual:

is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figures of colonial otherness- the White man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body. It is in relation to this impossible object that emerges the liminal problem of colonial identity. (1952, p. xvi)

Similarly, Fanon declares in his *The Wretched of the Earth* that the native intellectual "feels the need to turn backwards" to the past "because he is the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable" so he "will try to make European culture his own" (1965, pp.175-176). He adds that "the intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English [like Achebe], when he comes up against the need to

take on two nationalities, chooses, if he wants to remain true to himself, the negation of one of these determinations” (p.176). This native yearns to be classified “with the bourgeois representatives of” the colonial country (p.143). Such intellectuals “can’t choose; they must have both. Two worlds: that make two bewitchings... each day the split widens” (p.17). The attachment to other cultures and civilizations pushes “the individual who climbs up into society-white and civilized” to abandon his past (1952, p.149). Fanon calls this state of the individual’s mind “cultural imposition,” indicating the split and ambivalence of consciousness (p.193).

Furthermore, Fanon tackles the idea of ambivalence in the will of the nationalist parties in the newly independent countries. He writes that “inside the nationalist parties, the will to break colonialism is linked with ... that of coming to a friendly agreement with it. The two processes will sometimes continue side by side” (1965, p.98). One can argue that such ambivalence in will appears amongst writers of postcolonial discourse. Thus, Fanon’s illustration of the ambivalent will meets Bill Ashcroft’s definition of ambivalence which is “wanting something and wanting its opposite” simultaneously (1998, p.12). Ashcroft et al continue paraphrasing Bhabha’s definition that ambivalence designates “the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer” (p.12-13).

Ambivalence is located not only in the consciousness of the colonized but also in the colonizers’, for the strong impact of colonialism affects both. When Fanon mentions the Algerian revolution, he writes about the ambivalent French settlers living in Algeria. He states that “many members of the mass of colonialists reveal themselves to be much, much nearer to the national struggle than certain sons of the nation” (1965, p.116). The term “ambivalence” appears in African American literary jargon as well. W. E. B. Du Bois, the African American writer who is one of the founders of Pan-Africanism, comes up with the term “double-consciousness” (Childs and Patrick, 1997). In 1903, Du Bois describes it as:

a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.(p.9)

This double consciousness is described generally as “the split awareness of the minority or marginalized writer”, as conflicting allegiances (Childs and Patrick, 1997).

Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray attribute the “fame” that many African writers achieve to “articulating the complexities” of the “unique history” of Africa (Schwarz and Sangeeta, 2000). Achebe is mentioned in that group of writers including Wole Soyinka (p.275). Surely, Achebe, in his first three novels as well as his other novels, articulates the complexities and ambivalences of postcolonial African societies. *TFA* and *AG* are concerned with the Igbo’s first encounters with the British administration, while *NLE* exhibits the modern morally-corrupted Nigeria far from the British colonization but with the presence of a British government. On the other hand, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1966) and *A Man of the People* (1988) tackle the era after Nigeria’s independence. It is possible to find other patterns of postcolonial ambivalence in these novels. However, the pattern of revenge-gratitude consistently addressed in this article and the facets of ambivalence to be analyzed here: language, religion, tolerance, and violence are not found in the aforementioned novels.

Kwame Anthony Appiah studies the ambivalence of postcolonial intellectuals. In his article “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?” he defines postcoloniality as:

the condition of what we might ungenerously call a comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of

world capitalism at the periphery...their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa. (1991, p.348)

Such a definition is applicable to all native intellectuals who have received a Western education, including Achebe, and who assimilate aspects of two or more cultures and thus develop conflicting allegiances. Moore-Gilbert et al argue that the nativist writers are criticized because “their criticism [of the West] has simply generated a reverse discourse,” for when they criticize “the cultural domination of the West” they become “of its party without knowing it” (1997, p.21). By constructing a counter discourse, such writers risk confirming the existence of the Western stereotyped image of the natives.

2. ACHEBE AND POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE

Surely, Achebe is a postcolonial writer and not a pro-colonialist one. In his essay “Colonialist Criticism,” he articulates the possibilities for ambivalence in the postcolonial situation. He criticizes the racist narrow-minded look that many scholars apply to the African novel (1995, pp.73-76). He attacks the universality under which the colonialist critics consider some works and exclude others. He also criticizes “the man of two worlds theory” believing that it was created by colonialist critics “to prove that no matter how much the native was exposed to European influences he could never truly absorb them” (p.74). Additionally, he believes that the educated native is worse than the native living in the jungle, because his Western education “deprived him of his links with his own people” (p.74). Concluding his article, Achebe rejects the rules of colonialist writing, which the colonialist critic uses to devalue the African novel, calling for true universalism: “let every people bring their gifts to the great festival of the world’s cultural harvest and mankind will be all the richer for the variety and distinctiveness of the offerings” (p.76).

In addition, in his article “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” Achebe accuses Conrad of being a racist in his description of the African natives in his novel (2011, pp.1783-1794). He writes: “*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as...the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality” (p.1785). Also, Achebe in “Africa Is People” accuses the West of dealing with Africans as numbers rather than humans (p. 313). He again criticizes Conrad for his racist and imperialist language used in [Conrad \(1902\)](#). However, he vents mixed feelings, calling for attacking the Africans for their mistakes and declaring:

I am not an apologist for Africa’s many failings...I am hard-headed enough to realize that we must not be soft on them, must never go out to justify them. But I am also rational enough to realize that we should strive to understand our failings objectively and not simply swallow the mystifications and mythologies cooked up by those whose goodwill we have every reason to suspect ([Achebe, 2011](#)).

The ambivalence of Achebe appears in attacking his people and colonialism simultaneously. He attacks his people believing that he “must never...justify them” (p.317). On the other hand, he attacks the West, who are the ex-colonizers, suspecting their intentions in Africa (p.317).

This article explores different manifestations of postcolonial ambivalence in Achebe’s texts. This ambivalence takes the shape of gratitude and revenge regarding both natives and colonials. Although the setting of each novel differs, the pattern of ambivalence this article seeks is still there. In *TFA*, *NLE* and *AG* Achebe shows gratitude for the missionaries by using English as the language of his writings. He believes that colonialism “gave [Africans] a language with which to talk to one another” (1993, p.430). On the other hand, in *TFA* a hint at revenge on the missionaries appears by describing English as the language spoken through the nose ([Achebe, 1958](#)). In *NLE*,

native people prefer using English to their mother tongue (1960, p.89). As for gratitude for the natives, *TFA* presents some of Igbo translated proverbs, but it suggests revenge on them by neglecting their language (pp.4-124). In *NLE*, people exclude English from their intimate conversations where they tell their hearts (1960, p.61).

As for tolerance, the missionaries are tolerant when they declare that “there is no slave or free” in front of God promoting freedom of belief (1958, p.107). In *NLE*, England appears as tolerant when it embraces Obi giving him elitist education despite his ethnicity (1960). Additionally, in *AG* missionaries are tolerant when they put a law during the construction works that forbids destroying “people’s homesteads” (1964, p.69). On the other hand, missionaries are shown as intolerant as a sign of revenge on them when one of the converted outcasts kills “the most revered animal” in the clan (1958, p.108). Moreover, in *NLE* Mr Green accuses Nigerians of lacking commitment while seeking independence (1960, p.116). Some of the converts in *AG* plan to burn an Igbo shrine, which is an instance of being intolerant (1964, p.268). There are some instances when the natives appear tolerant. For example, they seem to welcome differences between themselves and others when one of them declares that “what is good in one place is bad in another” (1958, p.50). Also, in *NLE* some Igbos have no problem in marrying white women (1960, p.25). Additionally, in *AG* the Igbo priest agrees to send his son to the missionary school (1964, p.56). However, their intolerance of others appears when they describe the white man as a piece of “chalk” with no toes (1958, pp.50-51). Additionally, *NLE* shows that Igbos’ belief that thunder would kill anyone out of their clan, whether African or British, is extremely intolerant (1960, p.38). In *AG*, people chase “out all Christians” and burn their homes as a reaction to accidentally killing a sacred python by the missionaries (1964, p.268).

Additionally, *TFA* shows gratitude for Christianity by exhibiting it as a peaceful loving religion that embraces the outcast and rescues twins (1958, pp.106-107). Furthermore, in *NLE* Christianity is the religion of education and enlightenment (1960, p.96). In *AG*, Christianity is a caring religion that announces the day of the harvest instead of Igbo’s priest to save people’s crops (1964, pp.269-270). On other occasions, revenge on Christianity appears by showing it as a materialistic religion whose priest uses “gifts and singlets and towels” to encourage people to come to missionary school (1958, p.122). In *NLE*, Christianity is a weak religion that cannot uproot the Ozo tradition from the converted society (1960, p.101). In addition, Christianity seems to be a religion that seeks to separate people to easily govern them (1964, p.70). The native religion is reduced and elevated simultaneously as a sign of revenge and gratitude respectively. The power of the gods and ancestors of the Igbos is decreased and weakened (1958, pp.102-103). Furthermore, *NLE* criticizes the continuity of Ozo tradition (1960, p.54). Gratitude for Igbo religion is shown when the clan exiles rich Okonkwo for his abomination (1958, p.86). In addition, *NLE* mentions an Igbo proverb that calls for unity which is a gratitude sign for Igbo beliefs (1960, pp.61-62). People of Igbo religion as well seem to be committed to their religion in *AG*, for they await the announcement of harvest while their crops were dying (1964, pp.253-270).

As for violence, missionary violence is sometimes justified as a sign of gratitude for the colonizer. For example, when Christians prison Okonkwo’s men it is because they destroy the church (1958, pp.128-129). In *NLE*, they appear as saviours of the people from Igbo violence (1960, p.9). Furthermore, they prison Ezeulu because he refuses to “co-operate with the Administration” which seems justified (1964, pp.216-218). However, the text of *TFA* shows revenge on them by showing the unjustified violence they practice on the natives as when the missionaries kill a whole village because an Igbo kills a white man (1958, p.106). Similarly, *NLE* shows Obi getting beaten by the headmaster of the missionary school (1960, p.8). Likewise, *AG* takes revenge on the missionaries indirectly by describing the imprisonment of the Igbo priest by force (1964, pp.216-218). By comparison, gratitude in justified Igbo violence appears when the Igbos exclude all converts from the privileges of the clan because one of them kills their sacred animal (1958, p.109). Further, in *NLE* people are shown as less violent with women and children than

they are in *TFA* (1960). By the same token, people of *AG* seem to be less violent in choosing running as their favourite sport instead of wrestling in *TFA* (1964, p.26). Similarly, revenge on them appears in instances of illogical violence as their ill-treatment of some sick people by throwing them in the forest till they die because swelling is an abomination for them (1958, p.12). In *NLE*, natives are even violent with poor animals (1960, p.14). In *AG*, psychological violence is practiced on children by their mothers who tell them horrifying stories of spirits (1964, pp.235-236).

3. JUSTIFYING POSTCOLONIAL AMBIVALENCE IN ACHEBE'S NOVELS

An analysis of *TFA*, *NLE*, and *AG* reveals their postcolonial ambivalence with regard to the representation of language, tolerance, religion, and cultural violence of both missionaries and natives. Achebe's novels hint at gratitude for the missionaries by using English language, representing them as tolerant, praising Christianity and its followers, and justifying their cultural violence. By contrast, the texts portray revenge on the missionaries by criticizing English language, showing them as intolerant of others, attacking Christianity and its followers, and exhibiting the unjustified cultural violence Christians practice on the natives. On the other hand, the three novels reveal gratitude for the natives by mentioning the strengths of Igbo language, presenting Igbos as tolerant of others, praising their religion, and justifying their violence. Simultaneously, the novels suggest revenge on the natives by excluding and criticizing their language, exposing their intolerance, reducing the value of their religion and its followers, and revealing their cultural violence.

The ambivalence of the texts possibly implies the ambivalence of their writer, one who "is at the same time a prey to the postcolonial market, of which he is also a profiteer, and a resented son who cannot find the means to disengage himself from the imperial eye" (Appiah, 1991). Achebe fits under George Castle's definition of "the deracinated native intellectual" who is "the intellectual who became alienated from his/her local culture and nurtures ambiguous feelings of resentment, contempt, and admiration for the metropolis, from which he/she also expects recognition" (cited in Rodrigues (2007)). With this in mind, one specifically understands the position of writers like Achebe who seek the recognition of the other, thus assimilating his/her culture. Meanwhile, they are still attached to their cultures and countries. The two motives exist in parallel in their unconscious and act accordingly. We cannot claim that such writers are disloyal; they are just a valid case of ambivalence.

Likewise, one can compare Tridib's attitude towards the existence of two cultures in Amitav Ghosh's novel to Achebe's ambivalent attitude according to Radhakrishnan (2003). It is because "his ideological stance is that of Chinua Achebe, who argued contra Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o that precisely because modernity is constitutively colonial in nature, it does not belong exclusively to the colonizer" (Radhakrishnan, 2003). Identically, Achebe "reserves to himself the right to heterogenize, hybridize, and relativize the authority of modernity...both the Victoria memorial and the English language as master signifiers are stripped of their colonial dominance and reterritorialized in response to the postcolonial will to hegemony" (Radhakrishnan, 2003). Therefore, Achebe uses English language in a way that he believes to be different in its indications. In his article "The African Writer and the English Language," he states that he uses English language because it will carry his African experience (1993, p.430). He is glad for the tongue that the missionaries give to his people, and sees no contradiction between loyalty and using English (p.430). Moreover, he creates his own definition of a national literature which is "the literature written in English" (p.429). Consequently, he marks his writing as "a product of colonialism" (Morrison, 2007). Achebe supposes that the natives should "give the devil his due" because he "gave them a language with which to talk to one another...a tongue" (1993, p.430). In addition, he confesses the fact that African writers who write in English are the "by-products" of colonialism role playing the victim (p.430). Is it enough to consider one's self a victim to

justify a position many consider disloyal? Achebe could have written better texts that account for the attractive sides of the Igbo life and fight the British colonialism at the cultural level of writing. He could have written more propagandistic works in favour of his African nation and ethnicity.

Accordingly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o criticizes Achebe for using English instead of his native tongue, for he believes that language is a tool to strengthen the colonizer and weaken the colonized. Language, for Thiong'o, moves the battlefield to the realm of education: "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom" (1993, pp.435-453). Thiong'o tackles the emergence of intellectual imperialism which is more dangerous than the military one.

This "double vision" that haunts Achebe is the result of "contradictory and multiple beliefs" that lead to "partial representation" of the self and the other (Bhabha, 1994). In this sense, Achebe "speaks in a tongue that is forked" (p.126). His pen writes two voices, but one would be the dominant. Consequently, Achebe tries to defend himself justifying his neglect of Igbo language and his ambivalence:

even today I'm not sure that I want to write a novel in Igbo. I would write poetry, which I do, in that language. In other words, I have two hands, and so I give them different things to do. Some of my friends don't agree. They think you should cut off one of your hand because it's somehow more loyal to be one-handed. But I don't think so. (cited in Rodrigues (2007))

Thus, to read the literature written by Achebe in English is to "experience the globalization of English language" even in "literary and cultural production" (Schwarz and Sangeeta, 2000). This leads to questioning the positive results of assuming that every writer uses their mother tongue to write their works. Further, in his book *An Introduction to Post-colonial Theory* Childs & Patrick state that "representations such as Achebe's" which "are produced in a language and forms inherited from the colonial powers makes it a complex process" to judge such works (1997, p.105). His justification is that "on the one hand, using European languages and European forms such as the novel in order to oppose European ideologies and representations on their own terrain can be a very powerful act" (pp.105-106). However, the continuity by which Achebe uses these "non-native forms can seem like a compounding of European devaluing of indigenous languages and cultural practices" (p.106). Consequently, Achebe's use of a Western genre like the novel and of the English language can be read as siding with the colonizer of his mother country, Nigeria, in the underestimation of his own language and people. From another perspective, he is seeking universalism and pleading the case of Africa with Western audiences, bringing his country and culture to the forefront.

In his article "The Novelist as Teacher" Achebe confirms the educational role of the novel. He prefers utilizing his writings to expose the wrongs of his people instead of attacking the "other" West. To justify his attitude, he writes: "why should I start waging war as a Nigerian newspaper editor was doing the other day on the 'soulless efficiency' of Europe's industrial and technological civilization when the very thing my society needs may well be a little technical efficiency" (Achebe, 2007). So, Achebe believes in the propagandistic role of his novels through showing the Nigerians the reality of their society. He mentions, for example, the young woman who is a teacher and who blames him for not making Obi marry the outcast girl Clara in *NLE*. Her motive was "that there were many women in the kind of situation" in the novel (p.104). She tells Achebe that he "could have served them well" if he "had shown that it was possible to find one man with enough guts to go against custom" (p.104). The teacher hints at the importance of teaching through example which is encouraging for such a society. Achebe, however, believes that what his society needs is "to look back and try and find out where" they "went wrong, where the rain began to beat" them (p.104). We might partly agree with him. However, if one does not see an example of the right things,

how would one ever learn them? Pedagogy and education are inseparable. Thus, the opportunity Achebe had, and maybe missed, in his position as a writer was great. It is important for all writers to realize the significance of solving the problems of their societies in their works. Achebe draws a degraded stereotypical image of the African man (“Negro,” which is a traumatic one for the natives) to be omitted (Fanon, 1952). We can omit this reference here only because it seems far fitting

Had Obi married Clara in *NLE*, many people in the Nigerian and other African societies would have rethought the whole situation of abandoning Ozo tradition. Achebe declares that “the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done...he should march right in front” because he is “the sensitive point of his community” (2007, p.105). Achebe adds:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past- with all its imperfections- was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them”. (p.105)

However, one would be shocked with the amount of the imperfections of the natives compared to the amount of perfections of the missionaries in his first three novels. He could have shown the wrongs of his society more kindly. *TFA*, *NLE*, and *AG* have many instances of criticism of the natives. Although Achebe sometimes mentions their merits and attacks the missionaries, he could have written something more suitable for education. His novels are taught in the African schools and universities, which could be a great opportunity to teach the young generation how to deal with the difficulties of their current and coming days. Achebe could have shown more commitment in writing about his people, but his ambivalent position made this difficult. His understanding of the role of the socially and politically committed writer is simply ambivalent rather than straightforward.

There is a debate about politics vs. aesthetics in African American fiction, between commitment and political responsibility or propaganda literature as opposed to artistry. Critics like Du Bois call for propagandistic literature which shoulders political responsibilities towards people. On the Other hand, Langston Hughes calls for artistry as Neimneh (2014) has mentioned (Neimneh, 2014). Likewise, Fredrick Jameson declares that all third-world literature has to be “national allegories,” meaning that it has to shoulder some kind of responsibility towards people (1986, p.69). He believes that the story of a person is allegorical of a whole society. So, it seems difficult for the native intellectual to skip the national situation and write only aesthetically. And when they write socially and politically relevant literature, they are interpreted differently by different factions of readers.

According to Schwartz and Ray, African writers gain fame through writing about the complexities of Africa (Schwarz and Sangeeta, 2000). In this light, Fanon believes that the African man who “behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro” reveals his ambivalence (1965, p.17). Surely, Achebe articulates the complexities and ambivalences of the African societies and of his own. His first three novels share the four thematic aspects of ambivalence we analyze: language, tolerance, religion, and cultural violence.

Many suggestions are applicable for the reasons behind the ambivalent position of the texts in representing natives and missionaries. Firstly, an autobiographical reason for the gratitude for the missionaries may be the educational environment which Achebe lived in Njeng (2008). He indicates his gratitude for the education, career, publishing potential, and fame that the missionaries offered him. The representation of Christianity and its followers seems to be a positive one. The reviewer of Times Literary Supplement justifies this “confusion of attitudes” writing that “Mr Achebe owes much to missionary education, and his sympathies are naturally more with the new than the old” (cited in Morrison (2007)). Equally important, Fanon tackles the gratitude position from an economic point of view, when he writes that: “Europe is literally the creation of the Third World” (1965, p.81). He states that the receivers of the aids of Europe “do not tremble with gratitude” (p.81). This idea could be applied to

the writers of postcolonial discourse who should not show their gratitude for the colonizers because they are the cause of their existence. Achebe once asked the World Bank to aid Africa and to cancel the debts on the poorest countries in the world (1999, p.319). However, they did not. Their position as capitalist countries will be shaken if they give these countries their economic independence.

Besides, there is another autobiographical reason for the ambivalence of the texts which does not contradict the main focus of this article on textual analysis. Achebe may have written his texts in defence of his converted father and family who are considered outcasts by their own people. Eric Sipyinyu Njeng declares that “Achebe’s experience as a child of a convert, considered as an outcast and a traitor, might have pushed him to write in defence of his father and his own experience” (2008, p.3). Another interesting reason that results in gratitude is the fear that Achebe may feel; it is the fear of losing the care and interest that British government surrounds him with. It is not only fear from the British who might take all the privileges that they give him, but also the fear of the degradation of the ego and its image in the eyes of the other. The reason may be a narcissistic one as well. The love of the current self and the recognition of the self as inflated with fame and pride led Achebe to take the gratitude road to keep his comfort zone and to save his self-image. Consequently, Achebe wanted to give “the devil his due” by being just and show the good sides of colonialism (1993, p.430). It is the white man’s burden that Kipling demonstrates in his 1899 poem, the burden which the writers of postcolonial strain find difficult to leave behind. Because of the colonial education they have got, their unconscious and acts are dominated by this burden.

On the other hand, the reason for revenge on the missionaries is possibly that they are the colonialists who took Achebe’s mother country, Nigeria. So, his works are a way of writing back to the canon, a part of a postcolonial counter discourse. He implies this in his article where he accuses Conrad of the racist representation of Africans in his novel (2011, pp.1783-1794). Furthermore, what causes him to show his gratitude for the natives is the clear relation between them. They are his people, so he writes out of loyalty to them and to their country. The same motive appears in his article “Africa is People” when he asks the capitalist countries to cancel the debts they want from many poor countries including African ones (1999, p.319).

On the contrary, he takes revenge on the natives for many reasons. First, he tries to avenge —not defend as Njeng (2008) declares— his converted family who suffered from the injustice of the Igbo society. Accordingly, “his picture of the collapse of the tribal custom is perhaps less than compassionate” (cited in Morrison (2007)). Also, Igbo religion is reduced compared to Christianity which is elevated (Njeng, 2008). Had Achebe written back to the canon, Igbos would have been shown as less violent and more tolerant.

Second, Achebe’s texts’ revenge on the natives is a way of cultural renewal and a call for change. Achebe believes in the renewing role that fiction plays, declaring that the “beneficent fiction calls into full life” the “total range of imaginative faculties and gives...a heightened sense of... personal, social and human reality” (2007, p.113). So, his first three novels are a call for change. His state of ambivalence is evidence against the ignorant Igbo religion and inflexible traditions, which in refusing the changes allow the dominance of Christians’ beliefs. Igbo’s inflexibility, injustice, irrationality, and intolerance lead to the integration of Christian religion, education, and ways of living in Igbos’ hearts and minds. Thus, Achebe’s ambivalent position portrays him as the victim of an ignorant and rigid society. However, the victimized is no longer a victim if he/she realizes the causes of his state. Accordingly, he has to fight his perceived victimization and create a resistant act that takes him out of the antagonism of victim-victimizer position. One can say that Achebe realizes his position partially. However, we do not think that he realizes he is the by-product of the Igbo society as well. Or, maybe he understands his position fully and chooses to avenge himself by criticizing Igbos. Other reasons for ambivalence might be cultural contact

and negotiation. The interaction between different cultures with their positive sides and negative ones traps both colonizers and colonized in difficult positions and causes their ambivalence.

Fanon's advice for the ambivalent subject in postcolonial discourse takes the form of self-assertion and self-satisfaction. The ambivalent subject has to believe in himself/herself and say:

I am not the prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny... I do not have the right to go and cry out my hatred at the white man. I do not have the duty to murmur my gratitude to the white man. (1952, p.229)

Fanon calls on the postcolonial subject to realize him/herself and to fly out of the box of gratitude and revenge. Such a call needs many years to be achieved, for the inner complexities of the unconscious are not easily fixed or even understood. Future generations of writers might be adequately aware of the ambivalences of their ancestors to reform their complexities in a way to serve the new reformed society. This requires a will to challenge the unconscious and focus on the whole experiences of nations. The ambivalent attitudes Achebe exhibits in his texts indicate that he is ironic about his situation as a native intellectual who is prisoned in the grey area of ambivalence. It seems that Achebe tries to articulate the irresolvable condition of the native intellectual who gets educated in England or America and feels his/her split impulses towards the process of colonization. Additionally, Achebe's ambivalent texts hint that he writes realistic literature, not a utopian one, to show the reality of the African situation.

Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh state that in post-structuralism "the sign is not stable...that there is an indeterminacy or undecidability about meaning and that it is subject to 'slippage' from signifier to signifier" (1989, p.179). Thus, "if literature, the author, and the text no longer have an identity outside of difference," then they do not "have a single, fixed and determinate meaning" (p.179). Accordingly, texts and authors "are relativized and unstable" (p.179). Postcolonialism is considered as a poststructuralist "critique of difference for political ends" (Barthes, 1989). Consequently, postcolonial ambivalence can be included under the umbrella of textual indeterminacy and the death of the author. In his article "The Death of the Author" Roland Barthes states that when "writing begins," "the author enters into his own death" (1968, p.185). By excluding the author from the interpretations of a text, the text is open to different interpretations by different readers. So, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (p.189). Because the text has no fixed meaning, the theme of ambivalence this article delivers is legitimate. Textual indeterminacy is one area where post-structuralism and postcolonialism meet, the in-between area of ambivalence, which contributes to the development of both theories. Postcolonial ambivalence also matches Linda Hutcheon and Joseph Natoli's perspective of postmodernism. They declare in *A Postmodern Reader* that "postmodernity's assertion of the value of inclusive "both/and" thinking deliberately contests the exclusive "either/or" binary oppositions of modernity" (1993, p. ix). They add that "postmodern paradox, ambiguity, irony, indeterminacy, and contingency are seen to replace modern closure, unity, order, the absolute, and the rational" (p. ix). This idea makes postcolonial ambivalence one of the indeterminacies found in postmodernism. The both/and thinking equals ambivalence, the existence of multiple interpretations which are all acceptable.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article has offered reasons for postcolonial ambivalence in Achebe's selected texts *TFA*, *NLE*, and *AG*. It attempted to justify the ambivalence implied in the revenge on the missionaries and the natives and gratitude for both of them. Some of the reasons given are cultural renewal and the call for change. Another reason could be cultural contact and negotiation, i.e. hybridization. The inevitable interaction between cultures with

their positive and negative values puts both colonizers and colonized in difficult positions and accounts for their ambivalence. Interestingly, the representation of ambivalent attitudes in Achebe's texts may be considered a way of mapping an ironic end to the novels. This suggests that Achebe is cynical of the difficult and irresolvable situation of the native intellectual who is split and divided between his mother culture and the Western culture. This difficult situation of the native intellectual indicates the divided loyalties both the colonizers and the colonized have towards colonization. Such ambivalent treatment of colonization appears in E. M. Forster's 1924 novel *A Passage to India*. Forster and the characters of his novels, such as Dr. Aziz and Cyril Fielding, have a kind of parallel ambivalence towards the British colonization of India. Fielding is compassionate and friendly with Indians, especially with Dr. Aziz. At the same time, Forster's text does not call colonization to leave but to stay and treat Indians on a human basis (Forster, 1991). Postcolonial ambivalence can be applied to Achebe's other literary and non-fiction works. It is also applicable to literary works that tackle issues like hybridity and cultures, or those written by African writers with British or American education. However, we should be careful when we apply this notion so as to avoid simplistic arguments or overgeneralizations. Other studies may use the lives of the writers to make a connection between the text and the author. However, it is evidently better to rely on the text itself to avoid fallacious arguments. Therefore, we have discussed Achebe's texts rather than made claims about their writer's life. Nevertheless, Achebe's upbringing, education, and professional career have all contributed to this ambivalence we witness in his texts.

Additionally, this article has related the theories of postcolonialism, post-structuralism, and postmodernism on the ground of their celebration of ambivalence. Bhabha's notion of ambivalence, Barthes's idea of the death of the author, and Hutcheon's postmodernism of the both/and logic indicate the possibility of different interpretations within the same text. Such creative ideas pave the way to the potentiality of interdisciplinary analysis of literary texts based on the three theories mentioned. Besides, one can declare that a good reason for such an article is intra-racial prejudice, divided loyalties, and racism in postcolonial literature. It is applicable to works that contain ambivalent positions, and to works whose writers are hybrid subjects. Whether this ambivalence the texts exhibit is Achebe's own or not is not the crucial issue. Rather, the significant point is to explore this literary phenomenon by beginning with the texts of the novels and then moving to meta-textual levels of meaning.

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