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Achebe's Arrow of God: Unraveling the Postcolonial Ambivalence

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The Linguistic and Literary Practices in The Desert of Algeria and their Extensions in the Sahel Region Research Laboratory and the Interdisciplinary Approaches to English, African (Sub-Saharan) and Algerian Literary Texts Laboratory

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Abstract :

The paper delves into the postcolonial ambivalence portrayed in Chinua Achebe's novel *Arrow of God*. The analysis explores the depiction of language, tolerance, religion, and cultural oppression, revealing a complex interplay of gratitude and revenge towards both missionaries and natives. The study employs the MLA citation style, referencing a range of critical works and primary sources to support its arguments. The paper contributes to Achebe scholarship by unveiling the nuanced postcolonial duality in his texts.

Keywords: Postcolonial Ambivalence; Chinua Achebe; *Arrow of God*; Gratitude; Revenge

Introduction

“He was at once blind and full of sight...he felt like two separate persons”
(Achebe, 282)

Arrow of God, the novel which received a wide critical attention since its publication in 1964. One of the many African works which provided clues to postcolonial ambivalence status quo based on its representation of both missionaries and natives. Sometimes the text hints at gratitude for missionaries and natives, while it portrays revenge on both of them in other incidents. This can be traced in the text's treatment of language, tolerance, religion, and cultural violence. Consequently, this research draws a pattern that proves the existence of postcolonial ambivalence in AG. The text is the source of such evidence depending on what W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley term in their formalist analysis as “The Intentional Fallacy”. They argue against authorial intention as the basis for critical interpretation of literature. They declare that the text “is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it” (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 5). We cannot claim that this ambivalence is Achebe's, but it might still be an indication of Achebe's difficult position as an educated intellectual aware of the advantages and disadvantages of both colonialism and native cultures.

Such intellectuals represent what Kwame Appiah calls the “comprador intelligentsia” who are “a relatively small, ‘Western’-trained group of writers and thinkers, who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery” (Appiah, 348). As a result, the intellectual included in this definition plays a “double role: he 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” (348). He fits as well under the definition of George Castle 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” (Rodrigues, 3). Furthermore, Moradewun Adejunmobi asserts “the implicit influence of the non-African gaze” on the African writer indicating the influence of western culture and civilization on the African writers (3).

Likewise, Jean-Paul Sartre highlights the kind of “writers and poets” who “tried to explain to us [Europeans] that our values and the true facts of their lives did not hang together and that they could neither reject them completely nor yet assimilate them” in the introduction to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*

(Sartre, 7-8). "They cannot choose; they must have both," he continues. Two worlds equal two bewitchings, and the divide gets wider every day (Sartre, 17). Fanon goes on to characterize the "native intellectual" as "the living haunt of contradictions that run the risk of becoming insurmountable" because he "will try to make the European culture his own" (Fanon, 175–176). Fanon introduces the concept of 'cultural imposition,' a term closely associated with ambivalence (Fanon, 193). He argues that it is typical for the Black individual 'to be anti-Negro' (Fanon, 191). Interestingly, Homi Bhabha echoes this sentiment, suggesting that by exploring the 'Third Space,' one can evade the politics of polarity and emerge as an 'other' to oneself (Bhabha, 39). In defining the third space, Fanon adds, 'I existed triply: I occupied space' (Fanon, 112). The literary works *Arrow of God*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Things Fall Apart* navigate multiple representations of language, tolerance, religion, and cultural oppression, presenting a complex interplay between missionaries and natives.

Morrison mentions the 1973 conversation with Achebe entitled 'Chinua Achebe on *Arrow of God*: Conversation with Michael Fabre' where Achebe is asked about the reason for writing AG. Achebe declares that the motive for writing AG is to 'revaluate' his culture. Achebe encourages his readers to read AG the same as TFA: a way to write back; or to counter colonialism. He states that it is a text 'especially for his own people.' Surprisingly, Morrison comments that the novel represents the 'diminishing confidence and self-determination amongst the Ibo, under the influence of colonialism' which is a negative image of the Igbos (Morrison, 93). In addition, Robert Wren criticizes AG for 'the way it seemed to present the Ibo culture as static and unchanging' because 'such a view accords with the perspective of colonialism, which frequently represented Africa as unhistorical- even primeval- and untouched by development' (Wren, 94). As per Wren, AG aids 'in understanding the complex' or ambivalent 'interaction between British colonial rule and traditional Igbo culture during the early twentieth century' (Wren, 97). Additionally, Wren discusses numerous historical references that align with Achebe's work (Wren, 95-97). This emphasis on historical events aligns with the characteristics of 'the native intellectual,' as described by Fanon, who prioritizes the past and the people's history over their current situation (Fanon, 180). Such intellectuals tend to overstress details and, in doing so, may even overlook that the true aim of the struggle is to overcome colonialism in postcolonial discourse (Fanon, 38-39). This approach exposes to the risk of becoming outdated (Fanon, 180). Furthermore, Fanon's concept of the divided will is applicable to postcolonial discourse and texts like *Arrow of God* and the

previously mentioned novels, illustrating their fluctuation and ambivalence (Wren, 98).

Language

Ambivalence which refers to a complex emotional state characterized by conflicting feelings, thoughts, or actions related to the same object, idea, or past experiences. It often involves a simultaneous experience of both positive and negative emotions. For instance, someone might feel both love and hatred toward a person or thing.

Beyond this common understanding, psychoanalytic terminology provides a more nuanced definition. Introduced by Bleuler in 1911, in this context, ambivalence represents an underlying emotional attitude where contradictory impulses (typically love and hate) stem from shared origins and are intricately interconnected. Notably, when used in this psychoanalytic sense, it doesn't necessarily imply that the person embodying ambivalence directly feels both conflicting emotions. Instead, in cases like obsessional neurosis, where opposing sides are somewhat balanced in consciousness, one side tends to be repressed.

It's essential to distinguish between psychoanalytic ambivalence and everyday mixed feelings. While the former arises from neurotic conflicts, the latter may stem from a realistic assessment of the imperfect, inconsistent, or self-contradictory nature of the subject under consideration.

AG reveals ambivalence over the use of language in postcolonial texts. It shows the aboriginal people taking retribution on the colonists. It also expresses appreciation for the two of them. AG's official language is English, the language of recently arriving civilization and technology, which shows gratitude for the missionaries. Bhabha's concept of the "irony of partial representation"—which is embodied in "the desire to emerge as "genuine" as possible through mimicry - through a process of writing and repetition"—fits the usage of the English language (Bhabha, 88). Thus, using English is an indication of unfavorable mimicking.

Many critics argue against the tendency to write in English by some African writers. For example, Abdul Jan Mohamed argues against the use of English in TFA, which can be applied to AG as well (Abdul Jan, p.38). AG hints at a justification for using English in a way that serves the colonial. When people gather to find a solution for the unpaid work for the white man, many of them vote against sending a man called "Unachukwu" as a messenger. However, Ukpaka reminds his people that they do not know the language of the white man, and that power is with the one who speaks the language. He declares that "what a man does not know is greater than he. Those of us who want Unachukwu to go away

forget that none of us can say come in the white man's language" (Achebe, 103-105). English is the language of power, so it has to be spoken and learnt.

Fanon explains the reason to consider the use of colonial language a negative one. His explanation can be used to argue against AG's English text. He states:

at the moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hall-mark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism. (Fanon, 180)

As a result, the native intellectual who reconnects with his people through cultural accomplishments essentially behaves like an outsider, expressing himself and promoting his culture in a foreign language (Fanon, 180). Since language holds power and embodies culture, writers in various fields are expected to safeguard their cultures by utilizing their native languages. Failure to do so suggests that the writer has adopted the culture of the occupying power (Fanon, 178). Consequently, in *Arrow of God*, there is a display of appreciation towards the missionaries by adopting their language, which holds dominance over the Igbo language. Moreover, certain English names carry positive connotations, symbolizing gratitude towards the missionaries. For example, Mr. Good country's name carries a positive allegorical significance linked to his home country, England (Achebe, 268). In essence, England is personified in the man named Mr. Good country. This personification evokes Fredric Jameson's idea about third-world texts, asserting that 'all third-world texts are necessarily... allegorical.' National allegory, in this context, signifies that The story of the individual's destiny always serves as an allegory of the embattled situation of third-world culture and society. (Jameson, 69). Utilizing positive national allegory becomes a means of expressing gratitude toward the missionaries.

Otherwise, the text depicts a form of retaliation against the missionaries' language. For instance, the indigenous people describe it as an unfamiliar language emanating from the noses of its speakers, presenting a somewhat negative portrayal of English (Achebe, 170). At the same time, *Arrow of God* expresses appreciation for the native language by highlighting its strengths, particularly through the use of Igbo proverbs. Translated Igbo proverbs are employed to underscore the robust cultural heritage of the Igbo people (22-261). Additionally, the allegorical significance of Mr. Winterbottom's name is

noteworthy. In literature, winter symbolizes despair, but his name, Winterbottom, implies the conclusion of winter. The season that follows winter is spring, representing love and joy. Therefore, his name encapsulates both despair and love present in his life. Although he missed an opportunity for love at one point, the narrative informs us that he later falls in love with Dr. Mary Savage, who cares for him during his hospitalization (185). Through personification and symbolism, his name serves as a representation of both retaliation against and gratitude for the missionaries.

On the other hand, the text of the novel does not employ vernacular, which is a sign of revenge on the natives. The exclusion of the native language indicates that the natives are weak, and their language is not worth using. Additionally, Achebe in his novel shows the natives' ignorance of English language by their use of broken English which reflects their inability to acquire it fully (192). The text also has many African names and songs which are difficult to pronounce. The reader has no choice but to skip them to continue reading the simpler text. Even one of the characters changes his name from "Nwabueze" to "Johnu" when he goes to work for the white man. It seems that it is easier for Christians to call him an English name instead of his long African one (210). The use of African names adds to the sense of difficulty of Igbo language compared to the English text. Furthermore, the connotations that go with some African names are negative. One of the female characters is called "Ogbanje" which has a negative connotation (45-60). TFA shapes this connotation by mentioning the story of the Ogbanje child who is thought to be an evil one, for he/she dies and returns in circles to torture his/ her parents. Native people used to consult oracles to deal with Ogbanje children. Accordingly, the girl is named after the name of evil children indicating that the girl herself is evil as well.

Finally, Fanon is right when he states that 'mastery of language affords remarkable power' (Fanon, 17-18). AG's English language gives it power to suggest revenge on the missionaries and the natives simultaneously, and to imply gratitude for both of them. Employing English language and excluding Igbo language are signs of gratitude for the missionaries and revenge on the natives. On the other hand, criticizing English language and praising Igbo language are signs of revenge on the missionaries and gratitude for the natives. Such postcolonial ambivalence is depicted also in AG's attitude towards the representation of tolerance.

Tolerance

Postcolonial ambivalence appears in AG through the representation of tolerance at the side of both the missionaries and the natives. The text depicts gratitude for the missionaries by presenting them as tolerant to others. For example, Ezeulu is blamed by his people because he tells the truth before the white man in the case of Okperi. However, the white man understands Ezeulu calling him “the only witness of truth” which people hate “to hear” (7-8). Additionally, the white man’s tolerance is obvious in the construction works in Umuaro. There is a law that demands the avoidance of “people’s homesteads” during the construction works “by Captain Winter bottom himself” (69). Consequently, the white man cares for people’s houses and considers their needs while he can easily ignore them and make the road across their houses. Furthermore, Ezeulu mistrusts his own people and believes in the “goodwill” of the white man when he is “at Government Hill” in prison (216). Ezeulu believes that the British government is tolerant and it has a goodwill towards him although it prisons him. His trust of the supposed enemy shows that the whites are tolerant and just to others.

Nevertheless, the text suggests vengeance on the colonists by mentioning some incidents where they appear as intolerant. For example, the converts plan to burn a shrine belonging to the Igbos which is considered as a shrine (Achebe, 268). Here, they are intolerant of the Igbos and their houses of worship. Additionally, Mr Clarke invites Mr. Winter bottom to a chicken meal. The guest has some “difficulty with a piece of chicken,” so the host curses it thinking “these damned native birds” (133). His thinking, which is based on othemess, reaches the birds which he believes to be bad because they are African. Moreover, Ezeulu’s son Oduche converts to Christianity and becomes really committed to it. As a sign of his intolerance of Igbo traditions, he tries to kill the sacred python by suffocating it in a box (61). In addition, he once refuses going with his family to a wedding because there will be sacrifices for the idols there (145).

Simultaneously, the text portrays gratitude for the natives by presenting them as tolerant of others sometimes. For example, the Igbo priest Ezeulu is fine with sending his own son to the missionary school to learn there (56). This action of tolerance is important because it is done by the representative of Igbo religion. However, the revenge on the natives is revealed in representing their intolerance of the others and their differences throughout the novel. Igbos practice their intolerance on other Igbos by mistrusting them. They believe that “a man from another clan” is “a foreigner” in their eyes (70). Additionally, Igbos seem to be afraid of each other because they lack the common trust. For example, when they host visitors in the morning they do not serve them kola nuts. They are afraid of causing pain to their guests. When Ezueulu, the protagonist, has a morning guest, he does serve him kolanuts. He justifies this action saying “lest he should have a

belly-ache later and attribute it to Ezeulu's kolanut" (65). Some may argue that this is hostility; however, it is not. He may say "I do not want to cause you pain by serving you kolanut now," but he does not. He is afraid of the accusation of sickening the guest which is not a good reputation. It seems that Igbos exchange accusations amongst them which indicates their intolerance of each other. Moreover, Ezeulu's unaccountability for difference is obvious to his mother. She says that her son expects "everyone — his wives, his kinsmen, his children, his friends and even his enemies — to think and act like himself" and the one who dares "to say no to him" is "an enemy" (114). This causes his mistrust of others to the extent that his intimate friend, Nwodika, tells him: "you are a suspicious one" (211).

Furthermore, intolerance of the missionaries is obvious when some of the Igbos go to work for the white man in a road construction. When Nwabueze (John)'s friend goes to work in that road, John considers him as dead (Achebe, 209). In addition, Nwabueze (John) himself is the victim of Ezuele's own intolerant skeptical thoughts. When John offers Ezeulu his wife's cooking, the latter seems skeptical. He mistrusts John because he works for the white man's kitchen committing "a great degradation for a son of Umouro" (200). Another example occurs when one "ordinand" burns a shrine with some converts and kills "a python in the process." Although it seems an accident, Igbo people consider that an offense against the sacred python. So, they chase "out all the Christians among them and" burn "their houses" (268). In addition, Ezeulu's inner thoughts of the white man who comes to his house seem to take the direction of intolerance. He thinks that the white man is "short and thick, as hairy as a monkey" (109). He likens the man to an animal portraying the extreme intolerance of his clan. Also, when people meet to appoint a spokesman to ask the white man to pay them for the construction works, some vote against Moses Unachukwu. Because he belongs "to the white man's religion," he has the same "seed of foolishness" that all Christians have (102-105).

Religion

AG's postcolonial ambivalence is apparent in its representation of Christianity and Igbo religion. It suggests gratitude for Christianity in many ways. Christianity is shown as a complete religion that serves all aspects of life. This strong religion attaches people's lives to the Bible (57). The bishop is a strong believer in his religion. He writes a letter to Mr. Goodcountry saying that "the day would not be far when the priest [the Igbo priest] and all his people would turn away from the worship of snakes and idols to the true religion" (269). In addition, Christianity is a clever and caring religion. When Ezeulu refuses to announce the day of the new moon, the church saves people's lives and harvests (269-270). The

church is strategic, as it designates the day of the new moon, prompting the entire clan to embrace Christianity (287). Individuals seek sanctuary in the church and believe in the "power of Jesus to defend the vengeance of Ulu" (Morrison, 108).

Furthermore, Christianity brings education to the illiterate. Ezuele sends his son Oduche to learn the christianity (56), justifying this decision by saying: "I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there...my spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow" (55). Ezeulu also visits Mr. Clarke, who writes with his left hand, pondering "whether any black man could ever achieve the same mastery over books as to write it with his left hand" (213-214). He persistently encourages his son to learn to read and write, as this is what gives the white man power (233-234). As a result, Oduche becomes a diligent student who learns the English alphabet (240).

Moreover, Christianity appears as a peaceful religion that halts war among the Igbo people. The Igbos express gratitude for the missionaries, stating that "it is all due to the white man who says, like an elder to two fighting children: you will not fight while I am around" (23-24). Mr. Winterbottom, referred to as the "Breaker of Guns," collects all the guns in Umuaro and destroys them to halt the war over the land of Okperi (33-34). He is revered as the "Breaker of Guns," and "all children born in that year belong to a new age-grade of the Breaking of Guns" (44). AG expresses gratitude to the white man whose intervention brings peace (174 - 268).

Additionally, the new religion establishes courts to settle disputes (127), introduces industry and trade of tobacco and clothes to the African land (143 - 210), and brings genuine clinical medicine to the Igbo land (139). The missionaries also initiate the construction of roads (94) and demonstrate a level of organization in their households unlike the Igbos (210). Consequently, Ezeulu regards the white man in a highly favorable light, even thinking of Mr. Winterbottom as great (109).

However, the text implies a sense of retaliation against Christianity by hinting at its divisive force, which creates fractions among the Igbos. Ikedi, one of the converts, is appointed as the Chief of Okperi, and he insists that people refer to him as "an obi." king" so he is "now called His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi." It is the first time that Igbo people have a king due to British colonialism. This is "what British administration was doing among the Ibos, making a dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before" (70). The British divide people into small groups to govern them easily.

The text of AG simultaneously expresses gratitude for the native religion, depicting its followers as dedicated individuals. When Ezeulu refuses to announce

the day of the New Yam Festival, he causes a significant delay. Despite their crops dying, the people patiently wait. However, their wait cannot persist, as human action dictates the timing of the new moon's announcement. The priest seeks revenge when they abandon him in the British administration's prison (253-270). The text implies retribution against the native religion by diminishing its significance, evident in three main forms: passive portrayal of its followers, passive depiction of the gods and spirits, and the irrational passive beliefs held by the Igbos. The passive representation of the native religion's followers is chiefly embodied in Ezeulu, the priest of the god Ulu. He is introduced as a solitary individual who dines alone while his daughter longs to share his meal (6). Furthermore, this priest appears unjust and authoritarian, displaying favoritism among his children (122 and 113). This unequal treatment sparks envy among siblings (156-204).

Moreover, Ezeulu's uncontrolled temper leads him to use harsh language when angered (65). His son, Edogo, informs him of the rumors circulating about him and his converted son, Oduche, who attempts to harm a sacred python. Ezeulu laments his lost youth and strength, as his son takes no action against those slandering his family. Instead of punishing Oduche for his offense, Ezeulu encourages Edogo to be aggressive and intolerant of any insult to their reputation (63-65). He declares, "I would have come and broken the man's head instead of hiding in the spirit-house" (64). This highlights the priest's own conflicting feelings, leading him to handle different situations separately. Facing criticism and rejection, he opposes the rule sanctioning the perpetrator of this offense (63-65). He endeavors "to hurl defiance at them all," claiming that no religious rule mandates confining the sacred python in a box (72). The religious rule is to hold a funeral for the sacred python that has been killed. Additionally, he asserts that this transgression is "the kind... which a man must resolve between himself and his personal god" (73). Ezeulu himself will address this transgression during The Festival of The New Pumpkin Leaves, along with the sins of the other six villages, before the planting season (73). Ezeulu's response is driven by personal emotions rather than religious devotion, as a reaction to the "calumny" and "ill will" of his neighbors who engage with him in a deceitful manner (63 and 72). In essence, he violates the tenets of his religion in order to find a resolution for his son's wrongdoing. This is supported by Indrsena Reddy's suggestion that "Ezeulu is depicted as powerfully egocentric" and is "in a position of ambivalence and crisis" (Morrison, 103).

Furthermore, the priest Ezuelu cannot maintain control over his compound in relation to the religion he represents. He sends Oduche to the missionary schools, resulting in his conversion to Christianity. Additionally, his other son

Obika is a drinker of palm wine (Achebe, 12). Reddy suggests that "instead of guiding his son more carefully in his encounter with the white man, Ezeulu tacitly uses him as an agent in the battle with Nwaka and Ezidemili" (Morrison, 104). Moreover, he instills fear in people during the festival because it is believed that spirits surround him (87). Ezeulu relishes the fear that his presence evokes, and he fabricates a story about conversing with numerous gods. He claims that the spirits acknowledge his dominance over them (88). Additionally, he attempts to persuade his people that he can render himself invisible (181).

Ezeulu's ambivalence towards both religions contributes to the decline of Igbo religion because of his role as the priest. He envies the carpenter, who is honored to work for the white man. However, he believes that his son will attain "the same or greater honor" by attending the missionary school (96). Ezeulu believes that his father wishes to have a hand in selecting his successor by sending Oduche to the missionaries. As a result, he disqualifies him from being his successor, causing the priesthood to pass to his youngest son, Nwafo (113-114 and 155).

Ezeulu's vacillation between the two religions prompts numerous objections against him. People begin to question the validity of his role as a priest of Ulu (33 and 197). This occurs when the white man takes Ezeulu to prison because he refuses to be the warrant chief to Okperi (Carroll, 15).

During Mr. Winterbottom's illness, he remains in captivity as none of his people take action to release him, suggesting a desire to undermine Ulu's authority. Ezeulu's thoughts turn to revenge, finding pleasure in the idea. He views his dispute with the white man as less significant compared to the matter he must deal with his own people. In a self-persuasion and public defense, Ezeulu, conversing with his deity, envisions himself as the instrument of god's punishment for the people's abandonment of their god. Ulu's revenge, seemingly human-made, manifests in the delayed announcement of the New Yam Feast. Ezeulu's arrogance and thirst for revenge lead to his people's starvation. He decides to retaliate by delaying the feast until their crops begin to wither. Ezeulu's actions ultimately lead to the destruction of his religion and god. His delay drives people to turn to Christianity, resulting in the demise of Ulu and the adoption of a new religion. Ezeulu's self-centeredness and arrogance, as the epitome of Igbo religion, expose a rigid faith that gradually deteriorates until it fades away.

Furthermore, AG hints at the decline of Igbo religion through the passive portrayal of the gods and spirits. The Igbo people create numerous gods through medicine men and magicians, seeking their favor with offerings. Some gods are weaker than others, as evidenced by Nwaka's challenge to Ulu, proving that gods are vulnerable to destruction if not revered. Consequently, Igbos remember the

past days when there are no gods but “men of high title” to rule the clan (49). The clan seems to be heading towards secularism or a new religion.

On the other hand, gods instill fear in people through their names and descriptions. For instance, Ulu is described as "the deity that destroys a man when his life is sweetest to him" (32). It engages in warfare against other gods to establish dominance over them (48) and seeks revenge on those who abandon it (275). Additionally, the unequal distribution of wealth by certain gods is a manifestation of revenge within the native religion, as it favors one person over another. For example, when Ulu "favors a man, wealth flows like a river into his house; his yams grow as big as human beings, his goats produce threes and his hens hatch nines" (10). Moreover, the wealthy appear to have a specific god, "Eru, the god of riches" (19), indicating a society characterized by inequality and economic disparities. Igbo gods are depicted as weak, man-made, discriminatory, and highly demanding. They impose stringent conditions for sacrifices, such as requiring a kola nut to break into five lobes. One Igbo laments that he needs "to buy four or five basketfuls of kolanuts before" he can "find one with five lobes for a sacrifice" (118), complicating the sacrificial process.

As for the spirits of the ancestors, they evoke fear in people (160) but are considered weak, leading people to hire herbalists to strengthen their spirits (141). Additionally, spirits grant a sick man twelve days to recover, after which they will cause his death if he does not improve (140). Furthermore, spirits are afraid of gunpowder and noise, which the Igbos use to scare away the spirits near the sick individuals (139-140). The Igbos believe that gods are visible, and thus hold a festival to unite the gods and people. Notably, there is a god responsible for madness, "Agwu" (254). The spirits are esteemed individuals who wear masks to add an air of mystery to their presence. However, it has become easier for common people to discern the person behind the mask, diminishing the significance of the spirits and their masks (244).

Additionally, AG's text portrays the diminishing significance of the Igbo religion by incorporating certain irrational passive beliefs that the Igbos adhere to. For instance, when a man dies, his wife is expected to "sit in the ashes in the cooking place for seven whole markets," a practice that seems illogical and unjust (92). Furthermore, it is the bride who brings the dowry, not her husband (143). Moreover, Igbos believe that they must retain the dust of their ancestors in their compounds, considering it a sacred possession (29). They also believe that magic contributes to the prosperity of trade. For instance, they attribute the success of the "Eke" market to "an ancient medicine" (22). Additionally, they hold the belief that there is an evil moon "like the one under which Okuata" dies because "its legs" are "up in the air" (2). Despite Ezeulu being the priest tasked with observing

the moon, he experiences a mixture of "joy" and fear when encountering the new moon, hoping it may be a favorable one (2). Similarly, rain is not always perceived as beneficial; it is deemed "good only if it" ceases "clean" after lasting "so long," whereas if it persists "longer" and the body becomes "cold," it is not considered favorable (226). Another irrational belief is that unless the deceased receives a funeral with yams, their anger will return to haunt their family (272). These illogical beliefs surrounding widows, natural elements, and death create a mythical portrayal of Igbo religion and traditions, thus diminishing their cultural value. The mythical depiction of Igbo religion in AG's text aligns with colonialism, serving as a tool to maintain control through "mystification" (Fanon, 146).

The previous portrayal of both Christianity and Igbo religion in AG supports the concept of postcolonial ambivalence. Tejumola Olaniyan asserts, "here, finally, is the vacuum into which is inscribed, the fall of indigenous, and the rise of the colonial, episteme" (. Morrison, 111). This highlights one aspect of postcolonial ambivalence in AG, namely the denigration of native religion, which is contrasted by instances where it is elevated in the novel. Simultaneously, Christianity is both exalted and critiqued, as stated by Olaniyan. The vacillation between these two positions throughout AG illustrates postcolonial ambivalence, which is also evident in the representation of cultural violence practiced by the missionaries and the indigenous people.

Cultural oppression

In his discussion of "cultural violence," David Hoegberg contends that this type of oppression encompasses not only conflicts between people of different cultures, but also violence that is endorsed by the beliefs and customs of a particular culture and perpetrated against its own members (Hoegberg, 69). While Hoegberg's framework is rooted in the events of TF, it can also be applied to the narrative of AG. AG portrays postcolonial ambivalence through its depiction of cultural violence involving both missionaries and indigenous peoples. The text conveys a sense of appreciation for the missionaries by rationalizing the violence they inflict upon the natives. For instance, when they imprison Ezeulu for refusing to "cooperate with the Administration" by accepting the position of warrant chief to Okperi (216-218). Additionally, the people of Abame, also mentioned in TFA, kill the white man "Macdonald" (134). The killing of the white man serves to justify the subsequent retribution inflicted upon them in *Things Fall Apart* when they are killed by the white man (94-95). Moreover, Obika is whipped by the whites for insulting them and arriving late for work (109-110).

Conversely, the text implies a desire for retribution against the missionaries in the incident involving Ezeulu's imprisonment. The British exhibit aggression

as they employ force to incarcerate Ezeulu, the most esteemed figure among his people. The missionaries employ their power to transport the priest to the government's headquarters, aiming to make an example of him in order to intimidate others who resist conforming to their authority and regulations. This ambivalence appears to indirectly reflect the complex reality of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, which is unlikely to be straightforward.

Alternatively, the text demonstrates gratitude toward the indigenous people in two instances of cultural oppression. Firstly, the sport practiced in AG is running, which is less violent than wrestling in TFA (26). Secondly, the Igbos have a commendable custom for dealing with the messengers of their enemies; they do not harm them because they are merely bearers of messages (171-173). On the other hand, the text seeks retribution against the indigenous people by depicting them as violent toward Christians and their fellow Igbos. According to Fanon, the "African" is depicted as "a violent person, of a hereditary violence" (Fanon, 241). The Igbos engage in unjustified violence against the whites when the whites accidentally kill a sacred python. The Igbos expel "all Christians among them and" burn "their houses" (268). Their violence is unjustified because it is believed that the whites killed the python accidentally.

The oppression practiced by the Igbos against their own people is evident in AG. In the case of women, they are treated violently by their society. They are burdened with heavy work, such as carrying water from far distances, where "every one" carries "a towering load of five or six or even more big water pots held together with a net of ropes on a long basket" (22). Additionally, they carry "heavy loads of firewood" (100). Furthermore, they are subjected to early marriages and unplanned pregnancies (107 and 242). Women's role is reduced to cooking and bearing babies (16). Moreover, Igbo society holds a stereotypically patriarchal view of women as inferior to men. This is evidenced when the priest prays, saying: "may our wives bear male children" (7). Consequently, when a man wants to calm another, he says: "hold yourself together... you are not a woman" (10). They believe that women's talkativeness is a flaw that men must avoid: "it is this lick lick lick which prevents woman from growing a beard" (78). At times, men mock the way women talk by imitating them in front of other men (101). Such attitudes are psychologically violent, dominating the sister-brother relation. For example, Ezeulu's son Nwafo considers himself superior to his sisters. He sits "on the small mud-seat watching them with a superior air and pointing out now and again their mistakes" (78).

Shouting at women and threatening them are clear indications of psychological violence that the Igbos practice on women in AG. For instance, when Ezeulu's wife asks him to bring her some food from his married daughter, he becomes angry. He shouts at her, saying:

this madness which they say you have must know its bounds. You are telling me to go and find cassava for you. What has Akueke to do with it: is she my wife? I have told you many times that you are a wicked woman. I have noticed that you will not do anything happily unless it is for yourself and your children. Don't let me speak my mind to you today...Go away from here before I rise on my feet. (Achebe,75)

Ezeulu's abusive behavior towards his wives is evident when one of them is late to bring him supper (10-11). His disrespectful way of speaking to his wives is mirrored in his son's treatment of his sisters (6 and 154). Ezeulu shouts at his wife, commanding her to "shut your mouth," and when she tries to speak again, he orders her to "shut your mouth! Are you mad?" (159). This imperative silencing of women is also seen when Ezeulu commands his wife Matefi, shouting, "go back to your hut, woman!" (109). Furthermore, when Oduche's mother objects to sending her son to the missionary school, Ezeulu silences her, saying, "how does it concern you what I do with my sons?" (56). This deprivation of a woman's right to express her opinion indicates that her role ends after delivering the son, and she must not intervene between the son and the father. She is treated like a stranger. Similarly, Ezeulu's son-in-law mistreats his daughter, Akueke, causing her to return to her father's house (11-12). When her husband comes to take her back, Ezeulu asks him, "how will you pay me for taking care of your wife for one year?" (76). This shows how he treats his daughter as a commodity. As a result, Achebe's representation of women is criticized by many feminist critics (Morrison, 160).

Likewise, psychological violence is inflicted on native children by their mothers. Children are told frightening folk stories about spirits (235-236). Later, mothers threaten their children with spirits if they do not obey them (205). Another way of instilling fear in children is seen when people await the new moon. There is a belief in an evil moon, and children are afraid that it can harm them (2-3).

Additionally, the Igbos have some violent traditions that are prevalent in their society. For instance, they have a peculiarly violent way of accepting a visit. The host says, "I shall not run away from my house," and the guest replies, "we shall not bring war to you." This demonstrates how deeply violence is ingrained

in their "collective unconscious" (Fanon, 188). The collective unconscious represents the accumulated system of beliefs and ideas in a nation that are difficult to erase. Such beliefs shape the actions, reactions, and lifestyle of the clan. Violence is an ancient label in Igbo life that can be traced from *Things Fall Apart* to *Arrow of God*, and it is evident even in their manner of requesting a visit. Some may argue that this is a form of humor. however, it is a part of the profound accumulated violence over the years.

Furthermore, the site of blood appears in celebrating weddings as a kind of sacrifice by slaughtering rams (244-251). Also, Igbos have a violent way in saluting each other. When Ezuelu visits his friend, he begins by asking: "is the owner of this house is still alive", the host answers: "did they not say that you died two markets come next Afo?" (116). Amongst the violent traditions the Igbos have in the past is sacrificing a human being for the gods (261). This is an extremely violent action that negates the very simple human right to live.

Cultural violence between Igbos is depicted in their way of treating each other, their addiction to wine, and the violent way of solving their problems. The way James Ikedi, the Warrant Chief of Okperi, treats his own people is violent. He threatens Igbos in the name of the white man, who proves to be innocent of Ikedi's claims. During the construction works of the road, Ikedi threatens people to destroy their houses if they do not pay him money. He also takes "any woman who" catches "his fancy without paying the customary bride-price" (69-70). As for wine, Igbos are addicted to palm wine and they drink a lot till they become violent (84). For example, Obika is known for his violence when he drinks a lot of palm wine (12). Because of the "sudden and fiery anger," he hits people around him "inflicting injury" on them (12). Also, Igbos solve their own problems by fighting, not by elevated conversation between the counterparts. They fight a lot with the sight of blood over their fights (28-102). They have many wars where many people get killed (33). Surprisingly, the Igbo priest, who is supposed to be the example of peace, thinks violently to fix his problem with his clan. Ezeulu thinks of a "fight" to take revenge on his people because they leave him alone in the prison of the white man (198).

Conclusion

Hence, *Arrow of God* demonstrates the presence of postcolonial ambivalence through its portrayal of language, tolerance, religion, and cultural

oppression involving both missionaries and natives. It wavers between revenge on and gratitude for both of them. When it comes to language, gratitude for the missionaries appear in the employment and praise of English language, while excluding and criticizing the native language express revenge on them. Interchangeably, the praise of Igbo language indicates gratitude for the natives, and the denigration of English language shows revenge on the missionaries.

Additionally, representing the missionaries as tolerant of others expresses gratitude for them, while portraying them as intolerant expresses revenge. On the other hand, AG shows gratitude for the natives by depicting them as tolerant of others, and suggests revenge by portraying them as intolerant of others and their fellow Igbos. Regarding religion, the representation of the highly valued Christianity and Igbo religion indicates a position of gratitude for the missionaries and the natives. Conversely, the underestimated and criticized Christianity and Igbo religion exhibit a revengeful attitude towards both missionaries and natives.

Finally, justified cultural violence committed by the missionaries and the natives on each other is a symptom of the grateful attitude AG reveals towards both of them. Unjustified violence practiced by the missionaries and the natives on each other and on their own people proves the revengeful position against them as suggested in the text. The most represented level of postcolonial ambivalence in AG is religion, which is also the most depicted level of postcolonial ambivalence in AG and NLE, while it is cultural violence in TFA. This representation of postcolonial duality in Achebe's texts is nuanced. The texts do not simply repeat each other when it comes to the notion of "ambivalence." The systematic pattern of postcolonial ambivalence embodied in the revenge-gratitude position appears in Achebe's novel *Arrow of God* studied in this paper, highlighting the contribution of this research to Achebe's scholarship.

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