



Chinua Achebe and the Ego Ideal: A Psychoanalytic Reading

Amneh K. Abussamen

Shadi S. Neimneh *

English Department, Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

Abstract

Against postcolonial and cultural readings of Chinua Achebe's works, this article approaches Achebe's fiction and non-fiction using Freud's theory on narcissism and creative writers as well as Otto Rank's views on art and the artist. It highlights the narcissistic formation of the ego ideal of Achebe and explains its growth according to Freud's views on the psychology of repression and wish-fulfillment. This assumption is built upon a reading of Achebe's novels and some of his non-fiction to argue that Achebe followed in his works the ideals he internalized during his childhood and narcissistically repressed. An analysis of some of Achebe's works is used to support our argument that Achebe's attempts to prescribe the direction of African art and letters as well as his didactic concern with the value and effect of African literature all testify to the writer's narcissistic repression and the family ideals founded on such repression within a colonial, missionary setting. Achebe's use of English language in his fiction and criticism and his following of Christianity support the same notion of ego ideal we postulate. Equally significant is the notion of "ambivalence" we find in Achebe's treatment of themes like language, tolerance, and religion and which we can justify using the same theory we posit and in terms of conflicting ideals. The article interrogates whether we can come up with the term "the intellectual ego" and connect it with the authors and scholars and their works as the literary and artistic theories they embrace are a manifestation of the ideals they practice or simply aspire to.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; Ego Ideal/Ideal Ego; African Literature; Chinua Achebe; Autobiography; Intellectual Ego

INTRODUCTION TO ACHEBE'S "CREATIVE" FICTION, FREUD, RANK, AND LACAN

In his 1914 article entitled "On Narcissism", Sigmund Freud explains that being a narcissist can mean that such a person has suffered so many restrictions in his/her childhood. Hence, Freud establishes a relationship between narcissism and repression, arguing that one builds one's ideal according to the society's rules because if the

society's cultural and ethical rules contradict one's own rules, there would be a kind of a "pathogenic repression." Therefore, Freud believes that "for the ego the formation of an ideal would be the conditioning factor of repression", that controls its normal side from the abnormal one (p. 2947). The ideal ego built in one's mind measures and judges the actual ego. It is the last part of Freud's article that is concerned with the relationship between narcissism and the ego and the emergence of the ego ideal out of narcissistic repressed childhood practices. Freud believes that "repression...proceeds from the ego...with greater precision that it proceeds from the self-respect of the ego" (p. 2947). Additionally, he establishes a difference between an actual ego and an ideal one; he illustrates the "psychology of repression," writing that "one man has set up an ideal in himself by which he measures his actual ego" (p. 2947).

Childhood is crucial in forming the ego ideal. Freud's contribution to the term "narcissism," as James L. Sacksteder (1990) puts it, lies in his theorizing "that the developmental line of narcissism" participates and adds "to one's experience of oneself and of one's feelings about oneself-especially its contributions to self-regard and self-esteem regulation" (p. 11). He adds that "the developmental path from infantile to mature narcissism contributed importantly to the formation of the ego ideal as one important constituent of the superego" which is so important in achieving "self-regard" (pp.18-19). Freud declares that "the ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego." So, "the subject's narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value" (Freud, 2010, p. 2948). The child, therefore, creates a perfect ego that deserves every kind of love and respect and tries to achieve it to always feel satisfied. Freud adds that "what he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal" (p. 2948). As a result, when one discovers that childhood was not perfect as one always thought, he/she builds a perfect ideal.

For Freud, the terms ego ideal and ideal ego are almost interchangeable, and we can use them in this article accordingly. However, Jacques Lacan (1988)—it should be noted—used the terms differently. He gave three seminars on Freud's narcissism; IX On Narcissism, X The Two Narcissisms, and XI Ego-Ideal and Ideal Ego (pp. 107-142). In XI seminar, Lacan differentiates the two terms. His explanatory schema is illustrated in seminar X where he differentiates between two levels of narcissism. He believes that Freud was not clear enough on the idea of narcissism when it comes to the ego drives and the sexual drives (p. 119). He declares that Freud mixes the two together in "a condition of narcissism" where "it is impossible to distinguish the two fundamental propensities." In Lacan's article, one finds the two kinds of narcissism where the first one is "connected with the corporeal image." It unites the subject in many ways including "the imaginary source of symbolism, which is what links symbolism to feeling" (p. 125). According to Lacan, the first type is found at the level "of the real image...as it makes possible the organization of the totality of reality into a limited number of performed frameworks". So, for Lacan this narcissism is a unitary power that collects the pieces of a subject to bring up the whole image of it. The second narcissism is

defined according to the subject's "relation to the other". This other is a "captivating" power which "enables man to locate precisely his imaginary and libidinal relation to the world in general" (p. 125). Nevertheless, narcissism for Lacan and Freud has to do with one's relationship with the outside world like the parents, peers, and social reality, i.e. with what is external to the ego (and this is more relevant to the ego ideal that can get manifested in creative works and daydreams based on the relationship the ego has with the external world). In this symbolic relation, Lacan contends, "the ego-ideal governs the interplay of relations on which all relations with others depend. And on this relation to others depends the more or less satisfying character of the imaginary" (p. 141).

This ideal ego, as Dylan Evans (2006) clarifies in his dictionary of Lacanian terms, "always accompanies the ego, as an ever-present attempt to regain the omnipotence of the pre-Oedipal dual relation" and it "continues to play a role as the source of all secondary identifications" (pp. 52-53). While in Freudian psychoanalysis it is difficult to distinguish among the ego-ideal, ideal ego, and the superego, slight differences can still be made. Unlike the unconscious superego, the ego-ideal for Freud is a conscious ideal of perfection or excellence and concerns what one wants to be rather than what one should be. It is a combination of good traits in persons someone admires wants to emulate and identify with like parents and peers. This part of the ego is tied with narcissism as a basis for perfection and an admiration for parents. By contrast, Lacan makes better distinctions between different formations of the ego. He associates the ideal ego with the imaginary order for infants in which the ideal of perfection stems from the subject's encounter with the image of himself in a mirror and discovers a whole ego as compared with the chaos of outside reality. The ego ideal for Lacan relates to the symbolic order when the subject looks at himself from a vantage idealized point to see his normal life as limited and useless. In brief, critics can make a distinction between the ideal ego as the self-love or narcissism the ego enjoys in infancy and the ego ideal as a desire for perfection and completeness of daydreams and fantasies one acquires with relation to the environment like parents and peers.

Based on this fine distinction between ego ideal and ideal ego, this article is more concerned with the ego ideal of Achebe—although we can use the terms interchangeably in a Freudian sense. This choice is made because we are tackling the symbolic relation of Achebe to others through his writings, many of which were lectures or seminars given to an audience. However, this does not deny the existence of the ideal ego in Achebe as an ideal of perfection and completeness the writer lived up to and implemented in his life. Freud relates the formation of an ego-ideal to the conscience of the subject. In case of writers like Achebe, they consciously choose to express their ideals through writing instead of daydreams and fantasies, choosing their perfect ego ideals to complete and fulfill the internalized wishes of repressed childhood. However, since the subject is one—body and soul; mind and heart—we cannot firmly separate the formation of ego-ideals as a conscious act and the formation of an ideal ego as an unconscious one. We cannot measure things by a strict ruler. However, we can argue that the formation of ego-ideals is almost a conscious act evoked out of unpleasant memories and experiences of childhood.

Otto Rank- Freud's assistant- in his *Art and Artist* (1932) tackles the idea of the struggle amongst artists in their way to the artistic work. Amundson (1981) illustrates Rank's idea of writing that "according to Rank, the artist is he/ she who has turned the inner psychological struggle into an objectified effort in the outer world, and in the process has developed the capacity for unusual usefulness" (p. 116). This can be compared to the motive of creative writing that Freud talks about in his article on creative writing, stating that it is the wish fulfillment of unfulfilled dreams and suppressed wishes (p. 425). For while Freud posited an ego ideal developed in reaction to childhood experiences, repression, and relationship with others and described it in terms of perfection and excellence, he also viewed literary works as the product of infantile wishes. In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," Freud (1950) likens the creative writer to "the child at play," for the writer "creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously-that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion-while separating it sharply from reality" (p. 421). Commenting on narcissism and its relation to childhood, Freud declares that humans can never give up "a pleasure" they once had. He states: "we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate" (p. 422). The alternative of playing is the fantasy in all humans, not only the writers. However, the adult hides his fantasies and daydreams from others because he is ashamed of their nature (p. 422). Consequently, "the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correlation of unsatisfying reality" (p. 423). Thus, daydreams are "wish-fulfillments" of "repressed wishes" (p. 425).

When it comes to Otto Rank's views of art, he supposes it is a will for immortality (p. xxvi). Additionally, he thinks that art has many aims aside from "aesthetic gratification" (p. 96). Interestingly, Rank connects the artistic work to its creator assuring the biographic approach of literary criticism. He believes that when the artist has aims of art out of the aesthetic circle, art becomes "essentially an expression of his personality". On the other hand, he thinks that at the aesthetic level art is an "assertion of the self" (p. 23). So, in both cases art is tightly attached to the artist or creator. Furthermore, Rank believes that "the creator-impulse" is as "the life impulse made to serve the individual will" (p. 39). Consequently, the control is in the hand of the artist who has the will to create such a work full of his personality and ideas. Since creative writers such as novelists are considered as artists and their works as pieces of art, one can apply Rank's ideas to Achebe and his works as well as to other writers' works.

As Freud attaches the formation of ego ideals to the infantile narcissistic suppressed wishes of childhood, Rank connects the creative impulse to the formation of the ego in general. He states: "in the artist type the creative urge is constantly related, ideologically, to his own ego" (1932, p. 371). This supports our ideas about the ego ideals of Chinua Achebe which we suppose he lives and writes upon. Rank uses the term "ideology" to indicate the ideal ego when he argues that "the starting point in the formation of a biography is the individual's ideologizing of himself to be an artist, because henceforward he must live that ideology" (p. 383). Thus, the turning point in

the life of the artist or writer is when he/she decides to put ego ideals which they aspire to achieve and live upon. Considering the relation of the artist to himself and to his environment, Rank believes that “the creative impulse” of the artist “is so powerful” that he always resists “the transient experience, which eats up his ego” in “the tendency to immortalize himself” (p. 39). This aim of immortality is at a conflict with the “inherent striving after totality, which faces him [the artist] equally in the direction of a complete surrender to life and complete giving of himself in production” (p. 60). The artist uses his “love-ideal” to serve “his own self-immortalization” (p. 58). This means that, the aim of ego ideals is to immortalize the artist by coming up with new and creative perspectives. The artistic work itself is a step towards immortalization and perfection.

Rank believes that art is “becoming more and more individually subjective, and that the impulse to create, which is still fundamentally the same, is more a matter of consciousness in the artist” (p. 360). So, artists consciously create their art purposefully. What is interesting is Rank’s inclusion of all artists in his view with regard to the conflict of the artist against totality and its effect on his ego:

We may remark here that every production of a significant artist, in whatever form, and whatever content, always reflects more or less clearly this self-liberation and reveals the battle of the artist against the art which expresses a now surmounted phase of the development of his ego. (p. 375)

Through art we can trace the development of the artist’s ego which he puts all in his productions (p. 375). Rank seems a big fan of the relation between art and artist which takes us away from the reader-response literary theory and focuses on the biographical approach of reading literary and artistic works. Rank thinks that the artistic work swallows the whole of the artist who always tries to set himself apart from his work. This struggle is the same with regard to the artist’s conflict with the collective society which he tries to distinguish himself from by his artistic productions. Surprisingly, it seems that the artist flees from his ego to the art to elevate it, flees from art which swallows his ego, and at last flees from the collective to the artistic work to be distinguished (360-361).

In the case of Achebe, the writer had many unfulfilled wishes in his childhood because of the cultural clash that occurred out of the colonial situation. In 1930, Albert Chinualumongu Achebe was born at Ogidi in Eastern Nigeria to “Christian evangelist parents” (p. ix). He graduated from University Collage in 1953 with a BA (from London). In 1956, he studied at the BBC in London. Later on in 1959, he was awarded “The Margaret Wong Memorial Prize for his contribution to African Literature”. He resides in the United States (1972-1976) as “a Visiting Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts and University Professor of English at the University of Connecticut. He teaches as well at universities in Canada, Los Angeles and New York (Carroll, 1990, pp. ix-x). This child who grows to be a professor of English witnessed a narcissistic childhood. Language and traditions were big issues for such a child who tried to attract the attention of his educators (the colonizers) and to avoid the anger of the pagan native

citizens. He always tried as an adult to go back to his narcissistic childhood where he was the center of his parent's love and pride as one of the first converted Nigerians who had a British education. He was a good student. Later on, his writings reflected keenness on English language and every English-like act. That daydream of being the center of love—that infantile fantasy—turned out to be Achebe's English novels and literary essays with an African taste.

Freud tells his readers about the creative writer who writes an "egocentric" story that has a hero as the center of action, which is exactly the same as "His Majesty the Ego, the hero alike of every day-dream" ("Creative", 1950, p. 425). So, the story and the fantasy are about the ego. Even the characters in the "egocentric stories" are attached to the hero and are divided into good and bad according to their relation to him. Interestingly, Freud observes that even the "psychological novels" are put according to one person's concepts of others. Freud believes that "the psychological novel...owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split his ego, by self-observation, into many part egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes" (p. 426). So, the novel and the hero are personifications of the writer's life and day-dreams. Freud tries to explain the relation between the creative writer and the day-dreamer declaring that "a strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as of the old memory" (p. 427). This produces a "piece of creative writing" which is "a continuation of, and a substitute for, what was once the play of childhood" (p. 427). The ego-ideal available in writers' fantasies and day-dreams such as Achebe's is the motive for writing. Creative writers who have unfulfilled wishes and are eager for the perfection and completeness of their lost childhood use writing as the completing factor of their early repressed narcissism. Hence, the next section attempts an analysis of Achebe's works, not through the conventional postcolonial approach but rather in terms of their possible depiction of the writer's ideals and repressed, unconscious wishes.

DISCUSSION: ACHEBE AND THE EGO IDEAL

Achebe's works were tackled and criticized in the light of many critical theories, mainly cultural and postcolonial. For example, Abdul JanMohamed (1983) in his article "Sophisticated Primitivism: The Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" criticizes Achebe's use of English language, for it contradicts the African content of his novel. Additionally, Jago Morrison (2007) in his book *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe* gathers the critics' opinions of Achebe's fiction in light of issues like cultural gaps, ambivalence, language, history, and feminism. Further, Achebe was studied along with Joseph Conrad in a postcolonial framework in Njeng's article "Achebe, Conrad, and the Postcolonial Strain" (2008). It seems that postcolonial theory and cultural studies are the most related approaches to Achebe's works. Interestingly, Uzoma Esonwame in his 2007 article sheds light on the far distance between psychoanalysis and African literature, trying—against the grain—to connect Achebe's

Things Fall Apart to Lacan's "The Topic of the Imaginary", a distance which we also—in this article—try to bridge by linking Freud's and Lacan's theories on the ego ideal and ideal ego as well as Rank's views on art and the artist with Achebe and his work. Such an article works well for psychoanalytic theory, for it proves that it is still a widespread theory flexible enough to be applied to almost all international literatures including the African one.

Achebe was a child of a converted family who left the religion of their society and adopted Christianity (Carroll, p. 9). He announces that in an interview with Jerome Brooks titled "Chinua Achebe, The Art of Fiction" by saying: "my parents were early converts to Christianity in my part of Nigeria. They were not just converts; my father was an evangelist, a religious teacher". They did not move from their place, but they were casted (Njeng, 2008, p. 3). The Nigerian society at that time considered anyone who abandons its traditions, rules, and religion as an outcast or even a devil as such a convert is subjected to the anger of their gods. Achebe was raised in the missionary schools where he learnt English and was one of the distinguished students (p. 3). To be raised in a contradictory society is to witness that each antagonism (his Christian family and his pagan society) considers the other and its beliefs the worst ever. In order not to feel inferior to the other, each of the binaries needs to elevate itself and to put an ideal for itself that opposes, confronts, and contradicts the ideal of the other.

Accordingly, Christianity and its language become the ideal for Achebe's parents. On the other hand, their society creates the ideal of being a pagan far from Christianity. Therefore, one supposes that Achebe's family ideal was formed upon rules and restrictions that elevate education and English language. Consequently, Achebe the child felt a necessity and a need for every English-like detail to oppose the ideal of his society and fortify the ideal of his family. One can imagine the ego of that young child who worked hard to satisfy the two poles of his society. But was he really satisfied? His wishes to satisfy conflicting sides of his upbringing left him unsatisfied and always in need of completing the lack he felt inside. Rank believes that art is a way of immortalizing the artist, which necessarily requires looking for perfection and completeness (*Art*, 1932, p. 26). Unfortunately, we carry our incompleteness and imperfections with us as adults. At this point, we find the unfulfilled wishes that Freud claims to be the core for creative writing jump to the surface of the unconscious of Achebe portrayed in his works. It seems that Achebe was not that very happy of a child after all, an assumption that matches Freud's theory of the creative writers who had sufferings in their lives ("Creative", p. 423). When Freud (2010) tackles the problem of paranoid people, he mentions the voices they hear in their heads as their ego ideals. He states:

what prompted the subject to form an ego ideal, on whose behalf his conscience acts as watchman, arose from the critical influence of his parents (conveyed to him by the medium of the voice), to whom were added as time went on, those who trained and taught him and the innumerable and indefinable host of all the other people in his environment - his fellow-men - and public opinion. (p. 2949)

Away from the psychological problem, this idea of an inner voice that leads the person in his/her deeds can be compared to the voice of the unconscious of narcissistic people. For them, the unconscious is the place where they have formed their ego ideal to repress the real ego. Additionally, this voice resembles Rank's "creative impulse" which he believes to be the motive for artistic production (p. 39). One can claim that the environment, the society, and the idealized self-image are the components by which the ego is judged by the ego ideal.

We can contend that Achebe's narcissistic repression—which is the source of the formation of ego ideals—appears in his fictional and non-fictional works. He incorporates ideals in almost each of his works. Interestingly, he considers the ideals he has put for himself as the ideals for every African writer. Was he looking to reform the whole African writing experience according to his own ideals? Maybe this was one way of his ego to authenticate his own narcissistic experience. He wants to feel familiar and in the right place amongst the right intellectual community, doing, saying, and writing the right things. He wants to create his comfort zone in order not to feel strange or inferior again.

In his 1975 article "The African Writer and the English Language," Achebe manifests his ego ideals. He has put the rules for writers and for himself. He starts by differentiating between national and ethnic literature. He believes that "the national literature of Nigeria...is, or will be, written in English" (1993, p. 429). He believes that Nigeria itself was created by the British, and their language has united Nigerian people who were tongueless with their so many accents and languages. For him, Nigeria now "is one country" due to the efforts of the British administration (p. 430). Of course, many African writers — like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'O (1993) in his article "The Language of African Literature" (pp. 435-454) — criticize what Achebe has declared in his aforementioned article. However, Achebe clung to his ideals and continued writing in English until he died. He defends his choice when he ends his article by writing:

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (1993, p. 434)

To the extent that Achebe was idealistically prescribing the direction of African art and letters, he was seeking an ideal of perfection and excellence to the national literature of his country. One notices Achebe's efforts to satisfy the British side of his split childhood, a tendency that seems to have been nurtured by his Christian parents (Carroll, 1990, p. 9).

Achebe's ideal of writing in English continues to measure and judge all his real writings to satisfy the ego ideal he has formed on repression and to save the self-image that he has created of himself as an ideal African writer who writes in the universal English language because his ethnic language is incapable of carrying his experience to the whole world. It is interesting to observe the capacity of the ego-ideal to collect the pieces of a subject —no matter how separate and different they are—to form the image of

the subject as Lacan puts it (p. 141). It is also interesting to trace Achebe's thoughts of himself as an ideal African writer who writes in English which is not an African language that many find "illogical." The ego ideal is capable of gathering the antagonisms together in favor of the perfect image of the subject. Whether what Achebe did was right or wrong is not our concern. We are more concerned with tracing the ideal and seeing its effects on his real life. It seems that the ego ideal gives one the required amount of determination and repression to follow it strictly. Further, Achebe in his 1965 article titled "The Novelist as Teacher" conveys his views about writing novels and the idea of pedagogy. He declares that the writer should not "take dictation from his audience" and "he must remain free to disagree with his society and go into rebellion against it if need be" (2007, p. 104). He thinks that pedagogy is part of his mission as a writer. He believes that his job is to bring up the past and the mistakes of his people in order of them to learn and avoid such mistakes in the future (p. 104). He viewed himself as trying to re-value the African culture and all the things that are relevant to Africa. In idealistic and propagandistic terms, he declares that "the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front" (p. 104). In a sense, Achebe's conception of the cultural role of the black writer and such writer's public intellectualism is an indication of the workings of his ego ideal.

Achebe's way of re-educating his society may not be the same as many Nigerians expect. He mentions a woman who blames him for the tragic end of his second novel *No Longer at Ease* (2007, p. 104). She declares that he should have made the protagonist Obi marry the outcast girl to put an example for the Nigerian society where many women have gone through the same suffering. This takes the discussion to another direction about art and pedagogy. However, one can observe the pronoun "we" that Achebe continues to use in his article while declaring his ideals. It seems that he takes his ideals to be the ideals of his society, for he declares: "my aims and the deepest aspirations of my society meet" (p. 105). Also, the use of this pronoun reveals the existence of a real ego and an ego ideal that are the indications of a narcissistic tendency of repression. Additionally, the reader notices that Achebe puts himself in the place of God to authenticate his beliefs using the phrase "if I were God" (p. 104). The self-image of Achebe that can be traced in this article suggests that he holds himself in a high position higher than that of his people and almost sacred. We cannot claim that these are symptoms of paranoia, but they are indications of an idealized ego that keeps judging and measuring the reality of things contra feelings of inferiority or inadequacy. This meets Rank's ideas on the artist as the creator who is responsible for the process of immortalizing himself by following his own ideals (p. 360). Furthermore, Achebe writes, "perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind" (2007, p. 105). This indicates that he does not care if his novels are considered artistic pieces as long as they serve the educational aim of teaching people how to avoid the mistakes of their past. He regards his ideals higher than any other opinion or criticism, and he represses the artistic tendency of his works in order to serve his aims, thus fulfilling the unsatisfied wishes of his childhood. In fact, we can notice the emergence of what might be called "the intellectual ego" of creative writers with repressed and unfulfilled wishes as Freud describes them. It could be argued that

the intellectual ego is the compensation of the sufferings of creative writers in their early years. Through this ego formation, they try to reform, educate, judge and criticize their surroundings in order to reach the goal of reforming the self. But, could they reach this stage of reformation? Creative writers and intellectuals may take refuge and breathe their inner stresses through writing as a relief, but the self is not easily repaired after the damage it receives.

By the same token, in "The Truth of Fiction" Achebe (2007) gives the definition of fiction as he sees it. Also, he differentiates between two kinds of fiction: the beneficent and the bad fiction (p. 114). He states that the power of fiction lies in the capacity of human imagination that puts the readers amidst the story as if they are experiencing it now. It seems that Achebe and Freud meet over the idea of the reason behind the effectiveness of creative writing. Freud declares that "our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from liberation of tensions in our minds" ("Creative", p. 428). Achebe ends his article by assuring us about the role of fiction. He states that

it does not enslave, it liberates the mind of man. Its truth is not like the canons of an orthodoxy or the irrationality of prejudice and superstition. It begins as an adventure in self-discovery and ends in wisdom and human conscience. (2007, p. 114)

Rank as well sees art as a liberation of the artist's mind from the totality of the artistic work which tries to swallow his personality and of the conventional society that he lives in (p. 375). Accordingly, Achebe here displays the ideals that he followed in his fiction. He gives his own definitions of art, fiction and its kinds, and imaginative identification. Of course, many critics and philosophers established definitions of art; however; Achebe's ego ideal comes up with what one can call "Achebe's definition of art." Achebe has followed his ideals of art in his fiction by explaining his purpose of writing his novels.

Furthermore, Achebe (2011) in "An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" analyzes Conrad's novel in what he claims to be a new light. Here, Achebe displays what he considers to be the ideal meaning of racism in language. He accuses Conrad of being "a thoroughgoing racist" (p. 1789). For Achebe, Conrad portrays Africa as "the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization" (p. 1785). This racism and the black image of Africa depicted in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be traced in Achebe's novels as well. However, Achebe declares that he brings the past up to teach his people lessons to avoid their previous imperfections. Whether there is a difference is not our concern. Achebe believes that Conrad's novel is racist because of using words like "savage" and "cannibal." Achebe does not use such words in his work, but his portrayal of Africans is "less than compassionate" (qtd. in Morrison, p. 8). Consequently, Achebe, at least consciously, avoids what he accuses Conrad of using regarding language. He repressed himself to follow this ideal. So, one can still trace the narcissistic tendency to form ideals, follow them, and judge one's self and others accordingly. Achebe's article on Conrad judges the latter's novel on the basis of Achebe's idealized views.

If fantasies and daydreams are the disguised wish-fulfillments in creative writings, then what are Achebe's phantasies that are revealed in his novels? Precisely, what were his repressed and unsatisfied wishes that became his own ego-ideals later on? Achebe, who is a son of a converted family, got a British education (Njeng, p. 3). In his novels, Achebe tackles the idea of British education as a type of elevation for the natives. As for English language, Achebe chooses to write in English because of his idealized conception of the national language manifested in his non-fiction. He states that English is the language that is capable of carrying his African experience (1993, p. 434). In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964), one notices the ideals of Achebe in the "ambivalent" representation of Igbos and Christians at the levels of language, tolerance and religion, which is an indication of his conflicting ideals.

When it comes to Achebe's novels—*Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964)—the reader notices that they are all tragic. We do not see happy endings or ideal ones, but we witness the collapse of the characters and trace their mistakes throughout. Achebe fulfills his ideals of art and fiction teaching his people through their loopholes. He could have taken another road in pedagogy, but he stuck to his ideal. This takes us back to Freud and his illustration of the psychology of repression and gives readers a new light to look through at Achebe's works and those of other writers'. For Freud, "the formation of an ideal heightens the demands of the ego and is the most powerful factor favoring repression" (2010, p. 2948). Repression equals the "creative impulse" in Rank's psychology of art and the artist (p. 39).

As for language in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses English to write his novel. This indicates his ideal when it comes to using the national language or lack thereof (1993, p. 429). On the other hand, he criticizes this language through one of his characters expressing that it is the language spoken through the nose (1958, p. 95). Feelings of inferiority toward Igbo language appear in *Things Fall Apart* in neglecting this language which is supposed to be the one used in the text. Additionally, the novel contains examples of transliterated Igbo words and names which are difficult to pronounce and seem to disturb the smooth English text such as the words "Onwuma" and "egwugwa" (p. 53 and p. 61).

When it comes to tolerance and religion, Achebe highlights the imperfections of his people, which he believes to be the best way to change the Nigerian society (2007, p. 105). He portrays the intolerance of Igbos clearly when they kill a white man because of his appearance (1958, p. 95). They think that the white man is "a leper" imagining him as a sick alien man rather than a normal human being (p. 51). Sometimes, Achebe represents the Igbos as tolerant of others when they declare that they welcome the differences between themselves and others as they say: "the world is large" and "what is good in one place is bad in another" (p. 50). On the other hand, Christians are portrayed as tolerant of others when they embrace the Igbo outcasts who converted to Christianity (p. 107). However, they sometimes become intolerant as when one of the converts kills "a royal python...the most revered animal" in the Igbo clan (p. 108). In depicting the shortcomings of his people and their national literature, Achebe may be

expressing the ego ideals of his childhood years. Put alternatively, Achebe might be interpreted as exposing the conflicting ideals he had to live with.

Further, Achebe portrays the loopholes of Igbos regarding religion and the good sides their religion has. On the other hand, he mainly presents Christianity as an elevated religion. Igbo religion is reduced throughout *Things Fall Apart* as when Mbanta's people give the missionaries a land in the evil forest expecting them to die "within four days" according to their religion (1958, p. 102). However, none of the missionaries die, which refutes the strength of Igbo religion (p. 103). On the other hand, Igbo religion seems to apply its rules on all of the followers equally, which is a good point. For example, the clan exiles Okonkwo who commits a religious mistake although he is a man of a value (p. 86). This wavering in representing the perfections and imperfections appears in the representation of Christianity as well. It appears as a peaceful religion that embraces the outcasts and rescues twins (pp. 106-107). Also, this religion goes "hand in hand" with "education" by building schools to educate native people (p. 122). It is a "quiet harmless" religion (p. 106). On the other side, it is presented as a materialistic religion which seduces people using "gifts of singlets and towels" to attend missionary schools (p. 122). Again, this ambivalent position might be indicative of the existence of conflicting ideals due to the conflation of native and non-native cultures within the writer's identity.

As with *Things Fall Apart*, the reader notices that English is the language of *No Longer at Ease*. Some of the characters in the novel express their preferences regarding language. Some of them prefer using English instead of Igbo such as when Obi and his friend meet the English girls, Obi "talks English more than the English Girls" (1960, p. 89). However, English is not the language that Igbos use to tell their hearts (p. 61). As for Igbo language, Achebe portrays it as the language used for private Igbo issues like when Mr Mark meets Obi and shifts his tongue when he notices "a European" there (p. 65). On the other hand, Achebe criticizes Igbo language because it has so many dialects which are like separate languages that are difficult to master. Obi cannot talk to a woman from Benin who sits beside him in the lorry because she does not know "a word of English" and he does not speak Bini (p. 35).

Additionally, Achebe tackles Igbos' intolerance of others. For example, they believe that natural phenomena work for them against others as when a man from another clan was killed by thunder which they believe to attack only foreigners (Achebe, 1960, p. 38). Some of Igbos are tolerant enough to marry white women (p. 25). On the other hand, the missionaries seem intolerant of Igbos sometimes. For instance, Mr Green argues that whatever high education Igbos get, they will remain corrupted: "the African is corrupt through and through...they are all corrupt" (p. 5). It is implied that white Christians are tolerant of others, for in no place other than the captured examples they appear intolerant of others.

Furthermore, Christianity appears as the religion of education that offers university learning for the natives (1960, p. 69). On the other hand, Achebe criticizes it indirectly when he hints at its weakness, for it cannot erase the old Igbo traditions from the minds

and hearts of converted Igbos such as Obi's father (p. 101). As for Igbo religion, its imperfections appear frequently in *No Longer at Ease*. Achebe criticizes for instance the ozu tradition, which casts a group of people and prevents them from marrying anyone out of their group, declaring that it is "nonsense" (p. 54). Simultaneously, Achebe praises Igbo religion when he mentions an Igbo proverb that calls for unity (pp. 61-62).

The same pattern of ambivalence and wavering appears in *Arrow of God* (1964) regarding language, tolerance and religion. Achebe justifies his use of English through his novel. One of the characters declares that "what man does not know is greater than he" indicating that English is the language of power (Achebe, 1964, pp.103-105). This also implies that Igbo language is inferior to English. On the other hand, Igbos criticize English for being produced through the noses of its speakers which is an ugly description (p. 170). As for Igbo language, it sometimes appears as rich and strong by Achebe's portrayal of Igbo proverbs throughout the novel (pp. 22-261). Otherwise, it is shown as a difficult language to the extent that one Igbo changes his name from "Nwabueze" to "Johnu" when he goes to work for the white man (p. 120). His new name is easier to pronounce than the Igbo name. Moreover, Christians seem to be tolerant of others as when they put a law that prevents destroying "people's homesteads" during the construction works in the roads (p. 69). Other times they are intolerant of Igbos such as when the converts plan to burn a shrine that belongs to Igbos which is considered as a place of worship for them (p. 133). On the other hand, Igbos appears as tolerant when their priest Ezeulu agrees to send his son to learn in the missionary school (p. 56). However, Ezeulu's inner thoughts uncover his intolerance of the missionaries when he thinks of one of them to be "short and thick, as hairy as a monkey" (p. 109).

Achebe wavers between representing the good sides and bad sides of Christianity and Igbo religion. Christianity for example brings education for illiterate people. Ezeulu sends his son Oduche to learn the new wise religion (Achebe, 1964, p. 51 and p. 56). However, this religion along with its administration divides people and appoints many Igbo kings "making a dozen mushroom kings when there was none before" (p. 70). On the other side, Igbo religion has committed followers who wait for the announcement of the New Yam Festival despite of their dying crops (pp. 253-270). Otherwise, this religion has many gods and spirits which are made by medicine men and magicians (p. 9). Those gods are different in their sizes and they receive presents from people indicating their need of them (p. 254). This wavering between different impulses which all exist in Achebe's discussed novels indicates Achebe's ambivalence and split consciousness. One notices the internalization of white standards as being superior and elevated compared to the feelings of inferiority and shame regarding his own culture. It seems that Achebe's own day-dreams and phantasies were full of many wishes; the wish to be elevated by embracing the British-like lifestyle and language, the wish to overcome the imperfections of his nation, and the wish to be identified and recognized away from his people's history which represents Rank's idea of the wish of the artist to be immortalized and well-known (1932, p. 39). It might be supposed that Achebe had received different insults in his school days because of his English accent, Igbo language,

black skin and Nigerian cultural background. To use Freud, Achebe has always aspired to be better than what he is. So, he clings to every English-like way of living believing that he is a typical Nigerian. He fulfills his needs to be better and becomes a famous novelist. Freud believes that creative writing is a way to fulfill unsatisfied wishes which were repressed in childhood. If we are to apply Freud's theory to Achebe, we can say that Achebe had a wish to become English-like and to run away from everything that is native. On the other hand, a part of him rejects the white standards and clings to the native ones. It seems that since childhood he had fantasies and day-dreams that serve to satisfy both his educators (the whites) and his society (the natives). These two wishes overlap and integrate in his unconscious till they produce a creative writer whose ego-ideals are revealed in his writings through his split and ambivalent wavering between the two cultures and their languages.

In fact, Achebe's inability to fully identify with his native language or roots might indicate the pull of another ideal foreign to his native culture. A reader may argue that this ambivalent position contradicts the persistence and stability of the ego-ideal. We argue that this state of ambivalence was ideal for Achebe and it helped him fulfill his ego ideal well. It was the liminal state in-between at the border of two cultures. Achebe thinks that he creates this state following his own ideals without offending any of the cultures that he is split between. Although forming an ego ideal means a persistent and consistent state of thought, in Achebe's case this inconsistency is the ego ideal of external influence, lifestyle, and education. He formed his ideals to accurately reach this level of ambivalence without probably knowing it. Being perfect for Achebe means to stay on the borderlines without crossing them; it means to criticize and praise both his people and his colonizers (educators) simultaneously because of not being able to fully identify with either.

CONCLUSION

It is interesting to connect the unsatisfied wishes of childhood with the growing narcissistic ego ideals that turn into a piece of creative writing full of ambiguities to be revealed with the key of childhood. Creative writers transform their repressed wishes to pieces of art, unlike ordinary people whose daydreams liberate their unfulfilled wishes. Writers and intellectuals benefit whether consciously or unconsciously from their inner imperfections, turning them in the real world to masterpieces. As stated before, one can come up with the term "intellectual ego" which is the ego ideal of creative writers and intellectuals that affects their writing style, content, and the artistic theories they put accordingly to judge their own work or the work of others.

One can assume that what Achebe wrote was a self-conscious writing that he was responsible for every available theme or idea in his writings according to Rank's views on art as a conscious and intended action (p. 360). Accordingly, it is fair to say that the "intellectual ego" is almost a conscious choice that comes out of the unconscious, repressed, and narcissistic infantile wishes. These wishes are the ego ideals of creative writers who seek refuge in writing instead of having fantasies. This "intellectual ego" plays a crucial role in the writers' lives and the construction of a whole generation of

readers looking for examples to follow in their lives. Furthermore, the “intellectual ego” is important because by tracing its formation in the writers’ works we can find clues to historical, social, political, cultural, and personal events that have not been obviously studied before. It follows that the ego ideal for writers and artists becomes tantamount to an intellectual ego vented in the theories they write and follow in their creative works.

The point of Freud’s “Moses of Michelangelo” is to teach the readers that “even these [small] details have significance” in psycho-analysis (1955, p. 224). Freud believes that the artistic work is so attractive because of the artist’s intention stating that “what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist’s intention in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it” (p. 212). So, the artist’s intention is so powerful that it attracts the audience to the work by its power to let them experience the same experience of the artist; “what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create” (p. 212). According to Freud’s views on artists, we can apply his opinions to creative writers considering their works as pieces of art. If we are to say that Achebe’s intention was to evoke this and that we will commit the intentional fallacy. However, we can argue that what Achebe represents in his works could be conscious. Studying his works whether fictional or non-fictional in detail uncovers many assumptions regarding his ego-ideals and narcissistic writing attitude.

We think that this narcissistic tendency which Achebe has followed affected his artistic ability, for he seems to repress his creative imagination to fulfill the needs of his ideals and certain artistic expectations, shying away from certain themes or techniques in favor of the ideals of perfection he set for himself. One may imagine the richness and fertility of Achebe’s novels if he left the repressed part of his personality unrepressed and thus wrote without restrictions. The floor now is for the Nigerians to tell the world if what they achieved because of Achebe’s fiction is enough to accept his sacrifice.

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