

Ambivalence Reversed: Discovery Of Original Identity in J. A. Mensah's *Castles from Cobwebs*

Dr. Tarik Ziyad Gulcu

Ankara University, Turkey

Abstract

In contemporary English fiction, ambivalence is described as a byproduct of the Western biased outlook on the Oriental culture. Accordingly, in Khalid Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003), Amir Khan and his father's migration to the USA because of the sectarian conflicts, the lack of security as a result of the coup d'état in Afghanistan, and their experience of economic difficulties as well as their consideration as not an integral part of the American society account for their ambivalent identity. Similarly, Changez's exposure to verbal abuse in his workplace and the termination of love between him and Erica in post-9/11 American context despite his successful university life in Princeton and his healthy romantic relation with Erica in pre-9/11 social area in the USA in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) epitomise ambivalence as a byproduct of Western prejudice against the immigrants. However, different from these works, J. A. Mensah's debut novel, *Castles from Cobwebs* (2021) elaborates on the issue of ambivalence from the reversed perspective. In the work, the protagonist, Imani's innate ambivalence based on her situation as a foundling, and her consideration as an "outsider" despite her education in the church by Reverend Mother embody her split identity early in her life, while her observations of funeral traditions, religious belief and patriarchal social system in Ghana signify a discovery of her original cultural self. Hence, *Castles from Cobwebs* invites reading as a story representing the discovery of the original cultural identity transformed from a split sense of belonging.

Keywords: contemporary English fiction, prejudice, split identity, change, exploration