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The Margin and the Rewriting of Exile in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy (1977)*

A dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Master in language and Culture

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the most important people in my life, whose support made this journey possible.

To my lovely parents, parents in law, thank you for your love and encouragement.

To my husband, your patience, belief in me have been anchor throughout this process

To my heart Ghayth, your joy and energy have given me the strength to keep going .

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To the dearest to my heart Lala, Foufa

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the themes of exile, marginality and identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy: Or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint (1977)* , focusing on how the novel redefines exile by centering the experiences of Africans while critiquing neocolonialism, reclaiming margin as a site of resistance ,challenges dominant ,Eurocentric exile narratives. The main aim of this research is to explore how exile is not just about leaving home but about losing one's self and provide a profound understanding of the psychological consequences of exile and alienation. The study adopts Homi Bhabha's hybridity and third space, Frantz Fanon's psychology of oppression and colonized psyche, Stuart Hall's ideas on cultural identity and diaspora. At first, the current study explored the concepts of Hybridity, Cultural identity and discusses the psychological impact of exile. The second chapter focuses on how Sissies' time in Europe creates an emotional and cultural disconnection. The final chapter investigates the ambiguity of hybridity, critiques mimicry and language loss. Ultimately, this research reveals that Aidoo rethinks exile through post-colonial lens, portraying it as a cultural dislocation and psychological struggle.

Keys words: Exile, Marginality, Eurocentric, Alienation, Hybridity, Third space, Colonized Psyche, Cultural Identity, Mimicry

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Introduction

Exile has been an important theme in literature for a long time, showing the emotional and mental struggles of people forced to leave their homeland. This may happen because of war, colonialism, political problems, or personal decisions. Exile is often shown as a painful experience, filled with feelings of loss, loneliness, and a desire to belong. However, it can also be a time for deep thinking, personal growth, and creative work. Writers in exile often feel caught between two cultures, living on the edge of both their home country and the new place they live in. Because of this, exile in literature is not just a personal story it also speaks about larger issues like power, identity, and society. From old writings to modern postcolonial novels, exile continues to shape how stories are told and what they mean.

Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Our Sister Killjoy: Or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint(1977)* stands out as a powerful and thought-provoking critique of the postcolonial experience, especially for Africans who find themselves in Europe the heart of the former colonial empires. The novel explores the painful, complex, and often contradictory feelings tied to exile and marginalization. This dissertation explores the ways in which Aidoo redefines exile. Instead of viewing it simply as a physical separation from one's homeland, Aidoo presents exile as a state of psychological confusion, cultural displacement, and political meaning. This research offers a detailed analysis of the main character, Sissie, and her journey through Europe. Her observations and experiences provide insight into how exile can impact a person's identity and connection to their country of origin. Aidoo uses the idea of the margin usually considered a place of weakness or exclusion as a powerful space where critical thinking, resistance, and personal transformation can occur. From this position, Sissie is able to reflect on the flaws of both Europe and postcolonial Africa, challenging both colonial values and the choices made by some African exiles.

To support this reading, this dissertation draws on the key ideas of two major postcolonial thinkers: Homi K. Bhabha's and Frantz Fanon. Bhabha's theories of Hybridity, ambivalence, and the Third Space help to explain how Sissie navigates multiple cultural identities and the contradictions of her situation. Fanon's work on internalized racism, epidermalization, and the psychological effects of colonialism sheds light on Sissies' emotional struggles and the mental toll of exile.

Writers throughout history have shown that exile and being on the margin often involve feelings of loss, loneliness, and being out of place. At the same time, these experiences can also lead to deep thinking and creative growth. In their stories, essays, and letters, writers present exile as both a personal struggle and a political issue, one that influences how people see themselves and how they tell their stories.

Literature has long explored exile and margin as themes reflecting displacement, identity, and resistance. Many authors who experienced exile or marginalization have used their works to articulate the complexities of these conditions. As Edward Said famously describes exile in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* as " the perilous territory of not-belonging" highlighting the exile's position on the margins of both their homeland and the society they enter. This in-between state, he argues, allows exiles to develop a unique critical outlook and creative voice shaped by displacement (173). Achebe's works, especially *Things Fall Apart,* depicts how colonialism violently disrupts the Igbo cultural fabric, leading to loss of identity, causing alienation within the community and individuals.

After the 1989, Salman Rushdie lived in hiding, embodying cultural exile, and his novels, such as *Midnight's Children*, explore Hybridity, religious intolerance, and the clash of identities, illustrating exile as a cultural and psychological margin. As well as Victor Hugo exiled politically during Napoleon III's reign, Hugo wrote some of his greatest works, including *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, while in exile. His novels address social injustice, marginalization, and the plight of the oppressed, reflecting his own experience of exile as a form of political and social marginality.

In novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde claims that " Youth! There is nothing like youth. The middle-aged are mortgaged to Life. The old are in Life's lumber-room. But youth is the Lord of Life. Youth has a kingdom waiting for it. Everyone is born a king, and most people die in exile"(35). Wilde's exile after imprisonment reflects the personal and social consequences of marginalization. He poetically captures exile as a universal human condition of alienation and loss.

In the paper *Counter-Discursive Strategies in Postcolonial African Novel: Revising the Peripheries in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy* examines how the novel challenges racial stereotypes that portray Africans as inferior. It highlights Aidoo's use of counter-discourse to undermine colonial narratives and reject the negative representations of African people. Through this strategy, Aidoo asserts the invalidity of colonial ideology and reclaims African identity and dignity. Furthermore, in his essay "Transculturalism, Otherness, Exile, and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" Nwanyanwu explores the themes of migration and exile, focusing on how these experiences affect the lives and identities of migrants.

There are several important reasons for choosing to study *Our Sister Killjoy*. First, the novel remains deeply relevant today because it deals with issues that are still affecting African societies especially the emotional and social consequences of exile. Aidoo offers a powerful critique of how exile, rather than always being a path to freedom or success, can actually lead to confusion, disconnection, and identity loss. Her work is especially important because it brings attention to the experience of African women, who are often left out of postcolonial discussions. Second, the novel offers a strong challenge to traditional, Western ideas about exile. While many stories from the West present exile as a heroic or liberating journey, Aidoo shows how it can also be damaging leading to cultural betrayal, personal loss, and emotional suffering. Her novel pushes readers to rethink what exile really means, and to consider the consequences of staying away from one's homeland for too long. Third, *Our Sister Killjoy* provides a valuable opportunity to apply the theories of major postcolonial scholars like Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon. Their ideas helps to explain the deeper meanings behind Sissie's

experiences such as her feelings of being caught between two cultures, her resistance to colonial values, and her struggle to hold onto her identity in a foreign land. By applying these theories to Aidoo's text, we gain a clearer and more powerful understanding of how exile works on a psychological, cultural, and political level.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to reveal how exile is not just about leaving home, but about losing one's sense of self, and how literature can be used to challenge that loss and recover identity, also examines Aidoo's choice to center the voice of an African woman. This is essential, because African women's experiences are often ignored in postcolonial narratives. By giving Sissie a powerful voice, Aidoo pushes back against colonial and patriarchal storytelling. Through Sissies' experiences her disappointment with Europe, her feelings of alienation, her observations of racial injustice, and her eventual decision to return home, Aidoo offers a new way of understanding exile. It becomes not just a story of loss, but a chance to think critically, reject false promises, and begin to rebuild a stronger, more authentic African identity in the face of ongoing neocolonial pressures. Hence, This dissertation seeks to answer the following central question: How does Ama Ata Aidoo, through the story of Sissie in *Our Sister Killjoy*, use the idea of being on the "margin" of European society not just to show alienation, but to challenge and rewrite dominant Western and patriarchal views of exile? This study also strives to answer the following questions: How do Homi Bhabha's and Frantz Fanon's theories help us better understand Sissies' position as an African woman in exile? And in what ways does Aidoo critique the decisions of African exiles that remain in Europe, and how does she suggest a path toward self-reclamation and resistance? This dissertation is built on the following assumptions:

- Aidoo presents the margin not just as a place of exclusion and suffering but also as a space where critical awareness can grow. From this position, Sissie is able to

challenge colonial beliefs and begin building a new, more independent identity that blends resistance with self-reflection.

- Through Sissie's thoughts, experiences, and eventual decision to return home, Aidoo shows that real decolonization is not only political. It also requires a deep cultural and psychological reconnection with Africa. She highlights how African intellectuals who remain in Europe risk losing touch with their communities and becoming complicit in neocolonial systems.
- The novel uses the experience of exile to uncover the hidden costs of Western education and success, especially for African women. It critiques the idea that living in the West automatically brings empowerment, and instead shows how this often results in identity loss, alienation, and guilt.

To answer the questions and in order to verify the provided hypotheses, the study adopts some post-colonial tenets such as Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Third space, and Ambivalence. to explore how Sissie navigates cultural boundaries and resists colonial identity structures. This research also inspires its theoretical formulations from Frantz Fanon's analysis of the psychological effects of colonization, such as internalized racism, epidermalization, and the neuroses of colonialism to approach the proposed corpus " our sister killjoy "and to explain Sissie's emotional and psychological struggles.

Using these theoretical tools, the dissertation performs a critical textual reading of the novel. It looks closely at Aidoo's narrative style, character development, and thematic choices. Special attention is given to how Sissie's voice functions as a critique of both Western society and postcolonial African elites. The analysis also considers how Aidoo uses language both poetic and political to highlight the tensions of exile, the contradictions of cultural identity, and the hope for transformation. In doing so, the current study seeks to demonstrate how Our

Sister Killjoy not only critiques the postcolonial condition but also offers a radical and empowering way of thinking about exile from the margins, and through the eyes of an African woman.

In term of structure, this study comprises three chapters. The first chapter provides the theoretical framework necessary for understanding the hybrid dilemma and exile experience in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy,this thesis* divided into three main sections. The first section explores Homi Bhabha's concept of Hybridity, focusing on how cultural identities are not fixed but constantly evolving through contact and negotiation between colonizer and colonized. This concept of ''Third space'' will be central to analyzing the protagonist's experience in exile. The second section examines Stuart Hall's ideas of cultural identity and limited position, highlighting how postcolonial subjects often find themselves caught between cultures, neither fully at home in the west nor in their country of origin. The third section focuses on Frantz Fanon's psychology of oppression, divided into two parts. The first part explains Frantz Fanon's colonized psyche, particularly how colonization affects self-perception and mental health. The second part discusses the psychological impact of exile, showing how displacement and alienation can lead to identity crisis and emotional tools for reefing Our Sister Killjoy through the lenses of postcolonial theory, identity, and psychological struggle.

The second chapter explores how Ama Ata Aidoo redefines the concepts of exile and marginality in *Our Sister Killjoy*. Rather than presenting exile solely as physical displacement, the novel frames it as a complex psychological and cultural experience. It is structured into three sections. The first section examines how Sissie's time in Europe creates a deep sense of emotional and cultural disconnection. Her alienation is not only from the foreign spaces she occupies, but also from her own identity, as well as, discusses how exile produces identity crises, psychological fragmentation. The second section explores how exile is framed as a

kind of betrayal, both personal and political. Sissie views some of her fellow Africans abroad as having abandoned their cultural roots in favor of Western materialism and assimilation. The section also looks at how Sissie's personal disillusionment reflects broader political betrayal. The final section focuses on how Aidoo gives voice to the marginalized, particularly African women, who are often silenced in both colonial and patriarchal narratives. This section argues that *Our Sister Killjoy* is not just about exile in the physical sense but also about reclaiming narrative agency from the margins.

The third chapter focuses on how *Our Sister Killjoy* explores the complex idea of hybridity and the challenges of forming identity in a postcolonial world. It is divided into five main sections. The first section looks at the ambiguity of hybridity, showing how Sissie's identity is shaped by both African and European influences, which creates tension rather than harmony. The second section studies Sissie as a hybrid subject, someone caught between two cultures and unable to fully belong to either one. The third section examines mimicry and objectification, especially how African characters abroad imitate European ways and how Sissie herself is seen as exotic or different. The fourth section discusses language as both a tool and a barrier while English allows Sissie to express herself, it also limits her and distances her from her roots. The final section explores the ambivalence of return, showing that going back to Ghana is not a simple homecoming but a return filled with questions, disillusionment, and emotional struggle. Together, these sections highlight how Aidoo presents identity in exile not as fixed or complete, but as something shaped by conflict, negotiation, and constant change.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework, Exploring Exile, Psychological Oppression, and Identity Formation in the Third Space

This chapter sets up the theoretical framework for exploring exile, marginality, and identity in *Our Sister Killjoy*. It draws on the work of key postcolonial thinkers who help to explain the complex experiences of displacement and cultural conflict that the characters in the novel go through. Homi Bhabha's ideas about hybridity, cultural identity, and the "third space" shows how people who live between different cultures often form new, mixed identities. His concept of the limited position of the postcolonial subject helps us understand the struggles of those who don't fully belong in either their home country or the places they move to. In addition, the chapter explores Frantz Fanon's theory of psychological oppression, focusing on the inner struggles of the colonized psyche. Fanon shows how colonialism damages self-perception and creates lasting emotional and mental conflict. His work helps us understand the psychological effects of exile, especially how individuals feel alienated both from themselves and from society.

1. 1. Homi Bhabha's Hybridity:

Homi K.Bhabha is recognized as one of scholars in the realm of postcolonial theory, known for his theories on identity, culture, and power. He posited the concept of hybridity to elucidate the transformative processes that ensue when disparate cultures converge particularly during and subsequent to the period of colonization. In contrast to preceding theoretical frameworks which predominantly emphasized themes of oppression or domination, Bhabha examines the processes by which novel identities and significations emerge through the amalgamation of cultures. In *Of Mimicry and Men(1994)* Bhabha asserts that when colonial authorities perused to impose their cultural paradigms, they did not merely obliterate the indigenous culture (122). Rather, an amalgam was forged. The colonized subjects neither

fully embraced colonial practice nor did they preserve their ancestral traditions in a pure state. Instead, they engendered a hybrid identity comprising elements of both native and colonial influences, resulting in a distinctive and singular cultural expression. The notion of hybridity

in *The Commitment to Theory* as articulated by Homi Bhabha, constitutes a fundamental aspect of postcolonial theory, subverting conventional ideals of cultural homogeneity and accentuating the dynamic interactions between the colonizer and the colonized (37). This concept is important to his influential work*, The Location of Culture* (1994), wherein he represented the Third Space as a site for cultural negotiation and transformation.

Hybridity, as conceptualized by Bhabha, refers to the emergence of novel transcultural forms within the contact zone engendered by colonial encounters. The terminology itself is derived from horticultural practices, wherein it denotes the cross-fertilization of two species to yield a hybrid. In the context of postcolonial discourse, hybridity contain the synthesis of cultural elements encompassing linguistic, racial, political, and social dimensions resulting from colonial interactions. Bhabha further elaborates on antecedent ideas presented by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* who regarded hybridity as a subversive force capable of contesting dominant narratives through the mechanism of multivocality (314),that refer to the idea that a single piece of writing can include many different voices ,perspectives in conflict ,creating a kind of dialogue within the text. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha introduces hybridity as a central concept in postcolonial discourse, emphasizing the complex interactions between colonizer and colonized that produce new, hybrid cultural identities. Rather than viewing colonialism as a simple domination of one culture over another, Bhabha argues that colonial encounters always involve a process of negotiation and transformation. He writes “Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of

domination through disavowal" (112). Here, Bhabha emphasizes that hybridity reveals the unstable and shifting nature of colonial power. Rather than being a passive mixing, hybridity actively challenges and reconfigures power structures, and the colonial powers tried to impose their culture .Instead, a mix was created. The colonized people did not completely adopt colonial ways, nor did they keep their traditions untouched..

In *Sign Taken for Wonders,* Homi Bhabha means that when two different cultures come into contact, they don't just mix like ingredients in a recipe. Instead, something completely new is created a new identity or way of life that isn't fully part of either original culture. This new identity has pieces of both cultures, but it also has its own unique features. It's not about choosing one culture over the other, but about forming something different through the interaction between them. This process is called cultural hybridity, and it shows how culture is always changing and evolving.

Furthermore, Central to Bhabha's philosophical framework is the concept of the "Third Space" a liminal position where cultures intertwine and multifaceted identities blossom. This realm is neither wholly engulfed by the prevailing culture nor completely defiant against it; rather, it transforms into a vibrant landscape for dialogue and transformation. He posits that acknowledging this hybridity can cultivate a global culture rooted in shared expression rather than mere exoticism or diversity. On the imaginative possibilities of the third Space, He writes "It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (55). This means that the "Third Space" as a melting pot where hybrid identities take shape. It illustrates that cultural significance is never pure or static but is perpetually forged through the art of negotiation, this does not means one culture dominates and erases the other, instead both are altered through context.

as Achebe bends English with Igbo proverbs,idioms,here English no longer pure British English but becomes a hybrid medium through which the African worldviews are communicated create a new narrative form that's speaks both, and it becomes a site of resistance and possibility, where traditional binaries such as colonizer/colonized or self/other are challenged. This space questions cultural authenticity and opens up new avenues for identity formation in postcolonial contexts. According to Bhabha, Third Space is "the forefront of translation and negotiation, the intermediary area that bears the weight of cultural meaning" (38). It lies not within the prevailing or the subordinate culture, but in the ambiguous, transitional space where cultural interpretations are debated and reshaped. Third Space serves as a realm of expression where cultural systems and declarations are generated. Bhabha argues, " The Third Space, while unrepresentable by itself, creates the discursive conditions of enunciation that guarantee that cultural meanings and symbols lack any original unity or fixity; that even identical signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized, and interpreted in new ways" (37).

In addition to previous, Bhabha politicizes hybridity by positioning it as a site of resistance against colonial domination. He contends that hybrid identities subvert colonial authority by exposing its contradictions and undermining its claims to authenticity. As Robert Young notes, Bhabha transforms Bakhtin's concept into an active moment of challenge, depriving imperialist cultures of their imposed authority. This process not only destabilizes colonial power but also redefines cultural identity in ways that resist binary categorizations. He says "The hybrid strategy... is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power, but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion" (112–13). Here, Bhabha is talking about how hybrid identities those formed in the space between colonizer and colonized can challenge colonial power. He says that hybridity doesn't

just copy or reject colonial identity; instead, it takes the colonial stereotypes and meanings and repeats them in new ways that expose their flaws. By doing this, hybrid identities disrupt the idea that colonial power is strong, fixed, or natural. However, they don't completely escape colonial influence they still use its language and symbols but they turn them into tools for resistance and transformation. So, hybridity both challenges and plays with the structures of colonial control, using them to undermine their authority and authenticity from within.

According to Drichel.S in his research *The Time of Hybridity,* which delves into the intricate concept of hybridity as proposed by Homi Bhabha within the realm of postcolonial studies. It aims to shed light on the often oversimplified discussions surrounding hybridity by emphasizing its complex connection to temporality. By focusing on the *'Time of Hybridity'* in a bicultural context in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the study underscores how hybridity intertwines with temporality to not only shape postcolonial politics but also navigate ethical dimensions. The paper challenges existing notions of hybridity as mere "syncretism", urging a deeper exploration of its temporal implications in fostering an 'ethics of hybridity' that remains largely unexplored in the field of postcolonial studies. In addition**,** *Critical Review of Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha's Hybridity: A Study of "The Location of Culture",* critically examines Homi K. Bhabha's renowned work, *The Location of Culture*, within the realm of postcolonial theory. The paper delves into the intricate interplay between Western colonial powers and the impacted nations, highlighting how colonization profoundly influences cultures and identities globally. By dissecting Bhabha's exploration of identity formation amidst colonial encounters, the research underscores the nuanced complexities inherent in postcolonial interpretations, emphasizing the need for careful attention to the multifaceted legacies of colonialism (Umar et al.1-10)

In "Mimicry in Postcolonial Theory"(2016), Nasrullah Mambrol posits that mimicry serves as a vital notion in postcolonial discourse, illustrating the fluctuating and contradictory relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Mimicry happens when the colonized embrace the cultural values, beliefs, customs, and ideology of the colonizer. This procedure yields a warped representation a fuzzy picture of the colonizer, reshaped and assimilated by the colonized. Mambrol observes that "mimicry thus uncovers a fissure in the assurance of colonial rule, instability in its command over the actions of the colonized"(2016), indicating that mimicry weakens the colonizer's power by disrupting its superiority. Mimicry frequently pairs with mockery, since the colonized individual's imitation is never fully achieved, thereby quietly mocking the colonizer's authority.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha describes mimicry as "one of the most subtle and powerful strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (85). Bhabha states that colonial mimicry is "the yearning for a modified, recognizable other, as a being of a difference that is nearly identical, but not entirely" (86). This demonstrates how the colonizer aims to create subjects similar to him, yet only in part preserving control and dominance by preventing complete access to cultural or intellectual parity. The colonizer thus selectively reveals specific elements of their culture while concealing others, forcing the colonized to mimic blindly without ever fully reaching the colonizer's degree of civilization or education (Bhabha 86).Mimicry is the process through which the colonized subject is reshaped to resemble the colonizer, though only partially. Its complexity lies in the dual nature of its results: it creates both resemblance and resistance. The danger of colonial mimicry stems from its capacity to destabilize imperial authority and expose the irony in the colonized subject's blind imitation of the colonizer.

As Nasrullah Mambrol explains, postcolonial literature often subverts the very rebellious criteria embedded within colonial discourse, ultimately undermining its credibility.

Jacques Lacan, in his essay *The Line and Light: of the Gaze*, as quoted by Homi K. Bhabha, notes that "mimicry reveals something so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage… It is not a question of harmonizing with a background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare" (Bhabha 85). This suggests that colonial mimicry conceals the colonizer's true intentions by selectively revealing and hiding elements of cultural identity. In this way, mimicry acts as a strategic form of deception, similar to wartime camouflage, wherein the colonizer covers certain aspects of them to appear familiar to the colonized. This method produces an ambiguous and incomplete reflection of the colonizer in the colonized subject, further complicating identity and reinforcing colonial control.

On other hand, in Miriam Webster, Ambivalence is a state of having mixed feelings or contradictory attitudes toward someone or something. It often reflects internal conflict, such as feeling both love and resentment toward a person or simultaneously desiring and fearing a particular outcome. Ambivalence describes the condition of experiencing opposing, simultaneous emotions or attitudes towards a person, object, concept, or circumstance. This mental condition is defined by a conflict between contrasting feelings or ideas, like love and hate, attraction and aversion, or desire and fear. Essential elements of ambivalence involve psychological duality (the presence of conflicting emotions regarding the same object), emotional complexity (the concurrent feelings of both positive and negative emotions), cognitive dissonance (stress from aligning contradictory thoughts), and behavioral uncertainty (hesitation or fluctuation in decision-making). Ambivalence is broadly acknowledged as a typical and frequent psychological occurrence. Eugen Bleuler first presents the concept to psychology in the early 20th century, initially recognizing it as a symptom of schizophrenia but later admitting it as a component of the human experience. Ambivalence is the inclination

to assess something (or someone) positively and negatively. If you are ambivalent toward something, you might consider it positively and negatively, feel both positively and negatively about it, or think and feel in opposite directions (e.g., you can love something but know it is bad for you, like my ambivalence about ice cream) (Jonas et al). Ambivalence is not neutrality, you're neutral towards something when you don't think of it either positively or negatively (Jonas et al 35).More clearly ambivalence reflects a state of conflicted evaluation unlike neutrality which implies lack of opinion, ambivalence reveal deeper complexities and contradiction in perception

In summary, the concept of hybridity, as explored by Bhabha, provides a nuanced understanding of cultural interactions, particularly in the context of colonization. Bhabha's exploration of hybridity offers valuable insights into the complexities of cultural interactions, particularly in post-colonial contexts. It encourages a deeper appreciation for the ways in which cultures can influence one another and the innovative identities that can emerge from such encounters. Understanding these dynamics allows for deeper awareness of how colonial legacies still influence present-day identities and social structures.

1. 2. Cultural Identity and Limited Position

Identity is a complicated, evolving, and multifaceted concept comprising various elements that influence a person's self-perception. Identity fundamentally encompasses a range of conflicting interactions among personal traits, beliefs, and connections that foster individual distinctiveness. Interests, tastes, and values form an essential part of personal preferences that significantly influence the development of individual identity. Cultural background introduces an additional dimension, encompassing shared customs, traditions, language, and values that shape an individual's unique identity (Sellers 18). Family, community, and society at large also shape social roles, which subsequently affect how individuals view themselves. Furthermore, identity is constantly transformed by outside

factors, including societal norms, historical context, and the variability of individual experiences. It is not a static idea but rather a fluid, evolving notion that signifies the continuous process of self-definition and adjustment within the intricate framework of personal and social interactions (Carter et al 221).

In literature, identity serves as a thematic indicator that examines the complex and often varied nature of personal and collective self-hood. It encompasses the psychological, cultural, and social aspects of characters within a narrative, offering insights into their motivations, challenges, and transformations (Sellers 18). Literary identity explores the complexities of character formation, offering understanding of how people manoeuvre through their internal experiences and manage their roles in the broader context of the story. It serves as a perspective for authors to explore themes of belonging and authenticity (Reed 310), along with the impact of external factors in developing and forming characters. Literary depictions of identity often prompt readers to consider universal human experiences, enabling them to empathize and connect by showcasing the diverse ways people contend with self-definition, societal expectations, and the formative impacts of culture and history.

Likewise, Stuart Hall's exploration of cultural identity is a pivotal contribution to cultural studies, offering a nuanced understanding of identity as both a historical and evolving construct. Hall's seminal work, particularly his 1990 essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," outlines two primary ways of conceptualizing cultural identity. The first is an essentialist view, which sees identity as a fixed, shared essence rooted in the past. The second, more dynamic perspective, views cultural identity as a process of 'becoming' as well as ‘being’ emphasizes its fluidity and future orientation. This latter view is particularly influential in understanding the complexities of identity in a globalized world, where cultural interactions are constant and multifaceted. Hall's theories have been applied across various contexts, from literature to film, highlighting their broad applicability and relevance.

Cultural identity consist at first, Language is the strongest marker of cultural identity. Language is the principal mechanism through which individuals interact, express ideas, and transmit cultural information. Language connects individuals to their past and community (Kramsch 3).Then, Religion shapes an individual's worldview, influencing his or her morals, behaviors, and daily activities. It provides an account of life, death, morality, and the universe, often embedding deeply held traditions within a population of people (Taylor 127).Besides, Ethnicity is a group of people who identify themselves as connected through shared ancestral, social, cultural, or national customs. Ethnic identity includes traditions, food, music, and a sense of shared origin. Cornell & Hartmaann have mentioned that "Ethnicity is a socially constructed category that forms a key element in the composition of cultural identity"(19).Next, Traditions are the common practices and rituals that are passed down through generations. They secure group solidarity and cultural continuity, such as celebrations, food, festivals, and rites of passage. "Traditions preserve a sense of history and belonging, reinforcing group identity through shared practices" (Hall 234). Besides, Norms governs acceptable behavior within a culture and create the social roles individuals enact. These roles by age, gender, status, and occupation help to determine how identity is expressed and interpreted. Hofstede states that "Cultural norms provide the behavioral codes that define group membership and identity expression" (56). Finally, Values are the moral principles that define what is important and desirable in a society, for example, respect collectivism, independence, or hospitality. These values shape the moral character and decision-making of individuals. "Values are at the heart of cultural systems and influence identity by defining what is considered good or bad, right or wrong" (Schwartz 30). A shared history, with common experiences, events, and legends, helps to shape a collective identity. This typically encompasses national myths, heroes, and struggles that become embedded in the identity of the group. "Collective memory creates a sense of coherence and differentiation, a backbone for cultural identity" (Assmann 45).that means a collective memory shape cultural identity and preserve shared histories, feeling of unity, at the same time, it creates distinguishing one group’s identity from another’s through unique experiences.

While Hall's theories provide a powerful framework for understanding cultural identity, they also invite critique and further exploration. Some scholars argue that Hall's focus on representation and identity might overlook other structural factors influencing cultural dynamics, such as economic and political power. Additionally, the challenge of maintaining cultural identity in the face of globalization and technological advancement remains a critical area for ongoing research (Gilroy 1993&Miller 2007). Despite these critiques, Hall's work continues to be a foundational reference in cultural studies, offering valuable insights into the complexities of identity in a rapidly changing world.

Cultural identity is crucial in shaping how individuals and communities perceive themselves, especially within postcolonial contexts. It is commonly understood as a collective sense of belonging rooted in shared language, traditions, historical experiences, and cultural values. Often, cultural identity serves as a powerful tool of resistance against colonial oppression. Yet, postcolonial theorists like Stuart Hall and Homi K. Bhabha challenge the notion of identity as fixed or pure. Instead, they argue that identity is constructed, fragmented, and continuously reshaped by historical events, cultural interactions, and discursive processes.

Stuart Hall, a key figure in cultural studies, critically challenges the essentialist view of identity as fixed or innate. He argues that identity involves both a sense of "being" and a process of "becoming," and is *"always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth"* (225). Within postcolonial contexts, this perspective suggests that identity cannot be recovered in its original or pure form. Rather, it should be seen as a dynamic construct shaped by historical events, cultural exchange, and ongoing transformation. Homi Bhabha builds on this idea by introducing key concepts like hybridity, mimicry, and the Third Space in his book The *Location of Culture*. He explains that cultural identity is shaped in the in-between spaces where colonizers and the colonized meet and interact. In these spaces, a mix of cultures takes place, which creates *"*new ways of thinking and expressing identity*"* (Bhabha 2). This

process challenges the idea that cultures are fixed or pure. Instead, it shows that identity becomes something mixed and new, not completely from one side or the other, but formed through a blend of both.

The idea of limited position is closely connected to cultural identity. In colonial times, colonized people were often given fixed roles by the colonizers, based on stereotypes and simple opposites like civilized/uncivilized. Bhabha calls this the "limited position" a situation where the colonized person is seen only through the colonizer's point of view and is restricted to certain meanings or roles. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha explains how colonial mimicry when the colonized try to copy the colonizers creates someone who is "almost the same, but not quite" (86). This shows how colonial power is unstable and full of contradictions. The colonized may use the colonizer's language or customs, but never exactly, and this imperfection becomes a way of resisting and undermining the colonial system from the inside.

Literature gives us clear examples of how cultural identity is shaped and limited by colonial power. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon shows how Black identity is affected by racism and the pressure to use the colonizer's language. He explains that colonized people often try to copy their colonizers, but they end up with a confused and damaged identity this is a good example of what Bhabha calls the limited position. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the main character Okonkwo builds his identity around traditional Igbo values, but his world is disrupted when British missionaries arrive. He tries to hold onto his old role, but in the end, he cannot survive in the new, mixed society. In the same way, in *Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga*, Tambu is caught between her Shona roots and the Western education she receives. Her story shows how postcolonial people often feel torn between two cultures, unable to fully belong to either one.

In the end, the connection between cultural identity and limited position shows how identity in postcolonial societies is complex and always changing. Powerful systems, like colonial rule, often try to control how people see themselves by putting them into fixed roles. But people in postcolonial situations don't just accept these roles, they find ways to challenge and reshape them. Homi Bhabha's idea of the Third Space gives room for this resistance. It's a space where new, mixed (hybrid) identities can form, combining elements from both native and colonial cultures. So, cultural identity isn't something unchanging or pure it's a flexible and ongoing process, shaped by history, power, and the blending of different cultures.

1. 3. Frantz Fanon and his Psychology of Oppression

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is one of the activist of anti-colonial struggle. He is one of the most postcolonial theorists. He is political philosopher and psychiatrist. Fanon discusses the colonized and colonizer thinking and their psychological state, he also develops ideas about familiarity with colonialism such as neocolonialism, colonial mentality, racism toward blacks, and process of decolonization. In his works, *The wretched of the Earth* (1961), *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), and *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), Fanon argues that "the native constructs a sense of self as determined by the colonial master through discourse and representation, while the colonizer constructs a sense of superiority" . It is intended that, on the one hand, the Western colonial power constructs the colonized identity by determining its protocol in the colonial discourse. On the other hand, the conqueror constructs his supremacy in all areas. Fanon discusses the colonial mentality and the psychological weakness of the native black people who try to imitate the white by adopting the Western values, language, way of thinking, ideology, and by rejecting the native culture and identity. Fanon's theory discusses the psychology of the colonized. The sense of inferiority is psychologically rooted in the psych of the colonized, says Fanon. Fanon feels that the perception of inefficiency and lack of confidence in the psyche of former colonized peoples is a natural reaction as a result

of his coexistence with the violence environment during colonialism time, and that it is an act of self affirmation as claimed by the natives. This means that the natives have interaction with western ideology because they strongly believe in the superiority of the white.

Central to Fanon's psychological analysis is the idea of "Epidermalization",the assimilation of racial inferiority by Black individuals. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he states: "The Black individual tied to his perceived inferiority, the white individual tied to his perceived superiority similarly act in accordance with a neurotic perspective" (Fanon, Black Skin 60). Epidermalization refers to the way racism is physically ingrained "under the skin," becoming integral to the colonized individual's perception of their own body. The Black individual encounters racism not just as external control but as an ingrained framework of self-identity.

Fanon identifies his claim to explain"epidermalization", he states: "I start to feel a profound sense of loss from not being a white man, to the extent that the white man inflicts discrimination upon me, turns me into a colonized native, strips me of all worth and individuality, claims I am a burden on the world, and insists that I must submit to the white world as swiftly as I can" (Fanon 98).

Fanon's clinical observations reveal how colonialism inflicts deep psychological harm on the colonized, producing a range of neurotic symptoms. He identifies what he termes *colonial anxieties* irrational fears directed either at symbols of colonial authority, such as uniformed officials and state institutions, or toward racialized objects and bodies. These feed into a broader condition Fanon described as *colonial anxiety*, a chronic state of hyper-vigilance and uncertainty arising from navigating persistently hostile racial environments. He also noted the emergence of *narcissistic disorders*, in which colonized individuals develop exaggerated fantasies of becoming white while simultaneously experiencing shame and discomfort about their racial identity. This internal conflict often leads to hostile urges

repressed anger and frustration resulting from colonial injustices that may turn inward as self-hatred or outward as aggression against other colonized people. In his 1952 essay "The 'North African Syndrome" Fanon criticizes his psychiatric colleagues for mislabeling the legitimate emotional responses of North African immigrants as pathological. He asserted,"If you take away a man's language, his cultural bond, his original relation with his group, put him to work for minimum wages, and prolong his unhealthy living conditions, there is nothing surprising in his presenting a pre-psychotic syndrome of defensive aggressiveness with a marked regressive tendency*"* (Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* 13). This analysis underscores Fanon's belief that what appears as individual pathology is often a rational response to systemic oppression, and shows how colonialism harms a person's identity and mental health pointing out that the person aggression is not a personal weakness but is a defense against a world that has taken away dignity and freedom.

1. **3. 1. Frantz Fanon's Colonized Psyche**

Fanon explains that colonialism doesn't just control people physically, it also affects their minds and self-image. It makes colonized people feel inferior and less human, and this feeling goes deep into how they see themselves. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon says that colonialism makes the colonized constantly ask: "Who am I in reality?"(qtd in The New Yorker 2021). This deep question becomes a big part of their life, as they try to understand who they really are while also dealing with the negative and false images that the colonial system puts on them.

The colonized person goes through what Fanon calls the "Epidermalization of inferiority"(11). meaning they start to internalize negative stereotypes about their race until those ideas affect how they see and even feel about their own bodies. As Muhammad Shadab Ilyas explains, this process "helps to make sense of how certain schemas through which we

process social interactions became pervasively organized around skin color, which may lead to the internalization of inferiority and a desire to mediate the experience and knowledge of one's self-world through the lens of skin color." In other words, the colonized person starts to see themselves the way the colonizer sees them through a distorted and racist viewpoint. This creates a sense of dual consciousness, where the colonized are torn between how they truly see themselves and how the outside world, shaped by colonial power, sees them. This inner conflict leads to cognitive dissonance, a mental and emotional struggle between two opposing identities.

One of the most painful effects of colonization on the mind is what Fanon calls dual consciousness. This means the colonized person feels divided inside, constantly struggling between their true cultural identity and the identity forced on them by the colonizer. They feel stuck in two worlds, unable to fully belong to either one. As Fanon points out, "The black man among his own in the 20th century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other"(14). This shows how deeply the feeling of inferiority and confusion is rooted. The colonized person starts to feel like a stranger even in their own culture, leading to a strong sense of isolation and inner conflict. Fanon shows the inner conflict of colonized people by noting that "A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro"(14). This shows how colonized individuals often have to change how they act depending on who they are with, a process known as cultural-switching. This constant shift creates a heavy mental and emotional burden, as they try to live between two worlds one shaped by the colonizer’s expectations, and the other rooted in their own culture. As a result, their identity becomes fragmented, pulled in different directions by conflicting pressures.

In *Black Skin, White Mask*s, Fanon also focuses on the role of language in colonial domination. He explains that language is not just about communication it also carries the

colonizer's values and way of thinking. When colonized people speaks the colonizer's language, they may also start to see the world through the colonizer's eyes, often without realizing it. Fanon says that every colonized people must deal with this difficult relationship between language and identity. Speaking the colonizer's language might bring social benefits, but it also leads to greater alienation from one's own cultural roots, adding to the emotional and psychological struggles already caused by colonization. In The *Wretched of the Earth*, especially in the chapter "Colonial War and Mental Disorders," Fanon describes the serious mental health issues caused by the violence of colonialism. He uses the term "reactionary psychoses" to talk about psychological problems that develop in response to the "bloody, pitiless atmosphere" created by colonial violence and "outright war." (247-97) these mental health issues show up in many ways, including anxiety, depression, and in some cases, severe psychotic episodes. Through his work as a psychiatrist, Fanon found that colonialism creates a world that is "totally inhospitable to living out the intrinsic conflicts of human subjectivity."

In other words, the harsh and violent conditions of colonization make it nearly impossible for people to deal with their inner emotions and personal struggles in a healthy way. He explains that the colonial system "decomposes the cultural infrastructure that makes the elaboration of the unconscious and the impasses of its speaking possible"(14). which means it destroys the cultural support systems people need to understand and cope with trauma. As a result, the colonized are left without the tools to heal emotionally or maintain psychological balance.

Even though colonialism causes deep psychological harm, Fanon's view is not entirely without hope. He believes that within the colonized mind, there is not only pain and trauma, but also the possibility of resistance and freedom. According to Fanon, when a person becomes aware of their mental colonization, that awareness can be the first step in freeing the mind from colonial control. For Fanon, real liberation means more than just gaining political

freedom, it also requires psychological healing. The colonized must reject the false, negative images they've been taught about themselves and work to reclaim their true identity and sense of worth. This journey toward self-discovery and resistance is reflected in what Ilyas describes as "the characters' internal monologues and interactions, which frequently convey a yearning to be freed from colonial confines and to reinvent themselves on their own terms." In this way, Fanon shows that liberation begins within the mind, and that reclaiming one's identity is a powerful act of resistance.

Frantz Fanon's ideas about the colonized mind are still very important today for understanding the deep emotional and psychological effects of colonialism and its aftermath. His work *Black Skin,White Masks(2008)* shows that colonialism is not just about physical or political control, but also about controlling how people think and see themselves a kind of colonization of consciousness.By carefully studying the mental damage caused by colonial systems, Fanon gives us both a powerful critique of colonialism and a way to understand the emotional side of the struggle for freedom.What makes Fanon's work so powerful is his belief that real decolonization must happen not only politically, but also psychologically. As he shows, "true liberation" means more than just ending colonial rule it also means healing the mind, letting go of feelings of inferiority, and reclaiming a strong and true sense of self-worth and identity. Today, as many societies continue to deal with the long-lasting effects of colonialism, Fanon's ideas remain a crucial tool for understanding and addressing the emotional and mental impacts of both historical and psychological trauma.

1. **3. 2. Psychological impact of Exile**

Exile creates a special type of alienation that involves what Edward Said refers to as "a discontinuous state of being," in which individuals experience a constant sense of disconnection from homeland and new world alike (Said 177). This alienation is verbalized through a number of psychological processes and produces what Akhtar describes as "a

specific kind of mourning" that is different from normal grief in that it is ambiguous and unresolved (Akhtar 133). Unlike losses that can be unambiguously mourned, the exile has to contend with the paradoxical process of mourning something that continues to exist but is unattainable, resulting in what Boss refers to as "ambiguous loss" a particularly challenging psychological state to eliminate (Boss 554-55). The displaced individual typically experiences what Grinberg refer to as "cultural shock syndrome," which encompasses depersonalization, heightened anxiety, and identity confusion in the face of new cultural expectations and norms (Grinberg 23). The syndrome occurs as a result of the sudden invalidation of previously automatic social skills, provoking severe uncertainty about one's ability to navigate even ordinary social interactions. This ambivalence is transferred to language as well, where the displaced person often experiences what linguist Eva Hoffman calls "linguistic dispossession" loss of the spontaneous, affect-laden identification with one's mother tongue and the conversion of self-expression into more pragmatic, less affect-laden communication in an acquired language (Hoffman 107). Linguistic alienation creates a form of affective dissociation, whereby feelings are partly detached from verbal expression, that’s means when someone is forced to speak or think in language that not its own, this can make it hard to fully express emotions or thought, feelings and words become disconnected.

Exile breaks the coherence of identity, creating what philosopher Maria Lugones describes as "world traveling" a necessity to move back and forth between discrepant worlds of culture without a home in either (Lugones 159). This is a state of inner dislocation that is described in what psychologists refer to as "cultural identity confusion," in which one cannot integrate disparate cultural values, behaviors, and concepts of self into an integrated sense of self (Berry 706). This resultant state of mind will generally entail what Erikson would identify as "identity diffusion" the inability to synthesize several strands of identity into a cohesive whole, and thereby create continuing internal conflicts over authenticity and membership

(Erikson 168). In exile, temporal experience similarly fractures, resulting in what historian Svetlana Boym calls "reflective nostalgia" a kind of temporal disconnection in which the past is both glorified and scrutinized, leading to a complicated relationship with memory that contrasts with mere yearning (Boym 49-50). This temporal disturbance appears as what medical professionals identify as "nostalgic depression," marked by persistent thoughts about the past, challenges in fully participating in the present, and doubts regarding future opportunities (Volkan 231). The individual in exile frequently undergoes what sociologist Alfred Schutz refers to as "the home comer paradox" the understanding that although a physical return to the homeland may be attainable, a temporal return is unrealistic since both the place and the identity have changed during the duration of absence (Schutz 369).

Exile typically entails what psychologist Robert Lifton refers to as "traumatic severance" a painful tearing away from foundational structures that offer significance and meaning (Lifton 192). Severance leads to emotionally distressing impacts that fall along what Herman refers to as a "trauma continuum," which spans from immediate stress responses to intricate variations of post-traumatic disorder (Herman 119). For political refugees escaping persecution, this continuum frequently encompasses what mental health experts for refugees refer to as "sequential traumatization" a series of traumatic events starting with persecution in their homeland, followed by the perilous journey away from it, and extending to the difficulties of assimilating in host nations (Keilson 55).The resulting psychological profile generally encompasses what practitioners refer to as the "exile syndrome" a group of symptoms that features hyper vigilance, difficulties with sleep, intrusive thoughts, survivor guilt, and persistent anxiety even months after reaching physical safety (Eisenbruch 673). The syndrome is recognized by neuroscientists as changes in the stress response system caused by trauma that results in persistent dysregulation of the body's physiology, exhibiting both psychological and physical symptoms (Yehuda 108). Among these bodily expressions,

practitioners often note what anthropologist Kirmayer refers to as "embodied memories" the imprint of traumatic events in physical symptoms that evade verbal expression. in addition to personal reactions to trauma, exile may lead to what psychiatrist Maurice Eisenbruch described as "cultural bereavement" a deep sense of loss stemming from being removed from cultural structures that offer meaning, identity, and defined social roles. This culture-related element of trauma appears as what anthropologists term "cultural identity confusion" distrust about suitable behaviors, values, and self-presentation in the new cultural environment (DeVries 398). For exiles transitioning from individualist to collectivist societies, this confusion often includes what cross-cultural psychologists refer to as "acculturative stress" the psychological strain resulting from a clash between ingrained cultural values and the values of the new culture (Berry 708).

In spite of significant difficulties, those in exile exhibit exceptional abilities for what psychologists refer to as "posttraumatic growth" the emergence of new psychological strengths and viewpoints after experiencing trauma (Tedeschi and Calhoun 4). Such growth frequently appears in what resilience researchers describe as "stress-related growth"—the development of increased flexibility, empathy, and the ability to find meaning as a result of facing challenges (Park 73). One of the key adaptations is what anthropologist Victor Turner refers to as "liminality resilience" the ability to endure uncertainty and thrive effectively in the transitional areas between established cultural categories (Turner 128). This resilience often encompasses what psychologists refer to as "bicultural competence" the capability to adeptly manage various cultural contexts, blending elements from both while preserving psychological consistency (LaFromboise et al. 402). The cultivation of this skill encompasses what sociologists refer to as "cultural code-switching" the ability to adjust behavior, language use, and self-representation based on cultural circumstances (Molinsky 625). For numerous exiles, this adjustment results in what psychologist Ainslie describes as "cultural mourning" a

process that facilitates the integration of losses while shaping a workable identity that blends aspects of both their native and host cultures (Ainslie 287).

Chapter 2: Rethinking Exile and the Margin in *Our Sister Killjoy*

Building upon the theoretical framework established in Chapter One, which has explored Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, the Third Space theory, and Frantz Fanon's psychology of oppression, this chapter examines Ama Ata Aidoo's insightful critique of postcolonial realities in *Our Sister Killjoy*. Our analysis shifts to the complex experiences of exile and marginalization faced by Africans in Europe, the former colonizing center. Through the protagonist Sissie's critical perspective, Aidoo does not present exile as merely a pathway to opportunity but rather as a profound psychological and cultural challenge.

This chapter applies Fanon's theories of psychological colonization and internalized racism, as established in Chapter One, to analyze how Aidoo portrays the psychological dimensions of exile. Particularly relevant is Fanon's concept of "epidermalization," which describes how racism becomes ingrained in one's identity, and his analysis of colonial neurosis, which helps illuminate the psychological tensions experienced by African characters in European settings. These concepts provide valuable insight into Aidoo's representation of the dislocated African subject navigating foreign cultural and social landscapes. This chapter engages with the theories of cultural identity and liminal positioning discussed in Chapter One, examining how Aidoo employs these concepts to challenge dominant narratives about African experiences abroad. The cultural components identified in our theoretical framework including language, traditions, and shared history serve as analytical tools to understand the protagonist's resistance to cultural erasure and her assertion of an authentic African female perspective.

Through close textual analysis of *Our Sister Killjoy*, this study investigates three interconnected dimensions: exile as a form of psychological and cultural alienation, the portrayal of exile as a potential betrayal of one's homeland, and Aidoo's deliberate foregrounding of marginalized voices particularly that of the African woman. The chapter demonstrates how Aidoo radically reimagines exile not merely as geographical displacement but as a complex psychological and political condition deeply embedded within the continuing legacies of colonialism.

2. 1. Exile as Alienation in *Our Sister Killjoy*

Exile is often seen as a forced separation from one's homeland usually for political or social reasons and is typically associated with feelings of loss, nostalgia, and longing. But in the postcolonial context, exile can take a different form: self-imposed exile. This type of exile occurs when individuals from former colonies travel to the former colonial powers, often in search of education, better economic prospects, or cultural enrichment. In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Ama Ata Aidoo explores this form of self-exile not as a path to freedom or fulfillment, but as a deeply alienating experience. The novel exposes how such journeys can lead to cultural, social, and psychological disconnection rather than empowerment. Aidoo challenges the usual optimistic narratives surrounding African migration to the West stories that highlight progress and opportunity. Instead, she presents exile as a continuation of colonial dynamics, where the individual remains caught in the shadow of the former colonizer. By doing so, Aidoo reframes exile not merely as a geographical separation, but as an inner state of dislocation and confusion a condition marked by identity struggles, cultural disorientation, and existential doubt.

Sissie's initial departure for Germany on a scholarship, though framed as an opportunity, is immediately tinged with unease. The opening section "Into a Bad Dream," in

Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* sets a tone of foreboding, suggesting that this journey into the "civilized" world of the colonizers may be far from the idyllic experience often imagined by those back home. The very title of the novel, *Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint*, hints at a perspective that is inherently critical, one that sees the world fractured, and unmasking hidden realities. The narrative structure itself reinforces this sense of disorientation. The fragmented style, with its shifts between prose, poetry, and epistolary forms, mirrors the fractured experience of the exile. As Sissie boards the plane, Aidoo writes: "From the start, it was no ordinary journey" (8). This opening statement establishes that her experience will defy conventional expectations, positioning her journey as exceptional yet representative. Sissie, the titular "Our Sister," is presented not just as an individual but as a representative, her experiences connecting with her community. This immediately positions her journey in opposition to the individualistic narrative of exile that often prevails, particularly among male African exiles in the novel.

Upon arrival in Germany, Sissie's encounters highlight the pervasive cultural and racial alienation she faces and even a cultural shock. She is immediately marked by her blackness, becoming an object of fascination and orientalism. The incident on the train where a woman points her out, saying "Ja, das Schwartze Mädchen" (Aidoo12), is a potent early example. This simple phrase, translated by Sissie as "black girl," underscores her reduction to her racial identity, stripping away her individuality. She describes the people around her as having "the color of pickled pig parts" (12), a striking image that shows her shock at seeing so many white people and realizing how different she is. Instead of feeling welcomed, she feels like an outsider judged by her skin color.

The language of objectification persists throughout Sissie's European experience. In public spaces, she feels herself becoming "a sight" (Aidoo 28), reduced to a spectacle rather

than recognized as a complete human being. This persistent othering creates a psychological distance that prevents genuine connection or belonging, reinforcing her status as perpetually alien. As Aidoo reflects, "what she also came to know was that someone somewhere would always see in any kind of difference, an excuse to be mean" (13). This reveals a fundamental aspect of her alienation: the realization that difference, her very existence as a non-European, is weaponized against her, used as a justification for prejudice and exclusion. The novel shows that racism isn't just about individual acts, but part of a larger system that continues colonial thinking where Africans are seen as strange, primitive, or naturally different. This reflects what Frantz Fanon calls "epidermalization," the way racism gets under a person's skin and shapes how they see themselves. As Fanon explains, Black people may feel inferior, while white people may feel superior, and both act based on these harmful beliefs (60). Aidoo shows this process through Sissie, who moves through Europe always aware of how her Blackness is viewed. Even though she understands and resists these ideas intellectually, being constantly judged by others still leads to a deep sense of isolation what Fanon calls the psychological impact of colonialism.

The relationship with Marija Sommer, the lonely German housewife, further explores the complexities of cultural and social alienation. While Marija initially offers companionship, her perspective is steeped in Eurocentric assumptions and a veiled sense of superiority. Marija's fascination with Sissie, while seemingly friendly, is also tinged with exoticism. She initially mistakes Sissie for an Indian, revealing her tendency to lump non-European people into broad, stereotypical categories (Aidoo 19). The relationship between Marija and Sissie reflects the unequal power dynamics of colonial history. As Bhabha explains, colonial relationships are marked by "ambivalence" a mix of attraction and tension which is clear in their interaction. Marija tries eagerly to connect with Sissie, but Sissie remains distant, aware of the deeper history behind their cultural differences. Their relationship takes place mostly in

Marija's home, a space that symbolizes the order and control of European society. The "unused best room" (Aidoo 42) and the spotless, overly perfect home reflects what Fanon criticizes in colonial societies: a focus on surface order that hides emotional emptiness. Sissie compares it to a prison, where everything looks perfect but feels lifeless and confining (Aidoo 45).

Later, Sissie notes that "the captives did not know they were in prison" (Aidoo 46), suggesting that Europeans are also trapped in their own rigid systems without realizing it. Marija, though kind, cannot break free from these structures, and her friendship with Sissie is limited by the deeper inequalities shaped by colonial history. This perception contrasts sharply with Sissie's memories of home, where community and genuine connection thrive despite material poverty. The juxtaposition highlights how European "advancement" has sacrificed communalkinshipfor individual isolation a critique of the very values Africans are is supposed to aspire to in their journey to the West . Marija's attempts at sexual intimacy, which Sissie rejects, are seen by Sissie not as a genuine expression of connection but as a symptom of this alienation, a "perversion of woman love" arising from the "despair of a western-style, isolated, loveless family life" (Aidoo 64-67). This perspective, as Gay Wilentz (Gay Wilentz, a literary scholar known for her work on African and Caribbean literature,) notes, is complicated but highlights Aidoo's critique of Western societal structures as fostering isolation and dysfunction, thus challenging the notion of European cultural superiority (164). Sissie's alienation here is two-fold: she is alienated from the European cultural norms she encounters, and she is alienated from the possibility of genuine connection within this alien environment. She feels a sense of discomfort and confusion, unable to fully bridge the cultural chasm.

Language itself becomes a source of alienation for Sissie. Educated in the colonial language, English, she is expected to navigate European society using tools that feel inherently constraining. While she is fluent, the language carries the weight of colonial history. In the final section, her "love letter" to her lover who remains in exile articulates this linguistic alienation: "[How can I] give voice to my soul and still have her heard? Since so far, I have only been able to use a language that enslaved me, and therefore, the messengers of my mind always came shackled?" (Aidoo 112). This powerful image of "shackled messengers" emerges from Sissie's reflection on writing her letter in English rather than her native tongue. When she writes: "And the messengers travel down, along slippery paths, laden and fettered" (87), she transforms the act of writing into a visceral, embodied struggle. The messengers her thoughts and emotions must traverse the treacherous terrain of a foreign language, weighted down by cultural baggage and literal linguistic constraints.

The shackles represent not just difficulty but actual bondage; her most intimate thoughts are prisoners forced to move within the confines of colonial linguistic structures. As she struggles to express deeply personal sentiments about love and identity, the language itself becomes a form of constraint, transforming her natural expression into something that feels artificial and distant from her lived experience. Despite this profound alienation, Sissie chooses to write in English for reasons that reveal the complex reality of postcolonial existence. Primarily, she uses English because it has become the practical lingua franca through which she can reach her intended audience. The novel suggests this is both a pragmatic choice and a bitter reminder of colonial legacy her lover would not understand her native language, highlighting how colonialism has severed connections between Africans and their indigenous forms of expression.

Additionally, Sissie's education has been primarily in English, making her technically more proficient in writing the colonizer's language than her own, a common phenomenon Fanon identifies among the colonized intellectual elite. This creates a painful irony: her most sophisticated tool for expression is simultaneously the instrument of her alienation. This linguistic predicament embodies what George Lamming calls a "double exile, in culture and in the tongue" (qtd. in Lautre 28).

Sissie's experience goes beyond simple homesickness; it is a profound displacement from her linguistic and cultural roots. Even as she crafts articulate critiques of European culture and defends African identity, she must do so through the very medium imposed by those she criticizes. The language that enables her to communicate also constrains what she can say and how she can say it, creating a constant tension between expression and authenticity. Through Sissie's struggle, Aidoo illustrates how language itself becomes contested territory in the postcolonial experience—a necessary tool for communication that simultaneously reminds the speaker of their historical subjugation and ongoing cultural dislocation.

Throughout the text, Aidoo disrupts Standard English with Ghanaian expressions, rhythms, and structural patterns. She includes untranslated phrases and culturally specific references that resist full assimilation into European linguistic norms. This formal choice mirrors Sissie's resistance to cultural assimilation ...in order to claim her unique identity even if within the imposed Western structures. The struggle with language becomes a central metaphor for the broader struggles of the postcolonial subject negotiating between worlds, using the tools of the oppressor while attempting to maintain authentic self-expression.

Sissie's observations in England deepen her sense of alienation, particularly when she encounters other African immigrants. While she might expect solidarity, she often finds a

different kind of alienation that of her compatriots from their own roots. The poor living conditions and shabby appearance of many Africans in London, as observed by Sissie" how badly dressed they were. They were all poorly clothed"(Aidoo 88), are a stark contrast to the idealized image of the West. In one particularly remarkable scene, Sissie observes African men in a London pub, desperately trying to impress white women with fabricated stories of their importance back home. She notes,"They all claimed to be sons of chiefs the lowest rank they gave their fathers was 'paramount' who were in Europe to qualify as doctors, specialists, or whatever, before they went back home to help develop their countries." (Aidoo 90).This kind of behavior shows how exile can harm people psychologically. The men feel the need to tell grand stories about being important back home like being sons of chiefs or future doctors to make their presence in Europe seem meaningful. These stories help them hide the fact that they feel ignored and unimportant in European society. Sissie sees through their act and understands that it reflects a deeper problem: they feel disconnected from who they are and from their roots. The image of these African reveals the reality of economic marginalization within the metropole, countering the myth of Europe as a land of abundance for all.

Sissie is alienated not just by the white Europeans but by the performance of successful exile put on by some of her fellow Africans. She sees through the facade, recognizing their struggles and the sacrifices they've made, including the potential abandonment of their identity and homeland. These forces a deeper level of alienation, as she finds herself distanced even from those who share her background, due to their differing responses to exile. Ultimately, Aidoo portrays exile in *Our Sister Killjoy* as a state that, rather than offering freedom, often imposes new forms of constraint and isolation. Sissie's alienation stems from being constantly perceived as other from the cultural clash she experiences, and from the psychological burden of operating within the linguistic and ideological framework of the colonizer.

However, Aidoo presents this alienation not merely as a negative experience but as a potential catalyst for critical consciousness. Sissie's outsider status allows her to see both European and African societies with heightened clarity. Her "black-eyed squint" - Aidoo's term for the distinctive perspective of an African woman observing Western society from its margins - becomes a powerful analytical tool. This perspective, which forms the narrative core of *Our Sister Killjoy*, represents the gaze of the colonized subject turned back upon the colonizer, reversing the traditional colonial dynamic where Europe observed, categorized, and defined Africa. Through Sissie's "black-eyed squint," readers experience a deliberate inversion of the colonial gaze, as she meticulously documents and critiques European customs, values, and behaviors with the same level of scrutiny historically applied to African cultures by Western anthropologists and travelers.

This critical perspective connects directly to Fanon's concept of "nervous conditions" discussed in Chapter One, where he describes how colonized subjects develop a heightened awareness of social contradictions due to their liminal positioning between cultures. As Fanon argues, the colonial experience creates a "pathological situation" where the colonized individual becomes "an anxious observer, perpetually on guard" (Black Skin 60). This psychological state, while painful, also generates a unique form of insight. Sissie embodies this dynamic when she observes of her European hosts: "Nothing was out of place. No dust, anywhere. Ever... [A] prison where the captives looked too clean, too well-fed, and smiled too much" (45). Her observation reflects what Bhabha terms "the ambivalence of colonial discourse" - the ability to recognize contradictions that remain invisible to those fully embedded within the dominant culture.

This critical distance, theorized by Bhabha as operating in the "Third Space" where cultural meanings are negotiated and contested, ultimately leads Sissie to reject the narrative

of exile as advancement. Unlike many of her compatriots who embrace what Fanon describes as "epidermalization" - the internalization of colonial values and hierarchies - Sissie chooses to return home, viewing engagement with Ghana's challenges as more authentic and meaningful than the illusory promises of the West. Her alienation, rather than leading to assimilation or despair, becomes the foundation for her resistance and her commitment to an alternative vision of African identity and development that challenges the neocolonial structures perpetuating cultural and economic dependency.

3. 2. Exile as Betrayal in *Our Sister Killjoy*

Beyond the personal experience of alienation, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* presents a powerful critique of postcolonial self-exile as a form of betrayal. This betrayal is not merely a personal choice but a political act with tangible consequences for the newly independent nations and the communities left behind. In the context of post-independence Africa, where skilled individuals were desperately needed to build and develop their countries after decades of colonial exploitation, the decision of educated Africans to remain in the metropole is framed by Aidoo as a profound abandonment of duty and loyalty.Aidoo situates this critique within the specific historical moment of post-independence Ghana and other African nations. Having achieved political independence, these countries faced the monumental task of building functional economies, educational systems, and healthcare infrastructure while still grappling with the lasting economic and psychological damage of colonialism. In this context, the departure of educated elites those with the training and skills most needed for national development constitutes a continuation of colonial extraction, a "brain drain" that perpetuates dependency and underdevelopment.

Sissie, as the eye of her people, becomes the voice of a sharp postcolonial critique, exposing the illusions many African exiles maintain about life in Europe. Rather than sharing

a sense of solidarity with them, she is troubled by their attempts to fabricate importance and success. In one scene, she observes men in a London pub "all claiming to be sons of chiefs the lowest rank they gave their fathers was 'paramount'" and pretending to be future doctors and specialists in order to impress white women (Aidoo90). This performance, for Sissie, is not merely embarrassing it exposes the deep emotional and mental strain that exile places on her sense of self and identity. As she reflects, "They knew they were liars. And they hated themselves for it" (Aidoo91). This behavior mirrors what Frantz Fanon calls *colonial alienation syndrome*, where colonized individuals internalize the values of the colonizer and suffer a profound disconnection from their cultural roots. The exiles' attempts to construct grand narratives are a defense mechanism against marginalization, a way to give their displacement meaning.

In other way Sissie's disillusionment illustrates what Edward Said refers to as a "discontinuous state of being," in which the exile exists in a liminal psychological space detached from the homeland but never fully accepted in the new society. This fragmented condition is intensified by what your theoretical chapter terms *ambiguous loss* and *linguistic dispossession*, as Sissie struggles to find authentic self-expression within a Western world that does not fully recognizes her. Her alienation is not only from the Europeans who see her through the lens of race, but also from her fellow Africans, who, in attempting to fit into the metropole, have "turned their backs on the land of their birth and the language of their mother's songs" (Aidoo93). Through Sissie's critical perspective, Aidoo rewrites the narrative of exile not as a journey toward liberation or success, but as a site of alienation, psychological fragmentation, and cultural betrayal.

The section titled *"From Our Sister Killjoy"* opens with Sissie's reluctant journey to London, the symbolic center of the former empire. Although her trip is officially for

educational purposes, it quickly becomes a deeper reflection on the consequences of exile and the choices made by her fellow Africans. This part of the novel is shaped by Sissie's quiet observations and inner thoughts, many of which feel like messages directed back to her homeland.

As Wilentz notes, these reflections read like “a report to the ‘mothers left behind’” (Wilentz 166). This line is key because it shows that Sissie is not just thinking for herself, she is speaking on behalf of a collective experience. She takes on the role of witness, telling the truth about the emotional cost of exile and the false promises of Europe, especially for those at home who still believe in the dream of the West. Through this imagined communication, Aidoo gives voice to the silenced perspectives of African women and positions Sissie as a figure who rewrites the narrative of exile not as success or progress, but as disillusionment and cultural loss. This framing immediately establishes the communal context of Sissie's journey and highlights the perspective of those who are betrayed by the self-exiles. The mothers, sisters, and families back home, who often sacrificed immensely to send their children abroad for education, are left waiting for their return, for the promised contribution to national development.

The unanswered letters home, poignant snippets interspersed throughout the text, underscore this sense of abandonment: "There is nothing bad here... except our family is drowning in debts..." and "I am not complaining My Child. You also know we are proud that you are overseas" (Aidoo 104-05). These voices, filled with love, hardship, and a desperate hope, represent the direct recipients of the betrayal. Their pride in the "One Scholar" is tragically contrasted with the "financial and emotional hardship" they face, a burden exacerbated by the exiles' failure to return (Wilentz 168). Aidoo uses these letters to shift the perspective on exile from the individual to the collective, forcing readers to confront the

human cost of the "brain drain"(Docquier&Rapoport681). The letters reveal not just material privation but emotional wounds the rupture of family bonds and the unfulfilled expectations of communities who invested their hopes and resources in their educated sons and daughters. By privileging these voices, Aidoo reframes exile not as a personal achievement but as a communal loss and a breach of reciprocal obligation.

Sissie's confrontation with the African self-exiles, particularly Kunle and her unnamed lover, forms the core of this critique. She sees their reasons for staying in Europe as "excuses" (Aidoo 121), disguising a fundamental fear or unwillingness to face the challenges of building their nations. Frantz Fanon's concept of the "colonized mind" is highly relevant here. Fanon argues that the colonized subject may internalize the colonizer's view of the world, seeing the metropole as the "real world" and their own country as inferior or chaotic (Fanon 37). Aidoo shows how this internalized inferiority leads to a perception of the West as the only place, where one's skills are valued or where a decent life can be live, Kunle, for instance, believes that Africa's problems, like apartheid, can only be solved by Western technology and expertise, even citing the horrifying example of a white doctor using a black man's heart for a transplant without apparent moral recognition (Aidoo 97). This chilling example, filtered through Kunle's seemingly detached intellectualism, reveals the extent to which the "colonized mind" can become divorced from its own reality and humanity, prioritizing Western "advances" over indigenous dignity and life. Sissie's critique extends beyond individual examples to identify a pattern of self-justification among the exiles. They develop elaborate rationalizations for their continued absence:"The usual explanations for not returning home were not, could not be entirely honest. They were excuses... The constant talk about how the town was filthy, the people lazy, the officials corrupt, the telephone system hopeless and the water supply erratic"(Aidoo 121).These complaints about dysfunction at home become convenient shields, protecting the exiles from confronting their own

involvement. Sissie challenges this mindset directly, asking how conditions could improve if the very people with the skills to address these problems refuse to engage with them. Her question exposes the perpetual conception of the exiles they stay away because conditions are difficult, ensuring that conditions remain difficult because they stay away.

Kunle's decision to remain in England, despite his Western education, is presented as a moral failure. Sissie harshly refers to it as a "cowardly" act (Aidoo 107), a choice that reflects not only personal weakness but a deeper betrayal of community and identity. Kunle represents the archetypal "been-to" a postcolonial figure who, after traveling abroad, internalizes the values of the colonizer and distances himself from his roots. Rather than returning to help rebuild Ghana, he chooses the perceived safety and prestige of the West. This mirrors Frantz Fanon's concept of internalized racism and colonial alienation, where the colonized subject adopts the worldview of the colonizer, ultimately resulting in a rejection of their own culture and people. Fanon explains that this internalized inferiority leads to a fractured self one that no longer belongs fully to either world.

Kunle's end is a powerful metaphor for the tragic consequences of this disconnection. Sissie narrates his death in vivid terms: *"They found him at the wheel… gripping the wheel with both hands… He had burnt together with the car to his original skeleton"* (Aidoo 107). The luxury car once a symbol of achievement and Western success becomes his coffin. The image of him burned down to his "original skeleton" strips away the Western façade, exposing the spiritual emptiness beneath. As Aidoo shows, adopting Western materialism without a true sense of belonging or rootedness leads not to fulfillment, but to destruction. This aligns with Edward Said's notion of exile as a "discontinuous state of being", where the individual, caught between two worlds, finds no true home. Kunle remains physically in Europe but psychologically suspended detached from his homeland and never truly accepted

in the West. His tragic end reflects what Said calls the condition of being “out of place,” both literally and spiritually. The material success he achieved abroad fails to protect him from existential loss.

Through Kunle’s story, Aidoo critiques the illusion that Western life guarantees dignity, safety, or self-worth. She reveals instead the "neurosis of colonialism", as described by Fanon a psychological state in which both colonizer and colonized are trapped by false narratives of superiority and inferiority. Kunle’s chauffeur-driven death is not simply an accident;It symbolizes what happens to a postcolonial person who gives up their duty to their community while chasing a Western dream that was never truly meant for them. Sissie's scathing critique in *Our Sister Killjoy* dismantles the self-exiles' belief that sending money home fulfills their duty to the postcolonial homeland. She dismisses these remittances as "a paltry sum" that cannot address the systemic damage left by colonialism (Aidoo 123). This indictment challenges the common justification that financial contributions from abroad meaningfully support development.

Aidoo, through her protagonist, exposes this logic as flawed as Walter Rodeney in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* claims that remittances may alleviate immediate family hardships, they fail to build institutions, develop infrastructure, or retain the skilled labor essential for post-independence progress. The relationship created by this remittance economy dangerously mirrors colonial power structures. The exile assumes the role of benevolent provider, while those at home become dependent recipients a dynamic that replicates the paternalism of the colonial era. This aligns with Frantz Fanon's analysis of internalized colonialism, where the oppressed unconsciously perpetuate the systems that subjugate them the psychological dimension is equally damning: exiles justify their absence through monetary transactions, mistaking economic support for genuine engagement.

Sissie's observation lays bare the hypocrisy of this arrangement: *"They all swore they were staying away temporarily... Meanwhile, they lived in the heart of some of the worst slums in Europe, saved enough to send a few pounds home and further denied themselves to bring another brother over"* (Aidoo 123). Here, Aidoo highlights the cyclical nature of the betrayal. The so-called "chain migration" where one exile facilitates another's departure not only deepens dependency but also accelerates the brain drain crippling the homeland. This pattern reflects what Homi Bhabha terms mimicry, where the colonized reproduce the colonizer's logic, in this case by valuing Western survival over homeland rebuilding

Sissie's anger and frustration are palpable, particularly during the African student union meeting. She grows weary of the "beautiful radical analyses of the situation at home" (Aidoo 121) offered by the male exiles. She challenges them directly: why talk endlessly about the problems when they could be home *doing something about it*? This is the core of her "killjoy" function among them she refuses to allow them the comfort of intellectual detachment and forces them to confront the moral implications of their absence. The scene exposes a particular form of betrayal common among intellectual exiles the substitution of radical rhetoric for practical engagement. The exiles spend hours discussing Africa's problems with apparent passion and insight, yet their analyses remain academic exercises, divorced from any commitment to action.

Sissie observes: "They talked and talked until... [They] came to what in their minds were satisfactory conclusions. Then they went home to sleep, satisfied that they were activists." (Aidoo 122). This critique extends beyond the fictional characters to address the broader phenomenon of the diasporic intellectual whose radical politics rarely translates into direct engagement with home countries' struggles. Aidoo suggests that this disconnection

between rhetoric and action represents a profound betrayal of the intellectual's responsibility not just to analyze conditions but to participate in their transformation.

Therefore, the doctor who remains abroad, convinced his skills would be "wasted" in Africa epitomizes the tragic self-betrayal Aidoo exposes. His pride in "educating Europeans about African worth" strikes Sissie as the ultimate core of exile hypocrisy a performance she finds profoundly "distasteful" (Aidoo 126). This character embodies what Frantz Fanon diagnoses as the colonized intellectual's crisis: a psyche so thoroughly assimilated that it measures its own value exclusively through colonial recognition. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes:"The educated Negro… feels himself dignified like the colonialist when he proclaims that Africa can find her way only if she imitates Europe. He who is most 'Westernized' congratulates himself when his own people no longer understand him" (Fanon 18).This passage captures the doctor's pathology. His belief that his expertise only matters when validated by Western institutions mirrors Fanon's concept of epidermalization, where colonial racism becomes internalized as self-alienation (*Black Skin* 11). By locating his worth in European approval, the doctor perpetuates the very system that devalues African knowledge production.

The final "love letter" section, though addressed to one person, condemns all exiles' betrayals. Sissie writes with clear-eyed criticism, lingering love, and deep disappointment. Her lover, like other exiles, calls her "too aggressive, too outspoken, 'too serious'" (Aidoo 112), showing they prefer a comfortable exile over facing hard truths.

Aidoo makes the personal political: betrayal happens in bedrooms as much as in nations, linking emotional abandonment to historical and political injustices. Sissie's lover abandons both Ghana and her - choosing exile's comfort over building their homeland together. The letter highlights this dual betrayal:"My beloved, did I ever tell you... about the

woman with an economics PhD who begged to return home, but her foreign-educated husband refused?" (Aidoo 116). This shows how even relationships become sites of colonial mentality, where men often block women from returning. Like Fanon observed, the colonized sometimes become "the keepers of their own prisons" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 10), enforcing the exile mentality on each other.

Sissie's unsent letter becomes her ultimate act of resistance, where others make excuses, she acts - returning home despite the loneliness. As Fanon argues, true decolonization requires "absolute violence″ against these mental chains (*Wretched of the Earth* 37) the kind sister Sissie shows by rejecting exile's false comforts.

2. 3. Marginalized Voices (Subaltern Voices) in *Our Sister Killjoy:*

Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* is a significant work in postcolonial literature precisely because it centers on a voice that has historically been marginalized: the voice of the African woman. Building on the critiques of exile as alienation and betrayal, the novel's formal and thematic choices work to elevate this perspective, challenging dominant narratives that have often been white, male, or focused solely on the experiences of male intellectuals in exile.

The very title, *Our Sister Killjoy*, positions the protagonist within a communal framework. She is "Our Sister," suggesting she represents a collective identity and speaks on behalf of a community. This stands in contrast to the individualistic narratives often found in Western literature or even in the stories of the male exiles in the novel who seem primarily concerned with their own status and comfort. Sissie is presented as the "eye" of her people, tasked with observing and reporting back from the "civilized" world of the colonizers (Wilentz 160).This role imbues her perspective with a collective significance, positioning her as a crucial witness whose insights are vital for the understanding and decolonization efforts

of her community back home. Her observations are the reflections from a "black-eyed squint " a gaze that is critical, non-conformist, and capable of seeing through the illusions perpetuated by colonial discourse.

African women's voices have been doubly marginalized; silenced both by colonial discourse that portrayed them as primitive or exotic, and by patriarchal structures within their own societies. By centering Sissie's perspective, Aidoo challenges this dual erasure, insisting on the validity and power of the African woman's gaze. As Sissie notes: "Perhaps to be a woman is to be born with a special kind of eyes... Maybe with a special type of eye which sees through concrete and steel" (Aidoo 82),This passage suggests that marginalized perspectives can offer unique insights, seeing through the seemingly solid structures of power to expose hidden truths. Sissie's gender and racial identity, rather than being limitations, become sources of critical vision, allowing her to perceive realities invisible to those in more privileged positions.

Aidoo’s fragmented style in *Our Sister Killjoy* mirrors Sissie’s fractured identity as an exile. The mix of poetry, letters, and journal entries rejects Western novel structures, just as Sissie rejects colonial expectations. This isn’t just artistic experimentation, its rebellion. The poetic sections hit hardest, like when Sissie spits: "We are beginning to believe we cannot do without them" (Aidoo 128). Here, form matches message, the broken layout mirrors the broken mentality she condemns. The diary’s "Dear Reader" moments create intimacy, like we’re hearing secrets. This oral style connects to what Bhabha calls "the third space " where colonized people remake culture by mixing traditions (*Location of Culture* 38). Aidoo writes how Sissie lives: refusing to choose between Africa and Europe, instead crafting something new. The journal’s raw honesty contrasts with the exiles’ performative letters homehers are private truths, their letters are public lies.Even the love letter section weaponizes form. By framing politics as personal betrayal, Aidoo shows how exile corrupts relationships too. When

Sissie recalls the economist trapped by her husband (Aidoo 116), the diary's abrupt line breaks scream her fury louder than proper paragraphs could. This is writing as survival each fragmented piece builds Sissie's resistance. Where the exiles cling to European respectability, Aidoo's messy, mixed style declares: marginal voices won't be tamed.

The letters from families back home force us to hear neglected voices the mothers and siblings left behind. Their raw, emotional words "There is nothing bad here... except our family is drowning in debts", (Aidoo 104) expose what exiles ignore: the real human cost of their absence. Where male exiles intellectualize their choices, these letters scream in plain language about empty stomachs and broken homes.This mirrors Stuart Hall's idea that marginalized groups must "speak themselves into history" (*Cultural Identity and Diaspora* 225). Aidoo doesn't just describe the subaltern she hands them the pen. The pregnant sister "Your younger sister... is totally out of hand"(Aidoo 105), is more than just a number; she's a character arguing against the myth of progress through exile. Hall reminds us identity is built through representation here, Aidoo represents those literally written out of the exile success story. The letters also smash the illusion of linear advancement. While exiles show off about European degrees, the village collapses debts grow, girls get pregnant, elders beg for return (*Aidoo 105*).Hall's "reverse discourse" (99)in his book *Representation* helps explain this: Aidoo uses family letters to turn the idea of "development" upside down, showing it instead as a loss of culture and identity. Where Hall studied how black Britons reclaimed identity, Aidoo shows Ghanaian women taking back control of their stories, using their own voices to reveal that exile's so-called "opportunities" often bring hardship and pain to their families. For example, in Our Sister Killjoy, Sissie writes letters that expose the loneliness and cultural loss experienced abroad, while also criticizing those who abandon their roots. These letters highlight how migration can tear families' apart, showing that exile is not just about personal gain but also about difficult sacrifices and family struggles.

By including these voices, Aidoo does more than critique she rebuilds collective memory. Hall argues marginalized people "reconstruct themselves" through storytelling (*Cultural Identity 234*). These letters are raw, urgent, and used to fight against the selfish dreams of the exiles. The mothers' complaints are more than just messages they are a history told from a different, honest perspective and manifest a counter-history.

Sissie's character dismantles both Western colonial and African patriarchal stereotypes of womanhood, embodying the radical self-determination your thesis identifies as essential to true decolonization. Her education, solo travel, and political engagement reject the passive roles assigned to women in both systems. When she declares she wasn't taught *"such meekness"* to sacrifice her ideals for men (Aidoo 117), she exposes the hypocrisy of male exiles who mimic Victorian gender norms, in *Our Sister Killjoy*, some men who have moved to Europe try to make women like Sissie give up their freedom and follow old-fashioned roles. These roles don't fit with their own culture or beliefs. This shows that these men are being unfair because they hold on to old colonial ideas instead of being true to themselves. While claiming anti-colonial resistance.

Sissie refuses the *double colonialism* of adopting Western gender roles abroad while romanticizing patriarchal traditions back home. Her famous rebuke:*"*Should I have grown meeker... for daring to do what they... told the world they wanted to do?*"* (Aidoo 117), this reflects a criticism of exiles who claim to fight for change but still hold onto unfair systems. While they give in, Sissie fully rejects colonial ways of thinking, she embodies Fanon's call for *"absolute rejection"* of colonial mentalities (*Wretched of the Earth* 41).She is both a strong political voice and proudly a woman.

To sum up in *Our Sister Killjoy*, Ama Ata Aidoo not only introduces exile as physical displacement but as a painful experience of emotional and cultural estrangement. Through the experience of Sissie, Aidoo proves how away-from-home existence brings feelings of

isolation and confusion and questions the concept that exile leads to freedom or progress. Instead, exile can cause individuals to lose touch with their roots and adopt foreign values that go against their own culture. At the same time, Aidoo gives voice to those who are often unheard especially African women by allowing Sissie to speak honestly about her struggles and observations.

In doing so, Aidoo challenges colonial and patriarchal systems and reveals the hidden costs of migration. The novel offers a powerful reflection on the meaning of home, identity, and resistance.

Chapter 3: Hybrid Dilemma in Ama Ata Aidoo's O*ur Sister Killjoy*

3 . 1. Ambiguity of Hybridity in *Our Sister Killjoy*

In Ama Ata Aidoo's groundbreaking novel *Our Sister Killjoy*, the concept of hybridity emerges as a complex and ambiguous phenomenon that problematizes the postcolonial experience. As articulated in Homi Bhabha's theoretical framework, hybridity represents "the intertwining of cultures in colonial and postcolonial contexts, creating a 'third space' to negotiate, translate, and reconstruct cultural meaning and identity" (112). This third space, while theoretically offering potential for new cultural expressions and identities, manifests in Aidoo's novel as a site of profound discomfort and uncertainty for the protagonist, Sissie, who occupies the periphery of both European and African societies.

Sissie's journey to Europe positions her in what Bhabha terms the "in-between" spaces of cultural identity, where her African heritage encounters Western culture in ways that produce neither pure assimilation nor complete resistance. This hybrid position is immediately apparent when Sissie arrives in Germany. The narrator observes,"It was not only the color of her skin which made her so conspicuously a stranger in Hamburg. Her clothes were wrong for the place and the season too" (11). This description signifies more than mere physical displacement; it represents the initial manifestation of cultural hybridity that will continue to develop throughout the narrative. Sissie's physical presence her black skin in predominantly white Germany alongside her inappropriate clothing creates a visual representation of cultural displacement that positions her in Bhabha's "third space," neither fully African nor European.

Aidoo's novel significantly reconceptualizes the exilic experience by positioning the margin not merely as a space of exclusion but as a potential site of resistance and cultural affirmation. Bell Hooks articulates this potential when she writes that "marginality [is] much

more than a site of deprivation... it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (341). Sissie's marginal position as a Black African woman in Europe allows her to develop a critical perspective on both European society and the African Diaspora's relationship to the West. Rather than portraying exile solely as displacement and loss, Aidoo presents it as an opportunity for critical consciousness and eventual return. The margin becomes evident in Sissie's interactions with Germans, particularly Marija. Their relationship epitomizes what Bhabha describes as the "productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (Bhabha 112). When Marija invites Sissie into her home, the German woman's fascination with Sissie's blackness creates an uncomfortable tension: "While they drank their coffee, Marija's eyes had filled with tears as she looked at 'mein Schwester' and said that her skin was 'Schokolade'" (Aidoo 45). In this scene, Marija, a white European woman, addresses Sissie, the African protagonist, with the German phrase mein Schwester, which means "my sister." This moment reflects both a personal and racialized interaction Marija's emotional response and her comment about Sissie's skin being like "chocolate" highlight the mix of admiration, exoticization, and unconscious racial stereotyping in her perception of Sissie. This interaction demonstrates the ambivalent nature of their connection, a mixture of genuine affection and objectification that exemplifies the problematic aspects of cultural hybridity in postcolonial contexts.

In this exchange, Sissie occupies the margin between being acknowledged as human ("mein Schwester") and being exoticized as Other ("Schokolade"). Her position at the margin enables her to recognize what Edward Said describes as "Orientalism" the Western construction of the non-Western subject as exotic, primitive, and essentially different (7). The margin thus becomes a vantage point from which Sissie can analyze and critique Western perspectives on Africa.

Aidoo's portrayal of hybridity and exile diverges from more optimistic theorizations by emphasizing their psychological burden. Rather than finding emancipatory potential in the third space, Sissie experiences what Fanon describes as "a profound sense of loss from not being a white man, to the extent that the white man inflicts discrimination upon me, turns me into a colonized native, strips me of all worth and individuality" (*Black Skin* 98). This psychological dimension manifests when Sissie observes, "It is not that the African cannot get used to the ways of Europe. Rather, a lot of the time, he does not see why he should. And one of the many tragedies of our situation is that so many of our brothers and sisters do not even know that they do not see why they should" (Aidoo 115). This statement reveals her resistance to the assimilatory pressures that hybridity often entails, highlighting her awareness of what Fanon would term the "neurosis of colonialism" the psychological conflict arising from being caught between cultural worlds. Exile in *Our Sister Killjoy* is not merely geographic displacement but an internal psychological state characterized by what Gayatri Spivak terms "epistemic violence", that is to say, the colonization of consciousness that accompanies physical colonization (Spivak 281). Sissie's exile is multidimensional, encompassing both her physical displacement in Europe and her psychological alienation from aspects of her own cultural heritage. As she witnesses the cultural assimilation of fellow Africans in Europe, she experiences what might be described as an "exile within exile" – a further marginalization from those who share her geographic origins but not her critical perspective on Western cultural hegemony.

The ambiguity of hybridity extends to Sissie's encounters with fellow Africans in Europe, particularly the "been-tos" who have embraced Western lifestyles or have blended African traditionalism with western modernity. In one pivotal scene, Sissie confronts a group of African students who defend their decisions to stay in Europe:

> And our men looked away, into their drinks, into the night outside the window,

> at the legs of the Russian prostitute who had plumped herself contentedly on the knee of one of them. Besides, what could they say to a loud-mouthed sister who had no education? They had various bits of paper from the LSE, London, the Sorbonne, Harvard... (Aidoo 121).

This passage illustrates what Al Areqi describes as hybridity serving "as a tool used by the colonizer to assimilate the colonized into Western culture" (Al Areqi 53). The educated African men have internalized Western values and educational credentials as markers of superiority, creating a hybrid identity that Sissie views critically as a form of cultural betrayal. Their hybridity becomes ambiguous simultaneously representing achievement and assimilation, progress and alienation.

Aidoo radically redefines exile by presenting return as a deliberate political act. Unlike the traditional exile narrative that focuses on permanent displacement, *Our Sister Killjoy* culminates in Sissie's decision to return to Africa. As Elleke Boehmer's influential book*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* notes, "Postcolonial writing... often draws on the return journey as a way of signifying cultural reclamation and rediscovery" (Boehmer 200). Sissie's return represents not a nostalgic retreat to a pre-colonial past but a forward-looking commitment to Africa's future development outside Western perspectives. In her final letter, Sissie writes:

> My soul, we cannot live in Europe and die in Europe. It may be ridiculous to talkof going back to our ancient land. And yet, my love, under these alien northern skies, what else is there for us to do?For really, my soul, what are we doing here? What are we doing in this cold land where only to breathe is to be

> reminded that you are alive if only half-alive? What are we doing here? Even when we pretend we have come to learn (Aidoo 133).

This return is framed not as a simple resolution but as a complex acknowledgment of the unfinished work of decolonization. It exemplifies what Ngugi wa Thiong'o characterizes as "decolonizing the mind", the psychological liberation that must accompany physical independence (Ngugi 4).

The ambiguity of hybridity and the complexity of the margin appear in Sissie's own contradictory emotions about Europe. Despite her critical stance toward Western culture, she cannot help but admire certain aspects of European society. When she acknowledges the "efficiency" and "cleanliness" of German towns, there is a reluctant admiration that complicates her otherwise resistant position: "That these trains almost always run according to the timetable filled her with wonder" (Aidoo 16). This internal conflict exemplifies what Bhabha terms "ambivalence"; the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from the colonizer's culture that characterizes the hybrid subject's experience.Sissie's position at the margin is thus not static but fluctuating, embodying what Stuart Hall describes as identity formation "not as a fixed essence but as a positioning" (Hall 226). The margin becomes not simply a space of alienation but a dynamic position from which to negotiate cultural meaning. This idea connects with what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls the “inappropriate/d other” in her *book Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* which meansa person who exists both inside and outside dominant cultural systems. According to Trinh, such individuals challenge the norms of the society they live in while also being shaped by them (Trinh 65). Sissie's inappropriate/d status allows her to develop what Bell Hooks might call a "radical black subjectivity" that resists both Western domination and the uncritical assimilation demonstrated by the "been-tos" (Hooks 343).

Aidoo's story shows that hybridity is not a happy mix of cultures but a difficult mental and emotional state. This state creates what Fanon calls "colonial anxieties" and "hostile urges." In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Sissie's experience of being in between cultures leads to deep inner tension. Fanon explains that colonized people often develop confused fears sometimes directed at symbols of colonial power, and other times toward their own racial group or culture (Fanon).

Sissie's worries about being truly African, her distrust of Western ways, and her criticism of Africans who adopt Western lifestyles all come from this uncomfortable, in-between position. Her time in Europe forces her into a hybrid identity that feels unstable and painful. This confusion and tension also appear in the way the novel is written. Aidoo mixes different styles: poetry, regular storytelling, personal letters, and even stream of consciousness thoughts. The result is a hybrid structure that reflects the novel's themes such as hybridity, alienation, resistance. This creative blending of forms mirrors Sissie's mixed identity. According to Bhabha, hybridity can disrupt the idea that any culture has a single, fixed identity. Instead, it highlights movement, uncertainty, and the blurry lines that exist when cultures meet (Bhabha). So, the novel's structure mix that doesn't fully follow either Western literary rules or traditional African storytelling becomes a reflection of the hybrid identity it describes.

Postcolonial feminist scholar, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, says that books like *Our Sister Killjoy* must challenge and change how we think about politics by showing how gender connects with race, class, and sexuality (51). Aidoo does this not only through Sissie's story, but also through the novel's unique form. By rejecting typical Western ways of writing, Aidoo creates what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a "borderlands" text a piece of writing that exists in between traditional categories (25). This hybrid form forces the reader to engage with the book differently. It places them in a position similar to Sissie'son the edge, in transition, and

always negotiating meaning. The structure of the novel, just like its story, shows the challenges of living between cultures and identities.

3. 2. Character as Hybrid Subject

In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Aidoo carefully creates Sissie as a clear example of a mixed or "hybrid" character, showing the struggles, conflicts, and inner thoughts that come with a postcolonial identity. Sissie's character shows what Homi Bhabha means when he says cultural identity exists in a "confusing and uncertain space" that breaks the idea of pure, separate cultures (112). Her mixed identity comes through her education, her time living in Europe, her connections with Europeans and other Africans, and the way she sees herself changing throughout the story.From the beginning, Sissie is shown as someone with a mixed intellectual background. She goes to Germany on a scholarship, which shows she is part of Western schooling, but she still values her Ghanaian roots. This mix puts her in the kind of mental conflict that Fanon talks about the educated person from a colonized country who starts to dream of being white but also feels ashamed of their own race (93). But Aidoo changes this idea by showing Sissie as someone who refuses to fully become Western, even though she is influenced by Western learning.

Sissie's hybrid subjectivity manifests most clearly in her interpersonal relationships. Her friendship with Marija exemplifies what Bhabha terms mimicry,"the yearning for a modified, recognizable other, as a being of a difference that is nearly identical, but not entirely" (86). Marija attempts to relate to Sissie through their shared womanhood, yet continuously exoticizes her blackness:"For the German woman tried to embrace her, hold her, touch her. At first, even running her white fingers on her black skin as if she wanted to feel if it was real, it was embarrassing. It was frightening"(65).This interaction reveals the impossibility of an unproblematic cross-cultural relationship in the colonial/postcolonial context. Despite Marija's apparent affection, the relationship remains infected by what Fanon

terms "epidermalization "the way racism becomes physically ingrained "under the skin," becoming integral to the colonized individual's perception of their own body (Fanon, *Black Skin* 60). Sissie's awareness of her body as an object of fascination demonstrates her hybrid consciousness and her ability to see herself simultaneously through her own eyes and through the European gaze. So, she sees herself both from the inside (how she feels and who she is) and from the outside (how white Europeans stare at her or speak about her). This dual perspective is painful and confusing, but it also gives her critical insight. It's a key feature of what postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha calls hybridity being in-between cultures, never fully belonging to one or the other, and yet seeing both more clearly because of that position.

3. 3. Mimicry and Objectification

Sissie also shows her mixed identity through the way she uses language. Even though the novel is mostly written in English, Aidoo adds African sayings, rhythms, and ways of speaking. This connects to what Bhabha calls the way language is used in a way that stops cultures from being seen as fixed or pure (37). When Sissie talks about other Africans living in Europe, her language changes to sound more like traditional African speech:"My brothers, why are you here? Why have you come? The jobs you do, The beds you sleep in, The women you sleep with…" (Aidoo 120).This poetic and musical way of speaking shows her language is also hybridshe uses the colonizer's language (English), but adds African oral traditions and speaking styles. This mixed language use connects to what Fanon says about colonized people and language: speaking a language is not just about grammar, but also about taking on the culture and values that come with it (Fanon, *Black Skin* 17).

Sissie also shows what Fanon in *black skin white masks* calls "hostile urges" that come from the pain of colonial rule anger caused by oppression that turns inward (like self-hate) or outward (like anger at other colonized people) (Fanon). Sissie's harsh criticism of Africans who try to act Western is an example of this outward anger. She is upset with those who, in

her view, have given in to Western power:“Ah, my brothers, my brothers, what have they done to you, to us? Because, unless we see you with the clarity of our situation as history placed it before us, how shall we go ahead to plan for our tomorrow?” (132).This emotional speech shows the kind of defensive anger Fanon talks about, which happens when colonialism breaks people’s connection to their own culture and community (Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* 13).

As a person with a mixed identity, Sissie goes through what psychologists call "Cultural Identity Confusion." This means she struggles to balance her different cultural backgrounds. She feels like she has to switch between being African and fitting into Western society, which causes stress and confusion (Duran and Duran 37–9). We see this clearly when she hears a group of African students excitedly talking about European topics:

> Listening to them, Sissie had felt like crying. What had Africa done to he children?Where had she gone wrong? When? Why should young men and women who were supposed to have ‘brains’ go to foreign places and instead of learning whatever it was they were supposed to learn there, just dive into the scum of the cesspool? (Aidoo 117).

This shows Sissie’s inner struggle, she wants to stay true to African values, but she is disappointed with Africans who adopt Western ways too eagerly. At the same time, she is also part of the Western world and unsure how to define a truly African identity after colonialism.

Sissie represents what Bhabha describes as the "power of colonialism to change and move things around" (112). Her mixed identity lets her criticize both the West and Africans who accept Western rule too easily. She stands in what Bhabha calls the "third space"; a place between cultures where new meanings can be created. But unlike Bhabha’s hopeful view of

this space, Aidoo shows that for Sissie, this mix of identities feels like a heavy burden. It causes the kind of deep stress and fear that Fanon calls "colonial anxiety " the constant tension of trying to survive in a world shaped by racism and power struggles (Fanon).Aidoo uses her character as a way to explore the psychological dimensions of postcolonial identity demonstrating how hybridity can be empowering and alienating in the same time, enabling critical perspective while creating profound internal conflict. Through Sissie, Aidoo reveals the hybrid subject not as a celebratory multicultural fusion but as a contested site of psychological struggle and political resistance. Her refusal to assimilate becomes a political stance, resisting the pressure on postcolonial subjects to conform to Eurocentric standards

3.4. Language as Tool and Barrier

In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Aidoo presents language as a paradoxical element in the postcolonial experiences imultaneously functioning as a tool for expression and connection while serving as a barrier that reinforces colonial power structures. This duality reflects what Kramsch identifies as language being "the strongest marker of cultural identity" and the "principal mechanism through which individuals interact, express ideas, and transmit cultural information" (Kramsch 3). Throughout the novel, Aidoo demonstrates how language both shapes and complicates Sissie's experience of cultural hybridity and exile.

The novel's engagement with language begins with its very title *Our Sister Killjoy* which employs English words but structures them according to African naming conventions, where descriptive epithets often serve as names. This hybridized title signals Aidoo's intention to use the colonizer's language while subverting its conventional structures. This approach aligns with what Bhabha describes as the colonized subject's ability to appropriate and reconfigure colonial discourse: "even identical signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and interpreted in new ways" (37). By transforming English into a vehicle for African expression, Aidoo demonstrates the potential for language to serve as a tool for

postcolonial resistance. The novel simultaneously depicts language as a barrier that reinforces colonial hierarchies. When Sissie arrives in Germany, her limited German immediately marks her as an outsider: "Sissie spoke no German. And as she had found out, less than a quarter of the people she had met so far spoke English" (12). This linguistic isolation reflects what Fanon describes as "linguistic dispossession" the condition in which the colonial subject experiences "loss of the spontaneous, affect-laden identification with one's mother tongue and the conversion of self-expression into more pragmatic, less affect-laden communication in an acquired language" (Hoffman 107). Unable to communicate effectively in either her colonially imposed English or the local German, Sissie experiences a double alienation that restricts her ability to connect authentically with those around her.

Aidoo also shows how language can be used as a tool of colonial power by highlighting how educated Africans treat European languages as a sign of status. When Sissie meets other Africans in London, she notices how proudly they speak English, French, or Portuguese:“They spoke English or French or Portuguese, completely forgetting that these were languages that had been forced down our throats... The way they spoke them, you would have thought these were precious jewels they had spent their entire lives fashioning for their own use.” (Aidoo 87).This criticism matches Fanon’s idea that colonized people often adopt the colonizer’s language to feel accepted. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argues that colonized individuals often internalize the values of the colonizer, equating whiteness with humanity and civilization. He explains that people from the Caribbean may begin to feel “whiter” or more human the better they speak French, revealing how language becomes a tool of psychological control and racial hierarchy (Fanon 18). Aidoo criticizes Africans who are proud of speaking European languages because this shows how colonial power has been absorbed into their minds and behavior.

The novel also shows this mixed use of language in its writing style. Aidoo combines Western storytelling with African oral traditions, creating a text that is culturally “in between.” She uses poems, dramatic conversations, letters, and stream-of-consciousness writing. For example, when Sissie thinks about the African diaspora, her thoughts turn into poetry: “My soul, my own, why do you weep? Let the children of the land Go to foreign places. They will come back maybe...” (Aidoo 133) .This poetic style creates what Bhabha calls a "third space"a place where new cultural expressions can be formed (Bhabha 37). By breaking Western storytelling rules, Aidoo creates a new, hybrid way of writing that reflects Sissie’s mixed identity.

Similarly, Aidoo emphasizes the importance of language as a place of what Bhabha calls “mimicry”when colonized people try to copy the colonizer but never quite succeed. Sissie sees this when she hears Africans trying to speak with European accents:“And you wonder why, after so many years on these shores, our brothers would still not have learnt to speak with their own voices. That they could not even say ‘Water’ but must say ‘Wo-tah.’” (Aidoo 97).This copying of European speech matches what Fanon says: the colonized person tries to become like the white man by speaking like him (Fanon, *Black Skin* 19). But Aidoo shows that this mimicry doesn’t create a true European identity or keep African culture ,it just creates a confusing and incomplete mix, what described as fuzzy picture of the colonizer.

Aidoo's treatment of language extends to exploring what Fanon identifies as "narcissistic disorders" resulting from colonial oppression "inflated dreams of being white juxtaposed with intense embarrassment regarding one's racial background" (Fanon93). This psychological change appears in Sissie's observation of fellow Africans who consider their multilingualism a mark of sophistication:"Indeed, from the way they behaved, it was obvious that our young men considered it a feather in their caps that they could not remember a word of their own languages" (Aidoo 89).This forgetting of indigenous languages represents what

Fanon terms "epidermalization"the internalization of racial inferiority that leads colonized subjects to reject aspects of their cultural heritage in favor of European ways of being and speaking.

Despite these critical depictions of language as a colonial barrier, Aidoo also presents it as a potential tool for resistance and cultural reclamation. Throughout the novel, Sissie uses language to challenge colonial assumptions and articulate a distinctly African perspective.

Her final letter in the final section titled " A Love Letter ", which constitutes a significant portion of the novel, demonstrates how the colonizer's language can be reclaimed to express anti-colonial sentiments:"When I thought of the people I had met abroad and compared their voices with the voices of people living here at home, I realized that we still are capable of crying and laughing like human beings, not because we are especially blessed but simply because we have not learnt that other way." (Aidoo 156).This passage shows what Bhabha means when he talks about how colonized people can take over and reshape the language and ideas of the colonizer. Instead of copying Western ways, they can use the colonizer's language like English to criticize Western society from within. In this case, Sissie does not simply imitate Western culture; she uses English as a tool to question and challenge it.

This act of resistance through language reflects what Fanon sees as an important step in the process of decolonization. He writes that "the colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 232). In other words, Fanon believes that writers should not forget the past, but should use it to imagine and build a better future for their people. Aidoo follows this idea by using Englishnot to praise colonial powers, but to push for change and new possibilities.

Aidoo's use of language in *Our Sister Killjoy* shows how complex language can be in shaping a postcolonial identity. Language acts both as a tool and an obstacle. It helps people

express themselves, but at the same time, it can limit how they express their cultural identity. Language brings people together, yet it can also make them feel separated or disconnected from their roots. It can pull someone closer to the culture of the colonizer, encouraging them to assimilate, but it can also be used to fight back and express resistance. In this way, language shows all the contradictions that come with being a hybrid subject after colonialism someone who belongs to more than one culture at once.

By writing a story that mixes different kinds of language like English with African rhythms, poetry, and storytelling styles ,Aidoo creates what Bhabha calls a "third space." This is a space that exists between cultures, where new ideas, meanings, and identities can be explored. In this space, the challenges and confusion of using a colonial language are not just shown but questioned and transformed. Aidoo's storytelling doesn't follow the strict rules of Western writing; instead, it creates something new that reflects the mixed, in-between world of postcolonial people. Through this hybrid use of language, she makes space for new voices and new ways of understanding identity after colonialism, this version underscores how colonialism suppressed authentic expression and imposed rigid identity frameworks something the hybrid language now seeks to undo.

3.5. The Ambivalence of Return

In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Aidoo explores the idea of returning home with deep uncertainty. She looks closely at the emotional and psychological struggle that comes with going back to one's country after living in Europe. Specifically, for someone from a colonized nation, this return is not easy or peaceful. Instead, it is filled with mixed emotions. Psychologists call this feeling "cultural bereavement," which means a deep sense of loss when someone is taken away from their cultural background where they once found meaning, identity, and clear social roles (Eisenbruch 673). In the novel, Sissie's return to Ghana is not shown as a joyful

homecoming. Instead, it’s a difficult process that shows the inner conflicts of both postcolonial identity and African diaspora identity.

Bhabha’s idea of the “third space” helps us understand Sissie’s return in a deeper way. This return is not just a physical trip back to Africa. Instead, Bhabha would say it is a journey into the third spacea place where cultural differences meet, mix, and where new identities are formed (56). In this space, people can create what Bhabha calls “counter-narratives ” stories that challenge traditional ideas of the nation, breaking down fixed or idealized images of identity (300). Sissie’s return creates one of these counter-narratives. She questions both the colonial view of Africa as backward and the nationalist idea of Africa as pure and united. Her return demands that she looks critically at her homeland, rather than simply celebrate or reject it.The novel’s portrayal of return also fits with what Svetlana Boym calls “reflective nostalgia.” This is not just a longing for the past. It’s a more thoughtful kind of remembering that both honors and questions one’s memories. It brings out a mix of admiration and doubt (49–50).

This kind of nostalgia is clear when Sissie talks about how Africa looks different when viewed from Europe:"From overseas, the homeland either looks like paradise or hell. There is no middle way. Those who have been to other places and then come back bring with them yet other yardsticks of measuring the life here"(112).This quote shows how living abroad has changed Sissie’s way of seeing Ghana. She no longer sees it in simple terms, but through a lens shaped by her time in Europe. She measures it using new standards such as lingustic integrety,racial conciousness, and this creates emotional distance.Sissie’s encounters with racism in Europe, especially her reflections on being objectified and exoticized (like being called "Schokolade" by Marija), sharpen her awareness of how Africans are positioned in the global racial hierarchy. On returning to Ghana, she realizes that even in a Black-majority

society, the standards of beauty, success, and intelligence are often measured by white, European norms.

Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity helps explain Sissie's complicated return. Hall says identity is not something fixed or natural, but something built over time. It is shaped by experiences, comparisons, and the stories we tell ourselves (Hall 226). For Sissie, going back to Ghana is not about reclaiming a lost African identity. Instead, it's about finding a new position one that includes both her African roots and her European experiences. Hall reminds us that identity is always created through memory, imagination, stories, and myths (Hall 226).

Sissie's journey shows this process clearly, as she balances her past in Ghana, her life in Europe, and her hopes for Africa's future.Aidoo explores this ambivalence through Sissie's encounters with Africans who have chosen to remain in Europe. When confronting her compatriots who refuse to return home, Sissie articulates the political dimensions of return:"'Yes, I am going...And you, my brother, why don't you come away too?' An unexpected silence fell on everyone. Then gradually, the arguments they all knew so well started again. They could not go back because... Because..." (Aidoo 130)

The novel's ending marked by the unfinished phrase "Because…"emphasizes what sociologist Alfred Schutz calls the "home comer paradox." This is the idea that while someone can physically return to their homeland, they cannot truly go back in time. Both the place they left and their own identity have changed during the time they were away (369). In *Our Sister Killjoy*, the African expatriates struggle to explain why they choose to stay in Europe . Their silence or uncertainty reflects their mixed feelings about going home. These feelings come from many factors: the practical benefits of living in Europe, the mental and emotional changes they've gone through while adapting to life there, and the fear of returning to a homeland that may no longer feel familiar.

Fanon’s theories are especially useful for understanding Sissie’s emotional and psychological experience of return. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon examines how colonialism damages the minds of colonized people, often leaving them with a confused and split sense of self (82). They feel torn between the culture of the colonizer and their own traditional roots. For Fanon, part of breaking free from this damage involves returning to one's homeland not just in a physical sense, but as an act of reclaiming one’s identity and resisting colonial power.

Sissie’s choice to return to Ghana can be seen in this light. It is not just a personal decision it’s a political act. It reflects what Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth* as a key part of decolonization: the process through which the colonized person becomes fully human by fighting back and freeing themselves from colonial control. As Fanon puts it, “decolonization is truly the creation of new men,” and this transformation is not something magical,it happens through struggle and action (36).

So, Hence, Sissie’s return is more than a trip home. It is an act of self-definition and resistance. She refuses to accept the colonial idea that Europe is the center of the world and Africa is only its background. By choosing to return, she creates a new sense of self and pushes back against the mental and cultural systems left behind by colonialism.

However, Aidoo complicates this political dimension of return by acknowledging its psychological ambivalence. Throughout her journey, Sissie experiences what anthropologist Kirmayer refers to as "embodied memories" ,as she says:"the imprint of traumatic events in physical symptoms that evade verbal expression". Her physical and emotional responses to Europe her discomfort with the weather, her unease in social situations, her visceral reactions to racism create a bodily memory that will inevitably influence her experience of return.

Fanon's recognition that "the colonized's affective liability... makes him terrifying

company" (57) helps explain Sissie's sometimes extreme emotional responses, which reflect the psychological damage inflicted by colonial encounters.

This psychological complexity is evident in the novel's final section, which takes the form of a letter Sissie writes on her flight home:"My darling, finally, I am coming home... You know, we have to learn to love ourselves... To love our land . Our Africa. Not to the tune of slogans... But with our hearts... We have seen the fantastic human circus. We can afford to stay at home and rebuild"(163). This passage reveals the ambivalence of Sissie's return through its simultaneous invocation of love for Africa and acknowledgment of the continent's need for rebuilding. Her return is framed not as a retreat to an idealized homeland but as a conscious political choice to engage with Africa's complex realities after having "seen the fantastic human circus" of Europe.

Stuart Hall's concept of "articulation" proves useful here, Hall defines articulation as "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions" (141). Sissie's return represents an articulation that connects her European experiences with her African identity, creating a new political consciousness that is neither purely European nor traditionally African. This articulation allows her to develop what Hall would call a "diasporic identity" that acknowledges multiple cultural influences while maintaining a commitment to political transformation. Aidoo explores the uncertainty and mixed feelings of returning home through how the novel is structured. It ends with Sissie on a plane, flying back to Ghana. She is physically between two places Europe and Africa and emotionally between two identities. This in-between state reflects what Bhabha calls the "borderline work of culture," where the past is looked at in new ways and the present is interrupted by moments of change (7).That is, to say new and hybrid identities come to emerge between the margin and the center. He identifies as a perpetual contact between cultures where and by ending the story with Sissie still in motion, Aidoo shows that return is

not a final moment of closure. Instead, it is a continuing process, where Sissie must find balance between her past in Ghana and her experiences abroad.

Sissie also knows she is not the same person she was when she left. Her time in Europe has changed her. She now has what psychologists call “bicultural competence,” which means she can move between different cultures while staying mentally and emotionally stable (LaFromboise et al. 402). She understands both African and European ways of thinking and living, and she uses this knowledge to think critically about both. This is what Bhabha calls the “third space”a place where cultural meanings are not fixed but are constantly being questioned and reshaped. We see this in Sissie’s reflection:“We cannot tell our people that the solution to our problems is for all of us to find a way of going abroad. For those who say it, know it is not true. The problems would still be with usmagnified and complicated by distance and homesickness.” (165), This shows how Sissie can criticize both the power of Europe and the way some Africans believe leaving the continent is the only way to improve their lives. Her experience abroad gives her a new way of seeing things, which makes it difficult for her to fully reconnect with Ghanaian society and changes how she relates to her home.. Fanon calls this kind of awareness “national consciousness”a mindset that replaces colonial thinking with a deeper understanding of one’s own nation and its struggles (148).

In the end, Aidoo’s view of return matches what Bhabha calls the “right to narrate”the right to tell your own story instead of being defined by others (15). By returning home and speaking about Africa in her own words, Sissie resists colonial stereotypes and also challenges overly simple or idealized views of Africa. This act of storytelling is what Stuart Hall calls “cultural production ”the process of creating identity through memory, experience, and imagination (222).

Aidoo’s portrayal of return avoids any easy answers. She doesn’t show return as a perfect solution to the problems caused by colonialism. Instead, she presents returning home

as just another step in the ongoing struggle with cultural tension and personal transformation. Through this complex portrayal, Aidoo supports Bhabha's idea of hybridity as a powerful tool. Hybridity shows how colonial power is never complete it shifts, breaks down, and can be turned against itself. It is a way for people to challenge the dominance of colonial thinking (Bhabha 112). Sissie's decision to return is not just a personal choice. It is a political act. By choosing to return, she affirms Africa as a meaningful place to belong to even with all its problems and uses her experience in Europe to help redefine what that belonging can mean.

To conclude, Our Sister Killjoy reveals how exile deeply affects a person's sense of identity and belonging. Sissie's journey shows the emotional and psychological challenges of living between cultures she is shaped by both Western education and Ghanaian roots, yet fully accepted by neither. This in-between, or hybrid, space creates tension but also opens room for questioning and resistance. Ama Ata Aidoo uses the idea of the margin not as a place of weakness, but as a powerful space where the excluded can speak, reflect, and push back against dominant systems. Through Sissie's voice and fragmented storytelling, Aidoo rewrites the meaning of exile and marginality, showing them as complex experiences that reveal the struggles and strength of postcolonial identity.

Conclusion

Our Sister Killjoy as the central text for this study is deliberate, as the novel powerfully embodies the main themes explored in this research: exile, marginality, identity, and resistance. Ama Ata Aidoo does not present exile as a journey of renewal or simple relocation; instead, she exposes its emotional cost, psychological impact, and the cultural disconnection it creates. Through the character of Sissie, the novel explores how being caught between two worlds home and abroad leads to a fragmented sense of self. Aidoo also reclaims the margin, often seen as a place of silence or weakness, and turns it into a space of reflection, critique, and resistance. The novel's structure, voice, and political insight make it an ideal work for analyzing how postcolonial literature can challenge dominant narratives and rewrite the meanings of exile and identity.

The dissertation employs a critical reading approach to explore how exile and marginality shape identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy. The study aims to show that exile is not merely a journey or status, but a deeply conflicted and political condition that disrupts identity, challenges belonging, and creates space for resistance.

The first chapter lays the theoretical foundation by drawing on the ideas of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Frantz Fanon. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and the "third space" helps explain how postcolonial subjects like Sissie exist in a constant state of cultural negotiation. Hall's theory of cultural identity and limited positioning adds depth to understanding how identity is not fixed but formed through historical and cultural shifts. Fanon's analysis of the colonized psyche and the psychological effects of oppression and exile is central to grasping the inner conflicts Sissie faces, including alienation, self-doubt, and resistance. Together, these thinkers provide tools for interpreting the complex emotions and contradictions in the novel.

The second chapter, titled Rethinking Exile and Margin, applies this theoretical lens to Aidoo's portrayal of exile. Exile is analyzed in three dimensions: as alienation, betrayal, and marginalization. The novel reveals how exile cuts the individual off from both homeland and host society, producing emotional isolation and cultural confusion. At the same time, it critiques those who betray their communities by adopting Western ideals uncritically. The chapter also highlights how Aidoo amplifies subaltern voices, especially those of African women, turning the margin into a site of critical reflection and resistance, rather than weakness. This supports the claim that Aidoo rewrites the meanings of exile and marginality from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

In last chapter titled the Hybrid Dilemma, focuses on the ambiguity of hybrid identity in the novel. It explores how Sissie is a hybrid subject, shaped by both Ghanaian and European influences, yet fully accepted by neither. Her position is marked by discomfort and resistance, not harmony. The chapter examines mimicry and objectification, where exiles perform European norms while being reduced to racialized objects. It also analyzes language as both a tool of expression and a barrier to authenticity, reflecting Sissie's struggle to speak with her own voice. Finally, the chapter discusses the ambivalence of returnSissie's realization that going back to Ghana does not offer a simple solution, but a new phase in the struggle for identity.

The findings confirm the hypothesis that exile produces not only fractured identities, but also critical consciousness. Across all three chapters, the dissertation shows how Aidoo uses form, character, and language to challenge colonial legacies and rethink what it means to belong. The critical reading approach, grounded in postcolonial theory, demonstrates that Our Sister Killjoy is not just a story of exileit is a powerful critique of cultural dislocation, hybrid identity, and the politics of marginality.

The analysis of Our Sister Killjoy confirms the core aims of this study by revealing how exile is not simply the act of leaving one's homeland, but a deeper crisis involving identity loss, alienation, and psychological displacement. Through Sissie's voice and experiences, Aidoo illustrates how the margin often seen as a place of weakness or exclusion can become a powerful site of reflection and resistance. The study also highlights the emotional cost of Western education and success, particularly for African women, challenging the assumption that exile brings liberation. Instead, it portrays exile as a state of inner fragmentation. Aidoo's work gives voice to those pushed to the margins and critiques the colonial and neocolonial systems that silence them. In doing so, The novel fulfills the dissertation's objective to rethink exile not only as a political reality, but as a psychological and cultural struggle, while also offering new ways to understand identity, belonging, and postcolonial resistance.

In conclusion, Aidoo's groundbreaking work, therefore, transcends a simple narrative of geographical displacement; it functions as an urgent call for comprehensive psychological and cultural liberation, powerfully emphasizing that true agency and authentic identity for the postcolonial subject are forged not through mimicry or intellectual detachment, but through sustained critical engagement, unwavering resistance, and a conscious, albeit inherently complex and ongoing, process of re-rooting and self-definition.

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Resumé

Cette thèse examine les thèmes de l'exil, de la marginalité et de l'identité dans le roman d'Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy : Or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* (1977) d'Ama Ata Aidoo, en se concentrant sur la façon dont le roman redéfinit l'exil en se concentrant sur les expériences des Africains tout en critiquant le néocolonialisme, en réclamant la marge comme un site de résistance et en remettant en question les récits d'exil dominants et Eurocentriques. L'objectif principal de cette recherche est d'explorer comment l'exil ne consiste pas seulement à quitter son pays, mais aussi à se perdre soi-même, et de fournir une compréhension profonde des conséquences psychologiques de l'exil et de l'aliénation. L'étude a adopté l'hybridité et le troisième espace de Homi Bhabha, la psychologie de l'oppression et la psyché colonisée de Frantz Fanon, ainsi que les idées de Stuart Hall sur l'identité culturelle et la diaspora. Dans un premier temps, l'étude actuelle explore les concepts d'hybridité et d'identité culturelle et discute de l'impact psychologique de l'exil. Le deuxième chapitre se concentre sur la façon dont le séjour de Sissie en Europe crée une déconnexion émotionnelle et culturelle, ainsi qu'un sentiment d'impuissance. Le dernier chapitre enquête l'ambiguïté de l'hybridité, critique le mimétisme et la perte de la langue. Finalement, cette recherche révèle qu'Aidoo repense l'exil dans une optique post-coloniale, le décrivant comme une dislocation culturelle et une lutte psychologique. En outre, l'identité hybride de Sissie devient un lieu de négociation.

Mots clés : Exil, marginalité, eurocentrisme, aliénation, hybridité, troisième espace, psyché colonisée, identité culturelle, mimétisme.

الملخص

تبحث هذه الأطروحة في موضوعات المنفى والهامش والهوية في رواية *اختنا قاتلة البهجة* ل آما آتا ايدو : أو تأملات من حولاء سوداء العينين (1977) مع التركيز على كيفية إعادة تعريف الرواية للمنفى من خلال التركيز على تجارب الأفارقة مع نقد الاستعمار الجديد. واستعادة الهامش كموقع للمقاومة و تحدي سرديات المنفى السائدة والمركزية. الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو استكشاف كيف أن المنفى لا يتعلق فقط بمغادرة الوطن بل بفقدان الذات و تقديم فهم عميق للعواقب النفسية للمنفى والاغتراب. وفد اعتمدت الدراسة على نظريات هومي يهابها في الهجانة والفضاء الثالث. وسيكولوجية القهر والنفسية المستعمرة ل فرانتز فانون وأفكار ستيوارت هول حول الهوية الثقافية والشتات.في البداية استكشفت الدراسة الحالية مفهوم التهجين والهوية الثقافية و الشتات ومناقشة التأثير النفسي للمنفى.بينما يركز الفصل الثاني على كيف أن الفترة التي قضتها سيسي في أوروبا تخلق انفصالا عاطفيا وثقافيا وكيف ان المنفى هو الذي خلق هذا الانفصال.أما الفصل الأخير فيفحص غموض التهجين وينتقد المحاكاة وفقدان اللغة. يكشف هذا البحث آن آ يدو تقدم المنفى من خلال عدسة ما بعد الاستعمار.وتصوره على انه انفصال ثقافي وصراع نفسي كما تصبح هوية سيسي الهجينة موقعا للتفاوض.

الكلمات الدالة: المنفى. الهامشية. المركزية الأوروبية. الاغتراب. التهجين. الفضاء الثالث. النفسية المستعمرة. الهوية الثقافية. المحاكاة.