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**The Representation of the Elites in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977): a
Comparative Study**

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Dedications

I dedicate this dissertation to the cherished memory of my mother, who continues to be my source of motivation even in her absence. To my beloved sisters, and my little nephew Aylane, whose presence brings joy to my life. To my father and grandmother, for their enduring support and love. And to all my friends, relatives and my binomial Lydia for their constant encouragement and belief in me.

Idir

To my father, whose strength, support, and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today. To my mother, whose endless love, patience, and sacrifices have been my constant source of comfort and wisdom. To my sisters Nedjma, Siham, Mounia and my brother Khaled, who have been my best friends and greatest allies. To my grandmother, whose prayers and warmth have been a light in my life. To my extended friends, relatives and my binomial Idir for their encouragement and having faith in me.

Lydia

Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative study between Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). The aim of this research is to discuss the representation of the African elites in both narratives in terms of political corruption and cultural alienation. The subsequent chapters of our discussion have relied on Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory, mainly in the chapter 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' from his book entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and the concept of 'Cultural alienation' from his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). The basic findings of our investigation reveal in the first chapter that the integrity of African elites was compromised by political corruption involving bribery, which undermines public trust and governance. In the second chapter their identity was significantly influenced by cultural alienation by aligning with Western norms, reinforcing foreign dominance and intensifying challenges in post-colonial societies. Furthermore, these phenomena contributed to the perpetuation of neo-colonialism, intensifying the challenges faced by post-colonial societies.

Key words: African Elites – Corruption – Cultural Alienation- Cultural Assimilation - Identity- National Bourgeoisie - National Consciousness - Neo-colonialism – Post-colonial era.

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I. Introduction

For numerous years, African countries faced the harsh control of colonial powers, a period that laid the foundation for what would later be known as neo-colonialism. This term as defined in Cambridge dictionary, is a form of indirect control where former colonial powers or other dominant nations maintain influence over less powerful nations. This, often through economic exploitation; such as resource extraction by multinational corporations and political manipulation as policy imposition.

In the same context, both Nigeria and Ghana experienced colonialism under British rule, enduring the imposition of governance, economic policies, and cultural norms that shaped their development. After gaining independence, both nations faced neo-colonial influences, including economic exploitation, political interference, and cultural dominance. These dynamics hindered their development efforts, perpetuating patterns of dependency and inequality inherited from the colonial era. Despite their independence, the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism continues to shape their socio-economic and political landscapes.

Therefore, many African writers were influenced by the socio-political realities of post-colonial Africa which included the pervasive influence of neo-colonialism, among them Chinua Achebe and Ama Ata Aidoo. Their experiences living in and observing the complexities of post-colonial societies likely prompted them to explore and critique the ongoing dynamics of power and influence in their respective works. Additionally, both authors were committed to addressing issues of social justice, equality, and the quest for genuine independence in African nations. Their writings can be seen as a response to the ongoing challenges faced by African societies in asserting their sovereignty and achieving true liberation from colonial legacies.

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) are seminal works of post-colonial African literature that offer profound insights into the challenges confronting African elites in the aftermath of colonialism reflecting the enduring influence of neo-colonialism. The comparison of these two selected literary works will reveal the real image of intellectuals in post-colonial Africa.

Our research was driven by a keen interest in exploring works that address similar contemporary issues. Eventhough the novelists belong to different backgrounds and generations, both Achebe and Aidoo deal with the same issues like political corruption and cultural alienation. Their works vividly portray the challenges faced by elites and their struggle to overcome their obstacles.

1- Review of Literature

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), are two African pieces of literature that have been analyzed from diverse perspectives by critics worldwide, underscoring their significance in postcolonial discourse. These works provide a deep examination of the effects of colonial legacies and contemporary challenges on African societies.

To start with, the article entitled '*Moral Decadence in Chinua Achebe's 'No Longer at Ease'*' by Mr.Vaibhav Sunil Bhalerao which attends to explore the results of moral decadence on individuals within Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease*. The critic highlights the role of morality in the development of economy arguing how Obi Okonkwo embodies the repercussions of moral decay. First, he was an uncorrupted man refusing to succumb to bribery and then he encounters a series of tragic events, driving him to accept bribes. In fact: "Moral decadence is evident when people feel helpless on every front of their life"(p.81). He

explains how Achebe portrays the devastating effects of moral decadence on individuals and how it conducts the protagonist into tragedy aiming to prevent the humanity from the decline of morality by claiming:

Chinua Achebe successfully portrayed how moral decadence can disturb individual, family and society. Sometimes lack of our inner strength and indecisiveness are the reasons of tragedy and not the outer circumstances alone. The protagonist Obi and the fate he encounters due to his moral decadence stand as a warning for entire human race which degrades morality and crown (p.81).

As still another piece of criticism of Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, in the article entitled '*Education as an Ideological Instrument: A Postcolonial Reading of Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease*' published in *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* (2012). The two critics, Seyed Mohammad Mrarandi and Reyhane Sadat Shadpour assert how the colonizer uses education as powerful ideology to control nations and alienate the colonized from their native identity. They argue that Achebe in *No Longer at Ease* illustrates how the West motivates Africans, to study in their hegemonic schools and infuse their principles in their minds, through Obi after his study in England who becomes assimilated to European values and alienated from his own, leading to his struggles when grappling with the complexities of Nigerian society after his return. They add that: "Achebe believes that to fight against this hegemony Africans should have their own education system and cultivate their own values" (pp.938-944).

Like Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Our Sister Killjoy* has been the focus of numerous critiques. In the article '*African encounter with the West, On European soil in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy*' (2019) written by B. Tamiselvi, focuses on the African encounter with the West; exploring the challenges they faced in Europe through the 'eye' of the protagonist Sissie, her experiences, encounters, and reflections as she navigates there. At the same time, this critique highlights the issues of racism, colonial legacy, and the struggle for African identity including gender role, while also critiquing the hypocrisy of the African

elite and the exile dilemma. He asserts “the desire to lose oneself in the [European] world was understandable: “a naive faith that this is the way to escape the feeling of exile”. Similar to the study emphasized on African self-exiles, Gay Wilentz in her paper ‘*The politics of Exile: Ama Ata Aidoo’s Our Sister Killjoy*’ (1991) analyzes Aidoo’s challenges with the view of exile as liberation and her questioning for ‘the supposed superiority of the European culture for the colonial subject’.

Another reviewers’ criticism is that of Dr. Ibraheem N.A. Tagaddeen and Ms. Aisha Al-Matari treating *Our Sister Killjoy* in their article ‘*Counter-Discursive Strategies in Postcolonial African Novel: Revisiting the Peripheries in Ama Ata Aidoo’s Our Sister Killjoy*’(2010). It offers an analysis of the novel’s counter-discursive strategies within the postcolonial African context, with studying the racial stereotypes that have been spread through history. They argue that: “colonial discourse along with colonial representation have created and perpetuated stereotypes about the colonized people throughout the course of history”. The critics take the novel as an example of how writers resist colonialist narratives as Aidoo does.

2- Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the above review of the literature, it is clear that Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) have received a large amount of criticism; however, we believe that no work had so far been interested in the study of both novels in the light of the two suggested theories. Frantz Fanon’s concept of ‘National Bourgeoisie’ and ‘Cultural Alienation’ taken from his books; *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* that this dissertation relies on. Our task in the present dissertation is mainly to present and explore the shared aspects in both novels and their use by the two authors.

It is worth mentioning that our hypothesis in the dissertation consists of showing the possible affinities and divergences existing between Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). Despite the fact that the two novels were not written in the same period, potential resemblance come to exist since the authors belong to countries that had been under the colonial domination. This comparative study is interested first, in exploring the issue of political corruption among the African elites. Second, we ought also to examine the issue of cultural alienation of the African intellectuals in post-colonial Nigeria and Ghana.

To sustain our analysis, we rely on Fanon's theory for its relevance to our study. In fact, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) deal with the corruption of the national bourgeoisie and its cultural alienation. Therefore, it remains our task to contribute to this gap through our investigation about the representation of the elites in both novels.

3- Methodological Outline

This dissertation is written following the IMRAD method. The work starts with an introduction in which the problematic is identified. It is followed by brief overview of the literature conducted on the two novels. The second section will be devoted to methods and materials. In the methods section, we will borrow the concept of 'National Bourgeoisie' from Frantz Fanon's chapter 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' developed in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and the concept of 'Cultural Alienation' provided in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). The materials section compromises the synopses of the novels, biography of the two authors, and then we deal with a historical background of the novels. In the results section, we emphasize on the findings we have reached. The discussion section will be divided into two main chapters. The first part treats the issue of political corruption of the

African elites in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). The second chapter discusses the cultural alienation of the elites in the novels. This piece of research will be closed with a conclusion that restates the issues under discussion and the major findings of the work. It also open new research perspectives.

II. Methods and Materials

1- Methods

In order to achieve the purpose of this dissertation, we will rely on the works of Frantz Fanon, a West Indian French psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary, and writer from Martinique. He is best known for his works on the psychology of the oppressed, social and cultural consequences of decolonization. Fanon's seminal works explore the dehumanizing effects of colonization and advocate for the liberation of colonized people through revolutionary struggle using violence. His ideas have significantly influenced post-colonial studies, critical theory, and Marxism. We will borrow from his books entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Therefore, we only focus on the concepts of relevance for our work, namely 'National Bourgeoisie' for the need of the first chapter, and 'Cultural Alienation' for the need of the second chapter.

a- Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1961)

Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), is a seminal work that addresses the complex issues of colonization, decolonization, and the psychological and social impacts of these processes on both the colonized and the colonizers. Published in 1961, the book draws on Fanon's experiences as a psychiatrist and revolutionary in Algerian war of independence from France.

To analyse the political corruption of the African elites for the first chapter of our dissertation, we will draw on Fanon's chapter '*The Pitfalls of National Consciousness*' from *The Wretched of the Earth* where he critiques the post-independence path of newly liberated nations, highlighting the emergence of the 'national bourgeoisie' that seeks to replace colonial rulers without making fundamental social and economic reforms. This national middle class prioritizes its own interests, perpetuating exploitation and maintaining economic dependence on former colonial powers. Fanon (1961) advocates that this class mimics colonial behaviours and values, leading to political corruption, authoritarianism, and stagnation, which hinder true liberation and the revolutionary spirit. He argues that: "After independence this underdeveloped middle class, reduced in numbers and without capital, which refuses to follow the path of revolution, will fall into deplorable stagnation."(p.151). Instead of promoting authentic independence and development, these nations risk replicating the oppressive structures of colonial rule.

b- Frantz Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks (1952)

To emphasize the cultural alienation of the African elites in our two primary sources, we will count on *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) where Frantz Fanon delves into the psychological effects of colonialism and racism on Black individuals, emphasizing the experience of alienation within colonized societies. He claims:

I should like to say something that I have found in many other writers: Intellectual alienation is a creation of middle-class society. What I call middleclass society is any society that becomes rigidified in predetermined forms, forbidding all evolution, all gains, all progress, all discovery. I call middle-class a closed society in which life has no taste, in which the air is tainted, in which ideas and men are corrupt (p.224).

Fanon examines how the colonial encounter shapes the psyche, leading to internalized oppression, feelings of inferiority, and a profound sense of alienation from one's own identity. He discusses the mechanisms of assimilation and mimicry adopted by the colonized as addressing strategies in response to this alienation. Ultimately, he underscores the potential

for liberation through reclaiming authentic identity and participating in collective struggle against colonial oppression as means to overcome alienation and achieve true emancipation.

2- Materials

a. Biography of Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe also known as Albert Chinualumogu Achebe, born in 1930, in Ogidi, Nigeria and died in 2013, in Boston, U.S.A is a Nigerian novelist, poet, professor and critic. After studying English and literature at University College (the University of Ibadan nowadays), Achebe taught for a short time before joining the staff of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in Lagos.

Chinua Achebe is Africa's most successful novelist belonging to the first generation of African writers, best known for his seminal work "The African Trilogy" which consists of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964). He wins the Nigerian national trophy for the second work *No Longer at Ease* (1960) in which he portrays corruption in Nigerian society, attributing to its various factors like the colonial legacy, corporate power, and local business elites. He believed that corruption in Africa was a result of a failure of leadership. Followed by other works such as; *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987).

Achebe's works examine the impact of British imperialism on Nigerian traditions, highlighting how colonial legacies contribute to the corruption and alienation of the African elite. He explores how these elite figures, shaped by colonial influences; grapple with the tensions between traditional values and their own self-serving interests in the post-colonial era.

b. Biography of Ama Ata Aidoo

Ama Ata Aidoo or Christina Ama Ata Aidoo is a Ghanaian author, poet, playwright and educator born on March 23, 1942 in Aboadzi Kyiakor, near Saltpond, Gold Coast (now Ghana). She belongs to the first generation of African woman fiction writers that published in English. She was considered one of the most influential African writers of her generation having produced works focusing on themes such as gender role, culture, identity, black Diaspora, colonialism and the struggles of post-colonialism.

Aidoo's literary journey began at the age of 15 when she started writing. She attended the University of Ghana, where she majored in English literature. After her time at the University which marked the beginning of her writing career; she wrote her first play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* published in 1965 which established her reputation as a significant literary voice in Africa.

Aidoo's works including the classic *Our Sister Killjoy* or *Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint* published in 1977 is a powerful critique of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa where she portrays the complex experiences of the Africans abroad, emphasizing the importance of preserving African heritage and resisting the allure of Western ideologies. These literary works solidifies Aidoo's position as a nationalist, where she often champions African culture and identity. Ama Ata Aidoo passed away on May 31, 2023.

c. Synopsis of No Longer at Ease (1960)

No longer at ease is set in Nigeria in the late 1950's. Most of the actions occur in the capital Lagos. The novel opens with Obi Okonkwo's trial for bribery. Obi receives a scholarship as a loan from the Umofia Progressive Union (a group of Igbo men from the village of Umofia), to study Law in England expecting him to pay back the money in the next

several years once he shifts for an English degree. At a dance in England, Obi meets Clara and gets to know her a little more on the boat back to Nigeria.

At his arrival to Nigeria, Obi gets a job in the civil-service with the scholarship board. He is a man of ethics and duty who wants to stop corruption in Nigeria; while his kinsmen gain power through corruption and bribery which makes him feel alienated from his community. Later in the narrative, Obi makes a marriage proposal to his girlfriend who refuses since she is an Osu(a member of a sacred Igbo caste considered unmarriageable for anyone outside their caste). Obi encounters many financial problems as he should pay back his scholarship loan and other charges. Moreover, his struggle against Ibo traditions to marry Clara leads to their breakup. His friend Christopher advises him for a Doctor to abort their unborn, followed by the death of his mother.

These events influenced Obi's psychic state and as he is not able to manage his financial situation, he succumbs to bribery and pays off all his debts. Since corruption opposes his principles and values, he decides to stop taking bribes. When he takes his last bribe, Obi is arrested. Thus, the narrative concludes going back to the beginning of the novel.

d. Synopsis of *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977)

Our Sister Killjoy or *Reflection from a Black-Eyed Squint* written by the Ghanaian novelist Ama Ata Aidoo, published in 1977. The narrative is a combination between verse and prose. It tells the story of a young Ghanaian student named Sissie, awarded a scholarship to travel to Europe and better herself with western education.

The novel is presented in four sections. The first one entitled *Into a Bad Dream* where Sissie meets Sammy, the assimilated elite before arriving to Germany. The second section is *The Plums* tells the love relation between Sissie and a German housewife. *From Our Sister*

killjoy is the third section where the protagonist travels to London and encounters other Africans such as Kunle. Whereas, the last section is *A Love Letter* written as political letter from Sissie to her lover who decides to remain in exile, trying to convince him to go back home for the sake of serving the interest of his country, and instead of posting the letter, she decides to return home and tell the story to her people.

Through her journey, *Our Sister* provides a critical examination of her encounters. She is shocked of how the minds of the African elites are reshaped by western ideologies and thoughts, contrary to her who seems to be aware of the impact of Western Education. Moreover, Sissie draws conclusions about how the African Diaspora succumbs to political corruption and become alienated from their native culture. She reveals a big fact which is the existence of neo-colonialism, in particular colonization of the mind in post-independent area.

e. Historical Background of *No Longer at Ease* (1960)

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* is set in the mid-20th century, a pivotal period during British colonial rule in Nigeria and the nation's transition to independence in 1960. Colonized by the British in the late 19th century, Nigeria was fully integrated into the British Empire by the early 20th century. Published in 1960, the year Nigeria gained independence; the novel explores the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by its protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, upon his return to Nigeria after studying in England.

During this time Nigeria was undergoing significant socio-political changes. The country was transitioning from colonial rule to self-governance, with growing nationalist movements advocating for independence. The legacy of colonialism, characterized by exploitation, cultural imposition, and administrative corruption still influences Nigerian society today.

Obi's character embodies the tensions of this era; educated in the west, he grapples with the clash between traditional Nigerian values and Western influences. His experiences reflect the broader challenges faced by a generation caught between two worlds, navigating the complexities of cultural identity and societal expectations and the moral destruction colonialism had on Igbo society and culture.

In Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, the clash between traditional African culture and Western colonial influence is vividly depicted, a theme accentuated by Nigeria's imminent independence in the late 1950s. The novel also addresses the pervasive corruption that infiltrated Nigerian society due to colonialism. Under British rule, Nigeria's social and political structures were disrupted, leading to the erosion of indigenous cultures and values as new systems of governance, education, and Christianity were enforced.

The story captures the tensions faced by Nigerians as they navigate a society undergoing rapid transformation. The historical context reflects the clash between Western education and traditional African values, illustrating the broader struggle of integrating these divergent influences. The narrative delves into the pervasive issues of bribery and corruption that have infiltrated the civil service, shedding light on the difficulties encountered by individuals striving to reconcile their ideals with the entrenched systems of their time. As part of the post-colonial literature movement, this novel emerges as a response to colonial rule.

Nigerian writers like Achebe used the English language to convey their experiences, giving rise to a distinct African literary tradition. Achebe blends historical realism with literary narrative, offering a profound exploration of Nigerian identity and the lasting effects of colonialism. Drawing from his upbringing in colonial Nigeria, Achebe provides a nuanced portrayal of the historical context. Through Obi's journey and encounters with various

characters, the author critiques the colonial legacy and its impact on post-colonial Nigerian society.

Overall, the historical context of *No Longer at Ease* is crucial for understanding its exploration of themes such as cultural identity, corruption, and the impact of colonialism on Nigerian society. Achebe's portrayal of the colonial experience and its aftermath continues to resonate with readers today. *No longer at ease* serves as a powerful commentary on the complexities of Nigerian society during this pivotal moment in its history, as the country transitioned from colonial rule to independence.

f. Historical Background of *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977)

In the context of mid-20th century Ghana, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) captures a period defined by the country's transition from British colonial rule to independence in 1957 and the subsequent post-colonial challenges. Ghana, known as the Gold Coast during colonial times, was colonized by the British in the late 19th century and was among the first African nations to achieve independence, led by the prominent nationalist leader Kwame Nkrumah. Published in 1977, two decades after Ghana gained independence, the novel is published to delve into the complex experiences and identity struggles of its protagonist Sissie, during her travels in Europe.

During the time of its independence, Ghana was at the forefront of African nationalist movements. The country experienced a surge of hope and high expectations as it transitioned from colonial rule to self-governance. However, the legacy of colonialism, characterized by economic exploitation, cultural imposition, and political instability, continued to influence Ghanaian society.

Our Sister Killjoy highlights the clash between African values and Western influences in post-independent Ghana between the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, many Africans faced a

widespread feeling of cultural disconnection and identity crisis when traveling abroad. In the novel, Sissie serves as a symbol of the educated African elite who criticizes the Africans torn between their Ghanaian heritage and the Western lifestyle they encounter in Europe, illustrating the struggles faced as they confront the legacy of colonialism and navigate the complexities of building a national identity.

To elucidate further, in the novel Aidoo critiques the lasting impacts of colonialism on Ghanaian society and the disillusionment resulting from neocolonial influences. Through Sissie's eyes, her character epitomizes the tensions of her time as she confronts the sharp disparities between European life and the complexities of post-colonial Ghana. Her encounters mirror the broader challenges confronted by a generation navigating the intricacies of cultural identity and societal norms in the aftermath of colonialism.

As part of the post-colonial literature movement, *Our Sister Killjoy* emerges as a response to the colonial experience and its aftermath. African writers like Aidoo utilize the English language to convey their experiences, giving rise to a distinct African literary tradition. Aidoo offers a profound exploration of Ghanaian and African identity with the lasting effects of colonialism. Drawing from her upbringing in colonial and post-colonial Ghana, Aidoo provides a nuanced portrayal of the historical context. Through Sissie's journey and encounters, the author critiques the colonial legacy and its impact on post-colonial Ghanaian society.

Understanding *Our Sister Killjoy* by Ama Ata Aidoo requires considering the realities of post-independent Africa. The novel delves into themes such as power dynamics, cultural identity, displacement, and the lasting impact of colonialism on Ghana. Aidoo uses characters and stories to describe life during this pivotal period, when Ghana transitioned from foreign rule to the neo-colonial system. The novel highlights the challenges Ghana faced in defining its identity and overcoming the legacies of colonialism. It is a powerful reminder of the

ongoing struggle Ghana endured to find its own identity and the lasting impact of colonialism on the country.

g. Definition of the African Elites

The term "African elite" refers to a small, influential group of individuals within African societies who hold significant social, economic, or political power. This group often consists of high-ranking officials, business leaders, academics, and other prominent figures who have substantial influence and access to resources. The African elite typically enjoy higher standards of living compared to the general population and play a key role in shaping policies, economic strategies, and cultural norms within their countries.

h. Definition of Political Corruption

Political corruption is the abuse of public power for private gain, involving unethical or illegal actions by government officials. In his chapter 'Political Corruption in Africa' from the book entitled *Policing Corruption: An International Perspectives*, Sarre, et al., (2005) affirm that political corruption is the engagement and the use of power by politicians and government officials taking advantage of their position for illegal operations and illegitimate gain. It involves the misuse of public authority and power for personal or private benefits through different forms of corruption; such as receiving bribes in "lieu of fair competition or a quid pro quo"(p.99). In another definition, political corruption is not only a deviation from formal and written legal forms from professional codes of ethics and court ruling, political corruption is also when rulers abuse, ignore or tailor laws and regulations systematically to fit their interest .(Amundsen, 1999, p.3)

In relation to the African post-colonial context, colonialism played a consequential role in institutionalizing political corruption in Africa: "By the nature process, and structure of colonization and colonial administration from 1800-1970, political corruption was made

inevitable in Africa’’ (Sarre, 2005, p.101). This influence also manifests in exporting the core principles of corruption discourse, which can be viewed as a form of cultural imperialism that reinforces existing power imbalances, as Napo Claudius Khasoane claims in his book entitled *CORRUPTION AND PATRONAGE IN POST-COLONIAL SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: AN AFROCENTRIC ETHICAL CRITIQUE* (2019):

The neo-colonialism traces in corruption interventions led by the Western countries in the region have become overt in the imposition of anti-corruption approaches and stratagems. Western countries have also exported their key tenets of corruption discourse to sub-Saharan Africa. (p.51)

In the same context, the returning Africans who have studied abroad, known as ‘been-tos’. According to oxford dictionaries a ‘been-to’ is a person who returns to his home in Africa after studying abroad and facing challenges reintegrating into his native culture. Their exposure to different moral beliefs may clash with existing corrupt practices, intensifying opportunities for corruption and hindering anti-corruption efforts.

i. Definition of Cultural Alienation

Cultural alienation occurs when indigenous people experience a marginalization of their own culture due to the imposition of colonial customs and values. This leads to a sense of disconnection and identity loss among the colonized populations. According to Cambridge Dictionary, Alienation is the feeling that you have no connection with the people around you or that you are not part of a group.

Benedetti Gianmaria et al.(2010) explained in their article entitled ‘*An atypical psychic breakdown of adolescents in immigrant families: The Cultural Alienation Syndrome*’. The expression of ‘Cultural alienation’ is used in the analysis of colonialism and post-colonialism, with the meaning of process of devaluation or abandonment of their culture or their own cultural back-ground, on the part of indigenous peoples subjected to colonization and forced

into a rapid modification of their traditional values. It is implicated in the processes of decay of whole populations or individuals deprived of their traditional cultural and social values.

III. Results

This part of our dissertation is concerned with the major findings and results we have reached and we come to after studying and deeply exploring Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), through Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theories explored in his works entitled *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

From our exploration of the two works, we have noticed that although they belong to different countries, cultures (Nigeria- Ghana) and generations, the two authors share common themes and issues. With a profound analysis of the two works, they permitted us to discover that both Achebe and Aidoo deal with the themes of corruption and identity which make the two books comparable.

In the first chapter, focusing on the concept of 'Political corruption', our analysis reveals that Achebe and Aidoo portray the African elites exemplified by characters like Obi Okonkwo and Sissie, Christopher and Sammy, The Doctor and Kunle as entrenched in corruption, exploiting their positions for personal gain. Through their narratives, these authors vividly depict how these elites exploit their positions for personal gain, showcasing the corruption within African societies.

In the second chapter, we deduce that the African elites are portrayed as culturally alienated through characters like Obi Okonkwo and Sissie, Clara Okeke and Sammy, and Kunle. They are depicted as disconnected from their roots and heritage, opting for Western values and lifestyles over their heritage. This depiction highlights their detachment from indigenous traditions, deepening identity crises.

These compelling narratives shed light on the effects of neo-colonialism on African intellectuals as they contend with the lasting impact of colonialism. Our analysis focuses on the authors' portrayal of the post-colonial African elite. Furthermore, we have explored the disparities in the depiction of this elite class within these narratives.

IV. Discussion

This section of our dissertation intends to study the representation of the elites in both Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). The discussion will handle both political study through the issue of corruption in the first chapter and cultural study focusing on alienation in the second chapter. Thus, we will try to draw a comparison between the two novels; to emphasize the major affinities and divergences between Achebe's and Aidoo's characters in terms of political corruption and cultural alienation. It is worth remembering that this analysis will be undertaken relying on Frantz Fanon's theoretical concepts highlighted in his two books entitled *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961),

Chapter One: Political Corruption in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977).

In this chapter, we will examine Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) to analyse the notion of political corruption in post-colonial Africa. Achebe and Aidoo in their narratives poignantly illustrate the pervasive influence of corruption and the moral dilemma of the African elites. They both highlight aspects of neo-colonialism showcasing how the British colonial empire establishes the system of corruption by deepening it inside the government's infrastructures and spreading it among the masses of people. Thus, we will compare respectively Achebe's characters Obi Okonkwo, Christopher and the Doctor, to Aidoo's ones Sissie, Sammy and Kunle. In regard to Frantz Fanon's chapter *The Pitfalls of the National* to show the involvement of the elites in corrupt practices in post-colonial era.

a. Obi Okonkwo and Sissie as new elites

Achebe's and Aidoo's protagonists namely Obi and Sissie share several notable similarities. Both characters are African elites who receive Western education, and upon their return home, they become representatives of the 'Been-tos' individuals who have spent time abroad. Achebe and Aidoo utilize these protagonists as critical figures to denounce the political corruption in their societies, particularly focusing on issues such as bribery.

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi is portrayed as a young educated man from Umuofia; an Ibo village in Eastern Nigeria (Achebe,1961,p.4) who gains a scholarship through the Umuofia Progressive Union(U.P.U) as a loan to study in England mentioning: "we paid eight hundred pounds to train him in England"(p.3). After four years Obi comes back to Nigeria with his Western education which is a symbol of success and prestige placing him within the ranks of the elite class as described by Ravenscroft in Jago Morrison's book entitled *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe* (2007):

The UPU has turned Obi into Umuofia's first graduate, and thus into the new Secretary of the government Scholarship Board. Obi becomes Umuofia's 'only palm fruit' in the upper echelons of the civil service, and he is looked to for the influence he will exert on behalf of Umuofians anxious for some crumbs from the national cake.(p.70)

In a meeting of the U.P.U they assert about Obi that: "Many towns have four or five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one" (Achebe, 1960,p.6) mirroring their pride.

Western education allows Obi to integrate the colonial administration, where he gets a job as civil servant in the scholarship board of the capital Lagos, he is considered as a 'Been-to' due to his experience of studying abroad and returning to Nigeria. Once home, he finds himself torn between the traditional customs of his Igbo heritage and the modern values acquired in the West, since he adopts some aspects of the European way of life such as the

English language, their way of thinking which create a sense of instability while he can no longer reintegrate and accept his native culture.

Achebe uses his protagonist as a critical figure in addressing corruption in Nigeria through his personal journey and the circumstances he encounters. He mutters to himself: “Where does one begin? With the masses? Educate the masses? [...] But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance?” (p.40), later in his interview for the job Obi starts to notice corruption among the jury members when the chairman asks him: “why do you want a job in a civil-service? So that you can take bribes?” (p.37), this proves that they used to take bribes in this service, but Obi is more ethical than this, for him it is a colonial mentality (p.37).

Furthermore, when Obi meets his friend Christopher for dinner, they delve into a discussion about bribery in Nigeria's public sector. Obi voices his critique of the civil service, pointing out the pervasive corruption perpetuated by experienced individuals occupying top positions. He asserts that: “The civil-service is corrupt because of the so-called experienced men at the top” (p.17) and adds: “I didn’t say straight from the university, but even that would be better than filling our top posts with old men who’ve no intellectual depth despite their experience” (p.17) this implies that civil servants rely solely on their experience without demonstrating intellectual abilities.

Obi extends his criticism stating: “but take one of the old men, he probably left school thirty years ago in standard six, he has worked steadily to the top through bribery an ordeal by bribery. To him the bribe is natural” (p.18), the protagonist advocates for freshly graduated students over experienced yet corrupt individuals, who lack the essential education and knowledge required for such positions. This echoes what Fanon says about the national bourgeoisie in the chapter entitled *The Pitfalls of National Consciousness* from his book *The*

Wretched of the Earth (1961): “Since the middle class has neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources, it limits its claim to the taking of business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers” (p.152), conveying that those elites are intellectually not suited to this type of position which they gain by bribing and once on the top they use to deal with corruption.

Obi is determined to resist corruption and maintain his integrity, even in the face of temptation, like when he rejects an offer of bribe from an individual called Mr. Mark seeking to have a scholarship for his sister. This reaction reflects his national consciousness and his aspiration to combat corruption, demonstrating a sense of social responsibility. His witness about bribery undermines the effectiveness of the government institutions and perpetuate inequality and injustice, even with the policemen who arrest the wagon which transports him and other individuals for a short visit to Umuofia, asking the driver for bribes.

The critic Witte suggests that: “Obi’s alienation becomes evident in many of his actions and comments, especially on the widespread bribery in Nigeria, which he sees through the lenses of European values” (Morrison, 2007, p.82), when the protagonist addresses to himself :

Where does one begin? With the masses? Educate the masses? He shook his head. ‘Not a chance there. It would take centuries. A handful of men at the top. Or even one man with vision – an enlighten dictator. People are scared of the word nowadays. But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance?’ (Achebe, 1960, p.40)

Here the protagonist condemns directly the source of all this corruption which is the government controlled by few who break the link between them and the masses of people, and the role of education to awaken people in order to erase corruption and achieve national unity. In this respect Fanon (1961), asserts that this national bourgeoisie class should put itself to school with the people: “in other words to put at people disposal the intellectual and

technical capital that it has snatched when going through the colonial universities.”(p.150), showing the responsibility of educating the masses of people instead of breaking the link with them.

Achebe’s nuanced and complex portrayal of his characters takes us through the path of how someone like Obi can come to take bribes, once a symbol of integrity, undergoes a tragic metamorphosis, he loses his love because of Igbo traditions, he confronts great financial distress and his mother died, all of these brings the protagonist of the novel to fall into what he once believes as terrible and corrupt. Ravenscroft in Jago Morrison’s book entitled *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe* (2007) comments Obi’s state:

His mind is packed full of elevated notions of public service, and he is determined to play his full part in reinvigorating the Nigerian civil Service and stamping out all the old corruption that so ill befits a new nation. The story records his failure. It is an attempt at a tale of muted tragedy, told laconically rather than with detachment.(p71)

Additionally Achebe in this respect argues: “In due course he paid off his bank overdraft and his debt to Hon.Sam Okoli, M.H.R. The worst was now over, and Obi ought to have felt happier. But he didn’t” (Achebe,1960,p.153). From this statement we notice that now the protagonist becomes corrupt by taking bribes and pays off all his debt, but still feels unhappy and guilty towards what he uses to denounce and blame in his country ‘Corruption’. These actions ultimately lead to his downfall, as it is mentioned: “His ethical ideals and opposition to corruption are, similarly, set up as flimsy screens simply waiting to be torn down” (Morrison,2007,p.72).

After receiving his last bribe, Obi overcomes with guilt, hears a knock at the door. When he answers it is a police officer “Meanwhile the other man used the telephone outside Obi’s door to summon a police van” (Achebe,1961,p.154) so Obi is searched, and marked bills are found in his pocket, a police van is called for his arrest.

Comparing it to the protagonist of *Our Sister Killjoy* Sissie, several traits become evident creating key points of comparison with Obi. Likewise, Sissie the protagonist of the Aidoo's novel, a young Ghanaian woman depicted as a strong self-determined female character, awarded a scholarship by an international volunteer organization to receive Western education in Europe which she portrays as 'A Bad Dream'. During her time in Europe, she discovers the realities and effects of colonization upon the colonized people, in other words; aspects of neo-colonialism, where:

Sissie has begun to understand how ideologically, and economically speaking, things are not what they seem.... When you eat the white man's pay, you fight at the cannon's mouth. In short, the display of power exhibited by the neocolonial bourgeoisie and its allies, the intelligentsia, is not real power. (Odamtten, 1994, p.127)

'Our sister' or named 'black eyed squint', described as an aware woman, employed as a critical figure that reveals her inner ideas through her reflection on the miseries, social issues and political corruption experienced by the African individuals from which the title *Reflection from a Black-eyed Squint* is inspired.

Sissie criticizes the social and economic discrimination, the struggle of the masses of people in African countries after independence. In contrast to the extravagant lifestyle of the elites, politicians and government officials, likewise when she wonders how an ex-prisoner from Europe drive city buses; while black workers work hard under the sun to build luxury houses to wealthy people (Aidoo,1977,p.56).

Meanwhile, many others suffer from poverty, illness and lack of access to education: "EDUCATION HAS BECOME TOO/ EXPENSIVE. THE COUNTRY CANNOT AFFORD IT FOR EVERYBODY"(p.57). Fanon (1961) in this context asserts that: "There exists inside the new regime, however, an inequality in the acquisition of wealth and in monopolization." (p.171), this means that even within a newly established government or system, there are disparities in how wealth is obtained and controlled.

Ama Ata Aidoo compares between people of the national middle class that opt to solve their problems in a brief meeting with men of power by exercising corruption and bribery, and the mass of people that finds hardships to get education, job and good conditions. She states that being an African student may offer the chance to gain scholarship and this by wooing to the leaders. As a result; they agree to pay for these few students because they will need them to become the faces for important speeches and confrontations: “But first!/ Their leaders must be wooed/ For now and tomorrow/ And, it’s quite in order/ To produce/ One/ Or two of their sable countenances,/ To garnish dull speeches and resolutions” (Aidoo,1977, p.60), She adds:

Therefore/ we do not complain about/Expensive trips to/Foreign ‘Varsities’ where/Honorary doctorate degrees/Come with afternoon teas and/Mouldy Saxon cakes from/Mouldier Saxon dames...[...]While/ Able-bodies fishermen/Disappear in/ Cholera, the rest from under/ Leaking roofs and unlit alleys/ Shall drum,/ and sing/ dance/ with/ joy[...]There is ecstasy/ In dying from the hands of a / Brother/ Who/Made/ It.(pp.58-59)

Aidoo points out how the government can spend a lot of money on fancy things for rich people, like expensive cars and parties instead of helping everyone to get a good education or access to healthcare. Some leaders even go to fancy schools in European countries and come back acting like they are better than everyone else, “They tell us how the water from the shit-bowls is better than what the villagers drink...” (p.58). She also highlights a situation where the resources are mismanaged and the natural wealth is exploited by the few rich elites who prioritize self-interest and foreign investments over basic needs of the population.

Aidoo shows the corruption and self-serving behavior of politicians and intellectuals who benefit from the system by borrowing money from foreigners that know how to gain double benefits later at the expense of the masses of people. She adds: “Ministers and commissioners/ Sign away/ Mineral and timber/ Concession, in exchange for/Yellow Wheat

which/ The people can't eat. / And at noon,/ The wives drive Mercedes-Benzenes to/ Hairdressers', making ready for/ The evening's occasion"(p.57). And then people must celebrate the achievements of these few individuals who have succeeded in the corrupt system by using bribery even if it comes at the expense of the others. This is to be found in the critic of Fanon (1961): "He therefore knowingly becomes the aider and abettor of the young bourgeoisie which is plunging into the mire of corruption and pleasure."(p.166)

Through the description of the rulers, Aidoo, as Fanon does, sheds light on the corruption of the national bourgeoisie that has neither power nor sufficient knowledge to govern their country, therefore; it searches for self-interest and refuges to the aids of the Western ex-colonizer, and this latter takes benefits in return. This is the result of the absence of the national consciousness, ignorance, insufficiency of intellectual resources and the incapacity to think about all the problems of the nation.

Additionally, in Aidoo's chapter *A Love Letter*, Sissie addresses various political statements to her lover criticizing him and the self-exiled Africans who prioritize personal gain over national duty. Sissie's lover symbolizes those who refuse to confront the political corruption and challenges left by colonial rule, opting instead to seek better lives abroad. Sissie argues that their knowledge and education should be used to benefit their homeland, criticizing the corrupt system that drives many to self-exile. She encourages her lover to confront the problems left by the colonial rule. She proclaims: "So that the question was never that of changing into something that we have never been. No, we only need to make a small effort to update the stronger, the harder, the more insensitive part of ourselves."(Aidoo,1977, p.116)

The protagonist is also a 'been-to' figure since she returns home at the end of her study's journey, when she was abroad, on the one hand she condemns those who refuse to

come back, on the other hand; she criticizes the behavior of the been-tos who lie about the realities they faced in the west, their assimilation to foreign customs and their arrogance which Sissie confirms: “Eventually went back home as ‘been-tos’, the ghost of the humans that they used to be, spoke of wonders of being overseas, pretending their tongues craved for tasteless food which they have vomited to eat where were prepared best.” (pp.89-90). She adds:

They lied

They lied

They lied

The been-tos lied. (p.90)

However, some characteristics of these been-tos are to be found in Sissie. Her higher and Western education leads her to master the language of the colonizer ‘English’ better than the Europeans, it means that she uses the hegemony left by colonialism: “Our sister who is British-born and British-trained teachers had spent hours moulding her tongue around the nooks and crannies of the received pronunciation...” (p.42). Consequently, she possesses high standards and it is highlighted in how she values herself: “Youthfulness/ Peace of mind/ Feeling Free:/ Knowing you are a rare article,/ Being/ Loved.” (p.40)

Despite the similarities between the two protagonists, their character development diverges significantly by the end of their respective stories. Obi's character becomes increasingly corrupt, leading to his ultimate downfall. In contrast, Sissie, upon returning home, maintains her national consciousness and commitment to her principles. This stark contrast highlights how their journeys shape their outcomes: Obi's moral decline results in his ruin, while Sissie's steadfastness strengthens her resolve and identity.

b. Christopher and Sammy

Christopher and Sammy are comparable as both elites educated in Europe, but their responses to Western values differ. Christopher, while promoting corruption, reflects his own moral compromise. In contrast, Sammy fully assimilates into Western culture, adopting its values and behaviours completely. Their different adaptations highlight how Western education can lead to varied personal and moral outcomes.

First, Christopher the Nigerian friend of Obi also received his education in England, which grants him a level of privilege and access to opportunities not available to the average Nigerian; he works as a clerk in the Lagos office of the Department of Education. While he is not directly involved in corrupted practices he serves as a negative influence on Obi, encouraging him to indulge in unethical behaviour.

When Obi recounts the story of Miss Mark, he describes how she visited his home and offered to exchange sexual favours for a scholarship. Christopher tells him that: “if a girl offers to sleep with you, that is not bribery”(Achebe,1960,p.109), Obi is surprised of his friend’s reaction he claims: “But it is scandalous that a man of your education can see nothing wrong in going to bed with a girl before you let hear appear before the board”(p.110), proclaiming his honesty and ethical duty within his work in contrast of Christopher who is manipulating him to accept bribes and engage in corrupt practices.

On the other hand in Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel, Sammy, Sissie’s countryman, was also awarded a scholarship to receive Western education. She meets him in an extravagant cocktail party in the ambassador’s house when preparing her departure to Germany. Sammy “laughed all the time: even where there is nothing to laugh at.” (Aidoo,1977,p.6). During the dinner, he expresses his gratitude for being chosen as well as Sissie to go to Europe. He also tries to

convince Sissie that life in Europe is better than the one in Africa, he asserts that: “going to Europe was altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise.”(p.9).

This character is considered as corrupted elite since he is assimilated to the European culture and seems to lose his African identity which is obvious through his behavior, his adaptation to Western lifestyle and his mastering of the imperial English language. In this respect, Aidoo (1977) confirms: “Perhaps he had been invited to the dinner just to sing of the wonders of Europe? / He spoke their language well and was familiar with them in a way that made her feel uneasy.” (p.9)

The case of Sammy and Christopher goes with Fanon’s (1961) criticism when he argues that: “The national bourgeoisie will be greatly helped on its way toward decadence by the Western bourgeoisie” (p.153). This quotation showcases the impact of Western culture and education on the African elite and their belonging to the ex-colonizer’s corrupted activities.

c. The Doctor and Kunle

The Doctor and kunle are two minor characters; each of them attained their education in England, portrayed as elites and been-tos at the same time. They are both involved in corruption; the first succumbs to bribery for unethical activity, and the second by assimilating to Western ideals at expense of his owns.

Starting with the Doctor, a Nigerian man educated in England to become a Doctor practicing in his homeland, Christopher advised Obi to see him for Clara's abortion due to the prohibition against marrying an Osu girl, unlike the first Doctor who refuses to abort their unborn; this one accepts the operation. Achebe (1960) argues in this scene:

He was young and very business-like. He said he had no taste for the job they were asking him to do. ‘It is not medicine,’ he said. ‘I did not

spend seven years in England to study that. However, I shall do it for you if you are prepared to pay my fee. Thirty pounds. To be paid before I do anything. No cheques. Raw cash. What say you? (p.132).

From this quotation we understand that the Doctor realizes the degree of the crime which he is asked to do by claiming: "I'm sorry, but my price is fixed. It is a very minor operation, but it is a crime. We are all criminals, you know. I'm taking a big risk". (p.132). But in spite of his awareness, and the fact that he is privileged by receiving Western education making him an African elite; he accepts to abort the baby in exchange of a good amount of money as a bribe going totally against the ethics and the deontology of medicine just for his personal benefits. Fanon (1961) in this context states that: "privileges multiply and corruption triumphs, while morality decline" (p.171), aligning with the case of this corrupt Doctor who succumbed to bribery for unethical operation.

Secondly, Kunle a Nigerian man whom Sissie encounters during her journey which she describes as: "many, many Sammys" (Aidoo,1977,p.9). This character believes that the Western technology will solve the Apartheid dilemma by transplanting a heart of a colored man in that of a white man which he believes that is a part of Europe's development and is not a cruel, abominable crime. What provoked Sissie's response and describes it as:

It is believed that cutting the throat/
Of a pig is simply/ Useless: the/
Only way to get your good pork/
Is to tear the heart out of the chest of
a / Squealing pig – the louder he/
Squeals, the better the pork. (p.95)

The protagonist astonishes of Kunle's way of thinking and how he can be blind and heartless of the cruelty practiced over his people "In London, seven years he is not concerned about the civil war in his homeland, Nigeria."(Odamtten,1994,p.128), adding: "The inappropriateness of Kunle's fearful defense of "the Christian doctor" is sadly apparent, for while he mouths these inanities, in his relative's "Dingy but rather respectable penny-economy hotel room" (90)" (p.128). Sissie sorrowfully expresses her trifle over people like him, saying: "It's a laugh!/ Look at the mess they've made of/ Independence given

them”(Aidoo,1977,p.101). She argues that dogs and cats are treated better in Germany than human beings in England. She expresses her grief about the national values and duties rejected by the Africans to imitate the White.(p.99)

Aidoo delves with the issue of European’s influence on the Africans so that they forget about their country’s problems adopting others’ problems. The character reflects the corrupt nature of the Africans abroad that promote the colonial legacies and take advantage of their status to support the Western ideals instead of their native ones, described in the book entitled *THE ART OF AMA ATA AIDOO* as those: “Who daily betray their own people by mindlessly repeating the bourgeois universalist cant.” (Odamtten,1994,p.121). In the following citation Fanon (1961), criticizes the elites that align with this situation:

the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons. It follows the Western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention, stages which are an acquisition of that Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances.(p.153)

Kunle similarly embodies the archetype of a "been-to.". He reflects the tensions and contradictions inherent in the experience of returning to one's homeland after living abroad. He feels not only alien from his culture, but also a sense of belonging to the Western societies. This makes him experience a mixture of cultural identities, experiences, and perspectives shaped by his exposure to both African and Western cultures, considered as legacy left by colonizers. His behaviour also underscores the corrupting influence of his Western experiences, highlighting:

So many in fact that Kunle like so many of us, wished he had had the courage to be coward enough to stay forever in England. Though life ‘home’ has its compensations. The aura of having been overseas at all. Belonging to the elite, whatever that is.(Aidoo,1977,p.107)

Overall, comparing elites like Obi Okonkwo and Sissie, Christopher and Sammy, and the Doctor and Kunle reveals a perpetuation of political corruption inherited from colonialism. Their actions emphasize the lasting impact of colonial rule. Furthermore, this comparison sheds light on the complexities of maintaining identity and integrity in post-colonial settings.

Chapter Two: Cultural alienation in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977).

In this chapter, we will study the theme of cultural alienation which is delicately woven into the two narratives Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). Achebe and Aidoo illustrate the profound cultural displacement and estrangement experienced by the African elites. Therefore; we will compare both protagonists Obi Okonkwo and Sissie. And then other characters such as Clara Okeke and Sammy, in regard to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952).

From one perspective, Achebe paints a vivid picture of a nation in conflict, grappling with the clash between traditional values and the Western influence, portraying a society in transition where the decay of traditional values leads to a widespread sense of alienation and dislocation among its people. Alternatively; Aidoo delves into the complexities of cultural displacement and the challenges faced by individuals navigating between their African roots and the Western world, portraying the protagonists' critical view of the profound sense of detachment and estrangement in a foreign setting.

As Preeti Maneck (2014), declares about cultural alienation: "In the hegemonic phase of colonialism which begins after the country has achieved independence, the natives internalize western culture and the colonizers entire system of values" (p.439), this internalization reflects a deep-seated impact of colonial rule on indigenous identities.

a. Obi Okonkwo and Sissie

Beginning with Obi Okonkwo's return to Nigeria from England, which marks the start of a profound internal struggle; as he grapples with the clash between the traditional values of his Igbo heritage and the modern influences he encountered abroad. As Obi traverses these challenging landscapes, he strives to harmonize two contrasting worlds, seeking a balanced

blend of his origins and Western education ideals; described in Ravenscroft words in Jago Morrison's book entitled *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe* (2007): "While his story can also be read partly as a paradigm of a man caught between the irreconcilable values of a different ways of life". (p.72)

This cultural clash engenders a pervasive sense of alienation within Obi, the critic Moses argues that: "Set down in this context, the character of Obi is shown as a vulnerable and alienated, even deracinated, figure who is far from 'at ease' in his world" (p.86), leaving him feeling estranged from both the familiar customs of his upbringing and the foreign ideals he has embraced. In the words of Frantz Fanon (1952): "White civilization, and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro" (p.16). This quote encapsulates the profound impact of colonialism on individuals like Obi, caught between his indigenous heritages and imposed Western ideals, highlighting the struggle for identity. This idea is supported by the critic Witte as he argues that: "Achebe's novel uses Obi's own position of ambivalence, paralysis and alienation to illustrate the breadth of cultural divide between British colonial and Nigerian(especially Ibo) culture". (Morrison,2007,p.83)

The protagonist Obi grows up in a Christian house and later has European education in England, finds himself torn between Western values and Igbo traditions. His alienation is evident as he received western education, as the critic David Carroll argues: "but what they don't anticipate is that the knowledge which brings power also brings detachment and alienation."(Morrison,2007,p.72). Furthermore, Obi thinks that: "What would happen if I stood up and said to him: "Father, I no longer believe in your God"?" (p.51), he no longer desires to adhere to Christianity as he did before going to England, emphasizing the Western individualism he encounters abroad and the pursuit of self-autonomy as it is suggested:

Achebe encapsulates the double-bind experience by young Nigerians in the 1950s. On the one hand, Obi has absorbed a Western ethos of

individualism. The narrative stresses his idea of living according to one's own principles and shows his angry reaction when his personal privacy is invaded, for example over his relationship with Clara. Yet, on the other hand, Obi is also shown as a figure who is tightly bound up with the Umuofian community.(Morrison,2007,pp.73-74)

Besides, when his father comes against his marriage with the Osu girl Obi asserts: "I don't think it matters. We are Christians [...] The Bible says that in Christ there is no bond or free." (Achebe,1960,p.120). In this instance, we perceive his confusion arising from his native culture controlled by old Igbo traditions, which may not align with Christianity imposed by the colonizer.

Achebe (1960) portrays another contradiction of his nuanced main character toward the African culture; where on one side Obi is very proud of his native culture by claiming:

Let them come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live. (p.45)

Alternatively, later he defies his ancestor's traditions and customs saying: "What is this thing? Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called and innocent man *osu*" (p.120). Based on this observation, it seems that Obi's stance toward African culture is somewhat vague, unclear and unstable. In this respect, Amine Maalouf (1998) asserts: "En tout homme se rencontrent des appartenances multiples qui s'opposent parfois entre elles et le contraignent à des choix déchirants" (p.10). This quote emphasizes the complexity of human identity, as individuals often belong to multiple and conflicting groups such as family, nationality, religion, and cultures creating internal conflicts which is the case of the protagonist.

In addition, Obi's sense of alienation is further emphasized when he is astonished by the lack of Nigerian dishes on the restaurant menu during his meal with Joseph in the capital Lagos, by wondering: "Do they serve Nigerian food here?" (Achebe,1960,p.31), showing him displaced in the hearth of his mother country. Moses argues about Obi in Lagos: "a member

of the new African elite, Obi sometimes feels lost, alienated, and alone amidst the multiethnic crowds of modern Lagos” (Morrison,2007,p.86)

These uncertainties and confusions in Obi’s character deepen his isolation from his community, as clarified, “Insofar as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated” (Fanon,1952,p.224). This insight underscores how the adoption of European ideals can aggravates the feelings of alienation and disconnection from one's cultural roots, contributing to Obi's internal struggles in other words; he feels no longer at ease in his homeland, from which the title *No Longer at Ease* inspired by a line from T.S. Eliot’s poem.

This illustrates how Achebe’s protagonist Obi, experienced cultural alienation in his homeland due to the fact of being educated abroad, the clash between his native culture and Western values, contrary to Ama Ata Aidoo’s protagonist Sissie whose education abroad created on her a sense of resistance to Western influence and alienation from her culture. Unlike Obi, who becomes estranged from his roots, Sissie’s experiences abroad deepen her cultural awareness and commitment.

Therefore; Sissie's transformative journey to Europe on a scholarship symbolizes a significant shift in her life, marking a transition from her familiar African surroundings to the foreign and often isolating environment of Western education. This makes her feel alien from the land she is voyaging to, from the beginning. It is highlighted when she says: “It is a long way from home to Europe. A cruel past, a funny present, a major desert or two, a sea, an ocean, several different languages apart, aeroplanes bridge the skies.”(Aidoo,1977,p.8)

In Europe, Sissie; the conscious woman of the realities of the West, never attempts to imitate the West. Instead, her strong personality helps her maintain her African identity

allowing her to resist being influenced by the West; she consistently strives to be herself and openly expresses her displeasure with European ideologies and lifestyle.

Additionally, Sissie criticizes her kinsmen who experience the sense of alienation and estrangement from their native culture while studying abroad. It is showcased through her interactions with these Africans; such as Sammy, kunle and her lover who represent the assimilated African elites and seem to be amazed by the European values and culture as Fanon(1952) asserts: “the alienation is of an almost intellectual character.”(p.223). And since Aidoo employs this character as conscious, critical figure, ‘Our Sister’ becomes the eyes of her community that rejects the Western culture and appears as a ‘killjoy’ for other Africans. It is evident when she reminds them: “After all, was it not part of the original idea that we should come to these alien places, study what we can of what they know and then go back home?” (Aidoo,1977,p.120)

Aidoo highlights the challenges faced by these African people, particularly Ghanaians, who journey across Europe in pursuit of better opportunities and a brighter future. A case in point is the one of Sissie’s lover whom Sissie tries to convince to bring his knowledge and return home. She also reminds him and his fellow by the sense of duty that they neglect while hastily altering their identity, arguing: “They say that after all, literature, art, culture, all information, is universal. So we must hurry to lose our identity quickly in order to join the great family of man...” (Aidoo,1977,p.121).

Thus, the novelist portrays how Sissie strives to assimilate into white society, often neglecting her authentic identities what makes her convey her frustration and anger: “Then she became very angry. At whatever drives our people to leave their warm homes to stay for long periods, and sometimes even permanently, in such chilly places. Winter in. Winter out” (p.89).This aligns with Fanon's (1952) assertion that:

A Negro like Rene Maran, who has lived in France and breathed and eaten the myths and prejudices of racist Europe, and assimilated the collective unconscious of that Europe, will be able, if he stands outside himself, to express only his hatred of the Negro. (p.188)

Fanon's quote highlights how living in a prejudiced society can cause African intellectuals to absorb these negative attitudes and become disconnected from their own identity.

Sissie remains true to her African identity, never attempting to conceal it or imitate White women. Instead, she consistently strives to be herself and openly expresses her displeasure with European ideologies and lifestyle. Sissie's strong personality helps her maintain her identity, allowing her to resist being influenced by the West. Aidoo conveys that there are individuals like Sissie who are conscious of the true nature of the West and remember the painful past of their ancestors as Fanon (1952) claims: "In human relationships, the negro may feel himself a stranger to the western world."(p.230)

Through Sissie, Aidoo shows her belief that black Africans living in Europe should preserve their identity and culture, as these aspects define who they are as individuals and represent their country of origin, she tries to remind them stating: "we are not responsible for anybody else but ourselves" (Aidoo,1977,p.114). Sissie discovers that forming a connection with Europe or any place that isn't home leads to a loss of self, culture, and an identity crisis. This resonates with Fanon's (1952) assertion that: "freedom requires an effort at disalienation" (p.231), emphasizing the importance of maintaining one's cultural integrity in the face of foreign influences. She also advocates: "So that the question was never that of changing into something that we have never been. No, we only need make a small effort to update the stronger, the harder, the more insensitive part of ourselves."(Aidoo,1977,p.116) illustrating how they struggle to become what the West deems desirable leading to the decline of African ideals.

From the comparison of these main characters, one can conclude that despite both being educated in the West and navigating multiple cultural contexts influenced by colonialism, Obi and Sissie exhibit distinct stances toward their cultural identity. While Obi feels increasingly disconnected from his community because of Western influence and struggles to reconcile his cultural heritage, Sissie stays grounded in her native culture and identity, opting to reject Western values.

b. Clara Okeke and Sammy

Both Clara and Sammy as elites educated in Europe, undergo profound shifts in their identities. Clara's commitment to old Igbo traditions and Sammy's embrace of Western lifestyle result in their alienation from their community. Moreover, their adoption of Western values lead to a nuanced process of assimilation, adding complexity to their cultural integration.

First, Clara Okeke is a significant character who plays a pivotal role in the life of the protagonist as she becomes his love interest. Clara is a young, educated nurse who has studied abroad, “she had been offered a job as Assistant Nursing sister” (Achebe,1960,p.61). She is depicted as a beautiful, intelligent and independent woman as Joseph describes her “such a good and beautiful girl” (p.64).

Clara’s status as an Osu, which means unmarriageable girl as she declares to Obi: “I am an *osun*[...]So you see we cannot get married” (p.64), a member of a socially outcast group described in Obi’s words:

It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-great-grand father had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of Time. (p.65)

This cast deepens Clara's alienation and estrangement in her society as it brings significant societal and familial opposition to her relationship with Obi as his father claims: "I said you cannot marry the girl" (p.121). Due to traditions which place Clara in isolated cast, despite their deep affection for each other, they cannot marry in a society still bound by traditional values. This situation reflects Fanon's (1952) observation: "The educated Negro, slave of the spontaneous and cosmic Negro myth, feels at a given stage that his race no longer understands him. Or that he no longer understands it" (p.16). So Clara feels alienated because Igbo traditions isolate her due to her caste. This creates a gap between her and Obi. Despite their education, they cannot escape these strict cultural norms.

In the passage from the ninth chapter Obi says that: "First, by her sophisticated un-Nigerian accent she showed that she was a been-to..." (Achebe,1960,p.84). Clara's alienation within Nigerian society is vividly illustrated through her sophisticated language. This accent and behaviour mark her as a 'been-to', often acquiring Western education and internalizing their mannerisms. She unintentionally exhibits her assimilation to the Westerns through the use of English language among Nigerian individuals. As Fanon (1952) states: "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture" (p.38). Clara's use of English signifies not only her education but also her adoption of Western culture, further distancing her from her native Nigerian roots and contributing to her sense of alienation.

Moreover; Clara consistently references her time in England as per Obi: "In company of her less fortunate sisters she always found an excuse for saying: "When I was in England" (Achebe,1960,p.85), accentuating her alienation from the cultural and experiential gap that sets her apart from her peers who lack similar experiences, as it constantly reminds others of her foreign influences and acquaintances, intensifying her isolation within her social circle.

Achebe uses Clara's character to explore the complexities and personal costs of navigating multiple cultural identities, highlighting the profound sense of isolation that can accompany such experiences. Her alienation highlights the tensions between the emerging elite class, with its new values and aspirations, and the deep-rooted traditions of Nigerian society. Thus, her accent, behaviour and traditions become a symbol of her alienation, embodying the broader challenges faced by those who experienced multiple cultural contexts.

In Ama Ata Aidoo's novel, *Sammy*, Sissie's fellow countryman seems to lose his true identity which can be seen in his behavior, and his adoption of the European lifestyle; which makes him suffer from self-alienation reflecting the case of the African students who for the imitation of the West. This is evident in Sissie's encounter with him at the German embassy dinner, trying to convince her that life in Europe differs from the one in Africa, arguing: "going to Europe is altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise."(Aidoo,1977,p.9). And the way Aidoo describes the character, reveals his being a figure of alienation that becomes disconnected from his African roots and integrated to the Western culture; as she asserts:

His voice, as he spoke of that far-off land, was wet with longing./
Perhaps he was invited to the dinner just to sing of the wonders of
Europe?/ He spoke their language well and was familiar with them in
a way that made her feel uneasy.(p.9)

This citation provides Sammy's mastering of the German language better than the natives, and his being familiar with them what showcases his assimilation into Western cultural norms, values, behaviors and practices as well it reflects his estrangement and loss of his original cultural identity. Therefore, Sissie's reaction to Sammy suggests that he has become a troubling embodiment of an African who seeks belonging and assimilating in Europe at the expense of his own history and people since he is supposed to represent his identity, heritage, and people abroad.

Aidoo's portrayal of Sammy is a typical example of the African elites, that search and "seeks the validation for his being in the world elsewhere." (Korang, 1992, p.56). It is exhibited when she claims:

He can only regurgitate what he has learnt from his bosses for you [and] ... even more dangerous, who in the face of a reality that is more tangible than the massive walls of the slave forts standing along our beaches, still talks of universal truth, universal art, universal literature and the Gross National product. (Aidoo, 1977, p.6)

Sammy's condition reflects the adoption of Western ideals and the consequential self-alienation experienced by many Africans. This mirrors Fanon's (1952) observation that: "the black Antillean is the slave of this cultural imposition... After having been the slave of the white man, he enslaves himself. The Negro is in every sense of the word a victim of white civilization." (p.192). Fanon's suggests that black people, who were once oppressed by white colonialism, continue to subject themselves to the cultural norms imposed by their oppressors

Overall, from the above analysis and comparison, we reach the conclusion that colonialism promotes the alienation of colonized people by disrupting their traditional social structures and imposing foreign customs and languages. This cultural imposition leads to a loss of cultural identity and belonging, perpetuating a cycle of cultural assimilation and alienation.

c. Kunle

In the chapter *From Our Sister Killjoy* Sissie expresses her frustration on Kunle whom she designates as a 'Londoner' since he lived in the city for seven years and assimilated the Western culture easily. From the starting, she conveys her displeasure on this elite, since he advocates for what he terms Europe's development during a debate on heart transplantation (Aidoo, 1977, p.96), which is in reality cruel particularly for the Africans dying of this

experiments. However; he attempts to justify all the facts as if he were European, disregarding his African identity, integrating with the one that will never fully accept him as its own.

An example in point, is when Sissie questions him about the reasons he feels the way he does and answers eagerly: “that he was sure it is the type of development that can solve the question of Apartheid and rid us, ‘African negroes and all other negroes’ of the Colour Problem.”(p.96)

Over the course of the dialogue between both Sissie and Kunle, Aidoo highlights Kunle’s estrangement from his own cultural identity, and his inability to recognize the historical and cultural significance of using African bodies in medical experiments. His acceptance and promotion for the heart transplant as a solution to racial problems indicates his alignment with Western ideals even at the expense of ethical considerations, arguing: “We are in the region of SCIENCE!”(p.96), and exclaiming “What were they trying to get at”(p.97). Echoing Fanon’s (1952) words: “If I order my life like that of a moral man, I simply am not a Negro”(p.192).She also portrays Sissie’s wondering about his elimination of African problems from his mind which should be his own instead of occupying himself in others’ problems, she proclaims: “As it turned out, uppermost in all their minds, was not the war in Nigeria”.(Aidoo, 1977,p.95)

Being against kunle, Sissie reveals on the other side her inability to accept not only his perspective toward things but also the European ideals asserting:“Lord/I shall not/ Question his/Morality,/Seeing /I an not of/The society for/The prevention of cruelty to man’s/Dumb friends or any /Selfless group.”(p.98-99). Here,Sissie describes people such as kunle as being “selfless” which means prioritizing the needs and norms of different culture or community over their own cultural identity, reflecting willingness to integrate into thisforeign culture subordinating their own cultural background or identity. Aidoo adds: “Disgraceful imbecility.

Her half normal self regretted her inability to share kunle's vision even then.”(p.101) showing her aversion from him after perceiving his thoughts.

Aidoo's protagonist presented as a 'black-eyed Squint' has grown and developed more her consciousness by confronting situations as Kunle. She realizes that: “For Kunle, and other “Migrant birds” there will be no escape once they have entered “Into a Bad Dream””(Odamtten,1994,p.129), this quotation proves that African intellectuals who lack consciousness may become westernized and alienated from their roots once abroad and distanced themselves from their African heritage, contrarily to Sissie who is resistant and whose critique underscores her connection to her cultural values.

In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo, much like Kunle, experiences cultural alienation after spending several years in England for his education. Upon returning to Nigeria, Obi finds himself caught between two worlds: the traditional Igbo culture and the Western values he adopted during his time abroad. His education and experiences in England have distanced him from his roots; likewise Kunle's prolonged stay in London distanced him from his African identity.

Both characters exhibit a struggle with their cultural identities, but they navigate these struggles in different ways. Kunle, as depicted in *Our Sister Killjoy*, fully embraces Western ideals, even at the expense of his own cultural heritage reflecting his estrangement from his own cultural identity, what make Sissie perceives Kunle's views as a betrayal of African values and identities, highlighting his estrangement and the moral and ethical compromises he makes.

In contrast, Obi Okonkwo's character reveals a more nuanced struggle. While influenced by Western values, Obi attempts to balance and reconcile his traditional cultural values with the European ones he has adopted. His education has made him critical of certain

aspects of traditional Nigerian society causing his grapples with the challenges of modernity and the tensions between traditional and Western values. Unlike Kunle, who seems to accept Westernization more readily, Obi's alienation is marked by his ongoing struggle to reconcile his dual identities.

Both characters' experiences reflect the broader themes of post-colonial identity and the impact of Western education on African elites. Kunle's complete assimilation and Sissie's rejection of his views underscore a clear divide, whereas Obi's experience is a reflection to the complexities and often painful realities of navigating multiple cultural identities.

In summary, both Kunle from *Our Sister Killjoy* and Obi Okonkwo from *No Longer at Ease* both experience cultural alienation, Kunle's character is portrayed as fully assimilated into Western culture, to the point of disregarding his African heritage. In contrast, Obi's character is depicted as struggling to harmonize his traditional cultural values with the Western ideals he has adopted. This highlights how African elites may feel disconnected from their cultural values after colonialism. The varied reactions of these individuals underline the difficulties they encounter in managing their traditional background alongside Western influences.

To conclude, the comparison of elites like Obi Okonkwo and Sissie, Clara and Sammy, and Kunle reveals the deep-seated cultural alienation inherited from colonialism. Their struggles and actions emphasize the lasting impact of colonial rule on their identities and sense of self. This comparison sheds light on the complexities of maintaining cultural integrity in post-colonial settings, illustrating the profound challenges of navigating identity and cultural alienation amidst the enduring effects of colonialism.

V. Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation is to examine and compare the themes of political corruption and cultural alienation among African elites in the post-colonial era, as depicted in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). We have focused our analysis on the affinities and divergences between the two novels, highlighting how each author portrays the experiences and struggles of African intellectuals in a post-colonial context.

Through our research, it has become evident that these elite characters play a pivotal role in perpetuating neo-colonialism. Our arguments are supported mainly with Fanon's chapter 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' from his book entitled *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and the concept of 'Cultural alienation' from his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), as well as the viewpoints of other scholars on the topic.

In the first chapter, we discussed the issue of political corruption of the African elites' characters in the two novels in the light of Fanon's concept of 'National Bourgeoisie'. We argue that these elites instead of eradicating corruption in their countries, they perpetuate colonial legacies in other words neo-colonialism, due to the mishaps of their national consciousness. Furthermore this elite class is criticized for its corruption and misuse of power for personal gain.

In the second chapter, we have studied the issue of cultural alienation experienced by the African intellectuals along with their assimilation, resulting from their exposure to Western influences causing the loss of their native identity. Relying on Fanon's concept of 'Cultural alienation' we explored how this process of cultural displacement manifests and its implications for the individual and society navigating between traditional culture and Western

modernity .Both Achebe and Aidoo were aware of these issues and vividly illustrated them in their works.

To conclude, our present research does not cover all the issues that can be tackled in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*. We came across many workable topics; we invite other students to undertake research on the following topics such as the role of education, clash between tradition and modernity by comparing the two narratives in the light of other theories

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