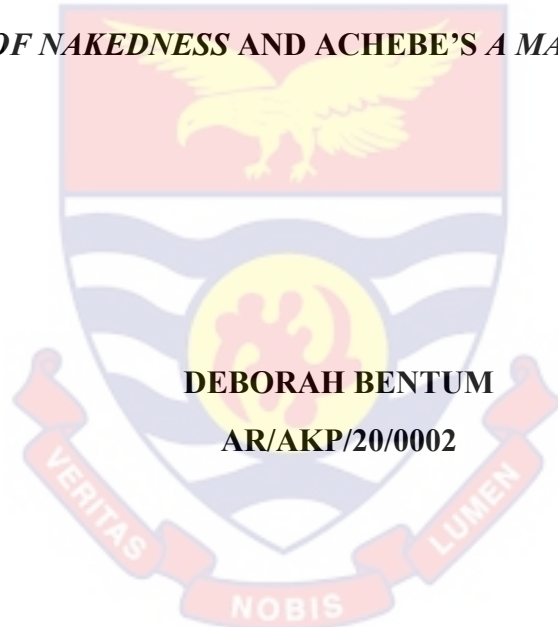


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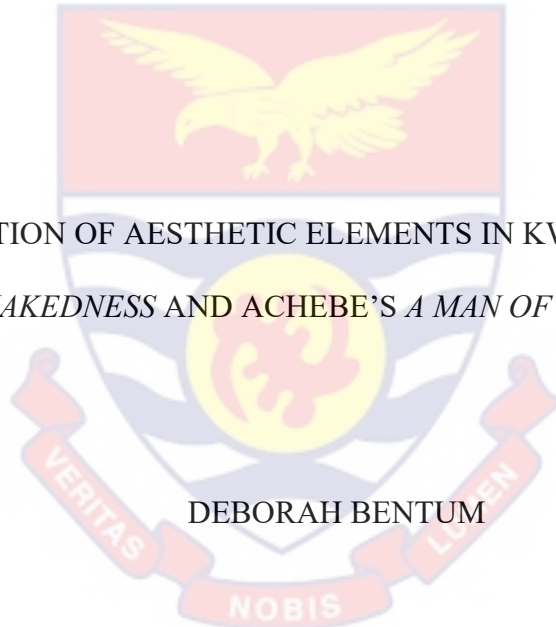
AN EXPLORATION OF AESTHETIC ELEMENTS IN KWAKYE'S *THE CLOTHES OF NAKEDNESS* AND ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*



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AR/AKP/20/0002

2024

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST



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OF NAKEDNESS AND ACHEBE'S *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*

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A Thesis submitted to the Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics of the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of a Master of Philosophy Degree in Ghanaian Languages.

MARCH, 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, except for quotations and references contained in published works which have all been duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work and that no part of it has been submitted for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's signature..... Date

Name: Deborah Bentum

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's signature Date

Name: Mr. Emmanuel Asubonteng

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the aesthetic elements in two literary texts: Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*. This study is situated within the context that the reading and interpretation of literary texts generally emphasizes the didactic value of the texts, often disregarding the aesthetic importance contained in the texts. The study is based on a qualitative research design. It uses a text-analytical approach to analyse the aesthetic elements and their significance in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*. The study, which employed Adorno's aesthetic theory, argued that aesthetic values are an integral part of understanding and interpreting a literary piece. The main findings of this study revealed two aesthetic elements: the aesthetic character and the aesthetic setting. The aesthetic elements elicit two types of significance, which are aesthetic value and didactic value. The aesthetic value encourages individual interpretation of a literary work, elicits aesthetic taste/pleasure, and evokes emotional resonance, while the didactic values seek to inform or educate the reader on some of the post-colonial challenges, such as neglect of political duties among the political leaders, exposure of moral decay, and political ignorance, among others.

KEYWORDS

Aesthetics

Aesthetic taste

Black aesthetics

Decay/Decadence

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I give thanks to the Almighty God for grace and strength throughout this research. My sincerest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Mr. Emmanuel Asubonteng, for his professional guidance, sacrifices, impromptu journeys, encouragement, and patience throughout my supervision. I also appreciate Sir Benjamin Kubi for his guidance and sacrifices; I am grateful to you for every push you gave me, sir. Also, to my programme mates, Madam Philo, Madam Ghandi, Madam Serwaa, Madam Evelyn, Pewode, I am grateful for your words of encouragement. I would also like to appreciate you, Madam Comfort Bonsu, for the many times I came to you for guidance, and you were always readily available to help me. Finally, I want to extend my sincerest appreciation to my friends and family, especially Estella, Rhodaline, and Augustine, for their unwavering support and motivation they gave me. May God bless you all.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents, Mr. Joseph Kwaw Bentum and Madam

Mary Angoe.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Themes in literature have developed over time, reflecting the ebb and flow of human history and societal dynamics. Themes served as potent lenses through which authors have examined the various facets of the human experience in the wide expanse of literature. Some of the themes in literature that have evolved include politics, economy, and cultural dynamics reflecting historical periods (Khan, 2020). As literary movements evolved, artistic works shifted and a gradual transition happened, beckoning literature to embrace a new world of expression and comprehension called aesthetics (Eysteinnsson, 2018).

The concept of aesthetics began with German literature, and one of its major proponents was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Other proponents who emerged, later on, included Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and Vernon Lee, among others. The word aesthetics is derived from a combination of the Greek words "aistheta", which means "things perceptible by the senses" and "aisthethai", meaning "to perceive" (Edachira, 2020). According to Grote (2010), the term aesthetics was coined by a professor of philosophy, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735 as a philosophy for teaching morality. Thus, aesthetics was initially conceptualised as a philosophical theory to teach morality. Later on, aesthetics evolved into the term aestheticism, which refers to the movement that emerged during the nineteenth century and was founded on the idea that art is self-sufficient and should not be used for other purposes. In other words, art is an end

in itself and does not need to be didactic, politically committed, propagandistic, moral, or anything else other than itself; nor should it be judged by non-aesthetic criteria such as weather, setting, history, era or time.

Edwards (2021) notes that the aesthetic movement began in Great Britain in the 1830s, and it entailed the implementation of aesthetic principles in the production of furniture, metalwork, ceramics, stained glass, textiles, wallpapers, and books. During its peak, from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s, the aesthetic movement impacted the American society. For instance, the period saw the emergence of a lifestyle and artistic movement that included the use of various forms of art, such as paintings, and sculptures, as well as the establishment of art museums and the development of clubs and societies aimed at creating functional and attractive objects that could be integrated into domestic spaces.

According to Gultenkin (2016), the objectives of the aesthetic movement were diffused into British society by Coleridge and Caryle during the Victorian era such that while the Victorian era saw the enforcement of strict moral standards and industrial development, there were also instances of immorality as a result of the capitalist system. Thus, those who sought material gains under the capitalist system were also influenced by utilitarianism, a concept that sought the greatest happiness for everyone through the pursuit of utility. As a result, the aesthetic movement emerged to save art from the effects of utilitarianism through its main principle of "art for art's sake". Consequently, writers, designers, and artists in general created works that were admired for their beauty rather than works that sought to provide

moral functions. This was in contradiction with the traditions of art, which believed that artwork should be uplifting.

Joughin and Malpas (2003) also observe that aesthetics primarily examines the nature of beauty and taste. It considers what happens in our minds when we engage with aesthetic objects or environments such as paintings, music, poetry, or other literary works. It involves devotion to art and denotes the importance of beauty compared with other values, such as morality and material utility. Thus, aestheticism is not a single concept, but rather a collection of phenomena that together represent a belief that the experience of beauty may offer value or significance to life in itself (Markovic, 2012). Simply put, aestheticism attempts to separate art from life to minimise moral implications. As a result, art is valued for the immediate aesthetic pleasure it brings, rather than allowing attitudes of life to impact it. By emphasising sensory pleasure and beauty, aestheticism constituted a threat to the Victorian era's moral values (Dora, 2014).

According to Bellonby (2012), Oscar Wilde is one of the most well-known figures associated with literary aestheticism. Bellonby (2012) notes that Oscar Wilde was introduced to aesthetic principles by Walter Pater and John Ruskin, who were his college teachers. Oscar Wilde, therefore, carried Pater's philosophical words with him and termed them his Golden book, because they were experiencing for him. Bellonby (2012) adds further that Ruskin inspired Wilde to share his aesthetic interests which were relevantly evident in his popular work, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. On his part, Graham (2005) observes that aestheticism began as a philosophy against the Victorian era's emergence of decadence. Its prominence,

however, rose with Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which Wilde used to criticise the principles of aestheticism. Thus, Oscar Wilde's famous work, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is mostly viewed as the embodiment of the literary aesthetic movement during the Victorian era (Edwards, 2021)

An aesthete, one who pursues aesthetic beauty, believes that "art should be abstract and imaginative and take no part in shaping society and its morality in any way. In other words, the value of a work of art lies in its scale (Humaish, 2017). However, if art is supposed to be abstract, where will it take its inspiration from? It is against this backdrop that Oscar Wilde in his essay *The Decay of Lying*, states "Arts begin with abstract decoration, with imaginative and pleasurable work, dealing with what is unreal and non-existent, which is lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art" (Edwards, 2021). This means that art begins with imagination, but as the creator begins to create, he draws inspiration from some of the pressing issues around him or her, which is in contrast to the principles of aestheticism, which state that "an artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them" (Edwards, 2021). One of the Western aesthetes, Graff (1973) argues that the concept of art is a self-contained universe rather than a depiction of the real world and that art should be kept separate from social and political issues. He explains further that a scholar called Clive Bell once contended that "to associate art with politics is always a mistake". He believes that arts exist not to communicate an experience of significant form, which includes the everyday world of political and social affairs, but to provide pleasure. This is where African aesthetes differ.

Following the preceding arguments, black aesthetics evolved, with African aesthetes asserting that African literature is created by Africans and for Africans. Okeke and Ugwanyi (2020) note that African arts are all "instrumentally oriented" and therefore must serve a purpose within a particular context. African art is not merely a separate activity but also a part of everyday life. Its subjects have a serious tone and are not taken lightly, which is why it is regarded as a vital part of the culture. For instance, in African culture, art is often associated with life, communism, ingenuity, and continuity. Therefore, it is not enjoyed for the sake of pleasure (Onyewuenyi, 1984, cited in Chukwunonso, 2014). This demonstrates that African critics believe that art for the sake of pleasure has no place in African literature.

According to Miller (2019), the black aesthetic movement emerged from David Driskel's essay, "The Evolution of a Black Aesthetic, 1920–1950," where David Driskell and black feminist writers like Linda Nochlin, Eleanor Tufts, Cindy Nemser, among others, fought for the inclusion of black artists in the history of art. Driskell argues that art, though seldom allowed to perform its function without critical analysis, knows no racial boundaries. It is ultimately a universal language of form, a "visual dialogue about man cultural history that can be read and understood without regard to the colour of the artist" (McGee, 2008, cited in Miller, 2019). According to Miller (2019), Driskell explores the history of how African-American artists were received in the history of American art. By reception, he meant the opinions, philosophies, and criticism raised by critics, intellectuals, and scholars of both races about black arts. He also addresses the various criticisms that

were levelled against black artists, as well as the conflicting demands they had at that time. He introduces many different styles and artists and explores the acceptance of African-American art during the 1930s, 1940s, and Harlem Renaissance while challenging the false narrative that was created by their white counterparts during this period and pointing out the hindrances that black artists faced.

Just like Miller (2019), Taylor (2016) earlier observed that the Western aesthetic movement was filled with racism. By western he meant the earlier aesthetic movement. He notes that the concept of aesthetics is often involved in political and philosophical discussions. However, it is also complicated by the racist beliefs expressed by some of the early Western aesthetics leading figures, such as Kant and Hume. Thus, most black aesthetic works raised thematic issues such as Black identity, racism, and black movements, which reflected their emotions as well as the challenges they faced as African Americans.

Moreover, black aesthetics projects African art within an African context. According to Ojaide (2009), the African aestheticism movement addresses issues unique to the black race. Because black literary art speaks about the people's history and culture, it is not autonomous; therefore, a literary work must have a purpose, and that purpose must conform to African norms. African scholars like Chukwunonso (2014) articulate that "arts in Africa are instrumentally oriented". Thus, a literary work is said to have aesthetic value when it portrays a human experience. In other words, any piece of art that is not functional in value, and does not convey people's political, moral, or cultural experiences, lacks aesthetic merit.

Okeke and Ugwanyi (2020) affirm that African literature presents an artistic vision particular to the demands of the continent and is hence primarily concerned with societal development. African aesthetics, therefore, embrace arts value in the African context. In this case, literature is employed to accomplish some important and specified goals within a particular society in Africa.

In the twentieth century, aestheticism took on a new form which is regarded as a revolutionary movement that sought to reexamine the relationship between society, art, and ethics, which paved the way for the modern art movement to thrive (Sorokin & Richard, 2017). One of the notable scholars of this movement is Leo Tolstoy, a Russian philosopher. Tolstoy's work has contributed to the reconstruction of aesthetic theory as an integral part of society. According to him, the role of the artist is to communicate his or her emotions through art, which can lead to the establishment of communities of like-minded individuals. One of the most important factors people should consider when it comes to establishing communities is the ability to feel empathy, which allows like-minded individuals to identify with the values and emotions of others. He further talks about the role of art in many aspects of life, such as politics, among others (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016).

Aesthetics took another form that dwells on the beauty in decay, called the aesthetics of decay, which is the focus of this study. This aesthetic is used to describe the fallout of a situation by capturing the beauty of the degraded situation while at the same time providing moral implications and solutions that curtail the unpleasantness. It combines Western aesthetic objectives, black aesthetic

objectives, and modern aesthetic objectives in its portrayal (Petursdottir & Olsen, 2014). Against this backdrop, the present study uses the aesthetics of decay as a literary device, paradox, to discuss the theme of decay in two selected texts: *The Clothes of Nakedness* by Benjamin Kwakye and *A Man of the People* by Chinua Achebe.

Nasim and Sushil (2011) define paradox as an expression of contradictions. Hadi (2019) also notes that a "paradox is a self-contradictory statement or a statement that brings together opposite ideas, but conveys some essential truth". Korotkova (2013) asserts that paradoxes appear in every field of human activity. For instance, a paradox is used to create amusement, but it is also used to discover, illustrate, and rationalise the existence of different perspectives that can be considered when analysing a complex social construct. The aesthetics of decay is thus a paradoxical concept that combines two opposing facts: aesthetics, which is literary translated as beauty, and decay, which is also translated as decomposition (Somhegyi, 2014). The concept has been worked on in many fields, such as architecture (Fein, 2011), environment (Kompatsiaris, 2012), and literature (Awitor, 2014; Scott, 2020). The study employs the aesthetic theory of Theodor Adorno in the analysis of the aesthetic elements and their significance in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*.

Statement of the Problem

A review of existing literature shows that some works have been done on aesthetic elements (Trigg, 2006; Fein, 2011; Kompatsiaris, 2012; Brawley, 2016). However, most of these works deal with other forms of art other than literature. In

literature, particularly African literature, aesthetic elements have been examined in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Meja Mwangi's *Kill Me Quick* to discuss the political decay and gleaming life of the higher-ups in society (Awitor, 2014). There, however, seems to be a dearth of research on the aesthetics of decay as far as literary works are concerned.

Again, Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People* have both been the subject of numerous studies. The literature that is currently available on these texts reveal that most criticism have concentrated on thematic and character analysis, leaving a lot unsaid about the aesthetic elements in the texts and their significance. It is for this reason that the current study is focused on the aesthetic elements in the texts.

According to Oxford (2010), cited in Attard (2018), audiences, including literary readers, are interested in the aesthetic taste derived from a literary work. This refers to the pleasurable experience a reader derives from reading a literary work which gives the work aesthetic value. This aesthetic taste, according to Tolstoy, has taken on a new shape by coexisting with the traditional didactic value of art and often playing a complementary role to each other.

Thus, the lack of empirical evidence regarding the aesthetics of decay in literary works in general, as well as the absence of the concept in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*, has made this study critically important to bridge the literature gap in Achebe and Kwakye's selected texts, given that these two texts have received worldwide acclaim.

Brief biography and social background of the authors

This section seeks to give a brief summary of the biographies of the two authors, Chinua Achebe and Benjamin Kwakye. The purpose is to help gain a deeper understanding of the lives and events that influenced the works of these authors. Since each of them belongs to a society and to a certain class in that society, and for that matter, their perception of the world around them is heavily influenced by various factors such as the cultural, religious, socio-political, and economic background.

Chinua Achebe

According to Achebe and Gikandi (2003), Chinua Achebe was born to an Igbo family on November 16 1930, in the Igbo village of Ogidi in the Eastern Region of Nigeria, an area that was colonised by the British at the end of the nineteenth century. Achebe was christened Albert Chinualumogu Achebe. His mother was educated in a convent, while his father was a missionary teacher. As a result, they held a special place in the colonial cultural order. Achebe's fascination with storytelling originated with his family's admiration for the written word. This enthusiasm was solidified at St. Philip's School in Ogidi, where he excelled and was nourished by his exposure to traditional tales and knowledge, distilled in proverbs.

At the age of twelve, Achebe discovered 'Mbari', a pre-colonial art form unique to the area that consisted of temporary museums of mud sculptures offered to the earth goddess, 'Ala', for the protection and regeneration of society, while living with his brother in Nekede, about eighteen miles from the south-eastern town

of Owerri. *Mbari* was a vehicle for historical documentation and cultural critique, and it instilled in Achebe lifelong lessons on decolonization, cultural reclamation, the moral imperatives of aesthetics, and the interconnection between the individual artist and society, in addition to its aesthetic and religious imperatives.

In 1943, Achebe was accepted into the Government College in Umuahia which was one of the few elite secondary schools established in Nigeria by the British colonial government. This boarding school, which was for males, was designed to socialise gifted African children into the mores and cultural values of English gentlemen and was modelled after the famous English public-school legacy. The institution required students to follow the stringent teachings of Christianity and to reject traditional religions, languages, and other cultural expressions. The students were supposed to embody an ideal of Englishness encompassed in England's great literary tradition, English upper-class norms of behaviour, and the religious games, with a focus on cricket. Furthermore, their professors, most of whom were Oxbridge-educated Europeans, tried but failed to protect them from the attraction of anti-colonial nationalism.

From 1948 to 1953, Achebe attended the University of Ibadan. Achebe's years at Ibadan occurred at the height of Nigerian anticolonial nationalist activity and the struggle for self-determination and independence from British colonial rule. After his education in Ibadan, Achebe joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in 1954 and remained there until 1966, when violence against Igbos in Northern Nigeria began to accelerate to proportions that eventually triggered the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. During the period before the civil war,

Achebe explored the question of post-independence nationalism in novels such as *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *A Man of the People* (1966). *A Man of the People* articulates Achebe's exploration of how the legacy of colonialism continues to haunt the social, political, and cultural landscape of modern Nigeria. The false and self-serving nature of this rhetoric leads to a situation that seems rectifiable only by the extreme cleansing measures of a military takeover.

Other novels written by him, which include *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* confront historical moments and thematise the Igbo/ Nigerian experiences with imperialism and colonialism in a manner that speaks directly to the circumstances of many colonised Africans.

Benjamin Kwakye

Benjamin Kwakye was born on January 7, 1967, in Accra, Ghana. He attended the Presbyterian Secondary School (Presec) in Legon, Accra, Ghana. He furthered his education at Dartmouth College, a private research university in Hanover, New Hampshire, in the United States. At Dartmouth, he majored in Government with an emphasis on international relations, spending trimesters in Arles, France, and at the London School of Economics and the United Nations Association in New York.

While at Dartmouth, he wrote and published poetry, served as editor of *Spirit* (the literary journal of the African American Society at Dartmouth), and was named the Society Senior Honour Roll in 1990 for outstanding leadership, distinguished service, and intellectual and artistic creativity. From there, he went to Harvard Law School. His father, Benjamin Samuel Kofi Kwakye, was a former

Ghanaian police officer who served as the Inspector General of Police from July 1978 to June 1979.

Benjamin Kwakye has been lauded as an award-winning Ghanaian novelist who is a two-time Common Wealth Writers Award winner. His books have won a number of awards, including the 1999 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book (Africa Region), the 2006 Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book (Africa Region), and the 2011 IPPY Gold Award for Adult Multicultural Fiction. According to Yitah (2007), in March 2001, BBC adapted *The Clothes of Nakedness* for its “Play of the Week”. Kwakye also served as a resident novelist for Window to Africa Radio and Afriscope Radio after the publication of *The Clothes of Nakedness*. He reviewed a number of African and African-related books on the air as the resident novelist. He was also a director of the Africa Education Initiative, a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting science education in Africa.

Kwakye falls under the category of contemporary African writers whose fictional writings discuss the theme of migration from different perspectives. His other works, *The Count's False Banquet* (2017), *The Other Crucifix* (2011), and *The Sun by Night* (2005), explore themes such as the experiences of migrant students in the USA and the challenges of adjusting to a new culture as well as the race and identity issues that they face. Some of Kwakye’s writings also focus on post-colonial themes, as depicted in his novel *The Clothes of Nakedness* (1998). Heinemann published *The Clothes of Nakedness* in 1998 as part of its African Writers Series. Kwakye once shared his thoughts with a radio broadcaster, Cyril Ibe, about how he wants readers to approach his novel; readers should pay close

attention to the Akan proverb from which the title is derived 'If nakedness promises you clothes, hear his name'. He adds that in a world of clothed people, what does this nakedness mean? Thus, readers should ask the questions about who and/or what Mystique Mysterious is, as Mystique Mysterious is the character in the novel around whom all the others revolve. Mystique Mysterious is seemingly full of good intentions, he promises jobs to unsuspecting poor people and exacts a price for that. The characters know very little about him, and it is fascinating to see how differently the other characters react to him. Do all the characters succumb to him completely or do the characters ignore his influence in the community until it is too late? Or do they deal with him squarely and face the consequences? Kwakye believes that when a reader considers these questions, it will help facilitate a better appreciation of the novel.

Thus, the foregoing discussion between Kwakye and the radio broadcaster, Cyril Ibe, Kwakye, like other critics of his text, *The Clothes of Nakedness*, focuses on the character and thematic analysis, highlighting the absences of review on the exploration of the aesthetic perspective, which exploratively combines the aesthetic value as well as the didactic value in texts.

Kwakye further reveals during the interview that;

In just a few hours of reading, I can appreciate parts of pre-colonial Nigeria with Chinua Achebe and even explore aspects of my native Ghana from a different perspective with people like Ayi Kwei Armah. Africa has many brilliant writers who entertain and challenge us, introduce us to parts of the continent we may not have had the opportunity to visit, and even offer us new perspectives on those we have already experienced. Reading requires the use of all senses through imagination, and because African literature is so rich and diverse, this is extremely empowering and life-changing.

The above statement shows that Kwakye has an interest in the works of Achebe, who, by far, is known for numerous works that are deeply rooted in African culture. It further reveals the mentor-mentee expectations that Kwakye has towards Achebe, which are quite reflected in his works. This further informed the choice of these two selected texts for this study as they share a common thematic issue that mirrors Ghanaian society and the African society at large.

In essence, the authors' biographies above demonstrate how their life experiences have influenced their work. For example, Achebe's biography reveals that he has been interested in arts since the age of twelve, which is reflected in his artistic works. His passion for African culture is shown in his writings. Moreover, socio-political issues during their eras are also thematised in their texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of the People*. For instance, Achebe's experience with British schooling, which included the rejection of African culture and language, is mirrored in his work, with Chief Nanga's children speaking only English at home. Also, Chief Nanga, who is the Minister for Culture, regards a suit as the "correct protocol" (Pg. 70) for public gatherings. Additionally, the narrative depicts the Nigerian civil war of 1967 to 1970, in which a coup d'état overthrew the governmental leadership.

In Benjamin Kwakye's biography, it is evident that his geographical setting is quite reflective of his art. He conveys the hardship of the underprivileged in Accra's Nima district so well that anyone who has visited the area will recognise the recurring themes in the writings. It also depicted some of the vices associated with the area, such as narcotics, adolescent pregnancies, deaths, and the varying

kinds of abuse the area is noted for. It also captured the area's decaying status as well as the hardships that people living in such locations face. Thus, the biographies of the authors play a major role in the understanding of some of the recurring themes which will later be examined in greater depth.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the aesthetic elements that are depicted in the two texts by illustrating the similarities and differences in their portrayal, as well as to highlight the significance of these aesthetic elements. There are considerable works of literature, such as Brawley (2016), Awitor (2014), Kompatsiaris (2012), Fein (2011), and Trig (2006), suggesting the use of the literary device, the aesthetic of decay, in evaluating thematic issues in literary texts. Thus, the concept of the aesthetics of decay is used in this study to evaluate the aesthetic elements as well as their value as portrayed in the two selected texts by taking into account the significance of these elements to the texts and the reader.

Research questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What aesthetic elements are portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?
2. What are the significances of the aesthetic elements portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?

Significance of the study

First, this study aims to add to the body of knowledge on the two texts: *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of the People*. Many critics have examined various

aspects of both texts, including theme and character analysis. However, no study to date has looked at it from the perspective of the aesthetics of decay; hence, this study will contribute to ongoing scholarship on the writings of Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*.

Furthermore, the findings of this study will aid in mapping the aesthetics of decay as a literary device used to evaluate a societal construct in texts. In simple terms, the findings will enhance the reader's perception and sense of the various aesthetic interpretations that can be considered when reading and analysing a text. Thus, the study aims to help readers develop a deeper understanding of the aesthetic interpretations of literary works. It also seeks to enhance the interest in the texts by creating a more accurate understanding of the various aesthetic values that can be derived from reading the two selected texts and other literary texts.

Delimitation

This study will primarily focus on two primary texts: *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of the People*. It is further limited to the evaluation of the aesthetic elements and their significance in the texts. The two texts, Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*, were chosen because they distinctively depict the aesthetics of decay in all aspects: political, social, moral, and physical.

Methodology

This study was carried out using a qualitative research design. Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore a phenomenon more systematically by collecting and analysing non-numerical data. It also allows for the description,

analysis, and interpretation of a text. Precisely, this study used a text-analytical approach to examine the two selected texts. Text analytical approach is useful to this study because it facilitates the identification and analysis of textual features, enabling the researcher to derive conclusions regarding the meanings or interpretations of the texts. Frey *et al.* (1999), cited in Schneider, Nullmeier & Hurrelmann (2007), identify performance studies, rhetorical criticism, interaction analysis, and content analysis as the four primary approaches to textual analysis.

For this study, content analysis of the two selected texts will be done using aesthetics theory. This method is deemed appropriate for this study because it is exploratory in nature and thematic in focus. Thus, content analysis enables the evaluation of texts' content, including themes, characters, and settings, as well as their narrative significance within the texts (Prior, 2014).

The two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of the People* serve as the source of primary data. The researcher carried out a close reading of the two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of the People* to identify the aesthetic elements and the significance of their narratives. This reading took into consideration the portrayal, occurrence, placement, and thematic significance of the aesthetic elements within the narrative, as well as the social-economic background of the authors. Secondary sources of data were obtained from research articles, published and unpublished dissertations, a poem by Sly Cheney Coker that discusses the incorporation of the aesthetic concepts and thematic issues in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of The People* into works of literature.

The process of data analysis entails a systematic evaluation of both primary and secondary data. The researcher identifies the aesthetic elements in the texts and thereafter extracts relevant excerpts from the texts that exemplify the depiction of the aesthetic elements and their significance. The research employed two literary texts; thus, the analysis was conducted in two folds. The analysis commenced with the first text, which is Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*, and subsequently proceeded to Achebe's *A Man of the People*.

Synopsis of A man of the people by Chinua Achebe

In *A Man of the People*, Achebe used a variety of stylistic and artistic devices to effectively communicate his feelings and opinions (Ibhawaegbele & Edokpayi, 2012). Achebe tells the story from a first-person narrative perspective, and the narrator, Odili, is also the main character. By using Odili's point of view, Achebe can take the reader on Odili's journey to discover the full extent of corruption in his country. By describing Odili's perceptions, he is also able to reveal Odili's blind spots and weaknesses, such as his pride. Odili is an Anata schoolteacher.

Despite having a degree, Odili chose to work in a private school rather than the government civil service to avoid being exposed to corruption. In the first chapter, the story introduces readers to Chief Nanga, the Minister of Culture, and also a native of Anata who pays a visit to the Anata community. The people of Anata affectionately refer to him as "the man of the people." (Pg. 1) Odili informs us that he used to admire this individual. However, an incident involving an international coffee market caused him to lose respect for Chief Nanga and interest

in him. The then-finance minister, who has a PhD in public finance (Pg. 3), proposed a plan to reduce the price paid to coffee planters to alleviate the crisis, but the prime minister rejected it out of fear of the "risk of losing the election." During that time, Chief Nanga incited the public, which resulted in the ministers' deaths.

Following that, Chief Nanga rose quickly in his political career. Chief Nanga quickly recognises Odili as one of the bright students he remembered from Anata during his greeting section. Odili's status among his peers rises as a result of this recognition, and he has mixed feelings about his feelings towards Chief Nanga. Odili is invited to Chief Nanga's house in Bori. Odili is exposed to the bribery, corruption, and immorality of these people because he is close enough to Chief Nanga and other ministers. He later joins the Common People's Convention, a political party, to run against Chief Nanga. The party recognises that they may not win the seat in the elections, but it will allow them to expose Chief Nanga's rottenness to the public.

Synopsis of *The clothes of nakedness* by Benjamin Kwakye

Benjamin Kwakye's first novel, *The Clothes of Nakedness*, was published in 1998. According to Yitah (2007), *The Clothes of Nakedness* shares the disillusionment expressed in earlier post-independence Ghanaian works such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* (1970), and Laing's *Search Sweet Country* (1986). All of these texts portray the colonial past's conditions of poverty, exploitation, and misery as sterile political capabilities, economic decline, and a general sense of hopelessness. The story's title resonates with a Ghanaian proverb that means, "If nakedness says it will

give you a cloth, hear its name," implying that it takes someone with something to give something out, or that a person cannot give out what he does not have.

The Clothes of Nakedness tells the story of Mystique Mysterious and three friends, Kofi Ntim, also known as Philosopher Nonsense, and Kojo Ansah, the quiet one and Bukari, who is gravely exploited by Mystique Mysterious. The story begins in Nima, inside a drinking spot called Kill Me Quick (Pg. 1). Mystique Mysterious, whose name sums up his attitude and demeanour, is a manipulative but respectable man in Nima. He manipulates the poor by offering them help while posing as their friend. He believes that "leadership did not have to have a moral basis" (Pg. 8), and that the only way to control people is to make them dependent on you.

Bukari has been unemployed for eight months, but according to the story, Mystique Mysterious "was glad that Bukari was jobless" (Pg. 3) because he had plans for him. Mystique Mysterious convinces Bukari to drive a taxi for one of his friends but at a cost. The price is that Mystique Mysterious will receive "fifteen percent" (Pg. 33) of Bukari's monthly salary. Bukari, who has been unemployed for eight months, reluctantly accepts the offer. Bukari and Mystique Mysterious grew closer and became good friends and partners in many kinds of life's pleasures, including some that Bukari could never have imagined.

Drunkenness, adultery, and sex parties all became a part of Bukari's nightlife as a result of Mystique Mysterious' bad influences on him, while Fati, Bukari's wife, had to cope with the lonely nights. Mystique Mysterious further persuades Bukari's son, Baba, to sell newspapers in order to raise money for his girlfriend, Adukwei, while a percentage of his income is paid to him without Baba's

knowledge. He also gets Kofi Ntim hired and takes a percentage of his salary in the same manner. Kofi Ntim, unlike Bukari, managed to negotiate the percentage to a lower rate. Kojo Ansah, also known as the quiet one, was the only person Mystique Mysterious could not control because of his quiet demeanour.

Mystique Mysterious gave marijuana and cocaine to the youths in order to make money from them. This he accomplished by first giving the drugs away for free in order to get them addicted to drugs and then selling them once they had developed a habit. He also gives money to people on occasion, especially in crowded places, to gain their respect and trust in him as someone who has their best interests at heart. His schemes resulted in Bukari's death, Baba's arrest, and Fati's pain.

Definition of concepts

This section generally seeks to explain the key concepts used in this study. The key concepts are; aesthetics, aesthetic taste, black aesthetics, and decay/decadence. Understanding these concepts will help in appreciating how they have been used within the scope of this study.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the study of sensory perceptions and emotional responses to art. The concept is based on philosophical traditions or conceptions that are linked to cultural circumstances and are perceived differently across diverse societies. Aesthetic explores the human ability to perceive beauty in art, considering emotions, memory, and sensory modalities. According to Gustafsson (2010), the concept of aesthetics can be defined in several ways which makes the boundaries

of the concept blurred. Aesthetics, like the formalist theory, asserts that art can be understood through literary consideration of its form rather than situating it in a societal context. Therefore, aesthetics makes dominant use of imagery, especially visual and gustatory imagery. It further condones immorality as a way of seeking pleasure.

Aesthetic art was directed against the bourgeois who were obsessed with money and material possessions rather than art and beauty. Consequently, aesthetics emerged to deconstruct the bourgeois attitude towards art and beauty. Over the years, in literature, the concept of aesthetics has taken different turns to mean the use of references to artistic components or expressions within a narrative. It is a strategy for promoting or informing readers about significant artistic expression in a particular society.

Aesthetic taste

Spicher (2017) explains that aesthetic taste, which is metaphorical rather than literal, is primarily centered on the notion of rationalism, which is particularly ascribed to beauty, and the notion of egoism, which is also ascribed to the notion of virtue. What this means is that aesthetic taste is a person's subjective evaluation or admiration of beauty, art or design which entails the ability to recognise and enjoy traits such as harmony, balance, and emotional resonance in many types of visual or sensory encounters. Aesthetic taste is therefore influenced by cultural, personal, and social factors, making it unique to each individual. In other words, we determine whether or not something is beautiful (good) by reasoning it out, which typically entails inferring from principles or applying concepts such as the

theory of taste. The theory of taste views touch as the main component since the tongue must touch what it tastes. Touch thus becomes the primary focus for making aesthetic judgements.

Shelly (2017) contributes that taste is occasionally associated with the term honesty, and honesty is ascribed to the truth. Markovic (2012) also argues that, essentially, an object that will be well-situated for its intended use is what an honest person will find beautiful. This concept is linked to the fact that good and beautiful things are interconnected, and so a good person is better equipped to appreciate the beauty of an object. Hence, taste became a metaphor for judging the beauty of an aesthetic object. In short, taste is metaphoric to the perception of flaws and perfections in a work of art or a person's psychological response to literary works. Spicher (2020) confirms that aesthetic taste is "associated frequently with truth and goodness".

According to Burnham (2022), Kant contends that most languages use the metaphor of taste as a way to describe the mental faculties that are used in perceiving beauty in writing. This faculty of mental taste, which is responsible for perceiving beauty, has various degrees of refinement. This implies that taste has an impact on a person's psychological reactions to artwork. Although this faculty of taste can be found in everybody at birth, cultivating it is very important to ensure that it is developed, and this can be done through the use of sensitivity, refinement, correctness, and proportion when perceiving an object of beauty.

Black aesthetics

Black aesthetics began with black writers such as Wheatley Peters, George Moses Horton, and David Walker producing literary works that reflected images of Africa. In this regard, Denis and Dennis (2015) contend that black aesthetics looks at the definition and role of art as well as the population for whom the works of art are intended. The concept of black aesthetics addresses and delineates the meanings, interpretations, goals, and objectives asserted by black artists engaged in the process of creating and producing.

It also centres on the idea and perspective of cultural works when received by the targeted audience. The concept of black aesthetics aims to examine the various factors that influence the creation of unique cultural products by African Americans. It also explores the significance of these products in the lives of African-Americans. Thus, the black aesthetic concept is useful in identifying the multiple cultural contexts in which black artistic products are made.

They argued further that black aesthetics raises and addresses three central questions, which are: "1) What are the social functions of black arts and black artistic creativity? What are the cogent features of life, art, and culture that should be uncovered, promoted, and emphasised? And lastly, how has this creativity promoted and changed the individual and collective behaviour of blacks in divergent settings over time? These are very intriguing questions because they help in the African self-identification process and show through whose eyes how we intend to see ourselves as far as artistic creativity is concerned. Therefore, black aesthetics is an artistic product of social significance.

Decay/Decadence

Decay and decadence can be used interchangeably within the scope of this study. According to Weir (2018), the concept is associated with the fall of the old Roman Empire. Decadence is obtained from the Latin word "decadere" which means "to decay". It has its historical interpretation as the fall of ancient Rome as a result of social decay and political corruption. This, in turn, influenced the literary works of that era. Weir (2018) contends further that, during the same time in England, the Victorian era was characterised by industry, scientific progress, and high moral standards, but it was also characterised by moral corruption, poverty, materialism, and commercialism.

Weir (2018) continues that, in contemporary times, decadence may be understood as the aesthetic expression of conflicted attitudes toward modernity. Where modernity refers to the vast complex of social, political, and technological transformations that emerged in the early nineteenth century. Therefore, the concept of decadence is deeply rooted in urbanism. The term "decadence" will be used in this study to refer to behaviours or activities shown in the two books that have the potential to impede socio-political and economic growth within the context of the texts.

The above exposition suggests that there are many different ways to perceive decay. One of the ways is that decay can be described as a process that involves the death of something or the destruction of something. This process is not a pleasant experience, but it must happen according to the laws of nature and the natural way of life in order for something new to emerge. Thus, decay/decadence

is frequently associated with aestheticism, and the terms are frequently used interchangeably. Within the scope of this study, decay/decadence is defined as both decline and decomposition, with a focus on understanding the declining aspect of the concept. Thus, both decay/decadence aesthetics represent an era where artwork took on a new form by denouncing its association with society.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has first looked at the background of the study, and a brief biographical and social background of the authors, Benjamin Kwakye and Chinua Achebe. The chapter then moved on to the purpose of the study and then the research questions. The significance of the study was also looked at. The study then moved on to the delimitations, where the focus of the study was provided. Then the method by which the study is guided was also provided. A synopsis of the two texts, *A Man of the People* and *The Clothes of Nakedness* was also provided. Furthermore, various terminologies that were used in this study were also defined.

Organisation of the study

This study has been grouped into five chapters. The first chapter, the introduction, provides a general background to the study. It presents the identified problem and states the purpose of the research as well as its significance. Chapter Two constitutes the literature review. It discusses the theoretical perspective that will be used in analysing the texts under study. The chapter will further review the empirical literature on the two texts as well as the concepts of aesthetic decay. The

chapter three examines how the author, Benjamin Kwakye, contextualizes and communicates the aesthetic of decay in his text, taking into consideration, the aesthetic elements as well as their significance as portrayed in the text. In a similar manner, chapter four also presents how Chinua Achebe contextualizes and communicates the aesthetic of decay in his text taking into consideration, the aesthetic elements as well as their significance as portrayed in the text. Chapter Five presents a summary of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The previous chapter was generally about the background of the study. It detailed the history of aestheticism and its application to this study. This chapter gives an exposition on the theories, the various concepts, as well as the empirical literature which informs this study. This chapter is divided into three parts. It will first introduce the reader to the theoretical framework with which the researcher will conduct the study. And then move on to review works of literature on the concept of aesthetics of decay. Furthermore, the chapter will review works of literature that critique Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of The People*.

Theoretical framework

This section delves into the theoretical framework underlying this research. The aesthetic theory is employed because it adopts the objectives of both the didactic value and the aesthetic value of art. The theory will also allow for a broader and in-depth understanding of the texts being used.

Aesthetic Theory by Theodor Adorno

The theory chosen for this study is aesthetic theory, also known as aestheticism. The theory has evolved over the years, with numerous versions and proponents. However, Adorno's aesthetic theory will be used for this study because it combines several aesthetic theoretical objectives from other scholars like Hegel, Marx, Kant, Plato, and Tolstoy. Adorno's aesthetic theory was published in 1970

after his death (Gordon, 2021). As already stated, Adorno's aesthetic theory is heavily influenced by the ideas of Hegel and Marx, who both emphasise the importance of intellectual import and the embeddedness of art in society which focuses on two main themes: the first is a Hegelian question about the survival of art in a capitalist world, and the second is a Marxian stance on the potential of art to transform society. Both questions are based on the idea that art should be given formal autonomy, which also dwells on Kant's idea that "art proper", also known as "fine art" or "beautiful art," is distinguished by formal autonomy. (Hegelian and Marxian).

Adorno's position on these themes is that if art can survive in the capitalist world, it must retain its formal autonomy. At the same time, he incorporates this concept with Hegel and Marx's insistence that art also carries intellectual import since art is inevitably embedded in society. As Luke (2018) observes, Hegel and Marx's arguments that art is embedded in society and that the intellectual import of art is also vital to society suggest that artworks should be socially and politically relevant. Although the two categories can be mixed, they still inform each other. Nonetheless, Adorno opposes the idea that artworks should be reduced to a purely social function. Instead, he prioritises works that are formally autonomous, politically mediated and socially relevant, which is also comparable to Kant's free beauty, beauty that transcends function. Art should be independent and beautiful, and at the same time, didactic or politically engaged. Adorno's ultimate goal is to find the truth content of art, which is a dialectic between form and content. The

tensions of these works are often encountered during the artist's struggle with the production conditions.

In addition, the theory reconstructs aesthetics from the perspective of modern art by eliciting the socio-historical significance of art, terming it as “the social antithesis of society” (Hohendahl, 2013). According to Adorno, the modern art movement is different from its predecessors in that it has more freedom. Adorno believed that artworks should have more “truth content” in them. “Truth content” in this regard refers to the deeper meanings that lie in the artist’s creative expression (Ross, 2015). This means that instead of having strong aesthetics, artworks should have more freedom. However, there will always be an individualised interpretation of that artwork, which will always be different, both negative and positive. These interpretations do not define the artist's work. According to Adorno’s aesthetic theory, examining artwork with an individual perception removed from society allows one to understand how the artwork relates to the traditions of the day, with “truth content” found in the link between many dynamic interactions.

Also, Adorno’s aesthetic theory combines two main notions from Kant and Marx (Rose, 2014), who also like Hegel, question whether arts can help change society. Both believe that, at best, art is a representation of reality. Since the artist is only focused on the representation of reality, it is assumed that he should stop imitating and start looking for the best possible image. In engaging with the work of Karl Marx and how it relates to aesthetic theory, Adorno focuses his analysis on how Marxism is applied in cultural contexts, particularly in the areas of art, beauty, and taste. According to Marx, art can represent the conditions under which people

live, and can also help improve such conditions. Within the context of the aesthetics theory, a dialectical discourse can be understood as a type of discussion that aims to establish a fact through a reasoned argument.

Just like Marx (Rose, 2014), Talon-Hugon (2018) notes that Kant's contribution to the development of aesthetic theory is no different from that of Marx and Hegel. He equally combines aesthetic value and traditional art value in his submissions. He provides four features of aesthetic judgments, which are disinterested, universality, purpose and purposiveness, and necessity. Kant's first argument that beauty is disinterested, means that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, and not because we find it pleasurable. The second is that aesthetic judgment is universal and necessary, which implies that it involves an expectation or demand for other people's approval or agreement in perceiving an object of beauty.

The third argument introduces the concepts of purpose and purposiveness, which can also be translated as "end" and "finality." The concept explains that an object is created for its purpose. This means that, while artworks may have been created with a purpose in mind, such as the artist wanting to express a certain mood or communicate a certain idea, these cannot be sufficient for the object to be beautiful. Kant asserts that the beautiful must be understood as purposive but without a specific goal. A definite purpose is defined as the set of external or internal goals that an object was created to achieve. The former is usually judged according to its usefulness, while the latter is judged according to its perfection (Hume, 2017)

In the fourth argument, Kant attempts to demonstrate that aesthetic judgments must pass the test of being 'necessary,' which effectively means that the judgment must follow a principle. This necessity, however, is unique in that it is both 'exemplary' and 'conditioned'. This argument leads to the conclusion that Kant believes that artwork has a purpose in form (which is the work's internal property) and must also serve the intended purpose for which it was created (which is its external property).

Again, Adorno talks about the perception of aesthetic beauty. He argues that the mind can recognise beauty in artwork by determining its complexity and symmetry. This allows it to evaluate the content of the work in order to determine if it is beautiful or not. He explains further that although political thoughts, emotional reactions, and other personal judgments tend to override one's perception of aesthetic beauty, it does not make an artwork any less beautiful. He contends that art is the philosophical expression of beauty and taste in terms of the creation and appreciation of artistic expressions (Gordon, 2021). Again, the theory explains that art has the ability to create or alter sensory values or emotional reactions, which aesthetics refers to as judgment of taste or sentiment. When any form of creative expression is viewed, each person has a unique reaction to that artwork, which can be positive or negative, which Tolstoy refers to as "good" and "bad" art. To Adorno, authentic modern works of art express some of the conflicts that existed in the world in which these works were created. He thus focuses on the fact that the content and function of an artwork should be understood in relation to each other.

The next objective is to promote the traditional didactic value of art, which is detailed in Tolstoy's famous work "What is Art?". According to Attard (2018) and Moland (2019), aesthetic value coexists with the didactic value of art. Art is defined in terms of its capacity to convey moral concepts, and these moral qualities are what define artistic values. Again, he believes the goal of art is not simply to create beauty or to provide pleasure, enjoyment, or entertainment, but also that art is a form of communication and an important way to express any experience or aspect of the human condition. This implies that works of art can and should be understood in terms of their capacity to communicate knowledge and enlightenment of social-political and existential conditions.

Tolstoy uses the terms "good" and "bad" in a moral sense to indicate that a specific work is an example of bad art if it meets Tolstoy's aesthetic criteria and is bad if it has a negative moral impact on the public. However, in the ordinary sense, "bad art" refers to something closer to "non-art" or "weak art," but for Tolstoy, non-art is in a category entirely separate from bad art, and weak art is a concept devoid of meaning. Three assumptions are made about the aesthetic character of art. First and foremost, art is a form of communication (Rose, 2014).

The term "communication" is used to refer to the process of making a work of art accessible and comprehensible to others. There are two forms of communication that are commonly used in this type of work: expression and infection. The expression refers to the process where the artist expresses their subjective thoughts and ideas. The infection is described as the process of making a work of art accessible to the public. Tolstoy equates the infection process to understanding the

artist's thoughts and ideas. He also states that art is a process that allows the public to become objective observers of the work. The second assumption is that art is good if it is perceived as good by the majority of its readers or audience.

Another assumption is that art consists of two categories: the first category is that art in the broader sense may be defined as containing all communications of feeling. Among Tolstoy's examples are processions and jests. A procession may be art in that it expresses feelings of solemnity and grandeur and impresses these feelings on those who behold it. A comic work may be art in that it expresses a feeling of levity that is imparted to those who hear it.

Lastly, aesthetic taste is not a matter of recognising that an aesthetic object possesses emotional qualities; rather, it involves the reader's ability to transfer himself into the artist's mind, re-enact his creative expression, and thereby allow his clarified emotion to be manifested in the artist's creative expression. This allows the artist's clarified emotion to be manifested in the reader or the audience. In aesthetic experience, every duality between ourselves and the artist is transcended. Thus, the reader or audience is able to share the artist's feelings or emotions. This, in turn, allows the reader or audience to look upon the same world as the artist with the same heart and eyes, etc.

From the ongoing discussion about the aesthetic theory, two key objectives stand out: the autonomy of art and its embeddedness in society. The current study employs Adorno's aesthetic theory in its analysis because of its ability to synthesise ideas from Hegel, Marx, Kant, and Tolstoy, and to balance questions of form, beauty, autonomy, and social function, which are concerns central to the two novels

under discussion. The theory's insistence on formal autonomy is particularly useful in identifying the texts' aesthetic elements and the techniques the authors used in making those elements aesthetic. These techniques align with Kant's notion of purpose and purposiveness. At the same time, Adorno, echoing Hegel and Marx, argues that artworks carry 'intellectual import' because they remain inevitably embedded in society. This view allows this study to interpret the same devices as commentaries on postcolonial conditions, thus drawing out their didactic significance. As an illustration, Achebe's satirical depictions of Chief Nanga are not merely social critique; their impact stems from the tension between ironic exaggeration (form) and political corruption (content). Similarly, Kwakye's symbolic use of decay serves as both a choice of style and an aesthetic means of exposing moral and political collapse in urban Ghana. Fundamentally, in my view, just like Adorno, art continues to survive in the modern world precisely because it combines autonomy (aesthetic significance) with embeddedness (didactic significance). This analytical approach enables the current study to maintain the formal autonomy of Achebe and Kwakye's works while also highlighting their important role in mediating social and political realities. The next section seeks to provide a review of the literature on the aesthetics of decay.

Empirical Review

This section seeks to review empirical studies on the aesthetics of decay in general. It will then move to review works of literature on Achebe's *A Man of The People* and Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*

Aesthetics of decay

Trigg (2006) argues in his “The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia, and the Absence of Reason” that ruins are not places to be re-established, admired, and monumentalised, and neither are contemporary ruins beautiful. Instead, he demonstrates a method by which the true meaning of ruins can be observed and navigated, especially when it comes to literary works, philosophy, fine art, poetry, and music. Trigg also suggests a better way of experiencing, defining, and approaching the aesthetics of decay. Trigg begins by demonstrating what ‘Nothingness’ mean by first talking about Heidegger's concept of ‘nothing’, according to which the question of nothing is compounded with the question of being.

According to Trigg, Heidegger puts forward that the question of being and the question of nothingness should be put together. Thus, when we start to recognise this as an area of reflection, we experience an existential anxiety of facing nothingness. In contrast to Heidegger, Trigg puts the nothing in a spatial context and argues for less anxiety in the face of nothing. Instead of combining nothingness with anxiety, Trigg chooses to combine nothingness with silence and violence. “I will seek to reclaim the nothing from its anxious roots & place it within a spatial realm while simultaneously retaining its metaphysical significance” (Trigg, 2006). Trigg contends again that before nothingness leads to silence, one must realise that the violence that allowed nothingness in the first place is absent or no longer exists, making the silence all the more apparent, “The presence of silence, when sufficiently forceful to recall its origin, is, I will seek to prove, the interceding agent

between pure experience and pure nothingness. Silence like nothingness is absent upon inspection: we do not find it there as such” (Trigg, 2006). Thus, in the face of nothingness, there is silence. Trigg exemplifies nothingness in the context of mourning, demonstrating that mourning is an experiential silence even when there is a sense of violence at the time of extreme pain. When examined critically, one can see that the violence is actually absent, leaving only silence.

Trigg further contends that nostalgia is the longing for a past that was better than the present, and as a result, the present is inadequately represented, which evokes feelings of nostalgia. He explains further that the use of history illustrates the excessive reverence shown toward historical occurrences. Trigg exemplifies a scenario where the current generation desires future generations to adopt and cherish their way of life and beliefs as a way of preserving old traditions and not losing their significant elements may result in newer advancements being overlooked.

Trigg argues about the 'absence of reason' that rationality cannot maintain permanency and order. He cites an instance that during the 18th century, the reason was sustained by piety, but thereafter it has been a history of decline. Rationality doesn't always neatly accommodate ruin, entropy, and eventual decline, as the reason in the shadow of decay is transient. The flourishing of that reason is contradicted by the ruin, which stands as a testament to the irrational and the soon-to-be post-rational.

Unlike Trigg (2006), Fein (2011) “The Aesthetic of Decay: Space, Time, and Perception” discusses how photography is used to capture memories of

abandoned structures and places. Fein (2011) notes that photographs communicate the story of decayed settings in the most direct and conceivable way. Fein's argument is based on the aesthetic of decay that is found in the urban areas of Midwest America. He contends that interest in urban decay, specifically the photography of it has grown on the internet, galleries, and published works which shows the inherent beauty people find in architecture that has lost its purpose.

He acknowledges that the process of decay which is caused by abandonment takes place over time where the end product of the decay is ruin, and defined ruin in reference to architecture as "ancient works that have decayed over hundreds of years, and still act as architecture expressions of culture, exclusively aesthetic level: beauty". He posits further that during the romanticism era in the late Eighteenth century, the concept of ruin in visual art placed special emphasis on emotions with regard to aesthetic beauty which I found to be in tune with Trigg (2006) "absence of reason". Thus, the concept of ruin took to the interest of both archeology as well as romantic beauty which is still significant in modern times. In terms of ruin, photography helps depicts and preserve archeological space. This leads to the comparative perception of decay; a situation whereby certain space is amplified, while others are subdued due to its ruined nature that has led to its unattractive. The purpose of such an investigation is to comprehend as well as leverage the various components in order to guide an architectural strategy in remuneration. However, these remunerations do not maintain the old aesthetics of the ruin because each strategy alters the originality of the ruined space or structure. For instance, renovation provides a redesign of space, and demolishing removes traces of the

building totally destroying the evidence of the decay. As such, the preservation of decayed buildings is aesthetic in the sense that they preserve the evidence of memory.

Similar to Fein (2011), Kompatsiaris (2012) “Environments of Aesthetic Decay”, considers the aesthetics of decay in an environment that has been captured in a photograph. Their point of distinction is that, whereas Fein (2011) examines the aesthetics of decay in structures captured in photography, Kompatsiaris (2012) examines the aesthetics of the decay in the environment. Kompatsiaris asserts that photographic images are explored as material objects that travel, mediate effect, change hands, and are employed as forensic evidence, symbolic trade objects, and meaning generators. It also underlines how ethnographic research can generate meaning-related problems while exploring the familiarities and unfamiliarities that affect visual representations. More specifically, Kompatsiaris (2012) explores how similar images with some formal and contextual similarities could be used as a starting point for ethnographic research. Rather than addressing how the images themselves were constructed to communicate the specific circumstances in which they appear, the study maps a possible ethnographic reading that can arise from the formal and contextual encounters between the two images offered in the text.

In literary writings, Awitor (2014) discusses the socio-political, economic, and moral decay of post-independence Ghanaian and Keyan society portrayed in the two texts, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Kill Me Quick*. Awitor (2014) exposes the pervasive corruption of Ghanaian societies and the failure of the economic and socio-political policies of Nkrumah’s regime by using filth,

putrescence, and excreta to present the unpleasant environment of the protagonists. The omnipresence of filth metaphorically shows the decadence of the system and the reality of a dirty landscape in Takoradi or Accra (the probable setting of the text) and in most African cities. In a word, experimental language is used to depict the corrupt society as well as the stifling and dirty environment in which the characters live.

Again, Brawley (2016) explains that the aesthetics of decay in Thomas Ligotti's book *The Bungalow House* represent his philosophical worldview which evokes a unique mood in the reader. A brief review of Ligotti's book reveals how central decay is to his aesthetic. For example, a reading of his book *Teatro Grottesco* reveals an abundance of crumbling houses, deserted factories, decaying towns, defunct hotels, broken-down carnival rides, and dilapidated shacks, just to name a few. What is overlooked is how much these locations represent Ligotti's philosophical position. Ligotti confesses in a personal correspondence to the author that most readers can relate to the stories' outward decay, but not necessarily with what that decay signifies as he describes such places of decay as "My own sad self, yet at the same time a shelter for that self,". "It's a scummy and comfy zone where I can curl up in a corner and dream" (Brawley, 2016).

The preceding literature all agree on one thing: the aesthetics of decay occurs as a result of human activity. Thus, human abandonment resulted in the perception of decay from the content of ruined buildings and the environment. To document such ruins, photography was used as forensic evidence. There were also suggestions on how to renovate such ruined structures for human use. Awitor

(2014) viewed the aesthetics of decay as a metaphor rather than a literal representation. Brawley (2016), on the other hand, discusses ruined buildings in Thomas Ligotti's "The Bungalow House," and so do Fein (2011), Kompatsiaris (2012), and Trigg (2006). Brawley (2016) clarifies, however, that the decay represents the author's philosophical worldview. In light of this, this study identifies with the above works that the aesthetics of decay is indeed associated with human activities, whether in literal or metaphoric portrayal.

The next section of the literature review will examine studies that have been carried out on the selected texts for this study.

Review of Empirical Studies on *A Man of the People*

According to Dajja-Tiou (2018), Achebe's works in general depict the various aspects of life in Nigeria that is starting to emerge from its colonial past. He continues that the realism of Chinua Achebe's novel *A Man of the People* can be demonstrated by the fact that the events that were depicted in the text actually happened in Nigeria. Achebe's extensive experience as depicted in *A Man of the People* talks about the African political, social, and environmental decay in a way that is realistic, and these various forms of decay portrayed are thus disgusted by the reader due to the growing unrest within the Nigerian society as well as its relatability to similar situations or occurrences in other African societies.

Dajja-Tiou (2018) explains further that during this postcolonial period when Achebe wrote his novel, *A Man of the People*, the country had become a "cesspool of corruption and misrule". What this means is that the postcolonial era in Nigeria saw many forms of corruption in the country which resulted in the

emergence of an “elitist middle class” and the conflict between the general population as well as the emerging middle class in the Nigerian society. Thus, Achebe’s ability to represent the Nigerian environment and his realistic portrayal of the country's economic and political state during the time in which the novel was written has made him a highly regarded novelist. His characterisation of the country's problems has the potential to inspire a revolution.

This revolution occurred in 1967 during a military coup in Nigeria where many prominent politicians were arrested. Thus, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* was able to recreate Nigerian society in a way that was both relatable and realistic through his persuasive arguments about the lives of various government officials. In his novel *A Man of the People*, Achebe rejected the notion that art should only be made to justify its existence to nobody. Instead, he portrayed that the goal of art to serve the needs of its users. He also demonstrated through his novel that good stories should have a purpose and should be uplifting. Achebe again demonstrated that people should first perceive the world through the eyes of other plausible individuals.

In addition, Dadja-Tiou (2018) talked about characters and characterisation in Achebe’s *A Man of The People* as one of the main reasons why Achebe's works are so popular. The main characters, Odili and Chief Nanga, are both realistic and relatable in society. For instance, Achebe’s character, Chief Nanga represents the corrupt and opportunistic leaders who exploit their positions for personal benefit, often at the expense of the very people they claim to represent. Thus, Nanga's portrayal reflects the prevalence of politicians who prioritize their interests over

public welfare. Odili represents the educated and optimistic young generation that emerged following colonial control. His initial enthusiasm and faith in positive transformation reflect the optimism of young people who envision a better future for their society. Odili's path, however, depicts the disillusionment and compromise that can surface when confronted with the harsh realities of corruption and power. Besides Chief Nanga and Odili, other notable characters such as Edna, Josiah, and Mrs. Nanga are also relatable.

Thus, Achebe's ability to capture the essence of Nigeria's political, social, and economic situations through his novels has helped him gain a reputation as a leading figure in the field of African literature.

Kareem (2017) also explores the various social and political situations that occurred following Nigeria's independence in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. According to Kareem (2017), the aim of the portrayal of the political situation after Nigeria's independence is to educate the reader that many Nigerian political leaders are incapable of leading the country. Achebe achieves this by exploring the corruption and mismanagement in post-independent Nigeria through the character Chief Nanga, a politician who is determined to stay in power even though his incompetence is acknowledged. In the novel, Chief Nanga uses his political position for personal gain while ignoring the concerns of the masses which clearly depicts how the leaders in post-colonial Nigeria betrayed their citizens thereby rendering their independence useless. The depiction of Chief Nanga also shows how the leaders failed to represent the citizens or recognise their needs as well as find solutions to some of their basic needs.

Kareem (2017) particularly notes that one of the main factors that contributed to Nigeria's socio-economic challenges after its independence was the lack of shelter. The lack of shelter indicates more significant issues in Nigeria, which are the government's indifference toward the plight of its citizens and its failure to address the basic needs of the people. It also displays its self-centeredness and estrangement from ordinary people. For instance, in the novel, the protagonist, Odili, visits his former teacher, Chief Nanga. He notices a significant difference between the luxurious mansion of Chief Nanga and the impoverished slums where the common people live. This contrasting situation highlights societal inequality and the misplaced priorities of the ruling class.

Achebe criticises the absence of shelter as an illustration of how the political elite disregards the needs of the people they are supposed to represent. It also reflects how post-colonial African countries are struggling to achieve substantial growth and development as a result of nepotism, corruption, and resource misallocation.

In addition, the character Chief Nanga portrays the image of the politicians just as they are in reality. During his speech at Anata School, Chief Nanga claimed that he is a patriot who is from the country's grassroots. However, he does nothing beneficial to his community or the people who have hope in him.

Kodah (2017) on the other hand contextualises Achebe's *A Man of the People* as a political satire that focuses on democracy in Nigeria. Compared with Dadja-Tiou (2018) and Kareem (2017) who generally give a perspective of post-colonial Nigeria through a thematic representation in Achebe's *A Man of The People*, Kodah (2017) discusses that Achebe employs both Juvenalian and Menippean satirical

denunciations in *A Man of the People*, allowing him to criticise the socio-political condition in a harsher tone. In other terms, the denunciation discourse examined the novel's open criticism of numerous cultural and political subjects exposing the weaknesses and failures of political leaders through denunciations, shedding light on corruption, political conflicts, and moral decay in post-colonial African cultures. Therefore, the denunciations are meant to draw attention to the hardships that the newly independent nation is facing, as well as the disillusionment felt by its citizens.

Kodah (2017) notes further that this observation of denunciation discourse prompts readers to reflect on the various lessons that have been learned from the literature produced in Africa over the years. The denunciation discourse also allows readers to understand the complexities of the transition from colonial rule to independence and the subsequent challenges confronted by the newly formed governments. Thus, *A Man of The People* contributes to a more thorough knowledge of the historical context and the difficulties that affected many African states during the transition period by condemning corruption and abuse of power. Furthermore, Achebe's use of the various elements of humor, satire, and violence to expose the corruption and socio-cultural issues that are prevalent in the emerging nation-state aims to call for a comprehensive political and economic transformation to ensure that the country becomes sustainable. The discourse of denunciation also reflects the use of characters to embody and symbolise various social and political themes. The novel criticises not only individual characters but also the entire systems and structures they represent by denouncing their actions and behaviors.

This technique enables readers to relate personal experiences with societal problems. Through denunciation, the novel challenges readers to contemplate moral and ethical considerations and to ponder questions of accountability, integrity, and the responsibilities of leadership.

Muunda (2019) on the other hand contributes to Achebe's *A Man of The People* and *Anthills of The Savannah* by looking at the portrayal of women in power and politics emphasising the social transformation of the female characters. Muunda argues that the Stiwanism theory provides a unique perspective on how the Achebe portrays these female characters. Muunda (2019) explains that the way women are depicted in the novel using this theory provides a distinct depiction of the issues faced by them. For instance, Achebe portrays strong women such as Eunice the lawyer in *A Man of the People*, and Beatrice Okoh in *Anthills of the Savannah*. Through Beatrice, Achebe is able to give a positive representation of women in society redefining the language used to describe their political participation and identity. In other words, Achebe challenges traditional gender roles and expectations by portraying modern and educated strong female characters like Beatrice, who is highly educated and holds influential positions in society, demonstrating that women can be leaders, thinkers, and agents of change in their communities.

Generally, while I acknowledge the perspectives presented by Muunda (2019) regarding the portrayal of strong women in Achebe's *Anthills of The Savannah*, I diverge with the perspective pertaining to the depiction of strong women in *A Man of The People*. Evidence from the text, *A Man of the People*

suggests that women are portrayed as having limited political power. This is because the plot is set in a patriarchal society where men hold most of the political power and decision-making authority, and women are often limited to supporting roles, such as wives, mistresses, or daughters of male politicians. Their roles are defined primarily by their relationships with male characters rather than their personal political aspirations. For instance, Mrs. Nanga and Mrs. Max Kelton are primarily defined by their roles as wives to the male protagonists. The female characters are depicted as submissive to the male characters, reflecting the traditional patriarchal norms of the society at the time. This is evident in the relationship between politicians and their wives, who often lack a strong voice or initiative in political and social changes.

Consequently, Mrs. Nanga's character in the novel can be interpreted as a mirror of cultural conventions and power dynamics. While Chief Nanga is portrayed as a charismatic and strong figure, his wife's decision to stay with him despite his infidelity and neglect is influenced by his position and prestige. Thus, Mrs. Nanga tolerates her husband's infidelity and neglect for her because he is a powerful figure with positions of control. Mrs. Nanga's decision to stay in such a marriage is also influenced by her fear of social stigma, financial reliance, and a lack of options. Mrs. Nanga's persona thus highlights the complicated dynamics of relationships in a society dominated by power and injustice. In a similar fashion, Edna's father pushes for his daughter's marriage to Chief Nanga because he wanted his daughter to have social status and financial freedom. Marrying his daughter to a powerful and important man like Chief Nanga will elevate the family's status, as

well as give their family access to other opportunities. Edna, on the other hand, had no opinion about the marriage, despite the fact that she clearly desired to marry Odili. Moreover, the text depicts a collaborative effort of female characters who unite to help the male figures, highlighting that no event, whether a political gathering or election, transpires without the influential participation of women. As an illustration, during an election season, Chief Koko's wife is tasked with coordinating women to ensure the success of the election. These instances demonstrates that contrary to the strong women portrayed in Achebe's *Anthill of the Savannah*, women in *A Man of the People* are depicted as submissive, voiceless and less powerful to their male counterpart.

Khadidja and Hadjer (2020) focus on the theme of corruption in Achebe's *A Man of the People* analysing how Achebe used real events in Nigerian history to address the theme and how he exposed and criticised corrupt political leaders in the country through his novel. *A Man of the People* reflects the act of corruption that has persisted in Nigeria following its independence. Achebe demonstrates in *A Man of The People* that the main sources of corruption are greediness, poverty, and societal attitudes. Achebe demonstrates this by integrating historical occurrences and societal concerns into the plot. For instance, the main character, Odili, initially supports Chief Nanga, who pledges to enact positive transformations in their community and the country at large. However, as the plot develops, it becomes evident that Chief Nanga, like any other political figures in the society, is primarily propelled by self-centered interests to neglect his initial promise to the people who voted him into power. Achebe employs Chief Nanga's persona to bring to light the

strategies exploited by dishonest leaders to maneuver and mislead the general public for their personal gains.

Shah (2020) examines the social spread of English in Achebe's *A Man of the People* using the Kachru model as a tool of linguistic and political imperialism. Through a qualitative research design, the study explored the various factors that influence the development and use of English in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. The Kachrus three-circle model was created in 1985 by Braj Kachru and is regarded as one of the most effective models for grouping English varieties, it divides the global spread and use of English into three concentric circles: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. The setting of *A Man of the People*, Nigeria, follows the Outer Circle of Kachru model since English was introduced by British colonial rule. Thus, in the novel, English is employed as a symbol of power among the upper classes, including politicians and bureaucrats, who communicate in English to maintain their status and control. This linguistic barrier fosters a feeling of superiority among the educated class and alienates those who are not fluent in English.

Furthermore, the ability of educated elites to use English effectively gives them an edge in politics, allowing them to use the language to their own benefit. They create political narratives, manipulate public opinion, and maintain control over the masses. This control of language reflects the larger theme of political imperialism, where those in power use a variety of tools, including language, to exercise power and maintain dominance.

Owusu (2022), like Khadidja and Hadjer (2020), focuses on the theme of corruption and notes that in all of Achebe's novels to date, corruption or abuse of power is explored in multiple ways. For instance, in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo uses his position of power to abuse his household through a combination of implacable will and brute force. In *No Longer at Ease*, the central character, Obi, finds himself in a position of responsibility and power as Nigeria prepares for its independence. Furthermore, *A Man of the People* revolves around events that happened in 1966 when an army took over Nigeria.

During the colonial period, Nigeria, like many other African countries, endured resource exploitation and oppression at the hands of colonial authorities. As colonial officials exploited resources and abused their positions of power, corruption began to take root. After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the newly formed government inherited a system that was heavily rooted in corruption. The colonial legacy of corrupt practices and systems persisted, making it challenging to eradicate. Postcolonial rulers in Nigeria therefore imitated the corrupt practices of their colonial rulers and continued exploiting national resources for personal gain while rewarding their loyal followers with lucrative government contracts and positions, thus continuing a circle of corruption. Corruption had devastating effects on Nigerian society. It hindered economic development, undermined public trust in government, and worsened poverty and inequality (Owusu, 2022).

In addition to the observation made by Owusu (2022), Ogunrotimi, Bamigboye and Omotunde (2022) note that although the novel does not provide the

name of a country, all of the contextual elements are similar to those found in Nigeria, making the conflicts in *A Man of The People* historically defined. During the colonial era, the imperialists had the dominant position in the country and directed the socio-cultural and political development of the nation. Despite the various cultural and socio-political divisions that existed in the indigenous societies, colonialism still led to new structures that were detrimental to the old ones. After the country's independence, the introduction of civil and democratic government led to the emergence of a new class of individuals who were more capable of using their power than the colonialists. These individuals, who were the ruling elite utilised the various tools available to maintain the status quo.

One of the main factors that contributed to the biased behavior of the elite is the idea that upper-class life faces a lot of burdens and challenges that the lower classes never encounter. In the novel, Chief Nanga repeatedly says that he sometimes regrets leaving the teaching profession. Also, whenever Chief Nanga had the opportunity to tell the lower class that their way of life was better than that of a minister, he always reminded them. Similarly, his wife, who is well-dressed and living in a mansion, adheres to this upper-class mindset. According to her, any woman who marries a pastor has a worse marriage than a night watchman. Chief Nanga's regret about leaving his teaching position is ironic given that he has evolved into a dishonest and self-serving politician. He may regret his decisions, but he continues to seek political power and fortune, emphasising his moral uncertainty.

The preceding works of literature point to a considerable depth of scholarly engagement with Achebe's novel, *A Man of the People*. The recurring theme identified in these analyses pertains to the portrayal of the socio-political and economic landscape in Nigeria, which finds particular resonance within a section of the current study, particularly where the didactic significance of the aesthetic elements will be discussed. Nevertheless, this study aims to further explore the aesthetic significance that underlies these themes, an area that previous scholarly research has not explored. The following section seeks to review the relevant literature on Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

Review of empirical studies on *The Clothes of Nakedness*

Mwinlaaru and Nkasah (2018) discuss how Kwakye uses the trickster character in *The Clothes of Nakedness* to construct a "semiotic figure" that explores the themes of social and economic insecurity and survival. The trickster's various features include his webbed spider imagery and his ability to manipulate and construct power. He also portrays himself as a villain and a "hero-scamp". The trickster figure in *The Clothes of Nakedness* embodies the art of survival in a world where opportunities are limited, and support structures have eroded. His actions are typically driven by the desire to ensure his well-being, and he frequently defies moral conventions in order to achieve this objective. Moreover, the trickster uses his cleverness and skill to cope with the challenges of an uncertain and challenging socioeconomic environment.

Furthermore, Mwinlaaru and Nkasah (2018) discuss four strategies that align the protagonist in *The Clothes of Nakedness* with the trickster character in

folklore. These strategies are the spider image of the trickster, trickery, and manipulation, the trickster's manifestation as hero-scamp, and dupe and villain. In addition to the oral forms that he utilised in his novel, Kwakye's art goes beyond the traditional incorporation of folklore to re-enact the trickster as a metaphor for Ghana's postcolonial social complexity. Their paper, therefore, examined Kwakye's analysis of the use of the trickster as a symbol of the urban problems of Accra. In his work, Kwakye uses the technique of indirection to create a universal name for his main character, Mystique Mysterious, and also to represent the folkloric trickster as a metaphor for conflicting interpretations.

Contrary to Mwinlaaru and Nkasah (2018), Akrong (2019) discusses the importance of adapting *The Clothes of Nakedness* into a film stating that despite the controversy that has been raised about the book, most of the criticism has focused on the problems of corruption, alcoholism, and the influence of the rich on the poor. As a result, the moral disposition of the women in the novel has not been sufficiently reviewed. Therefore, the concept of turning a book into a film will be a growing trend that can be used to promote values that are similar to those depicted in the book. For instance, discussions about feminism and gender theory that are evident in the book could be used to empower female audiences. In addition, when the film is released on a social media network such as YouTube and on Television, the message of the novel will be immediately revived and conveyed to a wider audience.

Moreover, in *The Clothes of Nakedness*, the plot sheds light on moral virtues such as diligence, determination, and integrity, which are primarily portrayed by

the female characters throughout the story. Additionally, the novel also highlights a lack of direction, ingenuity, and skill among the male characters providing a story that warns young people of the consequences of those shortcomings. It is noteworthy for these virtues to be imparted to younger generations through a film adaptation of the novel as a potent medium of mass communication.

Akrong (2019) notes that movies have become appealing to Ghanaian youth today and the popularity of Nigerian TV series and films is a prime example of this. Therefore, it is possible to adapt novels into films to foster in young people the values they want to develop. For example, the theme of love that prevails in long-running drama scenes is a factor that appeals to young people. Due to the popularity of telenovelas, one of the television channels in Ghana, Universal TV (UTV) has started broadcasting telenovelas with Twi voiceovers. As in telenovelas, the theme of love manifests itself in *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The love between Bukari and Fati and Mystique Mysterious attempt to seduce Fati are factors that are likely to attract the public. Moreover, Akrong (2019) makes it evident that storytelling has served as a longstanding method for imparting moral lessons within Ghanaian societies and African cultures in general.

I hold the same opinion as Akrong (2019) on the view that adopting *The Clothes of Nakedness* into a film can serve as a powerful tool for imparting values to a larger audience. Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasize that narratives aiming to convey moral values must inherently contain moral consequences or repercussions that align with those values. In other words, while adopting the novel into a movie can effectively transmit moral messages, it is important to ensure that

these messages are reinforced by the narrative's outcomes and events. However, Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* portrays themes involving alcoholism, drug abuse, fraudulent activities, and explicit content related to prostitution and promiscuity. In essence, the novel highlights numerous societal problems, including the exploitation of the less privileged by the rich among others. As previously observed by Mwinlaaru and Nkasah (2018), Kwakye has drawn upon the folkloric tradition of the main character, Mystique Mysterious, who possesses a trickster nature. This results in the wrongdoer escaping punishment while innocent characters like Bukari and Kojo Ansah are unfairly penalized and left to suffer. These themes, encompassing alcoholism, prostitution, exploitation, fraud, promiscuity, and injustices, among others, if not conveyed or guided appropriately, might inadvertently encourage rather than discourage such behaviors among young people.

Darkoh-Ankrah (2022) also notes that the paradox in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* warns against being deceived by empty promises. This warning is based on a proverb among the Akan people of Ghana, which states that the quality of a person's clothes can tell you how much they are worth. The proverb emphasizes the importance of clothing in conveying a person's identity. Therefore, when a financially disadvantaged individual makes extravagant promises, it is advisable to assess their financial situation before placing trust in their words. When the characters put on clothing or are depicted without adequate clothing, they reveal messages not only about themselves but also about those who look at them. Darkoh-Ankrah (2022) refers to an instance when Fati enters her home and finds an exposed

his upper body of her sleeping son because his covering had slipped down to his waist, she is overwhelmed with love. This strong emotional reaction is rooted in the challenging circumstances they've faced, and it reflects her relief that she has been able to protect her young son from the cold and illness by ensuring he is not exposed while sleeping.

Moreover, the character Mystique Mysterious in *The Clothes of Nakedness* is depicted as a symbol of oppression, greed, vanity, and discrimination. In line with this observation, an earlier observation by Nina Felshin (1995) cited in Darkoh-Ankrah (2022) notes that "as a familiar presence in figurative arts, clothing has functioned as both formal and iconographical evidence as a signifier of class and status". This is especially true for Mystique Mysterious, who appears to be in a class of his own and uses his clothing to affirm his social class.

Similarly to Darkoh-Ankrah (2022), Djaja-Tiou (2022) explores ways in which the prevalent metaphor of clothes and nakedness, which is rooted in Ghanaian proverbial wisdom, drives Kwakye's political and ethical agenda in *The Clothes of Nakedness*. *The Clothes of Nakedness* shares the disillusionment of earlier post-independence Ghanaian works such as Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*, and Laing's *Search Sweet Country*. In all these texts, the historical conditions of poverty, exploitation, and misery during the colonial period are portrayed as having solidified into unproductive political abilities, economic stagnation, and an overall sense of hopelessness. This portrayal of the disillusionment and general disenchantment in post-independence Ghana is supported by non-fictional accounts of contemporary Ghanaian life.

Djaja-Tiou (2022) also highlights in his article, the negative impact of corruption on Africans as well as on the development of postcolonial African countries and its rapid spread in society. The study reveals that the analysis of Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* is based on postcolonialism and Marxism and that corruption is a scourge that plagues most postcolonial African societies. The greed, laxity, and favoritism of political leaders lead to emulation among populations living in abject poverty. Corruption is a vice to which populations readily accommodate. Also, dishonesty and deceit have become the cherished values in the society. Thus, Kwakye's novel is a call to political leaders, and sources of corruption, to truly embark on the path of good governance. This new political orientation will make it possible to reduce drastically corruption at all levels of society and move towards sustainable development.

Further, Djaja-Tiou (2022) argues that Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* shows that corruption, deceit, and personal interests are values extolled by new African leaders. The pauperization in which most Africans live is due to this system of leadership settled by new leaders. Corruption is an evil that undermines most postcolonial African societies. The greed, laxity, and favoritism of political leaders lead to emulation among populations living in abject poverty. Corruption is a vice that populations readily accommodate. Dishonesty and immorality have become cherished values in society. Kwakye's novel is a call to political leaders, and sources of corruption, to truly embark on the path of good governance. This new political orientation will make it possible to defeat corruption at all levels of society and move towards sustainable development. Poverty becomes a mark of most Africans

and pushes many of them to compromise their moral and ethical values. Efforts should be jointly made both by the power holders as well as the masses so that they can contribute to the re-building of a new Africa ready to embrace the desired development.

The review of the two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People* reveal a considerable amount of existing literature on these texts. However, it is worth noting that much of the existing studies focus on themes and character analysis, with little to no attention paid to exploring the aesthetic aspects of these texts. Consequently, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by delving into the aesthetic values embedded in these themes. The exploration of characters and themes aligns with a section of this study that examines the didactic significance of the aesthetic elements. Furthermore, this study adds by highlighting the aesthetic values of *A Man of The People* and *The Clothes of Nakedness* to provide a new perspective as well as deepen our understanding of the aesthetic value present in the works of Achebe and Kwakye.

Chapter Summary

This section has focused on the literature review. It has discussed the theoretical review for this study, as well as empirical studies related to the two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*. The next chapter will discuss the aesthetic elements as well as their significance as portrayed in Kwakye's novel, *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

CHAPTER THREE

AESTHETIC ELEMENTS IN *THE CLOTHES OF NAKEDNESS*

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter of this study examined the underlying theory that is relevant to this research. Consequently, Adorno's aesthetic theory was employed because it was more relevant to the topic of this study and also incorporated the objectives of aestheticism by some of the renowned aesthetic writers such as Tolstoy, Hegel, and Kant, among others. The theory was also appropriate for exploring the objectives of this study. The previous chapter also reviewed works of literature that are related to this research. Moving on, this chapter seeks to answer the first research question "What aesthetic elements are portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?" In an attempt to answer the first research question, this chapter will focus on the first text which is Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. Subsequently in this same chapter, the second research question "What are the significances of the aesthetic elements portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?" will be examine in the first texts which is Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The discussions will be broken down into subtopics. Before delving into the various aesthetic elements and their significance, the study will first provide a brief overview of what aesthetic elements are.

Aesthetic Elements

Fowler (2016) defines aesthetic elements as the various literary features that bring about the aesthetic value of an artwork. The aesthetic values include but are

not limited to pleasure, amusement, and the enjoyment a reader experiences while engaged in a work of art. In broad terms, aesthetic elements are what inspire the reader; the presence of aesthetic elements motivates the reader and sustains his or her interest while reading a particular text, and this can be achieved by concentrating primarily on the aesthetic elements. For the purpose of this study, two aesthetic elements have been identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. They are aesthetic character and aesthetic setting. These two elements together elicit an aesthetic taste in the reader. Another significant aspect that brings about the aesthetic taste and value in most literary works is imagination. Imagination is the essence by which a writer makes his aesthetic character and setting more appealing or attractive to their readers. Therefore, an aesthetic taste involves exploring the concepts or messages an artist conveys in their work to captivate the imagination of their reader or audience, ultimately aiming to create pleasure.

In addition to the aforementioned features key to the appreciation of aesthetic work, it is considered that imagery and emotional reaction are important for the aesthetic appreciation of a literary text. This is because imagery plays a significant role by increasing the reader's engagement, as well as sustaining the reader's interest, and pleasure in the text. This implies that imagery creates a mental representation of scenes, simplifying the process for the reader to grasp the writer's intended message.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the aesthetic appreciation of a text is concerned with the interaction between the reader and the work, rather than with literary history, literary biography, or literary critique. As a result, denying the

reader the ability to interact with the content in an aesthetically pleasing, "lived-through" (Brincker, 2015) manner is likely to destroy their interest in reading the text. What this means is that the idea of appreciating the aesthetic value of a literary work may appear to place more emphasis on representational content rather than on elements such as the author's background, among others. However, these elements operate best together to help readers appreciate and understand literary works. The next subtopic will attempt to discuss the aesthetic character in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

Aesthetic character (Mystique Mysterious)

Aesthetic character generally refers to a fictional character that embodies a particular aesthetic or style and generally deals with adventurous events that elicit awe, amusement, and laughter among other feelings in the reader (Mejia & Montoya, 2017). In Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*, Mystique Mysterious is identified as the aesthetic character in the text based on his appearance, personality, and behaviour. Kwakye employed zoomorphism, aesthetic characterization, and imaginative or folklore elements to create the aesthetic character, Mystique Mysterious. The following sections will present a comprehensive analysis of the reasons why these features make the character Mystique Mysterious aesthetic and distinct from the other characters.

Zoomorphism

Bence (2021) conducted research on zoomorphism as a scientific methodology used as "a way of understanding the human mind". In a broader sense, zoomorphism is a tool that is used for understanding specific mental states humans

have based on postulating animal-like mental states. In literature, LeBlond (2017) earlier defined Zoomorphism as a literary technique that is used to attribute animal characteristics to humans. Zoomorphism may be similar to metaphor and can infuse writing with imagination by providing more vivid imagery and compelling descriptions of characters. When Mystique Mysterious made his first appearance in the text, Kwakye portrayed him as a character who was both engaging and captivating, yet full of mystery. Mystique Mysterious was introduced as:

He moved slowly, like a bored chameleon. It was as though his steps were a chore performed with difficulty but necessary for the accomplishment of compelling objectives. At his sides, his arms swung steadily, unhurried, like noiseless pendulums. The only swiftness in his movements was the sharp motion of his tongue, flickering through his lips and back again. Or perhaps his gaze was fixed unwaveringly ahead. It was impossible to tell, because his eyes were always hidden behind a pair of dark sunglasses, his barrier against curiosity of those who were drawn by his unnatural quality of energy and power (Pg.1).

The writer's choice of words used to describe Mystique Mysterious in the preceding section is lingering. Kwakye strategically crafts Mystique Mysterious' personality, actions, and overall presentation to stimulate curiosity about his identity and intentions. This deliberate approach aims to engage the reader, leaving them with lingering questions and fostering a sense of identification with the character. Therefore, the appearance of Mystique Mysterious acts as a cue for the audience to attentively focus on him. Furthermore, one may wonder about the choice of the term "chameleon" for a character description and no other animal. Kwakye's comparison of Mystique Mysterious to a chameleon implies a duality of the character's persona and also hints at his cleverness to adapt and change. This foreshadows some of the traits the reader should be cautious of in the character.

Aesthetically appreciating a character involves a lot of sensory activities, which primarily dwell on the creation of a vivid image of what you would want the reader to appreciate or remember. According to Gilmour (2008), Zoomorphism not only helps us comprehend human nature by comparing them to animals, but it also generates vivid mental images or imagery, making it easier to envision and empathise with the emotions and behaviour of the character. Kwakye achieves this through the use of imagery, specifically visual and kinesthetic imagery. For instance, Mystique Mysterious is described as “a bored chameleon” moving “slowly”, “calculative steps (that are) necessary for the accomplishment of (his) compelling objectives...his arms swung steadily, unhurried...his tongue, flickering through his lips and back again” and “his gaze was fixed unwaveringly ahead” (Pg.1). These images give the text a more vivid quality, increasing reader engagement and eliciting feelings such as excitement and suspense.

Another element of zoomorphism linked to the aesthetic nature of Mystique Mysterious reflects the chameleon's capacity to change its skin colour, effortlessly blending into its various surroundings. Unlike the actual chameleon which can change colour, the aesthetic character Mystique Mysterious can befriend all characters, adults, and children, rich and poor. An excerpt from the text describes that “Male and female, child and adult, all referred to him by that name “Mystique mysterious, in which they combine their respect for him, their fear of him, the fascination they felt for the unreachable person behind the shades” (Pg.1). In this excerpt, Mystique Mysterious is conscious of the fact that those around him both admired and feared him. Nevertheless, to gain acceptance and be recognised as part

of the group, he socialized with them by engaging in their activities like smoking and drinking. For instance, while at KILL ME QUICK with Bukari, Kofi Ntim and Kojo Ansah, Mystique Mysterious overlooks his preference just so he can win the affection of his friends. Despite his dislike for hard liquor, the passage portrays him as someone who, to integrate into Bukari's group and establish trust or friendship, purchases hard liquor not only for his friends but also for himself, even though it is not to his liking. The text recounts that “The smell of the liquor hit his nostrils hard and he winced a little. He could handle the more diluted stuff, but not this akpeteshie” (Pg.2). His adaptability to the various circumstances allows him to blend in quickly. He takes this further by drinking the liquor and the text describes the situation as he “almost winced again as the liquor burned his mouth and stomach. But because he could not show his weakness, he maintained his composure fighting the urge to grimace” (Pg.2 & Pg.3). These features are similar to the characteristics of the trickster character in African folklore found in Mwinlaaru and Nkansah (2018) who argue that Mystique Mysterious has characteristics of heroism, villain, and dupe which makes him unique among other characters in the text. Kwakye employs this unique technique to ensure that the aesthetic character lives up to his name.

Furthermore, the zoomorphism technique linked to the nature of the aesthetic character Mystique Mysterious, which depicts his ability to blend into his various environments easily, is further highlighted at 441, a suburb in Nima. An excerpt from the text reads “... no one was quite certain when Mystique Mysterious entered the private world of the gathering... Mystique Mysterious found an

unoccupied stool and sat on it”. (Pg. 26). This excerpt depicts an evening at Nima as a lively gathering of young people engaged in pleasant conversations about a variety of issues. In the midst of this exciting atmosphere, Mystique Mysterious is pulled to the location and decides to join the group, taking a seat among the lively debates. Upon his arrival, “The conversation that had died completely was revived, but only in the form of whispers” (Pg. 26). This suggests that the people acknowledge that Mystique Mysterious is not one of them. As a result, they are cautious around him and have reduced their communication to whispers. “Faces turned furtively, and here and there their agitated voices murmured into ears as the crowd struggled to remain calm” (Pg.27). Mystique Mysterious recognizes the alienation nature of his companions and in order for him to fit in or be acknowledged, and accepted into the group, Mystique Mysterious starts a conversation, “It’s a good day, no?” This won “a collective nodding of heads...I have something for you all...He tortured them a little before beginning to pass the packets around. The men grabbed the cigarettes hungrily...” (Pg. 27). In this excerpt, Kwakye presents the compelling nature of Mystique, emphasizing his ability to manipulate circumstances to his advantage. Thus, Mystique Mysterious endears himself to those around him, carefully adapting to their preferences and successfully winning their affection by providing these individuals with precisely what resonates with their interests and desires.

To reiterate, his social circle consists of individuals of varying age groups, including both adults and younger individuals. For instance, he forms a close friendship with Baba, the son of Bukari, and affectionately refers to him as "my

son," a term used with the deliberate intention of building a deep sense of trust and kinship (Pg. 28). This strategy not only proved to be effective but also generated a sense of joy and elation within Baba. According to Baba, "To be addressed directly by Mystique Mysterious was to achieve instant stardom" (Pg. 29). When Mystique Mysterious earlier acknowledged Baba as his son, he proceeded to demonstrate his paternal responsibility by generously giving some amounts of money to Baba.

Mystique Mysterious delved into his pocket and produced a bundle of money. He held it out so that Baba could see its thickness before handing it over to him. "This is for you Baba. I know you need the money since your father has been unemployed for so long and you don't do any work" (Pg.29).

This singular act of kindness was intended to instill a sense of indebtedness in Baba, deliberately positioning him as a victim of Mystique Mysterious's future schemes. He does these things to win the trust of these characters. For instance, an excerpt from the text explains that "He hoped to gain Baba's trust by addressing him as a father would" (Pg. 29). In addition to that, he does these favors in order to draw the characters further into his trap.

Furthermore, an additional zoomorphism technique Kwakye uses to achieve his aesthetic character is the wearing of "dark sunglasses". The term "dark sunglasses" is employed symbolically to suggest that the aesthetic character uses sunglasses to shield or conceal aspects of his personality as opposed to the practical function of shade which is to protect the eyes from the sun's rays. It is important to highlight that the eye is the window to the body, and the symbolic importance of the "dark sunglasses" in this context rests in its ability to limit the individual's vision. This perspective is particularly evident in the narrative when the character frequents KILL ME QUICK while wearing dark sunglasses, despite the diminished

sunlight. Consequently, the reduced luminosity within his vision symbolizes obscurity or lack of transparency within his intentions. In effect, the portrayal of the character wearing these "dark sunglasses" suggests an inclination towards mischief or dubious motives directed at others. Behind the dark glasses, Mystique Mysterious engages in meticulous activities, characterized by deliberate observation and examination, as evident in instances such as "studied...observed" (Pg. 2) and "studying" (Pg. 26). Much like the chameleon skillfully alters its skin colour to avoid detection by both its prey and predators, Mystique Mysterious adopts the guise of concealed vision through his dark sunglasses, allowing him to discreetly analyze and study his target without arousing awareness. An excerpt from the text reads "For a period, he did not speak, studying their faces under cover of his dark sunglasses (Pg. 26). This suggests that wearing sunglasses is a deliberate strategy for self-defense and control over people around him. An excerpt from the text shows that while wearing dark glasses and observing the faces of his intended victims, he enjoys in his heart "the respect he commanded among these men...flaunting his power in the silent challenge" (Pg. 26)."

Aesthetic characterisation (naming)

Another technique Kwakye employed to make his character aesthetic is the choice of the character name, Mystique Mysterious, which is influenced by the Zoomorphism technique. The choice of a character's name in a literary work is an important aspect of the creative process for authors. Character names are more than just labels; they play a significant role in shaping a character's identity and personality. Olatunji, Issah, Noah, Muhammed and Sulaiman (2015) agree that

within the context of African culture, a person's name has the power to influence not only their personality but also their social identity and even their fate. To better understand this concept, we must consider the meaning of the name *Mystique Mysterious*. The layman's definition of *Mystique* connotes something that possesses an attractive reverence while *Mysterious* can be broadly defined as something difficult to understand. The combination of these two words as a character name holds symbolic significance; it foreshadows not only the character's personality but also hints at their role within the narrative. This offers a glimpse into the character's traits and responsibilities, giving readers an early clue about what to expect as the narrative unfolds. An excerpt from the text describes that "Male and female, child and adult, all referred to him by that name, in which they combined their respect for him, their fear for him, and the fascination they felt for the unreachable person behind the shades" (Pg.1). Kwakye provides an early indication to readers about how the aesthetic character's name has played a key role in earning him authority, admiration, and acknowledgement within his society. This early insight underscores how the character's name has been instrumental in shaping their reputation and standing, ultimately reflecting the power that a well-chosen name can hold in shaping one's identity and influence in society. The identity of the aesthetic character in the society is acknowledged as someone who is "unreachable" (Pg.1). Esi, the owner of *KILL ME QUICK* refers to him as "a big man" (Pg.5). These descriptions and interpretations provided by Esi and other characters about the aesthetic character allows the reader to engage in a thought-provoking exploration of the character's motives, emotions, and actions which

aligns with Al Harbi (2017), cited in Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla (2017) who argues that “proper naming of a thing gives it essence”. For Kwakye to achieve this unique naming and assigning of roles to the aesthetic character, Kwakye uses the technique called characterisation. Kwakye uses both types of characterisations, which are direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) characterisation, to make Mystique Mysterious more interesting and complex. “Explicit or direct characterisation involves the “explicit naming of the traits” (Culpeper, 2017) cited in (Culpeper & Fernandez-Quintanilla, 2017), such as “unnatural quality of energy and power” (Pg.1). This is achieved by examining the character's actions, words, thoughts, as well as what other characters say about the aesthetic character. Kwakye uses direct characterisation to comment on the character, describing his motivations, appearances, and feelings for the reader to get to know him. Kwakye, for example, uses the character Kojo Ansah to warn other characters of Mystique Mysterious's potential negative intents. This is demonstrated in an instance at KILL ME QUICK where Kojo Ansah doubts Bukari's condition, asking, "Why would Mystique Mysterious get you a job?" (Pg. 36). The question serves as an indirect warning, implying that Mystique Mysterious may have ulterior motives for assisting Bukari, and subsequently cautioning the other characters and the reader to be wary of his actions and intentions. As a result, this excerpt encourages the reader to explore the complexities of his personality.

Regarding indirect characterisation, Culpeper (2017), cited in Culpeper and Fernandez-Quintanilla (2017), elaborates that, “implicit or indirect characterisation means that the traits and the entire personality of the character need to be guessed

from words, opinions, and actions. Thus, the most important thing to consider about implicit cues is that the information always has to be derived by inference, and contextual factors need to be taken into account. For instance, Mystique Mysterious buys drinks for Kofi Ntim, gets a job for Bukari, gives Baba some pocket money, and looks for a job for Baba. As the name suggests, his actions are that which are beyond the understanding of the people who directly receive them. For instance, when Mystique Mysterious buys a drink for Kofi Ntim, he is “surprised by this show of generosity” (Pg. 7). Kofi Ntim further wonders “Why would anyone, especially a stranger, buy him a drink?” (Pg. 7). This excerpt shows that Kofi Ntim is struck with a strong sense of awe and skepticism as Mystique Mysterious actions are unusual. The combination of awe and skepticism indicates the complexities and mystery surrounding the Mystique Mysterious behaviour. Thus, when Kwakye chose not to give Mystique Mysterious a specific name, the character took on a universal quality, embodying individuals within societies who share a similar mindset and behaviour depicted by the Mystique Mysterious. This allows readers to connect the character's thoughts and behaviours to a broader range of people in different cultural circumstances. It also promotes a more inclusive and relatable narrative, allowing readers to project their own experiences and opinions into the character and increasing the story's relevance across varied audiences.

Imaginative Character (Folkloric)

To add to the features mentioned earlier, another technique Kwakye used to develop his aesthetic character is imagination. This implies that Kwakye's character Mystique Mysterious is a product of creativity and imagination. Interestingly, the

name chosen for this character does not bear any cultural resonance with any Ghanaian society or ethnicity. In essence, Kwakye created a character whose identity is distinct from and does not resonate with any specific cultural norms or customs in Ghana. In most African societies, particularly Ghanaian societies, names often signify family lineage and ancestry, which is preserved and honored across generations (Tordzro, 2021). Thus, the purposeful break from traditional naming emphasizes Mystique Mysterious' unique and innovative nature within the narrative. Kwakye achieves this through the clever and mischievous demeanor of his character Mystique Mysterious. To be deemed aesthetically pleasing, a character must entertain, amuse, embark on adventures, and offer readers a sense of tranquility and enjoyment. Kwakye skillfully crafts Mystique Mysterious into a character of impeccable stature and wisdom. As demonstrated by Esi's description of him as the "big boss" (Pg.2), he appears as a heroic figure, coming in at the most critical moment to save the day. Kwakye gives Mystique Mysterious a god-like feature above the other characters such that in his presence, all the other characters become insignificant and lose their voice or free will thereby ending up doing what he wants. For instance, at 441 when he entered the meeting ground of the crowd, all conversations died out and turned to murmur (Pg.29). People feared him and gave him reverence (Pg.1 & 26). Another instance is at KILL ME QUICK where he frequents with Bukari, Kofi Ntim and Kojo Ansah. When "...Mystique Mysterious stepped into the room. As if he carried a magnetic charge, all heads turned in his directions" (Pg. 52). He exerts a significant influence on the behavior and choices of others, compelling people to adhere to his instructions against their

will. For instance, his influence over the youth at 441 leads them to engage in a range of detrimental activities, such as excessive alcohol consumption and the usage of hard drugs. He deceives them that the hard drugs are “the source of knowledge, the beginning of all wisdom” (Pg. 28). He further assures a man who hesitated to smoke marijuana for fear of breaking the law that “Nothing I give you is illegal! I am what is legal and what is not” (Pg. 28) making him the custodian of the law. This aligns with what Mwinlaaru and Nkasah (2018) describe as webbed spider traits that give him the ability to manipulate and construct power. Based on these events and his deeds and the influence he had on the other characters, it is nearly impossible for a person like him to exist in the real world, as every action has its repercussions, and those who violate the law will eventually be held accountable for their actions. However, as proven in *Mystique Mysterious*, lawbreakers in a community can continue to violate the law indefinitely without being punished, which is a very uncommon occurrence in a well-structured society. The next subtopic will seek to discuss the aesthetic setting that is identified in Kwakye’s *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

Aesthetic settings

This section looks at the second aesthetic element that is identified in Kwakye’s *The Clothes of Nakedness*. Within the scope of this study, aesthetic settings can be defined as the time and location of a text that contributed to the creation of the aesthetic character as well as the understanding and appreciation of the aesthetic value in a text. This study identifies KILL ME QUICK (Pg. 2) as the aesthetic setting. KILL ME QUICK contributed significantly to the development,

understanding, and appreciation of the aesthetic character. KILL ME QUICK is a kiosk owned by Esi where she sells “akpeteshie, distilled locally from sugar cane or palm and possessing an incredibly high alcoholic content (Pg. 2)”. The kiosk is located at Nima, a “suburb” (Pg. 25 & 30) in Accra.

Comparably, the aesthetic setting KILL ME QUICK finds resonance with the title of a novel written by one of the renowned African writers, Meja Mwangi which was published in 1973 long before Kwakye’s novel, *The Clothes of Nakedness* was published. Kwakye used the literary technique of intertextuality to make the setting of his narrative aesthetic, deliberately integrating a direct quotation of the title of Meja Mwangi's work, *Kill Me Quick*, as the name of his aesthetic setting. This is an intentional effort to explore and expand on some of the main thematic concepts introduced in Meja Mwangi's novel *Kill Me Quick*. Meja Mwangi's narrative *Kill Me Quick* takes place within the challenging socio-economic environment of Nairobi where two adolescents, Meja and Maina, have goals of securing employment, earning a livelihood, and providing financial support to their respective families. Nevertheless, their determination quickly gives way to the harsh truths of urban challenges. When confronted with the financial hardship of maintaining a decent lifestyle, the pair decide to live on the outskirts of the city. Unfortunately, these outskirts prove to be inhospitable environments, filled with poverty, and pollution.

Similarly, in Kwakye’s narrative, readers are confronted with a comparable predicament faced by characters such as Bukari, Kofi Ntim, and Kojo Ansah, who were regular customers at KILL ME QUICK, shedding light on the complexities of

their lives as they overcome the circumstances surrounding their frequent visits to KILL ME QUICK. Before delving into the discussion of the aesthetic setting of KILL ME QUICK, it is necessary first to discuss Nima because KILL ME QUICK is set in Nima, and the narrative of KILL ME QUICK intertwines with the unique characteristics and atmosphere that define Nima. Nima is a neighborhood in Accra that is home to working-class individuals including labourers, drivers, and petty traders, amongst other occupations. As a result of the high rate of unemployment that prevails in this environment, most of the residents are on very limited incomes. This is seen in the situations of Kofi Ntim and Bukari, who are both living on a minimal income. Nima is in so much ruin that “even in darkness, the transition from Nima, beaten down by poverty and squalor, to adjoining luxurious estates of Kanda, was so stark that the opulence of Kanda was exaggerated in the mind” (Pg 30). Most of the buildings were built during the colonial period. Families live closely together and make just enough money that barely feed the family. The text describes the people living in this area as having “narrow buttocks”, which clearly defines their poor living conditions, such as a lack of proper nutrition and good health, among other basic needs of life.

Furthermore, this study identified that the various activities that took place at Kwakye’s aesthetic setting, KILL ME QUICK, resonate with the theme in Cheney-Coker’s poem *Myopia* where the poor living conditions of the peasant farmers who work to feed the country are made known to the reader. In *The Clothes of Nakedness*, for instance, Bukari drives a taxi that transports people to their various workplaces, while Kofi Ntim works as a cleaner for the "City Council" (Pg.

54), both of which contribute to the advancement of society through their vital jobs.

Lines 1 to 4 of the poem reads:

On rainy mornings
You will see them drenched
PEASANTS! Shivering in their emaciated bones
along the boulevards of misery

The above lines of the poem resonate with the feeling and the imagery Kwakye painted in his text. At Nima, “young men lounged on the street corners” (Pg. 25) which depicts the unavailability of jobs in that area. Those who work also retire in the evening to buy either rice and beans or kenkey which is wrapped in plantain leaves. The text goes on to explain that these individuals who patronize such food are those “who had spent a long day toiling at work, had been paid little, and now craved food to fill their stomach”. This excerpt resonates with line 8 of the poem which describes the unavailability of enough food to feed the peasant farmers as a result, they live in “hunger”. In a similar manner, the people of Nima though toil hard, their meagre income do not allow them to enjoy a good meal but rather just eat “to fill their stomach” (Pg.25). It not surprising that only two varieties of meals were mentioned in the text. This also explains why they have “narrow buttocks” just as the peasant farmers in *Myopia* had “emaciated bones” signifying their lack of enough nutrients to nourish their body. Lines 5,6 and 7 talks about the emotions, pains, and perhaps hopelessness of the persona. In a similar fashion, Kwakye describes that the conversations the people at Nima have in the evening express their pain, anger, and loss of hope as they have “at least resigned to it” (Pg.25).

The conversation shifted from topic to topic, from hustles of the day and the problems of ordinary men like them, to selfishness of rich folk, who used their labour, ... flashed money in front of them and paid them little” (Pg.25).

Interestingly, these people live with their extended family which includes “siblings, aunts, uncles and the like...” (Pg.26) which also means they have more mouths to feed at home, therefore, depending on the meagre income they make at the end of the month barely feed them. For instance, Issaka tells Fati that “you know that new babies mean new mouths to be fed”. As such he borrows sardines from Fati just so he could feed his family. To vent their pain and anger, they meet and talk about it as a “way of vengeance...maligning their bosses, the big men...” (Pg.25). Since the living conditions of the people living at Nima has been established, it will be easier for the reader to understand why Mystique Mysterious was able to dupe the other characters trapping them in his schemes. It is not as though they were dumb not to have realised, they were being trapped but to some extent, they were in desperate need of assistance, and at that point in their lives, Mystique Mysterious offered them what they required; therefore, they could not afford to let this opportunity slip through their fingers. Bukari's inability to find steady employment over a period of months has caused him significant emotional suffering, leading him down the path of alcoholism (Pg.22). He is constantly seen at KILL ME QUICK in the company of Mystique Mysterious, Kojo Ansah, and Kofi Ntim. As a result of his vulnerability due to unemployment, he becomes a target for Mystique Mysterious's scheme. Mystique Mysterious approaches him at KILL ME QUICK with a job offer; “I am offering you a job” (Pg.12). While Kojo Ansah questions why Mystique Mysterious would offer Bukari a job, Bukari on the other hand “...cried, unable to cover his enthusiasm” (Pg.12) To Bukari, “his ill luck was about to be

reversed” (Pg. 22). At some point when Mystique Mysterious demanded fifteen percent of Bukari’s salary, he had wanted to decline the job offer (Pg. 33) however, he remembered that it is “extremely difficult to find jobs” (Pg.33) and again, he had a family to take care of. These situations compelled him to accept Mystique Mysterious’s offer. Also, in KILL ME QUICK, the reader is introduced to Kofi Ntim who works as a “labourer for the city council” (Pg. 54). He is only a cleaner and makes just enough money which can “barely” (Pg.54) to feed his family. In contrast to Bukari, he was in a position to negotiate the commission he was required to pay Mystique Mysterious because he already had a steady income. After some negotiation, he only had to give Mystique Mysterious seven percent of his salary instead of fifteen percent.

Also, at KILL ME QUICK, Mystique Mysterious is seen always buying alcohol for the characters he duped. This is because alcohol “encourages risk-taking” (Pg.166) and Mystique Mysterious needed to study his target and know how to penetrate their private lives. To urge them to open up, he bought them alcohol although he rarely drinks himself so that “Their tongue loosened as they talked freely and Mystique Mysterious listened carefully, digesting every word and feeding on whatever he heard” (Pg. 8). Kojo Ansah, on the other hand, believed that alcohol is evil (Pg. 8). It was not surprising that he was unable to trap Kojo Ansah in his schemes because he never drank alcohol and hence said little. The following subtopic will address the significance of the highlighted aesthetic elements.

Significance of the Aesthetic Elements

This section seeks to examine the second research question (in the first text i.e Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*) "What are the significances of the aesthetic elements portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?" The foregoing discussions show that the incorporation of aesthetic elements in a literary work holds significant reasons. In the previous section, the analysis revealed that the presence of aesthetic character and setting serves to distinguish the aesthetic elements from the rest of the literary elements in a text. Aesthetic elements are primarily concerned with the lived-through experience of the text. What this means is that, for a reader to enjoy reading a text, he must be able to emotionally bond with the aesthetic elements. This bonding evolves through shared experiences and the overall impact the aesthetic will have on the reader. Kwakye achieves his aesthetic elements through some techniques that have already been mentioned, such as zoomorphism, aesthetic characterisation, and mystery. Regarding his aesthetic setting, Kwakye uses the intertextuality technique to make his setting aesthetic. Having discussed the aesthetic elements and the technique Kwakye used to achieve them, this section of the study will explore the significance of the aesthetic elements that have been identified with a focus on the aesthetic value and didactic value of art as identified by Luke (2018) and Hohendahl (2013). The aesthetic value explores the reader's aesthetic taste of the text without incorporating any cultural, social, or political inferences from the text, whereas the didactic value examines how the literary text has been used to represent a certain society. Thus, the didactic value considers the author's biography as well as the historical background or the

era in which the text was written or published. The subtopic that follows aims to expand on the aesthetic values identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

Aesthetic Value

Literary works have a distinct value that is different from the traditional value of art yet of primary significance; this value is referred to as aesthetic value, and it is the basis of the various significances attributed to aesthetic elements identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. Aesthetic value is the value that an object or event has because of its ability to induce pleasure (positive value) or displeasure (negative value) when appreciated or experienced. This implies that anyone who appreciates reading a literary work is experiencing aesthetic pleasure (aesthetic taste). Appreciating aesthetic value entails the reader recognising the structure or form of a literary work by paying attention to the various elements and becoming aware of its cohesion. The various interpretations of these elements usually reflect the different perspectives of the writer and the reader. The difference in perspectives emphasizes the subjective nature of aesthetic appreciation, where the unique lens through which an individual engages with a literary work contributes to the different interpretations within the context of art. This section of the current study will explore various aesthetic values identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*.

Individual interpretation of a literary work

The aesthetic value of art encourages individual interpretation of a literary work. This suggests the reader's understanding, analysis, and perspective on the text stems from a more personal and open-ended experience. Thus, a reader can side with a

character based on experiences or moral standards. For instance, a reader may identify Mystique Mysterious based on the fact that he helped the other characters in times of need. For instance, he offers Bukari a driving job “I offer you the opportunity to walk proud and confident, knowing that you are bringing in a wage. Bukari, my friend, I know you are a driver and I am offering you a job” (Pg. 12). Bukari is deeply moved by this occasion, as he has been unemployed for “eighth months” (Pg. 12). In this instance, Mystique Mysterious is perceived as a supportive figure who helps Bukari in reclaiming his status as the leader of his family: a provider and a guardian. He also shares money with the unemployed youth at 441: “...Mystique Mysterious put his hands into his jacket and brought out a stack of cash. This he began to distribute...” Another possible perspective is that Mystique Mysterious could be perceived as a villain. He intentionally traps the other characters and takes advantage of them for his benefit. For instance, Mystique Mysterious generously gives marijuana, cocaine, and cigarette to the youth and gets them addicted. He then later sells the drugs to the addicted ones. Additionally, he deducts “fifteen per cent” (Pg. 33) of Bukari's income after successfully finding him a job.

Aesthetic taste/pleasure

The aesthetic taste of reading a literary text, for example, can be one of anger, joy, love, and amusement among others. For instance, when Mystique Mysterious informed Fati that “your husband has slept with half of the women in the city” (Pg.147), Jojo’s mother sat in silence “contemplating the effect” (Pg.147) on Fati. At this moment, the reader can feel the pain and sadness of the character,

Fati. This is what the live-through experience means for the reader to bond with the character to the point of sharing their joy, pain, and sadness. This experience is based on sensual cognition of the various aesthetic elements present in the work. In addition to appreciating the aesthetic characteristics of a literary work, recognizing its expressive features (various elements evoking feelings or emotions) can also result in an aesthetic taste. When conveying the perceived aesthetic value of a literary work to others, we project our experiences into the elements or objects being appreciated and choose the emotions that best reflect the essence of our perception (Knoop, Wagner, Jacobsen & Menninghaus, 2016).

Also, Immanuel Kant, one of the philosophers who helped in shaping the aesthetic theory, looks at the aesthetic taste as pleasures associated with occasions, and situations of aesthetic objects which influences one's perception to judge something to be beautiful (Ross, 2017). These pleasures do not occur as a result of the realization that the aesthetic object is useful or agreeable or because of some special qualities of the aesthetic object, instead, the pleasures arise simply from the fact that the aesthetic object is delightful and could be enjoyed by anyone. This implies that a literary work does not require a moral lesson to be appreciated. However, if the story is sufficiently engaging to be read, it can be deemed beautiful. Kwakye achieved this through his aesthetic character and aesthetic setting. These two elements make the story engaging enough for the reader. Kwakye carefully selects the names of these elements and makes them sound interesting. First, the name of the aesthetic character is Mystique Mysterious. The first thing the reader does is to try and find the meaning of these two words and then try and follow the

story closely if the character will live up to his name. Second is the name of the aesthetic setting KILL ME QUICK. The name of the place suggests dreadfulness, however, the ironic thing about this is that it is also a place where friends meet to talk about important matters in their lives such as jobs, among others. It is also a place that people frequent to sober up or find solace.

For instance, when Mystique Mysterious goes around cynically assisting every character he meets, the reader's attention is drawn to find out the result of his cynicism as the reader becomes curious to know how things will turn out. At this point, the reader is using their cognitive ability unconsciously to organize and categorize these details and hints. The reader then compares him to other characters as well as their positions in the story and begins to differentiate between the truth of what he says and what other character says about him. For instance, Bukari refers to Mystique Mysterious as “the bearer of new lights” (Pg. 22). Ironically, the bearer of the new lights sells hard drugs to the youths (Pg.18) and introduces Bukari to womanizing which is considered immoral in Ghanaian society. The act of understanding these contrasts makes the reader think, wonder, find out, and, most importantly, start to understand how important and useful it is to read a literary piece. This is because as the reader moves through the plot, he or she figures out what clues to look out for. This engages the reader in the narrative by requiring them to piece together and analyse clues and facts to determine the outcome of the story. Kwakye employs this approach to achieve reader engagement, thereby impacting the reader's conscience and expanding his or her imagination while maintaining the reader's interest in the story.

Didactic Value

This section explores the second significance of the aesthetic elements that were identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. Unlike aesthetic value, the didactic value of art has a different but significant direction. The didactic value of art according to the aesthetic theory looks at the import and embeddedness of societal values in the artwork. It is important to note that a reader's understanding of a text can be influenced by their past knowledge and life experiences. These experiences enable the reader to form emotional connections with the text they are reading (Brincker, 2015). Those who appreciate pure beauty develop their moral sensibilities through the process of making aesthetic judgments. Unlike the aesthetic value, the didactic value of the aesthetic elements considers the literary history and the author's biography among others.

The aesthetic character is the representation of good and evil in the society

According to Attard (2018), "even if literary works do have aesthetic value, it is inevitably so mixed with other values of art". This means that the aesthetic value of art is not independent of the didactic value of art. The two are connected. An instance is seen in a literary imaginative character like Mystique Mysterious whose name is unlikely to be named after a human being. That is because names define people; it gives information about their tribe, family, and even their religion. For instance, Kojo Ansah and Kofi Ntim have Akan names which help define their route as Akans, and Gabriel Bukari, Baba, and Fati can also be identified as hailing from the Northern Region. Mystique Mysterious lacks specific identity with a particular society. The fact that his name does not associate him with a particular

group of people also means that in every society, there is someone like this character. It is for this particular reason that the themes of the story can be related to other literary works that share similar themes. The aesthetic character, although imaginative, propels the plot and displays personality traits that are an expression of actual people living in a society that has been artistically developed to portray real-world experiences.

This is so that readers can experience how a literary character brings to life, a conditionally autonomous society that has been created based on the personalities of real-world people. One way a reader can enjoy a story's plot is if the themes or the subject matter are relatable to real-life experiences. The more the reader relates with the character, the more likely it is for her interest to be sustained. Kwakye depicted this vividly through his aesthetic character Mystique Mysterious. Although the character has a personality trait of a trickster found in African folktales that makes him fictitious, he is also a representation of a real-life person in society. He was the representation of both good and evil in society. He made the other characters around him feel noticed and loved. For instance, Kofi Ntim "saw himself as... a target of mockery, the specimen of human ugliness who others treated as a source of amusement" (Pg.7). However, Mystique Mysterious buys him a drink which makes him change the negative perception he has of himself. Thus, the singular acts of generosity Mystique Mysterious showed Kofi Ntim gave him a restoration of honour, and hope of being noticed or respected as he no longer considered himself insignificant. He questions "Was his luck about to change? Was a propitious god smiling on him?" (Pg.7). His singular act of kindness towards Kofi

Ntim gives him a new perspective of having confidence in his personality as someone worthy enough to be noticed by a “big man” (Pg.5). With regards to the representation of bad in the society, while Mystique Mysterious went about finding jobs for the unemployed Bukari and Ntim, he also extorted monies from Bukari, Baba and Kofi Ntim. He also almost raped Fati (Pg. 171), killed The Madman (Pg. 201) and sold marijuana to the youth turning them into drug addicts in the society (Pg. 119) This confirms Tolstoy’s argument in the aesthetic theory that art is a reflection of society though it may have an inherent form that can be used in its appreciation (Orwin, 2013). In addition, the aesthetic character Mystique Mysterious imparts a valuable lesson concerning the kind of individuals we interact with on a daily basis in our society.

People like Mystique Mysterious are prepared to engage in any means necessary to attain their desires, irrespective of the potential repercussions that may arise as a result of their actions. Mystique Mysterious has exhibited a strategic and deliberate approach towards the other characters from the outset of the narrative. He appears to provide support to the other characters while leading them to their downfall. For instance, he extends a job offer to Bukari and thereafter deducts fifteen percent from his income. He employs Kofi Ntim and deducts seven percent from his salary. He offers free drugs to the crowd at 441 and when they have become addicted to the drugs, he sells the drug to them (Pg.110) He also gives money to Baba and encourages him to spend it on his girlfriend, Adukwei. He offers free drugs to the crowd at 441 and when they have become addicted to the drugs, he sells the drug to them (Pg.110) He also gives money to Baba and encourages

him to spend it on his girlfriend, Adukwei. When Baba runs out of money, Mystique Mysterious. urges him on and immerses him in alcoholism and promiscuity. Bukari ended up sleeping with half of the women in Nima (Pg.147). He also “lost his income and probably his wife” (Pg.189). Bukari realised that “he had followed Mystique Mysterious into immorality” (189) at the late hour. Meanwhile, in the text, Mystique Mysterious is referred to as a “big man” (Pg.8). He drives a BMW, a Mercedes Benz, and a jeep (Pg. 183). Given his role, it would have been natural for him to assist the other characters in overcoming their difficulties. However, he instead exploits them and takes their money, operating under the belief that "leadership did not have to have a moral basis" (Pg. 8). Mystique Mysterious's actions serve as a lesson to the reader that "Nobody does good just for the sake of doing good" (Pg. 55), emphasizing the self-interest often present in people's actions.

Injustice in the judicial system

According to Todorov (2019), a good mystery author is conscious of the various aspects of the period in which the narrative takes place, and if they have knowledge about the historical view, they will incorporate this into their narrative. In the text, Kwakye gives the reader crucial historical information that is essential to their understanding of the murder mystery by infusing the historical aspect of that period into the story. An instance of a murder mystery in the text is the murder case of the Madman. According to the court, the fingerprints as well as the laboratory test were identical to Kojo Ansah's. In contrast, Kojo Ansah had an alibi that proved him innocent of the murder. However, the court ruled him guilty based

on the testimony of 441 witnesses as well as the laboratory test. Per the court ruling, Kojo Ansah was sentenced to death through firing squad. The “crowd roared again and the guns fired” (Pg. 209). Thus, Kojo Ansah was executed to death. Historically, in the 1990s, execution by firing squad was prevalent. It was a common practice carried against convicted murderers and therefore relevant that Kwakye incorporated this in his text. Currently, such an offense would have resulted in life imprisonment instead. In addition, although the mystery genre pays attention to the historical aspect of the story, they also ensure that accurate details about the characters, settings, and other information that may directly or indirectly lead the reader to the solving the mystery is provided. For instance, Kofi Ntim and Kojo Ansah solves the murder mystery of the Madman by giving clues that “...I normally do not sleep six. But the day of the deaths, I slept till noon” (Pg.205) and do not see the possibility of becoming a prime suspect of The Madman’s murder. More surprisingly, Kojo Ansah’s fingerprint matched with the one on the murder weapon. Kojo Ansah questions if he would “so stupid as to leave it (the murder weapon) there (at the crime scene), where it can easily be discovered...” (Pg.205). At this point, both Kofi Ntim and the reader gets the clue and recognize the murderer as Mystique Mysterious. Reason being that Mystique Mysterious sees Kojo Ansah as a dangerous opponent (Pg. 206) since he spoke little and drank no alcohol and on top of that, he was the exact opposite of everyone else that he has encountered, he decided to eliminate him to clear his path.

Exposure to decaying activities: Prostitution, Drug abuse, Morality

Again, Mystique Mysterious' cunning nature help in introducing some of the decaying activities in the setting. Nima is introduced in the novel as the suburb of Accra, "...the suburb of Accra called Nima..." (Pg. 25). Mystique Mysterious schemes and manipulation yielded several forms or kinds of moral decay at the setting, Nima. Moral decay within the scope of this study looks at the various activities and decisions made by a character or characters which was influenced by the aesthetic character which contributed to immorality in the text or one way or the other, negatively affected another character. There were many kinds of moral decay that took place in the text's setting. They included sexual immorality, extortion, police brutality, injustice and alcoholism. However, the predominant of all which was identified at the aesthetic setting that is KILL ME QUICK is alcoholism. KILL ME QUICK, a name that resonates the harmful effect the hard liquor sold at this setting has on its consumers is an akpeteshie kiosk owned by a character called Esi. The kiosk was a symbol of alcoholism in the text. In the text, alcoholism occurs when a character excessively and addictively consumes hard liquor, akpeteshie making them ineffective and dysfunctional. Historically, akpeteshie is perceived as a symbol of national identity as well as a symbol of courtesy in Ghanaian culture. Aside this liquor being produced in Ghana, it is also used in some of the Ghanaian cultural practices such as libation and naming ceremonies. However, Samuel, Donkoh, and Gyamfuah (2017) are of the view that, during the colonial era, British rulers banned its production and consumption in order to improve good morals and productivity. This is because the liquor had a

high intoxication quality. For instance, Kojo Ansah calls the liquor evil (Pg.7). The text recounts that “As on most nights, Mystique Mysterious did not desire to drink, being weary of what he considered to be ill effects of alcohol. It dulled the intelligence, and he needed to preserve the keenness of his mind in order to attain his prize” (Pg. 2). It is not surprising that comparably, the other characters who drank alcohol fell prey to Mystique Mysterious schemes.

To add to alcoholism, there is also the abuse of weed and cocaine which are championed by Mystique Mysterious. At Nima, Mystique Mysterious joins a group of young men and then entices them with a packet of cigarettes (Pg.27). He then spots one gentleman in the group and strikes up a conversation with him; “This cigarette is not strong enough, is it?” He “reached into his pocket again and produced a roll of marijuana” (Pg. 27) and offered it to the young man. It is very interesting to note that, the man everyone looks up to, who is referred to as “the big man” is the architect of all the vices that took place in the text. He freely gave marijuana to the youth.

Historical inferences

The historical background of the text, that is the time or period when the text was written reveals the living condition of the Ghanaian people, especially those living in the suburb like Nima. During the 1990s, there was an uproar in the country which resulted in a protest against the payment of Value Added Tax (VAT) themed “Kumi preko” (Donkor, 2013) which was introduced by Rawlings ruling government. Thus, “Kumi preko” which resonates with the aesthetic setting “KILL ME QUICK” shares similar characteristics. The period of the protest as well as the

aesthetic setting introduces the poor living conditions of the people due to the lack of employment in the country. In the kiosk, “KILL ME QUICK”, through the characters Ansah, Ntim, Bukari, and Mystique Mysterious, the reader is introduced to the abuse of power in the society by the elite and how it has negatively resulted in the unpleasant circumstances the characters find themselves in. In the text, Mystique Mysterious represented the elite in society. He is someone regarded as a role model that everybody looks up to. Esi refers to him as a “big man” (Pg. 4). Among the people of 441 in Nima, Mystique Mysterious is regarded as one of the wealthy men living in that area. An excerpt from the text describes him as “Mystique Mysterious drew up nearby in a bright red Mercedes Benz. He stepped out of the car and approached them (the youth gathered at 441), dressed in his presence, the other characters lose their voices. It also reveals the frustrations of their situation and how eager they were to get out of the situation. actions of the aesthetic character Mystique Mysterious make visually visible the fact that the reader is interacting with the text, which takes this character seriously as an aesthetic object that blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction by connecting the imaginative world to society.

Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at the analysis and discussion of the aesthetic elements and their significance in Kwakye’s *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The chapter identified Mystique Mysterious and KILL ME QUICK as the aesthetic element. Per the aesthetic theory, the study again identified two significances of the aesthetic elements. They include aesthetic significance and didactic significance. The

aesthetic significance deals with the reader's ability to interpret, enjoy or understand the text's message without necessarily situating it into a historical occurrence, while the didactic value considers the socio-historical significance of the identified aesthetic elements.

Conclusion

It was demonstrated in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* that an aesthetic character needs to be distinct in all aspects for readers to be able to differentiate them from other characters. These aspects include the character's name, personality, moral ideals, and narrative techniques. Therefore, in order for a character's name to be appropriate, it should be reflective of both his personality and the roles that he performs in the narrative. It was also established that Mystique Mysterious' foil Kojo Ansah may have been identified as an aesthetic character because they shared comparable personality traits. He emanated the air of an intelligent character who knew when and how to act. He, like Mystique Mysterious, abstained from drinking and kept a vigilant watch. Also, Mystique Mysterious feared him because he could neither comprehend him nor read his thoughts. Furthermore, he was a flat figure whose role stayed unchanged from start to finish, making him predictable. Aside from these, he lacked intellect, therefore he died terribly for a crime he did not commit. However, his name Kojo Ansah was common, and his personality was uninteresting. Additionally, he was a flat character whose role remained consistent from beginning to end, making him predictable. Aside from these, he lacked wittiness and so in the end, he died tragically for a crime he did not commit. Again, it was shown that a proper naming indeed impact on the object. This was proven in

the aesthetic element, KILL ME QUICK. As the name suggest, those characters who frequent this setting met with untimely death such as in the case of Kojo Ansah and Bukari.

CHAPTER FOUR

AESTHETIC ELEMENTS IN *A MAN OF THE PEOPLE*

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the analysis and discussions of Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. It explored the aesthetic elements as well as their significance as portrayed in the text. During its analysis, two aesthetic elements were identified, which were the aesthetic character and the aesthetic setting. Also, the significance of these elements was discussed using the aesthetic theory by Theodore Adorno. It, therefore, considered two significances of the aesthetic elements, which were aesthetic value and didactic value. This chapter, however, seeks to discuss with a similar structure as the previous chapter, discuss the aesthetic elements and their significance in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. Because an overview of the concept of the aesthetic elements was given in Chapter 3, this chapter will proceed to discuss the aesthetic elements that have been identified in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. Moreover, just as was done in chapter 3, the analysis and discussions will be carried out under sub-topics using Adorno's aesthetic theory.

Aesthetic elements in *A Man of the People*

This section of the study seeks to address the first research question "What aesthetic elements are portrayed in *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*?" In response to this question, this section has identified two aesthetic elements: the aesthetic character and the aesthetic setting.

Aesthetic character (Chief Nanga)

M. A Chief Nanga is identified as the aesthetic character in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Chief Nanga currently holds the position of Minister of Culture in the unnamed country. He is commonly known as a man of the people. He hails from Anata, and at the beginning of the narrative, Chief Nanga visits Anata for a campaign. There, he encounters his foil, who is also the narrator of the story. Chief Nanga extends an invitation to Odili to pay him a visit at his residence in the city. Their different priorities and drives will lead them to different choices or decisions. This helps the reader to recognise and understand the personality traits or characteristics, and motivations of the aesthetic character. The foil character serves as a means to make inferences about the motivations behind the actions of the aesthetic character. In addition to using the foil character to make the aesthetic character beautiful, Achebe predominantly employed the technique of dramatic irony to make the aesthetic character interesting.

Dramatic irony

Chief Nanga is a former teacher and scoutmaster who taught Odilli in standard three many years ago. He hails from Anata. Odili recounts “Sixteen years or so ago he had been my teacher in standard three and I something like his favourite pupil. I remember him then as a popular, young and handsome teacher, most impressive in his uniform as a scoutmaster” (Pg. 2). He also serves as the minister of culture on the ticket of the People's Organisation Party also known as P.O.P (Pg. 1&3). Achebe makes this character aesthetic through the use of dramatic Irony. According to Williams (2022), dramatic irony refers to a situation where by the

reader or audience knows something that the characters do not. Thus, dramatic irony is the contradiction between what the character believes to be real and what the reader or audience believes to be true. The use of dramatic irony helps to construct tension and maintain the reader's interest in the text. When the reader or audience is exposed to information regarding the flow of events that the characters themselves are not aware of, it has the effect of captivating the reader's mind and making them anxious to find out how these new developments will alter the flow of events in the text. Dramatic irony relies on words or actions that do not appear to correspond to the action being rendered, yet the reader knows the true meaning of these words and actions. The irony is that what is said or done appears to be very different from what is intended, but the characters are blinded by their emotions, ignorance, or biases and are therefore unable to comprehend the actual situation. The dramatic irony is heightened if one of the characters is aware of this situation which in this case happened to be Odili, Edna, and members of the Common People's Convention (CPC).

The first instance of dramatic irony in Achebe's *A Man of The People* was highlighted in the first chapter of the text through a flashback. Odili recounts how a standard six school leaver "won a seat in Parliament" (Pg.3) and was later appointed a minister of the state. Odili reveals that it was easy during those days to win a parliamentary seat (Pg.30). He further tells how the honourable minister won his seat. "I had no reason to be enthusiastic about Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga who, seeing the empty ministerial seats, had yapped and snarled so shamelessly for the meaty prize". The irony here is that Chief Nanga, a standard six school leaver

holds a ministerial position in the country and the people unaware of his qualification refer to him as Chief the Honorable Doctor M.A. Nanga LL.D. Interestingly, he brags about his educational level. “Yes, I use to tell them that standard six in those days is more than Cambridge today” (Pg.11). This statement implies that Chief Nanga has a low opinion of the standard of education provided by universities; alternatively, he may be trying to reassure himself that, despite the fact that he is the Minister of Culture, the realisation that he does not possess a higher degree does not make him any less capable of leading his people. Unfortunately, his remarks have the ability to influence some of the characters, including Mr. Nwege who had praised him by stating that the Minister's excellent behaviour was due to the standard six education he had received which was then of high-quality equating it to B. A, “The Minister's excellent behaviour, he said, was due to the sound education he had received when education was education... You mean it is equal to B. A. today---if not more” (Pg. 12). On the other hand, the people revered him as a leader, held him in high regard, and literally referred to him as a man of the people (Pg.1). Regardless of his level of education or qualification, the people of Anata, as well as the nation at large, do not see a correlation between his qualification and the position he held as the minister for culture. To them, once a leader has mastery of the English language, he is qualified to hold a political position in the country. During one of his campaign visits to Anata, he was cheered for using the phrase “national cake” (Pg.13). Odili informs that

“The hackneyed phrase 'national cake' was getting to some of us for the first time, and so it was greeted with applause. 'Owner of book!' cried one admirer, assigning in those three brief words the ownership of the white

man's language to the Honourable Minister, who turned round and beamed on the speaker”.

The Minister, who did not continue his education past the elementary school level, made derogatory remarks about the quality of education offered at Cambridge and was applauded for it. In the course of the text, Odili referred to the Minister on multiple occasions as an illiterate. The author uses this to highlight the irony of voting someone into a ministerial position despite the fact that they have never completed their education beyond the primary level.

While at Anata Grammar School, different groups of singers and dancers sang and danced for him as a ritual prior to his arrival as would be done for any leader, especially when he hails from the land. Interestingly, African praise songs usually elevate the leader by highlighting their strengths as well as their achievements (Finnegan, 2018). Contrarily, Odili describes how Nanga was praised by the soloist, Grammar Phone, stating, "...she was now praising Micah's perfect attractiveness..." (Pg.1). This demonstrates that Chief Nanga has not accomplished anything noteworthy in his own community; otherwise, these accomplishments would have been mentioned. It also reflects the people's lack of political education, as the appearance of a leader has absolutely no bearing on his or her ability to lead. In addition, it also contributes to the aesthetic appreciation of the aesthetic character. According to Smith (2022), a character with aesthetic value must be beautiful: magnificent, amusing, graceful, and funny. Odili refers to Chief Nanga as handsome several times in the text. Instance includes “I remember him then as a popular, young and handsome teacher” (Pg.2), “The man was still as handsome and

youthful-looking as ever---there was no doubt about that.” (Pg.8). The effect of this description is to make the character stand out and also allow him to create an impression on the readers minds.

Another illustration of dramatic irony can be found in the theme of political ignorance. Most of the characters in the story, with the exception of Odili and the other members of the Common People's Convention, were clueless when it came to political issues and concerns. Odili believes that Chief Nanga knows what he knows (Pg.130). As a consequence of this, the other characters, notably those at Anata, fell for Chief Nanga's act of kindness as his genuine concern for his people. Odili describes them as “silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honour of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation” (Pg.2). Chief Nanga is a prime example of a corrupt leader who takes advantage of his political position to enrich himself, despite the fact that the majority of the people including those from his hometown Anata were confronted with a variety of political, economic, and social challenges. Aside stealing from the government’s coffers, he also steals from his party. Odili informs his father in a conversation that “Chief Nanga has eaten ten per cent commission and they begin to break their heads and holler up and down.” (Pg. 130). Odili’s friend Max also believes that Chief Nanga “... was a minister bloated by the flatulence of ill-gotten wealth, living in a big mansion built with public money, riding in a Cadillac and watched over by a one-eyed, hired thug” (Pg.85). Again, Max calls him “corrupt, empty-headed, illiterate capitalist” (Pg.83). However, he is someone who is very smart and knows how to draw people to his side. For

instance, Chief Nanga has an outgoing nature which makes him easily approachable. Odili for example is taken aback when Nanga recognizes him from among the crowd as his former student and invites him to visit his house in Bori. In addition to the invitation, Nanga promises to assist Odili in obtaining a scholarship to study in England, which further stuns Odili. This gesture, however, confuses Odili as to whether Chief Nanga is genuine or not. He explains that:

The man was still as handsome and youthful-looking as ever – there was no doubt about that ... The Minister had a jovial word for everyone. You could never think – looking at him now – that his smile was anything but genuine. It seemed bloody-minded to be skeptical (Pg. 34).

Therefore, he uses his affable disposition and occasional favors to mislead those around him into believing that he is working in their favor or looking out for their best interests. For instance, when Odili contested against him in an election, Chief Nanga comes to Odili's father with favours. Odili's father informs Odili that

“In spite of your behaviour, Chief Nanga has continued to struggle for you and has now brought you the scholarship to your house. His kindness surprises me; I couldn't do it myself. On top of that he has brought you two hundred and fifty pounds if you will sign this paper....” (Pg. 132).

Although the offer looked genuine, his statement “I am only giving you this money because I feel that after all my years of service to my people, I deserve to be elected unopposed” (Pg. 132) clearly indicates that he is buying Odili off the race since scholarship means Odili will be traveling outside the country which will automatically take him off the race. Odili, on the other hand is of the view that even if some individuals who are fully aware of all the political scandals are willing to liberate others from their ignorance, it is impossible due to the fact that these very same people have condoned the corrupt practices of some political leaders such as

Chief Nanga. Odili highlights that “Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you---as my father did---if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth” (Pg. 2). Despite the fact that the leaders elected by the people are taking advantage of them, the people look unconcerned and continue to render their support to these corrupt politicians. Ironically, they regard anyone who tells them the truth or attempts to expose the leaders' wrongdoings as an enemy, despite the fact that such people are attempting to protect them from being taken advantage of. In a flashback, Odili describes an incident that occurred when the Minister of Finance proposed to the other members of the Cabinet “that lowering the price paid to coffee planters would be an efficient approach to combat the effects of an ongoing economic crisis” (Pg.4). The prime minister together with other ministers including Chief Nanga called the finance minister a traitor. Odili narrates that “The next morning the Prime Minister sacked them and, in the evening, he broadcasted to the nation. He said the dismissed ministers were conspirators and traitors who had teamed up with foreign saboteurs to destroy the new nation” (Pg.4). The public believed the Prime minister and “yelled down its abuses” (Pg.6) on them. Again, when Odili decided to contest for the seat of the Member of Parliament against Chief Nanga, he recounts that

As our journeys became more and more hazardous I agreed to our carrying the minimum of weapons strictly for defence. We had five matchets, a few empty bottles and stones in the boot. Later we were compelled to add two double-barrelled guns. I only agreed to this most reluctantly after many acts of violence were staged against us, like the unprovoked attack by some hoodlums and thugs calling themselves Nanga's Youth Vanguard or Nangavanga, for short. New branches of this Nangavanga were springing up every day throughout the district. Their declared aim was to 'annihilate all enemies of progress' and 'to project true Nangaism'. The fellows we ran

into carried placards, one of which read: NANGAISM FOREVER: SAMALU IS TREITOR.

Most of the people of Anata were in support of Chief Nanga because he hails from there. These folks believe that Chief Nanga is their representee of the community in the national level and considers anyone who goes against him as a traitor. Odili, who is also a native of Anata was considered a traitor for backstabbing the man who took him into his house. Odili understood their behaviour and commented that the people themselves had motives. They are also as corrupt as their leaders. He explains that;

The people themselves, as we have seen, had become even more cynical than their leaders and were apathetic into the bargain. 'Let them eat,' was the people's opinion, 'after all when white men used to do all the eating did we commit suicide?' Of course not. And where is the all-powerful white man today? He came, he ate and he went. But we are still around. The important thing then is to stay alive; if you do you will outlive your present annoyance (Pg.161).

Moreover, even though these leaders are corrupt and do not represent the people, the irony is that the government honors them by naming streets after them. Odili questions this behavior by saying that "We drove through wide, well-lit streets with the names of our well-known politicians on them." (Pg. 53). This makes it sound like African countries are owned by politicians.

Furthermore, many people, because of their lack of education, have the misconception that politics is a forum for wealthy people only. They are unaware that people of modest means can hold political office and participate in political processes. As an illustration, Odili states that his father asked him once, "...if my new party was ready to give me enough money to fight Nanga..."(Pg. 128). This shows that politics is nothing more than a fight between wealthy individuals and

not a method for selecting trustworthy leaders for the state. As another point of interest, Odili mentions that "when I first announced that I was going to contest chief Nanga's seat everybody laughed" (Pg. 101). They act in this manner due to the fact that they are aware that Chief Nanga is an extremely wealthy individual who cannot be challenged. For instance, the police ask Odili that "Turn you back make I see the nyarsh you go take fight Nanga" (Pg.147) mocking Odili's average body which is an indicative of poverty, compared to Chief Nanga's fat body which is also an indicative of riches. Also, some educated individuals are well aware of the length of certain leaders' political careers; however, they continue to vote for those leaders regardless of what they know. For instance, Odili makes this statement about Chief Nanga that "...In fact there was already enough filth clinging to his name to disqualify him and most of his colleagues as well but we are not as strict as some countries..." (Pg.108). On the other hand, their riches and political power have successfully swayed the system in their favor. Even officers of the law harass citizens on their behalf. For instance, he has all the undisciplined police officers by his side who he can contract to do his dirty work. One of them Odili describes as "He had been a police corporal who had served two years in jail for corruptly receiving ten shillings from a lorry driver" (138). In response to the statements that Max had made regarding the campaign, the former policeman replied that "They are bringing us water, and they promise to bring us electricity" (Pg. 124). This comment demonstrates that the leaders are acting as though they are doing good work at the eleventh hour in order to win the trust and votes of the people. The electorate, on the other hand, is oblivious to the facts and

lauds Chief Nanga's achievements. That notwithstanding, Odili comments that certain individuals are conscious of the fact that there are incompetent leaders, and for that matter, political ignorance cannot be associated with illiteracy. For instance, Mr. Nwege is the representative of a few educated individuals who lack political knowledge. Mr. Nwege expelled Odili from his school because he was running against Chief Nanga for the seat of Member of Parliament. He informs Odili that '... I see that you have grown too big for your coat...' (Pg. 102). Although he is educated, he is unaware that political democracy permits anyone who meets political requirements to run for office yet, he alienates Odili and expels him from his current job for exercising his constitutional right. In many African states, ignorance of politics is perilous. It makes individuals undemocratic and violent. For instance, Edna's father tells his wife that Odili "...is poking his finger into my in-law's eyes" (Pg.119). Again, Edna's father tells Odili that his challenge is comparable to a tick to a bull (Pg. 119). All these individuals are blindly following Chief Nanga because of his wealth and their allegiance to him as a member of the same community.

Again, the dramatic irony is highlighted in Chief Nanga's ministerial work as the minister for culture. First, as a minister for culture, it would be expected of him to start appreciating his cultural values right from his home. However, this is not the case. The reader gets to know through a conversation between Odili and Mrs. Nanga that his children are unfamiliar with their native language and cannot speak it. Mrs. Nanga tells Odili "Don't you see they hardly speak our language? Ask them something in it and they reply in English. The little one, Micah, called

my mother "a dirty, bush woman" (Pg.43-44). As a minister of culture, it is at least expected of him to be well-versed in his culture, especially the material culture. However, Chief Nanga displays a lack of knowledge in his area of expertise. This Odili explains that "My closeness to the Minister gave everything I said heightened significance." He gets fascinated by Chief Nanga's lack of cultural values as well as the unappreciative and denunciation nature of his character towards the African culture. As the minister for culture, he lacks a basic understanding of his own people's culture. For instance, in a conversation with Odili, Chief Nanga misinterpret a sculpture by retorting that

...at a certain point the conversation turned on art appreciation, I made what I still think was a most valid and timely intervention. One of our leading artists had just made an enormous wooden figure of a god for a public square in Bori. ...it had attracted so much attention that it soon became fashionable to say it was bad or un-African. The Englishman was now saying that it lacked something or other. 'I was pleased the other day,' he said, 'as I drove past it to see one very old woman in uncontrollable rage shaking her fists at the sculpture...' 'You see this old woman, quite an illiterate pagan, who most probably worshipped this very god herself; unlike our friend trained in European art schools; this old lady is in a position to know...' (Pg.56).

While the foreigners attributed unworthy interpretations to the sculpture, the honourable minister of culture joined in to say that the sculpture represented pagan worshiping. Odili on the other hand explains to chief Nanga that, "Shaking the fist in our society is a sign of great honour and respect; it means that you attribute power to the person or object.' Which of course is quite true" (Pg. 56). Again, the honourable minister of culture prefers to wear suite to a cultural ceremony he has been invited to. He tells Odili that "If you want me to attend any of your functions you must wear a proper dress. Either you wear a suit... or if you don't like it, you

can wear our national costume. That is correct protocol” (Pg.70). The honourable minister for culture is also unaware of the few writers in his country. Odili explains, “I had expected that in a country where writers were so few, they would all be known personally to the Minister of Culture. But it was clear Chief Nanga hadn't even heard the man's name before” (Pg. 69). Despite his ignorance, the people cheered him on. Odili narrates that,

For how else could you account for the fact that a Minister of Culture announced in public that he had never heard of his country's famous novel and received applause – as indeed he received again later when he prophesied that before long our country would produce great writers like Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen, Bernard Shaw and – raising his eyes off the script – Michael West and Dudley Stam (Pg.71)

It is astonishing that Chief Nanga, who serves as a Minister of Culture, is unaware of the Book Exhibition or prominent writers in his country. However, he is familiar with Western writers, and he erroneously believes that the title of the book *The Song of the Black Bird* is a song. He thus says in his opening speech, “As you know Mr. Jalio is the President of this Society, which has already done much to project the African Personality. I believe Mr. Jalio himself has composed a brilliant song called... erm... What is it called again?” (Pg.71). Unfortunately, the people mistook it for “witticism” (Pg.71). It becomes obvious that Chief Nanga is not well vested in his leadership role and, for that matter may be unfit for his position as the Minister of Culture. The realisation that the Minister is unfamiliar with the roles of a Writers' Society serves to amplify the mockery even further. Odili reveals that the Minister having heard the word 'song,' he asks the president of the Writers' Society while glancing at the arrival of ambassadors to the launching of the book exhibition,

"So your society includes musicians as well?". His lack of understanding of this event makes him a cultureless minister of culture. This makes Odili wonder about his projection of his culture to the outside world and questions "Just think of such a cultureless man going abroad and calling himself Minister of Culture. Ridiculous. This is why the outside world laughs at us" (Pg.26). Additionally, it is interesting to note that his association with his colleagues make them cultureless also. An instance occurred when Chief Nanga and Odili visited Chief Koko. Odili explains the incident,

Chief Koko explained that nothing warmed the belly like hot coffee and proceeded to take a loud and long sip followed by a satisfied Ahh! Then he practically dropped the cup and saucer on the drinks-table by his chair and jumped up as though a scorpion had stung him. 'They have killed me,' he wailed, wringing his hands, breathing hard and loud and rolling his eyes.

Apparently, Chief Koko gets poisoned by his cook. He blames his workers in his house and to some extent, the country having a thought that perhaps the poisoner was contracted by an enemy and questions "What have I done to them? (Pg.37)". At the point of despair, Odili advises they call a hospital and request the attention of a doctor. Chief Nanga steps in and "rushed towards the telephone (Pg. 38)" to make phone calls. However, it was futile; "Nanga had been trying to phone a doctor and was not apparently getting anywhere" (Pg. 38). Reality hit on him and he realises that "That is the trouble with this country" (Pg.38). At this point, the reader begins to question the efficacy and responsiveness of the country's health system. If a minister of the country, with all the influence he had, could not find a doctor to attend to him in a time of emergency, how much more difficult would it be for an average citizen with no money or influence? At this point, the bodyguard drags the

cook in, and Chief Koko who has been poisoned a few minutes ago still energetically and angrily threatens the cook “I will kill him before I die” (Pg.38). The cook arrives and “made for the cup of coffee quickly, grabbed it and drank every drop” (Pg.39). At this moment, the cook explains that the minister’s usual Nescafe had run out so he “... had brewed some of his own locally processed coffee which he maintained he had bought from OHMS” (Pg.39). Odili comments that

“OHMS---Our Home Made Stuff---was the popular name of the gigantic campaign which the Government had mounted all over the country to promote the consumption of locally made products. Newspapers, radio and television urged every patriot to support this great national effort which, they said, held the key to economic emancipation without which our hardwon political freedom was a mirage (Pg.39).

Interestingly, it appears the ministers are unfamiliar with their own local products. However, it is revealed in this scene that they have high preference for foreign products over locally made products while also campaigning for the patronage of locally made products. Ironically, the percentage of the consumption of these products by the politicians is highly proportionate to what the ordinary citizen consumes. This is due to the fact that these government officials are public figures first and foremost and so have a larger size of household members which includes their domestic servants, unlike the ordinary person who has a smaller household. Ironically, they are the major consumers of foreign products which makes them the major contributors to the country’s economic malfunctioning.

Aesthetic setting

Imaginative setting (Bori and Anata)

Imagination is an essential element of aesthetic writing. *In A Man of the People*, one of Achebe's techniques for making the narrative appealing is the use of an imaginative setting. The capital city of the nameless country is called Bori which does not exist in any known African society. Unlike *Kwakyē's The Clothes of Nakedness* which had names of places such as Nima and 441 existed, Achebe's specific names of places such as Bori, Anata, Giligili, Urua among others are all imaginative. Among these settings, the study identified Bori and Anata as the aesthetic setting. The purpose for choosing these settings as aesthetic is because most of the events that involved the aesthetic character took place in these two places. The two settings help to compare and contrast the events that occurred in the narrative. Bori represents the urban lifestyle while Anata represents the rural lifestyle.

Anata

A place of political ignorance

Members of the Anata community knew one another and supported one another, especially those wanting to advance in society. This shows in the characters' disinterest in the scandalous act of Chief Nanga. Odili informs "Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you--as my father did--if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth" (Pg. 6). For instance, the people of Anata view Chief Nanga as their spokesperson in the nation building. Thus, Chief

Nanga makes a trip to Anata and to his former place of work “Anata Grammar School” (Pg.1). The village attended the welcoming ceremony in their numbers as Odili recounts that “The Assembly Hall must have carried well over thrice its capacity. Many villagers sat on the floor, right up to the foot of the dais” (Pg.1). Various performing groups in the village attended in full and in their best look to impress the honourable minister “Five or six dancing groups were performing at different points in the compound. The popular 'Ego Women's Party' wore a new uniform of expensive accra cloth” (Pg.1). It shows how the village folks can easily be manipulated due to their lack of exposure to the true nature of these political leaders.

A place for nurturing cultural values

Anata is also portrayed as a place for nurturing cultural values. For instance, Mrs. Nanga tells Odili that Chief Nanga allowed his children to visit once every year. Odili narrates that “Apparently the Minister insisted that his children must be taken home to their village at least once a year. 'Very wise,' I said. 'Without it,' said Mrs. Nanga, 'they would become English people’” (Pg.43). In contrast to the city, where young people might be disrespectful and yet get away with it, children in Anata showed respect to the elderly. Mrs. Nanga tells Odili that one of her children called her mother “a dirty bush woman” (Pg.44). Even Odili informs how respectful he is towards his father that “I answered full of respect” (Pg.132) although his father was wrong in imposing Chief Nanga’s will on him.

A place of struggle

The rural life provides the reader with the poor living conditions of the people compared to the urban life. This is very evident in the welcoming ceremony that was organised for Chief Nanga. Odili tells that “That afternoon he was due to address the staff and students of the Anata Grammar School where I was teaching at the time. But as usual in those highly political times the villagers moved in and virtually took over” (Pg.1). This is an indication that the members of the community are either unemployed or are subsistence farmers who work on the farm. This is because nobody will leave his/her work on a working day and go sit “on the floor” (Pg.1) while waiting to hear a speech from a politician. Again, the story tells that “Five or six dancing groups were performing at different points in the compound” (Pg.1). This shows how unbusy the group are. Almost all the groups or societies in the village came to the school to see the minister. Had they been occupied, perhaps, they would still be working during those minutes and return to the ceremonial ground only when the Chief arrived. Even the “members of the hunters” (Pg.1) who only came out on special occasions were there at the scene. Odili tells that their arrival caused a stir. “Mothers grabbed their children and hurriedly dragged them away” (Pg.1) indicating that there was the presence of children at the scene too. Odili calls them “poor contemptible people” (Pg.2). He then singles out the school owner and describes him as “Mr. Nwege was a poor, hungry elementary school teacher---that is before he built his grammar school and became rich but still hungry” (Pg.14). Apparently, the individual who owns a promising job and even pays his employees happened to be poor how much more those who work for him

or do not own a job. Odili describe Mr. Nwege's house as square, "cement-block house" (Pg.15). Again, Odili describes the poor living condition of Chief Nanga's fiancée's family. It happened that Edna's mother was hospitalised. Edna prepared her mother's lunch and Odili offered to help take the lunch to the mother at the hospital. However, the food fell and poured onto the ground. Odili described Edna's reaction that "Actually I think her crying was probably due to hurt pride because the food lying on the road showed how poor her family was" (Pg. 106).

Bori

A place for the political elite

Unlike the village, the city is a busy place which had educated individuals such as Max and Eunice who were lawyers and active members of the Common People's Convention (Pg. 87). These individuals, in contrast to the people who lived in the villages of Anata, were well informed about both their constitutional rights and their patriotic obligation to keep the country's leaders on their toes. In other words, they were involved in the political process of the country and were quite knowledgeable about the events that were taking place in the nation. Thus, the city unlike Anata is a place of confrontation where young men and women like Max, Eunice, and Odili fight for the sanity of the country's political system. Nevertheless, despite all of this knowledge and the presence of those who were working to eradicate corruption, the city remained the most corrupt setting.

Significance of the aesthetic elements

This section of the study focuses on the second research question which seeks to explore the significance of the aesthetic elements that are identified in the selected

texts. In line with the second research question, two significances have been identified in the second text which is Achebe's *A Man of The People*. They are aesthetic value and didactic value. The subsequent sections will explore into details the significances of the aesthetic elements.

Aesthetic value

This section of the study explores the first significance of the aesthetic elements that were identified in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. The aesthetic value in Achebe's *A Man of The People* looks at the form or inherent elements that one can use to understand the text without situating it in society. Aagaard-Mogensen and de Vos (2022) argue that to define a work of art as beautiful, one first needs to be able to identify its value, which must be a distinctive feature or element. Thus, the identification of this distinctive feature results in the aesthetic taste or experience of the work of art. As mentioned earlier in the above subtopics, this study identified two aesthetic elements which are aesthetic character and aesthetic settings.

The aesthetic character contributed to the conflict and tension in the narrative.

The aesthetic character was used to increase tension or build conflicts in the narrative. Chief Nanga appears to assist and hinder the other characters, leaving the reader wondering what his prime objective is. An instance is when Chief Nanga bribed Odili with a scholarship.

Chief Nanga has continued to struggle for you and has now brought you the scholarship to your house. His kindness surprises me; I couldn't do it myself. On top of that he has brought you two hundred and fifty pounds if you will sign this paper....' He held up a piece of paper. 'Don't say I am interrupting you, sir,' said Chief Nanga. 'I don't want Odili to misunderstand me.' He

turned squarely to me. 'I am not afraid of you. Every goat and every fowl in this country knows that you will fail woefully (Pg.132).

A few weeks before the election, Chief Nanga offers Odili a scholarship to convince his rival to withdraw from the race, all the while seeming as though he is trying to assist Odili. A few weeks before the election, he distributes water to the people of Anata in an attempt to persuade them of his leadership abilities and entice them to vote for him: "They are bringing us water and they promise to bring us electricity. We did not have those things before; that is why I say we are eating too.' 'Defend them, Couple,' cried someone in the audience to him" (Pg. 139). All these, the reader is aware that they are meant for him to remain in power and not meant for the goodwill of the recipients.

The aesthetic character must be distinctive

A character with aesthetic value must be beautiful: magnificent, funny, graceful, and humorous. Thus, the literary and aesthetic feature of a character's formation is referred to as its aesthetic characterisation, and it involves describing the attractiveness and coherence of the character. This is very evident in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. Odili as well as Gramar-phone the soloist describes Chief Nanga as "Handsome" (Pg.8). This tells the reader one distinctive feature the aesthetic character has over the rest of the characters. This description is very important in identifying the aesthetic character since the writer will build upon it as the story unfolds. Again, he is portrayed as a rich politician who had influence not only in Anata and its environs but in the whole country. Odili tells at the beginning of the narration that "No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, M.P,

was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people” (Pg.1). The narration then moves to an ethical characterisation or ethical interpretation approach in presenting Chief Nanga, where Achebe constructs and sets the moral code and social orientation of the aesthetic character through the voice of Odili. Achebe accomplishes this through his foil character, the community, the general interactions of the other characters, and Nanga's relationship with the world and with life. In this regard, the author presents the aesthetic character's worldview or perspective on morality. The analysis of a literary character usually combines two or more types of characterisations as established in Chapter three.

Didactic value

This section of the study seeks to explore the second significance of aesthetic elements that were identified in Achebe's *A Man of The People*. Achebe, aware of the didactic value of his work *A Man of The People*, employs his art as a means of conveying a message to his readers. Achebe achieves this by identifying, organizing, and incorporating ideas, and themes to create great content. The didactic value of an artist's work can either be explicit and obvious or implicit and oblivious. An example is the intentional designation of Achebe's aesthetic persona as A man of the people. Though Achebe did not mention that the setting is Nigeria, instances in the text prove otherwise. Achebe's text was published in 1966, 6 years after Nigeria's independence. He incorporates this in his text when Odili mentions that “A common saying in the country after independence was that it didn't matter

what you knew but who you knew” (Pg. 17). This conveys the disillusionment among the youth.

Exposure to the problems that most newly independent African societies face

Another didactic value that may be derived from the text is that it satirises the problems that most newly independent African societies are facing, which stem specifically from the leaders who gained power from the colonisers and, in a general case, simply replaced the coloniser. Plato's perspective on aesthetic theory is brought into focus owing to the aesthetic value of these elements. To Plato, Art that is only for pleasure is useless. This confirms the complementary role that Adorno claims aesthetic value and the traditional value of art play on each other. It introduces common theme such as the theme of inequality. The upper class is represented by rich politicians like Chief Nanga, Chief Koko, and other ministers who live luxuriously and drive expensive cars while the majority are suffering. They also send their children to expensive schools run by Europeans. Odili says “Mr. Nanga always spoke English or pidgin, his children, whom I discovered went to expensive private schools run by European ladies spoke impeccable English...” (Pg.32). There are residential areas for high-class members and poor people. When Jean drives Odili around the city she takes him through the areas where poor people live and then to those of high class as Odili says “we were now back in the pleasant high-class area.” (Pg.54). The poor class which comprises the majority of the citizens lives in dire poverty. For instance, in Giligili, Odili’s sister was living a poor life when Odili visited her. They lived in a house with only two rooms and had to fight rats in the house. He says “My sister, her husband, and two

small children slept in one and the rest of us – three boys – shared the other with bags of rice, garri, beans, and other stuff. And of course, the rats” (Pg.41). When Edna and Odili get a bicycle accident and the food spills down she cries saying that “My mother will die of hunger today.” Odili has the following to say “Actually, I think her crying was probably due to hurt pride because the food lying on the road showed how poor her family was” (Pg. 94). Poor people who are lucky are using pit latrines, but the disadvantaged ones are using bucket latrines. This includes Odili’s half-sister and her family in Giligili, who were using bucket latrines. In the city, poor people are using bucket (pails) latrines. This shows the highest state of poverty. Odili explains this clearly.

The attention of the Public is hereby drawn to Section 12 of the Bori (Conservancy) Bye-laws, 1951: (i) Occupiers of all premises shall provide pails for excrement; the size of such pails and the materials of which they are constructed shall be approved by the City Engineer. (ii) The number of such pails to be provided in any premises shall be specified by the City Engineer. The Public are warned against unauthorized increases in the number of pails already existing on their premises. (Pg.46).

Even though the city exuded urban life, those who were poor were equally suffering just as the poor peasants in Anata and its environs. Odili provides a clear contrast between the rich and the poor by comparing the situation to that of Chief Nanga “The surprises and contrasts in our great country were simply inexhaustible. Here was I in our capital city, reading about pails of excrement from the cosy comfort of a princely seven-bathroom mansion with its seven gleaming, silent action, water-closets!” (Pg.46)

Achebe creates this character and elevates him in his story as a man from the grassroots who rose to become a powerful politician in post-colonial Nigeria.

Odili informs the reader that Chief Nanga is from the Village of Anata and a former teacher at Anata Grammar School (Pg. 9). Due to his humble background, Chief Nanga believes that "...minister means servant" (Pg. 9). However, aesthetic settings and the aesthetic character analysis showed otherwise of what the honourable minister professes. Achebe uses this as a form of mirroring Nigerian society and some African societies hoping to influence the way the reader may think or feel after engaging with the text. Achebe also uses his text as a way of painting an image that can tap into the reader's emotions by inspiring, uplifting, and entertaining as well as awakening their sense of duty and patriotism to the state. These strong emotions then become associated with the message, provoking the reader to feel more connected to the issue than they otherwise might.

Neglect of political duties among some of the politicians

Moreover, Achebe uses to expose neglect of political duties among some of the politicians. Politicians are power-driven people. They talk about how the work is tedious and hard yet, they have no intentions at all of stepping out of power. Chief Nanga hails from Anata and according to Odili, he has always been impressed with Odili. With his position and exposure, it would have been the other way around with him mentoring Odili to become a good minister for their constituency. However, he gets angry at the fact that Odili is contesting against him. The point is, they all want to serve the country and the people so why must he be angry? The truth is, Chief Nanga, is already engrossed in his position enjoying the privileges, glory, and all the money that comes with it. For instance, Odili learns that Nanga bribed the editor of the *Daily Matchet* with five pounds in order to keep

withholding information pertaining to Nanga's interests. The editor promises to print Nanga's speech on the front page of his paper. This is eye-opening to the fact that the ministers or government officials in the country are projecting through the media an image they want the public to see them as while in actual sense, they are serving the public interest.

Although the text does not mention the names of real places, and uses imaginary settings, tracing through the book we can establish a conclusion that the novel is set in post-colonial Nigeria. One way of confirming this is through characterisation. This is where the artists assign roles to the characters in the story including their names. Looking at the names of the characters such as Odili, Chief Nanga, Nwege, and Samalu among others, the reader can identify these names with the Nigerian culture. Nigeria gained independence from colonial rule in 1960, and Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa assumed power. Workers in rural areas became acutely aware of the gap between their village lifestyles and those of politicians in Lagos during his reign. In June 1964, this triggered a strike that affected the entire country. Many political opponents of the regime were killed during the 1964 national elections. Further, Europe's ongoing economic interest in Africa's resources led to international concern and pressure. The pressure reached a pinnacle in January 1966, leading to the military coup. The book, *A Man of the People*, came out a few days before the coup. With this background information, it becomes clear that Achebe is a perceptive observer of the political climate in his country. During times of political unrest, he emphasised the value of artists and

intellectuals. Achebe saw the systematic abuses of power and made a profound and foreboding commentary on them.

The settings Anata contributes to the city's contrast by emphasizing the various activities that took place in the village settings and by highlighting the disparity between the degree of decay in these settings. In addition, the aesthetic setting of Anata enables us to comprehend that there are people who live in rural areas where walking or, at best, bicycles are the primary means of transportation. Inadequate social services, such as lack of electricity and piped water, as well as distant hospitals. People in the villages are extremely illiterate and ignorant, allowing a select few, such as Chief Nanga, Chief Koko, and Josiah, to exploit them unwittingly. Furthermore, both the aesthetic setting and aesthetic character introduce the theme that corruption is a common theme in African literature. It involves people's misuse of power or public office and resources for private gain. It is a result of moral decay in any society engaging in corruption. In the novel, there are many cases of corruption. For instance, Chief Nanga bribes Odili by giving him some money and a scholarship so that Odili can step down for him. However, Odili refuses the offer. Chief Nanga tells Odili to take the money and a scholarship to go and learn more books since the country needs young people like him (Odili) and leave the dirty game of politics to people like Chief Nanga who know how to play it (Pg.132). Likewise, Chief Koko bribes Maxwell £1000 to step down for him, but Max uses the money to hire a minibus for campaigns. Also, Chief Nanga bribes the Editor of the *Daily Matchet* so that his speech can be printed and for the journalist to write only good things about him. He says "if I don't give him

something now tomorrow, he will go and write rubbish about me” (Pg.66). Also, Chief Nanga receives “a dash” From British Companies like Antonio and Sons after giving them a contract worth half a million pounds (Pg.108). The reader is introduced to another form of decay when Boniface asks Odili to provide them with more money since the money he gave them the previous day was used to bribe the police and the court clerk to get their case canceled (Pg.144).

Exposure of Moral Decay

Achebe's *A Man of the People* identifies sexual decay as one of the forms of moral decay that plague society. This particular theme will be discussed in regard to the aesthetic character of Chief Nanga for the purpose of this investigation, as its focus is on that character. Within the scope of this study, the term sexual decay can be understood to refer to the way in which the characters in the text violate moral norms by indulging their own sexual desires. Chief Nanga is depicted as a character in the text who, in several instances, engages in sexually exploitative behavior by taking advantage of his influence or personality. The first instance can be traced back to his involvement with Elsie, who was Odili's former girlfriend. The conversation begins with Odili informing Chief Nanga about his girlfriend Elsie and his intention to invite her over to his house. Chief Nanga readily agrees to this new arrangement, and Odili travels to the hostel where Elise resides while she is employed as a nurse. Elise is referred to by Odili as a "good time girl" in an exchange of careless words that takes place between Odili and Nanga which describes a girl who has loose morals. Chief Nanga successfully seduces Elise on the very first night she spends at his house and successfully sleeps with her. Odili

felt insulted and betrayed and makes the decision to exact his vengeance on Chief Nanga. Again, the incidence caused Odili to have a new perspective of Chief Nanga as not only being corrupt but also greedy and immoral. For instance, he offers to get him prostitutes “If you like I can bring you six girls this evening. You go do the thing sotay you go beg say you no want again” (Pg.81). Ironically, the minister of culture who is supposed to culturally groom the youth patronises prostitute which is against the African cultural values. Odili reminds Chief Nanga that “You call yourself Minister of Culture” (Pg.81). In order to carry out his plans to exact revenge on Nanga, he enlists the assistance of Max, a former classmate of his who is now an accomplished lawyer and a fiery politician.

Exposure of Political Decay

According to Kareem (2017), the political history in Nigeria after independence demonstrates that the government has always been led by a group of individuals more concerned with the interests of themselves, their group, or their ethnic group than with the welfare of the country as a whole. Since the nation's attainment of its independence, civilians and members of the armed forces have taken turns running the government. It does not appear that either of these two groups has been more successful than the other in terms of lowering perceived levels of corruption in the country. In point of fact, the political leadership class has been successful in institutionalising corruption by facilitating its growth in a manner that is detrimental to the nation's economic, cultural, and political development Okeugo, Ejike & Okoye, (2020). This has resulted in corruption becoming deeply embedded in the nation's political, cultural, and economic

systems. This was done at the expense of the political development, cultural development, and economic development of the country. Under Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and President Nnamdi Azikwe, there was a great deal of corruption during the First Republic. Officials of the government stole public funds without being caught (Kareem, 2017). Federal Representatives and Ministers flaunted their wealth without concern. It appeared that none of the men in charge of the government of the First Republic had good morals.

Politically, the leaders of Nigeria during the First Republic viewed politics as a means to make money and live comfortably. In addition to the aforementioned circumstances, a group of young, middle-rank army officers staged a coup d'état on January 15, 1966, to remove the corrupt politicians from Nigeria's First Republic. The military government of General Aguiyi Thomas Ironsi, which took over after the civilian government was overthrown, established a number of commissions of inquiry to investigate the activities of some governmental bodies and the widespread corruption that existed in the public service under the previous administration. The report on the ministries, in particular the Nigeria Railway Corporation, the Nigeria Ports Authority, the former Electricity Corporation of Nigeria, and Nigeria Airways, revealed that several ministers established their own businesses and used their position to secure contracts. They were also found guilty of stealing money and not following rules when agencies under their Ministries gave out contracts (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014). In the novel, Odili recalls his youth, when he praised Nanga for being a model, trustworthy politician. However, his opinion of him changed when he witnessed the political assassination of the

Minister of Finance, who was a "first-rate economist with a PhD" (Pg. 3) in Public Finance, shattering this image of Nanga. Cabinet rejected the Minister of Finance's comprehensive plan to avert the financial crisis because it would result in the government's defeat in the upcoming election. The politicians who supported the Minister of Finance were dismissed, and the corrupt politicians accused the honorable Minister of being a traitor, of being un-African, and of "aping the white man's mannerisms and speaking" (Pg. 4). Odili was astounded to discover that these falsehoods were being used as political propaganda in local newspapers, one of which published the following:

We are proud to be Africans. Our true leaders are not those intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard degrees but those who speak the language of the people. Away with the damnable and expensive university education that only alienates an African from his rich and ancient culture and puts him above his people ... (Pg. 4)

Consequently, the prime minister aware of the situation refused the Minister of Finance's proposal for the fear of losing the upcoming elections and rather chose to frame them as traitors. Achebe uses this to portray the post-colonial political situation in Nigeria and any other African country.

Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at the analysis and discussion of the aesthetic elements and significant of these elements. The study identified two aesthetic elements. They are the aesthetic character and the aesthetic settings. In this chapter, Chief Nanga was described as the aesthetic character, and Anata and Bori as the aesthetic settings. The relevance of the aesthetic elements was broken down into two categories in this chapter as well, aesthetic values and didactic values. In addition,

the chapter defined two types of decay that were portrayed as a result of the aesthetic elements and values. These two types of decay were moral decay and political decay.

Conclusion

The depiction of both the aesthetic and didactic values may also reflect Achebe's argument of his conviction that an incompetent government can only remain in power if its citizens remain silent about its actions. The analysis also reveal that the people are irresponsible, as they have failed the nation by choosing not to take action against corrupt leaders such as Chief Nanga, Chief Koko, and other Ministers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the previous chapter, this study looked at the analysis and discussion of Achebe's *A Man of The People*. It identified two aesthetic elements which are, the aesthetic character and the aesthetic setting. It further examined the significance of the aesthetic elements that were identified in the text. In this chapter which is the final chapter of this study, the study seeks to presents a summary of the pivotal issues raised, key findings of the study and some recommendations for further study.

Summary of the study

This study aimed to explore the aesthetic elements and their significance in the two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*. The selection of these two texts was based on their ability to distinctively depict the aesthetics of decay in all aspects: political, social, moral, and physical. Moreover, these two texts were also relevant to the research as they address some post-colonial challenges faced by the newly independent African nations that are relevant today.

The study was divided into five chapters. The first chapter of the study presented the background of the study, the justification of the use of the selected texts, brief biographies of the authors of the selected texts, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, delimitation, methodology, synopsis of the two selected texts, the definition of key terms as well as the organisation of the study.

Chapter two of this study looked at the literature review. It examined the theoretical framework that guided the study, in this case, Adorno's aesthetic theory. The literature review was divided into three parts. The first part reviewed empirical studies on the aesthetics of decay in general. The second part reviewed works of literature on Achebe's *A Man of the People*, while the last part reviewed literature on Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The chapter concludes that, even though there are works of literature on the aesthetic of decay, most of these works focus with other forms of art other than literature. Additionally, most of the studies on the selected texts focused on character analysis or themes; therefore, the concept of the aesthetics of decay is noticeably lacking in the literature of these selected texts. The subsequent chapters were devoted to the analysis of the two selected texts.

Chapter three explored the analysis and discussion of Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The analysis started with the first objective, which is identifying the aesthetic elements in the first text, Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. Two aesthetic elements were identified: the aesthetic character and the aesthetic setting. Subsequently, the techniques or methods through which the author made the aesthetic elements 'aesthetics' were explored. Chapter three further examined two significances of these aesthetic elements, which were aesthetic value and didactic value. The aesthetic value seeks to elicit aesthetic taste, while the didactic value seeks to inform or educate.

Chapter four focuses on the analysis and discussion of the second text, which is Achebe's *A Man of The People*. The analysis, just like Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*, identified two aesthetic elements, which are the aesthetic

character and the aesthetic setting. Again, the technique or method the author used in making his aesthetic elements 'aesthetics' was explored. The chapter further identified the significances of the aesthetic elements as didactic significance and aesthetic significance.

Chapter five of the study provides a general conclusion to the study. It thus presents the summary of the study, the key findings of the study, some recommendations for further studies and a conclusion.

Key findings of the study

The research presented two questions. The first question sought to explore the aesthetic elements in the two selected texts. The analysis showed that the two selected texts, *The Clothes of Nakedness* and *A Man of The People*, both had aesthetic character and aesthetic setting as their aesthetic elements. Mysterious was identified as the aesthetic character in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*. The techniques or methods the author used to make this character aesthetic were identified as zoomorphism, aesthetic characterisation (character naming), and imagination. These techniques were identified to be very important to the text because they build up a character's appeal and make the character attractive to the reader. Without these techniques, the main character will not be able to stand out among the other characters. Thus, the aesthetic character's personality resulted in aesthetic taste that is primarily concerned with the lived-through experience of the text, allowing the reader to emotionally engage with the aesthetic character. Achebe's *A Man of The People* presented the reader with such a bond. This bonding was done through shared experiences, as well as the aesthetic

character's general impression on the reader. Achebe achieved this through the technique of irony and, predominantly, dramatic irony.

The study also showed that in literary works, the portrayal of a character often creates a lasting impression within the first few lines of their introduction and can influence how the reader perceives him/her, establishing the foundation for their continued involvement in the narrative. Kwakye achieved this through aesthetic characterisation, where the character was given a name that reflected the role he played in the story. In describing his character, Kwakye predominantly used imagery, especially kinesthetic imagery, such as "moved quickly...surveying people" (Pg.1). The character was also described as having an "unnatural quality of energy and power" (Pg.1) which translates to supernaturalism which also reflects the name that was given to him. Hence, the readers' imagination is widened as they look out for the demonstration of these qualities in the aesthetic character as the plot progresses. The aesthetic setting examined the place or location that set the atmosphere for the aesthetic character to operate or live up to their role.

The significances of the aesthetic elements were aesthetic value and didactic value. The aesthetic value of a text involves the kind of reading in which the reader's attention is centered on what he is living through during his engagement with the text. The aesthetic value encourages individual interpretation of the text, which could be negative or positive. It also results in aesthetic taste, which could be anger, disappointment, or love. Subjects that emphasize aesthetic values are substantially most likely to be applied to real-life occurrences and, as a result, draw broad conclusions about the world.

Another significance of the aesthetic element that was identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* was the traditional value of art, didactic value. The didactic value that was identified was found in the themes of alcoholism, drug abuse, power, and unemployment (Pg.22). These values are consistent with the aesthetic theory which informs that to experience an artwork aesthetically means to understand the structure of the work's content-related elements which involves our experience, pleasure, and appreciation of the artwork. This is not to say that structural features such as imagery, alliteration, or irony among others result in aesthetic pleasure. Rather, it is only by interpreting or understanding the place of a particular structural feature in a context that makes it possible to experience a text as beautiful.

In Achebe's *A Man of The People*, the aesthetic character identified in the text is M.A. Chief Nanga. It was revealed that Achebe makes his character aesthetic through the use of irony and imagery. At the beginning of the narrative, the aesthetic character is introduced to the reader as the man of the people. However, the analysis showed that Chief Nanga who was regarded by the people as their representation, leader and icon of national building, in actual sense, was not serving the people. Rather, he stole from the national coffers to enrich himself.

The two texts are relevant to our current societies because all the issues discussed within the texts are found in our current societies, especially in African societies. Specifically, Achebe discussed the issue of corruption by using Chief Nanga, who tries to bribe Odili by giving him a certain amount of money, indicating that in our societies, the issue of corruption is a big problem that undermines

democratic institutions, traditional values, among other things. Moreover, these two aesthetic elements bring about the concept of decay as the analysis revealed through the aesthetic character in Achebe's *A Man of The People* that corruption is a two-sided act; one side is doing it, and the other side is condoning it. This implies that ordinary people can equally enable corruption by turning a blind eye.

Overall, the two texts revealed that, sometimes, the 'big people' we look up to in society are the architects of the plights of ordinary people. This is very evident as the two aesthetic characters that were identified in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of The People* are seen to be in a place of power and influence to help people in their society. Yet, they used their power and influence to take advantage of these people. Mystique Mysterious goes to the other characters with the pretense of helping them while also using their desperation to make ends meet as an advantage to extort money from them. Moreover, at the end of the coup, a year after the government officials, including Chief Nanga and Chief Koko, were arrested by the army, they were bailed out. Thus, they gained their freedom and were neither punished nor had the stolen government's assets confiscated.

Achebe does not provide a closure to the narrative and nor to the case of the arrested politicians. He leaves the end open for possible guesses. From the open end, it can be deduced that the politicians who were arrested will not be able to justly pay for their thievery or robbery of national funds. Even if they serve jail terms, they would still be keeping the stolen assets, which rightfully should have been confiscated and returned to where they stole from. Similarly, the aesthetic

character in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* alters the fate of all characters, such as Bukari, Baba, Fati, Kojo Ansah, and the crowd of 441 whom he encountered. He murders Bukari in a car accident and misleads Baba, which lands him in jail. Kojo Ansah goes to jail for framed murder, the crowd of 441 becomes drug addicts, Fati becomes a widow, and Esi loses her customers. Mystique Mysterious, however, walks away freely without being punished for his crimes.

The closure from Kwakye is equally relatable to Achebe's *A Man of The People*. Although the text gave hope that the corrupt ministers were arrested and tried, the fact that the actual act was not carried out informs the reader that the symbolic representation of corruption in the African political system has not been eradicated. Kwakye closes the text by stating, "If one looks harder, what may seem to be right at a glance will become a clear vision of lies hidden in the dark."

Kojo Ansah, who represented truth in Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness*, was executed for a murder he did not commit. Mystique Mysterious, who committed the murder, walked away a free man while the people, oblivious of the truth of the matter, condemned Kojo Ansah as "a very bad man. "He (Kojo Ansah) has been pretending that he is a good, planning all along to do murder" (Pg. 202). Also, in Achebe's *A Man of The People*, Odili was beaten up till he fell into a coma for trying to expose Chief Nanga's lies and fraudulent activities. These insights serve as a commentary for readers to reflect on societal values and governance, ultimately encouraging us to be accountable and transparent in order to promote good governance.

Recommendation for further studies

This study focused only on Kwakye's *The Clothes of Nakedness* and Achebe's *A Man of The People*. It primarily examined the aesthetic elements and their significance by using the aesthetic theory. Two recommendations are made for further research. The first recommendation is to examine how aesthetic elements comment on social issues, cultural norms, and societal structures. This can be done by using the aesthetic theory, which seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of literature's role in reflecting and shaping society. The other recommendation is to analyse the reader's response to aesthetic elements by exploring the emotional and cognitive impact of aesthetic elements on readers.

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