

CAPITALISM AND THE MARXIST IDEALS—A DISCUSSION OF E. T. SUTHERLAND’S *THE MARRIAGE OF ANANSEWA*

Ofori Amanfo Boateng, Faith Ben-Daniels

1. Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana, West Africa
2. Department of Languages Education, Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, P. O. Box 1277, Kumasi, Ghana.
fbdanields@aamusted.edu.gh

Abstract

Ananse is popularly known in Akan tradition as a trickster because he is cunning, crafty, deceptive, among many other negative accolades. In conformity with other trickster characters around the world, Ananse has an anthropomorphic nature. His anthropomorphic nature makes him suitable not only for fireside stories, but for the stage as well. The playwright, Efua Theodora Sutherland, adapts Ananse’s anthropomorphic nature, as well as Akan traditional storytelling conventions, and creates a theatrical movement which she calls, Anansegoro. Based on the theatrical conventions of Anansegoro, Efua T. Sutherland creates her play—*The marriage of Anansewa*. As such, this qualitative study uses a textual analysis approach to explore Ananse’s motivation for deceiving his victims in E. T. Sutherland’s *The marriage of Anansewa*. The style Ananse adopts to trick his victims in the play is also discussed. The study is carried out using Marxist literary criticism as its main theoretical framework for the analysis and interpretation of the play. Marxism is chosen because it serves as one of the main critique ideologies which oppose the economic systems of capitalism. The researchers discover through the play that capitalism provides the exposure for people to become greedy, and that Ananse’s deceptive operation on his victims is highly motivated by capitalist ideology and its material realities. Based on the initial discovery, the researchers further argue that it is the capitalist system that directly motivates Ananse to deceive his victims in the play. The study concludes that E. T. Sutherland uses her theatrical movement, Anansegoro, to satirize the economic system of capitalism, as well as those who subscribe to this individualistic property-owning ideology.

Keywords: Ananse, Anansegoro, Anansem, Capitalism, Marxism.

DOI: 10.7176/JLLL/106-02

Publication date: June 30th 2025

Introduction

Efua Theodora Sutherland (1975) defines *Anansem* as the body of stories told and the storytelling performance of the Akan people. She further explains that *Anansem* thrives on a traditional form of theatre with its own conventions, and it is this traditional theatre that Sutherland adapts for a conventional stage and calls *Anansegoro*. According to Sutherland (1975) *Anansegoro* simply means playing Ananse on stage. Although *Anansem* as an Akan traditional storytelling art form has stories that do not feature the character Ananse, *Anansegoro*, which Sutherland creates out of *Anansem* is focused on stories or plays that feature the character of Ananse. Ben-Daniels (2024) posits that Ananse’s anthropomorphic nature as a character in *Anansem* is a relevant aspect of the Akan society, and his continuous presence can never be over emphasized. Ben-Daniels (2024) further delineates that although society is uncomfortable with Ananse’s character as a trickster, Ananse, according to Sutherland represents the society. Ananse’s deception is a representation of society’s deceptive nature.

Deception, according to Bell (2003) is the conscious, planned intrusion of an illusion seeking to alter a target’s reality, replacing objective reality with perceived reality. Bryan and Pillutti (2017) opine that the methods to alter the perceived reality may differ, but the key point is that the deceiver always does so with explicit intent as part of a conscious process. Bell’s framework on deception indicates that deception starts with planning, determining both the goal of the deception and the method. For Corner (2007) deception occurs across democratic and non-democratic states and that, there is a manifestation of deception in every part of the world. The issue of deception is a perennial concern that dates as far back as Ancient Greece mythology as discussed in Plato and Aristotle’s *The Republic* and *On Rhetoric* respectively.

Deception is a common issue under discussion in contemporary discourses. Miller and Robinson (2019) observe that we live in an age in which debates about deception and propaganda are prevalent. DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein (1996) state that deception is a ubiquitous phenomenon in real life, and the meaning of their assertion is that, day in day out, people deceive others for selfish gain. This phenomenon happens on the

streets, in the markets, in institutions, on the internet, in politics, and even in churches. For example, Kendall (1998) is of the view that the internet offers new possibilities for deception and makes many well-known forms of deception easier because deception on the internet and deception in real life are fundamentally not different. Though there might be differences in relative frequency, their motivations are the same. Kendall also points out that an aspect of identity forms the basis for discrimination and because people do not want to be discriminated against, they tend to deceive the public by faking their identity in order to be accepted and recognized by capitalist societies. This makes some internet users disguise their identity because of racism and classism, and on that same issue of self-identity, Utz (2005) observes that men tend to present themselves in an idealized way by lying about their socio-economic status. He then identifies three common types of internet deception: gender switching, attractiveness deception and identity concealment.

Another area where deception is prevalent is marketing. Godwin (2005) in his book, *All Marketers are Liars* observes that marketers succeed when they tell us stories that fit our worldview, stories that we intuitively embrace and share with friends. According to him, every organization, from non-profit to car companies, from political campaigns to wine glass blowers, is a marketer and every marketing is about telling stories. They abuse the tools of their trade and make the world worse. On church deception, Hinn and Wood (2018) in their book, *Defining Deception: Freeing the Church from the Mystical Miracle Movement*, describe fraud pastors as “the global movement of mystical-miracle enthusiasts” who have put a modern face on historical doctrine (Hinn and Wood, 2018, p. 1). According to them, some men and women pose as prophets and apostles and make millions of money preying on the sick, poor, and emotionally fragile victims, and behind the veil of their miracles, these self-proclaimed pastors mask their spiritual abuse with claims of special power from the Holy Spirit. The book explains that the fake pastors have taken the church as a lucrative business industry and turned Jesus into a commodity. This is a complex situation in contemporary times and a common question that comes to the mind of the observer is—what motivates the con artists to execute their deceptive acts?

Utz (2005) reiterates that different types of deception are attributed to different motivations. According to him, his assumption is not entirely new as other scholars have thought about the possible motivations underlying deceptive acts and possible classification of deceptive acts. In reaction to the question, “what motivates people to deceive others?” Anthony and Cowley (2012) have examined lying as a strategic and deliberate tactic used to gain a better material reward. It could then be suggested that materialism enjoys a higher position among the possible factors that drive people to deceive others. This response of Anthony and Cowley (2012) resonates with the argument in this current research that capitalist system and its material concerns create unnecessary and unconscious competition, which keeps people in constant struggle for wealth and power through indiscriminate means. There is no telling in how far and adverse the consequences of deception can go. But it is important to state that deception usually has a serious traumatic effect on the deceived persons as Darke and Ritchie (2007) observe that the consequences of deception range widely and may include financial costs, psychological distress, and social distrust.

The previous researchers such as Bell (2003), Boush et al. (2009), Hinn and Wood (2018), Bakir et al. (2019) among others, have discussed extensively the concept of “deception.” Deception is the basic attribute of the folkloric character, Ananse, even though critics have described him in several other ways. It is now vital to look at the motives behind his tricks. This study therefore seeks to examine the motivation for Ananse to deceive his victims. It also looks at the style he adopts to go about his deceptive act. The primary text for analysis in this study is Sutherland’s (1975) *The Marriage of Anansewa*.

Methodology

This study is basically a qualitative one and therefore adopts the textual analysis research approach to gather data and analyze them. Hawkins (2018) assesses the instrumental role of textual analysis as a methodology that involves understanding language and symbol in texts to gain information regarding how people make sense of and communicate life and life experiences. The primary data for the analysis are drawn from Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa*. The study uses stylistics as an analytical tool to analyze the text in relation to capitalism and its material realities that reflect in the development of the plots of the play. From the perspective of stylistics, close reading technique is employed to read the text with special focus on how the linguistic forms bring to light the Marxist issues discussed in the play. Stylistics as a literary approach examines the creativity in the use of a language. It enhances the way we think about language and its use. Thus, the stylistic process, examining the creativity of the language use, develops our understanding of literature (Simpson, 2004). Marxist literary theory helped the researchers to mirror the linguistic features and events in the play that bring out the Marxist tenets through the plot of the play. Marxist criticism seeks to expose the ways in which the socioeconomic system determines people’s realities and how this system segregates some people from others in the various world

societies through material circumstances and material dialectic (Tyson, 2006). The study pays attention to the playwright's intentional use of language to reflect the capitalist inscriptions in the play. Discussions in this study have been organized into an introduction, methodology, theoretical framework, empirical literature review, discussions, findings and a conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses Marxist criticism as its main theory and that is used to ground arguments and analysis of the primary text, *The marriage of Anansewa*. Marxist criticism derives from the theories of the social philosopher, Karl Marx. Marxist critics insist that the use of language is influenced by social class and economics. It directs attention to the idea that language makes ideological statements about things like class, economics, race, and power, and the function of literary output is to either support or criticize the political and economic structures in place. Some Marxist critics use literature to describe the competing socioeconomic interests that advance capitalist interests such as money and power over socialist interests such as morality and justice. Due to this, Marxist criticism focuses attention on content and theme rather than the form of the text.

According to Tyson (2006), Marxist criticism seeks to expose the ways in which the socioeconomic system determines people's realities and how this system segregates some people from others in the various world societies through material circumstances and material dialectic. Material dialectic is a belief system that maintains that what drives historical change are the material realities of the economic base of society, rather than ideological superstructure of politics, law, philosophy, religion, and art that is built upon the economic base (Richter, 1975). Tony Benn (1970) also sees inequitable economic relationships as the source of class conflict. Marxism is a theory that opposes capitalism, the economic system in which people are kept struggling in order to amass wealth by means of exploitation and manipulations, with a motive of joining the upper class so as to be recognized and honored. Marxists maintain that there is a difference between the bourgeoisie—those who control the means of production, and the proletariat—those who operate the means of production to fill the coffers of the rich; a situation caused by capitalism.

It is the claim of Capitalism to have offered the poor the means to improve their own well-being because the system grants people's right to their own labor, whereas some critics also think the system is unfair because it is based on theft and exploitation as it privatizes the entire planet and its resources. For example, Gramsci (1971), an Italian Marxist theorist, is of the view that capitalism has sought to manufacture false needs and turn humans into voracious consumers. He makes it clear that the capitalist system is able to paralyze criticisms by justifying the importance of living an affluent life. He also asserts that the capitalist system plays a repressive role of creating an impression that individuals can be competitive enough to acquire wealth; however, it conceals the extent to which indoctrination and ideological control take place. The above view of Gramsci could represent the illusions posed by the capitalist system which seems to offer opportunities to people but rather creates unhealthy competition among individuals to struggle for material wealth and power through undue process.

Marxist literary criticism therefore investigates literature's role in the class struggle (Hartley, 2004). Many people recognize Marxism as a political and economic theory based on the fact that Karl Marx and Engels had a core duty to criticize the political structures, and the economic system rooted in the history of human society. Eagleton (2002) in his book *Marxism and Literary Criticism* qualifies Marxism as a literary theory. He states that the aim of Marxism as a literary theory is to explain the literary work more fully.

Lukacs (1967) defines Marxism as a dialectical method premised upon the category of totality. He introduced "reification" to reiterate Marx's concept of "commodification." He made reification a fundamental concept to radicalize Marxism, as he states: "to be radical is to go to the root of the matter. For man, however, the root is man himself" (Lukacs, 1967, p. 1). He explains reification as transforming an abstract thing or human function into real object as a commodity; thus, Lukacs extends Marx's idea of commodification or commodity fetishism theory to abstraction. According to him, capitalist society is permeated by reification and commodification, and abstract things like ideas and labor power have been reified (turned into commodities). This allows the capitalists to buy the labor power of the working class for more wealth. Lukacs further asserts that capitalism has destroyed the natural relations of men, where the society is characterized by class consciousness; everybody wants to get ahead.

Literature Review

Oso (2021) has studied text and performance deviations in Sutherland's *The marriage of Anansewa* and Abiodun's *The trials of Afonja*. Through the new historicist literary theory, the author examines the points of divergence between the two selected African dramatic texts and their stage performances with a view to

foregrounding the reasons for the deviations of the dramatic texts from their stage performances. He concludes that directors of stage performances deliberately and pragmatically deviate from dramatic texts without prejudice to the storyline nor the historicity of the text. Therefore, the divergence between text and performance is creativity.

Addo (2013) studied Ananse as a folkloric character in new Ghanaian drama. She used four Ghanaian drama works which feature Ananse: *The Marriage of Anansewa*, *Ananse in the Land of Idiots*, *The Story Ananse Told* and *Ananse- Kweku Ananse*. She, however, observes that Ananse is a multi-dimensional character and not always a villain as most people perceive him. According to her, Ananse uses his God-given talent of deceit to get himself out of the world's troubles. Addo adds that Ananse is motivated by desperation to save himself and his daughter from poverty and meet other urgent needs in *The marriage of Anansewa*. Meanwhile, she admits that Ananse uses psychology to manipulate Anansewa into writing the letters; he tells more lies to rid his mother and aunt from his way in order to succeed in his scheme. Addo finds it easy to conclude that Ananse is motivated by love and care for his one and only daughter, Anansewa.

Affiah (2012) in his paper "From Orality to Print: An Oraliterary Examination of Sutherland's *The marriage of Anansewa* and Osofisan's *Morountodun*" outlines several traits of Ananse, the spider. According to the author, Ananse is crafty, cunning, selfish, greedy, deceitful and conceited. He adds that George Kweku Ananse in *The marriage of Anansewa* has a generous dose of these traits and the traits, in turn contribute to the development and realisation of the theme—modern man's quest for materialism by hook or crook. The author also states that the entire play centers around the cunning, tricky Ananse and that he is a crafty modern individual who converts every little opportunity into an illegitimate avenue to amass wealth. The current study agrees with Affiah's observation on the grounds that capitalist ideology programs the modern man, using the ruse of the promise of tremendous material wealth. They therefore adopt unconventional means to acquire them in all life endeavors, even in religion. In *The marriage of Anansewa* we see modern Ananse with modern cunningness applying illegitimate and unconventional means in pursuit of materialistic gains.

Annin (2014) has studied the aesthetics of *The marriage of Anansewaa* in which she discusses the philosophy of African culture specifically, Ghanaian, by the explicit use of language by Sutherland. The study analyses the literary stylistics of Sutherland's play, focusing on the linguistic patterns and their communicative functions. It also discusses linguistic foregrounding by analyzing the paradigmatic associations that exist in the play among the lexical items and their literary significance. This includes the use of linguistic parallelism in Sutherland's 'mboguo' (songs) and her use of appellations. The author concludes that Sutherland as a prolific playwright projects Ghana's cultural values through Ananse stories and has given it a full theatrical expression in terms of style and form.

In Mireku-Gyimah's (2013) paper, "Sutherland's Creativity at Work: The New Family of Mr. Ananse the Spider in *The Marriage of Anansewa*," he explores characterization in the play and demonstrates the playwright's imagination and creativity at work. According to the author, Sutherland creates a daughter, a mother, an auntie and a lover as a new family for Ananse to balance the four males in the original Ananse family in the traditional Ananse stories. He points that Sutherland has created a new identity for Ananse as a modernized Ghanaian with an English name, George, and that the playwright artistically introduces a new dimension to Ananse by redefining his identity as a modern citizen of the globalized world. The author concludes that, by this new dimension of characters and the roles they play, which bring freshness and popularization to the Akan folktales, Sutherland has elevated the Akan folktales to become an African Classic.

Throughout the literature that has been reviewed, various approaches have been used by critics to look at Sutherland's play in terms of its content and form. The approach that has not been used at all by critics to analyze the play is the perspective from Marxism. This study seeks to examine the motivation for Ananse to deceive his victims. It also looks at the style he adopts to go about his act.

Synopsis of *The Marriage of Anansewa*

The marriage of Anansewa follows the tradition of Akan folktale, *Anansem*, in Ghana with the usual practice of Ananse, the opportunist, always outwitting his fellow characters. Ananse is a poor father who cannot afford his daughter's fees for a secretarial program she is pursuing in school, as well as other basic things that he needs in order to run the family. In his attempt to resolve his financial difficulty, he moves into a secret pact with four chiefs who are believed to have the ability to change his economic circumstances. He promises to give his only daughter, Anansewa, in marriage to all four chiefs even though his daughter is uncomfortable with his scheme.

He finds a way to persuade Anansewa who eventually agrees with her father because she is also interested in the economic well-being of the family. The scheme works perfectly for Ananse and the chiefs begin to shower money and gifts on him. Things get worse when the chiefs express the will to legalize the marriage for Anansewa to be brought to their homes. Ananse comes up with a new scheme to extricate himself from the impending mess. It is agreed that Anansewa should act dead so that he would inform the chiefs about the sudden death of their prospective wife. At the funeral, the reactions of the chiefs prove one of them fit for Anansewa. And so, Ananse performs his fake incantation to raise his daughter from death.

Discussion

Historical materialism in Marxism indicates that the primitive communism era had a classless society where there was equality among humanity. People began to realize class distinction and social stratification at the inception of capitalism and its material productions. And this gave an impression, and the consciousness to many that some people were poor because they could not afford the capitalist inventions. A similar situation is replicated in Sutherland's play when Ananse realizes he is poor, and for that matter, he has to do something to improve his economic circumstance.

The extent to which classism conditions Ananse to be so obsessed with materialism can be measured by his thoughts and diction, songs, and the stage directions in the play, as he laments in his introductory remark on stage: "while life is whipping you, rain also pours down to whip you some more" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 9). The personification used in Ananse's expression reflects the extent to which he presumably wallows in poverty. Ananse's poor situation is intensified through the use of the action verb "Whipping" assigned to the subject "life" in the above expression. He thinks life has struck him down because he cannot afford the flashy things that have been produced by the capitalist economic system. The raincoat Ananse is wearing and the umbrella he uses to cover himself against the rains have been described by him as "shabby" and "old" respectively. These adjectives signify the comparison that creates undue competition in a capitalist society because, of course, there are new and better products of those materials which Ananse must get at any cost in order to meet societal standards. And as individuals seek to meet the "standards," they are kept in persistent struggle. This is seen in the first song in the play:

Oh life is a struggle,

Oh life is a pain;

Oh life is a struggle,

Oh life is a pain

In this world (Sutherland, 1975, p. 9).

The metaphor used in the above poem maps "life" to "struggle" and "pain" in a simple SVC structure through syntagmatic relation to establish the direct link between the two phenomena (life and struggle & pain). Parallelistically, "struggle" and "pain" are synonymously related with a common feature of plus "hardship" or "stress" and that foregrounds the kind of trauma Ananse is enduring. This is because that is how conscious wealth-seekers who are always not content with their lot are programmed by the capitalist ideology. Ananse is a troubled man because he is conscious of the assorted material productions in the capitalist system which he aspires by any means possible. The competition created by the capitalist ideology sets individuals to compete, not even with one's self but with others. The fact that everyone wants to be better than others, is a true reflection of capitalist human programming. Ananse compares himself to others and realizes there is a wide gap between him and the other people because he does not enjoy a comfortable life as he sees others enjoy. He laments bitterly in his effort to persuade Anansewa into his scheme:

ANANSE: After you have gone out and returned home, here, will my hope for a more comfortable future be any better? The mattress on which I try to rest my bones after each day's up-and-down-will it have changed from a straw-stuffed, lumpy mattress to a soft, bouncy Dunlopillo? ...Apart from things like that, and above all, when you return, will there be a better, leak-proof roof over our heads? Let alone some comfortable chairs to sit in? A fridge in the kitchen? A car in the garage? My name on invitation lists for state functions? Embassies' parties? Tell me, tell me. Will I be able to go to memorial services, this week in a fine cloth, next week in suit or a different cloth? Will I be able, if I go, to thrust my hand confidently into my pocket in public and take out a five-guinea donation? (Sutherland, 1975, p. 12)

Of course, many Marxist insights into human behavior involve the damaging effects of capitalism on human psychology, and those damaging effects often appear in our relationship to the commodity. In the capitalist system, a commodity's value lies not in what it can do (use value) but in the money or other commodities for which it can be traded (exchange value) or in the social status it confers on its owner (sign-exchange value) (Tyson, 2006). Admittedly, some of the materials Ananse wants for his living really have "use value" because they are essential to his living. For example, the leak-proof roof will provide good shelter. However, there are several "sign-exchange value" commodities Ananse expresses interest in, for the capitalist idea of "You are what you own" therefore even if he already possesses the item, he would want the luxury ones to reflect a social standing, and to attract social recognition. For instance, "Garage to park a car, a change from lumpy mattress to Dunlopillo, comfortable chairs to sit in, suit or different cloth to attend social functions, his name in invitation lists for state functions among others" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 12) are all extravagant and affluent living conditions he wants to assume just to raise his social status. The number of rhetorical questions used in the above extract attests to how desperate Ananse has become in his quest to change his economic circumstance. Ananse continues with his capitalist aspirations:

ANANSE: Imagine a great congregation at an important occasion. It is time for collection. There sits the priest. There stands the gleaming collection plate in everybody's view. They call out: 'Those born on Sunday'. 'Those born on Monday'. Those born on Tuesday. It is coming soon to those born on Wednesday, mark you. To the Kwekus and Ekuwas. And my name is Kweku. Tell me, how many times have I missed going to church because there is nothing in my pocket to deposit in full view of the public? Finally, when I breath my last and die, will my coffin be drawn from a fine, private hearse instead of municipal hearse? Will the people who come to my funeral eat salad and small chops and drink whisky, instead of chewing bits of cola and drinking cheap gin and diluted Fanta? (Sutherland, 1975, pp. 12-13)

The above descriptions of the material things Ananse is so desirous of, gives a clear picture of the levels of material products in the capitalist society. He contrasts some materials with others with the use of qualitative adjectives to describe the items he wants, exhibiting disparities among the capitalist products. He wants 'better comfortable' future than his current circumstance; he wants 'soft', 'bouncy' Dunlopillo instead of straw-stuffed, lumpy mattress, 'comfortable' chairs rather than the wooden one with bare surface; he wants his name to appear on invitation lists for 'state' functions, and also attend embassies' parties and memorial services in a 'fine' cloth but not an ordinary one. He wants to show his wealth among a great congregation at an important occasion. Again, he wants his coffin to be drawn from a 'fine', private' hearse instead of municipal hearse. The paradigm of adjectives gives the reader a broad idea of what to picture in their mind. The adjectives add details to the products in the material world to which Ananse is so much attracted. Ananse's diction here attests to Derrida's (1964) assertion that ideology is embedded in the language, and that the language users are being manipulated by the ideology. Sutherland's style of the language use in this play justifies any assertion by a literary critic to qualify her as a Marxian who is trying to push the Marxist agenda through her play. Ananse's ardent wish, aspirations and enormous desires liaise with Tyson's (2006) argument that indeed, human beings are not free agents, they are socially determined, and the current researcher also adds that in the world of materialism, human beings are determined by capitalist ideology.

It is clear that some people just desire to flaunt wealth for the pleasure of it, but not the need for it. The "sign-exchange value" concept of consumerism in a capitalist system is largely depicted in the character of Ananse. Most of the things he aspires to get do not really have "use value" as he confesses when his daughter asked him these rhetorical questions "So, father, do you desire all those things? Haven't you condemned many of them often and often?" He tells her that some of them are absolutely absurd. "Empty vanity", (Sutherland, 1975, p. 13) yet he wants them for a good social recognition and also to impress others. Consumerism is intensified in the play by Ananse's desire to spend money on sophisticated materials. He expresses it after Sapaase Chief's first deposit:

ANANSE: I'am heading for town on a buying spree.
 I'll be seen with the best of the spenders,
 And when I return expect me to bring
 The latest cloth in town,
 The latest suit in town.
 Yes, tomorrow, I go to church.

To deposit with the best of the spenders... (Sutherland, 1975, p. 33).

The above expression comes in poetic form to signify a deep-rooted desire of Ananse as a result of the capitalist influence. And poetry is the means for people to express their deep feeling as Wordsworth defines poetry as a spontaneous overflow of a powerful feeling. From time to time, Sutherland switches from normal dramatic flow of turn-taking to poetic expressions to portray how some feelings are firmly grounded in some of the characters in the play. In the above poem, Sutherland shows how far ideology can go, and how effectively capitalist ideology works to program Ananse so that he finds every unconventional means through the capitalist motivation, to upgrade himself socially. As a wealth-seeker, he explores every avenue to amass wealth. The motivation for Ananse to swindle the chiefs lies in his desire to enjoy the capitalist ideological construct, which is centered on material productions and social honor.

Owusu-Manu (2018) identifies risk taking as a quality of an entrepreneur. Ananse is therefore qualified to be a modern entrepreneur who is ever ready to take any action in spite of the risk involved, as rugged individualism in the capitalist society requires. He is aware that his action of giving his daughter to the four chiefs is very dangerous, yet he grasps the bull by its horn to take the risk because he is being pushed by a strong ideology. He confirms this in his lamentation when the time is due for him to finally release his daughter to the chiefs: "If the world were not what it is, I would not gamble with such a priceless possession" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 76). Ananse means to say that if capitalist system had not made the world a competitive world where everyone is chasing socioeconomic power, he would not dice with death and play with his precious daughter. Sutherland has imitated insatiable desires of humans in this play, and that is a phenomenon caused by capitalism. The competition in the capitalist state maps up to the competition Ananse creates among the four chiefs around his daughter. For Ananse's egoistic materialism, one chief cannot provide for all the materials he wants.

In addition, classism presents itself in the play, and it could be asserted that it is a major motivating factor for Ananse's deceptive adventures. Capitalism has put people into groups and every group is identified with some unique features. Ananse wants to spend with the 'best' of the spenders, which means that even among the spenders, there are comparatives. The comparing adjectives used in the above poem signifies the social stratification in the capitalist society. It implies that there are good spenders, better spenders and the best spenders: the superlative form of a social class Ananse actually wants to join. Sutherland's use of descriptive adjectives is very trendy in the play and the significance of it lies in the fact that disparities exist in the modern capitalist society. Classism in church is also loud in Ananse's wish to deposit with the best of the spenders at a church service. By this, it could be asserted that church donations also come with capitalist influence such that the best donors are recognized by the church, and that accounts for the reason Ananse could not attend church service for some time because he could not flaunt any wealth in order to be recognized by the church.

The four chiefs also represent the bourgeoisie class who are at the top of the traditional political structure in the society. They own the land and control all the natural resources. Their position attracts preferential treatments, for they are special beings as Ananse acknowledges: "...and cancel that 'Dear Chief of Sapa', it is too ordinary" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 14). The address sounds too 'ordinary' for a person of that social class, so Ananse assumes the stance of an official praise-singer to sing a qualified appellation just to properly address the chief of Sapaase. Ananse is aware of the social structures in the capitalist society and the honor and privileges ascribed to some category of people. He is then motivated to deceive his victims in order to enjoy those bourgeoisie privileges. He mentions it when he gives orders to the workers who renovate his house: "In the very near future, visitors of no mean station will start coming to honor us" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 35). Ananse's use of the word "honor" reveals his thought of the capitalist privileges in the society. This utterance attests to Ananse's preoccupation with capitalist class consciousness.

Sutherland's criticism of capitalism in this play extends to capture most of the Marxist tenets. The concept of alienation, which in most Marxists' belief, separates the worker from his own production, from himself, from the work he does, from the bourgeoisie, and from the society is reflected in the play. Ananse's workers are distanced from the work they are doing for Ananse. The second work song in the play highlights the distance of the workers from their own production:

I say, Kwabonyi,
I'll never envy your wealth.
Kwabonyi, when you toil
Do lift your head for he

Who will spend it

Sits idle somewhere (Sutherland, 1975, p. 37).

It is clear that the “Kwabonyi” song is yet another expression of the feeling of “alienation” in a capitalist system where materials are produced by workers, 0.but they are alienated from them because the ideology does not allow them to enjoy their own products. Their labor power is hired to produce the materials for the benefit of the bourgeoisie, but not for themselves. Now that Ananse has joined the bourgeoisie class, the capitalist system allows him to hire the labor power of the workers to produce for his enjoyment.

As Tyson (2006) states, many Marxists believe that the proletariat who are being exploited by the bourgeoisie under capitalism are not aware of their exploitation. They rather believe that they have been destined to remain in their status as laborers who operate the means of production. They therefore offer their labor power with utmost passion. The first work song of Ananse’s workers shows the total admission of duty and position by the workers:

Who doesn’t like work?

Oh, I like work!

Work, work-

Who doesn’t like work?

Oh, I love work!

Work, work-

This work that I do-

Yes, yes-

Supplies my clothing.

Yes, yes.

This work that I do-

Yes, yes.

Supplies me food.

Yes, yes-

This work that I do-

Yes, yes-

Supplies my cash.

Yes, yes.

Who doesn’t like work?

Oh, I like work!

Work, work (Sutherland, 1975, p. 36).

Ideological manipulation connotes the total conditioning of the human mind to accept a social construct as a natural phenomenon, even though it is not rooted in nature. The workers sing the work song with passion and in high spirits, which is inspired by the capitalist ideology. They love the work they do because it supplies them life’s basic needs and some little cash for their self-keeping, so that they can be kept alive to work for the bourgeoisie. This is justified by the parallelistic structure in the above poem: “This work that I do-supplies my **clothing**. This work that I do-supplies my **food**. This work that I do-supplies my **cash**.” The words (clothing, food, cash) in the paradigm represent the basic life support for a worker in a capitalist society. The poem is also characterized by a succession of repetition, exclamation and rhetorical questions to make a point on existentiality and validation of work.

The above discussions give insight into manipulations in the economic systems of capitalism. The play imitates the conflicts that exist between the two major classes of people and the motivation for the proletariat to catch up with the bourgeoisie. Individual's desire to flaunt wealth in the capitalist society is largely reflected in the play and that confirms Sutherland's status as a Marxist who uses *Anansegoro* to criticize the idea of capitalism. Sutherland justifies that in Ghanaian context, modern manipulations are rooted in the traditional *Anansem*.

The free market economy in the capitalist system allows for the choice of commodity in a business transaction. Thus, almost anything could be reified in the world of business. Ananse's first approach to his wealth creation is to commodify his daughter, Anansewa. The title of the play is in harmony with the text in such a way that it has a strong relationship with the plot of the play. Analysis of the title of the play, *The marriage of Anansewa*, gives a sense of advertisement of Anansewa as a commodity on the market. The title foreshadows the sale of a commodity and in this case Anansewa is treated as a commodity through which her father would accumulate wealth to assume the recognized position in society. Anansewa herself is aware that her father has commodified her, so she laments:

ANANSEWA: My father is selling me,

Alas, alas!

Whoever thought he would?

But let me tell you bluntly,

I'll never comply.

I will not let you sell me

Like a parcel to a customer...(Sutherland, 1975, 1p. 9-20).

Semantically, the word "sell" does not collocate with human, as "me" as the pronoun of Anansewa in the lines one and six above become the object of the verb "sell" because a human being is not for sale under any circumstance. The deviation foregrounds desperation of Ananse to commodify his daughter for wealth. The simile in line eight also compares Anansewa (a human being) to a parcel (commodity in a business transaction) to a customer for money. The word "customer" in the expression is also a register in the field of business, which reflects a business transaction. Anansewa, as a good commodity, must be sold to the chiefs. Thus, she should marry them for her father to fulfill all his ambitions. Ananse himself acknowledges his daughter's beauty, as he admits: "There you sit looking lovely, and it's exciting for you to go out with all your beauty" (Sutherland, 1975, p. 11). So, as part of the strategy to achieve this ambition, Anansewa's beauty must be accompanied by education to join the elite group. This would make her become an expensive commodity; therefore, he trains her at the E.P.'s Secretarial School to complete the value of his daughter for a good business deal. This strategy works perfectly for Ananse because the chiefs are attracted to Anansewa, not only for her beauty, but also for the fact that she is educated. This is confirmed by the messengers of the chief of the Mines:

Our royal one, the wealthy paramount chief of the Mines whose praise name is 'You Are Coming Again, Aren't You', has had many discussions with his councilors about the marriage he was going to contract. He insisted-against their advice- that if a lady of this quality came into his hands, she would give enlightened training to the many children to whom his wives have given birth (Sutherland, 1975, p. 78).

It clearly indicates that the chief of the Mines is gifting money and other items to Ananse in exchange for something of good quality for a win-win transaction. The chief is interested in Anansewa's beauty, as well as her education, and this is depicted through the use of the word "enlightened" in the extract above. She is going to enlighten his children for him. Another evidence is seen in Togbe Klu's messenger's expression on Anansewa's death:

Our brother was most appreciative of this lady's training in secretarial work. He was looking forward to having a real helper at last to assist him in building up a substantial business. A helper who would not ruin him as some of his own relatives, I regret to say, have done time and time again to distress. Look, he is ready to order giant tracks for bringing cattle from Mali. That aside, he has ordered a trawler, for fishing. And the documents to all these were to have been entrusted to his own wife's administration" (Sutherland, 1975, pp. 82-83).

Togbe Klu also understands business as Ananse, and that is why he agrees to shower money on Ananse because he knows the resultant benefit at last. He needs Anansewa as an instrument for his business success. It is true that in the world of business (capitalist system) everyone is looking for a business opportunity. The marriage therefore could represent material sold directly for money as it happens in a modern system of trade, contrary to the historical social structure in which some items were bought for a ritual performance for the marriage transaction.

The entire plot of the drama represents the metaphor of marriage as a business, starting from the point Ananse takes his daughter's photograph for advertisement to the chiefs, and then writing letters for a follow-up till the time he finally executes his plan. It is clear that marriage is understood by Ananse in terms of business since business involves advertisement and promotion of business commodities. The following are some of the metaphors of business in the play: Anansewa's training in E.P.'s Secretarial School in order to attract the best suitor, represents quality product sold by serious business operators in the capitalist world. Ananse's approach to the chiefs with his daughter's photograph as a convincing strategy, also represents business advertisement, among a few others. As a serious businessman, Ananse carefully selects the bourgeoisie who are fit for his purpose. He conducts a survey as any serious businessman would do to search for a good business deal. He narrates to his daughter his toil to reach the chiefs:

ANANSE: I covered miles, I travelled the country, by bus, by train, by ferry-boat. I lobbied for introductions into palace after palace. I listened with ears alert. I observed with keen eyes. I assessed everything before I selected the four chiefs to whom I could show your photographs with advantage (Sutherland, 1975, p. 19).

In this short text above, the first-person singular pronoun "I" appears eight times as subjects of eight action verbs respectively. Six out of the eight verbs (covered, travelled, lobbied, assessed, selected, show) are material verbs. This transitivity data reflect the real efforts Ananse applied to reach his source of wealth. The parallelistic structure: "I travelled the country, by bus, by train, by ferry-boat" could form a paradigm (bus, train, ferry-boat) and they have a common feature of plus means of transportation, which foregrounds the desperate means through which Ananse reached his wealth destination. The reality of this phenomenon points to the instance of modern parents who aspire to give their 'nice-looking daughters' in marriage to rich men, by all means, so that they can also join the upper-class privileges.

For her physical looks, Anansewa has attracted four bourgeoisie chiefs who are bidding their chance to win her. This situation causes a serious trauma in an unseen lady character in the play. This is represented by the lamentation in one of the MBOGUO:

She says, mmm mother;
She says, mmm father;
She says, how shall I find a mate?
K-legged Ama,
How shall I find a mate?
Limping Ama,
How shall I find a mate? (Sutherland, 1975, p. 24).

The metaphor in the description "K-legged Ama" paints the image of Ama's leg looking like the letter 'K', which connotes deformity. The rhetorical question "How shall I find a mate?" is repeated to foreground a great worry. Ama probably sees the fortunes Anansewa's beauty has afforded her, comparing them to her unfortunate circumstance. Her deformity, which the song describes, cannot possibly attract any better suitor who would shower money on her and her parents. This is evident in the parallelistic structure in the first two lines of the poem "She says, mmm mother; She says, mmm father." Indeed, capitalist ideology extends competition to every sphere of human life.

As a sycophant, Ananse strategizes himself linguistically to flatter the chiefs for appropriation. He assumes the position of a panegyric poet, singing designated appellations to delude the chiefs because as a custodian of the Akan language, he knows how to carefully select words in a persuasive process. He also has better knowledge on human psychology. Chiefs appreciate their appellations because they elate them and make them feel superior to

their people. Their appellations play a key role in their classification as the bourgeoisie in their various communities. He recites the appellation of the chief of Sapa:

ANANSE: 'O Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin!
Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin,
Rooted in the shrine of deity
Countless branches in which
Benighted wandering birds
Are welcome to shelter' (Sutherland, 1975, p. 14).

The words in the appellation indicate the chief's high standing in relation to the people in his territory. "Mighty Tree Of Ancient Origin" is repeated to emphasize the social standing of the chief. The metaphor of comparing the chief to a mighty tree foregrounds the power of the bourgeoisie class which does not compare to the commoners, and Ananse carefully chooses those words for his purpose.

The outdooing of Anansewa is very essential in Ananse's design to benefit from the chiefs. As a custodian of the Akan tradition, he is much aware of the deficiency in Anansewa's value without her outdooing. To complete her value, worthy of being a wife of a mighty chief, it is incumbent on her to be out doored. Aya, Ananse's mother, is confused about the sudden ceremony, but Ekuwa explains to her that it is to prepare Anansewa for the position she is going to occupy in the palace. This ceremony is therefore a requirement in the package for the business transaction. Truly, ambitious people strategize their plans in order to execute them successfully. Ananse is successful in his adventure because of proper planning and reformulations of methodology in his deception process so that at the end, he goes unpunished.

Findings

Contemporary society is inundated with self-seeking individuals whose only concerns are material gains. This growing group in contemporary society are immune to the effects of their selfishness on others, and would justify their self-serving actions with narcissist arguments, just as we see Ananse do in the play. Also, in modern society, where materialism is commonplace among people of different groups, Sutherland cautions us to be wary of the various strategies adopted by fraudsters and other self-seeking individuals whose agenda is to deceive and manipulate others for their own selfish interests and unlawful gains. *The marriage of Anansewa* makes us aware that we are being manipulated one way or another by an ideology, and that the capitalist ideology motivates individuals to seek wealth through indiscriminate means. The system has established a social hierarchy for people to move through ranks in order that they become superior to others. Marxist literary theory gives us an insight into the crook ideology of capitalism, which is the metaphor of Ananse in this play. The play uses dark comedy which suggests that Sutherland intentionally uses Anansegoro to criticize capitalist ideologies.

Conclusion

Ananse is only a mirror reflection of the society. Contemporary society is already materialistic in nature. This is evident in the hailing and high respect for individuals with money regardless of their moral or ethical values. It is not Ananse that has made the society so. Neither is Ananse reinforcing or encouraging society's materialism. However, as a trickster character, his actions and inactions probe our consciousness and force us to the realization that in the world of materialism, people are motivated to do anything for material gain. Ananse's actions in the play prove the fact that society is capitalistic in nature, and as such, even marriages are naturally more transactional than emotional. It is for this reason that some parents would choose to give their daughters and sons in marriage to the rich, because money comes with comfort as well as power. This is a common phenomenon, not only in the African society, but in other parts of the world, and Sutherland criticizes it extensively through Ananse and Anansegoro. Ananse's actions all through the play aims at cautioning society to be wary of the capitalist ideology of wealth and status acquisition, and the unnecessary competition it creates in the society, which causes individuals to seek material possessions through all sorts of illicit means.

References

Addo, A. A. (2013). *Ananse as a folkloric character in new Ghanaian drama* [Unpublished Mphil

- thesis]. University of Ghana, Legon
- Affiah, U. (2012). From orality to print: An oraliterary examination of Efua T. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5(2):13-25
- Annin, F. (2014). Aesthetics of *The Marriage of Anansewa*: A Stylistic Analysis of Sutherland's language (Placeholder1) 4(3), 153–160
- Anthony, C. I. & Cowley, E. (2012). The labor of lies: How lying for material rewards polarizes consumers' outcome satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(3), 478–492. <https://doi.org/10.1086/663824>
- Bakir, V., Herring, E., Miller, D., & Robinson, P. (2019). Organized persuasive communication: A new conceptual framework for research on public relations, propaganda and promotional culture. *Critical Sociology*, 45(3), 311–328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920518764586>
- Bell, J. B. (2003). Toward a theory of deception. *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 16(2), 244–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850600390198742>
- Ben-Daniels, F. (2024). Reclaiming Ananse: discussing the trickster's relevance in contemporary Ghanaian society. *Nairobi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(1),
- Benn, T. (1970). *Office without power: diaries 1968-72* London
- Boush, D. M., Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (2009). *Deception in the marketplace: The psychology of deceptive persuasion and consumer self-protection*. New York: Routledge
- Corner, J. (2007). 'Mediated politics, promotional culture and the idea of propaganda' *media, Culture & Society* 29(4): 669-677
- Darke, P. R., & Ritchie, R. J. B. (2007). The defensive consumer: Advertising deception, defensive processing, and distrust. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 44, 114-127
- DePaulo, B. M., Kirkendol, S. E., Kashy, D. A., Wyer, M. M., & Epstein, J. A. (1996). Lying in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(5), 979–995. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.979>
- Derrida, J. (1967). *Grammatology: signature event context*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press
- Eagleton, T. (2002). *Marxism and literary criticism*. New York: The routledge classics.
- Godwin, S. (2005). *All marketers are liars: The power of telling authentic stories in a low-trust world*. New York: Penguin Books
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London: International Publishers Co.
- Hartley, D. (2004). *Marxist literary criticism: An introductory reading guide*. London: British Journal of Sociology of Education
- Hawkins, M. (2018). *Textual Analysis*. The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods
- Hinn, C. W. & Wood, A. G. (2018). *Defining deception; freeing the church from the mystical-miracle movement*. Kindle Edition. El Cajon, CA: Southern California Seminary Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.44.1.114>
- Kendall, L. (1998). Meaning and identity in "cyberspace": The performance of gender, class, and race online. *Symbolic Interaction*, 21(2), 129-153. Doi:10.1525/si.1998.21.2.129
- Lee, B. & Pilutti, K. (2017). *The problem of deception*. James Mpilartin Center for Nonproliferation Studies
- Lukacs, G. (1967). *Reification and the consciousness of the proletariat*. Georgia: Merlin Press.
- Miller, D., & Robinson, P. (2019). *Propaganda, politics, and deception*. In: The Palgrave handbook of deceptive communication (pp. 969-988). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Mireku-Gyimah, P. B. (2013). Sutherland's creativity at work: The new family of Mr. Ananse the spider in *The Marriage of Anansewa* January. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(5), 177-184
- Oso, O. (2021). Text and Performance Deviations in Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* and Toyin Abiodun's *The Trials of Afonja*. *A Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 20(1)
- Owusu-Manu, D. (2018). *Enterpreneurial finance and management* [Unpublished Textbook] Institute of Distance Learning Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology Kumasi, Ghana.
- Sutherland, T. E. (1975). *The Marriage of Anansewa*. London: Longman African Classics.
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. Routledge English Language

- introductions. Psychology Press.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis Group. Routledge.
- Utz, S. (2005). Types of deception and underlying motivation: What people think. *Social Science Computer Review*, 23(1), 49–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439304271534>