



## Theme Analysis in two Excerpts from Amma Darko's *Faceless*: a Hallidayan Systemic Approach

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### Abstract

This article has explored, from a Hallidayan systemic perspective, the grammar of textual meaning in two excerpts culled from Amma Darko's *Faceless*. The aim of this scholarly research is to dig out, through thematic analysis, the hidden messages of the author in the studied excerpts on the one hand, and help lay bare her ideology to make explicit what positions, biases and interpretations are encoded therein on the other. To be able to attain that goal, both the quantitative and qualitative research methods have been appealed to. The quantitative research method employed by the study has helped to recap the linguistic features of the analyzed excerpts in a statistical table while paving the way to their interpretation via the qualitative method. Indeed, the research has arrived at interesting results. Among several others to be discovered while reading this article, the predominance of the topical Themes suggests that both studied texts have remarkable thematic potentials. Moreover, the use of the predicated Theme in the first of the studied texts, is not only illustrative of the foolishness, irresponsibility and cowardice poverty can lead people into but also revelatory of the tortuosity of human beings' minds. Some of the atypical meanings disclosed by the marked Themes are that political leaders all around the world especially those African should fulfill their leadership role of creating jobs for their citizens and that governments should try to rehabilitate street children in order to save their lives from jeopardy. Furthermore, people, whatever their social class, should give one another a helping hand for better living conditions and sustainable development. The research has interestingly opened up to such further investigation areas of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the experiential meaning, the interpersonal meaning and discourse semantics.

**Keywords:** theme, textual meaning, paratactic, hypotactic, thematization

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, several scourges undermine the development of quite a few countries and, by and large, of a number of continents especially Africa. Among these ills, one can name corruption, anarchy, autocracy, authoritarianism, chaos, dictatorship, poor governance, high population rates to name but just a few. Many African novelists have approached

these underdevelopment issues in their various prose fictions but in such a veiled way that it is quite difficult for the laymen to grasp their meanings. The choice of carrying out this research work results from my desire to fill that gap and contribute in getting fictional messages more across. As a result, I have decided to apply the theory of the grammar of textual meaning to samples of texts taken from *Faceless*, a novel by Amma Darko, an African novelist, to help dig out, via Theme analysis, the underlying meanings of the key issues she has addressed in the selected excerpts. Aside from the abstract, the introduction, the conclusion as well as the references list, the article in progress goes round four (04) main cruxes namely: Theoretical Background of the Study, Methodology of the Study, Theme Analysis in the Selected Excerpts and the Interpretation of the Findings.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **Theoretical Background of the Study**

Halliday (1974:95, 97) cited in Eggins (1994:273) described the third and final strand of meaning in the clause i.e. textual meaning as the “relevance” or the “enabling” metafunction. The organization of the clause at this level is one which enables it to be packaged in ways which make it effective given both its purpose and context. More to the point, the textual strand of meaning is concerned with the potential the clause offers for its constituents to be organized differently to achieve different purposes. As a matter of fact, two key systems enter into the expression of textual meaning in the clause namely the system of Theme, and that of Information Structure. Indeed only the first of the two systems just mentioned is going to be dealt with in this article. The second one viz. the information structure with its constituent of Given and New realized through intonation choices is not going to be scrutinized in this article. So what is Theme?

Halliday (1985a:39) defined Theme as the element which serves as “the starting-point for the message: it is what the clause is going to be about. In fact, Theme typically contains familiar, or given information, i.e. information that has already been mentioned somewhere in the text, or is familiar from the context. Theme system is realized through a structure in which the clause falls into just two main constituents namely a Theme i.e. the first part of the clause and a Rheme. The Rheme is the part of the clause in which the Theme is developed. The Rheme typically contains unfamiliar or “new” information. Whatever is not Theme in a clause is Rheme.

Theme involves three major systems that is to say, the choice of type of Theme, the choice of marked or unmarked Theme and eventually the choice of predicated or unpredicated Theme (Eggins, 1994, p. 274).

### ***Theme Types and Identification Criteria***

Reflecting the three-dimensional metafunctional structure of the clause, we can identify three different types of elements of clause structure that can get to be theme viz. topical (or experiential) elements, interpersonal elements and textual elements. Let’s examine each one of these different types of Theme while presenting their respective identification criteria

### *Topical Theme*

The element of the clause to which a transitivity function can be assigned that occurs in first position in the clause is described as **topical Theme**. An example taken from the first excerpt of the analysis carried out in the appendices of this article is: she greeted no one else aside from Naa Yomo. The topical theme in the given example is in bold and underlined. As it can be noticed, the subject “she” that occurs in first position in the clause can be assigned the transitivity function of “Behaver” therefore it is a topical theme.

An important principle to remember is that **every clause must contain one and only one topical theme**. As a matter of fact, this relates to a consideration of how much choice a writer/speaker has in deciding what to make Theme, which in turn relates to the notion of the thematic potential of a clause. As a consequence, once a topical Theme is identified in a clause, all the remaining clause constituents can be consigned to the Rheme role. It is this principle which allows to set the Theme/Rheme boundary in the third clause of the first excerpt analyzed in the appendices: ... *when* she entered the house. In this clause, the first constituent “*when*” in italics is a textual (conjunctive) Adjunct, which does not receive any transitivity role. The second constituent “**she**” in bold is an Actor (subject in traditional grammar) and therefore topical Theme. While “*when*” is therefore considered part of the theme which is underlined, all the other constituents of the clause after the topical theme are part of the Rheme. An exception to the rule that a topical Theme will always carry a transitivity label lies in the fact that though “**there**” does not receive a transitivity label in existential processes, it’s nonetheless described as topical Theme.

### *Interpersonal Theme*

The clause constituent to which a Mood label can be assigned that occurs at the beginning of the clause is called an interpersonal Theme. The constituents which can function as interpersonal Theme are the unfused finite in interrogative structures, and all the four categories of Modal Adjuncts: Mood, Polarity, Vocative and Comment. Here are some examples from clauses 5, 6, 8, 72, 113 and 151 of the first excerpt analyzed in the appendices. The interpersonal Themes are in CAPITALS:

“**MOTHER**”, she acknowledged Maa Tsuru without emotion.

“**FOFO**,” Maa Tsuru responded with difficulty

“**DID he** do something to you?”

**ARE you** sacking me, mother?

“**YES**.”

Well, MAYBE, for people like you living in proper homes like here

The interpersonal Themes in the above given examples are part of the Theme and not of the Rheme because they all occur before the topical Themes indicated in **bold** in the same examples. The polarity adjunct in clause 113 has no topical Theme following it owing to the ellipsis that always accompanies polarity adjuncts. It is important to underscore that when vocative adjuncts occur after the first topical theme as in clause 72 “**ARE you** sacking me, mother?” they are not considered interpersonal Theme. They are considered

so only when they occur before the first topical Theme as in clauses 5 (“MOTHER”, she acknowledged Maa Tsuru without emotion.) and 6 (“FOFO,” Maa Tsuru responded with difficulty) given above.

### *Textual Theme*

Textual elements are those which do not express any interpersonal or experiential meaning but which do important cohesive work in relating the clause to its context. The two main types of textual elements which can get to be theme are both continuity adjuncts and conjunctive adjuncts. As a matter of fact, continuity adjuncts are words which are used in spoken dialogue to indicate that the speaker’s contribution is somehow related to (continuous with) what a previous speaker has said in an earlier turn. The commonest continuity items are: *oh, well. Yea* and *no* are also continuity items when these are not used as stand-ins for clause ellipsis, but as the first item in a clause. As for the conjunctive adjuncts, they are elements which serve to link clauses or sentences together. Some conjunctions such as “*and, but*” are used to link clauses together within a sentence and occur in first position in the clause. Others like “*however, therefore*” are used to link sentences to other sentences and may occur in other positions. Both kinds of conjunctions are described as textual Themes when they occur before the first topical Theme in a clause.

### *Multiple Themes*

A clause can realize only one thematic element in which case the latter is considered a topical Theme. However, it is far more common for clauses to contain a sequence of Themes, with often several textual and/or interpersonal Themes occurring before the obligatory topical Theme as in clauses 143, 151, 263, and 288 of the first excerpt and clauses 19, 53, 146, 217, 229, 233, 270, 274, and 308 of the second excerpt both available in the appendices.

**NOTE:** In written or spoken language, sentences (or clause complexes in Systemic Functional Linguistics terminology) typically consist of a certain number of clauses linked together by a conjunction which expresses the logical connection between/among the clauses. One of the major differences between the ways clauses are linked is whether each clause is largely independent of each other i.e. paratactically related or whether one clause is dependent upon the other viz. hypotactically related. In independent clauses (i.e. paratactic clause complexes), each clause is given an individual thematic analysis following the textual meaning analysis principles elaborated on so far. Although paratactic clauses are often linked by conjunctions such as *then, and, so*, they may also occur without conjunctions, particularly if in a series. One common occurrence with paratactically related clauses is the omission of the subject in the second and subsequent clause(s). In these cases, the ellipsed subject is considered to have fulfilled the role of topical Theme. As a consequence, the second clause is therefore shown as having no topical theme. An example is witnessed in clauses 26, 27 and 28 (26.Fofo hesitated, 27. then moved 28. and sat down carefully at the farthest point from her mother) of the first excerpt analyzed in the appendices.

In hypotactically related clauses, what is of particular thematic interest is the ordering of the main and dependent clauses. The dependent clause may follow the main clause or the main clause may be preceded by the dependent clause. In the first case, the procedure for Theme analysis is as for independent clauses. The thematic structure is simply analyzed for each clause separately. However, when the dependent clause comes before the main clause, we consider that there are two levels of thematic structure operating. At the first level, each of the constituent clauses has its own thematic structure which should be analyzed. At the second level, the entire dependent clause can be seen to be acting as Theme to the sentence as illustrated in clauses 245 and 246 (245. If I hit him on the head, 246. I will make him chew off my own finger too inside his mouth.) of the first excerpt and in clauses 154 and 155 (154. Because he hasn't come to formally divorce me, 155. I am forced to continue to wear his ring) of the second excerpt.

Linking clauses into hypotactic clause complexes sometimes involves the use of what could simply be called "structural element". The link is created in part by using the relative pronoun "who" or "which". For the purpose of Theme analysis, structural elements like "who" and "which" should be analyzed as a conflation (fusing) of topical meaning. Illustrations would include clauses 3, 6, 9, 15, 207 and 210 of the analysis carried out in the second excerpt available in the appendices.

### *Marked and Unmarked Theme*

The term marked simply means atypical or unusual whereas the term unmarked means most typical or usual. An unmarked choice is made when all things are equal. On the other hand, when a marked choice is made, the speaker or the writer is signaling that all things are not equal. More specifically, it implies that something in the context requires an atypical meaning to be made.

In unmarked Themes the constituent that is Theme also plays one of the following roles: Subject (in a declarative clause); Finite (in an interrogative clause); Predicator (in an imperative clause); WH-element (in a WH-interrogative clause). Alternatively put, unmarked Theme is when Theme conflates with the Mood structure constituent that typically occurs in first position in clauses of that Mood class.

Theme can be marked in several different ways. First of all, when Theme conflates with any other constituent from the Mood system, it is considered marked. Indeed, the commonest type of marked Theme is to have Theme conflating with an adjunct circumstantial which is not conflated with a wh-element. An illustrative example from the analysis carried out in the appendices is clause 147 "**Last week** a body was found behind a blue rasta hairdressing kiosk salon at Agboghloshie" of the first excerpt. Moreover, one way of creating a marked Theme is to move a circumstantial element to thematic position. Another well-known strategy is to repackage a constituent (e.g. an Actor) as a circumstantial element typically of matter. Clause 106 "**As for me**, what should I do?" of the analysis carried out in the second excerpt is an illustrative example. Finally, Theme predication is another strategy for producing marked Themes. In fact, all predicated Themes are in some sense marked since the subject of the original clause is made Rheme in the predicated version.

*Predicated and Unpredicated Theme*

Theme predication is used when the speaker or writer wishes to give emphasis to a constituent that would otherwise be unemphasized, while maintaining the “real” news, which is in the Rheme of the original clause. Indeed, by moving a constituent away, from the beginning of the clause, it is possible for it to carry the intonation choice for the clause. It can thus be signaled as “new” information, rather than “given” information. Version b) of the example given below allows “Daniel” to attract the stress and become “news”. This would be an appropriate structural choice in a context where there was argument about just who published an article a month ago. So while example (a) below is unpredicated, (b) is predicated.

e.g. a) **Daniel** published a new article a month ago

b) **It** was Daniel who published an article a month ago

Theme predication involves introducing what is technically a second clause: the element “it was”. As a matter of fact, by moving “Daniel” from its original position in the original clause (a) to allow it to carry intonation and appear in the Rheme of the clause, we are presenting “Daniel” as “news” with the empty structural “it” as the point of departure for the message.

**METHODOLOGY**

The research methods or techniques adopted in this article are those of sampling and practical statistics. More specifically, two excerpts in keeping with Theme analysis have been chosen on purpose and analyzed basing on the up-to-date textual meaning analysis theories and keys within the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework. Following the quantitative method, statistics of the data collected from the analysis carried out have been drawn not only for the uncovering, the classification and counting of the excerpts thematic features but also to help pave the way for the qualitative method which has provided insights to dive deeper into the studied excerpts meanings via the interpretation of the findings.

**THEME ANALYSIS IN THE SELECTED EXCERPTS**

The Thematic analysis of the selected excerpts in all their respective ranking clauses has been carried out in the appendices. Where a dependent clause preceded its main clause, a double Theme analysis is provided. Indeed, the analysis has allowed the identification of the different types of Themes embedded in the scrutinized excerpts. The findings of the analyses carried out in both studied excerpts are summarized in the recap statistical table below:

	Excerpt 1	Excerpt 2
Category	Number and Percentage	Number and Percentage
Topical Theme	314 {57.72% }	259 {49.42% }
Interpersonal Theme	32 { 05.88%}	44 {08.39% }
Textual Theme	98 {18.01% }	110 {20.99% }
Multiple Themes	87 { 15.99%}	96 {18.32% }
Marked Themes	09 {01.65% }	12 {02.29% }
Predicated Themes	01 { 0.18 }	00 { 00%}
Dependent Clause as Theme	03 { 0.55%}	03 {0.57% }
Total number of Themes per excerpt	544 {100% }	524 {100% }
Overall number of Themes in both excerpts	1068	
Ranking clauses per excerpt	360	316
Total number of ranking clauses in both excerpts	676	

As it can be witnessed from the above statistical table, all the different types of Themes elaborated on in the theoretical background to this research work have interestingly been identified in both excerpts all together though in different proportions. While the first excerpt count an overall number of 544 different types of Themes with 360 ranking clauses, the second excerpt counts slightly less with a total number of 524 Themes and has 316 ranking clauses. One striking remark from the above statistical table is that topical Themes are head and shoulders above all the other types of Themes in both excerpts representing 57.72% in the first excerpt and. 49.42% in the second one. They are followed in the right order by the Textual Themes which count an aggregate number of 98 and 110 in the first and second excerpts respectively. Multiple Themes hold the third position with summative numbers of 87 in the first excerpt and 96 in the second one. The interpersonal Themes have the fourth position and are 32 and 44 in numbers in the first and second excerpts respectively. Marked Themes count a fewer number and are just 9 in the first excerpt but 12 in the second one. Dependent clauses as themes tie for the sixth place in both excerpts and are just 03 in number. The least occurring Theme type is the predicated one which is just single in the first excerpt and non-existent in the

second excerpt. A whole aggregate of 1068 different Themes have been recorded in both studied excerpts which count 676 ranking clauses in total.

## INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

Drawing upon the linguistic patterns recorded in the above statistical table the hidden meanings of the studied excerpts are going to be made explicit under this subsection devoted to the interpretation of the findings. Indeed, a close look into the statistical table reveals that the most prevailing theme type is the topical Theme. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of topical Themes in both selected excerpts which are conversational texts, are basically either personal pronouns such as “I, you, she, he, we” or names like “Fofo, Maa Tsuru, Baby T, Poison, Maami Broni and Kabria”. It is important to mention that the personal pronouns are in fact referents to the names that have just been mentioned above. Where the topical Themes are not personal pronouns or names, they are mostly a brief nominal group referring to specific individuals such as “the old lady, the woman, the poor man, the girl, Fofo’s four-year-old other half-brother”. Such linguistic features, are indicative of the key characters around which Amma Darko has woven her various messages being conveyed in both studied excerpts. Besides, the predominance of the topical Themes is revelatory of the fact that both studied texts have remarkable thematic potentials.

The studied excerpts encompass an important number of interpersonal Themes. Indeed, meanings of modality especially of the modalization sub-type have been made and have been given thematic status. More to the point, the modalized meanings have been made through such thematic modal finite as “maybe” in clauses 151 of the first excerpt and clauses 22, 40, 53 and 308 of the second excerpt. Actually, this thematization of modality and the use of Mood classes which invite interaction such as interrogatives as witnessed in the twenty second (22<sup>nd</sup>) and the fortieth (40<sup>th</sup>) clauses pinpointed above is one way both texts relate to their spoken mode and remain focused on their conversational contexts. Moreover, the choice of the author to make interpersonal elements thematic without any recourse to modulation in both studied excerpts in such a remarkable proportion has largely contributed to the realization of the less authoritarian tenor of the examined texts.

In other respects, the considerable number of the textual Themes recorded in the analyzed texts is full of meaning. As a matter of fact, some of the recorded textual Themes are continuity adjuncts such as “*oh, yes, no*” while others are conjunctive adjuncts introducing both paratactic and hypotactic clauses namely “*and, so, then, but, when, if, because, before, since*”. Indeed, the use of the continuity adjuncts in both scrutinized excerpts is symptomatic that both texts share a common face-to-face mode since continuity adjuncts are used in spoken dialogue. Further, the recorded textual Themes have served to achieve a very important cohesive work in relating the clauses of the studied excerpts to their respective contexts. Besides, a number of clauses contain multiple themes specifically several textual and /or interpersonal Themes occurring before the obligatory topical Themes in the studied texts. This implies that very little of the clauses’ thematic potential has been used. In fact, with many textual elements,

occurring before the topical Themes there is relatively little choice as to their position in the clause. Nevertheless, their use in both studied excerpts has contributed in achieving their rhetorical organization.

The only one recorded predicated Theme in the analyzed texts is not a trivial detail. As a matter of fact, through that single predicated Theme, Amma Darko wishes to give emphasis to some of her written messages which would otherwise escape her readers' attention. And one has to dive deeper into the text to understand what the message being emphasized really is. Actually the complete predicated Theme from the first excerpt is normally "**It** was for their sake *that I* chose the man" not just what we have at clause one hundred and twenty two (122). So the message being emphasized here is that pertaining to the fate of some African women who have no choice but do anything even including accepting to get married with a man they really don't love just to save the lives of the children, that they got with another irresponsible man, whom they are unable to take care of owing to their dire poverty. This is not only illustrative of the foolishness, irresponsibility and cowardice poverty can lead people into but also revelatory of the tortuosity of human beings' minds. Many are those women, who, out of interests, got married to the men they really don't love without thinking twice about the possible consequences such behaviors could bring about both in their lives and in that of their offsprings. Likewise many irresponsible men have taken advantage of a lot of women's naivety and precarious marital status and have just contented themselves with satisfying their sex desires with them without considering the chaos and danger such incontinence represents for themselves, the women they abuse sexually, the society they belong to and the results of their irresponsible act. There are so many couples that could have divorced because actually not founded on solid marital foundations but who still remain together just for the sake of the children they accidentally gave birth to despite the suffering such a choice costs them. Through the predicated Theme, Amma Darko is undoubtedly denouncing, downcrying, and disparaging such morally downgrading and degrading inhuman demeanors. To that end, Anyodoho (2013), on the back of *Faceless* cover page stated, "It is not enough to sow the seeds of human life in quick, repeated sessions of reckless ecstasy. Beyond the delight of tears, children, of our own morality and ancestry await our constant vigilance and careful nurturing. No seed grow into harvest joys without the planter's diligent labour."

Through the marked Themes in both studied samples of texts, the novelist (Amma Darko) signals that a certain number of things in the excerpts contexts require an atypical viz. unusual meaning to be made (Eggins 1994, p.296). As a consequence to fully understand the writer's message in the recorded marked Themes one needs to go beyond the surface words and dig out the hidden meanings in their various surrounding underlying contexts. As a matter of fact, a close look into the contexts of the selected excerpts reveals that Amma Darko has encoded a lot of meanings through the marked Themes recorded in the analyzed excerpts. Indeed, one core meaning via the marked Themes in the first excerpt is parents' irresponsibility and abdication vis-à-vis their children. Some men don't mind getting women pregnant though they know they don't have the means and are just ready to shirk their parental duties as regards their wives and children, dooming them, by so

doing, to all kinds of mental, psychological and physical appalling tortures and sufferings. Owing to such a state of affairs, many children who could have become great personalities have just been reduced to housemaids and houseboys entrusted to people they don't know under that identity to allow their own parents to survive at their expense. It is proper cruel! Actually, having children is one very good thing. Indeed, children are the best gift parents can obtain graciously from the Almighty God. Moreover, they are the greatest treasure parents can have on this earth. But having children for the sake of having them without being able to take care of them, look after them and cater for all their basic needs in due time is what Amma Darko is strongly disparaging via the marked Themes in clauses 16, 130, 176 and 200 of the first excerpt. Via the marked Theme In the two-hundredth clause the author is denouncing the sorry and shaky state in which societies are today with their homeless children left to their own struggling to survive in the streets here and there without anybody's help. Some of the female teenagers in such conditions are even raped by reckless irresponsible poor male adults as depicted in the above pinpointed marked Theme. It is important to note that the man being talked about in this marked Theme is jobless. Almost all the men in the selected excerpts have been portrayed as jobless living at their so called wives expense. Amma Darko, via such portrayal, is certainly calling attention to some of the vices joblessness can lead people into. She is undoubtedly also inviting political leaders all around the world especially those African to fulfill their leadership role of creating jobs for their citizens to keep them busy and allow them to have the minimum they need to live on for as the proverb goes the devil finds work for idle hands. Moreover, considering the danger street life represents to children as depicted here by the author, Amma Darko is certainly suggesting that government should try to rehabilitate street children in order to save their lives from jeopardy. Indeed, street life is one terrible thing any serious government, all over the world, should fight against.

In the marked Theme of the one hundred and sixth clause of the second excerpt, one notices the remarkable indifference of decent people to the life condition of street children. Amma Darko is without any doubt showing how societies have grown to become selfish today. Every man for himself, God for us all! Today, we are living in societies where people care for themselves only. One can only get anything from them by trickery or guile. Via this marked Theme, Amma Darko is conveying the message that people, no matter what their social class is, should give one another a helping hand for better living conditions and sustainable development. The other crucial message being conveyed by the writer through the marked Theme in the one hundred and fifty second clause is that of African tradition bonds. Many are those African women who dreadfully suffer due to some of the African traditions dictates. If some of the latter ones (African traditions) are very good for both happy married life and social welfare, others need improving. As a matter of fact, Africans must be highly discerning to improve whatever requires improvement in their various traditions as well as customs if they really dream of facing the challenges of development. And that is Amma Darko's hidden message via this marked Theme of the second studied excerpt. She is also certainly censuring the impunity of the irresponsible men whose mistakes and bad demeanors, as regards their

wives and families, are covered up by their respective traditions and customs. This implicitly highlights Amma Darko's feminist trend.

Most striking in the studied excerpts is the frequency with which dependent clauses as Themes to entire sentences have been used in the studied excerpts: three (03) in each one of them. This is a choice which contributes to making the studied texts appear more spoken than written as the use of dependent clauses in thematic position contributes to neutralizing the distinction between spoken and written language. To descend to particulars, the writer viz. Amma Darko has, through such hypotactic structures, adopted a very congruent style. Indeed, rather than building up the lexical density of the studied texts she has opted for the strategy of grammatical complexity. This actually gives both texts a degree of thematic pre-planning that is less common in spoken than written language. Hence both texts have certain similarities to written language while remaining accessible by maintaining their proximity to the spoken language.

## CONCLUSION

This scholarly study has explored, from a Hallidayan systemic angle, the grammar of textual meaning in two excerpts from Amma Darko's *Faceless* with the aim of uncovering, via the analysis of Theme, the writer's various hidden messages while laying bare her ideology behind them. To reach that goal, I have appealed to both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research has arrived at very interesting results. As a matter of fact, all the categories of theme as elaborated on in the theoretical framework have been recorded in the selected excerpts. This basically means that the selected excerpts really fall in with the applied theory. More to the point, the prevalence of the topical Themes indicate that the studied excerpts have remarkable thematic potentials. In addition, one of the messages being conveyed through the marked Themes, by Amma Darko is that having children for the sake of having them without being able to take care of them, look after them and cater for all their basic needs in due time is a crime. Via the same linguistic pattern, she has also called attention to the vices joblessness can lead people into while inviting political leaders all around the world especially those African to fulfill their leadership role of creating jobs for their citizens to keep them busy and allow them to have the minimum they need to live on. One more atypical meaning of the marked Themes is that people, no matter what their social class is, should give one another a helping hand for better living conditions and sustainable development. In other respects, Africans must be highly discerning to improve whatever requires improvement in their various traditions and customs if they really dream of facing the challenges of development. More can still be read about the results of the current article in the section devoted to the interpretation of the findings. To round off, the study has interestingly opened up to such further SFL research areas as the Experiential and Interpersonal meanings as well as discourse semantics.

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## APPENDICES

Each of the two excerpts under study has been analyzed according to the Hallidayan theme analysis keys which are presented at the start of the analysis carried out below. Following the principle of the thematic analysis of written discourse within the Systemic Functional Linguistics framework, the selected texts have been broken into their respective clause constituents.

### Key:

Theme is underlined

Textual theme: in *italics*

Interpersonal theme: in CAPITALS

Topical theme: in **bold**

Dependent clause as theme: **whole clause in bold**

### Excerpt 1: (chapter 3 pp.20-26)

1. Having been briefed by Odarley on the way, 2. she greeted no one else aside from Naa Yomo 3. when she entered the house; 4. then joined Odarley in front of the fifth room.

5. "MOTHER", she acknowledged Maa Tsuru without emotion.

6. "FOFO", Maa Tsuru responded with difficulty 7. and asked immediately, 8. "DID he do something to you?"

9. Before Fofo replied, 10. Maa Tsuru glanced across at Naa Yomo. 11. The old lady had fixed a stare on them. 12. Maa Tsuru grew nervous.

13. "SHALL we go inside the room?" 14. She entered first. 15. Fofo followed. 16. Odarley remained outside.

17. The room was partitioned with an old translucent curtain. 18. Fofo's four-year-old other half brother was asleep on a mat on the floor in the space in front of the curtain 19. which served as the living room. 20. Maa Tsuru raised 21. and pegged one corner of the curtain onto the line 22. and entered the inner space, 23. which was the bedroom. 24. She slumped onto the bed 25. and waited. 26. Fofo hesitated, 27. then moved 28. and sat down carefully at the farthest point from her mother. 29. Life on the streets made mixed up persons out of children. 30. She looked about the room 31. and backed at Maa Tsuru. 32. Something did not quite fit. 33. Then it dawned on her 34. something was wrong. 35. Something was missing.

36. "where is he, mother?" 37. she asked Maa Tsuru

38. Maa Tsuru winced. 39. She attempted to say something 40. but her voice failed her. 41. She paused, 42. swallowed saliva 43. and tried again.

44. "He left," 45. she said simply

46. "He left?" 47. it was a wail of pain. 48. "After all that he did to Baby T? 49. To us all? 50. He left? 51. And you stood by 52. and just allow this smallish man to leave? Just like that?"

53. Tears welled up in Maa Tsuru's eyes. 54. She did not speak. 55. She couldn't.

56. "What made him leave, mother? 57. Fofo howled on, 58. "and before he left, 59. DID you remind him of 60. what you did for his sake? 61. What you sacrificed? 62. DID you?"

63. Maa Tsuru began to weep.

64. "I asked you, mother. 65. DID you?"

66. Maa Tsuru began to cry. 67. "Go away, Fofo," 68. she managed between tears. 69. "Go!"

70. Fofo's face clouded fiercely. 71. "IS history repeating itself here? 72. ARE you sacking me, mother? Because of him?"

73. "No! No! I am not sacking you from here. Not from this room. Not from this house. 74. I mean to say, 75. go away. 76. (Go away) From Accra, if possible, Fofo. 77. Go away. 78. Go somewhere far away from here 79. where he can never find you."

80. "What are you talking about, mother? 81. IS it Poison? 82. What does he want with me?"
83. "oh, CHILD, go away!" 84. Maa Tsuru sobbed, 85. "Go."
86. "Why mother? Why?"
87. "Because they are animals. 88. They know no mercy. 89. And my hands are tied. 90. PLEASE, Go!"
91. A part of Fofo was 92. and would always remain the fourteen year-old 93. that she was; 94. but the harshness of life on the streets had also made a premature adult of part of her. 95. She was both a child and an adult 96. and she could act like both, 97. talk like both, 98. think like both 99. and feel like both. 100. What she wanted to do was to say a whole lot of things to hurt Maa Tsuru, 101. and cause her pain. 102. But she held back. 103. Her mother was still not making complete sense.
104. "Why should I go away, mother? 105. Who are they?"
106. Maa Tsuru wiped away her tears with the back of her hand 107. and blew her nose into her cover cloth. 108. "It's Baby T," 109. she said eventually.
110. "Baby T?"
111. "YES, Maami Broni..."
112. "The fat fair woman she lives with?"
113. "YES, 114. She came to me last week."
115. "So? Doesn't she sometimes come to..."
116. "I know Fofo. 117. I know. Oh God!"
118. "Don't bring in God's name, mother. 119. You knew 120. what you were doing 121. when you chose him over..."
122. "It was for their sake," 123. she pointed at the baby and the sleeping boy. 124. "What should I have done?"
125. "I don't know. 126. But you should never have fed him and his sons at Baby T's expense. 127. You don't see her. 128. I don't see her. 129. We don't know 130. how she has grown to look like. All for what, mother? For what?"
131. Maa Tsuru didn't respond. 132. She wiped away fresh tears from her face 133. And resumed 134. from where she had left off. 135. "Something happened, Fofo."
136. "Something is always happening, no? Always. 137. And HAD I not got the good sense to leave home, 138. he probably would have made you send me away too to work for some women to make money for you four to leave on. No?"
139. Maa Tsuru choked on saliva 140. and coughed violently. 141. "I don't have the strength to fight you with words Fofo," 142. she said slowly, 143. "And even if I did, 144. I wouldn't do it."
145. Fofo said nothing.
146. Maa Tsuru went on; 147. "Last week a body was found behind a blue rasta hairdressing kiosk salon at Agboghoshie. 148. DID you hear about it?"
149. "AREN'T bodies always being found there like the aborted fetuses at Sodom and Gomorrah? 150. IS that news? 151. Well, MAYBE, for people like you living in proper homes like here, 152. it is, no?"
153. Maa Tsuru ignored the sarcasm to avoid the bait of another round of war with words, 154. for what she was about to say was in itself, war enough. 155. "Maami Broni didn't come to give me money, Fofo. 156. She came 157. because she was afraid."
158. Fofo frowned. 159. Her unasked question was obvious.
160. Maa Tsuru went on. 161. "Since she was the one 162. I entrusted Baby T to, 163. she..."
164. "What are you trying to say, mother?"
165. "She came to tell me."
166. "Tell you what?"
167. "That the body behind the hairdressing salon..." 168. fresh tears choked the rest of her words.

169. Fofo's eyes widened. 170. "Baby T?"

171. Maa Tsuru began to shake.

172. Fofo just sat there 173. and stared at her. 174. She felt no immediate pain. 175. Even the anger and mixed feelings lay low. 176. In her mind's eye was a recollection of the last time 177. she laid eyes on her sister: Baby T's reddish and swollen eyes from too much crying, with her belongings tied up in an old headscarf and held loosely in her right hand 178. as she followed Maami Broni out of the compound house.

179. Her calmness, when she opened her lips again to address Maa Tsuru, surprised her own self. 180. "MOTHER, what is happening? 181. Where do I fit into all this? 182. What has all this got to do with Poison?"

183. "He got upset 184. when he heard of Maami Broni's visit to me. 185. He knew she had come to tell me."

186. "Tell you what? 187. ARE you saying 188. Baby T is dead?"

189. Maa Tsuru nodded

190. Fofo didn't know 191. what to think. 192. "So Baby T is dead?"

193. Maa Tsuru nodded again

194. Fofo was scared and confused and in great emotional pain all at once. 195. "My sister was staying with Maami Broni. 196. Then she dies. 197. So Maami Broni comes to inform you about it. 198. You, who are her mother. 199. And because of that, Poison gets upset? 200. For which reason he tries to rape me? 201. It doesn't make sense to me. 202. What does it all mean?"

203. "He came to me, Fofo. 204. He came here."

205. "What?"

206. "He came here 207. and turned me into a leper."

208. "So that was 209. why the woman in the third room didn't respond to Odarley's greeting?"

210. "211. And why you should also go away from here; 212. he told me 213. he would find you."

214. "Me?"

215. "YES. 216. And he swore to replace Baby T with you 217. if we made him angry."

218. "Replace? 219. Make him angry? 220. What are you saying mother? 221. What is all this roundabout talk?"

222. "Look, Fofo, 223. PLEASE, go away."

224. The sleeping anger in Fofo awakened. 225. "It's all you keep telling me. 226. Go away; 227. go away!" 228. Fofo yelled! 229. "How do I just go away? Somewhere, mother? 230. Where should I go? 231. I have nothing on me. 232. I got a job at the vegetable market just a few days ago. 233. I tried to stop stealing. 234. But the little I had on me too, 235. I just lost to Matcho. 236. So tell me something better."

237. "I have nothing better to tell you, child, 238. and no money to give you, too." 239. Maa Tsuru cried. 240. "I looked on 241. and allowed something to happen 242. that shouldn't have happened. 243. My hands are tied. 244. I have my fingers between his teeth. 245. If I hit him on the head, 246. I will make him chew off my own finger too inside his mouth. 247. Then what would happen to them?" 248. she asked 249. and paused, pointing again at her sons, 250. "Look at them;" 251. she went on, no longer crying but clearly hurting. 252. "What have they done? 253. Their only crime is 254. that they came into the world through me."

255. Rage gripped Fofo. 256. "Is their father still your husband? 257. You said 258. he left, no?"

259. Maa Tsuru broke down. 260. She began to cry again. 261. "Don't talk to me like that, Fofo," 262. she sniffed. 263. "JUST because I made a lot of mistakes in life 264. and I am poor, 265. it doesn't make me less your mother. 266. So don't talk to me that way."

267. Fofo's heart churned. 268. She looked at her mother long 269. and then turned her face away." 270. "I don't like coming to see you, mother," 271. she began slowly, 272. "Odarley's mother sacks her like a fowl 273. when she goes to see her. 274. She says Odarley is a thief. 275. You don't sack me 276. when I come to see you. 277. Yet I don't like coming to see you 278. because I don't like 279. what I feel 280. when I come to see you, mother. 281. I don't."

282. Maa Tsuru looked away 283. and stared into the outside void through the tiny window. 284. Fofo's outpouring didn't shock her. 285. It wasn't the first time 286. Fofo had said this to her. 287. But somewhere inside her, she said a silent prayer, 288. that SOMEHOW something would happen to make it the last.

289. "MOTHER." Fofo resumed. 290. Her voice was calm and steady; too calm and too steady, 291. "Why was Poison upset about Maami Broni coming to tell you about Baby T?"

292. "He didn't want me to know 293. that Baby T was dead."

294. "Just that?"

295. Maa Tsuru pursed her lips 296. and refused to respond.

297. "But Maami Broni came to tell you anyway."

298. "YES." 299. She was afraid. 300. If Baby T was made out, 301. someone was bound to remember 302. that she was staying with her"

303. Fofo felt exhausted. 304. "DID anyone say what happened? 305. Why Baby T died?"

306. "Poison only said 307. it was Baby T's own fault."

308. Fofo digested that 309. and chuckled bitterly. 310. "So how do you feel, mother?"

311. "How I feel? 312. How I am supposed to feel? 313. How do you suppose 314. I should feel? 315. DO you know 316. what Poison told me to the face? 317. That Baby T ceased to be my daughter 318. the day I sold her to the streets. 319. I sold her to the streets? 320. I sold my own daughter to the streets? 321. Oh God!" she broke down again.

322. Fofo remained calm and unimpressed.

323. "I carried her for nine months in my womb." 324. Maa Tsuru cried on. 325. "I screamed in pain 326. when I was bringing her forth. 327. And look where she ended up dying? Under the open skies behind a kiosk at the market place? 328. And all I have left is my anger at the world. 329. Oh God!" she noticed Fofo studying the blue and white plastic rattan bag in the corner near the bed. 330. "DO you need it?" 331. she asked Fofo calmly, 332. THINKING Fofo needed it to pack in her few belongings and get away from Accra.

333. Fofo turned her attention from the bag, 334. and it was like 335. she had aged ten years more within the last few seconds.

336. "I can give it to you 337. if you need it," 338. Maa Tsuru offered.

339. "I don't need the bag," 340. Fofo retorted. 341. "Does he have some things inside?"

342. "A few of his clothes. 343. YES." 344. He left without warning. 345. He just left."

346. "I don't really care about that, mother," 347. Fofo snapped 348. and rose to the bag, thankful for her stepfather's smallish frame. 349. She unzipped it. 350. Inside was sparse, the leftovers of a man neither here nor there. 351. Not there for the wife, not there for the sons, yet, not gone completely from their lives either. 352. She rummaged through 353. and picked out an old pair of shorts; a faded checkered skirt torn at one shoulder; and a crumpled old baseball cap which still carried a pungent smell. 354. Her four-year-old half-brother was up 355. by the time she was through with her pick 356. and was all over Maa Tsuru on the bed like his baby brother. 357. Fofo paid them no attention.

358. "I'm off!" 359. she announced brusquely, 360. and stepped out of the room.

## Excerpt 2: (chapter 7 pp.59-65)

1. She recognized the salon owner from her huge portrait in one corner. 2. She was both a puzzle and a challenge to the wisdom of Mother Nature, 3. who, when unduly interfered with, 4. left in her trail dire consequences. 5. The woman had bleached her skin from head to toe, 6. which apparently caused our uncanny creator to unleash his fury in grand style upon her. 7. Having endowed the African with ample melanin to withstand 'until calletth' the harsh rays of the African sun, 8. the Creator least expected this woman, 9. who had dared to interfere with the His plans, to have bleached herself, 10. so she ended up fair from face to ankle, dark at the feet, which refused to succumb to the dictates of her bleaching soaps and creams, purplish around her eyes and cheeks and underarms. 11. She was a multi-colored parody of nature's original handiwork. 12. Her punished body found solace in a cute but pathetically mismatched sleeveless dress, 13. while her stubborn feet triumphed in a pair of fine white slippers. 14. Her perfume clashed with the odour of skin 15. whose entire outer protective layers had been gradually and persistently peeled away, 16. while at her service to obey and carry out her orders, were eight young apprentices.

17. "SORRY!" 18. she asked, 19. when at last she noticed Kabria, 20. "you should have come earlier. 21. We are fully booked up for the day. 22. CAN you come back tomorrow?"

23. In reply, Kabria greeted loudly, "Good Morning". 24. She gave Kabria a sharp look.

25. "I am not here to plait my hair, madam." 26. Kabria rattled on giving her no time to recover enough to throw her out. 27. "I am from an organization called MUTE," 28. and stretched out her job ID card.

29. The woman got confused. 30. "So?" she said tersely, ignoring the card.

31. Kabria put it back in her bag. 32. "PLEASE!" she beseeched, 33. "I am here about the body 34. that was found behind your salon last week."

35. The woman became alarmed. 36. Kabria didn't risk a pause. 37. "I am here to find out 38. whatever I can for a report 39. I am working on. 40. PLEASE, CAN you tell me something? 41. Anything you saw 42. or heard 43. or know?"

44. The woman grew more bewildered.

45. "SISTER, she shrieked at Kabria, 46. "HAVE I done something to you? 47. DO you know me from somewhere? 48. HAVE I, maybe, snatched your husband from you?"

49. "PLEASE NO."

50. "Then why should you come 51. and spoil my day for me this way? 52. DO you live here in Accra? 53. Or MAYBE you are lucky. 54. You have somebody abroad remitting you regularly, 55. so you chop dollars, eh?"

56. "NO."

57. "YES. 58. You chop dollars. 59. I can see it. 60. That is why 61. you don't have problems of your own. 62. Look," she said 63. and gave Kabria no opportunity to interrupt again, 64. "just in case you haven't noticed, 65. I am here to work 66. and make my chop money for the day. 67. See all the apprentices too? 68. They are all expecting something from me by the close of the day, 69. on top of which I also need to save something to cater for my daughter. 70. Her upkeep and education is all upon my head. 71. So if you think you can just....."

72. "MADAM!"

73. "Let me finish! 74. You think 75. I am here to add police work to my hairdressing job? 76. MY DAUGHTER...oh! God! Raising her eyes onto the heavens, 77. she said 78. "I thank you 79. that she is my only child. 80. Thank you!" leveling her eyes again with Kabria's, 81. she continued, 82. "she is wholly and exclusively my responsibility. 83. And you know 84. what that means in these times, 85. don't you? 86. So don't come 87. and trouble me this Tuesday morning. 88. Don't come 89. and make somebody's palaver my palaver by force. 90. Not one cidi do I get from the man 91. who fathered my little girl. 92. The only thing that man ever gave her 93. was his last name. 94. It cost him not a pesewa. 95. Yet he made sure 96. that somehow, I paid for it. 97. He came 98. and quaffed six bottles of beer at my expense. 99. Six! Bought solely from my sweat and toil. 100. After which he did the disappearing act from our lives, 101. NEVER to return again. 102. So PLEASE, don't come 103. and add to my woes. 104. If a street girl's body was found behind my salon, 105. so what? 106. As for me, what should I do? 107. DO I look to you like the one 108. who killed her?"

109. Kabria smiled. 110. She knew on impulse 111. how she was going to get through to the woman.

112. "You know something?" 113. she began impassively, 114. "I am also stuck in a similar soup."

115. The woman frowned. 116. "What similar soup?"

117. "SISTER," Kabria began, calmly 118. as the lie she was about to tell at the expense of Adade, 119. "DO you think 120. it was for nothing 121. that our elders coined the saying 122. that until you hear the plight of another, 123. you think 124. yours is the worst in the world? 125. Why should I be standing here 126. making such a fool of myself 127. and asking questions 128. the police should be asking, 129. but for the same situation I am in as you. 130. You were thanking God for your only one child? 131. SISTER, I have two to deal with. 132. Two! Who both depend wholly on me. Two!

133. The sense of solidarity Kabria was hoping for 134. kindled like a candle flame in the woman. 135. "You too were cursed with a foolish and irresponsible man? 136. She spat.

137. Kabria's heart churned for Alade. 138. The poor man was definitely other things. 139. *But* foolish and irresponsible! 140. NO! 141. That he definitely wasn't. 142. Yet, aluta, as they say, must continua.

143. "MY SISTER, see my finger?" 144. Kabria continued, stretching out her left hand. 145. "He married me, 146. oh, then after our first child, disappeared, 147. came back four years later, 148. begged for my forgiveness, 149. got me pregnant again 150. and disappeared once more. 151. And you know 152. how it is with our tradition, 153. don't you? 154. Because he hasn't come to formally divorce me, 155. I am forced to continue to wear his ring 156. and stay married to him. 157. Yet he is gone. 158. And I have to care for our two children all by myself. 159. Ah, SISTER, you have reminded me of my pain. Ah!"

160. By now, the woman was wholly awash with guilt

161. "Oh SISTER, I am sorry!" 162. she beseeched Kabria. 163. "ME aaah, I don't know 164. why I keep bringing up the foolish man. 165. It's just that the six bottles 166. he came to quaff at my expense...ah! 167. What's the use? 168. Forget it! 169. PLEASE have a seat. 170. SORRY I kept you standing. 171. Sit down."

172. Kabria took the seat, feeling like both Judas Iscariot and Archimedes rolled in one.

173. The woman did not let her pose her question again. 174. She launched into her response.

175. "To tell you the truth, my sister, 176. what at all am I even supposed to know?" 177. and shrugged.

178. Kabria broke into a cold sweat. 179. WAS that all that the woman was going to tell her 180. after she had so cold-bloodedly massacred Adade's reputation? 181. All for the sake of some information about a dead girl whose face she had never even set eyes upon? 182. The hell what are you even supposed to know? 183. She swore at the woman in her head.

184. The woman somehow read Kabria's thoughts 185. and quickly resumed as though on cue, 186. and said, 187. "Actually, I didn't come to meet the body." 188. She paused, 189. waiting for Kabria to pose her next question.

190. Kabria didn't. 191. She sat there boiling inside; 192. struggling to suppress the growing urge to whack the woman across her discolored cheeks. 193. DID she think 194. she sold Adade for such cheap and porous information? 195. The woman spoke again. 196. "If you like, 197. I'll grant you some few minutes with my senior apprentice. 198. She is the one out there in the pink blouse. 199. She knows more."

200. Kabria sighed with relief. 201. "thank you", 202. she muttered 203. and walked out onto the extended plank in front of the kiosk 204. where some of the apprentices were seated on benches and in chairs, 205. gossiping about boyfriends and co-tenants 206. and plaiting the hairs of some customers 207. who were seated on low wooden stools in front of them. 208. The painstaking process of joining, bit by bit, the thin strands of long fake hair by inter-braiding them with the original on the head, always made a fascinating sight.

209. The senior apprentice, a large-boned copper-colored woman of about twenty-four, co-operated with Kabria on the orders of her madam, 210. which were shouted across at her.

211. "when I arrived, 212. there was a small crowd gathered around the body", 213. she began, 214. "people were arguing about 215. whether she died here or somewhere else 216. and was dumped here. 217. And before the police came 218. and carted her away, 219. something interesting happened with the reporter from the FM station. 220. I am not sure of which one, but..."

221. "something interesting happened?"

222. "YES. 223. At first, everybody assumed 224. and thought 225. that the girl was a Kayayoo, 226. so this reporter began to interview some of them."

227. "The kayayoos?"

228. "YES. 229. But after he spoke with two of them, 230. their leader came 231. and told them something. 232. No one knew what. 233. But after it all of them became tight lipped. 234. They refused to talk even to the police too."

235. " What about the two who spoke with the reporter before their leader's intervention?"

236. " They disappeared. Just like that," 237. she said, indicating the swiftness with the snap of her fingers. 238. " Suddenly they couldn't be located anywhere around here. 239. The police looked for them in vain. 240. Then they gave up."

241. "DO you know 242. what they told the reporter 243. before they disappeared?"

244. "Oh YES! 245. Many people heard them. 246. They said 247. the dead girl was definitely not one of them. 248. They know one another very well 249. you know."

250. " So what conclusion did people draw?"

251. "the conclusion? 252. ISN'T that obvious? 253. Someone didn't want the kayayoos to keep telling people 254. that the dead girl was not one of them. 255. Simple. Or? 256. Which means that 257. somebody wants people to believe 258. that she was a kayayoo. 259. DON'T you agree?"

260. " But who can wield that kind of power around here as to issue such an order to the kayayoos through their leader 261. and have it obeyed?"

262. The senior apprentice shrugged 263. and said, 264. " Who knows? With Sodom and Gomorrah just across the streets? 265. Moreover, what did the kayayoos really have to lose 266. if the dead girl wasn't one of them? 267. Nothing. 268. Theirs is to work 269. and make money. 270. And if a girl found dead here is not one of them. 271. ISN'T it all the better for them?"

272. One of the girls called the senior apprentice 273. and said, " SENIOR, what about the white fowl?"

274. " Oh yes," 275. the senior apprentice responded, 276. " WAS it three days after, 277. I think so. 278. YES. 279. When I reported for work, 280. a pure white fowl was lying slaughtered at the spot 281. where the body was found."

282. " What happened then?"

283. " Oh. One of the market pastors came 284. and prayed over it, 285. after which a man took it away. 286. Probably ended up in his wife's soup bowl that evening. 287. It was a really fat fowl."

288. Kabria noticed one of the apprentices staring at her curiously. 289. She smiled 290. and turned her head shyly away 291. when Kabria gazed back at her.

292. IS there something else 293. you can tell me?" 294. Kabria asked the senior apprentice, 295. who pondered briefly 296. and answered in the negative. 297. Kabria thanked her 298. and went back inside the kiosk 299. and thanked the madam too. 300. She cast a final look at the girls 301. as she left the salon 302. and caught them all staring at her 303. and whispering among themselves. 304. Then the senior apprentice said aloud to her, 305. " SISTER, it's like 306. we have seen you somewhere before. 307. Your face looks familiar."

308. " Me? well, MAYBE somewhere in this market. 309. I come here a lot." 310. She hurried out.

311. " Ah! I am sure of it!" 312. the junior apprentice exclaimed 313. after kabria was gone. 314. " It was she. 315. She was the woman 316. whose purse was picked by that boy yesterday."