

**MITIGATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN GHANA THROUGH
THEATRE**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR
THE AWARD OF MFA DEGREE IN THEATRE ARTS**

JULY, 2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own undertaken research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. Any scholarly work that has been quoted or cited has also been duly acknowledged by means of referencing.

Any errors of commission or omission in the entire work are entirely my own.



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ABSTRACT

Theatre has been with humanity over the centuries due to its importance to society. Not only is the theatre meant for fun, but also to discuss pertinent issues bothering people. Hence, many playwrights have resorted to theatre to explain philosophies, theories and instigate change in society. Theatre therefore engages the audience mentally and psychologically when issues raised in the play are of primary interest to the audience. Domestic violence has become a household name in the country owing to, perhaps, its prevalence. Over the years, government, religious bodies and other gender advocacy groups have spent time and resources fighting this violence that keeps on surging. A research problem is thus identified, as to how theatre can be used to mitigate this increasing trend of domestic violence incidents. Through unstructured interviews and observation, relevant data was obtained from stakeholders as well as victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence. The data gathered was later assessed using the qualitative method. Plays and other materials that discuss issues on domestic violence were also accessed and analysed. Interventional efforts against domestic violence in Ghana were also discussed. Results assembled after carrying out the methodology served as an invaluable resource in writing the play *Sorry Ever After*. The play aims at educating its readers, through the actions and inactions of the characters, about the causes, effects and prevention of domestic violence. Finally, the play hopes to spur its readers into action against domestic violence.

DEDICATION

To **THE DESIRE OF ALL AGES – JESUS CHRIST**

To my dearest father, the Late Mr. Maxwell Odoi-Yeboah; may you rest in His arms as we
await His imminent return. **MARANATHA!**

To all direct and indirect victims/survivors of domestic violence.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the Almighty God for empowering me to successfully complete this work and to contribute my quota to efforts being made at resolving the myriad incidents of domestic violence confronting Ghanaians in particular and the world as a whole.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my supervisors, Mr. Africanus Aveh and Dr. Regina Kwakye-Opong for their insightful comments, positive criticisms and their magnanimous guidance; not forgetting their fatherly and motherly care when I lost my father.

I would like to express my indebtedness to Jesse Pobi Otchere, Kelvin Karl Hesse, Kofi Anane Kyeremeh Gyamfi, Joyce Antwi, Ebenezer Asiamah, Martin Quansah, Margaret Delali Numekevor, Eric Asomani, Stephen Ampomah, Elder Eric Owusu Appiah, Elder Kwaku Agyenim-Boateng and Elder Simon Owusu-Yeboah for their encouragement, prayer and support during the period I lost my father, but at the time working on this research.

To John Paul Asiedu, Shelter Say, Gloria Obiyaa Obeng, Beatrice Gyekye, Helen Tsotsoo Aryee, Oforiwah Adu-Kumi and all the cast for the play reading of *Sorry Ever After*, I salute your friendship and your support in diverse ways.

I doff my hat to all interviewees, especially Chief Inspector Sabina Blay and the DOVVSU officials at the Tema Regional Police Headquarters, for taking time off their busy schedules to help me gather the relevant data that proved priceless in realising this research.

Further, I am grateful to all lecturers of Theatre Arts department for their diverse contribution towards the successful completion of this project. Particular mention should be made of Prof. Martin O. Owusu, Dr. Awo M. Asiedu and Dr. Samuel Benagr.

Finally, I also appreciate my mother, Mrs. Beatrice Odoi-Yeboah, for always being there for me no matter what and assisting me through another stage of my education; and also my siblings (Gloria, Miriam and Deborah) for their unflinching moral support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHRAJ	Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice
DOVVSU	Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit
FIDA	Federation of International Women Lawyers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
S.D.A	Seventh Day Adventist
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
WAJU	Women and Juvenile Unit

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Theatre has survived for centuries because of its importance to society. In the era of the dark ages in Europe, theatre went underground, but the church revived it through liturgical performances like *Quem Quaeritis* (Whom do you seek?). This liturgical performance by the clergy explained the resurrection of Jesus through drama. Soon, the church was full and the theatre had to move outside the church. The efficacy of *Quem Quaeritis* to solve the problem of the church shows the power of communication through drama (Brockett and Hildy 2003:76-99; Shagrir 2010:63-64). The existence of drama in spite of the advent of television, radio and film proves that the drama is still an effective weapon in effecting change in society as it had in times past. This can be seen in the works of playwrights such as Femi Osofisan who engage drama to cause change (Osofisan, 2001:93). Again, the use of drama to explain philosophies also illustrates how effective drama can be used to communicate. For instance, Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit* explains some tenets of existentialism. These examples lay credence to the fact that the theatre is a place not only for fun but also to discuss and reason about pertinent issues bothering the society. Thus, the theatre should engage the audience mentally and psychologically. This feat may be achieved when the issues raised in the play are of primary interest to the audience.

Hindin, as cited by Takyi and Mann (2007:62) in "Intimate Partner Violence in Ghana, Africa: The Perspectives of Men Regarding Wife Beating", defines domestic violence as "the physical, sexual or psychological violence perpetrated by one intimate partner against the other." According to Kahn (Director of UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre), domestic violence includes "violence by an intimate partner and by other family members, wherever this violence takes place and in whatever form" (UNICEF 2000:1). In as much as I agree with

the above definitions, they fail to capture violence that can exist between separated spouses, tenants and people who are dating. However, the explanation of domestic violence in Ghana's Domestic Violence Act (2007) does not fall short of the inadequacy in the earlier definitions. The Act, in summary, states that domestic violence is any harmful act in a domestic relationship (family relationship, a relationship akin to family or a relationship that has existed) that violates the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29) or specific acts that may result in physical, sexual, economic, emotional, verbal or psychological abuse (Domestic Violence Act).

The effect of domestic violence on the victim is insidious and undeniable (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Campbell, 1993; and Takyi and Mann, 2007). Thus, over the years, government and other non-governmental agencies have spent time and resources fighting domestic violence. In 1998, the Government of Ghana set up the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) of the Ghana Police Service, now known as Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU)¹, to address issues of domestic violence. In 2007, Parliament passed the Domestic Violence Bill into law, yet the deed rages on in our society.

Domestic violence is arguably one of the major social challenges facing Ghanaians today. In spite of the vibrant discourse in public and academic circles, domestic violence seems to be on a steady increase statistically. It never ceases to grab the headlines of the media, be it print or electronic. A recent instance that comes to mind is the alleged assault and battery incident that happened between Black Stars player, John Paintsil and his spouse in February 2013 (myjoyonline). Although sustaining physical injuries, his spouse denied the incident. However, one neighbour who was assaulted by John Paintsil for intervening disagrees with Paintsil's wife, and even threatened to take the matter to court. Another case of domestic

¹ Police officers in the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service are specially trained to handle domestic violence incidents which include child abuse, child delinquency, juvenile offences, defilement, rape, indecent assault among others.

violence was reported by Beatrice Foster, the wife of Ali Baba, a musician, at Joy Fm on April 21st 2013. Since the year 2013 began, countless occurrences of domestic violence have been chronicled by the various forms of media; some resulting in the death of the victims. It is therefore not surprising that statistics from the DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service indicate growing numbers of reported violence cases, not to talk about many others that may never be reported. According to the 2011 statistics of DOVVSU, for instance, 12,906 cases of various forms of domestic violence were received nationwide.

My desire to undertake this study is motivated by numerous reports of domestic violence in the media. One of such domestic violence events happened in the house of a close family friend where the victim failed to report the violent partner to the police or relatives until she lost her unborn child.

Since drama may be considered as one of the best channels of communicating and thus effecting change in society (Osofisan, 2001:93), this research will inform the writing of the play *Sorry Ever After*. The play will delve into reasons why domestic violence occurs, why it is not often reported until the victim faces dire consequences and indicators that signal a potentially violent relationship. Primarily, the drama will seek to add up to the various ways that are being used by government and non-governmental organisations in fighting the domestic violence menace.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The family, I believe, is an integral part of nation building because whatever happens in families can make or unmake a country. For instance, if parents fail to take proper care of their children, the possibility that the children will grow up to become miscreants in the society is high. Thus, if there is such a problem among many families in the country and no one addresses them, then the likely outcome will be a disaster. Families are therefore the

building blocks of every nation. With this in mind, every citizen tries in their own way to contribute to the development of the state when challenges confronting families are well redressed. Presumably, domestic violence is one of the foremost threats in Ghanaian families of today. In the dailies in Ghana, one cannot fail but to notice the various reports of domestic violence incidents that people are faced with. Undoubtedly, the effect of experiencing domestic violence impacts negatively on the victims as well as the nation. Hence, tackling domestic violence in the society should be a priority and a necessity.

Though many researchers have done a number of studies on domestic violence and a few have come out with possible solutions, it seems that these solutions have stayed in the papers where only a handful of people can get access to. Thus, it is important to bring to public all these solutions; and this can be done through drama. It is in this vein that an earlier research on domestic violence was successfully completed by Faustina Brew² in her thesis, “‘Murder of the Surgical Bone’: A creative response to the phenomenon of domestic violence.” This thesis, however, dealt with the effects of domestic violence on indirect victims, leaving out the direct victims/survivors. Thus, it is to fill this gap and complement other efforts by theatre practitioners in fighting this menace that this project was undertaken.

More so, regardless of the existence of the Domestic violence Act 2007 and DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service, reportage of domestic violence incidents by the media keeps on swelling in Ghana. This raises the alarm as to whether the society has exhausted all avenues that seriously and effectively deal with domestic violence. A research problem is thus identified as to how to mitigate the ever increasing domestic violence incidents in Ghana using theatre.

² A lecturer at the department of Theatre Arts, University of Education, Winneba.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research is organised around the following questions:

1. How can a spouse tell if the partner can possibly perpetrate violence in the marriage?
2. How can proposed solutions by researchers on domestic violence be known beyond the research paper or article?
3. Why the seemingly annual increase of domestic violence statistics?
4. To what extent are the victim/survivor, family and nation affected by domestic violence?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to:

1. Educate people through theatre on ignored signals that may indicate a potentially violent person.
2. Use theatre to create awareness about some suggested answers to domestic violence that seems to reach a few people because it is in a research book.
3. Access the perception of stakeholders (pastors, marriage counsellors, elderly in society, couples, Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit [DOVVSU], etc.) as to why domestic violence is on the increase.
4. Examine the effects of domestic violence on the victim, the immediate family, society and the nation at large.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Since domestic violence is defined broadly in the Domestic Violence Act (2007), this research will focus on violence (be it physical, emotional or psychological) that people suffer in marital relationships in Ghana.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study is important because:

1. A play based on the findings of the research will be written to educate audience about the effects of domestic violence and the advantages they stand to gain if they report domestic violence incidents early.
2. It will seek to bring out recommendations that will help to stall the seemingly growing number of domestic violence cases (reported and unreported) in Ghana.
3. The successful completion of the research will add significantly to knowledge on domestic violence in Ghana; causes, effects and remedies.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research methodology was employed by the study. The research therefore reviewed a selected number of non-African and African plays that highlight domestic violence. This gave me an insight as to the style to use in writing the play in order to strengthen the thematic concern (which is mitigating domestic violence incidents) I want to put across. Incidents of domestic violence reported by print or electronic media in Ghana were also looked at. Through unstructured interviews, the opinion of some Police officers in the Tema Regional Police Headquarters' DOVVSU as well as religious leaders and marriage counsellors on domestic violence between spouses were elicited. Though unstructured interviews were employed, an interview guide was prepared to aid me in asking the right

questions. During interview sessions with the aforementioned, I used tape recorders to capture relevant information; the recording was later transcribed. The interview was characterised by open ended questions in order to urge respondents to fully express their opinions and thoughts about domestic violence.

Further, the observation method was also engaged in the research process. This was essential as it assisted me in gathering the demeanour and gestural expressions of victims/survivors or perpetrators of domestic violence at the DOVVSU office at Tema Regional Police Headquarters. The nature of characters in the play written at the end of this research was informed by the data assembled.

Also, other specific materials in both the print and electronic media that discusses the keywords in this thesis were accessed.

1.8 EXPECTED OUTCOME

Several resources have been committed to fighting abuse but the reportage on violence among people of intimate relationships is still on the increase. This project will add up to efforts being made by both government and non-governmental organisations that primarily seek to challenge this appalling status quo. Since drama has proved to be one of the potent means of changing society, data collected from the study largely informed the writing of *Sorry Ever After* to educate audience on domestic violence and rally them into action.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of relevant literature on domestic violence and points out how this project intends to contribute to the subject matter of domestic violence. The literature review will discuss the definition, cycle, theoretical perspectives and causes of domestic violence. Again, interventional efforts against domestic violence in Ghana as well as how domestic violence has been treated in dramatic works would also be elucidated in this chapter.

2.2 WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a term that is well discussed in several fields in academia and thus has a number of other words used as its synonym. For instance, “intimate partner violence”, “gender-based violence”, and “wife battery” are but a few examples of terms that are sometimes used by scholars in place of “domestic violence”. Mullender (2008:9) argues that “domestic violence” can, at best, be called “woman abuse” since the perpetrators (in this case men) hide behind the façade of domestic violence; a word which fails to point out men as agents of violence. Though others may have dissenting views, Mullender (2008:11) is speaking based on a research in Leicestershire that undeniably reveal men as the major culprits of domestic violence. However, I choose to work with the word “domestic violence” for this study because any act of violence must be condemned, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim/survivor. This is because the focus of this study is on the act of violence itself but not the gender of people who perpetrate it.

After reading a number of articles on domestic violence, I agree with Davis (2008:xviii) that domestic violence has been variously defined by many “domestic violence experts”. Whilst one school of thought prefers a broad-based definition that includes “structural violence” (for example, poverty and unequal access to health and education), the other has argued for a limited definition in order not to lose the essence of the term (UNICEF 2000:2). Wallace, as cited by Davis (2008: xix), also brings out the dilemma faced by scholars and laypersons alike in defining domestic violence: “How does one accurately study or research a phenomenon if a definition cannot be agreed on because the definition of any act both sets limits and focuses research within certain boundaries?” This means that researchers and scholars must try to reach a definition on domestic violence since the definition will define the boundaries of their study. Davis (2008: xviii) further questions how successful interventions, prevention programmes, policies and solutions would be without consistency in definition.

This definitional significance acknowledges the fact that it is imperative for a researcher to first define domestic violence before coming out with effective recommendations. Therefore, the conceptual definition adopted by this study is identified with the Domestic Violence Act (2007:2), as found in the Constitution of Ghana. The Act, in summary, defines “domestic violence” as,

engaging in any harmful acts that are likely to result in violating the Criminal Code (1960), physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, emotional, verbal or psychological abuse within the context of a previous or existing domestic relationship.

Clearly, as defined by the constitution of Ghana, domestic violence includes but is not limited to physical abuse. Hence, “domestic violence” in this study encompasses physical, sexual, economic and emotional abuse in a domestic relationship.

The Act further explains domestic relationship as a family relationship or any relationship akin to family. Thus, domestic violence, according to the Ghana constitution, can also occur between people courting, house-help and mistress, landlord and tenants, any cordial relationship among others. The criminalisation of all acts of violence that exists in any intimate setting shows how the constitution of Ghana guards the individual rights of its citizenry.

Although the Domestic Violence Act (2007) characterises violence as occurring in a wide range of intimate and familial relationships, this research will focus on violence between spouses, recognising that to a large extent many domestic violence incidents reported by the media in Ghana are violence between spouses.

2.3 CYCLE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence incidents in relationships usually pass through three different yet interconnected stages (Benokraitis 1996; Kinstlinger-Bruhn 1997). The first stage is when a few minor battering incidents occur. The victim takes blame for the battering incidents and tries to stay out of trouble by following the dictates of the abuser and becoming reconciliatory. The tension in the relationship builds up into the second stage where battering intensifies. At this point, the perpetrator wants to literally “teach the victim a lesson”. This stage is often anticipated by the victim because the perpetrator becomes very moody; thus the least of actions done by the victim triggers the abuser into unleashing acute battery on the victim. This phase is the shortest as it lasts for a few hours. The last stage is marked by the abuser acting contrite in order to win back the trust and love of the victim through apologies and gifts. For some reasons, the victim accepts and stays in the relationship. A number of interviewees (Amofo; Amoakohene; Owusu-Appiah) added that, on the few occasions where the apologies of the supposed contrite abuser are rejected, the abuser employs other

means to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. This is done by either accusing the victim till the victim caves in and accepts the blame or suggesting that the violence was caused by evil supernatural powers. Either way, the victim believes the abuser and is convinced not to leave the relationship. A short time after the last phase, the cycle starts all over again since the remorseful nature of the abuser is usually brief.

2.4 CAUSES AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The reasons for the rise in domestic violence incidents in Ghana and the world at large are numerous and complex yet interconnected (UNICEF 2000:7). There is no one single factor that accounts for domestic violence. Consequently, the causes of domestic violence have been well discussed in many studies worldwide. Though we live in a globalised world where nations share many things in common, these factors that account for domestic violence may differ slightly from one country to the other due to cultural differences. As such, scholars and researchers have come out with several theories and perspectives explaining causes of violence in domestic setting.

2.4.1 Socio-cultural Factors/Perspectives

In Africa, particularly Ghana, UN points to socio-cultural factors that evoke and perpetrate violence, especially against women, in the society (UNICEF 2000:8). Some of these cultural practices that can easily be identified include wife inheritance and dowry payments, widowhood rites and forced/arranged marriages, just to mention a few. These practices usually disregard the rights of individuals hence making the victims, in this case women, vulnerable and susceptible to violence. These aforementioned cultural practices are intricately connected to “cultural explanations” of domestic violence where customs, norms and traditions are influential in continuing domestic violence (Bowman 2003:853).

Widowhood rites, as done by many ethnic groups in Ghana, disregard the rights of women to sleep, clothe and eat well for a number of months after the death of the widow's spouse. In extreme cases, the widow is forced to drink the water used in bathing the corpse to prove her innocence. In Lawra, a community in the Northern part of Ghana, the widow is detained in a room for four months and is automatically inherited by the brothers of her late husband. If the widow refuses, she must stay single for the rest of her life no matter how young she is. However, when the widow re-marries any man other than the brothers of her deceased spouse, then she must give up her rights to the property of her late husband, their children as well as access to their home. It is believed that if the widow stays in her matrimonial home with her new spouse, the ghost of her dead husband would haunt her new partner (Action Aid Ghana 2007:42). Apart from disregarding the individual's right of choice, forced marriages have a probability of putting together two incompatible people who do not love each other; thus preparing the grounds for possible domestic violence (Action Aid Ghana 2007:43).

Wife beating, belief in the inherent superiority of males and other perceptions are considered normal and legitimate in many African communities including Ghana (UNICEF 2000:8).

Action Aid Ghana (2007:43) points it out clearly that:

[a]ccepting violence is seen as a mark of a good woman. On the other hand, if the woman perpetrates the violence, she would be called a witch. The women are not prepared to report because it is not our custom. Even the chiefs do not hear let alone the police.

This means that women are unfortunately required by society to suffer in silence in order to be considered good wives. It also shows that women are, most often than not, victims of such socio-cultural perceptions that perpetuate domestic violence in communities. According to Abane, as cited by Bowman (2003:853), "Ghanaian culture by and large perceives women as inferior beings who can be used and battered at will". Hence, violence against the female gender by males is often overlooked by the society because such an act is considered normal.

This therefore makes it culturally alien for many battered women to report cases of domestic violence to the appropriate quarters.

Further, some socio-cultural practices especially in Ghana have been designed such that women have become the properties of men (UNICEF 2000:8; Bowman 2003:855). Men have absolute control over the household including the sexuality of their wives. Thus, the abuse of this power men exercise in familial settings leads to domestic violence. Culturally defined gender roles in Africa usually encourage inequality especially in marriages and other relationships thereby rendering women incapable of protecting themselves against domestic violence (Bowman 2003:853).

Notwithstanding how culture seemingly encourages domestic violence, it is worthy to note that there still exist certain cultural practices that safeguard spouses against domestic violence and even provide room for peaceful redress. For instance, as with many ethnic groups in Ghana, when a spouse wrongs the other, the victim should report the incident to the immediate relatives of the perpetrator as well as the victim's relatives. Later, a meeting is convened between the two families and the problems of the couple in question are resolved. Therefore, to a large extent, the effectiveness of the resolution lies in the objective judgements and views of both families present. This example shows that not all aspects of culture give rise to domestic violence. For that reason, in the haste to stop domestic violence, gender activists must not advocate for the obliteration of a society's rich cultural heritage. Instead, the cultural practices that mitigate domestic violence must be promoted and strengthened and the obnoxious norms abolished.

Whilst many people who believe that domestic violence in relationships should be regarded as a family affair prefer the traditional mode of mediation, those against it are of the view that relatives may be biased because the society is heavily patriarchal; hence victims of domestic

violence, especially women, are likely to be treated unfairly. In a way, Cantalupo et al (2006:556) confirm this in an article that women who are victims of domestic violence in Ghana are usually counselled by the traditional authorities to endure the violence and to refrain from provoking the man into violence. Although such a posture taken by the traditional proceedings may fail to uproot domestic violence and punish the guilty party, this should not deter others to resort to such available system of arbitration. The issue to be solved, I think, should be how traditional mediation can be refined and reformed to prevent biased judgements rather than totally abandoning that system.

2.4.2 Feminist Explanations

In a very similar way to socio-cultural factors, “feminist explanations” in domestic violence discourse posit that the patriarchal nature of African societies serve as a safe-haven for domestic violence to occur (Bowman 2003:852). Feminist explanations therefore link inequality and male dominance in societies as pivotal in discussing domestic violence. Feminists are of the notion that the many injustices that women face in the world are because most societal customs and beliefs only favour men. The institution of patriarchy is seen both as a system and an ideology. Patriarchy is regarded as a system of male domination whereby rewards are given based on systematic structures and expectations created to benefit men who wield power and maintain the status quo. Again, patriarchy is considered as an ideology of social values and norms which support gender discrimination against females. Such ideologies are often embedded in law, religious beliefs and economic practices (Abane 2000:37-38). Women are therefore expected to respect and obey every dictates of a man in any patriarchal setting. For instance, a study by Offei-Aboagye (1994:925) in Ghana noted that the ascendancy of domestic violence among married couples was strongly linked to the result of the subservient position women are expected to take. This accounts for passivity and acceptance of all forms of violence in marriages.

Though widely discussed by several scholars, patriarchy is aptly described by Adrienne Rich, as quoted by Eisenstein (1984:5), as:

a familial – social, ideological, political system which men – by force, direct pressure, or ritual, traditional law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.

This shows that patriarchy is very pervasive and can therefore be found in almost all activities of human endeavours. Also, it clearly confirms that the lives of women are totally dependent on how “much privilege or influence the patriarchy is willing to accede” and “male approval”. Obviously, patriarchy makes women second class citizens and thus susceptible to all kinds of violence the dominant (men) mete out on them.

Not only does patriarchy concern male domination but it also constructs social ideologies and expectations of both genders. As explained by Rich, patriarchy determines the behaviour people are supposed to exhibit. Consequently, patriarchy, to a large extent, conditions the mind-sets of people as to what is expected of them leading to gender stereotyping where men are seen as superior and women have a secondary status. Thus, patriarchy exalts males and denigrates females. Hoffman et al (1994:132) aver that violence is the most obvious and effective means of husbands’ control over wives, and it is used when other and more subtle methods of control do not elicit submission.

Though I associate with all these feminists’ sentiments about domestic violence, it must be noted that the feminist explanations must take into consideration, but not totally put aside, the culture of a people. This is because giant strides are being made by feminist activists to stall domestic violence across the globe yet there is still more to be done in many parts of Africa. The one reason that may account for this, in my view, is the apparent difference between African feminism and Western feminism. African feminism is well discussed by many

scholars including Awo Mana Asiedu (2011) in her article “Nneora: An African Doll’s House: A Study of the Virtues of Womanhood”. I presume that anchoring on African feminism may help the course of feminists in Africa in fighting violence in domestic relationships.

2.4.3 Ecological Theory

Ecological theory of domestic violence has been interpreted and used by various scholars and researchers in different ways; some even associate this with feminist theory. Similar to social learning theory, ecological perspective connects violence in domestic setting to the broader social environment (Levinson 1989:18). Gelles (1997:129) in explaining ecological theory tried to integrate three levels of theoretical analysis namely, the individual, socio-psychological and sociocultural.

Respectively, the Individual level constitutes values, beliefs and attitudes a person learns in one’s family, environment as well as subjective perceptions (Carlson 1984:569). This level is focused on the traits that individuals pick up as a result of what pertains in the home and society. If a person lives in a home where violence is used as a means to solve problems, then the person will do the same in a similar situation. Again, if a person grows up in a community where the views of men are always right and therefore not challenged, then the person, according to this level, may perpetrate this social norm in future since that individual has subconsciously learnt it. The Socio-psychological and Socio-cultural levels deal with how society contributes to violence. In general, both levels’ analysis concentrate on widely accepted social perceptions that create gender stereotypes, social norms, cultural values and belief systems that affect everybody (Carlson 1984:578; Gelles 1997:129).

The ecological theory explicitly implicates society as the root cause of domestic violence since perpetrators are a product of the practices of the community. With this as the basis,

domestic violence can be tackled by changing the opinions and philosophies of the community that promote violence among its inhabitants.

2.4.4 Religion/Wrong Theology promoting Domestic Violence

The multifaceted nature of domestic violence makes it difficult to approach it from only a socio-cultural angle without touching on religion. Since people in the society belong to various religious bodies, they try their best to solve issues of domestic violence through religion. Though I largely could not lay hands on many scholarly articles that indict religion as a contributing factor to domestic violence, a number of interviews I conducted with some marriage counsellors suggested that religion is at times used to perpetuate violence in relationships.

As explained in an interview with Paapa Amoakohene (a Christian Pastor and a marriage counsellor), “wrong theology” is when religious doctrines are misinterpreted to support violence among people. Amoakohene accuses many people, especially “false teachers of the Bible”, of erroneous explanation of the Biblical expectations of spouses in marriage. He made particular mention of Ephesians 5:22, one of the numerous texts in the Bible that has been used to accommodate violence among spouses. In the *Good News Bible*, Ephesians 5:22 reads, “[w]ives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord”. The word “submit” has mistakenly been regarded to mean that spouses should concede to all actions, including violent acts, which are meted out by their partners. Clearly, this is not what the passage intends to teach because reading further in that same chapter (Eph. 5:28), husbands are charged to love their wives as they do their own bodies. This challenges men to treat their wives as they would themselves.

Additionally, the marriage vow which contains phrases such as, “... for better for worse...” and “...what God has joined, let no man put asunder” are usually stretched to mean that,

spouses should endure all that they face in marriage no matter what; the second quote also labels people who seek to rescue a spouse from a violent marriage as working against God. However, these quotes, I suppose, call on spouses to be faithful to each other and deter from activities that will result in a divorce. Moreover, the marriage vow is hinged on an unflinching commitment to love. Consequently, if a partner is abusing the spouse, then there is no basis for keeping the marriage vow. This shows that the very quotations cited by people as promoting domestic violence among Christians in marriages are the same that guard against domestic violence if properly explained, understood and put into practice.

Apart from wrong theology, Owusu-Appiah (a marriage counsellor) in an interview revealed that religious leaders in Ghana seldom encourage married couples to report incidents of violence to the Police because doing that may end the marriage – an institution that should last until the death of a spouse. This re-echoes a research carried out in Ghana and reported in the article, “Domestic Violence in Ghana: The Open Secret” (Cantalupo et al 2006:545).

Some plays such as Soyinka’s *The Trials of Brother Jero* suggest that religion can be used to spread violence in domestic settings. In *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Jero, a charlatan prophet, instructs Chume, his most loyal follower, to go and fight his own wife, Amope. Chume stupidly acts out the orders of Jero because Jero is a man of God and thus Chume believed his every word. At the end of the play, Chume realises his foolishness and tries to repay his trusted prophet, Jero.

Though the above discourse seemingly accuses religion of condoning and even encouraging domestic violence, several documents by the various religious bodies suggest otherwise. Readings about the views of a number of churches regarding domestic violence in marriage disclosed that the churches frown upon this appalling act among couples. For instance, according to the Catholic Church’s online source (USCCB), the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops in a paper unequivocally condemned violence in relationships and called on victims not to shy away from divorce. The Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian and many other churches may share the same sentiments as the Catholic Church.

Similarly, the *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual* denounces violence in marriages but is rather cautious in advocating for divorce on the grounds of physical violence. This is because physical violence is not considered by the church as “unfaithfulness to the marriage vow”; however, the victim may choose to separate keeping in mind that there would be no re-marriage after the divorce (Seventh-day Adventist 2010:153). Notwithstanding the Seventh-Day Adventist (S.D.A) church’s position of no remarriage for ex-partners who divorced because of physical violence, domestic violence issues concerning incest and child sexual abuse in a relationship is considered as “a violation of the divine intention of marriage”, hence a cause for divorce or separation (Seventh-day Adventist 2010:152). Thus ex-partners in this case can re-marry

On the topic of violence in marriage, the perspectives of the churches I read about were in direct opposition to a previous viewpoint expressed by one of the early Church reformers, John Calvin, in a letter written to counsel a battered woman. An excerpt of the letter reads as follows:

We have a special sympathy for poor women who are evilly and roughly treated by their husbands, because of the roughness and cruelty of the tyranny and captivity which is their lot. We do not find ourselves permitted by the Word of God, however, to advise a woman to leave her husband” (religion-online).

This counsel obviously reflects the early church’s insensitivity towards women experiencing violence since the church sees “tyranny” and “roughness” (simply violence) as the “lot” of women; a situation that arguably exists in practice in Ghana today but not available in books I consulted from the various churches for this study.

Primarily, with reference to domestic violence in marriages, all the churches I read about considered divorce as the last resort if counselling and reconciliation fail. This suggests that the churches want couples experiencing violence to, as much as possible, resolve their differences rather than divorce.

2.4.5 Economic factors/Poverty

Bowman (2003:859), UNICEF (2000:7) and Cantalupo et al (2006:546) among others assert that economic dependence of victims on abusers for survival perpetuates domestic violence. Cantalupo et al (2006:546), chronicling a domestic violence research carried out in Ghana in 2006, quotes a Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) official who declares that women who usually get beaten are those who solely depend on their abuser for livelihood. Again, a District Court Judge in Ghana whose comments are captured by Cantalupo et al (2006:546) suggests that judges find it very difficult to put domestic violence perpetrators behind bars because they (the Judges) realise that the victims are dependent on such abusers for maintenance – monies needed for the upkeep of the house. These examples unambiguously attest to the fact that poverty accounts for domestic violence, particularly in Ghana.

Further, UNICEF (2000:7) suggests that limited access to employment in formal sectors and limited access to well-paying jobs leave women to settle for menial jobs where they earn meagre wages or become housewives. Again, some men deliberately deny their wives the privilege of ‘working’ outside the home, thus making the women housewives and caretakers. This eventually results in women relying heavily on abusers in terms of finance. This situation makes it difficult for women to report cases of violence to the Police for appropriate action to be taken. Even to walk out of a marriage riddled with violence becomes a dream for

such women who are not financially independent. This is because financially dependent women do not have what it takes (that is money) to survive without their abusing spouses.

Women are sometimes economically abused by their husbands when the man intentionally gives a small amount or no money to the woman for housekeeping. This action is normally preceded by the woman questioning how the man spends his salary if the man, for a couple of months, had failed to provide enough money for important necessities such as food and clothing for the house. Cantalupo et al (2006:546) point out that economic violence is widespread in Ghana considering the numerous accounts gathered from interviews. This economic abuse is a violation against the rights of such victims but the victims fail to report. A case is recorded by Cantalupo et al (2006:547) where a woman blatantly denies before the law court that her husband, who has been dragged to the court by a third party, was abusing her. When later inquired outside the courtroom, the woman questioned whether the police will cater for her after her husband has been jailed. This incident and many others that happen show the extent to which financial constraints can force a victim to still remain in a relationship with the abuser.

2.5 OTHER CAUSES AND THEORIES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Other factors that aggravate and complicate domestic violence include low levels of legal literacy – understanding the constitution – among the populace (UNICEF 2000:7). Traditionally, issues of violence particularly among spouses are settled by community leaders hence outside the legal courts. These community leaders usually advise victims to stay in the abusive relationship and endure without complaint (Cantalupo et al 2006:551). Although a justice system has been established by law to protect domestic violence victims/survivors, victims who do not know this legal avenue can only persevere in a relationship full of

violence. Thus, the link of low levels of legal literacy among the populace to the promotion of domestic violence is clear.

Similarly, in a country where legal rights are not known by many because of limited access to education, domestic violence is likely to dominate in that nation. This is because the victims do not know that the laws of the land can protect them from their violent partners. In the same vein, abusers are not aware of the sanctions that they can face should they be brought before a court; therefore nothing prevents them from being violent especially in a patriarchal society. Thus, limited access to education also contributes to increase of domestic violence in the society.

Acceptability of violence as a means of resolving conflict in marriages and the society at large is also a reason why domestic violence still persists. This situation is sometimes referred to as the culture of violence by scholars (Bowman 2003:857). The widespread perception of the right to resolve conflict in marriages through violence legitimises the battery of women leading to domestic violence. Interestingly, in such communities, the battered women see nothing wrong with the abuser's violent actions.

Further, the notion treating the family and domestic violence issues as a 'private affair' creates a rather conducive atmosphere for domestic violence to flourish (UNICEF 2000:7). Cantalupo et al (2006:544) postulate that this notion of domestic violence as a 'private affair' is common in Ghana, and this accounts for the reason why many incidents of violence go unreported. Again, the general belief that domestic violence is a private family matter also discourages and sometimes prohibits victims from seeking help from outside the family. Victims of violence have to suffer in silence if they keep it to themselves.

Moreover, exposure to violence at a tender age is also a cause of domestic violence (UNICEF 2000:7). This is closely linked to studies on the effects of domestic violence on children

which assert that the child learns this aggressive attitude as a result of witnessing parental violence and sometimes experiencing it as well. Thus, the innocent child becomes a victim of a vicious act that would damage the child's ability to trust and be devoted to people in close relationships and may eventually become a perpetrator or victim in adulthood (Burman and Duffy-Feins 2007:156).

Finally, exchange theory explains the situation where people resort to violence if the punishment is insignificant compared to the advantages they stand to gain from engaging in such act. In many communities where this theory applies, there are not adequate laws to inhibit domestic violence. If such laws exist, then they are not being enforced; other state institutions needed to help domestic violence victims/survivors are underfunded (Levinson 1989:16). This exchange theory therefore posits that existing laws should be strictly enforced as well as the introduction of stringent laws in order to deter people from engaging in domestic violence.

2.6 INTERVENTIONAL EFFORTS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The numerous causes of domestic violence indicate that there should be quite a number of strategies to end it. I therefore agree with UNICEF (2000:13) that, “[c]onsidering the interconnections between the factors responsible for domestic violence...strategies and interventions should be designed within a comprehensive and integrated framework”. This section discusses the various strategies that have been put in place within Ghana to mitigate domestic violence.

2.6.1 Legal Framework regarding domestic violence in Ghana

In Ghana, laws like the Criminal Code 1960 (Act 29), Children's Act, Interstate Succession Law (PNDC Law 111), Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)

Act and Domestic Violence Act are some of the laws that protect citizens against domestic violence. Similar domestic laws have been passed in other African countries including South Africa, Mauritius and Uganda.

In Ghana, the Domestic Violence Bill was passed by government in 2007 as a result of relentless pressure from the public, Non-governmental Organisations and other international bodies like Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA). For many scholars and gender advocates, the Domestic Violence Act was an important step to take because earlier legal documents (such as CHRAJ Act and the Criminal Code) failed to adequately tackle domestic violence problems (Cantalupo et al 2006:551-566). Thus, the Domestic Violence Act complements the other existing laws that seek to provide protection for individuals in the country.

In spite of all these laws, domestic violence still persists in the country. This means that the populace should be educated and informed about the existence of laws that protect them against domestic violence.

2.6.2 Statutory Bodies established to fight Domestic Violence

Just like many countries across the globe, the government of Ghana through its legislations has established agencies and offices mandated to solve issues related to domestic violence. Such bodies include CHRAJ, the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, the various law courts, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and many others.

CHRAJ is an arm of government that has been created by the Ghanaian constitution to basically defend the human rights of citizens as guaranteed by the constitution. The CHRAJ Act (456) requires complaints to be resolved through mediation. Therefore domestic violence

cases reported to any CHRAJ official are settled through mediation. But, the agreement that both parties come up with after the mediation process is not enforceable by law. Consequently, any party can disrespect the settlement without facing any legal consequences. More so, the law charges CHRAJ to educate the public about human rights issues of which domestic violence falls under. If CHRAJ carries out this duty precisely, I think it would go a long way to compliment efforts being made by non-governmental organisations such as Action Aid Ghana, ARK Foundation among others.

DOVVSU, just as CHRAJ, is also set up by the constitution. Formerly called Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), the DOVVSU police officers are specially trained to handle incidents of domestic violence that are reported to it by the populace. The change of name from WAJU to DOVVSU, as revealed in an interview with Chief Inspector Sabina Blay, is to announce that the unit is gender neutral and also to stop false perceptions that it is gender biased. DOVVSU came into operation in 1998 when the government saw the need to treat domestic violence cases especially from the other incidents reported to the police. Hence, the formation of this unit in the Ghana Police Service shows the commitment of both the government and police to mitigate domestic violence in the country. However, DOVVSU faces challenges that hinder it from executing the task given it by the state.

Although DOVVSU asserts the commitment that all assault cases should be prosecuted, Cantalupo et al (2006:552) notes the alarming frequency with which DOVVSU refers domestic violence cases for counselling instead of prosecution. Counselling may be a good supplement to prosecution but using counselling as a substitute may send a wrong signal to the victim that the police pose an empty threat, thus encouraging perpetrators to continue with their deed. This notwithstanding, many people continue to report incidents of domestic violence to DOVVSU.

Over the years in Ghana, there has seen a growth in the number of reportage published by the dailies concerning the sentences of culprits of domestic violence. Such publications do not only confirm the potency of the Domestic Violence Act, but also suggest that the law courts are enforcing the law without favour. Nevertheless, these law courts are the same places where some judges prefer to exercise minimal punishments against perpetrators of domestic violence (Cantalupo et al 2006:564). This can only mean that the extent to which abusers should be dealt with is being slowed by the same body instituted by law to enforce the constitution.

In a nutshell, even though all the statutory bodies created by law are earnestly working towards mitigating domestic violence, there are still institutional challenges that ought to be surmounted in order to be more efficient with their duties.

2.6.3 The media and domestic violence

In Ghana, as well as in other countries, the media is usually referred to as the fourth organ of the government because of its vociferous nature in checking the activities of the other arms of government (namely, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary). Due to the existence of free press in the country, Ghana has a very vibrant media that is very critical of governmental policies and all social issues. As such, domestic violence has not ceased to capture headlines in both print and electronic media, not to talk about movies and documentaries. Hence, the local media are washed with several issues that are either fighting or promoting domestic violence.

The reportage of domestic violence incidents by the various newspapers in Ghana points to the myriad abuses that come under the umbrella of domestic violence in the Domestic Violence Act (2007). Some few recent incidents of domestic violence captured in the headlines of a number of print media in Ghana include: “Hand-boiling dad jailed” (Daily

Guide, July 4, 2014:3), “Father in-law’s rape attempt fails as pregnant victim squeezes his genitals” (The Spectator, June 21, 2014:3), “Man sells wife for \$3000” (The Spectator, June 14, 2014:3), “ ‘Rape’ victim fights for life – rapist gets 25year jail term” (Daily Graphic, June 11, 2014:3), “Father rapes and sodomises his children” (The Ghanaian Times, June 10, 2014:15), “Taxi driver remanded for defilement” (The Ghanaian Times, June 9, 2014:3), “Mason jailed for three years for indecent assault” (The Ghanaian Times, June 9, 2014:3), “Woman dies in attempt to collect money from hubby” (The Ghanaian Times, June 7, 2014:3), “Man, 35, shoots ex-girlfriend” (The Ghanaian Times, June 3, 2014:3), “Teenager poisons father” (The Ghanaian Times, June 2, 2014:3), “Driver Assaults Wife, 3 cops” (The Spectator, May 31, 2014:3) and “Man renders woman, 5 children homeless” (The Spectator, March 29, 2014:3).

I agree with UNICEF (2000:16) that the media should be involved in the fight against domestic violence since the media has the ability of influencing and changing social norms and practices that tolerate domestic violence. But, the media should thus be circumspect about information they put out to the unsuspecting public since they can either increase or decrease the incidents of domestic violence. For instance, if the media constantly show occurrences of violence and aggression, the society may tend to tolerate such happenings since it has become a part of them psychologically. The media, especially through movies, challenges certain obnoxious socio-cultural practices in Ghana that promote domestic violence by questioning the pattern of violent behaviour accepted by individuals, families and the community.

Though the media in Ghana is making great efforts at mitigating domestic violence, it falls short of UNICEF’s expectations concerning the role of media. Many pictures illustrating domestic violence in the media, as well as in schools, hospitals, and police stations, always show men as the perpetrators of domestic violence hence creating an impression that males

are violent³. Though beyond the pictures the discourse around domestic violence sometimes includes women as abusers, it is high time the pictures also include women as well in order to quell that erroneous notion that is subtly being perpetuated.

In the same vein, some Ghanaian movies reinforce the popular view that typecasts men as the prime cause of domestic violence whilst women are the helpless and unfortunate victims. An example is Djansi's award winning *Sinking Sands*, a movie that portrays men as perpetrators of domestic violence in marriages. In the movie, Jimah and Pabi are the best of lovers and later become married couple until Pabi carelessly picks up a sauce pan containing hot oil with her bare hands but ends up scarring Jimah's face when the hot content pours. After that incident, Jimah starts to maltreat her because of his scar which has obviously dented his psyche about himself. However, neither did Jimah lose his job nor his salary because of his scar, yet Pabi is battered, raped and abused psychologically and emotionally by Jimah. In spite of all these abuses meted out to her, Pabi still stays in her marriage. It is not until Jimah literally tries to force her to abort their baby that she finds reason enough to leave. This short review of *Sinking Sands* demonstrates how some films in Ghana promote gender stereotyping with regards to domestic violence.

Although statistics show that men are predominantly perpetrators of domestic violence, it does not take away the fact that women are sometimes abusers as well. From this tangent, I believe it is high time that local movies reflected this statistical balance in presenting domestic violence as well.

³ See Appendix A

2.6.4 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) response to domestic violence in Ghana

In dealing with domestic violence in the society, UNICEF (2000:16) highlights the important role that NGOs can play. In Ghana, for instance, the persistent attack on domestic violence cannot be mentioned without discussing the immense contributions of the numerous NGOs present in the country. This is because NGOs seemingly act as a pressure group to instigate changes within government policies in order to end domestic violence. It is well documented in several articles that the Domestic Violence Bill which was passed by Parliament in 2007 had long been lobbied by the gender activist groups (Bowman 2003:848; Cantalupo et al 2006:559).

Aside this fundamental duty (which is to bring pressure on government), NGOs have been at the forefront when it comes to creating awareness and educating the public on domestic violence and providing associated services for victims of domestic violence. Action Aid Ghana, for example, published a report on an extensive research conducted in the three Northern Regions of Ghana regarding violence and HIV (Action Aid Ghana 2007:1-92). Osei (2011:51-53) also notes in his unpublished thesis that NGOs, particularly Ark Foundation, provide support and assistance to victims of domestic violence through counselling, legal representation, making available temporary shelter and rehabilitation, medical assistance and capital support. An interview with a worker of Human Rights, Robert Amofo, revealed a similar package available for domestic violence victims.

All these remarkable works being done by NGOs has still not brought an end to domestic violence in Ghana. Hence, I concur with UNICEF (16) that NGOs should be assisted by government, international organisations and other private individuals in order to deepen and strengthen their capacity to combat domestic violence.

In this section, we have discussed the various efforts and approaches being made in Ghana by the legal regime, statutory agencies mandated to fight domestic violence, the media and NGOs to mitigate domestic violence. It can be deduced that a good work against domestic violence is ongoing but there still remain hindrances and problems that curtails this progress. Beyond the aforementioned ways, theatre presents the opportunity for domestic violence to be discussed in a performance. Audience could therefore apply the solutions inherent in the play to help curb domestic violence.

2.7 THEATRE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Theatre, in no small way, has a role to play in fighting domestic violence in the world. This is because the theatre is not a place only meant for fun, but also a venue where audience are engaged intellectually on pertinent issues in society. In this vein, Osofisan (2001:93) states that he writes plays that seek to present audience with the painful reality that will result in a new and positive awareness. In the same way, Mda, as cited by Ebewo (2009:26), writes plays that concern and address the problems of his people in order to rally them (his people) into action. In order to make the impact playwrights like Osofisan and Mda create through theatre, plays meant for social change must be grounded in relevant issues bothering society.

Playwrights in writing their plays have a wide range of source materials at their disposal. Such sources could be about pertinent social, political, religious, or cultural issues among others. In spite of the many concerns in society that plays seek to address, playwrights over the years have not denied the world of taking a second look at domestic violence through the lens of theatre.

2.7.1 Theatre Beginnings and Domestic Violence

From the Greek tragedies, one cannot help but notice feuding families in almost all the plays.

Greek tragic playwrights' obsession with feuding families probably indicates what was happening in their society or warned their audience of how dangerous it is to entertain hostility in the family. This prolonged familial fighting present in many of the famous Greek tragedies to an extent touches on aspects of domestic violence. For instance, in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.E), the eponymous hero, Agamemnon, kills his own daughter (Iphigenia) and abandons Clytemnestra, his wife, for ten years in battle. All these decisions he undertakes are in no way subscribed to by Clytemnestra, hence Agamemnon probably causing his wife emotional pain. Clytemnestra's loneliness, compounded with her agony of losing a daughter and seeing Agamemnon bring home a mistress (Cassandra) after ten years of war, perhaps, provoked her to take vengeance.

Medea by Euripides (431 B.C.E) is also another example of the numerous Greek tragedies that touch on domestic violence through violent disputes in families. In the play, Jason promises to love and marry Medea only because she helped him to secure the golden fleeces. But when they arrive in Corinth, Jason breaks his vow; he plans to wed the King of Corinth's daughter. Feeling cheated and emotionally hurt, Medea kills Creon's daughter and her two sons in retaliation. This clearly depicts the consequence of Jason abusing Medea emotionally when he makes up his mind to love another person other than Medea his wife. Subtle as it may be, the two Greek tragedies highlighted here show glimpses of domestic violence in feuding families.

It is worthy to note that the Greek playwrights mainly used narratives to register the violence that happens in the play. Thus in *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, Jocasta's death and Oedipus losing his sight is not acted on stage but reported. Again, in *Agamemnon* the Chorus opens

the door to reveal the lifeless bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra and inform the audience how Clytemnestra murdered the two.

The above discussed plays show that domestic violence has not been a major thematic concern in drama during the Greek era although there were scenes of violence.

2.7.2 Domestic Violence and the Modern Stage in Africa

Moving away from the classical Greek period, playwrights particularly after the industrial revolution have been bold in representing the society as it is on stage; hence, the beginning and flourishing of realism in theatre in Europe. Consequently, domestic violence features prominently as the subject matter of many plays. Examples of such plays, particularly those by African writers, include, *Altine's Wrath* (by Femi Osofisan), *She No Longer Weeps* (by Tsitsi Dangarembga), *Blood and Tears* (by Asiedu Yirenkyi), *Murder of the Surgical Bone* (by Faustina Brew), *Dilemma of a Ghost* (by Ama Ata Aidoo), *The Trials of Brother Jero* (by Wole Soyinka), *In the Chest of a Woman* (by Efo Kodjo Mawugbe), *The Other War* (by Alemseged Tesfai) and many others.

Osofisan's *Altine's Wrath* (1986) is a play in which the playwright engages with several subject matters including domestic violence. Violence among married couples is seen in the play when Altine suffers maltreatment at the hands of Lawal, her husband. Lawal is very rich yet his wife is a representation of the poor and downtrodden in society, like Onene and Audu. Here, it can be inferred that Altine is being economically abused. Moreover, Lawal decides to cause Altine more distress by deciding to marry another woman. Altine, after acquiring knowledge through adult education, decides to put an end to her suffering by revenging her husband's unfair actions towards her. This reflects scholarly articles that suggest that limited access to education promote domestic violence. Had Altine not attended the adult education,

she probably might have continued to bow to the whims of Lawal without knowing how to fight for her rights.

In *She No Longer Weeps* (1987), Dangarembga presents the love life of Martha that paints grim situations in relationships and eventually ends up in murder. Martha, though not married to Freddy, is forced to stay because Freddy is the father of her unborn baby. She declares, “[t]hey say you are my husband... They say a woman’s place is with her husband. They won’t let me stay home”. This re-echoes accepted cultural norms and expectations that invariably cause domestic violence. Freddy’s actions (for instance, chasing Gertrude and Chippo) towards Martha depict that he is an abuser, especially when he kicks and throws Martha out of the house because of his girlfriend Chippo. The destructive nature of violence in intimate relationships is seen as Martha, after being emotionally tormented and eventually thrown out by a man she loved, cannot love her suitor to secure a new marriage. Thus she grows to become an embittered successful single lady. Having a conscience seared by emotional abuse, Martha in the last scene becomes a murderer as she kills Freddy. This exemplifies studies carried out on domestic violence by researchers that predict the likelihood of a child or a young adult who experienced or witnessed domestic violence to become future perpetrators of domestic violence.

Yirenkyi’s *Blood and Tears* (1980) is a play that deals with family issues as well as aspects of domestic violence. The play is about Charles Brown and his wife, Elsie, who return to Ghana from London. Situations become bizarre when Elsie realises that her friend, Flora, is having an affair with her husband. Elsie, being emotionally hurt by Charles Brown’s actions, drives him out. Charles Brown thinking of finding comfort in the apartment he rented for Flora rather finds trouble as he meets a Corporal and a Sergeant, both boyfriends to Flora. In his rage, he injures Flora with a sword and tries to escape from the grips of the two service

men. Charles physically assaults Flora because he felt betrayed. This has links to how infidelity, as discussed by Cantalupo et al (549), triggers domestic violence in society.

Domestic violence is a subject matter when it comes to the treatment of some scenes in Aidoo's *Dilemma of a Ghost* (2002). Ato Yawson slaps his wife, Eulalie, after she has questioned and insulted his African culture. At that moment in the play, Ato Yawson becomes an abuser of his own wife. Presumably, Ato Yawson reacted out of anger that his tradition had been disrespected but that is not a reason to justify violence in marriage. In fact, Kinstlinger-Bruhn observes that the excuses of abusers are untrue and unfair; therefore she unequivocally states that, "[t]here is no excuse for abuse" (1997:23).

Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1973) is also embedded with some scenes that illustrate violence. In the play, it comes to bear how religion can stir up violence in a home. Chume, a devoted follower of Jero, a charlatan prophet, is instructed by Jero to go and beat up his own wife, Amope. Chume carries out Jero's words without questioning him because he (Chume) has always desired to fight Amope but for Jero's numerous counsels. Later, the audience as well as Chume learn that Jero owes Amope and hence wanted to get rid of Amope, his creditor. These scenarios in the play point out clearly how religious leaders sometimes contribute to domestic violence in the society.

Some incidents of domestic violence, though narrative, are also portrayed in Mawugbe's *In the Chest of a Woman* (2008). This is seen when Nana Yaa Kyeretwie recounts her violent actions to her child, Owusu; in her own words, she had to "poison your [Owusu's] father" and "[t]he midwife who stood by my bed when I was in labour [...] had to lose her tongue" in order not to let the world hear about the true gender of Owusu.

Tesfai's *The Other War* (1999), though deals with the liberation struggle of Eritreans, focuses more on a "war away from the military front, where domestic life becomes another kind of

front line, hence ‘the other war’ ” (Banham and Plastow xxiv). Consequently, *The Other War* was set in a home that was not devoid of incidents of domestic violence. For instance, the play reveals that Astier suffered physical abuse in a forced marriage with Zecharias, a drunkard who never stopped beating her. She remarries a man who is very loving but in the end she is physically abused again. These events in the play comprehensively illustrate the pains women endure at the hands of abusive spouses.

To sum up, the pervasive nature of domestic violence in society is seen as some African playwrights highlight violent incidents in their plays. Thematically, except for Dangarembga’s *She No Longer Weeps* and to an extent Osofisan’s *Altine’s Wrath* that deal with domestic violence in relationships, the other plays discussed in this section treat domestic violence as a part of an overriding theme. This means that more African plays with domestic violence as its thematic concern have to be written in order to challenge society about domestic violence. Again, all the aforementioned plays are seemingly silent on the signals that foreshadow domestic violence. This research will therefore come out with a play that will incorporate that aspect of domestic violence. Published plays that speak on domestic violence in Ghana are not many. Therefore, the writing of a play at the end of this study will add up to the other plays and thus fill this vacuum.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Domestic violence is arguably one of the menacing social issues confronting the world today. The complex nature of domestic violence has brought about many theories and perspectives that aim at explaining its causes. Such theories include socio-cultural perspectives, feminist explanations, ecological theory, exchange theory and many others.

In response to the growing intolerance of domestic violence across the world, many researchers from diverse academic fields have come out with a number of findings that ultimately seek to stall this societal menace. In Ghana, despite the fervent interventional programmes offered to the populace by the constitution, Police, CHRAJ, media and NGOs, domestic violence still prevails.

Through plays, theatre also engages in domestic violence discourse. In some Ghanaian plays, domestic violence has been treated but in many plays, it is not the thematic preoccupation of the playwright. However, this research will result in writing a play that is fixated on discussing domestic violence between couples and how to mitigate it. Hence, this study aims at contributing to efforts being made against domestic violence in Ghana through a seemingly less used but effective medium of creating awareness, drama.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research design simply refers to the procedures, guidelines or plans that researchers follow to achieve the objective of a study. Similarly, Hay (2010: 68) avers that, “thoughtful planning of research and the use of procedures to ensure that research is rigorous should be central for qualitative researchers.” Consequently, in this chapter, I will explain the methodological approach employed by this project as well as the specific data collection and analysis methods. Again, important issues relating to research challenges will also be elucidated in this chapter.

3.2 CHOOSING A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to accomplish the objectives of many research works, a methodological approach is needed. Methods simply refer to a set of techniques used for gathering and analysing data. The choice of a methodological approach largely depends on the aims and objectives of the research. The two major classifications of methods are the qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on the objectives of this research, the qualitative method was preferred since it presented to me the opportunity to be able to access information through interview with key stakeholders. Such interviews gave me the chance to gather in-depth knowledge and experiences from the stakeholders, victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence. The information collected through interviews is significant and lies at the heart of this research since it served as a framework on which the play about domestic violence, *Sorry Ever After*, was written. Again, compared to the quantitative, the qualitative method is flexible and effective for getting deeper understanding of specific situations and also gives room for observation as well (Wimmer and Dominick 2006:49).

3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The research adopted the purposive non-random sampling technique. According to May (2001:95) in *Social Research: issues, methods and process*, purposive sampling method is a type of sampling procedure whereby the people to be surveyed are selected based on a known characteristic that is vital to the research. Thus, I chose this sampling technique because it allowed me to select interviewees based on certain criteria that address the objective and problem of the study. The criteria are two namely, people or institutions whose activities concern fighting domestic violence and accessibility to first-hand information from victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Consequently, the sample comprised police officers, religious leaders, marriage counsellors and workers from Non-Governmental Organisations that are working at mitigating domestic violence, to gain understanding on the different ways and strategies used in curbing domestic violence in Ghana. I had the chance to find out from them the causes and cycle of domestic violence. I chose this sample because the aforementioned are major interested parties preoccupied with ending domestic violence in the country. As this research aims at complementing efforts at mitigating domestic violence incidents, it is important to get in touch with these stakeholders that are already in that field. Further, through the Domestic Victims' and Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, I had the rare opportunity of listening to experiences of victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence. This helped in shaping the story of the play which has to be close to reality as possible in order to appeal to its audience. Moreover, the application of the criteria ensured that stakeholders selected for interview had remarkable knowledge about domestic violence in Ghana.

3.4 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Primary data are the pieces of relevant information solicited directly from respondents, usually through interviews and/or questionnaires, for a particular research. Regarding this research, I used unstructured interviews and observation methods as instruments for collection of primary data.

3.4.1 Unstructured Interviews

I employed the unstructured interview method because it leads to a deep understanding and appreciation of the activities of stakeholders since the line of questioning was in context with the main themes of the research. Some questions raised in the interview guide included the definition, causes and effects of domestic violence on direct victims/survivors and perpetrators. I worked with this data collection procedure because it presents an opportunity for more fluid interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. Again, this method gave room for me to ask further questions based on the answer of the respondent. Thus, the follow up questions, which were obviously not in the interview guide⁴ helped me to better comprehend the issues under discussion. Though typically time consuming, this technique gave me the detailed information needed for this research. Transcriptions of the interviews were subsequently done after the interviews had been conducted.

3.4.2 Observation Method

Observation method is used by researchers when they want to capture the minutest details regarding a phenomenon. Hay postulates that, “[t]he key to taking observation seriously is being attentive to detail as well as acknowledging our position as researchers” (2010:257). This means that observation serves as a platform in identifying certain intrinsic information that may not have been captured through interviews. The observation method was engaged to take notice of the demeanour of domestic violence victims/survivors and perpetrators as well

⁴ Appendix B

as how incidents of domestic violence are handled. It was important to take notice of these because in writing the play about domestic violence, I have to depict life as close to reality as possible. The observation method was particularly useful at the DOVVU office at the Tema Regional Police Headquarters.

3.5 SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data collection is a process that begins upon inception of the study problem and this continues until the end of the study. Secondary data involves reading, analysing and recording information relevant to the study from published and unpublished books, government reports, journals. The internet also played a crucial role by providing information that is unavailable in books.

In carrying out this research, the primary data was complemented with documents, statistics and records on incidents of domestic violence. Specifically, documents comprising reports on domestic violence in scholarly articles and dailies, statistics of domestic violence from the Ghana Police Service and other important data were gathered.

Secondary data did not only act as a supplementary to primary data, but also gave me more insight about the different aspects of issues linked to the topic under investigation.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Data analysis primarily involves the procedures used to interpret the information received so as to answer the research questions. As indicated earlier, data gathered in this research is mainly qualitative in providing a deeper understanding of domestic violence incidents in Ghana. Therefore, I familiarised myself with the data by reading the material and listening to audio tapes to fully grasp the whole interview. Again, data was examined by looking for key words, ideas, similarities, consistencies and differences in the respondents' views.

The data collected for this research were analysed and served as the basis for writing the play *Sorry Ever After*. The play was also examined especially to point out the salient issues that depict domestic violence and how such incidents were mitigated.

3.7 PLAY CREATION PROCESS AND PLAY READING SESSION

Though one cannot begrudge the fact that plays are written based on inspiration, fiction, social realities, history, among others, it must be noted that other elements contribute to the final script. These other elements considered by the playwright when writing plays include the prospective audience, use of language, setting, thematic concern, subject matter, characters and many more (N.A *Writer's Solution* 1997:176,182,183). Thus, in writing the play for this project, I paid attention to many of these essential facets in writing plays.

As the aim of this play is to depict, as closely as possible, the incidents of domestic violence in reality, I wanted to observe people who had lived or are living through this bitter experience, domestic violence. To accomplish this quest, I had to use the observation method of collecting data. Again, in order to have a truly honest and less exaggerated account of domestic violence incidents from victims/survivors and perpetrators, I decided to go to a police station. Due to proximity, monetary and time restraints, I chose to be at the DOVVSU office of the Tema Regional Police Headquarters.

For a month, I had the privilege of being attached to the DOVVSU office so as to observe the cases that were being reported. I sat in the room that was the first point of call for any victim/survivor and perpetrator of domestic violence. Since I concealed my identity as a researcher, and as such a civilian, the people who came reported their ordeal as they would to any other police officer. Thus, I had unadulterated information about domestic violence incidents. It is worthy to note that I was in the room with a DOVVSU officer who later crosschecked the information I wrote including the play written.

Ethically, it is wrong for a researcher not to reveal his/her identity and objective for which he/she is seeking information from a person. Thus, though I gathered genuine stories of domestic violence from victims/survivors and perpetrators, it would be unethical to use the exact information received for writing my play. This is because the victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence who turned up at the DOVVSU office did not know my real identity and for what purpose I wanted to use their stories about domestic violence. With this ethical consideration in mind, and in order not to breach it, I created a fictitious story out of the many factual accounts of domestic violence incidents I got for my play. Thus, the storyline of the play for this project which aims at mitigating domestic violence is entirely fictitious.

Apart from the many stories of violence that I heard at the DOVVSU office, I also had extra harrowing descriptions of domestic violence happenings from the marriage counsellors I interviewed. All these data gathered informed the development of a storyline.

The storyline is divided into scenes and the actions to take place in each of the scenes are described in detail. Characters in each of the scenes were listed and the working title (*Sorry Ever After*) was chosen at this point. Again, names were given to the characters at this stage so that I could think of them as a person. The names of the characters either reflected their nature or served as an irony of their actions.

Next, I wrote the characteristics of each of the characters in the play. This helped me to ensure that the characters were distinct from each other and portrayed the behaviours of people in society. I also began to treat and think about the characters as different individuals living in a world that is similar to mine because of their characterisations. The characterisation of the characters comprised their age, social background, employment status, ambitions, and so forth.

The first draft of the play, *Sorry Ever After*, was ready for reading after almost two months of intensive writing. I gave it out to my colleagues for criticisms before presenting it for play reading on the 2nd of April 2014.

I had the opportunity of rehearsing with my cast for two days before the play reading session. I used the closed auditioning method of casting to select the cast due to time constraints. Although I did not use the open audition to select my cast, I also restrained myself from choosing my cast at will. Rather, I chose my cast based on their roles in previous productions that I have personally witnessed. Thus, the cast were people who were well vexed in play performances and as such needed little instructions as to how to get into their roles and characters.

3.7.1 Plot Summary of the Play *Sorry Ever After*

In the compound house of Auntie Mary live five tenants – Prudence (an independent woman who once had a violent husband), Yaa and Kwame (a married couple) and Vanessa and Bright (another couple). Yaa insults Kwame, her husband, at will and orders him to do all the house chores. The situation grows worse to the extent that Kwame is called “Kotobonko” (meaning “a man who acts like a woman”) by almost all the tenants in the house. Since Yaa is fending for Kwame, who is unemployed, she sees nothing wrong with how she treats him. Vanessa and Bright are not in a healthy and happy relationship either. Bright maltreats Vanessa all because she lied to him that she was pregnant in order to get him to marry her. But, five years into the marriage, there is no child hence Bright uses this as his reason for beating up Vanessa. Vanessa accommodates Bright’s actions because she thinks she deserves it. Prudence tries to talk Vanessa into reporting Bright to the police but Vanessa would not listen. Hence, Prudence gives her a complimentary card of a police man who is her friend. Though not married and living a somewhat promiscuous life, Prudence is able to help

Kwame fix his marital problem. Since she is well connected, one of her guys offers employment to Kwame. Yaa's attitude dramatically changes towards Kwame when she learns that her husband will soon be earning huge salary. She pleads for forgiveness and after a little hesitation, Kwame accepts her pleas. For Auntie Mary, she is always in heated argument with her tenants. She is never pleased with how her tenants maintain the house so she never ceases to quarrel and insult. Vanessa, having sustained a head injury towards the end of the play, now realises the truth in Prudence's countless advice. Therefore, she calls the police and for once, Bright is frightened and does not know where to hide when the sirens are heard.

3.7.2 Play Reading Discussion

Play reading is always an important step that has to be carried out by playwrights because it opens up their play to a number of people for criticisms that will lead to improving your work. Again, the playwright will also be able to determine whether his play is a full-length play or a one act play depending on the time duration spent during the play reading session. Additionally, play reading sessions for graduate playwriting students are the time when experts in the field of theatre (especially lecturers in the Theatre Department) gather to help the student with invaluable suggestions that will make the play fit and ready for audience consumption.

The play reading lasted for about an hour and a quarter. In attendance were the cast, my supervisors, a couple of lecturers, and colleague students. Discussions followed immediately after the play reading. The discussion brought out certain details and lapses that were missing in the play. It was suggested that I build on the characterisation of the characters and heighten the climax as well. Again, I was made aware of some typing errors and misuse of the English language. I was also advised to make a glossary of all the Twi expressions I used in the play. Finally, it was put forward that I rework the ending of the play and also try to intersect the seemingly parallel plots.

I found all these suggestions beneficial since it helped me to really bring out the essence of the play, which is mitigating domestic violence. Nonetheless, I did not include the suggestion about some missing popular actors of domestic violence such as children being abused by parents or guardians. This was because it was not a part of the objectives of this project. Besides, one of the objectives of this project was to focus on violence between couples. Moreover, and most importantly, I did not want to duplicate a field that has already been explored thoroughly in *Murder of a Surgical Bone*, a play by Faustina Brew which highlights the effects of domestic violence on children.

I benefitted from the comments shared since the final play captured most of the suggestions given. Compared to the draft play I read at the play reading session, I must confess that the suggestions have really enriched my play since characters are now better developed, the plot is much stronger than before and the central message about mitigating domestic violence is also clear.

3.8 RESEARCH CHALLENGES

This project had its own challenges when I carried out my methodological approach. First, I was faced with a problem of not being able to meet some stakeholders I planned interviewing due to the busy schedule of the interviewee. More so, since I had to work within a time frame to present this project, I could not reschedule the interview date. Further, I was faced with the challenge of who to choose for my sample, since I used the purposive non-random sampling technique. Lastly, the untimely death of my father, the financier of this project, hindered my ability to fully carry out all measures planned.

3.9 CONCLUSION

The qualitative research method was employed for this project and the purposive non-random sampling technique was also used. Other methods I engaged to gather primary data were unstructured interview and observation. The data analysis is largely qualitative in nature and some challenges I faced were also surmounted. The project, although limited by scope, will serve as a significant guide for future researchers on domestic violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLAY ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the issues that emerged in the play *Sorry Ever After* vis-à-vis data gathered through primary and secondary sources. Issues of violence as well as how they were mitigated in the play are also discussed. Again, the play *Sorry Ever After* will be examined to bring out how the title of the play, setting, characters and form collectively reflect the objective of this project.

4.2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PRESENT IN *Sorry Ever After*

This section examines the salient issues of domestic violence as illustrated in *Sorry Ever After*. It also discusses the ways that domestic violence was mitigated in the play.

4.2.1 The Vicious Cycle of Domestic Violence

As discussed in chapter two, it is clear that domestic violence is a cycle; the first stage is minor battering incidents, the second phase battering intensifies and the last stage is when the abuser shows remorse in order to win back the love of the victim. The cycle repeats itself since the abuser's remorse is pretence (Benokraitis 1996; Kinstlinger-Bruhn 1997). In the play, *Sorry Ever After* this cycle of domestic violence is portrayed through the characters Bright and Vanessa (married couples). From the start of the play, Vanessa appears with a "small plaster just above her left eye brow" (Sc.1:2). Although she readily denies that it is the result of her husband beating her, audience get to know the truth in the last scene. Thus, the first stage of minor battering has been established.

The second phase of the domestic violence cycle where the victim experiences intensified battering is also manifested in the second scene of the play. At this point, Vanessa is mercilessly battered by Bright because dinner is not set. When Vanessa tries to explain, Bright gets irritated and that is when he physically abuses her. This is captured in the following lines:

Vanessa: Let me get you a table. The food is almost ready.

Bright: Almost?

Vanessa: (*frustrated*) Kwesi, you're impossible!

Bright: Am I not demanding for something that is rightly due me as a husband? A good wife should know the need of her husband at every point in time.

Vanessa: And a good husband should at least call his wife when he's coming home earlier than the usual time.

Bright: Did you just insult me? Did you? (*He slaps Vanessa and she falls*) I should slap you twice for saying that. You're becoming too outspoken for my liking. Have you been talking to people I don't know? Have you? (*The now sobbing Vanessa gestures in the negative.*) You better be right. (*Pause*) Or, was it that whore, Prudence?

Vanessa: She's done nothing yet.

Bright: I said it. This morning it was Yaa and Kwame, now it is us. Why can't people in this house mind their own business? So she is planning to ruin our marriage too eh?

Vanessa: Not that.

Bright: Then what did she say? ... TELL ME.

Vanessa: Nothing important.

Bright slaps Vanessa again and her sobs grow louder. He even takes off one of Vanessa's slippers and uses it to beat her up. (Sc. 2:13)

From the above, it is obvious that Vanessa is going to suffer a bigger wound than just the plaster she was wearing in the first scene.

The third stage of the domestic violence cycle is also portrayed in the second scene of the play when Bright shows remorse for what he has done. This is emphasised in the following lines:

Bright: Listen, I said I'm sorry and I mean it. I am terribly sorry for what I did. Please forgive me. (*Pause*) Pleeese. (*After a while, Vanessa smiles and hugs him to show reconciliation.*)

It is clear from the above that Vanessa falls to the plea of Bright and forgives him. In order to fully win back her love, Bright further invites Vanessa to a dinner at a restaurant where she has been dying to go since their first wedding anniversary.

The domestic violence cycle restarts in the third scene where Bright beats and rapes Vanessa. So intense was the battery that Vanessa sustains a head injury since she is seen with “*bondage around her head*” at the beginning of the final scene of the play (Sc. 4:30). The play, however, does not end without the cycle ending. Unlike the second scene where Bright had his way by going through the third stage of the domestic violence cycle, this time around it does not get there. Vanessa realises she has lived in the abusive marriage hoping Bright will change. Vanessa says:

For over five years, I convinced myself that I could tolerate, if not change, this abusive attitude of yours. But now I realise the truth in the saying that man cannot change another man. (Sc. 4:37)

This dawn of realisation is what piqued Vanessa to ultimately call Sammy, a policeman who is the friend of Prudence. Consequently, when the siren of the police car is heard at the final moments of the play, Bright starts to find a hiding place knowing very well that he will be arrested for meting out such abuses to Vanessa. Hence audience are made to appreciate the fact that informing the police can help end the vicious cycle of domestic violence.

4.2.2 Types of Domestic Violence Illustrated in *Sorry Ever After*

The action of the play reveals some three types of domestic violence; physical abuse, sexual abuse and verbal/emotional/psychological abuse. Since the research aims at spurring its audience into action it is important that the audience are exposed to these types of domestic violence that they ought to identify and fight against. This section therefore discusses how these types of domestic violence are reflected in *Sorry Ever After*.

Physical abuse is defined in the Domestic Violence Act (2007) as “physical assault or use of physical force against person [...] or subjecting another person to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. This kind of violence results in the victim usually sustaining physical injuries. In the play, there are several instances where this type of domestic violence is illustrated by the actions of characters. The very first scene of the play showcases physical abuse in the action. Yaa and Prudence engage in a verbal argument that leads into a fight. This is how this physical attack is presented:

Yaa: Is it your business?

Prudence: Shameless woman. How can you treat a man so?

Yaa: Find your own husband if you think you can treat men better than –

Kwame: It’s enough ladies. Yaa, let her be.

Yaa: Will you shut up and finish washing my hankies.

Prudence: Kwame, don’t worry. I can single-handedly manage this crazy wife of yours.

Yaa: You are the crazy one here. Leaving a room you’ve paid for and always going to sleep overnight with another man. That is crazy. You better get married.

Prudence: Now you make me laugh. With all apologies to you Kwame, Yaa your stinking marriage is enough to deter me from having one.

Yaa: God forbid. Don’t put that witch mouth of yours in my marriage. See how your evil eyes are sparkling. You can only find such sparkle in the eyes of witches.

Prudence: It is your witchcraft that is inviting women to come for your husband. Lazy wife.

Yaa slaps her and Prudence returns the slap with a bigger force. Bright, a young stout man in his mid-thirties wearing a blue overall with opened buttons, enters the compound from outside and helps Kwame to stop the fighting women. They manage to tear them apart and restrain them from fighting again.
(Sc. 1:6)

Again, the second scene exposes audience to another act of physical abuse. Bright slaps Vanessa for failing to set dinner on time. This is how it is captured:

Bright: Did you just insult me? Did you? (*He slaps Vanessa and she falls*) I should slap you twice for saying that. You’re becoming too outspoken for my liking. Have you been talking to people I don’t know? Have you? (*The now sobbing Vanessa gestures in the negative.*) You better be right. (*Pause*) Or, was it that whore, Prudence?

Vanessa: She’s done nothing yet.

Bright: I said it. This morning it was Yaa and Kwame, now it is us. Why can't people in this house mind their own business? So she is planning to ruin our marriage too *eh?*

Vanessa: Not that.

Bright: Then what did she say? ... TELL ME.

Vanessa: Nothing important.

Bright slaps Vanessa again and her sobs grow louder. He even takes off one of Vanessa's slippers and uses it to beat her up. (Sc. 2:13)

The dialogue before the violence described in the above stage directions indicates that anger precedes physical abuse; and the process of venting it out leads to physically abusing another person. In both instances, abusers were angry and chose to express their anger in a way that eventually led to domestic violence. So often, that is what happens in society. People get irritated by actions and inactions of other people thereby leading them to physical abuse others. Similarly, this is imitated by characters in *Sorry Ever After*.

Another type of domestic violence that is illustrated in the play is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse occurs when a person is forced into engaging in a sexual contact (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). In the play, this type of domestic violence is exhibited in the third scene by Bright and Vanessa:

Vanessa: After roaming, you come home drunk and you want me? Forget it.

Bright: You lie bad; whether you like it or not, it will happen.

Vanessa: Not today. After sleeping with your numerous girlfriends, you come back home and demand for what? Don't make me furious than I am. (*Vanessa struggles to get past her drunk husband but she couldn't*)

Bright: Today be today.

Vanessa: Please, let me go to chapel.

Bright: I won't keep long.

Vanessa: I'm already late.

Bright: If you had stopped arguing with me, we would have been done by now.

Vanessa: But I'm tired.

Bright: The more reason why you have to stay behind and have fun with me.

Vanessa: But I'm not in the mood.

Bright: Ok. I will let you go if you can do one thing for me.

Vanessa: What do you want done?

Bright: Just go and fix me breakfast.

Vanessa: Is that all?

Bright: I swear that is all. Let's go inside so that I eat.

Vanessa enters the room UL followed closely by Bright. Soon afterwards, there are shouts and moans from Vanessa. Stage lights alternate between high and low and finally blacks out when Vanessa screams loudest. Seconds later, after the yelling has subsided, the stage is fully lit. Bright comes out of his room, zips up and buckles his belt. He throws a shirt over his singlet-clad-thorax and exits SL. (Sc. 3:24,25)

Although Vanessa clearly expresses her disapproval in having sexual contact with Bright, the latter forces her against her will. This is comparable to the many incidents of rape that are reported at DOVVSU and put out in the media. The perceptions that people may hold as well as the economic dependence of victims of rape among other reasons make it difficult for victims to express their ordeal to others. Likewise, Vanessa after experiencing this marital rape stays in her room and nowhere in the play does she talk about the issue to other characters.

Finally, verbal, emotional or psychological abuse is also depicted in the actions of characters in *Sorry Ever After*. Verbal, emotional or psychological abuse refers to “any conduct that makes another person feel constantly unhappy, miserable, humiliated, ridiculed, afraid, jittery or depressed or to feel inadequate or worthless” (Domestic Violence Act, 2007). Many examples of conducts that make other characters unhappy, depressed or ridiculed is scattered in the action of the play. In the opening scene of the play, Auntie Mary insults and ridicules Kwame, her tenant, by calling him derogatory names such as “she-male, *kotobonku*”. In the same scene, Vanessa also uses the same derogatory name for Kwame. Prudence also suffers verbal abuse at the hands of Yaa in the first scene when the latter referred to her as “Prostitute! *Awooshia!*” Prudence replies Yaa in like fashion by calling Yaa a “Lazy cocoon”. All these insults humiliate and ridicule the character being abused and sometimes lead to other types of domestic violence such as physical abuse. For instance, when Prudence was labelled as a “Prostitute” by Yaa in scene one, it led to a fight.

All the above discussed types of domestic violence present in the *Sorry Ever After* reflect some of the incidents of domestic violence that happen in society.

4.2.3 Causes of Domestic Violence Treated in *Sorry Ever After*

The types of domestic violence raise the question of how and why it starts; that is what causes domestic violence. Many scholars as presented in chapter two have come up with many means through which domestic violence is being perpetuated. In *Sorry Ever After* some of these causes displayed by characters are examined in this section.

4.2.3.1 Societal Perceptions/ Belief

The perspectives and expectations of society go a long way to influence the lifestyle of its inhabitants. Thus, in societies where domestic violence is condoned it is very possible that conformists will continue to suffer violence in one way or the other. After reviewing related literature about societal perceptions and beliefs in the second chapter and carrying out interviews, it became apparent that incidents of domestic violence have not stopped partly because of some socio-cultural activities existing in Ghana. In the bid to mitigate domestic violence using theatre, *Sorry Ever After* does not overlook this cause of domestic violence. When Prudence advises Kwame to report his wife, Yaa, to the Police because of the verbal abuse he suffers he declines. The reason given is that, “People will say that I’m not man enough to control my wife so I had to tell the police” (Sc. 2:16). This clearly points out why some victims of abuse fail to report it to appropriate authorities for an action to be taken. Similarly, when Vanessa is challenged by Prudence to tell the police about the ordeal she is enduring in her marriage, she clearly states that, “Which marriage in these parts would survive if the wife fails to fulfil seventy percent of what society expects?” (Sc. 2:9). This statement means that society expectations are strongly linked to success or otherwise of marriages. Vanessa at a different point says, “What would people say?” in response to being

asked to inform the police about Bright's violent conduct towards her (Sc. 2:11). It is therefore natural that Vanessa endured several abuses from her husband and still tried to cover up:

Vanessa: I can't help it. Which marriage in these parts would survive if the wife fails to fulfil seventy percent of what society expects? Your in-laws will come and kick you out of your matrimonial home.

Prudence: You have some truth in what you say, but always doing society's expectations isn't a guarantee for a successful marriage.

Vanessa: If it was a guarantee in the olden days, then I believe it is now.

Prudence: Vanessa, the present is different from the olden days.

Vanessa: I don't think so.

Prudence: So, because of the society, would you allow your husband to always hit you after all you do for him?

Vanessa: He doesn't beat me.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: We just quarrel sometimes. That's all.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: Of course.

Prudence: And I guess that (*pointing to the plaster on Vanessa's face*) is a product of your rarely frequent quarrels with that domestic dictator you call a husband.

Vanessa: Oh Prudence, don't exaggerate.

Prudence: Am I? I'm just saying what I often see here in the house.

Vanessa: (*Holding the plaster across her brow*) This is only errmm... I just hit my head against errr...

Prudence: (*finishing the sentence for Vanessa*) ...against the bedpost, or is it the wall this time? Vanessa, for how long will you continue to live a lie?

Vanessa: It's not like that.

Prudence: It is definitely like that.

From the above lines, it can be established that Vanessa is conforming to what society expects of a wife; and even goes the extra length to hide evidences of her physical abuse by lying. Again, the dialogue suggests that society expectations include women being silent even when they are battered by their spouses. In the attempt to fulfil this societal expectation, Vanessa experiences several incidents of domestic violence which ultimately leads to a life threatening head injury in the last scene. Audience are thus warned of the consequences of living in the eyes of what society expects in violent relationships.

4.2.3.2 Religion/Wrong Theology

Many incidents of domestic violence happen as a result of religion or wrong theology. As expatiated in the literature review of this research, abusers and victims of domestic violence use religion in one way or the other to perpetuate many abuses. The abuser justifies his/her actions by using religion and the victim keeps mute because of religion. In *Sorry Ever After*, this wrong use of religion to condone domestic violence is exposed. In the play, Vanessa is abused by Bright on many occasions. When Prudence confronts her about it and even advices her to report to the police, she tries to hide behind the cloak of religion to justify her refusal. This is what Vanessa says: “the Lord is listening to my prayers” (Sc. 2:11). Vanessa thus commits her abuses and abuser to God in prayers and will not take any action. Prudence tries to explain to Vanessa that she cannot rely on only prayers to solve her abuse but Vanessa would not listen. However, in the final scene when the abuse became unbearable, Vanessa finally realises the need to call in the police. Bright, however, uses religion to impress on her that there is no such need. This is how it is captured in the play:

Vanessa: There is no need because I have called the Police to come and take him away.

Bright: Me? You must be crazy.

Vanessa: That is what I initially thought too. For over five years, I convinced myself that I could tolerate, if not change, this abusive attitude of yours. But now I realise the truth in the saying that man cannot change another man.

Bright: This is Prudence speaking not you. I can't believe my eyes and ears. We vowed to stay together no matter what. Don't tell me you don't remember.

Mary: She never vowed not to report you to the Police. Did she?

Bright: But –

Vanessa: No buts Kwesi. You have pushed me too hard and for too long. I have to react.

Bright: This talk sounds like serpent language to me. Have you so soon forgotten the Bible which you hold dear?

Vanessa: The Bible does not prevent us from reporting wrongdoers to the necessary authority for proper action.

From the above, Bright tries to hide behind the wedding vow (an aspect of Christian religion), but he fails to convince Vanessa. Vanessa makes him aware that the Bible does not

condone wrong doing hence she is right to report him to the police. Without the initial help of Prudence, Vanessa may not have come to realise that religion, in this case Christianity, does not support domestic violence. In the same way, we live in society where people still hide behind false explanation of certain religious acts to perpetuate domestic violence. This play calls out to those who know the right interpretation to speak up and educate others just like Prudence did in the play.

4.2.3.3 Economic dependency/ Poverty

Economic dependency is a situation where a person financially depends on another due to poverty or low income. This condition tends to fuel domestic violence because the victim of domestic violence may have to condone the abuser because s/he solely depends of the perpetrator for livelihood. The perpetrator on the other hand see no need of apologising or stopping the violence s/he is meting out to the economic dependant partner since s/he controls the finances of the abused. The instance where economic dependency is used as a “licence” or a smokescreen to perpetrate or condone domestic violence is exhibited in *Sorry Ever After* particularly by Yaa and Kwame. In the play, Yaa is the bread winner of her family because her husband, Kwame, is unemployed. Therefore Kwame rightly says that, “my wife has been the man of the house. She calls the shot in everything that should be done” (Sc. 2:17). In scene two, it is revealed that Yaa’s verbal abuses on Kwame are so widespread in the neighbourhood that she is called “Yaa *Marigyata*” (meaning a woman who is abusive to people around her). Yaa’s financial superiority over her husband gives her the edge to verbally abuse Kwame at the least provocation. These lines emphasise this point:

Prudence: (*sarcastically*) But I guess it is morally right for a wife, in fact a responsible one as you are trying to act out now, to always insult her husband and treat him like a rag because he is unemployed.

Yaa: Is it your business?

Prudence: Shameless woman. How can you treat a man so?

Yaa: Find your own husband if you think you can treat men better than – (Sc. 1:6)

It is apparent from the above conversation Kwame is subject to verbal abuse because he is unemployed. After realising this Prudence aptly suggests to Kwame that:

you have to be attractive financially. That will catch her attention so that she will start treating you as the man that you are. You have to find a job. (Sc. 2:17).

True to Prudence's words, when in scene four Kwame secures a well-paying job and thus become financially independent, Yaa dramatically changes her attitude towards him. This change in attitude does not only support the fact that Yaa was abusing Kwame because her husband was economically dependent on her; it also echoes that some incidents of abuse can be ended when the victim is financially independent from the perpetrator.

4.2.3.4 Dealing with domestic violence alone

Victims of domestic violence usually hold unto the notion that they can best fight the abuse that they suffer. Therefore they find it difficult sharing their plight to others for help. For such victims of abuses they regard domestic violence as a "private matter" that should be treated privately. In few instances where the victims are coaxed to talk about their abuse, they will insist that they are dealing with the issue their own way and thus need no help. Such an attitude places victims at a disadvantage since their own efforts to fight domestic violence are mostly unsuccessful. Therefore, victims who usually treat domestic violence as a "private matter" always find themselves being abused. Interviews and literature review discussed in this research emphasises this fact and so does the play *Sorry Ever After*. In the play, Vanessa is being abused by Bright and although Prudence offers advice she rejects it. This can be seen in the ensuing conversation:

Vanessa: I can't bear the sight of my husband behind bars.

Prudence: But he can bear the sight of you in stitches, plasters and bandages.

Vanessa: I love him very much. I don't want to hurt him by reporting him to the police.

Prudence: Truthfully speaking, do you think he loves you equally? (*There is a pause as Vanessa ponders over the question before speaking*)

Vanessa: I can't tell, but I can say he's trying.

Prudence: Then he has a long way to go.

Vanessa: He will get there one day and love me just as I do him.

Prudence: (*Heaves a sigh*) I don't see that happening anytime soon.

Vanessa: Before we moved in here, it was worse. The Lord is listening to my prayers and he's changing little by little.

Vanessa's lines suggest that she is not willing to listen to Prudence because Bright is "changing little by little" as a result of her "prayers". This suggests that Vanessa is prepared to continue doing what she thinks is the right way to end domestic violence in her marriage. She is, however, not successful with her stance in tackling the violence she is enduring hence in the last scene of the play she suffers a head injury. Consequently, it can be deduced that the play portrays that domestic violence cannot be ended when the victim opts to use his/her own method without seeking for help. Thus, dealing with domestic violence alone will worsen rather than solve the situation of the victim.

4.2.4 Mitigating Domestic Violence Incidents in *Sorry Ever After*

The injuries and other negative effects that domestic violence leave on its victims makes it imperative for society to mitigate it. As such, in *Sorry Ever After* the various incidents of domestic violence portrayed were ended in one way or the other. It is these various interventional efforts that the play seeks its audience to employ in order to help end incidents of domestic violence in society.

4.2.4.1 Friends and domestic violence

As discussed earlier, some victims of domestic violence find it difficult to share their experience with others, especially close relatives and the police. However, *Sorry Ever After* challenges audience to revert such a situation if domestic violence is to be quelled. In the play, audience see how important it is for friends to know about the abuses a victim of domestic violence is suffering. Prudence is the character that epitomises this means of fighting domestic violence in the play.

Prudence is friends with Vanessa and Kwame, two characters that are experiencing domestic violence on different levels. Whilst Vanessa is mainly being physically assaulted by her husband, Kwame is being verbally abused by his wife. Prudence made it a point to not only find out the cause of their abuse but also help them stop it. For instance, after Prudence finds out that Yaa verbally abuses Kwame because the latter is unemployed she advises Kwame to find a job. The following lines bring this out clearly:

Prudence: It sure would. First, you have to be attractive financially. That will catch her attention so that she will start treating you as the man that you are. You have to find a job. (Sc. 2:17)

Here Prudence gives Kwame an invaluable advice that will ultimately help him to be free of the constant verbal abuses he receives from Yaa. Prudence follows up her advice by linking Kwame to a friend who offers him a well-paying job. Kwame confirms this when he informs Yaa that, “I have secured a job” and “[a]ll thanks go to Prudence” (Sc. 4:33).

Regarding Vanessa, Prudence urged her to report to the Police but Vanessa will not listen. The very first instance where the audience witness such a conversation between Prudence and Vanessa ends in with the latter having a serious disagreement with the former. The ensuing dialogue throws more light on this:

Vanessa: Stop it, Prudence. You want me, Mrs. Vanessa Adwoa Betoamu, to divorce my husband? So all along this is what you’ve been driving to *eh?* Bright was right about you; you are only good at spoiling other people’s marriage. I shouldn’t have started this conversation with you. What do you know about marriage and love? If you claim you know so much then get married. Find yourself a man and stop chasing men. I love my husband with all his flaws, JUST AS HE IS! (*There is a long pause after this outburst*)

Prudence: I’m sorry for meddling in your private affairs.

Vanessa: You must be.

Prudence: I thought I was offering a helping hand.

Vanessa: Thanks but I don’t need it. (Sc. 2:12)

The above shows the stiff opposition that Prudence had to deal with so as to help stop Vanessa’s abuse. However, she was not discouraged and still managed to help Vanessa at the

least opportunity that presents itself. It is therefore not surprising that in the final scene of the play, Prudence is willing to literally fight Bright to set Vanessa free from his abuses.

All these actions exhibited by Prudence to solve domestic violence in the lives of Kwame and Vanessa in the play appeal to audience the extent to which all should endeavour to fight this vicious cycle. Like Prudence, audience are impressed to continue to help people they know that are experiencing any type of domestic violence. Even in the face of stiff opposition from the abuser or victim of domestic violence, audience can learn from Prudence's actions that when they persevere they will eventually help end the domestic violence a victim is facing. If friends of victims of domestic violence will be supportive and of immense help just as Prudence was to Kwame and Vanessa in the play, then there is the possibility of mitigating domestic violence incidents in society.

4.2.4.2 Economic Independence

Another route through which a victim of domestic violence can liberate him/herself is by becoming economic independent. That is, the victim is gainfully employed thus there is not the need to economically depend on the abusing partner in order to make a living. Literature discussed in this research as well as by several researchers point to the fact that abusers who control the finances of the victim usually have the tendency to perpetuate domestic violence. *Sorry Ever After* therefore suggests to victims of domestic violence to get employed so as to be able to speak up and stop the violence they are subjected to.

In the play, Kwame typified the various survivors of domestic violence who are experiencing domestic violence and can do little to stop the situation because they are financially dependent on the abuser. In *Sorry Ever After*, Kwame suffers abuse from Yaa due to his unemployment status. This is emphasised in the following lines:

Prudence: (*sarcastically*) But I guess it is morally right for a wife, in fact a responsible one as you are trying to act out now, to always insult her husband and treat him like a rag because he is unemployed.

Yaa: Is it your business?

Prudence: Shameless woman. How can you treat a man so?

Yaa: Find your own husband if you think you can treat men better than – (Sc. 1:6)

From the above, it is apparent that Yaa treats Kwame unfairly because he has not secured a job. Throughout the play, Yaa insults him at the least provocation and even denies him sex. It was not until the final scene when Yaa learns that Kwame had landed a job that she dramatically stopped her verbal abuses. The dialogue below captures this:

Yaa: *(There is a total change of mood)* Oh I see. *(Her fingers roam through her hair as if searching for something in her hair)* Ermmm....ermmm... Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: *(Still scratching her hair)* Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: *(Impatient)* Out with it Yaa. What do you want to say?

Yaa: Ermm...Kwame... you are looking great today. *(Kwame looks at Prudence and the two characters share a smile. Unashamed and unperturbed, Yaa continues)* In fact you are looking awesome and rich. What will you eat tonight? Just say anything and it shall be done. I am at your service.

Kwame: I'm fine. (Sc. 4.33, 34)

This turn-around of events will certainly not have happened without Kwame gaining employment. That is, the abuse could not have stopped if Kwame had remained unemployed. Thus, the play connects economic independence to

4.2.4.3 Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU)

The Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police service is a division that can help solve domestic violence issues in domestic relationships. DOVVSU boasts police officers who have been specially trained to handle domestic violence cases in Ghana. DOVVSU offers counselling services for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and has also been mandated by law to arrest and arraign perpetrators who violate the Domestic Violence Act. With these activities, DOVVSU is better positioned to mitigate domestic violence by helping victims of abuse. As such, in the play Prudence alerts Vanessa of the expertise of DOVVSU to handle her domestic violence incident. This is how she says

it, “You must hand him over to the police. They are experts in dealing with such uncaring men” (Sc. 2:10). Here Prudence makes it clear to Vanessa as well as the audience that the police are “experts” in dealing with domestic violence.

Although Vanessa does not immediately listen to this advice, she informs the police at the last scene of the play when she had suffered a head injury. This important act by Vanessa stops the ordeal she is suffering since Bright, her abuser, begins to run away when he hears the police siren. This is how it is captured in the stage directions:

He attempts throwing the hot water on Vanessa, but the sirens of the police are heard almost immediately. Out of panic, Bright stops his act and begins running up and down in search of a hiding place (Sc. 4.39).

From the above, it can be deduced that Bright is full of fright because he knows that the Police will ensure that justice takes its place. Again, the knowledge that the Police are in to arrest him for constantly abusing his wife stops Bright from carrying out one last attack, which is “*throwing the hot water on Vanessa*”. This clearly suggests that perpetrators of domestic violence must be reported to the Police, specifically DOVVSU, if victims/survivors are to free themselves from abuse.

4.3 PLAY ANALYSIS

Play analysis involves deconstructing a play into its constituent elements in order to interpret and obtain a deeper appreciation of the play (Ejeke, 2013:466). With this as the focus, I will analyse the project play *Sorry Ever After* in light of the objectives of this project; That is analysing the causes and effects of domestic violence emerging from the play as well as how the play help to mitigate the problem of domestic violence. I will examine only the elements closely connected to the aim of this project but not all elements embedded in the play. The elements to be discussed therefore include the title of the play, setting, characterisation and form.

4.3.1 Choosing a title for the play

The title of every play deserves to be well thought of by the playwright because it is the first word, phrase or sentence that communicates the message (not always the central message) the entire play seeks to project. For instance, Ama Ataa Aidoo's *Dilemma of a Ghost* aptly captures the essence of the play since the play discussed Ato's perplexity in choosing either the Western or traditional culture. Likewise, I chose to use the title *Sorry Ever After* for the reason that my play seeks to deal with violence in marital relationships. In the Christian fashion, the nuptial knot is usually tied when the spouses exchange vows before a priest and a congregation of witnesses. The marriage vow charges the couple to love and stay faithful to each in both good and bad times. The marriage ceremony thus ends with merry making and it seems the perception of many is that a life of unending happiness has begun for the bride and groom. Observations I made from a number of wedding ceremonies I attended informed me that people frequently believe the wedded couple will live "happily ever after". Hence, the title of my play contrasts not necessarily the literal word "happily", but the view that a married life is always blissful. From this point of view, the title therefore seeks to draw attention to the fact that sometimes one's wishes, hopes and aspirations after marriage may be that of bitterness, pain and regret; consequently, the person being "sorry ever after".

4.3.2 Setting

To comprehend the actions and inactions of characters in a play, it is necessary to know the background where the drama is set. This is because the setting of a play will not only point out the location where the play transpires but will also enlighten an audience about the existing traditions and practices associated with the play's milieu. Setting can be explained as the time and place where an action or event in a play occurs. The features that determine the setting of a play includes geographical location, language, costume and names of characters.

Regarding the geographical locale, there is the larger setting and the immediate setting; where the larger setting refers to an area where the play takes place (for instance a city or country) and the immediate setting refers to the specific place where the action of the play is carried out (for instance a sitting room, kitchen or bedroom).

Sorry Ever After is a play set somewhere in Ghana. This is because the play explicitly states that the events in the play happens “somewhere in Ghana”. The immediate setting of the play, however, is the compound house of Auntie Mary. As the play indicates, “[t]he action of the play takes place in the compound house of Auntie Mary”. Thus, unity of place, a Greek theatre convention, is employed.

The time period (in terms of era or years as well as days and hours of the day) also adds to the setting of the play. The time of the play *Sorry Ever After* is the present. As a result, the environment of the play depicts closely what exist in the real world of today but not of years past. For instance, the petty squabbles, disputes and, sometimes, fights that plague people who live in compound houses is demonstrated by the characters in *Sorry Ever After*. The excerpt below illustrates this point:

Yaa: (*tapping her husband on the shoulder*) *Awɔshia* is home at last. (*Moving away from Kwame*) Some women should learn to sleep in their own rooms.

Prudence: (*sharply*) Yaa, is it me you talking to like that?

Yaa: (*moves towards Prudence but stops at C.S*) Prudence, Prudence, did I mention *that your name* when I spoke?

Prudence: (*meeting Yaa wherever Yaa is on stage to create a face to face stance*) Yaa I don't want trouble today. I'm not your husband to tolerate such nonsense from you.

Yaa: If you are not guilty of *awɔshia*, then keep quiet. It is that simple.

Prudence: (*She changes position with Yaa in order to effectively address Kwame*) Kwame, you better discipline that wife of yours, else I will teach her her place in this house.

Yaa: Women like you must be publicly shamed for spending nights with men you're not married to. That's immoral.

Prudence: (*sarcastically*) But I guess it is morally right for a wife, in fact a responsible one as you are trying to act out now, to always insult her husband and treat him like a rag because he is unemployed.

Yaa: Is it your business?

Prudence: Shameless woman. How can you treat a man so?

Yaa: Find your own husband if you think you can treat men better than –

Kwame: It's enough ladies. Yaa, let her be.

Yaa: Will you shut up and finish washing my hankies.

Prudence: Kwame, don't worry. I can single-handedly manage this crazy wife of yours.

Yaa: You are the crazy one here. Leaving a room you've paid for and always going to sleep overnight with another man. That is crazy. You better get married.

Prudence: Now you make me laugh. With all apologies to you Kwame, Yaa your stinking marriage is enough to deter me from having one.

Yaa: God forbid. Don't put that witch mouth of yours in my marriage. See how your evil eyes are sparkling. You can only find such sparkle in the eyes of witches.

Prudence: It is your witchcraft that is inviting women to come for your husband. Lazy wife.

Yaa slaps her and Prudence returns the slap with a bigger force. Bright, a young stout man in his mid-thirties wearing a blue overall with opened buttons, enters the compound from outside and helps Kwame to stop the fighting women. They manage to separate and restrain them from fighting again (Sc. 1:5, 6).

From the above excerpt in the play, Yaa insults Prudence and this leads to a fight. This scenario is sometimes associated with people living in compound houses in Ghana. Thus, the Ghanaian audience seeing this scene will identify with it since it portrays their very environment.

Unlike the classical Greek plays that made use of unity of time, *Sorry Ever After* does not. The story of the play spans over several days.

4.3.3 Characterisation

Characterisation is the process through which the “role and nature of [...] each character in a play” is revealed. (Owusu and Asante 2005:71). According to an internet source, the nature of characters is known to the audience in the following ways:

1. What the character says about himself/herself.
2. What other characters say about that character.
3. What the playwright says about the character.
4. What the character does.

5. What the character says about other characters. (readwritethink)

Sorry Ever After is made up of six characters namely, Auntie Mary, Kwame, Yaa, Vanessa, Bright and Prudence. The characters move the plot of the play since their behaviour results in the actions that propel the story. As a result, the play can be better understood through characterisation and dialogue.

Auntie Mary

Auntie Mary is “*an elderly woman in her late fifties*”. She is the landlady of the compound house. This attribute is explicitly spelt out in the stage directions of the opening scene of the play, “*The action of the play takes place in the compound house of Auntie Mary*”. This means that from the very beginning the play provides information that Auntie Mary owns the compound house where the events of the play are unfolding. Besides the playwright informing audience, the other characters in the play also refers to Auntie Mary as the landlady of the house. The extract from the play below lends credence to this:

Kwame: Have you misplaced the time table for scrubbing the bathroom?

Mary: What do you mean?

Kwame: Exactly what I said *efiewura*. You have to check the time table to be sure.

Mary: It must be her. It’s been a while since I saw her cleaning the bathroom.
(Sc. 1. 2)

The conversation above shows Kwame challenging Auntie Mary to cross check and be certain that he is not responsible for scrubbing the bathroom. In the course of the dialogue, Kwame calls Auntie Mary “*efiewura*”, an Akan word which means “landlady/landlord”. Apart from Kwame, the other tenants in the house also occasionally call Auntie Mary “*efiewura*” in various parts of the play. All these point audience to the role of Auntie Mary in the play.

Auntie Mary’s role as the landlady of the house gives her the opportunity to interact with all the other characters yet, most often than not, these interactions lead to verbal abuse; thus

highlighting an aspect of domestic violence in the play. One such incident between Auntie Mary and a tenant can be seen below:

Kwame: (*jokingly*) Eeeei Auntie Mary, greetings don't kill.

Mary: (*She stops humming and places down her bucket slowly*) I didn't hear you well Kwame. What did you say over there?

Kwame: Are you saying you didn't see me here when passing by?

Mary: How could I? I couldn't distinguish between the heap of dirty clothes and your dressing.

Kwame: What!?!

Mary: Kwame, did you expect me to be smiling like a cow to you after what your wife did to me yesterday?

Kwame: But I apologised on her behalf.

Mary: I don't blame you. [...]Your own wife has turned you into a she-male, *kotobonku*. (Sc. 1.1)

The excerpt shows how Auntie Mary wasted no time to rain insults on Kwame when the latter wanted to strike a conversation with her. Hence, the opening action in the play plunges the audience into the world of domestic violence.

Auntie Mary is also portrayed as a Christian whose actions leave a lot to be desired in the play. In the first scene of the play, the stage direction describes Auntie Mary humming “*a gospel tune*”. Again, in the third scene, Auntie Mary is ready to go to chapel and rehearsing the song she would be singing at church. This is how the play captures it in the stage directions: “[...] *Auntie Mary is singing from inside her room [...] joyous praises to God*” (Sc. 3.20). In spite of her overtly Christian exhibition through singing, Auntie Mary is almost always at the centre of every controversy that brews in the house. And all these controversies display pieces of domestic violence incidents. For instance, in Scene Three, Yaa and Kwame throw words at each other because Auntie Mary insists that they fill her water drum before they leave for church.

Moreover, Auntie Mary's ability to irritate other characters in the play results in verbal abuse, an aspect of domestic violence. The extract from the third scene of the play buttresses this point:

Yaa: I used to be part of the school choir.

Mary: In fact, *Awurade* you are very merciful. No wonder you are up there and we are down here. Why do bad people have good things?

Yaa: (*Surprised*) Oh Auntie Mary.

Mary: Don't take it personal. I am not talking about you.

Yaa: You can say that to a child.

Mary: Well, I said bad people so if you think you are one of them then that is your own *palava*.

Yaa: I'm disappointed that a woman of your age can talk like this to someone who can be your child.

Mary: *Eii*, how dare you insult me?

Yaa: You've seen nothing yet.

Mary: (*warning Yaa by pointing and shaking a finger at her*) Yaa! Yaa!

Yaa: How does it feel to have a dose of your own medicine?

Mary: (*Ignores Yaa's question*) Who is supposed to sweep this place? (*Yaa looks around as if trying to find out if another person is behind her*) It is you I'm talking to.

Yaa: And you expect me to answer?

Mary: Don't talk to me like that. Don't you know that the Bible and custom demand that you respect the elderly?

Yaa: And what is expected of the elderly? ... Rude behaviour?

Mary: *Herr Yaa!*

Yaa: I'm paying you back with interest. (*She sucks her teeth and enters her room UR*)

Mary: Is it me Yaa is talking to like that? (*Shouting in front of Yaa's door*) Yaa, if it was not for this Bible *paa*, I would teach you a lesson that you'd never forget. Bloody fool! Who do you take me for? If you don't know how to talk then don't talk to me. Swine. Are you my co-equal? (*Kwame opens the door UR and his clothing shows his readiness to go to church.*) (Sc. 3.20-21)

In the above dialogue, Mary irritates Yaa when she sarcastically labels her as a bad person who has been endowed with a good voice. This ends up with the two characters (Auntie Mary and Yaa) abusing themselves verbally with words such as "Bloody fool!", and "Swine".

Despite her insulting and irritable nature, Auntie Mary, in the last scene of the play, is seen offering advice to Bright and Vanessa over their marital problems.

Mary: The fights and quarrels in this house are up to here (*indicating her neck*) and I can't take it any longer. I know I have my own flaws but I think time is ripe to put things straight to you all. [...] (*To Bright and Vanessa*) Are you the only married people in this neighbourhood? And will you be the first or last to experience marital problems? Aren't you mature enough to deal with your problems without causing harm and pain to each other? (Sc. 4.36)

This clearly shows that Auntie Mary breaks away from her usual abusive nature and counsels Vanessa and Bright to be wise in dealing with their marital problems. Therefore, Auntie Mary is a character who exhibited both bad and good traits which exposed domestic violence incidents in the play.

Kwame

Kwame is the husband of Yaa. In the play, readers realise that when Kwame was gainfully employed, he maltreated Yaa. Hence, in the first scene, Yaa retorts that, “Am I treating you any different from how you treated me when I was only a housewife?” (Sc. 1.5). Yaa uses this question to shut Kwame up when he complains that she does nothing in the house. Kwame pleads with Yaa to “forget about the past so that [they] can forge ahead”, but Yaa would have none of that. This gives readers a clue that Kwame had a history with Yaa that was not pleasant.

Kwame is unemployed and thus takes up all the house chores that Yaa is responsible for. In fact, Prudence in scene one notes that Yaa treats his husband “like a rag because he is unemployed” (Sc. 1.5). Kwame declares his unemployment status plainly in a conversation with Prudence in scene two when he intimates that, “I was given the sack” (Sc. 2.17). Regarding the chores Kwame does, we see countless instances in the play. For example, in scene one, Kwame scrubs the bathroom because it is his wife (Yaa) who is supposed to do it and also washes the dirty clothes belonging to Yaa and himself. This is how the playwright puts it in the stage directions of the play, “*Kwame, a young man in his mid-thirties, who has been washing a heap of dirty clothes in front of his door*” (Sc. 1.1). Also, in the second scene of the play, we see Kwame setting up a table for Yaa’s supper. This is how it reads in the stage directions provided, “*Kwame enters stage from his room [...] with a table and a bowl and pays no attention to the fighting couple. He is moving in and out of his room and bringing out all that is needed in setting up supper*” (Sc. 2.13). All these actions by Kwame

show his submissiveness to his wife. However, this seemingly docile attitude towards Yaa's orders earns Kwame the derogatory name "*Kotobonku*", which literally means "man-woman" or someone who is less of a man. Thus Kwame becomes an unfortunate victim of domestic violence (specifically verbal abuse) in the play. Displeased with being verbally abused, Kwame almost fights Bright when the latter calls him "*Kotobonku*" in scene three.

Kwame realises his faults and marital problems and was ready to accept help in order to work things out smoothly. This is captured in scene two when Prudence and Kwame plan how to work out Kwame's various challenges.

Prudence: That's exactly what you should do with your numerous problems. Report Yaa to the police.

Kwame: Well I can, but I don't want to be the talk of town. People will say that I'm not man enough to control my wife so I had to tell the police.

Prudence: (*laughs*) Whether you go to report or not, people in this neighbourhood know you as Kwame *Odwan* and your wife as Yaa *Marigyata*.

Kwame: (*clenching his fist*) When I hear such news, it makes the beast in me rise up. I have to discipline Yaa one of these days.

Prudence: Please don't go and vent your anger on her. What has she done? People have eyes and they see what is happening.

Kwame: One of these days, I'll put her in her place. Vanessa will even be better off when I start.

Prudence: Exercise a little more patience.

Kwame: For how long? Had it not been you, I would have thrown her out of my room. I rented this place with my own money.

Prudence: And she has been taking care of you since you lost your job.

Kwame: I've had enough.

Prudence: Just keep your cool. I've been thinking about how you can change her and I came up with a plan that will do the trick for you. (*She whispers into Kwame's ears*)

Kwame: Are you sure this will work?

Prudence: It always works.

Kwame: If only she loves me.

Prudence: And I think she still does; it will work like magic. All we have to do now is to confirm her suspicion that you and I are dating. Then we spark the jealousy in her.

Kwame: And you think my wife will be concerned about having me back when her suspicion is confirmed?

Prudence: I know Yaa. She will fight for what is hers, especially when I have taken it forcibly from her.

Kwame: I pray it works.

Prudence: It sure would. First, you have to be attractive financially. That will catch her attention so that she will start treating you as the man that you are.

You have to find a job. [...] I'll see if my friends can help you find a good job (Sc. 2:16-18).

Consequently, Prudence helps Kwame to secure a job and this solves Kwame's economic problem, hence his marital issues. This is because when Yaa learns that Kwame is gainfully employed, she pleads for forgiveness and Kwame shows maturity by forgiving her. Thus, Kwame's forgiving spirit suggests how to end the cycle of domestic violence.

Yaa

Yaa is the wife of Kwame and gainfully employed. She provides money to cater for Kwame. As such, Kwame rightly informs Prudence that Yaa "has been the man of the house. She calls the shot in everything that should be done" (Sc. 2.17).

Yaa is seen as a revengeful person and an autocratic wife in the play. She is unforgiving because she is ready to maltreat Kwame, her husband, since he did same to her in times past.

The dialogue below sheds light on this nature of Yaa:

Kwame: You always have an excuse for not doing one chore or the other.

Yaa: Am I treating you any different from how you treated me when I was only a housewife?

Kwame: Can't you forget about the past so that we can forge ahead?

Yaa: Stop what you are saying before I disgrace you...Stupid man (Sc. 1.5).

From the above, it is obvious that Yaa is not willing to forgive her husband for his unkind attitude towards her in the past. Thus, she is ready to avenge Kwame. This same vindictive nature is also appreciated in scene three of the play when Auntie Mary angers her.

Yaa: I'm disappointed that a woman of your age can talk like this to someone who can be your child. *Panyin to to*, a grown-up without brains.

Mary: *Eii*, how dare you insult me?

Yaa: You've seen nothing yet.

Mary: (*warning Yaa by pointing and shaking a finger at her*) Yaa! Yaa!

Yaa: How does it feel to have a dose of your own medicine?

Mary: (*Ignores Yaa's question*) Who is supposed to sweep this place? (*Yaa looks around as if trying to find out if another person is behind her*) It is you I'm talking to.

Yaa: And you expect me to answer?

Mary: Don't talk to me like that. Don't you know that the Bible and custom demand that you respect the elderly?

Yaa: And what is expected of the elderly? ... Rude behaviour?

Mary: *Herr Yaa!*

Yaa: I'm paying you back with interest. (*She sucks her teeth and enters her room UR*) (Sc. 3.20, 21).

Without a shred of doubt, this excerpt from the play portrays the unforgiving character of Yaa. Not only was Yaa vengeful but there are several instances in the play that depict her autocratic nature as a wife. For example, in the very beginning of the play Yaa insists that Kwame should wash her handkerchiefs, though Kwame had another important task to undertake. This is how it is captured in the play:

Kwame: I forgot.

Yaa: Well, I need you to wash these [handkerchiefs] for me now.

She throws the handkerchiefs into the basin filled with soapy water (Sc. 1.5).

Again, the first scene ends with Yaa issuing, what is referred to by the playwright as, a “never ending to-do list” to her husband to carry out in her absence. Yaa says:

I'm going to work. By the time I return, I expect you to have finished with these clothes and dried them on the line, tidied up the room, prepared supper [*Lights begin to fade out as Yaa issues out the never ending to-do list*] and iron the dress I've placed on the bed. Don't forget to look for the high-heeled shoe I'll be wearing to Women's Ministry meeting tonight; also arrange the clothes in the wardrobe and find my blue headscarf (Sc. 1.8).

The above traits, especially her spiteful personality, spark some of the domestic violence incidents found in the play. Hence, the reader finds Yaa abusing other characters verbally in a number of scenes in the play because she was retaliating. For instance, Yaa in scene three insults Auntie Mary as a “grown-up who has no brains”, an expression referred to in the local Twi language as “*panyin toto*” (Sc. 3.20).

Though she orders Kwame, her husband, about and insults him as she pleases, Yaa is jealously guarding Kwame from Prudence's perceived advances towards him. Therefore, she

does not hesitate to fight Prudence anytime the latter is around her husband. The extract from scene three of the play portrays this point:

Kwame: (*turning around*) Yaa...you are back so soon.

Yaa: Do you call two hours soon? (*Prudence resumes sweeping the compound*) Prudence, what did you just tell my husband?

Prudence: It wasn't for your ears.

Yaa: Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You flirt with my husband in my absence and you say what?

Prudence turns away to restart the sweeping. This irritates Yaa so she gets a hold of Prudence and it turns into a tussle. Kwame moves to stop the women who are yelling insults at each other but he receives a fair share of the beating (Sc. 3.28).

From the above, it can be deduced that Yaa feels threatened that Prudence might snatch Kwame from her so she fights her. This physical abuse which is the product of Yaa's wrong perception about Prudence is also seen in the first scene. The extract below accentuates this:

Yaa slaps her and Prudence returns the slap with a bigger force. Bright, a young stout man in his mid-thirties wearing a blue overall with opened buttons, enters the compound from outside and helps Kwame to stop the fighting women. They manage to tear them apart and restrain them from fighting again.

Yaa: (*Panting and shouting*) Foolish woman... stay away from my husband!

Bright: (*Restraining Prudence whilst pleading*) Take it easy!

Prudence: (*Panting and shouting*) If you are a woman... come and fight me... and stop the insults!

They almost start fighting again but the men foil the attempt (Sc. 1.6).

Nevertheless, before the play ends, Yaa's jealousy and insecurity vanishes when she realises that Prudence, instead of encouraging Kwame to divorce her, is rather working tirelessly for her marriage to be successful and has even secured employment for her husband. This is how the play captures it:

Prudence: Yaa, it is not like you think.

Yaa: Why should I think differently from what I see? Kwame, just admit that you have something doing with her.

Kwame: She has always been my friend and nothing more.

Yaa: Yeah right.

Kwame: In one breath you love me yet you don't trust me. [...]

Yaa: Stop talking about trust Kwame. When I asked you to carry out the usual chores did you?

Kwame: But I always do. So your question should rather be why I couldn't do it today.

Yaa: I just need answers. I care less about how the questioning should be like.

Kwame: Well, after a successful interview this morning, I have secured a job.

Yaa: (*laughing*) Stop the joke man. [...]

Kwame: And I was given an advance pay that could buy us a new apartment and still have some change.

Yaa: (*Elated*) You don't mean it?

Kwame: I do. All thanks goes to Prudence. [...] She helped me to land this job.

Prudence: That's what the entire secret is about.

Yaa: (*There is a total change of mood*) Oh I see. (*Her fingers roam through her hair as if searching for something in her hair*) Ermmm....ermmm... Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: (*Still scratching her hair*) Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: (*Impatient*) Out with it Yaa. What do you want to say?

Yaa: Ermm...Kwame... you are looking great today. (*Kwame looks at Prudence and the two characters share a smile. Unashamed and unperturbed, Yaa continues*) In fact you are looking awesome and rich. What will you eat tonight? Just say anything and it shall be done. I am at your service.

Kwame: I'm fine.

Yaa: (*Disappointed*) You can't say that.

Kwame: I just did.

Prudence: Kwame, be a gentleman and stop what you are doing. Your poor wife is ashamed and sorry. If she wasn't she wouldn't make you this offer. [...] Obviously, she doesn't know how to go about it. (*To Yaa*) Right?

Yaa: Yes. Prudence is right. Please listen to her (Sc. 4.32-34).

From the lengthy excerpt, it is clear that there is a dramatic turnaround from Yaa's old insulting and autocratic self into a gentle new person.

Vanessa

Vanessa is the central character of the play *Sorry Ever After*. This is because she is the character most talked about in the play and also it is through how she handles her plight that the main subject matter of the project, mitigating domestic violence, is fully projected. Vanessa is married to Bright who always batters her at the least provocation. In the second scene, for instance, Bright beats her up because she did not prepare his food on time.

Bright: Please get me my food and stop this fake concern of yours.

Vanessa: Why do you still use that word on me? I've changed. I'm a better person now.

Bright: Don't even start. Just get me my food?

Vanessa: Now?

Bright: YOU HEARD ME!

Vanessa: Let me get you a table. The food is almost ready.

Bright: Almost?

Vanessa: (*frustrated*) Kwesi, you're impossible!

Bright: Am I not demanding for something that is rightly due me as a husband? A good wife should know the need of her husband at every point in time.

Vanessa: And a good husband should at least call his wife when he's coming home earlier than the usual time.

Bright: Did you just insult me? Did you? (*He slaps Vanessa and she falls*) I should slap you twice for saying that (Sc. 2.13).

From the above excerpt of the play *Sorry Ever After*, readers realise how easy it is for Bright to physically abuse his wife. The assault Vanessa suffers at the hands of her husband grows intense from the start to the end of the play. Thus, in the first scene of the play, Vanessa wears a plaster above her brow but during the final scene, she is wearing a bandage on her head.

Moreover, Vanessa is portrayed as a naïve woman in the play. This character trait seems to be her flaw as Bright takes advantage of that to always have his way. The example below buttresses this view:

Vanessa: Not today. After sleeping with your numerous girlfriends, you come back home and demand for what? Don't make me furious than I am. (*Vanessa struggles to get past her drunk husband but she couldn't*)

Bright: Today be today.

Vanessa: Please, let me go to chapel.

Bright: I won't keep long.

Vanessa: I'm already late.

Bright: If you had stopped arguing with me, we would have been done by now.

Vanessa: But I'm tired.

Bright: The more reason why you have to stay behind and have fun with me.

Vanessa: But I'm not in the mood.

Bright: Ok. I will let you go if you can do one thing for me.

Vanessa: What do you want done?

Bright: Just go and fix me breakfast.

Vanessa: Is that all?

Bright: I swear that is all. Let's go inside so that I eat.

Vanessa enters the room UL followed closely by Bright. Soon afterwards, there are shouts and moans from Vanessa. Stage lights alternate between high and low and finally blacks out when Vanessa screams loudest (Sc. 3.24, 25).

From the above, were it not for Vanessa's naivety, she would not have suffered marital rape, a type of domestic violence. Therefore, her inexperience and innocence created fertile grounds for the seed of violence to take roots in her marital life.

Further, Vanessa is stubborn and wants to have her way when it came to issues concerning her husband, Bright. Numerous advices from Prudence about how she should handle her husband's cruel actions towards her fall on deaf ears. One such instance is seen below:

Prudence: [...] Your husband is a bad man so you need to take action on him.

Vanessa: He is not entirely bad. You know, I sometimes cause it; I don't know why I always do something to provoke him.

Prudence: Look here, you may be the cause sometimes but that does not make his actions right. He may not like you for certain things you did or do, but he has no right to beat you. You must leave him. You must leave him so that he will learn to appreciate –

Vanessa: Stop it, Prudence. You want me, Mrs. Vanessa Adwoa Betoamu, to divorce my husband? So all along this is what you've been driving to *eh?* Bright was right about you; you are only good at spoiling other people's marriage. I shouldn't have started this conversation with you. What do you know about marriage and love? If you claim you know so much then get married. Find yourself a man and stop chasing men. I love my husband with all his flaws, **JUST AS HE IS!** (*There is a long pause after this outburst*)

Prudence: I'm sorry for meddling in your private affairs.

Vanessa: You must be.

Prudence: I thought I was offering a helping hand.

Vanessa: Thanks but I don't need it (Sc. 2.12).

From this extract, Vanessa is unwilling to accept the hard reality of her husband's brutal actions towards her and as such almost quarrels with Prudence. Just after this advice is rejected, Vanessa in the subsequent unfolding actions in the play gets battered by Bright. Hence, had she not been stubborn and heeded to Prudence's advice, she may have escaped her many incidents of violence in the play.

Vanessa is also a woman who still finds it important to follow the dictates of customs and traditions about a wife no matter how obsolete those norms are. Her conversation with Prudence in scene two of the play *Sorry Ever After* attests to this:

Prudence: Don't tell me you still follow such socially defined gender roles religiously.

Vanessa: I can't help it. Which marriage in these parts would survive if the wife fails to fulfill seventy percent of what society expects? Your in-laws will come and kick you out of your matrimonial home.

Prudence: You have some truth in what you say, but always doing society's expectations isn't a guarantee for a successful marriage.

Vanessa: If it was a guarantee in the olden days, then I believe it is now.

Prudence: Vanessa, the present is different from the olden days.

Vanessa: I don't think so.

Prudence: So, because of the society, would you allow your husband to always hit you after all you do for him?

Vanessa: He doesn't beat me.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: We just quarrel sometimes. That's all.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: Of course.

Prudence: And I guess that (*pointing to the plaster on Vanessa's face*) is a product of your rarely frequent quarrels with that domestic dictator you call a husband (Sc. 2.9, 10).

From the above dialogue, it is obvious that Vanessa does not regard the mark of Bright's brutality, "*the plaster*", because the society expects the woman to persevere no matter what. Her over indulgence in doing as custom demanded of wives leads her to be subservient even when Bright is abusing her. Characteristically, she allows the violence to grow out of hand; therefore, the stage direction of the final scene reads that Vanessa has "*a bandage around her head*" (Sc. 4.30).

Notwithstanding all the aforementioned traits of Vanessa promoting domestic violence, her situation does not remain hopeless till the end of the play. This is because in the last scene, she is able to reflect on the several pieces of advice given her and based on that she musters enough courage to report her husband to the police. This late yet significant action of Vanessa in the final scene of the play sends a definite message of how domestic violence incidents can be mitigated.

Bright

Bright is the husband of Vanessa and he maltreats his wife at any chance that presents itself. Vanessa even confirms this when she says, “I’m tired of having to stay away from work because my husband has been beating me. I’m tired of hiding the scars of his brutality under heavy make-ups and lies” (Sc. 4.30). Further, Bright’s callous nature earned him the name “domestic dictator” (Sc. 2.10). Bright is very unkind to Vanessa to the extent that, in scene one, Auntie Mary is even prepared to be a “devil” if that is what it takes to stop him (Sc. 1.8). Another instance of Bright’s brutality towards Vanessa is seen in the second scene of the play where he beats up Vanessa because she entertains the company of Prudence, a person he had warned Vanessa not to talk to. Below is an excerpt of this scenario:

Bright: Did you just insult me? Did you? (*He slaps Vanessa and she falls*) I should slap you twice for saying that. You’re becoming too outspoken for my liking. Have you been talking to people I don’t know? Have you? (*The now sobbing Vanessa gestures in the negative.*) You better be right. (*Pause*) Or, was it that whore, Prudence?

Vanessa: She’s done nothing yet.

Bright: I said it. This morning it was Yaa and Kwame, now it is us. Why can’t people in this house mind their own business? So she is planning to ruin our marriage too *eh*?

Vanessa: Not that.

Bright: Then what did she say? ... TELL ME.

Vanessa: Nothing important.

Bright slaps Vanessa again and her sobs grow louder. He even takes off one of Vanessa’s slippers and uses it to beat her up. [...]

Bright: Can you ever stop lying? How many times have I warned you not to speak to that prostitute? What better advice can she give you other than trade your body for what you don’t have? You see what Kwame is doing? That’s what you should have done long time ago. Rather, you wasted time talking to that shameless woman who has no respect for tradition and marriage (Sc. 2.13, 14).

From this dialogue, not only does Bright physically assault Vanessa but he had also restricted his wife as to who to talk to. Perhaps, Bright is aware of the true worth of Vanessa though he treats her cruelly, thus he is threatened that Prudence, an independent woman, may win Vanessa away from him.

Bright blames Vanessa for his terrible attitude and this is how he keeps her in the abusive marriage. In scene two, Bright uses lies told by Vanessa in the past to justify his actions. The extract below portrays this:

Vanessa: (*Regaining her breath*) Why do you find pleasure in beating me?
Bright: The very day I found out you tricked me into this... this marriage.
Vanessa: That was the only way we could be together. My parents didn't approve of our relationship.
Bright: But you could have at least planned with me first.
Vanessa: I'm sorry.
Bright: You should have told me that long before I found out your lie.
Vanessa: I was planning to.
Bright: You never finished planning?
Vanessa: I didn't know how to explain it to you.
Bright: But you certainly knew how to trick me into it.
Vanessa: Since you found out, I've accepted my fault and I've apologised time and again.
Bright: Don't say it as if it's a virtue you showed. You had no option.
Vanessa: It won't happen again.
Bright: That's what you always say when I remind you every time about this. You made me believe you were pregnant so I must wed you as soon as possible. But here you are, five years and still barren. What's the good of you if you can't give me a child?
Vanessa: Children are gifts from God. In His own time He will do –
Bright: I don't have time for your bible studies (Sc. 2.14).

From the above conversation it is clear that Bright uses the lies Vanessa told him before their marriage to vindicate his awful behaviour. Even though Bright is hurt when he realised the truth, that does not give him the authority to “find pleasure in beating” Vanessa.

Further, to keep Vanessa in the marriage union Bright makes sure he apologises after carrying out his brutality. The excerpt below aptly supports this assertion:

Bright: (*softly*) Adwoa.
Vanessa: (*passionately*) You slapped me.
Bright: Adwoa, I didn't mean to do that. I'm very sorry ok? (*Vanessa does not respond*) You know you are partly to blame too. (*Vanessa makes a sound that suggests surprise*) Yes. If the food had been ready, all that wouldn't have happened.
Vanessa: So it is my entire fault?
Bright: I didn't say that.
Vanessa: (*Sarcastically*) Of course you won't. You are too clever to say that.
Bright: (*In an all pleading voice*) Adwoa.

Vanessa: You are always in the right and I am always wrong.

Bright: Listen, I said I'm sorry and I mean it. I am terribly sorry for what I did. Please forgive me. *(Pause) Pleecease. (After a while, Vanessa smiles and hugs him to show reconciliation.)*

Vanessa: My love for you will always make me forgive you.

Bright: That's why I love you (Sc. 2.18, 19).

From the above, it can be realised that Bright does not truly love Vanessa as he says but only said that so that he could be pardoned. If not, Bright will not continue with his many acts of physical abuses as recorded in the subsequent scenes in the play. Therefore, Prudence suggests to Vanessa in scene two that Bright is "just pretending" (Sc. 2.10).

In the last scene, Vanessa sees through Bright's pretence thus she calls a police friend to come for Bright. Consequently, the play ends with Bright searching for cover for fear of being arrested for abusing his wife.

Prudence

Prudence is a divorcee who once had nuptial ties with an abuser. In scene four of *Sorry Ever After*, she confesses that, "I was once married to a man who treated me badly" (Sc. 4.38). It is therefore no surprise that she takes interest in helping couples who are in a similar situation in the play. The excerpt below shows one of her ways of being of help:

Prudence: Exercise a little more patience.

Kwame: For how long? Had it not been you, I would have thrown her out of my room. I rented this place with my own money.

Prudence: And she has been taking care of you since you lost your job.

Kwame: I've had enough.

Prudence: Just keep your cool. I've been thinking about how you can change her and I came up with a plan that will do the trick for you. *(She whispers into Kwame's ears)*

Kwame: Are you sure this will work?

Prudence: It always works.

Kwame: If only she loves me.

Prudence: And I think she still does; it will work like magic (Sc.2.17).

The conversation above depicts how Prudence is ready to aid Kwame to fix his marital problems. In the final scene, Kwame is a happy man because Prudence assists him to come out from his difficulties a better man. Kwame appreciates Prudence's help when he says,

“[a]ll thanks goes to Prudence. [...] She helped me to land this job” (Sc. 4.33). Again, it is through Prudence’s intervention that Vanessa had the opportunity to get the complimentary card of a police man who comes to her rescue at the end of the play.

Further, through the countless pieces of advice by Prudence, readers learn that it is better to resolve conflict amicably than retaliating – a good start to ending domestic violence. Again, she informs the audience about the various avenues available for conflict management. The dialogue between Kwame and Prudence in scene three captures this:

Prudence: That man [Bright] ought to be locked behind bars. If you don’t love your wife, you still don’t have the right to hit her.

Kwame: But some wives intentionally provoke the beast in us.

Prudence: Don’t shield him Kwame. Beating her up can’t solve the problem.

Kwame: But it would shut her up.

Prudence: Temporarily, yes. But over time, she would rebel against you. I can see Vanessa doing that if only she would listen to sound advice.

Kwame: Well, women usually abuse men with their mouth and men reply with their fist.

Prudence: If someone wrongs you and you go down the same lane with that person, then you are a bigger fool.

Kwame: Not in all cases. It depends.

Prudence: I don’t think so. There are so many ways in correcting your wife or your husband other than resorting to retaliation.

Kwame: Are there?

Prudence: The police, the family of your spouse, pastors, marriage counsellors and many others (Sc. 3.26).

From the above, Prudence reiterates the various ways a victim of domestic violence can seek for help. Thus, a possible end to domestic violence in marital relationships can be achieved if the abused resort to the aforementioned avenues.

Just like Auntie Mary, Prudence has her flaws. She hardly sleeps in the house and always goes out in the evenings to meet “clients”. Therefore, Yaa rightly comments about this perceived promiscuous lifestyle of Prudence in the play when she says, “Women like you must be publicly shamed for spending nights with men you’re not married to. That’s immoral” (Sc. 1.6). This habit of not sleeping in her room opens the chance for her to be

abused by other characters at several scenes in the play even when she had the clearest of intentions. This is because the other characters were not certain she could be capable of any good help. For example, in the last scene of the play when Yaa realises that Prudence is not a “husband snatcher”, she aptly remarks that, “[i]t never crossed my mind that you can... you can be of great help you know” (Sc. 4.35).

In summary, the detailed character analysis of all the characters in the play *Sorry Ever After* point out that characters had adequate motivation for their various actions. For instance, the past experience of having a batterer for a husband, coupled with the plight of Vanessa moved the actions of Prudence towards aiding Vanessa to end her abusive marital relationship with Bright.

Again, development of some characters in the play precipitates the advancement of the plot of the play. Vanessa, for example, is seen from the beginning of the play as someone who is not willing to take advice when it concerns her abusive husband, Bright. However, due to her many unending injuries she suffers at the hands of Bright, she changes her attitude and therefore carries out the advice of reporting Bright to the police.

Finally, the characterisation depicts effects and, most essentially, ways of mitigating domestic violence incidents. This is well exposed by the actions of Vanessa in the play. Not only does Vanessa bear the marks of the brutality of Bright in plasters and bandages but she sometimes fails to go to work as a result of Bright’s abusive nature. Nonetheless, she is able to end the cycle of violence when she calls the police to come and arrest Bright.

4.3.4 Form of the play *Sorry Ever After*

The form of drama may be explained as the categorisation of plays based on the content of the story as well as the role of the main character. In theatre, plays are usually described according to form or genre. These include tragedy, comedy, melodrama, drama, farce and

tragi-comedy, just to mention a few. The aforementioned forms help to define the drama being referred to. It is particularly important that plays have an affinity to a type of form so as to aid the audience to understand and appreciate them.

The play *Sorry Ever After* falls in the drama genre; specifically what Edwin Wilson in *Theatre Experience* describes as “domestic drama” (1994:422). This is because the play possesses most features associated with domestic drama. Domestic drama is a type of play that deals with the problems of members of a family and home. It first started during the eighteenth century in Europe and Great Britain. This was the period in history when the merchant and working classes emerged in Europe. Since many theatre patrons could associate with the characters and problems of domestic drama, it enjoyed popularity among the people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Wilson, 1994:422).

Sorry Ever After is a drama that centres on the marital challenges of couples in a home. In the play, Vanessa is bearing the bitterness of having married an abusive man, Bright. As a result, she admits in the final scene that,

I'm tired of having to stay away from work because my husband has been beating me. I'm tired of hiding the scars of his brutality under heavy make-ups and lies. I'm tired of keeping true to the marriage vow when I know he doesn't. I'm sick of living in the same room with him! (Sc. 4.30).

Similarly, Kwame is constantly being verbally abused by his wife Yaa. This is aptly captured in a speech by Prudence when she says, “[...] I guess it is morally right for a wife, in fact a responsible one as you are trying to act out now, to always insult her husband and treat him like a rag because he is unemployed” (Sc. 1.6). Therefore, the play portrays the marital challenges of Kwame and Vanessa and how the two characters solve their peculiar yet comparable family problems.

Sorry Ever After also discusses the problems of members in a home. Though the play is not set in the home of a nuclear family in its true essence, the characters lived together in one house, like families generally do. Thus, the characters, though not having family ties, are concerned with what happens to each other. However, there are troubles that arise as a result of the show of care for others. For example, Prudence recounts to Kwame how she was physically assaulted by Bright because she tried to help Vanessa, Bright's wife, from being battered.

Further, domestic drama characteristically revolves around characters that have conflicts with society, shattered hopes and renewed determination. Likewise, *Sorry Ever After* possesses characters whose actions project some of these features of domestic drama. In the play, Vanessa nurses hopes of having a very joyous relationship with Bright, but her hopes are stifled by the violent nature of Bright. This speech says it all:

Vanessa: [...] I risked it all for you; from the very beginning, I chose you over my family. I had to lie to the best parents I could ever have in my life to get married to you. Why? Because I thought we had a good future together. I thought our marriage will end up quietening the people who didn't want us married for we will live happily ever after. But, I now realise it is a wishful thinking (Sc. 4.38).

From the above, it is evident that Vanessa did have hopes of a better future with Bright but it never happened. Initially, Vanessa is determined to make her marriage work; as a result, she refuses to report Bright to the police for appropriate action to be taken from the start of the play. Nevertheless, Bright's unchanging habit of violence wanes her determination. Consequently, she gives in to the advice of Prudence by alerting the police.

Typical of domestic dramas, *Sorry Ever After* also attempts to represent, as close as possible, the lifestyle of ordinary people on stage. The lifestyle of the ordinary people is portrayed in language, dress and behaviour. The play revolves around the lower class (thus the ordinary people in society) since there is no character of noble birth present. The characters do not use

lofty language as do characters in classical Greek tragedies. In *Sorry Ever After*, the language used by characters can be equated to the colloquial English spoken by the average Ghanaian in present day Ghana. Again, the English language was mixed with Twi (a local language among the Akans in Ghana) thus reflecting the lives of the ordinary Ghanaian on stage. An example of the language can be seen below:

Prudence: (*laughs*) Whether you go to report her or not, people in this neighbourhood know you as Kwame *Odwan* [literally means Sheep] and your wife as Yaa *Marigyata* [meaning an abusive wife].

The mixture of the English language with Twi words and expressions by the characters in the play enables the Ghanaian audience to readily associate themselves with the play. Likewise, the behaviour exhibited by characters in the play can be identified with the ordinary people. For instance, the rude and stern attitude Auntie Mary displays in the play can be easily identified with some landlords in present day Ghana. This was confirmed by members who participated in the play reading session on the 2nd of April, 2014.

4.3.5 Style of the play *Sorry Ever After*

The style of the play *Sorry Ever After* is fashioned after realism. Realism was a movement that started in the nineteenth century in Europe; and in theatre, Henrik Ibsen is believed to be the father of this movement. Other prominent writers associated with realism include August Strindberg and Anton Chekhov. Realism is “the accurate, detailed, unembellished depiction of nature or of contemporary life” (encyclopaedia Britannica). Conversely, Robert Cohen avers that realism’s major objective is to fashion out something that has a “likeness” to life. (2000). Simply put, realism is depicting life as it is in reality on stage or in a performance. Thus, writers who employ realism usually want to objectively write plays about the society around them; a kind of “Domestic Drama” that will be at home for the society to relate to (Cohen 2000). As a result, the actions of many realist plays take place in the domestic setting. Therefore, the activities happening in the house setting of the drama becomes a metaphor for

what is actually occurring in society. It is in this vein that the actions of *Sorry Ever After* were set in a domestic setting; that is the house of Auntie Mary. In the play, the various actions of characters largely reflect the pervasive nature of domestic violence in the society. For instance, every scene in the play is not devoid of domestic violence incidents. This points to how society is confronted daily with domestic violence cases. Audience at the play reading confirmed this and opined that the play indeed captures some realities of abuses that are happening in the country.

Further, realist writers do away with poetic language (writing in verse) and noble characters that characterise the Greek classic plays. Writing in the classical Greek fashion will distance the audience from associating with characters in the play since in society people normally will not speak as the characters do. There is therefore the propensity for audience to treat lightly issues being discussed in the play. Consequently, realist plays, for instance, make use of colloquial language in order to depict life as is it in the real world. In this manner, the audience can easily identify with characters on stage as well as the issues being discussed in the play. Likewise, *Sorry Ever After* has characters that do not speak poetic language but rather make use of colloquial language. This style afforded the play to evoke verisimilitude of actions in the play. Thus, it was remarked by several audiences after the play reading that the play clearly depicts the society as it is presently in Ghana.

Again, realism is employed in *Sorry Ever After* so as to challenge audience to critically rethink the way domestic violence is marring marital relationships. I am of the view that realism is a style that can be used by playwrights to forcefully urge and stir up the audience into action. As already expounded in the previous subthemes, members present at the play reading session of *Sorry Ever After* revealed that, they saw the society on stage because the actions, situations and conflicts present in the world of the play is synonymous to reality. In effect, the audience in their mind's eye accepts the fact that what they are watching could

actually be the plight of people around them; hence sympathy developed for the abused in the play is transferred to victims/survivors of domestic violence in their communities who very much need their support to mitigate the abuses being suffered.

4.4 CONCLUSION

To conclude the discussions in this chapter, I can say that the play *Sorry Ever After* tackles the problem of the study, mitigating domestic violence in Ghana. This is because the play raises issues of domestic violence and suggests ways of curbing such violent incidents. Again, the actions and inactions of characters in the play as vividly elucidated in this section of the thesis depict the effects of domestic violence as well as ways of ending it. Finally, the form of the play aided me to be able to address the forms of domestic violence incidents among people in marital relationships, the major focus of this project, in a way that will easily appeal to the audience to help in the fight against domestic violence in their society.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND THE PLAY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter encapsulates the entire thesis. It captures all the issues discussed in the previous chapters as well as the synopsis of the play. The second part of this chapter also presents the play that came out as a product of the methods used in carrying out this project.

5.2 SUMMARY

As already discussed in preceding chapters, this project primarily aims at contributing to the varied means of curbing domestic violence incidents in Ghana. With this aim underpinning the project, objectives and research questions were drawn in chapter one in order to realise the aim. Again, in the same chapter, the motivation, significance and justification for carrying out this project were elucidated. Finally, the scope and limitation of the project were also defined. The subsequent chapters sought to answer the research questions and objectives.

In chapter two, the varied literature on the discourse of domestic violence were reviewed. The definition, cycle, perceptions, causes, theories and interventional efforts against domestic violence were examined. Views of some religious leaders and personnel from institutions that deal directly with victims/survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence were also surveyed. Further, a cross section of plays written by Africans, and some few ones by the classical Greek playwrights, were also looked at. The outcome of this literature review revealed that more work is needed to be done to complement already existing avenues to end domestic violence. Finally and more importantly, it was established that a play will be written to add up to other dramatic pieces that seek to educate its readers about domestic violence.

The methodology employed in carrying out this research was outlined in chapter three. The unstructured interview and observation methods in carrying out research were used in soliciting information from stakeholders (DOVVSU officials, and religious leaders) in the bid to answer the research questions and objectives set out from the beginning of the project. Moreover, the creation process and synopsis of the play *Sorry Ever After* were also discussed. The challenges encountered when administering the agreed methods were also reflected on in this chapter.

In chapter four, the data assembled through unstructured interviews and observation were analysed. Furthermore, the gathered data were analysed and interpreted in the context of the aim of the project. Also, the play *Sorry Ever After* was examined to bring out how the title of the play, setting, characters and form were informed by the data and collectively reflect the objectives of this project.

Finally, chapter five deals with the summaries of all the chapters, recommendations and conclusion of the entire project. It also presents the full length play *Sorry Ever After*.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The problem that domestic violence causes in society cannot be denied. The countless, horrendous and sometimes gory incidents of domestic violence reported on the various media (be it print or electronic) bears to this fact. Additionally, the abundance of literature – a cross-section which was reviewed in chapter two – on this problem attests to the fact that efforts are being made to curb it. However, domestic violence seems to be on the increase hence this research employs drama to help mitigate it.

The research process that aided me to come out with the final play was meticulously followed and carried out in order to gain a genuine data that will reflect the Ghanaian experience of domestic violence.

Challenges in translating the data assembled into a dramatic work was not an easy one; especially when I had to carefully negotiate my way in order not to breach the ethics of research. I therefore used the data as a basis to create a fictitious story about characters plagued with domestic violence. Since the project aims at mitigating domestic violence incidents, the various conflicts in the play were resolved. Thus, the resolution process illustrated in the play suggests to readers how to curb domestic violence. Again, the actions of characters in the play serve as examples for readers to fight domestic violence. Consequently, the play *Sorry Ever After* adds to the many other plays written by African playwrights to address, either metaphorically or plainly, the issues of domestic violence.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that more theatre practitioners, especially playwrights, create awareness and spur people into action through drama

DOVVSU community outreach programmes should include dramatization of information that is being given.

Finally, I recommend that more dramatic works that directly touch on domestic violence ought to be written and performed for all with the intention of contributing to mitigating domestic violence incidents in Ghana, and the world as a whole.

5.5 PART TWO – THE PLAY

Synopsis of the play *Sorry Ever After*

Sorry Ever After is the product of the research methodology that I carried out. The play through its various characters negotiates the causes and effects of domestic violence on direct victims and, most importantly, ways through which such conflicts may be solved. In the play, all characters have a share of domestic violence. As already elucidated in chapter four, the character who is worst affected is Vanessa.

The play is about Vanessa who marries Bright because she feels she is not getting any younger, forgetting he always makes her cry. Against her parents' advice, Vanessa ties the nuptial knot with Bright with the aspirations of living a happy life. However, her hopes are dashed when Bright begins to batter her at any chance that presents itself. She convinces herself that Bright will change but it never happens. It was not until she sustains a head injury that she realises that she had to divorce her husband. But before taking such an action, she first reports Bright to the police to ensure that justice is enforced.

SORRY EVER AFTER

By: Maxwell Odoi-Yeboah

CHARACTERS

Vanessa	– the wife of Bright
Auntie Mary	– the landlady of the house
Kwame	– the husband of Yaa
Yaa	– the wife of Kwame
Prudence	– an independent woman
Bright	– the husband of Vanessa

Time: Present

The action of the play takes place in the compound house of Auntie Mary, somewhere in Ghana.

NB: All incidents in the play are entirely fictitious and if it closely or loosely relates to someone it is purely coincidental.

SCENE ONE

The action of the play takes place in the compound house of Auntie Mary. There is a big water drum sitting by the paint thirsty walls of the house DL. The main gate that leads into and out of the compound is at SL. The door located UC leads to the room of the land lady, Auntie Mary. The doors UR, UL and SR are the various doors of the tenants in the house. An almost half built structure that serves as the bathroom of occupants of the house can be found at DR.

The stage is fully lit. Auntie Mary, an elderly woman in her late fifties, is heading towards the bathroom DR holding a bucket full of water and humming a gospel tune. She is clad in a piece of cloth and her towel and sponge hang around her neck. Absorbed in her humming, Auntie Mary pays no attention to Kwame, a young man in his mid-thirties, who has been washing a heap of dirty clothes in front of his door UR.

Kwame: *(jokingly)* Eeeei Auntie Mary, greetings don't kill.

Mary: *(She stops humming and places down her bucket slowly)* I didn't hear you well Kwame. What did you say over there?

Kwame: Are you saying you didn't see me here when passing by?

Mary: How could I? I couldn't distinguish between the heap of dirty clothes and your dressing.

Kwame: What!?!

Mary: Kwame, did you expect me to be smiling like a cow to you after what your wife did to me yesterday?

Kwame: But I apologised on her behalf.

Mary: I don't blame you. I blame that proud selfish good-for-nothing woman you call a wife.

Kwame: *(Checking to make sure he is not overheard by his wife, Yaa)* Look here Auntie Mary, if you won't greet me because of what happened yesterday, I'm fine. Please, I beg you in the name of God, go your way wai. I don't want any further wahala this morning.

Mary: (*Realising why Kwame is acting cautiously*) Ahhh! So you are afraid of your own wife eh? Someone you've paid her bride price to come and help you.

Kwame: Me afraid? I'm not afraid of any one, much less Yaa.

Mary: Then you better speak up boldly. Or should I shout it out to her?

Kwame: (*Putting his fore finger on his lips to indicate silence*) I beg. There's no need for shouting. I'm not afraid of Yaa; it's only that I don't want to displease her.

Mary: You wish it was just that. Your own wife has turned you into a she-male, *kotobonku*.

Auntie Mary sucks her teeth so loudly before picking up her bucket and resuming her humming. Kwame returns to his seat to wash the clothes. As Auntie Mary places her pale-coloured bucket by the paint thirsty bathroom door, she opens the screeching bathroom door and immediately, her humming dies in her throat.

Mary: *Eii*, are there not enough ladies in this house? (*Authoritatively*) *Herr Kwame*, is your wife not supposed to scrub this place first thing this morning?

Kwame: Have you misplaced the time table for scrubbing the bathroom?

Mary: What do you mean?

Kwame: Exactly what I said *efiewura*. You have to check the time table to be sure.

Mary: It must be her. It's been a while since I saw her cleaning the bathroom.

Kwame: (*Protesting*) *Eii*, if you've not been seeing my wife, it doesn't mean she has not been scrubbing. I've been washing that place in her stead for ages. I don't even know when I will finish with this one not to talk of coming to clean the bathroom on top. I think it must be Vanessa's turn.

Mary: You better be right. (*She walks towards Vanessa's room UL*)

Kwame: I know it's not my wife. You find out from Vanessa.

Mary: (*Knocking on Vanessa's door*) Agoo! Agoo!

Vanessa: (*From inside*) Who is it? ... I'm coming!

Mary: (*After waiting for a while without Vanessa coming out, she knocks again, stronger than the first one*) Agoo!! Agoo!!

Vanessa: (*Still from inside*) I said I'm coming! Can't you exercise patience for some time?

Mary: (*Almost shaking the door open*) I don't have all day to wait for you!

Vanessa: (*Alarmed*) Ebei! Do you want to break my door?! Don't you have any spirit of patience?! (*The door opens. Upon seeing Auntie Mary, Vanessa tries to take back her rude words*) Oh efiewura, I didn't know it was you at the door. I thought it was those troublesome kids who play around. I am sorry for making you wait for so long.

Mary: You better be. (*Noticing the plaster on Vanessa's face*) What happened to your face?

Vanessa: (*Rubbing the small plaster just above her left eye brow*) Just a little bruise I sustained when my head hit the bedpost.

Mary: I thought your husband is at it again.

Vanessa: No.

Mary: Anyway, good morning.

Vanessa: Fine morning Auntie Mary. Let me get you a stool from inside.

Mary: Don't worry your head over that. I won't keep long.

Vanessa: How may I help you early this morning?

Mary: Instead of waking up to do your chores, you are still in bed with that abusive thing you call a husband.

Vanessa: What is it today?

Mary: Is it too early to wake up to scrub the bathroom?

Vanessa: But I'm not the one to clean the bath.

Mary: You're not?

Vanessa: Kwame, am I the one cleaning the bathroom today?

Kwame: Of course.

Vanessa: Look here *Owura* Kwame, I'm very shy of your face *paa*. Just stop lying.

Kwame: I'm not.

Vanessa: You know you are lying.

Kwame: You are.

Vanessa: Me?

Kwame: Yes. Admit it

Vanessa: If anyone has something to admit it is you!

Kwame: No... You.

Vanessa: You.

Kwame: You.

Vanessa: You.

Mary: (*enraged*) ENOUGH. You people should stop playing games with me.

Vanessa: Auntie Mary, I know it's not my turn.

Kwame: It is. I scrubbed the place only last week.

Vanessa: That can't be true because Prudence did it last week.

Kwame: (*Scratching his head*) That's true... but... I did it ...a week before she did.

Vanessa: That can't be because I did.

Kwame: You're wrong.

Vanessa: But that's exactly what happened.

Kwame: No. My wife did.

Vanessa: Impossible, your wife has never scrubbed before.

Kwame: Auntie Mary, she is boldly telling lies.

Vanessa: Kwame, you better stop accusing me of something you perfectly have to do.

Kwame: Says who? I remember Yaa told me to scrub the bath-

Mary: Will you two stop quarrelling. I have to attend to a serious business and I'm getting late.

Kwame: As for me, I say it is Vanessa's turn.

Vanessa: Please *efiewura*, kindly verify from the bathroom scrubbing roster. (*Auntie Mary exits through the door UC to fetch the bathroom scrubbing roster. Addressing Kwame*) It is Yaa whom I should argue with. After all, the men in this house don't take part in scrubbing the bath.

Kwame: True but you know I help my wife to do these things.

Vanessa: I almost forgot that you have been scrubbing in Yaa's stead.

Kwame: That should tell you that I know the scrubbing time table as well as you do.

Vanessa: You wish. (*Realisation dawning on her*) *Ahaaa*, because you know it is your wife's turn and that means you have to scrub and wash these clothes, you want someone else to do it.

Kwame: As for me, I know that it is not my wife's turn.

Vanessa: Paper no lie. Auntie Mary will bring the roster then we will all see and hear for ourselves who is speaking the truth.

Kwame: You better go and start the scrubbing because I know she won't find that time table. (*The door UC creaks open*)

Vanessa: Auntie Mary, did you find it?

Mary: Sure. (*She holds the paper at arm's length and mutters something to herself as the other two characters look on expectantly*) Kwame, your wife is supposed to clean the bathroom this week.

Vanessa: *Oyiwa*, I said it. *Kotobonku*.

Kwame: Let me see.

Mary: Do you doubt me? (*Kwame nods in the negative*) Then you better order your wife to come out and scrub the bathroom.

Vanessa: *Efiewura*, can I return to my room now?

Mary: Please do. This *kotobonku* has made me disturb you.

Vanessa: (*Pulling Mary aside*) It's not his fault. He's just too tired considering that Yaa doesn't help him in the house chores. Not even on weekends.

Mary: Hmmm, women like her really disgrace womanhood. Doesn't she know that good wives don't leave their husbands to do all the house chores?

Vanessa: I think she doesn't know how to do any of the house chores expected of every married woman.

Mary: I don't care who does it. All I care now is that the bathroom should be scrubbed. (*Vanessa exits into her room UL*) Kwame, so you won't call your wife eh?

Kwame: You know I have to do it not her.

Mary: Then you better stop what you are doing and finish with the bathroom.

Kwame: (*protesting*) But I am -

Mary: Please no buts. You've already made me waste time finding out who is to scrub the bathroom.

Kwame: (*Still washing the clothes*) Ok. I will do it.

Mary: Don't make me angry. You better go and scrub the bath now. (*Kwame reluctantly picks himself from the stool and taking an empty bucket heads for the main exit SL*) And where are you going?

Kwame: To draw water from the tap outside.

Mary: You can draw water from my drum over there (*Mary waits and watches Kwame draw water from the drum sitting by the wall DL. She further yells out some instructions*). Make sure you refill it though. And you better hurry up. I've told you I have somewhere going. I'm giving you only five minutes to scrub the bath well.

Auntie Mary enters her room UC. Almost immediately Yaa enters the stage from the door UR holding some handkerchiefs.

Yaa: *Herr* Kwame, what have you been doing all this while?

Kwame: But I've been washing.

Yaa: Don't play silly with me. Since when did you start washing? And why are you drawing water from Auntie Mary's drum?

Kwame: It's your turn to scrub the bathroom so I was ordered to do it now.

Yaa: And didn't you know it was my turn this week?

Kwame: I forgot.

Yaa: Well, I need you to wash these for me now.

She throws the handkerchiefs into the basin filled with soapy water. She begins to check the clothes that are in the other basin. Kwame is about carrying the bucket when Yaa speaks.

Eii, come here. Hurry... Just leave the bucket and come. (Kwame rushes to her) Are you done washing these? (Silence) Ehh?

Kwame: No. I'll wash them a second time before drying them.

Yaa: You better do. Now, hurry up and wash the handkerchiefs. I have to leave early today and I don't have a single washed one to use.

Kwame: Can you please take the bucket to the bathroom and start scrubbing.

Yaa: Well I can only carry the bucket to the bathroom but I can't scrub because I would be late for work.

Kwame: You always have an excuse for not doing one chore or the other.

Yaa: Am I treating you any different from how men treat their housewife?

Kwame: Some men, not men in general.

Yaa: Whatever.

Kwame: And besides, I'm not a "housewife".

Yaa: *(laughs)* You stay home, you don't have any job, you do all the chores in this house; I call the shots...erm... aha, and the last time I checked I am the one who brings money home. What does that make you? *(pause)* Stupid man.

Yaa walks to the bucket filled with water DL and picks it up. She takes the bucket into the bathroom DR as Kwame washes the handkerchiefs. As Yaa returns from the bathroom, Prudence, a young beautifully dressed woman in her late thirties, comes in from the main entrance SL.

Yaa: *(tapping her husband on the shoulder)* Awoshia is home at last. *(Moving away from Kwame)* Some women should learn to sleep in their own rooms.

Prudence: *(sharply)* Yaa, is it me you talking to like that?

Yaa: *(moves towards Prudence but stops at C.S)* Prudence, Prudence, did I mention that your name when I spoke?

Prudence: *(meeting Yaa wherever Yaa is on stage to create a face to face stance)* Yaa I don't want trouble today. I'm not your husband to tolerate such nonsense from you.

Yaa: If you are not guilty of awoshia, then keep quiet. It is that simple.

Prudence: *(She changes position with Yaa in order to effectively address Kwame)* Kwame, you better discipline that wife of yours, else I will teach her her place in this house.

Yaa: Women like you must be publicly shamed for spending nights with men you're not married to. That's immoral.

Prudence: *(sarcastically)* But I guess it is morally right for a wife, in fact a responsible one as you are trying to act out now, to always insult her husband and treat him like a rag because he is unemployed.

Yaa: Is it your business?

Prudence: Shameless woman. How can you treat a man so?

Yaa: Find your own husband if you think you can treat men better than -

Kwame: It's enough ladies. Yaa, let her be.

Yaa: Will you shut up and finish washing my hankies.

Prudence: Kwame, don't worry. I can single-handedly manage this crazy wife of yours.

Yaa: You are the crazy one here. Leaving a room you've paid for and always going to sleep overnight with another man. That is crazy. You better get married.

Prudence: Now you make me laugh. With all apologies to you Kwame, Yaa your stinking marriage is enough to deter me from having one.

Yaa: God forbid. Don't put that witch mouth of yours in my marriage. See how your evil eyes are sparkling. You can only find such sparkle in the eyes of witches.

Prudence: It is your witchcraft that is inviting women to come for your husband. Lazy wife.

Yaa slaps her and Prudence returns the slap with a bigger force. Bright, a young stout man in his mid-thirties wearing a blue overall with opened buttons, enters the compound from outside and helps Kwame to stop the fighting women. They manage to tear them apart and restrain them from fighting again.

Yaa: (*Panting and shouting*) Foolish woman... stay away from my husband!

Bright: (*Restraining Prudence whilst pleading*) Take it easy!

Prudence: (*Panting and shouting*) If you are a woman... come and fight me... and stop the insults!

They almost start fighting again but the men foil the attempt. By now, the noise from the fighting women has brought out Auntie Mary and Vanessa from their respective rooms.

Mary: What is happening here?

Yaa: (*to Prudence*) Hooho! Prostitute! Awoshia! Stay in your room!

Vanessa: What is the matter?

Prudence: (*ignoring Vanessa*) Lazy cocoon. I don't blame you. It is the weakness of Kwame that has allowed you to grow wings.

Yaa: (*Obviously hurt*) What do you mean?

Prudence: Whatever! (*Yaa tries to fight Prudence but Kwame is holding fast unto her*)

Mary: So won't anyone explain to me what is going on?

Prudence: Excuse me. (*She walks out of the house. All eyes are looking at her but Yaa starts to yell again*)

Yaa: (*Addressing Kwame*) Idiot! Won't you say something? You are letting her get away with this eh?

Kwame: You called for it.

Yaa: Ohhh, so you are now blaming me? I thank your mouth. Ingrate!

Mary: Yaa, what is it?

Yaa: It is none of your business. (*She picks up the rinsed hankies and storms into her room UR.*)

Kwame: Sorry for disturbing you all.

Bright: You would be less sorry if you learn to put your home in order.

Vanessa: Say it again.

Mary: Leave the *kotobonku* alone. He has a lot to do this morning.

Vanessa: But it is mighty important he finds a way to tame that wild beast if we can have any peace in this house.

Mary: (*To Vanessa*) Wild beast you say? Anyone but you should say that. If someone needs advice here, it is you. Have you found a way of solving your own problems with that man?

Bright: (*Pointing to Mary and moving towards her*) Auntie Mary, be careful.

Mary: You can't threaten me in my own house. (*Vanessa holds Bright firmly to calm his bad temper*) Allow him; if you like touch me; I would report you to the police and tell them all the things you do to your wife. Foolish man.

Bright: What can the police do? They can be bought with some few cedis you know.

Mary: (*Taunting Bright*) If you are a man, just try me and see if you can bribe the police. You know that I'm not as easy going like your wife regarding this childish attitude of yours.

Kwame: Please let's not start another fight this morning.

Vanessa: (*Calming her husband's temper*) Don't allow that devil to get you, Kwesi. Just ignore her.

Mary: (*As the couple leave for their room UL*) If I have to be a devil to stop that *commando* husband of yours, then I like it. I pity you Vanessa. In fact I pity anyone who is married in this house. (*To Kwame*) Are you done with the bathroom?

Kwame: In this morning heat?

Mary: You better do it quickly and well before my temper multiplies. (*Mary exits UC. Kwame enters the bathroom and simultaneously, Yaa comes on stage from UR.*)

Yaa: Where is that idiot? Kwame!

Kwame: (*Responding from inside the bathroom*) Yes!

Yaa: Can I see you?

Kwame stands in the bathroom and the short bathroom walls do little to hide his face. He steps out.

Yaa: I'm going to work. By the time I return, I expect you to have finished with these clothes and dried them on the line, tidied up the room, prepared supper [*Lights begin to fade out as Yaa issues out the never ending to-do list*] and iron the dress I've placed on the bed. Don't forget to look for the high-heeled shoe I'll be wearing to Women's Ministry meeting tonight; also arrange the clothes in the wardrobe and find my blue headscarf. [**Fade Out**]

SCENE TWO

It is early in the evening. Prudence is brushing a wig whilst seated in a plastic chair close to her door SR. Her hand bag lies at the foot of her chair. Vanessa, who is by her door UL., is busily cutting up some vegetables (carrots, onions, green beans, spring onions, etc.) and fanning the coal pot intermittently. She is seated on a kitchen stool and a table on which the vegetables have been placed is just by her side. The two characters are engaged in a conversation as the scene opens.

Prudence: Hmmm, *eye asem o*. Yaa always treats her husband like a rag. I couldn't help it this morning.

Vanessa: So that was what the fight this morning was all about.

Prudence: Partly so. She insulted me so I did the natural thing by replying in like manner.

Vanessa: *Eii*, you and your sharp mouth.

Prudence: It's not that. We are all human beings and we should have some level of respect for each other. If you think someone has erred and you want to correct the person, does that mean you should insult the person? I simply can't accept such nonsense without answering back.

Vanessa: Well, you have a point in what you say. Maybe, she didn't suspect you would respond in that fashion.

Prudence: She should have. I'm not her husband to keep mute with that insulting bossy attitude of hers.

Vanessa: Hmmm, it's beyond every doubt that Yaa is not doing well at all when it comes to how she treats Kwame. Kwame almost does everything a wife is supposed to do.

Prudence: What do you mean by that?

Vanessa: All that Kwame does are the very things our society expects of wives.

Prudence: Don't tell me you still follow such socially defined gender roles religiously.

Vanessa: I can't help it. Which marriage in these parts would survive if the wife fails to fulfil seventy percent of what

society expects? Your in-laws will come and kick you out of your matrimonial home.

Prudence: You have some truth in what you say, but always doing society's expectations isn't a guarantee for a successful marriage.

Vanessa: If it was a guarantee in the olden days, then I believe it is now.

Prudence: Vanessa, the present is different from the olden days.

Vanessa: I don't think so.

Prudence: So, because of the society, would you allow your husband to always hit you after all you do for him?

Vanessa: He doesn't beat me.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: We just quarrel sometimes. That's all.

Prudence: Really?

Vanessa: Of course.

Prudence: And I guess that (*pointing to the plaster on Vanessa's face*) is a product of your rarely frequent quarrels with that domestic dictator you call a husband.

Vanessa: Oh Prudence, don't exaggerate.

Prudence: Am I? I'm just saying what I often see here in the house.

Vanessa: (*Holding the plaster across her brow*) This is only errrrmm... I just hit my head against errr...

Prudence: (*finishing the sentence for Vanessa*) ...against the bedpost, or is it the wall this time? Vanessa, for how long will you continue to live a lie?

Vanessa: It's not like that.

Prudence: It is definitely like that.

Vanessa: You don't understand.

Prudence: I may not but one thing I know is that you need help. If only you can gather enough courage and report him to the Police, they would -

Vanessa: (*alarmed*) The police?

Prudence: Yes. They would put the fear of God in him.

Vanessa: Is it only that? Won't the police lock him up in the cells?

Prudence: That's the place meant for people who beat up their wives...

Vanessa: Without a reason.

Prudence: With or without a reason, throwing punches won't solve the problem. Has it? ... Such abusers should face the law.

Vanessa: But he apologises when he realises he's at fault.

Prudence: Don't be fooled. That's what they all do but they soon do it again. He's just pretending. You must hand him over to the police. They are experts in dealing with such uncaring men. You know what, (*she looks around to ascertain if no one is within hearing range*) I have a client who is a police man. I can easily let him come and pick Bright up. Here, have his card. (*She picks up her hand bag and brings out the card*)

Vanessa: You frighten me Prudence. Don't you have a heart? Can't you forgive?

Prudence: I can forgive but the law must take its course. You can't beat me and get away with it when it is against the law. (*She gives the card to Vanessa. Vanessa holds the card and contemplates over Prudence's advice before speaking*)

Vanessa: I can't allow the police to take my Bright away. What would people say? What would my parents say?

Prudence: Do the right thing and damn the consequences. No one is bearing the heat with you.

Vanessa: My life would be meaningless, dark and gloomy.

Prudence: Says who? You have a better job than your husband, you earn a good salary and you are a decent woman with good manners. I dare say that these are the qualities of an

independent woman. But, look at how you dress and live all because of him. You can live a better life without that terrorist who doesn't appreciate your worth.

Vanessa: I can't bear the sight of my husband behind bars.

Prudence: But he can bear the sight of you in stitches, plasters and bandages.

Vanessa: I love him very much. I don't want to hurt him by reporting him to the police.

Prudence: Truthfully speaking, do you think he loves you equally? *(There is a pause as Vanessa ponders over the question before speaking)*

Vanessa: I can't tell, but I can say he's trying.

Prudence: Then he has a long way to go.

Vanessa: He will get there one day and love me just as I do him.

Prudence: *(Heaves a sigh)* I don't see that happening anytime soon.

Vanessa: Before we moved in here, it was worse. The Lord is listening to my prayers and he's changing little by little.

Prudence: Well, I wonder how many terrible things you have to go through by the time the Lord changes his violent nature.

Vanessa: Very soon. My Prophet said that he saw a vision about my future. And it was full of bliss.

Prudence: And you believe that?

Vanessa: But I can't challenge a man of God.

Prudence: A man of God indeed. Are you not talking of the Prophet in that church down the next street? *(Vanessa gestures in the affirmative)* Herr, that Prophet is a fake! Don't you hear the stories about him and little girls? Under the cover of offering a helping hand to poor girls, they end up warming his bed.

Vanessa: Those are just rumours. You know that people have mouth diarrhoeas in this area.

Prudence: Vanessa, I won't gain anything from lying to you. Those rumours are true. I have been in this neighbourhood long before you came and I know what I'm talking about.

Vanessa: If you say so.

Prudence: I don't even think his prayer can go past the roofing of the church, not to talk about God hearing it.

Vanessa: Many people have testified at church that the Prophet's prayers have resulted in their childbirth breakthrough. So if his prayers can give me a child, my problems would be half solved.

Prudence: I won't be moved by the testimonies of people when I know the Prophet leads an evil life. You have to find a better way of changing Bright. This Prophet option will not help you one bit. Your husband is a bad man so you need to take action on him.

Vanessa: He is not entirely bad. You know, I sometimes cause it; I don't know why I always do something to provoke him.

Prudence: Look here, you may be the cause sometimes but that does not make his actions right. He may not like you for certain things you did or do, but he has no right to beat you. You must leave him. You must leave him so that he will learn to appreciate -

Vanessa: Stop it, Prudence. You want me, Mrs. Vanessa Adwoa Betoomu, to divorce my husband? So all along this is what you've been driving to eh? Bright was right about you; you are only good at spoiling other people's marriage. I shouldn't have started this conversation with you. What do you know about marriage and love? If you claim you know so much then get married. Find yourself a man and stop chasing men. I love my husband with all his flaws, JUST AS HE IS! *(There is a long pause after this outburst)*

Prudence: I'm sorry for meddling in your private affairs.

Vanessa: You must be.

Prudence: I thought I was offering a helping hand.

Vanessa: Thanks but I don't need it.

There is silence. Both characters are now fully engrossed in their various stage businesses. Suddenly, Bright comes in. He is in a very dirty blue overall and holding his tool bag.

Vanessa: Bright darling, you are home early. (*She takes the tool bag and places it by the table*) You're drunk. Did something go wrong at your workplace?

Bright walks into their bedroom UL. Prudence wears her wig and looks into the mirror to fix it properly. Meanwhile, Vanessa has resumed her seat to continue her cooking. Bright enters the stage with his overall buttons opened to his waist and revealing a well-built torso clad in a grey T-shirt. He paces about before Vanessa speaks.

Vanessa: (*Rising from her stool*) Sweetheart won't you tell me wha-

Bright: Don't "sweetheart" me. Can't you see I'm not in the mood for that?

Vanessa: The more reason why I should be worried Kwesi.

Bright: Right now, the only thing you should be concerned with is getting me food. I've visited the 'blue kiosk' and I'm already charged.

Vanessa: Please come and take a seat and tell me what is eating you up.

Bright: Nothing is eating me up and nothing can. I'm the one to do the eating.

[Whilst Vanessa and Bright are still talking, Prudence picks up her plastic chair and mirror and retires into her room SR.]

Vanessa: I hear. (*She opens the lid of the saucepan to check the content*) You'll soon do your eating. What happened today? You told me you'll never drink again.

Bright: You want me to stay hungry?

Vanessa: I never said that. I only wanted to know why -

Bright: Please get me my food and stop this fake concern of yours.

Vanessa: Why do you still use that word on me? I've changed. I'm a better person now.

Bright: Don't even start. Just get me my food?

Vanessa: Now?

Bright: YOU HEARD ME!

Vanessa: Let me get you a table. The food is almost ready.

Bright: Almost?

Vanessa: (*frustrated*) Kwesi, you're impossible!

Bright: Am I not demanding for something that is rightly due me as a husband? A good wife should know the need of her husband at every point in time.

Vanessa: And a good husband should at least call his wife when he's coming home earlier than the usual time.

Bright: Did you just insult me? Did you? (*He slaps Vanessa and she falls*) I should slap you twice for saying that. You're becoming too outspoken for my liking. Have you been talking to people I don't know? Have you? (*The now sobbing Vanessa gestures in the negative.*) You better be right. (*Pause*) Or, was it that whore, Prudence?

Vanessa: She's done nothing yet.

Bright: I said it. This morning it was Yaa and Kwame, now it is us. Why can't people in this house mind their own business? So she is planning to ruin our marriage too eh?

Vanessa: Not that.

Bright: Then what did she say? ... TELL ME.

Vanessa: Nothing important.

Bright slaps Vanessa again and her sobs grow louder. He even takes off one of Vanessa's slippers and uses it to beat her up. Kwame enters stage from his room UR with a table and a bowl and pays no attention to the fighting couple. He is moving in and out of his room and bringing out all that is needed in setting up supper as the couple are talking.

Bright: Can you ever stop lying? How many times have I warned you not to speak to that prostitute? What better advice can she give you other than trade your body for what you don't have? You see what Kwame is doing? Huh? That's what you should have done long time ago. Rather, you wasted time talking to

that shameless woman who has no respect for tradition and marriage.

Vanessa: *(Regaining her breath)* Why do you find pleasure in beating me?

Bright: The very day I found out you tricked me into this.. this marriage.

Vanessa: That was the only way we could be together. My parents didn't approve of our relationship.

Bright: But you could have at least planned with me first.

Vanessa: I'm sorry.

Bright: You should have told me that long before I found out your lie.

Vanessa: I was planning to.

Bright: You never finished planning?

Vanessa: I didn't know how to explain it to you.

Bright: But you certainly knew how to trick me into it

Vanessa: Since you found out, I've accepted my fault and I've apologised time and again.

Bright: Don't say it as if it's a virtue you showed. You had no option.

Vanessa: It won't happen again.

Bright: That's what you always say when I remind you every time about this. You made me believe you were pregnant so I must wed you as soon as possible. But here you are, five years and still barren. What's the good of you if you can't give me a child?

Vanessa: Children are gifts from God. In His own time He will do -

Bright: I don't have time for your bible studies.

He makes for the main exit. Vanessa stands up and sits by her coal pot. She checks the content in the saucepan on fire. Satisfied, she picks up the saucepan and then takes out some of the coal. She places the saucepan on the coal pot again.

All along, Kwame is still going in and out of his room as he is still setting up the table. Yaa enters the compound from the main entrance SL.

Yaa: Good evening.

Vanessa: Good evening.

Yaa: What is wrong with your husba - *(her words dies in her throat as she notices tears in Vanessa's eyes)* Vanessa, is everything alright?

Vanessa: Yes.

Yaa: You are crying.

Vanessa: *(wiping her tears)* Oh, it is because of the onions. Yes, I was cutting some onions.

Yaa: Don't lie. Are you hurt? Did he hurt you again?

Vanessa: Nothing serious. *(She picks the saucepan and leaves for her room UL. Yaa shrugs her shoulders. Kwame comes onto the stage with a spoon in a bowl of water.)*

Yaa: Are you not done yet?

Kwame: *(Counting the things he has set on the table to be sure everything is in place)* Napkin!

He runs in to get the napkin. Yaa sits down to taste the food. As she shoves a spoonful of rice in her mouth, she shrills, "Arrrh!" She spits it into the bowl of water. Kwame returns with the napkin in hand.

Kwame: Are you vomiting?

Yaa: *(wiping her mouth with the napkin)* Kwame, so simple rice and stew you can't prepare?

Kwame: What is it?

Yaa: Come and find out yourself. I'm not eating that food of yours.

Kwame: *(bewildered)* Oh!

Yaa: Yes. I'm going out to find a tasty food to eat and I warn you, you better not bother me in bed tonight. *(Yaa makes for the main exit)*

Kwame: (*Puzzled*) Ah! (*Trying to reason with her*) Don't say that. See, we can settle this peacefully. (*Yaa exits the compound. Shouting after her*) I'm even tired of pleasing you. Who do you think you are? I made you who you are today but now you want to belittle me. (*pause*) Tonight, we'll see if you paid the bride price or I did. We'll see who is the man.

Prudence: (*coming out of her room. She is well dressed*) Who is making you angry?

Kwame: That woman is annoying me.

Prudence: Your wife you mean?

Kwame: Of course. Nothing I do pleases her.

Prudence: Nothing would. But what did you do this time?

Kwame: I don't even know. She just told me to eat my own food. And that I should not bother her in bed tonight. What impudence! Is it her who married me or I did?

Prudence: And have you tasted the food?

Kwame: I'm not hungry.

(*Prudence tastes the food and shrieks loudly. She puts the morsel in the bowl filled with water*)

Kwame: (*alarmed*) What is it?

Prudence: Did you use sea water in preparing the food? (*Kwame gestures no*) It is terrible. Your wife deserves to complain.

Kwame: So must she come to such an outrageous conclusion because of this harmless blunder? This morning, I washed and dried our clothes and managed to complete a never ending to-do list she gave me. Just because I couldn't do one thing right does not mean I should be quiet in bed.

Prudence: Men.

Kwame: So you support her?

Prudence: Hell no. She has a point but she is taking it too far. I wish I could help you with your problems.

Kwame's face lightens up as a smirk replaces the worried look. He rubs his palms together whilst he is ogling at Prudence

Kwame: Really?

Prudence: Not that way Kwame. For heaven's sake you are a married man and you must keep true to your vow.

Kwame: She has punished me for too long.

Prudence: I wish Vanessa could say same about her husband.

Kwame: She is suffering more than I am. Why should she live in denial?

Prudence: I can't tell. I really want to help her.

Kwame: What better time could that have been than this evening?

Prudence: Do you want me to be beaten up? The last time I tried it, I received heavy punches.

Kwame: You don't say.

Prudence: So when it comes to fighting, I have decided not to help.

Kwame: You should have reported that good-for-nothing man to the police.

Prudence: That's exactly what you should do with your numerous problems. Report Yaa to the police.

Kwame: Well I can, but I don't want to be the talk of town. People will say that I'm not man enough to control my wife so I had to tell the police.

Prudence: (*laughs*) Whether you go to report her or not, people in this neighbourhood know you as Kwame Odwan and your wife as Yaa Marigyata.

Kwame: (*clenching his fist*) When I hear such news, it makes the beast in me rise up. I have to discipline Yaa one of these days.

Prudence: Please don't go and vent your anger on her. What has she done? People have eyes and they see what is happening.

Kwame: One of these days, I'll put her in her place. Vanessa will even be better off when I start.

Prudence: Exercise a little more patience.

Kwame: For how long? Had it not been you, I would have thrown her out of my room. I rented this place with my own money.

Prudence: And she has been taking care of you since you lost your job.

Kwame: I've had enough.

Prudence: Just keep your cool. I've been thinking about how you can change her and I came up with a plan that will do the trick for you. (*She whispers into Kwame's ears*)

Kwame: Are you sure this will work?

Prudence: It always works.

Kwame: If only she loves me.

Prudence: And I think she still does; it will work like magic. All we have to do now is to confirm her suspicion that you and I are dating. Then we spark the jealousy in her.

Kwame: And you think my wife will be concerned about having me back when her suspicion is confirmed?

Prudence: I know Yaa. She will fight for what is hers, especially when I have taken it forcibly from her.

Kwame: I pray it works.

Prudence: It sure would. First, you have to be attractive financially. That will catch her attention so that she will start treating you as the man that you are. You have to find a job.

Kwame: I've tried so many places but I'm not finding one.

Prudence: Where did you say you were working the other day?

Kwame: At an insurance company. I messed up big time so I was given the sack. Since then, my wife has been the man of the house. She calls the shot in everything that should be done.

Prudence: If she is not bossy and insulting, then I see nothing wrong with that.

Kwame: But you know very well how insulting she is. She gave you a taste of it this morning.

Vanessa: Hmmm, but I hope you have learnt from the mess that led to your sack.

Kwame: You don't have to say that twice.

Prudence: I hope you are telling me the truth.

Kwame: (*gesturing whilst saying this*) I cross my heart. (*A car horn is heard. Prudence checks the time on her wrist watch. The car horn is heard again*)

Prudence: That's my cue. (*She locks her door*) I'll see if my friends can help you find a good job.

Kwame: I'll be most grateful.

Prudence: (*handing her room keys to Kwame*) I'll be back by tomorrow. If she locks you out, you can sleep over in my room.

Kwame: Ok. Enjoy your night.

Prudence: I wish I could say same for you. Good evening.
[exits]

Kwame puts the keys in his pocket. When he begins clearing the table, Bright enters the compound.

Kwame: Bright, why do you treat your wife so?

Bright: *Masa*, chop your own business. Have you ever asked why your wife treats you so?

Kwame: You are a man. You must learn to treat women with soft gloves.

Bright: If that won't turn me into a *Kotobonku* like you, then I don't mind.

Kwame: (*getting angry*) Watch the words you use on me.

Bright: What can you do?

Kwame: (*livid*) Don't dare me.

Bright: So you are man enough to fight me today eh? (*Kwame momentarily stops clearing the table as if to fight, but he resumes clearing the dinner table.*) What is holding you back man? (*He breaks into a fit of laughter. Vanessa comes in and begins to clear her table as well*)

Bright: Adwoa, won't you mind me? (*Vanessa doesn't answer him. Bright holds her hand to stop her from carrying out her task*)
Didn't you see me?

Vanessa: I did.

Bright: And won't you say something?

Vanessa: What do you want me to say now? What did you do to me when I tried talking to you earlier? (*Kwame enters his room after clearing everything*)

Bright: (*softly*) Adwoa.

Vanessa: (*passionately*) You slapped me.

Bright: Adwoa, I didn't mean to do that.

Vanessa: But you did.

Bright: I know... I'm very sorry ok? (*Vanessa does not respond*)
You know you are partly to blame too. (*Vanessa makes a sound that suggests surprise*) Yes. If the food had been ready, all that wouldn't have happened.

Vanessa: I knew it will get to this. So it is my entire fault?

Bright: I didn't say that.

Vanessa: (*Sarcastically*) Of course you won't. You are too clever to say that.

Bright: (*In an all pleading voice*) Adwoa.

Vanessa: You are always in the right and I am always wrong.

Bright: Listen, I said I'm sorry and I mean it. I am terribly sorry for what I did. Please forgive me. (*Pause*) Pleeese. (*After a while, Vanessa smiles and hugs him to show reconciliation.*)

Vanessa: My love for you will always make me forgive you.

Bright: That's why I love you.

Vanessa: Will you eat now?

Bright: I wish I could.

Vanessa: You say you are sorry yet you refuse my food.

Bright: Adwoa, I'm very sorry but I don't want to eat your food tonight.

Vanessa: I don't understand.

Bright: You soon would. I want us to go out and have dinner at your favourite restaurant.

Vanessa: Really?

Bright: Really.

Vanessa: (*surprised*) You don't mean it.

Bright: I know you have been begging for us to go there since our first wedding anniversary. Now is the perfect time. (*Vanessa hugs him tightly*) Let's get dressed and leave. (*As the couple head towards their room, the lights fade out*)

SCENE THREE

The scene begins with Auntie Mary singing from inside her room. As she comes on stage, she is seen well dressed and holding a bible. Her joyous praises to God ceases when she realises how dirty the compound is.

Mary: *(Exasperated)* Aaaa, do I live with goats? Why can't people in this house obey simple instructions? *(Yaa enters the compound from her room. She is well dressed and prepared to go to church as well)*

Yaa: *Efiewura*, good morning. I was really enjoying your song *paa*.

Mary: *(Pleased)* Oh ok. I was doing my last practice before I get to church. Do you know that I am leading the choir today?

Yaa: I see. I'll have to join the choir one of these days. You have few members.

Mary: Can you sing? *(Yaa clears her throat and gives a short rendition of the song Auntie Mary was singing. Auntie Mary is awed by Yaa's melodious voice)*

Yaa: I used to be part of the school choir.

Mary: In fact, *Awurade* you are very merciful. No wonder you are up there and we are down here. Why do bad people have good things?

Yaa: *(Surprised)* Oh Auntie Mary.

Mary: Don't take it personal. I am not talking about you.

Yaa: You can say that to a child.

Mary: Well, I said bad people so if you think you are one of them then that is your own *palava*.

Yaa: I'm disappointed that a woman of your age can talk like this to someone who can be your child. *Panyin toto*, a grown-up without brains.

Mary: *Eii*, how dare you insult me?

Yaa: You've seen nothing yet.

Mary: *(warning Yaa by pointing and shaking a finger at her)*
Yaa! Yaa!

Yaa: How does it feel to have a dose of your own medicine?

Mary: (*Ignores Yaa's question*) Who is supposed to sweep this place? (*Yaa looks around as if trying to find out if another person is behind her*) It is you I'm talking to.

Yaa: And you expect me to answer?

Mary: Don't talk to me like that. Don't you know that the Bible and custom demand that you respect the elderly?

Yaa: And what is expected of the elderly? ... Rude behaviour?

Mary: *Herr Yaa!*

Yaa: I'm paying you back with interest. (*She sucks her teeth and enters her room UR*)

Mary: Is it me Yaa is talking to like that? (*Shouting in front of Yaa's door*) Yaa, if it was not for this Bible *paa*, I would teach you a lesson that you'd never forget. Bloody fool! Who do you take me for? If you don't know how to talk then don't talk to me. Swine. Are you my co-equal? (*Kwame opens the door UR and his clothing shows his readiness to go to church.*)

Kwame: *Efiewura*, good mor-

Mary: (*Firmly*) Save the courtesies Kwame. Look at how dirty this place is. What wrong have I done if I ask who is responsible for sweeping here this morning?

Kwame: You've done nothing wrong.

Mary: Yet your wife walked out on me. If nothing at all, she should respect me for my grey hair. That's what our customs teach. Or don't you have the picture of an elderly person in your room?

Kwame: Please don't take her behaviour to heart. Just let it go.

Mary: She talks and acts anyhow. That's very unladylike.

Kwame: You know how she is.

Mary: You have to really advise her. Else one of these days I'd report her to our Prophet.

Kwame: Please, forgive her.

Mary: If it were not that I am going to church *paa*, like you'd see the other side of me?

Kwame: I beg; this side alone is enough.

Mary: You know that I am not a difficult person.

Kwame: That's why I am pleading.

Mary: Starting from this morning, I won't allow your wife to treat me anyhow.

Kwame: *Efiewura*, it won't happen again.

Mary: (*expressing distrust*) *Apuu!* Don't I live here with you? The last time you begged me not to eject you because of her violent attitude towards me what happened the next day?

Kwame: Auntie Mary, I'm giving you my word; it won't happen again.

Mary: Yoo. So who is to sweep here?

Kwame: I think it is Prudence. She'll be in soon.

Mary: *Eiii*, this woman and her night business.

Auntie Mary is walking towards the main exit SL. Yaa opens the door UR. and begins to lock the door. Auntie Mary stops by the main exit when she notices that her water drum has not been closed. When she picks up the lid to close the drum, she realises that it has been used.

Mary: Who has used my water?

Yaa: (*Addressing Kwame*) Let's go.

Mary: Kwame, I say who used my water?

Kwame: *Efiewura*, you know that the tap has not been flowing for some weeks now so... maybe ... ermmm... because of that -

Mary: I don't need an explanation. I asked a simple question and I need an honest answer. Who used my water?

Yaa: Kwame, we are getting late.

Mary: (*To Yaa*) Don't you know the way to the chapel?

Yaa: Auntie Mary, we didn't use your water. Can I leave with my husband now?

Mary: Kwame, is it true? (*Kwame is scratching his head*)

Yaa: (*Swiftly pulling down Kwame's hand*) Of course it is.

Mary: Kwame, you are holding a bible, tell me the truth.
(*Kwame resumes the scratching of his head*)

Yaa: Kwame, what is wrong with you? Just tell her we didn't use it so that we can leave. (*Brief pause as the two women look inquisitively at Kwame*)

Kwame: I used the water this morning.

Yaa: You what?

Mary: I knew it.

Kwame: (*To Yaa*) I didn't mean to use it.

Yaa: But you did, and you failed to tell me this morning.

Mary: Kwame, I want the drum filled by the time I'm back.

Kwame: But *efiewura*, I can do that after church.

Yaa: Yes. We are almost late for the first service.

Mary: Who cares? Immediately after the sermon, I'll be back to check if you did. [*exit*]

Yaa: This woman is something else.

Kwame: So what do we do?

Yaa: We? Please say, what do I do? My dear, you have to fix your own problem.

Kwame: But you also used the water.

Yaa: Look at me well... Do you think I'll change and fill that thing for her before going to chapel?

Kwame: It's only fair that we fill it.

Yaa: Well, (*Looking for something in her bag*) if you want to do it go ahead. Here. (*She throws him their room key*) I'm taking the lead. [*exit*]

Kwame shakes his head and moves towards his room UR. As he is unlocking the door, Bright comes on stage from outside. He is steep in stupor.

Bright: Today be today...Whether you like or not, it will happen...*Ebeba* so live and coloured.

Kwame: *Abrantes*, at last you are back. Your wife has been looking for you for the past two weeks.

Bright: And so? Now you have become a woman eh? You like putting your nose in other people's business too much.

Kwame: If you will be a responsible man and stop drinking and chasing anything in skirt then I will stop talking about you.

Bright: *Kotobonku*, I say chop your own business.

Kwame: I told you never to use that word on me. You have turned into a *Salome* and instead of explaining your long absence you are calling me names. (*He enters his room*)

Bright: *Kotobonku*, what did you say? *Kotobonkueee*...come out and speak...come and let me put sense in your pawpaw head...when will you realise that you are a man and so you must behave as such. It is only women who talk like you just did. You are indeed a *Kotobonku*.

Vanessa comes out from her room UL. Vanessa is sharply dressed and holding a handbag. Compared to the previous scene, she is wearing a larger plaster above her left brow. Upon seeing Bright, she drops her handbag and rushes to him.

Bright: Leave me alone.

Vanessa: (*After smelling the pungent scent of alcohol*) You are drunk.

Bright: Where are you going?

Vanessa: To church.

Bright: Church by this time?

Vanessa: But it is still morning.

Bright: Don't lie to me.

Vanessa: I won't. Will you go?

Bright: You want to kill me eh?

Vanessa: No. It's rather the opposite.

Bright: I don't want it. I have better people who pray for me.

Vanessa: Where have you been for the past two weeks? Where did you go? I have looked for you at all the drinking bars around but I didn't find you.

Bright: I've never been to the drinking bars since I left home. I went to seek the face of the Lord so that we can have the child you are failing to bear.

Vanessa: I should have known. You went to that fake Bishop of yours. What does he want again? I'm tired of following his instructions.

Bright: Why should you call my pastor fake? Have I ever called your pastor fake?

Vanessa: None of his prophecies are true. At first, he prophesied that, if I stop visiting my parents and stop talking to my friends, I will be pregnant. I am doing all these but we still don't have a child to call our own. Do you continue to believe in such a pastor?

Bright: Why not.

Vanessa: If he is able to stop you from drinking, then I might believe him. Or, would he command a child into my stomach?

Bright: *Oo so for the weeks I've been away you have grown long wings eh?*

Vanessa: It has always been there.

Bright: See how you are talking back to me. I will pluck the proud wings for you today. *(He makes an attempt to hold Vanessa, but she shoves him off.)*

Vanessa: I won't entertain this attitude of yours this morning. I'm going to chapel. *(She picks up her handbag from the ground)*

Bright: *(Quickly standing up and getting in her way)* You won't go anywhere but inside.

Vanessa: Stop the joke.

Bright: Do I look like a comedian to you? You better go inside and get ready for me. *(Loosening his trousers' belt)* I have to do what I came here for; making a baby on the Lord's Day.

Vanessa: After roaming, you come home drunk and you want me? Forget it.

Bright: You lie bad; whether you like it or not, it will happen.

Vanessa: Not today. After sleeping with your numerous girlfriends, you come back home and demand for what? Don't make me furious than I am. (*Vanessa struggles to get past her drunk husband but she couldn't*)

Bright: Today be today.

Vanessa: Please, let me go to chapel.

Bright: I won't keep long.

Vanessa: I'm already late.

Bright: If you had stopped arguing with me, we would have been done by now.

Vanessa: But I'm tired.

Bright: The more reason why you have to stay behind and have fun with me.

Vanessa: But I'm not in the mood.

Bright: Ok. I will let you go if you can do one thing for me.

Vanessa: What do you want done?

Bright: Just go and fix me breakfast.

Vanessa: Is that all?

Bright: I swear that is all. Let's go inside so that I eat.

Vanessa enters the room UL followed closely by Bright. Soon afterwards, there are shouts and moans from Vanessa. Stage lights alternate between high and low and finally blacks out when Vanessa screams loudest.

Seconds later, after the yelling has subsided, the stage is fully lit. Bright comes out of his room, zips up and buckles his belt. He throws a shirt over his singlet-clad-thorax and exits SL. Almost immediately, Prudence enters the compound from the main exit SL. She moves towards her room and as she unlocks her door, Kwame, who has completely changed his

clothing, comes in holding two buckets full of water. As he puts down the buckets, Prudence turns to see who is there.

Prudence: Good morning Kwame. No church today?

Kwame: Yes. I have to fill this drum. (*He pours the content of one bucket into the drum*)

Prudence: So you mean Auntie Mary couldn't wait for you to come and fill it after church?

Kwame: She won't even listen to my pleas. And she was asking for you because you are responsible for sweeping the compound this week.

Prudence: Then I better finish it before she comes.

She enters her room. Kwame pours out the water in the second bucket into the drum. Prudence returns with a broom having left the big bag and high heeled shoes inside.

Kwame: Did you meet Bright here?

Prudence: I did, but just outside the main entrance.

Kwame: With Vanessa?

Prudence: Don't be silly. When was the last time you saw the two of them walk out together, especially to church?

Kwame: I believe they used to when they first married; so there is always a second time.

Prudence: Well well. (*Prudence begins to sweep and Kwame is knocking on Vanessa's door UR. He tries the lock but the door won't budge.*) Maybe Vanessa left before Bright did.

Kwame: That could only be true if Bright didn't beat up Vanessa and prevent her from going to church.

Prudence: And you looked on unconcerned.

Kwame: Not really. I was inside when I heard them fighting and shouting. By the time I came out, they were both inside and the door was locked just like it is now.

Prudence: That man ought to be locked behind bars. If you don't love your wife, you still don't have the right to hit her.

Kwame: But some wives intentionally provoke the beast in us.

Prudence: Don't shield him Kwame. Beating her up can't solve the problem.

Kwame: But it would shut her up.

Prudence: Temporarily, yes. But over time, she would rebel against you. I can see Vanessa doing that if only she would listen to sound advice.

Kwame: Well, women usually abuse men with their mouth and men reply with their fist.

Prudence: If someone wrongs you and you go down the same lane with that person, then you are a bigger fool.

Kwame: Not in all cases. It depends.

Prudence: I don't think so. There are so many ways in correcting your wife or your husband other than resorting to retaliation.

Kwame: Are there?

Prudence: The police, the family of your spouse, pastors, marriage counsellors and many others.

Kwame: All these avenues are too slow to resolve issues.

Prudence: Better than revenging yourself.

Kwame: Yeah right.

Prudence: Then why don't you fight your wife?

Kwame: Maybe I might.

Prudence: You love her so much to do that.

Kwame: So you'd rather Vanessa endure her hardships?

Prudence: Well, marriage is a commitment so it is not wrong for her to love her spouse better than herself. That should be the ideal. She can also choose to always take her marital problems to God, the manufacturer of marriage, for maintenance. But don't forget that we live in a country where there are customs, rules and laws and we have to abide by those regarding human relationships.

Kwame: Well spoken, but it isn't easy to walk the talk.

Prudence: Nothing comes easy.

Kwame: Sometimes I wonder why marriages have to always face these problems.

Prudence: That's because we are simply humans, fallible.

Kwame: So if we choose to love ourselves in spite of our faults, then we should not react when our faults provoke each other?

Prudence: Exactly. That is the ideal but we are governed by rules and so though you forgive your spouse, she must face the law if she has in any case gone against it.

Kwame: How possible? The same person who has forgiven takes the spouse to court?

Prudence: If you are a good Christian, you should understand. In Genesis, God tells us to obey rules in the community.

Kwame: Genesis?

Prudence: Galatians... No... Numbers. Yes, it is in Numbers.

Kwame: (*Sarcastic*) You sure know your Bible.

Prudence: I know it's somewhere in the Bible.

Kwame: You sure do.

Prudence: I'm better than some church goers who can't even find the key text of the preacher until they check the content list.

Kwame: Even though you are not familiar with the books of the Bible, you'll make a good marriage counsellor. Why don't you try setting up a consultancy to earn good money?

Prudence: If anyone needs a well-paying job, it is you.

Kwame: True. Were you able to convince him to pick me for the job?

Prudence: I tried.

Kwame: I had a feeling I don't stand a chance.

Prudence: But he is willing to take you if you can impress him.

Kwame: So?

Prudence: If you do well with the interview, you'd be employed.

Kwame: I'm very grateful Prudence. How can I repay you?

Prudence: Don't worry about that. Your concern should be when our plan will come to fruition.

Kwame: So when is the interview?

Prudence: This Monday. Please don't disgrace me oo!

Kwame: I won't. I will nail the interview one time. (*Yaa enters the compound from SL.*)

Prudence: (*Upon seeing Yaa*) I pray so SWEETHEART.

Kwame: (*bemused*) Sweetheart?

Yaa: Kwame!

Kwame: (*turning around*) Yaa...you are back so soon.

Yaa: Do you call two hours soon? (*Prudence resumes sweeping the compound*) Prudence, what did you just tell my husband?

Prudence: It wasn't for your ears.

Yaa: Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You flirt with my husband in my absence and you say what?

Prudence turns away to restart the sweeping. This irritates Yaa so she gets a hold of Prudence and it turns into a tussle. Kwame moves to stop the women who are yelling insults at each other but he receives a fair share of the beating.

Kwame look at me carefully. Apart from being used several times by different men, what at all does this public bowl have that I don't have?

Prudence: You better watch your mouth.

Yaa: You better watch how you behave around my husband.

Kwame: (*Addressing Prudence*) She is sorry.

Yaa: (*Realisation dawning on her*) Ahhh, so you now care more about her feeling than mine eh? (*Prudence begins sweeping again*)

Kwame: It is not like that.

Yaa: Don't touch me. What is it then? (*Silence*) So because of her, you didn't bother to come to church after filling the drum.

Kwame: It's complicated.

Yaa: (*Sarcastic*) Of course it is. Torn between the lily and rose huh?

Kwame: No. It is you I have married and that should tell you where my heart is.

Yaa: That's not enough.

Kwame: So what else do you want me to do for you besides all that I have been doing?

Yaa: Is it so difficult to stop entertaining this devil, especially in my absence?

Kwame: She's nothing like what you think.

Yaa: There you go again. You claim your heart is with me yet you don't even want to please me.

Kwame: For how long should I please you? ...Always? I'm tired of making you happy. Things must change and it is starting today.

Yaa: You don't mean it.

Kwame: Do I look like a clown?

Yaa: I will argue with you no further. It will soon be dark and I am certain you will come back on bended knees begging for forgiveness. (*As she moves towards the door UR, the lights fade out*)

SCENE FOUR

The scene opens with Vanessa seated on a stool by a bowl on fire. She is wearing a dress and has a bandage around her head. She is carrying her chin in her palms. She stands up and begins to say a prayer to God.

Vanessa: My father in heaven, I don't know how to say this. But, did you really create humans to marry? I can't help but to think whether people genuinely experience happy marriages. Could it not be that they are all a bunch of liars? I thought marriage was the best thing that could happen to anybody, especially me. But...well, I guess I'm very wrong. I love Kwesi with all my heart yet he doesn't return my love. I always try my possible best to please him even if I am uncomfortable but he never appreciates it. He only remembers the bad that I do to him as if I'm not capable of any good. I've said all the prayers there is to say but my plight worsens by the day. I must confess that I'm tired of praying to you about this. I'm tired of having to stay away from work because my husband has been beating me. I'm tired of hiding the scars of his brutality under heavy make-ups and lies. I'm tired of keeping true to the marriage vow when I know he doesn't. I'm sick of living in the same room with him! (*Silence*) May be, I have to listen to Prudence and leave my matrimonial home. After all, I won't lose anything if I walk away. (*Pause*) No. No. He can find me out wherever I go and maybe kill me. Yes, Kwesi is so heartless when he's very angry; he can be competent in carrying out the worst evil. I have to find another way of preventing him from harming me again. What should I do with this domestic dictator? ... I know counsellors and the family won't be of any help because I've tried them, not once but a couple of times, and it yielded no positive results. Well, I think it is time to report him to the -

Bright bursts in from the door UL. The door bangs loudly after him and that interrupts Vanessa's prayer.

Bright: (*Almost screaming*) Did you not hear me call? (*Vanessa gestures in the negative*) What is wrong with you nowadays? Are you getting deaf or dumb?

Vanessa: Kwesi, what is it you want?

Bright: Is the water ready for my bath?

Vanessa: But you know I just started.

Bright: Let me know as soon as you are done. (*He exits through the main exit SL*)

Prudence is whistling a popular tune as she comes in from her room SR. She is wearing a dress that leaves less to the imagination. She stops whistling and drops her bag when she notices Vanessa.

Prudence: Vanessa, what happened?

Vanessa: I never thought he could go this far.

Prudence: I told you he is capable of anything. Have you informed Sammy... my friend in the police service I told you about?

Vanessa: Not yet.

Prudence: Do you still have his card?

Vanessa: I think so.

Prudence: What are you waiting for?

Vanessa: (*She holds her head as she shouts in pain*) Ai!

Prudence: It must be your head. Have you seen a doctor?
(*Silence*) Maybe you have to rest for a while.

Vanessa: I have to get this ready for Kwesi.

Prudence: Ah! Are you still thinking about Bright in this state?

Vanessa: I can't help it. What won't he do to me if he returns and finds out that I'm not here?

Prudence: Stop killing yourself for a man whose love for you is in words but not actions. After what he has put you through, he should not stress you if he cares so much about you.

Vanessa: You don't understand.

Prudence: Well, maybe I don't want to understand. If he tries to beat you today, I'll have no option than to carry out my perpetual threat of reporting him to the police. For how long will you be his doormat? I think it is high time you asserted your right. (*Vanessa tries to speak but Prudence won't let*

her) No more excuses. Come, let's go inside. *(She helps Vanessa and they exit through the door UL)*

Yaa enters the stage from the main entrance SL.

Yaa: Kwame! Kwame! *(When she gets to her door UR, she finds out that the door is locked. She knocks)* Kwame, are you in there? *(She knocks again)* Kwame! Where could he be?

She pauses and then goes to knock Prudence's door SR. There is no response. She returns to her door, unlocks it and enters. Simultaneously, Prudence comes out from UL and goes to pick her bag. She looks through her bag and brings out her phone. She is dialling a number as she walks towards the coal pot to have a look at what Vanessa has put on fire. Kwame enters the stage from the main entrance SL. He is in a suit.

Prudence: I was just about calling you because you have kept too long. How did the interview go?

Kwame: It was simply perfect. The panel was impressed so I was told to start work today.

Prudence: Good news. And is the salary as handsome as you look?

Kwame: It is more beautiful than you are.

Prudence: Congratulations. *(She hugs Kwame whilst they are unaware that Yaa is looking at them.)*

Kwame: I owe it all to you Prudence. Thank you very much.

Prudence: Don't mention it.

Kwame: Looking at how Yaa behaved last night, don't you think it is time to let her know our little secret?

Yaa: *(Clapping her hands and walking towards them.)* Well done o! Well done! Kwame, will you now accept that I have caught you red-handed cheating?

Kwame: I didn't know you were in.

Yaa: I am not in the least surprised. When you are with that shameless whore you call a friend, you lose count of time!

Kwame: Don't create a scene.

Yaa: It is you who started the scene. I just joined the scene as another character.

Kwame: Yaa (*Prudence holds him and gestures that he shouldn't speak*)

Yaa: So you now listen to her more than you do me eh? Answer me Kwame? You see, your guilt is preventing you from speaking.

Prudence: Yaa, it is not like you think.

Yaa: Why should I think differently from what I see? Kwame, just admit that you have something doing with her.

Kwame: She has always been my friend and nothing more.

Yaa: Yeah right.

Kwame: In one breath you love me yet you don't trust me.

Yaa: I am no fool Kwame. Not only do you sleep in her room lately but you also keep secrets. Only God knows what more you do behind my back.

Prudence: Nothing more than friends would do.

Yaa: Oh please.

Kwame: Yaa, she is right. You have to believe us.

Yaa: Us, you say? How on earth can I trust her when I suspect she is taking you away from me?

Prudence: *Herr* Yaa, look at me properly and answer me. Do I look like someone who will desperately need something from him?

Yaa: So he is after you.

Prudence: No. I want you to understand that you are holding unto baseless suspicions.

Yaa: (*Shouting*) Oooo! Ashawo! First class prostitute! Where is everybody? Come and see Prudence at her best. (*Prudence almost fights Yaa but for the timely intervention of Kwame. The ladies hurl insults at each other.*)

Kwame: ENOUGH! ENOUGH! Yaa, don't be hysterical.

Yaa: Am I the only one?

Prudence: Yes. (*Kwame raises his hands to stop Prudence from speaking any further*)

Kwame: (*To Yaa*) But you started it all.

Yaa: Don't let us go back. It is you who started everything here. Had you stopped being friends, like you claim you are, all this would not be happening.

Kwame: But you have to believe me that Prudence and I are simply friends.

Prudence: Nothing more, nothing less.

Yaa: You wish.

Prudence: What at all do I need from your husband that I can't get elsewhere? Is it money, job or what lies down there?

Yaa: Then why do you give my husband your bedroom keys and keep secrets with him?

Kwame: Yaa, I sleep in her room because you lock me out and since Prudence is always not home in the evening, what wrong will it be to be there?

Yaa: What about the secret and the big hug I just saw?

Kwame: It is nothing serious to worry your head about. Just trust me.

Yaa: Stop talking about trust Kwame. When I asked you to carry out the usual chores did you?

Kwame: But I always do. So your question should rather be why I couldn't do it today.

Yaa: I care less about how the questioning should be like. I just need answers.

Kwame: Well, after a successful interview this morning, I have secured a job.

Yaa: (*laughing*) Stop the joke man.

Kwame: Do I look it?

Yaa: (*Surprised*) You mean to say you've secured a what?

Kwame: And I was given an advance pay that could buy us a new apartment and still have some change.

Yaa: (*Elated*) You don't mean it!

Kwame: I do. All thanks go to Prudence.

Yaa: (*Shocked*) To who?

Kwame: Prudence of course.

Yaa: (*Disgusted*) Her?

Kwame: She helped me to land this job.

Prudence: That's what the entire secret is about.

Yaa: (*There is a total change of mood*) Oh I see. (*Her fingers roam through her hair as if searching for something in her hair*) Ermmm...ermmm... Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: (*Still scratching her hair*) Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: Yes?

Yaa: Kwame Kwame.

Kwame: (*Impatient*) Out with it Yaa. What do want to say?

Yaa: Errmm...Kwame... you are looking great today. (*Kwame looks at Prudence and the two characters share a smile. Unashamed and unperturbed, Yaa continues*) In fact you are looking awesome and rich. What will you eat tonight? Just say anything and it shall be done. I am at your service.

Kwame: I'm fine.

Yaa: (*Disappointed*) You can't say that.

Kwame: I just did.

Prudence: Kwame, be a gentleman and stop what you are doing. Your poor wife is ashamed and sorry. If she wasn't she wouldn't make you this offer.

Kwame: I wonder why you are doing this for her. You know she never liked you. Let her speak for herself.

Prudence: Obviously, she doesn't know how to go about it. (*To Yaa*) Right?

Yaa: Yes. Prudence is right. Please listen to her.

Kwame: So I can listen to her now?

Yaa: You have my permission as well as my fullest support to do so. Prudence is a very good woman.

Kwame: Not a whore or husband snatcher?

Yaa: You know she is nothing like that.

Kwame: Yet you called her names.

Yaa: I was blind but now I see clearly.

Kwame: So now you are a changed -

Prudence: Please Kwame, just let her be. All that she did is in the past now.

Kwame: All that name calling, insults and the rest?

Prudence: Don't forget your wedding vows. You told me you love her. Now is the time to prove that. Just forgive her and accept her new self. (*Yaa kneels and is about to beg when Kwame holds her up*)

Kwame: There is no need for that. Get up. I know we wrong each other but I think it has come to an end. (*They hug each other. Prudence clears her throat and Kwame and Yaa part*)

Prudence: This calls for celebration.

Yaa: Thank you very much Prudence. I'm so grateful.

Prudence: Don't mention it.

Yaa: You have been a real friend to my husband. How can I ever repay the debt of gratitude I owe you? Forgive me for my earlier rude but wrong remarks about you.

Prudence: Don't worry. What you did is natural. I would have been surprised if your reaction was less than what you did.

Yaa: It never crossed my mind that you can... you can be of great help you know.

Prudence: The good old cliché has it that appearances are deceptive. Many people shun me because they are not close to me.

Yaa: I won't anymore. (*To Kwame*) I'm starving.

Kwame: So what are we having for dinner?

Yaa: There are some foodstuffs so I'll go to the kitchen and -

Kwame: I think we have to go to the best restaurant in town and enjoy ourselves.

Yaa: You know I don't earn much. Can you afford it?

Kwame: Have you soon forgotten that I am the newest employed person in this house?

Yaa: But let's not waste your money on such petty things.

Kwame: Just a night of expensive spending won't kill us.

Prudence: I agree. You guys should just stop talking and leave.

Yaa: Are you not coming along?

Prudence: I wish I could but Vanessa needs my help. You know her husband is nasty.

Kwame: I hope he doesn't devour you.

Prudence: He dares not.

Auntie Mary enters the stage from the main entrance SL. Yaa and Kwame happily pass her by and exit through the main exit of the house.

Mary: They say miracles happen but I never thought it could happen under my roof. God has prevailed and the devil has lost.

Prudence: You better stop testing my patience.

Mary: Have I mentioned your name?

Prudence sucks her teeth and Mary replies in like manner. Mary leaves for her room UC. Bright comes on stage from outside and sees Prudence checking the saucepan on the coal pot. She picks a fan and begins to fan the fire in the coal pot.

Bright: Where is my wife?

Prudence: Did you leave her under my watch?

Bright: I'd be crazy if I did. But let me warn you for the hundredth and last time... keep your distance from my marriage and from that coal pot. I am not a friendly person.

Prudence: I will also be crazy if I thought otherwise about you.

Bright: Prudence, you are playing with fire.

Prudence: You can't threaten me, ok? I will report you to the police about how you treat your wife and people who try to help her.

Bright: Just move away from here.

Prudence: And why should I? Your wife wants me here. Or don't you want the water anymore?

Bright: I have to strangle you for disobeying my orders.

Prudence: Don't even try it.

Bright: Vanessa! Vanessa! *(There is no response so he moves to his door UR and bangs it.)* Vanessa, you better come out this moment before I come in for you!

Prudence: *(Shouting orders to Vanessa)* Don't come out! He can't do anything to you so long as I am here! *(Bright tries opening the door but he realises that it is locked)*

Bright: Open the door! You better listen to me else you will have a shock of your life today!

Prudence: You would rather be shocked today if you don't behave yourself. All I have to do is to call a client of mine who is a police.

Bright angrily pounces on Prudence but Prudence is faster and escapes. They begin to go in circles.

Bright: I am going to beat you till you look like you have been stung by bees.

Prudence: You can't. I will over power you.

Bright: *(Taunting Prudence)* If you are the woman you claim you are, stop moving and face me.

Suddenly Bright quickens his pace and Prudence starts shouting. By the time Bright lays hold of Prudence, Auntie Mary has come out of her room UC and so has Vanessa.

Vanessa: Kwesi!

Mary: Would you two stop what you are doing?!

Prudence: He started it.

Bright: I warned you.

Vanessa: (*Calming Bright down*) It is alright Kwesi.

Mary: (*To Prudence*) Why can't you allow others to have their peace of mind in this house?

Prudence: But I have done nothing wrong. I was only helping Vanessa to get water ready for Bright.

Mary: Are you his second wife? Sometimes you need to learn your place in this house. Have you learned to control your appetite for many men?

Bright: Say some for me *efiewura*.

Mary: And you too Bright, why can't you exercise patience when dealing with women?

Bright: It is none of your business.

Mary: The fights and quarrels in this house are up to here (*indicating her neck*) and I can't take it any longer. I know I have my own flaws but I think time is ripe to put things straight to you all. I am the eldest person in this house and the owner of this house too. As such, I won't sit idle and allow you little ones to turn things upside down. (*To Bright and Vanessa*) Are you the only married people in this neighbourhood? And will you be the first or last to experience marital problems? Aren't you mature enough to deal with your problems without causing harm and pain to each other?

Bright: Please, I know you as my landlady not a marriage counsellor. If it were light or water bills, I would have listened to you because that is what you are good at.

Mary: If you were close to me I would have given you a knock on the head.

Vanessa: There is no need for that.

Mary: (*Expressing shock*) What?!

Prudence: (*Expressing surprise*) Vanessa?!

Bright: Thank you my wife. Give it to them.

Vanessa: There is no need because I have called the Police to come and take him away.

Bright: Me? You must be crazy.

Vanessa: That is what I initially thought too. For over five years, I convinced myself that I could tolerate, if not change, this abusive attitude of yours. But now I realise the truth in the saying that man cannot change another man.

Bright: This is Prudence speaking not you. I can't believe my eyes and ears. We vowed to stay together no matter what. Don't tell me you don't remember.

Mary: She never vowed not to report you to the Police. Did she?

Bright: But -

Vanessa: No buts Kwesi. You have pushed me too hard and for too long. I have to react.

Bright: This talk sounds like serpent language to me. Have you so soon forgotten the Bible which you hold dear?

Vanessa: The Bible does not prevent us from reporting wrongdoers to the necessary authority for proper action.

Prudence: As a matter of fact, the bible sanctions her very actions today. She has suffered too long in silence.

Bright: You better listen to me Vanessa. These women are leading you the wrong way.

Mary: And which direction are you leading her in your marriage?

Bright: I am sure Auntie Mary never got married because of her insubordinate nature.

Mary: (*Threateningly*) Masa, Masa, don't make me fume.

Bright: As for this one here, the least said about her the better.

Prudence: I would rather remain as I am than to be in a marriage such as yours. You know what? I was once married to a man who treated me badly but Bright is even worse than my ex.

Bright: Don't listen to her.

Vanessa: Kwesi, I have no choice but to listen to her now. I risked it all for you; from the very beginning, I chose you over my family. I had to lie to the best parents I could ever have in my life to get married to you. Why? Because I thought we had a good future together. I thought our marriage will end up quietening the people who didn't want us married for we will live happily ever after. But, I now realise it is a wishful thinking.

Bright: It isn't. We can work things out because I still love you.

Vanessa: Love? A love that exists in your words is all you've been giving me. Your actions don't even show the kind of love you profess for me.

Mary: Exactly.

Bright: Auntie Mary, don't muddy the waters. (*He moves towards Auntie Mary but Prudence stands between them*).

Mary: (*Starts throwing punches in the air as if about to start a boxing bout*) Allow that terrorist to come. (*Vanessa calms Bright down when she softly holds his hand*) Just allow him I say. I will discipline him like my very own child. I used to be a boxer in my youth.

Bright: (*Addressing Vanessa*) Adwoa, don't be fooled by these people. Times are hard that's why I act so. Who among you here has not experienced tough times in marriages and relationships?

Vanessa: But I am tired of being manhandled Kwesi.

Prudence: You have endured for too long my sister.

Mary: What he does to you is against the laws of the land and it is good you called the police.

Bright: (*exasperated*) Now, enough of the police nonsense. If they will be here, they would have come long ago. Will you get my bath water ready? I need to feel fresh.

Prudence: See man.

Vanessa: You can help yourself.

Mary: That's right. Let him do it himself because he is done tossing you about.

Bright: Forgive me, I don't understand you Vanessa.

Vanessa: Please forgive me Kwesi but I also can't explain myself any further.

Bright: Need I remind you that I am your lawfully wedded husband to whom you owe explanations?

Vanessa: Need I also remind you that I am your lawfully wedded wife to whom you deserve to at least treat properly?

Bright: *Herr* Vanessa! So you now have mouth to throw my question back at me *eh*?

Prudence: Let her be.

Mary: You better not try to harm her because the police are on their way.

Bright: Ok. (*He pours the hot content from the sauce pan into a bucket*) Well, if the police have to catch me, then they need proof of your lies.

He attempts throwing the hot water on Vanessa, but the sirens of the police are heard almost immediately. Out of panic, Bright stops his act and begins running up and down in search of a hiding place. The lights fade into darkness.

GLOSSARY

1. *wai* ok?
2. *Wahala* trouble/problem
3. *Kotobonku* a man who acts like a woman
4. *Efiewura* land lord
5. *Owura* Mr.
6. *Oyiwa* I said it
7. *awoshia* a lady who spends the night in another person's (usually a man) room other than hers
8. *hooho* shame on you
9. *eye asem o* it is a serious problem
10. *Herr* Hey
11. *Odwan* Sheep
12. *Marigyata* A woman who is abusive to people around her, usually her spouse
13. *Awurade* God
14. *Panyin toto* An adult who is foolish
15. *Apuu* Forget it
16. *Yoo* I hear
17. *Ebeba so* It will happen
18. *Abrantee* Gentleman
19. *Ashawo* Prostitute

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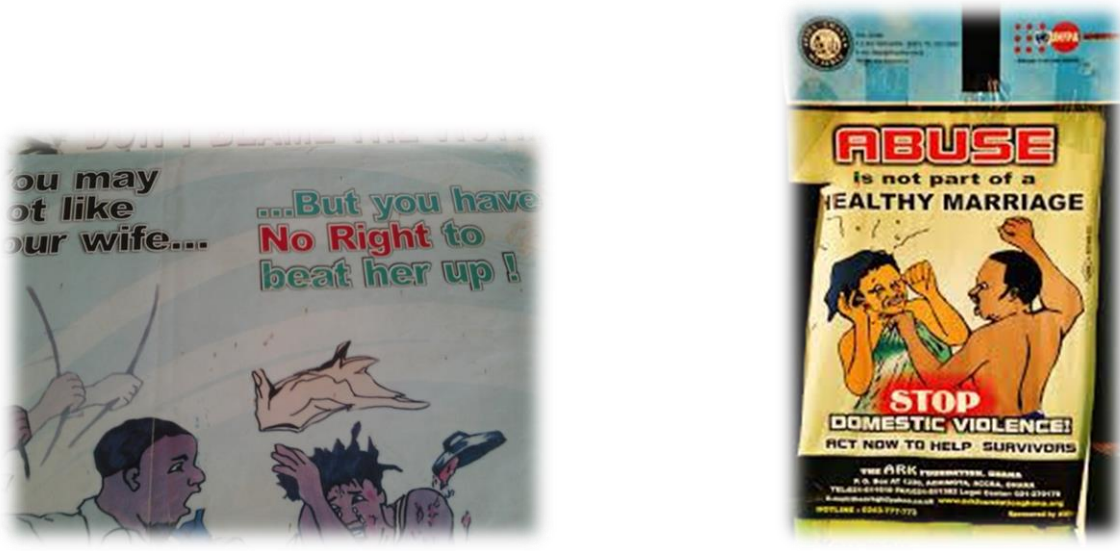
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APPENDIX A

Some pictures used by DOVVSU officials in sensitisation programmes



APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introductory remark

Thank you for granting me this interview on domestic violence.

QUESTION: Can you please explain to me what domestic violence is?

QUESTION: How would you classify the causes of domestic violence? Economic, social, religious, etc.

QUESTION: Would you agree that there are signs that could tell if a spouse or an intimate relation could be a potential perpetrator of domestic violence? If yes, what are those signs and how can a prospective victim/survivor identify them?

QUESTION: What could account for the rise in domestic violence statistics in Ghana?

QUESTION: What could be the reasons why victims/survivors of domestic violence do not report their ordeal to the appropriate quarters for redress?

QUESTION: How can we (as a nation and individuals) better improve on, if not add to, the existing ways (like DOVVSU, marriage counsellors, etc) of curbing domestic violence in the country?