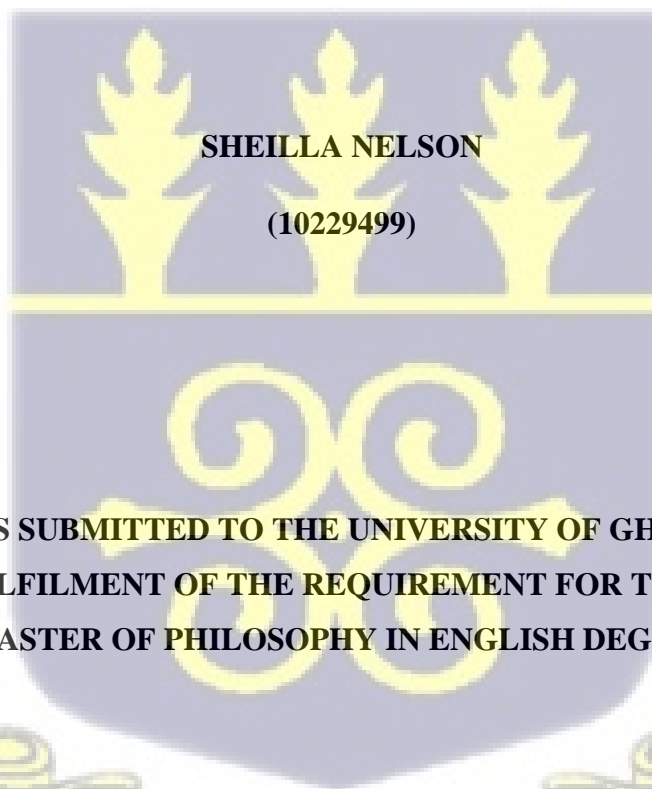


DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

**WHEN WOMEN REFUSE TO ACCEPT WATER IN HONEY'S STEAD:
DIALOGIC GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN SELECTED GA PROVERBS AND
CONTEMPORARY CHORAL SONGS.**



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH DEGREE**

DECLARATION

I, Sheilla Nelson, the author of this thesis, do hereby declare that this thesis, with the exception of the cited references, is the result of my own research undertaken under supervision, and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.



Signature:

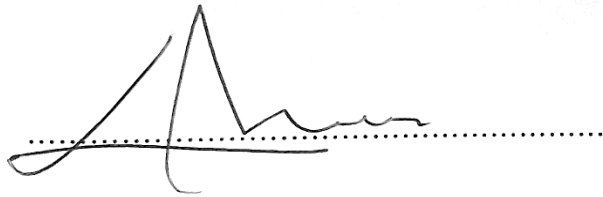
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CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana.



Date: *July 27, 2022*

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Date: July 26, 2022.....

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to
the memory of my Father, Mr. Ali Nelson;
the people of Tabom and Otublohum, and all of Ga Mashi;
and to all Ga-Danme people.



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Firstly, and above all, I am deeply and infinitely thankful to God for His gifts and goodness, and for His unfailing presence and strength for every step of this journey, one that has not been easy but is altogether worth it.

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Nyɔŋmɔ ajɔɔ nyɛ fɛɛ, ni Edro nyɛ kɛ hewalɛ kɛ walasɛtsɛlɛ, jɔɔmɔi kɛ dromɔ-nikeenii srɔtoi babaaoo.

ABSTRACT

It is well established in scholarship that in many Ghanaian cultures, gender representations in proverbs and folkloric songs are largely unequal and negative against females. Apart from there not being relatively much research on the subject in relation to the Ga people, a lot of said scholarship is often in subject areas that do not make for a focused, thorough and nuanced study on the subject. And often when research is directly and entirely centered on the subject, the theoretical framework and or dialectical underpinnings of the study, and consequently its direction and outcome(s), are not exactly consistent with the epistemological contexts and cultural realities of the ethnic groups to which the proverbs and song are indigenous.

Using an adaptation of Bakhtin's imagination of Dialogue, together with the *kasantwi* (indirection) principle and the proverb-name of a Ga *sama* (symbol), this study suggests four patterns of gender construction in Ga socio-philosophical culture as is evident in Ga proverbs and folkloric songs the kind that Ga music troupe Wulomei popularize(d). Each of the four patterns has a corresponding implication, an outcome. Per the study's Dialogic imagination, and more importantly, per the dominant trend of gender representation in the selected Ga proverbs and songs, all four outcomes are generally biased against the female gender.

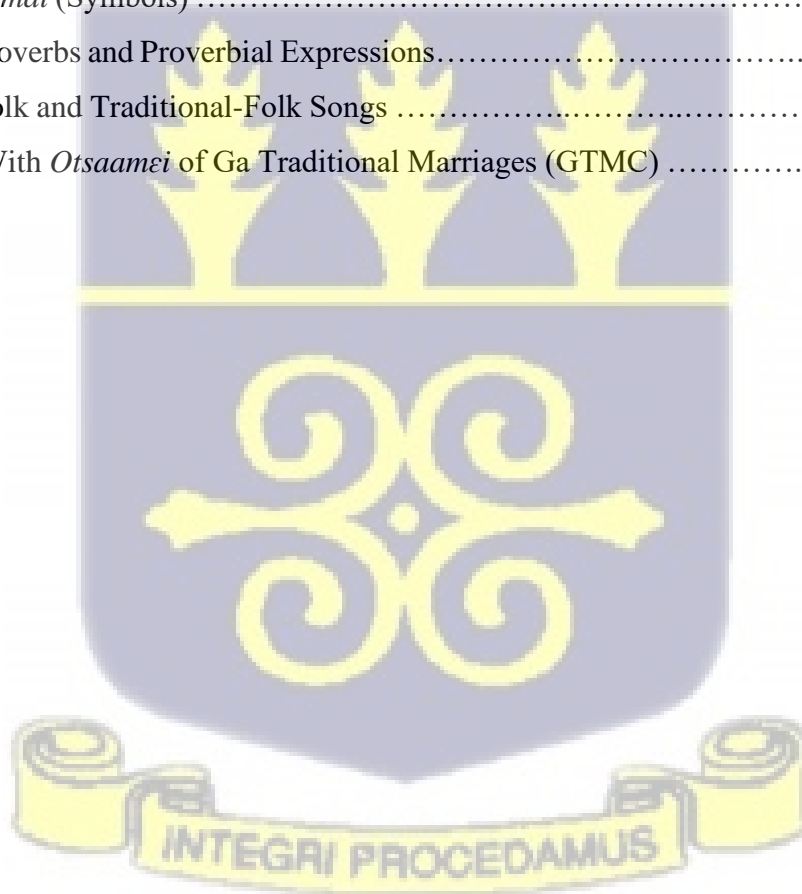


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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW: This chapter is an overview of the research, its key contents and core argument. In the following order, this chapter consists of five (5) parts: Title of the Study, Background to the Study, Introduction to the Study, Source of Data, and Organization of (the) Research. The Background of the Study outlines the nature of gender representations as seen in some African, Ghanaian, and particularly Ga socio-cultural, and to some extent, philosophical imagination. The Introduction to the Study includes the Purpose of the Study, Statement of Problem, Scope of the Study, Thesis Statement, Research Questions, Research Objectives, and Significance of the Study. The last two (2) parts of this chapter describe this study's Source of Data and the Organization of (the entire) Research. These two and some earlier sections of this chapter describe aspects of the study's Theoretical Framework and Methodology, a more detailed exposition of which is in Chapter 3.

1.1 Title of Study

The title of this study is 'When Women Refuse to Accept Water in Honey's Stead: Dialogic Gender Representations in Selected Ga Proverbs and Contemporary Choral Songs'. As it will later be unraveled and hopefully, become obvious at the end of this study, the first part of the title, *When Women Refuse to Accept Water in Honey's Stead:*

- a) is a metaphoric reference to "Abiii wo ni ahe nu (One does not ask for honey and take water instead)", the ¹proverb-name of a Ga sama (symbol) that is the basis of the 'kasantswi

¹ This proverb-name is referenced and explained in various parts of this study, particularly under *Section 3.2.2* in Chapter 3.

principle' in this study's proposed theoretical framework.

- b) alludes to a Ga ²folksong about a certain outspoken woman who said she loves, and will choose her lover, and then Makola too, over her husband. This woman represents women who assert their voice and agency – sometimes, in outright refusal and rebellion – in the face of the oppressions that they suffer from the gender inequalities against them.

As metaphor as allusion, and from the core arguments and conclusions of the study, this first part of the thesis title gestures towards the implications of '*when women (the female gender) refuse to accept water (mere tokens and such of gender equality) in honey's (actual gender equality that translates into their lived realities) stead.*

1.2 Background of the Study

A cursory overview of Ga oral literature shows, among other beliefs and ideals, forms of misogyny, even if subtle and seemingly innocent. For example, one Ga proverb has it that

Bɔ fɛɛ bɔ ni yoo kwɔ ha lɛ, akɛ aɲswere ekɔɔ lɛ.	No matter how high [tall] a woman is, one [a man] does not need a ladder to climb her.
---	---

This proverb is very telling about how a woman's status and achievement are diminished, if not dismissed altogether, in any relationship she has with any man. That is, merely being a woman is almost always the only reason that a woman's worth and value are of little or of no import and consequence. Also, the proverb's figurative meaning and implications are steeped in sexual innuendos which debase women or at the very least, objectify them. These representations are not at all the case for men, and for just about any man at that. And this double standard makes the

² This folksong is referenced in the concluding parts of *Section 3.1.1* in Chapter 3. This was in relation to how the woman in the song was perceived negatively by the two Ga Traditional Marriage Ceremony (GTMC) *Otsaamei* who were interviewed as part of this study. And together with the Makola reference, the song text and a discussion about it are in *Section 5.1.2*, as part of the second Dialogue under the Undeifying Dialogic Mode in Chapter 5.

proverb to be seen for what it really is: one of many demonstrations of misogyny in Ga gender culture, as evident in (oral) literature. Thus, unlike as would have been usual, the proverb is not to be understood based on only its literal meanings, and neither is the proverb deemed another mere piece of (oral) literature. That is, suddenly, the proverb is not thought of as another innocent use of language for merely aesthetic and or rhetoric purposes. Similar double standards and other forms of gender inequality can be said of many other Ga proverbs including the following:

Kɛ yoo he tu lɛ, ekehãa nuu shitoo. When/ if a woman buys a gun, she gives [is to give] it
to a man to keep.

and

Nuu mli be fioo. There is no such thing as littleness in [a person if this person is male/] a man.

There has been, and still is, ongoing academic and activist discourse that seek to make essential and definitive distinctions between Feminism, African Feminism, African Feminism-s and even Womanism. Preceding this discourse, however, the concept of Feminism itself is highly contested in Africa, such that the legitimacy of Feminism in African cultures is often trivialized, dismissed and sometimes even denied. This lack of legitimacy is largely because, it is

...question[ed] whether there is any discernible feminist school though that is actively *African*... [The initial contention, however, is that] Some see feminism as a (Western) 'weed' that has infiltrated Africa, equating in some ways with cultural imperialism and (post-)colonialism. (Atanga 2013, p. 302)

And so despite the misogynies that women endure in their various lived realities, feminism is still thought to be foreign, to be alien to Africa, and thus, not to be encouraged, not to be explored and engaged, much less to be welcomed for all the good it can do all humankind. In effect, there is barely any room to even attempt (feminist) ideals and changes that restore the full humanity and dignity of the female members of many an African culture. Thus, various forms of misogyny and

other manifestations of the patriarchy in African cultures are ignored, be they in (oral) literatures or in said women's lived realities.

And where these misogynies are not ignored, but are rather excused, it is usually because of what the researcher terms 'token feminism': the various forms of feminist ideals and practices that are all but truly and fully meaningful to the gender inequalities that women suffer. Token feminisms are fundamentally superficial: they are often placatory and performative, and sometimes disingenuous and also counter-productive. An example of token feminism is the matrilineal inheritance system among the Asante people of Ghana, as well as the institution of queen mother in many other African cultures. In pre-colonial Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe (2019), Okonkwo vividly loves and respects Ezinma his daughter, and more so because of her remarkable intellect and strength of character. While bemoaning the abject lack of similar traits in Nwoye his son, and even in Unoka his father, Okonkwo never stops wishing that Ezinma was born a boy. Despite all this, Okonkwo and his society at large have no real use and place for such a female – nothing beyond traditional and domestic roles, such as bringing Okonkwo his food; and nothing close to the strictly reserved position of a male (child), such as carrying Okonkwo's chair to the special wrestling matches. Therefore, Ezinma has to be content with the token feminism of the opportunity to freely and confidently converse with Okonkwo, at one time, even insisting that Okonkwo eat his food, because he has not eaten for two full days. Okonkwo has been down-spirited, after having taken a crucial part in the killing of Ikemefuna. In *Changes* by Aidoo (1994), post-colonial Ghanaian society finally concedes to educating the girl child (too), only for the same society to stifle the female's new and numerous potentialities and successes as a result of this education. As if this stifling is not enough, same society insists on maintaining its age-long suppressive patriarchal expectations of and demands on women, even in the face of new realities

of said education and of changing times. Thus, access to education proved to be a mere token feminist ideal in the individual and unique lives of Esi the main female character, Opokuya her friend, and Fusena her co-wife to Ali. In the end, and with regards to the patriarchy, these women's education made no real significant and meaningful difference in the quality of their lives, as compared to the previous generation women who had not been educated – women such as Esi's mother, Nana her grandmother, and Ali's mother-aunt Mma Danjuma. The situation is so ironic and tragic that, Esi later asks her mother and grandmother – and patriarchal society at large – why they sent her to school, if they did not expect and accept that her education, in order for it not to be a mere token, will require necessary and often drastic *changes* in the ways that society has hitherto perceived, treated and valued women.

More than token feminism, another term, 'cultural speak', is perhaps the reason feminism is yet to gain said popular attention and acceptance. Here, cultural speak refers to a concept in a culture's imaginary, a concept that suggests or asserts gender equality or gender neutrality or even a feminist ideal, only that this concept is nominal and has neither useful function nor material value in the lives of women. Many a cultural speak is encoded in society's lores and mores, as part of the given society's gender culture or its philosophical imagination of gender. Like token feminism, cultural speak is anything but actual and tangible. An example of cultural speak is the gender neutral third person singular pronouns in Ghanaian languages such as ³Ga, Ewe (Ewe) and the Akan dialects. Another example is the Ga reference of the Supreme Being as 'Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ', an attributive title-name that is inclusive of both the male and female essence. In other African

³ See details about the Ga gender-neutral third person pronouns as part of the first footnotes in Chapter 4, specifically section 4.1.1.

⁴ 'Ataa' is an affectionate and the more reverent version of the term 'Father'; 'Naa' is a title for a female ruler of some sort, or a female with one form of power and authority or the other; and 'Nyɔŋmɔ' can loosely be translated as 'God'. In this thesis, 'Ataa' is variously translated as 'Dear', 'Beloved' or other, depending on the given context.

cultures, some forces, deities and similar entities are imagined, referred to and sometimes also related to as females. This includes how the Akan people call the Earth ‘Asaase ⁵Yaa’, particularly in reference to the spirit of the Earth’s very being and to It being a profound force of Nature. Also, Ga socio-cultural philosophy has it that “Nye Awo ɲɔɔ...”, which means that “Mother is sweet...”, and by implication, that no one and no-thing soothes, refreshes, gladdens and is as gracious and giving as a mother is to her child. Similarly, the Igbo people believe that “Nneka”, that “Mother is supreme”. Chiding and admonishing the exiled and dejected Okonkwo, Uchendu, same Okonkwo’s maternal uncle, profoundly explains an aspect of the nature of cultural speak:

“Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother’s kinsmen. He does not belong here...[But] why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or “Mother is Supreme?” We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka – ‘Mother is Supreme.’ Why is that?...It’s true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother’s hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you...And that is why we say that mother is supreme.” (Achebe 2019, pp. 114-115)

Thus, by “Nneka” and “Nye Awo ɲɔɔ...” alike, many an African society ascribes a certain utmost supremacy to a mother, or a female parent, or simply, a female. However, like other such cultural concepts, the sheer nominal nature of these two expressions makes them the cultural speak-s that they really are. In the specific case of these expressions, and as aptly demonstrated by Uchendu’s words, this nominal nature is rooted in the normalized role of the female as a carer-nurturer and as the ultimate source of affection and compassion.

⁵ ‘Asaase’ literally means ‘earth’ and ‘Yaa’ is the day name of a Thursday-born female.

In effect, be it token feminism or cultural speak, it, at best, only pacifies, patronizes, indulges and sometimes even infantilizes women, all without any real intention and effort to treat women with grace and fairness – with equality. And so it goes without saying that neither token feminism nor cultural speak translates into positive and progressive laws and systems, which in turn, actually affect the lived realities of women in same positive and progressive ways. And it is for these and such reasons that token feminisms and cultural speak-s are mere tokens and only nominal, respectively – and nothing more. As evident in said lived realities and in histories of women, as well as in academic discourse and in literary traditions, women have had to be decidedly and unapologetically rebellious if and before they will enjoy what may still be the barest advantages of a feminist ideal or action. Thus, this makes easily tenable Virginia Woolf (2021)'s bold assertions about what would have been the case *If Shakespeare had a Sister*; makes expectedly urgent Alice Walker's *Womanism*, as iterated by Greenblatt and Gunn (1992); and also, makes African Feminism(s) valid and legitimate in its own right, and in effect, worthy of every goodwill and unanimous action.

Numerous research has also shown that in many African/ Ghanaian cultures, the misogynies that necessitate African Feminism are sanctioned by, and very often, enshrined in both oral and lived traditions. The oral traditions include folktales and proverbs, while the lived traditions are usually dictated by mores and customs that govern institutions such as marriage and inheritance. In one such research, Appiah-Amfo and Diabah (2014):

“argue that although the contexts within which [selected Akan] proverbs are used may not always be gendered...[they] tend to present women in particular stereotypical ways...most of which can be interpreted as derogatory, negative or subservient...[And] although women are sometimes represented positively, such representations, which are seen as virtues, often lure them into accepting and playing...roles [which] reinforce hegemonic masculinity...” (p. 1)

In another by Cudjoe (2016), she concludes that:

“the language of Ewe proverb[s]...supports a patriarchal ideology which...[is] subtle [yet] ensure that women’s traditional roles of being submissive to men are maintained”. (p. 80)

It is therefore well established in academic discourse and literary traditions that there indeed is misogyny in both traditional and contemporary African/ Ghanaian cultures. And as can rightly be expected, this is true for Ga culture.

There is, however, not as much research which explores the ways that women in African/ Ghanaian cultures assert, even if subtly, gender equality or feminist ideals such as agency and ambition, intelligence and independence, as well as interrogation and subversion of misogyny and its many sibling patriarchal norms. There is even less research that explores how African women assert themselves and dissent the gender culture of their societies, by employing, referencing, dialoguing or even subverting the very oral literatures and lived traditions that inform and enforce the misogynies that women suffer. In one of such work, Yitah (2018) explores how Kasem women “deploy *nantandia*, a local Kasem term which encompasses intelligence, initiative and courage” in their “contemporary retellings of...Kasem folktales”. By disrupting patriarchal norms and systems in both the temporal and supernatural worlds of these Kasem folktales, these women use their retellings to “assert their own subjecthood” in these folktales and perhaps, also in their consciousness of their lived realities outside of both the original and retold folktales.

1.3 Introduction to the Study

Proverbs form both an important feature and foundation of many an African society’s culture, philosophy, value and belief systems – an entire worldview. And among other subjects and issues of life, this includes the worldview about and imagination of gender. In a more general sense, Dzobo (1992) observes that African proverbs

“state metaphorically certain general truths about life...[and they] lead us to conceive and understand the essence of human relationships, events, life’s situations and the behaviour patterns of people. They establish certain value bases to help us comprehend and order our actions, and they enshrine...vital conclusions...” (pp. 94–95)

Thus, anything that a proverb asserts about any subject, including gender, is set firm and fast as fact and truth. And as part of their eclectic qualities, proverbs can inform, be derived from or linked to other oral literary traditions such as folk tales and songs, myths and legends, idiomatic and colloquial expressions, and even symbols and other forms of material culture. For example, the Ga *sama* (symbol) that is called ⁶‘Alagba tɛ’, and is reminiscent of a person holding a catapult, is linked to the Ga proverb,

Alagba tɛ gbeɔ loofɔlɔ. [Like a well-aimed stone,] a stone thrown amiss (with a catapult)
[too] kills [or can sometimes kill] a bird.

Also, the Ga proverbial expression,

“Mɔ ko lee mɔ ni fɔ Okai Koi” “No one knows who gave birth to Okai Koi”

is most likely informed by the historical narrative about the ⁷supposedly unknown mother of the ancient Ga king, Okai Koi. Over time, the proverb will evolve from its historical reference and literal meaning to a literary and rhetoric one, to the effect that ⁸“The origin of a notable person is (sometimes) obscure or unassuming”, or sometimes, altogether unknown. For this reason,

⁶ See a picture of this Ga *sama* (symbol) in the Appendix.

⁷ Mantse (king) Okai Koi’s mother is Mannye (Queen) Dode Akabi, the famously said wicked and only woman ruler of the Ga people. Her reign immediately precedes her son’s. According to Amartey (1990), mother and son reigned from about 1610 to 1635 and 1635 to 1660, respectively (p. 21).

Dode Akabi is said to have been buried alive in a well that she had instructed to be dug, one of the tasking and often impossible commands during her alleged tyrannical rule. “Prince Okai Koi was very young [at the time, and so] on coming of age, he desired to know who his mother was, as well as her name, but none durst tell it. Hence the...expression, “Moko lee moni fo Okai Koi” [*sic*], i.e. No one knows the one who begat Okai Koi. At last an old woman told him all the circumstances connected with his mother’s death. He, therefore, ascending the [throne], ruled the subjects with a rod of iron” (Reindorf, 1895: p. 19).

⁸ An equally valid interpretation of this proverbial expression can be “Information that is potentially damaging is best left unmentioned.”

iterations of a proverb in other forms of folklore and material culture are as admissible and authoritative as the proverb itself. To this end, contemporary choral songs, such as those pioneered and popularized by Wulomei in the 1970s, are of particular importance.

Founded in 1973 by Nii Tei Ashitey, as he was ⁹popularly known, the Wulomei music troupe is widely known in Ga-land and in Ghana and beyond for songs including ¹⁰*Meridien*, ¹¹*Kaafo* and ¹²*Mala, Mawie Ga*. Wulomei had the immense support of multi-artist ¹³Saka Acquaye, who is known to have also directed the group and to have written some of their songs. Before founding Wulomei, Nii Tei himself had, at various times, been part of bands including E. T. Mensah's Tempos Band, Tubman Band in Liberia, and later, the Ghana Police Band and the ¹⁴GBC Orchestra. Naa Amanua Dadoo was the troupe's lead vocalist, and ¹⁵Nii Adu Ofoliquaye was the bass *gombe* drummer. Other members of the troupe included Naa Fenua, Nii Nortey and Nii Laalai. Nene Acquah, Nii Annor, Nii Odartey and Steve Ampah were part of the troupe's band. Later, because of Wulomei's phenomenal acclaim, and particularly after some of the foundational members left the troupe, other Ga cultural (music) groups emerged – such as Abladei, Agbaafoi, Ashiedu Keteke (Ashiedu Keteke), Bukom Ensemble, Blemabii, Dromo Naa (Dromo Naa), Dzadzelo (Jajeloi), La Dade Kotopon (La Dade Kotopon) and Suku. Naa Amanua, Nii Adu and John Collins formed Suku, Bukom Ensemble and Agbaafoi, respectively.

It is more than reasonable to say that Wulomei influenced, inspired or least paved the way

⁹ Nii Tei Ashitey is also known as Raymond Amartey Ashitey. He passed on in his 80s, in December 2018. His funeral and burial were in March 2019.

¹⁰ See this song under the Undoing Dialogic Mode in Chapter 4.

¹¹ See this song under the Undeifying Dialogic Mode (One) in Chapter 5.

¹² See the song text of *Mala, Mawie Ga* at the end of the list of songs in the Appendix.

¹³ Among other artistic occupations, Saka Acquaye was a dramatist, sculptor and musician.

¹⁴ Ghana Broadcasting Corporation.

¹⁵ Nii Adu Ofoliquaye is popularly known as 'Big Boy'.

for Ga music by later generation musicians such as rapper Tinny (Nii Addo Quaynor); highlife artistes Adane Best (Joseph Amoah), Adotey Tetor and King David (David Kotey Neequaye); Amarh Pino (Nii Amarh Amarteifio); Kaseembebe (Kaseem Issaka); reggae-dancehall artiste ¹⁶Shatta Wale (Charles Nii Armah Mensah Jr.); Gasmilla (Odartei Milla Lamptey); and singer-songwriter Cina Soul (Christie Quincyna Quarcoopome), who mentioned in an interview that “one moment in her [music] career that [she] totally adored” was a performance with Naa Amanua of Wulomei (and Amandzeba Nat Brew) (Quarcoopome 2021).

Together with those of the same genre and era, the songs by Wulomei are vividly folkloric. This is largely because of the rich language and other literary qualities employed in the songs, the subjects and themes explored in them, as well as the rootsy texture lent them by the infusion of folk elements such as proverbs and (folk)tales, elements that are steeped in lore and in oral tradition. Because of this, even though some of these songs are original compositions of individuals or of one or more members of a troupe, it can be easy to think of these songs as borrowed from, or as renditions or adaptations of already existing Ga ¹⁷traditional-folk songs. Thus, the values, beliefs, attitudes and principles that are represented and asserted in such songs are (to be) treated and accepted with utmost respect and assent. And if this is not enough for these songs to command popularity and authority in equal measure, the very name of the troupe, ‘Wulomei’, together with their corresponding and albeit eccentric stage costume, makes for an even more remarkable import.

The name ‘Wulomei’ refers to Ga traditional priests, the spiritual leaders and the custodians of social culture and religious customs. Like Wulomei, Ga priests and priestesses are usually clad

¹⁶ Shatta Wale’s former stage name was Bandana.

¹⁷ See a detailed footnote explanation for ‘traditional-folk’ under the Unraveling Dialogic Mode (One) in Chapter 4.

in plain ¹⁸white calico cloth. The women usually wrap one piece of the cloth around their waists, in the form of a long skirt. They drape or tie another piece around their busts or trunk – this top half can hang from the tops of the breasts to as far as near the knees. The men wear can wear a bottom half of full shorts or trousers or similar, with or without a top half draping their chests from across one shoulder. The men may also wear loose hats – made of the same cloth – with raw-cut frills, and the women may wear a simple-tied headscarf or hair band. Around their necks and on their chest, both men and women may also wear (usually) white beads and or ¹⁹*nyanyara*. In an interview, Naa Amanua recounts how it was not until the troupe and its name had been approved, prayed for, blessed and sanctified by the ²⁰Nai Wulomɔ and other Ga (Mashi) Wulomɛi, together with other traditional leaders and elders, before the troupe became ²¹officially established (Dodoo, 2020).

Therefore, Wulomɛi and similar music troupes enjoyed, and continue to enjoy, a popular appeal, not only for their genre of music, but even more so for the esteemed and influential place that these songs hold in Ga oral tradition and oral literature canon. And all this is not without the impact of this place on Ga social, cultural, philosophical and even gender consciousness. Thus, just as one will preface a proverb or some other element of Ga folklore with

“Onukpai kɛɛ...”

“[Our] Elders/ ancestors...”

¹⁸ Led by Nii Tei’s son and daughter, Nii Ashikwei and Naa Asheley, respectively, the new/ second generation Wulomɛi wear yellow, instead of white cloth. Some time before he passed on, Nii Tei was one of the producers for *Wulomei Returns*, a ten-track album of contemporary music genre renditions of previous Wulomɛi titles, and in which artistes such as Tinny and Kaseembebe were featured.

¹⁹ Nyanyara is *Momordica Charantia*, a creeping plant used for adornment, as part of Ga purification and other religious rites, and for its medicinal purposes.

²⁰ Nai is one of the three major deities of Ga Mashi, the Ga of Accra Central. The others are Sakumɔ and Kɔɔle (Amartey, 1990; p. 161). Nai is a sea deity; the head of Nai We (the Nai deity home) is the Nai Wulomɔ (Nai Priest).

²¹ Prior to this, however, the troupe was actively working – composing and rehearsing songs – in ready for releasing their first LP and album, *Mibe Shi Dinn (Mibe Shi Dinn)* and *Walatu Walasa*, respectively, both in 1974. *Walatu Walasa* is a Ga linguistic modification of the Akan expression, ‘*Woara tu, Woara Sa*’, which can literally be translated as ‘You dig, you collect (the dug-out debris by) yourself’.

one would as well do same with

“Lalaɲmalɔ [aloo lalɔ] lɛ kɛɛ...” “The songwriter [or the singer/bard] said...”,

where ‘songwriter’ or ‘singer’ here may as well refer to Wulɔmɛi and or similar.

To this end, and in the light of this study, whether Ga proverb or song, and whether an actual Ga ²²traditional-folk song or a folk song by Wulɔmɛi or similar, all these are at once, tenable and admissible in *de-constructing* their inherent gender representations. And it must be mentioned, that except for very rare instances, the gender representations in these Ga songs and proverbs are masculinist or pro-masculine, and most often, altogether misogynist. Also, in said rare exceptions that a Ga song or proverb is in any way feminist, it is almost always a negative representation (of females). In effect, and ²³using an adaptation of Bakhtin’s imagination of Dialog(ue), together with the *kasantswi* (indirection) principle and the proverb-name of a ²⁴Ga *sama* (symbol), this study suggests four patterns of gender *construction* in Ga socio-cultural imagination. Each pattern has a corresponding implication or imagination; all four patterns are generally biased against the female gender.

1.3.1 Purpose of the Study

Beyond merely establishing perceived misogynist and feminist representations in the selected Ga songs and proverbs, this study seeks to show the implications of the gender inequalities that emerge when the parties in these representations are brought into a prescribed *Dialogue* with each other. These implications are inherent in the outcomes of the said Dialogue.

²² See reference to this term, as distinct from ‘folk song’, and both as used in this study, earlier in this Introduction. See also a detailed footnote explanation under the Unraveling Dialogic Mode (One) in Chapter 4.

²³ An explanation of this study’s Theoretical Framework is in the next section, ‘1.3.3. Scope of the Research’. A more detailed explanation is in Chapter 3.

²⁴ The specific Ga *sama* (symbol) here is “*Abiii wo ni ahe nu*”, which can be translated as “One does not ask for honey and take water [instead]”. See a picture of this Ga *sama* in the Appendix.

1.3.2 Statement of Problem

There are unequal gender representations in Ga oral literature, including Ga proverbs and folk songs or their contemporary choral versions, such as those sung by Wulomei and the like. However, these inequalities are not readily evident because of the token and nominal notions of gender equality and the albeit very rare ‘feminist’ ideals in these Ga songs and proverbs, as well as in other elements of Ga oral literature.

If and since these inequalities must be interrogated, and their implications deconstructed, this must as well be done using a distinct Theoretical Framework. This study’s Theoretical Framework is not only consistent with, but also, is derived from relevant²⁵ elements of the body of oral literatures in which these same inequalities exist. At the very least, this study’s Theoretical Framework ensures integrity with the contextual questions of the subject at hand, gender representations in proverbs and folk songs, which in turn, are aspects of said body of oral literatures. All this makes for the Theoretical Framework’s necessary compatibility with the subject at hand, and even the subject’s context. And this in turn, makes the Theoretical Framework valid for its own sake, and for its relevance and aptness to said subject and to its contextual implications.

1.3.3 Scope of the Study

For the avoidance of doubt and ambiguity, the two genders under consideration in this research are the male and female genders. And to achieve a focused and unified Dialogue between the

²⁵ This refers to the *kasantwi* (indirection) principle and the proverb-name of a Ga *sama* (ideogram), both of which form the conceptual basis for the Dialogue(s) prescribed by this study. See an earlier mention of this in the Introduction section of this Chapter, and a detailed explanation in Chapter 3, the Theoretical Framework and Methodology Chapter.

parties of the gender representations in the selected Ga songs and proverbs:

- a) this study prescribes four dialectical models, termed Dialogic Modes: Undoing, Unraveling, Undeifying and Unmasking. Each Dialogic Mode has a corresponding outcome, all of which are forms of gender inequality: Double Standard, Irony, Tokenism and Contradiction, respectively.
- b) The *tenor* of any given Dialogue is set by the dialectics of the *Dialogic Mode* in which that Dialogue is conducted, together with the *subject matter* of the main selected song(s) and or proverb(s) under consideration in the Dialogue.
- c) the essential meaning of a statement-turned-question of a *Ga proverb* sets the *preamble* for a particular Dialogue in a particular Dialogic Mode, and for all four unified Dialogic Modes. This proverb is actually the proverb-name of a ²⁶Ga sama (symbol):

Abiii wo ni ahe nu.

One does not ask for honey and take water [instead].

1.3.4 Thesis Statement

Employing elements of Ga oral literature to interrogate gender representations in other elements of Ga oral literature helps to more aptly study the inequalities in these gender representations. (For the purposes of this research, the specific elements are the *proverb-name* of a Ga sama and the *kasantwi* principle.) Using a prescribed theoretical framework, analyses of the implications of these inequalities tend to certain outcomes, outcomes that expose these gender representations for what they really are: Double Standards, Ironies, Tokenisms and Contradictions.

²⁶ See a picture of this Ga sama in the Appendix.

Ultimately, these outcomes generate and sustain an unending unified Dialogue between Ga gender culture and either or both genders, as the case may be in the selected song(s) and or proverb(s) for a given Dialogue. However, because of the dominant masculinist and often misogynist representations in Ga oral literature in general, the female gender is most often the other party in Dialogue with Ga gender culture.

1.3.5 Research Questions

- a) What are the unequal gender representations in the selected Ga proverbs and songs?
- b) What are the implications or outcomes of these inequalities, when either or both genders and Ga gender culture are ‘incited’ into prescribed Dialogue(s) with each other?
- c) What do these outcomes ultimately reveal about the nature and patterns of the unequal gender representations in the selected Ga songs and proverbs?

1.3.6 Research Objectives

- a) Describe the unequal gender representations in the selected Ga proverbs and folk songs.
- b) Define the implications or outcomes of these inequalities, when either or both genders and Ga gender culture are ‘incited’ into prescribed Dialogue(s) with each other.
- c) Interrogate what these outcomes ultimately reveal about the nature and patterns of the unequal gender representations in the selected Ga songs and proverbs.

1.3.7 Significance of the Study

That there is general and dominant misogyny in popular Ga oral tradition, and specifically in Ga oral literatures such as Ga proverbs and folk songs like those sung by Wulomei and similar, is probably neither covert nor ill-intentioned, and neither unknown nor particular to only Ga

worldview or even that of Africa and the world at large. This study, therefore, will be quite the cliché if it seeks to merely establish the existence and tangible reality of said misogyny. Therefore, rather than merely establish gender representations in the selected Ga songs and proverbs, this study seeks to illustrate the implications or outcomes of these inequalities, through ‘inciting’ a prescribed Dialogue between Ga gender culture and either or both genders.

Also, this study initiates – if not inspires – one way of conceptualizing and decolonializing theoretical frameworks as tools for exploring and understanding Africa and African epistemologies. Broadly speaking, this implies employing original or adapted theoretical frameworks, the underpinning concepts of which are based on, derived from, or at least consistent with the cultural context of the subject at hand. Specifically in this study, this is how one set of elements of Ga oral literature are employed as theoretical framework in exploring the subject of gender representations in another set of elements of Ga oral literature. The first set of elements of Ga oral literature are the said *kasantwi* principle and the proverb-name of a Ga sama; the second set consists of the Ga songs and proverbs selected and used as data for this study.

1.4 Source of Data

The research data are selected from various collections of Ga proverbs and contemporary choral songs. In this study, these songs are specifically described as ‘folk songs’, among other terms and references. In no particular order, the main sources for the songs are:

- a) the researcher’s personal collection from various sources.
- b) a collection from the music archives at the Gramophone Library of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).
- c) downloads from YouTube and other online sources.

And the main sources for the proverbs include:

- a) the researcher's personal collection from lived experience and interactions with people, especially her late Grandmother, Madam Mary Ansaba Botchway. Years before this study, the researcher used to share some of these proverbs on one of her social media accounts.
- b) the list of Ga proverbs in Zimmermann (1972).
- c) extracts from social media and other sources, usually Ga-centered personal and organization Facebook pages, like ²⁷Patrick Masoperh's and ²⁸We Are Ga's, respectively.

It is important to state here that there are other Ga songs and proverbs sourced from the above-mentioned, only that these other songs and proverbs are referenced and or used for other purposes in this study, usually as supporting texts to main or selected data texts.

Also, unless otherwise stated, all the data, as well as any other Ga texts mentioned and used in this research, are rendered in the most current orthography of Written Ga (WG), rather than Spoken Ga (SG) or Ga as it may be heard. It should suffice to quickly explain that Written and Spoken Ga are distinctly different, at least in terms of phonetics and transcription, but not in terms of semantics. Only a person who is very competent in Ga can tell WG and SG apart. And depending a person's actual literacy in Ga, he/she can transpose from the one to the other.

Finally, in selecting the song- and proverb- texts for this study, and in keeping with the study's Gender subject and its Dialogic Theoretical Framework:

- first priority was given to gendered texts. The relationship context of these texts is neither necessarily nor always romantic, marital, familial, or other. All the same, the relationship

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/patrick.masoperh/>

²⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/WeAreGa/>

contexts are categorically gendered. These texts are often used as main selected data, with or without supporting texts, which in turn, may or may not be gendered.

- non-gendered texts are generally not used as the main and or the only selected data in a given Dialogue. However, under the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, a non-gendered text may be used as one of the two selected data for a given Dialogue. The reason for this exception is explained in the introduction to the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, in Chapter 5.

1.5 Organization of Research

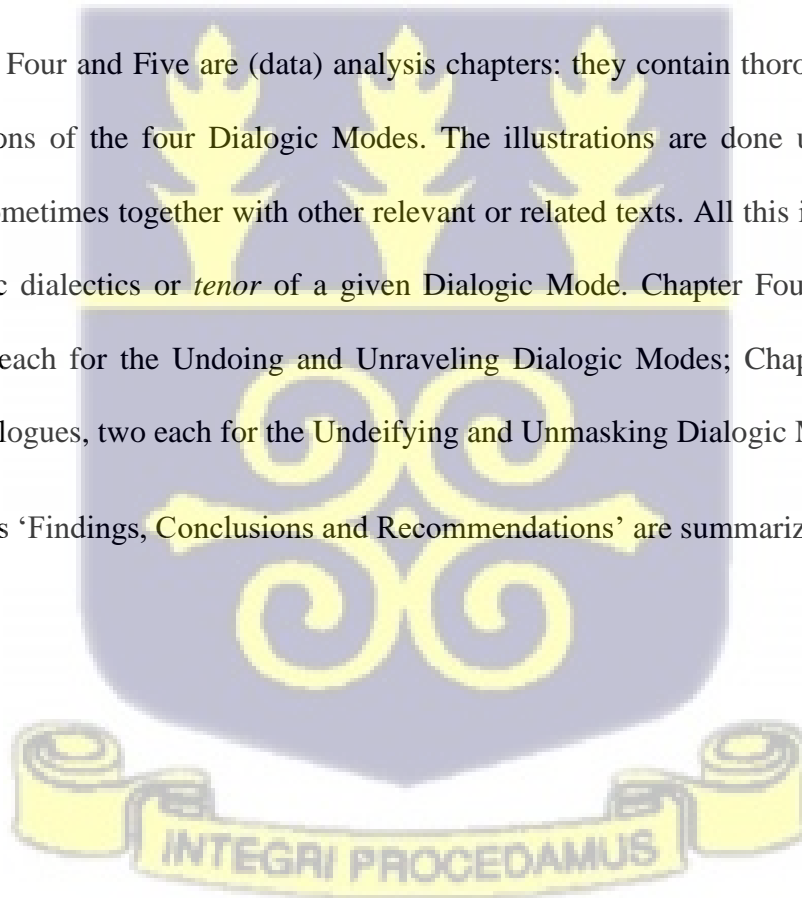
Titled ‘Background and Introduction’, Chapter One outlines the fundamental aspects of this study and its core argument. This chapter is made up of the Title of the Study, its Background, its Introduction and the Source of (its) Data. The Background to the Study explores the question of African Feminism in the face of a general and dominant bias against the female gender, a bias that is neither reduced nor undone by the ‘token feminisms’ and ‘cultural speaks’ that it is often fraught with. Beginning with an exposition of the place and value of the Ga songs and proverbs in Ga socio-cultural imagination of gender, the Introduction to the Study continues with information that specify the Purpose of the Study, Statement of Problem, Scope of Study, Thesis Statement, Research Questions, Research Objectives, and Significance of the Study. Under the Source of Data section of this chapter, the various sources from which the research data were collected are described, as well as how data is selected and distributed for use under the four Dialogic Modes, and how this data is rendered or transcribed. Chapter One ends with the Organization of the Research.

With more focus on the Ghanaian, Chapter Two, ‘Literature Review’ is an overview of previous and relevant scholarship on Proverbs and Folk(loric) Songs, together with the gender constructions in both. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into two sections.

Chapter Three begins with a description of the general context and the dominant gendered culture within which the research data is situated and therefore, will later be analyzed. The Theoretical Framework and its constituent research methodology and tools are then explained, together with their implications on the positionality of the study. This is followed by a distinction between Bakhtin's and this study's Imagination of Dialogue. After this, the four Dialogic Modes prescribed by this study are specified and briefly described, to be explained and illustrated in extensive detail in the next chapters, Chapters 4 and 5. Under the various sections in this chapter, aspects of this study's Theoretical Framework and Methodology are justified, as variously indicated in Chapter 1.

Chapters Four and Five are (data) analysis chapters: they contain thorough introductions to and illustrations of the four Dialogic Modes. The illustrations are done using the selected research data, sometimes together with other relevant or related texts. All this is done in keeping with the specific dialectics or *tenor* of a given Dialogic Mode. Chapter Four consists of four Dialogues, two each for the Undoing and Unraveling Dialogic Modes; Chapter Five contains another four Dialogues, two each for the Undeifying and Unmasking Dialogic Modes.

The study's 'Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations' are summarized in Chapter Six.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

OVERVIEW: With more focus on the Ghanaian, this chapter is an overview of previous and relevant research literature on Proverbs and Folk(loric) Songs, together with the gender constructions in both. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into two sections.

2.1 Ghanaian Proverbs and Folk(loric) Songs

A proverb can be defined as a vivid yet pithy sage expression that asserts a truism in a language steeped in metaphor and symbolism. Here, the term ‘expression’, instead of ‘words’ or ‘statement’, denotes that apart from the oral and verbal, African proverbs in particular, often have visual, kinaesthetic and other tangible or material mediums. Various examples of these other mediums include symbols and totems, gestures and actions, names of ²⁹cloths and or the designs and patterns in them, sewn styles of these and other cloths, and even styles of wearing them – and headscarves too. The proverbs of interest to this study, however, are proverbs as expressed in words, be they written or spoken – or sung, as is sometimes the case here. According to Yankah (1989a), “The word ‘proverb’ comes from the Latin word, *proverbium* (*pro* = for and *verbum* = word), implying that the proverb is what is used instead of a plain word (Bryant 3)”; he also cites

“B. J. Whiting, who describes the proverb as ‘a short saying of a philosophic nature, of great antiquity, the product of the masses rather than of the classes, constantly applicable, and appealing because it bears a semblance of universal truth (278)’” (p. 327).

Proverbs are one form and genre of what is often termed a culture’s body or canon of ‘oral

²⁹ Ready examples of such cloths are textile prints and what many Ghanaian cultures call ‘kente’ – or variations of it.

literature' or 'folk literature' or sometimes simply 'folklore', which also includes folktales and ³⁰traditional-folk songs, greetings and by-words, riddles and lullabies, myths and legends, taboos and even names, as well as idioms and certain formalized (sets of) expressions that are (parts of) speeches such as oaths, apostrophes, prayers or libations, and appellations.

In an organic yet dynamic culture, it can be expected that its stock of proverbs, for example, evolve to accommodate and reflect changes and shifts in worldviews about phenomena including gender, gender representations and gender inequality or otherwise. With the inevitable passing of time and its natural tendency to facilitate said changes and shifts, such a vibrant culture may even add to its canon of literatures or lores, thereby effecting more complex and nuanced changes and shifts in the same culture's values and beliefs as seen in their mores, as well as in their principles and practices as seen in their laws. In other words, as part of lore, proverbs both reflect and congeal into mores and laws. This means that proverbs are not innocent and innocuous as they may often appear: neither are they merely art and articles of aestheticism, nor even elements of rhetoric and orature. However, it should be valid to value and deploy proverbs, irrespective of medium, even if merely and only for their peculiar properties, as well as for reasons and purposes that Anyidoho (1997), Yankah (1989a, 1989b and 1995) and many other scholars have extensively indicated. It is therefore not surprising that as part of constructing frameworks and epistemologies of African (sometimes specifically Akan) Philosophy and Philosophical Thought, philosophers such as Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye mention, include and engage proverbs. Wiredu (1980) does argue a distinction between what he calls 'modern African Philosophy and ³¹'traditional African thought',

³⁰ See a detailed footnote explanation for the researcher's choice of the 'traditional-folk' under the Unraveling Dialogic Mode (One) in Chapter 4. There are also earlier references to this chosen term in the previous Chapter 1.

³¹ This term appears to be interchangeable with 'African Traditional Philosophy' and 'African Traditional Thought', as well as "traditional folk thought" as seen in the blurb to Wiredu (1980).

which readily springs from proverbs and other such folk lores and mores; yet, Wiredu neither denies nor rejects that proverbs and said lores and mores largely inform and are integral to the construction of African Philosophy, be it ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’ (pp. x–xi, 4 and 29). On the other hand, Gyekye (1987 and 1988) does not only categorically assert the imperative place and role of proverbs in the construction of African Philosophy. Also, Gyekye argues against the distinction attempted by Wiredu and others, and even more importantly, against the suggestion that the so-called ‘African (traditional) thought/ philosophy is any less of Philosophy, and or is not Philosophy in its own right, thereby refuting the implied notion that the idea and subject of Philosophy is the preserve of the Western and Eastern worlds (pp. 1–8 and pp. 28–29, respectively). All this goes to prove why “Proverbs, since the time of Aristotle, have been depicted as remnants saved from the ‘wrecks and ruins of ancient philosophy by reason of their conciseness and cleverness’ (Bryant 1945:4)” (Yankah 1989a, p. 327). And all this is but one telling reason and evidence that the (African) proverb transcends it being only and merely “an aesthetic device [and] an agent of vitality in speech” (Yankah 1989a, p. 328).

For the Kasena people of Northern Ghana, there is significant scholarship on proverbs, including Awedoba (2000) and Yitah (2006, 2009, 2012 and 2018); there is some more research on Ewe proverbs such as Ladzekpo (1980), Agbemenu (2010), Cudjoe (2016) and Agbemabiese (2016); scholarship on the proverbs of the Akan from roughly mid-Ghana appears to be the most extensive, among which are Yankah (1989), Asante (2002), Agyekum (2012), and Appiah-Amfo and Diabah (2014). For the Ga people of roughly South-Eastern and coastal Ghana, some of their proverbs have been collected in Zimmermann (1972, p. 158–177), Klu (?2018, pp. 59–81) and in three volumes by Squire (2003: pp. 60–65; pp. 83–88; and pp. 86–92, respectively). Apart from these collections, it appears there is very little scholarship on Ga proverbs, and even so, much of

this scholarship is rather quite incidental, often focusing on the contents and technicalities of subject areas such as history and linguistics, religion and customary culture, music and design or applied science, and even ethnographic studies. Thus, it seems these fields essentialize the subject of proverbs, and are not exactly extensive and discursive in their approach to and treatment of proverbs, thereby not making for studies that centre and explore proverbs in their own right. Neither does this make for a rounder and fuller realization of the nature and nuances of proverbs, and perhaps for inspiring or igniting similar or further research. Among such scholarly works are Odotei (1989, p. 47); Kropp Dakubu (1997, p. 11–12 and 129); Kudadjie (1999); Parker (2000, p. ix); Odamtten (2015); and Asmah, Clement and Mate (2015).

Folk(loric) songs, or specifically what the researcher has termed ‘traditional-folk songs’, also constitute an important part of oral literature. To a large extent, and as mediated by the peculiar genre features and qualities of this other form of oral literature, much of the foregoing discussion about proverbs can be said (to be true or at least similar) about these songs too. And again, it appears that far more than any other Ghanaian culture, Akan folk songs have enjoyed vast scholarly interest and attention. This includes research work on the preceding traditional-folk origins or versions of these songs, as well as work on their latter re-imagined versions, and also original compositions in the form of palm wine music and highlife. Having said this, mentioning but a few said research work will suffice: Nketiah (1958), Collins (1985 and 1994), Salm (2003), and Webb (2015). Not only these particular mentioned works by these scholars, and even if these works are largely immersed in the subjects of music and music history, but also these scholars have done significant work on traditional-folk music of Ghanaian origin, especially such music of the Akan people. Salm’s dissertation appreciably focuses on *kpanlogo*, a Ga traditional-folk music (and dance), which partly influenced the music by Wulomei and their like; Webb’s long paper is a

rigorous work that is specifically and passionately about Wulomei – and Wulomei alone. And even if cursorily or without much focused detail, and even if in keeping with the length and content of their mentioned works here, Collins and Nketiah variously mention traditional-folk precursors of the songs by Wulomei and similar, such as *adaawe* and said *kpanlogo*. And especially in their other works (not referenced here), these and other scholars have done a lot of work that explore other music genres partly inspired by and or derived from traditional-folk music, genres such as what is popularly called ‘palm wine music’ and ‘highlife’.

Considering the ³²cultural origins and stylistic influences of palm wine music and highlife, as well as the era in which Wulomei gained grounds and popularity, one can think of music/ songs by Wulomei and the like as ³³‘Ga highlife’. Even better, Webb (2015) asserts that:

“...many highlife-inspired groups performing at local establishments incorporate sequences of popular Ga folk music pieces into their repertoire for foreign and local audiences. Ga folk music has even impacted highlife, one of Ghana’s most recent branches of highlife inspired by rap and hip-hop, with artists like Kaseem Bebe remixing older popular Wulomei songs for his compositions...Outside of the local scene in Accra one can find groups in the Ghanaian diaspora performing pieces from the Ga folk music repertoire, and several internet sites and blogs online feature select tracks or albums of old releases with short descriptions of various “Ga Cultural Highlife” groups...” (p. 53).

³² The earliest form of *palm wine* music was in the 1920s, among the Kru people of Liberia and Sierra Leone. As it spread from coastal to hinterland areas, palm wine music evolved into discernibly traditional (Ghanaian) music genre(s), having first begun as a fusion of local (West African) and Trinidadian calypso rhythms, accompanied by Portuguese guitar introduced to the people on the coast by sailors and other ship workers.

Dynamic in both time and location since its beginnings in colonial Ghana (Gold Coast), *highlife* is a popular and an ever-evolving West African music genre that is heavily influenced by palm wine music, traditional Akan and Ga (Kpanlogo) music, as well as jazz melodies from the West.

³³ Even though Ga traditional-folk music such as *kpanlogo* is known to have influenced highlife, and perhaps even palm wine music, these two music genres are often associated with the Akan people. And this is not to mention that per its very stylistic origins and socio-cultural history in Ghana, palm wine music, and to some extent, highlife, began in coastal Ghana, among the Ga people, and most likely the (Akan) Fante people too, before spreading hinterland to (the other) Akan people, and perhaps to the rest of Ghana.

And even so, Ga music by the likes of ³⁴King Bruce predates that of Wulomei and their contemporaries, and obviously also those that emerged after Wulomei and their like, such as music by ³⁵King Solomon (Nii Mantse [Maɲtsɛ]). Despite all this, there still is relatively not much scholarship on Ga music and song genres, including those by Wulomei and their like, and this is something about which Webb (2015) showed concern:

“This article intends first to provide scholarly space and an accurate description of Wulomei’s emergence onto Accra’s musical landscape. To date there has been little attention devoted to Ga folk music in the academic world that could be considered commensurate with the music’s impact in Ghana. Moreover, writing about Ga folk music has been largely journalistic thereby lacking interpretation of its broader meaning and significance within the Ga community. Second, I aim to uncover how factors such as urbanization, marginalization and social transformation led to the strategic reconfiguration of heterogeneous artistic and cultural elements—foreign and local, old and new—for the purposes of promoting a Ga cultural renaissance through this stylistic and deeply symbolic artistic display (Clifford 2003: 89).” (p. 54)

2.2 Gender Constructions in Ghanaian Proverbs and Folk(loric) Songs.

As has been indicated in detail earlier in this study, especially in the Background and Introduction sections in Chapter 1, almost all – if not all – of the scholarship on proverbs from Ghanaian cultures show that these proverbs (re)present females in unequal and often negative ways. This is true even

³⁴ Founder of the Black Beats band, **King Bruce** made music from the early 1950s to well into the 1970s, when music by Wulomei started enjoying popular attention. Albeit often with a mellow tempo and lightly danceable rhythm, King Bruce’s music is outstanding, and this is only partly because of the remarkable poetry of his composition and arrangement, and his lyric’s approachable philosophical inclinations. Sometimes sung in Fante, some of his popular songs are ‘Srotai Yemlin’ [*Srɔtoɪ ye Mli* (They Come in All Sorts)] and ‘Minsumobo Tamoshe’ [*Misumɔɔ Bo Tamɔ Shɛ* (I Love You Like Sugarcane)].

³⁵ Known in private life as Nii Okaikoi Tetteh-Quaye, **King Solomon’s** music is experimental and upbeat, but also evidently rooted in or reminiscent of the preceding Ga music history and influences. One of his most popular songs is ‘Fofoi’ [*Fɔfɔi* (Flower)], which was released in the 1990s. He is still alive and making music.

for gender studies in other elements of folk literatures such as folktales, examples being Opoku-Agyemang (1999) and Mireku-Gyimah (2013). This pattern in gender constructions can be expected among the Ga people too, even though there is barely any scholarly work that decidedly examines Ga proverbs, and even more so gender in Ga proverbs. This is mainly because many Ghanaian ethnic groups, share certain similarities and resemblances, which manifest in aspects of their identity, such as their individual languages and literatures, their traditions and customs, and sometimes even the value and belief systems that underpin the entirety of the given Ghanaian ethnic group's culture and cultural identity. This is particularly so for Ghanaian ethnic groups that are geographically close to each other, as well as those that have had one kind of interaction and exchange or the other, in history. This by no means suggests that some or all Ghanaian ethnic groups are homogenous. Neither does this imply that they are essentially similar or the same, nor that they may be representative of each other and even of the entire nation state of Ghana. Thus, as part of the aims of this study, and as it later emerged as its outcomes, this study transcends establishing said pattern of gender construction in Ga proverbs (and folk songs).

One of the rather rare scholarly works on Ga proverbs is Asmah, Clement and Mate's (2015) *Proverbial Symbols in Cloth for Ga Royals*. Apart from this work being about the visual representation of some Ga proverbs, these representations are the authors' own interpretation and "translation of Ga proverbs into symbols, [which they then] use[d] to produce royal clothes [*sic*]" (p. 22). The authors claimed to have created these symbols using knowledge of traditional design concepts and principles, understanding of the socio-cultural philosophies underpinning these proverbs, and "constant social interaction characterized by casual conversation with [some] custodians of Ga royal culture and knowledgeable elders' [*sic*], to formulate, describe, evaluate and assesses [*sic*] the proverbial symbols" (p. 22). It is important, however, to state that these

proverbial symbols are different and distinct from Ga *samai*, the known Ga traditional symbols, all of which are proverbial or idiomatic in their own right, if not that they are directly linked to or based on one Ga proverb or the other. Also in this work, the researchers listed other ninety-one (91) Ga proverbs, together with their translations and interpretations in English. And they recommended further research similar to theirs, that is, the creation of more designs and symbols based on Ga proverbs. Thus, rather than the literary and rhetoric nature and nuances of Ga proverbs in their own and singular right, the subject of Asmah, Clement and Mate (2015) is the visual and material aspects of Ga proverbs.

Another scholarly literature that is somewhat relevant to this study, specifically in terms of the subjects of gender and Ga (traditional-)folk songs, is Kubi's (2017) *Celebration of Love: An Aspect of Ga Women's Discourse on Love in Adaawe Song-Texts*. Per its folkloric origins and the rhetoric of its poetics, *adaawe* as song is composed and sung strictly by only women, specifically Ga young women; as dance and performance, *adaawe* is primarily a source of communal evening- or night- time entertainment, but also a medium of female expression and assertion about issues including, but not at all limited, to romantic love and love relationships. Kubi (2017), therefore, rightly specifies the focus of his paper on romantic love, and not without admitting that *adaawe* "provides a platform for...women to give commentaries on significant social issues that affect them". Also, and even if momentarily, the *adaawe* "performance territory...demarcate[s] and isolate[s] women from men", from the larger society and from their everyday lived realities, thereby "insulate[s]" women from their own "inhibition" and from society's prohibition of them freely and openly expressing and asserting themselves without any "censure" whatsoever (Kubi, 2017: pp. 59–60). This quality of *adaawe* is reminiscent of another genre of Ga traditional-folk songs, *La kpã*, of the *La(badi)* sub-group of the Ga people – or simply, *kpã*.

More than *adaawe*, and perhaps other Ga folklore genres, *kpã* has received significant scholarly attention, even if as part of work on other topics in Ga custom and culture, and Ga oral literature and tradition. For yet other scholarly works, however, *kpã* – or *La kpã*, specifically – can be the singular and substantive subject. An example is Marley’s (2019) *Kpa Music as a Medium of Social Resistance Among the La*, in which (La) *kpã* is described as

“the type of Ga traditional music performed during *Homowo* [Hɔmɔwɔ] by the people of *La* and *Teshi* [Teshi]. In *La*, the music may be freely performed in public, played on radio, at [drinking] bars and at social gatherings during the period of the customary ban on noisemaking. Outside this period, it is unacceptable to perform or play in public especially if the songs are satirical [or recreational, or even categorically not *kpã*]. *Kpa* songs can nevertheless be performed in the form of dirge during the funeral rites of a *La* community leader such as a chief, priest/priestess, a member of the *Amlaku* or a *kpa* singing group.” (Marley, 2019: p. 23).

Unlike or more than *adaawe* and other Ga traditional songs, *kpã* is specially known for its candid and often caustic commentary on and critique of society in general, individuals and institutions in society, and even incidents and other phenomena in society’s experiential realities. All the same, both *adaawe* and *kpã* are not necessarily focused on the subject of gender and gender constructions. And so neither Kubi (2017) nor Marley (2019) decidedly explore gender politics and other gendered issues, even when the contents of an *adaawe* or a *kpã* may be about or include love and other relationships between people of the two genders. Therefore, the review of research literature like these ones by Benjamin Kubi and Jacob Nii Marley is, firstly, because *adaawe* and *kpã* are specific and original genres of Ga traditional-folk songs, much like folk songs by *Wulɔmɛi* and the like, and these Ga songs, together with Ga proverbs, consist of the subject of this study. The second reason is that the theoretical aspect of this study, *Dialogue*, is implied by *adaawe* and *kpã*,

³⁶such that women or a section of society, respectively, is a party in dialogue with another party, the rest of society and all that it is and consists of. Secondly, just like Dialogue, *adaawe* and especially *kpã* can always assume the posture of a commentary or critique, a reflection or a didactic exercise, a satire or subversion, and even a protest or an outright resistance.

To this end, it must be mentioned that Odamtten (2012) has attempted what may as well be the beginning of actual and concerted canon of Ga gender studies. In his own words, his “paper specifically aimed at adding to the canon of the rather scarce theoretical scholarship that exists on Ga-Adangbe women”, while also admitting that there has been “previous scholarship that has some consideration of Ga Women’s roles...[specifically] in the earlier works of Margaret Field (1940, 1961)...[and] Marion Kilson (1971, 1974).” (p. 111 and p. 114, respectively). Odamtten also notes how “Field’s work was aimed at explaining the religious and political culture of the Ga, but also includes various roles occupied by early twentieth century Ga women” and how “Marion Kilson’s (1971, 1974)...disagreed with some of Field’s initial positions on Ga kinship” (p.114). About the latter scholarship by Claire C. Robertson, Odamtten asserts:

Arguably, the first systematic study specifically dedicated to the study of Ga women, and with some theoretical thrust is Claire C. Robertson’s (1984) *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socio-Economic History of Women and Class in Accra*. Robertson’s venerable study of Ga women in central Accra explains how Ga women increased their autonomy and economic status within the Ga socio-political hierarchy between the pre-colonial era and the post-independence era. Robertson explains that Ga women in pre-colonial Ga society were involved in “corporate kin mode of production” that functioned in a social web of male dominance, and that the colonial period allowed Ga women to assert more autonomy within this Ga patriarchal system. Finally, the capitalist mode of production in the post-independence era saw women lose their access to production and thereby lose the

³⁶ In the case of *adaawe*, women are expectedly one party in Dialogue, while society, together with its patriarchal order, is the other party. For *kpã*, a group of *kpã* singers is a party, and the rest of society, sometimes including the group, is the target party.

autonomy they gained during the colonial period leading to class formation along gendered lines (Robertson 1984, 1-247).” (p. 114)

It is worth noting, however, that although Odamtten (2012) is tentative about and amply qualifies his claim about contributing to – if not initiating – a canon on Ga(-Adangbe) gender studies, his assertions in the entire paper are neither unquestionable nor without counter-arguments, some of which have been intimated earlier in this study, including the researcher’s arguments about ‘token feminism’ and ‘cultural speak’ in Chapter 1. Moreover, and as implied earlier, Odamtten’s paper is tangential to the particular subject of Ga proverbs and folksongs in general, and to a large extent, to Ga oral literature in particular. Rather, it is focused on the subject of Ga religious custom and the role and place of women therein, a focus that is much like the various preceding and albeit extensive and seminal works by Margaret Field and Marion Kilson, and to some extent, even Claire C. Robertson. And as recently implied, his views on Ga gender culture, particularly in relation to the female gender, are debatable, just as he thinks of Claire C. Robertson’s views:

“Robertson’s [1984] study revealed a lot of facts and truths about Ga society, however her view of Ga society as having an ideology of male superiority is debatable, as societal emphasis on the patrilineage does not presume matrilineal inferiority.” (p. 114).

Helen Yitah’s (2006, 2009, 2012 and 2018) various scholarly work on the double subject of proverbs and gender appears to be the most proximate to this study. Particularly in her *Kasena Women’s Critique of Gender Roles and Gender Justice through Proverbial Jesting* (2012), the element of a verbal exchange is parallel to this study’s conceptualization of Dialogue, even if this Dialogue is only or essentially a conversation, and be it formal and structured or not. The following ³⁷exchange is an instance of “proverbial jesting”, which in many ways, aptly illustrates this

³⁷ The Dialogue cited here does not contain the Kasem text of which the English text is its translation. The underlined parts of the Dialogue are the Kasem proverbs employed by the woman, in keeping with the ‘proverbial jesting’.

proximity and parallelism:

“Woman: I am going ahead, and I know you’ll follow soon.

Man: Tell me you’re going ahead to begin cooking my dinner, don’t just say you’re leaving.

Woman: I would have said so if you had given me what I need to be able to cook.

Man: Go and cook with the little that you have and stop complaining. The female ant says that no matter how small her groin is, she will still show it to her husband.

Woman: I am sure the female ant said that on the assumption that her husband would reciprocate her gesture. After all, it is the dog who says it is fair play only when you fall and your partner falls too. If I have to cook, it is only fair that you should provide the food.

Man: Well, if I’m trying to be nice and you want to show me how much you know, I will have to compel you to do your duty by me. You must not rub shoulders with me.

Woman: The female ant’s groin may be small, but it takes more than a strong hand to expose it.

Man: What else does it take?

Woman: A kind mouth.” (Yitah, 2012: p. 13)

Like Dialogue as imagined in this study, the above exchange or *dialogue* is not only and not merely like any other dialogue. On the contrary, this other *Dialogue* is witty and intelligent at once, is both tactful and tactical, and is ultimately purposeful, in the sense that both its content and dialectics are aimed at initiating a hitherto nonexistent and otherwise forbidden opportunity *to dialogue* a society’s entrenched patriarchal notions and attitudes. And as variously explained earlier, this utmost absence and silence is largely because,

“As far as...proverbs and their social functions are concerned, perceptions about gender roles and identity and the structures that engender them are located in the world view of the ancestors...who, through their proverbs [and other forms of lore and more], provide contemporary society...with a normative sphere within which appropriate roles and behaviour are defined...[That is,] proverbs are the wisdom of the ancestors, and [are] therefore encapsulate unchallengeable ‘truths’. African oral literature in general, and the

African proverb in particular, has been largely insulated against criticism because it is perceived as an authentic culture which must not be altered...

[And this] accounts in large part for its perceived unassailable position and for the important role that it plays in the socialization of women and men. The belief that proverbs are created by the ancestors who are always right and therefore must not be contradicted also ensures that the sexist ideology and discriminatory rhetoric in these wise sayings are not questioned.” (Yitah, 2012: p. 10)

It is therefore not only audacious and somewhat foolhardy to question or challenge proverbs; doing as much is tantamount to committing a taboo, an attack on the sacrosanct and sacred, a sacrilege in itself. Despite this, and with women or females most often being the victims of the patriarchy and its attendant gender inequalities, Dialogue sometimes implies an *engagement* that transcends conversation, an engagement that may sometimes be somewhat confrontational or even offensive. Thus, rather than merely *engage* by way of a Dialogue, females may essentially or also query, critique, dissent and sometimes even protest and subvert their society’s oppressive gender culture.

In effect, the aforementioned proximity-cum-parallelism is irrespective of the *jesting tone* of the said particular Yitah’s work in relation to the *dialogic tenor* of this research work. That is, the gesturing and insinuating posture of the former and the direct and categorical posture of the latter do not in any way subtract from the shared essence of the two, which is that they both are intentional, strategic and hopefully, effective, in their individual right. Therefore, be it what may appear to be *incident-al* and perhaps improvised per Yitah (2012) or what may seem more ³⁸*event-ive* and perhaps pre-arranged per this research, Dialogue is systematic, like the patriarchal order it seeks to de-normalize at the very least, or to dismantle altogether. Dialogue is innovative and (pro)active, and is ultimately aimed at achieving equality and its myriad implications and tangible realities, or at the very least, a means to achieving these.

³⁸ See another usage of this term in Chapter 3, specifically in reference to Bakhtin’s idea of carnivalesque.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW: This chapter begins with a description of the general context and the dominant gender culture within which the research data is situated and therefore, will later be analyzed. The Theoretical Framework and its constituent research methodology and tools are then explained, together with their implications on the positionality of the study. This is followed by a distinction between Bakhtin's and this study's Imagination of Dialogue. After this, the four Dialogic Modes prescribed by this study are specified and briefly described, to be explained and illustrated in extensive detail in the next chapters, Chapters 4 and 5. Under the various sections in this chapter, aspects of this study's Theoretical Framework and Methodology are justified, as variously indicated in Chapter 1.

3.1.1 Interview with Otsaamei at Ga Traditional Marriage Ceremonies (GTMC): Establishing the General Context of the Research Data and Its Implications on Ga Gender Culture.

The ³⁹data for this study are Ga proverbs and folk songs, specifically the contemporary choral songs by Wulomei and their like. The songs are usually Narratives or have Elements of Narratives such as persona/e or Character(ization), locale or Setting, event/s or Plot, problem/s or Conflict, all of which imply specific Subject Matter from which Theme, and to a large extent, context too,

³⁹ See details about the research data in the 'Source of Data' sub-section of 'Introduction' in Chapter 1.

can be established. Beyond the literal and the explicit, the proverbs, on the other hand, do not have immediate and singular implied or deeper meaning/s from which their specific contexts may be inferred. It is necessary for a given song and proverb text to exist within some readily defined context, or at least a somewhat discernible context. This context is necessary to help inform and direct the reading of these texts for interpretation purposes. This reading will, in turn, translate into accurate and objective ⁴⁰analyses of the various and layered meanings of the texts, and ultimately, into arriving at a sound and balanced conclusion of the entire research.

Despite the need and reasons for said context, it will be impractical and quite redundant to describe the literal and deeper meanings of each song and proverb text, and in every instance, to also circumscribe what is rather an obvious and recurring or general context of the texts. However, in order to avoid what may appear as an *a priori* assumption about this gender culture or general context, and to actually and effectively establish evidence for it, the researcher designed and conducted an interview. The same interview was carried out on two separate occasions, with two different people, a man and a woman who play the role of an ⁴¹*otsaame* (pl. *otsaamei*) at Ga Traditional Marriage Ceremonies (GTMC).

Usually women, the two *otsaamei* at a GTMC represent the groom and the bride, together with their respective families. These *otsaamei* are usually older, respectable, eloquent and wise women from the said families. Unlike the bride and groom, an *otsaame* has no direct and immediate personal interest in the gendered relationship that a marriage is, an interest which would have

⁴⁰ This refers to the analyses of the selected songs and proverbs under the various Dialogic Modes in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴¹ The *otsaame* here performs a role similar to the one who mediates – so to speak – communication between a king and another person or persons. This *otsaame* speaks to the other *otsaame*, and together, they represent and mediate the conversation between the families of the bride and the groom during at a GTMC. The popular English translation for *otsaame*, ‘linguist’, is both inaccurate and inadequate, and so like Yankah (1995) did with the Akan version of the term, I maintain the Ga word in this study (p. 2).

compromised an *otsaame*'s views and declarations about Ga (gender) culture. On the contrary, and in keeping with the spirit and title of their role as *otsaame*, these people speak or are supposed to *speak for* and sometimes *to* the specifics of Ga marriage custom and culture, as well as Ga cultural views about other gendered relationships and the dynamics therein.

In recent times, people hire or contract strangers or non-relatives to play the role of *otsaame* at their (G)TMC, and this is often due to a combination of factors including convenience and (not) having such a qualified person in one's family. Because of this, playing the role of an *otsaame* at (G)TMC is becoming a good and huge business for many people, albeit quite informal, freelance and a one-time service for every new client, a bride- or groom-to-be. However, and contrary to the ideal, this element of transaction does not sit very easy with the inherent nature and expectation of a GTMC as a private and socially intimate family affair, and as a celebration between the couple and their families. This is even more so because of the delicate and critical role of an *otsaame* as the singular representative and speaker of one of the two families. Neither is the personal-yet-familial, the eventful-yet-temperate and joyous-yet-solemn occasion of a GTMC consistent with the paid role of a key person like an *otsaame*. Also, the transactional element clashes with the notion that culture and custom, which a contracted *otsaame* represents and embodies at once, are so precious and sacrosanct to be commercialized, to be undignified in this or some other way.

Nevertheless, this rather transactional relationship does not necessarily detract from the skills that a hired, non-family member *otsaame* has, continually hones, and brings to the GTMC occasion – skills including orature and performance, a personable and cheerful air, and a wealth of knowledge about Ga marriage customs and practices. Neither does this detract from the fact that this kind of *otsaame* too is, at once, the embodiment and very oracle of Ga culture particularly, Ga gender culture – during a GTMC. And so to this end, it would suffice to summarize the contents

and conclusions of the two interviews:

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Even though the two Interviewed *Otsaamei* (IO) are of the two genders, they both unapologetically incorporate and sometimes even replace certain strict Ga marriage customary beliefs and practices with Judeo-Christian ones. In fact, they are wont to quote Bible scriptures as they would elements of Ga tradition and culture, such as Ga proverbs and songs by *Wulomei* and the like, both of which are already part of the selected and analyzed data texts in this study. And expectedly, some of their repertoires are neither Ga nor of Ga origin per se, but these are often familiar and popular enough for their audiences to accordingly relate with and respond to. Some of their most often quoted

⁴²Bible scriptures are:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Genesis 1:27)

and

“...but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh...and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:20b–24)

and

“...husbands, dwell with them [women] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life...” (1 Peter 3:7)

and

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is

⁴² Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible scripture quotations in this study are from the King James Version (KJV). The underlined parts are emphasized by the *otsaamei* for GTMC-s.

the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” (Ephesians 5: 22–23, 25)

This last scripture is quoted as though a man’s love (for his wife) is on the condition that a woman first submits to him, and also that his love is a natural consequence of her submission. Emphasis is placed on the admonishment that (only) women submit and be subject to men, while ignoring or excluding the preceding verse 21, which makes submission a requirement for all, irrespective of any condition or characteristic, including gender:

“...Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:21)

Apart from others already referenced in this study, the Ga proverbs that the IO often employ include:

Nuu musu ni yiɔ le, ehāa shia hiɔ. A home thrives on a man’s [husband’s] stomach being full [with food].
Bi fooo enyieɛɛ nuu sɛɛ. A child does not cry following a man [its father], [but rather its mother].
Yoo naanyo ji bɔlɔ. A broom is a woman’s friend [companion].

Incidentally, one IO mentioned a more vivid and direct version of the third proverb:

⁴³Bɔlɔ feɔ yoo. Broom makes a woman [a real/ true woman].

All these proverbs specifically relegate a woman to the domestic and to nurturing, and to nothing else she may be capable of or aspire to. Thus, other proverbs such as:

⁴⁴Kɛ yoo hoo nii le, nuu ji mɔ ni tsɔɔ. When a woman cooks, it is a man who dishes it [the food] out.
and

Nuu mli be fioo. There is no such thing as littleness in [a person if this person is male/] a man.

Incidentally again, both IO quoted this second proverb to indicate a man’s superiority to a woman,

⁴³ This proverb, together with the previous one related to it, is very likely an equivalent of the proverb, “*Yoo shee bɔlɔ gbeyei*”, to wit “A woman has no fear of [a] broom”. This other proverb is referenced as part of the second Unmasking Dialogic Mode in Chapter 5.

⁴⁴ See another proverb strikingly parallel proverb to this proverb referenced under the Background to the Study section in Chapter 1 and in the first Dialogue under the Unmasking Dialogic Mode in Chapter 5: “*Kɛ yoo he tu le, ekɛhaa nuu shitoo*”, which means “When/ if a woman buys a gun, she gives [is to give] it to a man to keep”.

even in cases when a woman is an equal or the greater contributor to a certain positive situation in a relationship. More importantly, they deployed this proverb in response to the popular notion that whatever a man can do, a woman (too) can do same, and sometimes even more. In fact, both IO categorically disagree with this notion, to the effect that irrespective of a woman's age, wealth, position and other markers of status and forms of power, she is always subject and subservient to a man, even to men of lower status. Moreover, both IO agree that circumstances can change, and so sometimes a man may be required to take on some of the roles and duties relegated to a woman, or that a man takes part in them. However, both IO are quick to qualify this exception by framing what a man does in such a circumstance as "help to the woman", as something that is never (meant) for a man, something that is below a man, and demeaning to a man. In effect, a woman is not perceived as a complete person and an equal partner in any relationship whatsoever that she has with any man, even when her contributions in the relationship benefit both her and the man, and in some cases benefit the man more, and in yet some other cases, benefit only the man.

Finally, the two IO gave interesting responses to one interview question about a ⁴⁵folksong like the ones by Wulɔmɛi. In the song, a certain outspoken and wealthy woman says that she will choose her lover, and then Makola too, over her husband. One IO dismissed the woman's words as something provocative in a jovial sense, nothing to take too seriously, but something for a woman to be wary of entertaining in her thoughts, before she becomes what she says. The other IO dismissed the woman herself as a rogue, as brazenly ungovernable, as one who has gone wayward because of arrogance from being wealthy and probably, also because she has fallen into the bad company of other such unconventional, disruptive women. In response to one other

⁴⁵ Together with the Makola reference, see the song text and a discussion about it as part of the second Dialogue under the Undeifying Dialogic Mode in Chapter 5

question, the same IO mentions a proverbial saying, which effectively translates as women not having any sense of discretion and not being strong-minded, and yet capable of being fearfully deceitful, scheming and malicious:

Ake yoo yitso eshãaa ti.

Even though there is a radicalism to this woman's words and attitude, it is important to note that both IO do not imagine the woman – and women in general – as assertive, independent, and as a full and free human who is well able to express and live out her choices, and much less choices that contravene society's values and ideals, and (gender) culture and all.

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Thus, the interviews with these two *otsaamei* at GTMC help not only to establish the general context of the research data, the Ga songs and proverbs; even more importantly, the interviews help to specify the dominant Ga culture inherent in the data, specifically, a gender culture that is largely and almost always masculinist, if not often anti-feminist. And beyond establishing these, the use of interviews as a research tool is aptly in keeping with the need for a direct and actual engagement with the research setting, Ga (gender) culture. This, in turn, is critical for the ethnographic dimensions of this study.

3.1.2 The Established General Context and Dominant Gender Representation in the Research Data: Implications on Interpreting the Research Data and on the Theoretical Framework.

In general, it was clear from the interviews that the two IO clearly have every good intention and they lack an explicit awareness of imagining a female/ a woman as the less party in any instance of gender inequality, or simply an awareness of their being misogynistic, even if remotely so. All

the same, in their individual capacities, the two IO represent and personify Ga (gender) culture as it pertains to marriage, a relationship that provides a most apt context for a study about gender and gendered issues. And the fact and reality of this specified Ga culture is both the background and foremost context for how the selected Ga songs and proverbs in his study are interrogated. That is, this established Ga gender culture is practically valid, sufficient and necessary context for each data in this study, be it a song or a proverb, and apart from the ready or remote, and the ample or scanty context inherent in each data. Thus, even when a reading of a given data seems to be *a priori* or an over-extension of the data's literal and deeper meanings, such a reading will still be essentially valid and devoid of any argument to the contrary, so long as the reading is within and or consistent with this established context.

Apart from the established context having implications on how data is interrogated in this study's various ⁴⁶analyses, this context also has implications for the study's Theoretical Framework, which is basically a Dialogue, a dialogue between either or both genders on one hand, and the gender culture of Ga society on the other. Interrogating the texts requires a particular and focused reading, in order to achieve accurate and objective interpretations and conclusions. One of the reasons such a reading is necessary is in order to arrive at conclusions that are fair and valid, even if contestable. For the most part in said analyses, this reading may seem skewed, often in favour of the female gender and against the male. This bias, however, is neither real nor true: it is only and merely apparent. And as indicated ⁴⁷earlier, this apparent bias is because, where any at all, the gender representations in the data – the Ga songs and proverbs – are almost always negative towards the female gender and to the advantage or privilege of the male gender. This, by default,

⁴⁶ This refers to the analyses in the various Dialogues under the four Dialogic Modes in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁴⁷ This is variously indicated in Chapters 1 and 2.

makes females the deprived gender and therefore, the plaintiff party in Dialogue with Ga society's gender culture, the defendant party. And since this study's theoretical underpinnings imply equality between the parties in Dialogue, it is easy and yet erroneous to deem anything done to ensure said equality as sympathizing with or (over)emphasizing the plight of the plaintiff female gender, while attacking the defendant Ga society. In effect, the unequal gender representations in the data, as well as the equality inclination of this study's Dialogic theoretical framework, make the analyses of the data and the resultant conclusions, appear to emerge from a feminist position, rather than a neutral and objective position, which is actually the case in this study.

3.2.1 Theoretical Framework: Dialogue as Imagined by Bakhtin and as Conceptualized in This Study.

Like the Soviet thinker and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin himself, his ideas and theories about different forms of resistance and revolution are as important and indispensable as they can be elaborate and belaboured, and sometimes even controversial. In this regard, Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism, the essence of which is the concept of Dialogue, is no different. Therefore, one would want to be careful not to be presumptuous or pretentious about having a full and perfect understanding about Bakhtin's ideas and theories, in all their seemingly endless complexities, implications and applications. Having said this, Bakhtin's imagination of Dialogue can loosely be thought of as a sense of awareness, recognition and inclusion of plurality in the creation, shaping and, where necessary and possible, also the modification or transformation of meaning, knowledge and reality – or simply, forms of 'truth'. Alternatively, "Dialogism is the characteristic of the epistemological

mode of a world dominated by ⁴⁸heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole – there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 426). Put differently, “A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes ‘dialogization’ when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative and absolute.” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 427).

Bakhtin’s conception of Dialogue – or Dialogism, to be specific – is in particular reference to language in all its complexities and stratifications, and in further particular reference to the ‘word’, which is not necessarily less simple and less layered just because it is the most basic ⁴⁹linguistic unit of language. Bakhtin’s Dialogue/ Dialogism is in an even more particular reference to creative work in prose genres, precisely the novel. And by this, Dialogue or Dialogism can be realized in at least three ways:

a) the ‘words’ or ‘voice’ of a writer does not take over and dominate that of the world in the story, and especially that of the characters in the story’s world. This means that the writer does not

“place [his or her] own narrative between the character[s] and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. It is thus as if the [story is] written by multiple characters, [and] not [from] a single author’s standpoint. [And so] instead of a single objective world, held together by the author’s voice...the reader [sees]...how reality appears to each character” (Robinson 2011a, p. 2).

⁴⁸ Linked to the idea of plurality and diversity, and therefore to ‘other-ness’ [as in ‘hetero’], heteroglossia can be defined as “the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text”, such that all the obvious and latent notions that underly and surround the words in the text/ utterance contribute to the meaning/s projected by the entirety of the text/ utterance. (Bakhtin 1981, p. 428)

⁴⁹ It can be said that a ‘word’ is the most basic unit of language, but this is only so in a manner of speaking. This is because in aspects of linguistics, such as phonetics and semantics, a ‘word’ is not always and or not necessarily the most basic of units. For example, in phonetics, sounds form syllables, which in turn, form words; in semantics, some morphemes are themselves ‘root words’, while other morphemes, such as affixes (prefixes and suffixes), are added to ‘words’ to form other ‘words’.

- b) the ‘words’ or ‘voices’ of the various characters interact and are in some ways influenced by each other’s ‘word/s’ or ‘voice’, such that “characters are able to speak for themselves, even against the author” and “each character has their own final word, but it relates to and interacts with those of other characters” (Robinson 2011a; p. 2 and p. 3, respectively).
- c) the novel or work itself “constantly engages with and is informed by other works and voices, and seeks to alter or inform it”, rather than the work being isolated and inert in a world teeming with multiplicities of consciousnesses, perspectives, and ideologies (Robinson 2011a, p.3).

Whether by Bakhtin himself or by others, the theory of Dialogue has been and can be applied to discourse in disciplines such as Literature and Linguistics, Philosophy and Psychology, History and Politics, Economics and Education, and even in Everyday life. For example, in Linguistics, Dialogue will be a question about the concrete and everyday practical uses of language versus focus and emphasis on the form/s of language, and the section/s of society that dictate the so-called standardized or accepted versions of language; in Politics, Dialogue will entail ideologies like autocracy and democracy, as well as issues about dissent and consensus; in Everyday life, Dialogue can be seen in whether “people listen to their partners or housemates, [and] whether parents respond to the needs of their children” (Robinson 2011a, p. 4).

In keeping with this study’s imagination of Dialogue,

⁵⁰“Bakhtin’s basic scenario for modeling variety [as demonstrated in the *diversity of the voices of the parties in a Dialogue*] is of two actual people [or parties, *Ga society and either or both genders*] talking to each other in a specific dialogue [about the *unequal gender representations*] at a particular time [or *context* as may be seen in the *Ga songs and proverbs*] and in a particular place [or *setting of general Ga gender culture*]” (Bakhtin

⁵⁰ The underlined parts of this quotation are parallel to the *italicized* parts in the insertions in the quotation.

1981, p. xx).

That is, this study and Bakhtin recognize *others*, or specifically, the plurality and diversity of perspectives and voices, as well as the need to be intentionally aware of *others*, in order engage them, and even if not to accommodate or adjust to them, to be informed and or influenced in some other way/s by them, even as we do same to them. Also, Bakhtin's notion of Dialogism has it that "authentic double-voicedness...is not exhausted [but rather, it] remains...like a spring of dialogism that never runs dry [and it]...inevitably accompanies the social, contradictory historical becoming of language" (Bakhtin 1981, p.330). In relation to the subject of this study, this suggests that Dialogue tends or leads to an incremental, unending and dynamic progress from one status quo of gender culture to the next, with each next level of progress being consistent with the new and natural truths and realities that emerge from the previous level. Eventually, and per the subject of this study, society becomes the better for it: firstly, society is gradually rid of the otherwise abiding tensions caused by gender inequality, which is in turn informed and sanctioned by society's own (gender) culture. Secondly, society gets to benefit from the best of the two genders, seeing that they are both treated with the full dignity of their individual person and humanity. Ultimately, this leads to a "Bakhtinian utopia", a world of "abundance of dialogue, of coexistence of differences, of absence of an overarching regulation of the free self-actualization of different perspectives. It would be something like a permanent carnival" (Robinson 2011a, p. 8).

Moreover, Bakhtinian notion has it, firstly, that Dialogue is inherent in and is inevitable in the face of difference and diversity; secondly, that it is both imperative and urgent to pursue Dialogue to its rather unending conclusion; and also that this pursuit needs to have a real and ready intentionality about Dialogue. That is, apart from this intentionality, as well as a dauntless anticipation of and zeal for Dialogue, one also needs to be (pro-)active *to initiate* the Dialogue. In

the parlance of this study, *to initiate* is ‘*to incite*’, while in Bakhtinian language, it is ‘*to provoke*’, as seen in the following:

“...every word is directed towards an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word it anticipates. The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it *provokes* an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 280)

In this way too, Bakhtin’s and this study’s conception of Dialogue overlap.

However, the only point of divergence is that, it appears Bakhtin does not specify a particular tool or model with which Dialogue can be *initiated* – that is, *provoked* or *incited* – in the first place. In his *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin does “[discuss] carnivalesque (or ‘folk-humour’) a particular speech genre which occurs across a variety of cultural sites, most notable a carnival itself” (Robinson 2011b, p. 1). A careful look at Bakhtin’s idea of carnivalesque or a carnival, however, shows that it is in and of itself a Dialogue, even though it is momentary or ⁵¹*event-ive*. Or at the very least, carnivalesque is a demonstration, or even an invitation or provocation to Dialogue, but neither necessarily a tool for said invitation or a provocation, nor a Dialogic Model or Mode per se. Thus,

“A carnival is a moment when everything (except arguably violence) is permitted. It occurs on the border between art and life, and is a kind of life shaped according to the pattern of play. It is usually marked by displays of excesses and grotesqueness...[and it] creates a situation in which diverse voices are heard and interact, breaking down conventions and enabling genuine dialogue. It creates a chance for a new perspective and a new order of

⁵¹ See an earlier usage of this term at the latter end of Chapter 2, specifically in reference to Helen Yitah’s and this study’s concept of Dialogue.

things, by showing the relative nature of all that exists” (Robin 2011b, p.1).

And it is at this point of divergence from Bakhtin’s imagination of Dialogue that this study proposes the *kasantswi* principle of a proverb-question, as a tool to ‘incite’ Dialogue’s, as well as four (Dialogic) Modes in which Dialogue can occur.

3.2.2 Theoretical Framework: The *Kasantswi* Principle and the Ga Proverb-Question as Preamble to Dialogue.

Kasantswi is a Ga oral art form. It essentially implies Dialogue, even though, per its very nature and modus operandi, this Dialogue is indirect, can be very cryptic and yet appear to be (co-)incidental or even accidental, especially to someone who has little or no experience in things like this. This is partly because *kasantswi* may consist of allusion or insinuation, proverb or song or even idiom, as well as any other literary device that has a clear aesthetic and or rhetorical effect. The Akan version of *kasantswi*, ‘*akutia*’, is translated as ‘indirection’ (Martino 2018, p. 21). *Kasantswi* can also be expressed through socio-culturally intelligible gestures and actions such as dance and body language. And as Martino (2018) observes, even the names of cloths and cloth designs, and the styles in which the cloths are worn or sewn, can be mediums of *kasantswi*.

As the term ‘indirection’ implies, *kasantswi* operates on the ⁵²*ashi-mashi* principle: one party communicates a sentiment in such a way that the other party knows themselves to be the target audience of the sentiment, even though the latter party is neither named nor mentioned by the former, the sayer of the sentiment. In keeping with this principle, one Ga proverb has it that:

Kasantswi le enuntso.

[Every] *kasantswi* knows its master/ lord [owner or target].

⁵² ‘*Ashi-mashi*’ can loosely be translated as ‘so-so-and-so’. The Akan version is ‘*asumasi*’.

Thus, even though the target may or may not respond to the *kasantswi* ‘thrown’ them, they are still practically drawn into what can easily become and continue as a back-and-forth exchange of *kasantswi* – or simply, a dialogue, even if indirect. And beyond every doubt and ambiguity, this latter party know themselves as the target of the *kasantswi*, and this is because it rests on the sayer party to be witty and tactful, and strategic and even artful in ‘throwing’ the *kasantswi*. It is for this reason that there is the Ga notion of ‘*kasantswi obubuafo*’, ‘a cripple(d) *kasantswi*’, an idiomatic description of a *kasantswi* that does not arrive intact at its destination, a *kasantswi* that fails to effectively reach its target. This happens when the sayer party is not adept and sophisticated enough to ensure that, unless the target party is the less adept or novice one in this regard, the *kasantswi* is clear, unmistakable and impossible to miss. Also, if an adept target does not reply or react to a *kasantswi*, it is not for lack of knowing that they are its target; among other reasons, it is more likely that they would rather let matters slide, or they want to gather the wit and stratagem with which to ‘return’ the *kasantswi* that was ‘thrown’ at them with equal or greater fervour. Together with the art of it all, it is this wit and calculated albeit subtle stratagem that can make *kasantswi* escape or get lost on someone who is a novice or such a target party.

Ultimately, however, anything short of this *ashi-mashi* principle is not *kasantswi*: it is a direct conversation, or even an open confrontation – even if essentially a dialogue, like any other. The Akan version of *kasantswi*, *akutia*, can be translated as ‘that which fights against’. Similarly, *kasantswi* is likely a Ga modification of the Akan expression, ‘*kasa a etwi*’, which can be rendered and understood as ‘words or an expression that rubs on [a person]’, most likely in an uncomfortable and possibly abrasive way. In these senses, both *akutia* and ‘*kasa a etwi*’ are synonymous with *kasantswi*, at the very least, per its connotation. These linguistic and semantic associations, together with *kasantswi*’s afore-mentioned qualities, give *kasantswi* an offensive and sometimes

hostile undertone, despite it not being direct and explicitly confrontational.

To this end, it must be mentioned that this study's conception of *kasantswi* is, first of all, for the purpose of its implied and albeit indirect Dialogue, rather than for its said undertones. This means that the actually neutral and objective Dialogic position of this study's theoretical framework is not to be misconstrued as necessarily against or antagonistic towards Ga society's gender culture and or the male gender, in case either or both of these two are the afore-described defendant party in a given Dialogue, while the female gender is the plaintiff party. And this caveat is especially noteworthy in cases where said position may appear to be feminist, for reasons previously explained. It is also important to mention that deploying *kasantswi* as a tool in this study's theoretical framework is intentional. And this is partly because the socio-cultural and philosophical context of *kasantswi* is consistent with that of the research data, the Ga songs and proverbs. In fact, both *kasantswi* and the Ga songs and proverbs are forms of Ga oral tradition and lore. In effect, it makes for an apt research methodology to use one form of Ga oral literature (*kasantswi*) as a research tool to interrogate gender representations in two other forms of the same literary canon – the Ga song and proverbs.

The *kasantswi* principle in this study is extended, by first linking it to a Ga proverb about asking, where asking too implies Dialogue:

Abiii wo ni ahe nu.

One does not ask for honey and take water.

[or more aptly]

Abiii wo ni ahe nu.

One does not expect honey and accept water instead.

This proverb, like many others, is couched as a statement, a Declarative Sentence. And much more than a statement, an Interrogative Sentence – or a simply Question – readily suggests not only another party apart from its asker, but also the possibility of a dialogue, if not an incitement to a

dialogue. This is also true for a Rhetorical Question, to which a reply or some other reaction is implied even though this is not exactly required. In other words, and unlike a question, a statement does not always require a reply or a reaction of any sort, neither does it necessarily imply another party apart from its sayer. This means that, in and of itself, the statement form of the proverb is unlikely to incite a Dialogue, and much less to set the preamble for, and consequently, the tenor for any Dialogue. Thus, rendering this proverb as a Question, for the purposes of this study:

Abio wo ni ahe nu? Does one ask for honey and take water?

or

Aaabi wo ni ahe nu? Does one expect honey and accept water instead?

This question is further extended as a Dialogic concept, by adding the Ga expressions ‘*ani*’ and ‘*lo*’ to the now proverb-question. Thus:

Ani aaabi wo ni ahe nu lo? *** does one expect water and accept water instead **?

‘*Ani*’ and ‘*lo*’ are not easy to describe in English terms. However, in the context of their usages here, ‘*ani*’ can be said to highlight that a question in which they are used is a specific and direct question, a question that demands a response with the same qualities. On the other hand, ‘*lo*’ is both a signifier and an Intensifier that an expression is a question – and decidedly and quite insistently so – and also that this question demands only one of a set of few replies or reactions, a set which both the asker of the question and the one to whom it is posed know or are supposed to know. ‘*Ani*’ and ‘*lo*’ are not sufficiently described and understood only in terms of grammar and literal semantics. This notwithstanding, the question posture of both ‘*ani*’ and ‘*lo*’ imply Dialogue, thereby deepening the Dialogue underpinnings of the proverb-question *kasantswi* principle of which ‘*ani*’ and ‘*lo*’ are extensions. And all these make the theoretical framework’s imagination of Dialogue immediate and palpable, as well as make for a more layered and nuanced assumption

that the two parties in any given Dialogue are equal to each other. And because of this, the said parties' gender representations will be read and analyzed as such – with equality – even if this risks coming across as affected and or biased in favour of one gender, which is often the female gender.

The essence of this *kasantswi* proverb-question is what *incites* Dialogue between either or both genders and Ga society's gender culture, specifically the gender representations inherent in the Dialogue parties' voices in the selected Ga songs and proverbs. In every unique Dialogue, the specifics of the essential proverb-question is informed by the subject matter and themes and or context/s of the Ga song or proverb under consideration, as well as the tenor or dialectal direction of the Dialogic Mode in which the same Dialogue occurs. And although these questions are often listed at the latter end of the Dialogues from which they emerge, the questions, as a unit, are actually the **preambles** to the Dialogues.

3.3 The Four Dialogic Modes and Their Corresponding Outcomes.

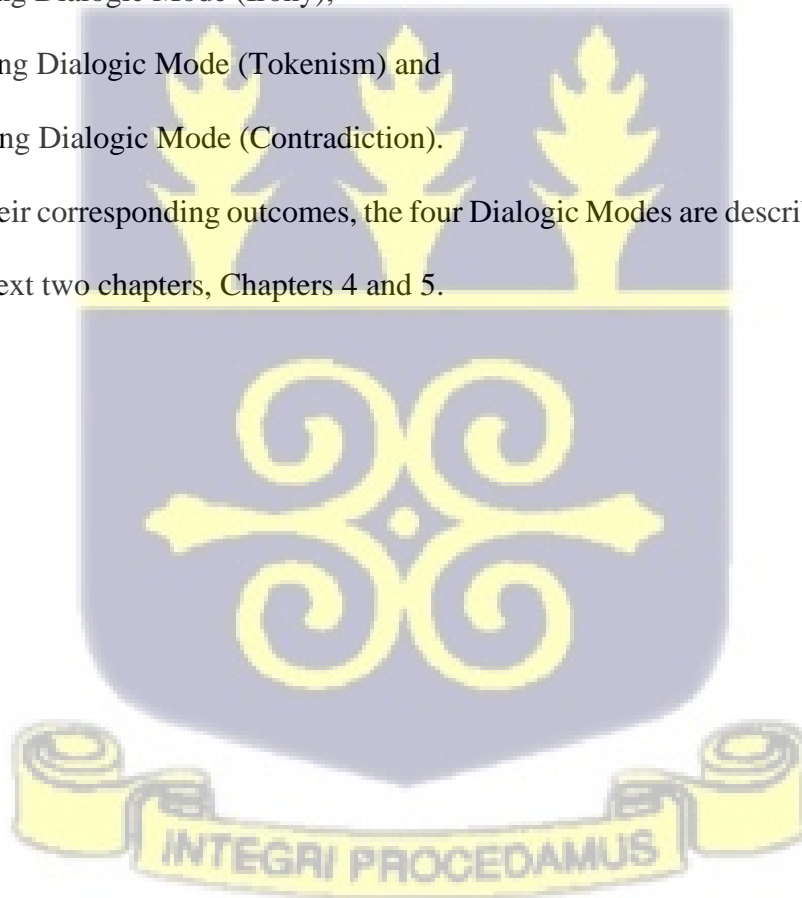
Having been 'incited' by a *kasantswi* proverb-question, Dialogues – or the various analyses – illustrate the four Dialogic Modes proposed by the researcher. And in this study, there are two such illustrations for each Dialogic Mode. That is, there are two separate Dialogues or analyses of Ga song and or proverb texts under each Dialogic Mode. The Dialogues occur with respect to the Dialogic imagination of this study's Theoretical Framework, which includes the use of the *kasantswi* proverb-question as **preamble** to Dialogue. Together with the specific Subject Matter and context/s – if any ready one/s at all – of each selected Ga song or proverb, the **tenor** for each Dialogue is mediated by the particular Dialogic Mode in which the given Dialogue occurs.

Each Dialogic Mode has a corresponding implication or an **outcome**, and this essentially

summarizes the pattern of unequal gender representations when a Dialogue occurs in a particular Mode. For example, *Undoing* or reversing the roles, voices or perspectives of the two genders in the narrative of a Ga song or proverb shows not only the nature and content of the unequal gender representations in that narrative. Even more importantly, this Undoing reveals that the inequality tends to a *Double Standard* in the ways that either or both genders are (re)presented or treated in the said narrative. Thus, the four Dialogic Modes, with their corresponding outcomes in brackets, are as follows:

- a) Undoing Dialogic Mode (Double Standard),
- b) Unraveling Dialogic Mode (Irony),
- c) Undeifying Dialogic Mode (Tokenism) and
- d) Unmasking Dialogic Mode (Contradiction).

Together with their corresponding outcomes, the four Dialogic Modes are described and illustrated in detail in the next two chapters, Chapters 4 and 5.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW: This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section consists of an introduction to the Undoing Dialogic Mode and two illustrations of this Dialogic Mode. Informed by the tenor of the Undoing Dialogic Mode, each of the two illustrations entails an analysis and discussion of gender representations in the selected Ga song and or proverb. Together, the analysis and discussion essentially is a Dialogue between the two parties – either or both genders – and Ga socio-cultural worldview of gender as seen in the gender representations in the selected Ga song and or proverb under consideration. Each illustration ends with a set of questions, the essence of which is the *kasantswi* proverb-question serving as the preamble that initiates each Dialogue. The second section of this chapter consists of an introduction to the Unraveling Dialogic Mode, followed by the other contents as explained above for the Undoing Dialogic Mode.

4.1 Introduction: The Undoing Dialogic Mode (Double Standard)

The Undoing Dialogic Mode entails a hypothetical reversal of hitherto fixed roles, voices or persona(e) and narratives of the two genders in the selected Ga song or proverb. This reversal exposes the unequal and sometimes unfair principles inherent in the said roles', voices', personae's or narratives' representations about the *other*-ed gender. Depending on the subject matter and particular contents of the selected Ga proverb or song, this othered gender can be either or both

genders. Thus, this reversal can be done for either or both genders, when the Undoing Dialogic Mode is applied to a text. And by extracting and analyzing the implications of the gender representations and inequalities inherent in the text, a particular outcome that corresponds with the Undoing Dialogic Mode emerges. For the Undoing Dialogic Mode, the outcome is a Double Standard. The Undoing Dialogic Mode, therefore, interrogates the unequal gender representations in the content and contexts of the selected Ga proverbs and songs, thereby showing the Double Standards in Ga gender culture.

The Ga songs and proverbs selected and analyzed for the Undoing Dialogic Mode are categorically gendered, even if the gendered relationship is not always romantic, marital or even familial. Where relevant and necessary, other texts are used in the analysis, but only as supporting texts for the Ga proverb or song under consideration in an instance of Undoing. These other texts may be gendered or non-gendered, and they may be other Ga songs or proverbs, or even other elements of Ga worldview including language, culture and lore.

4.1.1 Undoing Dialogic Mode: Dialogue One (1)

In ⁵³one song by Wulɔmei, a man approaches and asks audacious things of a woman to whom he was quite a stranger. The woman, narrates her encounter with this man thus:

Oblanyeyoo ko,	A certain gentleman lady,
⁵⁴ Eje Sempe.	He She is from Sempe.

⁵³ Popularly called *Meridien* (Meridian), this is one of the most popular *Wulɔmei* songs of all times.

⁵⁴ Unlike English, Ga has no distinction between the genders of the third person singular personal pronouns ('he' and 'she'), together with their grammatical variants (e.g.: 'her', 'hers'; 'him', 'his'). Thus, whether in reference to the male or female gender, the third person singular personal pronoun in Ga is 'e-', together with its variant(s) 'le'.

This gender-neutral quality is true too for the first person singular and plural personal pronouns ('I' and 'we' in English; 'mi' and 'wo' in Ga); for the second person singular and plural pronouns ('you' and same 'you', respectively, in English; 'bo' and 'nye', respectively, in Ga); and for the third person plural pronoun ('they' in

Egbomotso fæfæo.	He She has a beautiful build.
Esuomɔ mi [/mli] wuɔ be.	He She loves me like a few cock does [like a cock does hens].
Mikashi miwɔ.	I was lying down sleeping
Ebatɛ(i) mi.	He She came calling me [from sleep].
Mibi le ake, “Meni sane?”	I asked her , “What is the matter?”
Ekɛɛ mi akɛ eeye oyai.	He She he told me he she was in a hurry.

[Mibi le akɛ,] “Ooye oyai, [Ni] Nɛgbɛ okɛ mi yaa?”	[I asked him,] “ You are in a hurry, [and] to where are you taking me ?”
[Ekɛɛ,] “Wɔ’nya Meridiɛn yɛ Tema. Mi kɛ bo yaaye, Mi kɛ bo yaanu, Mi kɛ bo yaajo,”	[He She said,] “ We are going to Meridian, at Tema. I am going to eat with you , I am going to drink with you , I am going to dance with you .”

The voice and persona in this song is a woman, a lady, who is “lying down sleeping”, either because it is night or because she is tired from one kind of work or another. Whatever be the case, this woman must need her rest, because of which she is sleeping in the first place.

A “certain gentleman”, a man who the woman barely knows, suddenly comes, calling her, and asking her to hurry to come, and to go eat, drink and dance with him. The woman’s rest is insistently disturbed and interrupted by this stranger-man, about whom the only thing that she hitherto knows is that he is from Sempe. Sempe is one of the seven clans of Ga Mashi *Jaku* (entire Ga Mashi state), and like all the other six *akutso/-ei* (areas or sub-states) of Ga Mashi, Sempe has many *we/-i* (clans). Each *we* has several *shia/-i* (houses), each of which in turn consists of *weku-i* (extended families), each of which too consists of nuclear families made up of several people.

English; ‘ame’ in Ga). Thus, except for making a distinction between the second person singular and plural pronouns (‘you’ and ‘you’ in English; ‘bo’ and ‘nye’ in Ga), these other pronouns have the same pattern as in English, together with all their respective grammatical variants.

Because of this, the only accurate way it is known that the persona in this song is a woman is the word ‘oblanyo’ (‘gentleman’) in the first line of the song, which refers to the subject of the song, a man who comes calling the persona, a sleeping woman.

Therefore, it is vague and inconsequential if all that the woman knows about the man is that he is from Sempe: it is as good as the woman not knowing anything at all about the man. Knowing even the name of the man may give clues about which *we*, and even more unlikely, about which particular *weku* the man comes from. Thus, the man is still a stranger as any other to the woman and yet, he does not only approach the woman to ask to go out with her, but he also asks to take her to *Meridien*, far away from Ga Mashi, far away to *Tema*. This does not only make the man's motives and his interest in the woman questionable. It is also inconsiderate and conceited of him. And all this is irrespective of the intensity and urgency of this stranger-man's love interest in the woman, and irrespective too of the normalized codes and tactics for a man to pursue a love interest in the socio-cultural context of this song.

It can be argued that the woman, in fact, knows the man, and that she only refers to him as "a certain gentleman" while narrating the experience to another person. For any valid personal or other reason, the woman may rather not disclose the full identity of the man to the person. However, the bigger fact remains that this person must be a confidante, a trusted person, in the first place. And it is for this reason that the woman is comfortable or happy enough to share with the person such a personal experience, and an unpleasant one at that. In other words, by telling the person about her encounter with the man, the woman does something riskier than some other thing because of which withholding the man's identity may be a better or wiser thing to do. It does not matter if the reason for this other thing is fear, shame or simply a matter of being discreet. In effect, there is no real reason because of which the woman would rather not mention the man's identity, if she actually knows it. The more probable argument would be that, it is so much the norm for men to behave in such brazen ways that it is quite unnecessary for the woman to share the man's identity. That is, such attitudes and actions by men are so frequent and expected that any man is

representative of all or almost all other men. In one Ga song of the same genre as the one under study, another woman bemoans similar and even worse characteristics for which the men in her society are widely known to be notorious:

Man:

Awula ni yaa, tsi obenke mi mo! // Young woman on her way going, do come close to me. //

Awula ni yaa, miked obakwe no ko! Young woman on her way going, I say come see something.

Woman:

Ohie tsei lo?! Do you actually have [dough] money?!

Man:

Ohinmeitsei ke onaji po gbeo mi nee! How your beautiful eyes and legs kill me to bits!

Woman:

Ohie tsei lo?! Do you actually have dough [money]?!

Keji ohiee tsei le, kaatse mi. If you don't have dough [money], don't call me.

Ke mi bode [body] akashwe. Don't play with my body.

Ha ni maya he ni miyaa Let me go where I am on my way to.

[repeat]

Ohie tsei lo?! Do you actually have dough [money]?!

Kaatse mi. Don't you call me.

Ke mi bode [body] akashwe. // Don't play with my body. //

Ke mi bode [body] akashwe kwraa. Don't play with my body at all.

[repeat]

Ga oblahii ni eba [le], Ga young men of nowadays,

Je aaatsere nee neke soŋŋ: This is all you do every day:

Nye neke feemo hewo le, Because of these your deeds,

Nye go Ga oblayei fee. // You have caused all Ga young women dinginess. //

Nyɛ ɔ Ga oblayei blublu. You have caused all Ga young women dinginess beyond redemption.

Kaaatɛ mi! Don't you call me!

Ha ni maya he ni miyaa. Let me go where I am on my way to.

In many ways, this other woman's situation is similar to that of the woman in the main song under discussion. That is, both women are intrusively, tactlessly and sexually suggestively propositioned by two different men, both, stranger men. By asking the man calling her if he "actually [has] dough [money]", this other woman comes across as transactional, if not materialistic, with any love (interest) she will show or reciprocate to a man. However, this woman explains the actual and more important reason she will rather not entertain a man who finds her attractive, especially if it is a stranger-man: this man can only be one of the lot who inevitably "cause [women nothing but] dinginess beyond [any] redemption". This woman may rationalize that if she must lose her youth and luster to any man with whom she happens to be in an amorous relationship, it better be a moneyed man. Perhaps, the money can help undo or minimize the damages from the dinginess that the man will inevitably cause her. Therefore, rather than coming across as opportunistic and vain, the woman becomes a prudent woman, one who wisely knows to fight for a personal interest, which neither a man nor her society will so much as even seek on her behalf. In effect, to a woman in the socio-cultural context of the main song under discussion, an unnamed man, an anonymous man, and even the barely known man is hardly any different from the familiar man, the well-known man, and even the familial and the intimate man. And in such context, it will be pointless for the woman to spend time and effort detailing the man's identity, when narrating her experience with the man to another person. Also, and whatever the argument is, the woman refers to the man as "a certain gentleman", a reference that most likely says more about her dislike and rejection of the

man and his attitude, than it says about any wish or reason she may have for hiding the man's identity. And all this is even if the woman, in fact, knows the man – his identity and all.

And as if it is not enough that his airs are distasteful, the man plays evasive when the woman asks him “what the matter is”. He only tells the woman that “he is in a hurry”, suggesting that the woman is wasting his time, and also that the woman is being unreasonable and reticent about a supposedly simple and direct matter. Meanwhile, the woman is only being expectedly and duly concerned about suddenly going out to have some supposed fun with a stranger-man. And when the woman asks where he is taking her to, the man says he is taking her far away, to *Meridien*, a luxurious and popular hotel built as part of efforts to boost the burgeoning urban, economic and social activity in an important coastal and port city, Tema. The man goes on to list activities that he plans to do with the woman: to eat, drink and dance. It may be presumptuous for one to think that, by this list, the man plans to do with the woman more than what he says in the list. Also, it may be an exaggeration for one to imagine that the man intends to possibly have sexual relations with the woman. However, knowing that the man “loves [the woman] like a cock does hens” clears one of any such faults. The expression categorically calls the man promiscuous – and habitually, shamelessly and rampantly so. This is because, in Ga idiomatic parlance, the expression “loves like a fowl (does)” is usually used to refer to a person's unabashed and unbridled promiscuous ways. Even though this reference is supposed to be gender neutral, in the sense that it can refer to either gender, it is mostly used in reference to women, and not to men. The practical and literal interpretation of the idiom, “loves like a fowl (does)”, necessarily suggests that, rather than the hen or the female gender of a fowl, it is the cock or the male gender that is promiscuous or has the tendency to be so. Thus, even though the obvious and practical understanding of the idiom is a negative attribution on the part of the male gender, Ga gender culture ignores this and rather

imputes promiscuity to the female gender. In effect, the man’s evasiveness does not only betray his ulterior motives, to which the woman will fall prey if she accepts his love proposition and his invitation to *Meridien*. Also, the denotative meaning of the expression with which the man’s motive is presented shows a deliberate and an unfair attempt to discredit the female gender, who happens to rather be the victim and prey in the context of this song.

Another Ga expression with sentiments similar to “loves like a fowl (does)” is the word ‘*gbã/-a*’. This word more heavily connotes promiscuity, indicating a person’s proclivity to be a whore, to be involved with another person or persons in a casual romantic or even marital relationship. And this relationship is never without the intimacy of sexual relations. It is probably for this reason that the meaning of the Ga word for marriage, ‘*gbãla*’, which contains the word ‘*gbã/-a*’, includes sexual relations. Here too, the words ‘*gbã/-a*’ and ‘*gbãla*’ are mostly used in reference to women, rather than to men. Thus, it is much more typical, and it makes more socio-cultural sense to say that

yoo e/tee gbãla,	a woman went/ has gone (in)to marriage,
than to say	
nuu e/tee gbãla.	a man went/ has gone (in)to marriage.

Moreover, instead of other verbs or action words such as ‘*sumɔ/-ɔ*’ (‘like’ or ‘love’), which is used in the song, ‘*gbã/-a*’ is the more typical word used in the idiom that *likens* a person’s promiscuity to that of a fowl. It is, therefore, curious that the gender culture that informs the song seeks to use this *simile*-idiom, despite its undesirable underpinnings of promiscuity, to emphasize and dramatize the supposed love that the man has for the woman. At the same time, the same gender culture outdoes itself by opting for atypical ‘*sumɔ/-ɔ*’, while visibly avoiding the very much typical ‘*gbã/-a*’. By so doing, it is even more curious that this gender culture seeks to minimize – if not eliminate – the negative connotations of promiscuity on the part of the man. In other words,

the word ‘*gbãa*’ is bypassed, and ‘*sumɔɔ*’ used instead, in order to sanitize and to eulogize the man’s supposed love for the woman. This shows how the gender culture, albeit subtly, excuses the man’s promiscuity as a product of (genuine) love, rather than as of a lust-filled and sexually loose character. Thus, something that is normally used in a negative reference to women, something that is outrightly unacceptable for women, is (re-)presented as noble for men. And all this is only a part of the Double Standard against females, as seen in the gender representations in the song.

Again, it may be argued that at least, the man “loves” the woman, and so he may have respectable intentions for asking to go out with her, and perhaps, he will later commit to a more stable and recognized love relationship with the woman. However, the reason the persona chooses the verb ‘*sumɔɔ*’ (love), rather than others such as ‘like’ and ‘date’ or ‘court’ is most likely because there is no other real and single word that translates into ‘like’ in Ga. That is, Ga language makes no real distinction between ‘liking’ and ‘loving’ someone: both ‘to like’ and ‘to love’ are translated as ‘*sumɔ(ɔ)*’ in Ga, just as the nouns ‘love’ and ‘like/ liking’ is ‘*suɔmɔ*’. This means that unless there is specific and ample context from which deductions and inferences can be made, the one word which translates as either ‘like’ or ‘love’ in Ga can be ‘love’ – true and profound and virtuous. Or it can be mere ‘like/ liking’ – mundane and fleeting, or superficial and even lustful. Thus, the use of ‘*sumɔɔ*’ to refer to the man’s feelings for the woman is ambiguous and all but meaningless, if not for the context and the ample details provided by the rest of the song, as well as by the insights that the said context and details lend to the word ‘*sumɔɔ*’. And as has already been established about the man, rather than he being a love-struck man in some desperate but audacious pursuit of a love interest, he is being plain Casanova. Simply, the man has no real and wholesome intentions for the woman, not for the moment, not for some future time.

The man is said to have a “beautiful build”, a stature that he knows people, especially

women, will find attractive. From what is evident about the man's conceited personality and brash manners, he will be very eager to flaunt his good looks and grand gait. The man can soon be expected to master the art of relying on his "beauty", a quality which is bound to give him more advantage over other men, more unfettered access to women, or even more chances at succeeding with these women. It is therefore, not very surprising that despite barely knowing this stranger-man, and despite the discomfort that the man causes her by rousing her from sleep and intruding into her privacy, the woman does notice the man's "beaut[y]". In fact, the woman mentions the man's attractiveness, after her rather vague but needed introduction that the man is from Sempe. Also, the woman must have been so struck by the build of the man that she thought to mention it first, even if without intending so, and before mentioning what should have been the more alarming quality of the man: the man's notorious promiscuity.

There is no telling what the situation will be if the roles of the man and the woman are to be reversed in the context of the song. Here, the woman will not only be shamed for using her beauty to seduce a man, and a stranger-man at that. Also, she will be condemned in no uncertain terms for approaching a man to explicitly proposition him, and even worse, for the sheer temerity and tactlessness with which she pursues the man. Thus, the Double Standard outcome of the Undoing Dialogic is further evident. Meanwhile, in many of the songs relevant to this study, a woman is chided and gaslighted for her beauty. She is required to hide or be modest about her good looks, almost to the point of denial or negligence. And her attractiveness becomes a ready and easy point of attack or blame, in the event of anything untoward about her. The following are extracts from two such songs:

1.

[Someone calls – a woman's voice]

Kaafo oooo! Kaafo, Don't cry oooo! Don't cry,

Ni mə ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. For someone to look inside your mouth.
⁵⁵Shika kɛ kpɔ hɔ oɔaa[ŋ], A knot of gold is hidden inside your mouth,
 [Hewɔ lɛ] Kaaafɔ oooo! Mɛɛle, [So] Don't cry oooo! Merley,
 Kaaafɔ ni mə ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. Don't cry for someone to see the insides of your mouth

...

[A woman's voice]

Kaaala aaaa! Kaaala, Don't sing aaaa! Don't sing,
 Ni mə ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. For someone to look inside your mouth.
 Shika kɛ kpɔ hɔ oɔaa[ŋ], A knot of gold is hidden inside your mouth,
 [Hewɔ lɛ] Kaaala aaaa! Mɛɛle, [So] Don't sing, Merley Don't sing
 Kaaala ni mə ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ] Don't sing for someone to see the insides of your mouth

2.

Ajele ooo! Ajeley ooo!
 Yeeei! Yeeei!
 [repeat]

Ona ofufɔ frɔfrɔ fɛɛfɛo dukubii dukubii! You see your lush, beautiful, cutely round breasts!
 Ona ofufɔ frɔfrɔ fɛɛfɛo ?dekedeke niginigi! You see your lush, beautiful, crisply perky breasts!
 No hewɔ obuɯu mə kwraa! Because of which you are so saucy!
 [repeat]

Otse ewie aahu, onuuu. Your father has spoken for long, [but] you will not hear.
 ...?... hu ewie aahu, onuuu. ...?... too has spoken for very long, [but] you will not hear.
 Obaana kɛ ohinmei [lɛ], You will see with your very eyes, [and],
 Jee loomɔ ni eeeeei! That is not a curse eeeeei!
 Kwemɔ ojogbaŋ! Look very well [Be very careful]!
 [repeat]

...

From the foregoing discussion, there not only is a literal *dialogue* between the persona-

⁵⁵ In Ga, 'shika' is money or a medium of it. It also signifies wealth, and a metaphor for anything deemed precious and valuable. When used to refer to gold, 'shika' may be qualified with 'tsuru', which is Ga for 'red', but per this usage, it means 'coloured', as in 'not plain' like white or black. This distinction is often necessary because silver in Ga is 'shika yeŋ', where 'yeŋ' literally means 'white', but more appropriately in this usage, means 'plain', as in 'not coloured'.

woman and the Sempe-man characters in the song under discussion. There also is *Dialogue* between the female gender and Ga socio-cultural views about gender, as seen in the content of the literal dialogue. Through the voices of the two genders in dialogue, society represents the male gender as audacious and entitled, and with an unquestionable, non-negotiable access to satiate his desires. The desires especially include male desire towards the female gender, and in this particular context, a desire that is at the expense of the comfort, safety and dignity of the female gender. On the other hand, the female gender is represented as being unnecessarily focused on things that are made to appear to be trivialities. The supposed trivialities include her being alarmed at the sudden interruption of her sleep by a stranger-man; her asking the man what the matter is, only for the man to ignore her question; and her being given all but graphic details, when she only asked the man where he is taking her. In some other context, these actions by the woman would be viewed and interpreted as positive, as assertive, an attitude that the man in the song displays with wanton abandon. In the context of the song, however, this view is contrary to Ga society's expectation of women to be submissive. That is, the woman, or the female gender in the song, is not compliant. Neither does she quickly and eagerly indulge the man and his (male) desire towards her. And yet this woman is faulted, even if her compliance and her indulging the man are neither in her interest nor for her safety. Also, and per the same societal requirements of the female gender, it does not matter that the particular female – or woman in this song – is caught in an all too odd a situation, with an all too insensitive and obstinate character of a stranger-man.

With Ga society and the female gender as the two parties in Dialogue, and using the essence of the proverb-question per the particular subject matter and context of this song, the set of questions that serve as preamble to the Dialogue is as follows:

- *Why are there different societal ideals about physical attractiveness in the male and female*

genders, as well as different standards about the permitted or sanctioned uses to which the two genders can put their physical attractiveness?

- *Why are the romantic or sexual exploits of men excused, if not applauded, but the sexuality of women is strictly policed?*
- *Why are active entitlement and brazen audacity normalized and acceptable for the male gender, while the opposite is required of the female gender?*

Given this Dialogue in view of the preceding discussion, it is evident that Ga society not only overlooks, but also enables and sanctions the inequality against women with regards to asserting themselves and their agency. In other words, per the perfect patriarchal system endorsed by Ga society, both the subject matter and implications of the song are totally normal and acceptable, only that this is so for only the male gender. Thus, the subject matter of the song is suddenly unthinkable and altogether unacceptable in Ga social context, when the voices and personae of the man and the woman characters are swapped, or when the song's female persona's voice is replaced with that of the male, and vice versa. This swapping is the principle of the Undoing Dialogic Mode, the outcome of which is Double Standard – against the female gender, in this case. This swapping is therefore the basis for the re-writing of the song, the re-writing being an orthographic rendering of this said hypothetical reversal.

4.1.2 Undoing Dialogic Mode: Dialogue Two (2)

Another song unfolds as two narratives about the experiences of a heartbroken man and a woman, after they discovered their respective spouse's infidelity.

[In a woman's forlorn voice]

Aso neke **nuu** yoo lo?! So is this how [a] ~~man~~ **woman** is?!

Miiya jaraṇo ni maba [1ɛ], **I** go to the market [to trade/ work or buy things], to return [soon],

Eṅa shinaa yɛ miɛɛ. Only for ~~him~~ **her** to close a door behind **me** [after I left...]
Nuu, ayekoo ooo! ~~Man~~ **Woman**, well done ooo!
Nuu, ayekoo ooo! ~~Man~~ **Woman**, well done ooo!
 [repeat]

[Chorus to woman's verse]

Minye Awo oooo! Ooooo Mother **mine**!
Tse le ni obi le, Call ~~him~~ **her** and ask ~~him~~ **her**,
Ni etsɔɔ bo bɔni eba le mɔ! For ~~him~~ **her** to explain to you how this came about then!
Shi minaaa tsui kwraa! For **my** heart cannot take this at all!
Kɛyashi [be ni] eeegbele mi, Until [the time] ~~he~~ **she** opens [the door ~~he~~ **she** has locked] me,
Ni wɔye sane ei! So that we have this matter settled between us ei!
Ko ni eya, ni maya. So that ~~he~~ **she** goes [~~his~~ **her** way], and **I** go [my way].
Nuu, ayekoo ooo! ~~Man~~ **Woman**, well done ooo!
Nuu, ayekoo ooo! ~~Man~~ **Woman**, well done ooo!
 [repeat]

[In a man's calm but decisive voice]

Aso neke yoo yɔɔ lo?! So is this how [a] ~~woman~~ **man** is?!
Miia manɛɛ ni maba [le], **I** go beyond the country, to return,
Ni eyaṅɔ ho yɛ miɛɛ. And ~~she~~ **he** [*sic*] goes to acquire pregnancy in **my** absence.
Yoo, ayekoo ooo! ~~Woman~~ **Man**, well done!
Yoo, ayekoo ooo! ~~Woman~~ **Man**, well done!
 // //

Aso neke yoo yɔɔ lo?! So is this how [a] ~~woman~~ **man** is?!
Miifa gbe fioo ni maba [le], **I** travel a little, to return,
Ni etee eyashɔ ɔgrɛbɛɲ yɛ miɛɛ. And ~~she~~ goes to put up a revolt in **my** absence.
Yoo, ayekoo ooo! ~~Woman~~ **Man**, well done ooo!
Yoo, ayekoo ooo! ~~Woman~~ **Man**, well done ooo!

[Chorus for man's verse]

Mitɛ Ataa oooo! Oooo father **mine**!
Tse le ni obi le, Call ~~her~~ **him** and ask ~~her~~ **him**,
Ni etsɔɔ bo mɔ ni wo le ho! For ~~her~~ **him** to tell you who impregnated ~~her~~ **him** [*sic*]!

Kaaaha le shika donɔŋ!	Do not give her him money ever again!
Keyashi maba ,	Until I return [from my travel],
Ni woye sane ei!	And we have this matter settled between us ei!.
Ko ni eya , ni maya .	So that she he goes [her his way], and I go [my way].
Yoo , ayekoo ooo!	Woman Man , well done ooo!
Yoo , ayekoo ooo!	Woman Man , well done ooo!

[repeat]

The man and woman in this song are in two different romantic or spousal relationships: they each speak about their individual experience with an unfaithful partner. This makes each of the two narratives in the song distinct from the other. The reason for this distinction is two-fold: the narratives are about two separate incidents; the narratives' respective personae are of the two different genders. This distinction is neither contradicted nor in any way changed by the theme of infidelity shared by the two narratives. This is because, together with said distinction, the two narratives' particular subject matters expose the unequal gender representations in them. This inequality, in turn, tends to a Double Standard, specifically in the ways that the two genders are portrayed, treated and subconsequently judged, in the song.

The song begins with the woman persona wailing about how she returns from the market and finds that her spouse has locked up the door. Unlike the man persona who says himself to have “travel[led]” and to have “go[ne] outside the country”, the woman persona only “go[es] to the market”. This implies that the market is most likely some walking distance or a short road trip away from the home that the woman persona shares with her man-spouse. Thus, whether to buy stuff for the household or to ply a petty trade, the woman persona's going to the market entails her being away from home for only some hours in the day. And even if her absence eats into dusk or evening or even night, the woman can be expected to return home long before a time at which her spouse must necessarily lock the door in her absence. This suggests that unless the woman's spouse

and any other person/s with whom they share rooms also need to be away from the home for some hours, it is unexpected and odd for the woman to return from the market to meet a locked door. The exact reason for which the spouse locks the door is not expressly stated in the song. However, there is, firstly, the afore-mentioned infidelity theme shared by the two narratives in the song. Secondly, infidelity is a major cause of strain on a spousal relationship, a strain that can be so severe that it is tenable for a separation or even a divorce, something that the woman persona mentions as the imminent consequence for said locking of the door. These two suggest that the spouse must have locked the door in order to prevent the woman persona from suddenly walking in to see him in the middle of an affair with another woman, in the very home that he shares with the woman persona. It is for this reason that the woman persona wails about what should otherwise be a mere locking of a door. The woman persona's hurt and pain, therefore, are as much in the strange reality of her experience as in the tangible tragedy of her suffering a spouse's infidelity.

Also, unlike the woman persona whose going is only to a market that is practically close to home and only for some hours in the day, the man persona in the song's second narrative has a much farther going. By describing it as "a little", the man persona deliberately understates the duration and import of his going, as well as their impact on his spouse, a woman. This understatement is exposed when the man persona, in more than one instance, expressly calls his going what it really is: a "travel" and a "go[ing] beyond the country". Moreover, there is no explicit reason for the man persona's going far away from the home that he shares with his spouse. Nevertheless, as it was one of two assumed reasons for the woman persona's going to the market, it is fair to assume again that the man persona too goes away in order to work, or as part of a work or similar arrangement. This, however, does not change the fact that as compared to the woman persona's, the man persona's goings are far more extensive, be it in terms of time or space or both.

Given this and other differences in the peculiarities of the circumstances in which the man and woman personae individually suffer spousal infidelity, it can be said that the woman persona's suffering is far more heartbreaking than that of the man persona. Even though saying this risks minimizing the man persona's suffering, it is difficult to not notice that there is no real and rational cause for the woman persona to suffer her spouse's infidelity in the first place. That is, the woman persona returns home from the market, like any other day, only to chance on her spouse's act of infidelity in rather curious and shocking circumstances. The man persona, on the other hand, may have suffered infidelity because of his distant and prolonged physical absence from his spouse, something which can be tenable for a separation or a dissolution of marriage in its own right. This is because physical proximity is crucial for physical intimacy, which in turn validates, maintains and sometimes even enhances a spousal relationship. And even though the man persona's spouse gets pregnant as a result of her infidelity, and therefore, his may be deemed the greater tragedy, it also remains a fact that by Nature, only a woman can get pregnant, not a man, whether within or outside a committed/ marital relationship. Thus, the pregnancy is definitely admissible, but not necessarily and essentially consequential, in this context.

Being a party in a spousal relationship, the woman persona is expected to have a spare key for the door, in case of any sudden changes in her and her spouse's usual work-home or absence-presence schedule. Thus, it should not be much of an issue even if the woman persona's spouse locks the door behind her at an unusual time and for an unknown reason, since she always has access to the room/s because of the spare key. It is, however, a matter of concern, and therefore, a matter to be probed, if, for whatever reason, the woman persona does not have her own key to the door, and therefore has no access to the shared home-space. It is a matter of even more concern if the woman persona, whether she has a spare key or not, returns from the market to see that the

door lock may have been changed. These scenarios have obvious and revealing implications on the power dynamics in the woman persona's relationship with her spouse. The scenarios also suggest which of the two spousal parties own, and therefore, wield control over their shared home-space. And despite all these implications and suggestions, it is clear that the spouse knows beyond telling that the woman persona will definitely return home from the market, as usual, or sooner or later than usual. That is, the spouse is very much aware that the woman persona is not gone far away, and that she can and will be home at just about any time. Thus, the man-spouse being aware of all this and yet having an affair with another woman, and in the very home he shares with the woman persona, shows an audacious indifference on his part. Indifference of this kind, and as seen in the specific context of this song, can only be informed by the man-spouse's reckless disrespect for the woman persona, and or by an utter disregard for the socio-cultural recognition and legality of the spousal relationship between them. Either way, this disregard and disrespect are made possible and endorsed by an entrenched system that transcends not only both this man and his woman persona spouse, but also the gendered relationship between them. That this singular disrespect and disregard is sanctioned, even if only tacitly, does not in any way change the reality and gravity of the infidelity committed by the man-spouse against the woman persona. In fact, together with this socio-culturally sanctioned inequality against this woman, the specific circumstances under which she suffers her spouse's infidelity ensure that she is hurt and pained on more and deeper levels, as compared to the man persona in the other narrative.

It is already established as one of two possibilities that the woman persona goes to the market to ply a petty trade, to work, something which translates into some form of her own financial adequacy, if not independence. Sometimes, this financial independence benefits not only the woman herself, but also her spouse and immediate family, and her society and country at large.

It is in keeping with this that Ghanaian highlife musician, Koo Nimo (1989), explained to Trinidadian Calypso musician that

“...one of the easiest ways of knowing people, when it comes to Africa, is to visit the marketplace. There, nature, men and women, and things. And woman power. The women’s economic role in society.”

Thus, if not for this self-sufficiency at least, the woman persona, just like the woman-spouse of the man persona in the song’s second narrative, would have to depend on her man-spouse for her every personal upkeep and general livelihood, as well as for the upkeep of their home. Per the calculated arrangement of the patriarchal system, women need not be wary of this financial or any other dependence on men. All the same, this dependence is usually a token, tokens that are always contingent on far-reaching costs for women. And all this is illustrated in the song’s two narratives. Thus, the man persona suddenly has a reason to instruct his father not to give money to his cheating woman-spouse anymore, showing that not only is this woman going to suffer separation and or divorce, which is admittedly justifiable for her having been unfaithful to the man persona. But also, this woman is going to suffer a sudden loss of livelihood, and an even harsher one, seeing that she is recently pregnant. The point here, however, is that this woman’s hitherto dependence on the man persona was only a *privilege* predicated not only on her being a woman and a wife to the man persona. Also, the woman’s *privilege* is always on condition of the existence and the duration of the socially recognized and binding spousal relationship between her and the man persona. Therefore, the *privilege* is only apparent, only a token, and it ceases with immediate effect when the woman contravenes any of the rules of the patriarchy, including rules about the specific gendered relationship between the parties in a romantic or spousal relationship. In effect, unlike the woman persona, who only mentions a separation or divorce out of helpless and sorrowful resignation because of her spouse’s infidelity, the man persona not only threatens same separation or divorce. Also, the man persona waxes vindictive and powerful by withholding the very and only

livelihood of his spouse – infidelity or not. In other words, the woman persona’s spouse suffers nothing more than the expected dissolution of the spousal relationship he is a party of. And this is unlike this other woman, the man persona’s spouse, who first suffers the absence of her man-persona spouse. And after having been unfaithful probably because of said suffering, this woman has to also suffer, not only a very likely dissolution of her spousal relationship, but also, a very certain loss of the means by which she lives and survives. However, if for any reason at all including her spouse’s infidelity, the woman persona gives up or loses her means of said self-sufficiency, her cheating man-spouse would not be in similar or any significant danger as the cheating woman-spouse in the second narrative. What all this means is that, whether victim or villain, Ga gender culture ensures that a woman suffers and or suffers more than a man of comparable misconduct or character flaw.

Thus, being victim and yet having no real and other means of punishing her cheating man-spouse, the woman persona prefixes her call for a separation or divorce with a rather odd hesitation and half-heartedness, both of which hint at desperation of some complex kind. That is, more than she makes a concrete resolution about the wrong done her, the woman persona resorts to wailing and pleading with another woman, her mother, to “...call [her spouse] and ask him, / For him to explain to her [the woman’s mother] how this [his infidelity] came about then!” This is because of the Ga word ‘*mɔ*’, as used in this song, and loosely translated here as ‘*then*’. This word is usually used as an adverbial for an entire statement or another kind of a sentence. More importantly, ‘*mɔ*’ is an emphatic expression suffixed to a sentence, to indicate what should be the one logical consequence or conclusion to a matter or an action. Depending on the context in which it is used, ‘*mɔ*’ also indicates a desperate and impatient urgency to said expected consequence or conclusion. In the context of the song, ‘*mɔ*’ suggests how all that the woman persona could do, in reaction to

the infidelity she has suffered, is to act the part of the weak and the defeated one who must also be conciliatory, all of which is remarkably different from the man persona's reaction. Also, and in the particular context of the woman persona's narration of her experience, 'mɔ' heightens the sense of urgency in her desperation, as reflected in her saying, "For my heart cannot take this at all!" Seeing the helplessness of the woman persona's predicament, together with the overall tragic tone of her narration, it is clear that she was being somewhat sarcastic, to her own further hurt, when she says of her unfaithful spouse, "So that he goes [his way], and I go [my way]. / Man, well done ooo! / Man, well done ooo!" For the man persona, a parting would be a definite and willful choice, and for which he has little or nothing to lose. This is because he is the privileged and more powerful one, given the specific context of his own narrative, as well as given the dynamics of the gendered relationship that he has with his recently cheating spouse. Unlike this man, the woman persona has no such luxury of making an easy and sustainable choice of actually leaving her spouse, and of leaving (him) for good. That is, contrary to her own words, and unless she really insists it as verdict after an arbitration, the woman persona cannot really afford to part ways with her unfaithful spouse. This she knows far too well, and her man-spouse too, and this, in turn, is perhaps a good part of the reason for the audacious and reckless manner of his act of infidelity. Also, even if a woman insists it as verdict after an arbitration, the decision to part ways with an unfaithful spouse is rarely her own choice, not to even mention if it is a happy and promising choice. Moreover, even when a woman agrees with such a verdict, and the verdict may even favour her, this too is only apparent. That is, a woman is the loser party, the one who cries about and after the parting, the one who laments the finality of the decision or realization that she must leave the man or that the man is leaving her. This is the case for many other songs with similar subject matter and context, in which sometimes the woman asks for settlements, something that can only sustain her for some

time after the parting. In one such song, a woman laments:

[In a woman's voice]

Kɛji ole akɛ osumɔɔɔ dɔŋŋ (lɛ),	If you know you don't love me anymore,
Wo migbɛ maya.	Settle me off, so that I leave.
Kɛji ole akɛ osumɔɔɔ dɔŋŋ (lɛ),	If you know you do not love me anymore,
Wo migbɛ maya eee eei!	Settle me off, so that I leave eee eei!

In this other song, the man knows and tells why the woman wants to leave him: it is another case bordering on infidelity, on the man's own part. And instead of being penitent and apologetic, in case that will make his spouse change her mind about leaving, the man not only ignores the settlement that the woman asks for, but he also further abuses and incites her to already be on her way leaving:

[Man's voice]

Obaanyɛ oya!	You can leave!
Obienyeyeli naa wa tsɔ!	You are too fierce at being rival [with another woman]!
Kwemɔ bɔ ni ?osa tsui,	See how hardened your heart is,
Kɛ osane sheketee.	And how litigant you are.
Nɔ ko edɔɔ mi kwraa (akɛ),	What pains me even more is [that]
Abonsaŋ miilaka bo, ko ni oshi!	The evil one is deceiving you to leave [me]!

Here too, this other man displays similar confident insensitivity because he knows that whatever the outcome of the woman's threat to leave him or of a verdict that she leaves him, the woman will always be the losing party. This woman too knows this far too well. And so in keeping with this knowledge, she quickly rescinds her decision to leave. And as if being the victim party in this situation is not enough, she takes on the remorseful and reconciliatory role that should have rather been for her unfaithful spouse, by saying:

[Woman's voice, now conciliatory]

Wɔje nɔ etse lɛlɛŋ,	It is true, we have been together for long,
[Hewɔ lɛ] Ha ni wɔhishi pɛpɛpɛ.	[So] Let us live right.
Alɔŋte diŋ ko akafo wɔtɛŋ.	May no black cat [supplanter] come in between [to separate] us.

Wɔ kɛ edɪŋ ba, wɔ kɛ eyɛŋ aaaya. We came with black [hair], may we go with white [hair].
Wɔshihile mli aɔɔ, May there be peace and calm in our being together,
Ko ni wɔye ayilɔ futaa. So that ours will be [the victory of] pure white clay/ talcum powder.

The woman's sudden call for togetherness is all the more shocking because earlier, and before the man speaks to her further hurt, she has said, as part of her threat to leave, that:

Wɔhishi etse, ole misuban fɛɛ. We have been together for long, you know me thoroughly.
Misaji fɛɛ, ?mi bohu onɔ kwraaa. Nothing about me is hidden from you.
Agbenɛ lɛ etɔ mi, [But] I am tired now,
No hewɔ lɛ kaaagba ohenaa kwraa. So don't even bother yourself.
Mihu miyɛ yaahe, [hewɔ lɛ] I too have a place I belong, [so]
Anyɛmi, wo migbɛ maya eee eei! Fellow, [just] settle me off, so that I leave eee ee!

Where a woman leaves a man because of a matter intricately linked to a gender inequality against her, she will be very lucky to later find another man to show love interest, and even more lucky for the new man to marry her. Nevertheless, this new marriage or any other gendered relationship only begins a new cycle of the very inequalities she suffers, and she thinks to have escaped by leaving a previous (spousal) relationship. Thus, be it financial or in other ways, there are systemic inequalities that make women dependent on men in Ga culture. And these inequalities ensure that women remain not only weak and needy, but even more sadly, dispensable – if not disposable – in the largely oppressive setups of gendered relationships.

Moreover, in the main song under consideration, Ga gender culture is conspicuously euphemistic about the infidelity of a man, the woman persona's spouse. That is, the outright adultery committed by this man is expressed as “[to] close a door behind [one's woman-spouse after she leaves home to the market]”. Even if only as a rhetoric, this euphemism understates the man's infidelity for what it really is, to the point of minimizing its wrongfulness and trivializing its painful effect on the woman persona. And as a matter of political correctness, particularly in

the context of the prevailing unequal power dynamics in gender, this euphemism weaponizes language and uses it to reduce or erase the gravity of the man's unfaithfulness to the woman persona. This, in turn, excuses and somewhat absolves the man of his wrongdoing. More importantly, this robs the woman persona of the full and sincere acknowledgment of the wrong done her by her spouse, something she would need as part of her grieving about and healing from the heartbreak. Unlike the minimizing effect of this euphemism used to express the infidelity of the woman persona's spouse, the infidelity of the man persona's spouse is stated in an explicit, extended and exaggerated manner. Thus, rather than merely *mention* – or *insinuate* – his spouse's infidelity, the man persona declares that his spouse has gone to “acquire pregnancy in [his] absence”. He adds that his cheating spouse has also suddenly “[gone] to put up a revolt in [his] absence”. That is, the woman has gone from good, through bad, to outright rogue – to the worst that can be expected of a woman in the specific society to which she belongs. Already, this society has established mores and entrenched systems of taming women into conforming to its beliefs and expectations of them. And unless a woman is thoroughly the rebel, these mores and systems do not fail, or hardly ever fail, or are never expected to fail. For this reason, this woman-spouse is portrayed as the rather rare case of a woman who breaks bounds from the oppressive restraints that a typical patriarchal society reserves for women. This oppression is irrespective of the material and immediate presence of the man to whom a woman is married, the man being the handiest person that society puts in place to sanction and supervise the woman's conformity to said restraints. In reality, same oppression can be expected to be harsher towards a married woman, and even more austere towards a married woman who is deemed to have gone rogue. Thus, the supposed rebellion by the man persona's spouse, together with the pregnancy resulting from her affair, intensifies the gravity of her infidelity offence, and consequently, the societal penalties for

the offence. The overall effect of the euphemism and the exaggeration in the song's first and second narratives, respectively, dramatizes and complicates this unfaithful woman's misconduct. Even more so, the euphemism and exaggeration compromise the objectivity – and by extension, the sense of equality, or even plain justice – in both narratives in the song. In effect, the unfaithful woman's spouse, the man persona, appears more than justified to leave her, and before leaving her, to instruct his father to never again give her any money. This instruction, in turn, makes the matter curious and sad at once. That is, it is understandable, if for whatever valid and personal reason(s) or even no reason at all, a man-in-travel prefers to send through his father any money other than the one for his wife's upkeep. It is, however, evidently impractical and problematic for this man, per his own narrative, to send funds for the upkeep of his very own wife through his father. And this makes the narrative of about the man persona even more curious and sad.

In keeping with the dialectics of the Undoing Dialogic Mode, swapping the gender designations in the two narratives reveals in a more vivid way the unequal gender representations at stake. Thus, if the man persona is to be the one whose extra-spousal affair has resulted in another woman's pregnancy, his wronged woman-spouse will be coerced and coaxed into not only forgiving him, but also into accepting and possibly raising the child from the affair as hers. And especially because of the other woman's pregnancy, and since society does make and have room for a man to be polygamous, the man may marry the woman with whom he had the affair. Albeit a welcome relief for this other woman, this marriage will force and rush the man persona's hitherto original spouse into accepting another person, another woman, into a situation she had neither anticipated nor planned for. The situation is no different, no better, if the offended woman decides to part ways with the unfaithful man. Also, the new marriage cannot be expected to erase the wronged woman's suffering from her spouse's affair. If anything at all, the new marriage will be

to her further hurt because, it sanitizes her man-spouse's affair and his having impregnated another woman. At the same time, the new marriage gives the wronged woman neither time nor space, and neither real right and reason, in the eyes of society, to properly and fully grieve and heal from the pain caused her by her spouse's affair. In effect, the very pregnancy that condemns the man persona's cheating woman-spouse to a stiffer penalty would be both tolerable and resolvable if the pregnancy is rather as a result of the man persona's affair with another woman. The same is true, in the case of woman persona and her unfaithful spouse. And all this is because Nature or Biology makes pregnancy a woman's lot, something which is neither her fault nor necessarily a defect.

One reason the pregnancy from a woman's infidelity is especially damning for her (gender) is that, unlike men, pregnancy is a clear and physical telltale of such an affair – or any other sexual encounter, for that matter. Already, and with pregnancy for a telltale or not, a woman's sexuality and sexual activity are heavily policed by society, particularly sex before or outside of a recognized romantic or spousal relationship. Women who engage in such are considered promiscuous, in a way that is more abhorred than it is for men. It is partly for this reason that such women are bound to suffer a shame, stigmatization and degree of ostracization that society reserves for only an unfaithful woman or a woman deemed promiscuous. This largely explains why a man would much rather not take back his cheating spouse, or why a cheating woman has the previously-mentioned lean chance of winning her so offended spouse back. The chances worsen if the woman's affair results in a pregnancy. On the other hand, all that a man with the same character – an unfaithful or a promiscuous man – may lose, at worst, is his woman-spouse. Eventually, he may even be all but applauded for having had that affair. And this unequal penalty for the two genders is only partly because a man's affair is devoid of his getting pregnant, pregnancy from an affair being a definite reason for which a spousal relationship can be effectively dissolved. Admittedly, there are other

negative consequences of an affair, for both the male and female party in a spousal relationship. Despite this, more attention and weight are given to only one such negative consequence: a woman getting pregnant by a man other than her spouse. Thus, even though a man's infidelity is not exactly desired nor is explicitly sanctioned by society, this disparity ultimately shows how society normalizes male infidelity and (over-)penalizes females for the same act. In other words, by complicating the man persona's narrative with the pregnancy of his cheating woman-spouse, society's gender culture inadvertently suggests that a man having an affair is to be expected, and therefore, to be excused, if not to be ignored altogether. And this is not to even mention other elements of the patriarchy such as slut shaming, which is weaponized to deter women from pre- and extra- marital sexual relations. On the other hand, society all but glamourizes and makes a conqueror out of a man who has or maintains sexual encounters with multiple women to whom he may or may not be in a spousal relationship. There is also the pervasive unequal power dynamics in an otherwise non-romantic relationship between a man and a woman, a relationship which often translates into the woman being coerced or forced into a sexual relationship with the man, especially when her livelihood and or future is at stake in said non-romantic relationship.

From the foregoing analysis, the following questions serve as preamble to an imagined Dialogue between the gender representations voiced by the female gender and Ga gender culture in the song under consideration:

- *Why is a female's narrative about a wrong done her understated and trivialized with an euphemism, even though the peculiar circumstances of her narrative are illogical and tragic?*
- *Why is a male's narrative about a similar wrong done him expressed in an explicit and exaggerated manner, even though, per the circumstances of his own narrative, there are striking yet visibly ignored reasons because of which he may have suffered the wrongdoing*

in the first place?

- *Why is a male's narrative about same wrong done him complicated by a situation which is only a fact and an act of Nature, and yet this complication amounts to the damning penalty (to be) meted out to the female wrongdoer?*
- *Why is the penalty for breaking the same societal more not commensurate for the two genders, with the female's penalty being harsher and more complicated, irrespective of her being the innocent or guilty party?*

Being the preamble to the Dialogue they precede, these questions naturally inform and direct the tangent of the Dialogue, the essence of which is amply expressed and clarified in the foregoing analysis. Thus, the answers to these questions are consisted in the foregoing analysis, which elaborates the unequal gender representations in both the subject matter and thematic implications of the two genders' respective narratives in the song under consideration. It is, however, the dialectics of the analysis that expose the particular outcome of the unequal gender representations in the song. The outcome is evidently a Double Standard. This outcome is even more palpable when, per the dialectics of the Undoing Dialogic Mode, the genders of the man and woman personae in the song are swapped. It then suddenly becomes evident that, for reasons that are not at all obscure, society severely punishes and all but outlaws an unfaithful woman-spouse. From the forgoing analysis, this is because the same society compromises a woman's chances of receiving a punishment that is fair and irrespective of her gender; a punishment that is at par with punishment that would have been meted out to a man who commits the same or a similar offence; and a punishment that is not complicated with extra-circumstantial details, such as things that pertain to nature.

4.2 Introduction: The Unraveling Dialogic Mode (Irony)

The Unraveling Dialogic Mode entails a critical examination of hitherto inadvertent assumptions and assertions in the Ga songs and proverbs. This Mode *unravels* meanings that are embedded or intertwined in said assumptions and assertions, which are essentially the explicit and sometimes the implied meanings of the Ga song or proverb under study. In other words, unraveled meanings are not necessarily submerged or inextricably absorbed in these explicit and other meanings. Neither are they hidden layers underneath a Ga song or proverb's explicit and implied meanings. More accurately, an unraveled meaning is one of other *strands* – as distinct from a *layer* – of meanings, the other strands being the said explicit and implied meanings. Thus, until meanings are unraveled from a Ga song or proverb, they have been hitherto obvious and in plain sight, only not easily and vividly so.

Unraveling does not only make the gender representations in a Ga song or proverb noticeable; it also makes the gender inequalities inherent in these texts emerge. Per this study's theoretical framework, the outcome of the Unraveling Dialogic Mode is Irony. That is, Unraveling extricates the Irony in the implications of gender representations and inequalities in a given Ga song or proverb. This, in turn, exposes the relationship/s between the explicit assumptions or assertions in the Ga song or proverb and the actual lived realities of either or both genders, depending on the content and subject matter of the text under study.

The Ga songs or proverbs selected for the Unraveling Dialogic Mode are gendered. This gendered quality may be explicit, implied, neutral or even obscure, as can be expected for an Unraveling. Where necessary, non-gendered texts may be used in an instance of Unraveling, but only as supporting text(s) for the main Ga song or proverb under study. Other elements of Ga language, social culture, or even philosophical orientation about life in general, may also be used

for the same purpose.

4.2.1 Unraveling Dialogic Mode: Dialogue One (1)

To illustrate the Unraveling Dialogic Mode and its outcome (Irony), the following Ga proverb may be considered:

Akpaŋa hefũ le, ekeje enyɛ wɔɔ **MLI**. The vulture has its body odour **FROM** its mother's egg.
[Emphasis mine, crucial]

This proverb attributes a defect in an offspring to only one of its parents, the mother. The persona in this proverb neither directly mentions nor references the offspring's father and his contribution or otherwise to the offspring's defect, thereby making a palpable indictment on the offspring's mother. However, this lack of acknowledgement of an offspring's father is atypical of Ga socio-cultural norm in this regard, wherein a father's place is emphasized and distinguished. Thus, it is a mother who bears the discomforts and pains of pregnancy and childbirth, and later, of caring for and of raising an offspring, sometimes almost all alone. Nevertheless, it is the father who is ascribed more authority over an offspring, and is given the greater credit for the material and existential outcomes of an offspring's life. This is especially so when said outcomes are positive and desirable. Thus, even though both parents are recognized and blessed in the customary prayer said during the outdoorings rites of a newborn child, Amartey (1990) admits, that the entire rite is performed in order

“...[Akeheɔ] abifao le ashio weku le no. Kredɛɛ le etsɛɛɛ le, ejaake ame amewoɔ le gbei ameketsɔɔ ake ame bi ni”. (p. 34)

*

“...to receive the infant into the family. [That is,] particularly, its father's family, because they are the ones who name the infant to show that it is their child”.

Amartey (1990) states this as part of outlining the importance of the entire outdoor rite, which is organized and hosted by a child's father (and his family). Also, as part of the arrangements for the outdoor rite, tradition requires that

“...wekui enyɔ ɛ – nuu sɛɛ kɛ yoo sɛɛ – futuuu ketaraaa shi. Nuuseɛ hii taraa shi kɛfoɔ kɔntɔ fã ni yooseɛ hii hu taraa shi kɔntɔ fã ketsaa nɔ kekɛ ɛ abɔ kutu. Hii ɛ kɛ yei ɛ futuuu. Shitamɔ mli ɛ, bei babao ɛ, ahaa yooseɛbii ɛ yajeɔ shiangbɛ. No hewɔ, ɛ efeɔ tamɔ aasa amenaa awo shia ɛ mli”. (pp. 34–35)

*

“...the two families – the father and mother – do not sit mixed together. The father side sits in one semi-circle arrangement and the mother side sits in another semi-circle arrangement, joining to complete a full circle. The men and women do not mix. In the sitting arrangement, most of the time, the mother side is positioned at the inside end of the (father or father's family) house. Thus, it appears that they [the mother side] are cornered and shut inside the house”.

Thus, even in the symbolic performance of what should be a joyful – even if solemn – ritual for an infant, the unequal power dynamics between the genders of the child's parents are established and asserted. And this is done long before the child grows up and is gradually socialized in accordance with this inequality.

It appears that the only times that mention and recognition are given to a mother and her place in an offspring's life, they are tied to the expectation that she nourishes, nurses and nurtures the offspring. And even though Biology naturally assigns and equips only a mother to play certain aspects of these roles, society finds it convenient to shift the entirety of these responsibilities to the mother. These societal expectations and ideals of a woman, particularly a mother, inform an idiom such as

“Nyɛ Awo nɔɔ fe taami,”

“Mother is sweeter than sweet/ miraculous berry,”

and proverbs such as

“Wuo bi ni shwɛɔ enyɛ nane he lɛ, emio “The chick that sticks close to its mother’s [leg] gets
agã shwuo,” the thigh [biggest] share of the grasshopper,”

and

Kɛji wuo kɛɛ ɛɲmɛɛ ebi he lɛ, If the hen says it has let go of its chick [child], the hen has
ɛɲmɛko ehe ehãko akroma. still] not let go of the chick for the hawk [to catch and devour].

and

Wuo nane egbeee ebi. The hen’s foot does not crush its offspring [chick] to death.

Because of this, even when a woman is given any recognition that seems detached from her ability and or willingness to be the carer-nurturer party of an offspring’s two biological parents, this recognition is still tied to the implications of these roles assigned to females, especially mothers.

In the particular case of a proverb such as

“Bi [fɛɛ bi] nuɔ enyɛ wiemo,” “A [every] child heeds to the words of its mother,”

the high regard given to a mother or the female parent is only apparent, is only as a result of the natural closeness and bond due to said roles assigned her. That is, a child does not necessarily heed its mother’s words because the mother is entitled to the same or similar authority as its father wields over it. Rather, a child may be obliged to heed its mother’s words out of an affectionate appreciation of the warmth and fondness between them, a relationship that is still a consequence of society’s expectation of women to be carer-nurturers. And this is ensured by the socio-cultural norms about the power dynamics between a child’s parents in relation to it, as well as the child’s socialization about gender culture and mores. Thus, it is always only a child’s father, and not its mother, who enjoys actual and approved veneration and all but ownership of his offspring. Thus,

Mɔ ko kɛ enine beku etsɔɔ etsemi awe, No one points in direction of the father’s folk with the left hand,

and yet, a mother is still expected to quietly, unflinchingly and unconditionally bear every brunt and mishap that may accompany the very roles society has assigned only her, with regards to her

being a mother to a child. It does not matter if such mishaps befall a mother because of inevitable Nature, or the vicissitudes of life, or a fact of this world, or even because of her willful and inconsiderate offspring:

Yoofɔyoo wɔwɔ shwane wɔwɔ. A mothering woman does not indulge in afternoon sleep/ nap.

and

Kɛ ashā nyɛ aha bi lɛ, bi baayne ekpe, If a mother is roasted for her child, the child can [will] chew
shi kɛ ashā bi aha nyɛ lɛ, nyɛ nyɛɛɛ ekpe. [munch] it, but if a child is roasted and given to the mother,
the mother cannot eat it.

and

Bi ni kɛɛ ehāaa enyɛ awɔ lɛ, lɛ hu enaaa wɔwɔ The child who will not let its mother sleep will not
ewɔ. itself find sleep.

and

Gbeke ni gbɛɔ shi lɛ, egbɛɔ enyɛ wui anɔ. The child that insists on rummaging ends up uncovering
anɔ. its [buried] mother's bones.

Seeing the foregoing, one would have expected that an outcome of a child, be it positive or otherwise, would be attributed to the father of a child, even if only as one of the child's parents.

However, this is not what happens when the meanings of the proverb under study are unraveled:

Akpana hefū lɛ, ekeje enyɛ wɔlɔ **MLI**. The vulture has its body odour **FROM** its mother's egg.
[Emphasis mine, crucial]

To this end, it is true that once the vulture is conceived, it first develops into an offspring from an egg laid by its mother. It is also true that this egg is not formed inside of the mother, without a prior encounter of the mother with the father. This encounter results in conception, which in turn, is the biological and reproductive process that will later result in the offspring, the vulture.

Thus, from the very beginning, the vulture, together with all that pertains to at least its biological features and qualities, is jointly initiated and caused by both of its parents, both its

mother and father. Unlike as it happens with other creatures such as mammals, for which pregnancy takes place and lasts inside the body of the female parent or mother, a vulture is only conceived but does not stay inside its mother's body for the entire time it develops as a foetus. It is therefore, interesting how a particularly negative outcome, a defect, which is the vulture's body odour, is not only attributed to its mother. The vulture's defect is, in fact, blamed on its mother – alone. This attribution and blame ignore how, biologically speaking, the vulture could not have been conceived without the equal half contribution from its father's sperm and yet, the father is starkly absent in both the proverb and its accusation of the vulture's mother.

As if this accusation is not enough, the proverb also ignores that, rather than its father, it is the vulture's mother who warms and nurtures the egg inside which the vulture develops into a viable offspring. For the duration that the mother nurtures the still-developing vulture inside the egg, there is an intimate and prolonged contact between the vulture and its mother. This contact is the beginning of what will later be a natural and increasingly strong bond between mother and offspring vulture. That is, this bond continues long after the vulture has outgrown and broken out of its egg-shell, a time during which the vulture will still depend on its mother until it can fly and find food, shelter and other things to survive, by itself. Despite all these, it is still the vulture's mother who gets blamed for the odour that the vulture has after it is birthed. And this blame is without any consideration that the egg, and therefore the still-growing vulture foetus, did not even stay the full course of its gestation inside the mother vulture. Neither does the blame also consider that at every present moment that the proverb is invoked, the vulture is now grown, and has long broken out of its egg-shell, and therefore it is out of any physical and tangible contact with its mother, the reason for which the blame may even begin to be tenable.

It can be argued that this very bond between the vulture-egg and the mother can be the

source and cause of what will later become the vulture's body odour. However, the proverb itself clearly and emphatically states that said body odour is from INSIDE the egg laid by the mother, thereby absolving any and every condition and influence OUTSIDE of the egg from blame. Even though physical and intimate and not exactly explicable, the bond shared between offspring and mother vulture is OUTSIDE or external of the egg. It is, therefore, Ironic that the vulture's mother is still blamed for its body odour, despite the proverb's unequivocal and emphatic tone about how the source and cause of the odour are internal, and not external. Also, for every vital part that the mother vulture contributes to what is INSIDE the egg-shell, the father too has a corresponding and an equal part, both parts being the biological material at the conception of the vulture. Thus, the Irony doubles, seeing that while singling out the mother vulture for blame, the proverb is loudly silent about the whereabouts and contributions of the father vulture, before and after the vulture forms inside the egg-shell.

Moreover, it is obvious that the egg in which the vulture develops is for it and it alone, because the egg-shell is its only and intimately vital 'home' before it breaks out of the egg-shell. And if the egg-shell is to belong to anyone apart from the vulture itself, the egg should belong to both vulture parents, and not only the mother, since both parents have equal parts in the contents of the egg-shell or the vulture itself. It is, therefore, telling how the egg inside of which the vulture developed is rather said to belong to the mother. As it is later realized, this is said in order to validate, albeit unsuccessfully, the accusation that the mother is to blame for the vulture's odour.

From the foregoing, the female gender is represented as solely or mainly responsible for her offspring, after the offspring is conceived and for a significant duration after its birth. Also, the female gender is held accountable for how this offspring turns out, despite fact and evidence that the female gender cannot possibly be solely liable for any and every such outcome. This is all

the more curious in the particular context of the proverb under study: when the female gender is held responsible for anything about her offspring, she is not only and firstly given an unfair and far too much more than her share of this responsibility and its attendant attribution, but even worse, she is blamed for something explicitly negative. Meanwhile, the male gender is, at once, unacknowledged in responsibility and is absolved of any such blame. In Ga socio-cultural imagination of gender, it seems that the male gender is altogether inexistent, until some positive attribution such as an honour or a praise about an offspring is to be ascribed to an offspring's parent(s). One *obɔade lala* (Squire 2003), a Ga ⁵⁶traditional-folk song, illustrates this assertion:

“Ataa oblanyo e-ei!	Dear young man e-ei!
Atse le aha mi, mabi le sane.	Someone call him for me, let me ask him something.
Ataa oblanyo e-ei!	Dear young man e-ei!
Atse le aha mi, mabi le sane.	Someone call him for me, let me ask him something.
Ehɔ etse mlishi hu,	Even if he is snuggled in his father's groin,
Atse le aha mi, mabi le sane.	Someone call him for me, let me ask him something.
Ehɔ enye mlishi hu,	Even if he is snuggled in his mother's groin,
Atse le aha mi, mabi le sane.	Someone call him for me, let me ask him something.
Enaabu ke wiemɔ po gbeɔ mi nɛɛ.”	See how the words of his mouth enthralls me.” (p. 64)

⁵⁶ For lack of an immediate and accurate term in English, here, the researcher uses the term ‘traditional-folk’ to refer to those songs that are indigenous, popular and are originally part of the stock of Ga oral literatures. Squire (2003) rightly calls these songs what the Ga calls them, *obɔade lala[i]*, where *lala[i]* is ‘song[s]’, and *obɔade* is a Ga linguistic modification of the Akan word that can be translated as ‘(God the) Creator’. In the specific context here, however, *obɔade* describes that which is thought to be ancient, that which is at the beginning of and immanent in the historical, social, cultural and even philosophical existence of (Ga) society. Even though songs such as those pioneered and popularized by Wulɔmei may be loosely described as ‘folk’, ‘traditional’ and sometimes even ‘cultural’, it is important to note that

“the application of the[se] terms [to refer to such songs] contrast with the limited scholarship produced on Wulomei...[And] Collins' use of the term ‘cultural troupe’ (1994a) [to refer to Wulomei reflects language used during his time as a performer...however, the term ‘cultural troupe’ in Accra refers to the many drum-dance groups assembled as multi-ethnic youth dance ensembles performing ‘traditional’ choreographed pieces from different regions of Ghana, and more recently, *jembe* pieces from the Mande area or *jembe*-inspired creative works. In Ga, *oboade [sic] lala[i]*—literally meaning ‘traditional songs’—also mark ‘Ga folk songs’ (Hammond, 1970), but this term doesn't capture the essence of the Ga folk music repertoire”

such as those by Wulɔmei and the like (Webb 2015, p. 52). See also various previous references to this term in Chapters 1 and 2.

Thus, the norm is for the female gender to suffer blame for anything untoward about an offspring, while the male gender enjoys compliments and applause, particularly when only one of the two parents is to be acknowledged and named for such acclaim.

Using the essence of the proverb-question in the context of the explicit and unraveled meanings of the proverb under study, the Dialogue that ensues between Ga gender culture and the female gender will have the following questions as its preamble:

- *Why is the female gender tasked with full responsibility for something she is supposed to be only partly responsible for, and yet she gets blamed when and if her efforts do not tend to an expected positive outcome?*
- *Why is there no acknowledgement of the male gender's existence, and much less his equal and vital contribution to the reason for the blame apportioned to the female gender alone?*
- *Why is the male gender absolved of said blame and yet, he is the one who is celebrated in the event of a positive outcome, despite his having shown little or no responsibility for the reason for which he is celebrated?*
- *Why is all this so, without recognizing the obvious likelihood that the female gender is not the one to blame for any unexpected negative outcome?*

With insights from the preceding analysis, parts of this Dialogue reveal how Ga society unfairly burdens women with nurturing the offsprings that will ensure the same society's continuity and future, as if it is not enough that Nature already burdens women with conceiving, birthing and nurturing these offsprings. And despite these burdens women must bear, it is ironic that Ga society also targets same women – and only women – in order to blame them for undesirable offsprings and or undesirable qualities in the offspring. The bigger Irony, however, is that, except for what is

only naturally or biologically required for conceiving these offsprings, men contribute nothing else in the making and nurturing of these offsprings, and yet same men are essentially absolved and relieved of the things for which women are targeted for accountability and blame. And this Irony emerges as a result of Unraveling the unequal gender representations embedded in the express and implicit meanings of the proverb under study.

4.2.2 Unraveling Dialogic Mode: Dialogue Two (2)

In this song, a mother-in-law (MIL) and a daughter-in-law (DIL) have a caustic exchange in a rather cultured manner, and even with an apparent go-between who delivers the insults from the one to the other. It is not exactly clear what caused the exchange, but it is clear enough that a certain man is central to whatever is the cause of the exchange. This man is son to the MIL party, and spouse or partner to the DIL party. The exchange ensues thus:

[Mother-in-law begins]

Kɛ mi bi aba, kɛ mi bi aba. Bring [me] my child [son, a man], Bring [me] my child [son].

Kɛ mi bi aku sɛɛ abaha mi. Bring me back my child [son].

[repeat]

Ofɔ bi ko dā? Have you ever birthed any child?

Ani obaanyɛ ofɔ? Can you even [give] birth [to a child]?

O oho! Never!

Ani obaanyɛ okwɛ hu lo? And [so] can you even look after him [my son]?

Gbee hieɛŋ, Gbee hieɛŋ! Face-of-a-dog, Face-of-a-dog!

Gbee hieɛŋ, ni mikwɛɔ le! See that face-of-a-dog of yours!

[repeat]

Shaayoo alantatse eeei! Knock-kneed daughter-in-law eeei!
 Ole nɔ ko! Ole nihoomɔ po? Look here! Do you know how to cook?
 Jee mihe sane kwraa. I don't [even] care at all [if you do].

Ohie le tamɔ beemɔ nɔ – You handle him like that which is meant for sweeping –
 Yaa ko ni oyabɛ Makola. Go and sweep Makola.
 Mile nɔ ni ena ye ohe eeei, ye ohe eeei, I don't [even] know what about you that he saw, about you eeei
 Nɔ ni eha esumɔ bo, fe mi enye le. What makes him love you, more than he does me, his mother.
 No ji naakpɛ nɔ ko! It is such a wonder altogether!
[repeat]

[Daughter-in-law responds]

Ake mi jemɔ eba! My insult has been delivered [to me]!
 Nɔ ni emaje mi eeei! See what she [my mother-in-law] sent me eeei!
 Nɔ ni emaje mi eeei! See what she [my mother-in-law] sent me eeei!
 Nɔ ni emaje mi eee eeei! See what she [my mother-in-law] sent me eee eeei!
 Shaayoo emaje mi jemɔ. Mother-in-law has sent me insult.
 Shaayoo eeei, ηmɛemɔ mihe. Mother-in-law eeei, let go of me.
 Gbala kpakpa miiba eeee! [A] Good marriage is coming [my way] eeee!
 Dmɛemɔ mihe eeei! Dmɛemɔ mihe eeei! Let go of me eeei! Let go of me eeei!
 Mɔ ko bi ji mi eee eeei! I [too] am someone's child [daughter] eee eeei!
[repeat]

Shaayoo tse mi alantatse. Mother-in-law called me knock-kneed.
 Etse mi alanta kobokobo ooo, She called me wretched knock-kneed ooo,
 Kobokobo ooo! The most wretched ooo!
 Mi diɛntse mi nɔ ni kpɛɛɛ. I am very proud that it is my very own.
 Yaabi obi le ni egba bo. Go ask your child [son] and let him narrate it to you.
 Yaabi obi le. Go ask your son.
[repeat]

Nɔ hewɔ ni egbi ekpetɛ mi kpɛɲɲ –	The reason he is rigidly glued to me like so –
Lɛ pɛ ele, lɛ pɛ ele eeei!	Only he knows, only he knows eeei!
Nɔ ni enaa eeei!	What he gains eeei!
Yɛ mi kobokobo lɛ he eeei!	From my wretchedness eeei!

In attacking DIL, MIL asks if DIL has ever birthed a child, if she can even give birth to one. The MIL adds, asking if DIL can take care of the man (TM) central to the contention, a spouse to MIL, and a son to MIL. The MIL asks this, as if to conclude that a person, especially a woman, cannot care for a man, specifically a man-spouse, if this woman cannot or is yet to give birth to and care for a child. Apart from having no real and direct link to a woman’s ability or otherwise to care for a man-spouse in particular, these questions betray a situational irony about what a good and ideal spouse is supposed to be, and what a married person is expected to spend time and energies on. For the DIL in this song, it is to care for a man. For a certain man in another song, it is to do a short list of activities, which begins with the first step of formally contracting a marriage, with the rest of the activities having nothing else to do with caring for or spending time and energy on a woman-spouse. This other song is actually one of a short string of choruses following a long narrative song about a ⁵⁷hunter called *Kɔbla*, who was destroyed by a malevolent aunt. The song itself has no direct thematic relationship to the choruses after it, including this particular chorus:

Sohaa [lɛ], miyabi yoo ko shi.	On Friday, I went to ask for a certain woman’s hand in marriage.
Hɔɔ lɛ, mafɔ nii ahe.	Come Saturday, I will wash [my things/ clothes].
Hɔgbaa [lɛ], maya sɔlemɔ,	On Sunday, I will go to pray [/church],
Ko ni Ju lɛ, maya skulgɛ.	So that on Monday, I will [can] be on my way to school.

For a man who is newly married or is well on his way to getting married, it would be expected that he spends time and attention on his spouse or spouse-to-be. Instead, this man continues his life

⁵⁷ Reference is made to this hunter, *Kɔbla*, in the first Dialogue of the Unmasking Dialogic Mode in Chapter 5. Beginning with “*Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ...*”, the full song text of *Kɔbla*’s story can be found in the Appendix.

unabated, as if he does not even have a marriage process to complete, and as if his life is not now somewhat attached to and so, dependent on another person, a woman – even if only in the near future. Thus, this man sees to his personal physical everyday needs (“wash[es] his clothes”); he is careful not to neglect his spirituality (“go[es] to pray [/church]”); and he ensures to continue nurturing something by way of a personal ambition, his education, something which ultimately translates into financial power (“[is] on his way to school”). For DIL in the song under study, however, her entire life must be centred and spent on birthing and nurturing children if any, and on caring for the well-abled and full-grown adult male she happens to be married to. In effect, DIL is to lose equally valid and fulfilling aspects of her life, lose life beyond and apart from her marriage, or simply, lose out on the fullness of her humanity, all in order to care for her man-spouse. And so for something that would not at all be a matter of any concern if DIL was to be the male in the marital relationship, her supposed inability to or lack of caring for her man-spouse is suddenly a valid and biting insult. And all this is not to even mention that, with knowledge from Nature and science, TM could very well be the reason, or part of the reason DIL is childless, or is yet to have a child.

In attacking DIL, MIL mentions sweeping too, as a metaphor for cleaning and other housework such as cooking. Together with the previously-mentioned birthing and nurturing or caring, this sweeping metaphor is a popular way society systematically domesticates women. Whichever form this domestication takes, it deprives a woman of the freedom and possibility to attain her full human potential apart from and beyond her being a spouse and or a mother. It is, however, rather curious how MIL references and frames this form of domesticating women. Ordinarily, a woman is merely labeled and praised to be ‘a good woman’; she is not necessarily truly admired and duly compensated or rewarded for performing any of these tasks. This is mainly

“Bei ye taŋ,”

“Quarrel is disgusting,”

because of which, in a fight, just about any degree of nastiness, every outright lie, and any other worse thing may be fair and acceptable. Thus, it may be tolerable that in her attack, MIL references DIL’s cooking; her inability or being yet to birth a child; her supposed inability to or incompetence at taking care of a child and a man-spouse; and her not deserving of any love from TM. DIL’s response to all these is hardly an abuse, hardly a return attack. DIL only laments that her own MIL has sent her abuse, a set of insults; tells MIL to “let go of [her]”, or to not bother her anymore; says that a good marriage will come her way; reminds MIL that she (too) is someone’s child; admits to and takes unreserved ownership of her being knock-kneed; directs MIL to find out from TM the reason/s he is still committed to her and supposedly loves her more than MIL. MIL continues to insult DIL using an animal reference, body shaming, and as reported by DIL in her part of the exchange, an insinuation of some wretchedness bordering on the most abject of poverty or of some other utter deprivation: “Face-of-a-dog!”, “knock-kneed [one]”, and “*kobokobo*”, respectively. Notwithstanding all these, MIL outdoes herself and even the expected near-limitless extremes of a fight situation, when she explicitly asks DIL to return TM to her, implying that DIL leaves the spousal relationship with TM. And as if this too is not enough, MIL wonders exactly:

“...what about [DIL] that [TM] saw, about [DIL] eeei

What makes [TM] love [DIL], more than he does [MIL], his [own] mother.

It is such a wonder altogether!”

The MIL says this as if the love that a man shares with his mother and with his wife are not different, and as if the two love-s are necessarily mutually exclusive of each other. The MIL says this with the possibility of inciting TM to reconsider his love for DIL and his continuing together with DIL. The MIL says this to imply that DIL is thoroughly undeserving of any love from any man, including and particularly her precious son, TM. And altogether, MIL’s attack on DIL is

direct, dramatic, drastic and insidiously intended to destroy the quality and continuity of the spousal relationship between DIL and TM. Thus, irrespective of the existence of a fight situation and all the facts thereof, MIL is utterly cruel to DIL. And this cruelty is doubly ironic. The first irony is how MIL treats DIL, and how she expects DIL to treat her son TM – and even this is assuming that there is truth in what MIL says about how DIL treats TM. The second irony is that, MIL fusses over her son TM, and how she would have DIL treat him with only careful thought and kindness, yet without realizing that DIL too is someone’s child/ daughter. It is partly because of this that MIL instructs DIL to return “[her] child [son]” to her, if DIL cannot or will not care for him, and properly so. MIL also implies to “have...ever birthed [a] child” and to have “looked after [TM]” for so long, perhaps, until TM and DIL married. And it must only be in self-defense to this that DIL mentions that “[she] [too] [is] someone’s child [daughter] eeei!” In an ideal and (gender) equal world, DIL’s mother or some other relative will be looking out for her, ensuring that TM and MIL treat DIL with similar kindness, or at the very least, with dignity befitting the human and “someone’s child” that DIL (too) is.

Even if out of exasperation with an impossible MIL, some other DIL would have returned MIL’s attack with equal fervour, as in the following song about a similar MIL-DIL situation:

Mɛɛba ni ohaoo mi neke?	Why do you trouble me so?
Mɛɛba ni ohaoo mi neke kwraa?	Why at all do you trouble me so?
[repeat]	

Jee mijole ji bo, mishaayo ji bo.	You are not my lover, you are [only] my mother-in-law.
Miha ni onu shishi neke.	[This,] I have made you understand.
Fɛɛ sɛɛ [le], omli efu mi.	Despite all this, you are [still] angry with me.
Jee bo migbaa, shi obi le.	You are not the one I am married to, but it is [rather to] your son.
Kaaafee ojeɲba neke kwraa!	Do not put on such a character at all.

[repeat]

Ƙɛʒi okɛ mi miibe [lɛ], mi hu mi kɛ bo miibe If you quarrel with me, I too [will] quarrel with you.

Ɖmɛnɛ gbi nɛɛ [lɛ], mi kɛ bo egbe naa ei! This very day, I am done with you ei!

Shaayoo kɛ mi miibe eee! Mother-in-law is quarrelling with me eee!

Ɖmɛnɛ gbi nɛɛ [lɛ], mi kɛ lɛ egbe naa ei! This very day, I am done with her [mother-in-law] ei!

Shaayoo kɛ mi miibe eee! Mother-in-law is quarrelling with me eee!

[repeat]

Another DIL might have even continued to divulge details which should have been confidential between herself and her MIL, details that are damaging to MIL’s public image, such as in the following song:

Shaayoo, kaaajɛ mi eeei! Mother-in-law, don’t insult me eeei!

Shaayoo, kaaatɛ mi yaka gbɔmɔ. Mother-in-law, don’t call me a worthless person.

[repeat]

Obi lɛ ni mi kɛ yɔɔ [lɛ], [This] Your child [son], who I have been with

Afii pii nɛɛ [lɛ], [For] These many years,

Mikwɛɔ lɛ pɛpɛpɛ. I take care of him perfectly.

Shika [lɛ] ni obi mi, [Because of the] Money you asked,

Ni minaaa maha bo [lɛ], That I did not find [any] to give [to] you,

Efee bo mlifu. It has angered you.

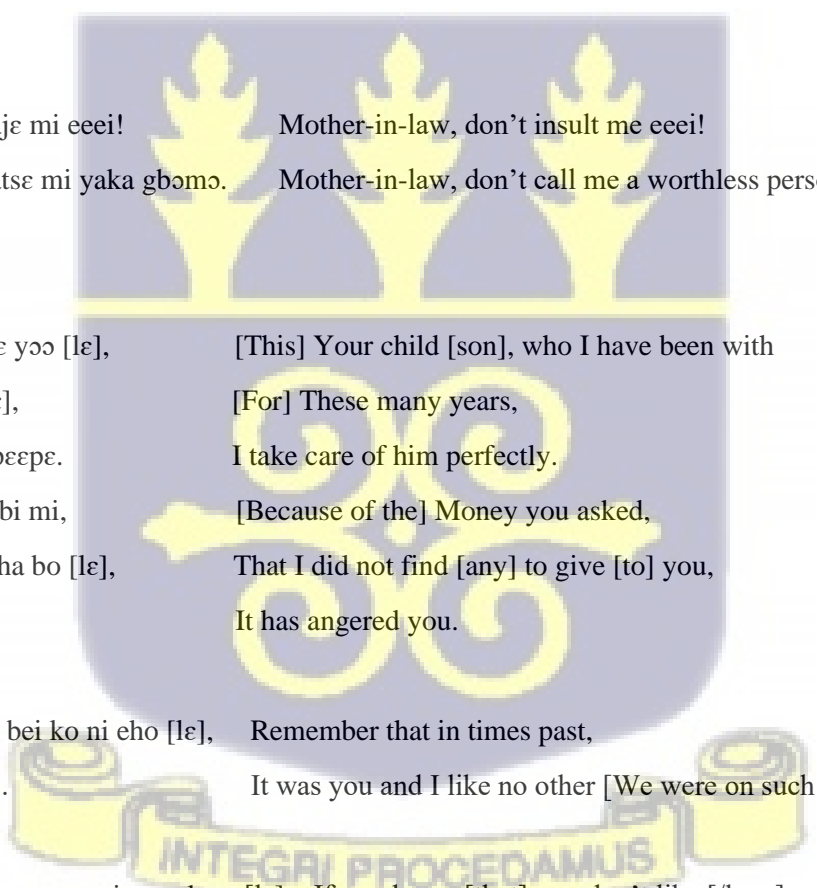
Kaimɔ akɛ shi bei ko ni eho [lɛ], Remember that in times past,

Mi kɛ bo nɔŋŋ. It was you and I like no other [We were on such good terms].

Ƙɛʒi ole akɛ osumɔɔ misane dɔŋŋ [lɛ], If you know [that] you don’t like [/love] me anymore,

Baamɔ obi [lɛ] keya! Come take your child [son, persona’s spouse] away!

[repeat]



Eto mi eeei! Eto mi ei! I am tired eeei! I am tired ei!
Eto mi eeei! Eto mi po! I am tired eeei! I am even tired!

[repeat]

It may as well be that the DIL in the main song under study has nothing much with which to deal an attack similar to the one her MIL unleashed on her, hence, her rather weak and mere reply of a return attack. However, even in her wan part of the exchange, DIL is also discreet about a certain definitely positive *thing* for which TM loves her and continues in the spousal relationship with her, to the shock and chagrin of MIL. DIL does not expressly state what the *thing* is, but this does not make said thing any less of the irony that it is. That is, contrary to belief and expectation per society's gender culture that the man in a spousal relationship is the benefactor party, it appears that it is woman-DIL who is rather the benefactor, while man-TM is the beneficiary. MIL, and most likely the rest of society too, believe DIL's wretched knock-kneed self to be valid and tenable reason enough for TM to leave and or to not love DIL. It must, therefore, be so crucial a *thing* for TM, the reason for which he continues to love and be with DIL, despite her supposed stark faults.

Moreover, DIL's above-mentioned discretion is an irony in itself, seeing the previously-explained intensity of MIL's attack on her, and even if her divulging the details of said *thing* will be to the hurt and harm of TM more than to MIL. This irony of DIL's discretion lies in the painfully loud silence and inaction of TM, in the face of his mother's brutal abuse of DIL, his spouse. It may be that since the song is about only MIL and DIL, and about an exchange between the two, it can be unreasonable to expect TM's voice or any other form of his participation in the subject matter of the song. However, there must be a reason DIL must be so much and finally jaded with both mother and son that, she is already considering leaving the marriage, and already looking to have "a good marriage", a much better marriage than the one in which she currently is with TM. Also, there must be a reason DIL does not proclaim love for TM, an unflinching love like the one that

MIL alleges that TM has for DIL, despite DIL supposedly not deserving of that love. That is, DIL could have mentioned her love for TM, if, at least, TM has ever shielded her from what appears to be MIL's constant attacks on her person and her peace. Or at the very least, TM could stop or separate the two from the frequent quarrels. And from DIL's part of the exchange, it is evident that the alleged love that TM has for her is most likely because of the *thing*, the benefit(s) that he enjoys from staying married to her, and not because he loves her for her own sake and or for some other unconditional reason. Thus, that TM says and does nothing to rescue – not to even talk of to defend – DIL is not only a given, but it is also a telling and rather tragic irony, to the detriment of DIL. However, the biggest irony in all this, perhaps, is DIL's naivety about the positive quality of her next marriage, to another man. That is, DIL does not recognize that the same society with the same gender culture and inequality which made her suffer like the way she did has not changed, and does not promise to change by the time she ventures into a new marriage, a dream and much better marriage, if she is even lucky to get the opportunity. In other words, DIL's naivety is in sharp contrast with the established and systemic realities of her society, a society in which a woman does not get to escape the oppressions dealt to her, while she also daydreams about some future freedom or relief from said oppressions. Like the proverbial stinging bitterness of *wie* (alligator pepper), a woman's oppression by a patriarchal society is ruthless and relentless, wherever she turns:

“He fɛɛ he ni adamɔɔ ni akpeɔ wie le, ejoɔ.” “Wherever one stands to chew alligator pepper,
it will [always] be bitter.”

In effect, DIL's story about her dream future marriage can as well be the story of the woman in the following song:

Miyato gbāla [kpa]kpa eeei,	I luckily got a goodly foundling marriage eeei,
[Ni] Nugbɔ [e]yi mi!	[And] Rain beat me!
Naa mi ni miyato gbāla [kpa]kpa eeei,	Here I am [now], who luckily got a goodly foundling marriage eeei

[Ni] Nugbɔ [e]yi mi!	[And] Rain beat me!
Anyemimeɪ fɛɛ,	All you, brothers and sisters,
Mɔ ko nɔ ko gbonyo ni ekɔ etse efɔ,	Someone's bad thing that she discarded,
Ni mitee miyakɔ,	And I went to take it,
[Ni] mikɛɛ mito aahu eeei!	Saying it is such a goodly a foundling thing eeei!
Naa mi ni miyato gbāla [kpa]kpa eeei,	Here I am [now], who luckily got a goodly foundling marriage eeei
[Ni] Nugbɔ [e]yi mi!	[And] Rain beat me!
Nugbɔ yi mi, anyemimeɪ fɛɛ!	Rain beat me, all you brothers and sisters!
Naa mi ni miyato gbāla [kpa]kpa eeei,	Here I am [now], who luckily got a goodly foundling marriage eeei
[Ni] Nugbɔ [e]yi mi!	[And] Rain beat me!

Mashi maha bo eeei, kosekose!	I will leave it for you eeei, [like the] ill-omen [thing that it is]!
Shienye kpakpa, mashi	Dear good friend, I will leave [it]
Maha bo eeei, kosekose!	For you eeei, [like the] ill-omen [thing that it is]!
Mi kɛ bo epeleee gbāla he.	I will not struggle over this marriage with you.
Okɛ oshika eyahā braibi [<i>bribe</i>] ye gbāla he,	You who has bribed your place into [this] marriage,
Hewɔ lɛ, mi kɛ bo epeleee gbāla he.	So I will not struggle over [this] marriage with you.
Shienye kpakpa, mashi	Dear good friend, I will leave [it]
Maha lɛ eeei, ko ni egbā eeei	For her eeei, for her to do this marriage eeei!
[repeat]	
Ko ni egbā eeei, wekumeɪ fɛɛ!	So that she does this marriage, all you kinsfolk!
Shienye kpakpa, mashi	Dear good friend, I will leave [it]
Maha lɛ eeei, ko ni egbā eeei!	For her eeei, for her to do this marriage eeei!
[repeat]	

Together, the various ironies outlined in the foregoing analysis will be the outcome of a Dialogue about the gender representations in the discussed main song. The parties in this Dialogue will be Ga society's imagination of gender and the female members of the same society. And the following questions will form part of the preamble for the Dialogue:

- *Why is domestic work trivialized and neither truly recognized nor rewarded for the work that it actually is, and yet, a woman's life and dignity are greatly defined by her ability and or willingness to perform domestic work?*
- *Why are women subjected the extreme forms of oppression as a result of gender inequality, and yet respectability – such as exercising discretion and restraint – requires of women to not uncover and dissent said oppressions?*
- *Why is it that despite the intense, consistent and ubiquitous nature of the oppressions that women suffer, every possibility and opportunity for them to be relieved of these oppressions remain elusive, and end up as another or the same old oppression under a different, deceptive guise?*



CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW: This chapter consists of two sections. The first section is an introduction to the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, and then two illustrations of this Mode. Per the tenor of the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, each illustration is an analysis and a discussion of the gender representations in the selected Ga song and or proverb. Together, the analysis and discussion detail the contents of the Dialogue between the two parties – either or both genders – and Ga gender culture as seen in the gender representations in said Ga song and or proverb. Each illustration closes with a set of questions, the essence of which is the *kasantswi* proverb-question that serves as the preamble to each Dialogue. The second section begins with an introduction to the Unmasking Dialogic Mode, followed by the other contents as described above for the Undeifying Dialogic Mode.

5.1 Introduction: The Undeifying Dialogic Mode (Tokenism)

In the context of this study, the term ‘undeify’ is formed by prefixing the word ‘deify’ with the negating morpheme, ‘un-’. The word ‘deify’ insinuates the absolute authority that a society ascribes to its culture. This authority is scarcely without the sacrosanct and sacred attitude with which the society’s people are required to approach and conform to the dictates of the culture. There are serious sanctions for a person’s conduct or otherwise towards a society’s deity or deities; there are sanctions too for how a person chooses to regard and treat a culture. Thus, a society’s culture is a deity in itself, seeing the nature of a culture’s place, purpose and power in the lived

realities of the people in a society. In effect, to dissent from the views and values of a culture is to undeify that culture, including the culture's views and values about gender.

The Undeifying Dialogic Mode, therefore, dissents from the dominant masculinist imagination of gender as shown in a majority of the Ga proverbs and the songs relevant to this study. Thus, texts selected for this Dialogic Mode directly or subtly assert gender representations that *are* positive and sensitive or sympathetic to the female gender and by extension, to feminist ideals such as female autonomy and agency. Sometimes, these assertions are expressions of outright female rebellion against the patriarchy and its misogynies, a rebellion that sometimes borders on toxic femininity. Nevertheless, the feminist ideals asserted in these proverbs and songs are always *apparent*, only a mirage. These ideals are ultimately merely a Token, in the place of thoughtful re-vision that translate into actual changes about gender representations and inequalities. In other words, these re-vision and changes do not reflect in the lived realities of the females in particular. And expectedly, these Tokenisms are not seen for what they really are, until after they emerge as the outcome of dissenting from what will later turn out as faux pro-feminist assertions in the selected texts. The Undeifying Dialogic Mode entails this dissent. It is important to mention that this dissent is *not* for its own sake: it is rather a tool to incite that needed Dialogue between two parties. One party is either or both genders, as the case may be in a selected text; the other party is Ga society, or specifically, Ga society's gender culture as seen in the gender representations in the selected texts. These gender representations are almost always unequal and against the females. Thus, the Tokenism outcome of the Undeifying Dialogic Mode is not only one way of exposing said gender inequalities, but also this outcome justifies the Dialogue that precedes it. And as in any of the four Dialogic Modes, this Dialogue is necessary for, or is a necessary part of, ridding society of these gender inequalities.

The Ga songs and proverbs selected and analyzed for the Undeifying Dialogic Mode are gendered, and they usually involve a romantic, marital or even familial relationship between a woman and a man. At least, from those collected for the purpose of this study, there are few Ga proverbs and songs which (appear to) assert feminist ideals, something that especially hinders the Undeifying Dialogic Mode. In view of this, some non-gendered songs and proverbs may be considered and selected as main texts under this Dialogic Mode. Where necessary, these non-gendered texts, as well as other relevant ones, will be used as supporting texts as part of the analysis and discussion of the main text in an instance of Undeifying.

5.1.1 Undeifying Dialogic Mode: Dialogue One (1)

One song is about a certain *Meele*, a female who insists on continuing to cry and to sing, despite how much and how long she is told to stop both:

PART I

[Someone calls – a woman's voice]

Kaafo ooo! Kaafo,	Don't cry ooo! Don't cry,
Ni mɔ ko kwe odaa[ɲ].	For someone to look inside your mouth.
Shika ke kpɔ hɔ odaa[ɲ],	A knot of gold is hidden inside your mouth,
Kaafo ooo! Meele, kaafo,	Don't cry ooo! Merley, Don't cry,
Ni mɔ ko kwe odaa[ɲ].	For someone to see the insides of your mouth.

[*Meele* responds – a chorus, including a man's voice]

Mafo, ooo! Mafo,	I will cry ooo! I will cry,
Ni mɔ ko akwe midaa[ɲ].	For someone to look inside my mouth
Awereho sune eka mise'ɲ.	A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat
Mafo ooo! Meele, mafo,	I will cry ooo! Merley, I will cry,
Ni mɔ ko akwe midaa[ɲ].	For someone to see the insides of my mouth.

[A woman's voice]

Kaaala aaa! Kaaala, Don't sing aaa! Don't sing,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. For someone to look inside your mouth.
Shika kɛ kpɔ hɔ oɔaa[ŋ]. A knot of gold is hidden inside your mouth
Kaaala aaa! Mɛɛle, kaaala, Don't sing aaa! Merley, don't sing,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ] For someone to see the insides of your mouth.

[Mɛɛle responds – a chorus, including a man's voice]

Mala aaa! Mala, I will sing aaa! I will sing,
Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ]. For someone to look inside my mouth.
Awerɛho sune eka mise'ŋ. A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat.
Mala aaa! Mɛɛle, mala, I will sing aaa! Merley, I will sing,
Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ]. For someone to see the insides of my mouth.

[BRIDGE – alternates between Someone's and Mɛɛle's voice]

Someone:

Oooo! Shika kɛ kpɔ hɔ midaa[ŋ]. Oooo! A knot of gold is hidden inside my mouth.

Mɛɛle:

[Mi] Mɛɛle, mala, ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ] [I] Merley, I will sing, for someone to look inside of my mouth

Someone:

Oooo! Awerɛho sune eka mise'ŋ. Oooo! A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat.

Mɛɛle:

[Mi] Mɛɛle, mala, ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ] [I] Merley, I will sing, for someone to look inside of my mouth

PART II

[Someone calls – a woman's voice]

Kaafo ooo! Kaafo, Don't cry ooo! Don't cry,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. For someone to look inside your mouth.
Shika anieku ye oɔaa[ŋ]. A gold diastema is in your mouth.
Kaafo ooo! Mɛɛle, kaafo, Don't cry ooo! Merley, don't cry,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ oɔaa[ŋ]. For someone to see the insides of your mouth.

[Mɛɛle responds – a chorus, including a man's voice]

Mafo ooo! Mafo, I will cry, ooo! I will cry,

Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ]	For someone to look inside my mouth.
Awereho sune eka mise'ŋ.	A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat.
Mafo ooo! Mɛɛle, mafo,	I will cry ooo! Merley, I will cry,
Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ].	For someone to see the insides of my mouth.

[A woman's voice]

Kaaala aaa! Kaaala,	Don't sing aaa! Don't sing,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ odaa[ŋ].	For someone to look inside your mouth.
Shika kɛ kpɔ hɔ odaa[ŋ].	A knot of gold is hidden inside your mouth.
Kaaala aaa! Mɛɛle, kaaala,	Don't sing aaa! Merley, don't sing,
Ni mɔ ko kwɛ odaa[ŋ].	For someone to see the insides of your mouth.

[Mɛɛle responds – a chorus, including a man's voice]

Mala aaa! Mala,	I will sing aaa! I will sing,
Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ].	For someone to look inside my mouth.
Awereho sune eka mise'ŋ.	A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat.
Mala aaa! [Mi] Mɛɛle, Mala,	I will sing aaa! [I] Merley, I will sing,
Ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ].	For someone to see the insides of my mouth.

[BRIDGE – alternates between Someone's and Mɛɛle's voice]

Someone:

Oooo! Shika anieku yɛ midaa[ŋ].	Oooo! A gold diastema is in my mouth.
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Mɛɛle:

[Mi] Mɛɛle, mala, ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ]	[I] Merley, I will sing, for someone to look inside of my mouth
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Someone:

Oooo! awereho sune eka mise'ŋ.	Oooo! A pillow of sorrow is stuck in my throat.
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Mɛɛle:

[Mi] Mɛɛle, mala, ni mɔ ko akwɛ midaa[ŋ]	[I] Merley, I will sing, for someone to look inside of my mouth
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Represented by their respective alternating voices, there are two personae in this song: Mɛɛle the crier-singer and the person who tells her to not cry and sing. At separate parts of the song, the person gives two reasons for the instruction: “A knot of gold is hidden inside [Mɛɛle's] mouth” and “A gold diastema is in [Mɛɛle's] mouth.” To these reasons, Mɛɛle gives only one reason she

cries and sings, and will continue to: “A pillow of sorrow is stuck in [her] throat”. And even for this singular reason that Meele cries and sings in the first place, its exact cause is not known, or not specific or literal enough. However, it can be assumed that even if not readily known, Meele must have real and valid reason/s for crying and singing, and for insisting to continue both. And this assumption is in keeping with the essence of the proverb:

Gbomo etāaa loo yaka,

No one grows lean for no reason,

It may be argued that the person’s words are out of sympathy for Meele’s crying and singing, or even out of concern that Meele may aggravate the discomfort and pains from the fluff of the “pillow...stuck in [her] throat” and also from the knot of the gold hidden inside her mouth. It may also be that the person’s words are out of admiration of Meele for the gold – the gold of the things – inside her mouth. And it may as well be that the person means well, only means to give Meele good-intentioned advice, that even if she must cry and sing, she should constantly be aware of and discreet about the said things inside her mouth. However, all these arguments lose ground, given the realities and practicalities of the song’s subject matter. Firstly, if the person is really sorry for Meele and genuinely cares about her, the person would have first, or also, or later asked Meele why she cries. That is, by the song beginning with the person telling Meele to not cry – and later in the song, to not sing too – it is easier to imagine that the person seeks only to silence Meele, rather than to sympathize with her. And even after Meele volunteers the reason she cries and sings, the person continues to repeat the same instruction. The mechanical insensitivity of this, on the part of the person and to the further hurt of Meele, is self-evident. Secondly, the person is emotionally and physically or bodily detached from the reasons Meele cries and sings. For this reason, even if the person is to truly empathize with Meele, the person will still lack the existential or lived reality with which Meele’s situation may be treated with the full or appreciable urgency, dignity and humanity that it deserves. And by insisting on the instruction, the person invalidates

Mæele – her entire personhood, which includes her voice, and her gender. All this means that however gentle, subtle and well-intentioned the person’s insistent instruction to Mæele is, it is merely to patronize Mæele and to dismiss the reality of her plight, using the inconsequential knot of gold and the gold of the diastema inside her mouth. Apart from this patronizing and dismissal, there is tokenism also in what is really an *apparent* – if not a *pseudo* – Dialogue between the person and Mæele. That is, the person’s and Mæele’s alternating and equal song parts give their exchange a rather apt semblance of a Dialogue, especially to someone who is at a distance away and is therefore not privy to the contents of the exchange. In the absence of any distance whatsoever, it becomes clear that the exchange is no Dialogue at all, and that it is in fact, one party essentially shutting down a pained party, even in the face of valid reason and vivid reality. Also, that Mæele has an albeit reduced and restricted right and room to cry and sing makes no useful difference to her plight, to how she is treated and above all, to the function of said right and room. The essence of this restriction is aptly captured in the proverb:

Bɔ fɛɛ bɔ ni aduŋ baafee le, kpãa ŋmɔ ehe. No matter what the monkey does, it is tethered at the waist. That is, despite the tokens of opportunity and freedom that a woman may have to express herself, she can only do so much, and thus, she can hardly make any tangible positive and progressive gain from said tokens.

The person reasons that because the knot of gold and gold diastema hidden inside Mæele’s mouth will be seen when she opens her mouth to cry and sing, Mæele must stop crying and singing. Even if in figurative terms, the gold reference of the knot thing indicates that it is a thing of value, an item of wealth. It may, however, be farfetched to interpret this reference in literal terms, that is, in terms of a solid, lifeless and foreign thing hidden inside Mæele’s mouth. Nevertheless, being a knot thing makes it fearsome, particularly because it is a hard thing located in a rather delicate and

critical part of Meele's body – her mouth. In other words, irrespective of what material a thing is, it cannot possibly be a natural, healthy and comfortable thing if it is a knot of all things, and if it is stuck inside a person's mouth of all places. Similarly, gold diastema can be interpreted as the metaphor that it is. In this case, it is a certain unique, ornate and precious thing entirely made by Nature or Biology. And even without it being a gold one, a diastema is valued as a thing of beauty, and particularly so because of its rarity. It is a mark of good looks, a thing of attraction and desirability in many African cultures, of which Ga is not an exception. Also, a diastema is prized because one can neither make nor fake it: one is either blessed by sheer and random Nature to have it or one is not. Thus, one can only be complimented or be admired for having a diastema; and at the very least, one can choose to be indifferent to a diastema or to someone who has it. Because of all these, one cannot be truly praised or faulted for having a diastema. And because a diastema is located at a rather conspicuous part of the body, it also cannot be fair to suggest that someone is flaunting a diastema, and much less so when said someone's mouth is open only because of crying and singing. Altogether, for the person to tell Meele not to cry and sing, in order not to expose a knot of gold and a gold diastema hidden inside her mouth, is as inane as it is insensitive. However, this is not the conclusion to be made by this person, and by extension, the rest of society. Meele will more likely be perceived as the one, the one female, upon whom was bestowed some of the best things that make her favoured and loved by society, and yet, she turns round to show to society ingratitude. It will not matter to society that these same things cause or contribute to Meele's life pains. Thus, crying and singing, as well as insisting on continuing to do so, is rebellion to the silence culture that Meele's society demands of her. In other words, even with her rather lucky and wealthy lot, Meele rebels against society, or more specifically, Meele undeifies society, and insistently so, and even if for valid reason/s. The tokenism in all this is that, however rare and rich,

these literally tangible reasons are mere tokens, since they do not translate into any currency by which Mæele's real and vivid pains are alleviated. And it is even more curious how the gold and gold things inside Mæele's mouth cause her further pain, and at the same time, stifle and make even more painful her expression of this pain, together with the other pain from the "pillow of sorrow...stuck in [her] throat".

Because of the afore-mentioned reasons for telling Mæele not to cry and sing, it may be that the person only means to appreciate and admire Mæele for the precious, peculiar and dainty thing inside her mouth. It is, however, curious how the person conveniently ignores that irrespective of it being gold, such an odd and knot-thing is bound to scratch the insides of Mæele's mouth so sour and bloody, causing Mæele to cry. Like a woman in another song, the gold of her being love-struck neither prevents nor soothes the sourness and scratching of her beloved's overwhelming absence. And so she pines and croons away:

[In a woman's plaintive voice]

Ataa oblanyo eeei!

Dear young man eeei!

Nɛgbɛ otee?

Where are you gone to?

Oshɛ shia lo?!

Have you arrived home, have you?!

Mæbe obaaba?

When are you coming [back to me]?

Ooya ni oba lo?!

Are you going to return at all?!

Ao! E-/ Suomɔ wa eeeei!

Ao! It/ Love is hard eeeei!

[repeat]

Mi gbekɛyoo fiooo –

Me, a little young girl –

Oshi mi otee.

You are gone and have left me [alone].

Otee sɛɛ shɔŋŋ!

You are gone far, so far [away]!

Mæbe obaaba?

When are you coming [back to me]?

Ooya ni oba lo?!

Are you going to return at all?!

Ao! E-/ Suomɔ wa eeeei!

Ao! It/ Love is hard eeeei!

[repeat]

Oshi mikome too!	You have left only me [all alone]!
Kε je na lε, mi eeei!	When it is night, it is me [alone] eeei!
Je tsere, mi eeei!	When day breaks, it is me [alone] eeei!
Kε je ejo hu, mi eeei!	When there is cold, it is still me [alone] eeei!
Ni otee shɔŋŋ.	And you are gone far, far away.
Ao! E-/Suɔmɔ wa eeei!	Ao! It/ Love is hard eeeeei!

[repeat]

Ataa oblanyo eeei!	Dear young man eeei!
Nεgbε otee?	Where are you gone to?
Oshε shia lo?!	Have you arrived home, have you?!
Mεεbe obaaba?	When are you coming [back to me]?
Obaaba lo?!	Will you come [back to me] at all?!
Ao! E-/ Suɔmɔ wa eeei!	Ao! It/ Love is hard eeeeei!

Eshwε mikome too!	It is left with only me!
Je lε mli fεε ejo eeei!	It is cold and quiet eeei!
Je miitsere mi eeei!	Day is breaking on me eeei!
Nɔko miifεε mi eeei	Something [grave] is happening to me eeei!
Suɔmɔ fεε eta lo?!	Is all love finished?!
Ao! E-/Suɔmɔ wa eeei!	Ao! Love is hard eeei!

An apostrophe, this song is a lament: a woman bewails the bleak and cold absence of her lover, a man who has travelled, leaving her to suffer what appears to be a life she is not supposed to be living alone, a life to which his mere presence can bring some light and warmth. The song's tone is both emphatic and forlorn; it contains repetitions, exclamatory words and unanswered questions; and all these give the song more layered meanings beyond the literal – beyond its subject matter – as well as make the song's mood heavy with the emotions that characterize agony and helplessness. Where weeping – or simply, crying – fails to bring this woman significant and meaningful consolation, she finds expression in singing, of which this song is the product. Because of the

agony and desperate helplessness of her peculiar situation, Mæele too sings, when she is finally stopped from crying, or when crying neither ends nor soothes the covert but nagging pains caused her by the things in her mouth and throat. And when Mæele resorts to singing away these her pains, because crying may have failed to bring her some acceptable reconciliation with her pains, she is told to not sing too. Whether worrying or weeping, whether crying or singing, this suppression of a woman's expression of her woes is contrary to the spirit and denotation of a proverb that champions expression:

Ayiii mə bi ni atua le yaafo. One does not beat someone's child and forbid it [the child] from crying.

In emphatic terms, this proverb shows that Ga culture frowns on silencing a person, particularly where there is evident enough need and cause for a person to break his or her silence. Even more specifically and literally, it is not allowed to silence a child from crying, to deprive a child of unrestrained expression of the hurt from having been beaten. Crying helps to heal, or at least, it is a necessary part of the process of healing from any kind of hurt. It is clear, however, that for full-fledged adult Mæele, there is a sudden exception to this explicit tolerance for crying, and this is all because Mæele is female, or because of the token that the gold thing hidden inside her mouth is, or because of both. Also, Mæele is prevented from singing. And this too is tragic because of the inexplicable eloquence and serenity that music or song oftentimes grants a person overtaken by the weight of life's various vicissitudes. More than simply and only because they are usually emotive and expressive in their individual right, both crying and singing are cathartic. Notwithstanding these otherwise enabling qualities and refreshing benefits of crying and singing, Mæele's are really tokens. That is, said qualities do not bring Mæele the urgent and needed catharsis resulting from expressing her abiding pains, and this can be part of the reason/s she insists on continuing to cry and sing. Put simply, crying and singing do not bring Mæele any relief, even if

brief, and before she is eventually stopped from doing both.

The more ready medium of vocal expression is speech. In the context of the song under study, speech is specifically the notion of speaking out, and of speaking up for oneself, and sometimes as a form of dissent. Meele does this, albeit through crying and singing, and not through speech itself. It is worth noting that in the song, speech itself is conspicuously not mentioned as an option for self-expression – not mentioned by Meele herself, and not by the person who tells her to not cry and sing. Thus, and as if in enforced compliance with the notion that a woman must only be seen and not be heard, Meele must have now resorted to two less plain forms of being heard via speaking – crying and singing. In view of this possibility, it is said in proverb that

Hijmei nyɛɔ mɔ, shi toi ni buaa (sane). The eye despises, but [it is] the ear [that] judges (a matter). Through this proverb, Ga culture asserts that even if not morally acceptable, a person may harbour negative impressions and prejudice against another person, a Meele of some kind. Nevertheless, until said Meele is a given chance and some attention to speak out or speak up for herself, it is unlikely for said person to arrive at an objective conclusion or a just judgment about the matter at hand. This tendency to hold unfavourable notions and biases about a person may well be a generic human fault, rather than something that is necessarily specific and exclusive to Ga (gender) culture. Another proverb, however, proves otherwise:

Bɔ fɛɛ bɔ ni nyɔɔ yaafonu baafa aha ɛ, No matter how plentiful a slave's tears will be, [they]
enyɛɛ [ni] efɔ sune tsɔtsɔtsɔ. the tears can never soak a pillow to the point of dripping.

This proverb shows the reality of said human tendency to be biased, only that this bias is targeted at and reserved for a marginalized group of people in society: slaves. In one way or the other, these people are deemed less, treated with less favour, and considered to belong less than others. These are people over whom authority is exerted and are often exploited, with regards to the fullness of

their abilities and human dignity. And even if not blatant oppression, society's lack or sheer reduction of the slave's agency and autonomy is, in some ways, comparable to that of females. And so by this proverb, it goes without saying that the duration and intensity of Mæele's crying and singing amount to nothing, and to no consequence whatsoever. In other words, Mæele's crying or any other form of vocal expression is so disregarded and ignored that, it brings her neither attention nor a chance to be seen and to be heard. And Mæele must have had to settle for the oftentimes wordless and inarticulate expression that crying is, as well as settle for the sometimes mechanical and calibrated medium of singing, because she is denied the more ready option of speech. No matter how distinct and how more easily they may lend themselves to aesthetics and more emotive expression, crying and singing are still unlike speaking or plain speech. Crying and singing are mediated and are less direct: they are not exactly natural and original speech. And together with crying and singing, even speech excludes acting or action – *active* or bodily expression. Thus, now that Mæele is barred from mere crying and singing, after she may have been prevented from speech, it is not hard to further imagine that she must have first been and or will very likely be stopped from action. In effect, Mæele is instructed to be silent, to be altogether passive. And so, for a woman, any form of vocal expression in any tone and tune is a forbidden thing in Ga gender culture. And whether in protest or as a mere expression of the pains that are intimately and vividly known and born by only herself, a woman's expression is considered unconformity, a form of dissent, something that undeifies the sacred authority of Ga gender culture. And ultimately, even crying and singing, which are indirect and affected forms of vocal expression, and from which Mæele is barred, are both mere tokens for more tenable and tangible mediums of expression such as said speech, and especially action.

The foregoing analysis details the subject and implications of the gender representations in

the selected song. This analysis, in turn, is essentially the contents of a Dialogue between Ga gender culture and the female gender. In keeping with the dialectics of the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, and as informed by the tenor of the proverb-question, the preamble to this Dialogue is defined by the following questions:

- *Why does society merely appear to recognize and to be concerned about females and their plight, while actually ignoring and sometimes even forbidding them to express the reality and intensity of their plight?*
- *Why does society focus on superficial and inconsequential qualities of females, rather than focus on the further burdens and oppression that these qualities may cause females?*
- *Why does society emphasize the aesthetic and material value of some of these female qualities, even when these qualities do not reflect in the rather dire lived realities of females?*
- *Why does society allow (self)expression, and sometimes even make room for dissent, and yet marginalized people such as females are subtly or expressly exempted from the dignity of these rights and opportunities?*

Through both Dialogue and its preamble, the Tokenisms inherent in the gender representations become evident. And in the specific instance of this Dialogue, under the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, these Tokenisms are directed at and detrimental to the female gender.

5.1.2 Undeifying Dialogic Mode: Dialogue Two (2)

In the following song, a woman announces to a man that she is going, leaving the spousal relationship that she shares with him:

Woman:

Miiya! Miiya! Miiya!

I am going! Leaving! Leaving [you]!

Man:

Yaa! Go!
Kaaa[ya]gba miyi nɔ nuu! [But be sure] Not to go and be with a man of my class!

Woman:

Miiya! Miiya! Miiya! I am going! Leaving! Leaving [you]!

Man:

Yaa! Go!
Kaaa[ya]gba miyi nɔ nuu! [But be sure] Not to go and be with a man of my class!

Kɛ ole ni oyagba miyi nɔ nuu [lɛ], If you go and be with a man of my class,
Ataa Nyɔŋmɔ abi bo sane! Let Father God [Himself] deal with you!
[Kɛ] ole ni oyagba *Kiŋ Jɔɔji* bi ye ablosti, Better go be with the son of King George, at overseas,
Koni okɛ lɛ afɔ [bi] futaa tamɔ ayilɔ ni okpa. So that you and he [shall] have a white child, white
. like white [clay-]powder that you [then]wear [, in victory].

Kɛ ole ni oyagba miyi nɔ nuu [lɛ], If you go and be with a man of my class,
Ataa Nyɔŋmɔ abi bo sane! Let Father God [Himself] deal with you!
[Kɛ] ole ni oyagba *Kiŋ Jɔɔji* bi ye ablosti, Better go be with the son of King George, at overseas,
Koni okɛ lɛ afɔ [bi] sakoo tamɔ klala ni obu. So that you and he [shall] have a white child, white
. like a white cloth that you [then] clad yourself in [, in victory].

[Repeat all]

The song begins with a very brief announcement by the woman: “I am going!”. This is repeated immediately, twice. All this is repeated the next and only other time that the woman speaks in the song. Despite these rather simple and monotonous repetitions, it is the man who speaks for the rest and much larger part of the song. This, in turn, makes it questionable that the song is intended to be a dialogue, seeing that there are indeed two voices of two personae in the song – the voice of the man and woman personae. Also, the song begins with the voice of the woman, followed by the man’s, in response to the woman’s sole “I am going!”, giving the impression that the woman initiated the dialogue, and therefore, and to some extent, she is the more powerful party in the

dynamics of the dialogue, as well as in the spousal relationship. However, the man persona and his voice quickly take over and dominate the dialogue, in terms its content, duration and tone. Thus, every semblance of the song being a dialogue is a mere token for the woman persona being an actual, active and equal party in the supposed dialogue. Moreover, in a true dialogue, the woman would have had opportunity and space to explain in some detail the reason she is leaving, especially since the man's response is not only elaborate, but also passionate and quite vindictive. Also, the woman could have been engaged in a real dialogue, with the possibility that she may even change her mind about leaving, due to a negotiation which results in a consensus about the reasons because of which she says she is leaving. However, the man's response to the woman's simple "I am going" begins with "Go!", which is immediately followed by ill-will wrapped in caustic sarcasm. And so even before responding to the woman's announcement, the man fails to realize that:

Kɛ onuuu mɔ ko gbee shishi lɛ, ogbeee lɛ. If you do not empathize with someone, you do not kill the person.

Thus, through the man persona's voice, society would rather dismiss or be rid of a woman than dialogue with her, even if only to know her needs and concerns in a social institution such as a spousal relationship. And it is even more unlikely that society would dialogue a woman about improving the conditions of said institution, conditions set by the gender culture of same society. Because of this, the man dares the woman to go find and "be with the son of King George, at overseas", confidently knowing that the woman will never find a man better than him, at least, not in the same society to which they both belong. The man is certain that the woman stands an even leaner chance of faring better in another society and culture, a foreign one. And seeing that the woman cannot possibly and truly belong and thrive in a society or culture that is foreign to and far away from her only and original one, society is as well ostracizing the woman for merely saying

she is leaving, even before she actually leaves, and even before society learns about her reasons. This implied ostracism is part of the price that the woman pays for daring to undeify society, merely by announcing to leave. And as it soon turns out, this announcement will be her only part in what is even a token dialogue.

Apart from being a token dialogue, this song strikingly differs from the trope of other songs about a man and a woman going their separate ways from a romantic or some other gendered relationship. In these other songs, and as demonstrated in earlier Dialogues, the man is almost always the one who asks for and initiates the separation, while the woman party does the begging and crying for reconciliation of some sort. Where the man insists on leaving, and where crying and begging fail to yield desirable outcome for the woman, she is left with no option but to plead with the man to not treat her further shabbily, while she prepares to leave. In a few song instances, the woman will also plead that the man give her a settlement of sorts, something that she hopes will sustain her, even if for only a short time after the relationship is conclusively dissolved. And so, in order for a woman to avoid her man-spouse even contemplating to leave her, the trope remains that a woman opts to be silent, meek and malleable to a man's every whim and wish. Thus, in a part of one song, a woman pledges unconditional and unquestioning love, loyalty and labour to her man-spouse:

Maṅme mitsui shishi maha bo ei, Nii.	I will lay myself low with patience for you ei, Nii.
Kpoo kɛkɛ!	All for the sake of quiet and peace!
Masɔmɔ bo bo ni otaoɔ eee eei!	I will serve you in every way you wish eee eei!
Kpoo kɛkɛ!	All for the sake of quiet and peace!
Mi ke mihe baafɔ shi maha bo ei, , <i>Mai Die</i> [My Dear].	I will surrender myself in meekness to you ei, My Dear.
Ja be ni mina midaaŋ-ŋmaa eeei!	As long as my everyday food [from you] is assured,
Mahi shi eeei!	I will stay [remain with you] eeei!

Kpoo kɛkɛ!

All for the sake of quiet and peace!

All that the woman in this song requires from her spouse is one of the most basic of things, food, and not values such as fidelity, fairness and human(e) freedom. Meanwhile, without question and expression, men and society at large essentially demand these and other such values of women, particularly women in the typically gendered relationship that a spousal one is. None of this, however, is the case in the main song under study, where for once, it is a woman who initiates separation, or at least announces her intention to leave a gendered relationship. This instance of a woman demonstrating assertiveness and exercising her agency should count for some positive change and progress in society's gender culture. However, said change and progress, albeit little, are undone by the content and tone of the man's response to the woman. After the woman says "I am going!". The man retorts with "Go!", which is neither an apt nor expected response to the woman's words. The response suits a plain question or a statement that (in)directly solicits his suggestion, or permission, or perhaps instruction. And the woman's announcement is anything but such a question or such a statement. Rather, it is clear and concise, and it is a direct and categorical statement – altogether assertive, and emphatically so. And yet the tone of the man's response is of one acknowledging and endorsing the woman's assertion, as if granting the woman permission to go or to enact what she has already asserted, and as if he can and will stop the woman from leaving him if he so wishes. Thus, by assuming and this position of power, the man not only exerts dominance over the woman, but he also erases this rather rare demonstration of agency and autonomy by a woman. As if this is not enough, the man goes on to tell the woman what quality of man she should be with after she leaves him. It is as though, even when this woman is no longer connected to the man in a way that gives him any stake in her life, the man still feels it his role and right to dictate to her about decisions and choices as personal and sensitive as who she later gets

romantically involved with. The man precedes all this, firstly, with a projection that the woman is leaving him to go find and be with another man; and secondly, with the presumption that even if the projection is true, the woman herself does not and cannot possibly know what kind of man will suit and treat her better. Above all these, the man essentially curses the woman: he swears on two occasions that “God [Himself] deal[s] with [the woman]” if, upon all her rather token audacity, she eventually settles with a man of no higher caliber than him. And in the unlikely case that the woman does find and wind up with better, the man adds to his ill-will against the woman, again, on two occasions, that:

“[the woman] and [her next man should be sure to] have a white child, white like white [clay-]powder that [the woman should then] wear [, in victory]”

and

“[the woman] and [her next man should be sure to] have a white child, white like a white cloth that [the woman should then] clad [her]self in [, in victory].”

The man does all this under the guise of what may seem a harmless sarcasm and metaphors of a fruitful outcome of the woman’s relationship with some supposed next man, and this by no means changes the fact that the man despises the woman, and that he does not wish her any good, even if only after the woman announced her leaving. And the man’s said projection and presumption about the woman’s leaving make this his attitude towards the woman anything but noble – or even plain indifference. This is because, it can as well be that the woman says to leave, not to go be with another man, but simply to opt out of what she may have concluded to be an unhealthy or dysfunctional spousal relationship. Whatever be the case, and whether by damning the woman for her audacity or by erasing the woman’s person and voice, the man and society’s gender culture at large make a token of the woman’s feeble attempt at autonomy.

Unlike the first woman in the main song under study, another woman in another song is

not feeble with her agency. Neither is this other woman agreeable like the previously mentioned second woman who said to “lay [her]self low with patience for [her spouse]”, “serve [her spouse] in every way [he] wish[es]”, “surrender [her]self in meekness to [her spouse]”, and to do all these “all for the sake of quiet and peace”. In fact, this other third woman is a lot more specific and forceful, her words and tone bordering on what may as well pass as toxic femininity:

Man's Voice:

Miibi sane kome eeei!

I ask a question eeei!

Miibi sane kome.

I ask but one question.

Ojole ke owu eeei, te ma ni osumoo?

Your lover and your husband eeei, which [of them] do you love?

Woman's Voice:

Misumoo mijole fe mi wu eeei!

I love my lover more than my husband eeei!

Shi ke migbo le, namo baaha [migbonyo] adeka le?

Yet who buys the casket [for me] when I die?

Miwu kooloo le, le ebaaha adeka le!

My husband the animal [buffoon], he buys the casket!

Man's Voice:

Miibi sane kome eeei!

I ask a question eeei!

Miibi sane kome.

I ask but one question.

Makola ke owu eeei, te na ni osumoo?

Makola and your husband eeei, which [of them] do you love?

Woman's Voice:

Misumoo Makola fe mi wu eeei!

I love Makola more than my husband eeei!

Shi ke migbo le, namo baaha [migbonyo] adeka le?

Yet who buys the casket [for me] when I die?

Miwu kooloo le, le ebaaha adeka le!

My husband the animal [buffoon], he buys the casket!

Like the many women who come to buy goods from her, as well as Odofo Lamptey herself in *Money Galore*, this third woman exhibits the “air of self-assurance and independence” that is characteristic of Ga women who ply various trades at the famous Makola market (Djoleto, 1975: p. 46). Individual personality and idiosyncrasy aside, this characteristic is greatly informed by the

sometimes unassuming economic and political power that these women wield, right from their homes and families, within their communities and the Makola market space itself, and in the nation Ghana and the world of business at large. Much of this power, in turn, is significantly informed by Makola's enigmatic role in the making of the nation Ghana at large, and in particular, Accra, the capital of Ghana, and the home-land of the Ga people. Quayson (2014) refers to this ever-evolving role of Makola in terms of its "peculiar and colourful history", a history that spans pre-colonial and colonial, pre- and post-independence and even present-day Ghana (Quayson, 2014: p. 27). It is not known how financially adequate the first woman in the main song under study is, but if she is, at least to a readily significant degree, the man would not have suggested that she go be with a man above his caliber. However, here is another woman who boldly admits loving Makola more than her husband: she explicitly chooses Makola, a metaphor for her financial independence, over her husband. The woman does this, most likely being very much aware of the unpleasant implications that a woman may suffer, if a man is the (more) financially powerful party in a spousal or any other gendered relationship.

Also, and unlike the first woman, the third woman does not leave her spouse. Rather, she maintains her marriage, while essentially cheating on her husband with a lover, another man, who she bluntly says she loves more than her husband. Despite this, this third woman also intends that "...when [she] die[s]...[it is her] husband the animal [buffoon] [who]...buys the casket" in which she is to be buried. It is possible that the woman's intention is a clear decision, a wilful and perhaps provocative disregard for the respectability that society requires from a woman to be married and to remain married, and to be strictly faithful if married, or to not be overtly sexual or at the very least, to not be promiscuous if unmarried. Irrespective of this possibility, tradition typically requires that a man be responsible for the casket in which his deceased wife is buried, and this

makes it odd and unfair for the woman to abuse her husband by calling him “animal [buffoon]”. Even worse, this woman doubly undeifies society, firstly, by her being dismissively audacious with her agency, and then by her taking undue advantage of tradition, and all this in the face her contravening another aspect of tradition, the one that requires her to be a faithful wife. As much as all these indicate an appreciable room for female freedom in a gender culture that is typically biased against her, this is even worse than a token, because it is a rather negative outcome on the part of the female gender. Simply, this is toxic femininity, something that corrupts the character and very humanity of the female gender, even before she and others are harmed by it in various ways. And all this is detrimental to both genders, and to society at large. At the same time, this untowardness points to the lengths that a woman can go, in order to undo or escape the various forms of suppression or oppression that said culture imposes on her. And the farther the length, the more severe the punitive consequences that she can be expected to incur.

In effect, whether a woman is temperate and tactful with her *undeifying* society like the first woman in the main song under study, or whether she goes the extreme ends of rogue and radical like this third Makola woman, or even when she plays her expected mute and meek part like the second woman as seen in other songs explored in this and other Dialogues, it never or it very rarely so happens that a woman will win or that whatever resultant change or progress will be true and thorough, and not be a mere token. In other words, even though the two divergent women in the main and third songs risk society’s rage and erasure, and sometimes even despise and damnation, their acts of asserting their agency are eventually tokenized. Thus, even when a woman outsteps the boundaries of modesty and morality – both of which are defined by society, and also consist of the reasons for the gender inequalities in society – a woman still gains nothing truly significant and meaningful by leaving a man or by being unfaithful.

Given the specific and implied meanings of the selected song under study, together with the peculiar modalities of the Undeifying Dialogic Mode, the foregoing analysis suggests in detail the Dialogue that will ensue between the female gender and Ga gender culture through the male gender. And in keeping with the tenor of the proverb-question, the preamble for this Dialogue entails the following questions:

- *Why does society give showy opportunities to dialogue with females, only for the society to dominate the dialogue, condescend to females and ultimately ignore or erase the females' voices entirely?*
- *Why are females sometimes represented as brazenly bold or radical in such token dialogue, even though it is all mere tokenism, even before females, and later, others, are harmed by such audacity?*
- *Why is society particularly vindictive and aggressive about even the least show of female agency and autonomy, to the point of ostracizing and sometimes altogether damning females?*

5.2 Introduction: The Unmasking Dialogic Mode (Contradiction)

In defining the Unmasking Dialogic Mode, it is important to distinguish it from the Unraveling Dialogic Mode in Chapter 4. Both Dialogic Modes suggest arriving at some hidden meaning(s) in a Ga song or proverb, a meaning that is not obvious until either Mode is applied.

The Unraveling Mode specifically entails a close, critical and logical reading of a Ga song or proverb, in order to unravel said meaning(s). Where any other data or material is used in an Unraveling, it is merely a related and relevant text to help spell out and pull apart all the knotted strands of meanings in the Ga song or proverb, meanings that later emerge as unraveled meanings.

This unknotting is essentially an Unraveling, the outcome of which is an Irony, which is in turn, distinct from a Contradiction, the outcome of Unmasking. Also, whereas Unraveling involves explication and results in a realization, Unmasking implies uncovering and tends to a revelation.

Unlike the detangling of knotted strands during an Unraveling, Unmasking is more the case of peeling away compacted layers of meanings in two selected data, in order to uncover the meanings hidden under the explicit and the obvious. These two data may be a song and a proverb, or two songs, or two proverbs; they complement each other. This is unlike the supplementary relationship between the single selected data and its other supporting material, in the case of an Unraveling. The two data in an Unmasking are read and analyzed together, particularly for the inherent conversation that ensues from one of the data being gendered and the other being non-gendered or gender-neutral.

The ungendered or gender-neutral data asserts that which is intended and upheld to be a categorical and universal truth per Ga social, cultural and sometimes even philosophical worldview. This data clashes, so to speak, with the implications of the gender representations in the gendered data. And all this largely accounts for the Contradiction outcome of the Unmasking Dialogic Mode. Thus, and in keeping with the essence of Unmasking, the reading and analysis of the two data uncover hitherto hidden layers of meanings underneath the two data's literal and implied meanings, particularly the inconsistencies in these meanings. Ultimately, this uncovering betrays inadvertent but actual inconsistencies in Ga gender worldview and culture.

To this end, the Unmasking Dialogic Mode juxtaposes two selected texts that may seem obscure and unrelated to each other until said juxtaposition. These texts share a thread of meaning or an underlining theme, one that eventually turns out to be a Contradiction, when the individual meanings of the two texts are carefully considered side by side. These texts are treated with the

same weight and depth, even though some other texts or materials are used as part of the process of Unmasking. Such other material, therefore, is only supplementary, only a support, and so does not have the same place and attention as the two selected texts in a given instance of Unmasking.

5.2.1 Unmasking Dialogic Mode: Dialogue One (1)

The following texts, two Ga proverbs, help to illustrate the Unmasking Dialogic Mode:

1. *Afi efeeɛ ɲmɔtse.* ⁵⁸The partridge is not greater than the owner of the farm [on which it feeds and lives].

and

2. *Kɛ yoo he tu lɛ, ekehãa nuu shitoo.* When/ if a woman buys a gun, she gives [is to give] it to a man to keep.

In keeping with the Unmasking Dialogic Mode, the first proverb (Proverb 1), “*Afi efeeɛ ɲmɔtse*”, is at least non-gendered, if not gender-neutral; the second proverb (Proverb 2), “*Kɛ yoo he tu lɛ, ekehãa nuu shitoo*” is gendered.

Proverb 1 asserts a profound statement about an aspect of Ga philosophical worldview, specifically about what should be the defined terms in a relationship that is mutual and fulfilling to the two parties involved. This proverb defines, even if subtly, the ranks of the two parties: the upper rank of the benevolent farm-owner party, and the lower rank of the beneficiary partridge party. The latter party is given unfettered access and liberty to the farm, the substance of benevolence. Even more subtly, the proverb also suggests that at some point, such access and liberty can make the beneficiary party transcend what should always be the clearly defined ranks

⁵⁸ Other equally tenable translations of this Ga proverb, “*Afi efeeɛ ɲmɔtse*”, are:

a) The partridge does not become (the) owner of the farm [on which it feeds and lives].

b) [Because of its resigned dependency on the farm and by extension, the farm owner,] the partridge itself will never get to be(come) an owner of a farm.

in the relationship. And it does not matter whether the beneficiary transcending rank is deliberate or accidental, or even innocuous or malicious. Thus, even though the benevolent owner, as well as the very nature and dynamics of the relationship, put the substance of benevolence at unrestricted disposal of the beneficiary, it is seriously hoped that the beneficiary does not take for granted the unregulated kindness and trusting leniency of the one true and actual benevolent owner. And even if only tacitly, it is also strongly advised that the beneficiary is not tempted to deem himself the owner of the substance, and consequently, to live beyond his reasonable station and allowances in the relationship, as well as in the provisions of the benevolence. This understanding partly informs the essence of the following two other proverbs:

Ayeee le mɔ ni hɔmɔ yeɔ le naa; A thing is not allotted according to who is hungry [in need of it];
ayeɔ le mɔ ni yeɔ le naa. it is designated in accordance with the one to whom it is due.

and

Mɔ ni akpɛ le le, ebiii nii naa. The one who is being carried [at another's back] does not go asking
the price of things [as if in the position to buy the things].

Even if inadvertently, Ga gender culture admits in Proverb 2 that it is not only a man who can and should be the benevolent party in a (gendered) relationship. A woman too can, even if seldom. This proverb also implies that sometimes the woman is the one who has the wealth and or means to buy, and consequently, to possess a gun, together with a gun's immediate and symbolic implications. However, everyone in a family or marital home or even a community, including a given man or woman, benefits from the safety and security of a gun, and sometimes even the mere idea and materiality of a gun. And this benefit is irrespective of whether a man or a woman owns the gun in question, and whether a man or a woman keeps, and therefore has easier and quicker access to this gun. Because of this mutual and common good, it should not matter if and how the gun-owner woman gets to exercise and live to her fullest potential with regards to her owning a

gun, as well as with the wealth or means by which she legitimately comes to own the gun. Neither should there be the need to focus on the lack of but sudden possibility of imagining a woman in a narrative about a gun. However, the entrenched and pervasive gender inequalities against women still exist, thereby contradicting everything practical and good about a woman owning a gun. And these inequalities ensure the anticlimactic effect in the proverb: the woman wins against all sorts and odds to buy a gun, with bright hopes of keeping and using her gun as is allowed for any man, only for it to be required that she surrenders her gun to her husband or any male relative. As a result, another person, a man, gets to keep and wield this gun at his own discretion and pleasure, without the woman's permission or preference, and without any real possibility and guarantee that the woman will have similar access and freedom to the same gun, her own gun, her very own legitimately acquired symbol and source of power. Therefore, even though Ga gender culture may not be entirely foreclosed about gender equality with particular respect to women, it is evident that any such possible gender equality is only inadvertent, and only a way of speaking or merely an aesthetic, such as seen in Proverb 2. More so, said gender equality is not an actual and tangible thing in Ga gender imagination; neither is it a lived reality in Ga gender culture.

Despite the gender inequalities and attendant contradictions that Proverb 2 is fraught with, there is consistency in its positioning of an albeit biased truth in general Ga worldview, a truth that is biased in favour of the male and against the female. Nevertheless, this consistency is only apparent, only tenable, until the import of Proverb 2 is juxtaposed with that of Proverb 1:

Afi efee *ɲmɔtse*. The partridge is not greater than the owner of the farm [on which it feeds and lives].

This proverb describes the typical benevolent-owner versus beneficiary-dependant /steward relationship – that is, between *afi* the partridge and *ɲmɔtse* the farm-owner, respectively. The partridge *lives on* the farm – both literally and otherwise. Now, a partridge (P) is a small bird, and

so because of its rather small appetite, it should not cause the farm any serious harm and by extension, bring the farm-owner (FO) any substantial loss on his (future) yield. However small P and its dependence on the farm, the conscientious FO will certainly know about P, and about the albeit tacit yet essential relationship that Nature establishes between them, via the farm. Soon, both P and FO will come to understand and accept the fact and implications of their inevitable relationship. Typically, this relationship begins with FO trying to rid the farm of P, whenever FO sees P and telltales of P on the farm. This attempted riddance will be deliberate and sustained, but only at first, until FO gradually settles into the *Nature* of the relationship. In the beginning, P too will take seriously FO's attempts to rid the farm of it: P will stop feeding and living on the farm momentarily, whenever FO is around. But all this will be short-lived, until gradually, P gets so used to and so familiar with the farm and FO that, it barely moves or even stirs at the sight FO. Sooner, the two act their parts. That is, FO loses real intention to and only pretends to drive P away from the farm. And seeing the half-heartedness and pointlessness of FO's actions, P merely flits and lurks around, while it continues to feed from, and possibly, also make a home somewhere on the farm. Thus, before long FO loses interest to act on the consciousness of being the owner of the farm on which P feeds and lives: FO becomes not exactly keen to pursue and reap any privileges from being the owner of the farm. On the other hand, P loses any possibility of feeling guilt, shame and helplessness for being kept (alive) by the providence FO and the farm: P loses the instinct to act with the mechanical carefulness and stealth expected of an intruder, especially an intruder that makes its entire life on a farm to which it has no claim and right whatsoever. Eventually, FO settles into forgetting to act the part of the ever-gracious giver and benevolent one in the relationship, while P sheds off the otherwise nagging and stifling consciousness of being the ever-needy and beneficiary party. Thus, the relationship between FO and P evolves, until it develops into, and is

maintained by the unconditional, unlimited and unending benevolence of FO – or for as long as the farm remains. All this notwithstanding, P will be careful not to alarm and anger FO by trespassing its somewhat unlimited allowances on the farm. And it is for this reason that P will be careful to not entirely overlook the fact that FO is and will always be the only owner of the farm. And even though P is never constrained by this fact, it will know to keep well within the same constraints, in order for P to remain in good standing with FO, and to also ensure the continuity of their peculiar relationship, for as long as Nature permits. Thus, unless P is not prudent and discerning, it will not think to irk FO. Neither will P do anything to make FO re-consider continuing to indulge its sustenance and stay on the farm. Nor will P act in any way that amounts to trespassing its rank as beneficiary. And to this end, Proverb 2 is rather inconsistent with the second one. In other words, all because of its gender bias, Proverb 2 contradicts the natural and neutral truth of Proverb 1.

Per Ga gender culture, a man is typically the benevolent owner party, while a woman is the beneficiary one. And this beneficiary part or role of a woman requires her to be subservient to a man, and to subsist on his benevolence. Because of this, even in the rare case that a woman is the owner or benevolent party, the power dynamics do not essentially or significantly change for the better for a woman or in her favour. Hence, Proverb 2:

Kɛ yoo he tu lɛ, ekehãa nuu shitoo. When/ if a woman buys a gun, she gives [is to give] it
to a man to keep.

And this too is a contradiction. Moreover, a man and a woman are expected to have mutual love for and loyalty to each other, particularly in the specific gendered context of a marital or romantic relationship, and even a familial one. This mutual devotion makes possible the said unconditional and unreserved benevolence of the owner party in the relationship. With a greater portion expectedly contributed by whoever is this party, said devotion blurs and sometimes even erases

the otherwise defined ranks in the relationship. In other words, there never need be any marked consciousness of who-owns-what in a loving and secure man-woman relationship: each and both parties become equal and co-owners of a thing acquired or originally owned by either party. However, Ga worldview contradicts this understanding too, and this time, rather insistently. The following three Ga maxims indicate this contradiction:

i. “Minɔ” hi fe “Wɔnɔ”. “Mine” is better than “Ours”. // It is better to own a thing alone
than to own it together with (an)other(s).

and

ii. Onɔ ji onɔ. That which is yours. // It is only that which is yours and yours alone that is
really and truly yours, and not that which you own with (an)other(s).

and

iii. Mei pii anii le, jee ni ni. That which is owned by many people is nothing [worth claiming
(co-)ownership of]. // It is best to be the sole owner of a thing.

The first maxim is self-explanatory, if not explained by the other two. Invariably, “*Onɔ ji onɔ*” also means that one must not deem oneself the owner of a thing, if said thing is actually owned by some other person(s). This thing may have been only lent to, placed in the charge of, or may even be co-owned with said other person(s). Especially in the case of co-ownership, “*Mei pii anii le, jee ni ni*” means about the same as “*Onɔ ji onɔ*”. That is, both maxims insist that one can only claim and assert ownership of only that which one truly and fully owns, rather than that which one partly or nominally owns. In Ga social culture, therefore, it is extremely important for one to always be mindful and respectful of the weight and rank of the owner of a thing. It is as though the very essence of ownership is compromised and somewhat diminished when a thing is not actually owned by someone, or when a thing has more than one owner. And so it does not matter the size of the part that a co-owner may have in that which is owned. Neither does it matter if the thing is owned by actual, equal co-owners. In effect, it will be a gross breach of Ga socio-

philosophical tenet for P to be tempted to think itself equal to FO, and much less for P to deem itself FO, and even much less for P to go about acting as though it is the very owner of the farm. And it should be the same anomaly for a man to think and act same, a man to whom a woman gives a gun that she owns, a gun that she buys with her own money. And despite the nature and degree of the relationship between this man and woman, this contradiction abides.

It may be said that the woman in Proverb 2 is not said to lose her right and rank as owner of the gun, and that she only gives the gun to the man for keeping. However, this thinking is problematic because it suggests that a woman can be capable and courageous enough to buy a gun, but she cannot be as prudent to (safe)keep her own gun herself, and if need be, she cannot be sensibly competent to use a gun that she purposefully acquired. Thus, such thinking contradicts the implied realities of the proverb. Moreover, this thinking is not applied to a man, whichever way he comes to acquire a gun – whether he buys the gun himself or inherits it, whether he is gifted the gun or he borrows it, whether he chances on some gun somewhere or he gets a gun merely because culture has it enshrined in proverb that a woman must give a gun that she buys to him, a man, any man. It is therefore not surprising that in lived reality, just as is manifest in history, a gun and everything about it are associated with a man, and not a woman – everything from owning, flaunting, shooting or using, and even abusing a gun. Wartime presents a major and critical context for Ga gender politics about a gun, such that in 1826, Ga women would sing in praise of men (soldiers),

“Sons of heroes, get hold of your guns!

The King’s white men say, When you get to fight, you will fight!

Sons of heroes, get hold of your guns!” [emphasis mine] (Jones, 1993: p. 549).

This categorical association of guns and other similar phenomena with men is so entrenched in (gender) culture that it must take

“war [to make it] possible (or necessary?) to invert or reverse some of the etiquette which normally governed gender roles. This [wartime] was the one occasion on which a woman might be seen wearing men's clothing or carrying an implement associated with men...[such as]...old flint-locks, imitation weapons carved out of wood, or simply long sticks, which in this setting were regarded as guns” (Jones, 1993: p. 553).

While their men are away at war, Ga and other nineteenth-century Gold Coast women came together and engaged in such reverse acts, as part of different kinds of war rituals, some of which take the form of mock wars. Jones (1993) opines that

“the roots of [such acts] lay in the tension that existed, at least latently, between the sexes: ⁵⁹*mmobomme* offered women – within a carefully delimited framework – an opportunity to “turn the tables”” (Jones, 1993: p. 557).

It may also be argued that Proverb 2 is not necessarily negated or denied by the first one. In other words, that a man is the one to whom a woman must give up a gun she has bought, and therefore owns, need not mean that the man necessarily becomes or must think of himself as the owner of the gun. This argument too is contradicted by many instances in Ga proverb and other lore, instances when reference to a gun in a gendered context is always in relation to men, often categorically biased in favour of men and biased against women. And this is all too evident in Proverb 2. Specifically, such proverbs and other lore suggest that only a man who can own, and therefore, is expected to wield and shoot a gun. Never a woman. Thus, another gender-biased proverb asserts that a man is to be ascribed praise for using a gun:

Kɛ atswa tu lɛ, ɛma nuu tsitsi (no). When a gun is shot [the trigger of a gun is pulled], it is on
[from] the chest of a man.

Underpinning this assertion is the unquestioned assumption that the man in this proverb must necessarily be the owner of the gun. Thus, there is no consideration for this other proverb:

⁵⁹ Jones (1993) generally and collectively terms these acts or war rituals by women ‘*mmobomme*’.

Amaa mə tu akɛgbeɔ loofɔɔ.

One may borrow another person's gun to kill [hunt] a bird.

Neither is there any consideration for the other previously mentioned possibilities about how a man may come to have and hold a gun. Even worse, there is no consideration that a woman could, in fact, be the owner of the gun in question. Thus, and to put all this in another proverb, such gender-biased proverbs curiously disregard an abiding and rather gender-neutral truism:

Amɔɔ mə [ko] nɛ akɛshii tsitsi.

[When boasting,] One does not grab another's hand to beat one's chest.

Yet another proverb makes a suggestion similar to the above-mentioned gender-biased assertion, only this time, in an indirect but bolder manner:

⁶⁰Gbɔbilɔ shee jweiaŋ gbeyei.

A hunter has no fear of [the] forest [where he goes hunting].

Now, a gun is an important tool – if not the most important – for a hunter's expeditions in the forest, from where he brings the substance of his work, game meat. Also, a gun reduces or eliminates a hunter's chances of being prey to wild animals, as much he is a predator on the prowl. Thus, to say that a hunter has no fear of the forest implies not only his success and security in his wielding a gun, but it also implies the notion that a hunter's gun is necessarily and always his very own possession. Moreover, in (Ga) folk tales and other similar popular narratives, a hunter is never imagined as a woman: a hunter is always a man. In one such tale, Wulɔmei sings of a certain ⁶¹Kɔbla, a hunter who was done some sinister evil by a woman, his own aunt, someone he must consider bosom enough for him to call 'Mother'. While on his way from an arduous but fruitless expedition, Kɔbla sees his aunt, at a rather odd time and place. In fearful shock, Kɔbla asks her,

⁶⁰ This proverb is mentioned in the other Dialogue under this same Unmasking Dialogic Mode. In this other Dialogue, *Gbɔbilɔ* (a hunter) here is said to represent the male gender. And the explanation for this is inherent in the discussion of the proverb here in this Dialogue.

⁶¹ Reference to this hunter, Kɔbla, was first made in the second Dialogue of the Unraveling Dialogic Mode in Chapter 4. Beginning with "Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ...", the full song text for Kɔbla's story can be found in the Appendix.

“Awo, meni ofeo ye bie eeei...be ne meni
otao ye bie?”

“Mother, what are you doing here eeei...what are
you looking for in these parts at this time?”

Given the strange circumstances of Kɔbla’s encounter, his question makes sense. Apart from this, however, an important part of the strangeness of it all is that a woman is not expected to be found in such a place, and much less at said time, whether or not she has safety and defence in something like a gun. The opposite is, however, easily expected of a hunter, and of any man for that matter, and more so if the man in question has a gun. And this is easily possible because the privilege of owning a gun is strictly reserved for a man; the praise for using a gun is also ascribed solely to a man. Meanwhile, a woman is not expected to wield a gun, not to even think of actually owning a gun, even if she manages to legally acquire it, even if she defies odds to buy a gun herself. Thus, Proverb 1 stands in sharp contrast – if not in utter contradiction – to the normalized gendered narrative about guns. It is, therefore, little or no wonder that when one thinks of the proverb,

Gbɔbilɔ gbɛi kpɛtɛ emilɛ loo he. The name [reputation] of the hunter is attached to [inseparable
from] his game meat.

one thinks of a man, and not a woman, as a hunter. Much more unlikely, one does not imagine that a woman may as well be the actual owner of this hunter’s gun. In this case, the woman goes entirely unacknowledged, yet this hunter is credited and praised for the game meat, which is the successful and tangible outcome of *both* the gun owned by this woman, and the hunter’s shooting skill.

To this end, there is the risk of implying that a woman must be acknowledged and or given credit for a man shooting a gun, simply because the woman happens to be the owner of the gun in question, and without taking into account the skill of the man who does the shooting. However, and as is especially evident in Proverb 1, the focus of the discourse at hand is how the female gender is obscured – if not suppressed and sometimes even erased – in socio-cultural imagination and narrative about a gun. Therefore, to include focus on or to divert focus to the albeit crucial

aspect of a man's skill at shooting a gun is to conflate said discourse. And this is not to even mention the peculiar skill and courage that a woman *too* can bring to shooting a gun, if not that before she can even discover and explore that potential, she is restricted from accessing and using a gun, and she is essentially barred from owning a gun. Ultimately, the fact that Proverb 2 mentions a woman buying a gun shows that whatever the nature and intensity of the restriction(s) that society imposes on a woman with regards to a gun, there is at least some possibility and room for a woman to own a gun, even if it is not acceptable for her to be overt and vivid in the ways she relates to a gun. Despite this token of a possibility and room, women still suffer stiffer unjust(ifiable) and unnecessarily suppressive restrictions about guns. And the better counter-argument is that it is very likely that this proverb emerged as an afterthought, something to quickly and rather inadequately remedy the unforeseen situation of a woman buying a gun, given that even if it is prohibited for her to flaunt and shoot a gun, it is not explicitly and specifically forbidden for her to buy a gun. That is, who knows if this proverb came about only after some crafty woman decided to buy a gun, not just for the sake of buying it, and not just because she can afford it, but for the sheer prank of poking society for restricting women from practical access to guns and yet, forgetting to actually bar women from acquiring guns in the first place?

From all the foregoing, it is clear that the quality of the relationship between P and FO in Proverb 1 also exists, albeit under different circumstances, between the man and the woman characters in the second. As in the case of P and FO, Nature plays a somewhat similar mediator role between the man and woman. This other role is based on the natural kindness and oftentimes mindless sharing expected or seen in a devoted familial, romantic or marital relationship. That is, the quality of the relationship between the man and woman is quite unlike the one between P and FO, which tends to a rather essential, inevitable and near-absolute dependence of P on FO.

Nevertheless, there is an aptness to the parallelism between P and the man on one hand, and between FO and the woman on the other. This aptness is mostly because P is metaphor – if not metonymy – for the man. And if not for the abiding misogynies and other gender inequalities against women in Ga gender culture as palpably seen in Proverb 2, it would be possible and easy to make this same figurative correlation between FO and the woman. Apart from the parallelism between the respective characters in the two proverbs, the proverbs share the same theme, and so each would have been the perfect equivalent proverb of the other, again, if not for Ga gender culture. The shared theme is about the sacrosanct nature of ownership in Ga socio-philosophical worldview. Proverb 2 suggests that this sacrosanct nature of ownership, together with an owner's legitimate right to claim and access to a thing owned, is amendable and therefore, an exception should be made of it, if it so happens that a woman is the owner of a thing, and especially so if this woman happens to be in any gendered relationship with any man at all. Meanwhile, using the insistent verb negation, “-*fee*”, Proverb 1 simply and emphatically asserts that the (one and actual) owner of a thing *is* its owner. And nothing changes this. Nothing should. Thus, Proverb 1 declares a universal and eternal truth about ownership, irrespective of gender or any other categorizing feature, and irrespective of the nature and terms of the relationship between the (two) parties linked in one way or the other to the object owned.

Unlike the sudden begrudging and the rather inconsistent stance of the gendered Proverb 2, universal Proverb 1 betrays a stark Contradiction to what is supposed to be the truth about ownership in Ga general culture, as is readily evident in same Proverb 1. This overarching Contradiction emerges as the outcome of a Dialogue that is incited between Ga gender culture and, in this instance, the female/ women members of the culture. Thus, the content of this Dialogue is informed by the specific subjects and attendant implications of the two main texts under study; the

Dialogue's tenor or direction is informed by the dialectics of the Unmasking Dialogic Mode. And in keeping with this and any other Dialogue under any Dialogic Mode, the following set of questions serves as the preamble to the Dialogue:

- *Why does Ga society variously and insistently uphold the rank and right of the owner of a thing, yet the same society quickly makes an exception to this principle when a woman happens to be the owner, that such a woman rather has to defer to a man?*
- *Why does Ga gender culture admit that even if seldom, a woman may be the owner of a thing, yet the culture condescends to a woman's judgement and ability to keep and make sensible use of the very thing she owns?*
- *Why does Ga society credit and praise a man for the common good that may result from a thing owned by a woman, yet the society bars a woman from the chance and space to prove what she too can make out of that same thing owned by her?*
- *Why does Ga gender culture associate certain things with only men, as well as maintain certain narratives biased against women, thereby diminishing or erasing a woman's place and power, and sometimes ascribing this power and place to men instead?*
- *Why does Ga gender culture take advantage of the kind humanity of a woman-owner in a gendered relationship with a man, in order for the culture to refuse a woman her legitimate and full claim and freedom to the thing that she alone owns?*

5.2.2 Unmasking Dialogic Mode: Dialogue Two (2)

The following two Ga proverb texts contradict each other in their individual assertions about an entity maintaining its innate nature and self versus the entity morphing into some other nature and identity as a result of external influence/s:

1. Abeleyeli haaa ni okropɔŋ bi atsɔ wuɔ. Feeding on corn does not turn an eaglet into a chicken.
and
2. ⁶²Yoo sheee bɔlo gbeyei. ⁶³A woman has no fear of [a] broom.

In keeping with the Unmasking Dialogic Mode, the first proverb-text (Proverb 1) is non-gendered, and it is a statement of a Ga facto-philosophical truth. On the other hand, the second proverb-text (Proverb 2) is gendered, and it tends to gender inequality.

Proverb 1 posits that an entity retains its innate self and potential, despite how altered or different its external conditions and realities are from the natural or normal. Eventually, the entity's true character(istics) emerges and unfolds. Thus, even if an eaglet gets stranded and acquaints itself with chickens and it gets used to feeding on corn with these chickens, an eaglet will always be an eagle(t). Like any other, this eaglet will not only grow physically into an eagle, but it will also grow and settle into all that is innate and natural to an eagle. It will only be a matter of time and opportunity before this eaglet distinguishes itself from chickens, and from everything it (may have) learnt during its association and habitation with chickens. At first, this eagle may not be familiar with the extreme habitat usually characterized by rock and steepness; neither may this eagle know how to soar far above the ground, and even beyond the heights that other birds can reach. Despite this ignorance and inexperience, this eagle will not spend all its life picking and nibbling at corn in the company of chickens, and in an enclosed and controlled habitat, a home. Just like the eagle in ⁶⁴Aggrey's (2000) widely known allegory, there surely will come the time when this eagle will discover and live in accordance with the fullness of its flairs, "a day/ [when] the eagle will not

⁶² An equivalent of this proverb is referenced in the first section of Chapter 3.

⁶³ Another English translation for this proverb can be "A woman has no fear of [a] broom" or simply, "A woman fears no broom".

⁶⁴ Incidentally, the same Dr. James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey is known to have said something to the effect that when one educates a man, one has educated an individual, but when one educates a woman, one has educated a whole society. That is, an exponential common good comes from giving women equal access to opportunities that transcend what society has defined for them.

[even] need heights/ Nor the keenness of eyes to hunt/...[for] It's all in the mind", in the eagle's abiding nature (Adzei, 2020: p. 57). Thus, it is true that an entity thrives best in its natural habitat, as evident in and confirmed by the following proverbs:

Baa bi gbooo faa. The offspring of a crocodile does not die of [drowning in] water.
and

Klaŋ bi elaaŋjeee yɛ koo mli. The offspring of a hyena does not get lost [stranded] in the forest.
and

Alaŋmai shwɛɛɛ kpɔi amlɪ. The sand crab does not play [wander] in rugged terrain.
and

Kɛ ŋoo tee ŋshɔ mli lɛ, etee emaŋ. When/ If salt enters the sea, [it neither gets lost or finds itself out
. of place. Rather,] it is [only] gone to its hometown [origin].

However, and as enshrined in Proverb 1 and its above-mentioned equivalent proverbs, it is both fact and truth that an entity never irrevocably loses its innate self as a result of having been exposed to an environment other than the one that is consistent with its nature.

Given Proverb 1 and its above-mentioned equivalents, it may be thought that Proverb 2 is an extension of Proverb 1 – even if only essentially. However, this extension is only apparent; it is no extension at all, being based on a faulty analogy that renders it altogether invalid. That is, instead of the low grounds and comforts of a home where chickens feed on corn, an eagle belongs to the dizzying wild, to heights and breadths that transcend and make an utter joke and drab tameness of a home. Similarly, the water, the forest, the beach sand, and the sea are simply the original and natural habitats for a crocodile, a hyena, a sand crab, and salt, respectively. The same cannot be said of a woman and a home, the domestic space in which is the broom that she supposedly does not fear. This is because the said lack of fear is merely the logical outcome of a woman's prolonged exposure to a broom, and therefore her familiarity with a broom, as well as her flair for using it. That is, it is to be expected that a woman acquires this familiarity and flair in

a domestic or similar setting, and also that such a setting is about the only space in which a broom is found and is of a certain importance. In other words, a woman's lack of fear of a broom is not necessarily indicative of a domestic space being the (only) natural environment that is consistent with her (full) innate identity and dignity. And herein lies the fault in any analogy that seeks to make Proverb 2 an extension of Proverb 1, and of any of Proverb 1's equivalents. This means that, together with the excellences thereof, a woman's innate abilities and potential are not limited to the domestic, and in this specific case, to her familiarity with a broom and her flair for using it. Indeed, a woman can and will excel at any and every other thing, if only she is allowed in any and every other space, spaces where she is exposed to and has unfettered access and freedom to explore and express all her innate abilities and potentialities. And Ga society not only allows men into all or almost all spaces; the society actively and generously gives men said access and freedom.

Moreover, an apt equivalent of Proverb 2,

Yoo shee bɔɔ gbeyei, A woman has no fear of [a] broom,

is the proverb,

Gbɔɔbilɔ shee jweiaŋ gbeyei. A hunter has no fear of [the] forest [where he goes hunting].

A cursory look at the two proverbs shows that they not only share the same theme, albeit with respect to the two genders. Also, these two proverbs are parallel to each other, and perfectly so, such that the expression 'shee...gbeyei' (translated as 'has no fear [for]') is even used in both proverbs. The *Gbɔɔbilɔ* (a hunter) subject in this other proverb is ⁶⁵representative of the male gender, and therefore, parallel to the *Yoo* (a woman) subject in Proverb 2. In the same way, *bɔɔ* (broom) in Proverb 2 is parallel to *jweiaŋ* (forest) in this other proverb. And there is no telling that

⁶⁵ This proverb is mentioned in the other Dialogue under this same Unmasking Dialogic Mode. In this other Dialogue, it is explained why it is said here that *Gbɔɔbilɔ* (a hunter) is representative of the male gender.

bɔlɔ (broom) is both symbol and metaphor for society's domestication of women, as well as the various ways society reduces and restricts a woman's expression of her (inner) self, agency and sometimes even her very humanity. Likewise, *jweiaŋ* (forest) is a striking image, and it is symbolic of the vast opportunity and room for male expression, agency and privilege, all these within and beyond the domestic space in which the same society confines a woman. Therefore, beyond and above any extension to and any equivalent of Proverb 2, there is a certain inconsistency between Ga gender and fact-philosophical thought. And this inconsistency tends to a certain contradiction, one that privileges men and stifles women.

Furthermore, Proverb 1 upholds that setting up an entity in an odd environment or under peculiar circumstances neither negates nor rids it of both potential and success at that which is its very nature. This truism is illustrated in other proverbs such as:

Kɛ juɔ kɛ ekpa juu lɛ, etaade lɛ he ni
efɔ he eka.

When a thief says s/he has quit stealing, it is only that s/he
has washed his/her clothes and waiting for them to get dry.

and

Kootsɛ egbɔɔ kɛ ewaonaa.

The leopard does not age [together] with its claws.

To this end, there is consistency in Ga worldview about the outcome of an entity's innate identity and abilities, in relation to its environment or external realities. This consistency is, however, undone or is, specifically, contradicted by Proverb 2, the implications of which betray a bias against the female gender. That is, to say a woman does not fear broom is to suggest that a woman is so used to a broom and to sweeping that a woman's nature consists of a broom and its adept use. In other words, a woman is so familiar and comfortable with a broom, almost to the point of her being jaded by it, such that a broom neither poses nor causes a woman any bother or pain, and any fear or danger. And none of these is sound per se. This is because, a woman's familiarity and flair with a broom is actually not natural, not truly innate, unlike an eagle(t) and its peculiar and vivid

wild ways. The same is true for the previously mentioned crocodile, hyena, sand crab, and salt, each in relation to its peculiar ways. This is because, this supposed innate quality of a woman is the result of prolonged and systematic socialization about brooms and sweeping, and even more so, about every other object and act that broom and sweeping (can) represent. And these representations are prejudiced and rather stereotypical, together with all their implications. These representations also reduce, and sometimes even erase, a woman's true and full identity and abilities – or simply, her nature. Even worse, these representations cast women in domestic and care-nurturer roles, roles that are assigned them by society, roles for which they are harshly judged and yet barely valued by same society. Meanwhile, same society accords men advantageous roles and favourable standards.

It is therefore little or no wonder that often when women are variously referenced in Ga lores and mores, such as in the ⁶⁶following proverbs, women are engaged in one such domestic or carer-nurturer task or the other:

Kɛ okɛ ohie ŋmɛ mɔ ko ŋa kukwei nɔ lɛ, hɔmɔ If you build your hopes on the [cooked food from
yeɔ bo. the] pot of another man's wife, you end up hungry.

and

[Bɔ fɛɛ bɔ ni] ⁶⁷Yawa ehiii [pɔ] lɛ, Yawa yaa [No matter how] Yawa is bad, Yawa [is the one who]
faa. fetches water [for the household].

⁶⁶ Whether literally or other, the underlined word(s) in each of these proverbs indicate the gendered reference or in each of these instances, the female gender.

⁶⁷ Among the Ewe (Ewe) people, Yawa is the name for a female Thursday-born. For the Ga people, this name is Aba, whose *sablã gbei* (which I term 'appellatory name') is Jaatsi. Together with their respective 'appellatory names', Ga day names have what Amartey (1990) calls *kla juromɔ gbei*, which I loosely translate as 'soul name' (pp. 57-58). Yawa or Aba's soul name is Awo.

Incidentally, a variant of Yawa is Yawo, which is linguistically reminiscent of Awo. Ga people rarely call a person by his or her day name, and especially by the corresponding soul name. The *shia* or *weku gbei* (family name) is more known and more often used. Therefore, except on very special occasions or for similar reasons, either the day or soul name – or both – is invoked and used instead of, or together with, a person's name(s). In particular, the soul name is used as part of other words to commend, congratulate, encourage etc. a person.

It is for this reason that, in this proverb, the use of the name Yawa is rather curious. Also, the mock indulgent and barely forgiving tone of the proverb is very telling, especially seeing that Yawa is explicitly said to be bad.

⁷⁰Yoo yitso mli kwɔ. A woman's head [mind/ intentions] is deep [with vicious evil]
and

Yoo yitso mli ye flɛfle. A woman's head [mind] is [filled with only the] frivolous and ridiculous.
and

Nuu fooo. [...]. A man does not cry. [Only women, weak people, do cry.]
and

⁷¹Yoo bɛ mɔmɔhe. A woman [is so delicate that she] has no part that a person may hold [in order
to help or save her].

and again,

Fɔmɔhe agboɔ ye, jee anɔkwalewie- One dies [is much more prone to die] at the [critical] birth-
mɔhe.. giving place, not [at] the place truth for speaking [the] truth.

In effect, the typical representation of women in Ga social culture is strictly confined within a home or a similar space; the dominant image of women is that of a mother or a similar role; and the ultimate effect of both representation and image is usually and insistently negative. And all this is quite palpable in Proverb 2. Thus, the universal truth and good inherent in Proverb 1 are unduly compromised, if not decidedly contradicted, by the essence of Proverb 2. It must be mentioned that all this is not to say that a woman's lack of fear of a broom is necessarily negative or even ruinous to her, and perhaps also ruinous to other people with whom she shares the space in which she uses the broom. It is rather that any person, be it a man or a woman, can and should be socialized into attaining said familiarity and flair with a broom. If not for any reason at all, this is because sweeping, as well as the other uses to which a broom may be put, is part of the things that ensure the cleanliness of the space in which a person inhabits. This cleanliness, in turn, contributes to a person's own health and the overall safety of the inhabited space.

Another striking contradiction between Proverbs 1 and 2 is in relation to aspects of the

⁷⁰ To be fair, in this proverbial saying, 'woman' is sometimes interchangeable with 'man'.

⁷¹ According to Naa Shormeh Nortey (2021), this proverbial saying is related to the Ga *sama* (symbol) called '*akpakpa*' (pawpaw). Among similar insinuations, this proverbial saying means that even if because of her grace and beauty and tenderness, a woman's delicateness is more of a thing to be careful or fearful of, rather than a thing to only admire and delight in. See a picture of this Ga *sama* in the Appendix.

outdooring-cum-naming ceremony for a new born child. The following is an extract from the customary prayer that is said as part of this important, solemn occasion:

“...Wɔ <u>sɛii</u> ayi ati, Wɔ <u>bɔlɔi</u> ayi ati... Eko ata shi ni eko abanina ɛ...” (Amartey, 1990: p. 39).	“...May our [the number of] our <u>stools/</u> seats enlarge, May [the size of] our <u>brooms</u> thicken... May some remain [alive] and others [be born to] come to meet them...” (Translation and underlined emphasis mine).
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Firstly, ‘stools/ seats’ here is metonymy for people, specifically the additional and hopefully wholesome people who are expected to expand a family’s size, as a result of their having been born into the given family. Also, this ‘stools/ seats’ detail is suggestive of the ones that family elders sit on, when they go to deliberate or to take counsel about an issue, or even to arbitrate a matter between parties. With Ga culture being literally patriarchal as is obvious, there is no telling that this council almost always consists of men, and rarely or never includes women. It is, however, interesting how not only stool, but also broom is used to reference an ever-growing and continually replenished number of people in a household. It is even more curious how a broom is associated with a woman and the domestic role and place given her by society, and how it is a woman who conceives and births a child, and yet a child always belongs (much more) to its father and his family, and not as much to the mother and her people. It is for this reason that, among other things, a child’s name is given by its father and his family. Thus, even during the crucial, joyful and albeit solemn occasion for outdooring a child, Ga gender culture contradicts at least one of its numerous biases against women. And it should not matter that this contradiction may be inadvertent, or even that it is only an aesthetic, an element of rhetoric, one as seen in a prayer.

From all the foregoing, it is clear that many a Ga proverb and other lore are not only profound and gracious, but are also usually inclusive and positive. However, these qualities are often conflated and contradicted by the unequal gender representations in some other texts, other

proverbs and or lores. These contradictions emerge when the two kinds of texts are set one by the side of the other, and especially when a certain Dialogue is incited between Ga gender culture and as is the case here, the female gender. The foregoing analysis details the meanings of the juxtaposed texts, as well as the various implications of and in between the texts and other related ones. Thus, the analysis defines both the scope and contents of this Dialogue. The tenor or direction of the Dialogue is informed by the proverb-question,

⁷²**Ani** aaabi wo ni ahe nu lo? *** does one expect honey and accept water instead **?

In keeping with the tenor, the preamble to the Dialogue consists of the following questions:

- *Why does Ga society define a woman's every innate identity, ability and potential – her nature – by her home-keeping and nurturing roles?*
- *Why does Ga society maintain this definition of women, even though the definition is an inevitable consequence of society reducing and restricting women to these domestic roles, thereby rendering the definition incomplete and for the most part also inaccurate?*
- *Why does Ga society insist that a woman's nature consists of her assigned place and function in the domestic space, and at the same time, society upholds that an entity remains true to its innate self, even under possibly contrary external conditions and realities?*
- *Why does Ga society conflate and contradict itself on subjects that are cast in fact and truth, so as to continue representing and treating women in negative ways, while being generous and passionate with positive representation of men?*
- *Why does Ga society compromise on things that are of universal good – and sometimes, even sacred, all in order to entrench and enforce biases that serve the men but suppress women?*

⁷² See the Theoretical Framework chapter for details about this proverb-question.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERVIEW: This chapter outlines the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations ensuing from this thesis.

6.1 Findings

Premised on the already established unequal gender representations in Ga oral literatures in general and in the selected Ga songs and proverbs in particular, and in accordance with the research objectives, the findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

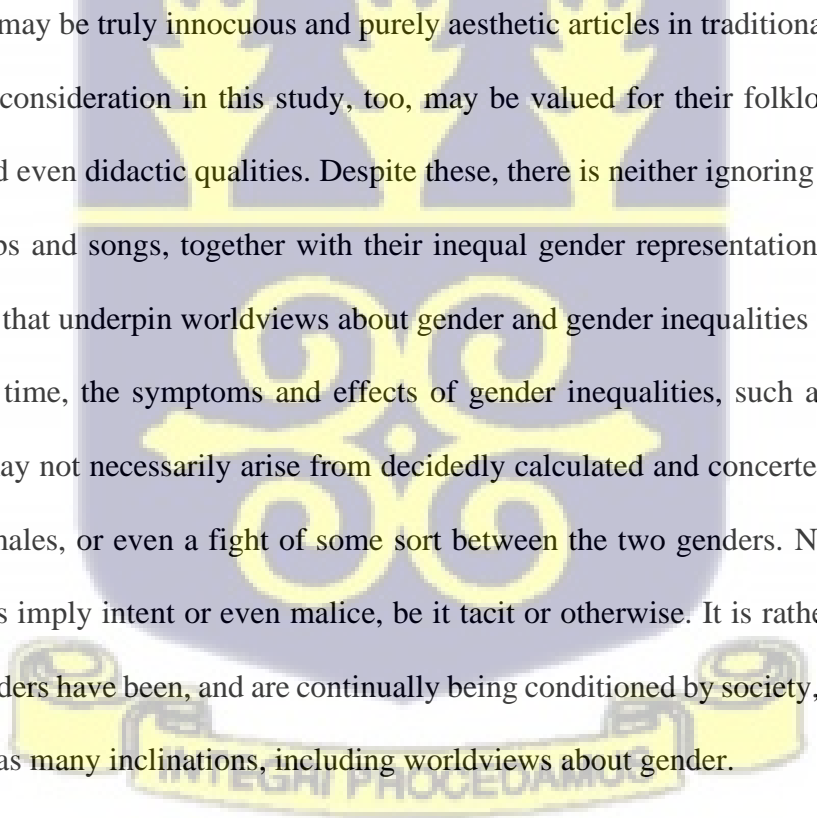
- a) The gender inequalities represented in the selected Ga songs and proverbs exist not only in various ways, but also across different kinds of relationships between males and females. Some of these ways entail the financial and emotional, the psychological and socio-cultural, even the sexual; others entail one's sense of self and autonomy, as well as the right to and freedom of (self) expression and independence – essentially all that borders on a person's humanity and full human dignity. The relationships include the familial and familiar or friendly, the romantic or even marital, the social and even between two strangers of the two genders.
- b) Per the four Dialogic Modes of this study's prescribed Dialogic Theory, and with either or both genders and Ga gender culture as parties in dialogue, the outcomes of these gender inequalities can be broadly categorized under Double Standards, Ironies, Tokenisms and Contradictions.
- c) By far, these inequalities are mostly against and negative towards females. In the rare cases that some representations are favourable to females and or are detrimental to males, they often

tend to be toxic feminism or an outright and conclusive censure of females, both of which are ultimately harmful, firstly and particularly to females, and then to society at large.

Because of this, the neutral positionality of the entire Dialogic Framework, in order to achieve parity between either or both genders and Ga gender culture, is inevitably skewed to what comes across as the generally feminist position of this study.

6.2 Conclusions

In view of the above Findings, the following qualifying statements which double as the major Conclusions for this research, can be made:

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- a) Ga proverbs may be truly innocuous and purely aesthetic articles in traditional oral art; the Ga songs under consideration in this study, too, may be valued for their folkloric, recreational, rhetorical and even didactic qualities. Despite these, there is neither ignoring nor denying that these proverbs and songs, together with their unequal gender representations, inform beliefs and attitudes that underpin worldviews about gender and gender inequalities of various kinds.
- b) At the same time, the symptoms and effects of gender inequalities, such as patriarchy and misogyny, may not necessarily arise from decidedly calculated and concerted hatred towards females by males, or even a fight of some sort between the two genders. Neither may these things always imply intent or even malice, be it tacit or otherwise. It is rather likely the case that both genders have been, and are continually being conditioned by society, in various ways, and towards as many inclinations, including worldviews about gender.
- c) It is for this reason that even though gendered issues have implications on the lived realities of especially women, it behoves all of society – males and females alike – to rethink said beliefs and attitudes. And hopefully, all this translates into positive and progressive changes for

females and for society at large.

6.3 Recommendations

Like any other research work, this thesis has a defined scope, as well as finite length, duration and resources. From various aspects of this study, therefore, the following are some recommendations for further research:

- a) A lot of future research is needed not only on the various kinds of Ga oral literature and traditions, but also on the now burgeoning specific subject of Ga gender studies.
- b) Some of this research can focus on the ways that society, as part of its general patriarchal order, recruits and weaponizes females against other females. An example of this is the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship in the second Dialogue under the Unraveling Dialogic Mode.
- c) Other research on Ga songs like those sung by Wulomei may pay attention to the extent that these songs were/ are influenced or informed by the preceding original traditional-folk ones, and the extent that the same songs were/ are original in their own right or are innovative in relation to said precedents.
- d) Future research may also consider if and how, for example, Ga proverbs are being re-imagined – with new ones even created – and deployed in ways hitherto not known or not popular.



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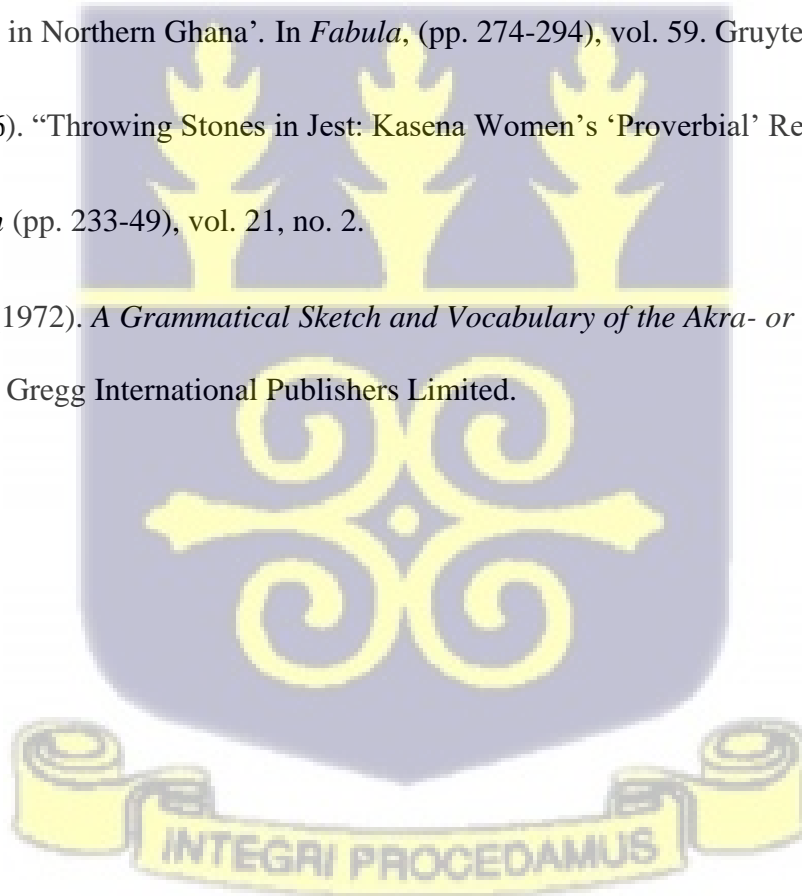
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⁷³APPENDIX

A. ⁷⁴Definition of Key Terms.

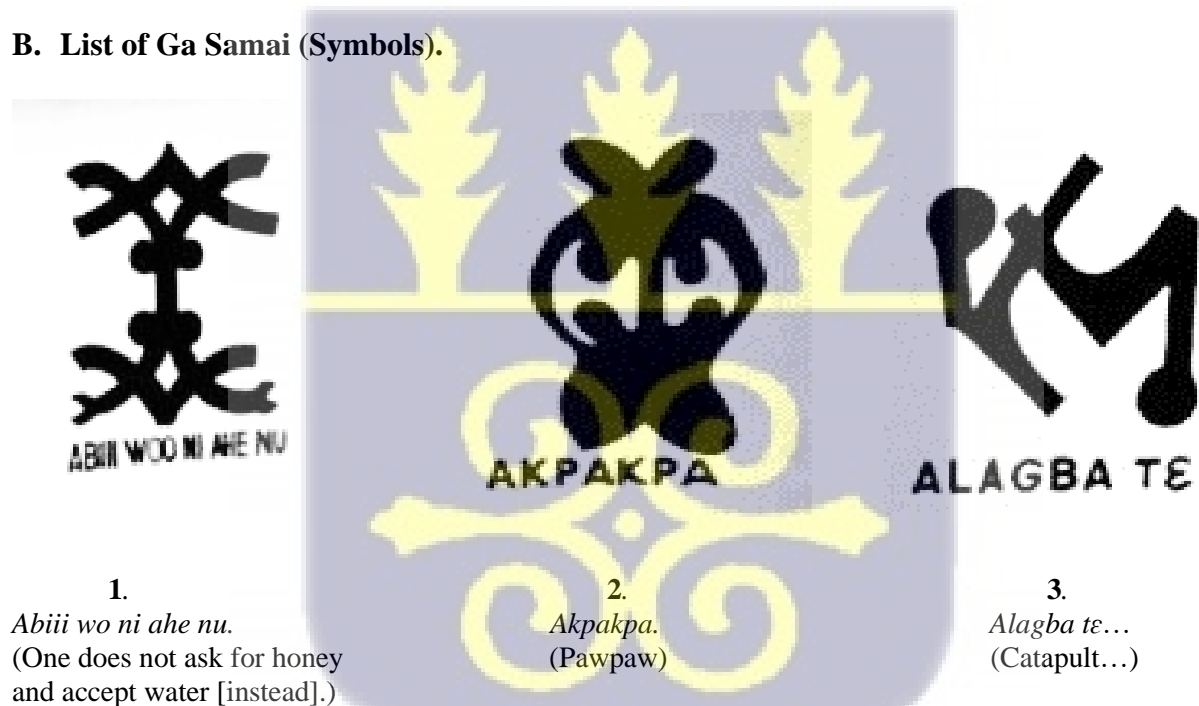
1. **agency** – exercising one’s sense of self and will power, without or beyond the influence of (societal) conditioning.
2. **ambition** – a personal and internal drive to want (to achieve) as much as one is capable of, rather than what one has been conditioned to aspire to.
3. **assertive(ness/ assertion)** – the ability and freedom to express one’s self, especially in the face of inhibition or suppression.
4. **autonomy** – the ability and freedom to think, feel and act on one’s own volition, without or beyond the influence (societal) conditioning.
5. **dissent** – to disagree or refuse and to express or protest about the disagreement or refusal.
6. **expression** – the ability and freedom to make oneself heard and included.
7. **feminism** – the belief that females be treated with equality, rather than be discriminated against on the basis of their gender.
toxic feminism – unhealthy, pseudo-feminism, often mistaken for true feminism.
8. **gender** – being male or female; issues about or linked to being male or female.
gendered – related to or has aspects that are linked to gender and gender issues.
gender equality – treating either or both genders equally, with fairness and justice, irrespective of gender.
gender inequality – generally, opposite of *gender equality*.

⁷³ The Ga samai, songs, proverbs and proverbial expressions in the Appendix are by no means the full items in their respective collections or canons. Only those used or referenced in this research are listed. Also, the items under the various sections of the Appendix are, as much as possible, listed in alphabetical order.

⁷⁴ The definitions listed in this section are loose, rather than strict and technical.

9. *intelligence* – especially in relation to females, having the acumen to be innovative and inventive, witty and wise, decisive and discerning, as against notions of females being infantile, docile and simple-minded.
10. *misogyny* – even if unintentional and without tacit malice, a belief or an act that tends not only to gender inequality against females, but also harms and hinders, suppresses and oppresses females.
11. *(the) patriarchy* – the societal system the informs, endorses, ensures, and enforces gender inequality, particularly against females.

B. List of Ga Samai (Symbols).



C. List of Ga Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions.

1. *Abeleyeli haaa ni okropɔŋ bi atsɔ wuwɔ.* (Feeding on corn does not turn an eaglet into a chicken.)
2. *Abiii wo ni ahe nu.* (One does not ask for honey and take water instead.)
3. *Afi efee ɲmɔtsɛ.* (The partridge is not greater than the owner of the farm [on which it feeds

and lives].)

4. *Ake yoo yitso eshāaa ti.* (See precise full translation of in first section of Chapter 3.)
5. *Akpaŋa hefū le, ekeje enye wɔlɔ mli.* (The vulture has its body odour from its mother's egg.)
6. *Alanmai shwēē kpɔi amlɪ.* (The sand crab does not play [wander] in rugged areas.)
7. *Amaa mɔ tu akɛgbeɔ loofɔlɔ.* (One may borrow another person's gun to kill [hunt] a bird.)
8. *Ayeee le mɔ ni hɔmɔ yeɔ le naa; ayeɔ le mɔ ni yeɔ le naa.* (A thing is not allotted according to who is hungry [in need of it]; it is designated in accordance with the one to whom it is due.)
9. *Ayiii mɔ bi ni atua le yaafɔ.* (One does not beat someone's child and forbid it [the child] from crying.)
10. *Baa bi gbooo faa.* (The offspring of a crocodile does not die of [drowning in] water.)
11. *Bei ye taŋ.* (Quarrel is disgusting.)
12. *Bi ni kɛe ehāaa enye awɔ le, le hu enaaa wɔɔ ewɔ.* (The child who will not let its mother sleep will not itself find sleep.)
13. *Bi fooo enyieē nuu sɛɛ.* (A child does not cry following a man [its father], [but rather its mother].)
14. *Bi [fɛe bi] nuɔ enye wiemɔ.* (A [every] child heeds to the words of its mother.)
15. *Bɔ fɛe bɔ ni aduŋ baafɛe le, kpāa ŋmɔ ehe.* (No matter what the monkey does, it is tethered at the waist.)
16. *Bɔ fɛe bɔ ni nyɔŋ yaafonu baafa aha le, enyēē [ni] efɔ sune tsɔtsɔtsɔ.* (No matter how plentiful a slave's tears will be, [they] the tears can never soak a pillow to the point of dripping.)
17. *Bɔ fɛe bɔ ni yoo kwɔ eha le, ake aŋswere ekɔɔ le.* (No matter how high [mighty] a woman is, one [a man] never need a ladder to climb [mount] her.)
18. *Bɔlɔ feɔ yoo.* (Broom makes a woman [a real/ true woman].)
19. *Fɔmɔhe agboɔ ye, jeee anɔkwalewiemɔhe.* (One dies [is much more prone to die] at the

[critical] birth-giving place, not [at] the place truth for speaking [the] truth.)

20. *Gbeke ni gbɛɔ shi lɛ, egbɛɔ enye wui anɔ.* (The child who insists rummaging ends up uncovering its [buried] mother's bones.)
21. *Gbɔbilɔ gbei kpɛtɛ emilɛ loo he.* (The name [reputation] of the hunter is attached to [inseparable from] his game meat.)
22. *Gbɔbilɔ sheee jweiaɲ gbeyei.* (A hunter has no fear of [the] forest [where he goes hunting].)
23. *Gbɔmɔ etāaa loo yaka.* (No one grows lean for no reason.)
24. *He fɛɛ he ni adamɔɔ ni akpɛɔ wie lɛ, ejɔɔ.* (Wherever one stands to chew alligator pepper, it will [always] be bitter.)
25. *Hiɲmɛi nyɛɔ mɔ, shi toi ni buaa [sane].* (The eye despises, but [it is] the ear [that] judges (a matter).)
26. *Kasaɲtswi le enuɲtsɔ.* ([Every] *kasaɲtswi* [insinuation] knows its master/ lord [owner or target].)
27. *Ke ashā nye aha bi lɛ, bi baayne ekpe, shi ke ashā bi aha nye lɛ, nye nyɛɛɛ ekpe.* (If a mother is roasted for her child to eat, the child can; but if a child is roasted and given to the mother to eat, the mother cannot eat.)
28. *Ke atswa tu lɛ, ema nuu tsitsi [nɔ].* (When a gun is shot [the trigger of a gun is pulled], it is on [from] the chest of a man.)
29. *Ke buuluu tere ojatsu lɛ, opalɛɔ lɛ esablā.* (When the fool is carrying your heavy load, you sing his/ her appellation.)
30. *Keji wuɔ kee eɲmɛe ebi he lɛ, eɲmɛko ehe ehāko akroma.* (If the hen says it has let go of its chick [child], the hen has [still] let go of the chick for the hawk [to catch and devour].)
31. *Ke julɔ kee ekpa juu lɛ, etaade lɛ he ni efɔ he eka.* (When a thief says s/he has quit stealing, it

is only that s/he has washed his/her clothes and waiting for them to get dry.)

32. *Ƙɛ ɲoo tee ɲshɔ mli lɛ, etee eman.* (When/ If salt enters in sea, [it neither gets lost or finds itself out of place. Rather,] it is [only] gone to its hometown [origin].)

33. *Ƙɛ okɛ ohie ɲme mɔ ko ɲa kukwei nɔ lɛ, hɔmɔ yeɔ bo.* (If you build your hopes on the [cooked food from the] pot of another man’s wife, you end up hungry.)

34. *Ƙɛ onuuu mɔ ko gbee shishi lɛ, ogbeee lɛ.* (If you do not empathize with someone, you do not kill the person.)

35. *Ƙɛ oowe yoo ajwamanlɔ lɛ onaaa mlifu.* (If one [a man] is the spouse of a promiscuous woman, [it will be if] one does not [easily] get offended [and react to issues].)

36. *Ƙɛ yoo he tu lɛ, ekehāa nuu shiwoo.* (When/ if a woman buys a gun, she gives [is to give] it to a man to keep.)

37. *Ƙɛ yoo hoo nii lɛ, nuu ji mɔ ni tsɔɔ.* (When a woman cooks, it is a man who dishes it [the food] out.)

38. *Ƙlanɲ bi elaaɲee ye koo mli.* (The offspring of a hyena does not get lost [stranded] in the forest.)

39. *Kootse egbɔɔ ƙɛ ewaonaa.* (The leopard does not age [together] with its claws.)

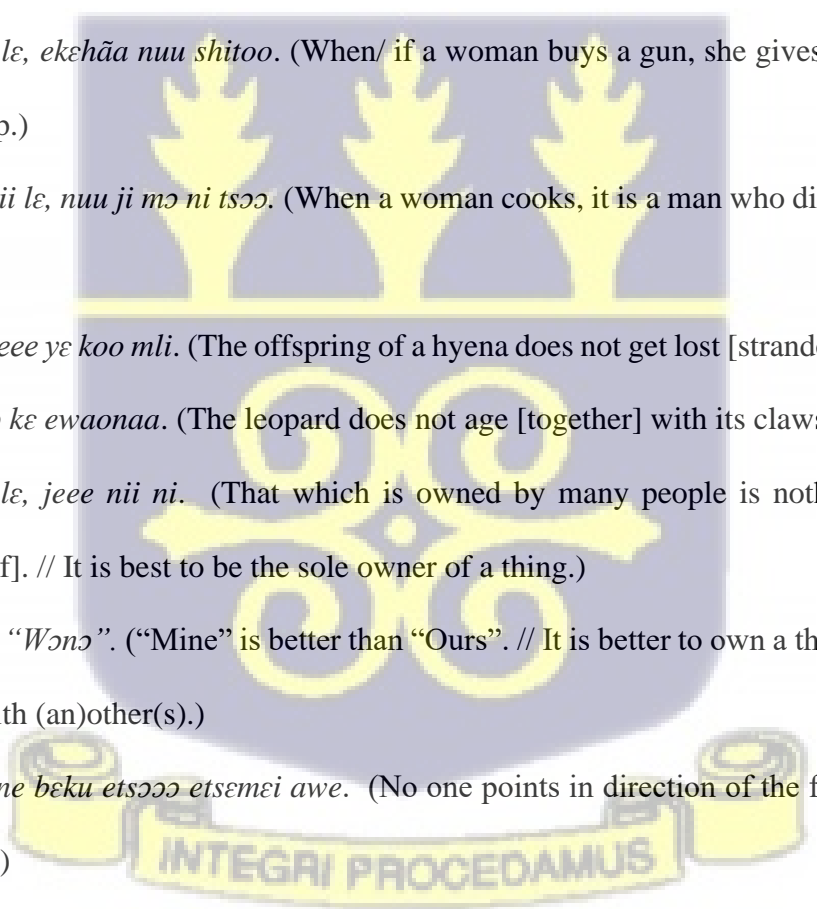
40. *Mei pii anii lɛ, ɲee nii ni.* (That which is owned by many people is nothing [worth (co-)ownership of]. // It is best to be the sole owner of a thing.)

41. *“Minɔ” hi fe “Wɔnɔ”.* (“Mine” is better than “Ours”. // It is better to own a thing alone to own it together with (an)other(s).)

42. *Mɔ ko ƙɛ enine beku etsɔɔɔ etsemi awe.* (No one points in direction of the father’s folk with the left hand.)

43. *Mɔ ko leee mɔ ni fɔ Okai Koi.* (No one knows who gave birth to Okai Koi.)

44. *Mɔ ni akpe lɛ lɛ, ebiii nii naa.* (The one who is being carried [at another’s back] does not go

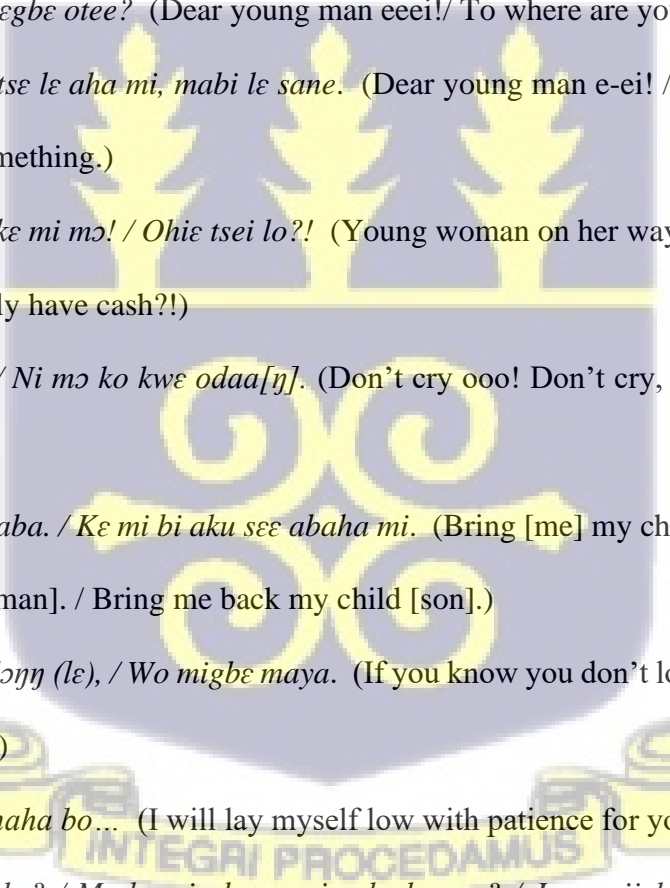


asking the price of things [as if in the position to buy the things].)

45. *Nuu fooo [...]*. (A man does not cry. [Only women, weak people, do cry].)
46. *Nuu le eɲa nyaalɔ*. (A man [is the only one who] is privy to his wife being one who defecates on herself.)
47. *Nuu mli be fioo*. (There is no such thing as littleness in [a person if this person is male/] a man.)
48. *Nuu musu ni yiɔ le, ehãa shia hiɔ*. (A home thrives on a man's [husband's] stomach being full [with food].)
49. *Nye Awo ɲɔɔ fe taami*. (Mother is sweeter than sweet/ miraculous berry.)
50. *Onɔ ji onɔ*. (That which is yours. / It is only that which is yours and yours alone that is really and truly yours, and not that which you own with (an)other(s).)
51. *Wuɔ bi ni shweɔ enye nane he le, emiɔ agã shwuɔ*. (The chick that plays [keeps close] to its mother's leg gets the thigh [biggest] share of the grasshopper.)
52. *Wuɔ nane egbeee ebi*. (The hen's foot does not crush its offspring [chick] to death.)
53. *[Bɔ fɛe bɔ ni] Yawa ehiii [po] le, Yawa yaa faa*. ([No matter how] Yawa is bad, Yawa [is the one who] fetches water [for the household].)
54. *Yoo be mɔmɔhe*. (A woman [is so delicate that she] has no part that a person may hold [in order to help or save her].)
55. *Yoo [e]tee gbãla...* (A woman went/ has gone [in]to marriage...)
56. *Yoofɔyoo wɔɔɔ shwane wɔɔ*. (A mothering woman does not indulge in afternoon sleep/ nap.)
57. *Yoo naanyo ji bɔɔ*. (A broom is a woman's friend [companion].)
58. *Yoo shee bɔɔ gbeyei*. (A woman has no fear of [a] broom.)
59. *Yoo yitso mli kwɔ*. (A woman's head [mind/ intentions] is deep [with vicious evil].)
60. *Yoo yitso mli ye flefle*. (A woman's head [mind] is [filled with only the] frivolous and

ridiculous.)

D. List of Ga Folk and Traditional-Folk Songs.

1. *Ajele ooo! / Yeeei! / Ona ofufɔ frɔfrɔ fɛɛfɛo dukubii decubiti!* (Ajeley ooo! Yeeei! / You see your lush, beautiful, cutely round breasts!)
2. **Akɛɛ shikatsemei miitao Ablekuma...* (They said wealthy [Ga] people sought for foreigners...)
3. *Aso neke nuu yɔɔ lo?! / Miiya jaranɔ ni maba [lɛ], / Eɲa shinaa ye misɛɛ.* (So is this how a man is? / I go to the market [to trade/ work or buy things], only for him to/ To close a door behind me [after I left].)
4. *Ataa oblanyo eeei! / Nɛgbɛ otee?* (Dear young man eeei! / To where are you gone?)
5. *Ataa oblanyo e-ei! / Atɛ lɛ aha mi, mabi lɛ sane.* (Dear young man e-ei! / Someone call him for me, let me ask him something.)
6. *Awula ni yaa, tsi obeɲke mi mɔ! / Ohie tsei lo?!* (Young woman on her way going, do come close to me. / Do you actually have cash?!) 
7. *Kaaafo ooo! Kaaafo, / Ni mɔ ko kwɛ oɔaa[ɲ].* (Don't cry ooo! Don't cry, / For someone to look inside your mouth.)
8. *Kɛ mi bi aba, kɛ mi bi aba. / Kɛ mi bi aku sɛɛ abaha mi.* (Bring [me] my child [son, a man], Bring [me] my child [son, a man]. / Bring me back my child [son].)
9. *Keji ole akɛ osumɔɔɔ dɔɲɲ (lɛ), / Wo migbɛ maya.* (If you know you don't love me anymore, settle me off, so that I leave.)
10. *Manɛ mitsui shishi maha bo...* (I will lay myself low with patience for you...)
11. *Mɛɛba ni ohaɔɔ mi neke? / Mɛɛba ni ohaɔɔ mi neke kwraa? / Jee mijɔle jibo, mishaayo ji bo.* (Why do you trouble me so? / Why at all do you trouble me so? / You are not my lover, you are [only] my mother-in-law.)

12. *Miibi sane kome.../ Ojɔle ke owu te mɔ ni osumɔɔ?* (I ask a question...Your lover and your husband, which [of them] do you love?)
13. *Miiya! Miiya! Miiya! / Yaa!* (I am going! Leaving! Leaving [you]! / Go!)
14. *Miyato gbāla [kpa]kpa eeei, / [Ni] Nugbɔ [e]yi mi!* (I luckily got a goodly foundling marriage eeei, [And] Rain beat me!)
15. ⁷⁵**Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, / Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ...* (This thing you have done me, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me...)
16. ⁷⁶*Oblanyo ko, / Eje Sempe. / Egbɔmɔtso fɛɛfɛo...* (A certain gentleman. / He is from Sempe. / He has a beautiful build...)
17. *Shaayoo, kaaajɛ mi eeei! / Shaayoo, kaaatse mi yaka gbɔmɔ.* (Mother-in-law, don't insult me eeei! / Mother-in-law, don't call me a worthless person.)
18. *Sohaa [lɛ], miyabi yoo ko shi. / Hɔɔ lɛ, mafɔ nii ahe...* (On Friday, I went to ask for a certain woman's hand in marriage. / Come Saturday, I will wash [my things/ clothes]...)

***Mala, Mawie Ga:** (*Akɛɛ shikatsemei miitao Ablekuma...*).

[Intro: Solo]

Akɛɛ shikatsemei miitao Ablekuma eeeei!	They said wealthy [Ga] people sought for foreigners eeeei!
Ohiafoi miitao Ablekuma eeeei!	They said poor [Ga] people sought for foreigners eeeei!
Akɛɛ Ablekuma	They asked that foreigners
abakula [abakuma] manɓii/ meibii!	come and settle and partake in the glory of [the] natives/ people!
Manɓii/ Meibii eyoooyooo oooo!	Natives/ A people eyoooyooo oooo!
Manɓii/ Meibii eyoooyooo oooo!	Natives/ A people eyoooyooo oooo!

[Solo]

Mala, mawie Ga eeei! I will sing, I will speak Ga eeei!

⁷⁵ This is the song about **Kɔbla**, the hunter, who was referenced under the Unraveling and Unmasking Dialogic Modes, in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Find the full song text at the end of the list of songs.

⁷⁶ Popularly called *Meridiɛn* (Meridian), this is one of the most popular *Wulɔmei* songs of all time.

Miwiee Awusa. I will not speak Hausa.
 Dmene [lɛ], mala, mawie Ga eeei! [As for] this day, I will speak Ga eeei!
 Miwiee Awusa dɔɔ-ɔ-ɪɪ! I will not speak Hausa ever again!

Mala, mawie Ga eeei! I will sing, I will speak Ga eeei!
 Miwiee Awusa. I will not speak Hausa.

Gbele ni gbe minye Awo! Death that took my beloved Mother!

[Chorus]

Mala, mawie Ga. Miwiee Awusa aaa! I will sing, I will speak Ga. I will not speak Hausa aaa!

Hela ni mɔ mitse Ataa! Illness that has attacked my beloved Father.

[Chorus]

Mala, mawie Ga. Miwiee Awusa aaa! I will sing, I will speak Ga. I will not speak Hausa aaa!

Amekɛ Ablekuma The prayed that other people
 abakula [abakuma] maŋ-/ mei-... come and settle and partake in building [their] nation/ people...

[Chorus]

Mala, mawie Ga. Miwiee Awusa aaa! I will sing, I will speak Ga. I will not speak Hausa aaa!

Maŋbii/ meiabii eyooo yooo yooo! Natives/ A people eyooo yooo yooo!

[Chorus]

Mala, mawie Ga eeei. I will sing, I will speak Ga eeei!

Miwiee Awusa aaa! I will not speak Hausa aaa!

[Repeat from third verse]

[Repeat from second verse]

Song about **Kɔbla, the hunter: (Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ...).

[Choral]

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
 Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,
Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Nyɛ Awo, This thing you have done me, Mother Dear,
Ogbe mi moŋŋ kule ehi eeei! It would have been good [better] if you had killed me eeei!
Kwraa aaa! Indeed!

[Repeat verse]

[Solo: a woman's voice]

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,
Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,
Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
Ogbe mi moŋŋ kule ehi eeei! It would have been good [better] if you had killed me eeei!
Kwraa aaa! Indeed!

[Repeat verse]

Jee oblanyo ko, ni atseɔ Kɔbla There was a certain young man, and he is called Kobla.
Kɔbla le gbɔbimɔ Kobla was a skillful hunter,
Fe maŋ [lɛ] mli obahii [lɛ] fɛɛ. More [skillful] than all the other young men in the town.
Gbi ko ni Kɔbla kɔ tu One day, Kobla took his gun
Ake eeya jwei amlɛ ni eba. To go hunting in the forest [as usual].
Shi be ni Kɔbla tee [lɛ], But this time when he went,
Kɔbla egbeee loo ko kwraa. Kobla did not kill animal.
Egbeee loo ko kwraa, He killed no animal.
[Ni] etswaaa loo ko hu tu. [And] he shot no animal too.
[Hewɔ lɛ] Efee ehe ake ebaapele shia gbe mɔ. So he decided to collect his way back home.
[Ejaake] Wɔ hu ke je tsere lɛ, Since the next morning,
Abaa[ba aba]ye le bɔnɔ ooo! Some people will come do some petty work for him
Kwraa aaa! And so it was!

[Choral]

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, This thing you have done me,
Nyɛ Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ,	This thing you have done me,
Nye Awo, nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ,	Mother Dear, this thing you have done me,
Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ, Nye Awo,	This thing you have done me, Mother Dear,
Ogbe mi moŋŋ kule ehi eeei!	It would have been good [better] if you had killed me eeei!
Kwraa aaa!	Indeed!

[Solo: a woman's voice]

Shi be ni Kɔbla yi mli [lɛ],	But when Kobla set off [on his way home],
Gɔji anɔ ni eshe le,	[And] when he reached the hills,
Onyai tso ko ni ma shishi le,	Below which stood a silk-cotton tree,
Ena akɛ kane ko miikpe helee,	He saw a [strange, lone] light shining,
Kane ko miikpe, lɛlɛŋ kane ko miikpe,	A light was shining, surely, some light was shining.

Kɔbla fee ehe akɛ ebaaya eyakwe nɔ ni ji.	[So] Kobla decided to go and see what it [the light] is
Shi be ni etsi eberŋke [lɛ],	[But] when he neared [the spot],
Ena akɛ le diɛntse enyekwe ni eeei!	He saw it was his own aunt eeei!
Le diɛntse enye Awo,	His very own dear mother
Ji mɔ ni damɔ tso le shishi.	Was the one standing under the tree.

Kɔbla wo enaa nɔŋŋ:	Kobla then uttered:
Awo, meni ofeɔ ye biɛ eeei?!	Mother Dear, what are you doing here eeei?!
Meni ofeɔ ye biɛ?	What are you doing here?
Be nɛ meni otaɔ ye biɛ eeei?	What are you doing here at this [such and odd] time?

Awo hu wo enaa nɔŋŋ:	The Mother [woman] too uttered [in reply]:
Kɔbla, ŋmenɛ [lɛ] ona mi eee,	Kobla, today you have seen me eee,
Ŋmenɛ [lɛ] ona mi eee,	Today, you have seen me eee,
Ŋmenɛ ona mi eee!	Today, you have found me out eee!
Ni na hu ni ona nɛɛ,	And this seeing that you have seen me,
Kɛji otee [ni] oyawie le,	If you go telling [people] about it,
No le mafite bo, no le mafite bo,	Then I will destroy you, I will surely destroy you,
No le mafite bo, no le mafite bo ooo!	Then I will destroy you, I will thoroughly destroy you,
Kwraa aaa!	Indeed!

[Choral]

Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ,	This thing you have done me,
Ole akɛ ofee mi nɔ ko tso.	You think you have done me a great deal.
Nɔ ni ofee mi nɛɛ,	This thing you have done me,
Ole akɛ ofee mi nɔ ko tso.	You think you have done me a great deal.
Onukpai buɔ abɛ akɛ	[Our] Elders have said in proverb that
Kɛji eyi aahu lɛ, kɛji eyi aahu lɛ,	When it fills up, when it fills up past its brim,
Ebaaya eyasa enaanɔ he eeei,	It will eventually touch its lid eeei.
Kwraa aaa!	Indeed!

[Solo: a woman's voice]

Enɛ hã Kɔbla kɛ awɛrɛho shi	And so, with sadness, Kobla continued
Jwei [lɛ] amlɪ kɛba shia.	On his way home.
Gbeyei nibii ni eyana yɛ jwei lɛ mli	His altogether fearfully strange encounter
Yɛ etsui mli eeei!	Gnawed at his heart eeei!
Be ni ebashe shia [lɛ],	When ho [finally] reached home,
Ebajie egbaja eshwiɛ shi.	He took off and put down his [empty hunting].
Eba hu ni ebaka shi,	And after he came [home] went to lie down,
Ni eba wɔ yeeɛ lɛ eeei!	He could not [bring himself] to sleep.
Kwraa, kwraa, kwraa po kɛkɛ!	And so it was, indeed!
Je ebatsere [ni] mɛi ni amɛbaaye lɛ bɔnɔ lɛ,	The next morning, those who were to work for him
Amɛ moŋ amete shi momo,	They were rather already up,
Ni amɛjɔjɔi amɛkɔŋtɛi anaa,	With their cutlasses sharpened [in ready for the work],
Ni amɛbaaye lɛ bɔnɔ lɛ,	Those who were to work for him,
Ni amɛbaaye lɛ bɔnɔ lɛ.	Those who were to do some petty work for him.
Beni amɛshe amɛ agbo lɛ naa [lɛ],	When they reached the entrance to their [Kobla's] compound
Kɔbla gbeleko eshinaa lɛ.	Kobla had not [even] opened his door.
Amɛna Kɔbla Papa,	They saw Kobla's father,
Ni amɛbi lɛ he ni Kɔbla etee.	And they asked him where Kobla is gone to.
Nuumo nɛɛ ye egbe ekɛɛ [akɛ]	The old man [Kobla's father] made known to them that
Maŋkɛ nɛɛ [lɛ] enu[uu]	That dawn, he did not hear [anything that showed that]
Kɔbla he, no hewɔ [lɛ]	Kobla [was present], and so

Eheee eyeeee akɛ Kɔbla yɛ tsu lɛ mli. He doubted that Kobla is in his room.
 Amɛheee ameyeee, They [all] were uncertain [about Kobla's presence],
 No hã ni amɛyajwa eshinaa lɛ. So this made them go to break down his [Kobla's] door.

Beni amɛyaaakwe saa lɛ nɔ [lɛ], When they went looking on the [Kobla's] mat,
 Kɔbla ekaje yɛ saa lɛ nɔ, [There was] Kobla, spreadeagled on the mat,
 Ni enaabu fɛɛ miitswa afũ, With his mouth frothing with foam,
 Ni enaabu fɛɛ miikokpoi afũi ooo. With his mouth quivering with foam.

Abawo Kɔbla nɔ, abawo Kɔblɔ nɔ. Up, up, they hurriedly raised Kobla [from the mat].
 Kɔbla wiemɔ, Kɔbla wiemɔ ko, Kobla, speak. Kobla, speak now,
 Dani oshi jɛɲ! Before you leave this world [die].

Kɔbla wo enaa nɔɲɲ: Kobla spoke:
 Gbɔbilɔ egbaaa [A hunter is not [supposed] to say
 Jwɛiaɲ sane po! What happens [he encounters] in the forest!
 Shi mitɛ Ataa ooo, But, my Dear Father,
 Beni mitee koo lɛ mli [lɛ], When I went to the forest,
 miyana minyɛ Awo... I saw my Dear Mother...
 Ni minyɛ Awo wo mi shi akɛ, And Mother vowed to me
 Nɔ ni mibana nɛɛ lɛ, [For] what I had seen,
 Kɛji miba ni mibawie lɛ, If I come telling [people] about it,
 No lɛ ebaafite mi ooo, ebaafite mi ooo Then she will destroy me, she will surely destroy me ooo
 Ebaafite mi ooo, ebaafite mi ooo! She will destroy me, she will thoroughly destroy me ooo!

Bɛ minyɛ Awo, So [it is] my Dear Mother,
 Minyɛ Awo gbe mi neke eeei! My very own Mother [who] killed me like this eeei!
 Bɛ minyɛ Awo, So [it is] my Dear Mother,
 Minyɛ Awo ye mi neke awui eeei! My very own Mother [who] did me such wickedness eeei!!
 Eshafeemɔ hewɔ It is because of evil[doing] that
 Awo mɔ fɛɛ mɔ ke egbei eeei! Everyone is given a [his/her own] name.
 Kwraa, kwraa, kwraa po kɛkɛ! Indeed! And so it was, and so the story goes!

[Followed by a few short choruses that are not exactly related to this song]

E. ⁷⁷Interviews with Otsaameɛi of Ga Traditional Marriage Ceremonies (GTMC).

1. Interviewees:

- i. L. K. Quartey. Mamprobi, Accra. Saturday, January 8, 2022.
- ii. C. P. Ayi-Bonte. Ga Mashi (Accra Central), Accra. Saturday, January 15, 2022.

2. Interview Questions:

...//...

Section II: Introduction to Interview.

1. Please do you have any concerns about all these explanations (from the preceding Debriefing and other statements)?
2. Having said these, shall we now begin the interview?

Section III: About Being Otsaameɛ at GTMCs.

3. How did you come by acting as *otsaame* at GTMCs, usually called engagements?
4. How long have you been acting as *otsaame* in GTMCs?
5. How many GTMCs, so far, have you been an *otsaame* in – an estimate or a range?
6. What things do you enjoy about being an *otsaame* at GTMCs?
7. What qualities do you think make a person an excellent *otsaame*?
8. What are some of the ways you train yourself or sharpen your language, orature and performance skills as an *otsaame*?
9. Do you know and have interactions with other *otsaamei* outside of the context of a GTMC?

⁷⁷ The entire interview document consists of two parts. The first part includes details and ethical considerations about the interview parties (the interviewer/ researcher and the interviewee), disclosure and consent. It is in keeping with some of the ethical considerations that only the initials and surnames of the interviewees are indicated in this Appendix. The first part of the interview document is excluded from this Appendix. The second part has two sections: a debriefing and the interview questions, both of which are in Ga and English. Only the English text of the questions is in this Appendix.

10. What is the nature of the arrangements and agreements you make with your clients before the GTMC itself?

Section IV: About the Process of a Typical Ga Traditional Marriage Ceremony (GTMC) and the Exchange Between Two *Otsaamei* during a GTMC.

11. Describe/narrate the process of an entire (typical) GTMC? At what point in the GTMC does the role of the *otsaame(i)* begin and end?

12. What do you think are things that make an *otsaame* an important part of a GTMC?

13. Describe the content and spirit/ tone between two *otsaamei* during a GTMC.

14. Have you been asked by the bride or groom or their families to say or not to say any particular thing(s) during a GTMC before? What are (some) these things, if any?

15. Have you been asked by the bride or groom or their families to do or to not do certain things during a GTMC before? What are (some) these things, if any?

16. Have you been an *otsaame* at a GTMC in which some things were done (a little) differently from what is usual or is required by custom? What are these things? What do you think of them or what are your impressions about these things?

17. What are some of the popular pieces of advice that other people give to the man/ woman/ couple, when/ if an *otsaame* gives people/ family people the opportunity to give advice to the man/ woman/ couple? What do you think about (some) of these pieces of advice?

18. What are some of the popular pieces of advice that you (and other *otsaamei*) give to the man/ woman/ couple, as part of your role in a GTMC? Why do you give (some) of these pieces of advice?

19. How will you describe your most memorable experience at being *otsaame*?

Section V: About Being Otsaame at GTMC in Relation to the Research.

20. Do you and other *otsaame(i)* use Ga proverbs and (folk music/) songs such as those sung by Wulomei in your work as *otsaamei*? Can you give examples of these songs?

21. Why and how do you and other *otsaamei* use these songs in your exchanges during a GTMC?

22. What do you think is the place/ *gbehe* and the position/ *gbenaa* of a man in a marriage?

23. What do think is the place/ *gbehe* and the position/ *gbenaa* of a woman in a marriage?

24. What do you think of the following proverbs as far as (Ga) marriage is concerned?

- *Yoo shee bɔɔ gbeyei.* // A woman does not fear broom.
- *Bɔ fɛɛ bɔ ni yoo kwɔ eha le, ake antswere ekɔɔ le.* // No matter how high (read as ‘great’) is, one (read as ‘a man’) does not need a ladder to climb her.
- *Keji yoo he tu le, ekehãa nuu shitoo.* // When a woman buys a gun, it is for a man to keep.
- *Ahaaa nuu yoo ni aku sɛɛ aha le saa.* // We do not give a man a woman, and give him a mat in addition.
- – *etc.* –

25. Do you know of other proverbs about man-woman relationships, especially in a romantic or marital context?

26. What do you think about this song in a marital/ romantic context? Do you know (the words of) the full song?

Man’s Voice:

<i>Miibi sane kome eee</i>	I ask a question!
<i>Miibi sane kome</i>	I ask but one question.
<i>Owu ke ojɔle le, namɔ osumɔ?</i>	Your husband and your lover, who do you love?

Woman’s Voice:

<i>Misumɔ mijɔle fe miwu eee</i>	I love my lover more than my husband!
<i>Shi ke migbo le, namɔ baahe</i>	(Yet) when I die, who buys the (/my) casket?
<i>(migbonyo) adeka le</i>	
<i>Miwu kooloo le, le ebaahe adeka le</i>	My husband the animal/ buffoon, he buys the casket.

Man's Voice:

Miibi sane kome eee
Miibi sane kome
Makola ke owu le, namo osumo?

I ask a question!
I ask but one question.
Makola and your husband, who do you love?

Woman's Voice:

Misumo Makola fe miwu!
Shi ke migbo le, namo baahe
(migbonyo) adeka le
Miwu kooloo le, le ebaahe adeka le

I love Makola more than my husband!
(Yet) when I die, who buys the (/my) casket?
My husband the animal/ buffoon, he buys the casket.

Section VI: Interviewee's Personal Opinions

They say things are changing with the world, and maybe too with marriages and the ways that society thinks of women, especially with regards to relationships which involve men and women.

27. What do you think are some of the changes that need to be made about marriages or romantic relationships or about other relationships which involve men and women?
28. What do you think are some of the things which should never change about these relationships, no matter how things and the world change?
29. What things do you think make marriages work OR what advice would you give to married people or people in (romantic) man-woman relationships?

Section VII: Conclusion.

30. Would you like to share your age (range)? [Answering this question was optional for the interviewees.]
31. What key advice/ secret do you think can sustain any relationship – including marriage – between a man and a woman?
32. Is/ are there any other question/s or comment/s you have about this interview and the research? ♦