Celebration of Love: An Aspect of Ga Women’s Discourse on Love in Adaawe Song- Texts

Benjamin Kubi
Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast, Ghana
Email: benjamin.kubi [AT] ucc.edu

ABSTRACT— Love is a subject that has received a lot of attention in literature, and poetry especially has seen much on love than any other genre, probably because it is traditionally seen as the creative exploration and expression of an individual’s emotion and passion. A genre of Ga oral poetry that has love as its primary subject is the adaawe songs that are sung by Ga maidens. This paper examines an aspect of Ga women’s discourse on love in the songs, particularly, how love is celebrated. This was done based on the theoretical premise that literary texts, which adaawe songs are considered to be part of, are informed by social, cultural and historical discourses at the place and time they are created. The songs were analysed, paying attention to content and style, and the analysis revealed that where love is celebrated, it usually expresses the personae’s happiness and pride in having their partners as lovers. Two media were identified by which the personae in adaawe songs celebrate their love for their lovers as well as their lovers’ love for them – open declarations and actions.

Keywords--- Celebration, discourse, love, oral poetry, oral literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Love may … be a universal phenomenon, but culture and language play a crucial role in defining it at every stage, from sexual arousal to codified sentiment, from norms of comportment to ‘significant stories’. Idioms of love have a very long history, and within every culture or cultural area, there will always be more than one available at any given time – prescriptive, poetic, commonsensical, satirical, religious, gender-specific, and so on” (Orsini, n.d.). Poetry particularly has seen much on love than any other genre, probably because it is traditionally seen as the creative exploration and expression of an individual’s emotion and passion. Thus, poetry, whether oral or written, explores the question of human love in a unique way and contributes a unique commentary on the subject (O’Dwyer, 2009).

Adaawe songs are an example of gender-specific idiom among the Ga people, a group of coastal dwellers located at the southern part of Ghana, which has love as its primary subject. The genre has a long history of existence, and the fact that it deals with love shows that the concept of romantic love has, for a long time, existed among the Ga people – an observation which challenges the Eurocentric view that the African does not have a concept of romantic love (Joseph, 1987). This paper examines an aspect of the discourse on love in the adaawe songs. Specifically, it examines how the personae in adaawe songs celebrate the love they have for their lovers as well as the love their lovers have for them.

2. ADAAWE AND ITS PERFORMANCE

Adaawe songs are used for a performance known as adaawe. Adaawe, as a performance, is a form of recreation for Ga maidens, which involves singing and dancing. Its primary function is to entertain, but in doing this, it presents some discourses. The major discourses of adaawe songs border on love and marriage, and this could be attributed to the preoccupation of young women, the owners of the genre, at that stage in their lives. As Coker (2012) observes, it is a common sub-culture among the youth to share with peers narratives about their romantic love moments with the opposite sex, and as suggested by Owen (1987), Pearson, West & Turner (1995) and Coker (2011a), cited in Coker (2012), women are more relationally attuned than men are. These assertions are what are exemplified by Ga maidens, whose preoccupation with love and intimacy is made manifest in the songs they use in their performance of adaawe.

In a real sense, adaawe provides a platform for the young women to give commentaries on significant social issues that affect them. Their fears, disappointments and excitements are expressed in the songs that are used for the performance. Aside providing a platform for the young women to express their views on issues affecting them, the performance of adaawe also allows the young women to band together, which allows them to express themselves as a
social group. They feel comfortable to belong to the group because the performance territory creates a demarcation for the participants, which excludes men. The isolation of the women from men enables them to regard each other as a social network or focal group (see Agovi, 1994). Also, the unison with which they sing and clap their hands gives them the assurance that they are together. This sense of togetherness gives them the encouragement to express themselves freely without inhibition.

Furthermore, the physical context of performance has an important function, in that it insulates the performers from censure. The Ga people have much restriction on what could be expressed openly and what could not, but with the insulation provided by the performance territory, issues that may otherwise not be openly openly because they may be considered obscene are expressed openly. This is because at the performance session, an isolated context is temporarily created outside the everyday life in which some issues, for instance sex, cannot be discussed openly.

Traditionally, adaawye was performed in the evening when the moon was out. This was so because until the invention of electricity, the moon was an important source of light at night. The young women (usually dressed in white chemise) gathered at the blohuy (square) and the performers form a closed circle with the boma (the “cantor” or the caller of the tune) standing in the middle; she calls a tune which the other performers, asafo, respond to. Unlike the general pattern of Western European folk-songs, the individual singer does not stand out in a dominant position as against a passive audience; instead, she interacts with the chorus (Finnegan, 1970). Also, no one person monopolizes the position of the “cantor” or the caller of the tunes; each participant is given an opportunity to call tunes during the performance.

3. ORAL LITERATURE, ORAL POETRY AND SONGS

The paper is rooted in two complementary concepts – oral literature and oral poetry. Oral literature, also identified by various scholars by such terms as orature, traditional literature, folk literature and folklore, simply means literature delivered by word of mouth (Okpewho, 1992). The special feature about oral literature, which marks it different from written literature, is its dependence on orality for its composition as well as transmission, and memory for preservation, but this does not defeat its character as literature (Finnegan, 1970). Literature is defined on the basic principle of creativity in terms of language use, and oral literature, just as written literature, exhibits this quality to the maximum level (Scholes, Kaus & Silverman, 1975; Henderson, Day & Waller, 2001).

But literature is also a reflection of culture. As Gunn (1983, p. 3) puts it, “literature is one facet of culture.” Evers (1983), in his essay, “Teaching American Indian Oral Literature,” also observes that the creation of literature is an act of imaginative response to distinctive cultural values. The two observations suggest that an adequate interpretation of literature cannot be attained without considering the influence it receives from its cultural milieu and, closely related, historical milieu. Indeed, Miruka (1994, p. 39) makes this observation about literature:

Literature, being based on a given time in history, place and society, has a setting. All literature is a product of a given social setting. They give a glimpse of the influences bearing upon the people. It can be stated confidently that literature is a sisterwing to history. The only difference is that history gives facts as they are while literature seeks to interpret the facts using language in an artistic manner and presenting the same reality in fiction.

Following from the above, the concept oral poetry denotes the class of poetry that has come to be recognized as poetry conceived and delivered by word of mouth. According to Lomax & Abdul (1970), African written poetry is a reflection of oral poetry. This statement is affirmed by Fraser (1986), who also observes that a relationship exists between the oral and written verse in West Africa. A clear example which he gives is the ability of Kofi Awoonor to reflect the same reality in fiction. The reason why oral art forms like adaawye songs should interest us is that they have a lot to offer us, as Africans, in shaping our literary tradition, a process which is already taking place (see Okpewho, 1988; Kalu, 2000; and Akinyemi, 2007).

The fact that oral poetry is not written can likely discount it as literature (Lorentzon, 2007); however, Finnegan (1992) argues that it is important that oral poetry is studied in courses on literature. She intimates that oral poetry is not odd, and that it is a common occurrence in human society, whether literate or non-literate. She also maintains that there are parallels and overlaps between oral literature and written literature, and she proves this by categorizing some oral poems in terms of Western literary study. Accordingly, she identifies epics, ballads, panegyric, odes and lyrics. According to Finnegan (1992), the lyric, which she defines as a short non-narrative poem that is sung, is the most common form of oral poetry and can probably be regarded as universal in human culture. Lyrics, according to Finnegan (1992), come with diverse functions. Thus, there are love lyrics, psalms and hymns, songs to accompany dancing and drinking, political and topical verses, war songs, initiation songs, “spirituals”, laments, work songs, lullabies and many others. Miruka and Sunkuli (1990), on their part, define lyrics as poems or songs expressing strong personal feelings of romance, performed privately or in public, individually or communally. They also see lyrics as love songs. This is
because love and marriage are probably the commonest themes in lyrics (Finnegan, 1970, p. 252). These two themes also happen to be the predominant themes in adaawe songs.

Even before Finnegan’s (1992) argument that oral poetry be studied in courses on literature, Okpewho (1988) admits “the oral traditional poetry of Africa” as part of literature. Therefore, in his anthology of African poetry, Okpewho (1988) includes both African oral and written poetry. In his own words, “The ... perhaps more important aim of this anthology is to give the oral traditional poetry of Africa its deserved place both in the literature curriculum and in our general understanding of what poetry tries to do” (p. 3). Most importantly, Okpewho (1988) makes a statement which has implications for this paper. According to him, one needs to abandon the false assumption that poetry necessarily has to do with words or the order in which they are arranged. As he observes, a group of measured lines which describe a situation is simply a verse, and may have very little that is poetic about it. On the other hand, it is possible for a combination of music and movement (dance) in a performance that has no words at all to be described as very poetic. To Okpewho (1988) therefore, the essence of poetry lies in its power to appeal strongly to one’s appreciation and, in a sense, lift one up. In fact, some adaawe songs do not contain many words: sometimes, a song is composed of just a line or two, which will be repeated several times. That nature of such adaawe songs could discount them as poetry, but Okpewho’s (1988) observation suggests that they are equally good poetry.

Joseph (1987), in a paper entitled Zulu Women’s Bow Songs: Ruminations on Love, examines love songs that are associated with the umakhweyana, a bow instrument played by unmarried Zulu girls, and discovered from her corpus of bow songs a tradition of love songs in Zulu society which reveals much about a romantic concept of love. As she observed, “It is not unlikely that a similar situation exists in other African societies” (p. 96). Indeed, the ayabomo, which was studied by Agovi (1994); the nnwonkororo, by Anyidoho (1994); the woyi tiddëte and the woyi ndëri, by Ndione & Mitsch (1993) all reveal much about an African concept of romantic love.

Hammond (1970) hints on a tradition of love songs in his collection of various songs that are used for entertainment among the Ga people, which include adaawe songs. According to Hammond (1970), some of the adaawe songs evoke happy feelings while others are sorrowful, addressing issues such as disappointment and ingratitude on the part of young men in love relationships. However, since Hammond’s (1970) main import for producing the work is to bring people’s attention to some of the Ga oral forms that are no longer common with the people, and not to analyse them for their discourse on love, he hardly makes any effort to analyse them to reveal anything about the concept love. This paper, in its small way, examines the songs to reveal an aspect of Ga women’s discourse on love in them.

4. METHODOLOGY

The work is a qualitative one, which involves data from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data constitute songs that were recorded on the field and the secondary data consist of songs taken from Hammond’s (1970) Obxade Lalai.

Creswell (2003), in citing Wolcott (1994), states that qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, which means that the researcher makes an interpretation of the data. The interpretation includes developing a description of an individual or setting, analysing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning personally and theoretically, stating the lessons learned, and offering further questions to be asked. “It also means that the researcher filters the data through a personal lens that is situated in a specific sociopolitical and historical moment,” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). According to Creswell (2003), the methods of data collection in qualitative research are traditionally based on open-ended observations, interviews and documents, and these were chiefly the methods that were used to collect data for the present study.

In line with Wilgus’s (1986) observation that the interview is a necessary method for collecting musical folklore and folksong, as it provides significant contextual information which can be gathered only through that medium, after conducting recording sessions, during which some adaawe songs were recorded for transcription and translation, some interviews were conducted to obtain useful background information on specific songs.

The analysis, which was primarily based on the transcribed texts, dealt with content and style. However, since oral literature goes beyond the text, and by definition is dependent on performance, the analysis took into consideration issues pertaining to the performance context which are useful in clarifying points which cannot be explained from the texts.

5. THE CELEBRATION OF LOVE

Love, as presented in adaawe songs, is celebrated on grounds of the pleasure it produces in the person who celebrates it. In the songs that deal with this theme, love is presented as a phenomenon which produces a happy feeling in the personae. This happiness is portrayed through the personae’s expression of love for their partners and or revelation of
how much their partners love them. The celebration usually takes the form of showing pride in the lovers concerned and expressing happiness for having such lovers. A marked feature of these songs is the reference to the personae’s lovers with such words as shiŋtsæ and lbhi, both denoting lover. Sometimes, the words, shiŋtsæ and lbhi, are modified with the possessive pronoun mi (my) and the intensifier diŋtsæ (own). Generally, the celebration of love in adaawe songs is carried out through two media – open declarations and actions.

5.1 Celebrating Love through Open Declarations

In celebrating love through open declarations, the persona uses words to express her heartfelt love for her lover as well as wards off an invasion of their love relationship with other people. As the persona celebrates her love for her lover, she also addresses the intruder or potential intruder and makes her aware of the fact that no other person will be allowed to interfere in that relationship, expressing happiness for having such lovers. A marked feature of these songs is the reference to the personae’s lovers and actions.

Call: Soyaama, Soyaama, Akwele, Akwako
Kš amsřhţ Tawia, Ago shiw nŋ ni elɛŋ ejwe, Ajo!
Response: Soyaama, Soyaama, Akwele, Akwako
Kš amsřhţ Tawia, Ago shiw nŋ ni efeŋ ejwe, Ajo!

Call: Soyaama, Soyaama, Mi diŋtsæ mishieŋtsæ, Mi kr še yë enyə ei,
Mɔ ko mɔ ko bɛ mli, Ajo!
Response: Soyaama, Soyaama, Mi diŋtsæ mishieŋtsæ, Mi kr še yë enyə ei,
Mɔ ko mɔ ko bɛ mli, Ajo!

Call: Soyaama, Soyaama, ~šो meele ni yaa, Misušlo ko ta mli ei,
Efo mi nine aahu, Ajo!
Response: Soyaama, Soyaama, ~šो meele ni yaa, Misušlo ko ta mli ei,
Efo mi nine aahu, Ajo!

Call: Soyaama, Soyaama, Mi diŋtsæ mishieŋtsæ, Mìk le yaawɔ ei,
Saatto miikpoko ei, Ajo!
Response: Soyaama, Soyaama, Mi diŋtsæ mishieŋtsæ, Mìk le yaawɔ ei,
Saatto miikpoko ei, Ajo!

The song is organised in four stanzas, each making a declaration in a call, which is repeated as a response. The declarations of the persona show that she is proud of her man, happy to possess him as a lover, and will not wish to lose him to anybody. These ideas, which are expressed in the calls, are emphasized by the repetition of each of the calls as responses. It is discernible from the song-text that there is another woman who is trying to interfere in the persona’s relationship with her lover. As the persona celebrates her love for her lover, she also addresses the intruder or potential intruder and makes her aware of the fact that her interference will not be entertained.

What can be deduced from the discourse is that romantic love exists between only two people, and no matter the nature of relationship that exists between one of these two people and any other people, be it his or her family members, they are not allowed to interfere in the love relationship. This is why sometimes people reject their families in pursuit of
their love relationships. Even though the persona in this song does not reject her family and demonstrates that they have a role to play in ensuring that she does not lose her lover to another person, she also demonstrates that they are not allowed to interfere in the love relationship itself. This is to say that whatever goes on in the love relationship must be of concern to only the two people involved and not any other person. It is common practice among the Ga people and many other African peoples that families sometimes interfere in issues which have to do with their members’ choice of love partners. The song presents a contrary position on the practice. It recognizes the importance of families in the lives of individuals; however, it also recognizes the need for families not to interfere in the relationships of their members.

The persona’s recognition of the importance of her family is made known when she tells her rival that she (the persona) is part of four siblings,

Akwele, Akwɔkɔ
Ke amesɛnho Tawia
Ago shiɛ ni ni efeɛ ejwe, Ajo!

Perhaps, this is to warn the persona’s rival that she may have to contend with four people if she tries to compete with the persona.

It is probable that the persona is a twin or a sibling of twins, and this is seen in the use of the names Akwele and Akwɔkɔ, which are Ga names given to female twins, and Tawia and Ago, which are Ga names given to the two children who come immediately after the twins. Twins and their two siblings who come after them are revered among the Ga people. Hence, the persona deploys the reverence that the Ga people have for twins and their siblings who come after them as a weapon to instil fear in her rival.

The reverence that the Ga people have for twins is demonstrated by the annual ritual which is performed for them a day before the annual Ga Ḥomwɔ festival. During the performance of the ritual, some horns, which are referred to as the horns of twins, are bathed in water which contains some leaves (Amartey, 1990). According to Amartey (1990), the Ga people believe that twins are a reincarnation of the buffalo because they behave just like buffalos behave. Thus, the Ga people believe that twins and their two siblings who come after them possess some mystical powers, which they could deploy to defend themselves when necessary.

As said by Amartey (1990), the Ga people observed that buffalos never walk individually (they always walk in pairs), and an attack on one of them is considered an attack on both of them, a characteristic they have observed about twins too. It is believed that twins and their siblings who come after them are so united in spirit that whatever happens to one person affects all of them, and just like buffalos, any confrontation with one of them is considered a confrontation with all of them. In this light, the persona recognizes her relationship with her siblings and identifies herself with them. Right at the opening of the song, the persona makes her rival aware of her identity, which is associated with twins. As indicated earlier, this is probably to warn her that she would have to contend against four people if she tries to contend with her.

In another vein, the persona does not take note of any other person or people around, not even her siblings, and recognizes the presence of only two people – her lover and herself,

Mi dĩnɔtsɛ mishientɛ, My own lover,
Mi kɛ lɪ yɪ enyɔ ei, Just the two of us,
Mɔ kɔ mɔ kɔ be nli, Ajo! There is no other person, Ajo!

This may sound like a contradiction of the first position the persona took, where she identifies four people that her rival must oppose if she tries to compete against her (the persona). However, it is a demonstration of the power of romantic love. When two people are in love, they see themselves in a world of their own where even their families are not welcome.

The persona does not only see her lover and herself as people in a world of their own where there is no room for interference from anybody, she also expresses her pride in having her companion as a lover, “Mi dĩnɔtsɛ mishientɛ,” (My own lover.). This is to say that in a love relationship, each partner must show pride in the other. When a person shows pride in having a partner as a lover, it assures the latter of the former’s unflinching love for the latter, and this impels the latter to reciprocate that love.

It is certain that just as the persona loves her lover and shows pride in having him as a lover, the persona’s lover also acknowledges and appreciates the love he receives from the persona. This is expressed in the fact that on the ԑsho meele (ocean-going vessel), he waves at the persona for a very long time, perhaps, to indicate that he really appreciates the persona and that he is going to miss her,

ԑsho meele ni yaa, Ocean-going vessel,
Misuɔkɔ ta mli ei, My lover is on board ei,
Eʃo mi nine aahu, Ajo! He waved at me for a long time, Ajo!
A vivid image is created in the above lines, which draws on the Ga people’s experience with the ocean. The people are close to the ocean so they often witness people sailing on the ocean. They have seen people travel to “ﬁshery” (overseas), which connotes a distant place, and it can be assumed that the persona’s man is on such a journey. This assumption is based on the fact that he waved at the persona for a long time. Among the Ga people, as it is the case in all Ghanaian cultures, and probably most African cultures, waving at a person is a sign of bidding farewell, especially when the person is going on a long journey. Most often, the longer the time spent on waving at a person shows how much one is going to miss the person. It also shows how far apart the two people are going to be separated from each other. The image of the persona’s man on-board an ocean-going vessel, waving at the persona is therefore significant as it allows one to visualise how much the persona’s man appreciates the persona for the love she has for him.

That the persona is acknowledged and appreciated for the love she has for her man goads her to even get wilder with the celebration of her love for him when she goes erotic. Here, she defies norms by celebrating her love making with her lover – something which should be considered private. Even so, she conforms to culture by presenting, “at the stylistic and technical levels, muted and euphemistic portrayal of the sexual” (Asaah, 2006),

Mi dirŋtsɛ mishieŋtsɛ, My own lover,
Mǐkɛ ԑ yaawɛ ei, I am going to sleep with him ei,
Saatso miŋkɔŋkɔŋpɔ ei, Ajo! The bed is shaking ei, Ajo!

Among the Ga people, and indeed Africans in general, issues about sex are considered taboo subjects, which are not to be discussed openly. On occasions like adaawε performance however, there is a kind of poetic license, which allows performers to express themselves freely on any subject, including sex. Thus, adaawε songs make use of erotic expressions and images but these are used only symbolically to create excitement. The shaking of the bed, though not a graphic portrayal of the sexual, creates a vivid erotic image.

In the next song, the persona does not have to compete with anybody over her lover, but she is not oblivious of the fact that if a person does not appreciate or show pride in a lover, the person is likely to lose that lover – someone who is going to miss the person. It also shows how far apart the two people are going to be separated from each other. The assumption is based on the fact that he waved at the persona for a long time. Among the Ga people, as it is the case in all Ghanaian cultures, and probably most African cultures, waving at a person is a sign of bidding farewell, especially when the person is going on a long journey. Most often, the longer the time spent on waving at a person shows how much one is going to miss the person. It also shows how far apart the two people are going to be separated from each other. The image of the persona’s man on-board an ocean-going vessel, waving at the persona is therefore significant as it allows one to visualise how much the persona’s man appreciates the persona for the love she has for him.

Call: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Atsɛ lɛ aha mi ei, wɔŋya ei, Call him for me ei, we are going ei,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Mishieŋtsɛ, mɔ mimli, My lover, hold me,
Ba miba ei, Come have I come ei,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Mishieŋtsɛ, laa mikuɛ, My lover, put your arm around my neck,
Ba miba ei, Come have I come ei,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Mibri nyɛ; mibɛ tɛɛ, wɔŋya ei, I have no mother; I have no father,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Awusa ji mi ei, wɔŋya ei, I am an orphan ei, we are going ei,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Mishieŋtsɛ, mɔ mimli, My lover, hold me,
Ba miba ei, Come have I come ei,
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.
Call: Atsɛ lɛ aha mi ei, Call him for me,
Ba miba ei, Come have I come ei
Response: Eŋɔɔ minaa fe nine. I am very happy.

Asian Online Journals (www.ajouronline.com)
Each stanza of the song opens with a happy declaration in the first line of the call, “Eŋŋo minaa fe nine” (I am very happy), which is repeated in the second line of the call and the single lines which are presented as responses to the calls. The repetition of the declaration emphasizes the persona’s happiness with her lover.

In the first stanza, the persona makes an urgent request that her lover should be called for her, “Atsɛ lɛ aha mi ei, wʊya ei” (Call him for me ei, we are going ei). The urgency of the request is expressed through the interjection ei. The fact that the persona is desperate to see her lover and requests that he should be called for her is an indication of her happiness with having him as a lover. This happiness is also expressed using the same interjection ei. Thus, ei, as used here, does not only show urgency, it also shows that the persona is really happy with her lover.

The focusing of the verb ba (come) in “Ba miba ei” (Come have I come ei) is an indication of the persona’s pride in having her man as a lover and her willingness to be with him. Generally, the words in the stanza depict the persona’s total submission to her man. However, the persona would also want to have some assurance that her lover has some affection for her in return. Putting one’s hand around another’s neck could be interpreted as a sign of profound affection for the latter. Thus, by responding to the persona’s request of putting his hand around her neck, the persona’s lover is also telling the persona that he has affection for her.

Apart from showing her pride in having her man as a lover, the persona in this song also expresses her confidence that her lover can provide something which is missing in her life – parental love. Thus, in the third stanza, the persona declares,

Eŋŋo minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Eŋŋo minaa fe nine, I am very happy,
Miɓɛ nɤɛ; miɓɛ tse, wʊya ei, I have no mother; I have no father, we are going ei,

The persona therefore comes to her lover not only for him to be a lover, but also to be a mother and a father. Whenever one is going somewhere with one’s parents, one is sure that one is in safe hands. The persona’s declaration that she is going with her man shows that she sees him as someone who is able to provide her the same security which she would have received from her parents. To emphasize her state of being motherless and fatherless, yet having confidence that her lover can provide her security, the persona declares, “Awusa ji mi ei, wʊya ei” (I am an orphan ei, we are going ei).

It is most likely for one to consider the pronouncements of the persona as frivolous. She seems to anticipate this, so as a way of indicating that she is serious and conscious of her pronouncements, the persona declares her identity in the fifth stanza, “Atsɛ mi Kweinyɛ,” (My name is Kweinyɛ.), and affirms the fact that she has no parents but has confidence in her man to give her protection.

“Kweinyɛ” which literally translates as “Kwei’s mother” would suggest that the persona is a mother. This is not necessarily the case. Among the Ga people, the names that are given to the children of a couple are fixed, and the names are usually given by the man. Thus, even before the couple give birth, they already know the names that their children will bear, and these names identify the children with the man’s family. The persona’s identity as “Kweinyɛ” could
therefore be interpreted as an affirmation of her attachment to her man, as by extension, she identifies herself with the man’s family. This is to say that, even before any formal institutionalisation of the persona’s relation to her man, she has done her own quasi institutionalisation. This shows that the persona did not come to her lover through any inducement, but because of her love for him and confidence in him. In effect, this song teaches us to be proud of our lovers, but it also defines the kind of lover that a person should be proud of – a dependable lover.

The idea of showing pride and happiness in a lover is also expressed in the next song. Just like the example above, the persona expresses an anxiety and urgency to seeing her lover,

Call: Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi! Hurry up and call him for me!
Response: Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi! Hurry up and call him for me!
Call: Mi dĩnjst mĩkome mĩlsbi, My own one and only lover,
Response: Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi! Hurry up and call him for me!
Call: Mi dĩnjst mĩkome mĩlsbi, My own one and only lover,
Response: Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi! Hurry up and call him for me!

The persona’s desperate call for her lover, which is expressed in, “Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi!” (Hurry up and call him for me!), and its repetition as responses in the above song, is possibly not for any wrong reason, but because of the fact that his presence is a source of happiness for her. The repetition of “Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi!” (Hurry up and call him for me!) as responses to the calls adds to the rhythm of the song, and creates a sense of urgency which allows the audience to appreciate how desperate the persona is to have her man around her. The persona’s show of desperation to see her man is an indication that she is happy whenever her man is around her, and her happiness in having her lover around her is a suggestion of her pride in him as a lover. This pride is what she expresses in her reference to her lover as, “Mi dĩnjst mĩkome mĩlsbi,” (My own one and ony lover). Thus, she personalises her man and sees him as her monopoly. The words, “Aye oyai ni atsc le aha mi!” (Hurry up and call him for me!), create a vivid image of urgency and desperation, where we see a restless young woman waiting impatiently to see a lover that she has missed so much.

An even more forceful expression of anxiety is presented in the next song. Here, the persona’s eagerness to see her man is expressed through a metaphor,

Call: Aaden kuma ei! Aaden thirst ei!
Response: Ee ee ei! Ee ee ei!
Call: Aaden kuma ei, Aaden thirst ei,
Ataa Kofi miiba,
He is on the ocean
Edamo ñso hir êmna mi wolo;
and wrote me a letter;
Afi oo ko miiba ei!
An Afi oo is coming ei!
Response: Edamo ñso hir êmna mi wolo.
He is on the ocean and wrote me a letter;
Call: Awushi oo ko miiba ei!
An Awushi oo is coming ei!
Response: Edamo ñso hir êmna mi wolo.
He is on the ocean and wrote me a letter.

The metaphor in the song is expressed in the comparison between the yearning of the persona to see her lover and the yearning for water when one is thirsty, “Aaden kuma ei” (Aaden thirst ei). It must be noted that water is a necessity of life, and to the Ga people nothing can assuage thirst better than water. Indeed, this idea can be recognised in other Ga poetic media too. For instance, a portion of the libation text that is used during the out-dooring of a child pronounces,

Wọje bu When we dig a well
Wọje nu nọ We should get water
Wọye wọnu When we fetch and drink
Wọkaji anọ ajọ wọ We should have relief

Again, one Ga proverb says, “Anuuu nu atooo ahrabata” (You do not drink water in advance against harmattan). It can be deduced from the above examples therefore that, to the Ga people, and indeed people everywhere, water is what assuages thirst. In the same vein, the only thing that can better relieve the persona of her thirst for her lover is the presence of her lover himself. Although some kinds of drink can provide relief from thirst, the experience is not the same as with water because water is the only natural substance that has the quality to quench thirst completely. That is why the letter that the persona’s man writes her does not assuage her thirst for him.

In the previous songs, the personae express their deep love for their lovers, and eloquently declare their happiness and pride in having them as their lovers. In songs that follow however, the personae express their happiness not with having their lovers as lovers, but with the love their lovers have for them.

In the first example, the persona shows extreme excitement about the fact that she is loved by her man and declares,
Call: Esumọ mi ei, koni ema tsu eha mi ei! He loves me ei, so that he will build me a house ei!
Response: Esumọ mi ei, koni ema tsu eha mi ei! He loves me ei, so that he will build me a house ei!
Jee e shika ni ena, Esumọ mi ei, koni ema tsu eha mi ei!
Jee e shika ni ena, Esumọ mi ei, koni ema tsu eha mi ei!

The love that the persona’s lover has for her in this song may be interpreted as true love. This may be interpreted as such because the persona’s man will build her a house and buy her a sewing machine, not because he has all of a sudden become rich, but because of the love he has for her,

Jee e shika ni ena, Esumọ mi ei, It isn’t that he has made much money,
Esumọ mi ei, koni ehe mashin ẹh a mi ei! He loves me ei,
Jee e shika ni ena, so that he will build me a house ei!
Esumọ mi ei, It isn’t that he has made much money,
He loves me ei,
Jee e shika ni ena, so that he will build me a house ei!
Jee e shika ni ena, It isn’t that he has made much money,
Esumọ mi ei, He loves me ei,
Esumọ mi ei, so that he will build me a house ei!
Esumọ mi ei, so that he will buy me sewing machine ei!

Certainly, one of the things that can drive a person to do this is love. However, it must also be noted that a man can give some of these promises just to beguile a woman into believing that he loves her so much.

Some time ago, among the Ga people, one of the most valuable gifts a man could give a woman was a sewing machine. This was something that was coveted by most women, and a man who was able to provide it was seen as a loving partner. In fact, it became customary for a man to provide a sewing machine as part of the bride price and women placed so much value on this. No wonder the persona attributes her lover’s promise to provide it as a symbolic expression of his love for her since he will provide it anyway, even though he has not become rich.

Indeed, it will not have been anything spectacular if the persona’s lover is providing the items because he has become rich. Providing them at a time he is not rich shows how much he values the persona and desires to make her happy. This is an indication that he really loves the persona. Thus, the house and the sewing machine are symbols of love. It must be noted that the items mentioned have not yet been provided, but the persona trusts that her lover will provide them. Where there is true love, there is trust, and this is what is demonstrated in the song. There is no doubt that the persona also appreciates her man. The excitement with which she declares that he loves her, “Esumọ mi ei…” (He loves me ei….) is indicative of her happiness and pride in having such a lover. The repetitions of the persona’s declarations in the responses also give emphasis to the belief that the persona has that her man loves her.

Although the song under discussion demonstrates true love, it also portrays a trait that has crept into the fabric of society, which is materialism. To show that one really loves a partner, one would have to lavish many material things on that partner, and this is what is epitomized in the song. Indeed, the persona’s man may be providing the house and sewing machine just to concretise his expression of love for her; however, the fact remains that the persona recognizes that love only through the provision of the materials.

Thus, without these material things, the persona may not realise that her man loves her. This is quite unfortunate because it means love can now be equated to the provision of material things. This is where ladies can fall prey to men who can go to any extent to provide the material things just to have what they want, in most cases sex. It may not be a surprise if the persona’s lover makes the promises just to gull the persona into believing that he loves her so much in order to satisfy his selfish interest, as other adaawee songs show semblances of this.

In the next song, the persona articulates her confidence that her lover will bear a tassel that is appearing (probably pregnancy) and this may be because of her awareness of the fact that her man loves her. For this reason, she expresses excitement over the appearance of the tassel:

Call: Egba ahwanya, ahwanya miiba It has tasseled, tassel is appearing.
Response: Egba ahwanya, ahwanya miiba It has tasseled, tassel is appearing.
Milshi baatere, ahwanya miiba. My lover will carry, tassel is appearing.
Egba ahwanya, ahwanya miiba It has tasseled, tassel is appearing.
There is every reason to believe that the persona’s lover really loves her, and she is aware of this. That is why she shows so much excitement over the appearance of the tassel and does not entertain any fear that her man may not accept to carry or bear it. It is not too certain what the tassel could be referring to, but it is probable that it could be referring to pregnancy. This is because since the Ga people are farmers, tassel could be a symbol of fruitfulness or fertility, and with its association to relationship between a man and a woman, pregnancy can only be the possible reference. If tassel refers to pregnancy, then it could be said that the persona knows that her man really loves her and is ready to accept responsibility for the pregnancy. That is why she is excited about the pregnancy. In other songs, a contrary situation takes place, where the lovers of the personae deny responsibility for pregnancies. It must be noted that the persona’s lover has not yet accepted responsibility for the pregnancy, but because the persona knows that he loves her, she is confident that he will accept responsibility. The issue of trust comes in here too. Because of the love the persona’s man has for her, she has so much trust for him, and it is that trust which inspires the confidence in her that he will accept responsibility for the pregnancy. The persona’s trust for her man is a sign of her own love for him.

5.2 Celebrating Love through Actions

In the songs that have been considered so far, the personae express their love for their lovers through words, and tell us, either overtly or covertly, about the love their lovers have for them. Using words to communicate love for a lover does not however constitute the only means of expressing love for a lover in adaawe songs. Sometimes, one does not have to use words to express love for another person. Actions, they say, speak louder than words, so in the songs that follow, love is demonstrated through the actions of the parties involved.

In the first example, the persona declares that she is going to buy cassava and return to pound fufu for her lover to eat so that in the evening, she will go to her lover for him to make love to her,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call:</th>
<th>Miyahe duade ei</th>
<th>I am going to buy cassava ei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response:</td>
<td>Miyahe duade ei</td>
<td>I am going to buy cassava ei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call:</td>
<td>Miyahe duade ei</td>
<td>I am going to buy cassava ei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response:</td>
<td>Miyahe duade ei</td>
<td>I am going to buy cassava ei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miyahe duade</td>
<td>I am going to buy cassava</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m’bashì fufu</td>
<td>to come and pound fufu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maha mishie: ni eye</td>
<td>for my lover to eat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koni gbìke ni maya jemè:</td>
<td>so that in the evening, I will go there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koni eshi mi nɔ ko.</td>
<td>for him to pound me something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a popular saying that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. This is to say that cooking for a man is usually judged by most men, particularly African men, as a show of love and care for the man, and it engenders a mutual relationship between a man and a woman. Thus, women who are able to satisfy men with delicious meals are more likely than not to attract these men to themselves. By cooking for her lover, the persona in this song also shows that she loves and cares for her lover, and by that, makes an effort to attract him to herself. This makes it more possible for her to get whatever she wants from her lover. Indeed, the persona needs love from her lover, and she is aware that the only way she can receive much of it is by also showing it to him, which she does by way of cooking for him.

There is an expectation that the persona’s lover also needs to meet to demonstrate his own love for the persona and this involves a reciprocation of the actions of the persona, not through cooking but lovemaking. This results in a sort of mutual exchange. While one party satisfies the other’s need for food, the latter is also supposed to satisfy the former’s sexual needs. What is being demonstrated here is that love is a give-and-take affair, and requires efforts on the side of both parties involved to satisfy each other’s needs. That is why the persona expects her lover to reciprocate the love she has for him.

The song has an erotic undertone, which is expressed in the persona’s act of pounding fufu and whatever her lover is supposed to pound for her. This gives evidence of erotic love among the Ga people as well as shows the importance of sex in an erotic relationship. The action of lovemaking is implicitly compared to fufu pounding. The word “shi” (pound) is used to draw the comparison between how the pestle goes up and down when fufu is being pounded and how the male reproductive organ operates during sexual intercourse. In fact, in a version of the song, the line, “Koni eshi mi nɔ ko” (For him to pound me something) is rendered “Koni eshi mi tso” (For him to pound me a stick). Here, there is a metaphoric comparison between the male reproductive organ (perhaps in its erect state) and a pestle.

Just as in the song above, the persona in the next song also shows her love for her lover through her actions. However, here, she does not show her love by cooking for her lover, but by washing her lover’s clothes,


6. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the celebration of love as an aspect of the discourses on love in adaawe songs. It was realised that, in adaawe songs, love is celebrated either through an open declaration or through actions. The celebration of love takes the form of showing pride in a lover. It usually expresses the personae’s happiness and pride in having their men as lovers. Some marked features of the songs that celebrate love are the use of words of endearment such as shientse and lbi. In addition, the personae express their desperation about their desire to see their lovers, and sometimes, they declare their identity as a way of indicating their seriousness about what they are saying. Generally, it was observed that the Ga people, specifically Ga women, have knowledge about the concept of romantic love and they express this in the adaawe songs which they sing during adaawe performances.

7. REFERENCES


