

## Some Womanist Incriptions in Ebony Reigns' Song *Maame Hwe*: A Literary Approach

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### Article Info:

Received: November 22, 2022

Accepted: March 23, 2023

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### Keywords:

Code Mixing,  
Code Switching,  
Ebony Reigns,  
Ghana,  
Womanism.

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### ABSTRACT

Music is a part of life in Ghana. Studying a people's music brings one closer to understanding them since music and reality are intertwined. Despite this reality, the contribution of popular music to national discourse has not received adequate research attention in Ghana. This paper sets out to study the lyrics of one of the songs of Ebony Reigns (Priscilla Opoku-Kwarteng), a Ghanaian musician who died few years ago. Using the womanist theory, the paper investigates how the tenets of this theory are inscribed in the song, the problems that womanism addresses in the song and their implications to the Ghanaian youth. The researchers conclude from the analysis in the paper that the youth have to use social media with caution; they need to listen to advice from the elderly in choosing life partners and the African woman needs to fight for self-expression and liberation through positive cultural means.

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### INTRODUCTION

Music occupies a unique position in Ghana and Africa in general. It is the “most widely appreciated art in Africa” (Allen, 2004, p. 1) It is not just an art that is most appreciated but it is also used to address a lot of issues in Ghana and Africa in general. It is even used for political militancy and activism and therefore is a “trenchant political site” (Allen, 2004, p. 1) The relationship between music and reality or politics or their symbiotic relation has also been established by researchers such as Omidiora, Ajiboye and Abioye, (2020); Bedwiadzi, (2016, p. 147); Finnegan, (2012, p. 265); Künzler and Reuster-Jahn, (2012, p. 1); Ademilokun, (2012, p. 281); and Henderson and Gilman, (2004) just to mention a few of them here. Gunner (2019) even observes that “a knowledge of political song is essential to being part of a particular community” in Africa.

Despite the relevance of music in all the spheres of life of the Ghanaian or African, popular music has not received enough academic scrutiny in Ghana in particular. In the instances where a few of the scholarly investigations have been conducted into music, the form or style has always received “little” attention in research (Finnegan, 2012, p. 289). In other words, meaning is always privileged over style or expression while in actual fact, music is an art and the two aspects should always be studied together in order to derive maximum meaning from such studies. This paper looks at both the content and form of the track under analysis and it therefore presents an approach that is different from most of the other studies.

Three questions and objectives have been used to guide discussions in the paper: What is the relationship between the lyrics of the song and gender issues and domestic violence in Ghana? How does the form of music enhance its meaning and what message does the track under analysis have for the Ghanaian society? The objectives of the preceding questions are to establish the close link between music as a communicative tool and gender issues as well as domestic violence in Africa; to demonstrate how style contributes to meaning and to establish the reality that the track has a relevant message for Ghanaians in general. From the analysis in the paper, it is observed that the youth have to use social media wisely; they need to pay attention to sermons from the elderly in settling on life partners and the African woman needs to continue to fight for self-expression and liberation through positive cultural means.

Discussions in the paper have been divided into seven sections: an introduction, lyrics and context of the song, methodology, theoretical framework, literature review, analysis and a conclusion. These sections have been provided to facilitate the reading and understanding of the paper.

### LYRICS AND CONTEXT OF THE SONG

Priscilla Opoku-Kwarteng known by her stage name as Ebony Reigns was born on February 16, 1997 and met her untimely death in a car accident on February 8, 2018, just a week shy of clocking twenty-one years. The song under study in this paper was released in 2017 together with other tracks under the album title "Bonyfied". Willisbeatz, a Ghanaian music producer together with the record label Ruff Town Records produced the song.

The song tells the narrative of a young lady who ignores the sound advice of her mother but trusts so much in social media to the extent of probably looking for a husband through such a medium and finally regretting her actions because the husband did not turn out to be who he claimed he was. The husband said he was a banker, not knowing he was a gangster, a bunch of lazy bones, an alcoholic and a marijuana smoker who eventually turned her into a punching bag. This brings to mind a similar situation in Aidoo's play, *Anowa* (1987). In this play, the eponymous character ignores the sound advice from her parents only to marry Kofi Ako who finally betrays her in the play by exchanging his male virility for wealth and setting up Anowa for blame. This is done in a society where infertility is hardly associated with men.

Some interesting issues raised in this song make it popular and relevant for academic research in the Ghanaian context. First, the problem of domestic violence in Ghana in 2017 and even today remains a problematic one. Though the government has made attempts at fighting against the problem by promulgating laws and acts and setting up a unit such as the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (1998) which evolved from the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU), studies still show that domestic violence remains a canker in the Ghanaian social context. Adjah and Agbamafle (2016, p. 8) observed that, "Domestic violence remains unacceptably high in Ghana and should be treated as one of the major public health problems" whose solutions should be sought through engaging multiple stakeholders and through a "culturally acceptable and sustainable" manner. Thus, stake holders such as married couples, boys and girls of school going age, school authorities, the judiciary, the police, the Ghana Health Service and so on all have a contribution to make in order to reduce this phenomenon in Ghana. The means through which the problem can be reduced is by considering the cultural specifics of the country before fashioning out a way to combat it so as not to generate a backlash that is based on the violation of cultural norms. This is what will make the solution a sustainable one. In another report compiled by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) and Associates in 2016, mention is made of as high as 38.7 per cent of ever married Ghanaian women between the ages of 15-49 having "experienced physical, psychological or sexual violence by a husband or a partner at some point in their lives" (p. 22).

The second interesting and relevant issue raised in the track is marriage and how courtship is carried out in the typical Ghanaian setting. Traditionally, “marriage is not simply an affair between individuals who have fallen in love. It is a matter in which the lineages of the contracting parties are generally interested” (Sarpong, 1974, p. 77). Lineages are not simply interested in the marriage but they take active part in the courtship process leading up to marriage by mutually spying on each other “to find out if the person in the other group is worthy of their child” (Sarpong, 1974, p. 81). It is these checks and balances put in place by lineages that will reduce the incidence of conjugal violence and possibly divorce in the future. A gentleman or lady who does not show the qualities of a well brought up person who is industrious and supportive is quickly rejected as a suitable candidate for marriage. In Ghana today and in 2017 when this track was released, a lot of water had gone under the bridge when it comes to due processes or courtship before a marriage is contracted. The youth do not only refuse to listen to their parents but they also feel they know better than their parents thanks to avenues such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and others that can easily be used to make acquaintances. Consequently, the Ghanaian youth of today sometimes contract hastily organized marriages such as the one talked about in the song, without relatives’ consent.

Finally, “Although different age groups use social media, the youths are at the forefront in social media sites all over the world, especially in Ghana” (Dapaah, 2015, p. 41). As at 2014 in Ghana, internet penetration was 20.1 per cent while that of mobile data subscribers was at 59.78 per cent (Dapaah, 2015). These figures have gone up today and it tells us the extent to which the Ghanaian youth are exposed to the internet and social media. Internet and social media are avenues with great potentials for learning, trading, staying in touch with relatives, for research and so on. They are full of great opportunities for improving our lives. However, these avenues are also full of negative influences and snares that the youth have to be wary about. “Social media has the strength to influence people’s lives for better or for worse” and youth “should avoid excessive use” and reliance on it (Dapaah, 2015, p. 41). Perhaps, if the young lady in the song had not relied so much on social media as a medium of choosing a life partner, she would not be regretting at the end of it. Below are the full lyrics of the song before the analysis is done on it.

### **Maame Hwɛ: *Imagine, Mother***

I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now

One day you will know  
 These are the words of my mother  
 As I'm getting old  
 Ebi now wey I remember  
 So I'm parking all my tools  
 I'm going back a home  
 A young girl like me  
 Shouldn't be caught with an old school fool

He told me he was a banker, not knowing bank robber  
 This man is a Gangster, Bukom Banku Boxer  
 Osori anopaaa, bolabo bodambo oo (*In the morning, he only drinks excessive alcohol*)  
 eduru awiah ahh, soccer ne ganja nkoa oo (*In the afternoon, he is into only soccer and marijuana*)  
 Now he dey beat me every night and day, Maame Hwɛ (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 You use to warn me but I didn't wanna know, Maame Hwɛ (*Imagine, Mother*)

Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Hwe nia akwaa nu de ye me (*Imagine, Mother. Imagine what this riffraff has done to me*)

Na pikin no dey hear Mama (*The youth do not listen to their mothers*)  
 Pikin no dey hear papa (*The youth do not listen to their fathers*)  
 ende nkwalaa ya ba, Social Media yeda (*Today's youth believe so much in social media*)  
 Beye na yabo obra pa (*How can you live a good life*)  
 Beye na yeya Odo pa (*How can you find true love?*)  
 Nanso akwalaa no die – Wohu koto ani aa wo se abaa oo (*It is because you are just a child that you insist the crab's eye is a stick*)

He told me he was a banker, not knowing bank robber  
 This man is a Gangster, Bukom Banku Boxer  
 Osori anopaaa, bolabo bodambo oo (*In the morning, he only drinks excessive alcohol*)  
 eduru awiah ahh, soccer ne ganja nkoa oo (*In the afternoon, he is into only soccer and marijuana*)  
 Now he dey beat me every night and day, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 You use to warn me but I didn't wanna know, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)

Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine, Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Hwe nia akwaa nu de ye me (*Imagine, Mother. Imagine what this riffraff has done to me*)

I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now  
 I hate you so much right now

One day you will know  
 These are the words of my mother  
 As I'm getting old  
 Ebi now wey I remember  
 So I'm parking all my tools  
 I'm going back a home  
 A young girl like me  
 Shouldn't be caught with an old school fool

He told me he was a banker  
 Not knowing bank robber  
 This man is a Gangster  
 Bukom Banku Boxer  
 Now he dey beat me every night and day, Maame Hwe (*Imagine Mother*)  
 You use to warn me but I didn't wanna know, Maame Hwe (*Imagine Mother*)

Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine Mother. Imagine Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Maame Hwe (*Imagine Mother*)  
 Maame Hwe oo, Hwe nia akwaa nu de ye me (*Imagine Mother. Imagine what this riffraff has done to me*)

I hate you so much right now  
 (<https://lyricstranslate.com>)

## METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative one that undergirds its arguments on the theory of womanism. The theory of womanism is selected for the study since it is the message of womanism that is at the center in the selected song text. The song text has been purposively selected for analysis in the study. The popularity of the song among all age groups in Ghana, the regular and huge air time it has always enjoyed on radio and television as at 2017 and 2018, the age of the artiste which is twenty (20) years and the fact that this age group is among the 38.7 per cent of women who have suffered various forms of domestic violence in their lives, the fact that she is a female since the incidence of domestic violence against the female and male genders in Ghana differs, (38.7 and 27.7 per cent, IDS, GSS & Associates, 2016, p. 22), and the content of the song that raises pertinent issues on domestic violence, marriage and the use of social media among the Ghanaian youth are the criteria used in selecting it. The lyrics of the song have been collected from a music site: <https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>. The song text constitutes the primary data while other scholarly works on music and feminism in Ghana and Africa in general constitute the secondary source of data for arguments in the paper. A close textual analysis is then applied to the content of the song text in order to reveal the message it carries and how this message is communicated since it is the 'how' that has received "little" attention in research (Finnegan, 2012, p. 289).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist theory, according to Tyson, "examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (2006, p. 83). In other words, feminism "seeks to understand ways in which women are oppressed – socially, economically, politically and psychologically – in order to reduce, if not eliminate their oppression" (Bressler, 2007, p. 144). Feminism in reality, is not entirely a twentieth century phenomenon. "It has antecedents going all the way back to ancient Greece in the work of Sappho and arguably in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata*" (Habib, 2005, p.667) Thus activists such as Christian de Pisan, Catherine de Roches, Aphra Behn, Anne Bradstreet, Mary Wollstonecraft, Emily Dickinson, Simon de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf whose lives span across different centuries have actively been involved in the fight against female oppression. The development of feminist criticism, however, gained momentum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has gone through several waves since then. Today, we are not only talking about different waves of feminism but adherents to the theory are also talking about "feminisms in order to underscore the multiplicity of points of view of its adherents and offer ways of thinking" that oppose the traditional and patriarchal way of treating women in society (Tyson, 2006, p. 83)

It is therefore not surprising that other models of feminism have been developed in Africa to cater for the peculiarities and experiences of the African woman. For feminists in Africa, the charges against western feminism are about three fold: the fact that western feminism tries to impose experiences of western (white) women on all women as the only form of feminism, that western feminism literally expunges men from feminist spaces and discourses and rather dub them as the enemy; and finally, on the basis of race, African women are described as women of color and their cultural and historical trajectories are simply repressed in feminist theorizing. F. C. Steady in 1981 actually proclaimed that "black women, particularly those from the African continent, were the original feminists" (Decker, 2018, p. 119). Steady defined "true feminism" as stemming from "an actual experience of oppression, a lack of the socially prescribed means of ensuring one's wellbeing, and a true lack of access to resources for survival" (1981, p. 36). Following this declaration, African feminists, particularly those from Nigeria have developed about six different models of feminisms that are based on African culture and ideology but are derivatives of western feminism.

Womanism, the most popular and problematic among these African models of feminism was propounded first by Alice Walker. Walker constructed a new definition of feminism to cater for the rights of women of color which she felt had been repressed in the mainstream definition of the term. Walker constructed a “new feminity, equating the liminal phase of becoming woman with being grown-up, serious, and in charge of her affairs” (Amaefula, 2021, p. 291). In Walker’s own words, a womanist is, “1. Acting grown up. Being grown up...Responsible. In charge. Serious. 2. A woman who loves other women, sexually/or nonsexually” (1984, xi-xii). Walker’s definition of a womanist would have sufficed but two charges are leveled against it: first, critics such as Hudson-Weems described Walker’s definition of Black Womanism as one that relates to African American Women’s experience more than the experience of women of color in general and second, the lesbian thrust of Walker’s definition is also denied especially in Africa where there is a total rejection of the phenomenon based on cultural and religious grounds. These are the two reasons that led to the re-tooling of the definition of womanism by Kolawole and others as the phenomenon of black women’s encounter with culture, colonialism and many other forms of control that condition the lives of African women (Ogunyemi, 1985, Kolawole, 1997). Whereas womanism does not define the black women as those from Africa alone or from the diaspora alone or a combination of both, stiwanism which is the second model, talks about “feminism in an African context” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 207). Motherism, the third model, redefines feminism by focusing on rural women who are entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing society despite their arduous task of sustaining the family and society in the rural context (Acholonu, 1995). Femalism, the fourth theory, argues that “the female body in the raw” constitutes a site for feminist discourse (Opara, 2005, p. 192). Nego-feminism (Nnaemeka, 2003) and snail-sense feminism (Ezeigbo, 2012) are both models of feminism that “are firmly hinged on a tripod of gender inclusion, complementarity and collaboration” and they therefore expand further the tenets of feminism (Nkealah, 2016, p. 62). Kolawole adds to womanism as a theory by focusing on “the totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways” (Kolawole, 1997, p. 24). Thus the African woman must express herself, her identity and assert herself totally in positive cultural ways. In fighting for her voice, identity and independence, the African woman is guided by the cultural context within which these struggles go on; it does not mean the woman throwing overboard everything cultural in order to assert herself. It is this definition of feminism given by Kolawole that is used to guide discussions in this paper. Womanism by Kolawole is first and foremost a derivative from mainstream feminism and from Walker’s Black Womanism. Kolawole’s womanism is therefore different from the mainstream western feminism and Walker’s Black Womanism in the sense that it talks about the experience of the black woman everywhere (whether in Africa or the diaspora) in her fight for “self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways” (Kolawole, 1997, p. 24) without necessarily expunging men from this fight or seeing them as enemies; without throwing her culture overboard; and without imposing her experience as the same thing happening to all other women in other cultural set-ups throughout the world. The black woman faces a peculiar experience in her fight for equity due to issues of color, culture, and levels of development in Africa which the western one does not take into consideration. Womanism by Kolawole is therefore more apt to capture the African woman’s experiences than western mainstream feminism and Walker’s Black Womanism in the context of this paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

African music and songs are not just purely aesthetic phenomena that are to be enjoyed artistically. Their genesis can always be traced to the social, moral, economic, religious or the political contexts of the society within which they are generated. To this end, Nketia (1975) observed that African music is at once both a musical and a social phenomenon. Emielu also confirmed this observation by saying that “African popular music is a socially responsive phenomenon” (Emielu, 2011, p. 371). Thus this kind of music responds to the social needs, questions and ambivalences within the African society. It is therefore composed with the aim of

providing musical delight and at the same time communicating a message that is of relevance to the young and old in the society. Abarry (1989, p. 202) therefore concludes that children songs, like those of the adults, “promote cultural continuity and growth and stress the imbibing of the moral, social, and other qualities” that would mold Ga children into good members of their community.

Music and lyrics often go together but most of the time, lyrics are not studied as music (Juslin, 2005). This often leads to the situation where the lyrics of songs are relegated to the background when studying music despite the fact that these “words, or lyrics, add something powerful to the songs we listen to” (Ransom, 2015, p. 3). To Ransom therefore, music is an “effective way to communicate to the masses, and lyrics have played a massive role in delivering this communication” (2015, p. 2). The lyrics of a piece of music are as important as the music itself and deserve to be given critical attention. Words alone make one think, and music makes one feel but a song which has both music and words makes you “feel thoughts” (Alonso, 2012, preface section, paragraph 12). Thus, studying the lyrics of a song will not only reveal the message embedded in the song, but it will also open up the context of the song which is the society and help us identify the issues the song is addressing from that social context.

Consequently, some publications on songs in Africa and their contribution to national discourse have been made. However, these publications are woefully inadequate considering the musical output from the continent and the fact that most of these musical products have lyrics in them that can be studied against the background from which they are generated. Hogan (2008) looks at women songs in West Africa as a site for gendered modes of resistance. Song performance constitutes one of the platforms through which women from Niger, Nigeria and Guinea are able to contribute their voices to confront local social issues as well as transnational political conflicts. This, they are able to do, through verbal arts despite their low levels of education and the limited opportunities given women in such societies to express themselves. Onyebadi (2018) uses framing theory and textual analysis to analyze the lyrics of the music of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Lucky Dube, and Alpha Blondy and to draw the conclusion that the three musicians are political activists who campaigned against corruption, citizen marginalization and called for cessation of war and bloodshed in the continent. Künzler and Reuster-Jahn (2018) also looked at the contribution of music to political discourse in Africa, particularly East Africa in an article entitled “Mr. President: Musical Open Letters as Political Commentary in Africa.” The paper focused on the ability of the youth to use music to run political commentary in which issues normally raised could not have been easily addressed in ordinary dialogue between the youth and their political leadership. These and other publications have touched on the relevance of the lyrics of the song in Africa to carry message and to impact social discourse. However, none of these publications has looked into the womanist inscriptions embedded in Ebony Reigns song entitled “Maame Hwe”. Thus, apart from identifying and explaining instances of womanist inscriptions in the song, the literary approach used in this paper also takes care of the theme(s) of the song, the devices used and their impact on the interpretation of the song. The paper also considers the relevance and suitability of the diction used in the song in order to enhance meaning.

### ANALYSIS OF THE SONG

In “Maame Hwe” (*Imagine, Mother*) Ebony begins the story of the song by sharing the present situation of her persona’s plight; then she takes us into the future through flash-forward and then brings us back in time, in a flashback scene, to her mother’s caution. Thus, the story starts *in medias res* in the song, creating suspense and whetting the appetite of listeners who would be interested in finding out why the young lady hates her partner so much.

I hate you so much right now  
I hate you so much right now  
I hate you so much right now

I hate you so much right now  
 One day you will know  
 These are the words of my mother  
 As I'm getting old, ebi now wey I remember  
 So I'm parking all my tools  
 I'm going back a home  
 A young girl like me  
 Shouldn't be caught with an old school fool. (<https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>)

The repetition of the first four lines which loudly registers the hate she has for her estranged lover and abuser, is calculated to emphasize her deep seated regret, which is a result of the lies, beatings and betrayals she has experienced from her male lover. The number of the repeated lines is significant. For the first line to be repeated four times means that this hate is beyond any attempt at reconciliation. Just after registering her deep seated hate, she fast tracks the story and makes it inclusive with the use of the second person "you" (one day you will know). The use of the pronoun "you" means the mother could be addressing the young lady in particular or any other young lady since it is the same spelling for both the singular and plural forms. The pronoun here may not have a particular addressee. The pronoun being plural in form, is addressing any youth or young woman who, like the song's victim, ignores her mother's caution and moves into the house of a woman-batterer. It is in the use of the plural "you" then, that forcibly ropes in the listeners since anybody can be a "you" especially those whose age is within the age bracket of the sufferer (19-24). The capacity of the "you" as used here is calculated as a means to transfer listeners of this song gradually from an outside view where they see the story as someone else's tragic story to an inside view, from which the behavior of this reckless and strong-willed daughter makes perfect sense within the context of the heedless behavior of some of her peers.

The use of the future tense (one day you will know) also serves as a caution to any of her peers who are in or planning to enter into such foolhardy relationship against the advice of their mothers. Women as mothers are generally respected and admired. It is thus not strange that the daughter quotes her mother's words. The answer to the question why "not her father's words" lies in the fact that in most societies, it is the mother who is expected to train and nurture the child especially the girl-child into adulthood (Foucault, 1990). Kolawole's observation that the average African woman sources her pride in her motherhood status is very relevant to our discussion here (Kolawole, 1997). The overt manifestation of motherhood which lasts throughout the children's life is at the heart of the womanism theory.

Kolawole argues that African women's self-definition focuses on positive collectivity as opposed to individuality. It also endorses the over-manifestation of womanhood and motherhood with no apologia (1997, p. 97). Kolawole is of the view that the mother figure in Africa usually is bent on cautioning her reckless daughter even when the daughter has presumably entered adulthood. This practice, expressed in Kolawole's words as "an overt manifestation of motherhood" serves as a catalyst for the traumatized daughter's decision to go back and connect with her mother like a baby whose survival depends on the milk of her mother. This traumatized daughter defiantly announces:

I'm going back a home  
 A young girl like me  
 Shouldn't be caught with an old school fool. (<https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>)

Having recognized her earlier rash behavior, this daughter now blames her plight on her refusal to heed the call of her mother and considers this act as her anathema. Thus, the use of the base adjective "young" to qualify the feminine gender "girl" is very striking. It is as though to say she is not yet ready for this relationship, she simply refers to herself as a "young girl" thus emphasizing her immaturity and her need of her mother's

training. This remorseful and subordinate stance taken by the daughter recalls to mind the plight of Ama Ata Aidoo's eponymous Anowa, who, like this traumatized daughter refuses to heed her mother's advice to refrain from marrying a lousy man, only to be betrayed by the man who accused her of barrenness, whereas in reality it is the problem of the man. Anowa, out of remorse and disappointment commits suicide but not without asserting that "somebody should have taught me how to be a woman" (Aidoo, 1987, p. 112).

Ebony's "Maame Hwe" then is a cry not only against male chauvinism and abuse but more importantly it establishes the cultural role of the mother as a trainer, an advisor, a nurturer and a keeper of life. Kolawole argues that the African woman, though a believer in the institution of marriage and family is not passive when it comes to patriarchal abuse. She is a fighter in the face of abuse and a respecter of her cultural norms (Kolawole, 1997) Consequently the average African woman's exultation of marriage and family values and assertion of femininity are important canons of African womanhood. Nonetheless, these women are crying out for justice where these values and traditions are abused or when the ideals of African culture are perverted in the patriarchal structure (Kolawole, 1997, p. 198) Ebony's "Maame Hwe" then is a cry against domestic violence just as her mother's earlier caution, steeped in a serious proverb/ traditional wisdom is also a step calculated at leaning on tradition and culture to direct and map out a clear path for the daughter.

The mother's use of the proverb: 'Nanso akwalaa na wodee – wuhu koto aniaa wose abaa oo' (It is because you are just a child that you insist the crab's eye is a stick) is very significant on two major counts. Firstly, it gives this rather contemporary song a traditional texture in the sense that, proverbs are considered not only as wise sayings but are more imbued with traditional truths which stand the test of time. Secondly, it also hints that the mother's ability to caution her daughter is linked to her knowledge of traditional wisdom. The proverb referred to here is deployed to reveal not only the daughter's immaturity but also her reckless behavior. It is the wrong interpretation and calculation of this traumatized daughter which lands her in trouble within this conjugal relationship. For if a child holds a crab's eye which she insists is a cane then she cannot blame anyone when her fingers or hands get caught up in its claws!

The use of the proverb, though a reminder of her mother's caution is also a way of absolving her mother of blame as though to say – (you told me so) and lay the blame on her immaturity. Kolawole's observation on the use of some proverbs is interesting, since it points out that in the traditional setting proverbs are used to criticize right yet dangerous behavior of women; "Proverbs, by their succinct pragmatic centrality in daily discourse, are equally deployed to validate several negative images of women." (Kolawole, 1997, p. 64)

The extrapolation of this proverb: 'Nanso akwalaa na wodee – wuhu koto aniaa wose abaa oo', thus exalts the mother as a wise guardian of tradition and shows how the idealization of the mother figure has filtered positively into creative works of popular culture. Thus to quickly reference this proverb is to confess the validity of the proverb and imply her decision to be allowed to be trained as a wife in the traditional way rather than through social media. The persona uses social to get married, ignoring all the warnings from the mother and the marriage fails woefully because social media is also full of deception. Thus, the ability to use social media to get married does not make one a successful wife or husband. It takes proper training, upbringing and true courtship to identify a suitable partner. Social media has failed our persona and she now turns to her mother who represents true tradition in this context. The statistics on the Ghanaian youths' addiction to social media is staggering. According to Markwei and Appiah (2016), the dangers associated with social media addiction in Ghana are real:

The increased use of social media or social network sites (SNS) by youth across the world has several consequences. They include privacy concerns such as sharing too much information, posting of false information about themselves or others, exposure to fraudsters and marketers, and addictions to internet or social media use that might impact negatively on their social, psychological and emotional well-being. (p. 2)

The crimes cited above are all seen in Ebony's "Maame Hwe". As the traumatized daughter lays the blame of her wrong choice of a man on her addiction to social media, she vividly sketches out moments in her abusive cohabitation setting. The lies put out there on social media landed her in the house of this abuser. In the song, the persona catalogues her partner's crime thus:

He told me he was a banker  
 Not knowing a bank robber  
 This man is a gangster, Bukom Banku boxer  
 Osori anopaa, bolambo bolambo ooh  
 Eduru awia ah  
 Soccer ne ganja nkoa a  
 Now he dey beat me  
 Every night and day  
 Maame hwe (<https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>).

It can be deduced from the accusatory tone, the frustration of the victim, and the unruly daughter whose refusal to heed her mother's call all result in all things falling apart. These lyrics thus represent the effects of social media both on young men and women. To get the girl's attention and love, he lied he was a banker, the reality however is that upon staying with him, she realizes he rather robs the banks. She calls him a gangster – a tough ruffian involved in crimes against humanity. His activities during the day include drinking of alcohol; "bolambo bolambo" (bottles upon bottles). The repetition of bottles in this line thus exhibits the use of synecdoche where the container is used to represent its alcoholic contents. It is in the repetitive use of bottles (bolambo bolambo) through which she highlights the man's addiction to alcohol the more. In the afternoon, this criminal (when not in character) watches soccer and smokes cannabis – referred to here as "ganja". The word "ganja" is a Hindi name for hemp/marijuana, which is a psychoactive drug naturally invested with euphoric and hallucinogenic properties imbued with the potency of making its addicts act unconventionally and even suffer mental illness (<https://www.shabdkosh.com>).

The reference to the smoking of this weed is to elicit emotional attachment to her plight for when one is under the influence of the cannabis, everything is done abnormally. It is not surprising then that after smoking ganja, he beats her in the evening, even into the next day. The enumeration of her estranged lover's criminal activities then becomes the daughter's case against her abuser and the reason underpinning her bold act of leaving his house.

It is significant to note that at the time of recording this song, Ebony Reigns herself was not married. Though beautiful and young, her dressing and stage mannerisms drew a lot of criticism from a section of the Ghanaian populace who felt she was a bad influence on the youth who are addicted to her songs and lifestyle. Indeed, Ebony's youth and vibrancy on stage lent a resemblance to the young woman who is the subject of "Maame Hwe". After relating her ordeal, she calls on her mother to have a look at her pathetic state, the result of her immaturity and insolence. The repetition of the refrain – Maame hwe (done seven times) is calculated to absolve her mother of blame, as the number seven is significant. It is not only spiritual; it also has symbolic, mythological, mathematical, esoteric and other meanings associated with it (Asante & Mazama, 2009). Thus for the seven times that "hwe" – "imagine" is repeated she seeks to reaffirm her stance that enough is enough and that she is breaking out from the fetters of the abuser whose behavior towards her reduces him to a nonentity, captured in the Akan translation as "Akwaa" (Hwe nia Akwaa no de ye me – look at what the nonentity is doing to me).

From the behavior of the young man narrated here, we glean that he is an archetypal character who together with the young woman (daughter) acts out the motif of the song – if you fail to heed the advice of your mother you will definitely land in the house of a woman-beater. The major strength of the song's motif is that it injects

hope in a somewhat hopeless situation; for unlike Anowa who commits suicide rather than connect with her mother, Ebony's battered young woman, like the prodigal son in the popular biblical story makes a U-turn to her mother's home. The juxtapositioning of home and house is significant. In the man's house she is battered, a home is where one finds unconditional acceptance and relief.

I'm packing all my things

I am going back a home. (<https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>)

The use of the standard English and patois is significant in the sense that patois itself is a product of the slaves' desire for a language that distances their communication from their slave masters. According to Ruby Madden (2009), patois originally developed as a pidgin. It is a combination of English and African languages which according to Madden "reflects the struggles of slaves and ancestry from Africa as well as the European colonization and influence throughout history on the Island of Jamaica considered as a rough language of protest." It is therefore significant that Ebony used this patois to protest the rough handling meted out to the victim. In fact in "Maame Hwe" the use of language(s) is significant as it is woven into the content of the lyrics to create levels of meaning in the song. Code mixing and code switching are intricately interwoven and are laced with deep meaning.

Whenever standard English is used it connotes the truth as well as the seriousness of the issue:

I hate you so much right now

One day you will know

These are the words of my mother-daughter

As am getting old

So I'm packing all my tools

A young girl like me

Shouldn't be caught with

An old school fool

He told me he was a banker

This man is a gangster. (<https://glammynews.com/2017/12/lyrics-ebony>)

The use of standard English is strategically employed to communicate the reality, truth and seriousness of the issue at stake. However, the use of English is interspersed with the use of pidgin. The use of code switching is calculated to create a special effect and in this paper the effect is to target and attract the interest of rough guys (old school fools like her boy lover) to listen to her plight and make corrective interventions in their relationship. In discussing the difference between code switching and code mixing, Payal Khullar has this to say "The key difference between code mixing and code switching is indeed that code switching has a special social pragmatic consequence while code mixing does not" (2018, p. 1).

In "Maame Hwe", the 'switching' is done for the purpose of targeting a particular audience who comprise addicts, drug pushers, criminals, irresponsible young men and the like who are associated with female abuse. Payal Khullar (2018) asserts that "code mixing is done more out of linguistic requirement" and for Ebony's "Maame Hwe" the use of code mixing, apart from addressing a target – her estranged lover and his colleagues – also signifies a limitation in translation. For example, how can "Bukom Banku Boxer" be translated? "Bukom Banku" is the boxing name of a famous boxer who hails from Bukom (a suburb in Accra, known for training fierce boxers). Bukom Banku apart from hailing from Bukom is also a lover of banku, a maize meal eaten with fish and pepper. Stout and strong, 'Bukom Banku Boxer' is used metaphorically to refer to the dangerous punches the persona has been receiving from her boyfriend. Her reference and comparison of her estranged lover's punches to Bukom Banku Boxer makes this traumatised daughter analogous to a punching bag in the hands of her estranged lover (old school fool). Thus, it is the inability to use adequate translation equivalent to "Bukom Banku Boxer" which accounts for its original use in this context. To add to this reason is also the fact

that, Bukom Banku himself is a boxer who does not limit his dangerous punches only to the ring; the least provocation outside the ring and you are sure to see Bukom Banku on the defensive.

The use of “Bukom Banku” in this context thus creates trauma in the reader/listener and evokes empathy for the traumatised daughter who suffers these punches. We also identify the use of Akan in “Maame Hwe.” Indeed, the title of the song is “Maame hwe” which translates as “Imagine Mother.” The song text itself is replete with Akan words. This is another evidence of code switching in which a song which is sung in the English language is suffused also with Akan expressions and even a Fante and Asante line: *Ɔsori anopaa, bolambo bolambo oo, Eduru awia ahh...* (when he wakes up in the morning, it is the bottle (alcohol)). In the afternoon it is all about football and marijuana.

It is interesting to note that when the direct addressee is the mother, the traumatised daughter connects with her using pure Akan:

Ɛnɛ nkwalaa yaba social media yeda  
 Bɛyɛ den na yenya obra pa  
 Bɛyɛ den na yenya odo pa  
 (Today's children are addicted to social media information (relationships)  
 How then can they live a good life?  
 How then can they make good lovers?)

The use of the Twi (Akan) in these lines is to lay the blame of her unruly behavior and that of her estranged lover on social media addiction. She is not blaming her mother; she is blaming herself for allowing social media training to take the place of her mother's corrective training. Though social media offers young people several benefits and opportunities which include easy access to information, social skills practice, identity expression, informal learning experiences etc. (Markei and Appiah, 2016), it is also a dangerous communicative medium of information dissemination when not censored. It is the erring daughter's preference to work only with information on conjugal relationships gathered only from social media which becomes her bane.

Directly following her confession and disillusionment is her recourse to a proverb her mother used which succinctly captures her immaturity and reckless behavior: *Nanso akwalaa na wodeɛ – wuhu koto ani aa wose abaa oo* (For the child, it insists that the crab's eye is only a stick). The crab is usually found in holes and it only pops out its eyes to catch prey. Even though the eye might look attractive and like a stick, it portends danger for the prey that touches it. This proverb speaks deep truth about accepting parental judgement and training rather than just being headstrong.

The erring daughter's recall of her mother's proverb has three significant implications. The proverb becomes a connective tool which makes it easier for her to solicit the empathy of her mother – “I have been bitten by the crab mum”. Secondly, the use of the proverb is calculated at absolving the mother of blame, as though to tell her mother, “Mother you told me so”. Thirdly, the use of the proverb signifies that the erring daughter has not only learnt her lesson the hard way but is remorseful and more than willing to be a good student of her mother's training.

Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* also highlights the significance of proverbs in African speeches. He observes “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1958, p.7) Without palm oil, one gets choked when eating dry foods like yam. Oil facilitates the chewing of this food. This means that proverbs enhance the meaning of words and they are a powerful interconnective tool. The use of this proverb thus is also a call on the youth to learn traditional wisdom which can also be derived from proverbs. The beauty of proverbs is far

reaching since it is connected to meaning making, universality of audience participation and gives insight into African cultures (Finnegan, 2012). The use of this proverb in “Maame Hwe” then becomes a wake-up call to the erring youth to be cautious of social media addiction and unruly lovers who come clothed in sheep humility.

## FINDINGS

In an era where social media information is competing fiercely with the teachings of our parents (mothers and fathers) the youth need to be aware that in as much as they have to tap into the benefits of social media information, they also need to be aware of its inherent dangers by giving themselves the opportunity of benefiting from their mother’s and father’s training. “Maame Hwe” is not only about domestic violence in a cohabitation relationship, it speaks volumes about erring youth who get glued to social media. Probably the song “Maame Hwe” is also a call on daughters to also know what constitutes the verifiable dangers of social media so as to use it to learn with caution.

What emerges from this examination of Ebony Reigns’ “Maame Hwe” is credible womanist inscription on a contemporary situation of social media addiction beyond a mere concern with domestic violence in which a young and unruly woman gets abused by her equally young and unruly lover. “Maame Hwe” captures the dangers within this era and how not to fall into them by listening and adhering more to our mother’s training. The song “Maame Hwe”, in line with the womanist quest for “positive self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways” is a cry against injustice and social subjugation. The persona sings out her plight both as therapy and identity reformation. She also sings out her plight as a means of asserting her independence. Having refused to be caught in a web of abuse, she is not only free from domestic violence, she is also free to learn from her mother on how to be a woman/mother.

## CONCLUSION

Here is a fresh female voice addressing the need for young girls (young women) to respect their mother’s tuition. Ebony Reigns’ life can be likened to a flare which flashed brightly and darkened prematurely in a gory road accident, yet her song “Maame Hwe” which she sings in her usual raunchy, sultry voice, demonstrates the productive process of music as a way of dealing with bitterness and insensitivity displayed by some unruly young men in their relationship with young women. The message is clear and penetrative. In this era, it is only when young women listen to parental tuition, that voice of intuition (muse) that they can escape from bad relationships and domestic abuse. Music is therefore not meant for entertainment alone but it also has a lot of relevant messages to communicate to listeners. Efforts should therefore be made by relevant stake holders in the Ministry of Education in Ghana to include a topic or topics that discuss relevant and contemporary aspects of Ghanaian music in the educational syllabi at different levels in the educational ladder.

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