

## POETIC ELEMENTS AND THE CRITIQUE OF MORALITY IN TWO ADAMU DANMARAYA'S SONGS ON MARRIAGE

DIKKO MU'AZU

Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina

### Abstract

This paper studies the effect of poetic elements in the development of themes that revolve around morality in Adamu Danmaraya's marriage songs. The two songs from Danmaraya's collection are "Auren Dole" (A Forced Marriage) and "Jawabin Aure" (A Discourse on Marriage). The paper explores how various elements of poetry abound in the songs and help in making the thematic expostulation of issues concerning marriage possible. The assessment of moral instruction in the marriage songs is drawn upon the ideas of Russian Formalism propounded by Roman Jakobson and Rene Wellek in 1930s. The research findings show that oral song is a grand antidote or panacea for numerous problems and challenges confronting the institution of marriage in Hausa society. The research further uncovers that Hausa oral songs entail some meaningful messages that, if carefully examined, they can lead to sound union of the couple.

**Keywords:** morality, poetry, Hausa society, songs

### Introduction

Most African societies have great attachment to oral songs. As a matter of fact, folksong, as an integral part of Africa's cultures and traditions, are veritable medium of expressions in African communities. Important moral messages, traditional norms and values are typically passed through oral songs especially during traditional rituals. In Hausaland, for example, oralsingers play the role of peace keepers and promoters of cultural heritage of their society (Fennigan, 140). Abdulkadir posits that, "Various aspects of Hausa/Fulani society can be discerned through singer's functions" (50). Similarly, Ojukwu and Esimonye assert that folksongs are used for "expression of the totality of a people's way of life, their traditions, indigenous practices which are peculiar to them without the interference of other cultures" (165).

It can therefore be observed that no artists – oral singers exude – operate in a vacuum. Literary works in any form are made by the people (the performers) and for the people (the audience). Through this communication channel, oral singers address issues concerning a society as Okiche notes that "The writer's environment constitutes a major determining factor that influences what and who he/she writes for..." (7). It is against this backdrop, marriage becomes a recurring topic that predominantly envisaged in Hausa literary outputs. Marital issues have for long been captured in Hausa tales and songs. One outstanding

Hausa singer whose songs have great impact on the social life of Hausa people, and whose oral songs address the social phenomenon of marriage, is Adamu Danmaraya. His two selected marriage songs that will be subjected to textual analysis in this paper include "Auren Dole" (A Forced Marriage) and "Jawabin Aure" (A Discourse on Marriage).

### Theoretical Framework

A theory adopted in this study is Russian Formalism. It is a theory that has a "focus on the patterns and technical devices of literature..." (Abrams and Harpham, 126). Developed in Russia in the early twentieth century, Russian Formalism is a literary movement that informed the ideas of American New Criticism and French Structuralism in 1960s. Its practice followed the founding of the Moscow Linguistic Circle in 1915, the Petrograd Society for the Study of Poetic Language in 1916 and the Prague Linguistic Circle by Rene Wellek and Roman Jakobson in 1930s (Baburajan, 8). According to Roman Jakobson (cited in Abrams and Harpham, 127) "The object of study in literary science is not literature but literariness; that is, what makes a given work a literary work." Therefore, in their attempt to evaluate or interpret the meaning of a text, formalist scholars do not consider the author's cultural and social background or ideologies as significance to its understanding. Rather, they take into account the literary elements such as poetic language, imagery, rhyme, rhythm, point of view and other technical devices and formal patterns a work of art is enriched with

(Baburajan, 8).

One important feature of formalism is the idea of 'defamiliarisation' formulated by Victor Shlovsky (1893-1984) in his essay, "Art as Technique". Babujana describes it as, "the process of making strange" (9). He further added that, "Art, however, can recover the 'sensation' of life which has been lost to habit and abstraction. Artist exchange or make objects unfamiliar by using literary convention" (ibid). This implies that a literary writer or artist does not communicate with his audience in a plain or an ordinary language; rather, he enriches his art with a poetic language illuminated by various literary devices. Therefore, understanding an artistic work depends entirely on the reader's familiarity with the devices as Baumgarten (cited in Mautner, 32) observes that, "a realm of poetry, a realm of concrete knowledge in which content is communicated in sensory form".

### **Poetic Elements**

In poetic composition, poets/singers make careful selection of words to express their deepest thoughts, feelings and emotions. Basically, their messages are conveyed to their audience in a figurative language, which is "a conspicuous departure from what competent users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect" (Abram and Harphan, 118). Murphy points out that, "When a poet writes a poem, he uses the English words that are available to all speakers of English. What makes him a poet, however, is that he uses them with greater awareness, sensibility and greater artistry" (22). Therefore, poets and singers employ a special tone and language devices relevant in his craft. These devices are like bricks that erect and decorate the internal structure of a poetic genre. In other words, the devices do not only bring beauty to his art, but also they make it possible for him to effectively communicate with his intended audience.

Although most oral poetry is a freeverse (Habib, 26) that does not follow strict conventions or a specific fixed pattern like a written poetry, yet it compensates its inconsistencies with unique poetic elements. Some of the elements common to Hausa oral songs are devices of meaning, sound and comparison. Whitla writes that, "perhaps the

most common observation made by readers is that poetry is a highly charged language, made up of figures of speech that twist and turn language out of the commonplace to produce meanings and new associations" (177). In their artistry, Hausa oral singers utilize such devices to conveniently convey their convincing moral messages to their audience.

### **The Concept of Morality**

Anwuluorah and Asike postulate that, "Generally, morality originates from religious considerations, and so pervasive in religion in Nigerian culture that the two cannot be separated" (192). However, this assertion has been disputed by many scholars in the fields of sociology and psychology such as Jean Piaget (1965), Lawrence Kohlberg (1975) to mention but few. While the role of religion in promoting morality cannot be denied, scholars like Haidt opines that, "... prosocial religions have been important cultural solutions that contributed to the creation of anonymous, moral communities, but clearly they are not necessary for morality" (380). In view to the latter assertion, Piaget defines morality as "the understanding of and adherence to rules through one's own volition" (Berns, 522). To Haidt, morality is an "interlocking set of values, virtues, norms, practices and identities, institutions, technologies, and evolved psychological mechanisms that work together to regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible" (270).

From time immemorial, man as a social being lives in accordance with certain social cords or set of rules that guide his dealings with other human beings in his natural environment (Anwuluorah and Asike, 190). The set of rules or standards that regulate the activities of a man living in a geographical entity is known as morality. Even though morality is not codified anywhere in the society, the set of values and norms that underline goodness or wrongness in the society are known and respected by all members of a community. Violating or breaking the moral standards in the community is regarded as an offence which may account for punishment by facial expression or capital punishment like charging a fine or caning or subjecting the law breaker to hard labour like farming or serving a jail

term. Berns posits that, “Morality involves obeying society’s rules for daily living such as not stealing, not assaulting, maligning another’s character and so on. It also involves one’s conscience or personal rules for interacting with others, such as being kind, cooperative, and helpful” (521).

Morality, as a concept, encompasses a wide range of human activities and chief among them is dress cords, modes of talking, walking and greeting. Failure to live in accordance with these principles agreed or accepted in the society will identify one as corruptibly immoral since he fails to adhere strictly to the ways of ancestors. It is a well-known fact that literary compositions are one of the vital outlets where morality is addressed. A popular adage goes that, “a pen is more powerful than a word”. A song or tale is used to preserve and transmit people’s norms and to criticize those who lost track or violate the principles. Even where the society is upright, a singer can use his craft to urge people to maintain social decorum. Therefore, when effectively used, a work of art can serve as a vehicle of restoring morality in the society.

#### **Textual Analysis of Danmaraya’s Songs**

Oral song is an instrument of combating social malady and teaching morals in the society. Furniss expatiates that singers “are constantly telling people what to do, how to behave, how to not behave, what to think and quiet often how to vote” (214). In spite of the efforts to integrate Africans with literacy, folksong remains intact and, to present day, maintains its role of imparting social mores. Although oral poetry and written

“Uwa da uba ga gargadi:  
Auren tilas babu kyau,  
Shi ya kan saka yara gantali;  
Uwa da uba ga gargadi:  
Kun ga auren tilas babu kyau,  
Ya kan saka yara gantali,  
Domin Allah baya so;  
Annabin Allah ma baya so,  
Domin ya yi hani a yi.”

*Here is a warning for the parents:  
Forced marriage is unfair,  
It drives children out of home;  
Here is a warning for the parents:  
Forced marriage is unfair,  
It drives children out of home,  
God is disapproved of it;  
His messenger, too, abhors  
And preached against it.*

poetry are distinct in rendition and that the latter was emanated from the former, Furniss postulates that they both: “formed a key weapon in the battle for hearts and minds of the ordinary people” (197).

The important literary aspects that greatly enhance the meaning of the singers are poetic elements. Danmaraya, like the rest of Hausa oral singers, uses his craft that is sufficiently embedded with poetic elements to critique social vices and maladies. Daba testifies that, “... most of Danmaraya’s songs are not praise for individual, but about social phenomenon; things like death, wealth and poverty, and work and profession and social criticism” (49). In so doing, he deploys various poetic elements that include imagery, simile, repetition, etc. to convey his “ideas and philosophy” (Daba, 37), as well as to comment on issues that affect his society negatively.

#### **“Auren Dole” (A Forced Marriage)**

In “Auren Dole” (A Forced Marriage), Danmaraya speaks against forced marriage which has for long posed an imminent danger in Hausaland. He, in the song, warns parents to stop choosing marriage partners for their children. Schuh posits that, “Auren Dole is an admonition to parents to allow their daughters to marry the men of their choice rather than to marry someone that the family chooses. The song warns that a girl forced to live with a man she dislikes will leave home and return to loose living” (2). The success of this message is realized through effective use of figurative language. The chief among them is repetition which is evident in the opening stanza:

Repetition, as Nwokeye and Oraegbunam assert, “can be used to intensify emotion” (263). Thus, the repetition of the first three lines of the above stanza indicates that the lines are not only important but central to the singer as they vividly capture the challenges around a forced marriage. In fact, the repetition emphasizes

Danmaraya's concern for the wellbeing of his people as it points out to the wrongness that has been stranding Hausa society for long. It thus makes it implicit that the message (warning against a forced marriage) and the decoder (the audience) are backbone of the discourse and, without anyone of one, the encoder (the singer) is nonessential.

Another significant figure of speech used in the stanza to stress the danger of the forced marriage is personification. Personifying the forced marriage with human action "drives", enables us to see the havoc it inflicts after the break up. Danmaraya depicts this phenomenon in stanza two and three. He tells us how this problem which is often conceived as insignificant grows to become a serious threat that, if neglected, it becomes an epidemic in the society. Below are his words:

"Mallam, wannan 'yar ka ce,	<i>Mister man, tend to your daughter,</i>
Mallam, wannan 'yar ka ce,	<i>Mister man, tend to your daughter,</i>
Da wanda ta ke so tun tuni,	<i>She's been in love with someone</i>
Tun sunayara 'yankankana,	<i>Since their childhood,</i>
Domin ta saba da shi,	<i>She is pleased with him,</i>
Shi ma ya saba da ita,	<i>Likewise the boy with her,</i>
Mutumin da ta saba da shi,	<i>So, expect an insoluble trouble</i>
Don yana da wuya a rabakuwa.	<i>If you attempt to end their relationship.</i>

Sai ka ce ma ta ba ka batashi,	<i>You set out to marry her to someone,</i>
Sai wanda ka ke so za ka ba,	<i>Other than the man of her choice,</i>
In kai auren ka jiya,	<i>If you proceed</i>
Kai mata auren dole wai,	<i>And do what pleases you,</i>
Sai ka ji 'yar kuma ta fadi:	<i>Your daughter will respond meanly:</i>
'An man auren dole ne,	<i>"Since I am forcefully married,</i>
Tun da an man auren dole kuma,	<i>You'll see the outcome of your action,</i>
To zama a gidan ba dole ai".	<i>I won't make an obedient wife".</i>

Looking closely at the above stanzas, it is obvious that the singer uses a lot of poetic devices to illustrate the bizarre reaction of the obedient girl who is being forced to marry a man of her parent's choice. The most obvious among these devices is 'point of view'. The poet shifts from the initial omniscient persona to a dramatic persona towards the end of the third stanza. This is to overtly present the reaction of the young girl whose right to choose a suitor is denied by her parents. Thus, her response creates a tension that keeps listeners alert to the next phase of action to be taken by the girl. Consequently, at the height of this conflict, the marriage breaks and the parents take the blame of their daughter's change of character which she has already forewarned. This situation becomes rampant in modern African communities and it always affect young girls as Abdulhamid and Sanusi observe that, "...the challenges and negative affections of divorce are usually much stronger on the women and her offspring than a man. These ranges from psychological trauma, immoral behaviour, economic hardship, denial of custody, etc." (13).

The use of another repetition in stanza four contributes to the development of the song. Repeating the expression "She travels to..." in some of the lines of the stanza signifies the frequency of trips embarked by the divorced young woman, which happen in rapid successions. As a poetic composer, the singer uses the repetition to save his time and energy by making his narrative of the travels very brief and concise. As so, the sum of the changed girl's trips are hereby summarily presented in a sort of a passing way, signifying how easily are those distances between the mentioned cities are covered within a short time by the girl who is expected to obediently stay with her husband at home. Sensitive about the happenings in his society, Danmaraya embodies the predictable consequence of the marriage break up as follows:

"Sai ka ga 'yar kuma ta fita,	<i>She then departs for a new lifestyle,</i>
Ta je gantali,	<i>She wanders around the world,</i>
Kan a jima ta je Kano,	<i>She travels to Kano,</i>

Sai ka ji ta je Samaru,	<i>She travels to Samaru,</i>
Sai ka ji ta je nan Gusau,	<i>And then comes down to Gusau</i>
Kan a jima, in ka tuna,	<i>Not any longer,</i>
Sai ka ji ta ce, “Na fita”,	<i>You’ll hear her say, “I’ll travel”,</i>
Ko da kudin mota,	<i>Lack of transport fare,</i>
Ko babu kudin mota ta je.”	<i>Won’t impede her trips.</i>

Here, the woman who vacates her husband’s house has fully taken the street life in order to make ends meet. This disgusting habit which is attributed to modernisation is utterly condemned even in the ‘civilized’ Hausa communities. In *The Stillborn*, Zainab Alkali depicts similar situation with the character of Faku who is rumoured in the village to have joined the company of independent women in the city (93).

Towards the end of the song, the artist makes a sudden turn-over by directly ‘addressing’ the parents who think the unbecoming forced marriage still has a place in this changing world. This has effectively served as a warning to all parents who think the future of their children is in their hand. Using the tone of disappointment, the singer states that they are totally wrong. Thorne states that, tone is a “reflection of the poet’s attitude to his or her subject created by the choice of words” (422). The punctuated ‘exclamation mark’ at the end of the stanza below suggests the singer’s concern about the incident:

“Uwa da uba, in kun tuna,	<i>O parents, do not forget,</i>
Wannan abu ku ku ka haddasa,	<i>You’re responsible of her fate,</i>
In da kudin mota ta je,	<i>With or without transport fare,</i>
In babu kudin mota ta je,	<i>She still travels,</i>
Toh, uwa da uba in kun tuna	<i>So, the parents can recall vividly</i>
Wannan abu ku ku ka haddasa,	<i>How you muddle your daughter’s life,</i>
Kun san wannan laifin kune!”	<i>You must take a blame of that!</i>

#### “Jawabin Aure” (A Discourse on Marriage)

“Jawabin Aure” (A Discourse on Marriage) is one of the masterpiece of Danmaraya (Furniss, 158), which a listener can easily conceive as a song for mere entertainment. However, doing the formalist reading of the song, an astute listener can discover that the song is didactic. It is mainly composed to show that couples can overcome the challenges facing their marriages as Daba notes that, “The singer is worried about the rate of divorce in the society” (73). Schuh comments that, “Jawabin Aure is an admonition to married couples to try to see through their differences and not to be influenced by gossip. The song describes the problems and indignities which await the wife who leaves her husband and returns to her family home and the husband whose wife leaves home” (1).

Structurally, the song consists of fourteen stanzas. It is a freeverse although the artist roughly tries to make some of the lines rhyme. One important figure of speech that resonates throughout the song is ‘apostrophe’. It is a device with which the singer assumes the presence of a person (real or imaginary) and speaks to him or her directly. Murphy asserts that, “A poet can address other people besides the reader” (49). In “Jawabin Aure”, Danmaraya softly entices the value of marriage by appealing to the spouses to settle down their disputes without inviting a third party in their affairs. The singer does this in the following stanzas:

“Mai-gida da uwar-gida,	<i>O you husband and wife,</i>
In an yi fada don Annabi,	<i>When you have a misunderstanding,</i>
Don Allah a bar saurin fita,	<i>Please, don’t vacate the house,</i>
Amma in aka bibiya	<i>A careful investigation of the case</i>
Wata kila gidan da munafikai,	<i>May prove that hypocrites butt in,</i>
Abin da mai gida iyi	<i>Whatever the husband does</i>
A zo a fada ma uwar-gida,	<i>Is secretly told to the wife,</i>
Sannan ke ba kya bincike,	<i>Who doesn’t bother to check the matter,</i>
Abin da uwar-gida ta yi,	<i>And whatever the wife does</i>
A zo a fada ma ka mai-gida,	<i>Is secretly told to the husband,</i>

Sannan kai ba ka bincike. *Who doesn't bother to check the matter.*  
Kun san ba a kwana bakwai, *Within seven days,*  
Toh sai kun ga hu suma ta hadu, *Discord will flare up,*  
Toh daga nan kuma sai rabuwa ta zo.” *And then the marriage breaks.*

The effect of apostrophe in the above stanza is justifiable. It gives a sense of reality as the singer refers to the imaginary human being who a listener might literally assume to be himself or herself. Couples who heed the artist's words will discern how seed of discord is implanted by petty talkers, and in the background of their mind, realise that the singer is referring to nobody but them. He admonishes them to be cautious of hearsayers and when certain issue is brought to them, they should listen to both sides before they take a hasty decision. According to Danmaraya, in such a way the activities of hypocrites and gossipers will be eliminated and the divine institution of marriage will be protected in Hausa society.

There is also the instance of symbolism in the song. According to Dobie, “the term ‘symbolism’ is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turns signifies something or suggests a range of reference, beyond itself” (358). Going by Dobie's assertions of what symbolism is, the phrase “a small room” presented in the song symbolizes the hard life waiting for the divorcee. Verbs of action such as “weighed in”, “bend” and “break” describing the state of her furniture literarily bolden the meaning of the singer in stanza four:

“Bayan in rabuwa ta zo, *When the marriage breaks,*  
Ke kiran amalenke fa naki ne, *You, the woman, have to call a cart-pusher,*  
Ki sa kaya a ciki kuma, *And load your furniture on the cart,*  
Ki biya su kudi a rigirgide, *Pay for the services of the cart-pusher,*  
Ki kai kayan ko gidan ku can, *The property is taken to your parents' house,*  
A sammaki daki dan kadan, *There, you'll be given a small room*  
Ki sa kayan sun kwarmade *Wherein to lodge your furniture*  
Sannan wasu ma sun karkare, *Where some of them will break,*  
Kana wasu ko sun lakwashe. *And others will bend.*  
Mai-gida, ba laifin sa ba, *It is not the man's fault,*  
Ke ma ba laifin ki ba, *It is also not the woman's fault,*  
‘Yan gulma da makircin tsiya, *Gossipers and slanders are the cause,*  
Masu raba Sunnar Rabbana, *Who find fancy in breaking of marriages,*  
To mu taru mu tsuttsine ma su, *So let's all together curse them,*  
To mu ce ma su Allah ya isa.” *And say may God punish them.*

In the foregoing stanza, house wives are made to realize that they are, by and large, the most vulnerable victims of divorce. Thus, after their marriages break, they end up without shelter to dwell in and their financial state becomes weak, unable to support their material needs. Abdulhamid and Sanusi note that, “when such happened, the women are left to fend for themselves without any preparation” (14). The singer then recalls the conjugal bliss the divorcee will miss. This technique of recalling the past is called ‘flashback’. Niazi and Gautam define it as “a sudden, vivid reversion to a past event and is used to surprise the reader with previously unknown information that provides the answer to a mystery, places a character in a different light, or reveals the reason for a previously inexplicable action” (142).

In stanza seven, the singer recounts:

“Dubban jama'a sun tabbata, *Thousands of people have testified that,*  
Da can kina ko gidan mihi, *When you stayed with your husband,*  
Dan kwali shi za ya yi, *He provided for you a headscarf,*  
Sarkar-wuya shi ne za ya yi, *He provided for you a necklace,*  
Rigar sawa duk sai ya yi, *He provided for you wears,*  
Sarkar hannu sai ya yi, *He provided for you bangles,*  
Takalma duk sai ya yi, *He provided for you shoes,*  
Zanen daurawa sai ya yi.” *He provided for you wrappers.*

The significance of flashback in the above extract cannot be over emphasized. It helps a divorcee to reminiscence her past life, appreciate her present conditions and prepare for her future. By recalling the past of the remorseful divorcee, many young couples who think break-up is the finest solution to their marital problems are made to rethink. The singer laments the divorcee's plight after the breakup. He says that, when the woman vacates her matrimonial home, where she used to have a room of her own, and moves to her parents' home, she is going to lose all the rights and privileges which her husband protected for her. And when worries of such losses accumulate, frustration and depression come in and lead to insanity (or misdeeds). In the light of this, Abdulhamid and Sanusi state that, "Divorce leads to un-Islamic behaviour on the part of some women" (22).

The most striking literary feature that makes this song unique in the singers' collections is its dramatic quality. The singer succeeds in making it possible for his audience to open their ears to the dialogue of the characters and to open their eyes to their actions. Presented below is a lengthy conversation between the divorced woman and a 'boka' (a Juju charmer), who she thinks can bring solution to her problem:

“Assalamu Alaikum, Mallami, Boka kai ma ni magani, Ai da ni da miji na mun rabu’. Boka i zana kasar shi a hankali, ‘Zainabu ko ko Aisha’. ‘A’a, suna na A’i dai’. ‘Lallai kasar nan ta nuna ma ni, Kasa ba ta karya kuwa. Hahahaha! Aisha, Kishiya ce tai ma ki magani, A ruwan randa kuma an kasa, Idan ke kin sha ruwan, Idan shi ma ya sha ruwan, Yarinya shi da ke kun rabu, Rabbaci ga shi ko kun rabun.”	<i>‘Peace be upon you, priest, Boka, solve my problem, My husband and I are divorced’. Boka draws gently on a sandy soil, ‘The name is Zainabu or Aisha?’ ‘No, my name is A’i.’ ‘Yes, this soil has shown me that, And the soil doesn’t tell a lie, Hahahaha! Aisha, It’s your co-wife that caused your divorce, In the pot, she put a mystical charm, If you drink the water in there And your husband drinks the water, You’ll be divorced, Now, you’re divorced.’</i>
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In the above stanza, the singer presents to us a humorous dialogue between the divorced woman and the boka, who claims to have a magical power to change her fate. The singer makes it clear that consulting soothsayers is not only waste of resources, but also it worsens the existing problem as the wicked potency or evil machinations of the boka is revealed in the stanza when he accuses the woman's co-wife of causing her fate. Such falsehood is capable of destroying the women's relationship and even the relationship of their misleading offsprings.

Another grand poetic device the singer employs in this song is the blatant use of satire. In fact, we can rightly say that the song is satirical. Satire, as defined by Thorne, is "A form of writing in which the follies and vices of society are censured and ridiculed in order to bring contempt and derision upon those who display such behaviour" (419). When used effectively, satire begets sarcasm. Usually, a person mocked is expected to make amend. In this song, the divorced woman who goes to a soothsayer seeking for his help appears to be an object of mockery. In order to get away with her money, the deceptive boka assures her that he can make the impossible possible. Her foolishness which is reinforced by her desperate desire to regain her lost status is clear when she believes in boka's fairy tale. Danmaraya sarcastically presents this comic incident in ninth stanza:

“Toh sai ka ji mata ta ce mai, ‘Toh, Mallam, ya ya za a yi?’ Take sai boka i gaya mata, ‘A kwai ko yadda za a yi: Ki ba ni farin rago biyar,	<i>She then shockingly asks him, ‘O priest, what can we do now?’ He replies to her, ‘There is a way out: You have to offer five white rams,</i>
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Turmin alawayya guda biyar,  
Ke ki ba ni dan taure guda biyar,  
Kuma ki ba ni kudin ki sule dari.’  
Take sai ka ji mata ta ce,  
‘O, um’uhmn!  
Wannan abu mai sauki kuwa,  
Ai, Mallam, tun tuni an gama.’  
Ta kawo kayan da ya zaiyana,  
Boka ya tattare, boka ya handame,  
‘Toh, je ki Allah yai magani.’”

*Five bundles of white wrappers,  
Five she-goats for rituals,  
And one hundred shilling.’  
Suddenly, the woman says,  
‘O, um’uhmn!  
This is a simple deal,  
Just consider it done.’  
She presents what Boka enumerated,  
And he greedily takes them and says,  
‘Go home, God will solve your problem.’*

The singer’s objective here is not mainly to make fun of the woman who goes to boka. His intent is to correct her worrisome behaviour. More essentially, the oral singer gives the situation awhim of universality as the message goes beyond the specific context of the woman but to all members of the public who seek for boka’s solicitation in their affairs. The singer then turns to the divorced man who also has his own share of blame. He objectively enumerates some of the duties of the wife such as cooking, sweeping, looking after the children and the husband himself. The singer laments that the good side of the divorcee is so often been ignored by the husband. He drops a rhetorical question at the end in order to heighten the state of confusion:

“Mai-gida, kai zan maka gargadi,  
Kai ma wannan matar ka ce,  
Ruwan wanka ita za ta kai,  
Ta tuka abinci, ka zo ka ci,  
Sharar daki ita za ta yi,  
In kai baki ta kula da su,  
Ta lura da yara ‘yan kankana,  
Shin, Mallam, ko ‘boyin’ ka ne,  
A wata nawa za ka biya shi ne?”

*O Mr. Husband, I warn you,  
Behold your wife,  
She prepares your bathing water,  
Cooks your food,  
Sweeps your room,  
Caters for the guests,  
Nurtures the children,  
If it’s your houseboy,  
What would be his monthly wages?*

As Shamdama and Suleiman write, rhetorical questions are used “for making emphasis, drawing the attention of the audience to a fact, and at the time evoking emotion” (170). In the above stanza, the rhetorical question stirs emotion and makes the audience to recognise the significant roles of women (especially, the married women) in the society. Although the answer to the question “If it’s your houseboy/What would be his monthly wages?” is not needed, the effect of the question is obviously clear. It evokes to the memory all the good things about women that men hardly appreciate. In other words, the rhetorical question is emphasizing the truth about women that men cannot dare to deny.

### Conclusion

Oral songs, as they have been, are useful vehicle of extending messages in both literate and preliterate societies. They are used for entertaining, sentisizing, ridiculing, protesting, educating and encouraging positive behaviours. From the textual analysis of Danmaraya’s marriage songs rendered in this study, it is evidently clear that poetic elements such as metaphor, personification, repetition, address, etc. are employed in the songs to achieve certain effects. First and foremost, the various literary devices incorporated in the songs do not only add

beauty to the artistic work but also make the meanings of the singer clearer. In fact, issues related to dos and don’ts in the marital institution are indelibly discussed in the songs. And in so doing, the significance of poetic elements cannot be undersold. The outcome of this study has established that the array of literary devices serve as colourful ornaments with which the artist’s feelings are dressed up. And to fully understand the meanings entailed in the songs, there is every need to understand the literary substances that go into the crafts and how they work within a poetic genre.

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