

The Contributory Role of Music Artist: An X-ray of Major Satiric Preoccupations in Some Selected Contemporary Nigerian Hip-Hop Music Artist

Maikano A. Lamela

Department Of English, Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria

Abstract: *“If music be the food of love, play on, give me excess of it; that surfeiting, the appetite may sicken, and so die”. This was Williams Shakespeare’s exact words in his absolute recognition to the importance of music to humanity. Similarly, every era in time is accompanied by music of its time, almost like an imprint that reflects a cultural reality always striving for aesthetics. Music is truly a narrator of what human beings have gone through and are still evolving to become. We would imagine that, without music, the human life span will be shortened because without music, our ability to emotionally express will be limited and that would be directly linked to our mental and physical health.*

Music is an art of sound in time that expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through, the elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and color. We all have in one way or the other have listen to music in respective of the genre and perhaps some are addicted to music. Therefore, in appreciation to the role music have been playing in our lives that I seek to lend a telescopic in-depth digging and exposition of the major satiric preoccupations found in the lyrics of our major contemporary Nigerian hip-hop artist. They have played vital roles in the socio-political, educational, religious, and cultural nerves of this great country.

Key Words: *Contributory, Satiric Pre-occupation, Contemporary Nigerian Hip Hop*

I. The Origin Of Music And Its Foundation In Nigeria

The origin of music itself is very difficult because in all probability, it is likely to have begun with singing and clapping or beating the hands on different surfaces, for which there is no of course no archaeological record.

However, critics have argued that, between at least 60,000 and 30,000 years ago, ancient humans experienced a type of cultural explosion – they started creating art in the form of paintings on cave walls, jewelry and ornaments, and to bury their dead ceremonially. If we assume that these new forms of behavior reflect the emergence of intentionality, then music as we know it must also have emerged at least during this period.

Evolutionary scientists believe that a musical culture would have helped prehistoric human species to survive because music coordinates emotions, help important messages to be communicated, motivate individuals to support other group members.

To buttress this assertion, the oldest musical instrument ever discovered is believed to be the Divje Babe flute, discovered in a cave in Slovenia in 1995, though this has been disputed. The item is a fragment of the femur of a cave bear, which has been dated at 60,000 – 43,000 years old, which had been pierced with spaced holes. Scientist who could not accept the possibility that Neanderthals were playing music rejected the claim and said that the perfectly spaced and neatly carved holes are in fact the result of the bone fragment having been chewed by an animal. However, a general census that the Divje Babe flute is actually a musical instrument has been growing as the view of the Neanderthals from subhuman brutes to more sophisticated humans is changing.

In 2008, another discovery was made a bone flute in HohleFels cave near Ulm in Germany dating back 43,000 years. The five holed flute has a V-shaped mouth piece and is made from vulture wing bone. It was one of several similar instruments found in the area, with others dating back to 35,000 years ago and made from Mammoth ivory. The Mammoth-ivory flutes would have been especially challenging to make. Using only stone tools, the flute maker would have had to split a section of curved ivory along its natural grain. The two halves would then have been hollowed out, carved, and fitted together with an airtight seal.

The cave in Southern Germany contains early evidence for the occupation of Europe by Homosapiens on announcing the discovery, scientist suggested that the “finds demonstrate the presence of a well-established musical tradition at the time when modern humans colonized Europe”. They suggested that music may have helped to maintain bonds between larger groups of humans, and that this may have helped the species to expand both in number and in geographical range.

The music of Nigeria includes many kinds of Folk and Popular music, some of which are known World Wide. Styles of Folk music are related to the multitudes of ethnic groups in the country, each with their own techniques, instruments, and songs. Little is known about the country's music history prior to European contact, although bronze carvings dating back to the 16th and 17th century have been found depicting musicians and their instruments. (1) The largest ethnic groups are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Traditional music from Nigeria and throughout Africa is almost always functional; in other words, it is performed to mark a ritual such as a wedding or funeral and not for pure entertainment or artistic enjoyment. (2) Although some Nigerians, especially children and the elderly play instrument for their own amusement, solo performance is otherwise rare. Music is closely linked to agriculture, and there are restrictions on, for example, which instruments can be played during different parts of the growing season. The people of the North are known for complex percussion instrument music, the one stringed "Goge", and a strong praise song vocal tradition via a strong Muslim influence dating back to the 14th century while the Igbo people live in the South-east of Nigeria, play a wide variety of folk instruments. They are known for their ready adoption of foreign styles, and were an important part of Nigeria highlife. (3) Their instruments are the most widespread 13-stringed Zither, called an Obo. They also play slit drums, xylophones, flutes, lyres, Udus, lutes and more recently, imported European brass instruments. Similarly, the Yoruba have a drumming tradition with a characteristic use of the dundun hourglass tensions. Yoruba music has become the most important component of modern Nigeria Popular music, as a result of its-early influence from European, Islamic and Brazilian forms. However, my concern is not with the traditional music nor popular music but contemporary Hip-hop music.

II. The Early Penetration Of Nigerian Hip-Hop Music And Its Founders

Hip-hop music was brought to Nigeria in the late 1980s, and grew steadily popular throughout the first part of the 1990s. The first acts included Sound on Sound, Emphasis, Ruff Rugged and Raw, SWAT ROOT, De Weez and Black Masguradaz. Moreover, mainstream success grew later in the decade, with attention brought by early hits like the Trybesmen's "Trybal Marks" (1999) and the trio Remedies "Judile" and "Sakoma". One of The Remedies, Tony Tettula, went on to work with PlantashunBoiz to great commercial acclaim. The 1999 founding of Paybacktyme Record by Solomon Dare, popularly as Solodee, Kennismusic by Kenny Ogunbe, Dove Record by Nelson Brown, Trybe Records by elDeehelp redefined and establish a Nigerian hip hop scene. Also, the general rapid growth of the entertainment scene with support from the media helps popularize Hip-hop music in Nigeria. Television programmes like Videowheels, HipTv, Music Africa, the MTN Y'ello Show, Nigezie, Soundcity played a major role. Other prominent Nigerian Hip-hop musicians include Ruggedman, former member of the Remedies Eedris Abdulkareem (who had a well-publicised spat with the American star 50 cent), Weird Mc, Naeto C, Twinx, 2 face, Young paper boyz, Jay Ikwana.k.a the Megajay and P-square.

In the past few years, Hip-hop has made a huge leap forward in terms of exposure and success of its artist. Around the decade of the 2000s, more Hip-hop artist sprang up and they include; Olamide, Vector, Reminisce (musician) (who was named as one of Time Magazine's seven international rappers to meet), Ice Prince and M.I (Ice Price and M.I are label mates). These are few names out of the many but however there are other music artists for instance rappers, highlife, Pop, R&B, Jazz, Afrobeat and reggae who have been consistent in their creative enterprise thus making their contributions in the world of music in Nigeria. They include A-Q, Sunny Ade, Yemi Alade, Eva Alordiah, Asa, Banky W, Blackface Naija, Burna Boy, Chidinma, D'banj, Da Grin, Stella Damasus, Davey, Davido, Safin De Coque, Tonto Dikeh, Dr Sid, Duncan Mighty, Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Faze, Flavour Nabania, Emmy Gee, 2face Idibia, Iyanya, Jesse Jagz, Tamara Jones, Fela Kuti, Femi Kuti, Seun Kuti, Majek Fashek, Mr Trill, Mo'Cheddah, Muma Gee, Muna, Niyola, Genevieve Nnaji, Nneka, Nosa, Obiwon, Monica Ogah, Victor Olaiya, Omawuni, Onyeka Onwenu, Orezi, Patience Ozokwor, Patoranking, Shina Peters, Phyno, Tiwa Savage, Seyi Shay, Skales, Timaya, Tolumi De, Weird Mc, Wizkid and Young6ix.

III. Socio-Political Roles, Lessons And Satiric Preoccupations In some selected Contemporary Nigerian Hip-Hop Music

The writer, the artist and the journalist, as mirrors of the nation's ethos, [must] see [music] as a source of mobilizing and uniting the populace towards the struggle for a better future. [They must] feel that in a chaotic and fragmentary society like Nigeria it is important to use [music] as a means of enlightening the populace. The truth however is that, without a conscious effort of mobilization, we cannot hope to shake our people out of our old habits of needless hysteria, political cynicism and economic cannibalism, and create a healthy and enduring national ethics. Hence we need to mobilize the artist, but not alone with other citizens the artist's song will gain wide acceptance only when the community sings along with him, it is when the other citizens add their voices that the song, born out of the artist's solitary genius, can turn finally into a communal property, and become collectively regenerating (Tadi, 51).

Like writers, contemporary hip-hop artists are speculative thinkers, they persistently demonstrate that they have vision as such they as seen as redeemers. They believe that they possess an inner light unavailable to the mass of their people, and that their duty is to use their inspiration and creative insight to guide their society towards a beautiful future. For instance, Ice Prince who has been sympathetic with Nigeria, how badly things are turning. In his song “Tears for Nigeria”, he eulogizes the gloomy and melancholic helm of affairs in his dear country, Nigeria he sings.

There’s too much sadness you know everywhere... sadness

Yes of course there is too much sadness; this artist has within his capacity perhaps taken a good look at Nigeria. The country is at war with itself, killings and shedding of human blood; human life is of no value. People and perhaps the country has loosen its grip as such the inhabitants do not longer rely on government for safety but rather prayers. Ice Price equally agrees with this as he sings:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>If I pray</i> | <i>If I pray</i> |
| <i>Heaven go hear my name o</i> | <i>Heaven will hear my name</i> |
| <i>(Heaven go hear my name o)</i> | <i>(Heaven will hear my name)</i> |
| <i>If I pray</i> | <i>If I pray</i> |
| <i>Nothing go ever do me o</i> | <i>Nothing will ever happen to me</i> |
| <i>(Nothing go ever do me o)</i> | <i>(Nothing will ever happen to me)</i> |

This artist finds consolation in prayers only as an answer to Nigeria unending problem. He goes on to ask several questions that surrounds the wicked atrocities unleashed on the human race:

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>If to say na me weydey bomb blast</i> | <i>What if am the one blasting bombing</i> |
| <i>If to say na me weydey carry gun</i> | <i>What if am the one carrying gun</i> |
| <i>If to say na me weydey shoot man</i> | <i>What if am the one shooting man</i> |
| <i>If for tire to dey follow the battalion</i> | <i>I would have been tired following the battalion</i> |

Here we are led into a world that is full of scandals, of ferocious and destructive beasts, symbolic of the ruthlessness of the country. This artist seems to assume the responsibility of a writer who is committed to society; he uses his art to reflect on the burning problems of the day and perhaps passionate in his recreation of the society.

Similarly, one contemporary hip-hip artist who has devoted his music to commenting on Nigerian society is EedrisAbdulkareem. In his album “Mr. Lecturer” where he chronicles the degeneration of the nation’s socio-economic and political structures, he titles one track Nigeria “Jagajaga”, a term literally meaning a state of disorderliness and chaos. He sings:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Nigeria jagajaja,</i> | <i>Nigeria in total disarray,</i> |
| <i>Everything scatter scatter,</i> | <i>Everything has scattered,</i> |
| <i>Poor man dey suffer suffer.</i> | <i>The poor are suffering...</i> |
| <i>Cunshots in the air...</i> | <i>Gunshots in the air</i> |

Due to the biting satiric thrust of the lyrics, Eedris was reported to have incurred the wrath of Nigeria’s former president, Chief OlosegunObasanjo, who scolded him for portraying Nigeria in negative terms. Oyetayo,(2006:52) reports:

The song was said to have touched a wrong chord with the president who reportedly thumped the artiste’s head When he visited Aso Rock, the seat of power, with the Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria, PMAN. In his response, the president reportedly told Abdulkareem. “It is your Papa and Mama that are jagajaga”.

Thus, in a subsequent album title “Letter to Mr. President, “Eedris attempts to shed light on the import of the signifier” “Jagajaga”; and the degeneration that has permeated Nigerian society, pointing out that his

lyrics are a reflection of the realities that require urgent solutions. Specifically, he cites the endemic social vice of corruption which must be fought for the nation to develop.

Therefore the concerns of Eedris are given expression in the lyrics of another new breed of musician but this time reggae, ChinagoromOnuaha, also known popularly as African China. In his first album titled “Crisis”, he labels the Nigerian government as ‘bad’ for their perceived insensitivity to the plight of the ordinary people on the streets. Writing on the satirical thrust of African China’s message, Oyetayo (2006:53) comments:

The track, our government bad, is a satirical x-ray of the penurious state of citizens occasioned by perceived insensitivity of the government. He opines that there are no job opportunities for the ghetto man and if he eventually gets one, it would now be a battle for survival. Ingeniously blending reggae tunes and social tapestry, African China is unsparing in his caustic criticism of the government’s anti-people policies which has left Nigerian more impoverished than ever.

In his second album titled “Mr. President”, the musician continues his musical preoccupation, expressing his disenchantment with the lack of basic social amenities such as water and good roads, coupled with the appalling scarcity of food in Nigeria. The musical social critic thus calls on the president and his team to attend to the problems, and put Nigeria on the right track so those at the grassroots level can benefit from good governance. Other popular artistes represent this new breed of Nigerian musicians, including Augustine, BlackFace,Ahmedu, Femi Anikulapo-Kuti (The son of FelaKuti), Tony Tetuila, and Lagbaja.They have, in their own ways, used the medium of music to reflect on the socio-economic conditions of Nigerian. However, it should be pointed out that the current relevance of their music is tied to the history of popular music in Nigeria where FelaAnikulapoKuti’sAfrobeat holds swag.

Amidst difficult challenges, these artists have continued to persistently expand their creative experience as they sort to pave way for a remarkable change in the country. Again, one may be surprise when you watch some of the videos produced by these artist, you begin to wonder whether truly these artists are product of the perceived insensitivity of the government. They portray themselves in a manner that demonstrates a free nation where “peace and justice reign”. Krystal et al (2013) reminds us that: Withthe globalization of hip-hop and digital technologies as well as commercially lucrative path paved by the Nigerian film and hip-hop industries, young people are capitalizing upon new avenues for the expressionand production of re-mixed and re-imagined cultures. Though the African continent continues to be plagued by political and economic instability, the field of [music] is one cause for optimism, as African youth, more than ever, are cultivating a spirit of ethnic, national, continental, and/or racial pride through popular culture, even when there is a disconnect between this realm and the social and political and economic instability, the field of music is cause for optimism, as African youth, more than ever, are cultivating a spirit of ethnic, national, continental, and/or racial pride through popular culture even when there is a disconnect between this realm and the social and political sphere. Emenyonu, (2010) adds. How do we transmit a national culture to Nigerians if not through works of imagination? This is something that our people have not paid attention to and perhaps music is one of it.

Nigerian hip-hop artist have performed the inviolable task of ‘educating’ and raising awareness in Nigerians – rulers, leaders, the masses and the general public alike, on the issues of national malaise and the quagmire into which the nation has remained deeply steeped.

Apart from the satiric portrayal on the national issues and the quagmire Nigeria has immersed herself into; hip-hop artists have for some time been deeply committed to the cause and destiny of the teaming youth, the need for self-emancipation, self-empowerment and self-reliance has also been demonstrated in D’prince’s

*If you dey wait for your brother,
Your auntie, your sister, yourcousin
My brother no think am
On your own*

*If you are waiting for your
brother,
Your aunty, your sister, your
cousin
My brother don't think about it
On your own*

*Wake up wake up wake up
My brother cos
On your own o*

*Wake up wake up wake up
My brother because
On your own*

*If you dey wait for your landlord,
Your friend, your government,
Your uncle...*

*This is a wake up call o
My brother no dey dull o
You gag to stand up tall o
Stand gidigba no dey fall o
No dey wait for person person
This na time to sojisoji*

Make you rise and fight

*If you are waiting for your
Landlord, your friend, your
Government, your uncle...*

*This is a wake up call
My brother stop being stupid
You got to stand up tall
Stand your grand, don't fall
Don't wait for person
This is a time to understand*

Raise and fight

Here D'prince seems to reckon with Emenyonu (2010) assertion in his recognition to the contributory role of the artist. The African writer [and music artists] is expected to be part of his or her society, not live on its fringes; share in the triumphant celebrations as well as the sorrowful heart aches of the society. Those constitute the human conditions which are recaptured in African creative works. The contemporary African writer [and music artist] should be no different in theory and practice, from the oral performer in the traditional African society. The circumstances and nature of present-day realities in Nigeria demand that the writer [and music artist] confront these issues with courage and forthrightness for the good of posterity. Therefore, D'prince in this song has echoed a strong call to the teaming youths of Nigeria for the need to be self-reliant as the era of dependency has elapsed. The need to be industrious is the bane and of course thematic thrust of this music.

IV. Conclusion

In my opinion, people are lacking in the sensitivity to appreciate the veritable values of music in general. Contemporary Nigerian political leaders, rulers, and education policy makers have underestimated and neglected (to our national peril) the positive contributions which music can make to the physical, mental, moral and spiritual development of any nation. People are so concerned with the negative and one sided misrepresentation of music artist; most especially through what we see on the videos. The nude dressing is what scares people and perhaps results to the Luke warn attitude and low patronage to music. I think people must have a rethink in their attitude to music because there is sense in what we hear as "nonsense". These artists have in a way offered their gifts as something solid and permanent that put into the people's consciousness. That is what we hear, what and we love. The stimulating effect of music in this respect is overwhelming for music reaches where more words cannot, to the soul and mind, to reawaken the people's consciousness and recapture fading values. These contemporary hip-hop artists are ambassadors in their own making as they use musical form to shape images of society in the face of drifting values.

Works Cited

- [1]. Adeyemi, Adegoju (2009) The Musician as Archivist: An Example of Nigeria's Lagbaja. Retrieved December 1, 2014 from www.gilbergalindo.com/importanceofmusic.htm
- [2]. Omojola, Bode (1995): Nigerian Art Music. University of Ibadan
- [3]. Titon, Jeff Otto (ed) (1992). Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples. Schirmer Books.
- [4]. Karolyi, Oho (1998). Traditional African and Oriental Music: Penguin Books
- [5]. Graham, Ronnie (2000) "From Hausa Music to Highlife". In Broughton, Simon and Ellingham Mark with Mcconnachie Duane, Orla (Ed), The Rough Guide to World Music, Rough Guides Ltd, Penguin Books.
- [6]. Juma. December (14, 2009). African Hiphop. Retrieved October 15, 2011 from www.africanhiphop.com <http://www.africanhiphop.com/africanhiphopradio/naija-nigerian-80srap-on-vinyl/>
- [7]. Pinter, Harold (2005). Art, Truth and Politics Nobel Lecture. The Nobel Foundation.
- [8]. Tadi, Nereus Yerima (2011). "Poetry and Power: Okinba Lauko's Aesthetic of Liberation in Minted Coins and Pain Remembers". Gombe Papers on Nigeria Literature. A Journal of the Department of English Gombe State University, Nigeria. Vol. 1 No 2.
- [9]. Emenyonu, N. Ernest (2010). "Creative Imagination and Present Day Nigerian Realities: What else can Literature do?". Gombe Papers on Nigerian Literature. A Journal of the Department of English Gombe State University, Nigeria. Vol 1. No 2.
- [10]. Kystal Strou and Shaun Ossei - Onusu (2014). "Naija boy remix: Afroexploitation and the new Media Creative Economies of Cosmopolitan African Youth". A Journal of African Cultural Studies, Vol. 26 No 2.
- [11]. Oyetayo A. (2006). The Lyrical Warriors Tell No. 12 March 20, 2006. Pp.52-54.
- [12]. Kolowale Ogungbesan (Ed) (1979). New West African Literature Ibadan. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.