

Humour of religious satire and linguistic dexterity of Nigerian stand-up comedy

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Abstract

Stand-up comedy, as a humorous performance, is a quintessential narrative that chronicles sociological realities of human endeavours. Its humour, as a new subgenre of comedy, fused the roles of performers and their audiences in a scintillating way that provokes laughter and, at the same time, gives great excitement. The performers and their audiences are major stakeholders in the performativity of stand-up comedy. Existing scholars have largely examined its realities as a product of entertainment and laughter to the neglect of its deeper sociological realities of religious satire and linguistic dexterity. Therefore, this paper investigates how stand-up humour serves as a tool for critiquing societal foibles of religious gullibility and bewitchment within the Nigerian socio-political space. Besides, the paper examines the linguistic techniques employed by the selected stand-up comedians. This is in a bid to show how stand-up comedians serve as gatekeepers, watchdogs, and social critics of their societies through their humour. Schechner's Performance, Freudian, and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the embodied behaviours of the stand-up comedians. Three digital discs of live performance recordings were purposively selected. They were: 'Halleluyan Volume 1 and Ward 2 Comedy Klinik' by Godwin Komone Gordons and 'A Nite of a Thousand Laughs Vol. 13' by Francis Agoda (I Go Dye). The selected live recordings were based on informing religious realities, choice of satiric humour, and performative styles of the performers. Data were subjected to performance and literary analyses.

Keywords: satire, stand-up comedy, technique, humour, religion.

1. Introduction

Stand-up comedy, as performative humour, engages society in all areas of human endeavours (Adekunle 2017: 54). Smith (2015: 561-580) reveals stand-up humour as a sociological tradition of interpretivism that is absolutely affiliated to a shared culture. This means that humour is a societal and biographical narrative intersection of wider society. The humour gives insight to contradictions, absurdities, and incongruities of the social and the potential that views life from

different perspectives. Koziski (1984: 57) avers that stand-up humour is culturally bound. It is a verbal act that is closed to the everyday reality of the given society. For instance, American stand-up comedians, like Bill Cosby, George Carlin, Dick Gregory, Hal Holbrook, Steve Martin, Bob Newhart, Richard Pryor, Flip Wilson, and Lily Tomlin, and a host of others, predicate the comedies around circumstantial issues that surround American society. To Patron (1988: 206-233), stand-up humour is a powerful tool of social order that purges society from her foibles and, at the same time, gives a healthy sensibility to its target audience. Its humour is concerned with man's relation to society and deals with experience considered rather suitable than questionable (Dasyuva 2005: 57). Its humorous performance shows its utilitarian functions in several ways (Adekunle 2014: 37). Its total act, as well as the context or environment involved in its delivery, is greatly considered (Ojaide 2013: 23; Okpewho 1990: 16). Adejumo (2008) says: "comedy is a means in which certain social misdemeanours are corrected through various satiric modes of humour." This means that stand-up humour is a product of social jokes that is largely informed by the sociological realities that surround it. This is why Tafoya (2009: 12) defines stand-up comedy humour as an art form that is undoubtedly a sophisticated kind of language play that cannot but reveal a culture's fears, values, hopes and, people's sins in distinctly literary terms as a zeitgeist.

In the same vein, Michael (2013: 129-153) uses his stand-up humour to showcase American social life of the world view of Muslims and what Islam stands for. The comedian uses humour to champion the cause of Muslim faithful in America. Also, Thonnart (2016: 1) examines how stand-up humour edifies the American Muslim community and elevates their core religionists to a determined ideal of Islam. Also, Adetunji (2013: 1) observes pragmatic strategies used by Nigerian stand-up comedians to involve their audience in the creation of the interactional context of humour. To Adekunle (2020: 9), stand-up humour is a contemporary live theatre that revolves round sociological realities. Tafoya (2009: 12) defines stand-up comedy as an art form that is undoubtedly a sophisticated kind of language play that cannot but reveal a culture's fears, values, hopes and, people's sins in distinctly literary terms as a zeitgeist. He sees stand-up comedy as a form of literature that usually codifies experience, defamiliarises the world, informs and reveals zeitgeist. He also sees it as an art form that plays with language, engenders wonder, and at the same time invites the readers to find out multiple layers of interpretation to its subject as other literary works do (Tafoya 2009: 13, 35-39).

According to Okwechime & Aikoriogbe (2013: 32), most times when comedians perform their societal humour, we laugh. We do not laugh because what they say is funny. We laugh because we find it funny after we have reconciled their inputs with our experiential knowledge. Also, Grunner (1978: 1) believes in the potential power of humour that without laughter everyday living will become drab and lifeless, and, at the same time, life will become difficult for all humans. Oring (2003: X) stresses that stand-up humour has a significant cultural therapeutic power that is universally used to ease out bottled emotions that conditioned humanity. Norrick (2003: 1344), explains that laughter, a product of humour, is used to ratify and evaluate the degree of the success of a performance. Also, Mintz (1985: 71) examines that stand-up humour is arguably the oldest, most universal, basic, and deeply significant form of humorous expression. In extension, Mintz critically views stand-up as the purest public comic communication and most interesting of all manifestations of humour in popular culture. To Harbidge (2011: 128), stand-up humour is a live performance that explores the comedian-audience relationship, and intra-audience communication dynamism through a pleasurable medium that would appropriately gratify to a point of laughter. Double (2009: 19) views stand-up comedic orature, spontaneity of thoughts, improvisational skills, and flexibility of response of the comedian-audience, as a product of professional skill, and intuitive ability of the individual performers gives credence to its art. His observational opinion of risk-taking is

referred to as the conscious effect, and the time management employed by the comedians, in their actual performances.

Besides, it is a product of a fast globalizing world where there is a profusion of inter-cultural encounters (Nwankwo 2014: 1). Schwarz (2010: 18) views stand-up humour as racial activities and cultural assertions of the Black Americans. He reveals it as a medium of expression and a way in which black people reveal their cultural identities. This is why Bamidele (2003: 30) affirms that the performer, as an artist, sees his role as a weapon to advocate for changes in society. He thinks that he is an extra sensitive creature who can mediate for us and be our saviour in the prevailing misery that plagues us. Schröter (2004: 44) observes that comedy, stand-up comedy inclusive, is consisted of public humiliation of the king, songs of hatred, and a ritual threatening of the king who had to flee into a sacred enclosure. Filani (2015: 73-97) conceptualizes that stand-up humour is an activity type that is structured in line with a given society or a target audience.

In conclusion, scholars above have largely examined humour as a product of entertainment and laughter to the neglect of its deeper sociological realities of religious satire and linguistic dexterity. Therefore, this paper investigates how stand-up humour serves as a tool for critiquing societal foibles of religious gullibility and class struggles within the Nigerian socio-political space. Besides, the paper examines the linguistic techniques employed by the selected stand-up comedians.

2. Historical background of stand-up comedy in Nigeria

In Nigeria, stand-up comedy is a business that has blossomed into what we know be the most popular entertainment enterprise after Nollywood. It becomes a massive industry worthy of global attention even among academic purists and eggheads (Mbah 2013: 50). Stand-up comedy in Nigeria is traceable to its founding father, Alleluia Atunyota Aporobomeeriere, whose nickname is Ali Baba. He started his comical career when he was an undergraduate at Bendel State University, Ekpoma, and now Ambrose Ali University in Edo State, Nigeria. Ali Baba had trained several upcoming stand-up comedians whose names have gained global recognition. A few names of such comedians are AY, Basketmouth, Gordons, I Go Dye, Julius Agwu, Bovi, Aboki, I Go Save, Helen Paul, Akpororo, Gbenga Adeyinka, MC Aproko, Seyelaw, Mr. Macaroni, Teju Babaface, Emmanuella, Lepacious Bose, Chiquil, Maleka, and many others.

Stand-up comedy shows in Nigeria came into the limelight when Opa Williams, a movie producer, delved into the production of comedy shows in the mid-1990s (Adekunle 2017; Filani 2017). Nigerian stand-up comedy is largely influenced by the Western performative styles, that is, American and European stand-up comedies. The language of Nigerian Stand-up comedy is Pidgin. Nigerian Pidgin is a mixture of different local languages with the English language. It is a language that is understood by all and sundry in Nigeria. Pidgin is often spoken by uneducated or half-educated Nigerians.

The shows are always staged in different cities in Nigeria, especially during Christmas and Easter seasons in stadiums, churches, and nightclubs (Adetunji 2013). The performance takes 10 to 15 minutes to perform by each comedian. Its digital discs of live performance recordings are produced by Opara Williams in video compact formats entitled “Night of a Thousand Laughs” (NTL). Nigerian stand-up is a sociological reality of the Nigerian state.

3. Theoretical framework

Schechner's Performance Theory and aspects of the Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories were used to analyse the embodied behaviours of the stand-up performers and the rationale behind their phenomenal popularity with their audiences.

3.1. Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalytic theory has succeeded in creating a concept and a pragmatic framework that explores human experience and builds a body of knowledge that gives a deep insight into human behaviour, society, and nature in the state of projection, introjection, displacement, eruption, repression, sublimation and condensation that explains the personal conscious and collective unconscious of individuals in a society which may be archetypes, icons, themes, images and narrative patterns of a society or individuals' experiences (Tyson 1999). Psychoanalysis history begins in childhood experiences in the family and each template of adolescent and adult behaviour is directly linked to one's early experience (Tyson 1999). Everyone is a product of the role that is given to him or her in the family complex.

3.1.1. Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud's theory is relevant to this research work because it helps to interpret the mental and emotional status of both the performers and their audience to bring the unconscious into conscious awareness through their performances. Besides, the theory helps to explain the therapeutic techniques employed by the stand-up comedians to provoke laughter, at the same time, bring succour and mirth to their audience.

3.1.2. Carl Jung's Psychoanalytic Theory

Carl Jung in his analytical psychology sees the individuals' experiences as the existence of a collective unconscious, that is, racial memory inherited by all members of the human family and connecting modern humans with their primitive roots (Tyson 1999: 27). The collective unconscious is manifested in the recurrence of certain images, stories, residual of unlimited experiences of the same types. For him to distance his psychoanalytical theory from Freudian psychoanalysis, he uses the terms introvert and extrovert to classify people. Introverts rely principally on themselves, while extroverts look for the companionship of other individuals for personal fulfilment.

The relevance of the application of Carl Jung's theory in this research work is that it helps to show that individuals' experiences of both performers and their audience are a product of collective unconscious of racial memory inherited by all members of the human family. The theory helps to reveal that both the stand-up comedians and their audience's behaviours are informed by their societal cultural experiences. These experiences of both performers and their audience are stand-up comedy materials that are brought into play on stage. Besides, the theory also helps to show that stand-up comedy is a form of therapeutic performance in which both performers and their audience release their bottled-up tension.

3.2. Richard Schechner's Performance Theory

Schechner's performance theory deals with all human endeavours and activities in consonance with every societal rule and regulation of any given race. It is a reflection and refraction of human activities that take place in everyday realities. Such are ceremonial activities, ritual performances, hunting of animals, theatrical shows, cinematic orchestrations, dramas and, other

endeavours, like games, sports, plays, scripts, dances, and music. According to Schechner, “performance is an inclusive term” (Schechner 1994: xiv). Historical events, artistic performances, and speculative ideas are performative. These are deep structures that include preparations for performances via training, workshop, rehearsals, preparations, and spectators’ satisfactions and what goes on after a performance as systems of social and aesthetic life of every society (Schechner 1994: xiv-xv).

In this research, Schechner’s Performance Theory helps to reveal the pyramid of actions that provokes laughter from the audience. It considers more “truthful” more “real” than ordinary experience. Theatrical music, songs, costuming, impersonation, dialogue, spectacle, and other paralinguistic ceremonial activities are dramatic elements that invoke laughter from the audience.

4. Methodology

Three digital discs of live performance recordings were purposively selected. They were: *Halleluyan Volume 1 and Ward 2 Comedy Clinic* by Godwin Komone Gordons and *A Nite of a Thousand Laughs Vol. 13* by Francis Agoda (I Go Dye). The selected live recordings were based on their themes, the informing religious realities, choice of satiric humour, and performative styles of the performers. The selected stand-up comedians have unique style and express themselves in an exciting way that appeals to their audience’s emotions on stage. The comedians are Godwin Komone (Gordons) and Francis Agoda (I Go Dye). Their performances were presented through the use of symbolism, caricature, subtle irony and humour. Data were subjected to performance, and literary analyses.

5. Phonological dexterity of Nigerian religious satire

Gordons’ stand-up humour is intellectually inclined and full of rational sensibility. It is characterised by episodic form and plot structure. Its linguistic humour is hypertextual. Its use of conceit usually reveals the shocking “truth” of an unusual logic that when it is proven further, is found to be intelligible, giving respite possible pleasure that evokes a ripple of laughter and excitement. Gordons’ humour is largely in form of a chain of specious rationalisation that is ordered chronologically, titillating and vastly torchy. His linguistic texture is a mixture of English language and colloquialism. Gordons speaks:

Performer:

Ladies and gentlemen like my friend will say no matter how you look there is a scripture for you, Halleluyah! If you get *big mouth*, you read the book of Mathew or Philip. If you get *big eye*, you read Isaiah. For Segun Arinze na Isaac. If you like trekking, try Genesis. If you like to drink Ogogoro, try the book of Ruth. If you like *sardine*, read the book of Titus. If you get mental problem, the book of Colossians and your life will never remain the same. Halleluya!

(Appendix NG1.a)

Gordons’ comic performance draws its imagery from intensely rooted scriptural materials. The use of some grammatical expressions, in the above text, serves as a comic element that creates a sharp contrast between the illustrative analyses to create a humorous effect. “Big mouth” is compared with the book of Mathew to create a rhythmic sound of /mauθ/ and /mauθu/ for comic pleasure and laughter. /ai/ sound is compared in “eye,” “Isaiah” and Isaac”. “Trekking” is compared with Genesis where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Israelites moved from

various locations to the land of Canaan. “Ogogoro,” a Yoruba local wine, is compared with the book of Ruth where barley wine was a major occupation among the Israelites. “Sardine” a well-known fish is related to Titus, another class of fish. Finally, the book of Colossians is associated with a popular slang called “Colo-mental,” that is, somebody that is believed to have a mental problem.

Apart from these analyses above, those grammatical lexical choices of words are used to lampoon the individual personalities that engage in nefarious activities that are inimical to their lives and society at large. “Big mouth” implies somebody who is lousy or speaks irrationally without considering the consequences of actions while “big eye” is a representation of somebody who engages in all things that are unprofitable to him. He oversees everything that goes around and takes advantage of it or acts on it. “*Ogogoro*” is a metaphoric use of the word that takes into account the people who regularly drink alcohol or take harmful drugs and medications that are injurious to their health. Also, “sardine” is a reflection or a sign of good living to those that enjoy the good side of life. Sardine is an expensive fish that a common man cannot afford. “Sardine” is a portrait of the bourgeoisie, the rich, who are living a luxurious life at the expense of the poor, the class of workers who are living below their incomes. “Colo-mental” is a representation of a set of civilised people who are engrossed with the Western culture at the expense of their native way of life.

6. Satirical humour of the evangelicals

In the same vein, Gordons’ stand-up comedy is a religious satire that metaphorically satirises the contemporary religious hypocrisy of Nigerian religious leaders. His approach of revealing this hypocritical act is through a refined way that gives a rethinking of actions that promote the right standards of moral behaviour in the mind of his audience. Besides, Gordons’s comedy is a revelation of religious bigotry and gullibility which draws the attention of the audience to crucial conflict of interest in an intelligible way. Here, the manipulative skill and the bewitching power of religious bigots work on the psychological gullibility of their faithful followers as revealed in the excerpt below.

Performer:

Make una ask you una this question! Why be say, if we go crusade anointing go catch pastor like fire. He vomits anointing give everybody whuuuuuu! Blow anointing for everybody, everybody dey fall down but the cameraman still stand mmmh! Cameraman don dey resist anointing abi! Hmmm! That devil is a liar. In those days when you fall under the anointing no be joke because the wey people fall under the anointing now I no understand. In our days, when you fall under the anointing, you need God to bring you back, but nowadays, I went to a church, a girl went under the anointing, her phone rings, I shocked, she picked, she even tell the caller say I beg call me back I dey under the anointing we go talk later. Hallelujah!

(Appendix NG1.a)

In the performance above, Gordons opens his comedy show with an aggressive interrogative gesture to question the authority of Nigerian religious leaders who are fond of brainwashing their followers through deception and fake miracles “Make una ask you una this question! Why be say, if we go crusade anointing go catch pastor like fire.” To relegate them to the background, Gordons says: “He vomits anointing give everybody whuuuuuu!” “Vomit anointing,” “whuuuuuu!” and “blow anointing for everybody” ironically signify manipulation of the pastors’ followers. This is why Gordons says: “the wey people fall under the anointing now I no understand. In our days, when you fall under the anointing you need God to bring you back,

but nowadays...” Gordons here reveals that the act of religious worship is sheer hypocrisy and total ignorance of God’s power.

The concept of “falling under the anointing” is rooted in Christian religious activity (Acts 2, 10: 44-46, 19: 1-6) during which the priest or pastor at prayer or deliverance sessions places his hands on the heads of the parishioners or speaks of the Holy Ghost resting on an individual. The act of falling under the anointing signifies that the fallen person is oblivious of everything that goes on around him or her for some time. Gordons’s mockery of the situation is to present a platform required for a spiritual reformation of activities of religious leaders. The ‘act’ of returning a call (though impossible) by the girl who fell, creates sarcasm for the listening audience in his portrayal of prayer sessions of some religious leaders, especially the Evangelicals. This is why Dasyuva (2005: 159) sees this present society as “a society so morally decadent, whose secular life is morally bankrupt and even those that care to seek refuge in God (and religion) fall prey to religious vultures.” Nowadays, people have turned the house of God into a mere entertaining theatre and the act of worship to a cultural routine of religious practice without having a personal encounter or experience with the Supreme Being. Take for example, in the performance exhibited above, the said lady under her self-deceit and religious gullibility picks her phone to answer her caller and tells her caller to call her back that she is under the anointing. In the true sense, anointing of God cannot be tamed nor manipulated under the influence of humans.

In the same sense, Gordons allegorically lampoons the “cameraman” who is seemingly assumed to be standing while covering the pastoral ministration in the church “everybody dey falls down but the cameraman still stand mmmh! Cameraman don dey resist anointing abi!” It is the Biblical truth that when Anointing falls, everybody around feels the impact or is possessed by it, but the cameraman’s case is different. The use of “I shocked, she picked” shows an element of “surprise” that shows his displeasure with this religious fraudulence.

Furthermore, many people go into this religious practice for commercial purposes. This happens because of the economic situation of the country that has adversely affected the financial capacity of the individuals. To find a way out of these social complexities and financial mess, they find an alternative way of using the religious platform to satisfy their hungry bellies and desired lust. Dasyuva (2005: 158) confirms that “there is a deliberate commercialisation of religion by custodians of the otherwise sacred institution.”

Also, I Go Dye, a talented stand-up comedian, satirises the charlatanism of Nigerian religious leaders to bring religious transformation in Nigeria through stand-up comedy shows. His style of comedy is a unique one that gives deeper revelation and meaning to the social realities or contexts of everyday life in the Nigerian nation. I Go Dye’s physical looks on stage often provoke laughter from his audience in readiness for the performance yet to unfold on stage. The physical appearance may sometimes be the way he dresses like a lady or appears haggard on stage.

I Go Dye passionately decries the affluent life and sanctimonious hypocrisy of Nigerian religious leaders, who are fond of living a flamboyant life, and leaving their followers in abject poverty. They brainwash their followers with soothing messages that are contradictory to biblical injunctions. The people are cajoled for their selfish desires and material tendencies. The people are drastically robbed of their possessions by these fake pastors and prophets. This heartless act of ruination has thrown some people into psychological traumas and made them unable to decide for themselves. The victims are brainwashed and tortured and thrown into a state of inconspicuous dilemmas. Apart from this, the religious leaders have turned the sacred groves of God, that is, His holy temples, to dens of robbers. They see themselves as demi-gods or sacrosanct that cannot be questioned. Sometimes, they see themselves equal to God through their attitudinal behaviour and spoken mannerism as revealed below.

I Go Dye:

Na him make me like our Nigerian pastors. They can convince you anytime to drop money. The one wey fear me pass for this Nigerian pastors, sorry to say. The time of Moses when God sent Moses to rescue people from Egypt, you know wetin happen. When God dey talk to Moses, the Bible says, it takes seven days for Moses ears to open, because of the thunder dey sound. The thunders take blind eyes. Pastor may just dey altar (says): “alleluia, the Lord just spoke to me.”, the guy no blind, nothing, nothing, “do you know, I was actually discussing with God today”. Na so them dey talk. A whole God, na him them take dey play. The Bible says: “When you believe, you will do greater work”. See Moses, stretch rod [demonstrating] the Red Sea opens. How many pastors can divide a gutter? Them come dey threatening you: “drop your offerings, don’t be stingy, drop your provoking offering that will provoke God. Ananias sold a piece of land and he hid the money. God turned him to a vagabond. Drop your offering”. People dey drop TV, drop everything, Warri, Warri boys dey fall pastors (say): “Na threatening o, na today?”

(Appendix NG2).

The pastors mentioned above have commercialised religious activities. They have turned churches into money-making ventures: “Na him make me like our Nigerian pastors. They can convince you anytime to drop money.” They have left their religious duties and run after wealth. Layiwola (2009/2010: 16) avers that “the honour to our prophets, in a manner of speaking, comes from outside of their home base.” They no longer care for their sheep. The comedian uses biblical Moses, who wholeheartedly serves God and cares for the lives of the Israelites, to castigate their unscrupulousness. Moses wrought signs and wonders to prove God’s presence with him. He parted the Red Sea into two “See Moses, stretch rod [demonstrating] the Red Sea opens. How many pastors can divide gutter?” I Go Dye sees many pastors these days as weak and indolent ones, who only care for their stomachs. This is why he uses a derogatory statement to ridicule them: “how many pastors can divide a gutter?”

7. Sarcastic humour of the traditional priests

Also, below, native doctors are caricatured in a way that reveals an element of truth through a stylistic approach. They are revealed as a primitive and uncivilised set of people. Due to civilisation and the act of learning, they have acclimatised and acculturated to western ideologies. They have blended themselves with a modern technological approach which informed their line of professions “Na so it be oh! Native doctors now them don package. No be joke oh! Na him I know say him ministries don change.”

Performer:

Na so it be oh! Native doctors now them don package. No be joke oh! If you see suit, I see native doctor wear Georgio Armani. If you see the Amos’ style, if you see the gravid. Na where I know say him na native doctor when he takes slippers take wear the coat na him I know say him ministries don change. And now them don upgrade oh! Them get laptop now. Them no dey carry juju any how again. Them no dey smell. Them dey wear perfume and some other departments.

(Appendix NG1.a)

Here, the stand-up comedian updates his target audience on the modern trend of life that brings about technological innovations and social well-being to African native doctors: “And now them don upgrade oh! Them get laptop now. Them no dey carry juju any how again. Them no dey smell. Them dey wear perfume and some other departments.” “Laptop” is a modern mini-computer that is completely foreign to native doctors in Africa because native doctors are illiterate and assumed to be primitive. Also, “suit” is modern wear of European people. It is

assumed to be put on only by educated people in Africa, but to the amazement of the comedian, he sees native doctors putting on a suit. To elicit laughter from his audience, he jocularly mocks the native doctors by saying: “where I know say him na native doctor when he takes slippers take wear the coat.” “Suit” and “slippers” are binary oppositions. One cannot put on a “suit” and, at the same time, put on “slippers.” “Suit” is associated with “comfort,” “superfluity,” “extravagance,” and “superiority,” while slipper is synonymous with “poverty,” “miserableness,” “retardation” and “inferiority.”

Besides, “suit” is seen as “a cooperate wear” for official use, while a pair of slippers is a “casual wear” for “informal dressing.” In the same vein, the use of “perfume” by the African native doctors ironically shows how the native doctors crave for material wealth against the background of “simplicity.” Also, “juju” the native medicine, and “laptop” modern technology are sheer opposites. Instead of the native doctors carrying juju, their professional tool, they are carrying laptops as instruments of their profession.

In Nigeria, one cannot put on a suit and at the same time put on slippers. And anyone that does that will become an object of ridicule in the eyes of the public audience. This is why Gordons metaphorically urges everyone in society to use their imaginative and artistic capacities to develop new ideas that add value to individuals in society.

8. Stand-up comedians as satiric beauticians

Also, the aesthetic potency of stand-up comedy is creatively employed by Gordons to reveal different ideological concepts obsessed by Nigerian people about their physiques. Gordons does an analytical appraisal of the physiques of every individual in the society in a more refined way that gives a healthy sensibility in appreciating one’s physical outlook. This is because some people do not appreciate their physical outlooks and rather see their bodies as a burden and a physical threat to their lives. To Gordons, you do not have to be slim before you look beautiful. All creatures, great and small, are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Lord God. No one is superior to the other. Everyone is equal before God.

Performer:

So, you don’t have to be slim in order to feel beautiful. Any how you dey, you are blessed. Some were wonderfully made, but we were all made. It does not matter whether RMD is wonderfully made and Taribo is fearfully made. It does not matter, we were all made. All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, the Lord God made them all. So, you don’t have to be slim in order to feel beautiful. As for me Gordons, I don’t like them slim. I like them very many. I like them conspicuous and bogus. I like them very proud. I like those ones like Mountain Zion that can never be hidden. Alleluyah! I like the one wey be like matter. Anything that has weight and that can occupy space. I like them like that, na be because the one wey I Dey like Bible write for them “occupy till I come”. The one wey I dey like them no dey do catwalk. Na only cat be animal? What about hippopotamus, elephant and rhinos?

(Appendix NG1.b).

In the performance above, Gordons figuratively confesses that he prefers those ladies that are robust who had seen themselves as non-compliance to their equals in a physical carriage. He uses the biblical expression to correct the erroneous beliefs that people are obsessed with overtime about their physical appearances. This is why he sarcastically says: “you are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Lord God.” To prove this point, he allegorically uses this biblical expression by saying: “I like those ones like “Mountain Zion” that can never be hidden... I like them like that, na be because the one wey I Dey like Bible write for them “occupy till I come.”

The use of simile “like” is to create emphasis as an affectionate outlook for beauty. “Occupy till I come” is satirically used to provoke laughter from the audience. To ridicule women’s mode of modelling, he says: “The one way I dey like them no dey do catwalk. Na only cat be animal? What about hippopotamus, elephant and rhinos?” “Hippopotamus,” “elephant” and “rhinos” are large heavy animals that walk slow in dangerous ways and sometimes harmful, while a “cat” is a small animal that walks in a zig-zag way. These are binary oppositions of an animal that are used to provoke laughter from the audience. Also, the stand-up comedian, Gordons, employs the use of “scientific truths” to complement his performance by saying: “I like the one way be like “matter.” Anything that has weight and that can occupy space.” To end the show comically, he says: “Alleluyah!” Therefore, the comedian, Gordons, here is seen as an expressionist that sees stand-up comedy as an art of picturesqueness of realities.

In addition, a famous artist, RMD, and a professional Nigerian footballer, Taribo, are used as symbols of handwork and great success. Both aforesaid characters are great achievers in their various professions. This is the reason he mockingly says: “it does not matter whether RMD is wonderfully made and Taribo is fearfully made. It does not matter, we were all made.” The stand-up comedian wants everyone to be hard working rather than being lazy or self-pity.

On the other hand, he employs this comic performance to satirize people who live a nonchalant life without taking into consideration what they put on or eat. Some don’t watch the weights. They eat anything that comes their way without considering their body structures or body compositions. The edibility of food consumption has made their physiques look unattractive and unhealthy to their physical outlook. Apart from this, some folks do not cultivate the habit of dressing well. Dressing well makes the body looks smart both in carriage and physique. In this sense, it shows that the people in question are well-groomed if they are well-dressed. In addition to this, cooperate wears also earn such people high respect in the society. Just like a slogan that says: “the way you dress is the way you will be addressed.” Good carriage of one’s body both in comportment and speech gives respect to one in Nigerian society. This is a satiric way of creating healthy consciousness in the hearts of Nigerian people who live out of hygienic and healthy life. This is why satire is seen as a platform in which social foibles and vices are revealed and corrected. In this case, stand-up comedy is revealed as a form of medium in which dissemination of information and enlightenment comes.

In conclusion, in the above, Nigerian stand-up comedians, Gordons and I Go Dye, have been able to show how stand-up humour serves as a tool for critiquing societal foibles of religious gullibility and bewitchment within the Nigerian socio-political space. This is a bid to reveal the role of stand-up comedians as gatekeepers, watchdogs, and social critics of their societies through their humour. Besides, the linguistic techniques employed by the selected stand-up comedians are examined for aesthetic purposes that provoke laughter and rational sensibility in society.

Appendix

Electronic Format Sources

Nigerian Stand-up Comedies’ Video Digital Discs (NG)

NG1.a Komone, G. (2009). Gordons halleluyah volume 1. Lagos: Obaino Music.

NG1.b Komone, G. (2009). Gordons ward 2 comedy klinic. Lagos: Obaino Music.

NG2. Williams, O. (2010). Nite of a thousand laughs volume 13 [VCD]. Lagos: Obaino Music.

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