

Women, Sexuality, Performance and Satire in the Nigerian Popular Fuji Music of Abass Akande Obesere

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Abstract

The fuji music is a sub-genre of the Yoruba popular lyrical poetry. This article examines the image of women in the Fuji music of Abass Akande Obesere, against the dominant critical views that characterise his music occasioned by his use of rather uncouth diction. Within the broader context of Yoruba cultural expressions, the study explores the tensions surrounding the representation of gender and sexuality in the Fuji music of Obesere. The study adopts a qualitative approach, analysing selected Fuji lyrics by Obesere through feminist perspectives on the representation of women. Through close textual analysis, the study focuses on the deployment of metaphor, repetition, simile, euphemism and indigenous sayings and other elements of satire that subtly shape the public portrayal of women as eroticized figures, transactional resources and markers of male prestige and domination. A special focus is also paid to how these lyrics propagate patriarchal domination. The findings of the study reveal that women are frequently reduced to sexual symbols within lyrical ideology. Such representations are neither static nor unidimensional. Rather, they showcase the ideological site of both control and resistance. It argues that women are not portrayed as sexual objects but rather function as a site for interrogating masculinity, power and how mechanisms of social control are constructed, negotiated and contested. Therefore, Obesere's music tends to deconstruct established moral discourses, opening a space for suppressed conversations about gender norms and public expectations of morality in Yoruba society. The paper concludes that Fuji music, specifically in Obesere's sphere, should be understood as a complex form of cultural production that critically engages issues of gender and power.

Introduction

Fuji music originated from the Ajisari music culture that was used to wake up Muslim faithful during the annual Muslim Ramadan fasting period. Olaniyan (2007:23) notes that Fuji music is a genre well known

as the music of the Yoruba Muslim faithful. Raji (2004:240) opines that the song itself is lawful, but it becomes unlawful depending on the time, circumstances, places, motives, and types of songs. Specifically, Islamic songs have been used over the years to propagate the ideals of Islam. As earlier pointed out, *wéré* reigned before the advent of Fuji. Olaniyan (2007:23) observes that *wéré* was the genre of music used to wake Muslims at dawn to eat their early morning meal, known as Sahur during the Ramadan month. It is also important to note that Fuji music is a major category or genre of music in Yorubaland. For an artist to be recognised as a Fuji musician, he or she must render the song in the Yoruba language. Odetade (2017:26) observes that Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Alhaji Kollington Ayinla were both *wéré* musicians in the 1950s. It is widely acclaimed that Sikiru Ayinde Barrister experimented with various forms of composition styles and musical instruments to create Fuji music. Over the years, many Fuji musicians have introduced one or more additional instruments into Fuji music.

Abass Obesere belongs to the post-modern phase of Fuji music (1980s-2000). The post-Civil War era in Nigeria signals the urbanisation of the Fuji music genre. There was increased patronage of the musicians across different socio-strata of the society. Fuji music became popular in urban areas like Lagos and Ibadan. It reflected street life, nightlife and modern experiences. Fuji music existed beyond just the mere tradition of the Islamic culture to a city culture. This made the music more acceptable, and it also coincided with the Obesere's era, where more Fuji musicians were becoming more known in the city space.

The transition of Fuji music into the urban space is a shift for the generation of Obesere. More of the Fuji musicians were looking for wide acceptability and recognition, and as such have to refine their lyrics and creativity to match the urban purpose. Obesere's position in Fuji music is characterised by transgression, which places him in opposition to the older generation of Fuji musicians like Sikiru Ayinde Barrister and Kollington Ayinla. His Fuji is a shift from social commentary to open discussion of sexuality and urban slang, which are major characteristics of urbanity.

Obesere's Fuji music is highly performative in nature. The incorporation of many female dancers into his music videos became a norm from the 1990s to the early 2000s. Female dancers move and shake their bodies to the provocative drum beats and lyrics. This is a response

to the poor economic conditions prevalent in Nigeria in the 1990s, where women now find a means of survival. His music also became more acceptable among the Yoruba populace because his lyrics became a blend of Yoruba idiomatic expressions with street language and coded expressions. This places him as a counter-hegemonic voice in Fuji music and as a likely comparison with Saint Janet, a female musician, who also revolutionises the Juju genre with sexually-laced lyrics.

The expansion of Obesere's lyrics is beyond the norm and conventional discourse of sex in Yoruba land. Through his sexually laced lyrics, he has broadened Fuji's thematic focus by foregrounding the body of the woman as a site of meaning and performance. Rather than seeing sexuality as a taboo not to be discussed in the open, Obesere brings it to the public court of opinion, thereby forcing the public to engage with a vital issue often suppressed by Yoruba sociocultural settings.

Obesere has also reconfigured the performance structure of the Fuji music. He has achieved this with his bold and energetic display on stage, and sometimes wearing a female top dress. His movement and energetic delivery of his lyrics are consuming and call for deep audience engagement. His redefining nature of performance has further consolidated the theatrical expression of masculinity and desire. This has become his signature and has also set the stage for interrogation of identity and power in Fuji music.

Obesere's Fuji's music is a cultural text that moves beyond entertainment. It is a cultural text that exists as a meaning-producing system. In the popular music tradition, language exists and function as a signifying practice through which social realities are constructed and interpreted. This aligns with Stuart Hall's notion of culture "as a site of meaning-making where music (texts) actively shapes how people understand the world. Therefore, Fuji lyrics exist as a vehicle of cultural knowledge production.

The representation of women in Nigerian popular music has continued to generate attention from various scholars, public analysts, commentators and feminist activists. Yoruba popular musicians are not left out in this framing of women as sex symbols. Increasingly, the portrayal of women's images as sex symbols has become a veritable means through which male musicians utilise to record high patronage. Adeleye-Fayemi (1994) opines that "the use of sex broadens the commercial space of producers. Through his saucy lyrics, the male

recording artist utilises the inordinate amount of space he has to titillate and excite the imagination of his audiences, and he finds legitimisation in doing so". The use of sexual imagery in songs by music artists helps them to gain much popularity in society.

Odetade (2017) notes that in traditional African societies, there have been various arguments advanced in support of and against women's participation in the musical, festival, ritual, history and the arts of the society in general. Women's participation in ritual spaces is not merely for appearance, but they sometimes have roles to play – major or passive. For instance, in the bridal performances (*Ẹkúnlẹ̀yàwó*) in the southwestern part of Yoruba land, women take control of the use language. Male and female private parts are mentioned freely but it must not be out of bonds of the festival. In this sense, women who mention male or female private parts openly outside festival spaces are tagged as *onísòkùsò* (senseless talker). In more recent times, male Fuji musicians and Hip-Hop musicians now use their music to venerate the image of women as sex symbols.

The gender imbalance in the portrayal of women in Fuji music can be understood within the framework of the feminist theories of representation, power hegemony (Olugbamigbe 2003, Akorede and Asiyanbola 2011). Interestingly, Fuji music has been a male dominated music genre, largely shaped by the performance of Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, Kollington Ayinla and more recently, Abass Akande Obesere in his own generation. It is true that women participate in the larger performance of Fuji music as chorus singers, dancers, audience and symbolic objects but the central structures of the musical genre like composition and narrative control are mainly dominated by male Fuji musicians.

From the viewpoint of a literary feminist, this gender imbalance does not merely exist, but that it is an ideological structure conscripted by the societal norms and conventions. The major argument put forward by the feminist scholars is that whoever controls the means of production also dictates how circulation, meanings and interpretations become scattered around the community. Since men dominate the means of production, the interpretations of social reality depend solely on the viewpoint of their reality.

This argument aligns with Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, which posits that the masculine perspective dominates the output of

cultural productions (Buckland, 2025 and Ozer 2026). Though Mulvey's theory is basically on cinema, its tenets apply to indigenous music cultures like Fuji music, where women have been marginalised through misrepresentation of their gender in terms of bodily imagery, eroticized descriptions and male-centred narratives of pleasure and conquest.

Abass Akande Obesere is a very popular name in Fuji music. This is partly because of the peculiar ways he portrays women in his music. He has branded himself as *Oba Asakasa* (King of Slangs). Over the years, the portrayal of women as sex symbols has been the focal point of his music. In "Mr Teacher", Abass Akande Obesere states the reason why he chose to change the style and tempo of his music to *asakasa*. This is reflected in the lyrics of the song below:

<i>Ọpọ èyàn ni wón ti mòmí télètélè</i>	Many people knew me before now
<i>È mọ pé mo mó kàkọrin onísúúrù</i>	You knew I did sing about the value of patience
<i>Mo moní pa kà kọrin isé loogùnisé</i>	I know how to sing about hard work
<i>Mo dẹẹ mọ kà kọrin nípatońí 'wàlẹwà</i>	I also know how to sing virtuous songs
<i>Ọmọ aráyé ni wón o maa forin bé eyẹn</i>	Human beings do not subscribe to such songs
<i>È wayé igbà tímo n kọrin onísúúrù</i>	Look at the time I was singing about hard work
<i>È wò gbà tí mo n kọrin iséloogùnisé</i>	Look at the time I was singing about patience
<i>Se beẹmọ gbà tí mo n kọrin oníwàlẹwà</i>	You all knew when I was singing about virtue
<i>Eyàn melò lógbọ orin mi nígbà yẹn o?</i>	How many people listened to my songs at that time?
<i>O dígba tí mo yí orin mi sítal'ásàkasà</i>	Now that I turn my songs into slangs
<i>Ní gbogbo ibikibì tí mo báti n wáserè mi</i>	Anywhere I stage my songs
<i>Èrò láti Sómólú dé Bàrigà</i>	Crowd from Somolu to Bariga
<i>Kétu Ọjọta</i>	Ketu Ojota
<i>Mo so pá won naa o gbéyìn</i>	I say they are not exempted from this matter
<i>Orílẹ̀ Ígànmú la fẹ sọ ẹ wo Èkó Federal</i>	Should we talk about Orile Iganmu; look at Eko Federal
<i>Èbúté mẹta ni kásoni Àkàndé Abass o</i>	What shall we say of Ebute Meta Akande Abass
<i>Ọpọ ló n wásílẹ̀ mi torí mi lámẹrìkà o</i>	Many come to my house from America for my sake
<i>Ọpọ ló n wásílẹ̀ mi torí mi niílú London</i>	Many come to my house from London for my sake
<i>Ọpọ ló n wásílẹ̀ mi torí mi ni Germany</i>	Many come to my house from Germany for my sake
<i>Gbogbo ọmọ nàíjá tẹ̀mìnì wón n se</i>	All Nigerians are in support of me ¹

¹ Abass Akande Obesere, *Mr. Teacher*, Lagos: Dudu Heritage Films and Records, (2000).

The excerpt above gives a clearer view of the reason why Obesere changed the style of his music to *asakasa*. Rhetorical question is used in this song to emphasise the non-popularity of his songs when he was singing about the values of patience and hardwork. Immediately, he changed the style of his music to *asakasa*, the number of his audience increased. Hyperbole in this song is used to describe the popularity of his songs both home and abroad. All Nigerians cannot be in support of his vulgar songs but he makes use of the exaggeration to state the increase in the number of his audience. In this album, Obesere establishes himself as a teacher of *asakasa* since it is what his audience, especially the youths admire about his songs.

The song below will further give us an insight into the lyrical content of Obesere's songs:

<i>I want to délèisé papa tòsíbè o</i>	I want to go to Papa Tosibe's company o
<i>I want to délèisé papa tòsíbè o</i>	I want to go to Papa Tosibe's company o
<i>Sé ẹ rí isèàárọ̀</i>	Have you noticed the morning's work
<i>Amúnisar'arindin</i>	It entertains
<i>Àmọ̀ isẹ̀ọ̀sán</i>	But afternoon's work
<i>Òhunlọ́ n fa àtọ̀sì</i>	It causes gonorrhea
<i>Amóiséalé</i>	The night's work
<i>A múnì sun déedéé</i>	Makes one sleep very well
<i>Iséalé, a múnì sun déedéé</i>	Night's job, makes one sleep
very well ²	

In the song above, Obesere calls himself as Papa Tosibe which literally means the one that 'pees' there. He also implies that he has a company where people are taught "the art of peeing". His reference to Papa Tosibe's company is a metaphoric reference to a locale which in reality is non-existent. Obesere employs the use of symbolism in the song cited above. Work is used to symbolise the sexual act. He categorises the sexual act into types according to the time of the day. The first type (morning) entertains. The second type (afternoon) induces infections, while the third type (night) gives one sound sleep. Night sex is seen as a therapy for the couple. The night is a time noted for rest and sex among

² Abass Akande Obesere, *Mr. Teacher*, Lagos: Dudu Heritage Films and Records, (2000).

couples. Obesere contends that one enjoys sound sleep after engaging in serious hard work (sex).

In terms of language, Obesere freely code switches from English to Yoruba in the song. This is as a result of the influence of modernity. The use of code-switching is deliberately employed to cater for his target audience which is the youths. One of the techniques Obesere uses in his portrayal of women is to compare women's genitalia with exotic cars that his listeners love to ride. This is reflected in the song below:

<i>Qlòmogeolójú Espero</i>	The lady with eyes that look like Espero
<i>Qlómu Altima</i>	Her breasts like an Altima (Honda)
<i>Onibàdí' X class</i>	Her waist like an X Class (Benz)
<i>Níboléyínwànígbàtibàbá</i>	Where were you when daddy
<i>Tíbàbá ò wá 'ya</i>	When papa was searching for a wife
<i>QlòmogeQlómú four runner</i>	The lady's breasts look like Fore Runner
(Toyota)	
<i>Níboléyínwànígbatibàbá ò wá 'ya</i>	Where were you when baba was
	searching for a wife
<i>Aunty onibàdí land cruiser</i>	Lady with the waist of a Land Cruiser ³

Obesere creates the picture of a man who is regretting; a man who is not satisfied with the woman he married. He characterises women based on their physical features. Simile is used by Obesere to achieve this comparison. The waist of the type of women he likes are compared with a Toyota SUV called Land Cruiser. This type of SUV is noted for its enormous size. In a similar vein, the breasts of his preferred women are compared with a Toyota SUV called Four Runner. In a literal sense, such women have big breasts.

He also makes use of a rhetorical question: *Níbo lèyín wànígbatibàbá ò wá 'ya*/ Where were you when daddy was searching for a wife? In the society, this type of men will go ahead to marry another wife. In this context, the man creates a space for jealousy in the home. Obesere's constant reference to sex can be traced to the free rein of obscenity during the Oke-Ibadan festival and other satirical poetic performances in Africa. During the festivals, there is the poetic license to mention the sexual organs of both male and female. As such, Obesere being an

³ Abass Akande Obesere, *O.B.T.K*, Lagos: Sony Records, (1999).

indigene of Ibadan, we can safely conclude that he must have borrowed from the *Aboke* festival in his rendition of sexually dominated lyrics. (Olugbamigbe, 2008). This type of characterisation and technique can also be found in the song below:

<i>Ohúntimóferan</i>	The thing I like
<i>Ni màfí se fàájìyèn</i>	Is what I will use to enjoy myself
<i>Ògèdè mèjì to n be layasisiyi</i>	The two plantains on this lady's chest
<i>E check ẹ</i>	Check them
<i>Ẹ yẹwò</i>	Examine them
<i>Iruèwoni</i>	Which type?
<i>Séláróndoni</i>	Is it small?
<i>À b'ògèdè àgbagbàni</i>	Is it plantain?
<i>Tòbàjẹ ògèdè àgbagbàni</i>	If it is plantain
<i>ÀtáríÀjanákú</i>	It is the Elephant's head
<i>Kiís'èrùòmòdé</i>	It is not meant for children to carry
<i>A jẹ péẹranàgbàni</i>	It is meant for adults
<i>Ìyẹnleranirútiwa</i>	That is our taste ⁴

In the excerpt above, Obesere employs the use of metaphor and euphemism in referring to the women's breasts. His classification is based on the size of the lady's breasts. He subjects the woman's body to the gaze of the man. He is meant to make his choice amidst the set of ladies' breasts in his possession. Obesere makes use of a Yoruba proverb to illustrate his authority to choose the type of lady he wants—*ÀtáríÀjanákúKiís'èrùòmòdé*. If the lady's breast is a plantain, it is meant for mature men to eat. The woman is metaphorically represented as venison for men to chase, hunt and ravish. The influence of modernity can also be noticed in this song through the evidence of code mixing. This creates a sense of belonging for Obesere in the sense that with the code mixing of English and Yoruba, youths will be more attracted to his music. His choice of words in *E check ẹ* and *Ẹ yẹwò* is used to create suspense as to the type of plantain on the lady's breasts. *Check* is the English word for *yẹwò*, thus, it can be said that they are used to lay emphasis on the question posed to the audience. His deployment of

⁴ Abass Akande Obesere, *American Faaji Series One*, Lagos: Dudu Heritage Films and Records, (2008).

language contributes to the overall sense of imagery of the song and it also sustains the euphemism used for representing size of the lady's breasts.

The lyrics of the song below also illustrates the way Obesere portrays women:

<i>Oúnjẹ to ba mi lára mu</i>	The food that is suitable for my body
<i>Sá nimálúù o</i>	Is cow
<i>Ẹ̀gbónṭóbátijá</i>	If it breaks loose
<i>Kíwónáájá</i>	You too get lost
<i>Kíwónáájá o</i>	You too get lost o
<i>Èbẹ̀ nimobẹ̀ é</i>	I plead with you
<i>Àmọ́, kònídáa</i>	But it will not be good
<i>Kó o febi pa bábàsùn o</i>	...That baba should sleep with an empty stomach

<i>Ó níPàpáTòsibẹ̀ o</i>	He says Papa Tosibe
<i>"Dòdò" tówàníbẹ̀ yẹ̀n</i>	The fried plantain over there
<i>Ta lógbẹ̀ e síbẹ̀ o</i>	Who placed it there?
<i>Ta lógbẹ̀ e síbẹ̀ náRápálá</i>	Who placed it there <i>Rápálá</i> ?
<i>Ẹ̀kí n jẹ̀ wòni</i>	Should I taste it? ⁵

Obesere employs the use of metaphor in the above excerpt. Women are referred to as – “cow” and “fried plantain”. Cow is an animal that is mainly slaughtered for human consumption while fried plantain is useful food for humans. Cow in this song is used to symbolise a woman that is fat. Sex is compared to a food which has to do with appetite. To satisfy his appetite, the cow should not be allowed to escape so that papa will not sleep with an empty stomach. The woman is portrayed in this song as a victim of patriarchal hegemony. In the first part of the excerpt, women are portrayed as what men cannot do without merely on the basis of sexual intercourse. He states that *Àmọ́, kònídáa/Kó o febi pa bábàsùn o/* But it will not be good/ That baba should sleep with an empty stomach. Thus, baba must not go to sleep without eating the cow (woman). The woman's body is seen as a food item worth craving for by the man. Obesere artistry presents women as game for men to hunt and ravish.

⁵ Abass Akande Obesere, *Asakasa*, Lagos: Sony Records, (1998).

In the second part of the excerpt, Obesere refers to women as *dòdò* – Fried plantain that is meant to be eaten by the man. He creates a sense of imagery by referring to women as “cow” and “fried plantain” in relation to taste. Obesere creates a gustative sense by equating womanhood with fried plantain that must be tasted by the menfolk by all means. The gustative sense is created visually in the sense that the fried plantain which represents the woman is given prominence as if it is present physically. He also makes use of rhetorical question to create a sense of taste. Women are presented in this song as food items that need to be tasted in order to discover their worth and sweetness. This contributes to the overall portrayal of women in his society where men see women as food that needs to be tasted. A lady whose taste is delicious will enjoy continuous patronage from men while the one whose taste is sour will be used and dumped by men.

Obesere also portrays women in terms of exchange. The song below reflects this:

<i>Ọmọkùnrintóbámò 'ge pe</i>	A guy that knows how to woo a lady
<i>Á mó 'wóna</i>	Should be ready to spend money
<i>Olómogetóbámò 'wógbà</i>	A lady that knows how to collect money
<i>Á mótíbí se</i>	Will know how to do it very well ⁶

In the foregoing song, the relationship between a man and a woman in terms of sexual intercourse is portrayed as business. It is a trade where the buyer pays for a commodity. In this context, the man is the buyer while the woman is the seller. Likewise, a woman who knows how to collect money must know how to reciprocate the man's act with sexual intercourse. In this song, Obesere creates a parallel structure to state the cause and effect of the relationship between man and woman in terms of exchange. The song below also supports this claim:

<i>Ìdítóbáyọ</i>	The buttock that shoots out
<i>Á gbà prize</i>	Will receive a prize
<i>Kótóólọlẹ</i>	Before she goes home
<i>Lójúagbotáwàyi</i>	from this gathering ⁷

⁶ Abass Akande Obesere, *Asakasa*, Lagos: Sony Records, (1998).

The extent to which a woman displays her buttocks will determine whether she would get a prize on the stage or not! Also, the degree of a lady's beauty determines the amount of money that will be spent on her. The choice of the word "prize" is an attempt by Obesere in code mixing Yoruba language with English. The mention of the word "prize" is meant to catch the attention of his audience, especially the youths. He creates a scene in which there is a display of buttocks on stage and a good display will attract a reasonable prize. In this context, beauty is seen as a relative term because what may be a man's food may be another man's poison. The song below captures the situation in this way:

<i>Omọ̀lẹ̀ to fine pupo</i>	A young maiden that is very beautiful
<i>Aná mi lówó</i>	Will cost me money
<i>Èyítíkò fine rárá</i>	The one that is not beautiful at all
<i>Kòníná mi lówó</i>	Will not cost me money
<i>Àmòèyí to fine diẹ</i>	But the one that is beautiful a little bit
<i>At the same time</i>	At the same time
<i>Á námilówó</i>	Will cost me money ⁸

The song above reflects Obesere's viewpoint about commodifying women's beauty. *Finediẹ* and *fine rárá* draws the attention of the audience especially the young people to the commodification of women's beauty. The charges payable for the lady's service depend on the degree of her beauty. Thus, a pretty lady will cost much money while the one that is not fine at all will not cost him any money. This issue is further attested to in the song stated below:

<i>Sé ẹ r'ómógetí ò bálòlẹ̀kẹ̀</i>	You see a lady that does not use beads
<i>Pọ́ókúlowó won</i>	Will be paid cheaply
<i>Èyítóbálòlẹ̀kẹ̀</i>	The one that uses beads
<i>Gbẹ̀mùlowó won</i>	Will get a huge pay ⁹

⁷ Abass Akande Obesere, *American Faaji Series One*, Lagos: Dudu Heritage Films and Records, (2008).

⁸ Abass Akande Obesere, *Old Skool Lapel*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

⁹ Ibid

In the song cited above, Obesere also commodifies women based on the objects of adornment. Beads are used to adorn the waist of a woman. It is an age long practice. *Pọ́ókú* and *Gbẹ̀mù* are used to create a contrast in relation to the financial reward associated with when a lady adorns her waist with beads and when she does not. Any lady who does not use beads will be paid cheaply (*Pọ́ókú*) while *Gbẹ̀mù* is the reward for a lady who uses beads. *Gbẹ̀mù* is a Yoruba word that was popularised during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo when he increased workers salary. It signifies something that is huge in terms of money. *Gbẹ̀mù* as used in this song is onomatopoeia. The sound of the word denotes its meaning.

A woman is expected to have only one man as her husband. The society does not give room for a woman to have concubines while the man has the license to have more than a wife. Infidelity is a serious crime for women in marriage. The song below is used by Obesere to expose women who engage in the act. The song was originally composed by Ebenezer Obey:

<i>Torí o gún 'yánlọ́ fàlẹ̀</i>	Because she prepares pounded yam for her concubine
<i>O tẹbaf'ókònlé</i>	She prepares Eba for her husband at home
<i>Panlatóbáwà 'lóbẹ̀ o</i>	There's stockfish in the soup
<i>Àlẹ̀ lo maa jẹ</i>	The concubine will eat it
<i>Bọkọtótóbáwàlọbẹ</i>	There's cow leg in the soup
<i>Àlẹ̀ lo maa jẹ</i>	The concubine will eat it
<i>Bọkọtótóbáwàlọbẹ</i>	There's cow leg in the soup
<i>Àlẹ̀ lo maa jẹ</i>	The concubine will eat it
<i>Tó báwólẹ̀ o</i>	If she comes back home
<i>A fi ikúnlẹ̀bẹ</i>	She will kneel down promptly
<i>Á lól'ówóorí mi</i>	She will say my darling husband
<i>Èmíó r'ẹ́ran ko o</i>	There is no meat o
<i>Asameegun to walọbẹyíi</i>	But broken bones are in the soup
<i>Ko fífẹ́bá mi jẹ</i>	Kindly eat it with love ¹⁰

¹⁰ Abass Akande Obesere, *Obaadan*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2003).

A woman is portrayed as someone who cherishes her concubine more than her husband. She pounds yams for her concubine while the husband eats eba. In Yoruba land, pounded yams are the king of food. Eba has no place at all in the hierarchy of food classification. As such, pounded yams are prepared for important people and for special occasions. The woman here sees her concubine as more important than her husband. She gives all the pieces of good beef inside the soup to the concubine while the husband eats the bones. The woman is presented as being deceptive in nature by going ahead to plead with the husband to eat the food with love (Olugbamigbe, 2003)

In terms of figurative elements, Obesere uses a class of food to invert the position of a husband in the home front. Superior delicacies such as pounded yams and *bokoto* (big meat) are served to the concubine, while less valuable food such as *eba* and *asameegun* (bones) is served to the husband. This is ironic and paradoxical given the respect a wife is expected to accord her husband in society.

Although in the above song, Obesere satirises the unfaithful woman as being disloyal to the husband, he fails to tell the audience whether the man is performing his financial responsibility on the home front or not. This allusion reinforces the patriarchal configuration of the society. In a situation where the husband fails to fulfil the financial responsibility to his wife, he indirectly offers the woman alternative means of survival as a concubine. Therefore, it is not surprising that the woman serves her concubine “the king of food” (pounded yams) while her husband is left with less valuable food. What this implies is that marriage is a kind of economic project. For it to succeed, a man who has chosen to go into marriage must be prepared to bear the financial responsibility associated with it. Another implication of this is that marriage is not meant for all men, except those who are financially prepared for it

Obesere vilifies women who pretend to long for their husbands’ company after a long absence from home. The song below illustrates this:

Okọ mi ò sínlé
Ojoójumoló ñ phone
Amóòrò orí phone

My husband is not at home
 He calls me on phone every day
 But the conversation on phone

<i>Kò dà bí àfójúrí</i>	Is not the same thing as face-to-face
interaction	
<i>Serioroorí phone</i>	Telephone conversation
<i>Kò dà bí àfójúrí</i>	Is not the same thing as face-to-face
interaction	
<i>Ení ko máabò ní 'lé</i>	Tell him to come back home
<i>Ení ko máabò ní 'lé</i>	Tell him to come back home
<i>Kówábá mi gbòn 'mísí</i>	Let him come and pour water into
me	
<i>Kómáabò ní 'lé</i>	Tell him to come back home
<i>Kówábá mi gbòn 'mísí</i>	To come and pour water into me
<i>Dear miótútùyípójù</i>	My Dear, this cold is too much
<i>Kówábá mi gbòn 'mísí</i>	Let him come and pour water into
me	
<i>Ení ko máabò ní 'lé</i>	Tell him to come back home
<i>Kówábá mi f'owókò ránsé</i>	Let him send transport fare
<i>Kówábá mi gbòn 'mísí</i>	Let him come and pour water into
me ¹¹	

This song creates the picture of a husband who is not at home. The wife gives that impression by saying *Okò mi ò sínílé* (My husband is not at home), *Ojóójúmoló n' phone* (He calls every day). Code-mixing and repetition are evident in this song. "Phone" is repetitively used in the song to call the attention of the audience to its ineffectiveness to address the lonely state of the woman. "Dear" is also an English word used in the song to catch the attention of the audience especially the youth who has been greatly influenced by modernity. Obesere creates the picture of a lonely lady who is sexually starved. The husband's term of responsibility is only noted in the area of sex. The musician captures this vividly by saying *Ení ko máabò nílé* (Tell him to come home), *Kówábá mi gbòn mísí* (And pour water inside me). Water in this song is used as euphemism for sperm.

As a romantic song which captures the travails of a lonely wife, the song explores repetition and dramatic monologue to accentuate the psychological loneliness of the woman. The use of these techniques in

¹¹ Abass Akande Obesere, *Egungun Be Careful*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

the song is appropriate because they show the dissatisfaction of the lonely woman and probably provide the reason for her waywardness.

In another song entitled *Old Skool Lapel*, Obesere characterises how sexuality can be used to measure the strength of a man in the society.

<i>Bòbò n n'awọ</i>	This boy can beat leather very well
<i>Kámádé purọ</i>	We must not tell lies
<i>Kámádé purọ</i>	We must not tell lies
<i>Bòbò n n'awọ</i>	This boy can beat leather very well
<i>Kámádé purọ</i>	We must not tell lies
<i>Toriàwontótisi</i>	Because of those he has used
<i>Toriàwontótílá</i>	Because of those he has tasted
<i>Toriàwontótijanjan</i>	Because of those he has banged repeatedly ¹²

Old Skool Lapel is a mixture of English and French words. It is an expression that was popular in Nigeria in the early 2000s. It is used to refer to old ways of doing things. *Skool* is a corrupt form of the English word School while *Lapel* is a corrupt form of *Je m'appelle*. *Je m'appelle* is a French expression that means My Name Is. In this song, Obesere extols the sexual prowess of the man. The man is pictured as one who has had sex with many women. The woman's vagina is metaphorically and metonymically called leather while the boy is the one who has the strength to beat the leather to satisfaction. In this song, sex is still under the control of patriarchal configuration. This is because Obesere gives the man the status of a victorious "drummer" who has successfully beaten several leathers. What this shows is that in sexual activities, women are still subservient to men. While a woman who engages in multiple sexual intercourses is considered as a "free commonwealth" and a "path to men's grave" as revealed in Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's *Barry Special*, men in the above song are praised for their sexual escapades. What this implies is that women are still on the peripheral in the discourse of sex. They do not only bear the brunt of their love for men, they also suffer from men's sexual indiscipline. This is evident by the fact that men are

¹² Abass Akande Obesere, *Old Skool Lapel*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

privileged to engage in multiple sexual intercourses without condemnation.

Apart from enhancing its lyrics, the use of repetition in the song foregrounds the sexual strength of the man. It also shows the man's uncontrolled appetite for sex. It is an appetite that must be satisfied and the object of that satisfaction is the woman.

In the subsequent songs, Obesere explores further the theme of sexual dominance in his lyrics. He advises men that:

<i>Awotéebaná</i>	The leather that you beat
<i>Tí ò báṛọ</i>	If it is not soft
<i>Ẹ won 'mísi</i>	Sprinkle water on it
<i>Ẹ yin bróda</i>	My brothers
<i>Kẹ maa nawọ o</i>	Continue beating the leather o
<i>Ẹ máanawọ o</i>	Beat the leather o
<i>Ẹyinobínrin</i>	Our women
<i>Kẹ ma jẹ 'san o</i>	Continue eating the flesh o
<i>Ẹ májẹ 'san o</i>	Continue eating the flesh o
<i>Ẹyin mummy</i>	Our mothers
<i>Kẹ ma jẹ 'san o</i>	Continue eating the muscle
<i>Ẹ ma jẹ 'san o</i>	Continue eating the muscle
<i>Isan tẹ bàna</i>	The muscle that you stretch
<i>Tí o bàlé</i>	If it does not get turgid
<i>Ẹ gbes'ẹnu</i>	Put it in your mouth ¹³

In the song cited above, the woman's vagina is metaphorically presented as leather. Leather is transformed into the shape that is pleasing to the owner and it must also be made soft before it can be used. Therefore, Obesere is saying that water should be sprinkled on the vagina that is difficult for the man to handle while the woman should eat the muscle that is not turgid at the point of sex. This song is also states that sex can be mutually beneficial depending on how those involved handle themselves.

¹³ Abass Akande Obesere, *Egunun Be Careful*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

The song below throws a jab at insatiable women creating the scenario of women who are not considerate about the circumstances and implications of indulging in sexual activities without moderation:

<i>Omogeḗlélèyi</i>	This young beautiful maiden
<i>Ò jẹ n rí 'mú mí</i>	Does not give mde room for rest
<i>Kòtì è jẹ n lèsùnràrá</i>	She does not allow me to sleep at all
<i>Látalẹ ànámọjú</i>	Since yesterday night till this morning
<i>Omọdéyi</i>	This young chap
<i>Kòtì è fẹ mò pó 'mí wón</i>	She does not want to know that water is scarce.
<i>Ẹnitó lo ñjẹ</i>	The owner of the food
<i>Kòdẹ kí n jẹ bẹẹ yẹn</i>	Does not eat it this way
<i>Aunty tò ní 'yán gan</i>	The lady who is the owner of the pounded yam
<i>Kòdẹ kí n gun bẹẹ yẹn</i>	Does not pound it that way
<i>Bòbò Bòbò</i>	Boy Boy
<i>Ò jẹ n rí mu mí</i>	Does not give room for rest
<i>Kòtì è jẹ n lèsùnràrá</i>	She does not allow me to sleep at all
<i>Látalẹ ànámọjú</i>	Since yesterday's night till this morning
<i>Eléwèlè</i>	Strong man
<i>Kòtì è jẹ n mò pé afẹ gbó</i>	She does not know that we want to get old
<i>Bròdátólọ 'múgan</i>	The brother who is the owner of the breast
<i>Kòdẹ kí n múbẹẹ yẹn</i>	Does not suck it that way
<i>Bròdátó lo ñ jẹ</i>	The brother who is the owner of the food
<i>Kòdẹ kí n jẹbẹẹ yẹn</i>	Does not eat it that way ¹⁴

He creates a picture that reveals that the couple in question are concubines. They both abandon their spouses at home in order to seek for sexual satisfaction elsewhere. The song uses a lady persona to reply the

¹⁴ Abass Akande Obesere, *Egunun Be Careful*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

artiste. Obesere employs the dialogue technique in order to simulate an interaction between the man and the woman. He uses euphemism to represent sperm as water. The lady does not want to know that water is scarce. Water is usually scarce during the dry season. Thus, sperm can also be scarce if the man has reached orgasm several times during the course of sexual act. He also metaphorically represents the man's reproductive organ as food. Obesere creates the picture of a lady who is very skillful in the act of sex. The sexual strength of both the man and the woman is emphasised through repetition.

The second part of the song shows a lady who is stating how the man has asserted his virility in satisfying her sexual yearning. Obesere metaphorically represents the man as *Elewele* – it means a super human who is full of strength and vigour. In the above cited song, the woman is portrayed as an object of satisfaction to the man. The woman is a victim of man's strength. To further promote male hegemony about sex, Obesere asserts that:

<i>Ọmọgetori ẹ nimo se ń sakọ</i>	Lady I am feeling proud because of you
<i>To rí ẹ nimo se ń sakọ</i>	Because of you I am feeling proud
<i>Ọpọ ọkùnrinlófẹkúnitorí ẹ</i>	Some men want to die because of you
<i>Ọpọ ọkùnrin lo ready láti se tí ẹ</i>	Some men are ready to do your wish
<i>Àmókinikannimofẹkóyẹ ẹ dàjú</i>	I want you to know one thing for sure
<i>Erégéle won kòlè se tómi</i>	They cannot play as I can do
<i>Nítorínaaẹlẹlẹ yiwòó se fún mi</i>	Because of this accept my proposal ¹⁵

In the above cited lyric, Obesere paints the picture of a lady who has many suitors. He wants her to consider him based on his sexual strength. This is achieved through the use of rhetorical elements to address the lady directly. The use of noun vocative, Lady, suggests that

¹⁵ Abass Akande Obesere, *Old Skool Lapel*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

the man and the lady are together. There is the use of hyperbole in the song to demonstrate that the woman has many suitors who want her as a wife. The tone of the song is infused with persuasion and eulogy directed at the lady.

The song below captures deception that sometimes characterise the relationship between men and women.

<i>No fumble</i>	No fumble
<i>No mess up</i>	No mess up
<i>Ìwònikanni</i>	You are the only one
<i>Sugar Sugar</i>	SugarSugar
<i>O tiwà pa jù</i>	You are just okay
<i>Ma kúnitóri ẹ</i>	I will die because of you
<i>Loótó</i>	Is it true?
<i>Ìwònikannimáfẹ</i>	You are the only one I will marry
<i>Ó daanìgbàyeṅ o</i>	It is okay
<i>No back up</i>	No back up
<i>No cheating</i>	No cheating
<i>Kàn be careful</i>	Just be careful
<i>Mo tigbọ ẹ</i>	I have heard you
<i>Ìwònimomàbálo</i>	You are the one I will go with ¹⁶

Obesere creates a scene in which the man is trying to woo a lady. He employs the use of metaphor to represent the lady as sugar. Sugar serves as a sort of inducement in order to enjoin the lady to accept his proposal. The use of exaggeration is also evident in this song. In reality, the man cannot die because of the woman. This is an avenue used by men to lure women to accept their proposal. There is also the use of metaphor to state the truthful nature of the man's proposal. "Back up" is a computer language. "Back up" is used to imply that there will be no room for rivalry in the relationship. The choice of "cheating" here is used to reinforce and assure the lady that there will be no room for competition in their affair. Code-switching is evident in this song. *No fumble* and *No mess up* are used to emphasise the commitment of the man to the relationship. They also serve as a form of assurance to the

¹⁶ Abass Akande Obesere, *Egun Be Careful*, Lagos: Bayowa Films and Records, (2002).

woman. “Be careful” serves as a note of caution to the woman. The woman is expected to reciprocate the commitment with a submissive attitude.

In conclusion, this paper has examined various themes explored by Abass Akande Obesere in his treatment of issues related to women. The analysis of the selected songs demonstrates that women do not exist merely as an object of desire but are rather constructed as symbolic sites through which issues of masculinity, sexuality, power and social norms and conventions are negotiated. The analysis reveals that the representations of women are informed by cultural, religious and patriarchal ideologies that are entrenched in the societal perception of women within Yoruba society. Whereas the unwary audience is quick to judge the music of Obesere as uncouth, obscene and full of dirty words, a closer look at his art would reveal an artistic attempt to redirect the perspective of both the male and female audience from the focus on the image of women as a mere object of sexuality and amorous satisfaction. The preponderance of obscenities expressed in this essay should be pardoned.

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