


## Linguistic Twists and Moral Decay in The Creative Arts of Contemporary Society

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### Abstract

*The creative arts, of which literature is a part, have been an integral part of human culture since the evolution of man. Apart from literature, the creative arts also include theatre/films, music, painting, sculpturing, to mention but a few. Through the creative arts, man's great achievements, his passions and struggles, his belief system and general ways of life, and his moments of disappointments and conquests have not only been documented but have also been preserved for society even before man developed a formal channel of documentations. This perspective paper explores the multifaceted impact of the aberration of language on culture, probing into its role in shaping societal values. Drawing from virtue ethics, discourse analysis and cultural studies, this paper analyzes various creative art forms, including literature, film, and music. It examines how creative expression can challenge the status quo, inspire innovation, and enrich the human experience. It also probes into the intricacies of contemporary creative writing, artistic activities, the language of artists and its significance to society. It discusses the role of literature and other art forms in society, focusing on the African context, and particularly Nigeria. It critiques issues of nudity, sexualization and vulgarity in contemporary Nigerian films and music, arguing that these undermine societal values. Given the rapid changes in society, the study argues that artists need to adapt their works to address the challenges of the modern world, ensures the sustainability of the African identity, particularly Nigerian cultural identity as well as safeguard the age-long environmental wisdom.*

**Keywords:** Creative Arts, Innovations, Language, Literature, Nigeria, Society.

### Introduction

The creative arts, renowned tools of societal reflection and moral compass, have undergone profound transformations in contemporary society. This transformation is not merely stylistic or aesthetic but also linguistic and moral. In their myriad forms, the creative arts have been a constant companion to humanity throughout history. They have served as powerful tools for communication, expression, and cultural transmission. They are media through which individuals and societies can explore their identities, beliefs, and aspirations. Beyond their

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Received 04 Feb. 2025; Accepted 21 Feb. 2025. Available online: 28 Feb. 2025.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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aesthetic appeal, they play a crucial role in shaping cultural values, expressing social norms, and show-casing individual differences. They provoke thought, evoke emotion, and challenge the status quo. They can, as well, engender social change, foster empathy, and promote critical thinking. The creative arts can also serve as bridges between cultures, facilitating intercultural dialogue and understanding.

In this paper, the expression, “linguistic twists” shall refer to those abberations in language deployments, deliberately created or fashioned by artists in an attempt to show ingenuity and depth in their artistry. Such abberations usually appeal to the sensory organ of pleasure because of the humor and wit that often accompany their creation; they, most times, undermine or subvert society’s sense of morality, sacrificing that morality, as it were, on the altar of pleasure. At such moments, pleasure, in whatever manner it is made manifest, becomes overwhelmingly appreciated by all while the societal sense of morality is played down, if not utterly jettisoned though temporarily (see Miriam Inegbe, 2024, 222).

Language is an aspect of culture; without it, culture would never propagate. Literature can express itself through the use of particular language because language is oral while literature can either be oral or written. Literature and language are linked to culture because it is under their belly that cultural norms and nuances are preserved, transmitted and expressed. Language is the product of operations and constructions whose end is to divide the thinkable into a finite number of representations, bringing with them, through their division, the power to render and express any thought (Guillaume Gustave, 1973, 27). Illustrations can be advanced to show, for instance, that different cultures have different wise-sayings, popularly referred to as adages, even on similar subjects. Poets make use of these proverbial adages, using language to entertain society. Among the Esan of Edo State, Nigeria, a popular proverb which admonishes on humility and secrecy is:

Umekhen ireko gbere (The pumpkin produces its budding seed in secrecy)

Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, the same admonition is seen in:

Bíṣu eni bá ta, erùpè la fí nbo (A man’s yam that is just budding is covered in earth)

The above wise-sayings show a similar subject-matter couched in different images by different cultures.

The process of borrowing, using, and referring to words or phrases by artists demonstrates dynamism because culture is dynamic. In this regard, literature functions or plays the role of opening up the rehabilitation of the people and, as an extension, the society in general.

Creative arts often mirror the values, beliefs, and concerns of the time and period in which they are created. They can reflect societal issues like inequality, injustice, and cultural shifts. Art forms like literature, film, and music have the power to evoke strong emotions in audiences, fostering empathy and understanding. Creative expressions contribute to the formation and preservation of cultural identity. They can highlight traditions, customs, and shared experiences. Artists often push boundaries and challenge conventional norms, leading to innovation and new perspectives. Art can be used as a powerful tool to critique social and political issues, raising awareness and sparking dialogue. Engaging with creative works can provide emotional catharsis, reduce stress, and improve mental health. Art facilitates cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, breaking down barriers between different communities. The creative arts industry has contributed significantly to economies through jobs, tourism, and cultural exports. Also, creative expressions can foster personal growth, self-discovery, and a sense of purpose. For instance, a powerful novel can shed light on the experiences of marginalized groups, promoting empathy and social change. A thought – provoking film can challenge societal norms and encourage critical thinking. A visually stunning piece of art can inspire awe and wonder, elevating the human spirit, and a catchy song can become a cultural phenomenon, uniting people across borders.

Traditional folk songs which have been passed down through generations, have long served as vessels of cultural heritage, moral instruction, and practical wisdom. These songs often extol the virtues of hard work, perseverance, and community. They narrate tales of historical events, celebrate agricultural labor, and instill a sense of identity and belonging. These declarations agree with Bolaji’s (2013) assertion that “one of the major channels used in disseminating information, correcting, admonishing, exhort, impacting educational knowledge, (both formal and informal) and sustainability of culture in any African society is its folksongs”(102). The above citation reveals that folksongs are cultural patterns within which positive behavioral ethics and morals are drawn. It also indicates that folksongs are channels that connect the past to the present. For instance, many African folk songs praise the dignity of labor, encouraging

listeners to embrace their roles as farmers, artisans, or warriors. By weaving intricate narratives and rhythmic patterns, these songs not only entertain but also educate. They teach about history, geography, and social customs, fostering a deep appreciation for one's cultural roots. Moreover, they instill a strong work ethic, emphasizing the importance of diligence and productivity.

In stark contrast to the values espoused by traditional folk songs, much of contemporary music, particularly popular genres like hip-hop, R&B, and pop, often centers on themes of sex, materialism, and superficiality. Lyrics frequently glorify sexual exploits, objectify women, nudity, indecency in words, and promote a hedonistic lifestyle. The pervasive use of explicit language, suggestive imagery, and sexually charged themes has raised concerns about the impact of such music on societal values and norms. Critics argue that this content can contribute to the degradation of women, the normalization of promiscuity, and the erosion of traditional moral standards as described in *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong* (Louis Pojman & James Fieser, 2009, 152). It is important to note, however, that not all contemporary music is devoid of positive messages. Many artists continue to address social issues, promote love, and inspire listeners. Nevertheless, the trend towards explicit and often vulgar lyrics remains a significant concern.

The shift from traditional folk music to contemporary popular music reflects broader cultural changes. As societies become more secular and individualized, the emphasis on communal values and traditional morality has diminished. The rise of consumer culture and the influence of mass media have further contributed to the proliferation of sexually explicit content. It is crucial to consider the impact of these cultural shifts on young people, who are particularly susceptible to the messages and contents conveyed in music and films. By understanding the power of music and films to shape attitudes and behaviors, we can work to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, the choice of what music or film to listen to or watch is a personal one. However, it is important to be aware of the potential influence of music or films on our thoughts, feelings, and actions. By critically evaluating the messages and pictures conveyed in both traditional and contemporary art forms, we can make informed choices about the kind of culture we want to create.

This paper probes into the multifaceted impact of language of creative artists on morality within the realm of contemporary creative arts, exploring how linguistic innovations and deviations have contributed to a perceived decline in moral values.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study will examine various creative media, including literature, film, and music, to identify and analyze the linguistic techniques employed to convey moral messages or, conversely, to subvert them. By scrutinizing the language in these domains, the study aims to uncover the underlying motivations and societal implications of these linguistic twists. This study will, therefore, adopt a qualitative research approach, primarily utilizing textual analysis and critical discourse analysis.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will draw upon the following theoretical frameworks: virtue ethics, discourse analysis and cultural studies. Virtue ethics will be used to analyze the portrayal of virtuous and vicious characters in creative works. This framework is an ancient philosophical approach that emphasizes the development of moral character and the cultivation of virtues. It focuses on what kind of person one should be rather than adhering to specific rules (deontology) or maximizing consequences (utilitarianism). It focuses on what it means to live a good life and the cultivation of virtues such as courage, honesty, and compassion (Louis Pojman & James Fieser, 2009, 147). Virtue ethics dates back to ancient Greece, with its roots in the works of Socrates, Plato and most notably Aristotle, who wrote extensively about virtue in his work *Nicomachean Ethics* around the 4th century BCE (David Sytsma, 2021, 5). Virtue ethics saw resurgence in the 20th century, particularly in the 1950s and 60s, as a reaction against the dominant ethical theories of utilitarianism and deontology (Michael Stocker, 1976, 454). Furthermore, Plato, Aristotle and Stoics are considered the founding fathers of virtue ethics. More recent proponents of the theory include Alasdir MacIntyre, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Martha Nussbaum. Alasdir MacIntyre revived virtue ethics in the contemporary era with his book, *After Virtue* (1981), where he critiques modern ethical theories and calls for a return to virtue as a central component of moral philosophy. Rosalind Hursthouse also contributed to the defence and development of contemporary virtue ethics (Phillippa Foot, 1978). Virtue ethics was developed to address the limitations of other ethical theories by emphasizing moral character and the importance of societal and cultural contexts in understanding what constitutes

a good life. It shifted the focus from mere rule-following or analysis of consequences to a holistic understanding of human flourishing and moral development.

Discourse analysis will be used to examine the ways in which language is used to construct and reinforce social and cultural values. This framework is a method for studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context. It seeks to understand how language shapes and is shaped by social interactions and power dynamics. Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, and Erving Goffman are prominent figures in discourse analysis. Michel Foucault's ideas about power, knowledge, and discourse significantly influenced discourse analysis, particularly in terms of how language constructs social realities. Also, Foucault according to Stuart Elden (2016) translated the earliest work on Discourse Analysis titled *Stilstudien* (Style Studies)(1928), written by Leo Spitzer into French. Norman Fairclough developed critical discourse analysis, focusing on the relationship between language and power structures in society. Erving Goffman's work on frame analysis contributed to understanding how social situations are constructed through language (Zellig Harris, 1952). Discourse analysis emerged in the late 20th century, in the 1960s and 1970s to be precise, with significant contributions from scholars in linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies (Ruth Breeze, 2013). Discourse analysis was founded to explore the complex relationship between language, social practices, and power dynamics. Researchers sought to demonstrate how language is not merely a tool for communication but is deeply intertwined with cultural and social constructs, allowing for a richer understanding of societal issues.

Cultural studies will be used to analyze the cultural significance of the creative works under investigation. It is an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between culture and society. It examines how culture is produced, consumed, and contested, and how it shapes our identities and experiences. Cultural studies emerged in the mid-20th century, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the United Kingdom, as a response to the limitations of traditional literary criticism and to the growing importance of mass media and popular culture (John Hartley, 2003; Rachel Pain & Susan Smith, 2008). Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, Angela McRobbie, Raymond Williams, and Antonio Gramsci are key figures in cultural studies. Richard Hoggart's book, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) is often credited as one of the foundational texts of cultural studies, critiquing the effects of mass media on working-class culture. Stuart Hall, a key figure in the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies has contributed to the understanding of race, identity, and the relation between culture and power. Angela McRobbie is known for her work on gender and culture; she expanded the discussions within

cultural studies to include feminist perspectives (Rachel Pain & Susan Smith, 2008; David Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen, 1996; Ziauddin Sardar & Van Loon Borin, 1994). Cultural Studies was developed to challenge existing academic boundaries, integrating insights from sociology, anthropology, media studies, and more. Its founders aimed to analyze and critique cultural artifacts beyond elite literature, focusing on everyday culture and its implications for identity, power, and social change.

By combining these theoretical perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between language, morality, and contemporary creative arts.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### LANGUAGE IN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

Language is the foundation upon which literature and society are built. It is the tool used to communicate ideas, thoughts, and emotions. Without language, man would be unable to share his experiences, learn from each other, or create the literature of human culture known to man today. Language, therefore, “finds credence in a social group and thus, the cord between language and culture remains inseparable”(Miriam Inegbe, 2024, 62). In literature, language is the medium through which authors craft their stories, poems, and plays. It is the words on the page that bring characters to life, evoke emotions, and transport readers to different worlds. The skillful use of language can elevate a work of literature from mere words on a page to a powerful and meaningful experience. In society, language plays an even more fundamental role. It is the glue that binds communities, allowing people to share their values, beliefs, and customs. Language shapes a people’s identity, influences their thoughts, and determines how man perceives the world around him. It is through language that man learns about history, science, and the arts, and it is through language that man passes his knowledge and traditions to future generations.

Literature is a phenomenon that has been frequently defined throughout the ages. Etymologically, the word is derived from the Latin "literal" or "literati" which is described as people of letters; this word means "grammar" or "of letters or learned". The word "literateur"



thus has been considered as a critic and it implies a writer as well; one who engages in literary pursuits. According to the Universal Dictionary (1995), literateur is defined as "man of letters, writer" (703). From this perspective, the word "literature" emerged. The Universal Dictionary conceives the word literature as a set of literary works realized by means of language, oral or written, considered both from a formal and an aesthetic point of view as well as ideological and cultural. The Collins Robert's Dictionary (1998) conceives "literature" as a documentation on travels or pedagogics, as well as writing produced in a particular language, country, or age" (1508). These pertinent, intellectual, and superficial definitions are limited. For example, what happened to literature in the Middle Ages? The relevance of this question leads us to the moment when we conceive that literature at that time was born from historical evidence, in particular oral facts; for example, William Shakespeare wrote stories based on the literary criteria of the 16th-century English society. Among others, we could cite Charles Dickens, and literary activists in Africa such as: Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, JP Clark, Sony Labou Tansi, Ahmadou Kourouma, Buchi Emecheta, Sembene Ousmane, Calixthe Beyala, Christopher Okigbo, Kofi Awoonor, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o; among others. One way to understand the literary works of the above writers is to explain their etymological content if one is to consider them from a lexical point of view. A play is performed on a stage before an audience. Novels are designed for reading, understanding and enjoyment, while poetry, through diction, symbolism, and imagination, appeals directly to the emotions. All of these literary or creative art forms are intended to reconcile man and his immediate environment. As such, their themes are largely drawn from the settings where humans carry out their immediate ideologies and ambitions. Consequently, there is an observable symbolic relationship between literature and society. Writers and artists draw their resources from their environments and then use them to create impacts on society according to their literary abilities. This has been the link between literature and society since the dawn of humanity. Despite different ideologies, literature has maintained its aesthetic value. Patrick Ebewo, in Thompson, et al (1991, 60), submits that:

Literature brings us to the realities of human situation through speculations.... It shows us human motives and reveals the dilemmas and fragmentations of human life. Beyond these general functions, literature, in more specific terms, helps to reveal the institutions of society.



Literature is important in a people. Artistic activities within the domains of man have revealed that literature is the aesthetic that edifies the soul. Literature serves as a didactic and psychological tool. These functions have been useful for emerging pre-industrial needs. With the development of society, evolution in technology, computer science, and explosive science, a new ideology is required of the artist so that he can achieve the purpose of things. In this regard, new experiences are emerging with the hope of controlling the ills that threaten the programmes designed for contemporary society. Jean-Paul Sartre (1950, vi), a philosopher, has argued that literature is a powerful ontological tool for social and liberal service. In Graeco-Roman times, writers were concerned with serving their society.

Literature, as a true cultural weapon, can function as a tool for the expression and understanding of a particular people and their social history. And according to Miriam Inegbe (2024) in JINCES, it “shapes cultural and social identities, as well as a means of communication and expression for citizens within a nation”(342). For instance, no individual needs to have lived in the pre-colonial Igbo society to understand the ideology of a true Igbo man if that individual has read Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* translated into French as *Le Monde s’Effondre*. This is also true of the works of Wole Soyinka, Charles Dickens, Sony Labou Tansi, Ahmadou Kourouma and others in relation to their various societies. The important submission of Isidore Okpewho in Thompson, et al (1991) when he explicates literary ideology is worth considering:

The commitment to one’s fellows and to the artist social environment

is more strongly emphasized by Marxist thinkers and writers. ...

Jean Paul Satre argues that nobles, as universal ideals in Arts are,

the most immediate constituency of the artist is his own people;

and

that the duty of the writer is to liberate the spirit of his fellow

people

as well as himself. (71-72).

In the same vein, Wole Soyinka, through an observation of his society, presents a character who suffers a spiritual problem in his poem, “Abiku”. The word, “Abiku”, is a Yoruba word that refers to a child who dies repeatedly only to be born again and again. Among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria, a child with this inclination is referred to as an “Ogbanje”, while among the

Ibibio of South South Nigeria, such a child is referred to as “Eyen Okposanja” or “Eyen Essienemana”.

For the literary or creative artist to be considered contemporary, s/he must identify with the history of his /her people. Tunde Adeniran (1994) has argued that if people today are not interested in poetry, a genre of literature, it is because poetry has not bent to the problems of the people concerned. He adds that:

In our time, not many are showing interest in philosophical  
 and literary works, especially poetry, ostensibly because people  
 are not interested anymore. We never cared to probe why people  
 loved poetry in the past, and now seem to abhor it. Part of the  
 problem revolves around the issue of “relevance” (4).

There is no doubt that literature has played a crucial role in human history. For example, Pierre Corneille’s *Le Cid* caused political upheaval in in the 17th century France. In Africa, Hubert Ogunde, Wole Soyinka, Fela Ransome-Kuti, Sony Labou Tansi, and Ngugi wa Thiong’O have been exiled numerous times due to the ideological stance of their literary works. Aderenth asserts that a writer is notable only if he manages to study society and exposes it while detecting the major problems that surround it in order to address them. (see David Craig, 1975, 445).

The relationship between language, literature, and society is complex and multifaceted. Literature reflects the society in which it is produced, shaping and being shaped by the language of that society. Language, in turn, is constantly evolving, influenced by literature, culture, and social change. Language is an essential element in both literature and society. It is the tool that allows man to connect with his fellows, express himself, and create meaning. By understanding the role of language in literature and society, man can gain a deeper appreciation of the power of words and the importance of preserving and protecting his linguistic heritage.

## CONTEMPORARY CREATIVE ARTS AND THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The expression, “contemporary creative arts”, is an umbrella term used in referring to the various art forms and subverted artistic expressions and practices that are produced in present day Nigerian society. Such art forms reflect current ideas, and themes and they are expressed in the literary arts (modern poetry, fiction and non-fiction that explore contemporary issues and narratives in experimental forms and styles); performance arts like theatre, music, dance, and films); fashion and design arts as well as the visual arts. These art forms are dynamic and continually evolving, creating new narratives on aesthetics, culture, and society. Many contemporary Nigerian artists have consciously migrated from known conventional styles to newer forms with their “...own peculiarities and defining characteristics ... (deploying) language coloured with changes in the social lifestyle of the people”(Miriam Inegbe, 2024, 60). Contemporary Nigerian art is, thus, a broad range of artistic practices that have emerged since the mid-20th century and are still evolving with newer forms of language and styles. They often seek to engage viewers not just as spectators but as active participants. They can include interactive performances that invite audience involvement. Contemporary creative arts in Nigeria celebrate diverse voices, incorporating a multitude of cultural influences. These artists frequently experiment with new concepts and techniques, pushing boundaries and challenging traditional notions of what art should be. Many of such contemporary artists blend different forms of arts. For instance, a performance might incorporate visual elements, music, and text, blurring the boundaries between categories. Artists have more freedom than ever to express a wide range of wild ideas and emotions, often moving away from established norms and exploring personal interests. Some of these artists prioritize what they feel are modern ideas and trendy concepts over time-tested traditional aesthetic values. For instance, a film actress like Halima Abubakar was once written against by journalists for “forgetting” to wear some underwear while attending some notable events. In the same vein Rukky Sanda, Mbong Amatah, Cossy Orjiakor, Chika Ike, Omoni Oboli and Tonto Dikeh had on occasions been berated by social media practitioners for wearing very revealing outfits which were considered indecent. Ini Edo, also a popular film actress was once banned from featuring in Nollywood films because of her style of dressing which was considered as indecent. And Samha Inuwa, a popular film actress has just been banned in Kano State for indecent dressing and vulgar content posting. In the music industry, artists like Tiwa Savage, and Emma Nyra are notorious for bad dressing. Shisha Miley Cyrus is also noted for bad dressing and drugs promotion (See The Crest Nigeria, 2025; Nairaland Forum, 2024; Vocal Media, 2020). This pattern of indecent dressing has “pragmatically appeal to the audience psychologically”(Inegbe, 2025), as many youths modeled their sense of fashion after these popular artists. This has also contributed to

the decline in Nigeria cultural values and ethics. However, a considerable number of contemporary works addresses issues like identity, race, gender, environment, and globalization, often reflecting and critiquing current social and political contexts.

The pervasive influence of the entertainment industry, particularly the film industry and music, on societal values and norms is undeniable. The portrayal of indecent dressing and nudity in movies and at other social engagements of actors and actresses has sparked significant debates regarding its impact on society. Indecent dressing and nudity can undermine cultural values and traditions, leading to a loss of identity. Frequent exposure to indecent content can desensitize individuals, leading to a decline in moral values and a blurring of lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The portrayal of women as sexual objects or men as hyper-masculine figures can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to gender inequality. Young people, particularly adolescents, are highly susceptible to the negative influence of the media. Exposure to indecent content can lead to premature sexualization, unhealthy body image issues, and unhealthy sexual behavior. Also, the glamorization of substance abuse, violence, and other harmful behavior in films can encourage young people to engage in these activities, believing that they are socially acceptable.

One of the wonderful verbal expressions that humans possess is the voice. With this, humans can create music, sing and make the environment peaceful. Thus, humans sing as a means of edification, elevation, spiritual control, leisure, praise, and sometimes, as a direct means of communication, aiming to be in tune with the world around them. The notable 18th-century English literary figure, William Shakespeare once declared: "If music be the food of love, play on; give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, the appetite may sicken, and die" (1958, p. 66). The word, 'love', is conceived by many contemporary Nigerian musicians and singers from a vulgar perspective. Interestingly, their audiences do not see anything wrong in some of these trendy songs as these singers use language connotatively. Such usage of language according to Miriam Inegbe (2020), is "deliberately fashioned to change the will, opinions or attitudes of its audience"(122). Many contemporary Nigerian musicians, for example, indulge in music by praising the female world from the perspective of female physique. These musicians and singers do not only address physical portraits but also portraits that can incite men to analyze the female disdainfully, with emphasis on the female buttocks and her way of showing love. Ironically, women derive much more pleasure from these songs than their male counterparts. In many music videos that accompany many of such songs, women are included in the staging process in various unholy acts. The question that may be asked is: "Does the popularity of such

indecent songs accord them social promotion in terms of social and emotional stability?” Tunde Adeniran (1994) puts it better in the following words: “Today the nation's soul is on fire, there is hunger and misery, criminal corruption and bare-face tyranny. There is structural and social decadence. ... without the slightest regard for humanity (4). From the original contextual origins of things in traditional societies, music has always served positive, functional roles, correcting the ills of society, encouraging diligence, social relations, allowing the world to be entertained during social activities and reducing stress. Music has even been used as a means of productivity from a biological or agricultural point of view. A good example is seen in this Ibibio folk song:

Afo sin ubok k'ékpat asaṅa k'usung  
 Ubok utom afo uyeneke  
 Afo udu nam didie unam akere?

Asuk akekere  
 Mkpong nya bup ufok enyong,  
 Ado ubok utom afo uyeneke

Afo udu nam didie unam akere?

#### Personal Translation

Hands tucked deep in the pockets with pride  
 A source of livelihood you do not have  
 How would you make plans?

With big and tall dreams  
 Tomorrow I will build a big mansion  
 Yet no source of income  
 How would your dreams come true?

This traditional Ibibio folk song emphasizes that the only way to succeed in life, the hope of a secure and productive future is through diligence and hard work. It also suggests that a life without a means of sustenance is a precarious one, regardless of lofty aspirations that may never be met. This edifying song connects us to the very essence of life, condemning laziness, day-dreaming and idleness. Rather, it encourages hard work. Another illustration is drawn from an Igbo folksong cited in Hope Okpala (2015, 204-205). The song stresses the need to be obedient to one's parents:

|                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ezigbo nwa e            | A good child               |
| Na-erubere nne ya isi   | is obedient to his mother  |
| Ezigbo nwa e            | good child,                |
| Biko rubere nne gi isi; | please be obedient to your |
| mother;                 | Ka I wee di ndu            |
|                         | so that you will live.     |

Another popular music that stresses on good morals is a Yoruba song, sang by Christiana Essien Igbokwe. It goes thus:

Omo mi s'ohun rere  
 Ti re adara o  
 Omo mi gbo temi  
 Ti re adara o  
 B'omode ba wu iwa buruku  
 Won ani iya re l'oko  
 B'omode ba wu iwa buruku  
 Won ani baba re l'oko

Iya mi f'ono to to han mi l'aye

Baba mi fi'wa to da han mi l'aye

Aye ti mo wa yi, ko ma ye mi o

Aye mi Olorun se temi da la'aye

Personal translation:

My child, be of good conduct

And it will be well with you

My child, cherish my words of exhortation

And it shall be well with you

When a child misbehaves

It is said that he learnt from his mother

When a child misbehaves

It is said that he learnt from his father

Dear mum, direct me on the right path on earth

Dear dad, teach me good morals to emulate

This world I live in is a puzzle; and it is complex

This world, please God, fill me with your blessings

Contemporary Nigerian music has, undeniably, shaped the people's cultural landscape, permeating every facet of the society. This is obvious in the pulsating beats of hip-hop to the introspective lyrics of rock and roll and reggae. These songs often evoke emotions, inspire thoughts, and challenge norms. An example is Mandator's Rat Race, (reggae) which mirrors



the Nigerian political system, querying the sufferings meted on the masses in the midst of plenty. However, with evolution and time, newer Nigerian songs appear to be shifting their concerns from their surroundings and their impact on society. Emphasis of contemporary music is shown in their potential to promote vulgarity. Here's an example of contemporary Nigerian music by a Yoruba music artist, Sunny Ade:

What do you di saya, baby?  
 What do you have under?  
 Sweet banana  
 Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet banana!

Personal translation:

"What do you desire, woman?  
 What do you have under?  
 Sweet banana  
 Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet banana.

The second song is by another Nigerian singer, Kollington Ayinla:

Sẹ ki n'to sibe?  
 E ma a to sibe!  
 Sẹ ki n'rojo sibe?  
 E ma a rojo sibe!

Personal translation:

Do I pee inside?  
 Yes, you may pee inside!  
 Do I allow the entire rain in?  
 Yes, the entire rain may be allowed in.

Both songs, although trendy, undermine societal values. In the first example, Sunny Ade plays on the English word and verb, 'desire', which sounds almost like the Yoruba expression, "dì sáyà". According to Miriam Inegbe (2024), words function "within the domain of language and the right or wrong choice of words can go a long way in making or marring a people"(214). The expression "dì sáyà" in the first song means, "have on your chest". This is a direct reference to the female "breast". Simply put, therefore, the musician is asking the woman: "what do you have on your chest?" but he is not done yet as he probes further in the third line, deploying another play on words: "what do you have under?" which, literally means; "what do you have between your thighs?" and the choral response is: "sweet banana". So, a woman's breasts and her private part are equivalent to "sweet bananas". In the second example, the underlined words or vulgar expressions portray a man at the point of ejaculation. The man's semen is comparable to "pee" and "rain". The man is asking the woman if he should release the semen (like pee) inside of her, and if he should make it splash or pour like rain. The question that arises is; what does the society stand to gain from these songs? It is time to reconsider these anti-social songs. The reason why these songs proliferate is that society accepts them. On the contrary, songs that address the contemporary needs of people are needed.

The question of diligence is inevitable given to Lanre Bamidele's observation (2000, 33) that society must function with the help of the artist. Since each society has its peculiar problems, the presence of the artist is necessary.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Literary and creative arts are seen as powerful tools that can shape society and individuals. This perspective paper criticizes the overtly sexual and vulgar content of much of contemporary Nigerian artists, arguing that it promotes negative values. Creative art has an undeniable and profound impact on culture. It serves as a mirror reflecting societal values, a catalyst for social change, and a vehicle for individual expression. By preserving cultural heritage, challenging the status quo, and fostering empathy, art enriches the human experience and shapes the world we live in. Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed:

\* The negative impact of indecency in words, indecent dressing and nudity in the entertainment industry should be addressed by creating stricter censorship guidelines to

regulate the content that is accessible to the public, particularly for the younger audience. The film and television industry should adopt stricter self-regulatory measures to ensure that content aligns with societal values and ethical standards. Parents should actively monitor the media consumed by their children and engage in open conversations about the potential impact of explicit content.

\* Arts education should be integrated into school curricula to cultivate creativity, critical thinking to be able to decipher right from wrong, and cultural awareness from a young age. This will promote social cohesion, enhance lives and broaden a people's horizon. Creative arts should be utilized as a tool for addressing social issues and promoting positive change. The production and dissemination of moral, ethical and social norms through diverse art forms to foster intercultural understanding and shaping of societal values should be encouraged.

\* Schools and communities should promote media literacy education to help individuals critically analyze and evaluate media messages and contents. Artists (writers, actors, actresses, musicians, dancers, etc.) should be mindful of their influence and strive to promote positive values and behaviors through their art works.

By taking the above steps, the negative impact from the entertainment industry can be mitigated. Also, a more positive and wholesome media landscape for future generations will be created. In conclusion, literary and creative arts play a vital role in shaping the society. They reflect a people's values, challenge their thinking, and connect them on a deeper level. By appreciating and supporting the arts, a people's lives can be enriched, thus contributing to a more vibrant, culturally rich society and an inclusive world.

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