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An Analysis of Rhetorical Strategies in the Gendered Performances of Nigerian Male Stand-up Comedians

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Abstract: *Gender relations are enacted in the day-to-day lived experiences of men and women. Mundane practices such as talks and jokes may not only reflect the prevailing gender relations in society, but may also offer opportunities to contest them. Stand-up comedy, as a genre of comedy, is especially suitable in this regard because it is discursive in nature. Stand-up comedians achieve their aim of entertaining and exciting laughter often through gendered manipulations of language — hence, the genre of stand-up comedy offers a veritable site for investigating dominant gender representations in Nigeria. This study seeks to argue that rhetorical strategies are a chief means by which stand-up comedians succeed in their various representations of women and men, and by so doing implicate rhetoric in gender relations of power, as contested in the Nigerian context of stand-up comedy. The data for the study comprise nine selected volumes of two stand-up comedy shows in Nigeria, Nite of a Thousand Laughs and AY Live, which are analysed to examine the rhetorical strategies employed by Nigerian male stand-up comedians in their gendered performances.*
Keywords: *women, gender, gender relations, Nigerian context.*
Résumé : *Les relations entre les sexes sont mises en œuvre dans les expériences vécues au jour le jour des hommes et des femmes. Les pratiques banales telles que les discussions et les blagues peuvent non seulement refléter les relations de genre prédominantes dans une société, mais peuvent également offrir des opportunités de les contester. Le stand-up, en tant que genre de comédie, est particulièrement adapté à cet égard car il est de nature discursive. Les comédiens de stand-up atteignent leur objectif de rire divertissant et excitant souvent grâce à des manipulations genrées du langage - par conséquent, le genre de comédie de stand-up offre un véritable site pour enquêter sur les représentations de genre dominantes au Nigeria. Cette étude cherche à faire valoir que les stratégies rhétoriques sont un moyen principal par lequel les comédiens de stand-up réussissent dans leurs diverses représentations des femmes et des hommes, et ce faisant, impliquent la rhétorique dans les relations de pouvoir entre les sexes, comme contesté dans le contexte nigérian du stand-up. Comédie. Les données de l'étude comprennent neuf volumes sélectionnés de deux spectacles d'humour au Nigeria, Nite of a Thousand Laughs et AY Live, qui sont analysés pour examiner les stratégies rhétoriques employées par les humoristes nigérians dans leurs performances sexospécifiques.*
Mots clés : *femmes, genre, relations de genre, contexte nigérian.*

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1. Introduction

Gender relations between women and men as it exists in most parts of the world and in Nigeria in particular are asymmetrical and hierarchical, tilted in favour men (Kiesling, 1997, Ogundipe-Leslie, 1993; Oloruntoba-Oju & Oloruntoba-Oju, 2013). However, this hierarchical gender relation is not fixed, but it is often contested. Oloruntoba-Oju (2009, p. 213) notes that "gender relations is power relations," and Lazar (2014, p. 187) observes that power relations are a struggle over interests, which are maintained and resisted, through a variety of modalities, extents, and degrees of explicitness from context to context. Gender relations are enacted in the day-to-day lived experiences of men and women. As Kulick (2014, p. 75) observes, "*gender is a fact of social life everywhere*," and as noted by Ehrlich and Meyerhoff (2014, p. 10), gender "is an omnipresent feature of all interactions." Thus, mundane practices such as talks and jokes may not only reflect the prevailing gender relations in a society, but may also offer opportunities to contest it. This possibility is especially tenable in stand-up comedy. Manwell (2008), for instance, observes that stand-up comedy "reflect[s] the culture from which it comes." Similarly, in words that clearly underscore the possibility of gender contestation in stand-up comedy, Filani and Ajayi (2019, p. 141) comment that, "Stand-up humour consists of acts which reinforce the ideology that defines the geo-cultural context of the performance or which supplant the ideology that envelope the routines so as to mediate new realities and perspectives."

What makes stand-up comedy particularly amenable to the possibility of reflecting the gender relations in a society as well as offering opportunities for contestation is the fact that the genre is discursive in nature. Stand-up comedy is a genre of comedy in which a comedian performs in front of a live audience, speaking directly to them (Ayakoroma, 2013). It is a comic style in which stand-up comedians achieve their aim of entertaining and exciting laughter largely through language. Moreover, this comic enterprise of entertaining and exciting laughter often involves gendered manipulations of language. Thus, gender issues as in gender relations are often foregrounded in the performances of stand-up comedians. Stand-up comedy therefore offers a veritable site for investigating dominant gender representations in Nigeria.

A few studies in the Nigerian context of stand-up comedy have already examined the gender representations of women and men in the performances of stand-up comedians (see Filani & Ajayi, 2019; Osuolale-Ajayi, 2019). However, the focus of this paper is not so much on investigating gender representations by Nigerian stand-up comedians as on analysing the rhetorical strategies stand-up comedians employ in achieving these representations. The aim is to argue that rhetorical strategies constitute a chief means by which stand-up comedians succeed in their various gender representations of women and men, and by so doing implicate rhetoric in gender relations of power, as contested in the Nigerian context of stand-up comedy.

2. Gender representations

Gender representations is conceptualised here as the ways women and men are portrayed in terms of their attributes and gender roles. Gender representations often result in stereotypes, and stereotypes are often implicated in the maintenance of certain relations of power (Du Plessis, 2016). According to Cranny-Francis, et al. (2007), "[a] stereotype

is a radically reductive way of representing whole communities of people by identifying them with a few key characteristics" (cited in Du Plessis, 2016, p. 33). The perversive effect of stereotypes lies in their ability to form a particular image of a group through accumulated repetition and representations. Thus, stereotypes are accumulated representations.

Gender representations have received a lot of interest from scholars. Many studies have examined the role of mass media and popular culture in constituting and reinforcing stereotyped images of women and also men. For example, Opoola and Awoniyi (2019) in their study examine the representation of women in selected Nigerian advertorial English medium billboards. The study finds an asymmetrical power relation through the way men and women are represented in the billboards. For example, while men are portrayed in terms of their physical attributes such as strength and vigor, women are portrayed in terms of their physical attributes such as sex appeal (Opoola & Awoniyi, 2019). Many other similar studies also reveal a general representation of women as weak, home-makers and sex objects, etc. (See, for example, Anweh, 2020; Lar, 2016; Oamen, 2019; Ugondo & Adikpo, 2016.) Furthermore, in his study, Ahmed (2019) analyses metaphors used by Nigerian female writers to describe women in Nigerian newspapers and found that Nigerian women still use metaphorical expressions, which largely kept in place a gender ideology, which upholds male dominance and female subordination.

In stand-up comedy, especially in the Nigerian context, a few studies have also examined the representations of women and men. In her analysis of gender-based issues in the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians, Osuolale-Ajayi (2019) submits that women are stereotyped as being coy, money-driven and deceitful in some of the gender-based jokes. Similarly, Filani and Ajayi (2019) in their study analysed gender ideology, among other ideologies, contained in the performances of Nigerian stand-up comedians, and observe that male stand-up comedians often portray women in a negative way, while female stand-up comedians often portray women in a positive way.

The foregoing highlights the fact that gender representations are pervasive and cut across different media and contexts, although the pattern of representations appears similar in terms of the generally negative representations of women in ways that maintain and entrench their subordinate status in a patriarchal framework. Unlike the many studies which have examined gender representations in different media including the Nigerian stand-up comedy, the focus of this present study is to analyse the rhetorical strategies by which stand-up comedians achieve the various representations of women and men in their gendered comic performances. The aim is to argue that rhetorical strategies constitute a chief means by which gendered discourses of stand-up comedians elicit not only comic perlocutions, but also construct certain gender representations that affect gender relations of power.

3. STAND-UP Comedy

The primary aim of stand-up comedy is to entertain the audience by making them have a good laugh. This is because, as Manwell (2008, p.2 2) explains, "a stand-up comedian's audience is prepared not to hear a message or learn about an issue, but to experience humor." According to Oloruntoba-Oju (1992, p. 259) humour, also referred to as comic aesthetics, is "that which excites amusement, culminating in laughter or similar

expressions of comic feelings." Humour is generally connected with laughter, gaiety, mirth, and feelings of happiness (Berger, 1995, cited in Lin & Tan, 2010, p. 60). Thus, stand-up comedy has as foremost an entertainment value.

However, it would be too simplistic to conclude that comedy in general and stand-up comedy in particular only functions to amuse, to excite laughter and to entertain. Raheem (2018, p. 76) observes that stand-up comedy is not just a platform for entertainment but also serves as a means of expressing opinions, making commentaries, and providing a platform to voice sentiments and bias on lingering issues in the nation, and sometimes the world at large. This point is aptly expressed by Mintz (1985) in words that clearly suggest that stand-up comedy is more than merely engendering humour. He says:

Though the time-honored function of the standup comedian has been to provide a butt for our humour, this function is perhaps less interesting, even less important, than his role as our comic spokesman, as a mediator, an "articulator" of our culture, and our contemporary anthropologist. (Mintz, 1985, p. 75)

What the foregoing reveals is that stand-up comedy is not only a site for entertainment, but may also be a site for social critique and observation, suggesting that stand-up comedy can be a tool for social transformation. Stand-up comedy is a site for cultural observation and social change (Manwell, 2008). However, while stand-up comedy may be a site for social critique and a tool for social change, it can also be a site where dominant attitudes, ideologies and cultural practices are reinforced. Filani and Ajayi (2019, p. 141) aptly observe that, [s]tand-up humour consists of acts which reinforce the ideology that defines the geo-cultural context of the performance or which supplant the ideology that envelope the routines so as to mediate new realities and perspectives." This assertion suggests that stand-up comedy offers a platform for gender ideological contestation.

It is posited here that whether in achieving their aims of entertaining or critiquing, stand-up comedians often employ rhetorical strategies. This claim is buttressed by Greenbaum (1999, p. 33) who observes that: Stand-up comedy is an inherently rhetorical discourse; it strives not only to entertain, but to persuade, and stand-up comics can only be successful in their craft when they can convince an audience to look at the world through their comic vision.

While Greenbaum's (1999, p. 33) assertion above clearly underscores the rhetorical nature of stand-up comedy, it says little as to the actual rhetorical means and strategies that stand-up comedians use in the elicitation of laughter and in making certain (gender) ideological representations. Consequently, this study aims to examine two chief rhetorical strategies employed by stand-up comedians in their representations of women and men. These two rhetorical strategies are tropes and argumentation schemes.

4. Conceptual Framework

This section presents the rhetorical strategies of tropes and argumentation schemes.

4.1. Tropes

Rhetorical tropes are figurative ways of using language. Four of these tropes are widely regarded as master tropes (Burke, 1941; Nordquist, 2020; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001).

The master tropes are metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony (Burke, 1941; Nordquist, 2020; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Three of these four master tropes, namely: metaphor, metonymy and synedoche, are adopted in this study for analysis.

According to Burke (1941, p. 421), "[m]etaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else."In their book, Metaphors We Live By, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) observe that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another." Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also argue that metaphor underlies the human conceptual system. Similarly, Kövecses (2010) observes that metonymies like metaphor are conceptual in nature. He defines metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 173). Kövecses (2010) argues that the main function of metonymy is to provide mental, cognitive access to a target entity that is less readily or easily available. Furthermore, synecdoches, according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 57), "are substitutions within one and the same field of reference." They further note that in synecdoches, a term is replaced by another term, the extension of which is either semantically wider or semantically narrower (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 57).

Commenting on the representational potentials of these master tropes, Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 56) explain that:

> Synecdoches, metonymies and metaphors serve to create difference-levelling sameness and homogeneity, which are the basis on which people are treated uniformly and undifferentiatedly as non-individuals.
>
> This submission suggests that the rhetorical tropes of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche can be used in doing ideological work such as representations and portrayals that objectify.

4.2. Argumentation schemes

The conceptualisation of argumentation schemes in this study follows from Reisigl and Wodak's (2001; 2009) presentation of argumentation strategy as one of the five discursive strategies of their model of critical discourse analysis, the Discourse-Historical Approach. Argumentation strategy has to do with the justification of positive or negative attributions (Wodak, 2016). It is concerned with persuading addressees of the truth and normative rightness of claims (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 113). This is done through the use of argumentation schemes.

Argumentation schemes represent the structure of an argument and have as components three parts which are: premise, warrant and conclusion (Wodak, 2016, p. 7). Argumentation schemes can be reasonable/plausible or fallacious (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). When argumentation schemes are reasonable, they are known as topoi. Quoting Kienpointner (1992, p. 194), Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 102) define topoi as follows:

Topoi are parts of argumentation which belong to the required premises. They are the formal or content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules' which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion.

Topoi (singular: topos) are not usually made explicit as Wodak (2016) explains that a topos should be understood as a quasi-elliptic argument (an enthymeme), where the

premise is followed by the conclusion without giving any explicit evidence but they can be made explicit as conditional or causal paraphrases such as if x, then y' or 'y, because x' (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 102).

When argumentation schemes are fallacious, on the other hand, they are known as fallacies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Fallacies occur when "rules for rational disputes and constructive arguing" are violated (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 102). As noted by Reisigl and Wodak (2009), it is only with the help of contextual knowledge that one can determine whether an argumentation scheme is employed as reasonable topos or as fallacy.

5. Methodology

The data for this study are gendered routines of Nigerian male stand-up comedians. By gendered routines is meant joke sequences which contain explicit portrayal or representation of female and male genders. The data are taken from selected volumes of two Nigerian stand-up comedy shows: Nite of a Thousand Laughs and AY Live. The two shows are chosen because they are popular stand-up comedy shows in Nigeria (Adetunji, 2013; Filani, 2016; Ukonu, 2016). The shows typically feature performances from different stand-up comedians, as well as musical interlude (Adetunji, 2013). While Nite of a Thousand Laughs is hosted by Opa Williams, AY Live is hosted by Ayo Makun who is himself a comedian.

The gendered routines to be analysed are drawn from a total of nine volumes of both Nite of a Thousand Laughs and AY Live. Three volumes of Nite of a Thousand Laughs are selected (i.e. NTL 16, NTL 17, NTL 27), while six volumes of AY Live are selected (i.e. AY Live 6, AY Live 8, AY Live 2011, Asaba Invasion; AY Live 27, AY Live 2017, Lagos Invasion; and AY Live 37). The nine volumes are selected based on their availability. Some of these volumes are in Video Compact Disc (VCD) format, while others were sourced online (i.e. YouTube).

As Nigerian stand-up comedians largely perform in Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), but sometimes in code alternation with Standard English (Adetunji, 2013; Filani, 2017), there is a need for the data to be transcribed and also translated. Wherever excerpts are taken from the data for illustration, the translation in English will always come immediately below the transcribed excerpt. The transcription conventions used in this study are adopted from Adetunji (2013).

The focus of the data analysis in the proceeding section is on the rhetorical strategies employed by Nigerian male stand-up comedians in their representations of women and men. The rhetorical strategies of interest are tropes (i.e. metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches) and argumentation schemes. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) conceptual metaphor theory and Fauconnier and Turner's (1998) conceptual blending theory are linguistic theories that have been adopted for the analysis of the master tropes.

6. Data Analysis

Analysis of the rhetorical tropes of metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy is first undertaken before the analysis of argumentation schemes. In the presentation of extracts for analysis, the following abbreviations are made use of: Audience Laugh (AL), Audience Clap (AC).

TROPES
Metaphor

1. **Ogbono, egusi, oha (for women):**

Extract 1

A man cannot just dey dey eat only ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono. Sometimes after ogbono, you take egusi. From egusi, you taste oha. [It's not possible for a man to be eating only ogbono. Sometimes, after taking ogbono, you take egusi. After taking egusing, you take oha] (Funny Bone, AY Live 37)

The metaphor in this extract is realised through the nominals ogbono, egusi, oha, which are indigenous soups in Nigeria. They are used as a metaphor for women. Thus, while these soup varieties represent the source domain, the target domain is 'women'. The fact that soups are food, tasty and commonly alternated for variety, etc. are elements that are mapped onto the target domain, 'women'. Owing to these mappings, women are conceptualised as soups (food), and through this metaphor, the argument is made that being with different women can be desirable just as 'tasting' different soups is normal and desirable. Thus, while the metaphor is used by the comedian to justify cheating by men on the one hand, it succeeds, on the other hand, in an objectifying representation of women as food — an edible commodity.

2. **Spirit (for kerb crawlers)**

Extract 2

Women are stronger than men. That's how it is. Make I further proof am? How many men fi go stand for GRA junction 2 O'clock AM, dey wait for spirit? (AL) [How many men can stand at GRA junction at 2 O'clock AM waiting for a spirit?] (Gordons, NTL 16)

'Spirit' is a metaphor for men who patronise prostitutes (i.e. kerb crawlers). It follows that the source domain is spirit, while the target domain is kerb crawlers. In African worldview, it is often believed that spirits and other invisible and supernatural beings are active and roam about at night. It is this nocturnal quality of spirits that is mapped onto the target, 'kerb carwlers'. This makes sense because prostitution — the kind that sex workers stay on kerbs and wait for kerb crawlers — usually takes place under the cover of night. This metaphor is employed in the portrayal of some women as promiscuous.

3. **Speak English (for spend money)**

Extract 3

Girls no believe in certificate these days, they believe in money. Dem no believe in English. Before I dey stress myself, " I Go Dye, speak good English." I dey try dey speak, dey speak. They no dey too...say, "I Go Dye, speak good English." Na when I travel abroad, US, naim I know sey all these girls na pretending. The speak English wey dem dey tell me na money, speak money. (AL) [Girls no longer believe in certificates nowadays; they believe in money. They don't believe in English. Before, I do my best when they say, "I Go Dye, speak good English". I try to speak good English. They don't really...It was when I travelled to the US I realised these girls are pretenders. The "speak English" they say actually means speak money]. (I Go Dye, NTL 16)

As can be seen in the extract, 'speak English' is a metaphor for 'spend money'. While the source domain is 'speech/fluency', the target domain is 'spend money'. These domains serve as the input spaces. In this metaphor, proficiency in English and spending power are equated as similar elements, and are blended to yield the understanding that 'speak good English' means 'spend money'. The metaphor is employed in the representation of Nigerian girls as money-driven. The humour in this extract derives from this metaphoric expression, 'speak money.

4. Prison (for breasts)

Extract 4

Tboss, that money wey you say you wan spend another two weeks, e no concern me (AL). You know sey wetin you carry bad, you just open and confuse men. You con carry chain put for the bobby, and you know sey Nigerian men no dey take eyes see bobby (AL). Nigerian men just see bobby, some of them don handcuff theirselves say, "Where e dey o? Where the prison? Make we dey go." [Tboss, I don't have a problem with the money and another two weeks you wish to spend (AL). You know that you're busty, and deliberately strip to confuse men. And you even have a chain in your breasts; you know Nigerian men don't joke with breasts (AL). Once Nigerian men see breasts, they just lose it and say, "Where is it? Where is the prison? Let's go there?]. (Akpororo, AY Live 2017)

The context of the joke establishes 'prison' to be a metaphor for breasts. While 'prison' is the source domain, 'breasts' is the target domain, and together, they form the input spaces. Because the sight of breasts can be captivating, captivation and imprisonment -- suggested as similar -- are projected from the input spaces of breasts and prison, and then blended. Besides, the 'appealing' quality of breasts is also projected from the input space of breasts and added to the blended space, thereby helping to explain the meaningfulness or logicality behind some men's wish to go to the metaphorical 'prison' (i.e. because it is one that is appealing). This metaphor is used to represent men as lustful and silly.

5. Breakfast, breasts

Extract 5 illustrates the interplay of the rhetorical tropes of metaphor and synecdoche in the sexual objectification of women.

Extract 5

O boi, see Princess! If I marry somebody like Princess, my breakfast is already settled (AL). All your body go enter heaven, but your breast will go hell fire (AL). [See Princess! All your body will go to heaven, but your breast will go to hell fire.] (Gordons, AY Live 27)

The butt of the joke in this extract is Princess. Also a comedian herself, Gordons invites the audience to join him in laughing at Princess (i.e. through the imperative "see Princess"). This is indicative of the primary source of humour in this joke sequence which arises out of a feeling of superiority by both the comedian and audience over the target of this joke. The relevant background knowledge about Princess required to understand the joke sequence is that Princess is busty. In this joke sequence, Princess is equated to food, as the comedian notes that if he marries Princess, his breakfast is settled. 'Breakfast' (from

the source domain of food) here is a metaphor for Princess (the target domain) which underscores her construction as food. The comedian further notes that while Princess' body will make heaven; her breast will make hell. This assertion is equally metaphorical as the comedian indirectly constructs Princess' body parts as food varieties of which her breasts are his favourite. In essence, the breasts which the comedian establishes as the most edible part of Princess for him becomes a synecdochical representation that continues the metaphorisation of Princess as food. Thus, foregrounding her body, Princess is not only constructed in this joke sequence as a sort of meal (i.e. a sexual food), but also an object (i.e. a body).

6. Synecdoche: Calabar girl

Extract 6

Now tell Calabar girl, "do you see that light?" "Ehen, NEPA never seize ham." (AL) [Now, tell a Calabar girl, "Can you see that light?" She will say, "Ehen, NEPA has not taken it."] (AL) (I Go Dye, NTL 17)

In this extract, the modifying nominal, 'Calabar' may appear to limit the portrayal of female to only girls in Calabar, a major city in the south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria. However, the nominal group 'Calabar girl' is a synecdochical reference for Nigerian girls, and this inference is hinged on the retort of the Calabar girl where she mentions 'NEPA'. Now known as PHCN (Power Holding Company of Nigeria), NEPA (National Electric Power Authority) is the company that manages the use of electricity in Nigeria. It is also common knowledge that Nigeria is faced with electricity challenges, which causes erratic power supply in most parts of the country even till date. It follows that the experience of erratic power supply is shared by most, if not all, Nigerians, which makes it plausible that a Nigerian girl in any part of the country can make a similar retort. Thus, functioning as a synecdochical reference in this extract, 'Calabar girl' is essentially a vehicle entity -- in conceptual metonymic terms (see, for example, Kövecses, 2010) -- for the target entity (i.e. Nigerian girls). The representational function of this synecdoche lies in its potential to encode a representation seemingly about a certain member of a group, but that is nonetheless generalisable to the whole group. In essence, it provides subtle means of generalising gender representations, which in essence makes the effect of the representations more pervasive.

7. Synecdoche: Six pack

Extract 7

Then women, get am for mind, no rich man go get your time hundred percent. E no dey possible. Poor men naim go get your time hundred percent. They're jobless (AL). Ladies, six pack can never put food on your table. Forget it. [Then women, have it back of your mind that no rich man can make time for you always. It's not possible. Poor men always have time to spare. They're jobless (AL). Ladies, six pack can never put food on your table. Forget it] (I Go Dye, AY Live 2017)

The nominal 'six pack' is essentially a synecdoche for poor men. For example, six pack is one of the elements (i.e. parts) in the domain of human body. Thus, being a part, it is used as a vehicle for the whole, 'man'. Underlying this mapping is the assumption that

men who have six pack are often poor. This synecdoche appears to objectify the category of men who are poor as it foregrounds the part (six pack) over the whole (man).

8. Metonymy: Recharge card, Dubai trip

Extract 8

For every NO a woman says to you, she meant YES. Hello o? Now, let me just confirm. If you're here with your wife or with your girlfriend, the first time, you toasted her, did she say yes or no (Audience: No). But wetin she dey do here now with you? (AL) Wetin happen? Maybe one recharge card would have caused it or a trip to Dubai would have caused it. That's how it is. Every NO a woman says to you... [But what is she doing here with you? What has happened?] (Gordons, AY Live 2011)

While this joke sequence on the surface seems to portray women as cryptic, it contains a subtle representation of women materialistic and money-driven and this achieved through the use of metonyms. The metonyms in this extract are 'recharge card' and 'a trip to Dubai' which stand for materialism. In conceptual metonymic terms, 'recharge card' and 'Dubai trip' are vehicles for the target entity, materialism, and are used in the representation of women as materialistic and money-driven. these metonyms, thus, enhance the representational potentials of the joke sequence by highlighting concrete instances of materialism.

Argumentation and schemes

When stand-up comedians make assertions that result in certain representations, they sometimes seem to provide proofs and arguments to support their assertions. These assertions are seen as claims, and they use argumentation schemes as proof. Some of the argumentation strategies employed by comedians in the data are analysed below.

1. Claim: Women are the reason why men beat them.

This claim or assertion is implicit and as such only inferable from the joke sequence. The joke sequence is presented below.

Extract 9

See, when you see man wey dey beat im wife, no be e calling. If your husband dey work for office, AC for car, AC for office, AC for everywhere, drink cold beer, e brain dey cool. He can never beat you. But if your husband na okada rider (AL), carbon monodu don enter all e ear com outside, im brain don metamorphose, e dey think of how e go take rest, then you say (XXX) (comedian throws a punch), He will not only beat you, he will send you to early, early grave. So slap no be wetin African man dey take dey play. [When you see a man beating his wife, he is not proud of it. If your husband works in an office that has AC, drives a car that has AC, always stays where there is AC, and drinks chilled beer, he will be always calm. He will never beat you. But if your husband is a commercial cyclist, who has inhaled all sorts of contaminated air and chemicals, and only thinks of how to rest when he gets home. So the African man don't joke slaps] (Gordons, NTL 27)

The argumentation scheme used in justifying the claim that women are the reason why men beat them is the topos or fallacy of provocation. This argumentation scheme can be roughly interpreted as the conditional: if somebody is stressed and then provoked, the

person's actions or reactions are justified. The realisation of this conditional can be seen in the italicised segment of the extract. The comedian seems to use this topos or fallacy of provocation to justify wife-beating by shifting the blame on the wife and other conditions like stress while absorbing the man of any blame. However, a number of arguments and points makes the reasonableness of this argumentation scheme untenable. For example, topos of love, which can be formulated as: if you love someone, you will never hurt or hit them, can be used to discredit the argumentation scheme used by the comedian in this joke sequence. Similarly, domestic violence of which wife-beating is an instance has been criminalised in the Nigerian criminal and penal code (see, for example, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015), and this also erases any justification for wife-beating. Hence, this argumentation scheme appears to be fallacious. The main representational effect of this argumentation scheme is to soften what should otherwise be a negative representation and a condemnable tendency of men, as wife-beaters.

2. Claim: Cheating is normal and desirable.

Extract 10

Ladies and gentlemen, I say it for free. Women una don let cheating get problem. "My man cheat on me." "My man cheat on me." "My man cheat on me." "My man cheat on me. "Keep quiet! What is cheating? A man cannot just dey dey eat only ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono, ogbono. Sometimes after ogbono, you take egusi. From egusi, you taste oha. Can we die for you? Ogini dim? Small thing, "He cheat on me". Relax! [Ladies and gentlemen, I say it freely. You women are guilty of problematising cheating. "My man cheated on me". Keep quiet! What is cheating? It's not possible for a man to be eating only ogbono. Sometimes, after taking ogbono, you take egusi. After taking egusing, you take oha. We can't displease ourselves to please you. What's the problem? Any little thing, "He cheated on me."] (Funny Bone, AY Live 37)

As can be seen in the joke sequence, the comedian explicitly asserts that cheating is normal and even desirable. In supporting this claim, the comedian uses the topos or fallacy of variety, which is interpretable as follows: since variety is desirable, it should be normalised. This argumentation scheme is implicit and realised in the joke sequence through the metaphor of food/soup variety. However, considering the faulty or unfounded basis for comparison by which women are equated to soups, it is clear that this argumentation scheme amounts to a fallacy. The representational function of this argumentation scheme (fallacy of variety) is to justify and legitimise cheating, and consequently represent men in a positively light.

3. Claim: It is not easy to be a man, but it is very easy to be a woman.

Extract 11

It is not easy to be a man, but it is very easy to be a woman (AL). I go prove am make una no worry. You don notice sey e no dey common make you hear sey woman get heart attack or cardiac arrest: na man. [I'll prove it. Don't worry. Have you noticed that it is not common to hear that a woman has a heart attack] (Benji D Joke, AY Live 6).

In this extract, the claim is explicitly contained in the first sentence. To justify this claim, the comedian uses the topos or fallacy of observation, which can be interpreted as the conditional: if somebody observes something to be the case, it is indeed the case. This

argumentation scheme is employed by the comedian when he notes that from observation, a man is more prone to having a heart attack than a woman. Even if the figures in reality may seem to back this observation, the causes of heart attacks are certainly different from and more wide-ranging than the one given by the comedian, which makes the comedian's observation amount to a fallacy. Besides, the use of this argumentation scheme to support his claim that women have it easier than men is non sequitur — as it neither logically relates to nor amounts to enough reason why women have it easier than men. The representational function of this argumentation scheme (fallacy of observation) is to construct a positive representation of men at the expense of women.

4. Claim: Men will always cheat.

Extract 12

Ladies, whether you like it or not, we can't help it but to cheat. Men will always cheat. As a matter of fact, you ladies some of you are sitting by a guy who is cheating on you right now. (AL) (Gordons, AY Live 8)

In this joke sequence, the comedian makes the assertion that men will always cheat. This claim is justified with the topos or fallacy of naturalness, which can be interpreted as the conditional: if something (an action or a habit) is natural, then one cannot do anything about it. This argumentation scheme is realised in the first sentence where the comedian notes that "we can't help it but to cheat." However, the question arises that: to what extent is cheating natural or men helpless about cheating? Most likely, the answer will be in the negative. Thus, the argumentation scheme employed by the comedian in this joke sequence is a fallacy. The representational function of this argument scheme is to justify cheating by men.

5. If she does not want Ferrari and designer, she is not a Nigerian

This claim is explicitly contained in the last sentence of the extract below, which contains a representation of Nigerian girls as materialistic.

Extract 13

Nigerians our love song e dey very, very annoying. Nonsense! [DJ] play track one (DJ plays Davido's 'Aye'). Davido, your father (AL). Nigerian girl, no want Ferrari and designer? God punish you (AL). She no want Ferrari, she no want designer, she no be Nigerian (AL). [Nigerian love songs are very annoying. (Curses Davido) A Nigerian girl doesn't want Ferrari and designer? If she doesn't want Ferrari or designer, she is not a Nigerian] (Funny Bone, NTL 27)

In constructing Nigerian women as materialistic in this extract, the comedian recontextualises part of a lyric of the Nigerian artiste Davido's song, 'Aye', where the musician notes that Nigerian girls do not want Ferrari and designer, which are metonymic references for material things. The comedian dismisses this recontextualised lyric as untrue, and he uses the topos or fallacy of definition to predicate Nigerian girls as materialistic. This argumentation scheme can be interpreted as follows: if she does not want Ferrari or designer, she is not a Nigerian because all Nigerian girls want Ferrari and designer. However, due to the totalising construction of all Nigerian girls as materialistic, which cannot be possibly true, it is clear that the comedian uses a fallacious argumentation

scheme in representing Nigerian girls as materialistic. The humour in this joke sequence derives from the hyperbolic portrayal of all Nigerian girls as materialistic.

6. Claim: Nigeria will be better if a woman is made the president.

Extract 14

Na only one thing we never try for this country, if we try that one thing we go make am. Na Abuja I dey. I know the problem: one thing. I'm moving a motion that we should give women the chance. Let's make a woman the president of Nigeria (AC). If we fi do that thing NOW, Nigeria go better (AC). [It's only one thing we have not tried out in this country, if we try it, we will make it. I live in Abuja; I know the problem: one thing. If we can do this now, Nigeria will be better] (Chuks The General, AY Live 37)

The central claim in this joke sequence is that Nigeria will be better if we make a woman the president. This claim is supported by a topos or fallacy of authority. This argumentation scheme can be interpreted as follows: if a statement comes from an authority, it is valid. The realisation of this argumentation scheme then can be seen in the way that the comedian constructs himself as an authority by affirming that he is knowledgeable. For instance, the comedian says, "Na Abuja I dey. I know the problem." This self-presentation as a knowledgeable person is a strategy by the comedian to present his claim as valid. Thus, the validity of his claim that "Nigeria will be better if we make a woman the president" rest on the extent to which his self-presentation as a knowledgeable person is true. At any rate, the representational function of this argumentation scheme is to prove or strengthen the validity of the comedian's claim that Nigeria will be better if we make a woman the president.

Discussion and conclusion

The preceding section presented an analysis of rhetorical strategies used by Nigerian male stand-up comedians in their gendered routines. In particular, the rhetorical tropes of metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy, as well as argumentation schemes employed by Nigerian male stand-up comedians were analysed.

The analysis reveals the use of metaphors as a prominent trope in the gender representations of women and men in the performances of stand-up comedians. Many of these metaphors are realised by nominals (i.e. ogbono, egusi, oha, spirit, prison, breakfast) and phrase (speak English). One significant result of the analysed metaphors is that the conceptual processes of these metaphors provide an access into some of the dominant gender ideologies and beliefs that subsist in Nigerian and African society. For example, a recurring metaphor in the data is the sexual objectification of women as food and edible, which, therefore, seems to suggest that the view of women as sexual food may be a strongly-held belief in the Nigerian context.

One of the ideological and representational functions of synecdoche according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001, p. 57) is that it serves "stereotypical generalisation and essentialisation that refer in a levelling manner to a whole group of persons." An instance of synecdoche in the data (i.e. Extract 6) is found to serve this function, as 'Calabar girl' functions as a "collective singular" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p. 57) for Nigerian girls, with the effect that the generalisation of the representation is not immediately obvious. The synecdochical reference contained in 'six pack' (i.e. Extract 7), however, directly results

in an objectification, suggesting that synecdoches similar to metaphors can sometimes play a direct role in gender representations.

The analysis of argumentation schemes has revealed the fact that comedians often attempt to justify their representations despite performing in a joking context. However, all the argumentation schemes used by comedians in the analysed extracts are fallacious. The inference is made that while comedians seem to readily give proofs and justifications for their assertions and representations, whether negative or positive, they are less painstaking in employing veracious and tenable arguments. Notwithstanding the fallacious argumentations used by stand-up comedians, the representations possess, in the researcher's view, as much potency and effectiveness to entrench or subvert gender ideologies as when reasonable (topoi) argumentations were used.

While stand-up comedians employ diverse linguistic strategies in achieving their aim of eliciting laughter and offering social commentary, this study has demonstrated, through the analysis of rhetorical tropes and argumentation schemes, how these rhetorical strategies are effectively utilised by Nigerian male stand-up comedians in their representations of women and men. This study also shows that in enhancing various gender representations, rhetorical strategies such as tropes and argumentation schemes feed into the contestation of gender relations.

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Appendix

Transcription convention

Adapted from Adetunji (2013)

(?)	Questioning intonation
(...)	Significant pause (> 2 seconds)
(...)	Emphatic pause (> 5 seconds)
(XXX)	Unable to transcribe
(CAPS)	Louder than surrounding talk
(><)	Quicker than surrounding talk
(<>)	Slower than surrounding talk
(AL)	Audience Laugh
(AL)	Audience Clap