

The Hidden Figures of The Nigerian Cartooning Art Form

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Abstract

Cartooning just like any other skill imbued profession continue to be practiced by females elsewhere and in Nigeria. The study presents the works of seven female cartoonists Folashade Adebare, Ronke Adesanya, Ijeoma Nwogu, Gloria Ejimofor, Emilia Oniegbu and Adaora Onele and Uche Uguru in Nigeria that have practiced the art form with three that presented editorial cartoons while the other four made cartoons on the familial platform. The study aimed at rethinking the exclusion of the female gender from the cartooning epistemology, while one of the objectives is to identify female cartoonists in Nigeria among others. The article relied on cultural feminism and queer theory to set the tone of the study so as to reveal that there are still various issues worth studying to expand the cartooning epistemology with focus on the works of female cartoonists. The article deduced in its finding that Emilia Oniegbu has not shown any clear-cut ability to make cartoons from the works she made. The article posits that scientific and biological inhibitions initially thought to prevent the female gender from any form of depiction are not true. The study recommends that Female cartoonists should publish their works for sale like the male cartoonists are doing so as to make the reading public aware of their existence among other recommendations.

Keywords: Gender, female, cartoonist, culture, queer

Introduction

Between 1970s and the late 1990s it is observed that as the boys grew through primary and secondary schools, some of them continued to improve on their drawing skills both at school and at home, and the collection of cartoon strips cut out from newspapers continued to increase.

Moreover, studies consistently mention boys' knack for drawing from comics. This is based on observation of a trend greatly uncommon with the girls at the time and even now. This gives credence to the reason why most boys practise drawing more than girls, whenever they come in contact with comics. On this, the study infers here that to hold that a female has a lesser or outright inability to draw as it compares to a male is wrong. As much as possible, it simply posits that abilities in both genders are what can be improved upon over time rather than hold one gender ability high above the other.

Culture and society are both agencies that form the basis for men and women to express their innate pains, desires, hopes and aspirations. The cartoonist's depictions often relate to the race he or she is born into. Currently, there are about fifty-three newspapers in Nigeria, and the researcher is not aware of any female cartoonists who are practising or may have practised the art form in the newspaper and magazine. The existing scholarship on cartooning appears to exclude the works of female cartoonists in Nigeria. This leaves out discursions on the works of female cartoonists such that it is as though there are no female cartoonists practising or that had practised the art form.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to rethink the exclusion of the female gender from the cartooning epistemology, while the specific objectives are to:

- i. identify female cartoonists in Nigeria
- ii. trace the academic background of the Nigerian female cartoonists, and investigate what informed their choice of the profession
- iii. examine the styles, themes, perspectives of the female cartoonists' work

- iv. examine the stylistic differences, similarities and influences between the works of male and female cartoonists, and
- v. ascertain the types of cartoons the female cartoonists make

The article highlights the stylistic differences in the female cartoonists' works in comparison to the works of male cartoonists. It will enable scholars to direct studies towards the works of female cartoonists. It will reveal the possible reasons why there are no scholarly works done on the works of female cartoonists practising in Nigeria. The study will expand the cartooning epistemology in that the mindset of the female is ordinarily different from that of man but has the capacity to be equally productive in any field of expertise, which may inspire further studies of their works. This study focuses mainly on both existing and retired female cartoonists in Nigeria with the aim of highlighting and examining the contributions their works make to cartooning.

Conceptual framework

Two concepts will be relied upon as vehicles to drive the thrust of this article. The first in no specific order is Cultural feminism. Lewis in Adeoti (2020: 294-5) hold that

Cultural feminism is a variety of feminism which emphasizes essential differences in reproductive capacity. Cultural feminism attributes to those differences distinctive and superior virtues in women. What women share, in this perspective, provides a basis for "sisterhood" or unity, solidarity and shared identity.

In the light of the above nuances, this article presents the work of female cartoonists alone to reveal the capacity in their works without to avoid the patriarchal shadow that has and continue to prevent the audience or and public from being able to realize that women make cartoons. While, the Queer Theory that started in the 1990s as a study that made attempts at understanding the deviant behaviour that led some men and women to become gay and lesbian. The word queer is a word that is used to describe an odd behaviour, attitude, or an event that is out of place. That a female making cartoons is out of place is what has and continue to make it difficult for women be accepted in the print media as cartoonists. It is important to note that Queer theory actually originated from queer studies and women studies. The theory is influenced with credits given to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1950-2009), Judith Butler (b. 1956) and Lauren Berlant (b. 1957). Over the years, the theory continued to enjoy a wide variety of expansions that have led Gauntlett (1997: 3) to define it thus

Queer theory is a set of ideas based around the idea that identities are not fixed and do not determine who we are. It suggests that it is meaningless to talk in general about 'women' or any other group, as identities consist of so many elements that to assume that people can be seen collectively on the basis of shared characteristic is wrong. Indeed, it proposes that we deliberately challenge all notions of fixed identity, in varied and non-predictable ways.

Some examples of these set ideas are the typecasting that is common in relationships linked to challenges that come up between couples in marriage, societal stereotypes, the patriarchal perception that is used to prevent women from pursuing their desired careers among others.

Literature on cartooning and gender exclusion

Lent (2010: 8, 26) opines that

Given their high readership and the vast reservoir of researchable topics identified with them, it is difficult to fathom why comics and cartoons remained unstudied (or at least, understudied) for so long... After these early efforts to advance comics as a field of study, a more sustained drive surfaced in the late 1980s, when various factors coalesced to change still prevailing negative attitudes about comics...the academy could no longer ignore the broad discipline of popular culture (which embraced comics), given its immense importance to the global economy and individuals' lifestyles.

The achievement attained abroad in the study of comics generally is evident from the above opinion with evidence seen in the books and scholarly published articles. Nigeria on her own has come a long

way in the contributions made by her cartoonists locally and internationally. Donnelly (2013: 1) and Lazzari and Schlesier (2008: 376) hold unequivocally that the role of the female in the arts and cartooning in particular is worth paying attention to because of the perspective that it has. This they affirm is potent and worth adequate consideration just like those of the male in any field and cartooning in particular. They posit that the female gender at one time or the other have held protests against their exclusion from some galleries as it presupposes that the female's works lack the value that equals those of the male artists. Apart from Nigeria, female cartoonists continue to lend their voice to the male dominated profession. In Kenya is Celestine Milka Wamiru, Lydia Paul in Tanzania and Stacey Stent in South Africa where they make strips in their various countries with little or nothing written about their works

Methodology

The quantitative research method was used to obtain information on the number of female cartoonists that may have or that are still practising the art form. Both the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches of collecting data were used for this study. The intrinsic approach, which is a primary method of gathering information, was used to establish the inspiration behind the female cartoonists' works. The extrinsic approach relied on cartoon strips, books, journals, magazines, electronic libraries, internet and other archival materials to discuss the female cartoonists' works' styles, influence, techniques and content.

The article used the historical approach to trace the educational background of the female cartoonists, so as to document what informed their choice of the profession. In addition, the expository approach was used to bring to bear on the study unfold a knowledge or any hidden event, or persons. The descriptive approach enabled the researcher to delve into the underlying interpretations of each of the female cartoonists' works so as to gain the nearest meaning of the intended message. The comparative approach was used to find out the differences in the content, depiction and message between the works of female and male cartoonists.

Population and sampling technique

The population for the study is the female cartoonists who had and are still practising cartooning in Nigeria. Purposive sampling was used since it is a method used to exclude people who do not fit into a particular profile. The profile needed for the study are the female cartoonists who may have and are still practising the profession.

Styles, themes and perspectives of female cartoonists' works

The study examines the styles, themes and the stylistic differences and similarities and influences of, and on the female cartoonists' works. Again, it assesses the stylistic differences between the works of the female and male cartoonists. Folashade Adebare trained at the Yaba College of Technology Lagos, Nigeria and on graduating got employed as the first female and cartoonist in the now rested National Concord newspaper. The themes focused on varied from editorial cartoons to socio-cultural issues in Nigeria and the world at large. The strip plate I berates the culpable attitude of both uniformed men and some members of the public as they engage in the ignoble act of giving and taking bribe.

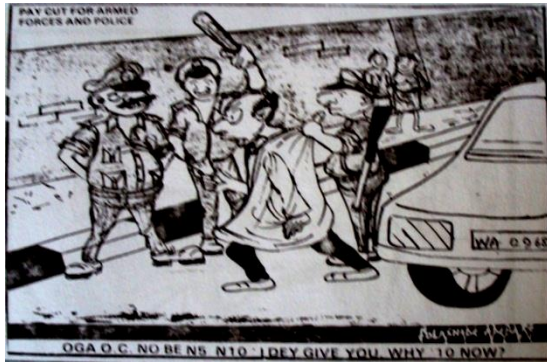


Plate I: Pay cut for armed forces and police, Folashade Adebare, *National Concord* newspaper, November 12, 1985



Plate II: Untitled, Folashade Adebare, *National Concord* newspaper, January 19, 1987

It is important to add that Adebare holds firmly that the main cause of the act of asking for gratification instead of punishing the offender is hinged on the pay cut of the two units of the armed forces. She further asserts through the strip that it is a more common practice that transcends pay cuts as seen in the conversation coming from the driver that has been arrested by the uniformed men. The depiction seems to be a cross pollination of influence of her colleagues' (Boye Gbenro, Dotun Adegboyega and Osazuwa Osagie) mannerism of depicting figures. In the strip in plate I, she aptly depicts a female figure standing by a man, both standing as onlookers as the driver is arrested. She does this to further express the helpless situation the citizens in the country find themselves, in the face of the attendant aggressive manner that characterises policing at check points.

In plate II, the man in a flowing gown could have been depicted as a female figure without losing the thrust of the message. However, the early 1980s was a time when women were just gradually finding an increasing footing in the civil service. This ordinarily beclouded her enough to depict men in her strips more than the frequency at which to depict women. More so, she might have done this to also maintain her place in the eye of the male dominated profession vis-a-vis the almost inexistent place of women in the print media when she started in the *National Concord* newspaper.

Ronke Adesanya made cartoon strips in the now rested *Daily Sketch* newspaper, *The Vanguard* and the *Nigerian Tribune* newspapers. From the *Nigerian Tribune* are these two strips that focus on socio-cultural issues that affects women. The first strip depicts a wife's frantic effort at preventing her husband from continuing to date his secretary. Adesanya helps the reader see the mode of dressing that the secretary is usually seen in, and the wife also decides to imitate her husband's secretary in order to win him back to herself.

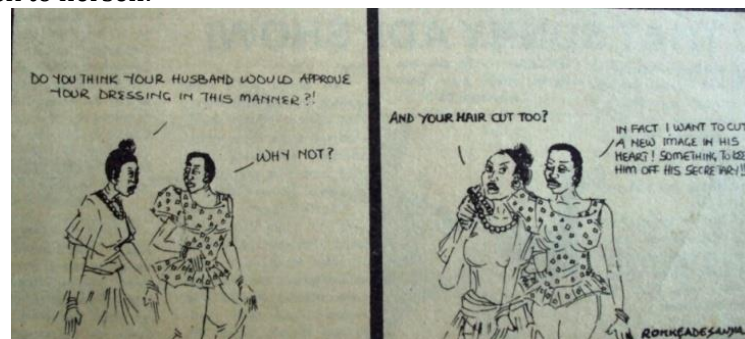


Plate III: Untitled, Ronke Adesanya; *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper, no date

The cartoonist has used just two panels to convey lots of messages and imagery that would have taken a few more strips to achieve. She presents the story in a way that captures the anxiety in the wife such that in the second panel the reader is able to get an impression that she is on her way to her husband's office to douse the existing competition her husband has created. In the next strip

Adesanya depicts one of the throes and challenges, thoughts and desires of a couple in the drive for public office.



Plate IV: Untitled, Ronke Adesanya; Nigerian Tribune newspaper, 23 July, 1987

In the second panel she asserts that some men in the eastern part of the country still see the place of the women to be in the kitchen. Her works are replete with female figures which should make scholars to inquire to want to know the gender of the cartoonist that makes the strips. This should inspire a gender study of Adesanya's works to lead to findings such as (i) The existence of a female cartoonist, and (ii) A replete use of female figures; perhaps to protest the neglect of the use female figures in cartoon strips. It also makes it clear that the overt gender stereotype makes it easy for readers and scholars in particular to hold that only men make strips.

Witek (2012: 37) holds that

One of the basic skills of any kind of drawing is the ability to render the appearance of objects consistently, and in comics the expectation is that no matter how stylized or iconic the drawings may be, the figures will look more or less the same throughout the narrative.

This ability is evident in Adesanya's work in the Vanguard newspaper such that it might have made many scholars to think it is not possible for a female to make cartoons let alone with the type of proficiency displayed by her in the VIRGINIA comic strips.

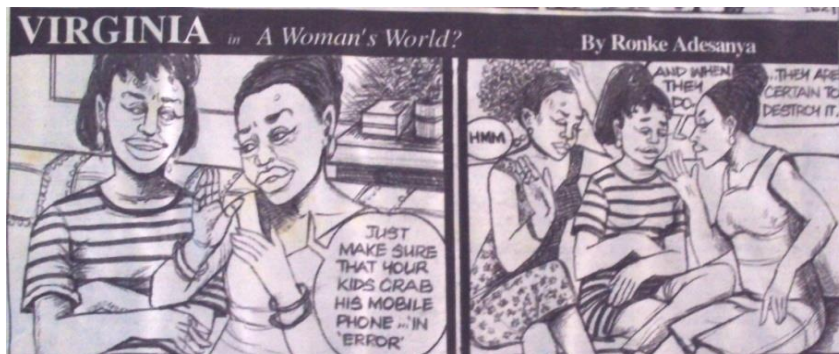


Plate V: VIRGINIA in A Woman's World? Ronke Adesanya; Vanguard newspaper, August 15, 2002

The ploy depicted in plate V is meant to wonder if the decision taken would actually resolve the issue for which VIRGINIA seeks revenge. Adesanya as a female decides to present the negative life style of some women through a woman's eye so as to better present this without the bias and poor information that a male narrator would have had to depend on hence ending up with a derogatory view of the women. McCloud (1994: 63) posits that, "This phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole has a name. It's called closure...Some forms of closure are deliberate inventions of storytellers to produce suspense or to challenge audiences". This technique cannot be easily attributed to the work above because the first woman on the left in the second panel has her arm

stretched behind the woman in the middle of the two women, but the first panel did not show any part of the body of the first woman in the first panel.

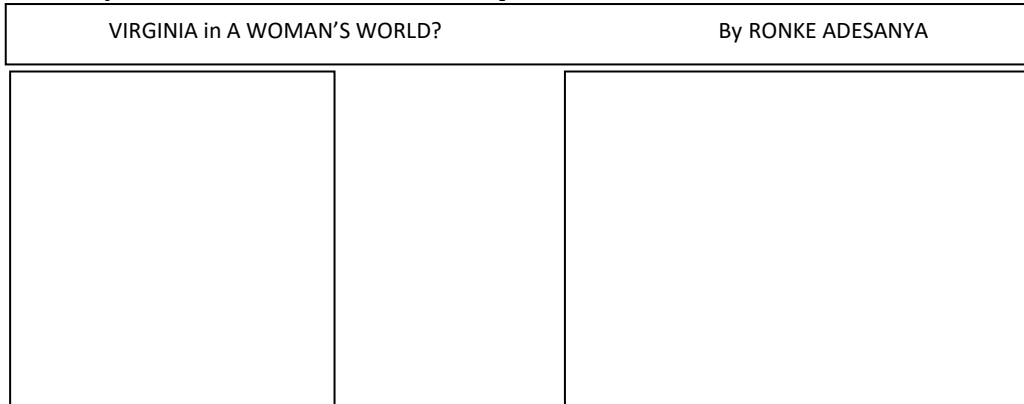


Diagram 1: Closure; as suggested by Scott McCloud shows the gutter that should have been used in the strip in plate V.

The gutter between the two panels in the above diagram is a widely accepted practice the world over. Again, VIRGINIA in TALES OF A CITY GIRL is a portrait of a lady portraying one that has chosen to be wayward. Singer (2012: 56) holds that

In narrative discourse, Gerard Genette defines narrative time through three types of relations between story and discourse: the order in which events transpire in the story and the order in which they are presented in the discourse; the duration of events in the story and in the discourse; and the frequency with which these events are repeated in the story as opposed to the frequency of their repetition in the discourse.

These narrative styles are evident in Adesanya's comic strips as seen in the following strips.

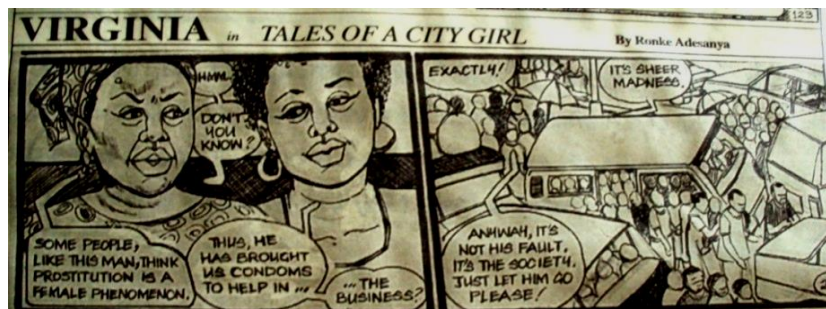


Plate VI: VIRGINIA in TALES OF A CITY GIRL, Ronke Adesanya Vanguard newspaper, 18 May 2001

The cartoonist in the strip above avoids the use of a few other frames to show the reader where the two women are by missing the scenes, and in the second panel creating a frame that captures the busy traffic laden road they are both travelling on. The replete use of female figures in Adesanya's comic strip is indicative of the thinking of radical feminists. The reason for this exclusion is varied, one of which is the low number of those who had practised the profession as observed by Professor John Agberia in a telephone interview of 16th March 2013. He explained that "I am not aware of any female cartoonist in Nigeria, and if there are, the figure is infinitesimal." The scholar had published an article titled 'The role of cartoons in the socio-cultural development of Nigeria' in 2001.

Ijeoma Nwogu studied Medicine at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and took interest in drawing while in secondary school. The characters she made are depicted in the clear-line style of presentation and the text in the strip are inspired by aphorisms and those drawn from the devil's dictionary. The character in THOTS is depicted as a thoughtful man wearing a face cap with his eyes not depicted. He is depicted on a strip with two panels of the same size with the sentence broken into the two panels. The essence of this is to draw the reader into the opinion that every thought must be

thought through as a process. In this strip, she implies that a person should destroy all evidence of failed attempts at success so that, apart from the ability to start again, the person does not get the reprimand of any one.

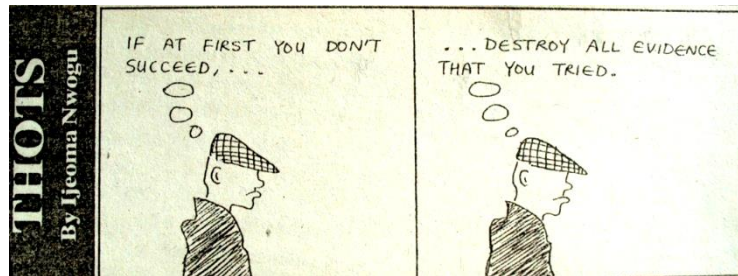


Plate VII: THOTS, Ijeoma Nwogu; Nigerian Tribune newspaper, no date, (Scrap Book, Kashima Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria)

Above is a strip with a stern expression that runs parallel with the text used by Nwogu. The first panel goes any reader that knows the idiomatic expression that leads to 'try, try and try again'. But in the light of the various spate of evidence been burnt before or during a court in some Nigerian cases, Nwogu lampoons the social and judicial system for lacking the integrity to stand on its decisions. Again, many people always want to hide their failures and would rather present a façade of being unaware of what to do under a precarious situation so as to seek peoples' sympathy.

The context in which the dollar in in plate VIII is used in the strip below is suggestive of a possibility that Nwogu alludes to the economic downturn in the country. This is so bad that the naira has lost its value enough for many to rely more on the American dollar that is also affected by a slight drop in value. However, the target reading audience is an elite class of the Nigerian society that would understand the thrust of the message as such a small class of people possess the opportunity of the use of the American dollar.

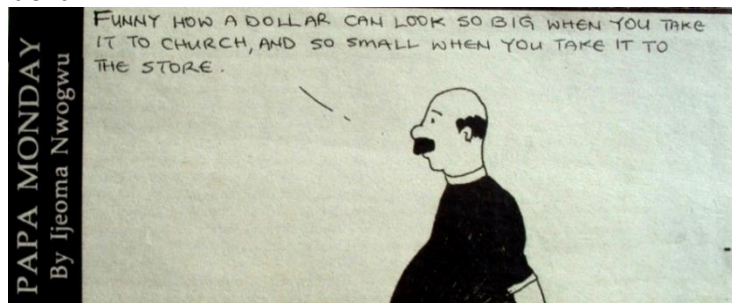


Plate VIII: THOTS, Ijeoma Nwogu; Nigerian Tribune newspaper, no date, (Scrap Book, Kashima Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria)

The female figure in the next strip in plate IX captures the way and manner seen in some young ladies behave they are proposed. The female character in the strip is been admonished to avoid being difficult when been proposed to by a man. The hand she has on her hip is made to suggest arrogance in her attitude towards men when any comes around to propose to her.



Plate IX: BETRAYAL, Ijeoma Nwogu; Nigerian Tribune newspaper, no date, (Scrap Book, Kashima Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria)

In an interview with Adaora Promise Onele, she refused to give a hint of the thrust of the comic when the researcher asked her to explain the thrust of the comic. She studied Painting at the Polytechnic Ibadan and made illustrations for the now rested Post express. She explained that she prefers readers to follow the strips and make out the meaning as they read. The comic strip she makes portrays some of the challenges unmarried young ladies go through on the path to getting married. The title moreover suggests that ANGELA is her own problem as indicated by the adjective that sets the tone of the comic strip.



Plate X: ANGELA THE TOOTHLESS GIRL, Adaora Onele; Daily Sun newspaper, no date

The two panels present both subjects from two different views. In the first panel, ANGELA is depicted to be sitting in the centre of the table opposite the man's seat, but in the second panel, she is depicted to be sitting on the right side of the table giving the viewer a clear view of the pastor. It is clear the cartoonist was aware of the impending possibility of the viewer being blocked from having a good view of the man in the depiction in the second panel that made her make the depiction in error. The next strip depicts a man and woman in a love tango as Onele uses an election campaign as an import of her inspiration for the strip. The allegory presented here depicts the man as a symbolic representation of Nigerian politicians and the woman as the electorate. She is openly frightened by the incessant spate of rigging that brings many of them into office without the expected performance they had promised while campaigning.



Plate XI: Untitled, Adaora Onele; Daily Sun Newspaper, May 3

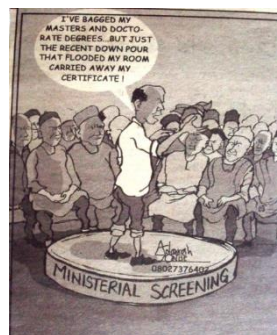


Plate XII: MINISTERIAL SCREENING, Adaora Onele; Daily Sun newspaper, July 25 2007

The folded arms of the woman are indicative of wariness from the failure previous governments leave trailing them, and a show of distrust to the politician's overture. It is observed by the study that

cartoons increasingly fail to sway or inspire members of the public in their decisions on various national issues. This is borne out of the fact that the incidence of threats to newspapers over a cartoon's inspiration over the public's decision is null. The nominee in the panel is depicted with both trousers rolled up to his knees to further prove that flood swept his certificates away, thereby attempting to draw the sympathy of the gathering.

The next strip takes a more subversive way in mentioning the scandal that rocked the lower house of the National Assembly when N625million was reportedly proposed for the renovation of some houses. Here, the cartoonist mocks the intention that should have increased housing unit for more poorly housed people as the victims of flood are presented as the primary beneficiaries of such a decision.



Plate XIII: Untitled, Adaora Onele; Daily Sun newspaper, September 14, 2007

Just like Folashade Adebare, Onele's works would have irked any politician that takes cartooning serious. Her contribution to the journalistic arm of news reportage is such that makes it difficult to be easily attributed to a female within the purview of the stereotype that informs gender roles and abilities. In an interview with Albert Ohams, the chief cartoonist with The Sun on the 14th March 2013 in which he explained that Onele had to be groomed regularly, and she continued to improve in the cartooning craft. He added that her works are average, yet progressive in the quality of depictions she churned out. She was however told to leave the job in 2007 as 'management was not satisfied with the quality of work she made'. Patronage, Onele added made a few readers come over to actually see her to convince them that she is actually a female cartoonist. She has also experienced no threats for her satires because they are in the least iconic level of depiction which makes it difficult for any person or group to be irked by her work. She has since stopped making cartoons and has gone into the clothing business, she told the author.

In comparison, Onele's works display the ability to satire political issues with the relish typical in the works of both Ohams and Erapl who continue as male cartoonists in The Sun newspaper. The visual content of the depictions to a large extent could be attributed to have been made by one single cartoonist. In a world, nation and work place, that is powered and dominated by men, the likes of female cartoonists will barely find a long and strong footing to practice the art form without an imminent end in sight that is hinged on one unfounded claim of inability on the side of women or the other.

Gloria Ejimofor made the strip in plate XIV published in the mode of presentation common to all cartoonists in the Guardian newspaper holds the depiction of political cartoons. The work posits that corruption is a word that characterises the activities of a majority of Africa's leaders as presented in the second panel. In the first panel, it highlights a decision that should be common among all African leaders with the aim of reducing corruption at all cost. Again, the character to the right of the second panel describes the attitude of African leaders while in office. This, he concludes in the last panel to

hold an opinion that many African leaders lack the willingness to fight corruption because they are involved in it too.

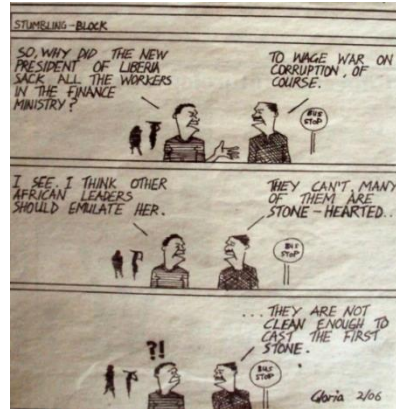


Plate XIV: STUMBLING BLOCK, Gloria Ejimofor, February 2006

On the top of all the strips is a theme that sets the tone for the reader and primarily for the cartoonists to drive the narrative through in the three panels. The less iconic strip will irk any leader in that the Liberian is leader is a woman and that ordinarily will be taken as an insult on the maleness that pervades any culture to be compared with a woman; though it is not intended in the work. Perhaps, the fact that she also a female cartoonist will heighten the anger on discovering that the cartoonist is a female. In an interview held on 18th March 2013 with Onu a male cartoonist with the Guardian newspaper, he explained that the quality of work Gloria Ejimofor made does not qualify her to be called a cartoonist. He added that only one of her works was approved for publication in her brief stay while she was participating in the mandatory Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme in the Guardian newspaper.

Emilia Oniegbu studied Law at the University of Nigeria Nsukka but made strips in her third and fourth year in the Punch newspaper. In the two strips below in plates XIV and XV Emilia Oniegbu actually used another cartoonist's work twice. The name of the cartoonist is signed on the third panel of the strip. The first one is published in colour while the second strip is published in black and white on two different dates.



Plate XV: WITTY WITZ, Emilia Oniegbu; Sunday Punch newspaper, 21 March 2010



Plate XVI: WITTY WITZ, Emilia Oniegbu; Sunday Punch newspaper 9 May 2010



Plate XVII: EXPENSIVE JOKE, Drazee; Sunday Punch newspaper, 6 November 2011

The strip in plate XVII above reveals that the three-panel work is also shared by the cartoonist known as Drazee; his real unknown as it was not given. The voice bubbles in each panel is also the same but the wordings are different which means that they both use this perhaps, by permission of the original creator of the panel; unknown to the author of this article. The third panel of both strips has the name of a cartoonist signed on it which clearly proves that Oniegbu or Drazee are not the original owners of the strip. It is pertinent to add that both cartoonists used the strip severally such that one can easily say that they lack the ability to draw cartoons which has led to why they chose to reuse the strip continuously.

The wit of a boy is depicted here in plate XVIII that leaves the father quizzing in surprise at the response he got from his son. Again, Oniegbu used the strip below without the images changing their positions in all subsequent presentations. Despite the fact that she is not originally a trained artist, it is still required of her to perhaps, have some basic ability to draw the human figure and use it to make her cartoons.

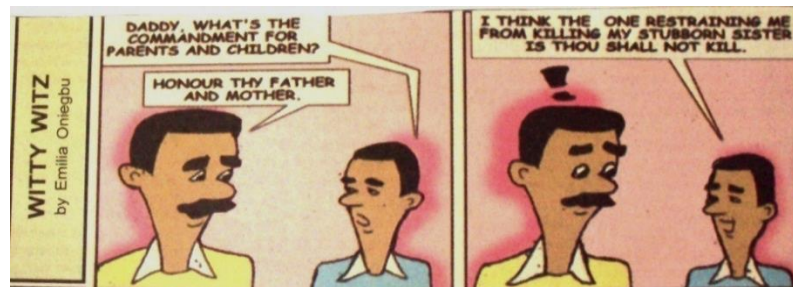


Plate XVIII: WITTY WITZ, Emilia Oniegbu; Sunday Punch newspaper, 16 May 2010

In the SMART KID strip below, Oniegbu presents the mind of a girl who is taking it to the extreme as she expresses her dislike for her teacher. It is worthy to note however, that any young reader who is equally the possible audience could read the message wrongly enough to hate her teacher. Cynthia in the last panel holds out her shock with an exclamation mark in dismay over her friend's rash suggestion. In this regard, the final opinion with the use of an exclamation mark does not necessarily state whether the cartoonist is support of the SMART KID's intention or not. Since the title of the cartoon is in the positive, Oniegbu clearly presents the ironic angle of smartness that attempts to reveal what some children believe is smartness. Furthermore, she made several strips with the use of this template imagery to present other issues. This further points out her evident inability to draw through the use of a variety of image positions.

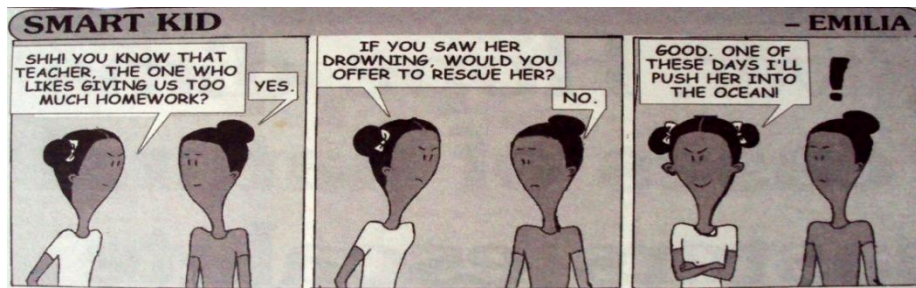


Plate XIX: SMART KID, Emilia Oniegbu; Sunday Punch newspaper, 30 January 2010



Plate XX: SMART KID, Emilia Oniegbu; Sunday Punch newspaper, no date

In the space between the two panels in plate XX is the tell-tale indication that the cartoonist actually worked directly on the panel. That proves her ability to depict without having to make sketches before a final work is done. Moreover, it would have been better when such lines that have nothing to do with the panel are erased at the end of the work. This work ordinarily still makes it difficult to aver that she can draw since most of the works she made while in the Punch newspaper relied on template of cartooning strip with already made images that are evidently not her.

Oniegbu made strips along with male cartoonists like Aliu Eroje, Drazee, Michael Ugali, Bidemi David, Ediene Abak, Ijoma Nwachukwu, Tope Olujimi, A. K. Simon, Shola, Nd'Usoro, Moses John, Tosin John, Niyi Aragbaola (NEARO), Ayo Oyerinde, Henry Cheche Egbune, Bayo Daniel, Bennett Omeke, Chukwuka Nwachukwu (Chukky Nwakky) and Abayomi O. It is worthy to note that only Eroje, Egbune, Omeke and NEARO are the cartoonists who make editorial cartoons and other cartoons that are in the familial platform.

Uche Uguru was born in Eboyin state and attended the Model Primary School and Model Secondary School both in Abuja passing out in 2003 and 2009 respectively. She studied Fine Arts in the Department of Fine Arts, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria where she specialised in Painting graduating in 2012. She made comic strips for the *Nigerian Pilot* newspaper on Sundays on the column made for children and teenagers. The comics are titled as follows, **Abdul can't find his school bag** and **Nothing comes easy**; both strips were started in 2011. **BON AND GEAN** is an anthropomorphic comic strip that depicts pigeons. All are comic strips attempt at teaching morals to its target young readers. The works are depicted in black and white since the newspaper cannot afford the cost of producing coloured pages. She stopped publishing her work with the newspaper in August 2013.

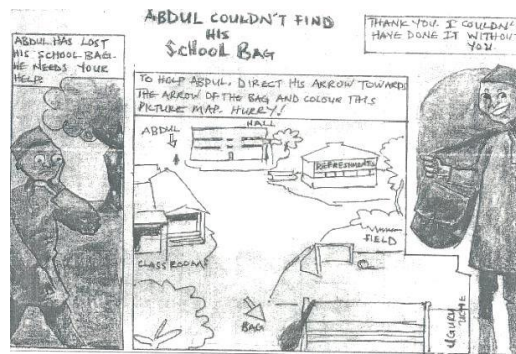


Plate XXI Abdul couldn't find his bag, Uche Uguru, Nigerian Pilot, Sunday, April 24 2011

Each strip has a puzzle that is made to tease the children's intelligence quotient and also make it fun learning to assist friends in looking for lost items. She has used three vertical panels to make this strip with voice bubbles on the top of each panel to guide the reader in the puzzle. Perhaps, the amount of space made available to her on the page has made it difficult for her to make it challenging for the reader such that she has had to make arrows on the top and bottom of the centre panels to lead the reader's eyes. The depiction of the subject in the first and last panels attempts at depicting a school boy but fails, because the boy rather too old for the age she had hoped to depict. In the last panel, the background has the same tonal value with the bag such that at first glance, it is as though the school bag is actually as big as a knap-sack.



Plate XXII Bon and Gean, Uche Uguru, Nigerian Pilot, Sunday, July 28 2013

Bon and Gean are two pigeon friends that Uguru uses to teach the spirit of sharing among friends and all and sundry. The choice of the pigeon enlists the young readers to be gentle as a metaphor, yet it is only an adult that might understand the choice of the pigeon. The dual panel strip weekly takes the readers through a story line that engenders friendship. The depiction is devoid of the use strong bold lines as she works within the shades of grey that makes it visually subtle, which might be borne out of her choice of pen.



Plate XXIII Nothing good comes easy, Uche Uguru, Nigerian Pilot, Sunday, May 8 2011

Uguru explains that the strip focuses on a 'man that wants to make money without working for it'. The work further attempts at promoting the position that there is dignity in labour. The story starts with the rural-urban drift plot as the only son the couple have leave his parents to the city where he has never been. The amount of information presented in the four panels, the narration and the conversation send the readers' minds reeling with the topical issues bordering on the thrust of the story. The teenagers and adults that read comics and cartoons might find it interesting to follow every week. The work indicates that Uguru works directly on a strip and sends it for publication after making one or two sketches. Three of the voice bubbles are not legible because of the shade she has created behind the text making it difficult to read. The second, third and fourth panels are poorly rendered as the background and the images are infused accidentally out of a poor study of the making of the comic art form. This gives it the unfinished look that characterise her works.

Making comics and cartoon strips require careful planning just like any other form of art. Since the strips were published once a week, the amount of time given to the making of each strip albeit the quality of the finished work leaves so much to be desired of her to have improved over time. Having specialised in Painting; coupled with the intense drawing classes had for four years, the figure drawings in the first and last strips fall short of expectations of her ever getting a place in another newspaper or magazine to make cartoons. Despite these short comings, it still opens her work for study in that the body of work produced can be subjected to further discussions bringing different analytical perspectives to bear on them.

The value placed on the female child falls lower than that placed on the male child in many cultures. This to a large extent continues to inform why many berate the female ability to excel in some career choice. This is a peculiar stereotype that cuts across many professions until recently when women increasingly gain employment in their choice places without prejudice. Teboh (1994: 56-7) and Aniakor (2004: 158) hold the need to turn greater attention to the study on the works of females to expand studies' epistemology. This is owing to the fact that the works of females are mostly deemed unfit for research due to their gender. Deepwell (1998: 3) posits that there are hurdles of choices that women's works fail to 'jump' have led to the exclusion of the works of female cartoonists in a period where women practise in about every area of expertise and profession the world over.

The artistic indices set by male scholars to decide whose work fits study or and display leaves one with wonder if the set rules of criticism are not violated in favour of another individual or group vis-a-vis the absence of studies on the works of female cartoonists. Ajiboye in Glendora review (2006: 7) critics the works of many cartoonists of today to be lacking in the ability to put words and images adequately properly which asserts that it weakens the quality of work produced. Agberia (2001: 42) affirms that, "It is time more attention should be paid to cartooning". Inference is drawn from this for the female cartoonists' works be studied more often to further expand the cartooning epistemology. Murray and Syed (2016:416) posit that,

Women are visibly marginalised on the basis of socio-cultural stereotypes embedded in the structures and practices of many societies...Societal norms,

together with gender differences in the distribution of resources have created a hierarchy of roles that awards higher status and authority to men as compared to women.

This no doubt unequivocally accounts for the reason why some males in the cartooning profession find it difficult to stand the presence of a woman practising the art; with comments made by Onu and Agberia. The culturally assumed hierarchy of the man being above the women stands as a yard stick that is always used to decide where a woman fits in. In other professions such as music and photography, the gender barrier has been broken so well that there several female musicians that continue to gain both local and international acclaim and perform collaborative with their male colleagues. In photography, T. Y. Bello a trained architect, former singer and now photographer served as the official photographer to former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. While, Tolani Alli had served as official photographer to former governor of Oyo state Abiola Ajimobi, she now serves as the official photographer to Vice-President Professor Yemi Osinbajo.

This brings up Ellemers (2014:1) position that “Organisations benefit from gender diversity, as research clearly documents. Nevertheless, statistics reveal consistent gender differences career development and payment. Women who feel undervalued at work will re-evaluate their priorities are tempted to “opt out”. This type of re-evaluation is to a large extent what has not led to the fact that, as at the time the author of this article concluded a PhD in 2015, there were, and still are no female cartoonists practising the art form in any of the print media in Nigeria that the author is aware of. Sibani (2017: 432) holds that

Gender inequality in our society today, is among the most prevalent forms of social inequality which exists all over the world, with different efforts in different regions. These differences are primarily due to cultural legacies, historical development, geographical location and religious norms which predominate the society.

As potent as this inequality continue to somewhat prevent female cartoonists from been seen, written about and employed, it is important to raise the need for the female cartoonists to take responsible for not taking to social media as an open platform. The social media has and continue to compete, be cheaper because of the ubiquitous nature in which all the information required are installed on one device. These platforms that are hypothetically more popular than newspapers and magazines are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter among numerous unpopular ones. Cultural feminism by definition therefore expects the female cartoonists to take responsibility to make themselves known to the national and international public.

Findings

- 1) There have been seven female cartoonists have practised cartooning in Nigerian newspapers since the early 1980s.
- 2) In the over eighty-year history of cartooning in Nigeria, female cartoonists have worked side by side male cartoonists doing strips and comics for more than twenty years.
- 3) Three of the female cartoonists Folashade Adebare, Gloria Ejimofor and Adaora Onele made editorial cartoons and female cartoonists write their names boldly, which makes it easy for any reader that is not given to gender stereotype to identify.
- 4) The works of the female cartoonists can also serve the same scholarly discourse the works of male cartoonists have and breaks the gender exclusion that characterises scholarship that makes them look inexistent.
- 5) Emilia Oniegbu’s and mode of using a single cartoon template to present cartoons shows she does not have the ability to make cartoons by drawing her images.

Suffice it to say that the purpose of establishing that female cartoonists practised the art form in the print media in Nigeria. The findings made, informed by fieldwork conducted by the author abridged from a PhD dissertation completed in 2015, have led to establishing the exclusion of female

cartoonists' works from most cartooning scholarship. These include the type and style of works they produced, their influences and the cartooning techniques they employed to make their works.

Conclusion

The study has been able to establish that female cartoonists practised the art form in Nigeria. It established that there is ignominy in the possibility of women's ability to practise the art form. It also established that most women do not make editorial cartoons as they focus mainly on the family, while only one of them overtly uses the female figure to express a feminine position with the aim of contending the patriarchal inspired society she lives in. The exclusion of the works of female cartoonists from scholarly discussion indicates a male stereotype amongst scholars of both genders such that cartooning is viewed as a 'biologically' male profession. The amount of scholarly discourse possible through the works of female cartoonists also shows that their works expand the cartooning epistemology.

Recommendations

- a) Scholars should bring other scholarly tributaries to bear on the works of female cartoonists
- b) Cartooning should be taught as a course of study in tertiary institutions so as to expand both the practical and theoretical knowledge of the area of specialisation.
- c) Female cartoonists should publish their works for sale like the male cartoonists are doing so as to make scholars aware of their existence.

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Interviewed persons

- i. Professor John Agberia, Lecturer, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria
- ii. C. C. Onu, Chief Cartoonist, The Guardian newspaper, Lagos, Nigeria.
- iii. Albert Ohams, Chief Cartoonist, The Sun newspaper, Lagos, Nigeria.