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Sensing Nigerian Pop Music Videos

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Abstract

Unhappy with the stranglehold of the 'linguistic turn' on western philosophy since early 20th-century, sundry critical thinkers have, since the later part of the century, proffered alternative and oppositional 'turns', such as the performance/body, pictorial/iconic and sonic turns. These new turns, which collectively challenge the dominion of language or the interpretive paradigm as the singular mode of apprehending our world, call attention to the sensuous and affective 'presence' of phenomena. Reacting to the unrelenting disregard for sense perception, Paul Stoller proposes 'sensuous scholarship' as the critical model that would "reawaken profoundly the scholar's body by demonstrating how the fusion of the intelligible and the sensible can be applied to scholarly practices and representation" (1997: xv).

Deploying this analytical model, this essay investigates the affective integrity of Nigerian pop music videos by charting their kinetic, pictorial/iconic and sonic complexes. Focusing on four award-winning videos from renowned Nigerian pop music artistes, the essay observes that although the videos are sometimes narrative their charm resides more in their sensuality; in their affective rather than cognitive authority.

Sensing Nigerian Pop Music Videos

The medium is the message no longer.
THE MEDIUM IS.
John Fiske

Mr Langley: I've got to confess, I never actually read anything you've written. Tell me Dr, what exactly is your position at the gallery?

Mr Bean: I sit in the corner ... and look at the paintings.

Mr Langley: Ah! That is brilliant. If only more scholars would do that; you just sit and look. You are not lecturing, writing or arguing; just sit and look at the paintings themselves. Now that is brilliant.
Atkinson & Smith. 1997

Introduction

Since late 20th-century, there has been a groundswell of dissentience with the hegemony of the 'linguistic turn' in Western epistemology, a term which originated with Gustav Bergmann (1960) but was made popular by Richard Rorty's 1967 anthology, *The Linguistic Turn*. This 'turn', which is characterised by its exultation of language not only as the singular and sufficient mode of knowing and expressing our world but as constituting the world itself, came to its fullness with the Poststructuralist canonization of textuality, exemplified in Derrida's famous declaration: "There is nothing outside of the text" (1976: 58-59). Scholars from diverse disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, art history, music, dance, philosophy, performance, cultural and visual studies, decry the manner in which absolute attention to language blinds us to the affective, experiential or ontological world of phenomena (Arnheim 1969, Mitchell 1994, Boehm 1994, Gumbrecht 2004, Fiske 1986). They observe that a rigid deployment of the linguistic paradigm shuts off the material object itself, the signifier, in favour of the absent subject or signified. They argue that phenomena can move us not only through their linguistic or cognitive impetus, but as much, if not more so, by their material presence. Thus they demand that critical attention be given to the physical presence of our world – that which is perceptible to the senses – rather than strictly to their meaning or symbolic dimension. The agitation, therefore, is for adequate attention to the 'presence effects' of phenomena, rather than solely to their 'meaning effects'; "that is, an oscillation between the concepts and functions that we associate with objects, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their tangibility as things" (Gumbrecht 2006: 306); for recourse to 'sensuous scholarship' which, according to Paul Stoller (1997: xv), calls attention back to the materiality of our objects of investigation and acknowledges the manner in which we can be sensuously, rather than solely cognitively, affected by them. Celebrating the success of this campaign Keith Moxey announces that

> The idea of 'presence', as startling to post-Enlightenment thinking as the appearance of Banquo's ghost at Macbeth's table, has entered the precinct of the humanities and made itself at home. Affirmations that objects are endowed with a life of their own – that they possess an existential status endowed with agency – have become commonplace (2008: 131).

This new interest in the sensuousness of phenomena spawned contra-linguistic 'turns', notably the performance/body, pictorial/iconic and

sonic turns. These turns extol the sensuous and affective 'presence' of phenomena. Performance/body turn privileges bodily processes or embodied acts; pictorial/iconic turn underscores visual/imagistic presence, while the sonic turn stresses aural sensation.

The material body has, since the seventeenth century, been posited in a negative light. The body's sensuality, its tendency to defy objectivity and intellection in its demands, has been its bane. In this respect, it has been inconsistent with the rational and objective construct of Enlightenment. Acknowledging the current groundswell of critical attention to embodied acts Stoller observes that "the sensuous body has recently emerged as a new site of analysis" (1997: xii-xiii).

Similarly, the iconic or pictorial turn, unlike the verbal or literary format, focalises visual perception. It foregrounds the ways in which objects and images make their presence felt through the medium of sight rather than language. Unlike the performance/body turn, however, the iconic/pictorial privileges images in general, especially figural and pictorial, rather than embodied protocol. It historicises a long-standing denigration of the vitality of visual perception in the understanding and experiencing of our universe. Alexander states, however, that iconic consciousness is not restricted to visual perception alone:

> Iconic consciousness occurs when an aesthetically shaped materiality signifies social value. Contact with this aesthetic surface, whether by sight, smell, taste, sound or touch, provides a sensual experience that transmits meaning. The iconic is about experience, not communication. To be iconically conscious is to understand without knowing, or at least without knowing that one knows. It is to understand by feeling, by contact, by the 'evidence of the senses' rather than the mind. (2010: 11)

The sonic turn is also a critique of the unremitting and longstanding dominion of the interpretive regime over the affective. However, the sonic seems to be particularly critical of the privileging of vision in our social and aesthetic engagement with our world. In this manner, it is also a critique of the performance and pictorial/iconic turns which privilege visual perception. Acknowledging the increasing attention to vision in such fields as visual studies and/or visual culture, Schedel and Uroskie observe that

> At least part of the significance of this groundswell lies in the challenge sound-based practices present not only to our ideas of art and its cultural institutions, but to entrenched hierarchies of the human sensorium that have consistently understood vision as the noblest of the senses (2011: 138).

Thus, attention to the physical world, the presence of phenomena – the bodiliness of actions, the visual integrity of pictures/images and the material perception of sound – enables us to acknowledge the ways they affect us sentiently in our daily lives. This is precisely what Fiske observes when he argues that "The interests of sense necessarily, always already, deny the interests of what is made to make sense: sense destroys what it makes ... the medium is the message no longer. THE MEDIUM IS" (1986: 77). The obsessive search for meaning undermines the integrity of the physical medium that conveys meaning. This is an obvious reference to Marshal McLuhan's pioneering and influential study of the media wherein he made the famous assertion, "The medium is the message" (1964: 7). Here McLuhan goes against the pervading notion of the medium as a transparent and slavish message-bearing apparatus. He argues instead that the medium is complicit in a manner that strongly influences the message. Fiske simply advances McLuhan's position by insisting on the supremacy of the medium in his study of Music Television (MTV). He calls for attention to the material presence of phenomena, rather than strictly to what they mean; to signifiers rather than signifieds.

It is to this end that Paul Stoller prescribes "sensuous scholarship," a kind of critical attention that desires to "awaken the imagination and bring scholarship back to 'the things themselves'" (xii). Just like Alexander's "iconic consciousness" Stoller's critical methodology aggregates the concerns of all the 'turns' in its emphasis on awakening all the senses; on locating our understanding of phenomena on the evidence of the senses of sight, hearing, touch, movement, smell and taste. In this regard therefore, both models of critical perception – 'iconic' and 'sensuous' – propose that we open up our senses to the materiality and agency of phenomena; that we do not impress upon phenomena but allow phenomena to impress upon us. Therefore, unlike the linguistic turn these emergent dissenting turns do not impose themselves on phenomena, but "demand that we take note of what objects 'say' before we try to force them into patterns of meaning" (Moxey, 2008:132). In the epigraph above, Mr Langley's fascination with a scholar who actually does sit down and look at "the paintings themselves" is a further critique of scholarship's disinterest in signifiers, in 'things themselves' (*Bean,* 1997).

The music video is multi-sensorial in its appeal. In its deployment of both literal and non-literal bodily acts, images and sounds, it appeals simultaneously to the physical and cognitive senses. However, the structuration of music video has been construed as largely non-linear and episodic, and its appeal based fundamentally on its evocation of an enchanting ambiance, of dream and desire, rather than ideology and meaning (Fiske, 1986: 74), even as it often deploys signifying sounds and

mimetic images. In this manner the music video offers itself as an exemplary candidate for 'sensuous' and 'iconic' critique because of its consummate attentiveness to bodily, pictorial and sonic protocols in both literal and non-literal formats. It also proffers an exemplary model for a critique of representation; for underscoring the critical pitfall in the endorsement of any singular mode of feeling and knowing life. The music video structurally offers multi-sensorial experience in its mobilisation of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic sensations – images, sounds and bodily movements.

Deploying the 'sensuous' and 'iconic' in the manners posited by Stoller and Alexander respectively, this paper examines the affective compass of Nigerian pop music videos. Through this emphasis, the paper endeavours to chart the kinetic, pictorial/iconic and sonic complexes of Nigerian pop music videos. Focusing on four award-winning music videos from renowned Nigerian music artistes, it underscores the various sensorial procedures by which the videos enchant their viewers. It submits that the allure of the videos resides predominantly in their sensual, rather than their semiotic assets; their magnetic hold on the sensory organs of sight and sound. It suggests that although systems of signification are deployed in many of these videos, signifiers are generally privileged over signifieds.

Therefore, 'sensing' Nigerian pop music videos implies attendance to the visual, the aural and the kinaesthetic dimensions implicated in the composition of the videos. Thus I hope to underscore the peculiar manner in which the videos privilege sensation over cognition, or 'matter' over 'mind.'

The Music Video

According to Willoughby,

> A music video is a commercial for recordings, a tool for promoting a song and its performer, and another method of getting a performer before the public. Part of the attraction of music videos, in addition to the music itself, is the innovative production techniques and imaginative visual creativity. Many videos incorporate dance, movement, dramatic action, montages, graphics and other special effects (1999: 340).

Although there is much that persists in this description of a music video today, there is also much that has changed due to rapid developments in the production and consumption of mobile digital technology.

The music video's origin can be traced to early attempts in Britain in the 1930s and 1940s at "Putting music and pictures together" (Aufdeheide, 1986: 59). However, its popularity as a unique cultural product began in the United States in 1981 when Warner's Music Television (MTV) initiated a 24-hour music video broadcast on cable television. Following MTV's phenomenal success many television stations dedicated strictly to music video broadcast, such as BET (Black Entertainment Television), VH1 (Video Hits One) and CMT (Country Music Television), emerged. Most other stations frequently broadcast music video either as dedicated content or filler between regular programmes. Designed originally as a programme of free music provided by record companies to promote the sale of their records and recording artistes, music video has not only grown into a successful TV programme of its own but has mutated beyond the television screen into practically all visual entertainment media. Aided by the Internet, the social media and mobile phones, and cheaper and easier access to digital media technology, the production and consumption of music videos has witnessed an unprecedented growth in recent times. As Edmond observes, "The short, snappy, and self-contained structure of music videos was well suited to the download speeds and streaming limitations of early broadband Internet." They "were an excellent form of content for online platforms at a time when content was in high demand" (2014: 306-307). The genre has not only had a staggering impact on practically every form of entertainment business and the creative industry, it has also immensely promoted recording artistes' visibility in the increasingly competitive digital marketplace. According to Peterson-Lewis and A. Chennault,

> Videos can increase artists' salience and profit potential by bringing them to or keeping them in the public's attention. They can also diminish if not completely obliterate the artists' need for extensive tours to acquire broad public exposure. Finally, videos display not only artists' musical talents, but also their talents as dancers, actors, and, in some cases, choreographers, producers, and directors. A popular and well-performed video may provide musical artists with the opportunity to expand their careers into these other areas. All these potential benefits, of course, are in addition to the profits the artists and their recording companies will reap from record sales and video sales and rentals (1986: 107).

By the mid-80s media scholars began to pay deserved attention to music videos. As Aufdeheide notes, "the rapid spread of the music video and its influence on popular culture is motive enough to take the phenomenon seriously" (1986: 59). Some of the reasons proffered for its pop-

ularity include music video's fragmented, hybrid and eclectic nature which is said to exemplify contemporary society; their less demanding structure which easily captures the attention even of a largely unfocused, nervous and impatient spectatorship; and their provision of an escape from challenging social reality by way of fantasy and dream. Aufdeheide, for instance, describes it as "perhaps the most accessible form of that larger tendency known as postmodern art" signaled by its "merging of commercial and artistic image production and an abolition of traditional boundaries between an image and its real-life referent, between past and present, between character and performance, between mannered art and stylized life" (58), and by imitating "dreams or manufactured fantasies rather than the event structure of bounded programs" (65). Marsha Kinder observes that "what we do see is a chain of disparate images, which may involve the musical performers, but which stress discontinuities in space and time – a structure that resembles the form of dreams" (1984: 3). John Fiske notes the culturally subversive impulse of music videos: "It takes the iconography of the social world and excorporates it, uses it to resist the social. Excorporation is the cultural strategy of the subordinate which takes the signs of dominance and excorporates them into a resisting subculture" (1986: 76).

Thus the rise of the music video is accounted for in the very character of the genre itself. It is a hybrid art which in its rhizomatic routine appropriates the formats of cinema, commercials and drama/theatre. This eclecticism is also implicated in several other forms, thus making it structurally mutational, diminishing most conventional boundaries between categories of art media, genres and modes of reception; borrowing from all expressive forms in its evolution into a unique and original phenomenon (Wollen, 1986: 167). According to Fiske, the music video's "originality lies in three dimensions – the foregrounding of the signifier over the signified, the 'openness' of its textual structures, and its popularity for a non-conventional, possibly oppositional audience" (74).

Many scholars agree that the magic of the videos resides fundamentally in their pleasuring rather than their signifying form. As a matter of fact, Fiske locates this appeal in their refusal to make conventional sense, opting rather for "popular sense, even, if you wish, non-sense" (1986: 74).

Nigerian Pop Music Videos

At the 9th edition of the most popular music video awards ceremony in Nigeria, Nigeria Music Video Awards (NMVA), held in Lagos on 26 November, 2014, some of the videos that won prestigious awards include Olamide's "Sitting on the Throne", directed by 'Kemi Adetiba (Video of

the Year and Best Mainstream Hip Hop Video); Patoranking's "Girlie O Remix," directed by Moe Musa (Best Reggae Dancehall Video); Tha Suspect's "Nsogbu", directed by Clarence Peters (Best Afro Hip Hop); and Yemi Alade's "Johnny" (best indigenous concept), directed by Clarence Peters. Others include, Oritsefemi's "Double Wahala", directed by Unlimited L. A. (Best Afrobeat Video); Niyola's "Toh Bad", directed by 'Kemi Adetiba (Best R&B Video); KCee's "Ogadimma", directed by Aje Filmworks (Best Highlife Video) and Mr Songz's "Kolombo", directed by Mazi C. I. Jizzle (Best Contemporary Afro Video).

Using four of these award-winning videos as case study, namely "Sitting on the Throne" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I03Pget1m8Y Accessed 01/10/2017), "Nsogbu" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWJFFo_qyyQ Accessed 01/10/2017) "Girlie O Remix" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvjqxub160w Accessed 01/10/2017) and "Johnny" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_XkTKoDI18 Accessed 01/10/2017) this essay undertakes an examination of their material forms with a view to identifying their kinetic, visual and sonic routines. This is based on the conviction that the success of these videos as award winners is predicated upon their aesthetic form; that the peculiar manner in which the various expressive media are organised or articulated is responsible for their appeal to viewers and subsequent nomination for the relevant prizes they won. However, this methodology is not a total disregard for the referential import of the videos. Echoing Alexander's iconic consciousness, I wish to observe that whatever effect the videos have on viewers, whether aesthetic or symbolic, is predicated on their material forms. This perspective explicates the angst of all the 'turns' against the 'linguistic turn:' that a predominantly interpretive regime naturally undermines the *presence* (the kinetic, sonic and visual particulars) of the videos.

Steve Jones notes that "A distinction between music video styles can be made based on the narrative forms found therein." He identifies three of these narrative forms, namely mimetic, analog and digital:

> Ones that consist of a performer or group filmed on a stage mimicking (or actually performing) a song ... employ a form of mimetic narrative. Other videos ... which present a performer or group mimicking a song on a street or at a party, and include activities other than performance, employ a form of analog narrative. The structure of the narrative is such that, though the performance is a part of the video, it is not presented solely as an experience of a performance. Videos with digital narrative often entirely do away with performance of the song ..., or show a performance in many locations, cutting from one place to another as if time and space are irrelevant (1988:19).

Furthermore, Jones observes that

> In general, the visual images relate to the lyrical images. However, it is a trait of videos incorporating digital narrative techniques that the connection between lyrics and visuals become more and more tenuous. In such videos, the visuals leave the relationship to the lyrics open. For example, in a video grounded in a traditional style … visuals act as a reinforcement to the lyrics. In a video exhibiting characteristics of digital narrative … the visuals virtually tell a story of their own. It is a story that is connected to the lyrics, but only indirectly. The actions, events and images described in the lyrics are not recreated in the visuals (19-21).

Jones further notes that "there are still few videos that fully develop digital narrative. Most music videos rely on traditional styles, and only bring in elements of digital narrative at a couple of points" (19). Thus it may seem that most videos deploy aspects of the three narrative forms, but differ only in degrees.

It is obvious that the differences between these three narrative modes lie principally in their peculiar attitudes to time and space, or to reality. The mimetic is more coherent and representational in its appeal, not entirely dependent on the materiality of the signifier but on the signifying or semiotic import of the audio and video. In other words, the mimetic mode privileges the signified. It is more literal and reasonably mindful of temporal and spatial fidelity. In analog there is still a form of the mimetic but it is inconsistent because it sometimes defies time and space by including images which may have no temporal, spatial or symbolic relationship to the performance of the music or the meaning of the lyrics. The digital is more mindless of spatial and temporal coherence, continuity or logical development. Its logic is, to borrow Fiske's expression, 'nonsense.' Digital imaging appeals to our audio-visual perception without really making any literal sense.

Olamide's "Sitting on the Throne," which was adjudged the best video of the year, can be classified as belonging largely to the digital narrative category. However, it has a scant deployment of the analog and mimetic forms, especially in its occasional lip-syncing as well as in its kinetic and graphic representation of bits of the lyrics.

"Sitting on the Throne" opens with a succession of eerie and monotonous rhythmic and oral sounds against a receding image of a man who appears like a visual parody of Jesus Christ's resurrection image – head slightly tilted up and gazing vacantly into space, dressed in a white toga with a red sash across the right shoulder, arms spread out with the thumb, index and middle fingers of both hands pointing downwards at

an angle away from the body. As the music starts a quick sequence of largely unrelated images follows, including that of the artiste listlessly smoking a cigar in total disregard for the music: he neither moves rhythmically nor lip syncs to the lyrics. Many of these initial images are subsequently repeated in the video. The most dominant pastiche is Michael Jackson who is represented in all the media: audio, visual, graphic and kinetic. His name is mentioned in the lyrics, written across the screen, and a character dressed in a playful imitation of his typical dress mode executes snatches of Jackson's iconic dance movements. The more mimetic of the images are those that tend to match the title of the song, featuring Olamide himself sitting on a throne. The most enduring, however, is a pastiche of the opening scene of Michael Jackson's "Remember the Time" in which the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, Akhenaten, and Queen Nefertiti (played by Eddie Murphy and Iman respectively) sit on their thrones while different performers individually endeavour to entertain them. In this instance Olamide, sitting on a throne with his 'queen,' is entertained by wrestlers.

Unlike most Nigerian music videos where embodied acts, such as mimetic and rhythmic movements abound, in "Sitting on the Throne" such movements are largely marginalised. What obtains is rather a montage of narratively unrelated images imbued with an illusion of movement through editorial effects. Cross-cutting, slow and fast motions and chromatic manipulation evoke a strong robotic and ethereal but playful atmosphere. Olamide appears at random, smoking a cigar, 'rapping', standing, sitting, gesticulating, but rarely moving. When he does move at all it is leisurely, often in total dissonance with the rhythm of the music or the meaning of the song's lyrics.

Close-ups and quick cross-cuts further underscore the video's visual and narrative incoherence and discontinuity. The background is predominantly indeterminate, an expanse of plain white background with no spatial or temporal signifier. To echo Jones, while the images are strongly cohesive they are not logically or narratively coherent (1988:21). Colour is also dominantly bland, consisting largely of plain white and grey backgrounds. This serves to throw into high relief certain items in a frame, such as scarves, meat and lips which are occasionally rendered in sharp colours. The video consists of tightly woven montage of images. No one in the video, save the Jackson character, dances or even moves rhythmically. Everyone, except in the shots where Olamide lip syncs to the lyrics, is totally mindless of the music.

However, there is an interesting intertextuality in which semiotic signs are rendered from audio to visuals and vice versa, and sometimes into actions as well. For instance, the spoken words 'sitting on the throne'

are often matched with a textual rendition on the screen. 'Beef' is matched with the image of a piece of meat on a flat plate. 'Dog' is translated from a spoken word to sound (a bark) and image (a real dog). 'Beast' is rendered verbally, textually and aurally. The most interesting of this multi-sensory translation is an obvious fascination with the late pop icon, Michael Jackson. For instance, at the word 'beat', rendered both orally and textually, the Jackson character executes one of Jackson's popular dance movements. This is an obvious reference to Jackson's hit music, 'Beat it'. Similarly, at the mention of his name the text 'Michael Jackson' appears on the screen, followed with the Jackson character doing another of Jackson's classic dance moves.

The entire video presents an interesting coda as it ends with the very image it began with, thus returning the viewer, as it were, to where he or she started.

"Sitting on the Throne" evidences a total disregard for spatiotemporal constraints and therefore to reality. It is not set in any definable place and time. This spatial and temporal indifference is consistent with the video's evocation of a listless, defiant and subversive atmosphere. This subtly echoes the kind of subcultural excorporation of signifying logos of dominant culture which John Fiske characterises in music television (1986:76).

Of all the winning videos the one closest to Olamide's "Sitting on the throne," in both visual technique and musical style, is Tha Suspect's "Nsogbu." Unlike "Sitting," however, "Nsogbu" deploys a much more coherent structural format, thus evoking an entirely different atmosphere. It is clearly an interesting video whose use of graphics is much more organic and expressive than "Sitting."

Tha Suspect's "Nsogbu" opens abruptly with a long shot of an imposing derelict space with huge interlocking metal and concrete structures, apparently an abandoned industrial site. It sets itself apart from our conventional everyday environment and, coupled with its greenish grey colour, evokes a curious, adventurous and exciting atmosphere. Tha Suspect (Peter David) is largely subjected to this imposing environment as he is often seen in a long shot. The environment's expanse of grey colour and its metallic, wild and cheerless feel further underscore an atmosphere of spatial imposition as well as remoteness. Tha Suspect begins to walk towards the camera in the long shot, but a few cuts to medium shots of the featured artistes, Phyno (Chibuzor Azubuike) and Illbliss (Tobechukwu Melvin Ejiofor), and Tha Suspect himself interrupt the long shot as they perform the intro to the music. There is a beautiful feeling of visual balance in the individual shots. From the camera's perspective Tha Suspect is in the middle of his shots, while Illbliss and Phyno seem to be

positioned to the left and right respectively. Thus the lead artiste is strategically positioned, directly facing the camera. As he begins his 'rap' several graphic images, some of which are animated, appear and disappear in response to verbal cues, a style reminiscent of the intertextual device in Olamide's 'Sitting'. Here, however, the technique is much more exciting because of its rhythmic flow and the artiste's spirited and metrical movements. For example, as soon as he begins the rap proper (after the intro) graphic images of journalists' arms, wielding a video camera, microphones, a pen and notebook, fill up the lower part of the screen. Other graphic images include a piggy bank which appears at the word 'invest", a couple of mobile phones cued by the word 'friends' which Tha Suspect casts behind him, cartoon images of an 'albino' and a 'witch', and of Barrack Obama and Goodluck Jonathan whose heads he switches, a long sinister arm stretching from right of screen which he amputates with a graphic machete. In addition to graphic images, texts are also avidly deployed, all of which are representations of relevant texts of the lyrics. A very effective use of texts is where, in a long shot showing the artiste in the imposing grey of the background, he walks steadily and confidently from left to right of the screen as graphic texts of the lyrics appear behind him progressively as he walks. This not only gives the impression of a confident and fearless character in an imposing atmosphere, but the lyrics seem to be in desperate pursuit, anxious to catch up with him. This establishes the artiste in a position of power and dominance, and gives the impression of a character in control of his business or, as the lingo goes, 'running things'. The shots last long and are largely stable, moving only when the camera slowly follows artistes' movements. All the movements are smooth, controlled and confident. There are no sharp movements, changes in direction or especial angle shots. Visual composition is more balanced and imaginatively controlled.

Editing effects are restricted mainly to selected slow motions and colour grading: subdued grey background and half-tone skin colouration for the artistes. The costumes are also subdued in colour: predominantly black, brown and grey. There are no sharp, full or contrasting colours. Similarly, camera movement and shots are mostly stable, with occasional controlled movements.

The spatial positioning of the artistes climaxes pleasantly a little over half way through the video where a long shot establishes Tha Suspect and a lady walking in slow motion towards the camera. Illbliss strolls into the frame leisurely from the left while Phyno leaps in from the right and they all confidently walk together in a straight line and in slow motion towards the camera. This long shot is interrupted intermittently with cutaways in medium shots of the individual artistes doing their bits. The

video ends with a composite shot of the artistes walking towards the viewer. The end credit has the final shot, a freeze, panned from Illbliss on the left, through the lady and Tha Suspect in the middle, to Phyno on the right, and then a slow fade to black.

The music comprises a steady, more or less conventional monotonous hip-hop rhythmic pattern. It is mid-tempo with a synthesised vivacious melodic phrase. These rhythmic and melodic patterns are often paused and continued at certain points in the music for effects, variety and lyrical emphasis. Generally, the artistes are controlled in their performance. There is no exuberance or exaggeration, and no playing to the gallery. The atmosphere is of artistes modestly in control of their game, exuding confidence and competence.

Patoranking's (Patrick Nnaemeka Okorie) "Girlie O Remix" video, featuring Tiwa Savage, presents a similar compositional format to "Nsogbu" in its spatio-temporal engagement. It opens with a visual and aural statement which establishes that it is a remix of an original music and video: a very fast forward of the original video and audio that lasts five seconds and stops with an aural emphasis representing arrival at the present time and place of the remix music video. This is also textually represented on the screen with the texts 'everything is a remix'.

With respect to spatial representation 'Girlie' is closest to 'Nsogbu', although it lacks the stability, definition and coherence of the latter. In 'Girlie' there is a dominant space: the interior of a dingy, disused structure, possibly a depot. This represents the real time and place of the video. Into this space other places are invoked through flashbacks and cutaways. The same space provides a here-and-now temporal consistency from where other places and times are cited in quick succession. The nondescript and sombre nature of the space throws into high relief the activity it hosts, which is simply the lead and featured artistes moving, dancing and singing. In this manner the video provides an ideal spatial transparency for the kind of aural and visual business that takes place within it. There is no representation of place or character in a mimetic sense.

The performance of the artistes is more animated and exciting, comprising mainly dancing with gesticulations and other embodied acts. Consistent with the kinetic liveliness of the artistes' performance, camera movement, consisting of smooth but fast pans and dynamic angle shots, gives a powerful impression of racy mobility, matching the aural progression of the music. The atmosphere is gay and celebratory and seems to suck the viewer in.

The presence of the artistes performing the music and moving to it establishes the space as the present time and place – the here and now of

the video. This coherent spatio-temporal regime gives the video a more grounded and stabilised look. The consistent presence of the artistes serves as a stable referent, a visual theme that unifies the various shots. However, more than the artistes, the most organic element in the video is the music itself, a mid-tempo dancehall tune with a pulsating rhythm accentuated with sharp synthesised blasts of the saxophone. The music is the aural terrain on which the visuals of the video are structured.

What is especially interesting about "Girlie O Remix" is how its visual rhythm echoes the aural. The shots are mobile and very short in duration, and camera angles are dynamic even as the images are cut into tiny bits. The brevity of the shots as well as the steady movement of the camera gives the video a racy or kinetic tone, which is underscored by the rhythmic temperament of the music.

My fourth example, which is Yemi Alade's 'Johnny', is clearly the most mimetic and kinetic of all the videos. It adopts the format of a drama set in a typical Nigerian village. It opens with the character of a TV news reporter (played by the popular Nigerian comedian, Bovi) telling viewers that he is on a mission to interview a certain Johnny who is reportedly cheating on many girls, one of whom he has impregnated and the other he has promised to marry. He invites viewers and members of the village to follow him as he goes in search of Johnny. This dramatised introduction lasts about four and half seconds before the music begins. It is a rhythmical afro-pop dance music with a simple upbeat tempo. Yemi Alade soon begins to perform. Her lyrics is a complaint to the reporter about her boyfriend Johnny who left her for other girls, already impregnated one and even promised to marry another. She is the lead character and the scene has all the other girls in the song lined up beside her, intent on laying their hands on the cheating Johnny. Finally, they go in search of Johnny, led by the reporter. The second verse of the song is narrated with cuts to Johnny in intimate love scenes with different girls – kissing, feeding and putting a ring on the finger of one of the girls. Finally, he is discovered by the search party in a small farm with yet another girl. As the third verse of the song is performed, Johnny sees the party coming after him and takes off. He is hotly pursued by the crowd and finally intercepted as the third verse ends. The music stops for about thirty-six seconds for a full dramatisation of the scene. The reporter accosts Johnny with his acts of betrayal and asks him if he knows the four girls lined up before him. Johnny hesitates awhile but finally denies knowing any of them. The girls scream in shock and physically descend on him. The final verse is performed with different scenes of Yemi Alade singing and dancing to the music.

Time and place are generally coherent. All the scenes take place in different parts of the village and the performance is an event in real place and time. Thus, in spite of the different scenes showing the performance of the music the viewer follows a logical and simple romantic narrative. The other scenes highlight the lead character further intensifying the drama by repeating her complaint. And because many scenes are visual representations of song texts, the sense of real time is further intensified. Thus the scenes are cutaways and flashbacks, showing simultaneous actions and reporting past events and deeds as narrated in the song text.

The video also engages the body more intensely. Apart from the ordinary everyday non-rhythmic movements, such as walking and running, other forms of movement – stylised mimetic gestures and well-choreographed dancing by Yemi Alade and two brilliantly costumed ladies – are freely executed. The setting is a typical Nigerian rural countryside. There is apparently no interference with the setting by way of design. Thus there is no apparent artificial set. The colour is natural and sombre, dominated by the brown rust of old corrugated roofing sheets, earthy brown of the roads and footpaths, and the green vegetation. These are framed against a blue sky background. There is a mild and playful use of graphics, deployed mimetically or literally to underscore aspects of the lyrics and actions. These four videos have been consciously arranged from the most digital to the most mimetic; from the least to the most kinetic. The videos' popularity as determined from the number of views recorded on Youtube is as follows: "Nsogbu" is the least viewed, followed by "Sitting on the Throne." "Girlie O Remix" is second most viewed, while "Johnny" is the most viewed.

Conclusion

Nigerian pop music videos have contributed actively to the global explosion in the production and consumption of digital media. They represent all the narrative models identified by Jones; that is, the digital, analog and mimetic. Irrespective of a video's narrative mode, the most successful ones virtually populate every frame with visually and kinetically striking images, ranging from the profoundly digital to the mimetic; from the spatial, temporal and kinetically indifferent to the more naturalistic representations of time, space and action. The major objective is to visually capture and sustain the interest of viewers. Of course, the aural form is significantly represented although it is not the focus of viewers' interest since, in virtually every case, the music predates the music video and is available in a strictly audio format.

While Yemi Alade's 'Johnny' might seem to undermine much of the music videos' characterised structural indifference to time, place and action, and the privileging of signifier over signified as identified by Fiske, Aufdeheide and Kinder, every frame is so packed with visual and kinetic resources that even in the dramatised scenes each frame is constructed in such a way as to leave a profound aesthetic impression on the audience. Even in the obviously mimetic scenes, visual and embodied signs and acts are aesthetically and semiotically underscored in order to make powerful sensorial impressions on viewers. As Vernallis says of music videos generally, "the creation of mood as such overwhelms the particularities of historical and cultural origins" (2004: xv).

Secondly, in the more digital videos, such as Olamide's "Sitting on the Throne" where movement and images are largely discontinuous and fragmented, the music itself provides the organic structural principle thereby imbuing the images with formal coherence and making them perceptibly continuous and 'sensible'. Jody Berland insists that what "video seems so easily to dominate and transform – the 3-minute musical single – remains the video's *raison d'être*, its unalterable foundation, its one unconditional ingredient" (1993: 25). In addition to the music, the ubiquitous presence of the artiste offers a second structuring principle which orders the images and proffers continuity. In this manner the identified incoherence or discontinuity of the videos is misleading because such an understanding undermines the ascendancy of the music. Through the aural consistency of the music as well as the presence of the music artistes who, in most cases, lip sync, move and dance, the non-linear and visually discontinuous images are rendered coherent. As Vernallis rightly argues, "music videos derive from the songs they set. The music comes first – the song is produced before the video is conceived – and the director normally designs images with the song as a guide" (x).

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