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Laughter is Big Business: The Transcendence of Young Entrepreneurial Nigerian Women in Social Media Comedy

Cultural production of humour has taken several forms in Nigeria, beginning with live performances in the (pre-)colonial period, television and radio skits in the 1980s, Nollywood in the early 1990s, and stand-up comedy a couple of years later. Two decades after, the demand for laughter has not waned, as Nigerians increasingly 'laugh' at their socioeconomic challenges. With the proliferation of social networks and internet availability across the country, social media comedy skits have become the new normal and, with the COVID-19 lockdown and closure of live events, more popular. Significantly, more women have taken up this. This study investigates how purposively selected comediennes with little production capital and technical expertise deploy social media as a domain for expressing their talents. Employing interviews, close reading, and critical analyses, I examine ways the selected comics utilize social media to dislocate hegemonic spaces, assert agency, and center their performances.

Rowland Chukwuemeka Amaefula teaches at the Department of Theatre Arts, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. He received his Ph.D. in Dramatic Theory and Criticism from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 2019; his work re-examined purposively selected Nigerian plays, hitherto considered as feminist, as laden with characters performing gender non-conformance as protest. He is a recipient of many research grants, including the African Humanities Program (AHP) fellowship award of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). At present, Amaefula is a Georg Forster Postdoctoral Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikastudien. His research interests straddle gender/sexuality and performance studies.

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de

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Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2024 Leitung: Nico Nassenstein

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