

Representations of Politicians in Contemporary Ghanaian Hiplife Music

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Volume 17 Issue 4 (December 2015) Article 4**Mark Narthey****"Representations of Politicians in Contemporary Ghanaian Hiplife Music"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol17/iss4/4>>Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 17.4 (2015)**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol17/iss4/>>

Abstract: In his article "Representations of Politicians in Contemporary Ghanaian Hiplife Music" Mark Narthey argues that in Asare Obeng's music, politicians in Ghana are depicted as self-seeking, self-serving, and self-centered. Further, he argues that since its emergence on the Ghanaian music scene in the early 1990s, hiplife music now transcends its original purpose of providing an entertainment outlet for its audience, predominantly the youth, offering them a pleasurable and therapeutic means of escaping from the harsh realities and pressures of life. Importantly, Narthey demonstrates that this musical genre has taken on a new and, perhaps, more important role: a legitimate avenue for Ghanaian musicians to express their views and opinions freely on virtually every subject within the country. Narthey concludes that music can be a powerful tool for societal change and reform.

Mark NARTEY

Representations of Politicians in Contemporary Ghanaian Hiplife Music

Postcolonial literature is a synthesis of protest and imitation and it blends revolt and conciliation. Although these dualities permeate its stratagem, its style, and its themes, it is not always perceptible to scholars and critics (see, e.g., Asante-Darko <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1062>>). Studies on postcolonial African literature have garnered considerable scholarly attention since the 1970s and have been used to criticize colonial portrayals of Africa as well as the notions of disillusionment and despondency that characterized most African countries after independence. Other studies focus on issues of politics, culture, governance, and so on from a reflective standpoint. Jerry Olasakinju, for instance, attempts to represent what Africans stand for and what they are not. Drawing mainly on two central postcolonial African novels, Olasakinju rejects the depiction of Africa and Africans by some writers and argues that African conclave have a strong sense of community that produces much required unity and that Africans pay serious attention to leadership. While conceding that the continent has had its fair share of problems and socio-economic challenges, Olasakinju maintains that Africa has had to pass through phases of culture and development just like every other continent.

Ines Mzali presents a postcolonial reading of resistance and negotiation in selected contemporary African writings. Refuting the notion of negotiation as a weakening of resistance, Mzali argues that negotiation implies a pluralistic concept of social, political, and cultural agency. She concludes that negotiation and resistance are tools deployed by postcolonial African writers for aesthetic and socio-political engagement in postcolonial narratives of conflict in countries such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria. Akin to Mzali, Moussa Issifou's examines the use of magical realism as a device for political criticism in the postcolonial African novel. Issifou argues that the use of magical realism is dictated by the issues of society, economic, and political concern in the novels and is an aesthetic of necessity in these novels, not merely a literary mode. Elda Hungwe and Chipu Hungwe discuss nationhood and nation in postcolonial African literature within the framework of postcolonial theory. They discuss problems associated with definitions of "nation" where groups or members are marginalized and acknowledge that while nationalism served a critical role during decolonization, notions of "nation" and "nationhood" represent problematic issues with regard to ethnicity and gender and that globalization, in particular, impacts and challenges the notions of "nation" and "nationhood" in postcolonial Africa. A further study on critical issues in postcolonial African literature by Munyae Mulinga and Gwen Lesetedi explores one of the major impediments to economic, social, and political development in Africa: corruption. Mulinga and Lesetedi establish a nexus between colonialism and corruption and claim that the genesis and institutionalization of this pandemic in Africa could be best understood within the context of colonialism and its systematic use of material inducements to compel African chiefs/administrators to collaborate with colonialists in the pursuit of their colonial project of dominating and exploiting their people. And examining Nigeria's postcolonial literature, Adeoti Gbemisola highlights how writers — through diverse ideological persuasions and aesthetic modes — captured people's experience under military rule. Gbemisola posits that the military is not only a dominant political force in the country's postcolonial governance, but that it is also a recurrent subject in its narrative fiction, poetry, and drama. His study reveals a twist in public perception of soldiers from the status of "messiahs" who rescued the polity from corrupt politicians to "vampires" who plunged the nation into political turmoil and economic tribulation. These scholars underscore some of the relevant issues in the study of postcolonial African literature. However, compared with the novel, music has not received much attention and pop literature/culture (whereby my point of reference, specifically, is hiplife music) is more accessible to a vast majority of Ghanaians. In the study at hand, I discuss a relatively new semiotic space for research on postcolonial African studies, namely the (hiplife) musical genre.

Oral literature is linked with and interwoven into the African social fabric in general and contemporary Ghanaian culture in particular: folk or traditional music is pivotal to this oral tradition. In Ghana, traditional music permeates all cultural activities, that is, from the cradle to the grave (see, e.g., Ya Salaam). Following traditional music, a new genre of music — highlife music — began to make waves within the Ghanaian social spectrum in the 1930s. As Kwasi Boateng notes, highlife music blends African and Western music and it originated as a result of the innovative fusion of traditional Ghanaian musical instruments (for example, drums and bells) and conventional musical instruments (for example, keyboard and guitar, as well as wind instruments such as the saxophone and trumpet). While highlife music in Ghana may have undergone various phases and transitions and, therefore, continues to occupy a central position within Ghana's verbal arts, in the last two and half decades highlife music

has relinquished most — if not all — of its "superiority" to a new brand of music, namely hiplife music (see Collins). Hiplife is an African American musical genre that incorporates traditional rhythms and instruments and is therefore a blend of the US hip-hop and highlife, a popular Ghanaian musical genre that blends distinct African rhythms with those of Euro-American and African diaspora and it is fashionable within youth culture (see Oduro-Frimpong; Shipley). As a musical genre in Ghana, hiplife music provides an avenue for musicians to express their views, in addition to entertainment, on virtually every subject of concern within the country. It comes then as no surprise that since its emergence on the Ghanaian music scene, hiplife music has been used by musicians to voice their social concerns regarding women, relationships, domestic issues, cultural behaviors, religious concerns, and in recent times also political issues. In a bid to carry across the various messages of their songs and more importantly to underscore their domestic, social, religious, or political views to their audience, hiplife musicians, consciously or not, couch their lyrics in satirical language.

Despite the popularity of this musical genre, scholars interested in rap music "within different social, cultural and ethnic contexts" (Mitchell 10) have given it little attention (on rap music see, e.g., Marc Martínez; Moser). However, hiplife should demand and indeed engender scholarly attention from language and literary researchers—not only because it is relatively an understudied genre—but also because the lyrics of the music have the potential to reveal very nuanced and intriguing findings which we are likely to ignore, overlook, or (and as is most often the case) totally miss by merely listening to the music. With this aim in mind and in an attempt to fill this gap, the present study sets out to explore the portrayal of Ghanaian politicians in contemporary Ghanaian hiplife music. Four hiplife songs of Kwame Asare Obeng (known in Ghanaian music circles as "A-Plus"), a Ghanaian hiplife musician who is described as "Ghana's most politically incorrect hiplife artiste" ("Person" <<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/people/person.php?ID=601>>), offer insights on Ghanaian politicians. The lyrics of the song are predominantly in Twi (a dialect of Akan, Ghana's most widely spoken native language) and occasionally interspersed with Pidgin English.

Samuel Nkansah observes that "when all the words, phrases, images, symbolisms and satires are explained in terms of each other and the whole, any literary text will display its own internal logic" (7). This approach, therefore, becomes the most effective tool in identifying the effect of literary expressions and repetitive structures present in the selected songs I used in my study. Formalist scholars focus on the formal elements of a work — its language, structure and tone, and therefore read literature as an independent work of art rather than as a reflection of the author's state of mind or as a representation of a moment in history (see, e.g., Meyer). Michael Meyer adds that formalists offer examinations of the relationship between form and meaning within a work thereby emphasizing the subtle complexity of how a work is arranged. A critical study of the lyrics of the selected songs as they portray Ghanaian politicians, then, can be understood and framed within the framework of formalism. An analysis of Kwame Asare Obeng's song "A Letter to Parliament" shows that Ghanaian politicians are, more often than not, self-centered and seek personal parochial interest and not the interest of the citizenry. Indeed, the lyrics of the song are couched in satirical and sarcastic language to project politicians as tricksters who during electioneering campaigns promise the electorate to pursue a national agenda, but renege on their promise when they are given the mandate in favor of a partisan or — in most cases — an individual agenda. Written in free verse style and deploying apostrophe-s to stylistic effect, Obeng assumes the role of a concerned and observant citizen who, having passively observed the behavior, conduct, and attitude of Ghana's Members of Parliament (and by extension Ghanaian politicians in general) before, during, and after elections, decides to be an active participant in the governance of the country by scripting a symbolic letter to the parliamentarians. It is in this letter in the form of a song that he satirizes, ridicules, lampoons, and criticizes politicians and expresses his despondency at their behavior, which he considers untoward. More crucially, he warns the politicians of the repercussions of their conduct and charges (if not threatens) them to do much better, having reminded them of and reiterated their social obligations and political responsibilities to the nation. Here is the refrain of "A Letter to Parliament": "Obi nkase, 2008 kɔwokuro mu wai // Afesεεε, wokɔe no, woamma ei. / Sukuudan no abubu. / Lɔrekwan no atutu, woate? / Sɛwammaammɛyε a / Afeyi wobeluusu woate?" (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("Nobody will remind you to go to your hometown in 2008. / Since you left last year around this time, you never returned. / The school building has collapsed. / I should tell you the roads have developed potholes. / If you do not return home to fix these problems / I should tell you that this year you would lose your seat" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine)).

In the excerpt above, we can deduce in line 1 the supposed apathetic behavior of the politician towards his constituency and that since the electioneering campaign in 2004, the member of parliament had not re-visited the constituency to pursue any developmental projects or even express concern

about the welfare, social needs, and general well-being of his constituency. We note the portrayal of the Ghanaian politician as self-centered and this view is buttressed when the lyrics go on to suggest to us satirically too that in 2008 the parliamentarian would be compelled to return to the hometown constituency for the new election year. We can therefore infer that the reason why the parliamentarian would suddenly find the need to re-visit his hometown is to canvass for votes and to solicit for support in order to retain his seat. Thus, his self-serving intentions are clear. We also observe an instance of a stern warning to the effect that if the parliamentarian does not respond to the infrastructural and social needs of the constituency, then he will lose the upcoming election. This line depicts a politician who neglects the needs of his community in pursuit of personal interest and individual gratification. The refrain is repeated three times, thus emphasizing the unacceptable behavior of the politician. Further, "A Letter to Parliament" portrays Ghanaian politicians as corrupt: they misappropriate, mismanage, and misuse the state's resources. Certain portions of the song highlight how the politicians are opportunistic and seize the slightest opportunity to enrich themselves by means of the nation's coffers: "Menkotenkote a, mete sɛ Ghana adi 50 oooo. / Yɛpɛ 20 million dollars de akodi"

(<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("I learnt Ghana is 50 years. / We are in search of 20 million dollars to spend"). We realize the "get rich" attitude of the politicians and how they intend to take advantage of a national celebration such as Ghana's 50th anniversary to defraud the state. Importantly also, the lines above indicate misplaced priorities on the part of the politicians culminating into the mismanagement and misappropriation of state resources to the detriment of more important social and public needs. Thus, with an ironic tone, the two lines suggest that while major needs of the citizenry, including schools, good roads, portable water, electricity, among others remain unattended, the government (here the president, his cabinet, and ministers of state) deems it appropriate to splash 20 million dollars on an anniversary celebration. The Ghanaian politician is depicted as a person of questionable character who is dishonest and is averse to the feelings of the populace. Once they assume office, however, these politicians act at variance with the fine views and noble intentions they professed during the pre-election period. The following portions of the song substantiate the views expressed above: "2004 abatoɔ, wobaa me kuro mu. / On a campaign tour / Wohyɛɛyɛnbo. / Sɛyɛnto aba no mmawo more more. / Wobɛmayɛnabrabɔnyinaaanya ahoɔ. / Yebisaawo wo number, ɔmotwɛrɔ 0244444444. / Sɛ "meflashe" wopɛ, nawatwa me star call. / Yɛatoamawo awie, wakɔyɛɔsoafoɔ. / Afeideɛ wo "phone" koraa"woapuutu" no off" (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("During the 2004 elections, you came to my village. / On a campaign tour / You made us a promise. / That if we turned out in large numbers to vote for you. / You would transform our entire lives into one of comfort. / We asked for your number and immediately you did give it to us — 0244444444. / You promised to give us a ring back once we gave you a missed call. / Having become a minister of state as a result of our votes. / Now, you have entirely turned off your phone"). We see from these lines that the politicians are deceitful and dishonest and their actions before and after elections are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive: one of thoughtfulness and concern before the elections and sheer insincerity and insensitivity to the feelings of the electorate after the elections.

Another song critical of the political landscape in Ghana is Obeng's "Freedom of Speech," a song released some few months after the 2000 general elections in Ghana. This song adopts a retrospective approach in relation to the campaign of the elections. Obeng questions the indifferent attitude of the politicians towards the plight of his countrymen and women, and similar to "A Letter to Parliament" points at the politicians with respect to the manner in which they have managed the state's resources/national coffers and how they conducted or did not conduct themselves as public officials. The underlying tone of the lyrics is one of disappointment and discontentment as the musician on behalf of his compatriots expresses his dissatisfaction with Ghanaian politicians, in general, and the governing party at the time, the NPP: New Patriotic Party, in particular. Obeng's choice of the title "Freedom of Speech" is strategic and deliberate: given that he was about to embark on a mission of criticism and a presentation of the politicians in a negative light, he chooses a title that, first, predisposes the targeted audience to concur with his submission and align themselves with the principal thesis of the song. Second, the title exempts him from any adverse constitutional ramifications or legal consequences owing to the view that one's "freedom of speech," ideally, is supposed to be a constitutional right held in esteem in any democratic dispensation and of which Ghana is no exception: "Mesuronso o, namerekekayi o. / Ibi freedom of speech, Mr. A-Plus, I go talk"

("Freedom" <<http://ghlyrics.com/lyrics/A-Plus/A-Plus-FreedomOfSpeechlyrics.html>>) ("Although I might be scared because of my instantiation / Ibi freedom of speech, Mr. A-Plus, I go talk. / Given that there is freedom of speech, me as Mr. A-Plus, I will talk"). Obeng alludes to an essential portion of a song on nationalism and patriotism composed by Ephraim Amu, the late Ghanaian statesman and patriot who is revered in Ghana's political history and Obeng reminds the current crop of Ghanaian

politicians about the toil, struggle, and pains their forebears had to endure in order to build the country. By so doing, he places responsibility on the current politicians to safeguard the inheritance bequeathed to them by their predecessors in order that they do not disappoint posterity.

Of note is that Obeng introduces in his lyrics an important caveat that seems to indicate that the projection he gives to the politicians is balanced and devoid of bias. Phrased slightly differently, Obeng uses the said caveat to impress upon his audience the idea that his criticism of the politicians is not borne out of malice, envy, or mischief thereby implicitly echoing the credibility and authenticity of his reportage. As said previously, the picture Obeng paints of politicians in "Freedom of Speech" is negative. Although he intimated in the introductory lines to offer praise and commendation to those politicians who deserved it, not a single instance of such commendation is found in the song. Instead, drawing on an assemblage of literary and stylistic techniques including satire, innuendo, repetition, imagery, and rhetorical questions, he shows the politicians as irresponsible and corrupt: "Yewo gold; yewo cocoa. / εbaa no sennayεkoo HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Country)? / 46, 000, Ghana money, Sombro Traffic. / Na se mote sεmmere bi cocoa yeraawoposo" (<<http://ghlyrics.com/lyrics/A-Plus/A-Plus-FreedomOfSpeechlyrics.html>>) ("We mine gold; we grow cocoa. / 46, 000 Ghana cedis was spent on Sombro Traffic. / How come we were declared HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Country)? / I reckon you might have heard that some time ago, our cocoa got missing on a ship"). Lines 1 and 2 show that the politicians are bereft of innovative ideas, inventive plans, and the dynamism and dexterity required to take full advantage of the natural resources with which the country is endowed. Lines 3 and 4 show the corrupt practices of the politicians.

Obeng's song "Konkansa Radio" (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j93ER0Emblk>>) (which translates as "Gossip Radio") mimes a panel discussion on radio to discuss political issues that made the headlines in popular Ghanaian newspapers. Unlike the two previous songs discussed above, in "Konkansa Radio" Obeng adopts an ironic tone complemented by a satirical diction as he presents Ghanaian politicians as facile and disingenuous people uninterested in the development of the country. The newspaper headlines presented appeared in the *Daily Graphic*, the *Daily Guide*, the *Ghanaian Times*, and the *Chronicle* and are supposed to be positive statements by the politicians in connection with the economic strides and feats they accomplished. Obeng suggests that the declarations trumpeted by the politicians and captured by the newspaper captions are false and that the economic transformation the politicians talk about is absent in Ghana: "Okudjeto Ablakwansose Adwumaapae. / Abana 'ecreate' 1.6 million jobs / amaaman"

(<<http://ghlyrics.com/lyrics/A-Plus/A-Plus-FreedomOfSpeechlyrics.html>>) ("There are lots of jobs Okudjeto Ablakwa declares. / The government has created 1.6 million jobs. / Abolish Ex-Gratia"). In line 1, Okudjeto Ablakwa, a minister of state, claims that there are many jobs in the country and in the second line, we are informed — likely by another minister of state — that the government has created 1.6 million jobs, while in line 3 there is a call by yet another politician for abolition of the ex-gratia of ministers of state and members of parliament presumably because the politicians have in mind and at heart the somewhat ailing economy of the country and so would not want to further burden it. While the foregoing utterances by the politicians may be laudable, Obeng suggests that the public pronouncements are in contrast with the economic realities of the country. Further, in "Konkansa Radio" Obeng satirizes the actions of the two dominant political parties in Ghana and shows how flippant Ghanaian politicians can be. The rhetorical organization of *Konkansa Radio* offers a scenario of a radio panel discussion in which a representative each of the NPP and NDC is given air time. Instead of proceeding along this tangent, the two politicians on either side of the political divide — as the lyrics connote — do not and instead engage in accusations and counter-accusations on matters of corruption, verbally attacking each other's party: "Hwe nne, President Kufuortumikogyinabaabi. / Kase corruption abu so wo Ghana man mu. National Health Insurance Scheme, monhwεneaakoyε. / Wanhwεn'abere so, namoatotε hotels? / Free Maternal Care, merebisa 'εwohε'? / Yεbεεboseayεεadepa. / Yεamfannwekyinkinga, Muntaka" (<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j93ER0Emblk>>) ("In recent years, president Kufuor can mount a platform / And opine that corruption is on the rise in Ghana. / He seems to have forgotten that during his tenure and under his watch, you bought hotels / I put it to you: "Where's the Free Maternal Care you promised Ghanaians? / See how your party has mismanaged the National Health Insurance Scheme we instituted / We contracted loans for profitable ventures and worthy courses. / We did not spend it on worthless enterprises like chewing of kebab as Muntaka did").

Putting the views of the two politicians side-by-side, in "Konkansa Radio", Obeng shows that Ghanaian politicians are not serious and they take the business of governing a nation for granted. Moreover, the text shows that the politicians are more attuned to their party ambitions than to the nation's, and underscores the difficult social conditions Ghanaians sometimes have to grapple with as a result of

the empty promises sometimes peddled by the politicians during their campaign activities. In "Konkansa Radio" Obeng presents the politicians as corrupt officials who sometimes use legislative power for illegitimate private gains. The mention of "Muntaka" is also worth noting, since the minister of state in question had recently been relieved of his ministerial portfolio because of financial misconduct ("Sports" <<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Sports-Minister-FIRED-163167>>). Indeed, the allusion to "Muntaka" and the concomitant relationship with "chewing of kebab" refers to the fact that the minister was found guilty of channeling a large chunk of state funds into the preparation of kebab to entertain guests at a state function. Hence by citing this example, Obeng succeeds in scoffing at and rebuking the politicians while at the same time giving validity, credibility, and reliability to the criticism he puts forward.

In "Agye Gon" (the terms means "a situation that cannot be salvaged or a negative condition which cannot be remedied"), Obeng discusses political activities that take place during and after the 2004 elections in Ghana (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>). The song is structured in a chorus, three verses, and a hook that seeks to give the entire song a sense of closure. Unlike in the three songs examined above where Obeng rarely made mention of specific Ghanaian politicians, in "Agye Gon" we hear something different: while mocking the politicians who he believes were merely vying for elective positions because of money, he mentions the names of politicians and satirizes some of their actions during the campaign: Papa Kwesi Nduom and Edward Mahama (both of whom contested the presidential elections and lost), as well as Alhaji Azuma Banda, an entrepreneur who seems to have invested a lot of money into the campaign of one of the unsuccessful presidential candidates. Obeng seems to be saying that the money invested in the election campaign has gone down the drain and hence "Agye Gon," "an unsalvageable situation." Further, Obeng suggests that some entrepreneurs sponsor campaign activities with the salaries of their employees and shows that politicians have such a strong desire for power that they are willing to get what they want even if it is at the expense of the welfare of employees who depend on such businesses of their employers for their livelihood: "Adwuma bi ayenkurofoɔ bi ka. / Adwumawuranompiireye politics. / Nso ne workers bosome so a. / Wonnyasikan-tuɔɔmo ka" (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("Some businesses have gone bankrupt. / Most business owners have ventured into politics. / Yet when the monthly salaries of their employees are due / They are unable to pay them"). Obeng considers the politicians to be selfish and accuses them indirectly of being responsible for the unfortunate situation where some Ghanaian entrepreneurs are unable to pay their workers.

In "Agye Gon" Obeng also highlights the misappropriation of state resources by politicians and presents scenarios where a particular party in power organizes extravagant and flamboyant campaigns, yet when in opposition we see the contrary and, suddenly, the party begins to complain of inadequate funds: "Enkan no, sɛyɛrebɛto aba. / NDC paa, campaign paa. / Pick-up paa, T-shirt paa. / Car paa, rubber hyehyɛ ho paa. / Na ɛyɛmonno paa. / Saabɛrɛ no naɛyɛmosɛ Ghana yɛmodea" (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("Previously, during elections / The campaign of the NDC was extravagant. / Replete with "Pick-up" vehicles and T-shirts / With cars whose rubbers had even not being taken off. / And they were all brand new. / At the time, you guys thought Ghana belonged to you"). Clearly, the song reveals the corrupt practices of the politicians. When in power, they lavishly spend on campaigns only for them to resort to an ordinary or a "low level" campaign when in opposition: "No more Pick-up; m'anituatɛfrɛ car. / Entimo wɔ power no, nasika no firihenfa?" (<<http://m.museke.com/node/1115>>) ("There are no more "Pick-up" vehicles; instead, I see cockroach-like cars. / So while in government, where did all that money (for the extravagant campaign) come from?"). While in opposition, the NPP's campaign items were labeled "Awurade Kasa" ("God, Speak"), an indication that they are financially inadequate (if compared with their main rival party in government), and so were depending on divine providence in order to successfully participate in the elections. The party during this period had few billboards, cars, T-shirts, etc., but all of this suddenly morphed and underwent drastic transformation once the party won elections and became the incumbent government going into an election. This sharp contrast in campaigns of the two parties dependent on whether or not they are in government points to the view that the politicians use state resources to the benefit of their party and Obeng lampoons this when he says that "Aban sika na mode bi ayɛ moho fine" ("You [referring to the politicians] have used portions of state funds to enrich yourselves"). Given the above, we can surmise that the kind of description Obeng gives to politicians in "Agye Gon" is a corrupt attitude that stems from selfishness and mismanagement/misappropriation of state resources for personal gains.

The image presented of politicians resonates with several (if not all) assumptions people have about African politicians. Largely, the songs present politicians as corrupt, exploitative, deceitful, selfish, and irresponsible. Indeed, there is rarely an instance when Obeng commends Ghana's politicians.

To this end, I posit that Obeng uses his music as a tool and portal through which he brings to the fore the detrimental attitudes of the politicians in a bid to get them to eschew their misdeeds and to behave like genuine politicians ought to: championing the developmental agenda of their country as well as the general wellbeing of their electors.

In conclusion, the lyrics of Obeng's hiplife music are woven in an attempt to depict the ills perpetuated by politicians and more importantly to criticize the activities of politicians in the hope that such telling criticisms would make them amend their ways. Predicated on the assumption that besides providing an outlet for entertainment, music performs an important social function, I argue that Obeng uses his lyrics to express important social issues in Ghana's contemporary society. From my analysis of Obeng's lyrics, three main aspects are evident: 1) each of the four of Obeng's songs lampoons politicians' behavior and inordinate political ambitions, 2) the lyrics of the songs are deliberately couched in both satirical and sarcastic diction in order to give the songs a serious tone and to express contempt, displeasure, discontentment, and/or dissatisfaction and sometimes disgust at the attitudes, behavior, and actions of politicians, and 3) the entertainment value of the songs is neither entirely dismissed nor truncated, albeit the songs are written with the communicative intent to criticize and not necessarily provide amusement: to this end, the songs are interspersed with snippets of stylistic and lyrical techniques which ensure that the songs do not miss out on their literariness.

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