

NIGERIA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN: REFLECTIONS ON ASA'S "FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN"

Alfred Gelles Albert
Department of Music
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: alberttunesandbaton@gmail.com

&

Esinkuma James Amaegbe
Department of Music
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
Email: James.amaegbe@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

Nigeria is an independent sovereign state with its own leaders. It got independence since October 1st, 1960 with a constitution to guide the conduct and benefits of her citizens. It is currently running a democratic governance with three tiers of governance (the executive, judiciary and legislature), whose duties amongst others are to protect the lives and property of citizens (by provision of security) as well as welfare (including basic amenities like health, food security, affordable education and jobs etc). But the government have been insensitive and docile on this now leading to severe social vices including injustice, insecurity, insurgency, kidnapping, sea-pirates, tribalism, corruption, religious intolerance, inequality, nepotism, massacre, human slaughter, terrorism, banditry, territorial expansionist agenda by Boko haram, Iswap as Islamist jihadist sect, selective academic policy imbalance, and parallel laws amongst Christians and Muslims (ISLAM) states now making it an untrue and non-egalitarian society. These forced the American government to proscribe it as a country of particular concern(CPC) by its president Donald Trump through congress legislative recommendations, a moved welcomed by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), effective Saturday November 1st, 2025, referencing Christian's genocide as a reason. But there had been signals to curb this menace through national dialogues including confabs and music to mention a few. Retrospectively, Asa's music "Fire on the Mountain" is apt for reflections on the Nigeria's state. Released in 2007, it uses literary devices (figures of speech) and others to caution and alert the government on this looming tragedy. This paper appraises the song-text composition of her music. Using conglomerated creative-based musical song text, socio-political, and cultural analytical design, in addition to collected primary and secondary sourced data of literatures (from multi-media and legislative proceedings),the paper concludes that philosophical statements especially from musicians, if adhered to, can save a nation as to be forewarned is to be forearmed. It recommends that proverbs, parables, and idiomatic expressions remain vital cultural tools for guiding ethical practices in African societies.

Key words: proscription, retrospect, country of particular concern and song-text.

Introduction

There are claims and recent developments that Nigeria has been designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) by the United States, but it's disputed and complex. "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) is a formal designation under the United States International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). It applies to countries that are judged to engage in or tolerate systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. Once a country is designated CPC, the United States may impose certain diplomatic or economic measures. Recently, in November 2025, Nigeria was designated by (former and present) United States President Donald Trump as a Country of Particular Concern. This isn't just a recommendation, the United States government made the designation. USCIRF (the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom) welcomed that move. The designation is largely tied to religious freedom violations: ongoing violence (including by non-state actors like Boko Haram and Islamic States West African Province (ISWAP), blasphemy laws, and the government's inability (or unwillingness) to adequately protect religious communities. The Nigerian government strongly rejects this designation, disputing it and arguing that the situation is terrorism and ethnic conflict and not Christian persecution stating that United States is using faulty data. Nigeria says it's open to cooperation, but also defends its sovereignty in how it handles its internal security challenges but USCIRF has repeatedly recommended that Nigeria be designated a CPC. In its 2025 report, USCIRF again urged the United States government to treat Nigeria as a CPC because of egregious religious freedom violations. There are serious concerns raised by civil society (both within Nigeria and internationally) about violence targeting religious communities.

Nigeria is now being labelled a CPC by the United States. But it's been contested. Nigeria disputes the basis of the designation, and argues the situation is more about terrorism and ethnic conflict than a simple religious persecution narrative. For the United States Department documentation to confirm the precise legal status that there are several documents and credible sources that lay out the dates and reasons for Nigeria's Country of Particular Concern (CPC) status or CPC calls here are some key documents and sources below.

1. USCIRF Country Update Report (2025)

In July 2025, USCIRF published a report on religious freedom in Nigeria. It details violations like blasphemy-laws in 12 states and violent attacks by non-state actors (Fulani herders, Boko Haram, ISWAP). The report explicitly recommends designating Nigeria as a "Country of Particular Concern" because of "systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations."

2. USCIRF Statement Welcoming CPC Designation

On Nov 3, 2025, USCIRF praised the (re)designation of Nigeria as a CPC. They note this has been their recommendation since 2009. They point to specific problems: violent attacks, failure to protect religious communities, and enforcement of blasphemy laws.

3. USCIRF Historical Reports

There is a 2022 USCIRF report ("USCIRF – Recommended for CPC: Nigeria") that outlines key findings: e.g., persecution of the IMN (a Shi'a Muslim group), violence by Boko Haram, religiously motivated communal violence, and lack of accountability by Nigerian security forces. There's also a 2024 version of that "recommended CPC" report, showing that USCIRF still believed Nigeria met the criteria even then. Going further back, a 2017 USCIRF report likewise flagged Nigeria as deserving CPC status, citing religious freedom abuses.

4. United States Congress Resolution

There is a House Resolution (H.Res. 220) from March 11, 2025, where the United States Congress expressed that Nigeria should be designated a CPC due to systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. The resolution describes violent attacks (mass killings, abductions), religiously motivated violence, and failure by Nigeria to prosecute perpetrators.

5. CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide) Analysis

CSW published a piece when the CPC designation was made, giving background on why Nigeria qualifies: non-state actor violence (Boko Haram, ISWAP), mass killings by armed militias, and failures in accountability, and the use/tolerance of sharia in some states.

Summary of key reasons cited includes

Violent attacks by non-state actors (e.g., Boko Haram, ISWAP, Fulani militias).

Blasphemy laws in many Nigerian states, which are used to criminalize perceived religious insults.

State failure: weak or slow response by government/security forces to protect religious minorities /hold attackers accountable.

Systematic pattern: USCIRF argues these aren't isolated incidents but form part of a broader, ongoing pattern of religious-freedom violations.

Song-text and structures

Songs typically combines melody and lyrics, structured in verses and refrains. Such musical compositions is embedded with feelings and emotions be it vocal or instrumental, provided it has the quality of singability and easily memorized for retention. It is against this background that a song is described thus:

A song is a short piece of music, usually with words. It combines melody and vocals, although some composers have written instrumental pieces, or musical works without words, that mimic the quality of a singing voice. The words of a song are called lyrics. Lyrics can include a series of verses, the longer sections of the song that tell the story, and a refrain, a short phrase repeated at the end of every verse. Songs can have a simple structure of one or two verses, or a more complex one with multiple verses and refrains. Songs usually have a meter or beat. Whether you sing or speak the lyrics, you can feel a pattern or pulse in the way the words move the song forward (Song Overview, Types & Examples).

In reference to the elucidation of song above, there are more detailed structural forms in the categorising of song texts as Albert (2023) enumerated thus:

peculiar structural forms in popular/contemporary music song styles: includes (a) Verse, Chorus form, (b) Verse, chorus, verse form (c) Verse chorus extemporization form (d) Verse, response backup form (e) Into, Verse, Chorus and (bride or coda) form (f) Chorus verse chorus form and (g) Through-composed mixed song form (Pg 2) .

Songs or music is a phenomenon that can cause different situations and moods to humanity, be it happiness, rage, sadness, restiveness etc. This is basically made possible through the sensational composition of song text applied by composers. Composers themselves can become philosophers whom words of their music can see far

reaching future that the brain may not imagine early enough until the signals are made into songs by composers. This they do with some natural license of expression with the audacity of freedom of speech. No wonder Akpabot (1998) observed that the Freedom of speech is more pronounced in music than any other means thus:

The language used in a song text differs many times from that of ordinary discourse. It is possible to say things in a song that a singer cannot say in ordinary discourse. A singer takes great liberty with the text of a song. He can use metaphors, proverbs, archaic expression and cryptic utterances (p. 75)

The lyrics/words of any music composition is what gives meaning to it as well as determine the context of its performance. No performance in Africa culture is done out of context. It usually revolves around life rites, which include birth, puberty, marriage and death, or that which centers on matters of the moment. It is the language of the music that reveals the situations. The text of a song usually reflects the events or activities of everyday life with emphasis on the traditions, beliefs, customs, norms and values of the society.

African languages are said to be tonal and the way they are spoken, is the same way they are represented in music, so that the meaning may not be lost. Merriam (1964:188) observed that "language clearly affects music in that speech melody sets up certain patterns of sound which must be followed at least to some extent in music, if the music text is to be understood by the listener".

It is in light of this Merriam (1964) argued again that:

In song, the individual or the group can apparently express deep-seated feelings not permissible verbalized in other context...that singing itself gives the freedom to express thoughts, ideas and comments which cannot be stated badly in normal language situation. It appears then that song text because of the special kind of license that singing apparently gives, afford an extremely useful means for obtaining kinds of information which are not otherwise easily accessible. (p. 193)

Of course, the composer is one who operates with artistic freedom in his song text and therefore chooses the kind of expression and the manner of expression to suit his desire but guided by the norms, belief and value system of his immediate environment which is predetermined by the exposure of the culture to which his/her identity is drawn from in his native area in context. Music and language are both expressive in nature. Through in man's inner thoughts, their modes of expression are made bare. It is the expressive tendencies inherent in these arts that make them unique.

The Musician Bukola Elemide

Asa Bukola Elemide, commonly known as Asa, is a Nigerian-French singer-songwriter and recording artist known for her soulful and thought-provoking music. She is famous for her melodious songs with her guitar. Her style of music is a mix of pop, jazz as well as indie pop. Asa was born on 17 September 1982 in sign Virgo, when she was two years, Asa relocated to Nigeria, where she grew up in Lagos State. After eighteen years, she returned to Paris and began her music career. One of her popular songs that demonstrate her strong social consciousness is "Fire on the mountain ". This song touch upon various social values and issues, reflecting Asa's perspective on society and its challenges.

Asa Music Career

Asa Elemide attended Peter Kings School of music where she learned how to play guitar in six months. In 2004 she met Cobham Emmanuel Asuquo, a songwriter and producer through her manager Janet Nwose, Cobham thereafter became the producer of her debut studio album name ASA.

At the age of twenty, Asa went back to France to study at the IMFP school of Jazz music. In 2007, she took up the challenge and recorded her first single in Nigeria, "Eye Adaba" interpreted as Dove is solemn song full of Hope, prayer and a cry for peace in the country; In the no time, the song gained worldwide acceptance and applause. Afterwards, Asa got signed to native records where she worked together with Cobham Emmanuel, Christopher Dupuoy and Benjamin Constant to produce her first platinum album named after her, ASA. (Akinrinlola, & Adefemi 2).

Analysis of Musical Song-Text of Fire on the Mountain displayed with staff notation scores

Words and music by: Asa and Cobhams Asuquo

Brief Introduction of the piece

This composition, "Fire on the Mountain" is a socio-cultural criticism and moral crusade philosophical song that stands as a paradigmatic example of literary sophistication in contemporary Nigerian song-writing. Co-written by Asa and Cobhams Asuquo, the piece uses a deceptively simple acoustic framework to deliver a complex network of metaphors, symbolic imagery, and narrative devices that function as both social commentary and moral allegory. This review foregrounds the song's literary devices, positioning them within African oral-poetic traditions and global protest song aesthetics. There are changing and or modified voice texture at specific sections of the music, which is much suiting to the structural form in the creativity, all intended to ameliorate the work for the desire during performance practice realizations.

Song text of “Fire on the Mountain” by Asa

Intro

Mmmm

Worry oh.

OhMmm-mm

Chorus

There is fire on the mountain

And nobody seems to be on the run

Oh, there is fire on the mountain top

And no one is a-running

FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN

VOICE AND ACOUSTIC GUITAR

Scored by: J.S. ETIEVIE

Words and Music by:
ASA and COBHAMS ASUQUO

♩ = 108

INTRO
B♭maj7 Cm7 Dm7 Cm7 B♭maj7

Mm - hmm wor - ry oh-oh hmm

CHORUS
B♭maj7

8 There is fi - re on the moun - tain and no -

11 Cm7 - bo - dy seems to be on the run oh, there is

13 Dm7 Cm7 B♭maj7 fi - re on the moun - tain top and no one is a run - ning

Verse 1

I wake up in the morning

Tell you what I see on my TV screen

I see the blood of an innocent child

And everybody's watching

Now I'm looking out my window

And what do I see?

I see the army of a soldier man

Marching across the street, yeah

What did he say to make you so blind?

To your conscience and reason?

Could it be love for your country?

Or for your gun you use in killing?

16 **VERSE 1** Bbmaj7 Cm7

I wake up in the morn-ing tell you what I see on the T-V screen

20 Dm7 Cm7 Bbmaj7

I see the blood of an in-no-cent child and ev-'ry-bo-dy's watch-ing

24 Bbmaj7 Cm7

Now I'm loo-king out my win-dow and what do I see_____

28 Dm7 Cm7

I see an ar-my of a sold-ier man march-ing a-cross the street

31 Bbmaj7 Bbmaj7

hey! What did he say to make you so blind to your

35 Cm7 Dm7

con-science and rea-son? Could it be love_____ for your count-ry

38 Bbmaj7 **CHORUS**

or for the gun you use in kil-ling? So_____ There is

Verse 2
 Hey Mr. Lover Man
 Can I get a chance to talk to you?
 Cause you are fooling in a dead man's corpse
 And you don't know what to do
 So little Lucy turns sixteen
 And like the movie, she's been seeing
 She has a lover in her daddy
 She can't tell nobody
 'til she makes the evening news

VERSE 2

48 B♭maj7 Cm7

Hey, Mis-ter Lo-ver man can I get a chance to talk to you?

52 Dm7

'Cause you are fool - ing with a dead man's

54 B♭maj7 B♭maj7

corpse and you don't know what you do Oh, so lit-tle Lu-cy turns six-

58 Cm7 Dm7

- teen and like the mo - vie she's been see-ing she has a lov - er in her

62 B♭maj7 **CHORUS**

dad - dy she can't tell no - bo - dy 'til she makes the eve-ning news for there is

Bridge

One day the river will over flow
 And there'll be nowhere for us to go
 And we will run, run
 Wishing we had put out the fire, oh da

BRIDGE

73 Dm7 Cm7 Dm7

One day the riv-er will o - verflow and there'll be no-where for us

76 Cm7 Dm7 Cm7 F Cm7/Eb

to go and we will run, run wish-ing we had put out the fi - re Oh

CHORUS

80 Dm7 Cm7 Bbmaj7

— Lord! For there is fi - re on the moun-tain yeah, yeah and there is

Final Chorus with extemporizations

For there is fire on the mountain, yeah, yeah
 And there ain't nobody seems to be on the run (Nobody, nobody oh!)
 Oh, there is fire on the mountain top (fire on themountain)
 And no one is a-running (so yeah, yeah, yeah)

There is fire on the mountain (fire in Africa oh)
 And nobody seems to be on the run (fire everywhere in the sea, yeah)
 Oh, there is fire on the mountain top (in the air)
 And no one is a-running (no one is a-running) *Fades out*

Creative based considerations

Key	Bb major
Time	
Metronome	= 108
Interpretable terminologies	None
Length	96 bars.
Score type	Choice styled reduction
Musical Forms	
(a) Compositional Form	Through-composed
(b) Structural Form	Popular/contemporary music song style (Chorus verse chorus, bridge)
(c) Textual Forms	Syllabic
(d) Textural Forms	Monophony
(e) Rhythmic Forms	Speech rhythm
(f) Stylistic forms	Raggae/Rock and Roll
(g) Performative Forms	Solo/back up chorus and Secular
(h) Instrumentation:	Female voice and acoustic Guitar
Media	Alto voice and acoustic Guitar
Scale	Diatonic Scale
Modulation	None
Dynamics	None
Mode	Tonal
Mood	Emotionally dissatisfied and complaining
Language/Text	English
Audience	Mixed audience
Performance Location	Concert hall

Prophetic and Philosophical Analysis of the Song Text with socio-political, cultural/traditional and moral undertone narratives

In this song text (poem), the **FIRE** the fire as Nigerian proverbial imagery represents the diverse troubles, problems and challenges one can refer to as future calamity in Nigeria including unrest, tension, challenges and catastrophe. Therefore a small fire neglected becomes a blaze.

The **MOUNTAIN** to Nigeria as a country, literally means heights of battles, strongholds, closed gates, fearful spots and locations/issues to deal with, indomitable degrees, principalities and entities. Of course, we are aware that Nigerian seat of power is located at Aso rock which literally explains the mountain to even a lay man,

The **MOUNTAIN TOP** represents the government of our country as the leaders saddled with the management and administration of affairs on the mountain. Additionally, the use of **HEY MR LOVER MAN** was particularly a reference to the politicians and elites, since leaders pride service over tangible benefits in their public proclamations. Noting that the president is also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and grand commander, federal republic of Nigeria who bears the brunt and greater magnitude of whatever misgivings observed on the mountain.

The phrase **AND NO ONE IS A RUNNING** simply connotes that no one cares about the social responsibility issues and challenges. Knowing that running away symbolizes safety and precaution. Therefore, everyone is complaisant on the issue.

The verse one in its totality refers to the news that has always been broadcasted on the TV screen about the atrocities happening in the Nigerian state, even with the innocent children killed and slaughtered with massacre every now and then, yet there is calmness from the authorities rather than taking action?

THE BLOOD OF AN INNOCENT CHILD refers to children whom are venerable and yet killed as innocent as they are. It also includes the downtrodden and helpless citizens and the general masses who have been weaponized by the government's institutionalization of hunger, poverty, neglect, absence of job and many other basic social amenities. But most especially, those who may have died without gaining justice in different situations of unrest including peaceful protest in seeking for better or standard living but never got it.

LOOKING ACROSS THE WINDOW means seeing issues objectively.

SEEING SOLDIERS MARCHING ACROSS THE STREET, symbolizes that even in the presence of the military combatants, killing could still be on this rampage and maximally tolerated?

WHAT DID HE SAY TO MAKE YOU SO BLIND TO YOUR CONSCIOUS AND REASONING? The author was wondering why greed and corruption beclouded and overwhelmed the reason and conscience of the military to compromise their profession, moral and ethical practice to this unacceptable and unprofessional level. The job of the Army, Navy and Airforce is so stated in section 217-220 of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and the armed forces act as "Defend Nigeria from external aggression, maintain its territorial integrity, and perform such other functions as may be prescribed by law" but the story is different as they are rather deployed to shoot directly on lawfully protesting citizens like the End Sars and Fuel increase even when these protesters are waving the Nigerian flag signifying solidarity. **COULD THIS BE THE LOVE FOR YOUR COUNTRY OR THE GUN YOU USE IN KILLING?** As a popular Nigerian proverb has an implied meaning, addressing the principal security leaders including the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Nigeria. Whom rather than dealing with the insecurity in our nation, would instead be quick at giving orders to the military to kill lawfully protesting citizens, for their right of benefiting basic social amenities, which they have been deprived of for too long, thereby causing neglect and hardship. Therefore, the question is a metaphorical one comparing their oath of practice and desire for wealth. Knowing that only wealthy people and elites can afford gun. Ironically, rather than the leadership of the military to protect the civilians which is their responsibility. They rather watch the citizens die in their numbers in the pool of blood even after timely signals and alerts have been disseminated by the bandits.

Verse two

The first phrase in this verse is a proverbial advice asking the leadership why continuing the ideas of failed inherited liabilities from the past leadership? The reason it stated **YOU ARE FOOLING IN A DEAD MAN'S CLOTH.**

The next phrase **SO LITTLE LUCY TURNS SIXTEEN AND LIKE THE MOVIE, SHE'S BEEN SEEING. SHE HAS A LOVER IN HER DADDY SHE CAN'T TELL NOBODY 'TIL SHE MAKES THE EVENING NEWS** as a popular Nigerian proverb addresses our misplaced and collapsed socio-moral values in the disguise of culture, conflicting educational policies like higher institution admission gain quota systems as well as different down-graded criteria between the Northern and Southern regions of states in the country amongst citizens in the Federal tertiary institutions and unity schools with the claimed reasons of low education reception and interest areas as parallel treatments. Again, the education policies limits age access to university education at 16, but a parallel cultural and religious law accepts the girl child to be married at a younger age making it vulnerable for the girl child with the application of the sharia law which is simply a case of religious fanaticism and ethnic bigotry. Worst still, there are cases of paedophile issues and rape which are all gender-based violence. Amidst these challenges, there are gifted children who has the capacity to engage in high mental

activities but are cut off from accessing the academic pursuit in discuss even when they have meet up the criteria. Such restrictions expose some teenage girls to elicit drugs, cultism, sex jobs, street hawking and unwanted teenage pregnancy, and many other social vices that could have been controlled by one unified governed policy and law. Not forgetting that children/teenagers of age 16 years are used for underage voting especially in Northern Nigeria, yet the government is adamant and complaisant on these issues because it allegedly benefits their politics of the time, to rig/win elections fraudulently instead of discouraging it by enacting sanctions amidst the already existing law of 18 years adulthood categorization. Off-course, if these vices are experienced by the girl child, it then **NOW MAKES THE EVENING NEWS**, since **SHE CAN'T TELL NOBODY** knowing it to be **THE MOVIE SHE LIKE AND HAVEBEEN SEEING** as well as her husband who is her **LOVER AND FATHER** by age as permissive by both the culture and the sharia law. The evening news here means that she can't make any decision of her own until she is an adult is a stage of maturity and self-realization which the song writer referred to as her evening.

Bridge

In this bridge, that serves just like the climax of any venture, sums up the story line philosophically that there will be a day of reckoning, when there will be no hiding place as nemesis will come to our leaders. In the words of Asa, she said **“ONE DAY THE RIVER WILL OVERFLOW AND THERE WILL BE NO PLACE FOR US TO GO, AND WE WILL RUN, RUN WISHING WE HAD PUT UP THE FIRE”**. Today our leaders are running helplessly. The one day the song writer referred to is here. They never envisaged that it would come and even come so soon. That such an international proscription of law like the country of particular concern (CPC) can cross borders to affect their assets and freedom of residence as well as their investment across the globe, just to persuade and compel them to fix their own country. They have been caught up eventually because they paid deaf ears and ignored the fire on the mountain as they believed that the fire will never ever get to the top of the mountain, which was the danger Asa saw in advance prophetically. Even when their fellow government officials in the national assembly during legislative processes saw tomorrow, advised and caution for urgent action on the insecurity statutes of the country, which they rather neglected.

Literary Devices application in Fire on the Mountain

Metaphor as Structural Spine

The central metaphor “fire on the mountain” is the song’s organizing principle. In African proverbial speech, fire often signals danger, urgency, or moral crisis, while the mountain suggests prominence, stability, or societal foundation (Finnegan, 2012). Placing fire on the mountain creates an image of catastrophe in a place once thought secure, amplifying the sense of communal threat. This layered metaphor functions in several registers:

Literal: a visible, uncontrolled blaze.

Social-political: moral decay and societal collapse.

Psychological: inner turmoil and collective anxiety.

By keeping the metaphor open-ended, Asa invites multiple interpretations, aligning with the African oral tradition’s use of polyvalent imagery (Okpewho, 1992).

Allegory and Moral Parable

Beyond metaphor, the song operates as an extended allegory. The “fire” becomes a stand-in for conflict, injustice, and societal neglect, while the “mountain” embodies the nation, its leadership, and shared cultural values. The verses detail characters engaged in trivial or misguided pursuits, echoing the moral parables found in both Biblical storytelling and Yoruba folktales, where a community ignores an obvious danger until it is too late.

Symbolism and Archetypes

Symbolism permeates the text. Figures such as the “soldier” and “blind man” are archetypes representing institutional power and marginalized innocence, respectively. The “dead man’s top” an unusual, almost surreal image suggests either material greed (taking clothes from the dead) or moral inheritance of past corruption. These symbols contribute to what Barthes (1977) terms a “mythological layer” turning specific social realities into universally resonant signs. See score of full phrase beginning from bar 24 to 34.

Irony and Juxtaposition

One of the song’s most potent devices is irony. There is a dissonance between the calm, almost lullaby-like delivery and the catastrophic imagery of fire. This is what Hutcheon (1994) describes as stable irony: the audience recognises the gap between the surface tone and the underlying message. Juxtaposition is also evident in placing scenes of ordinary life (“watching TV,” “making money”) alongside apocalyptic warnings, thereby indicting societal complacency.

Repetition and Incantatory Effect

The refrain “there is fire on the mountain” is repeated throughout, functioning both as a mnemonic anchor and as a form of rhetorical escalation. In oral traditions, repetition heightens urgency, marks importance, and fosters

communal participation (Okome, 2014). Therefore, here, repetition transforms the warning into an incantation of a collective call to awareness.

Personification and Human Agency

Several images personify abstract concepts “a soldier is blind,” “love is lost,” “the news is sleeping” turning systemic issues into animate actors. This device shifts blame from vague “forces” to human choices, aligning with protest traditions that emphasize personal responsibility.

Tonal Shifts and Narrative Perspective

The song’s tone oscillates between prophetic urgency and observational detachment. Asa uses second-person address (Could it be love/Are you running?) to implicate the listener, breaking the fourth wall of the narrative. This shifting voice mirrors techniques in spoken-word performance, where the speaker alternates between storyteller, prophet, and participant.

Intertextuality and Cultural Resonances

The song’s metaphoric framework resonates with Biblical apocalyptic imagery (Revelation’s fire and mountains), reminds of Pan-African protest idioms in Bob Marley’s “Burnin’”, and Nigerian proverbs warning against ignoring small fires before they spread. This intertextuality deepens the literary complexity, allowing the song to operate simultaneously in local and global discursive

Conclusion

Fire on the Mountain exemplifies the strategic deployment of literary devices to achieve layered meaning in popular music. Through metaphor, allegory, symbolism, irony, repetition, personification, and tonal manipulation, Asa crafts a text that is aesthetically compelling, culturally grounded, and politically resonant. The song’s artistry lies in its ability to cloak urgent social critique in a poetic tapestry that invites contemplation as much as it demands action. The song uses the image of a fire on a mountain as a metaphor for personal and collective transformation. The “fire” suggests passion, anger, or a powerful force that can’t be ignored. By placing it on a mountain high, visible point. The lyrics highlight that this energy is both elevated and unavoidable.

The mountain often represents obstacles or established structures. A fire that spreads across it implies that the emotions or ideas being expressed are breaking through those barriers, urging change, renewal and warning. Fire can clear away the old to make way for new growth, but it also warns of destruction if the message is ignored. The song seems to call listeners to recognize the urgency of the situation and to act before the “fire” consumes everything. Overall, the song conveys a message of awakening: recognizing a burning need for change, confronting it head-on, and uniting to turn that intensity into constructive transformation.

Recommendation

This paper recommends that musicians should produce music that present positive change and convey messages that will be of relevance to citizenship, leadership and the society at large, rather than focusing only on its entertainment values. Musicians should also consider the educative and communicative undertones in the music they perform alongside its entertainment values.

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