Language and Identity Representation in Popular Music

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ABSTRACT

The arts in any form are signifying codes and means of representing splintering identity, fragmentation, subjectivity, citizenship and nationality. Popular music in Africana world, in particular, is also a means of border crossings which transcends the 'real' and 'imaginary' boundaries; and movement backward and forward in the ever-evolving global village. The paper focuses on the roles of popular music and very significant functions of language in the creolization/indigenization of popular music and representation of national identity. It also reiterates the active deployment of music in African colonial struggle, resistance and preservation of self-identity, philosophies, ideologies and culture. It suggests a thorough theorization of popular music with diverse theoretical frameworks to unveil specific peculiarities and ethos of contemporary African societies.

Keywords: popular culture/music, creolization, indigenization.

INTRODUCTION

The concept popular culture is rather ambivalent and platitude for its manifold complexities and intricacies. Therefore, guessing the meaning of the term may lead to several confusions. It is opposed to high culture and the polarity between the two we suggest could be explained as part of the hegemonic and unequal structure of the human society. Popular culture seems rather abstract without its manifestations in hip hop music, television, the Internet, radio, films and movies. Also, the ambiguity or vagueness typical of the term culture itself cannot be downplayed in any attempt to define popular culture. Therefore, questions such as: Is popular culture the opposite of any unpopular culture or high culture? Is it just a form of culture acceptable to many people? How do we define popular music within the ambit of popular culture?

Shuker (2001) argues that to study popular music is to study popular culture. This means one cannot be severed from the other although he admits that this claim is self-evident. His position is a pointer to the fact that popular music cannot be studied in isolation. Popular music is one of the major examples or manifestations of popular culture, a familiar and common vehicle through which popular culture is conveyed virally. Fabian (1978, p. 15 cited in McLaughlin, 1997, p. 1) emphasizes the importance of music "as a cultural force: in countries such as…, popular culture comprises a complex of distinctive expressions of life experience ... Excepting the sports, popular music is undoubtedly the most conspicuous carrier of this new culture." However, with the cutting edge of technology from the 1990s to the present moment, the Internet and cable television can rival popular music in terms of usage, and number of users across the globe. For instance, the proliferation of social networking sites is another means through which popular culture spreads across age, gender, class, and religious and ideological groups.

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To find a strong foundation for the thesis of this paper, it is sine qua non to succinctly examine the term popular culture. It is hoped that a conclusive definition of the term will explain popular music as a sub-culture within the broad spectrum of popular culture. William (1983) suggests meanings of popular culture as "well liked by many people; inferior kinds of work; work deliberately setting out to win favor with the people; and culture actually made by people for themselves". (i) a residual culture – left-over culture after high culture has been decided. (ii) popular culture is mass produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation. (iii) an imported culture, American culture whose modern form was invented in the city of United States, and in New York in particular.

Maltby (1989) states, on the other hand, that popular culture provides "escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere, but an escape of our utopian selves." It is also claimed that popular culture originates from "the people", it is not imposed on them. "It is often equated with a highly romanticized concept of working-class culture construed as the major source of symbolic protest within contemporary capitalism". Bennett's (1986, p.2) definition of popular culture is related to Gramsci's concept of hegemony and there is emphasis on it as a protest tool. He argues:

> Popular culture as a space or site of struggle between the "resistance" of subordinate groups and the forces of "incorporation" operating in the interests of dominant groups. In this usage or context is not the imposed culture of "the people", it is terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two; a terrain as already stated, marked the resistance and incorporation. The texts and practices of popular culture move within what calls an "a compose equilibrium."

It is significant to note that ideology or perception of popular culture is transferable to popular music as protest music genre. Popular music is a vehicle of a set of ideologies or counter ideologies. Homer and Swiss (1999) argue that popular culture cannot be void of ideology as interpretative framework because there is no text that is void of ideology.

Storey's (1999) dimension to understanding popular music is ideology. He makes an important submission that ideology is a crucial concept in the study of popular culture. Greene (1996) calls it "the most important conceptual category in cultural studies". Ideology is said to be indispensable in the discussion and understanding of the nature of popular music. Ideology is defined as: (i) systematic bodies of ideas articulated by a group of people; (ii) ideas that inform the practices of a particular group; (iii) "false consciousness" concealment or distortion, masking of reality; (iv) the way the media (e.g. television, fiction, pop songs, novels, feature films, etc.) represents the world as conflictual; structured around inequality, exploitation and oppression.

More specifically, Green (1996) explains the interlocking cords between ideology and popular music. With reference to prevailing definition of ideology as a set of ideas or assumptions in human societies, Green explains that popular music has two tendencies towards 'reitification' and 'legitimation' Reitification, according to him, means to treat abstract objects as real and immutable while 'legitimation' means justification of beliefs in "reitified concepts" and social relations based on them. The distinction between popular music and other genres of music; therefore, is based on ideology, particularly between classical and popular music and contrasting opinions about their originality, universality, and complexity inherent. An ideological capital of the interpreter/researcher plus sound theoretical framework could be very helpful to decipher musical values as common sense; the production of these values through history, and the innate tendencies for reification and legitimation; and finally, how social relations are made permanent through them. The analysis and interpretation of

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data in this paper hinges on the fact that any musical genre or text has underlying ideologies, focusing on the lyrics (lexis), and "extra-musical" associations (social. political, historical, and economic contexts of the lyrics).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Popular Music in Africa

To some extent, the political and socio-economic peculiarities of nations might influence the definitive roles of popular music, not only for entertainment and mass consumption, but also for identity politics, protest and revolutionary purposes. A number of articles reviewed in this study, both classical and contemporary may lend credibility to this position on popular music and the general social construct of its roles.

A good number of scholarly articles from South Africa are preoccupied with the struggles against apartheid regime, marginalization and dehumanization of Black South Africans, African Renaissance project, and identity struggles between white and black peoples. For example, Ballantine's (1989; 2000; 2004) works are concerned with the political roles of popular music in South Africa in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. His works bring to the fore the development, roles, power relations between men and women; segregation and racial discrimination against Black South Africans, re-racialization, popular music as vehicle of social integration or unifying force between black and white; and underlying ideology in popular music in South Africa at different points in time. Jury's (1996) work is similar to Ballantine's. His work describes the functional role of popular music as a counter-cultural advance against Afrikaans popular music, which is characterized by fascist hegemonic ideology, and reinforces Afrikaner gender stereotypes.

Coplan (2001) addresses the evolution and roles of popular music in post-apartheid South Africa. The paper focuses on the evolution of South African traditional popular culture and it gives an account of the evolution of Black popular music such as maskanda, mqhashiyo or mbaqanga which emerged among the expressions of enforcement which the white government called "influx control" in popular culture to prevent rural and small-town migrants from urbanizing. For example, the mbaqanga's is mostly walking–class urban African jazz enthusiasts, while maskanda has few audiences but enjoy fame among working-class African languages. The paper also foregrounds the place of the media in the promotion of African popular music in South Africa during the Apartheid regime, for example the regular programming on African-language radio and Ezodumo which are the main vehicles for the conservation and revival of popular traditional music.

While the existing studies on popular music in South Africa reveal the political struggles particularly in the dark days of apartheid regime, the case is different in Nigeria. Though political to some extent, they engage in lingering socio-economic and political woes which have bedeviled the post-colonial Nigeria. A popular Afrobeat musician, Fela Anikulapo Kuti was at the fore-front of the struggle against tyranny, oppression, and conspiracy between few civilians and the military 'boys'. His genre of music was tagged apolitical and avant-garde because it is distinct from existing forms and styles. It is also pedagogic as it informs and enlightens the masses who might lack access to sources of information such as television, radio, national or international news. Fela used to serve as social informant or instructor, for example, Fela's "I.T.T." (International Thief Thief) is an expose of the treacherous ways in which Africa is swindled by Euro-American multinational corporations. Though a controversial character, the most striking part of his life was his response to "post-colonial incredible" Olaniyan (2004, pp. 1-2). At the base of Fela's struggle was his belief in the ideals of Pan-Africanism and post-colonialism. Olaniyan (2004) writes:

…key to approaching the music of Fela and the contexts of its production, circulation, and consumption. It reveals, for example, the peculiar character of the relations between art, specially oppositional music, and a postcolonial African state. It is also an inadvertent homage to that part of Fela's image as a musician that is most familiar to the world: the "political." Above all, the unvarnished crudity, unhidden ill-bred megalomania, killjoy morbidity, and sheer incredibility of the unusual command speak volumes about the political order— and those who manage and profit from it— on behalf of which it is uttered. Indeed, if there is one overarching conceptual thread running through Fela's music, it is that the postcolonial Nigerian, and African, condition is an incredible one. The "incredible" inscribes that which cannot be believed; that which is too improbable, astonishing, and extraordinary to be believed. The incredible is not simply a breach but an outlandish infraction of "normality" and its limits... (pp. 1-2)

Olatunji (2009) describes a new phenomenon among the Nigerian popular music known as the Yabis music as a means through which those who govern through coercion are lampooned or satirized, and their bad policies are subjected to mockery. Yabis music is extremely satirical in nature and sometimes its performance is preceded or interpolated with either a speech monologue by the band leader or a dialogue by the leader and the remaining members of the band. It plays the role of a stimulant or a motivator to instigate the people and propel them into action against tyrannical rule, looting of the nation's treasury, bribery and corruption. It promotes large scale violence as well as undermining conventional democratic processes. It assumes role of a social critic by criticizing the government and systems.

On the contrary, Adegoju (2008), for example, portrays a popular musician as archivist, documenting the socio-political upheavals and achievements of his or her country using Lagbaja (a Nigerian musician) as a case study. He considers the musician advocate of cultural revivalism, social integration and national development, and other serious social issues which include campaign against ethnic discrimination and religious crisis, the need to jealously guard Nigeria's nascent democracy, and the importance of communal life. Thus, the role of popular music is extended beyond protest or opposition to the government. Following the line of thought of Adegoju (2008), Emielu (2008) pays particular attention to the economic import of popular music, particularly among the unemployed or under-employed graduates and youths in Nigeria. It is an instrument for ideological change and mass re-orientation, promotion product advertisement, promotion and advocacy of government programs and policies. It adds to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is a great income earner and a catalyst for job opportunities, and wealth creation. These papers emphasize the salvaging roles of popular music.

However, popular music is neither monolithic nor static; it is evolving even within the African space and its themes and preoccupations are unfolding, perhaps as a result of peculiar socio-political situations and challenges – bad leaderships, illiteracy, youth unrest, high unemployment rate, lack of infrastructures, money politics, corruption, civil war, communal crisis – of African countries different from other nations of the world. Therefore, the discourse and analysis of popular music in Africa should be extended, employing new analytical methods and theoretical frameworks that might reveal the ideological stance of the musicians, societal problems, cultural specificities and nuances, identity construction, gender, class, race and ethnic, counter-discourse, the interaction between popular music and the human society, and the role of the media and current socio-political events in Nigeria, for example. This attempt will eradicate the tag that popular music is a mere protest music, which might be

as a result of African-American slavery experience, harrowing apartheid experience in South Africa and long reign of military dictatorship and hydra-headed corruption in Nigeria.

An interdisciplinary analysis of popular music should be given priority instead of usual ethno-musicological, political perspectives and subjective comments and interpretations without any sound analytical paradigm. Several other analytical models should be deployed to analyze popular music lyrics to unearth its subject matters and themes. An interdisciplinary approach to popular music has been offered (e.g. Tagg, 1982; Sheperd, 2003). Shepherd (2003) enumerates manifold approaches to popular music studies: cultural geography, economics, history, musicology, literary criticism, post-colonialism, feminism, sociology, cultural anthropology, postmodernism, afro-centrism, ethnomusicology, cultural anthropology, discourse analysis, semiology/semiotics, lesbianism, Marxism, modernism, structuralism, post-structuralism, and so on. These approaches provide researchers with a broad spectrum of frames/trajectories to do analysis of popular music in different socio-political contexts.

For example, interactionist scholars of popular music within the sociological music studies concentrate on the meanings that attribute to music, and the relationship between people and music and the social ties. Broadly, the general focus of sociological music studies is to examine the social aspects of the production, distribution, and consumption of popular music, while ethnomusicology, dramaturgy, sociology of culture study popular music as a meaningful set of practices, performances, texts, and social world (Kotarba & Vannini, 2009). This indicates the diversities in popular music research and scholarship.

It is possible that popular musicians are influenced by certain ideologies; hence the tenets and principles of such ideologies are being promoted either consciously or unconsciously. For instance, Fela Anikulapo Kuti's Pan-Africanist and post-colonialist orientation is evident in his music (Olaniyan, 2004). Likewise, researchers of popular music can as well be influenced by a particular ideology. Tagg (1982) writes: "Choice of method is determined by the researcher's 'mentality'- his or her world view, ideology, set of values, objective possibilities, etc… (p. 45)" Hence, there is no tenable excuse for shoddy analysis of popular music data and paucity of research on popular music, given the number of analytical approaches available.

Creolization of Popular Music

Popular music could be defined on the basis of particular terms such as appropriation, syncretism, hybridization and creolization. They simply mean borrowing or combining from other sources to form new cultural forms and spaces. In relation to popular music, these terms mean reworking, reconciliation, fusion, blending of pre-existing elements – musical sounds, accents, and styles. On this ground, many refer to popular music as avant-garde, which is one of the characteristic traits of modernism. Frith (1989) writes that popular music is shaped by international influences and institutions, by multinational capital and technology, by global pop norms and values. The musicians all over the world deal with the influences of the big music industries and create hybrid sounds and hybrid selves to fulfill the norms of international entertainment with forms of the locale music traditions (Mitchell, 1996, Taylor, 1997). Taylor (1997) suggests that the traditional indigenous sounds of music are not simply getting lost in the process of hybridization. Also, the linguistic idiosyncrasy of popular music is a major part of the appropriation or hybridization, though it has been argued otherwise by the linguists researching on linguistic codes in this domain. We assume that part of the on-going hybridization/indigenization are code mixing/switching phenomenon and "genre mixing" (e.g. Jazz, R&B, Reggae, Afro beat, etc).

We assume that indigenization of popular music in Africa, perhaps in Nigeria, is a control effort of the Nigerian music industry to check the influx, infiltration and dumping of African American hip hop music in Nigeria. However, it is axiomatic that contemporary hip hop music in Nigeria has traceable elements or indices of Americanization. Omoniyi (2005) argues that code-switching is part of resistance project. But to make a conclusive statement on code switching, resistance to cultural hegemony and popular music, it is important to engage in ethnography of Nigerian contemporary popular musicians to ascertain their level of education and competence in the English Language, indigenous Nigerian languages and Nigerian Pidgin. This might not necessarily be a part of resistance project, rather a conventional style or creativity.

Code switching is both a localizing and globalizing device in the effort towards globalization and hybridization of popular music (Davies & Bentahila, 2006). Davies and Bentahila (2008) describe code switching as a poetic device. They argue that code switching between colloquial Arabic and French in Rai music lyrics add to the rhetorical and aesthetic effect of the lyrics message. It also reinforces the rhythm and various types of patterning in songs, semantic input, semantic oppositions, similarities, parallelism, repetition or reformation. In another, but similar study, Davies and Bentahila (2008) argue that code switching and translation are strategies to replace or reduplicate source material to highlight rewriting, juxtaposing components from different languages as affirmations of identity, as in-group markers, stylistic devices, and exclusion or alienation of outsiders.

Babalola and Taiwo (2008) examine code switching from English to Yoruba and vice versa in the music of five Nigerian hip hop musicians, the nature of code switching as a linguistic phenomenon in hip hop music, reasons for code switching, the stylistic effects of the trend, and implications of the practice in communication across the globe. They argue that code switching is an identity marker, showing the affinity with cultural roots, the growth, spread and popularity of hip hop music. Olatunji's (2008) argument takes another dimension though the same musicians' lyrics were analyzed. He argues that Nigerian hip hop musicians switch between Pidgin English and English vice versa because of the heterogeneity of Pidgin English, that is, it is understood by both the elite and other members of the Nigerian society.

Omoniyi (2006a) cites the fusion of American and British accents on the University of Lagos FM radio, Nigeria. He argues that the diffusion of language through radio demonstrates how Americanization of Nigerian English takes place, citing an example of hybridization or fusion of languages among hip hop stars in Nigeria as a desire to maintain and preserve aspects of their Outer Circle identity and at the same time acknowledge the realities of social change which include Inner Circle identity as an aftermath of globalization in contemporary society. Omoniyi et al. (2009), while building on Smitherman's (1996) discourse features of hip hop music in America, identify the linguistic features and other characteristics of Nigerian hip hop such as rhyme, blend of local language (conventional codes witching), absence of the misogyny, light references to sex, absence of gangsterism, use of global tropes, cross references, and strain of Nigerian Standard English. Several other hip hop researchers have also claimed that language mixing or code switching is an identity marker/emblem. To mention few, George (2007) writes on the mix of local variety Occitan with French in Southern France. Simeziane (2008) describes the mixing of Romani and Hungarian in Hungary; the mixing of Swahili, French, Spanish and Jamaican patois cum English in Switzerland (Mitchell, 2000). Pennycook (2007) investigates the use of the Creole Chavacano in Philippines.

Pennycook (2003) is more thorough on the role of language as symbol of identity. He identifies two important functions of language use in hip hop music: semiotic reconstruction and performativity. For

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instance, Kandiah (1998, p. 100) cited in Pennycook (2007) writes that the use of new Englishes in hip hop 'fundamentally involve a radical act of semiotic reconstruction of native userhood on the subjects involved in the acts.' Therefore, the use of both English and indigenous languages in Nigeria creates native users of a hip hop/rap language. By performativity we mean the use of language varieties to perform who we are. Performativity in post-colonial context can be comprehended as a form of: the "(re) writing of English, Spanish, Dutch, French and Portuguesse; … the (re)invention of musical sound; and a plethora of other act(ion)s that make clear a notion of fashioning and invention of the self" (Walcott 1997, p. 99).

To Butler (1993, p. 35) the 'performance' of performativity is more crucial – "performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it simply be equated with performance." Performativity provides ways of understanding the local contingencies of identity formation and to consider forms of performance such as music. Popular music lyrics create aesthetic, cultural and commercial effects. It performs and mediates between local and global. "If visas cannot be obtained for travel, music is another means for youth to cross nation-state boundaries and a vehicle for formulating new identities (Omoniyi et al., 2009, p. 16)." In The Chicago Defender Wednesday, May 4, 2011, Mo'Cheddah, award winner of MTV Africa Music Awards, said this about hip hop music, "We're representing our country to the fullest. We're putting our country on the map on a positive note. It's not just about the bad things, fraud." In the Africa Report, Monday 23, November, 2009, Adekunle reports that:

…They listen to pan-Nigerian stories told over groovy beats and catchy hooks, and the 'get-rich-or-die-trying' lifestyle is turning most young men and women into hard-driven entrepreneurs, as opposed to the blue collar workers of the previous generation. What is mainstream now, what young Nigerians are addicted to, are the sights and sounds of their nation – music coming from deep inside the souls of young, Nigeria, with many ethnicities and several languages, has no lingua franca. But hip hop is the language of the cities.

Through popular music people assert themselves and individual musicians as well strive to have a place in the popular music industry. We want to argue that the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language switching is an indication of fragmented self, splintered identity from the global, and a desire to negotiate between different languages or codes with distinct expressions of the world and African individual experience of it. There are several instances of neologism in Nigerian hip hop codes, for example, signifying Nigerians' cognition and linguistic creativity. Other paraphernalia of popular are significant. There are other semiotic resources/markings to complement language such as sagging, 'energy', dance, gestures, body movement and represented participants. More importantly, the social concerns/themes of the music lyrics are significant, though not static; they could be archival materials that might be useful in tracing socio-political mutations of a nation. These cultural indexes in popular music are constructed in essentialist terms, leading to tags such as Nigerian hip hop, African American hip hop, South African hip hop, etc. The consequence of this identity performance is perhaps multiplicity of identities in the global world.

METHODOLOGY

Shepherd (2003) notes that initially content analysis was very famous in popular music research, but later it was realized that analysis of popular music based exclusively on lyrical content would produce unsatisfactory and unempirical results. The validity of the data might be scrutinized. Hence, one of the limitations of this study is the separation of the lyrics (data) from other elements such sound, beat, rhythm, dance and human characters (performers and audience). The interpretation of the data without

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its cohesive relationship with other elements makes it subjective to different interpretations. We hope that contexts of the selected popular songs and the researcher's first-hand experience will enhance a fairly objective interpretation of data. Four popular musicians (e.g. Lagbaja, Beautiful Nubia) were purposively selected, two from each country under examination.

DATA: LYRICS

It is important to note that while Adegoju (2008) portrays Lagbaja, a Nigerian Afrobeat Musician as archivist, another reading of Lagbaja's lyrics may perhaps portray him as Afrocentrist and Black historian whose themes transcend Nigeria, but the entire Black community (the Diasporas and the Americas). Afrocentrism is a backlash or negative reaction to unwholesome comments and racial discrimination against African people or people of African descent.

Lagbaja sings as follows in one of his albums:

Africalypso, Africalypso
Some four hundred years ago
They took away my forefathers
From Africa to America
My forefathers took along their music
And some became jazz
Some became soul
Some became rhythm and blues
Swing, big band, bop, hip hop, funk, jazz, rap, reggea, ragga,
And some became calypso
The body can be enslaved but never ever the spirit
So whereever there's soul in the music
Whereever the spirit moves the music

Whether in Jamaica, whether for Cuba
Even in Trinidad and Tobago
Whether Brasilia, I say Brasilia
America, Europa, Australia, Asia
Whereever there's soul in the music
Behind it you find the African

Africalypso, Africalypso
Ah! Ayan, show them Africa
Eeeeee, Ooooo
Ayeele, Africa
Ikira o, Eee, Eee, Eee, Eh!
Ah!? Africalypso

The lyric is an account of African American slavery, that is, how African Americans' forefathers were taken as captives to different parts of the world, particularly to Europe and North America. He traces the origin and evolution of jazz, hip hop, funk, rap, and reggae music in the Americas or Europe to Africa. These genres of music, Lagbaja, are native to Africans and they are as well symbolic identities of African people. This may negate several stereotypes against Africa as people without history, heritage and values by some die-hard Eurocentrists. /The body can be enslaved but never the spirit. So wherever there's soul in the music/. This part of the lyric is striking, foregrounding Africans' resilience in the face of adversities and predicaments. The values and heritage of Africans, particularly music still remains indelible in different continents they were taken as slaves – Europe, South America, Australia, Asia and North America. African descendents have a particular contribution to world civilization even if other contributions had been denied.

Besides the re-historicization by Lagbaja, there are instances of code mixing and prominent pragmatic markers in the lyric:

Ah! Ayan, show them Africa; Ah! The drummer, show them Africa (Gloss)

This direct address to the drummer in the literary sense and within the Nigerian sociolinguistic space is a prompting to the drummer to exhibit his ambidexterity on the drum and distinctive African musical ingenuity. It is also interactional and ideology-laden. They may perhaps refer to non-Africans and it further buttresses the binary dichotomy between *them* and *us.* And this dichotomy or polarity marks the desire for individual and group identity in the global world despite the transnational relationships and interconnectedness. Lagabaja is proud of African aesthetics and music. *Eeeeee, Ooooo; Ayeele, Africa/ Ikirao, Eee, Eee,Eee,Eh!And Ah!?.Africalypso*. These are mannerisms or discourse features (backchannels) which might signal the intensity of the music and immersion in the mood of the music.

> Similarly, one of the latest tracks of a Nigerian Afrobeat Musician, Beautiful Nubia, can be divided into three. First, it has Marxist undertone, celebration of a Yoruba tragic hero Kurunmi and a call to emulate Kurunmi's candor and bravery by the Nigerian human rights activists. While he calls for true revolutionary movements in Nigeria to protect the human rights, he satirizes and lampoons Nigerian activists who run into exile during political crises and asserts that some Nigerian activists only receive awards from human right organizations and foreign bodies without any efforts or actions to justify such.

Usually, Nigerian human right activists make recourse to Western political activists and theorists such as Martin Luther King (Jr), Malcolm X, W.E.B. Dubois, Karl Marx, Marcus Garvey, Confucius, and so on. The Afrobeat Musician challenges the up-coming generations to depart from this norm and look into the Yoruba history for heroes to emulate and imitate their bravery, for example Kurunmi. /Children you will learn and you must never forget. The past is full of heroes from whom we can learn and the real lesson to guide us today. /Many many stories to make us proud/

Kurunmi was a tragic and militant Yoruba hero of Nigeria, West Africa. He was the ruler of Ijaye town close to Ibadan during the existence of the Oyo Empire. He was at loggerheads with Alaafin over the control of the Upper Ogun towns around Saki and failed to recognize the new Alaafin then. Consequently, his town was invaded and captured by Alaafin Adelu. But before the invasion and conquest of his town, he had committed suicide. Suicide was a symbol of bravery among the Yoruba heroes who would not want to succumb to defeat or capture. /Okunrin ogun ni Kunrumi (2ce). Akinkanju (2ce) Akinkanju ni Kunrumi./ Gloss: Kurunmi was a man of war. Kurunmi was a brave person. The refrain of the song praises Kurunmi for the tough decision, terminating his personal life in order to save his face from molestation and eventual death.
The lyric:

> Lately, when we see them they talk about change. They say it is their turn now to be the leader of the people. Tell them I have their many many times before. And no one can trick with honey mouth again. Lately, when we meet they flex their muscles up and they talk about bravery and courage never seen. Tell them I know book … Real man nah for actions no be for mouth o. Lately, when we see them they talk about their conquests. The many battles fought in the trenches for your rights. If you ask for evidence, nah word you go see and many awards from foreign bodies…Many many stories to make us proud too. Lately when we meet them, count up their loses and the pains scars of their vain struggles. Kurunmi lost five sons all in a day, but he never wavered till the last time. Okunrin ogun ni Kunrumi (2ce). Akinkanju (2ce) Akinkanju ni Kunrumi

Despite the hybrid identity and self, how do we create ourselves through arts? How empowering is our objectified self in the global society and the process of self-reconfiguration and re-assemblage in popular music? Zuberi (2001, p. 195) argues that popular music "stages identifications, imagines

subjectivities, and performs community." The subjectivity/subjecthood of African people is inherent in their arts despite the contact with other cultures and several modifications. The distinctiveness of their culture may present a sense of nationalism and ethno-centricism alongside with cosmopolitan culture and globalization.

The arts are the very volatile site to contest identity and its reconstruction. Alongside other forms of art, performing artists engage in reconstruction of Nigerian and African identity, not as object but as subject. Self-perception is expressed through arts which perhaps are quite against the Eurocentric construction of Nigerians or Africans at large. To exemplify female subjectivity in Nigerian hip hop, we use this lyric and complementary picture to explain African subjectivity in popular music. It emphasizes black beauty and African women as queens. There is an evident idea of re-construction of African women in the song titled You are my African Queen by 2Face Idibia.

Just like the sun,
Light up the earth,
You light up my life.
The only one I've ever seen
With a smile so bright
Just yesterday
You came around my way…

Though the hip hop star 2Face is not a woman, the representation and serial change of an African woman's pictures in the album has an Afro-centric undertone. It may perhaps be considered as a swift departure and fresh style of women representation in hip hop music. The pictures indigenize the contents/message of the lyric. The represented woman is not objectified as cheap figure and an appeal to men, but her image has a complementary role (text-image relation) to enhance the lyric and its meaning: Just like the sun, light up the earth, you light my life. The woman is explicitly compared with a very important element of nature. There is a romantic blend and appreciation of nature and humankind. The woman heralds hope, illumination and brightness. Figuratively, the woman as equivalent of the sun has brought a new season into his life (the implied man). This portrayal is absolutely different from African nativist stereotype that women are economic burdens.

Still on identity, amidst reparation issues, re-racialization and White South Africans' search for identity beyond the confines of South Africa, a Black South African singer draws attention to the cause of their unsettled differences even after apartheid regime had gone into extinction. His song further problematizes racism as one of the insurmountable societal barriers around the world. He blames the government and politicians who polarize the people to get their political desires. It is a direct attack on the government and politicians not to divide South African peoples. Despite different origins and races, people are the same and all were made by God or a certain high power. Therefore, origin or race is inconsequential. The song also reveals the singer's religious affiliation and theistic ideology: /They were *created in the image of God. And who are you to separate them. Bible says, he made man in his image*./

This standpoint is opposed to Darwinian scientific theory of human evolution. However, it is informative enough because it presents multi-national diversities of South Africa. /Some were from America. We were from South Africa. Some were from Japan. We were from China. Some were from Australia./ This song is important because, though apartheid regime has ended, the inequalities between white and black still linger. Racism and segregation still manifest in politics and work force. This song has a unifying content, from a Christian religious vintage point. It also emphasizes the position of a popular musician as historian and archivist.

Breaking those barriers
All over the world
Was not an easy thing
Yesterday your mouth was shut yeah
Couldn' t make a sound eh boy
But it' s such a good feeling today
When I can hear them from
Across the ocean singing this song
That the whole world should be singing
Chorus: (x3)
We' re...
Different colours / one people
Different colours / one people
Hey you government
Never try to seperate the people
Hey you politician
Never try to seperate the people
They were created in the image of God…

While concentrating on the socio-political aspects of popular music in South Africa and Nigeria, we cannot lose sight of the escapist role of popular music, particularly among the youth. The youth have been marginalized economically by the caliber of leaders in many countries of the African continent. Haunted by unemployment; lack of quality education; separation from parents as a result of financial predicaments; lack of home and government support structure; the youth find succor in popular music as an escape and distillation of emotions and harrowing experiences. Popular music produces the platform to perform their identities within the society. Some of these songs usually have a tremendous listenership because many of the youth who cannot sing are also victims of social stratification. Both the hip hop artistes and listeners share the experience and they are both in the venture of self and identity performance. Inclusive pronoun We and first person personal pronoun I are used to recount personal experiences and represent the general prevailing experiences of African youth. "We" is inclusive (to express general/common challenges) and "I" is exclusive (individual/personal challenges).

The rising moon faces the sickening sun,
as the lights in the tower blocks go on, one by one,
A big shot, overlooking this black iron skyline--
Surrounded by his symbols of prosperity--
Sits back in his new leather chair
ripped off the back of some unfortunate beast.
I'm smiling through my teeth.
Anybody can be a millionaire,
so everybody's gotta try…

We may submit that an integral part of escapism is sex discourse which permeates popular music in Nigeria and South Africa. While feminists belabor themselves on the commodification, thingification and objectification of women body parts; nudity and public display of female genitals seems a survival means among female youth, for example in Nigeria. They are portrayed as seductive objects that lure men into sex and romance. We opine that to condemn such scenes is immoral despite the immorality of such scenes. The government has failed to empower the youth and they must find a medium of self-expression in hostile and stifling societies.

CONCLUSION

Popular music has a broad spectrum of roles in Nigeria and South Africa beyond the stereotype that it is a protest music genre, either negative or positive. It is crucial to note as well that popular music is evolving as socio-political issues are developing and growing in African societies. They mirror the challenges of the youth and it is clear that some of the Western efforts to realize egalitarian societies (across genders, class, age, group, ethnic, race) across the globe will be jeopardized because of specific socio-economic issues in Africa. Length of research on popular music should be extended to reveal an exhaustive account of events and issues in our society.

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