INSIDIOUS EROTICISM IN MUSICAL PERFORMANCES OF SAINT JANET

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Abstract

From euphemism to dysphemism, the Nigerian popular music industry has enjoyed the patronage of the masses aided by the various virtual communities in the propagation of its message of eroticism. Unlike many Nigerian popular music artistes who are aggressive in their erotica performances, *Saint Janet* is a creative music artiste whose adoption of insidious eroticism knows no bound. With the use of ethnographic techniques (key-informant interview and participant-observation), this article discusses the insidious eroticism used in *Saint Janet*'s music. The paper argues that the Christian religious background of the artiste and the need to fulfil her daily needs have been the factors responsible for her insidious creativity. Socio-cultural themes such as didactic, religious, therapeutic, entertainment are part of her techniques in entrapping her audience in her web of eroticism. Subtly, both the young and old are lured into her erotica performances. The paper also argues that parody has been her major compositional technique with emphasis on the reconstruction of several *Juju*-gospel music.

Keywords: Saint Janet, Insidious eroticism, Nigerian popular music, *Juju*-gospel music performance

Introduction

Eroticism, violence and vulgarism, as discursive themes, have been greatly explored in the humanities, especially within the fields of the creative and performing arts. However, the motion portrait facet of the performing arts seems to be the propelling cogency in spreading the contentious traits of vulgarity, violence and eroticism. Kelly (2013)

expresses grave concern about the seemingly opposing but powerfully entwined forces of the erotic, perverse, macabre and violent, which have been explored on many levels within the history of art particularly through the medium of film. It is perhaps within the music video genre however, that we see these co-joined aesthetics so actively envisaged.

The term, erotic is culturally defined sinceits meaning variesfrom one culture to another. While the use of sexually implicit language is prohibited in some cultures, the same language can be used scarcely in another, especially where the use of euphemism is largely encouraged. Also, the use of lewd language is wittingly adopted in a different culture loosely. Supporting this claim, Asare (2014) notes that the definition of what is erotic in the arts may vary from one society to another and opinions may change over time. She continued:

> *to the Asante, there is little or no differentiation between words as erotica and pornography... If it is visual arts it will be likely to be judged in the domain of good art and bad art, not forgetting the functionality of the object. In the performance, it tends to a discourse of decency versus indecency (ethical basis). If an artwork is beautiful, it is admired, if it is to serve a purpose, it is used and discarded, and its admiration also dies quickly; that is to say, most of the socio-cultural arts of the Asante are ephemeral except for the royal arts and regalia. (Asare, 2014, p.2)*

Lewd, vulgar, exotic and lecherous words are expressed in the day-to-day compositions and performances of contemporary Nigerian popular musicians. These words are used sporadically in the popular media, particularly in music entertainment and the home video industry (the Nollywood). Nigerian popular music artistes also acculturate this aspect of lewdness in their musical performances. Consequently, the influence can be envisaged to be from the African American Hip-hop culture. In explaining the acculturation employed by Nigerian popular

music artistes, Emielu (2006) opines that with improved air travels and the development of global satellite network, music from around the world can be heard from the comfort of one's home, and this has both produced positive and negative effects on the development of African music. African pop musicians have adopted similar forms and practices of their American and European counterparts. The consumerist orientation which has gripped many African societies fueled by economic considerations is at the root of the ever-changing face of popular music in Africa.Some critics have contended that African music is fast losing its soul in a globalized world. The Yoruba word: 'asakasa', (a strange culture) is used to describe any cultural expression that cannot be properly linked to the home culture.

Nigerian popular musicians make use of different techniques as they introduce erotic lyrics into their compositions and performances. While some employ the use of euphemism, others are not moderately mild as they arequite direct and free in lewd expressions.For instance, sexual expressive terms by Abass Obesere (a Nigerian Fuji music artiste) were viewed by many as unacceptable to the Yoruba culture, which mademembers of the society to regard and label the artiste as an outcast. Generally speaking, the Yoruba culture does not seem to promote an arbitrary use of sexual terms in the day-to-day conversations. In common parlance, such words are referred to as 'isokuso' (indecent talks) and roundly frowned upon, especially when expressed by a minor, teenager or a married woman.

Janet Omotoyosi Kayode-Iyun popularly known as Saint Janet is a Nigerian female pseudo-juju-gospel music practitioner who is famous for adopting erotic themes in her music. Saint Janet is also known to employ parody as she changes the song texts of popular gospel juju/highlife, choruses, and native air music to erotic lyrics in the cause ofentertaining her audience.

Erotica displays are widespread in the lyrical and visual performances of many Nigerian popular music artistes, mostly the males and

especially those associated with the hip-hop, fuji and afro-pop genres. Members of the society sometimes consider this phenomenon excusable for male music artistes, but not for their female counterparts who are expected to maintain societal values including decorum and piety especially as Yoruba music artistes. While some music artistes are aggressive in their bawdy performances, others tend to adopt a subtle approach in their lewd performance. One of the artistes in the latter category is Saint Janet. This article, therefore, examines the insidious pattern in Saint Janet's erotica performances.

Theorizing the Socio-Psychological Needs

There is always a reason for an action despite the pros and cons of such action. The socio-psychological theory of human needs offers a perspective that is based on all human actions and behaviours in the pursuit of fulfilling his/her needs, irrespective of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the action. The earliest and most widespread version of this is Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs which includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. Neglects of any form of deficiency tend to motivate people to attempt the unthinkable to meet their needs with little or no regard for the possible consequences, including the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their actions. According to Maslow, it is not until theneeds at the base are satisfied that the individual could aspire to progress to meet higher level growth needs.

1. Psychological or biological needs include; air, food, cloth, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep…
2. Safety needs include protection from physical and natural causes, security, order, law, freedom from fear
3. Social needs include love, friendship, family, friends and romantic relationship
4. Esteem needs include achievement, mastery, independence, status, dominance, prestige, self-respect…
5. Self-actualization includes realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences.

One of the ways to comprehend the erotic and lewd performance of *Saint Janet* in lieu of Maslow's socio-psychological hierarchy of need is to study the activities of various popular musicians who in pursuit of money, fame and power would opt to perform any musical compositions. The lowest form of their needs, which is physiological and at the base must first be metbefore attempting to move up the ladder to the higherones. Many popular musicians are from the mass and low culture where they live below one dollar ($1) per day.

Moreover, the benefits of the lyrical performance of *Saint Janet* are not limited to her and her musicians alone but also her audience. Some of her listeners are people who patronise the pub house, bars and clubs - hence, they find solace and encouragement in the performance of *Saint Janet* as they enjoy their time and activities at the pub house. Also, some of her listeners talk about the therapeutics benefits of deriving sexual pleasure thereby increasing their libido, which in return helps them in securing their marriages especially as regards to sexual intimacy with their spouses.

Aggressive Eroticism in Nigerian Popular Music

The mass media and the internet have been a major avenue to spread an idea, concept or message. Hence, the Nigerian popular music industry has ridden on such a prospect. Though the media has a way of censoring the use of vulgar words, this has not in any way stopped aggressive erotica display by the music artistesusing audio and visual tracks. Kelly (2013) expresses the importance of the video to popular music artistes, states that 'the video clip is a visceral medium to exploit the theatrics of spectacle. For many woman artistes it is also a vehicle to address issues of body politics – questions of representation, sexuality and identity... for example, self-objectification, aggressive sexuality, sadomasochism, violence, horror and so on are all seen to beat play'.

Most young people access the music of their country, the West and especially of Americans and any other countries via the various social

media on the internet. Besides, music can be accessed and recorded from the various music and television houses as the country are open to different pay-tv that are foreign-based. In that way, there exist a very good opportunity and possibility for the youth to get exposed to the different cultures of the West and most especially their expression in lyrics, styles and dressing. Likeseveral other musical genres, popular music has the capacity of attracting people's attention through its melodic and rhythmic power (Adeola, 2001). Its effect on the listeners is enormous andquite evident in the kind of language, dance movements, facial expressions and gestures as well as the kind of moods displayed by the music enthusiasts, given the fact that it is learned by fans as dictated by the popular musicians.

Many music videos of popular musicians in the country contain erotica scenery both in words and sight. From women dancing naked and shaking their 'buttocks' to men calling out those erogenous words with or without euphemism being applied to sensor these acts. Oikelome (2013) in his work titled "Are Real Women Just Bad Porn?: Women in Nigerian Hip-hop Culture" ascertain that there is a tremendous trend in the development of using and displaying women as sex symbols on the music video of popular music genres. He continued:

> *However, sex symbolism is taken to an alarming dimension in the music industry where women are seen as a commercial venture, useful for commercial purposes. This is because generally, in Western culture and societies that follow the West, a woman's body is considered sexually provocative to man; and thus, there is a growing concern over the near-naked female postures in some music videos. (Oikelome: 2013, 86).*

There is a similar genre among the Yoruba known as *ìjálá*, mainly performed by men of any age (Ajibade, 2005).Although it contains more vulgar and erotic words than nuptial songs, there are no restrictions on its performance in public. In other words, if *ijala* (praise chant genre of the hunters' guild) grantsan unrestricted

license to men for vulgar expressionsand erotic words, nuptial songs equally permit women to perform such acts. Ajibade notes further that:

> *This song may be funny and amusing, and it is deliberately so. One can be in an erotic mood when listening to this song. This song conjures both male and female reproductive organs ready for sexual intercourse. This can stimulate the new wife to be into getting ready for the conjugal rites. This song is usually sung when the bride and her friends dance around the town usually a day before the marriage ceremony. They usually sing it when they notice the presence of males around them. They do not limit themselves to a mere description of the reproductive organs but go further to depict sexual acts between men and women. (Ajibade 2005: 104).*

One of the songs cited in Ajibade's work goes thus:

> *Olóríburúkú l'okó* – A penis is a heady ill-fated individual
> *Ajígbèsè l'epòn* – The scrotum is a debtor
> *Àfi tó bá wo 'nú òbò sin-sin* – It will not desist until it forcefully penetrates the vagina.

One can, therefore, infer that contemporary popular musicians sometimes leverage on references to sex and sexual objects in African oral literature, especially those found in performances of *ijala*, *ewi*, *oriki* and *ekuniyawo*of the Yoruba to launch and justify the inclusion of lewd lyrics in their musical performances.

Olajubu (1972) and Dare (2005) quoted the annual Oke'badan – Ibadan hill – festival in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State of Nigeria. This is an annual festival celebrated by the adherents of the deity of the hill in Ibadan. Expressions of obscene songs and gestures are allowed during the festival wherein boys and girls (below puberty) parade the streets, singing obscene/lewd songs accompanied with obscene gestures.The freedom in expressing lewd act and performance is permitted only once in a year and in the context of Oke'badan

festival. However, in contemporary times when social and mass media are widespreadwith accessibilityto users from the comfort of their houses, vulgar songs and lewd performanceshave been taken outside the context of the pub, beer parlours and nightclubs.They haveextended to public space, including homes, offices, fuel stations and markets as well as on the radio, television and the internet.

Examples of popular music artistes in the country who are fond of adopting erotic displays aggressively in their performances are Burna Boy, Olamide, Reminiscence to mention but a few. For instance, a part of the texts of the song entitled; '*Ladi*' by Olamide and Phyno, featuring Lil Kesh, Lil Kesh expresses his desire to have sex with a lady named 'Kemi' as used in the musical video.

Iranu, abasha Nonsense! Rubbish!
Olorun, jeje mi ni mo joko sita My God! I was sitting outside quietly
Mo ba ri omo kan tan pe ni Kemi Then, I saw a girl named Kemi
Nigbati mo ri idi Kemi mo pariwo aaah When I saw her buttocks, I shouted ahh!
She say Kesh do you want to sample me She said, Kesh do you want to have sex with me

Quite recently, relevant regulatory bodies in Nigeria have sanctioned the works of some music artistes, which are considered grossly offensive and contain erotic and vulgar lyrics. The table below shows a list of music productions banned by the different censoring authorities in the country for promoting obscenity and thereby 'corrupting the society' through their videos.

NOT TO BE BROADCAST (NTBB) LIST OF JULY 2015				
S/N	**ARTISTES**	**TITLE**	**REMARKS**	**CLASSIFICA-TION**
1	PHYNO	YAYO	Obscene Video	NTBB
2	REMINISC-ENCE	TESOJUE	Vulgar Lyrics	NTBB
3	NICKI	ANACONDA	Vulgar Lyrics and	NTBB (AUDIO

	MINAJ		Obscene Video	& VIDEO)
4	OLAMIDE	INDOMIE	Obscene Video	NTBB (VIDEO)
5	PRE	THE GIRL		SFB
6	WIZKID	IN MY BED		SFB
7	NAETO C ft D'BANJ	TONY MONTANA	Video depicts violence	NTBB (VIDEO)
8	ACE HOOD & RICK ROSS	BUGATTI		NTBB
9	OLAMIDE	FALILA KETAN		NTBB (VIDEO)
10	LIL KESH	GBESERE	Vulgar Lyrics	NTBB
11	MAY D	IBADI	Obscene Video	NTBB (VIDEO)
12	OLAMIDE	BOBO		SFB
13	DR SID FT TIWA SAVAGE	OYARI		SFB
14	KONET	MUMMY JOANNA		NTBB (VIDEO)
15	DAVIDO	FANS MI	Video promotes ostentatious lifestyle, violence, drug trafficking and indecent exposure	NTBB (VIDEO)
16	IYANYA FT DON JAZZY	GIFTS		SFB
17	OMARION FT CHRIS BROWN AND	POST TO BE		SFB

	JHENE AIKO			
18	JHIBO	LOMO	Obscene Video and Lyrics	NTBB

Source: NET Newspaper

Insidious Eroticism and the Music Performances of *Saint Janet*

The first erotica music album of *Saint Janet* contains a large number of texts that refers to sex and sexual activities without restriction. While other popular musicians adopt euphemism in mentioning the male sexual organs by using terms like 'banana' and 'pandororo', *Saint Janet* opted for dysphemism by literarily calling human sexual organs by their descriptive anatomical names:*oko* (penis), *obo* (vagina) and *omu* (breast). The release of her music album was a rude shock to the public, especially wherever the music is being played in Lagos State and the environment where she usually performed. Although the Lagos State Government announced that her music has been banned, it was later found out that some radio stations were granting airtime to it, while interested individuals played the musicat gatherings and private parties.

An example of a song from her first album that shows a dysphemism approach to her erotica performance is

B'oko ba le laleju, as'eyun
B'omode ba m'oko do o, a l'oyun
Boda rora se,
B'oko ba le laleju, ase'yun

Translated as:

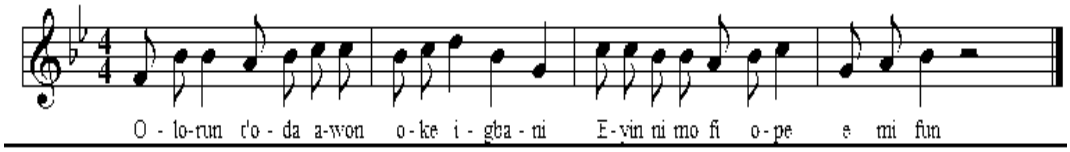
If the penis is too turgid (strong erection), it can abort pregnancy
If a young lady loves to have incessant sex, she will get pregnant
Brother, take it easy (exercise caution)
If the penis is too turgid (strong erection), it can abort pregnancy

It could be argued that the above musical lyric is didactic being that it warns of the risk of unwanted pregnancy on a girl-child who is sexually active; nonetheless, the affront with which she mentioned the male sexual anatomy largely remains unacceptable and the fact that the society frowns at such defiance cannot be pushed aside. Perhaps, the negative reaction that greeted her first album was the motivation that led her to adopt euphemism and insidious approaches to subsequent musical performances and productions.

A subtle approach to erotica performances can be seen in her adoption of parody tocommon gospel songs thathave gained much popularityamong the general public, including children before throwing caution to the winds in her erotica journey. Instrumental articulations of well-known tunes/songs laced with syncopated rhythmic gestures after the order of *juju-highlife* modeare presentedas preludes before initial verses in her musical performances. The melodic construct is predominantly tonal with a strongadoption of western-oriented harmony.Instruments include electronic keyboards, (one of which is used as synthesizer for the horns section, especially set to saxophone timbre), lead, rhythm and bass guitars, and the trap set (drums) all combining to make the musical performance comfy and appealing to the audience.

Also, the Africanization of popular church hymns remains oneof thestrategies and constituentelements in her insidious approach toensure a higher level of acceptabilityof her music. To this end, *Saint Janet* utilizes the choruses commonly usedfor liturgy in Yoruba churches in her performances to draw her audience towards her music. This is a common tactic by popular*juju* musicians, especially whose workstend to combine*juju* with gospel genres. A *juju* gospel music artiste is most likely tobegin his/her performance with core gospel songs singing with full instrumentation that is akin a *juju* musical performance with the use of all the percussive instruments available,including the *sakara* (circular-shaped membrane drum with earthen resonator) and *sekere* (rattle). Meanwhile, as part of a means

of entertaining the audience, s/he would often juxtaposegospel music form with *juju* style of performance by singing the praises, eulogy of the people in her performance circle. At times, such music artistes infuse their names in the performance in the form of vocables or rearranging the lyrics to suit panegyric mode of performance.



A musical example

Olorun t'oda awon oke igbani ancient hills	The Lord who created the
Eyin ni mo fi ope mi fun is due	(Un)to You all my thanks/praise

The above popular gospel songis commonly vocalized by*Saint Janet* at social functions regardless of the event or performance context. No doubt, the song is a parody of 'My Grandfather's Clock' written in 1876 by Henry Clay Work. *Saint Janet*'sparodied version, though gospel, is presented in a simple cantabile form akin to the *juju* rhythmic style. The chorus is kept short and simple following the repetitive structural form.Thereafter, she begins to make a roll callof her patrons by eulogizing and appreciating them for their generous support and for promoting her musical career, especially invitations extended to her to perform at their social functions.Panegyric form remains a common element in her music just as it is typical of*juju* music (Vidal, 2012). Her style of presentation may be described as midway speaking and singing (not entirely chant-like). In addition, her music performance brings a remembrance of an aspect of folklore and mass culture that finds its quotidian relevance tocultural expression in the form of contemporary hybridity as opined by Omojola (2012). The song texts of*Saint Janet* also feature socio-cultural themes including entertainment andironically, that of social control.

The starting section of her live performances and her studio-recorded filescould be subtly captivatingas one listensto and participatesin it. Listeners who are not quite familiar with her voice may find themselves singing and dancing alongside at this point. Examining the first live album of *Saint Janet* titled '*Faaji Plus',* the 44 minutes, 19 seconds musical album begins with a tuneful popular gospel music used as choruses in the liturgical service of some churches in the country, such as 'Heavenly Lord, your name is wonderful, your name is excellent, your name is beautiful, I worship you, Lord, for you are mighty, you've got the whole world in your hands'.

As expected, the lewd portion of the live performances of *Saint Janet*'s has given rise to the controversies surrounding her career. A majority of her critics are clergymen and church authorities who vehemently oppose the use of gospel songs as parody to her compositions. Apart from the fact that she always starts her performance with gospel/church lyrics and songs mainly comprising church choruses, she is also fond of changing the songs to suit her erotic/lewd performance thereby alternating the lyrics in the songs.On the other hand, a reconstruction of gospel songs as used by *Saint Janet* is a way of giving thanks to God who supposedly is responsible for her musical gift, creativity and success in the musical industry. In her words: *there is nothing one can do aside God, I get my inspiration for my lyrics from God, whether before a performance or while performing and I need to improvise, all these creativeness comes from God (sic).* It could be argued that perhaps this is the main reason for her insidious erotica performances compared to the aggressive erotica performances of some popular musicians.

The theological themes explored by the music artiste can be identified as part of her insidious movement. Another of such songs used by *Saint Janet* is:

Olorun to da awon oke igbani	Lord, the creator of the heavens
Eyin ni mo fi ope mi fun…	Unto You, I give all my praise

Ta ni un o tun gbega o Who else can I adore,
Bi ko se Baba l'oke If not You my heavenly Father
Ta ni mo tun fi gbogbo ope mi fun… Who else deserves all of my praise

The sheer number of church buildings and religious activities in Nigeria is a proof that its citizensare extremely religious. Manygatherings and secular meetings always start with opening prayers from at least the two major religions in the country (Christianity and Islam). *Saint Janet* is seen to adopt religious style in performances irrespective of the location/venue. She often begins her performances with songs in praise, honour and worship of God. In her words:' *There is nothing anybody can do outside God. I can tell you boldly that, my inspiration is from God'.* Unsuspecting listeners easily connect with such a musical idea before being swayed by her erotic lyrics.

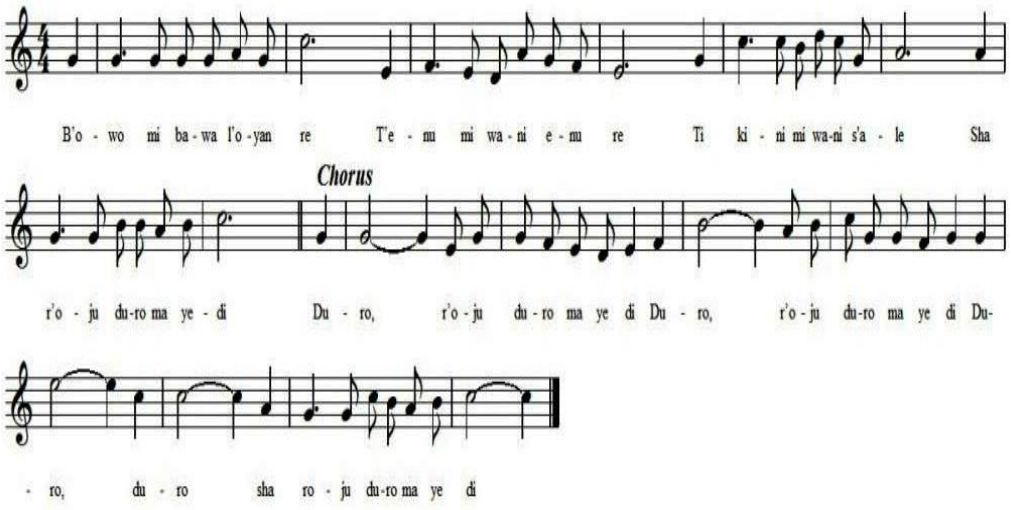
Another factor responsible for insidious eroticism in the performances of *Saint Janet* is audience appreciation of the socio-cultural themes in her music compositions. As popular *juju/highlife* songs, her performanceshave a strong appeal to her audience. Besides, most of the songs, though flavoured with erotic texts are sometimesa form of supplication, with strong appeal to religious-inclined members of the audienceanddidactic through effective use of euphemism. Such songs include:

Adara adara fun mi It shall be well with me
A ma ko'lemo'le We will build houses upon houses
Atun ma ra'le mo'le We will procureplots of land
Opeke to mu'le t'ikoko A damsel that lives next door to the wolf
Ikoko a naa l'egba The wolf will spank (devour) her

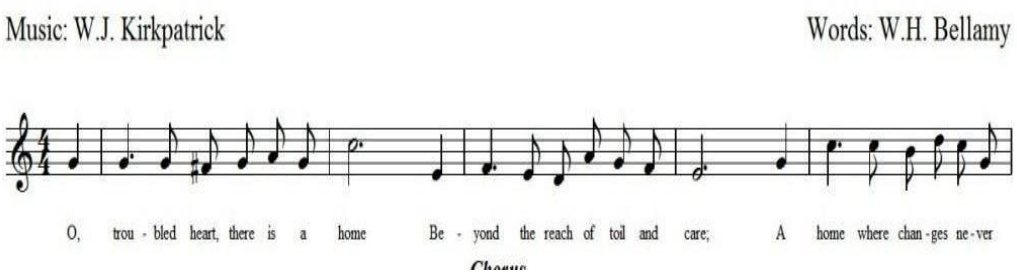
The first aspectis more or less a prayer, but the second, through euphemism, attempts tocautionasexually active girl-child against promiscuity.From the gospel songs to the socio-cultural themes being used by *Saint Janet*, her listeners are somehow gradually caught in the web of her erotica performances. Subtly, both the young and old

begin to swing to the rhythm ofwhat seemed like a 'praise and worship' form, until she interjects with erotica lyrics. At this level, both euphemism and dysphemism are applied in mentioning the sexual anatomy of both male and female along with indistinctterms (languages) depicting sexual activities. Example of such songs is:

B'owo mi bawa l'oyan re	If I am fondling your breasts
T'enu mi wani enu re	When kissing you
Ti kini mi wani sale	When having sex
Sha r'oju duro ma yedi	Please, be patient
Chorus: Duro, r'oju duro ma ye di...	Be Patient...



The above song is a parody of the hymn titled; 'wait and murmur not' with lyrics by W. H. Bellamy and music by W. J. Kirkpatrick. In the adaptation of this hymn, not only that the lyrics have been modified to satisfy the eroticism desire of Saint Janet, but also the melody was readjusted to accommodate the tonal inflection of the language of performance. This was done by adding a semitone to the already raised fourth note (as shown below) within the first melodic phrase.



Another song by Saint Janet goes thus:

O ti gbomi l'ataro ko ma je ki sun	He's been having sex with me all day long
Oba mimo, wo run 'sale mi, meta loku	Holy God, My pubic hair remains only three
Adogan l'obo, eyin bobo e to gi si	The vagina is meant for sexual activities

The last sentence is more or less a metaphor in which the vagina, likened to the cooking pot,in need of firewood, symbolic of man's penis, to ensure the making of delicacies is done.

Conclusion

This article attempted to demonstrate that unlike many Nigerian popular music artistes who make use of aggressive erotica musical performances (in lyrics and audio-visual), *Saint Janet* is a creative insidious erotica music artiste. The socio-psychological theory adopted by the authors in this paper reveals that human actions and behaviours in the pursuit of fulfilling their needs/wants do little or have no regard to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their actions.As a result, the insidious creativity in her performanceswas birthed to accommodate more followers and patronages utilising genresranging from the gospel to *juju* and highlife musical forms before the eroticism found in either the reconstruction of gospel music or the parody engaged in her compositions.

The paper argues that in spite of the Christian religious background of the artiste, it has not in any way stopped her from embarking on

erotica journey. Rather, it has been of assistance in her subtle approaches to erotica musical performances. Apart from the eroticism displayed by *Saint Janet*, other socio-cultural themes were explored in terms of the functionality of the musical lyrics, extending from didactic to the therapeutic themes in her musical compositions and performances. This insidious approach to her performance implies that many listeners could possibly be entrapped unconsciously and insidiously in the web of her eroticism.

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