

HUMOR IN NOUCHI AS A MEANS OF DEDRAMATIZATION IN ZOUGLOU: A MUSICAL GENRE IN CÔTE-D'IVOIRE.

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Abstract: The use of Nouchi, a vibrant Ivorian street slang, serves as a means of dedramatization. By incorporating Nouchi into their music, artists often navigate serious or sensitive topics with a touch of lightness. Hence, creating a space for social commentary, cultural celebration, linguistic diversity, and a shared sense of resilience by using figurative language. Delving into the heart of this linguistic and musical interplay, the paper examines how Nouchi promotes a sense of community well-being through humor in Zouglou. The objective is to use playful language, with the help of music, to reduce tension and create a peaceful environment based on the semantic content.

Keywords: humor, nouchi, dedramatize, zouglou, musique, genre, Côte-d'Ivoire.

Résumé: L'utilisation du Nouchi, un argot de rue ivoirien vibrant, sert de moyen de dédramatisation. En intégrant le Nouchi dans leur musique, les artistes abordent souvent des sujets sérieux ou sensibles avec une touche de légèreté. Ainsi, ils créent un espace pour le commentaire social, la célébration culturelle, la diversité linguistique et un sentiment partagé de résilience grâce à un langage figuré. En plongeant au cœur de cette interaction linguistique et musicale, cet article examine comment le Nouchi favorise un bien-être communautaire à travers l'humour dans le Zouglou. L'objectif est d'utiliser un langage ludique, avec l'aide de la musique, pour réduire la tension et créer un environnement apaisé basé sur le contenu sémantique de cette union.

Mots clefs : humour, Nouchi, dédramatiser, Zouglou, genre, musique, Côte-d'Ivoire.

Introduction

Language, a powerful and intricate tool, has long transcended its conventional role as a medium for communication. From ancient oral traditions and Shamanic practices to modern psychotherapy and mindfulness techniques, cultures across the globe have recognized the profound impact of the therapeutic benefits of language on the human experience. Beyond this therapeutic potential of language, various modalities, including narrative therapy, poetry therapy, bibliotherapy are vividly expressed. That is, music augments the healing potential of language by contributing to stress reduction, pain management, and relaxation.

At its core, the healing power of language to mend, nurture, and empower individuals, operates on the premise that words are not merely symbols but vessels of energy and intention. That is, movement (body language), dance, and artistic expression serve as alternative channels for individuals to communicate and process emotions that may elude verbal articulation. That is, the intersection of language and music which offers a rich terrain for exploring the healing functions inherent in human expression. This article investigates how language, when intertwined with music, another universal language with its own emotive and communicative potential serves as a powerful medium for promoting psychological, emotional, and physiological well-being that is humor, the gentle breeze that lightens the mood, diffuses tension and cultivates a shared sense of joy. Together, these elements compose the serene melody of peaceful coexistence, inviting harmony and unity into the spaces we inhabit. Hence, the topic: “Humor in Nouchi as a Means of Dedramatization in Zouglou a Musical Genre in Côte-d’Ivoire”.

The concern is therefore to know how humor is used as a tool for dedramatization within the lyrics and performance of Zouglou? What are the cultural and social implications of humor within the context of Zouglou music? To what extent does the use of humor in Nouchi contributes to the preservation of and evolution of peace within Zouglou music? In the descriptive perspective of languages, various approaches can be employed, including traditionally induction and deduction. As a decoder of the Nouchi language, both induction and deduction are integrated in this paper. These two methods will enable to identify and reconstruct the dynamic mechanisms of humor in Zouglou music. Indeed, these emerge as a fundamental element in the operational system of Nouchi, especially at a critical juncture where humanity is confronted with various dramatic situations and scourges, and also particularly when the question of peace research and maintenance is exceedingly vital. The ambition is to make intelligible the dynamic within Nouchi’s peaceful capacity in music. The

analysis will revolve around two essential points: the introduction to the object of study and then the way humor is used as a means of de-dramatization.

I. Contextualizing Nouchi and Zouglou

1.1. Historical Roots of Nouchi

Born between 1970 and 1980 (J. Kouadio 1991) among young people called “*les bri*,” which is itself a diminutive of the word *brigands*, Nouchi was an argot used only by most of Ivorian urban criminal groups like *Farem*, *Yang System*, *Mapless*, *Youpless*, and *les Ninjas Gorgés* which were supposed to be dangerous gangsters and distinguished themselves from the other members of the society. Historically speaking, “Nouchi budded and developed in bus stations, auto mechanic garages, carpentry workshops, market sheds, before taking over the entire street and then high schools and colleges”, as S. Solo, (2003, p.124) says. Deliberately, alongside standard French, Nouchi invents its own words and expressions by drawing from local languages as well as English. Indeed, it is the entire youth, rich or poor, that is engaged in this game, (K. Yacouba, 2002). Its vocabulary is mainly constructed from onomatopoeias, metaphors, and verlan¹. Nouchi, although similar to formal French in its syntactic structure (SVO), is also characterized by its own words, which words are constantly created by the Nouchi themselves depending on the socio-economic, cultural, and political situation. This language feeds on current events and societal issues, hence the necessity, to define or translate a word, to sometimes re-explain the whole underlying history to understand what is being said. It has even become the language that identify Ivorian in local and international exchanges, by being used everywhere, by everybody, and for bearing traces of Ivorian cultural legacy deserving more and more investigations.

1.2. Nouchi and Zouglou Music

Music, as an art form, encompasses the organized arrangement of sounds, rhythms, and melodies to evoke emotional responses, convey messages, or communicate ideas. It is a creative expression deeply rooted in cultural, historical, and personal contexts, often involving the manipulation of various musical elements such as harmony, melody, rhythm, timbre, and dynamics. In the vast symphony of existence, music emerges not only as an art

¹VERLAN is a form of slang derived from French and used by young people as a linguistic expression of their social, economic, and geographical marginalization. It is formed by inverting the syllables of a word and making any spelling changes necessary to aid pronunciation the word verlan is itself the inverted form of the French word “*l’envers*”, meaning “the other way round”, example *bizarre* becomes *zarbi*.

form that captivates the soul but also as a therapeutic modality that resonates with the very essence of human well-being. The concept of using musical waves for healing traces its roots through ancient civilizations, where the rhythmic patterns and melodic vibrations were recognized for their profound impact on the human spirit. That is why, according to A. Schaeffner (1997, pp.115 & 132):

“Music has the characteristic to be concrete like image or abstract like a text; (...) it is a moral law, it gives a soul to the universe, wings to the thoughts, a bloom to the imagination, a charm to sadness, the cheerfulness, and the life to all things; it is the essence of the order and guide towards what is good, right, beautiful, and thing that the form is invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate, eternal”.

Meaning that, whether through instrumental compositions, vocal performances, or experimental sonic explorations, music transcends language barriers, speaking directly to the human spirit and inspiring profound experiences of beauty, introspection, and connection. The music as an art, has greatly contributed as a factor of the expansion of the Ivorian sociolect Nouchi. Now, let us define the Ivorian musical genre under study, namely Zouglou. Ivorian urban groups such as *Farem*, *Yang System*, *Mapless*, *Youplless*, and *les Ninjas Gorgés*, which were supposed to be dangerous Nouchi gangsters were also composed of some students. So, amongst the Zouglou students there were also some Nouchi people. This shows that, Nouchi and Zouglou have many similarities that are approved by K. Yacouba (2002, p. 781), who said that: “The contiguity of Zouglou with the Nouchi is real (...), it is of course their working in collision that defines the sociological identity of the Zouglou (...) Nouchi and Zouglou are coming from the same environment. The Zouglou has become a national music thanks to its capacity to express Ivorian social realities through the Nouchi.”

This means that, the Ivorian youth use the Nouchi language as their vernacular medium to make their difficulties known by the population and the government through the Zouglou music by explaining their living condition to dedramatize.

In fact, zouglou have been a support for the claims of the Ivorian youth like the FESCI and the Ziguehi movement, with the particularity to criticize publicly the government and react to the established policies. Therefore, meetings, sit-ins, manifestations and some strikes were regularly organized by students to complain about their living conditions. The regular interruptions of courses at the university and the mock year of 1990, contributed to the birth of the dance, music and philosophy called “ZOUGLOU²”. More than a dance, the

² Zouglou is the son of wôlyô, who is in turn the son of ambiance facile

zouglou was for them a way of living (a philosophy) demonstrated through a particular dance step, supported by themes dominated by everyday social realities of Ivorian. That is why, K. Yacouba (2002: 796) qualifies Zouglou as “the product of the university, social, and political crisis that shook the entire country in 1990, zouglou is a musical creation of students in revolt against society.”

But initially, zouglou was not an anti-establishment music, but a music of enjoyment called “ambiance facile” or “wôyô”, born during funerals night watches, actual occasions of meeting for Ivorians to retie with the tradition. Hence, the majority of the lyrics of this first generation were funny and based on humor. Many Zougloumen have been inspired by the melodies of the first wave of this ‘ambiance facile’, and that is why, even if the zouglou artists are now engaged, it is with a strong touch of humor to dedramatize the situation. Furthermore, the lyrics of Zouglou gave prominence to demands and social critique, while “ambiance facile” took on the role of entertaining and promoting harmony among young students, then Zouglou became the music of the uprising.

In a way, “ambiance facile” and other Ivorian styles named Gnanman-Gnanman³ and Ziguehi⁴ have paved the way for Zouglou by revealing that within the Ivorian youth there was a need to reform a culture that is more in line with their own identity. Therefore, Zouglou, as described by S. Frith (1981), R. Pratt (1990), J. Chailley (1996), E. Genin (1992), and V. Boris (1997), is a means of conveying ideas, informing, and raising awareness among populations. The contestatory function added to the comic function were the common vocabulary of most of the Zouglou artists. Therefore, there will have different themes and waves of Zouglou depending on the socio-political situation of the country. The first wave was under the regime of the president Boigny, the second one under the government of Bédié, the third one was under the regime of Guéi Robert, and the last one which is divided into two types was under Gbagbo, before the crisis of 2002, and from 2002 till nowadays. So, for the analysis of the dedramatizing effect of Zouglou using Nouchi, we will select one artist in each wave, except in the last one; where we will take three artists instead of two, due to the length of the period. Therefore, in the first wave of Zouglou we will have (1) “les parents du campus”. For the second wave of Zouglou, we will deal with artists (2) “Poussins Chocs”, a

³ Gnanman-gnanman means dirtiness in Malinké, or a disorder or else a non-sense.

⁴ Ziguehi is a word from the ethnic group Bété, meaning warrior. It is used in nouchi to mean young marginal with big muscles, who between 1980 and 1990 was author of aggressions whether individually or in group in the streets of Abidjan, and the one who was feared by the population and who inspire a kind of respect amongst his peers.

group of four young men. In the third wave we can cite artists such as (3) “Yodé et Siro”. For the last wave taking into account two types, there are artists like and the (4) “Collectif Zouglou” for the first category, and (5) “commandant Moriba” and (6) “VDA” for the last type.

Apart from these artists mentioned above whose musical works will be further developed in this article, we present some of them briefly, as this list is far from being exhaustive. For example, there is “les chirurgiens du Zouglou”, a group of four young men, with their playful manner to tackle the issue of socio-political treachery in many domains, in their title “bayekoun”. Besides, there is the group “anti palu”, also a group of four young men with their song ‘accouchement difficile’, where, they are depicting the bad treatment given to the patients by the nurses. Then, we have Elvis Inspiration Divine, with his song “paradis”, to dedramatize with the death of many Ivorian singers. The particularity of all these artists is their use of Nouchi sometimes or all the time in their songs, besides, depending on their inspiration each Zouglou group deals with different themes. The sociolinguistic frame then done, what could be the humoristic side and how it is used to dedramatized in Zouglou?

2. The Way Humor is Used by Zouglou to Dedramatized

Humor is perhaps the most prominent element used in Zouglou to dedramatize serious topics. Artists often employ wit, satire, and comedic storytelling to tackle social and political issues in a lighthearted manner. By injecting humor into their lyrics and performances, they can address difficult subjects while keeping the mood upbeat and engaging. The integration of linguistic aspects into Zouglou music for healing is a fascinating and multifaceted endeavor, drawing from both the expressive power of language and the transformative qualities of musical elements. In the context of using music for therapeutic purposes, several linguistic aspects play crucial roles in facilitating healing. Here are some of the key elements.

2.1. Lyrics and Narrative Contents

Lyrics refer to the words or text of a song, typically set to music. They convey the narrative, emotions, themes, and messages of the song, serving as a crucial component of musical expression. Lyrics can vary widely in style, content, and complexity, depending on the genre of music, the intentions of the songwriter, and cultural influences. Personal narratives within lyrics can resonate with listeners, fostering a sense of shared experience and empathy. Besides, they can express emotions, that is to say, lyrics offer a linguistic framework for expressing complex emotions. By articulating feelings through words,

individuals can find a cathartic release, gaining a sense of validation and understanding. This emotional expression contributes to the therapeutic benefits of music.

Zouglou lyrics often feature playful language, witty wordplay, and satirical commentary on social and political issues. Humorous anecdotes, colloquialisms, and slang are commonly used to engage listeners and evoke laughter. For example, all Zouglou lyrics are always narrating a story in varied themes depending on the songwriter's style, influences, and intentions; which make the lyrics taking many different forms and serving various purposes within a song. For example, (1) “les Parents du campus”, (2) “Poussins Chocs”, and (3) “Yodé et Siro” have the particularity to start from descriptive lyrics to humorous and satirical lyrics, and personal or confessional lyrics by telling a story with characters, plot development, describing scenes and create imagery which are leading to expressing feelings and emotions, by employing wit, irony, or satire to entertain or criticize. As for the (4) “Collectif Zouglou”, (5) “Commandant Moriba”, and (6) “VDA” their specificities in addition to descriptive, emotional, and humorous or satirical lyrics is reflective or philosophical lyrics plus political or protest lyrics, by exploring deeper themes and ideas such as existential questions or social issues. They also address social or political issues, advocating for change, serving as a form of social commentary or activism.

2.2. Figurative language

As metaphorical language, there is symbolism, simile, hyperbole, personification, and metaphor. Indeed, song writers frequently use metaphorical language to convey abstract concepts and emotions. Metaphors can evoke powerful imagery and stimulate the imagination, allowing listeners to interpret and internalize the music in a personally meaningful way. This indirect communication can be especially potent in the realm of emotional healing. Symbolism is a literary technique where objects, characters, settings, or events represent abstract ideas, themes, or concepts beyond their literal meaning. These symbols are often imbued with deeper significance and can convey complex messages or evoke emotions in the reader or viewer. Symbolism is used across various forms of art, including literature, visual arts, music, and film, to add depth and layers of meaning to the work. It allows creators to convey themes and ideas in a more nuanced and subtle manner, inviting audiences to interpret and engage with the work on multiple levels. In Zouglou music, symbolism and metaphor can be employed to convey various messages, critiques, or reflections on Ivorian society, politics, and culture. Here are some potential implications and analyses of symbolism and metaphor in Zouglou.

Social Commentary: Zouglou often addresses social issues such as poverty, corruption, inequality, and everyday struggles faced by Ivorians. Symbolism in the lyrics or music videos may represent these issues metaphorically, shedding light on their impact on individuals and communities. Figurative language in Zouglou lyrics often serve as a vehicle for social commentary, allowing artists to critique societal issues indirectly. For example, in (6) “*affaire de parents*” by the Zouglou group VDA, a metaphor comparing the government to a compound, more precisely the main Ivorian political leaders are compared to the members of a big family living in a common yard, which might symbolize their same way of behaving. That is, outside or for an outsider (the people) they act as they don’t know each other but, in their compound, they use to be very close. We have some expressions like :

(6 a) « *moi là, je suis ton tohoun-tohoun non* – me, I am your idiot ».

(6 b) « *tu as eu ton gawa oh* – you have found your idiot ».

(6 c) « *djaha c’est cour commune* – yet it is a common compound ».

(6 d) « *on est gawa une seule fois dans la vie* – people are idiot once in their life ».

There is also, the lyrics of the song “ASEC-KOTOKO” by the group “les Poussins Chocs”, where they critique the social issues of the football match between Ghanaians and Ivorians, such as robberies, vengeance, and murders with some expressions like:

(2 a) “on sera se voir – we will catch up”.

(2 b) “nous là, c’est pays de paix (...) même celui qui a créé la paix il est mort pour la paix – we are a nation of peace (...) even the one who create peace died for peace ».

(2 c) « *tu vois son bôtchô, adoungba, agbôlôzani, un gros tassaba* – if you see her butt up, big, full of flesh, a very big butt up ».

(2 d) « *ils nous ont propro* – they chased us ».

(2 e) « *règlement de comptes on a mouta ghanéens (...) jeux de ziés, jeux de mollets, jeux de tibias, même jeux de dos* – settling of scores, we beat Ghanaians (...) game of eyes, game of calfs, game of shinbones, even game of the back ».

In this song, the event of ASEC-KOTOKO is a symbolism which is imbued with deeper significance for the people who witnessed and know this history, and it evokes complex emotions for them.

As for (1) “les parents du campus” with their title Gboklokoffi, it is a timid claim by Bilé Didier the lead singer, submitting the corporate grievances of the students with expressions such as: (1 a) -(...) pour avoir ndaya, il faut bosser beaucoup, ndaya qui est là, ça suffit pas”, “avec cambodgiens, si tu braike une go – to have a scholarship, you need to study a lot, this scholarship is insufficient (...) with roommates, if you are dating a lady (...)”.

(1 b) (...) “la go est brisée – the lady is voiceless”.

(1 c) “au campus ce sont des bluffers, à Abobo, ils ont des gos – at campus, they are boasters, at Abobo, they have girlfriends ».

(1 d) « mais faut qu’ils sortent parce que moi je dois couler du jus – but, they have to go out because I need to wet my tail ».

Through these examples, it can be said that while humor is a prominent feature, Zouglou music also serves as a platform for social commentary. Through clever and sometimes ironic lyrics, artists address serious topics such as poverty, corruption, and inequality in a lighthearted manner, making them more digestible to audiences. That is, humor in Nouchi functions in Zouglou as a form of social commentary and emotional relief. In other words, humor in Nouchi creates a sense of solidarity among Zouglou listeners, particularly among marginalized groups by the way they address serious issues humorously.

Identity and cultural heritage: symbols in Zouglou music may reflect Ivorian cultural identity, traditions, or historical events. By incorporating traditional instruments, clothing, or imagery into their performances, Zouglou artists celebrate and preserve Ivorian heritage. Figurative language in Zouglou may also reflect Ivorian cultural heritage, drawing upon symbols, imagery, and traditions unique to the country. These metaphors can evoke a sense of pride, belonging, and connection among listeners, reinforcing cultural values and collective memory. For instance, in “ASEC-KOTOKO”, there is the incorporation and the celebration of an Ivorian dance step called “*kpaklo*”, an Ivorian artistic heritage preserved till nowadays added to the dance step Zouglou itself. That is, Zouglou performances are characterized by energetic dance moves, comedic gestures, and theatrical elements that enhance the entertainment value. Artists often incorporate humorous skits, dance routines, and interactive elements into their live shows to engage with the audience and create a festive atmosphere. The Zouglou have even a slogan: “**ZOUGLOU, CI**”, to claim that the Zouglou is an Ivorian identity, with ‘CI’ initialism standing for Côte-d’Ivoire.

Unity and Solidarity: Zouglou music frequently promotes messages of unity, solidarity, and collective action. Symbols like hands joined together, the Ivorian flag, or references to national symbols may convey themes of togetherness and strength in the face of challenges. Figurative language in Zouglou music often emphasize themes of unity and solidarity, fostering a sense of community and collective identity among listeners. Metaphorical language may be used to evoke images of togetherness, cooperation, and mutual support, encouraging listeners to stand together in the face of adversity.

Another symbol of unity and solidarity in Zouglou is the fact of working together, that is, the group or the collective: a group of two or more people (most of the time, they are friends) singing together. Or else, the group is associated with artists from another musical style forming what is called ‘the collective’ or ‘le Gbonhi’. The collective, the Gbonhi or the association with another musical genre appeared during the Ivorian post electoral crisis and the most popular themes were the patriotic songs and the ambitions of the politicians. For example, in the song (5) “Commandant Moriba FRCI” by Le Magnific, he promoted the idea of peace and unity. He begins the song like this :

(5 a) « waalaa, tout ce que je vais dire là c’est amusement hein, c’est pour qu’on rigole pour que le pays avance, ne prenez pas ça au sérieux – that’s it, all that I am about to say is to joke, it is just to laugh so that the country will be better, don’t take it seriously ».

In fact, this artist knows that the war that the Ivorian people endured was a very sad and dramatic period, but he turns it in a funny way, a way for him to call for a peaceful atmosphere. Therefore, he deconstructed the uniform of the rebels: (5 b) “la tenue choco des FRCI, d’abord le béret c’est gendarmerie, les grades sur épaule c’est eaux et forêts, le haut du treillis, c’est la marine, le bas du treillis là c’est BAE, dans les pieds c’est les laikais, et puis dans ses mains y’a queue pour fongnon, ça fait joli garçon FRCI – the beautiful uniform of FRCI, first of all the beret is gendarmerie, the ranks on the shoulders are from the Water and Forestry department, the top of the trellis is for Marine, the down is BAE, the shoes are ‘laikais’⁵, and in his hands a tail to show off ».

(5 c) « Pour la paix au pays on va rigoler – for the peace in the country we will laugh ».

The way the uniform of the FRCI is composed is also a symbol of unity and solidarity. He even compared the sound of the helicopter to the name Soro, the sound of a rocket launched by the helicopter to the name ADO, and the sound of a mortar fire to the name

⁵ Laikais is a local, practical and plastic shoe used by both gender

Koudou. That is why in his video clip, there are many comedians like Jimmy Danger, Abass, Guéi Vêh, Kôro Abou, Agalawal, Zongo et Tao, and Boukari, to put the emphasis on the peaceful side of his message. He ends up his song by : (5 d) « les gars, tout ce que j'ai dit là, ne prenez pas ça en considération hein, je suis fou oh, c'est comme ça je suis. Je suis bête, je parle seul, je suis possédé hein, c'est amusement - guys, everything I just said, don't take it into consideration, okay? I am crazy, that is how I am. I am silly, I talk to myself, I am possessed, okay? It is just for fun ».

Resistance and Activism: symbolism and metaphor in Zouglou also serve as a form of resistance and empowerment, empowering listeners to challenge oppression and injustice. Artists may use symbols to express defiance, challenge authority, or advocate for change, inspiring listeners to question the status quo and take action. Metaphorical language may be used to depict struggles for freedom, dignity, and equality, inspiring individuals to take action and advocate for change. The well-suited examples are the song “liberez mon pays”, by the (4) Zouglou collective (composed of Yodé, Pat Sacko, Soum Bill, and Petit Denis), there is another collective with the title “la guerre est finie- war is over”, then the collective ‘David contre Goliath- David against Goliath’, just to mention only these ones.

With these songs calling for resistance, activism, and peace there are expressions such as :

(4 a) “Y’a rien en face c’est maïs – there is nothing ahead, it is a bluff”

(4 b) C’est comment-comment, Drogba Didier est sur le terrain, devant c’est maïs – whatever the situation, Didier Drogba is present, we do not care”.

(4 c) « Quelqu’un qui a des politiques tordues nous on met en place (...) est ce que c’est arme nous on mange, embargo-embargo, gnrinporte quoi – a bad politician (a person with bad political manners) we correct him ».

(4 d) « Ils sont clairs-clairs le soleil va les kpatra (...) tuez nous on est beaucoup, on va les déshabiller – they are whites, the sun will burn them (...) kill us there are many of us, we will undress them”.

(4 e) Tu veux, tu veux pas matchi wavié oh, (...) c’est ça qui est la vérité, on est fatigué, liberez mon pays, (...) on ne veut plus de gbangban, (...) on veut décaler dans la paix, (...) assailants, pays là c’est pas pour toi – whether you agree or not, the match is over (...) this is the truth, we are tired, set my country free (...) we don’t want war/struggle anymore (...) we want to live in peace (...) assailants, this country is not yours”.

The situated period, here is between the Ivorian post electoral crisis of 2002 till the beginning of 2011. In addition to addressing serious issues, Zouglou music often conveys messages of hope, resilience, and empowerment, highlighting the strength and resilience of the Ivorian people in the face of challenges. Artists emphasize the importance of unity, perseverance, and positive change, offering to listeners a sense of optimism in the face of adversity. By focusing on solutions rather than dwelling on problems, Zouglou music can dedramatize serious subjects and inspire action. That is why the majority of Zouglou artists were singing to call for peace.

Spiritual and Cultural Belief: Metaphors in Zouglou may incorporate spiritual or religious symbolism, reflecting the diverse belief systems present in Ivorian society. These symbols can enrich the music's meaning and deepen its connection to Ivorian spirituality and folklore. Besides, these metaphors can explore themes of faith, spirituality, and transcendence, offering to listeners a deeper understanding of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of life in Côte d'Ivoire. For instance, there is the song "les uns et les autres" by Glazahi Kevin, which well present the culture of Bété people during funerals. There is also (3) "Victoire" by Petit Yodé & l'Enfant Siro, in which they also present God as the creator of all things and humans on hearth, the corruption of human race by satan, and then they confirm that they will be a final battle between the devil and God at the end of which, the good (God) will overcome the evil (satan).

The followings examples are some expressions employed:

(3 a) « un jour moi je passais c'est là satan il m'a appelé, il dit Jésus a les foutaises, il a pris mes maquis – one day, I was walking and satan called me saying jesus is rude, he took my beer parlors ».

(3 b) « Tellement digba il ressemblait à Goliath, on dirait un cyborg, une lumière jaillit c'est là Jésus est arrivé – so big that he looks like Goliath, like a cyborg, a light burst forth, that is when Jesus arrived ».

(3 c) « Jeux de jambes de satan, jeux de jambes de Jésus il n'y a pas d'ouverture le gnaga était serré » (...) « jeux de jambes de Jésus, ouverture de satan, Jésus n'a pas dindin oh, un petit crochet, le Goliath a pris K.O – footwork of satan, footwork of Jesus, there is no opening, the fight was tight (...) footwork of Jesus, opening of satan, Jesus did not hesitate, a small crochet, the Goliath is down ».

There are even some christians singers such as Evannt Cheick with “mon devant derrière est soudé en Jésus”, Yoro de Dieu, Gballou Jean-Christ with “wouya-wouya”, ADC with “amusement là ça va », Elie Gata with « Jésus mon numéro 1 », and Richard Krémé with “bayolele”. The musical style of these artists is typically Zouglou. The symbolism used by these singers convey the message of either redemption or salvation. Here also, it can be said that, this conveys a message of positive change, progress, hope, resilience, and optimism for the future using the Nouchi language.

Overall, the use of figurative language in Zouglou music play a vital role in conveying experiences and offering to listeners a rich and nuanced understanding of Ivorian society, culture, and politics. Also, it adds layers of meaning and depth to the genre, allowing artists to communicate complex ideas and emotions while engaging listeners in critical reflection and dialogue about Ivorian society and culture. By employing metaphorical language, Zouglou artists engage listeners in critical reflection, dialogue, and action, contributing to social change and transformation.

2.3. Musical Elements

Beyond lyrics, the musical elements involve the rhythm and pacing of music, the tonal and harmonic elements which contribute to the linguistic aspects of the music. The prosody of a song, including rhythm, tempo, and dynamics, can influence the emotional and physiological responses of listeners. Upbeat rhythms may induce feelings of energy and motivation, while slower tempos can promote relaxation and introspection. Central to the therapeutic application of musical waves is the understanding that sound is a vibrational force. Every note, chord, and rhythm generate waves that travel through the air, penetrating the very fabric of our being. At the cellular level, these vibrational frequencies can induce a harmonious resonance, affecting our physiological functions, brainwave patterns, and emotional states. This phenomenon forms the basis of what is commonly known as “sound therapy” or “sound healing”.

The upbeat rhythms, catchy melodies, and infectious beats of Zouglou music contribute to its playful and vibrant nature. Artists, most of the time incorporate elements of traditional Ivorian music, such as percussion and call-and-response vocals, alongside modern influences to create a unique and dynamic sound. Moreover, there is the repetition or else called chorus or refrain, which also is a powerful linguistic tool in music, contributing to memorability and reinforcing key messages. Repetitive phrasing or affirmations in lyrics can serve as a form of positive reinforcement, promoting a sense of stability and reassurance.

Next, is the tonal quality and harmonic structure of a music that convey different moods and emotional nuances. Major keys often evoke a sense of happiness or triumph, while minor keys may elicit feelings of melancholy or introspection. The interplay of harmonies contributes to the overall emotional impact of the music.

2.4. Cross-Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Elements

Music's ability to transcend linguistic barriers is a unique feature that contributes to its universal appeal. Utilizing songs in various languages and cultural styles broadens the reach of music therapy, catering to diverse audiences and creating inclusive healing spaces. Zouglou music draws inspiration from Ivorian culture, incorporating references to local traditions, customs, and everyday life experiences to connect with their audience. By tapping into familiar cultural themes, artists are able to connect with their audience on a deeper level and elicit laughter through shared experiences. There are even some artists who sing in their native languages. Zouglou music is often associated with celebrations, festivals, and community gatherings. Artists create a celebratory atmosphere through their performances, encouraging audiences to dance, sing along, and participate in the music. This sense of communal joy and cultural connection can help to lighten the mood and dedramatize the themes explored in the songs.

Conclusion

In the convergence of linguistic elements and musical expression, the therapeutic potential of music becomes a rich tapestry, offering a myriad of ways for individuals to engage with their emotions, narratives, and inner selves. This interdisciplinary approach to healing underscores the profound connection between language and music, inviting individuals to explore the transformative power that emerges when these two expressive realms converge. More precisely, the symbiotic relationship between language and music facilitates emotional expression and regulation. Lyrics infused with personal narratives or universal themes resonate deeply with listeners, providing avenues for catharsis, validation, and self-reflection. Therefore, the combination of humor, figurative language, musical elements, cultural relatability, and optimistic messaging helps Zouglou artists to dedramatize serious topics and engage listeners in meaningful conversations about social and political issues. However, despite the trivializing aspect of Nouchi among some Zouglou artists, it is undeniable that Nouchi is also a source of tension in other musical styles and even among some Zouglou artists.

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