

A Critical Analysis of the Manifestation of Patriarchal Power Relations in Zimbabwe's Urban Groove Music

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Abstract: *This article analyzes how patriarchal power relations have evolved and manifested through Zimbabwean Urban Groove music. We will explore the extent to which the urban groove musical genre reproduces dominant, patriarchal power relations through the discourse of popular culture paying particular attention to findings by scholars such as Stuart Hall, John Fiske, among others. The paper will also show how patriarchal power relations appear as mystical and religious connotations as it turns its attention from exotic to mundane and from indigenous to authored culture.*

Keywords: *patriarchal, power relations, urban grooves music, musical genre, popular culture, Zimbabwe*

I. Introduction

Zimbabwean Urban Groove musical genre is a type of digital music that is composed and produced by young musicians and a generally touches to the taste of youthful audiences (<http://jivezimbabwe.com/index.php/on-music/77-the-history-of-zimbabwe-music>). Patriarchy literally means the rule of the father in a male-dominated society be it a monogamous or polygamous family set up. Put differently, it is an ideological construct which considers men as superior to women, (Walby, 1990). Storey et al (2001: 6) posits that "Popular culture is simply culture which is widely favoured or well-liked by many people or ... culture which is left over after we have decided what high culture is? In the later definition, popular culture is considered a residual category, which accommodates cultural texts and practices. Hall (2007) argues that cultural industries (media companies) do have the power to rework by repetition and selection to implant such definitions as those referred to above, so much that they fit descriptions of perceived dominant culture.

Historical development of the Zimbabwean Urban Groove musical genre

The Zimbabwean Urban Groove music can be traced back to the 1980s when iconic music figures like the late Fortune Muparutsa and the late Prince Tendai Mupfuruutsa pioneered the urban music genre for the very first time in Zimbabwe. Of particular note, the said musical genre borrowed heavily from the already existing and flourishing international Rhythm and Blues (hereinafter R&B) and Rap music, (www.profileengine.com).

Back then in time, the Urban Groove genre did not garner popular support from the local music fans as the music scene was dominated by the notorious Sungura musical genre. Put differently, the former (urban groove musical genre) was perceived as low culture music reflecting western cultural ideologies. Against the backdrop of such perceptions, the urban groove musical genre commanded poor air play on both local radio and television stations. However, against odds the said iconic pioneers of urban groove genre slowly gained prominence alongside the sungura musical genre. As an example, Muparutsa became famous following his release of the single hit titled Rumours (Makuhwa) in the late 1980s.

Furthermore, Muparutsa rose to fame in the 1990s after he produced a scorcher album titled Wheels of Fortune. What makes this album even special is that it was produced and recorded by the artist himself. The album features songs like Ease Money, Simbarashe and Kana matobo. The chorus of the Kana matobo lyrics were arranged as follows, Ndiye ndiye wangu wangu ndega ... Ndakaenda kuChitungwiza, kuChitungwiza, Ndikaona vasikana vasikana ... Kana matomabo, kana matomabo ini ndinikanda ... Yambiro usatembe naMurombo, yambiro ungazviwanire zvakawanda ... When translated to English this song goes ... The only, only ... only, only mine ... I went to the city of Chitungwiza, Chitungwiza ... and I saw girls ... I will fight and fight until the break of the dawn ... Be warned not to give space to or play with a fool as Murombo ... You will find yourself in mess The song also warns the man to use preventive or protective measures during sexual intercourse. Explicitly, this was a production and reproduction of the dominant, patriarchal power structures in our society as the text positioned men in command of sexual authority over their spouses. The song seems to portray men as having the power to have sex with any woman of their choice provided they use

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protection against HIV/AIDS and go back home safe. Thus, the musical text is viewed in a multi-dimensional context which favours many interpretations. However, it should be noted that whatever context may be attached to the text, the existence of patriarchal connotations is undeniable (Hall, 1980).

On another note, Prince Mupfurutisa rose to stardom when he released songs such as Zambezi to Limpopo, On and On, Sweet Temptation, Character among other hits. His song Character (1997) whose part lyrics goes "I love your character wow-ooooo, I love your attitude ... Don't change your character, woo, immaculate character woo, I love character, woo ... woo, woo, woo, woo, character babe, yooo The song was even nominated for Kora Music Awards in the Best African Song of the year category, (www.nehandaradio.com). That the song amassed the said Award speak volumes about how the urban groove genre was slowly gaining popularity in Zimbabwe and Africa at large.

It is also noteworthy that Mupfurutisa's song Character bears strong patriarchal ideologies. (Hall (2007) posits that popular culture organizes human beings as 'cultural dopes' not in a position to tell that what they are being fed is an updated form of the opium of the people. The song Character, upheld the notion that a man has to approve his fiancée's character and attitude credentials before they are officially married. The song frankly prescribed that a woman was supposed to be extra cultured. Furthermore, she has to be an absolute marriage package, of which failure to meet such high moral standards in our social settings would live her with all sorts of demeaning labels.

The Post-Millennium conceptualization of Zimbabwean Urban Groove music and its impact on patriarchal power relations

While the urban groove musical genre is said to have evolved since the 1980s, it can be said that the genre gained much support in the turn of the millennium when it was rebranded 'Urban Grooves'. Urban Grooves genre was then developed particularly by young musicians in the country who viewed it as an interesting opportunity to push the boundaries of culture so as to create new discourses to keep abreast of the ever-changing cultural aspects of the human race. The music subsequently, become a popular culture in the same period after the introduction of the 100 percent local content policy on electronic media which was imposed by The Ministry of Information and Publicity in a bid to promote Zimbabwe's young artists. Siziba (2009) argues that urban grooves artists in Zimbabwe have either maintained or pushed the frontiers of patriarchal power relations in the society and also they have been central actors in popular culture formation.

Of particular mention, the turn of the millennium also witnessed the proliferation of digital recording in the music industry. It became less costly for many Zimbabwean Urban Grooves artists to record their music as there was no need to hire a full band to play various musical instruments like guitars, drums, violins keyboards and so on. That saw the birth of Hip Hop, Dancehall as well as electronic dance and R&B by music producer Delani Makhallima. His efforts were augmented by the erstwhile Radio 3 disc jockey (DJ) Innocent Tshuma who dedicated part of his midnight shows to playing and showcasing music from around Zimbabwe. More so, other musicians such as Kenneth Jonasi a.k.a Mr Bell, the Movip (More Voices in Perfection) Family, Shame and Nathan, Roy and Royce among others rocked the urban groove musical scene. Of late, artists such as Mupfurutisa and Mupfurutisa used analog recording systems (<http://jivezimbabwe.com/index.php/on-music/77-the-history-of-zimbabwe-music>).

Fiske (1989) postulates that popular culture is made up of various formations of subordinated groups of people, discursive (digressing from subject to subject) and material, that are provided by the social system that dis-empowers them. Nowadays, the culture industry products (music) carry the economically dominant ideologies; with traces of force within them that are hegemonic (Manase, 2009). For example, the song by Alexio called Chibvukubvuku change (My darling) with the lyric composed partly as follows ... Ndiwe chibvukubvuku changu, ndiwe chichekecheke changu, ... ndichakutengera leather sofa DVD neradio ineCD ... kunyange zvangu ndiri rovha ndichamira-mira ndichijingirisa ... When translated the song goes as follows, You are my love ... absolutely the one ... I will buy you a leather lounge suit, DVD and a CD Changer ... Even though I am not gainfully employed, I will try my level best to make you happy materially....

The song explains the position of women in our society as economically dependent on men. The song view men as bread-winners, who have the monetary power with women being viewed as appendages of men.

Arguably though, women urban grooves artists such as Evernice Chamboko, Tererai Mugwadi, Betty Makaya among others have challenged the discourse by competing with men in the urban grooves industry. However, most of them play as second fiddle in duets with male artists. For instance, MC Villa features Evernice Chamboko on the song Unodzoka here and Jamal features Betty Makaya in the song Kurwizi. More so, the rumour mill had it that, Chamboko was dropped from participating in the Unodzoka here video after MC Villa de-campaigned her as not photogenic. Role playing in the song as directed by the owner of the song (MC Villa) shows patriarchal control inherent in our social settings such as the family set up and even during moments of courtship and dating.

In the song, MC Villa gave himself a position to explain and convince Chamboko that he will certainly come back to her from overseas. MC Villa raps: ... I have got one heart ... wangu wakamera pauri ... ndinodzoka ... ndodzoka nemari ndigobhadhara roora - My heart will always love you ... will definitely come back to you babe ... I will come after making money so that I can pay for your lobola. The chorus part of Unodzoka here, was sung by Chamboko and it goes as follows Dzoka dzoka mudiwa, dzoka dzoka iwe ... Unodzoka here Tendai, unodzoka here nhai, unodzoka here iwe ... ndogara sei ndega, ohoo iwe kana usipo (How will I make if you are not around with me) ... ndingazodawo ani - Please come, come darling ... Will you come back from the diaspora ... Will you ... Really, will you ... Whom do I have to love during your absence ... This chorus reinforces male dominance in the urban contemporary music. This is so because Chamboko portrayed herself as a very submissive woman to her lover who has to be alone while her would-be husband is overseas bound.

Further Evernice Chamboko's brilliant voice was therefore betrayed by her fairly unconvincing physical appearances to deny her a ticket to partake in the video production of the song Unodzoka here (Will you ever come back). Resultantly, another lady by the name Priscilla with stunning looks gate-crushed on the video. This is a female stereo-typification by men in commodifying women through the 'Urban Grooves' musical discourse. More importantly, such stereotypes are reflective of the societal attitudes that relegate women to the doldrums of male dominance in almost all spheres of life including the music industry.

The Jamal-Betty Makaya song titled Kurwizi whose lyrics goes, Patakaenda kurwizi taive vaviri shiri dzichitipa mhanzi, kufadza iwe neni, ini ndikakuyimbira chimbo ndipo apo rudo ... (As we go dating down the valley, just the two of us, the birds singing for us, I went head over heels with you) The wording of the song also informs about underlying patriarchal power structures that men take the show in love relationships. This is vindicated by the fact that the lyrics show that it's the malefolk who normally determine where and when to go out as a couple. Fiske (1957: 64) further notes that "... the meaning of (musical) text must be thought in terms of which set of discourses it encounters in any particular set of circumstances and how this encounter may re-structure both the meaning of the text and the discourses which it meets. The meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledge, prejudices, resistance, etc) brought to bear on the text by the reader and the crucial factor in the encounter of audience/subject and text will be the range of discourses at the disposal of the audiences."

The reproduction of the dominant patriarchal power relations have also been inevitable in Nasty Trix's song DDF (2004) whose title was drawn from District Development Fund unit which is in charge of roads and other infrastructure maintenance. As cited by Manase (2009: 59), the song DDF begins with a chorus that describes the girls beauty and the risks the singer is prepared to take for her: "Ndati mwanasikana iwe wakabatana, Hee kani, Chero ukanditi tsenga tara ndinokutsengera, Handina basa nazvo kana DDF ikandisungisa (You are such a beautiful girl, Yeah you see, Even if you order me to chew the tarred road I will devour it, I don't care if the DDF apprehends me)." Manase (2009: 59) further posits that "DDF describes the singer's determined pursuit of a local 'girl' till he wins her love and blessings from her father and church congregation.

The lyrics in Nasty Trixx,s DDF are also packaged in a much more macho-style seen in the comparison of the girl's beauty with metaphors that link the local with the foreign, such as the treacherous beauty that can be confused with the weapons of mass destruction that at the time were being searched for by the allied American and British troops during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, (Manase, 2009). Ordinarily, patriarchal ideas as upheld by the father and the church congregation upon marriage "blur the distinction between sex and gender and assume that all socio-economic and political distinctions between men and women are rooted in biology or anatomy," (Heywood, 2003: 248). These rituals, therefore formalizes repetitively stereotypical acts (Coman and Rothenbuhler, 2005) in patriarchal power relations. Nairn (1988: p 556) cited in Storey (1997) notes that "People enjoy the Monarchical twaddle, and how very little sign of being robotised or 'brain -washed.' They relish the weird mixture of cheap fun, exalted moments and great spectacles, and come back for more. Whatever it all means that meaning is sustained and apparently continually refreshed by a genuine, positive will more significant than any amount of peevish grouching around cost."

Furthermore, Nasty Trix's (2004) lyrics goes, Zvandakaona kumashure zvaiita kunge kuripa ngozi, Baby rakanditarisa zvikandishungurudza, Shape yaiva nayo ndakamutaurira asaende Iraq, Mira ungzonzi ndiwe chombo chekuparadza chirikutsvagwa nemavheti.... (What I saw was like appeasing an evil spirit, the girl looked at me and I was hypnotized, Because of her great shape, I told her not go to Iraq, Wait a minute, they will say you are the weapon of mass destruction that the whites are looking for). Here, the issue of pledging of the girl child to appease avenging spirit has been brought to light albeit in a subtle way which has been a common practice in the Zimbabwean culture. Siziba (2009: 2) further notes that such a "gerontocratic surveillance system has sought to regulate, suppress, control, define, shape and thus inform the production of culture and how young people imbibe it."

To add on to the above, Jah Praizer has also propagated patriarchal power relations in his song titled Gochi Gochi - Gochi gochi goye ... tichange takaunangana vakomana tiripadare ... ngoma ngairire ... ndokuti titandare, ndokuti tifare....When translated, the song goes, “Happy, Happy, Happy people, we will gather as men, beating the drum so that we are happy.” The language used in this song is discriminatory doctrinaire in that it claims complete and exclusive possession of political truth and abhors compromise by women in our society, (Geertz, 1973). It is alienative in that it proclaims women in the domesticity thereby enforcing their subservience to men. As a result, male culture as portrayed in the song has been re-affirmed through language use in Urban Grooves music.

On the contrary, it should be noted that cultural forms are not coherent. Actually they play on contradictions, especially when they function in the domain of 'popular culture', (Hall, 2007). Urban Grooves artist Diana Samkange of the group 2BG (Two Boys and a Girl) challenged male patriarchy through complicity and subversion: the politics of everyday experiences and love. Diana mocks Stunner in the American East Coast and West Coast hip-hop rivalry for being a cheap musician who travels around in public transport and borrows clothes from friends, (Manase, 2009). The attack on Stunner by Diana vehemently denounces male domination by revealing that he was not economically stable as he would depend on exchanging wardrobes in a bid to keep up appearances or maintain aesthetics in the eyes of the general public as celebrity or public figure.

Gendered perspectives of patriarchal power relations in Zimbabwe's urban groove music

Sexual relations between men and women have also been redefined by artists such as Decibel, David Chifunyise and Plexades Wenyika.” For instance, Decibel chastises male permissiveness and sugar daddies in his song 'Madhara' (Elderly Men) The flow of the song Madhara goes as Kune mamwe madhara asingade kukura apo makore aenda ... kukwezva vana nekushindisa mari ... (Some old men don't appreciate that they are aging wanting to date young girls ... using material things with the intention of having unprotected sex with the minor girls). The song also warns young women and society of the predatory nature of relationships between young women and elderly (usually) married man. Decibel challenged the reproduction of patriarchal power relations as men are commonly known of marrying young girls who may qualify to be their daughters or grandchildren by virtue of birth. Eco (1972) cited in Fiske (1989) posits that whenever there are significant social difference between the encoder and decoders of a text, then decoding will be aberrant as indicated by Decibel a male artist in the song 'Madhara' in tasking patriarchy.

Patriarchal power relations have also been slapped in the face by Chifunyise and Wenyika (2002) after they compiled an Urban Grooves album on Wills and Inheritance laws and the complications of multiple sexual relationships. The album featured Kelly Rusike, the late Robert Chiriga, Pastor G, the poet Chirikure Chirikure, Loveness Wesa, Dumi Ngulube and Amagents inter alia, (www.allafrica.com). It speaks of how such multiple sexual relationships disadvantage the remaining offspring born out of wed lock upon the death of the parents (usually the father). In such a scenario, the cultural prescriptions and definitions of sexuality, masculinity and femininity that privilege the adult male are deconstructed, (Siziba, 2009). To the extent that these artists vocalized social reality as they saw it and contested adult imperatives of polygamy they can be credited for pushing the moral boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the production and reproduction of culture.

Bourdieu (1993) cited in Siziba (2009) notes that dress and body language are fundamental resources that do not generate an identity in a dense cultural maze populated by struggles for hegemony, but they also point to ensuring hegemonic contests. As Siziba (2009; 23) elaborates “At any given point non-conformity or conformity to set dress codes indicate an intricate cultural duel. Body language and dress are forms of capital that can be mobilized to enforce as well as challenge the cultural hegemony of any social fraction in any given social context. Dress and body language are cultural artifacts that are value laden and saturated by certain ideological standpoints.” The argument here is that these cultural and ideological contestations can be noted in the body language and dress sense of urban grooves artists (and consequently in those who have adopted the lifestyle).

With the advent of Urban Grooves, formerly tabooed and stigmatized modes of dressing now pervade Zimbabwe, rural and urban areas courtesy of the deconstruction of ideology and the revelation that patriarchal gerontocratic power is both mortal and fallible. Even though globalization has largely informed the culture industry in Zimbabwe particularly regarding body language and dress, urban grooves artists can be credited for being the fore-runners in subscribing to tastes and lifestyles that defied Zimbabwean society's convention.

Gramsci (1937) argues that what was previously secondary and subordinate, even incidental, is now taken to be primary – becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. He also went on to posit that the old collective will dissolves into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially. This has been typical of urban grooves artists with plaited hair, pierced, tattooed and marked bodies as well as earrings ear studs such as Leonard Mapfumo, Snipper Storm, Exquitz among others. On another note,

female artists such as Tererai, Diana, and Paulina among others have been no exception as they now grow dreadlocks, bald their heads and often dress in a masculine manner.

The recipients of urban grooves music, however, are probably situated not in positions of conformity or opposition to the dominant ideology, but in ones that conform to it in some ways, but not others, they accept the dominant ideology in general, but modify or inflect it to meet the needs of their specific situation, (Hall, 1980a). Siziba (2009: 21) notes that “By contesting the monopoly that adults had over language young people have deconstructed the notion that culture is exclusively adult in orientation. Consequently, young people have largely been partakers of a value system deriving from the construction of adults. Proper tradition and culture have been key gate keeping words that have the diffusion and maintenance of norms, values and mores that have drawn the line between what is acceptable and not particularly with regards to young people's behaviour.

II. Conclusion

From the foregoing, one can discern that recent initiatives and movements by young people through urban grooves music have reconfigured the structures of social relations as well as other forces that inform the production and reproduction of culture. The notion that “urban grooves music simply reproduces dominant, patriarchal power relations” has been largely influenced by discourse. Young people have successfully contested and occupied various facets of the Zimbabwean urban music space. Through music, dressing, youth dialects, body language as well as dance in urban grooves music genre among other things, young artists have become central actors in the production and reproduction of popular culture.

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