



Lyricism, Populism and Negritude: A Comparative Study of Léon-Gontran Damas' Poetry and Fela Kuti's Music

Victor Terfa ATSAAM (Ph.D)

ORCID: 0000-0002-3704-4862

Department of Literary and Cultural Studies, Nigeria French Language Village, Badagry, Lagos State

Received: 05.05.2026 | Accepted: 05.06.2026 | Published: 10.06.2026

*Corresponding Author: Victor Terfa ATSAAM (Ph.D)

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.20630479](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20630479)

Abstract

Original Research Article

This article seeks to make a comparative study of lyricism, populism and Negritude in Léon-Gontran Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela Kuti's Afrobeat music. Whereas Damas is from French Guiana in West Indies, Fela is from Nigeria in West Africa. Using the philosophical theory of Negritude and populism literary school of thought, the research made a critical comparative analysis of two different lyrical artistic productions to reveal their areas of convergence as well as divergence. In the study, four poems of Léon-Gontran Damas ("Sale", "They Came Tonight", "The Blues" and "The Black's Lament") and four of Fela Kuti's musical tracks ("Colonial Mentality", "Gentleman", "Casket for the Head of State" and "International Thief Thief-ITT") were analysed based on comparative methodology. Firstly, the research revealed that Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela's Afrobeat music are both rhythmical based on their repetition of simple lyrical words. Secondary, the two artistic creations emphasize populism, a political and literary concept in which ordinary people's rights are defended against established privileged groups and individuals. Thirdly, both creativities rely on the philosophy of Negritude, which is a social and literary movement that seeks reclamation of original values of Black people, whether on African continent or living in diaspora. The study concludes that although Fela's Afrobeat is largely related to Damas' lyrical poetry, there are certain differences. The most important divergence resides in the language use. Damas employs pure French in his poetry while Fela relies on Nigerian Creole English, sometimes mixed with his native Yoruba language, to convey his message.

Keywords: lyricism, populism, Negritude, lyrical poetry, Afrobeat music.

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)

Introduction

At the opening of the last millennium, two key artistic and historical events marked the beginning of the awakening of awareness among Black people. The first is the discovery of Negro art by a group of painters and artists in Paris, France between 1905 and 1907. These European artists were

astonished at the Black African fetishes which were regarded as valuable objects of new art. As a matter of fact, in *La littérature nègre*, Jacques Chevrier (1990, p. 18) affirms that, "La découverte de l'art nègre en France a des répercussions sur la peinture, la musique et la littérature" [the discovery of Negro art in France has repercussion on painting, music and



literature].

The second notable artistic and historical feature with lasting repercussion on Black awareness is the Harlem Renaissance. According to Chevrier (1990, p. 19), this artistic movement which occurred in the United States in early 1920s was remarkable. It led to a situation whereby:

Le jazz, la poésie, le théâtre, la danse, mais aussi un certain air que l'on ne respirait nulle part ailleurs, une certaine manière d'être et de sentir (appelé "soul") contribuèrent à la prise de conscience par les Noirs américains de leur originalité et de leur personnalité, et marquèrent le début de la "Renaissance noire".

[Jazz, poetry, theatre, dance, but also a certain atmosphere found nowhere else, a certain way of being and feeling (called "soul") contributed to the awakening of Black Americans to their originality and unique personalities, and marked the beginning of the Black Renaissance]

Essentially, as a movement in search of awakening of Black consciousness and original Black African values, Black Renaissance and its adherents, as affirmed by Chevrier (1990, p. 19), « refusaient le monde de racisme, de violence et de matérialisme dans lequel l'Amérique tentait de les enfermer » [rejected the world of racism, violence and materialism to which America was trying to subject them].

Black Renaissance along with Negro art with their aspirations inspired Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Léon-Gontran Damas, who eventually founded Negritude. As a social and literary movement, Negritude seeks reclamation of original values of Black peoples, whether on African continent or living in diaspora. In the early 1920s when Negritude began through the writings of its three proponents, poetry was the initial medium of artistic expression, with Léon-Gontran Damas' poems being generally composed of simple lyrics.

The presence of simple lyrics in poetry and music in form of verses and choruses, enables an artist to adequately tell their stories to convey feelings and experience. As a matter of fact, lyricism as a form of poetic and musical expression, is the basic feature which brings unity between the music of the Nigerian Fela Kuti and Léon-Gontran Damas' poetry.

Léon-Gontran Damas was born on the 28th March, 1912 and died on the 22nd January, 1978. According to UDC Writers (udc.libguides.com/udc-writers/damas), he "was a French Guianese poet, journalist, and politician". His literary genre is widely described as lyrical poetry. Fela Anikulapo Kuti (widely called Fela Kuti) was a Nigerian musician born on the 15th October 1938 and died on the 2nd August 1997. A musician as well as a political activist, Fela's musical genre, according to *Wikipedia* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fela_Kuti), "combines West African music with American funk and jazz", a combination called Afrobeat.

This article therefore aims at:

- Examining how lyricism functions as an artistic expression.
- Comparing its representation in Léon-Gontran Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela Kuti's Afrobeat music, articulating both similarities and dissimilarities.
- Demonstrating how Negritude and populism operate as structuring principles that highlight lyricism in both poetry and music, revealing more intense cultural and political dimensions.

1. Negritude as a Populist Movement: A Literary Review

Essentially, the genesis of the concept of Negritude indicates that it is based on the political concept of populism. Although populism is a contested political concept, at the beginning of the 20th century, two key ideas were generally accepted to characterize it, especially in Latin America. The first is reference to the plight of ordinary people in the hands of privileged individuals. The second is the rejection of class struggle.

More importantly is the literary notion of

populism. This literary school of thought emerging in Latin America in 1929, corresponds with the period and aspiration of Negritude postulated mainly by Caribbean writers. If this school of thought was created in 1929 to advocate the lives of ordinary people maltreated by established elitist groups in Latin America, it is apparent that the Negritude social and literary movement was postulated in the 1930s to accomplish the populist school of thought.

Aimé Césaire and Léon-Gontran Damas are the two out of three of the proponents of Negritude, both being Caribbean. Although Damas' *Pigments* (1937) was written two years before Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939), the latter is considered to be the mother work of Negritude.

It is noteworthy to recall that the historical and social contextual genesis of Negritude ascribes to the Negro art and the Harlem Renaissance. The discovery of the Negro art along with its consequent promotion in Paris in 1907 set the ball rolling for protests against the plight of Black people considered maltreated at the hands elitist European groups and individuals. With numerous expositions of Negro art organized since then, and now and then, much in Europe as in America, Harlem Renaissance was founded in early 1920s. According to Chevrier (1990, p. 19),

C'était l'époque où les écrivains de la « lost generation » - Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald - déçu par l'effondrement des valeurs consécutif à la première guerre mondiale, fuyaient une Amérique entièrement asservie au culte du dollar et se tournaient vers l'Europe aux anciens parapets.

[This was the period of time when writers of the lost generation - Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald - mesmerized by the consistent erosion of values during the First World War, fled an America entirely enslaved to the cult of the

dollar and turning towards Europe with its ancient ramparts].

It is interesting to note that these young American writers were not running away from America because of hunger but as a result of unjust wealth. In the early 1920s, these American writers considered excessive wealth in America at the expense of poor people, mainly Black Americans, as repugnant and repudiating. Chevrier (1990, p. 19) elaborates further that,

Dans ce contexte, il va de soi que les jeunes écrivains noirs n'étaient nullement enclins à perpétuer la tradition du plaidoyer social d'un Du Bois en faveur de l'intégration.

[In this context, it goes without saying that young Black writers were by no means inclined to perpetuate the tradition of social advocacy of a Du Bois in favour of integration].

As a matter of fact, W.E.B Du Bois (1868-1963), American sociologist, is considered in many respects, as the father of Negritude. It is apparent that his earlier quest for advocacy in the early 1920s for social integration vis-à-vis the plight of Black people, first in America then elsewhere, is a catalyst for the eventual formation of Negritude based on populist political ideology. In this perspective, in her article, "Bit in the Mouth, Death in the Soul: Remembering the Poetry of Léon-Gontran Damas", Kathleen Gyssels (2018, p. 3) writes that,

Negritude was born thanks to the momentous meeting of these three young students of African descent in Paris in the 1930s. The urge to protest publically against their inferior status was anchored in the avant-garde movement such as surrealism, on the one hand, and Harlem Renaissance, on the other hand. Indeed all three were struck by the influence of

African Americans exiled in the French capital and the movement saw the light of day under the auspices and imprint of various African Americans.

From that perspective, Caribbean postcolonial literature is generally described as a populist literature. In *La Littérature Franco antillaise*, Régis Antoine (1992, p. 357-9) takes time to present a number of key features of populism as an integral aspect of Francophone Caribbean literature. Firstly, come songs. According to him:

Les chansons populaires de Guadeloupe s'entendent comme une parole seconde dans les paragraphes de narration, dans les dialogues, et le lecteur est tenté d'y poser les notes de musiques connues.

[Popular songs from Guadeloupe can be heard as a secondary voice within the narrative paragraphs and dialogues, and the reader is tempted to post familiar musical notes there].

The second feature of populism in Francophone Caribbean literature resides in the characters themselves. According to Antoine (1992, p. 358), populism in Caribbean literature is based on « le choix des personnages qui rend compte d'un exode rural désormais généralisé » [the choice of characters that makes sense of a now widespread rural exodus]. It is apparent that widespread rural exodus amongst the people is mainly as a result of abject poverty and lack of basic human needs. Finally, Antoine concludes that :

Ce populisme même lorsqu'il s'accompagne de l'expression d'une protestation, comme c'est généralement le cas, ne laisse pas d'irriter parfois par une impression d'extériorité, un gout pour le pittoresque.

[This populism, even when

accompanied by the expression of protest, as is generally the case, sometimes irritates with its expression of detachment, its penchant for the picturesque].

Effectively, these aforementioned features linked to Negritude and populism make the former a populist movement. Additionally, the same characteristics are shared by Léon-Gontran Damas and Fela Kuti, and therefore bring a rapprochement between Damas' poetry and Fela's music.

The base of this rapprochement between Damas' poetry and Fela's music is Negritude, which is populist in nature. In this regard, in *Rethinking Negritude through Léon-Gontran Damas*, Bart Miller (2014, p. 28) opins that,

Negritude was [...] the first step of reimagining social consciousness for West Indian writers [...] It constituted an imagination of difference through literary experimentation in order to contest the racism and assimilation upon which the social order of colonialism depended.

Consequently, this experimentation worked well because the module employed by Negritude has been since adopted and practiced even in music. In the late 1970s, Fela Kuti's Afrobeat music ochestrated Léon-Gontran Damas' lyrical poetry, adopting the latter's simple lyricism in order to contest social injustices melted on Nigerian populace by the elitist military rulership.

Conclusively, Negritude as a first step of reimagining social consciousness for Black Indian writers is fundamentally a populist movement. It evolved first and foremost to denounce maltreatment of Black people in the Western World. It was later adopted in literature and beyond to incite Black people in an attempt to get them to cherish and embrace their original cultural values.

As a matter of fact, this research bridges three

distinct domains that are often treated separately:

- Francophone Caribbean Literature
- African Performing Arts
- Political theoretical frameworks.

By bringing these domains together, the research contributes to the development of an interdisciplinary and transcultural approach to Negro-African literary studies, foregrounding the interconnectedness of cultural experiences across Francophone and Anglophone hemispheres.

2. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Two theories define the scope of this study. The first is Negritude. As a social and literary concept formulated by Aimé Césaire (Martinique), Léopold Senghor (Senegal) and Léon-Gontran Damas (French Guiana), Negritude seeks reclamation of original values of Black people, either on African continent or living in diaspora. The second theory is populism, which is a political and literary concept that seeks to address the rights of ordinary people maltreated by established privileged groups. In this regard, according to *Dictionnaire Universel* (4th edition) (p. 954), populism is a “École littéraire créée en 1929, qui prônait la description de la vie du petit peuple” [literary school of thought created in 1929 which advocated for the description on the life of ordinary people].

3. Research Methodology

The basic aim of this research is to make a comparative study of Léon-Gontran Damas’ poetry and Fela Kuti’s music. Whereas Damas’ poems were written in the early 1930s, Fela’s music was composed in the late 1970’s. The purpose of the study is to illustrate to what extent Fela Kuti, a Nigerian afrobeat musician has appreciated and imbibed the artistic concept of Negritude, especially based on the use of lyrical artistic expression as initiated by Léon-Gontran Damas, a French Gusanese poet of engagement.

In order to carry out the research, four Damas’ poems as well as four Fela’s musical tracks will constitute the primary source of information.

Damas’ four poems under study are: “Sale”, “They Came Tonight”, “The Blues” and “The Black’s Lament”. Fela’s musical tracks to be analysed are: “Colonial Mentality”, “Gentleman”, “Coffin for the Head of State” and “International Thief Thief”. With the aid of secondary sources obtained from critical comments from intellectual as well as internet and library materials, the research will be achieved.

4. Analysis and Discussions

4.1. Lyricism as a Popular Art for Conscientisation

First and foremost, lyricism is an artistic device for popular conscientisation. According to an online education website, *StudySmarter* (www.studysmarter.co.uk) creative writing, (2024), “Lyricism refers to the expression of personal emotions or thoughts through poetry, song or prose, characterized by its poetic quality and musicality”. This underlines the fact that the art of lyricism is shared by musicians with poets. This explains the link between Fela’s music and Damas’ poetry. They both employ lyrics, which according to *Wikipedia* (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyrics), “are words that make up a song, usually consisting of verses and choruses”. In most cases, lyrics, as noted by *Cambridge Dictionary* (web), are “the words of a song, especially a popular song”. This underscores the fact that lyricism is device in popular art, music and poetry alike.

Therefore, populism is at the heart of lyricism, given the fact that the purpose of the latter is popular conscientisation. At this juncture, it is important to revisit Antoine’s observation on populism as outlined in the literary review section of this research. Antoine mentions three key elements of populism in Caribbean literature which are, by extension, shared by musicians, which are: a sung presence, people’s hardships and expression of protest. These three elements of populism are shared by Fela and Damas in their lyrical arts.

4.1.1 A Sung Presence: Repetitiveness and Sonority of Words

The first characteristic of lyricism is singing.

It is made possible by the tendency in words arrangement whose sounds are musical, giving rise to singing. Damas' lyrical poems are fundamental of such art. In Damas' poem "They Came Tonight", William Seaton (<https://williamseaton.blogspot.com/2017/02>) points out in his article "Poetry on the Loose: Floating on the Ocean of Words", the repetitiveness and sonority of words:

They came the night the
tom
tom
spun from
rhythm
to
rhythm
frenzy
of eyes
the frenzy of hands
the frenzy
of the feet of statues.

It is observable in the above Damas' poem that lyricism created by the disjointed arrangement of words gives rise to repetitiveness and musicality. For example: "tom tom spun from rhythm to rhythm" creates a musical character that prompts singing and popular rapping.

Interestingly, the same lyricism is replicated in Fela's music. These repetitiveness and sonority of words are equally noticeable in Fela's "Colonial Mentality", the fourth track in the album titled *Anthology 2* (2010) made available on www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Colonial...:

E be so
E be so them dey do, them dey
overdo
All the things them dey do
(E be so!)
E be so them dey do

Them dey do, them dey
overdo

All the things them dey do
(E be so!)

In a flare of Nigerian Creole English, Fela's music, as exemplified by "Colonial Mentality", is also characterised by repetitiveness and sonority. In this case, the Creole expression "E be so" (That is it), is regularly employed in the poem not only to create musicality and thus ensure a sung presence, but also to reinforce the position of the artist.

4.1.2. Picturesque Representation of People's Hardships

Being a device in popular art, lyricism is generally characterised by the taste for picturesque representation of people's hardships. It is important to bear in mind that the plight of ordinary people oppressed by established privileged groups, is an essential character in literary and political populisms.

In art and music, lyrics are often employed to depict ordinary people's hardship thereby revealing the manner in which established privileged groups have maltreated them. Fela shares this lyrical element with Damas. For example, Damas' poem "The Blues" as noted by Williams Seaton (<https://williamseaton.blogspot.com/2017/02>), shows how colonial administration maltreated ordinary Caribbean people:

Will they never know this
resentment in my heart
the eyes of distrust opened
too late
they made off with the space
that was mine
the clothes
the days
the life
the song.

A similar picturesque representation of

ordinary people's hardships abounds in Fela's music. In his musical track "Coffin for the Head of State" in a collection *Fela Kuti & Afrika 70*, the Nigerian musician takes a swipe, this time at the hypocritical attitudes of many Nigerian Christians and Muslims, especially in corridors of power. According *Genius* ([genius.com\Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70](https://genius.com/Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70)), Fela, in Damas' style, aligns himself with ordinary people while painting the picture of their maltreatment by privileged African Christians and Muslims thus:

I waka many village
anywhere in Africa
I waka many village
anywhere in Africa
Pastor's house na him dey
fine pass
My people them dey stay for
poor surroundings
Pastor's dress na him dey
clean pass
E hard for my people for
them to buy soap
Pastor na him them give
respect pass
And them do bad bad bad bad
things.

In his rather Nigerian Creole English, he says he "waka many village" (explore several villages) in Africa and notices marginalization of ordinary people even by religious individuals. Additionally, in a picturesque manner, as seen in his Black "International Thief Thief", Fela, who in his music, sometimes wants to be seen as a Pan-Africanist, presents a litany of various names used by different African tribes to describe pit latrines, a traditional open toilette system historically practiced in Africa before colonialism ([genius.com\Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70](https://genius.com/Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70)):

For Yoruba-land na
"Shalanga"
For Igbo-land na "Onunu-
insi"

For Hausa-land na "Salga"
For Gaa-land na "Tiafi"
For Ashanti-land na "Yarni"
For Ethiopia-land na
"Sagava-be"
For Kagyu-land na "Cho-
Cho"
For Bemba-land na
"Chimbuzi"

Therefore, picturesque representation of ordinary people's plight in the hands of privileged groups, is a central theme which Fela shares with Damas in lyrical art.

4.1.3. Expression of Protest

The third aspect of popular art as outlined by Antoine is expression of protest. As a matter of fact, both Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela's Afromusic indicate this. As noted by William Seaton (<https://williamseaton.blogspot.com/2017/02>), Damas' "Sale" is the most prominent artistic depiction of such popular protest:

I feel laughable
in their shoes
in their dinner jacket
in their monocle
in their bowler hat.

In fact, this is an attack on European Colonial culture, due to its harsh influence on Caribbean ordinary people. Damas' expression of protest reverberates in Fela's Afromusic. In his track "Genteman" in *Genius* ([genius.com\Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70](https://genius.com/Fela-Kuti-andafrika-70)), Fela protests thus in the chorus:

I no be gentlemen at all o
I be Africa man original
I no be gentleman at all o
I be Africa man original
I no be gentleman at all o
I be Africa man original

Interestingly, this protest on the part of Fela is clearly in dialogue with Damas' own protest against European culture at which the latter feels "laughable". In the first verse of "Gentleman", Fela's expression further resonates with that of Damas. According to him:

Dem call you, make you
come chop

You chop small, you say you
belle full

You say you be gentleman,
you go hungry

You go suffer, you go
quench

Me I no be gentleman like
that

As a matter of fact, Fela's protest is a stronger attack on European culture along with its adherents. In support of this idea, in his article "Nigeria in the Search for Democratic Rebirth: An Interrogation of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's Musical Impact, Ethno Musicology and Political Expressionism", Modupe Adu (2022, p. 6) points out another dimension in Fela's protest:

From the 50s and 60s, it took cognizance of the agitators against colonialism and oppressors of the Black man. After independence, Fela's music went further in the era of military rules to express the need for democratic reordering. The evils of military dictatorship was highlighted to warn, castigated the ruling junta, provide the necessary right violators adherents.

Adu calls this radical musicology. According Adu (2022, p. 3) "Radical music does not stand to entertain but usually accompanies some forms of protest [...] protest against societal ills such as racism, political oppression, economic downturn,

human right violation, conflictual situations among ethnic units and a host of others".

In literature as well as in music, lyricism and populism concur for the purpose of conscientisation. Repetitiveness and musicality of words are lyrical language devices that create images of popular incitement and protest in expression.

4.2. Anticolonialism: Quest for Original African Values

Populism is one parameter that relates Fela's musical lyrics with Damas' lyrical poetry. The other parameter around which both artistic creations turn in Negritude. Negritude is a social and literary movement which seeks reclamation of original values of Black African people, either from African continent or in diaspora. As a matter of fact, given that Negritude is immensely inclined towards cultural identity of Black African people whose cultural values are eroded by years of slavery and colonialism, the movement is itself a populist one. Furthermore, it is anticolonial as it seeks to undo and promote original African values amongst Black African people all over the world.

Therefore, both Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela's Afrobeat are in dialogue for the promotion of original African values amongst Black African populace. This aspiration from both artists take roots in the historic Negro art in Paris and the Harlem Renaissance in the United States both seeking to create African cultural awareness.

Essentially, Damas' lyrical poetry is considered fundamental to the literary and philosophical concept of Negritude. His poetry is equally regarded as anticolonial and prompting to Black racial identity. In his article, "Unveiling the impact of Léon-Gontran Damas: A Trailblazer in Black Literature", Olivia William (<https://theamericannews.net/america/martinique>) asserts that,

Léon-Gontran Damas emerged as a formidable voice in the early 20th century, advocating passionately for Black identity and culture efforts. As one of

the founders of the Negritude movement, he played a crucial role in redefining pride in Black heritage, countering colonial narratives that sought to diminish African and Caribbean identities.

This makes his lyrical poetry anticolonial.

As a matter of fact, fight for racial identity is essential to Damas' lyrical poetry. This literary aspiration is evident in his poem, "The Blues". In the last stanza of the poem, his lyrical words are not only characteristically anticolonial but they are as well confrontational:

Give back my black dolls
my black dolls
black dools
black
black.

This is a passionate quest for the revival of original African values which were eroded by years of slavery and colonialism. In vivid images in the last stanza, Damas paints this erosion in his poem, "The Black's Lament" which Williams Seaton (<https://williamseaton.blogspot.com/2017/02>) presents thus:

It goes on
my dullness
from days gone by
blows from knotted ropes
body burnt
burnt from toe to back
dead flesh
branding irons
of red hot iron
arms broken
under the whip unleashed ...

Fela's anticolonial rhetorics are rather dramatic, in this regard. Presenting it in form of conflict of

cultures in his musical track "International Thief" or "I.T.T" conveyed by *Genius*, Fela refutes in his chorus that:

Long, long, long time ago
African man we no dey carry
shit
We dey shit inside big big hole
Longtime ago!

The Afrobeat musician concludes in the final stanza of "International Thief Thief" thus:

During the time them come
force us away as slaves
Na European man, na him dey
carry shit
Na for them culture to carry shit
During the time them come
colonize us
Them come teach us to carry
shit.

This is apparently an anticolonial campaign to create awareness to African populace about original African values which, Fela shares with Damas.

It is important to conclude by looking at the essential difference between Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela's Afrobeat lyrical music. First and foremost, the first is a literary creation while the second a musical one. As a result of this, the language use is characteristically different. Whereas Damas uses pure French language in his poetry, Fela relies largely on Creolised English (often mixed with is native Yoruba language) in his music. Furthermore, Damas' lyrical poems were written in early 1930s while Fela's music was produced in late 1970s.

Conclusion

This research work has led to the discovery of three areas which relate the Nigerian Fela's Afrobeat music to the French Guianese Damas' lyrical poetry. The first area is connected to Negro art and Black Harlem Renaissance originating in France and the United States of America

respectively, in the early 1900s. This is owing to the fact that whereas Damas' lyrical poetry ascribes to the literary style of the American poets of Negro Renaissance, Fela's music bears allegiance to American jazz and funk musics, which he combines with Yoruba traditional music.

The second feature of convergence resides in the passionate quest for Black African cultural awareness. As a matter of fact, this study has revealed that both artistic creations seek to promote original African cultural values through the literary and social movement of Negritude.

The last trait which unites both creativities is the concept of populism. This is the tendency to defend ordinary people being maltreated by established privileged groups or individuals. This characteristic makes both Damas' lyrical poetry and Fela's lyrical music to share common features such as rhythmicity, picturesqueness and protest. The artistic divergence between the two is based on language use. Whereas Damas' language of communication is pure French, Fela relies intensely on Creolized English, which he sometimes mixes with his native Yoruba in his expression.

Bibliographical References

Adu, Fumilayo Modupe (2002). "Nigeria in Search for Democratic Rebirth: An Interrogation of Fela Anikulapo Kuti's Musical Impact, Ethno Musicology and Political Expressionism". *Annals of Language and Literature*. Vol. 6, no. 1. Sryahwa Publications, pp. 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.22259/2637-5869.0601001>.

Anthology 2(2010), www.musixmatch.com/lyrics

Antoine, Régis (1992). *La Littérature franco-*

antillaise : Haïti, Guadeloupe et Martinique. Paris : Karthala.

Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org

Chevrier, Jacques (1990). *Littérature nègre*. Paris : Arman Nathan.

Dictionnaire Universel (4^e) (2002). Paris : Edicef.

« Fela Kuti & Afrika 70 ». *Genius*, genius.com
 Gyssels, Kathleen (2018). *Bit in the Mouth, Death in the Soul: Remembering the Poetry of Léon-Gontran Damas*. *The CLR James Journal*. Vol. 24. No. 1/2, 255-270, <https://doi.org/10-5840/clrjames2018241/261>

Gyssels, Kathleen. (2018). "Bit in the mouth, Death in the Soul: Remembering the Poetry of Léon-Gontran Damas". *The CLR James Journal*. Vol 24, No. 1/2, 255-270, <https://doi.org/10.5840/clrjames2018241/261>.

Miller, Bart F. (2014). *Rethinking Negritude through Léon-Gontran Damas*. Amsterdam: Dokumen publishers.

Seaton, William (2017). "Poetry on the Loose: Floating on the Ocean of Words", <https://williamseaton.blogspot.com/2017/02>

StudySmarter (2024), www.studysmarter.co.uk/creativewriting.

UDC Writers, udc.libguides.com/udc-writers/damas

Wikipedia (2026), en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyrics

William, Oliver (2026). "Unveiling the Impact of Léon-Gontran Damas: A Trailblazer of Black Literature", theamericannews.net/america/Martinique.