

Research Africa Reviews Vol. 5 No. 1, April 2021

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Catherine Appert, *In Hip Hop Time: Music, Memory, and Social Change in Senegal*. Publisher: Oxford University Press, 2019. 248 pages. ISBN # 10 : 0190913495.

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Catherine Appert's book *In Hip Hop Time: Music, Memory, and Social Change in Senegal* is undoubtedly one of the most comprehensive and inquisitive works about the trajectory, meaning and impact of hip hop in Senegal. Appert dissects the sonic significance of hip hop in relation to local musical historiographies and unearths the transatlantic connections that fostered the rise of the genre in Senegal, while also using a meticulous ethnographic method to delve into individual histories of local hip hop artists as a way to immerse the reader in the intersection of class, gender, mobility, language and political resistance. Throughout the book, the author engages with colonialism, Pan-Africanism connections, and local music traditions as they relate to the rise and development of Senegalese rap.

Although rap music has its roots in the economically deprived neighborhoods of New York City, in Senegal it became at first a domain of the middle-class youth who certainly had easier access to cassettes brought in by Senegalese merchants from New York and Paris. As early as 1984, Senegalese youth had access to recordings of hip-hop pioneers such as Africa Bambaataa, Grand Master Flash, and the Sugarhill Gang. From its origin in the 1980s to its contemporary manifestations, Senegalese hip hop has shown its propensity to embrace/repackage foreign resonances and languages as well as its capacity to integrate indigenous rhythms and instruments, thus making Senegal one of the powerhouses of global hip hop.

Therefore, in retracing the transatlantic roots of the musical genre, and showing the manner in which Senegalese hip hop practitioners apprehend their positionality in a global artform, Appert conceptualizes two "origin myths," distinct yet complementary narratives through which one could grasp Senegalese hip hop. The first myth "concerns hip hop's origins in the inner-city struggles of Black youth in the South Bronx. The other links hip hop to indigenous orality, often located in the practices of hereditary West African bards called griots." Thus, by "mythicizing" the trajectory of Senegalese hip hop, Appert enters into dialogue with local histories and orature as well as with international audiences by locating rap Galsen at the shifting intersection of ostracism, resistance and African oral/aesthetic traditions. In this regard, Appert's book partly intersects with the works of Fatou Kandé Senghor (2015) and Eric S. Charry (2020), both of whom investigate the origins of Senegalese hip hop in their respective monographs *Wala Bok* and *Hip Hop Africa*.

In the second chapter of her book, Appert elaborates more on the beginnings of hip hop culture in Senegal with a particular emphasis on the pioneers such as Positive Black Soul (PBS), Daraa-J. and Pee Froiss, all of whom concurred that break-dancing preceded rap music in Senegal and paved the way for the latter, which later became the dominant element of hip hop culture in Senegal. More importantly, in this chapter, Appert juxtaposes mainstream/commercial hip hop –

embodied by the rap groups mentioned above – with underground/hardcore hip hop whose early and most prominent representatives were *BMG-44*, *Yatfu* and *Rap'Adio*.

While seemingly taking a stand against an underground versus commercial binary as a traditional scholarly way to apprehend global hip hop and marginality, Appert's book fleshes out the class dynamic that has historically characterized Senegalese hip hop. This transpires in a middle-class neighborhood versus working-class neighborhood duality in which underground hip hoppers' use of Wolof language becomes a marker of engagement, realness, and a "badge of hip hop authenticity" in contrast to their counterparts from middle-class neighborhoods who occasionally rap in flawless French.

In chapters 3 and 4 Appert explores the centrality of the griot oral traditions and the contentious positionality of hip hoppers vis-à-vis the *mbalax* genre and other local musical traditions. Griot aesthetic tradition remains the backbone of the "origin myth," according to which the griots' rhetorical art and the mythical mastery of the word transcend the geographical and ethnic boundaries to form a transatlantic/Pan-African umbilical cord which many scholars and hip hop practitioners believe to have been the foundation of rap music. Many of Appert's interlocutors however, contest the griot narrative as foundational in the advent of rap music. This is the case of Keyti, founding member of *Rap'Adio*, who thinks rap and griot oral traditions have no links. Though many Senegalese rappers acknowledge the South Bronx as the birthplace of hip hop, the griot narrative still confers to them a sense of entitlement in the emergence of the global art form. Paradoxically, many these rappers have long distanced themselves from the griot-dominated *mbalax* genre, which represents for them a modern musical tradition devoid of agency and inadequate for social change. This antagonism, however, is fast shifting as the new school of hip hop artists continues to collaborate with *mbalax* musicians and engage more with indigenous instruments and localized sounds to provide Senegalese hip hop a unique aural identity.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the book remains the problematizing of gender and the place of women in the Senegalese hip hop. Appert highlights that women have embraced the genre since its early days despite the countless socio-cultural obstacles that make it arduous for them to navigate the hip hop spaces. Fatim of BMG 44 and Lady Sinay pioneered the female presence in Senegalese rap scene in the early 90s and paved the way for more women who find in rap music another creative and expressive outlet. The book does not shy away from discussing the misogyny, family, and societal hurdles women encounter in the hip hop cosmos. In spending time with women's hip hop collective *Gotal*, Appert insightfully captures the predicament of female rappers which transpires through the pressure to settle and found a family as well as the negative stereotypes which traditionally conceive of women as unfit for the musical genre. Even as Senegalese audiences become increasingly accepting of female rappers, and more women continue to find their voices in the hip hop scene, many women still operate with reduced mobility in a male-dominated environment that sometimes proves hostile.

Beyond the historical, political and socio-anthropological considerations, Appert's book dives into musical techniques to draw a rhythmic comparison of American and Senegalese rap beats with an emphasis on local percussive sounds. She highlights both the confluence of American rap soundscapes in Senegalese hip hop and the propensity of the latter to repack local traditional sonorities into hip hop rhythms. While the writer seemingly conceives of American rap sonorities as the "global intelligibility" of hip hop sounds, she pays a close attention to the integration of the indigenous in Senegalese rap productions. Once "repurposed" and incorporated into hip hop music, these indigenous instruments and sounds also generate the potential for global appeal and are capable of influencing hip hop sound productions in other horizons. Therefore, sonic influences

in hip hop are no longer unidirectional (from the US to other places), especially in the digital era where the ubiquity of the internet and streaming platforms provide easy access to music globally. Thus, the sixth chapter of the book offers the reader a vantage point to scrutinize how local and global rhythms concomitantly contrast and interact to provide an even wider sonic repertoire to the hip hop genre.

Finally, in the epilogue of her book, Appert examines the issue of rap music and political resistance with a focus on the *Y'en a Marre* movement whose emergence in 2011 profoundly impacted the political arena and the hip hop scene in the process. "Hip hop myths of resistance metastasized in *Y'en a Marre*; in the movement's wake, internationally cycling narratives rewrote Rap Galsen as a practice of activism and extramusical mobilization, until "resistance," narrowly defined, threatened to overdetermine what it meant to be a hip hopper at all." Because *Y'en a Marre* was co-founded by Thiat and Kilifeu of *Keur Gui Crew* and hip hop is central to their mass mobilization and mass action efforts, Appert seemingly dissociates the movement's political activism from the existing hip hop networks and fora that *Y'en a Marre* tapped into. While in this segment the author beautifully wraps up the major themes developed in the book and shares about her expectations and findings, it could potentially read like a diatribe against the social movement, which grew increasingly problematic in the eyes of many hip hop artists who rightly or wrongly accused them of being coopted and financed by internal/external political forces.

In summary, *In Hip Hop Time: Music, Memory, and Social Change in Senegal* constitutes an ethnographic masterpiece of Senegalese hip hop from its early days to its contemporary manifestations. Appert has succeeded in shedding light on the intersectionality of diaspora influence, mobility, marginality, class, gender, and local sounds politics; all of which have contributed to making Senegalese rap a household name in global hip hop culture. Besides being analytically dense and captivating, the book's writing style is not esoteric, and one does not need to be an expert to peruse it. Thus, it goes without saying this monograph will become a classic in the growing literature about Senegalese and African hip hop and sound studies.

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ISSN 2575-6990