

From *Bul Faale* to *Y'en a marre*: a Semiotic Analysis of the Discursive Mutations of Senegalese Hip-hop

Ousmane Ngom¹

Abstract

From *Bul faale* (don't worry, don't give a damn) in the early 90s to *Y'en a marre* (Fed up) in the early 2010s, Senegalese hip-hop has negotiated and secured diverse identity formulations as well as social and political *positionalities*. Though basically aware and committed to social justice, the movement has operated mutations and ruptures and taken new orientations whenever necessary. Considering the direct impact and permanent interaction of hip-hop with societies, this article uses semiotics to study that interface through the mutations of the discourses of Senegalese hip-hop for a quarter of a century. The semiotic analysis of lyrics and signs pertaining to the movement give insight to the constant reconfiguration responding to dynamics and paradigm shifts inside and outside hip-hop.

Keywords: Hip-hop, *Bul faale*, *Y'en a marre*, discourse, semiotics, individualization, politicization

Introduction

Bul faale and *Y'en a marre* are two movements that have undoubtedly marked the evolution of hip-hop in Senegal, for they embody a phenomenon, a lifestyle, a philosophy, and a state of mind. More than twenty-five years after the release of the first Senegalese rap album, hip-hop in Senegal has increasingly become a mass movement that has come to the forefront of the political scene. The two groups that embody these respective movements are the group Positive Black Soul (PBS) of the rappers Awadi et Deug E Tee and the Kër Gicrew of Kilifeu and Thiat.

This paper analyzes the shifts in hip-hop discourse through the socio-political changes that have driven it to its current position as a key political force. The first phase, corresponding to *Bul faale* ("don't worry"; "don't give a damn") is embodied by PBS, the last phase, *Y'en a marre* ("fed up"; "that's enough") by Kër Gi; however, analysis is completed by inserting in between an intermediate stage – the advent of the hardcore current style – mostly embodied by Rap'Adio. I am aware after Charles Sander Pierce that the discursive practices are not limited to words spoken, but extend to other forms and means of communication. In fact, "Semiotics is the study of signs and sign systems. Sign systems constitute languages of different modes" (Bakker (Hans) & Bakker (Theo), 2006: 72).

As Barber contends, "Words are not the only form of representation or expression. People establish and convey meaning through clothing, dance, music, gesture, and through complex rituals which often defy verbal exegesis" (qtd Gueye, 2013: 23). The remark is particularly relevant in this article, because hip-hop is not only the form of rap music to which it is often incorrectly reduced. Rather, it is an artistic, cultural, and socio-political movement whose discursive mutations I will illustrate through the three major phenomena of Senegalese urban, juvenile culture, namely *Bul faale*, the current hardcore style, and *Y'en a marre*.

¹ University Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis, Senegal.

***Bul faale*, an ethos of individualizationⁱ**

Pioneering rap music in Senegal and in Africa, Positive Black Soul theorized the concept *Bul faale* so popular with young people that it gave birth to a generation known as “generation bul faale”. *Bul faale*, meaning “don’t worry,” “don’t give a damn,” is not, as an initial interpretation might suggest a philosophy of fatalism or self-defeatism (Bryson, 2014: 43). It is quite the contrary. As theorized by PBS in the eponymous title of their first album, *Bul Faale* values self-confidence, determination to lead one’s chosen life, and the pride in earning one’s living regardless of society’s denigrations. The success of this philosophy is due to its positioning as a response to the drastic effects of Senegalese economic reforms like the structural adjustment programs, the devaluation of the CFA currency, and the beginning of the stresses around growing unemployment. Faced with the government’s inability to adequately address these concerns, young people decided to take their fates into their own hands.

Rap means crafting instances and spaces to channel young people’s energy and to create places of expression. In the *Bul faale* case, the enunciation of Senegalese rap is primarily denunciation. It is not insignificant that the first sentence of this album, which becomes the de facto first labeled formula of Senegalese rap is “*Maangi nii di ñëw ci microphone bi ndaxte dañ ma tooñ.*” (“I’m stepping in to grab the microphone ‘cause I’ve been wronged”). The morpheme “microphone”, which by way of synecdoche denotes rap music, is then the ultimate instrument of complaint for marginalized youths who could not, in the course of canonical programming, hope to obtain airtime on state radio and television, which remained part of the monopolized media.

Because of its particularly extroverted physical expression and dress, hip-hop fashion, a new phenomenon imported from the American ghettos of the Bronx in New York City, was frowned upon in the Senegal of the late 1980s. Therefore, its stigmatized followers showed a unique mental fortitude so as to live their art despite the denigration of the older generation.ⁱⁱ Its extravagant expression – loose clothes and big shoes, lyrics shouted rather than sung, disarticulated and aggressive body movements – should be read as this generation’s rebellion against their society’s set of values, especially what Havard (2001) terms the model of the intellectual myth embodied by Senghor (63). This system, which has governed Senegal since independence, is judged by the youth as corrupt and also held responsible for the social, political, and economic decay of which they are the main victims. It is an image of an idle youth creating means of emancipation in defiance of the unreliable, formal status quo. This is the time of Rap Attacks, night-time street basketball games often played under floodlights, tea sessions on street corners, etc. The most popular two tracks in the first album of PBS – specifically “*Bul faale*” and “*Ataaya*” – crystallize the situation of the disenfranchised youth as well as their evacuation strategies out of their abyss. In addition, PBS translates that spirit to drown one’s pain while remaining positive and hopeful for an ultimate success.

In a society governed by holdings and appearances, the unfortunate do not thrive. PBS’s first track, *Bul faale*, describes the unwanted experience of unemployed, marginalized youth, stigmatized by a society that doesn’t give them any opportunities for advancement. The scenario this song presents, with great doses of visual images, is a young man who tries to woo a girl from his neighborhood; she spurns him with contempt because he is jobless. Drowning in frustration, he bitterly recalls his ex-girlfriend who is responsible for his present misfortune. The latter had flattered him into embezzling, but left him without a second glance when he was fired. The remix of “*Bul faale*”, released in *Salam*, PBS’s first international album, deplores the same practices described in the original version. Here, the young man returns home from an international tour, with his attire alone proving his success. The previous girlfriend no longer waits to be picked up; she brings herself to him without reservation. Faced with the shocking opportunism, the hypocrisy of the society with the short and selective memory, and the jealousy aroused by success which was until recently considered unlikely, the attitude to adopt is *Bul faale*. In all these scenarios the chorus wisely advises: “*Yow bul faale/ xale bee la tooñ waaye bul faale/ aduna du dara kon bul faale, toppal sa yoon bul faale ñi lay saale*”: (“Hey don’t worry, the girl has offended you, but *bul faale*. It’s not worth the trouble, *bul faale*. Keep your track; ignore the snobs standing in the way of your plans.” The lexemes “being offended” and “keep one’s track” are significant units in the phraseology of the *bul faale* generation who presented themselves as victims of a society who need to stay resolute to make their way out of their societal standing. Semantically speaking, the expression *bul faale* is doubly charged, simultaneously recognizing and discarding an enduring offence.

The other iconic track representative of the *Bul faale* philosophy is “Ataaya” – the Senegalese tea. As the two rappers describe in the song they dedicated to it, Senegalese *ataaya* is more than tea. It is a ritual, which to Senegalese people means peace, love, and unity; it is a solace for unemployed youth to “drown their pain.” A tea session can last for a whole morning or evening, with the intention to while away the time. Here again the PBS crew does not praise tea as a symbol of idleness or lack of ambition. Instead, it describes a social practice and explains its popularity, even warning against any abuse that ultimately could drown one’s ambition instead of pain. From the very beginning of their career, the rappers of PBS have positioned themselves as educators and models for youths in times of frustration and ambiguity. Theirs are moralizing songs that describe these youngsters’ lives. Indeed, the piece “Bul faale” is like an autobiography – be it true or lived by proxy. It traces, through its two versions, the evolution of its characters and provides a path to success for the youths searching for a lifeline and a role model. As Harvard writes, this movement bears an ethos that values success through effort and hard work and undeniable process of individualization (art. Cit. 63).

PBS has promoted and preserved this hope. They signed with the famous record label Mango, a branch of Island Records in 1994, increased international tours and *featurings* with great names in the hip-hop world. All of these actions greatly contribute to the remarkable expansion of Senegalese rap groups – currently more than 1000 bands (Niang, 2010: 77; Fredericks, 2014: 134). The proliferation of groups can be explained by the accessibility of the music genre: “All one needs is a voice and an audience can be found and a message conveyed, with no requirements for formal musical training, expensive instruments or equipment, or even literacy” (Fredericks, 2014: 136). However, the success of PBS exudes confidence in the genre’s capacity of transformation. In this perspective, rap music ceases to be perceived as a mere means of escape and is instead accepted as a mode of expression and a true means of self-realization (Niang, 2010: 76).ⁱⁱⁱ However, when *Bul faale* advises to struggle for self-fulfillment despite the unfavorable climate, *Y’en a marre* advocates fighting for changing the unfavorable climate and establishing the conditions for a collective success.

The Underground Current: Ragging for one’s Community

Between the discourse of individualization put forward by *Bul faale* and that of politicization promoted by *Y’en a marre*, there is an intermediate discourse referred to as underground. This current hardcore rap, raises the discourse of social claim a few notches, establishing a new form of writing and a new flow on more aggressive beats. If PBS, spearhead of *Bul faale*, came from residential areas, rapping much more in French and English, this movement emerged from the depths of the *banlieue* (ghettos) used Wolof as the main language of their lyrics and crude verb as a form of expression.

Indeed, in the United States and France, the mentoring countries for Senegalese hip-hop, rap was first developed in the urban ghetto as a means for disenfranchised, marginalized people to spread their voice. However, in Senegal the evolution was reversed: rap was initially welcomed by youth in wealthy neighborhoods who had access to foreign trends (Niang, 2010: 75), but the urban poor will soon take their revenge over the city. “Though the founding fathers of Senegalese rap hailed from middle-class central Dakar families who had privileged access to imported records and technology, the central pole of the scene is now concentrated in the city’s poor outskirts or *banlieue*” (Fredericks, 2014: 134).

The hardcore stream that standard-bearers Rap’Adio, Wa BMG 44 etc. proclaim themselves to be will allow true rap to spring straight from the *banlieue* and conquer the city. Thus the track “xibaaru underground” (news from the underground) in Rap’Adio’s first album (*Ku Wéet Xam sa Bopp*, 1998) brings to the front the wide gap between the urban residential neighborhoods and the *banlieue*: “Nu wàcc Ndumbelaan, dëkku h-a-r-d core: génël sa quartier boss ma won la beneen décor/ Big Town: du Fann du kër président ñépp a becor.” (Let’s land in Ndumbelan, the corner of hardcore/Get out of your residential area so that I show you another décor. Big Town: it’s neither Fann nor the presidential palace; dire poverty looms large). This spatial difference between the city and the *banlieue* articulated through rap engenders a sense of annihilation towards everything that has been done so far: “Coow laangi sooga door joge quartier populaire/ exploser ni bomb nucléaire.”

(The time of true rap has just rung springing from the populous district/ exploding like a nuclear bomb). Underground rap positions itself with a normative discourse setting the standards for “Real hip-hop” and the “real MC” in the same way as it denounces social and political failings.

This radical rap^{iv} describes, with straightforward words, the deprivation and destitution in the *banlieue* where promiscuity, lack of infrastructure and of decent family income leads to high rates of illiteracy, school dropout, crime, banditry, prostitution, and early motherhood. Life in the ghetto is undesirable; one even prefers death to it in the song “Dund gu dee gën” (a lifeless worthy than death) from the same album. This gloomy universe referred to as *Ndumbelaan* that, in Senegalese popular imaginary, reflects a merciless jungle, where wild animals are ruled by brute force or victims of cynical ruses deployed as survival strategies.

These youth from the Senegalese *banlieue*, because of the very difficulties contingent to their environment, consider themselves as the “underground” and therefore legitimate holders of “true rap,” as opposed to the “above ground” rappers, mainly from the city. This marks a turning point in Senegalese hip-hop with the introduction of territory as an identifying paradigm. Thus one notes active specialization where *I* and *we* are connoted to *here* and *this* in exclusion to *they/them* connoted to *there* and *that*. The MC becomes a messenger, a representative of a community, a neighborhood. The verbs that appear in the songs on this account are *teewal* or, “to represent.” PBS was the bard of Sicap. Rap Adio was defined by Medina, Grand Dakar; Pee Froiss by Fass; Wa BMG 44 by Thiaroye, Kër gi by Kaolack. Claiming membership to a community also aims at winning over one’s neighbors. One of the emblematic tracks of the transitory communitarian discourse is the opus of Daddy Bibson, a former member of Rap’Adio: “fompal say roŋoñ/ gëm ne doo ku lompoñ/ bu la kenn yab, jokal nga fight ngir sa waa koñ.” (Wipe your tears away, believe that you’re not a loser, don’t be intimidated by anybody, stand up and fight for your neighborhood).

In identifying themselves with the *banlieue*, they are proudly reclaiming all the shortcomings often associated with their environment, but insist that these are not fatalities. Moreover, they redefine themselves, turning the stereotypical failings of the suburbs into strengths. For instance, their lyrics are in Wolof, meaning that rap is neither the sole prerogative of the wealthy city nor the literate. Instead Wolof rap speaks directly to young people from the *banlieue* about their daily lives without the medium of Western languages. Accordingly, Wolof is involved in this claim of territoriality, accentuating the concepts of *Hip-hop Jolof* and *Rap Galsen*.^v

This shift is troubling PBS’s linguistic choice. Indeed, for an album of seven songs (not including the intro and outro) only one title was written in Wolof, the eponymous “Bul faale”. In addition to this cult track, the second most famous opus of the album, “Ataaya”, was written in French with a catchy refrain in Wolof. The success of these two songs perfectly proves the paramount role played by the Wolof language. Even if PBS tried to correct this trend in subsequent productions, a strong predominance of texts written in French and English will still be noticeable. The reason for this is perhaps that French and English are the languages of mediation between the Senegalese pioneers and hip-hop culture; and due to their higher levels education, these pioneering rappers were more comfortable writing rhymes in French or English, where the field is already established, as opposed to writing in Wolof where everything remains to be done. In addition to being comfortable in these non-native languages, these artists have, from the beginning of their careers, positioned themselves in the public eye as sons of Africa.

The idea of extending the claim of Africa’s progeny to the rest of the continent and the Diaspora is shared by most Senegalese rappers. In the same way that they sharply criticize Senegalese and African politicians, they generally arise as Africa’s defenders on the international stage. Indeed, “Senegalese Hip Hoppers enact a transnational African solidarity based on a shared practice of struggle against injustice rather than reified notions of static africanicity (Sajjani, 2013: 171). In their first album, Rap’Adio had this to say in original English: “Now who wants Africa’s death/ If not the World Bank and the IMF?/ International vampires sucking our blood to the last breath/ From east to west they got us under control” (“Karadindi”, *Ku Wéet Xam sa Bopp*, 1998). As much as they are outspoken critics of the evils that plague their society, they proudly display their national colors and claim the national/African culture as their own when they travel in the West. During international tours, the slogan “Represent your city” becomes “Represent your country, your continent.”

The message can be a process of identity formulation that places quest for self at the center of the journey. The return to one's identity is articulated around Cheikh Anta Diop's philosophy regarding fighting against clichés about Africa. The Egyptian civilization is magnified, convened in a speech reclaiming the existence of a pre-colonial African civilization, the anteriority of this civilization to that of Europe, and the need of a proud self-identity. As already shown, Senegalese hip-hop has always been textually aware and committed, but in the early 2010s it reaches yet another notch with *Y'en a marre* that propounds it to nothing less than disputing public space and the political field with professional politicians.

Y'en a marre and M'Ceing an Active Citizenship

A quick review of the political contexts may inform about the evolution that has made the advent of *Y'en a marre* possible. Indeed, though Senegalese rap's discourse has always been politically aware, it was difficult for the *Bul faale* generation under the auspices of 1990s Socialist Party regime to really believe in the possibility of a democratic changeover in Senegal. This feeling was strengthened by the fact that a peaceful democratic transition hasn't yet happened in any African country south of the Sahara since independence. In Senegal, despite the fact that presidential elections have regularly been held since independence, they were far from free and fair, and the ruling party was always accused of ballot stuffing.

The rap songs from the beginning up to 2000 have always expressed this sentiment of frustration. Xuman, one of the most committed rappers during that period, had eventually confessed his lack of confidence in the solution of the polls: "Mènuma gëm ne élections dina nu génne ci lëndëm/ Fii la ñuy wooteloo néew, dangay ree ba xëm" (I can't believe that polls can pull us out of darkness, because here they even make the dead vote; it's grotesque." In the same order of ideas, Awadi of PBS said: "I'd like to see in Africa a great revolution; a harsh dictatorship against this decay. Democracy isn't for us, for this system we aren't mature" (PBS, "Le bourreau est noir", *Daw Thiow*, 1996).

In fact, the most frequently released emotion in rap lyrics of this epoch prove that most of these artists firmly believed that the only course open to change this corrupt regime was a revolution or a coup. Even in 1999, on the eve of the 2000 presidential election sanctioned by the downfall of the regime, a rap group was planting the seeds that revolution was the solution. "Déédéet, bul xaar; du voté: xam nga ñoom loolu mënü leen fi jële, dañuy sàcc, danuy labac kart yi... Nanu jël sunu piques ba pèles, rateaux rangoo, dem palais balaie saleté ba fa ne." (No, no don't believe that the elections will bring any change, because they can't be discarded this way, they are masters in the art of twisting the votes. Let's rather take rakes, pikes and shovels, and take down to the presidential palace to get it rid of its dirt) (Underground Soldiers, "Metti na", *D Kill Rap*, 1999).

Yet, in 2000 the outgoing president surprised everyone by accepting his defeat in the electoral contests. This gave birth to a new paradigm that moving forward defined the understanding that ordinary Senegalese in general, and young fans of hip-hop in particular, have around politics and the meaning of elections. The new paradigm establishes the power of the citizen on the foundation of his voter registration card. The terminology that has developed around the voting card is interesting. Indeed, in rap songs it is associated to a voice or a weapon, to the idea of an instrument that confers extraordinary power to elect and dismiss politicians. Accordingly, the *Post-Alternance* rap songs call citizens to be more vigilant in the use of the card and more demanding with the card suitors.

Yet the dream sparked by the advent of *Alternance* has quickly faded. Poverty and lack of activities in the countryside and cities bring about two major phenomena: the effervescence of peddlers, congesting the streets of the urban centers, and the spectacular mass illegal emigration to Europe through makeshift trawlers. University diplomas and even certain professional training that used to grant direct access to jobs are no longer guarantees of employment. The outrageous epiphenomenon called "the new rich of *Alternance*," the insolence and arrogance of those in power, financial scandals, nepotism, in addition to the repetitive outages have quickly discredited Wade's regime. This dramatic context spurred the growth of a highly organized, exciting, and dreadful social movement, known as *Y'en a marre* (fed up) – a rallying cry that hoarsely shouts the youths' unprecedented, widespread discontent.

They are not satisfied to denounce the regime through their songs but would rather indulge in an active communication, besieging the streets to awake the youth, through sensitizing campaigns, on the utility of the ballot. In the same token, with the establishment of local branches called *esprits*,^{vi} they crisscrossed the entire country to enroll young people on voter lists, believing it's absurd to satisfy oneself decrying a situation when one can change it by their ballots. By the output of singles to theorize and accompany the three main stages of their campaigns, the movement became a real machine, perpetually producing slogans and concepts. It all started when President Wade's unpopular bill to revise the constitution to create a Presidential third term; to curtail from 50% to 25% the necessary rate to win the election in the first round; and to institute a vice-presidency, which people suspect was aimed for his unpopular son mockingly nicknamed the "Minister of the Sky and the Earth" because of the strategic ministry portfolios he had gathered up to that point in time.

The first stage of *Y'en a marre's* activism called "Don't touch my constitution" is accompanied by the song "Faux! Pas forcé" – a pun on words, meaning alternately "Don't push" and "Forced misstep" – released to warn Wade against maneuvering for a third term. In this song, *Y'enamarristes* (members of *Y'en a marre*) noted the failure of the political dialogue and argued that only the street was able to counter Wade. In the events of June 23, 2011^{vii}, against Wade's bill, *Y'en a marre* were the organized forces able to cope. They were in fact the driving force, and also the initiative behind the opposition movement, marching with the war cry "Don't touch my constitution." Self-appropriating the "constitution" through the possessive adjective *my* is part of their desire to give the fight a personal character and be more engaging than the neutral expression "the constitution."

Indeed, the characteristics of *Post-Alternance* contribute to the strategies of the Senegalese hip-hop movement in general, and especially *Y'en a marre* of catering to listeners to better engage their interests. Thus, they invite the young people to a civic battle just as they advise President Wade to abandon the unconstitutional project. Both groups are directly named and encouraged to act, each in their regards, for the victory of democracy. The following lines in "Faux! Pas forcé" are sound illustration of this typical discourse:

" Abdoulaye: Soo bëggee sa askan waroo ñedd nguur ba ciy rotal benn bakkan"
 (If your population matters for you don't kill them to stay on power)
" Bilay motoon nga royukaay balaa nga def sunu constitution bi sa fowukaay"
 (I swear you were a model before you turned our constitution into a toy)
" Foo nu woo nu wuyu; askan wu fippu xajjul ci maggatub wëyu"
 (We're ready to face you, 'cause an old lout is no match for a rebelled people.)

In "Faux! Pas forcé", the way of addressing the President is particularly eloquent by naming him personally, while they also directly attack him. This form of speech is a novelty in this traditionalist society as noted by Gueye.^{viii} Indeed, a step was taken in the discourse that breaks social taboos by calling the President by his first name to address him on what they consider the deficiencies and lack of vision in his poor governance.

When Wade's candidacy was validated by the constitutional court, *Y'en a marre* stages the next step of their combat strategy, to enroll as many people as possible for voting Wade out. They launch a single, direct phase: "my voter card, my voice." The song representing this political stage is figuratively entitled "Daas fanaanal", meaning to sharpen one's weapon in view of a contingency, or simply to get ready ahead of time:

C'est la sonnette de l'alarme (The bell has rung)
Daas fanaanal (get ready)
Ma catre, mon arme (my ballot, my weapon)
Daas fanaanal (get ready)
Moy fomp samay larmes (it removes my tears)
Daas fanaanal (get ready)
Yo, nangul sama charte (Yo, accept my conditions)
Ma jox la sama carte (Then I will give you my vote)

This song highlights the citizen's awakening to her new-found power conferred by the voter registration card. Citizens can redefine their relationships with politicians, putting forward their own terms before voting for any candidate. In the hands of *Y'en a marre*, hip-hop becomes a political forum for the sensitization of the population on their rights and duties. Furthermore, by the organization of civic activities, rappers of the movement vie with professional politicians for the public space. As such, all means of communication at hand are useful, above all the social networks. *Y'enamarristes* are on a mission as the champion of their people, whom they invite to join in this civic revolutionary struggle.^x

With *Y'en a marre* hip-hop further secures a normative dimension inside and outside the hip-hop realm. The "fake MC" is no longer, as the hard core movement conceived it, one who sings love in the harsh social and political situation; it is now one whose commitment doesn't go beyond their lyrics. Then the "real MC" is an activist, in theory and in practice. "Hey sénégalais, affaire bi carte la; Booko amul fake nga" (Hey fellow Senegalese, it's a matter of having a ballot, without it you're a fake.) "Bu dee réew mi da laa soxal; Jógal bokk ci ñu koy doxal" (If the country matters for you, rise up and join those who make it work) (Daas fanaanal). The singularizing pronoun of *nga* (the singular you) reveals an engaging rhetoric strategy that makes the recipient of the discourse feel more involved than if drowned or forgotten in a representative plural pronoun.

Methodical in approach, *Y'enamarristes* introduce civic networks called *esprits* which have tentacles throughout the whole country. Earning the sympathy and confidence of the youth, who have long turned their backs on politicians, *Y'en a marre* could dictate the conditions of the youth.^x For instance, rappers of the movement set the tempo, slogans, and choruses that punctuated the different phases of the long, breathtaking process leading to Wade's defeat and the advent of the second democratic handover.

Another reason for *Y'en a marre's* success is the consistency of its discourse. When the political opposition and civilian society allied with Macky Sall in the second round of voting took seat in the government under the banner "win together, govern together", only *Y'en a marre* drifted away from this attitude^{xi}, continuing to stand as a true sentinel of democracy.

For that reason they conceptualize the NTS: the New Type of Senegalese that is a citizen fully aware of his rights but who doesn't shun from his duties.^{xii} This ideal citizen is demanding toward their rulers, but doesn't expect everything from the latter. *Y'en a marre* value entrepreneurship and civic attitude, which earns the movement growing popularity among a population disillusioned by politicians.

Conclusion

Since the advent of *Bul faale* in the early 90s to the birth of *Y'en a marre* in the early 2010s, Senegalese hip-hop has undergone many shifts in its discourse following the evolution of the social and political contexts. This paper demonstrates that from *Bul faale* to *Y'en a marre*, there is no ideological break but rather a maturation process. As a remote, critical observer of the political field, the rapper becomes an active agent who understands that the best way to solve his problems is to address them collectively and politically. As Sajani asserts Senegalese "HipHop's stance is understood as defiance and advocacy for 'the people,' avowedly rejecting any overture to 'sellout.'" (2013: 161). But in the beginning the rapper had only his words to wage battle against social and political flaws. With the advent of *Y'en a marre*, in addition to radically committed lyrics he takes to the streets for a civic activism. I have shown that these two stationary phases of the discursive progression are signified by the microphone and the voter registration card respectively. The "real MC" is no longer a mere "protest rapper", committed and virulent in his lyrics, but an "activist rapper" vying the political field and public space with professional politicians and the civilian society. The evolution of the discourse is articulated through three paradigms: *Bul faale's* process of individualization; the hardcore representing of the community; and *Y'en a marre's* activating politicization. The three movements share constant identity, spatial claims, and sociopolitical demands, going progressively further in their requests and radicalizing their tones. Each progression underpins reconfigurations of dynamics both inside and outside the hip-hop movement.

Bibliography

- BAKKER, J. I. (Hans) & BAKKER, T. R. A. (Theo). 2006. "The Club DJ: A Semiotic and Interactionist Analysis," in *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 29, n°1 (Winter), pp. 71-82.
- BASSE, Ania Judyta Molejo Aïssatou. 2013. "Hip hop and politics in Dakar Senegal" A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Howard University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.
- BLOMMAERT, Jan & BULCAEN, Chris. 2000. "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 29, pp. 447-466.
- BRYSON, Devin. 2014. "The Rise of a New Senegalese Cultural Philosophy?" in *African Studies Quarterly*, Vo. 14, Issue 3, pp. 33-56.
- CASEY, Hayman. 2009. "People's Poetics: Amiri Baraka, Hip-Hop, and the Dialectical Struggle for a Popular Revolutionary Poetics," in *The Massachusetts Review*, Spring, 50, 1/2, pp. 82-97.
- FOREST, Michael. 2007. "Peirce and Semiotic Foundationalism," in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. 43, n°4, Fall, pp. 728-744.
- FREDERICKS, Rosalind. 2014. "'The Old Man is Dead': Hip Hop and the Arts of Citizenship of Senegalese Youth," in *Antipode*, vol. 46, n°1, pp. 130-148.
- GUEYE, Marame. 2013. "Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement 'Y'en a Marre' and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip-hop in Senegal," in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 6, n°3, pp. 22-42.
- HAVARD, Jean-François. 2001. « Ethos « *bul faale* » et nouvelles figures de la réussite au Sénégal, » in *Politique africaine*, vol. 2 n°82, pp. 63-77.
- LANG, Peter AG. 2012. "Glossary of Hip-Hop Terms," in *Counterpoints*, vol. 396, Culturally Relevant Teaching: Hip-hop Pedagogy in Urban Schools, pp. 213-214.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42981570> Accessed: 28-03-2016 19:15 UTC
- MCLAUGHLIN, Fiona. 2001. "Dakar Wolof and the Configuration of an Urban Identity," in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, vol. 14, n°2, pp. 153-172.
- NELSON, Sarah. 2014. "The New Type of Senegalese under Construction: Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané on *Yenamarrisme* after Wade," in *African Studies Quarterly*, vol. 14, Issue 3, pp. 13-32.
- NIANG, Abdoulaye. 2006. "Bboys: Hip-hop Culture in Dakar, Sénégal," in *Global Youth?: Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*, ed. Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa, Routledge. pp. 167-185.
- _____. 2010. « Hip-hop, musique et Islam : le *rap prédicateur* au Sénégal, » in *Cahiers de recherche sociologique*, n° 49, pp. 63-94.
<http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1001412ar> DOI: 10.7202/1001412ar
- . 2011. "The Hip Hop Movement in Senegal: When the 'Revolution' Comes from Below?" <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx>.
- NICHOLS, Lawrence T. 2011. "Editor's Introduction: Semiotics and Sociology," in *The American Sociologist*, vol. 42, n°2/3, Semiotics and Sociology, pp. 153-155.
- SAJNANI, Damon. 2013. "Troubling the Trope of 'Rapper as Modern Griot'," in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 156-180.
- SAVANE, Vieux & SARR, Baye Makébé. 2012. *Y'en a marre. Radioscopie d'une jeunesse insurgée au Sénégal*, Paris: L'Harmattan.
- THIAT & CISSOKHO, Sidy. 2011. « Y'en a marre. Rap et contestation au Sénégal, » in *Multitudes* vol. 3 n°46, pp. 26-34. DOI 10.3917/mult.046.0026.
- THOMAS, Greg. 2006. "Fire and "Damnation": Hip-Hop ("Youth Culture") and 1956 in Focus, » in *Présence Africaine*, Nouvelle série, No. 175/177, 50th Anniversary of the 1st International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, 19-22 September, Vol. II—Contributions and Discussion (2007-1er semestre 2008), pp. 300-312

ⁱ For this title I borrow some wordings from Jean-François Havard, « Ethos « *bul faale* » et nouvelles figures de la réussite au Sénégal », *Politique africaine* 2001/2 (N° 82), p. 63-77.

ⁱⁱ According to Niang (2010) this rejection of Hip-hop was due to the fact the elders considered as vulgar, silly imitators of Western, mainly Afro-American culture (75; 76). Cf Gueye (2013) reinforces: "In the beginning, rap music had negative connotations in Senegalese popular culture. Rap musicians were not taken seriously and were humorously likened to madmen because in Wolof, especially among the sub-group of the Lebou, the term *rap* means a spirit that inhabits someone's body and makes the person sick or mentally ill." (Gueye, 2013 : 24)

iii Cf Havard's comment on the *Bul faale* generation proves that it was not a philosophy of resignation, but instead a rejection of fatalism: « L'impact de ce mouvement générationnel est considérable, tant du point de vue social que politique. (...) Le *bul faale* n'est donc pas, comme certains ont parfois voulu le croire ou le faire croire, l'expression d'une jeunesse résignée. Bien au contraire, il apparaît comme le rejet d'un certain fatalisme qui imprègne 'traditionnellement' l'imaginaire sénégalais. » (Havard, art. Cit. 63 : 74)

iv According to the adepts of the hard core hip-hop the radicalization of the discourse is a response to social injustices. "When asked in a TV interview why they launch their critique through such harsh and violent language,

Foumalade explained that a language of contestation must match the power of the injustice being contested." (Fredericks, 2014:138)

v In the language of youth "Hip-hop Jolof" and "Hip-hop Galsen" refer to Senegalese hip-hop. They aim to formulate the particularity of this identity relating it to a commonly shared cultural reference, as Jolof was the kingdom of the Wolof community, believed to be the founders of the Senegalese society. Galsen is an inversion for Senegal.

vi Alioune Sané, a member of *y'en a marre* explains the concept "esprit" as follows: "When we formed the *Y'en a Marre* movement, we conceived of the *esprits* and determined what an *esprit* would be. It is a component part of *Y'en a Marre* in a given locality. Each *Y'en a Marre esprit* is composed of at least twenty-five members, of which ten are women. The *esprits* diagnose the problems of their localities and reflect on what they can do by organizing." (Nelson, art. Cit.: 17)

vii The opposition political parties, the civilian society organizations and *Y'en a marre* summoned the population for a big sit-in before the National Assembly on the day of June 23 to dissuade the MPs from voting Wade's unpopular bill. Aimed to be pacific, the gathering turned out violent with a heavy toll of dead and injuries and police arrests. However, despite the brutal police assaults the crowd held firm ground and Wade was forced to withdraw the bill.

viii "The direct addresses reinforce defiance and clearly identify Wade as the interlocutor. In Wolof culture, calling an addressee's name before speaking directly to the person is a practice used to garner the latter's attention. Repeating the name several times before delivering a speech establishes the importance of a message. It is used in panegyric forms where a praise singer wants to bear witness and acknowledge the presence or deeds of the addressee. In situations of conflict, it denotes a speaker's frustrations and serves as a warning to the person named. Also, as a sign of respect, a young person should not call an older person by their first name without first adding a term of respect such as uncle, father, sister, aunt, etc. The lyrics subvert this notion and suggest that Wade, addressed by his first name, Abdoulaye, is not worthy of this respect." (Gueye, art. cit.: 29)

ix The rapper sees himself as a missioner, and his priesthood is not to betray his public and his people. It means that art and politics are inseparable entities.

x Opposition political parties as well as the ruling party tried to seduce *Y'en a marre*, but the latter preferred to keep their distance. Apart from calling to vote Wade out, they refused to endorse any political party. For them, the stake was the restoration of democracy threatened by the Wade regime.

xi Successively Wade and Maky proposed important positions to *Y'en a marre* who turned the offer down preferring the watchdog mission. The coordinator of *Y'en a marre*, Fadel Barro relates the events: "After Abdoulaye Wade left, Macky Sall received us when we went to congratulate him. With Macky, it was more a gesture of appreciation, it was not an act of corruption, it must be said. He said, "You contributed a lot to the defeat of Abdoulaye Wade and to my election, whether you say so or not. You shouldn't be afraid of exercising power—that's how you can change things." That's his point of view. He offered a lot of different things—positions as ministers or ambassadors—but we told him that we appreciated his recognition, and yet we felt we could be much more useful by working on developing that strong public opinion and that critical mass capable of changing the country. We would be abandoning our fight for change if we accepted his offers, and he understood." (Nelson, art. Cit. :16-17)

xii In an interview with Sarah Nelson, *Y'enamarriste* Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané explain the concept of the NTS as follows: "The NTS agenda proceeds from the understanding that strong national institutions can only be founded on a society of responsible and engaged citizens who act with integrity and expect the same from their leaders.

We have to examine our own behavior, our habits with regard to the country and to public life. What is our share of the responsibility? That's what motivated our idea of the NTS. Even before Abdoulaye Wade left office, we said that change in Senegal will not come from a political leader, much less from a political party or coalition of parties. Change will come from each Senegalese understanding that the problem of Senegal is his or her problem." (2014: 13-14)