Richard M. Shain, *Roots in Reverse: Senegalese Afro-Cuban Music and Tropical Cosmopolitanism*. Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2018. 17 + 210 pp. (Paper US\$ 24.95)

It is well known that the emergence of popular music in Africa during the mid-twentieth century was greatly influenced by Cuban dance music, which itself has deep roots in the continent. Indeed, many of West Africa's best-known veteran stars acknowledge their debt to Afro-Cuban genres like *son*, which they see as the prodigal son returning home. Malian singer Salif Keita remarked of his early career that he sang Cuban-tinged songs in “what sounded like Spanish,” avowing that “it’s through Cuban music that we discovered modern instruments” (1989 BBC TV documentary *Under African Skies: Mali*).

Shain’s book focuses on Senegal and its long-lasting fascination with Afro-Cuban dance music, which has played an important role in the development of local popular styles, before *mbalax* took over as the dominant sound. His approach is primarily sociological. Early chapters give detailed information on the routes by which Cuban music reached Senegal, contesting colonial rule and becoming a signifier of “tropical cosmopolitanism,” modernity, and cultural citizenship. There is insightful discussion on the record clubs in 1950s Dakar that fanned the flames of passion for Latin music and dance.

Chapter 4 documents the rise of seminal bands like Star Band and Orchestra Baobab, to whom the book returns in Chapter 6. That Baobab should be a strong focus is absolutely justifiable. In their heyday, 1970–82, they were arguably Senegal’s most professional band. They toured widely and produced quality recordings with unusual arrangements, every instrument in tune. Baobab did not merely imitate Afro-Cuban music, they created an entirely new style out of it, and they were masterful songwriters.

The music referred to in this book is well known to me. Songs like *On Verra Ça* were my first, exciting exposure to Senegalese dance music in the late 1970s when I started spending time in Senegambia researching music. It is disappointing that Shain glosses over the diverse roots of Baobab’s style under the rubric of “Mande elements” (p. 70) without reference to influences such as *gumbe* (pan-African creole drumming) and the Mandinka kora repertoire called *Yeyengo* (from French “yeye”) reflecting Senegal’s cultural multiplicity.

There are numerous minor errors—for example, *tonado* should be *tonada* (p. 7); Ali Farka Touré was Sonrai not Tamashek (p. 121); the kora is a harp not a lute (p. 150); Dr. Nico’s influence on Baobab guitarist Attisso is not mentioned, et cetera. But where the book falls down dramatically is in Chapter 6, which purports to document the “global marketing” of Senegal’s Afro-Cuban bands in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately, the chapter is riddled with sweeping

assumptions about everything that has to do with the world music market, from producers to audiences, with statements such as “World Music is ... for arm-chair travelers, not dance floor warriors” and “Baobab resolved to attract this audience of audio anthropologists” (p. 134). (Where is the evidence for this?)

I witnessed Baobab's revival at first hand in Dakar in 2001 and recognize little in Shain's analysis. His portrayal of the intentions of Baobab's producer Nick Gold borders on the offensive, describing his work to promote the revival of Baobab as “myth-spinning,” and “ersatz nostalgia divorced from any sense of history or lived experience” (p. 124). The statement that “in Nick Gold's hands, Orchestre Baobab became a tree without any roots” belittles both World Circuit's respectful production and its meticulously researched sleeve notes and related publications, as well as Baobab's agency in their choice of repertoire, sound, and imaging. The use of language is provocative; for example, the “make-believe story allows audiences outside of Africa to feel the frisson of ‘rescuing’ these purportedly starving artists” (p. 125) and “images of African folk art [on the album cover, *Made in Dakar*] do violence to the image [of Baobab]” (p. 126).

In view of the seriousness of these allegations, I contacted Gold for a response. He replied, saying that Shain never consulted him for an interview (though he was readily accessible), and that the book has many inaccuracies. He cited, for example, Shain's claim that he had purposefully spun a story about guitarist Attisso not playing the guitar after the band split, thus confusing his story with that of Cuban pianist Rubén Gonzalez. “When we contacted Attisso” Gold said, “he told me that he hadn't been playing for years and that he needed to ‘get his fingers back.’ He also said he didn't have a guitar so we sent him one.”

World music producers seem to be a red rag to the academic bull (see “Our Stories, from us, the ‘they’: Nick Gold talks to Lucy Durán about the Making of Buena Vista Social Club,” *Journal of World Popular Music* 2014). It is time for academics to interrogate their underlying agendas, and stop essentializing the people who produce the music they are writing about.

Lucy Durán

SOAS University of London, London, England, U.K.

ld@soas.ac.uk