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Writing for A Future Audience Contemporary Children's Literature in Wolof

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Writing for A Future Audience
Contemporary Children's Literature in Wolof

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ABSTRACT

Wolof as a whole is a language in transition from oral to written. The immense oral tradition of stories and songs in Wolof is increasingly being supplemented by new literature. This movement is visible across all genres of literature, but I am particularly interested in literature for children, both because it has been largely ignored in the existing research on Wolof literature, and because I think that children's literature written in local or indigenous languages is important for increasing literacy and keeping these languages alive and vibrant. I will provide an analysis of the activities of two authors of Wolof children's literature and two major axes of Wolof children's book publishing. Through answering the questions of who is currently writing and who is currently publishing Wolof children's literature, I will be able to examine trends in contemporary Wolof children's literature and answer questions relating to the importance of Wolof literature in the present and future.

African Literature, Education: Language and Literature

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Secondary Sources

Before conducting my study, I first completed an exploration of existing literature. I found that there were many articles and dissertations that touched on either Wolof literature in general, with no mention of children's literature, children's literature in Africa in general, or Sénégalaise publishing and literary production in French. The literature that I found was thus able to inform the background of my research, but did not provide very much direct information about Wolof children's literature. Throughout my research, I aimed to extract the relevant information from already-published sources and supplement it with my own research, thus bringing the two together to form a more complete picture of the world of Wolof children's literature than I would have been able to create with solely my own research. The secondary documents that I engaged with the most in my research were two dissertations, "The Limits of the Literary: Sénégalaise Writers Between French, Wolof, and World Literature," by Tobias Warner, and "Communication in Culture and Society: Origin, Evolution, Challenge, and Achievement in Sénégalaise Publishing" by Elana Anderson, as well as numerous other scholarly articles. I will discuss these in further detail in my literature review.

Interviews¹

As part of my independent research in the course of my study, I conducted two formal interviews. These interviews were both conducted in French, at a location of the interviewee's choosing. I recorded both of the interviews with the consent of each participant. The advantages of conducting these interviews in person were that I was able to be more flexible in my questions, tailoring them to the responses that I was getting, and that the answers that I received were more detailed and longer than those that I was sent over email. I tried to follow the

¹ See Appendix 1 for interview questions

questions that I had prepared before the interviews, but I also wanted to create an environment that was more conversational, so that my interviewees would feel more comfortable. Overall, the interviews that I conducted in person were extremely fruitful.

The first interview was with Seydou Nourou Ndiaye, the director of *Editions Papyrus Afrique*. *Papyrus Afrique* is the only S n galese publishing house to publish almost exclusively in local languages (Anderson, 189). I conducted this interview at the offices of *Papyrus Afrique* in Gu diawaye, a suburb on the outskirts of Dakar. This allowed me to combine my interview with a brief tour of the two offices that make up the publishing company. These offices are located in Mr. Ndiaye's home, and are filled to the brim with published and unpublished manuscripts. The major challenge that I faced during this interview was that since Mr. Ndiaye is extremely busy, he was occasionally interrupted during the time that we were speaking. However, this only presented a minor problem, and overall my interview with Mr. Ndiaye went smoothly.

The second interview was with Babacar Mbaye Ndaak, the president and co-founder of *Leeboon ci Leer*, an organization of S n galese storytellers across oral and written traditions. Mr. Ndaak works as a high school history teacher, in addition to directing the organization and producing his own work. I conducted this interview at Mr. Ndaak's home in Gu diawaye, which is located nearby the school where he teaches, the *Lyc e Banque Islamique*. The only challenge that I faced when talking to Mr. Ndaak was that in advance of the meeting, he requested that I pay him for his time. However, when I explained that I was a student and did not have the funding to pay him, he was very accommodating and told me that he would waive his usual consulting fee.

In addition to these two in-person interviews, I conducted several e-mail interviews and correspondences. I conducted an extended email correspondence, including an interview, with Maam Daour Wade, who is a member of *Leeboon ci Leer* and author of many children's books, in addition to working as a consultant and with several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). After speaking to Mr. Wade on the phone, we decided that communicating via email would be the only way to efficiently remain in contact, since his schedule is extremely busy and he was out of the country for nearly the entire ISP period. Our email correspondence was primarily in English, and I received consent from him (as well as from all of the other email correspondents whose words I will use in my paper) to include his words and ideas here. My other major email correspondences were with Arame Fal, a linguist at of OSAD (*Organisation Sénégalaise d'Appui au Développement*²), which focuses on informal education and publishing in Sénégal's national languages, and with Afia Obinim at *Kasahorow*, a non-profit which publishes children's books in local languages, and facilitates local language community building (Obinim). The major challenges of conducting email interviews were that I could not modify my questions once the interview had started, and that my interviewees tended to give less elaborate answers than I received in my in-person interviews. The major advantage of conducting email interviews was that it allowed me to speak to people that I would not have been able to speak to otherwise, and allowed my interviewees to answer at their convenience.

A quick note about interviews quoted in this paper: all quotes in French or English are direct quotes from interview transcripts.

Other Primary Sources

In addition, I used several primary source documents, including four Wolof children's books. One of these books, *Des Djinnns de Toutes Les Couleurs/Jinne yu Mel Nune* by Ngoné

² Sénégalaise Organization for Development Support

Hélène Diop and Mame Daour Wade and published by BLD, I purchased at the *Librairie Clairafrique*. This book was interesting in particular because it is published in a bilingual French-Wolof edition. Another, *Yóbbalu Tuut-Tànk yi* by Meysa Mati Njaay and published by *Papyrus Afrique*, I purchased from Mr. Ndiaye at the offices of *Papyrus Afrique* after my interview. The other two books, *Màtt Fel Teeñ ak seeni jaar-jaar* by Séex Aliyu Ndaw, published by OSAD, and *Powum Xam ak Xamle Juróom-ñaari Jàngoro yi* by Baydi Taal Nduur, published by PAPA (*Projet d'Appui au Plan d'Action en Matière de l'Education de Base des Adultes et des Jeunes*³), were given to me by Souleymane Ngom, a professor at UCAD. I used these books to see what the finished product of the Wolof children's book publishing process looked like. In addition, I used primary source documents provided by the Prix Kadima, a prize for the best literature in local languages in Francophone countries.

My final research method was site visits at three major Dakar bookstores (*Librairie aux 4 Vents, Librairie Clairafrique, and Librarie Didaktika*) and one St. Louis bookstore (*L'Agneau Carnivore*) in order to gain an idea of the real-world availability of children's books in Wolof. At each site, I looked for Wolof children's books on my own first, and then (regardless of whether I had found any or not) I would ask the staff if they stocked children's books in Wolof. The challenge that I faced in this stage of my research was my limited knowledge of Wolof, which meant that I had to spend a large amount of time translating any primary source materials.

CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

Writing and Illustrating⁴

The final piece of my ISP was the experience of writing and illustrating a children's book in Wolof. My process for creating this book was divided into four distinct stages. The first was

³ Project for APPUI and Plan of Action for Materials of Basic Education for Adults and Children

⁴ See Appendix 2 for Wolof/English text of my children's book.

the brainstorming and decision-making process. I attempted to distill my experience in Sénégal into a storyline that would be appropriate for young children. The next step was to write the actual story. I did this by first writing the story page-by-page in English, then translating it directly into Wolof, using French for Wolof words I did not know. The next step was to meet with my advisor, Fatou Kandji, in order to revise my first draft and finish the translation process. This involved three rounds of drafts of the story, each of which we went over together to make sure both that the Wolof was grammatically correct and that the story was being told in a way that was true to how I imagined it. The final step was creating the illustrations and putting the book together. I decided to use *wax* fabric scraps for a large part of the illustrations for several reasons: they are a very recognizable and unique aspect of Sénégalese visual culture that I see each day, I am interested in recycling and reuse of waste, and was able to use scraps from various tailors which would otherwise have been thrown away, and I wanted my book to be visually interesting. As Osayimwense Osa points out in her article "The rise of African children's literature," "words in a picture book are primarily for the adult or any other person who can read the text to the child; illustrations, the core of picture books, are for the children" (Osa, 752).

INTRODUCTION

Wolof children's literature is evolving in the throes of several movements: increasing literature in local languages, revamping education and increasing literacy in Sénégal, and a continually renewed focus on Africa-centric children's literature. In addition, this literature is at the center of its own movement, with the industry being driven by extremely passionate writers and publishers. This paper will attempt to give an overview of the dynamic world of Wolof children's literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will serve to provide background and context for my study by tracing the evolution of Sénégalaise literature and climate of contemporary Sénégalaise publishing through the work of Tobias Warner and Elena Anderson, and the origins of African children's literature through Osayimwense Osa's articles.

The Limits of the Literary: Sénégalaise Writers Between French, Wolof, and World Literature

Tobias Warner

Introduction

This dissertation provides a broad overview of Sénégalaise literature in both French and Wolof. Warner traces the evolution of Sénégalaise literature from its earliest origins through the present day, and examines language politics and the tension between French and Wolof in Sénégalaise literature.

Literature in Service to Linguistics

From its beginnings, Sénégalaise literature has involved "the exclusion of some indigenous textual cultures and translation of others." The author examines the rationale behind

collecting fables in the colonial era (an early example of literature being produced in Sénégal) as a method of creating a guide for colonizers to languages that they had previously not encountered, and which were for the most part oral. The author points out that "in various sites across Africa, linguists (many of them missionaries like Boliat) were confronted with communities whose speech genres did not, to them, conform to the category of literature. Faced with this difficulty, authors of missionary and colonial grammars settled on proverbs and folktales as the best alternative" (Irvine qtd. in Warner, 5). This argument is contextualized by a reading of the works of the Abbé David Boliat, an early St. Louisian missionary and intellectual, and the author of what is widely considered to be the first Sénégalaise book written in French, his 1853 *Esquisses Sénégalaises*.

Evolution of Sénégalaise Literature

This historical background informs the author's further exploration of French and Wolof texts throughout the evolution of Sénégalaise literature. This evolution is traced first through the emergence of literary study in the colonial Sénégalaise classroom, and then through the first production of Wolof literature and film, beginning with Ousmane Sembene's films as well as more traditional literary works such as *Aawo Bi*, the first novel published in Wolof, by Maam Yunus Dieng, as well as Dieng's later translation of *Une Si Longue Lettre* into Wolof, in addition to several other Wolof texts. In tracing the emergence of Wolof literature in the 1950s, the author argues that "one need not consider the 'turn' to Wolof as an attempt to assert a rival, nativist cultural nationalism, but rather an attempt to expose the historical entanglement of literature itself with the making and remaking of Sénégalaise textual cultures. By experimenting with modes of address and response that had historically not been 'literary' and attempting to address publics that have historically been excluded from the category of literacy, Wolof writers trace

limits of the medium in which they work” (Warner, 13).

Can You Say it in Wolof?

In addition, Warner's discussion of a pivotal moment at a 1963 conference on literature, at which Birago Diop challenged Ousmane Sembène to repeat a speech he had given denouncing negritude and the continued reliance of African writers on French, in Wolof. Although Sembène avoided the topic at the conference, after this conference Sembène did attempt to 'say it in Wolof,' switching to film production so that his works could be understood by his target audience. This challenge, Warner says, is not the beginning of a push for Wolof literature, but marks a general trend towards pushing for African languages in literature. In a footnote on this section, Warner remarks that this idea had been previously discussed in Cheikh Anta Diop's *Nations*: "nestled in the middle of the tome is a section on “Developing National Languages.” “African languages,” Diop writes, “are far from being afflicted with a ‘natural poverty,’ and all that remains is to apply ourselves in an effort comparable with that which was applied to Western languages, so that [African languages] are at the level of the exigencies of modern life.” (Warner, 43) This attitude is remarkably similar to that of Seydou Nourou Ndiaye, the director of *Editions Papyrus Afrique*, and indeed, the discussion of a push towards a Wolof literature and intelligentsia informed how I would later understand Mr. Ndiaye’s philosophy.

Challenges of Wolof Publishing

Warner's remarks about the difficulty of publishing in Wolof ring true in the world of contemporary children's literature as well. Take for example the story he traces of Cheikh Aliou Ndao's novel *Buur Tillen*, which was first written in Wolof in 1967. After spending 10 years attempting to find a publisher, he eventually rewrote the novel in French, the version that was published as *Buur Tillen: Roi de la Medina* in 1972. The "wolof 'original' was finally published

in the late 1990s - nearly 30 years after it was first written" (Warner, 37). These stories of publishing in the earliest days of Wolof literature give context to the continued struggles that my research revealed, as does Warner's discussion of language politics. This discussion stretches from Leopold Senghor's reluctance to allow education and literary production in local languages, to the questions of audience that early Wolof writers were faced with has continued relevance in the present day (Warner, 40). Cheikh Aliou Ndao's comments on creating a standardized Wolof script with the *Ijjib Volof* group as "a means to the end of writing creatively in Wolof" and the justification for creating a latin script rather than the existing Wolofal script with it's accompanying literary traditions being the desire to "reach a larger public" adds context to the origin of the latin script in which contemporary Wolof is primarily written (qtd in Warner, 53).

Language as a Limiting Factor

Warner's discussion of the complicated relationship between French and local languages illuminates the context in which contemporary authors are writing. His discussion of Mariama Bâ's assertion that she was working in a 'borrowed language' which "is understood and spoken only by a tiny minority of the population" which "has a limited reach and is heard outside the people whom he addresses" gives credence to the arguments which are raised in favor of writing in a language which more people understand, even if they are not literate, rather than one that is spoken and read by a small and privileged segment of the population (qtd. in Warner, 60).

Warner highlights the idea that the danger of not being heard by those you are trying to reach is compounded by the danger of reaching entirely the wrong audience. This fear, along with the assertion by Boubacar Boris Diop that all literature is "written for a future public - implying that perhaps even texts that are written for a seemingly very present and determinate public are exposed to the contingency of their own futurity" gives further support to the authors and

publishers whose quest to write for that future public I will explore in this paper (Warner, 83-84). Despite the fact that "there has been an explosion in spoken and written public discourse in Wolof, this has not coincided with a rise in formal, institutional literacy in Wolof [and thus that]...the public for Wolof literature remains, stubbornly, potential" the writers with whom Warner engages throughout his dissertation share with the contemporary producers of children's literature in Wolof a deep belief in the existence of this future readership (Warner, 84).

Communication in Culture and Society: Origin, Evolution, Challenge, and Achievement in S n galese Publishing

Elana Anderson

Introduction

This dissertation explores the contemporary S n galese publishing world by comparing extensive profiles of three S n galese publishing houses, each with a different structure and focus. The dissertation also contains an overview of the general climate of S n galese publishing, including a discussion of the relationship between contemporary publishing and previous oral traditions in S n gal, which the author sees as intimately connected.

Historical Modes of Communication

The dissertation first follows the evolution of communication in S n gal through the long era of oral and musical traditions, including discussions of griots and drums used for communication, through the introduction of Islam and the first literacy in Wolofal, then through the colonial era and finally the contemporary post-independence publishing climate in S n gal. The author points out that regardless of whether the drum was a precursor to language or merely imitated the already-existing languages, it's position as a tool of communication leads it to be considered "the voice of Africa" (Anderson, 143). Drums in Senegambia were "all used to

communicate across vast distances, as well in ceremonies, royal and otherwise" (Anderson, 143). The author sees the *griot(te)* as serving a function which evolved out of the use of the drum for communication. She sees them as "agents of socio-cultural discourse, historians, mediators and musicians" and ascribes them a vital role in pre-colonial Sénégalaise culture, and despite their lessened visibility in contemporary Sénégal, posits that they remain an important channel of cultural communication. The introduction of Islam is the first instance of literacy in Sénégal, who in addition to providing the materials and climate for literacy, also brought to Sénégal "the Sufi Brotherhoods, who played a large part in the creation of schools" and resulted in the creation of a vast canon of religious poetry in Wolofal as well as Arabic (Anderson, 145). The arrival of French colonialism brought with it another wave of publication in Sénégal, but one which Anderson characterizes as being by the French and for the French, with very few exceptions. Post-independence, Sénégalaise publishing is characterized by creative solutions to lingering challenges, including "the imposition of the French language and the repression of all dissenting voices to French control and governance during colonial rule, the current lack of a paper production industry, and contemporary government disinterest, particularly with regards to public opinion. The Sénégalaise, like many other people in the global community, have met these challenges in unique and often unprecedented ways" (Anderson, 4). Although these publishers are far from problem-free, they represent an important move towards Sénégalaise publishing by and for Sénégalaise people.

Development, Challenges, Achievements

After this introduction, the author traces the development, challenges, and achievements of three contemporary Sénégalaise publishing houses. Anderson begins with *L'Harmattan Sénégal*, associated with *L'Harmattan France* but able to retain a degree of independence while

benefitting from the resources of the larger French publishing house. She then discusses *Editions Papyrus Afrique*, the only publisher in Sénégal to concentrate on local languages, which I will be discussing in much greater detail below. The third case study is of the experimental and innovative *Per Ankh: The Publishing Cooperative*, which is funded and run by a board of members, and is therefore able to avoid many of the problems which plague traditional publishing houses, and which the author sees as a uniquely pan-African approach to publishing. While *Papyrus Afrique* is the only publishing house highlighted by Anderson that has an explicit mission to valorise and publish in national languages, L'Harmattan Sénégal has a line of bilingual children's books in French and Wolof.

"The Rise of African Children's Literature" and "The Growth of African Children's Literature"

Osayimwense Osa

Introduction

The final pieces of literature that I will review here are two articles written by Osayimwense Osa and published two years apart in *The Reading Teacher*. These articles are called "The rise of African children's literature" and "The growth of African children's literature" and were published in 1985 and 1987 respectively. Although they deal with publishing in anglophone Africa almost exclusively, the discussion of the climate of early children's literature in Africa is applicable to my topic in that the reasoning and struggles for emerging children's literature written and set in anglophone Africa is similar in many ways to the emergence of Wolof children's literature in Sénégal. In addition, these two articles gave me a sense of the climate that the first Africa-centric children's books were published in.

Goals of African Children's Literature

In Osa's first piece, she begins by explaining the goals of children's literature as "ranging from developing literary appreciation to more specific and deeply humanistic goals such as investigating human values. The major way for children to reach these goals is by learning to read and respond to literary work." (Osa, 750-751). These goals, however, cannot be met by literature which is not geared towards the lived experience of African children. Thus, early 20th century children's literature being produced in Africa was ineffective at achieving any substantial humanistic goals, as "its appropriateness for African readers was never considered apart from gearing it to their level of literacy, for the aim of teachers and missionaries was to Europeanize African children, not to provide literature related to their needs and interests" (Schmidt, qtd. in Osa, 751).

A Snapshot of African Children's Literature in 1985

Osa then describes the current state of children's literature, using several English-language children's books as case studies, and concludes that "recurrent themes in African children's literature are at present rooted in local life stories, adventure stories, and historical fiction" (Osa, 752). Despite the clear growth in the production of more appropriate children's books for African children, the Osa maintains that before real work can be done in any substantial way, a bibliography of existing contemporary children's literature must be compiled, in order to provide a basis for further study. This challenge remains today for anyone attempting to conduct a more in-depth analysis of children's literature. As Osa concludes in this first article, "a true canon of written African children's literature is yet to emerge," and without it, a firm base for future study is lacking (Osa, 753).

Two Years Later

In her second article, Osa opens with the encouraging statistic that "the production of

children's books is the most rapidly growing segment of the publishing industry in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s" (Osa, 316). She then follows up by stating that "perhaps it is time to reflect upon the position of children's literature in Africa past and present" and to encourage further scholastic study of this growing field (Osa, 316). In this article, she explores more fully the oral history which undergirds all new children's literary production in Africa. However, she posits that although there was a tradition of "the sharing of yarns, in the form of folktales, myths, and fables[,] these were not invented for children; they were intended as adult literature. But children also listened to them." (Osa, 317). She goes on to credit the oral tradition with piquing childrens' imagination and interest in learning, which are goals that she also ascribes to children's literature. Thus, Osa, like the two authors who I will profile later, sees the contemporary children's literature world as having inarguable roots in oral expression. Indeed, although she maintains that "the rendition of oral folktales into print reduces their dense texture and essence," this same rendering into print may be one of the most effective ways of preventing its total loss (Osa, 318). Osa ends her article by chronicling the progress that has been made in the two years since her first piece was published: conferences have been called and awareness is being raised about the need for appropriate and innovative children's literature in Africa. But then, as now, there remains much work to be done. Despite the articles' basis in anglophone Africa, the larger conclusions that Osa draws are relevant to a study of children's literature in Sénégal as well.

WHO'S WRITING?

In order to begin to understand the world of Wolof children's literature, it is necessary to get a sense of who is writing children's books in Wolof. I will profile two authors who are currently producing children's literature, in order to highlight the various ways in which children's literature in local languages is produced. First, I will profile Maam Daour Wade, who has been writing children's literature for many years and working with various NGOs to produce content in local languages as well. Second, I will profile Babacar Mbaye Ndaak, the president of the *Leeboon ci Leer* society, of which Maam Daour Wade is also a part. Of course, there are other writers working in Wolof children's literature, but given the limited time and scope of this study, I will limit my exploration of the world of Wolof writers to these two authors.

MAAM DAOUR WADE

How It All Began

Maam Daour Wade's books were born from his fear that the stories he had once been taught would disappear in generations to come. As he tells the story, "Un soir, lorsque mes enfants m'avaient demandé de leur dire des contes, j'ai fait un triste constat. Je me suis rendu compte que la mémoire a ses faiblesses, car je ne me souvenais plus de toutes ces histoires que je connaissais. L'urgence, pour moi, était d'en recueillir le maximum possible et des écrire pour sauver cette partie importante de notre patrimoine⁵" (Wade qtd. in Jossan). Thus, Wade's first books were collections of stories that had previously existed in orality, including a 1993 collection of 25 stories which won the UNICEF prize for children's literature (Aït-Hatrit).

⁵ One night, when my children asked me to tell them some stories, I had a sad realization. I realized that memory has its weaknesses, as I no longer remembered all the stories that I had once known. The urgency, for me, was to gather as many as possible and write them down in order to save this important part of our heritage.

However, he soon realized that "les besoins des enfants étaient tellement grands que je n'avais plus le temps d'en recueillir assez.[...] Alors, j'ai commencé à en créer⁶" (Wade qtd. in Aït-Hatrit) In 2002, Wade received the 4th Kadima prize, a prize given every two years in three categories: *Prix des Langues*, given for advance in linguistic research, *Prix de Litterature*, given for an original work of literary production in any genre (this is the category that Wade won in 2002), and *Prix de la traduction*, given for an excellent work of translation from French to a local language or the inverse (De Nardi). The prize "a pour [son] ambition de valoriser les travaux de traduction et les créations littéraires en langues africaines et créoles⁷" (De Nardi).

Importance of Wolof Children's Literature

According to Wade, it is important to write literature specifically geared towards children because "ils ont un royaume qui leur est propre. Ils ne sont pas de tout des adultes en miniature⁸" (Wade qtd. in Jossang). This attitude has led Wade to focus on writing fiction for children. Wade also makes sure that his stories contain valuable lessons for the children he writes for. For example, in an as-yet-unpublished manuscript "parmi ses héros le nombre de filles est égal à celui des garçons. Une façon pour lui d'inculquer aux enfants la notion de parité dès le bas âge⁹" (Jossang). Wade defines his audience for his books as being all those who are literate in written Wolof, "but with an emphasis on new literate people among which I favor kids." (Wade). In addition, Wade gives a further reason for writing in Wolof rather than in French: "I must confess that Wolof being my native language my natural tendency is to use more in speaking and writing on one hand and the other I do think I should contribute to strengthen newly literate people by

⁶ the needs of children were so large that I did not have the time to collect enough [existing stories] [...] Thus, I began to create them.

⁷ has for [its] ambition to valorize work done in translation and literary production in african languages and creoles

⁸ they have a kingdom which is their own. They are not at all adults in miniature.

⁹ among the heroes the number of girls is equal to that of boys. A way for him to instil in children the idea of parity from a young age

writing in a language they can read understand, Wolof being one of those languages" (Wade). In an earlier interview with Afrik Online, Wade characterizes his choice to continue writing in Wolof as a method by which S n galese people can "battre pour notre culture"¹⁰ (qtd. in Ait-Hatrit).

Publishing and Distribution

Despite his growing fame as a children's book author, Wade characterizes the process of getting books published in Wolof as, simply, "Hell!" (Wade). He elaborates: "First of all there are hardly children's books publishers around. The existing ones are not visible enough to attract the very few writers interested by this kind of writing. Children's literature in local language is not looked at as being a sector that is worth developing" (Wade). Despite this bleak landscape, Wade sees a future for children's book publishing in S n gal, saying that "there's great potential in terms of market," but that neither publishers nor writers are willing to "make the move that will trigger the process," an attitude which has brought the Wolof children's literature world to a "standstill" (Wade). Despite these problems, Wade has published twenty two books, working with various publishers in S n gal. His success in publishing has been met with widespread delight by the community. The reaction to his books in Wolof has been enthusiastic, with "people amazed, excited and ready to acquire my children's books whenever they come to discover their existence" (Wade). Wade characterizes the challenge as "to publish enough children's books in local languages and make them available in bookstores for those who need to buy them" (Wade). The drive and creativity with which he writes his children's books has not gone unnoticed, however. Wade has worked with several non-profits to bring Wolof publishing to the forefront. In particular, Wade has done extensive work with Population Media Center (PMC), a non-profit that defines its mission as "striv[ing] to improve the health and well-being

¹⁰ fight for our culture

of people around the world through the use of entertainment-education strategies, like serialized dramas on radio and television, in which characters evolve into role models for the audience for positive behavior change." (PMC). With PMC, he has been able to work as a writer for the Wolof dramas that they have produced in Sénégal, as well as a director of projects in other countries. More specifically geared towards children is his work with a small non-profit called Local Language Literacy, which "is dedicated to creating, printing, and distributing books in local languages and giving them to students" (Local Language Literacy). These partnerships with NGOs have allowed Wade to circumvent the stagnant publishing market for children's books in Wolof.

BABACAR MBAYE NDAAK

How it All Began

Babacar Ndiaye Ndaak began his career as a storyteller in a similar way to Maam Daour Wade. Fascinated by the history of griots in Sénégal, he spent his youth travelling around the country and learning from griots, hoping to keep the knowledge and heritage that they represented alive. He believed that it was important to save these stories because "notre civilization a été construit autour des paroles. Autour de l'oralité"¹¹ (Ndaak). This dedication to the oral roots of Sénégalese culture, and indeed, in Ndaak's avis, the roots of all culture, has led him to a creative career in creating both oral and written literature for all audiences.

Leeboon ci Leer

As the president and co-founder of *Leeboon ci Leer*, Ndaak is a firm believer that "le mot dit est plus important que le mot écrit"¹² (Ndaak). However, this belief has led him to publish

¹¹ our civilization was constructed around words. Around orality

¹² the spoken word is more important than the written word

CDs which are accompanied by written texts. In this way, he is able to conserve the orality of the stories and poems which he recounts, while ensuring that they will be further preserved through the issuance of books as well. This is the work of his association, for which the idea came to him after meeting storytellers from other African countries at a festival celebrating African culture, as well. It occurred to him that many other countries had associations of storytellers, but that Sénégal was lacking one. When he returned to Sénégal, he worked with a friend to create and populate the new association. Over the years, the association slowly grew, and today counts seven members. According to Ndaak, when *Leeboon ci Leer* "[a] commencé, les contes étaient dans les maisons. Nous l'avons amené dans le scene publique¹³" (Ndaak). This valorization of oral histories is one of the main goals of *Leeboon ci Leer*, and despite his insistence on keeping oral tradition at the forefront, the members of his association are at the vanguard of literary production. Ndaak tells me that almost all of the members have published books of stories, despite their primary focus on oral storytelling.

Importance of Wolof Children's Literature

Ndaak sees the primary function of stories as being didactic. He believes in a universal aspect of his art: "tous les contes sur le monde disent le meme chose¹⁴" (Ndaak). Each story has as its objective to teach the listener how to be a better person. This message is of course expressed in different ways, but Ndaak is firm in his belief that the most important aspect of storytelling is to instruct young people how to grow up: how to be good, kind and smart. He is also clear that the most effective way to do this is in the mother tongue of the person who is listening to the story. His belief in telling stories in Wolof stems from the idea that "chaque

¹³ began, the stories were within the home. We have brought them into the public scene

¹⁴ all the stories in the world say the same thing

peuple rêve dans une langue, rit dans une langue et pleure dans une langue¹⁵" (Ndaak). Thus, "la langue dans lequel tu ris, tu pleures, tu rêves, c'est cette langue qui va te toucher. C'est avec ce langue la que tu peux toucher les autres dans la langue¹⁶" (Ndaak). Ndaak expresses the belief that it is possible to appreciate beauty in a language not one's own, but that a story told in one's mother tongue will necessarily sound more beautiful than the same story told in a different language. Thus, Ndaak is not opposed to working in languages other than his mother tongue, Wolof, but is fully committed to keeping the stories which he produces for a Wolof-speaking audience in that language.

Publishing and Distribution

Ndaak's work, like Maam Daour Wade's, is not limited to the traditional publishing sphere. Although he has worked in translation with several publishers, most prominently in Germany, his major production has been a series of three CDs with accompanying books, all of which he self-funded and published. Ndaak works as a consultant, performs as a storyteller, and teaches history at a local high school. Financing his own production allows him the freedom to produce his own work in Wolof, without having to translate it or to be at the mercy of an editor who is worried about sales figures. His process falls in a middle ground between orality and literature. Ndaak first writes out his poems and stories in Wolof, before meeting with musicians to create a track to go along with each poem or story. Once the recording process has been finished, Ndaak creates a CD and a book with the original written stories and poems. Thus, he is able to preserve the best of both worlds. According to an article in *Le Soleil*, Ndaak's artistic productions can be classified as "livres musicaux¹⁷" (Sarr). At the moment, he has released three

¹⁵ every people dreams in one language, laughs in one language, and cries in one language

¹⁶ The language in which you laugh, you cry, you dream, it is that language which will touch you. It is with that language that you can touch other speakers of that language.

¹⁷ musical books

albums, "Sooroor"¹⁸, "Boroom Ndeer"¹⁹, and "Wax sa Wax"²⁰, which are concerned with themes ranging from religion, including an eulogy of Mohammed and stories about the founders of Mouridism, to S n galese history and patriotism, to didactic tales dealing with politics and social issues. In addition, he is working on a fourth album to be released in the near future.

WHO'S PUBLISHING?

Wolof literature has never been limited to traditionally published works. Although I am focusing on works that would fall under the category of literature in the strictest sense - that is, which are produced physically on paper, the publishing industry nonetheless offers varied options for publishing. First, I will present a case study of *Editions Papyrus Afrique*, in order to explain the more typical (by which I mean for-profit, private, brick and mortar publishers) publishing options for Wolof children's books. This will serve as a microcosm of the world of publishing of "typical" enterprises, from which I will be able to extrapolate larger themes which apply across the industry. I will follow this with an exploration into the non-profit publishing world, by presenting two NGOs which are heavily involved in Wolof children's book publishing, as well as an examination of a specific instance of NGO-funded production of a Wolof children's book.

EDITIONS PYPYRUS AFRIQUE

Origins

Editions Papyrus Afrique is S n gal's only publishing house which publishes exclusively in national languages. The publishing company was founded by Seydou Nourou Ndiaye, who

¹⁸ The Summit

¹⁹ History

²⁰ Talk your talk

explained in an interview that "cette idee de crée un maison d'edition qui publie en les langues africains vient...de mon frustration du poete²¹" (Ndiaye). Today, *Editions Papyrus Afrique* runs out of two small offices in Ndiaye's home in Guédiawaye. The staff consists of Ndiaye, who fulfils every role that traditionally would be split between various employees, and his secretary Dado Fall, who manages administrative issues, as well as handling myriad other tasks. As highlighted in Anderson in *Communication in Culture and Society*, "in smaller publishing houses such as Editions Papyrus Afrique, the editor, considered the chief of production, and the publisher are one and the same...the editing [...], production [...], commercialization [...], and administrative/financial [...] stages of publishing a book are directed by one person" (Anderson, 196-7).

Ndiaye further explained the origins of his publishing house as having grown out of a natural inclination to write in his first languages. "J'écrivais en wolof et pulaar quand j'étais jeune, quand j'étais un etudiant, et ces poems était dans un contexte particulier dans Sénégal²²" (Ndiaye). Throughout the 80s, he wrote poems about his growing political frustration, in both Pulaar and Wolof. In the late 80s, a friend suggested to him that he should collect and publish his poetry. He did so, and brought them to IFAN (*L'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire*²³) soon after. However, there was nobody willing to publish writing in local languages in Sénégal, so Cheikh Anta Diop, a close friend and the inspiration for much of Ndiaye's work, found a publisher willing to take Ndiaye's manuscript. However, the publisher was located in Niger, and Ndiaye couldn't bring himself to publish these poems outside of the country that had inspired them. Thus, Ndiaye left his manuscript in the care of IFAN until 1993, when it was finally

²¹ This idea to create a publishing house which published in African languages came...from my frustration as a poet.

²² I wrote in wolof and pulaar when I was young, when I was a student, and these poems were in a particular Sénégalaise environment.

²³ Fundamental Institute of Black Africa

published, a year after the first novel in Wolof, *Aawo Bi*, was published. Ndiaye attributes the beginning of publishing in Wolof to a grassroots belief in African languages as appropriate avenues for literary production. The director of IFAN at the time and his wife were both supportive of the idea of publishing in African languages, which helped to kickstart the movement.

Ndiaye's Philosophy

Ndiaye has devoted his life to the valorisation of African languages. In fact, he believes so strongly in the potential of publishing in local languages that he gave up his career as a writer to single-handedly run the publishing company he started. He explains "je ne suis plus un createur, je me mette au service des createurs"²⁴ (Ndiaye). In addition, Ndiaye was clear that "je ne mets pas au service du langue. Je me mette au service de toutes les langues Africains."²⁵ (Ndiaye). This full commitment to the promotion of all African languages, at the expense of his own writing, is extremely impressive. Ndiaye considers himself "au service des langues qui sont marginalisé...c'est le sens de mon combat"²⁶ (Ndiaye). He characterizes his work as a fight: when questioned further about his choice of words, he explained that he feels himself to be in a combat, but not against an opponent in the traditional sense. In his words, it is "un combat contre nous memes, contre notre ignorance...contre une situation qu'il faut changer"²⁷ (Ndiaye). Ndiaye is clear that the combat is not against the French language, but rather against what he sees as the unnatural reality of a country forced to speak and conduct its business in a language not its own. As child of Pulaar parents who grew up in a Wolof environment and thus understood Wolof and Pulaar from an early age, Ndiaye is firm in his belief that "l'Afrique est un environnement

²⁴ I am no longer a creator, I have put myself in service to creators.

²⁵ I did not put myself in service to a language. I put myself in service to all African languages.

²⁶ in service to languages which are marginalized...that is the sense of my combat

²⁷ a fight against ourselves, against our ignorance...against a situation which we must change.

profondement multilingue²⁸" (Ndiaye). His belief is that with colonization, French was positioned as a way to link disparate ethnic groups who otherwise would be unable to understand each other. In Ndiaye's view, this false claim accompanied an inflated count of the languages of West Africa, which allowed the French to position their language as "la langue de unification²⁹" (Ndiaye).

The Importance of Publishing in African Languages

All this is to say that Seydou Ndiaye is fully committed to the cause of publishing in African languages. He believes that the work must be put in in order to build African languages up to the point where other languages with extensive literary traditions (such as German, English, and French) are. These languages did not become widely written and fluently read overnight. The mission of Papyrus Afrique is to remedy this as much as possible, but the process is slow because it is a small private enterprise. For true change, it is necessary to have the support, or at least the resources, of the government. This is one reason Ndiaye gives for continuing to publish in local languages. Another is the idea that continuing to read in colonial languages puts African people in danger of continuing along the artificial linguistic and political barriers constructed during the colonial period, for example between the Gambia and Sénégal. Ndiaye espouses a belief that the divide between Francophone and Anglophone Africa is a facile construction left over from the colonial age. He used the term "Africaphone" to describe his conception of how language really worked in the continent; a languages are spoken throughout each country, but linguistic borders should not translate to political borders.

The Function of Children's Literature

When asked specifically about the importance of children's literature in local languages,

²⁸ Africa is an environment which is profoundly multilingual

²⁹language of unification

he replied "c'est capital"³⁰ (Ndiaye). Ndiaye believes that for a country to conduct the education of its children in a foreign language is "le plus grand humiliation"³¹ that a country can experience (Ndiaye). In order for education to be conducted in local languages, there needs to be literature being produced in those languages. Ndiaye explains that the publishing house originally set out to write books for people who were literate in African languages but had nothing to read, but the mission has shifted over the years and in 2003 he created a branch that concerns itself with children's literature exclusively. Papyrus Afrique has already published a children's book in Wolof, *Yóbbalu Tuut-Tànk yi*, consisting of short songs and poems, as well as one in Pulaar, and has two further children's books in Wolof pending publication: *Awa Yassin ak Buur*, by Aissatou Gueye, and *Bu La Saxar Rawee ci Gaar* by Sada Weinde Ndiaye (Anderson, 217). In addition, Papyrus Afrique hopes to soon launch a line of stories in several African languages accompanied by music from various ethnic traditions so that children can grow up with knowledge of the richness of other cultures. Ndiaye feels that his catalog is representative of a major movement in Wolof publishing as a whole. While his published catalog may be relatively small, there are many new things in the works, awaiting finishing touches and funding. Many writers who used to write in French are switching over and writing in their own languages, and Ndiaye sees this trend continuing. African languages are following the inexorable march of all languages which have transitioned from an oral tradition: first not being written at all, then being written without regard for our knowledge of grammar and spelling rules, and finally being written widely with a standardized grammar and spelling. Ndiaye believes that this march forward will be met by an increase in publishing in African languages, and a corresponding increase in education in local languages.

³⁰ It's capital

³¹ the greatest humiliation

NON-PROFIT PUBLISHING

OSAD

OSAD specializes in informal education and publishing in the national languages of Sénégal. It is a branch of the Ministry of the Woman, Child, and Family, part of the Sénégalaise government and was established in 1995. According to the OSAD website, the organization has a wide list of initiatives, including "elaboration de matériels didactiques et de documents pédagogiques, sous le contrôle de spécialistes des disciplines concernées,³²" as well as "édition des ouvrages en langues nationales³³" (OSAD).

In addition, they are open to questions about Wolof grammar and orthography; a section of their website allows readers to write in with questions which are then answered and posted to the website for future reference. According to the OSAD website, funding for the publishing of books in local languages has been for the most part provided by the team who works in the other sectors of the organization, but in recent years has had funding from the Ministry of Culture for certain works. Despite their disclaimer that "Il faut dire, en le regrettant vivement, que la littérature a peu de place dans les programmes d'alphabétisation,³⁴" as some of their funders believe in only a functional syllabus for teaching literacy (OSAD). However, the website goes on to say that it is of the utmost importance to cultivate joy in reading through fiction, and in my interview with Arame Fal, she expressed hope that they would be able to expand their fiction, and specifically children's fictions offerings in coming years. In addition, despite these disclaimers, OSAD has the largest catalog of children's literature in Wolof of any single establishment I discovered in my research. They boast six children's books: *Ba jaar ganejee*

³² Production of teaching materials and pedagogical documents, under the control of specialists in the disciplines concerned

³³ publishing of works in national languages

³⁴ It is necessary to say, regretfully, that the literature has a small place in the literacy programs

kaña, *Màtt Fel Teeñ ak seeni jaar-jaar*, and *Mellentaan Koote ak ngatoom*, all by Séex Aliyu Ndaw, as well as *Pexe du ñàkk* by Coura Saar, *Ay du weesu baay de na* by Mamadu Jara Juuf, and *Liggéeyu ndey añub doom*, by Mame Ngoy Siise. This impressive catalog is in addition to various other didactic and literary materials in local languages. While all of the books can be ordered through an email provided on the OSAD website, they are unfortunately not stocked in bookstores at the moment.

Kasahorow

In a similar vein, a small NGO called *Kasahorow* has a two-pronged approach to encouraging literacy in African languages. They focus on publishing simple children's books so that they can become "familiar with basic vocabulary even while they're doing a fun activity (looking at pictures, or coloring them in)" (Obinim). These books are somewhat limited in scope, and fall more along the lines of pure didactic materials than true children's stories. The offerings in Wolof are all bilingual, with *My First Wolof Dictionary* or the equivalent being offered in a Wolof-English, Wolof-French, and Wolof-German version, and *My First Wolof Counting Book* available in Wolof-English only. These books are all fairly simple, presenting words in both languages along with pictures, and do not fall under children's literature as such, but are an important example of working towards early literacy. The second initiative involves community building work, allowing people who are literate in African languages to read something in their first language every day, with corresponding facebook pages and email listservs. The NGO is run by volunteer trustees, each of whom runs a different program. The NGO is new, having been started in 2012, and according to Afia Obinim, one of the trustees, hopes to continue and expand over the coming years, with the goal of eventually having "1 million people reading something in an African language every day" (Obinim). *Kasahorow* is mainly based online as they rely on

online distribution partners such as Amazon and BookDepository to get the books to their target audiences.

Tintin in Wolof

As a final piece of evidence, I will present a case study of specialty publishing in Wolof, funded by an NGO. This case is similar to that of Local Language Literacy's (LLL) work with Maam Daour Wade, in that LLL works specifically with one author in each target language to produce a single book in that language, before moving on to fund the next book in a different language. At this point, unfortunately, productions of children's books in Wolof are often a one-shot deal. Take for example the 2013 release of a limited number of editions of *Tintin in Wolof* (*Kumpag Wàngalàng Wi*³⁵) by the *Librairie aux 4 Vents*. The translation was accomplished over two years by a team of volunteer translators directed by Sérigne Diouf, an engineer in pedagogy and technology of communication for education ("L'Album de Tintin"). At a press conference held to celebrate the release of the books, Gérard Georges, founder of ATS/Belgique (Association de Soladarité Internationale) expressed the importance of publishing this text: "l'autre objectif c'est aider...[pour que] cette langue qui est tellement agreeable à entendre puisse être mieux lue et peut-être mieux parlée par les Sénégalaise, qui malheureusement ne font généralement que de parler"³⁶ (Diedhiou). Despite the high level of visibility of this project, and a preface written by the Secrétaire général de la Francophonie, Abdou Diouf, the *Librairie 4 Vents* does not seem to remain invested in the production of Wolof children's literature. On my recent site visit, I was unable to find a single example of children's literature in Wolof on offer,

³⁵ The Secret of the Unicorn

³⁶ the other objective is to help...[so that] this language which is so agreeable to hear might be better read and possibly better spoken by the Sénégalaise, who unfortunately generally only speak it

an observation which was confirmed by asking the staff, who said that they did not stock any children's books in Wolof.

ANALYSIS

Now that the question of who is writing and publishing in Wolof has been answered, I will turn to the more complex question of "why write for children in Wolof?" where I will examine the philosophy behind the production of Wolof children's books and the connection between Wolof children's literature and education. Finally, I will explore questions of audience and challenges in the Wolof children's book world in order to answer the question "What is it like to write children's books in Wolof?"

WHY WRITE FOR CHILDREN IN WOLOF?

The Philosophy behind the Production

The strongest trend among writers and publishers of Wolof children's literature is the conception of their writing as service to a larger cause. Of course, with the involvement of NGOs the link is clear, as the mission of these organizations is to solve existing problems. The very involvement of these organizations shows that the world of Wolof children's books is not yet a stable for-profit industry. And indeed, the stories of others involved in the industry give credence to this view of the publishing climate. Maam Daour Wade may very well be the most successful and prolific writer of children's books in Wolof, but his continuing struggle to be published means that he cannot devote his full time to being a writer. Wade has had to be extremely creative in finding willing publishers for his work, not only self-publishing and working with established publishing companies, but also finding funding through working with NGOs. His persistence in publishing is a result of his deep belief that this work is important. As he says in

his interview with me, "I do think I should contribute to strengthen newly literate people by writing in a language they can read [and] understand, Wolof being one of those languages" (Wade). When discussing the availability of Wolof children's books, his vocabulary is telling. He says that the greatest challenge is to publish a larger volume of children's books, and to make them available for those who "need to buy them" (Wade). By framing this as a need rather than a desire, Wade makes the point that Wolof literature should not be thought of as a luxury, but rather as a necessity.

This idea of necessity is reflected in the work of *Editions Papyrus Afrique* as well. Despite the international recognition that the publishing house has gained, Seydou Ndiaye continues to struggle with finding funding to publish new manuscripts. His determination to continue publishing in local languages is what has kept the publishing company afloat, and this determination comes through in the way that he speaks about the publishing house. He repeats throughout the interview that he has put himself in the service of all African languages, and that he has given up his status as a creator of literature in order to serve other creators of literature. This language of service and sacrifice reveals the stakes of Ndiaye's work. In addition, he refers to his work as a combat, a choice of words which belies the difficulty of sustaining an enterprise that specializes in African language literature as well as Ndiaye's level of commitment. This militant language positions Ndiaye's continued publishing as a political protest, rejecting the idea that Wolof and other local languages are not appropriate vehicles for literary work.

Even Babacar Ndaak's highly successful career as a storyteller and producer of Wolof children's literature is not free of difficulties, nor of the intense dedication to Wolof literature that Wade and Ndiaye both espouse and demonstrate. Despite his international recognition and regular performance schedule, Ndaak also works as a high school history teacher and as a

consultant so that he can self-publish his CDs and books. Across the board, the involvement of people in the Wolof children's book market is not seen as a way to profit, or even as a choice. The men and women involved in the movement towards Wolof publishing are living proof of Jill Taylor's assertion that writing in local languages in a bilingual culture is “an act of cultural perpetuation and dignification” (Taylor, 66). This act, then, is not a career choice but a call to arms.

Wolof Children's Literature and Education

It is impossible to talk about Wolof children's literature without talking about education. The connection between the two runs so deep that literature produced for the express purpose of encouraging children's literacy, such as the books published by the NGOs that I have highlighted, is frequently indistinguishable from the "pure" literature produced by the writers that I have profiled and by *Editions Papyrus Afrique*. The lines between the two are often blurred, with the scarcity of funding for publishing in national languages leading to both publishers and writers taking funding wherever they can get it. In addition, the survival of any publishing enterprise in national languages depends on literacy in those languages and thus publishers and writers have a vested interest in supporting literacy efforts. Despite the fact that according to UNICEF's 2008-2012 data, the youth (15-24 years) literacy rate in Sénégal is 74.2% for men and 56.2%, literacy in local languages lags behind. Various sources place the literacy rate in Wolof at around 7%. However, these numbers do not take into account the more complicated reality of the current multi-lingual society in Sénégal. Almost all schooling in Sénégal is conducted with the aim of eventual literacy in French, meaning that despite at least 70.9% of the country's population being Wolof speakers, very few people are functionally

literate, and even fewer have been formally schooled in Wolof grammar and orthology (Anderson, 188).

All of the people that I talked to expressed at some point the connection between education and children's literature. Maam Daour Wade's stated mission to produce literature that will help newly literate people strengthen their literacy expresses the same desire that drives Babacar Ndaak to include didactic messages in his poems and songs. Seydou Ndiaye joins the chorus by expressing his belief that educating children in a language not their own is the greatest humiliation a country can experience, and detailed in my interview his ideal educational climate, in which each school would teach in the language that a majority of its students spoke--a deceptively simple wish in a country where the language politics of education are complicated by a colonial past and an uncertain linguistic future. The inextricable connection between Wolof children's literature and literacy, and thus education, also connects with the conception of writing Wolof children's literature as a political and selfless act.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO WRITE IN WOLOF FOR CHILDREN?

Questions of Audience

Throughout *Limits of the Literary*, Tobias Warner brings up ideas that have relevance in the world of Wolof children's literature, even though he does not ever directly discuss this particular type of literary production. By speaking about Wolof literature as a whole, Warner's work serves to illuminate some of the rationale for writing in Wolof, which necessarily also applies to children's literature. In discussing Ousmane Sembène's dedication of his first novel, *Le Docker Noir* (written in French) to his illiterate mother, Warner raises a crucial question that writers of children's literature in Wolof in particular contend with: "what would it mean address literature to a public that has been historically excluded from the category of literacy[?] What

would it mean to write for a public that could not yet read what you wrote?" (Warner, 33).

Warner aligns these questions with the push for a "modern literary and cultural movement in Wolof," but they apply especially strongly to authors writing in Wolof for children (ibid.).

The audience of these children's books is doubly uncertain - both in that the parents who would likely read to the child at first would not necessarily be literate in Wolof, but also in that the children who the books are for would very possibly never be formally schooled in literate Wolof. The inherent leap of faith in writing for children, that someone will be willing and able to teach them how to read the books written for them, is especially poignant in Wolof children's literature. A new initiative by Tostan, an NGO working in Sénégal to [what's their stated mission?] neatly encompasses the connection between non-profit publications and developing a literate public, and thus a future audience for Wolof children's literature: "The result is a new five-month module that Molly and her team have developed with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. It is designed to help newly literate parents who have been through the Tostan program introduce their infants to learning with colorfully illustrated and engaging children's books in national languages [...]. The books will not only reinforce Tostan participants' reading skills and help children understand what reading is and how enjoyable it can be, but will also serve as a tool to encourage adults' interactions with young children." (Molloy, n.p.)

Thus, the work of NGOs to build a base of readers who will grow up literate in their first language (as is Kasahorow's aim) and beyond that who will develop a love of reading (as OSAD hopes to do with their fiction publications) is not too far from the work of other Wolof writers and publishers. Seydou Ndiaye's switch from publishing for an already-literate audience to writing for children and Maam Daour Wade's insistence on writing books specifically for children at the expense of reaching a larger market works towards the same aim, of writing to

create a future readership. They work to remedy the worry that Babacar Boris Diop expresses in an interview, speaking about his writing in French: " I write in a language that my public doesn't understand, putting out books that my public can't afford to buy" (qtd in Sugnet, 147).

Challenges

In addition to problems of literacy and funding, which I have touched on above, the other major challenge facing Wolof children's literature is that of accessibility. In my visits to four major Sénégalese bookstores in Dakar and St. Louis, I was only able to find a single Wolof children's book for sale (*Des Djinns de Toutes Les Couleurs/Jinne yu Mel Nune* by Ngoné Hélène Diop and Mame Daour Wade) and even that is a French/Wolof bilingual publication. This book was available at *Librairie Clairafrique*. Thus, at three other major bookstores, *Librairie aux 4 Vents*, *Librairie Didaktika*, and *L'Agneau Carnivore*, there was not a single Wolof children's book on offer. This means that an average consumer is going to have a very difficult time finding children's books in Wolof. In order to find them, the major outlet for availability of Wolof children's books is online. The bilingual offerings of *L'Harmattan Sénégal*, four books in total, are available online. The six children's books published by OSAD are available for purchase by email, with listings on the OSAD website, and the two Wolof books published by *Kasahorow* are available only through online distributors. The availability of these books exclusively online is an enormous obstacle to their dissemination in a country where only 19.2% of the population are Internet users (UNICEF). The other avenues for distribution, however, are not much easier and often depend on word of mouth. Maam Daour Wade's impressive catalog is available for purchase directly from him, and the books published by *Editions Papyrus Afrique* are available for purchase at the office of the publisher, and theoretically at *Librairie Clairafrique*, although at the time of my site visit they were not in

stock. Thus, Wade's answer to my question about the response to his books, that people were enthusiastic and wanted to know where to find them, is more poignant than it may at first seem. The issue of accessibility is a huge roadblock to the wider readership and production of children's books in Wolof. Bookstores are reluctant to stock Wolof children's books because they are worried they won't sell, while publishers will not publish books they can't sell to bookstores. And the true cost of this standoff is paid by the children who have no access to literature written in their first language. The present vicious cycle of illiteracy and lack of availability of children's literature calls into accountability all stages of the publishing process. However, the rise of technology may present some solutions to the problem of accessibility. In addition to the rising number of people who have access to the internet and therefore to a larger selection of available children's literature in Wolof, innovative use of technology could present a new avenue for children-focused literary production in Wolof. As Babacar Ndaak's innovative use of audio and book-based formats points to a future in which orality and literature are not mutually exclusive. The possibility exists for children's literature to fully embrace coming technologies and to evolve in tandem with the society for which it is being produced.

CONCLUSION

Through examining the main players in the current Wolof children's book publishing and writing industry, this study has answered questions of who is writing and publishing children's literature in Wolof, as well as why this genre is important, and what the world of Wolof children's book publishing looks like today. In terms of publishing, Seydou Nourou Ndiaye's political publishing house, *Editions Papyrus Afrique* was presented as a counterpoint to the other largest producer of works in national languages: NGOs. By examining the philosophy that undergirds each of these forms of publishing, it became clear that both have similar goals of

increased literacy and literary production in national languages. In the world of writing, two profiles of current authors were presented, Maam Daour Wade and Babacar Mbaye Ndaak. These two profiles showed the connection between oral tradition and current literary production, as well as exploring the various methods of production that each writer uses. These four in-depth analyses of the methods and philosophies of writers and publishers of Wolof children's literature have allowed me to glean information about the whys and hows of children's literature today. Specifically, I was able to compare the philosophies espoused by all four entities profiled, thus exploring the rationale behind publishing in less common languages, such as Wolof, and was able to draw out the connections between the work that each author or publisher was doing and education. Finally, I was able to use the information given to me by my four axis of informants to enumerate the challenges facing producers of Wolof children's literature, both abstractly, in terms of audience, and concretely, in terms of production and accessibility.

Despite the growing popularity of children's literature in Wolof, and its place in the vanguard of literacy movements in national languages, very little research has been done specifically focusing on Wolof children's literature. Therefore, my recommendations for future research only scratch the surface of what can be done with this topic. However, several sectors of children's literature seemed to me to be extremely interesting and thus worthy of future study in the near future. Given my limited time, I was only able to complete two profiles of authors working in Wolof children's literature. I would recommend that further research be done into the philosophies and production of the people who are driving the movement forward. In a similar vein, the *Leeboon ci Leer* organization is an extremely interesting intersection of oral tradition and emerging literature in local languages, and the scholarship on both of these topics would benefit from an in-depth examination of *Leeboon ci Leer*. Finally, the use of new technologies in

literacy work, and in accessibility to literature in Wolof especially, would be a fascinating topic for further study. The impact of technology on increasing the sheer volume of written Wolof cannot be overstated, and this movement seems poised for continual growth.

Ultimately, the Wolof children's book world is constantly evolving. Authors and publishers are working together to produce a body of literature appropriate for a newly literate public, while confronting challenges of funding and accessibility. The industry seems poised on the brink of enormous growth and change, and is worth following in the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Note: These were the questions that I prepared before each interview, the actual questions asked may have varied slightly from the wording here.

Seydou Nourou Ndiaye - *Papyrus Afrique* Publishing House

1. Vous ne publiez qu'en les langues locales. Est-ce que vous pouvez me dire comment l'idée pour cette maison d'édition à commencé, et quelle est la mission de votre maison d'édition? [You publish only in local languages. Can you tell me how the idea for this publishing house began, and what is the mission of your publishing house?]
2. Comment est la reception des livres qui Papyrus ont publié en Wolof?
[What is the reception of the books that *Papyrus* has published in Wolof?]
3. Est-ce que vous publiez les livres pour les enfants en Wolof? Pourquoi, ou pourquoi pas?
[Do you publish books for children in Wolof? Why, or why not?]
4. Qui est votre audience? Leur niveau de l'éducation, leur statut socio-economique, et cetera?
[Who is your audience? Their level of education, their socio-economic status, etc.?]
5. Comment est-ce que le monde de la publication en Wolof a bougé pendant les années récentes?
[How has the world of Wolof publishing changed in recent years?]
6. Qu'est ce que vous pensez de le futur de la publication en Wolof?
[What do you think about the future of publishing in Wolof?]
7. Pourquoi est-ce importante à publié les livres en Wolof, en particulier les livres pour les enfants?
[Why is it important to publish books in Wolof, particularly children's books?]
8. Qu'est ce que vous pensez de l'éducation en les langues locales? Est-ce important à alphabétiser les étudiants dans leur langues locales? En français? Les deux?
[What do you think about education in local languages? Is it important to achieve literacy in local languages? In french? In both?]
9. Quels sont les challenges les plus grands de la publication en les langues du pays?
[What are the largest challenges to publication in national languages?]

Arame Fal - Linguist at OSAD

1. Comment est-ce que le monde de la publication en Wolof a bougé pendant les années récentes, et qu'est-ce que vous pensez de le futur de la publication en Wolof?
How has the world of Wolof publishing changed in recent years, and what do you think about the future of Wolof publication?]
2. Pourquoi est-ce importante à publier les livres en Wolof, en particulier les livres pour les enfants?
[Why is it important to publish books in Wolof, in particular children's books?]
3. Quels sont les défis les plus grands de la publication pour les enfants en les langues du pays?
[What are the largest challenges to publication of children's books in national languages?]
4. Qui sont les livres pour les enfants en Wolof que vous savez?
[What are the Wolof children's books that you know of?]

Daour Wade - Author

1. Why did you start writing in Wolof rather than in French?
2. Who is your intended/desired audience for your books in Wolof?
3. What do you think is the current state of Wolof publishing (especially in terms of children's books), and what does the future hold?
4. In your opinion, why is it important for children's books in local languages to be published?
5. What has the process of getting books in Wolof published been like?
6. What has the reception to your books in Wolof been?

Babacar Mbaye Ndaak - Author

1. Est-ce que vous pouvez me dire comment *Leeboon ci Leer* a commencé?
[Could you tell me about the founding of *Leeboon ci Leer*?]
2. Quel sont les œuvres que vous avez publié pour les enfants?
[What are the works that you have published for children?]

3. Pourquoi est-ce importante à publié les livres en Wolof, en particulier les livres pour les enfants?

[Why is it important to publish books in Wolof, in particular children's books]

Appendix 2: Text in Wolof and English of *Muus bu Tutti, Dakar bu Bari* [Little Kitty, Big City]

Note: Translations into English are not word-for-word, but instead have been written to preserve the flow and style of the story.

Suba lawoon, Awa sonoon na lool. Fanaane na doxantu ci dakar. Awa sopp na nemmeeku ay berëb.

It was morning, and Awa was very tired. She had spent the night walking around the city. Awa loved to explore.

Ci mujj gi, gis na lal bu neex. Xalaatoon na "Dina baax ci man," ak tëdd na bu gaaw.

Finally, she found a comfortable bed. "This will work," she thought, and fell asleep right away.

Bimuy nelaw, lalam tukki na, waaye yëggu ci dara...

While she slept, her bed began to move, but she didn't notice anything...

Yeewu na bi lal bi aggee!

But she woke up when it stopped!

Cëppéelu na (yomboon na ci moom ndaxte muus la), ak xeeñtu na xetu jën ci cammoñam.

She landed on her feet (of course, because she was a cat after all), and smelled fish to her left.

Topp na xet gi ak gis na tefes ci ginnaw jummaa ji!

She followed the scent and found a beach behind the mosque!

Amoon na nappkat yu bari...ñeen ni dañu doon defaraat seeni gaal, ñeneen ñi dañu doon waas jën, waaye nëpp bégoon nañu ci gis Awa. Awa xalaat na "Dama mës sopp nappkat yi!" Lëkk na jën yu bari, ndekki li neexoon na.

There were lots of fishermen...some repairing their boats, some preparing fish, but all of them were happy to see Awa. "I've always liked fishermen!" Awa thought. She ate lots of fish, which made a tasty breakfast.

Ginnaaw ndekki li, gëmmantuwaatoon na! Seet na lal bu neex. Awa xalaat na "Fii baax na," ak tëdd na bu gaaw.

After breakfast, she was sleepy again! She found a good bed. "This will work," thought Away, and she fell asleep right away.

Yeewuwul bi lalam bi tambalee dem...
She didn't wake up when her bed started to move...

Waaye yeewu na bi duus bi njëkk aggée ci moom!
But she did wake up when the first big wave came!

Bimu wicacoo ba noppi, nuyu na nappkat yi. Ne na "Asalaamaalekum!" Ne nañu "Maalekum salaam! Yow, mën nga wax!" Amoon nañu mbetteel bu baax. Awa ne na "Waaw waaw! Muus naa."

After shaking herself dry, she greeted the fishermen. "Asalaamaalekum!" she said. The fishermen said "Maalekum salaam! You can talk!" They were very surprised. "Of course," Awa said, "I'm smart."

Ne nañu Awa "Kaay, toggat ci kaw, ngir nga baña tooy." Awa bégoon na, ndaxte teral nañu ko ni buur. Yendu nañu ci gaal gi, napp nañu, xool nañu picc yi, woy nañu...xiim nañu sax attaya!
"Come sit up front, so you don't get wet" the fishermen told Awa. Awa was very happy because she felt very welcome. They spent the day in the boat, fishing, watching birds, singing...even making attaya!

Bi jánt biy soww, dellu nañu ci tefes gi.
When the sun set, they returned to the beach.

Bimu paree lëkk jënam bu mujj, Awa gërëm na nappkat yi, ak taggoo na, dem na.
After eating one last fish, Awa thanked the fishermen, said goodbye, and left.

Yággul dara, Awa sonnaatoon na, ak banku na ci berëb bu nooy ak nelaw na ci saa sa.
Na say gént neex Awa!
After her big day, Awa was tired again, and found another cozy place to sleep. Sweet dreams Awa!

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