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Ruth Bush. *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization 1945-1967*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016. xi + 224 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, appendices, and index. \$120.00 (hb.) ISBN 9781781381953.

Review by Kandjouura Dramé, University of Virginia.

Publishing Africa in French. Literary Institutions and Decolonization: 1945-1967 comprises two parts containing three chapters each. The first part, called "Institutions," is divided into three chapters: "Anthologizing the Union française," "Book-publishing at Présence Africaine," and "Literary prize culture." The second part, entitled "Mediations," also contains three chapters: "Authenticity and authorship," "Editorial craft and literary resistance," and "Translating Africa in the French republic of letters." These parts are framed by a substantial introduction which lays out precisely the theoretical and organizational structure of the book and a conclusion which summarizes the main points of the study and suggests paths to new investigations. The list of figures includes eight figures of rich data supporting the study, four appendices on collections published by Présence Africaine, laureates of selected prizes, laureates of the Grand Prix de l'Afrique noire, from 1961 to 2012, and publications by Amos Tutuola, Peter Abrahams, and Chinua Achebe in French translation.

The first part deals with the defining historical and political contexts within which African literature as it is known emerged in the French colonial empire. The first chapter examines the fortunes of Black writers as they stepped onto the literary stage in Paris through the case studies of anthologies which were curated and published by various publishing houses. It also examines how they navigated the complex currents of politics, culture and literary representation during the period of changes in the French publishing industry after World War II. The publication of anthologies by writers like Damas and Senghor by several Parisian publishers may be described as manifestoes of a nascent consciousness creatively articulated in a discursive intervention in the volatile period of restructuring of the French colonial empire after World War II.

While Senghor published his well-known *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* in the new series created by French historian Charles-André Julien at Presses Universitaires de France, with the famous and controversial preface by J-P Sartre (1948), Bush demonstrates convincingly the pioneering and transformative work of L G Damas as a "passeur," already a literary and cultural broker of sorts at this point in his career. In 1947, he collected and edited *Latitudes françaises. Poètes d'expression française 1900-1945*, published by Le Seuil and, in 1948, a second collection of texts, *Poèmes nègres sur des airs africains*, at GLM.

Working as an editor for the series “Ecrits français d’outre-mer” at Editions Fasquelle during the same period, he was able to publish writers like Birago Diop (Senegal) and Makhali-Phâl (Cambodia) and open doors for new talent, thereby cultivating a more inclusive space in the Union française for literary voices coming from the overseas territories of France. At the same time, some French publishers and government officials were able to use this new visibility of overseas writers to promote the political validity of the ideology of Union française and the defense and expansion of the French language. As Bush rightly points out, the anthologies constituted topologies of *la grandeur française* in the precarious World War II context.

In fact, *Publishing Africa* shows that there were different and often competing objectives at work among those involved in the French publishing industry, including publishers, writers, government officials, and readers. It is in this competitive and treacherous terrain that Présence Africaine had to work and pursue the goals envisioned by its founder Alioune Diop. How it maintained its desired independence and develop as a viable book (1949) and journal (1947) publishing business is no small part of the difficult investigation successfully carried out in this study by Ruth Bush. Her ability to locate archives and to use them effectively is admirable.

As one of the small *éditeurs engagés*, along with Editions de Minuit and Maspéro, Présence Africaine offered a space for publishing on Africa while maintaining its ideological and political independence by excluding from the beginning any affiliation with political parties in Africa or France. Much of its success in this endeavor is attributed to Alioune Diop’s leadership and diplomatic skills which allowed Présence Africaine “to bring together writers and intellectuals to exchange ideas concerning Africa, despite deep-seated political differences throughout the 1950s and early 1960s” (p. 57). Among the notable contributions of Présence Africaine are also the internationalization of the Parisian literary geography and the shaping of notions of literary value. *Livre de poche*, cheap paperback publishing, the rise of the cultural politics of Third World politics, decolonization on the global scene, as well as the liberation struggles of African colonies in general and French colonies in particular, and their repercussions in France were among the many events and crises through which Présence Africaine successfully navigated. Bush successfully examines all of these factors in the development of Présence Africaine as a place where ideas about Africa could be debated and shared among the intellectual community living in France, in Africa, and the diaspora.

The next chapter considers “the prize culture” surrounding African literary production in the post war period (chapter title, p. 92). In particular, Ruth Bush investigates and analyzes the Grand Prix littéraire d’Afrique noire since its foundation 1924 to the present. An exciting example of the study of a cultural institution, the chapter reveals the complex history of ANEMOM and its continuous attribution of a literary prize targeting Africa while moving successfully through competing objectives and maneuvers involving private and government interventions, artistic and linguistic symbolic values, cultural and political evolutions and adaptations. Created during the heyday of colonial literature, it has survived various controversies and challenges by adapting to the political mutations of the French colonial empire, the rise of African independences, the foundation of new state institutions such the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique and the current Organization Internationale de la Francophonie. Its resilience is suggested by the various modifications its name has undergone as an organization. Still, it has managed to bring together different African governments and France, along with other French-speaking countries like Canada and Belgium, to work in support of its goals. Bush rightly points out the role of ANEMOM as an

engine of the influence for the French language and a vehicle for French hegemony in Africa while maintaining, contrary to other French institutions, the creative diversity it has espoused for a long time now. With its selection of books awarded the Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire, ANEMOM/ADELFF has promoted Francophone African literature and its visibility and distribution in France and throughout the world. In the end, it was and remains first and foremost a guardian and promoter of the influence of France on the world stage, even if that role is waning in favor of the bigger OIF. This chapter fills an important gap in our knowledge of the history and workings of the important institution known today as ADELFF and its literary prize, the Grand Prix littéraire de l'AOF, now the Grand Prix littéraire d'Afrique noire and dubbed—sarcastically perhaps—the Goncourt noir.

As the struggles of Africans toward political autonomy intensified from the 1950s on, the literary representation of Africans and African authors also became a contested zone. While colonial literature and exoticism as a literary current slowly lost ground in French readership and as readers discovered French language literature by African authors, “the anxiety surrounding authorial authority [appeared] in this period” (p. 118). Bush examines the manifestations of the resulting authenticity and authorship issues in this period of political transition. Starting from a close reading of Sembene Ousmane’s novel, *Le Docker noir*, and its dramatization of the expropriation of fictional writer Diaw Falla, she traces the issue through texts such as Mongo Beti’s landmark essay, “Afrique noire, littérature rose,” to Abdoulaye Sadjì’s *Nini, mulâtresse du Sénégal* and *Maimouna* on the one hand and pseudonymous novels by French writers like Christine Garnier’s *Va-t-en avec les tiens* and *La fête des sacrifices*, among others, on the other hand. The material examination of these works demonstrates the intentional and direct manipulations of texts and authors about Africa by commercially-minded publishers in order to satisfy an existing readership or to create one based on projected ideas of Africanness or African authorship. Bush shows the extent to which publishers and editors were willing to intervene in texts by authors from Africa and Europe in order to package their books as “authentic African” creations. She points out, correctly, that “the commodification of African authorship” and the resistance it provoked also signified a struggle for institutional legitimacy (p. 145).

Chapter five on “Editorial craft and literary resistance” analyzes this problem in depth. Starting with a critical examination of the phenomenally successful case of the novel, *L'État sauvage* by French writer, Georges Conchon (also made into a feature film), Bush shows how innovations by African novelists were met with resistance from French publishers whose editorial boards demanded they conform to certain metropolitan expectations about the representation of Africa. Her excellent archival research into the editors’ files on *L'Aventure ambiguë* and *La Plaie* by Senegalese writers C. A. Kane and Malick Fall demonstrates, without a doubt, the struggle between African novelists and their French publishers in general during the 1950s and 1960s. The case study devoted to the novels of Abdoulaye Sadjì allows Ruth Bush to step outside of Paris to reveal the mediation of Sadjì’s writing by pioneering Senegalese printer-publisher, Abdoulaye Diop and offer a contrastive view of practices. Careful attention is paid here to editors’ criteria of style, genre, style, and content that often show a preference for realism and universal French linguistic standards.

The mediation between writer and reader is further explored in Chapter six, “Translating Africa in the French republic of letters,” as Bush examines the mediating role of translators of African Anglophone writing into French in the period of decolonization. A central question

here is how normative ideas of French as a literary language and political positions in this period of transition informed translations of Anglophone African works of fiction in France and their reception. This and related questions are answered through a detailed discussion of three novels: Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* translated by Raymond Queneau, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* translated by Michel Ligny, and Peter Abrahams' *A Wreath for Udomo* translated by Pierre Singer. In each case, Bush gives careful attention to the translations themselves, as well as to the translator's status within the literary field. In addition, the editorial, social and political circumstances surrounding the projects and subsequent books are considered in her assessment of the fortunes of the translated books in French. A subsidiary consideration of African literary relations in English and in French highlights controversies surrounding Senghorian Negritude, as well as the great scramble for the educational book markets in Africa in both London and Paris.

Publishing Africa in French is an ambitious and inspiring book of literary criticism and a compelling demonstration of the crucial role played by African writers during the period of rebuilding of the publishing business following the *épuration* at the end of the Second World War in France. It stands as the missing chapter in any serious consideration of Paris as a top literary capital. It provides an in-depth, well-informed, and strongly argued history of Francophone African literature. *Publishing Africa in French* is a powerful intervention in the history of book publishing in France. The ways in which Ruth Bush was able to locate and interrogate publishers' archives on African authors is simply admirable. Her study of the conditions under which the authors were published in the first place, the material history of the literature itself, sheds a much-needed light on Francophone African literature during the period between 1945 and 1967. The book is, above all, a considerable contribution to the study of African literature. As such it should be required reading for all those interested in African literature.

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