

Mohamed Mbougar Sarr wins the Goncourt 2021

*By Rémi Armand Tchokothe**

After Abdulrazak Gurnah (**The Nobel Prize in Literature**), Boubacar Boris Diop (**The Neustadt International Prize for Literature**), Mohamed Mbougar Sarr, 31 years, wins **The Goncourt 2021**. Despite its token prize of **10 Euros** only, this is the most prestigious literary award in France, the Francophone worlds and a guarantee for hundreds of thousands of the author's books to be sold, international visibility and translation into many languages.

The prize is awarded to *La Plus Secrète Mémoire des Hommes*, published in July 2021 by Philippe Rey & Jimsaan. Jimsaan ("idea of making things grow", Felwine Sarr 2014) is a Senegalese publishing house launched by Boubacar Boris Diop, Felwine Sarr and Nafissatou Dia Diouf in 2012. I am still digesting this Grand Saga questioning the meaning of writing/fiction, targeted audiences and literary criticism, which I finished reading last Sunday. After his third novel *De Purs Hommes* (2018), a master work on homophobia and social lies in Senegal, Mbougar Sarr has written another Grand Work centred on an allegory of the life and writing of Yambo Ouologuem to whom the novel is dedicated.

Ouologuem from Mali won **The Prix Renaudot** in 1968 with *Le Devoir de Violence*, published the same year. Later on, the scandal around this work pushed him into silence until his death in 2017. By awarding the **Goncourt** to *La Plus Secrète Mémoire des Hommes*, the jury has both reawakened memories of Ouologuem whose work was newly edited in 2002 and 2018, and driven attention to Mbougar Sarr.

He is a voice and a style from Senegal we should listen to and

follow carefully in the next decades, hoping that this award and the ensuing exposure will not refrain his creativity.

*** *Tenure-Track Professorship in Comparative Literature with a Focus on African Literatures, University of Vienna, Austria***



Mohamed Mbougar Sarr
La plus secrète mémoire
des hommes

Philippe Rey | Jimsaan

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