



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Series on Women in African History

Mariama Ba

And the choice of Ndeye



The UNESCO Series on Women in African History is produced by the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO. This publication has received additional support from the Culture Sector, and the Social and Human Sciences Sector.

UNESCO specialist responsible for the project: Sasha Rubel
Editorial and artistic direction: Edouard Joubeaud

Published in 2017 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO 2017



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (<http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-use-ccbysa-en>).

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

Translation from French (original) to English: Obioma Ofoego and Maya Judd
Illustration of the cover page : Massiré Tounkara
Graphic design: Muyang Li

UNESCO Series on Women in African History

Mariama Ba

And the choice of Ndeye

Editorial and artistic direction: Edouard Joubeaud

Illustrations: Natacha Nze Ndong

Script and dialogue: Sandra Joubeaud



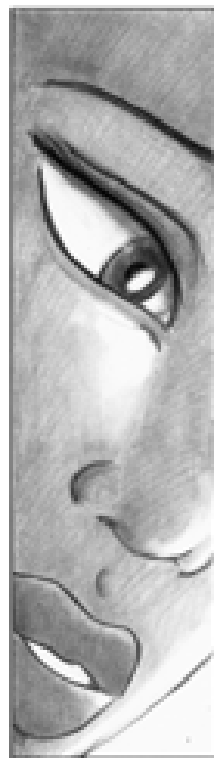
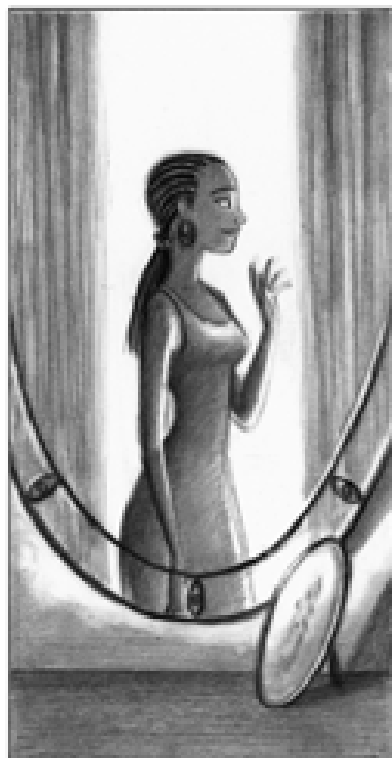
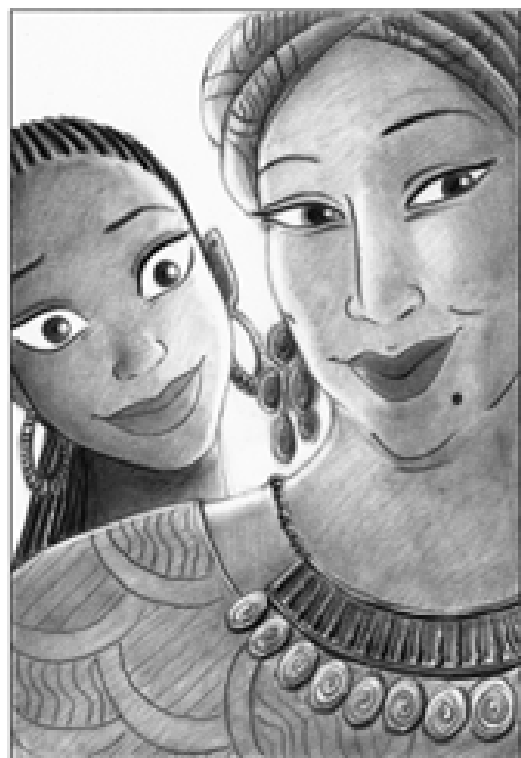


You won the bet
Ndeye, it's a little
boy...



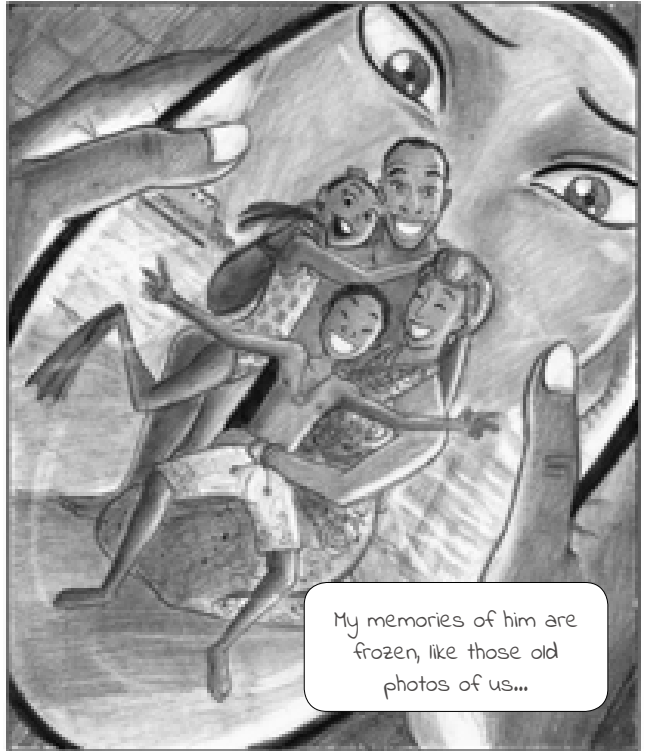
And he'll have a
modern daddy who
knows how to hang
out the wash.



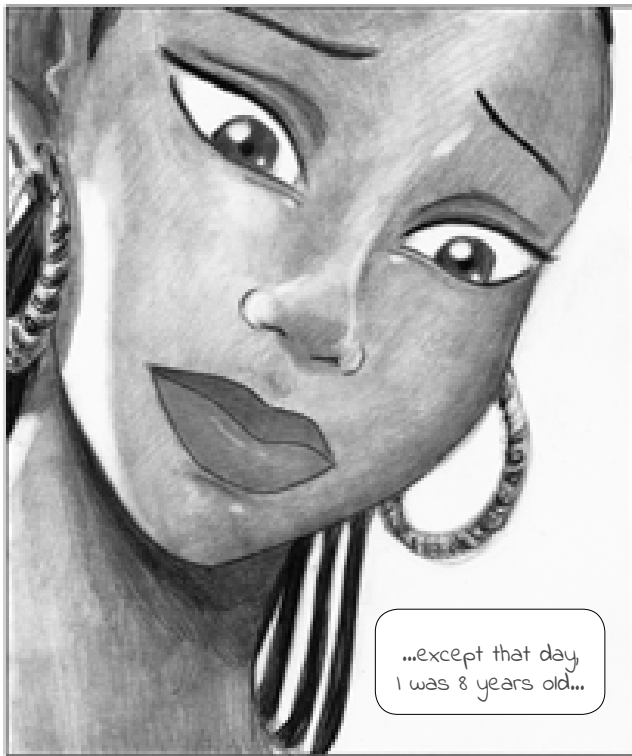
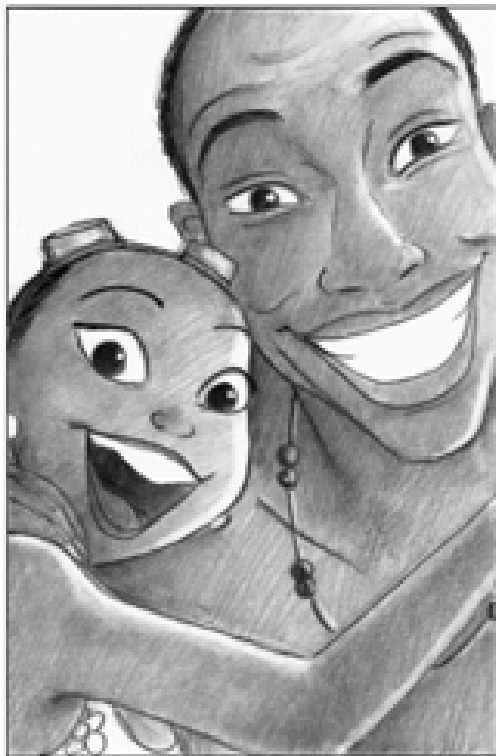




I'm wondering where my father is today...



My memories of him are frozen, like those old photos of us...



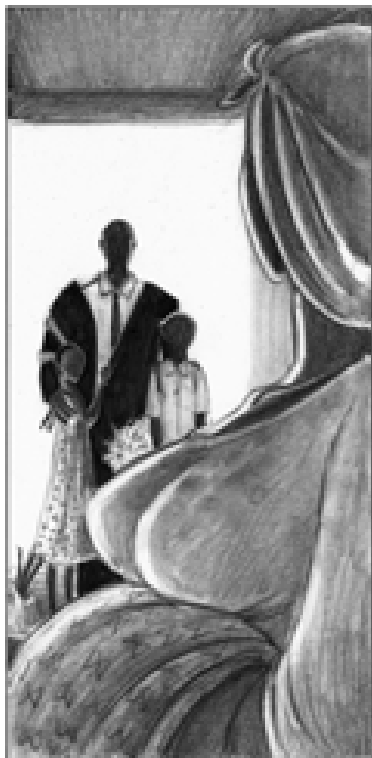


...I understood as soon as we got home... I'll never forget her words.



I tried you know, but by taking
a ñaare!^{*}, you leave me no
choice but to turn my back on
your love...

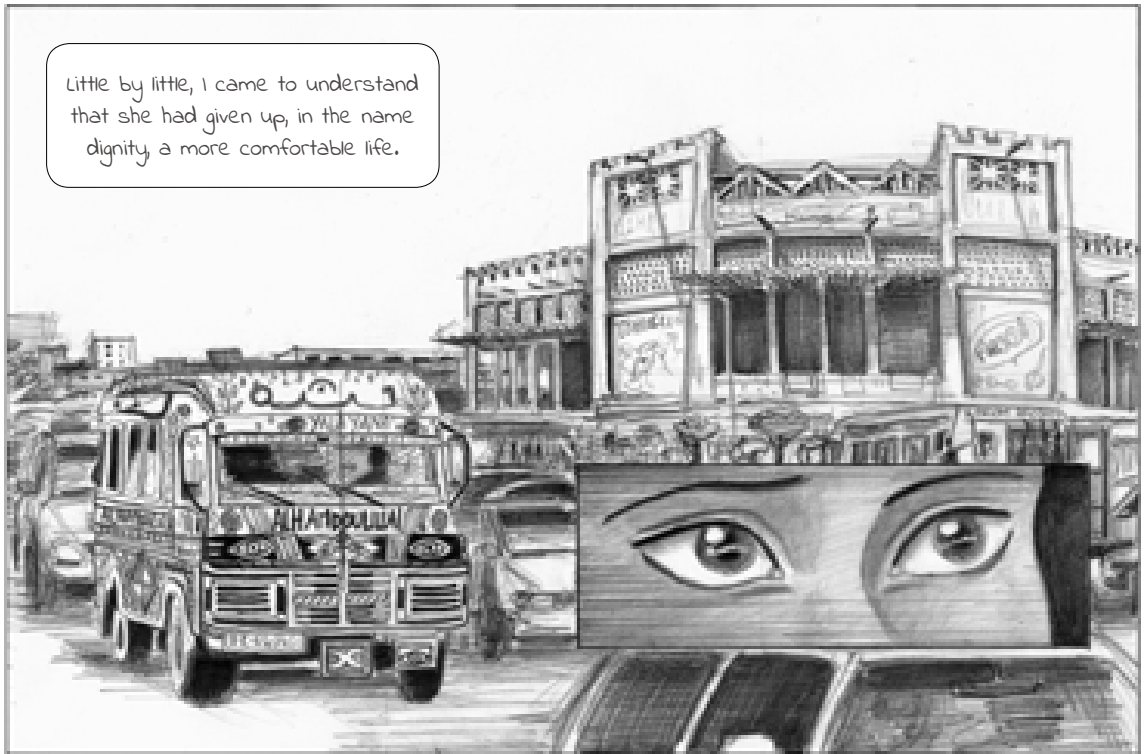
* second wife.

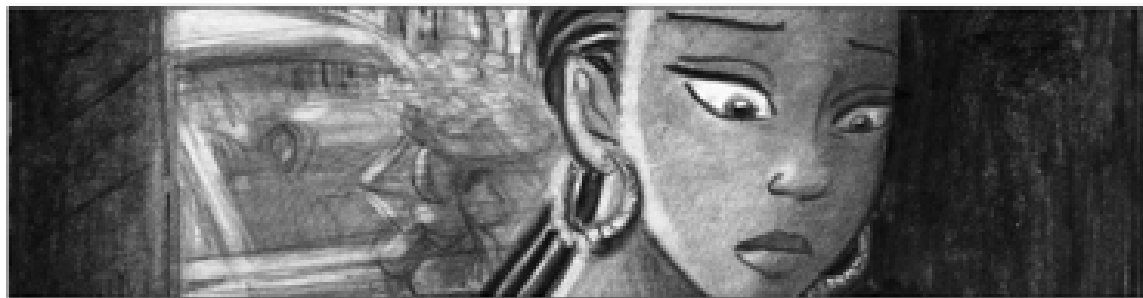




They loved one another,
but neither would give in
and we left for
another life.

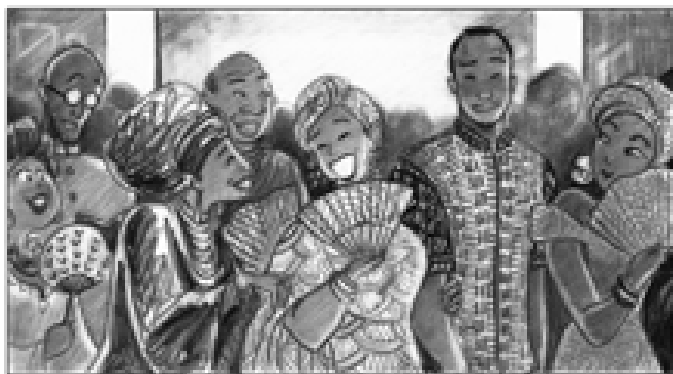
Little by little, I came to understand
that she had given up, in the name
dignity, a more comfortable life.



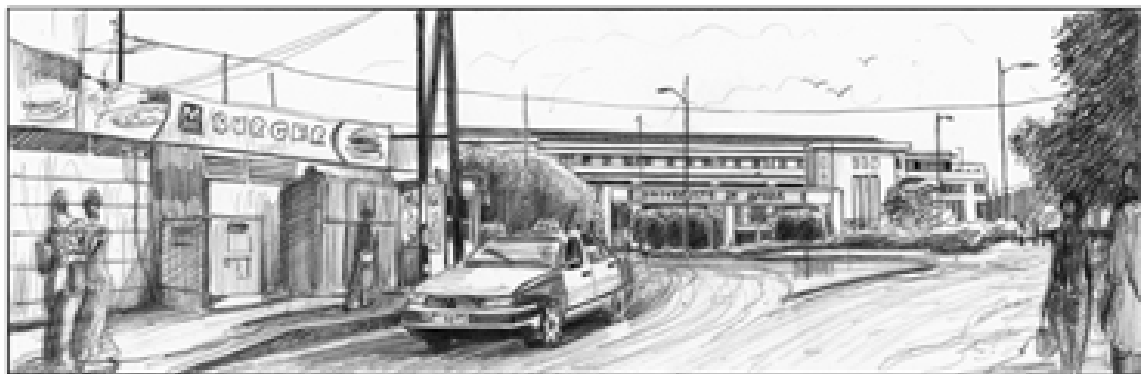



Sometimes I wondered whether she regretted giving up her choice, and if she would have preferred to go to the theatre with her husband instead of her son.






But all this
vanished
behind her
smile...





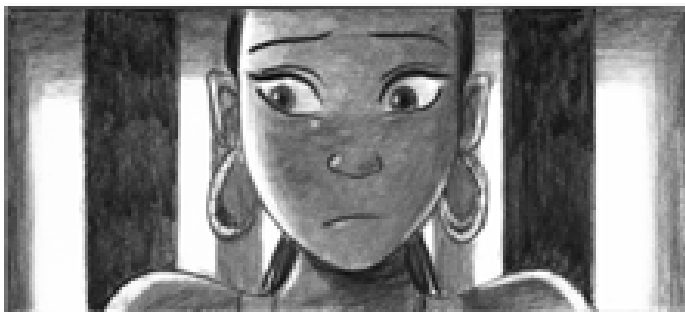
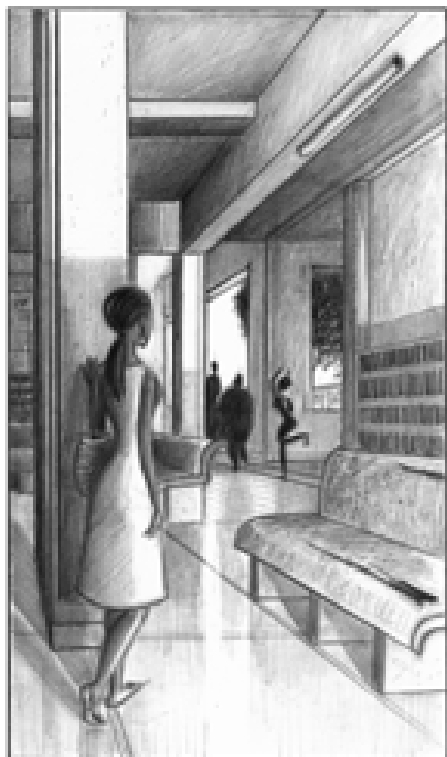
Hello there
ndeye!



So, what about
Amadou? have you
decided?

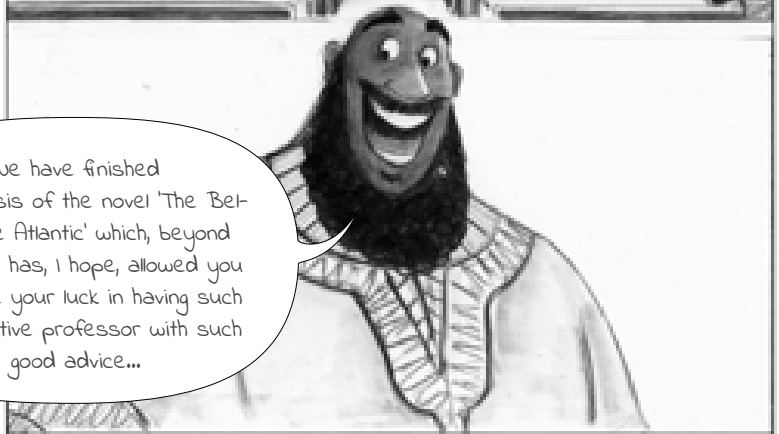
No, not yet...







we have finished our analysis of the novel 'The Belly of the Atlantic' which, beyond the story has, I hope, allowed you to realise your luck in having such a perceptive professor with such good advice...





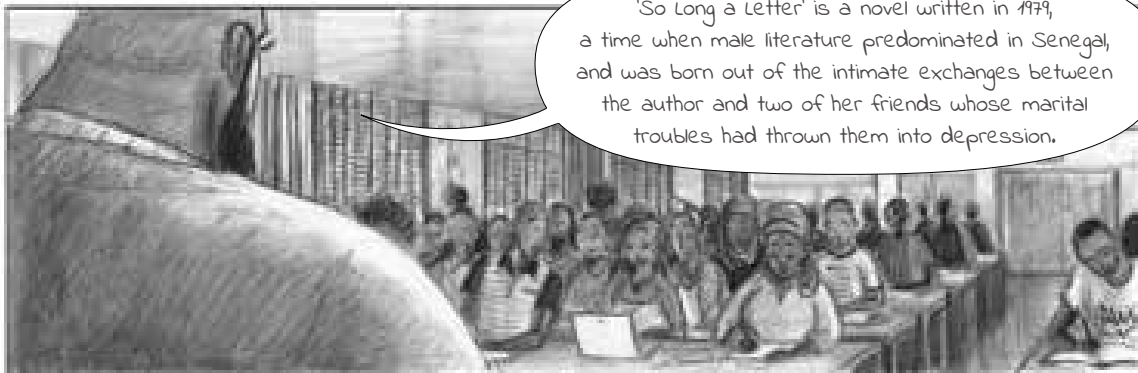
oh! A post-it!
Ha, ha, ha!





we are going look at another woman's views, this time that of Mariama Bă, on our society, particularly on marriage.

MARIAMA BĂ



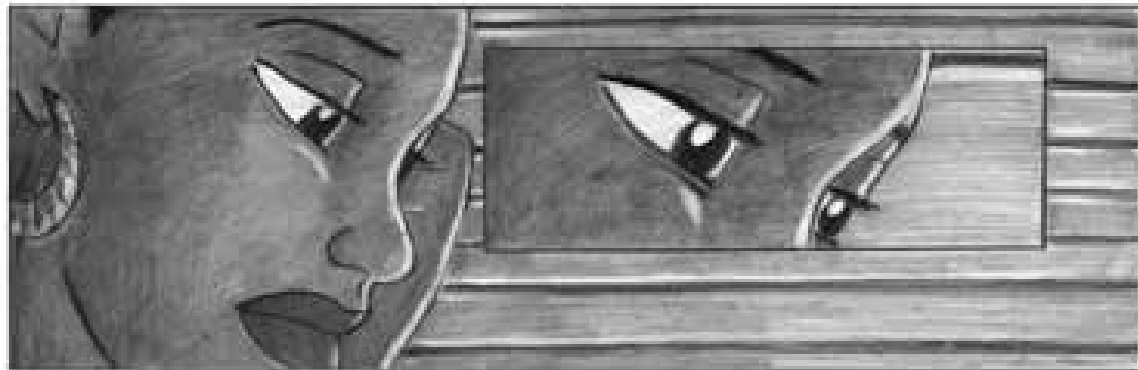




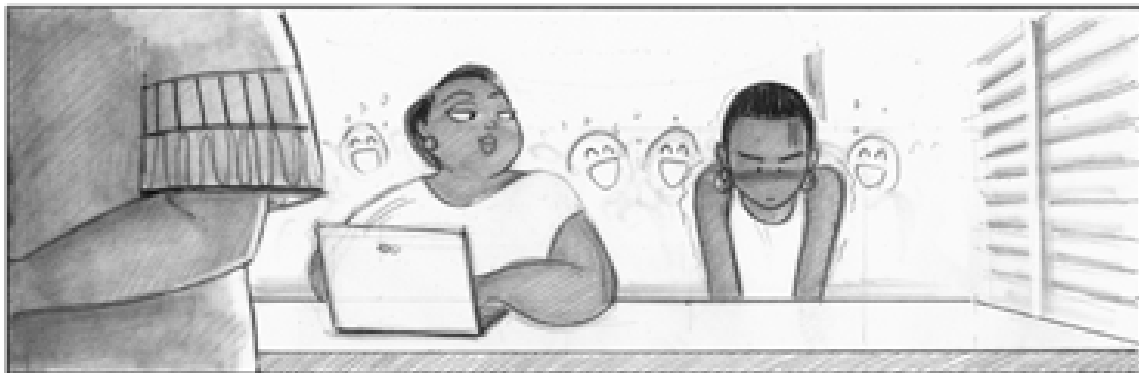
Faced with this situation
and through the life choices
of these characters...



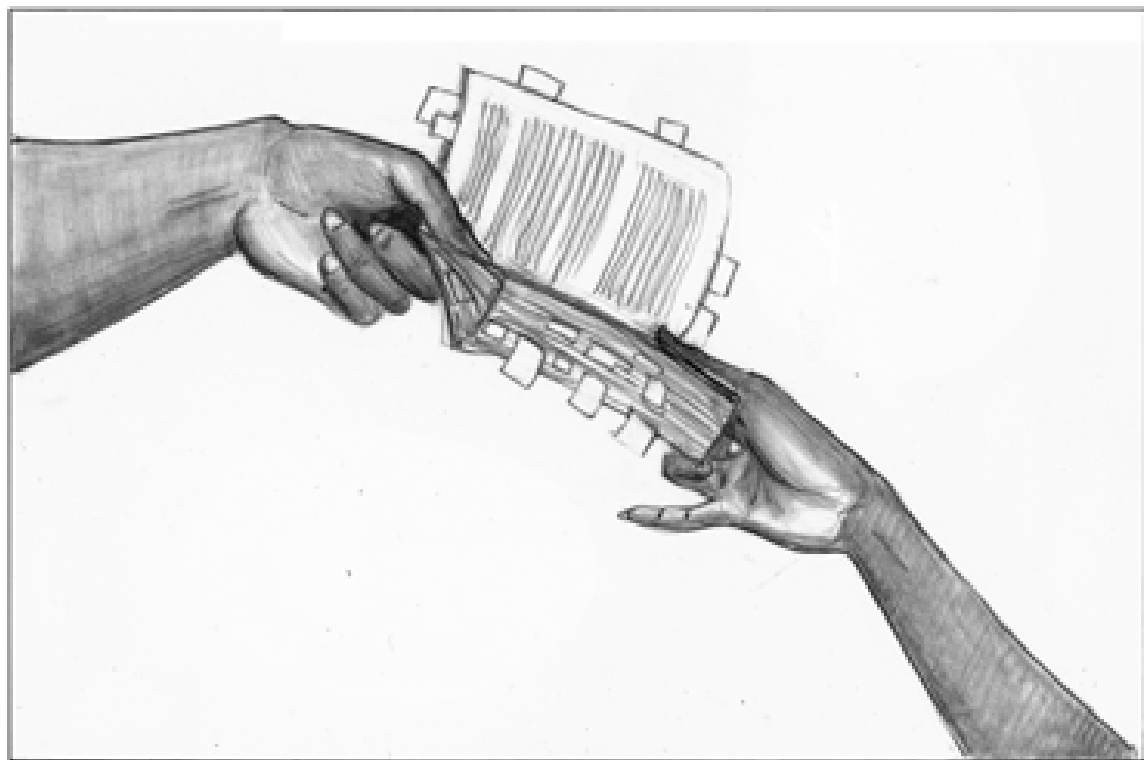
...Mariama Ba unveils the
destinies of two women
bound by friendship...





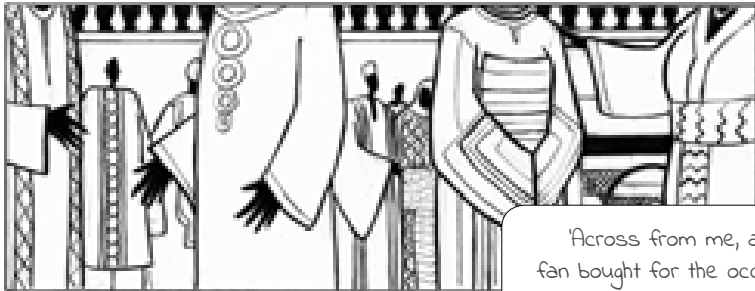




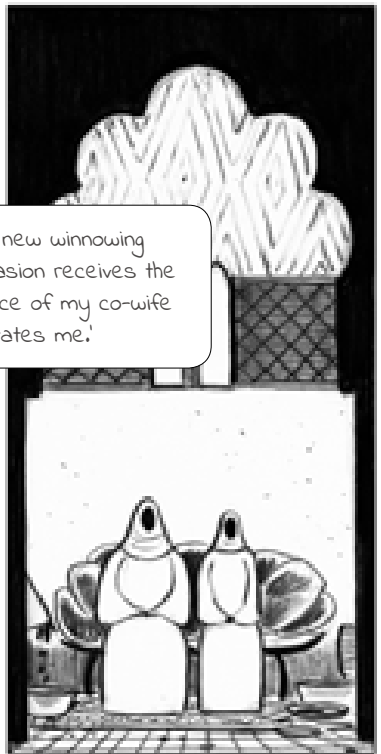




My back propped up by cushions, legs outstretched... I follow the comings and goings of people!

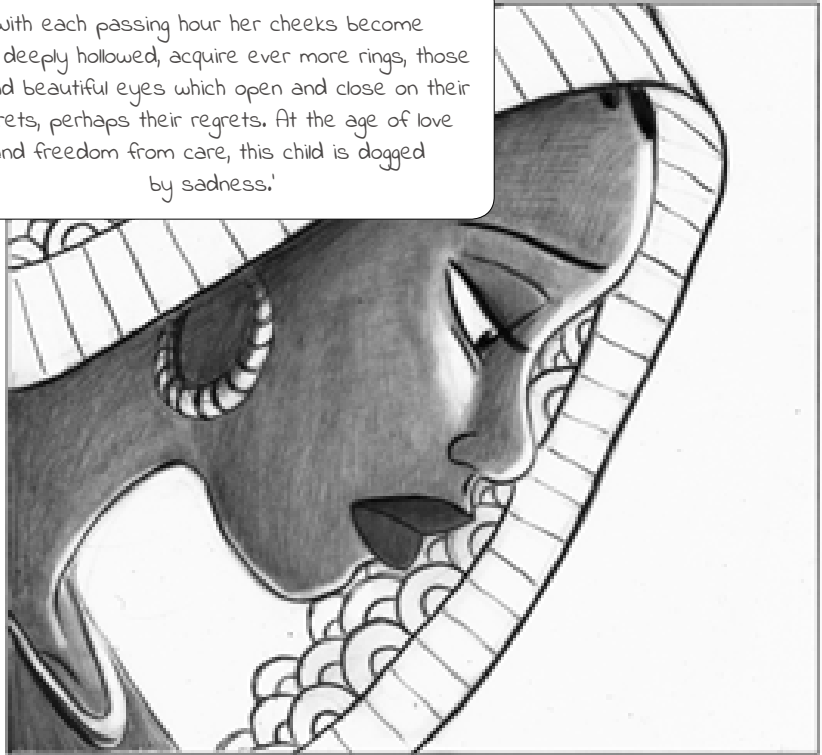
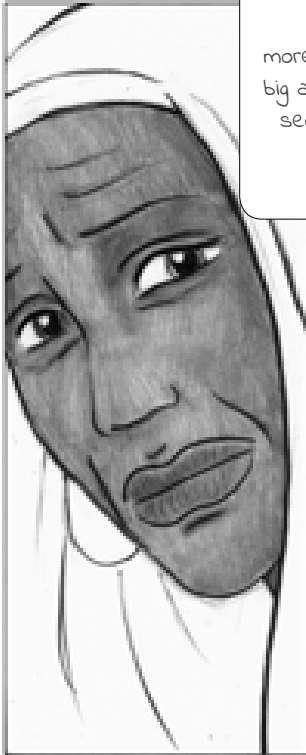


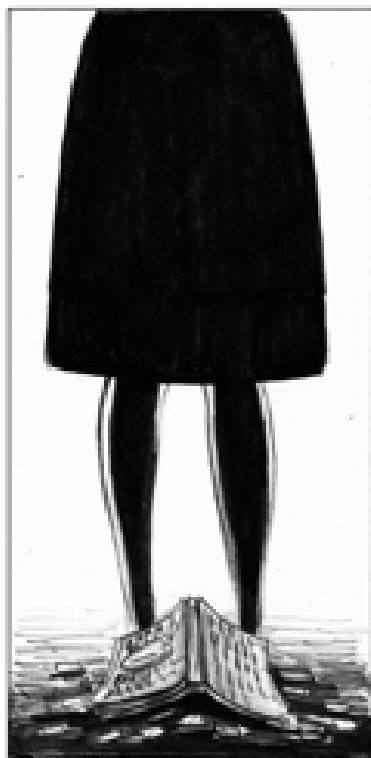
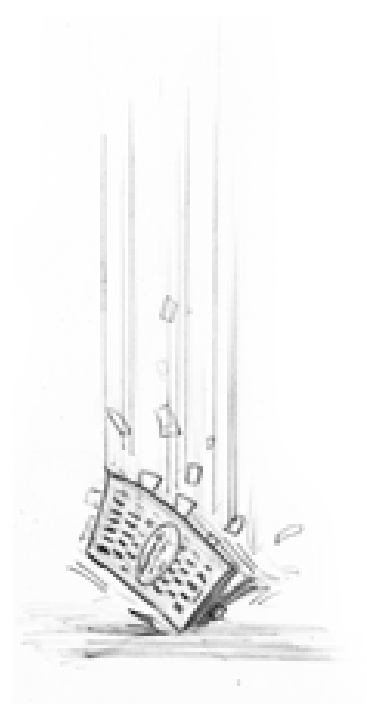
'Across from me, a new winnowing fan bought for the occasion receives the first alms. The presence of my co-wife beside me irritates me.'



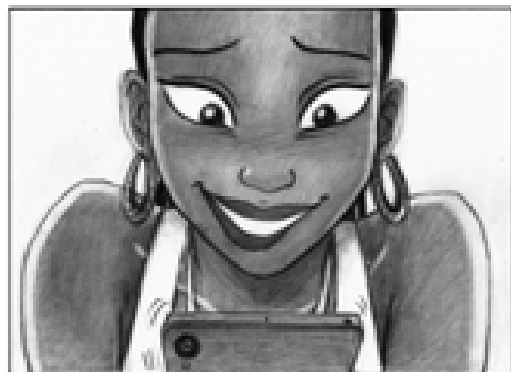


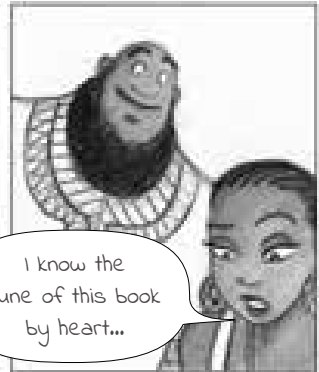
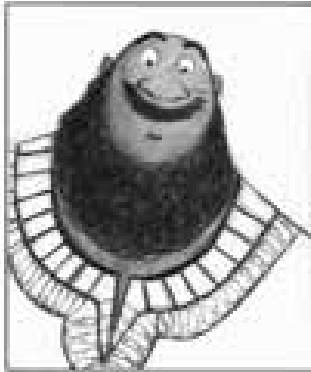
'With each passing hour her cheeks become more deeply hollowed, acquire ever more rings, those big and beautiful eyes which open and close on their secrets, perhaps their regrets. At the age of love and freedom from care, this child is dogged by sadness.'













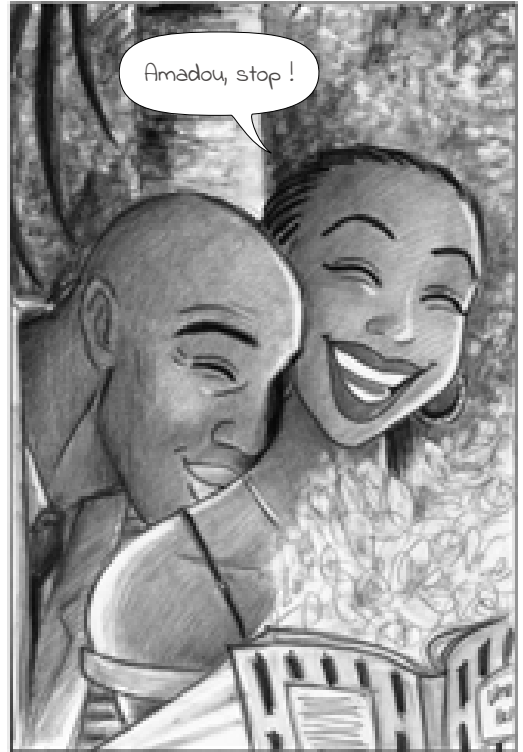
But of course we can love a married man or woman, that is not the point.



And then these days, second wives are often conquerors, not victims.











Really everybody?

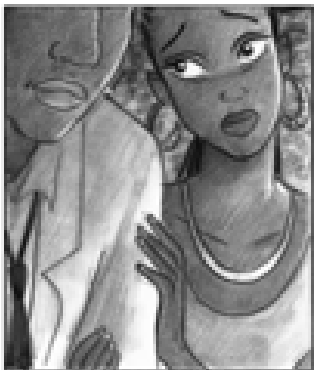


Babe, I've never hidden my marriage from you...

But Amadou, what will your wife say?



Naturally, she will be sad. No one likes to feel replaced. But you're not a replacement Ndeye, or a sequel...



Ndeye, come with a 'yes' on wednesday, otherwise don't come. I can't wait any longer.







The same happy smile lit up our faces.



The pressure of your hand became more tender, more possessive.

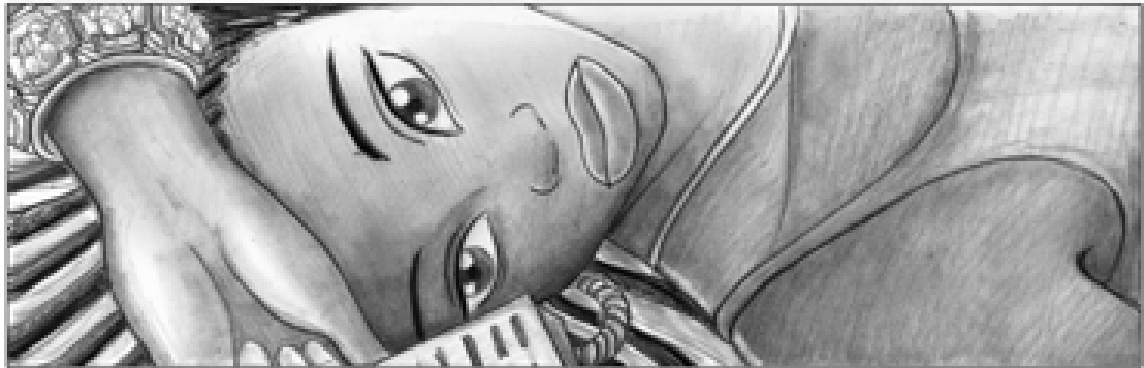


Everything in me gave in and our relationship endured over the school years and during the holidays, strengthened in me by the discovery of your subtle intelligence...

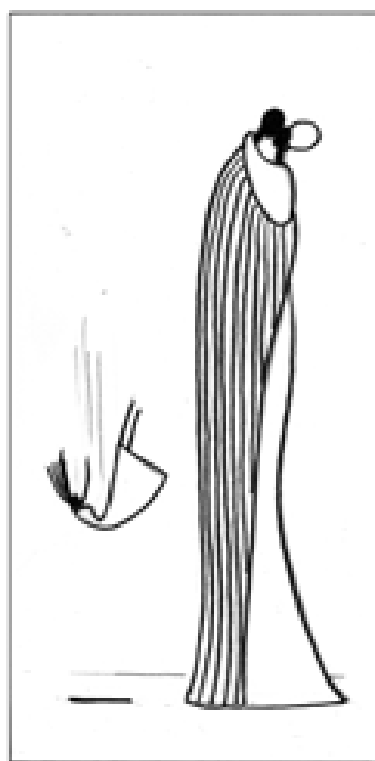
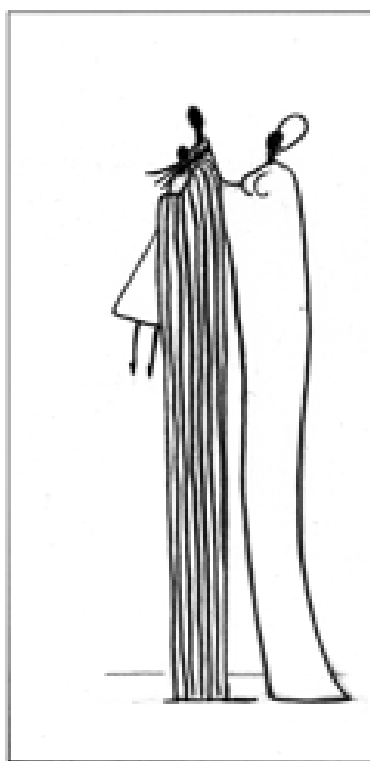
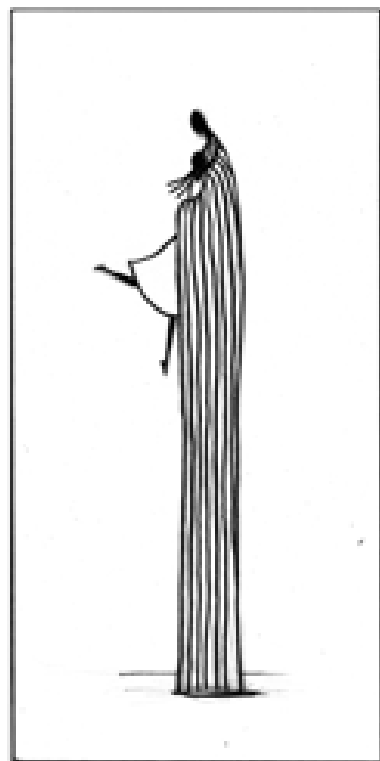


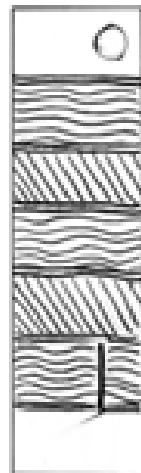
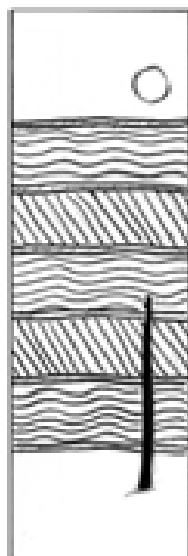
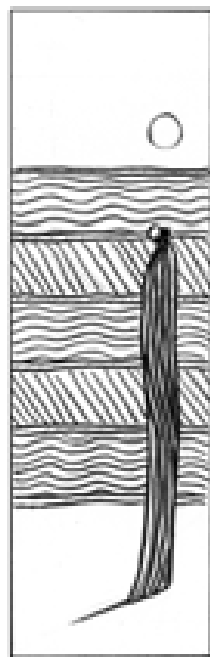
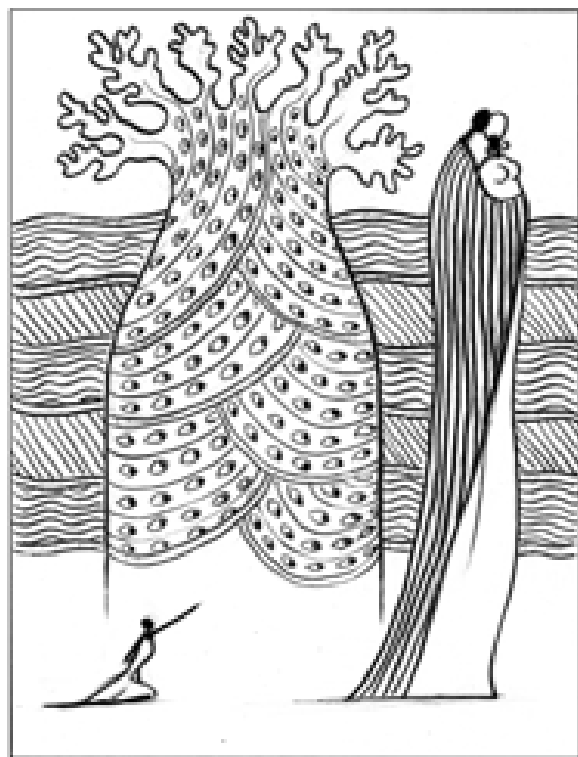


...by your embracing sensitivity,
of your readiness to help, of
your ambition, which suffered
no mediocrity.

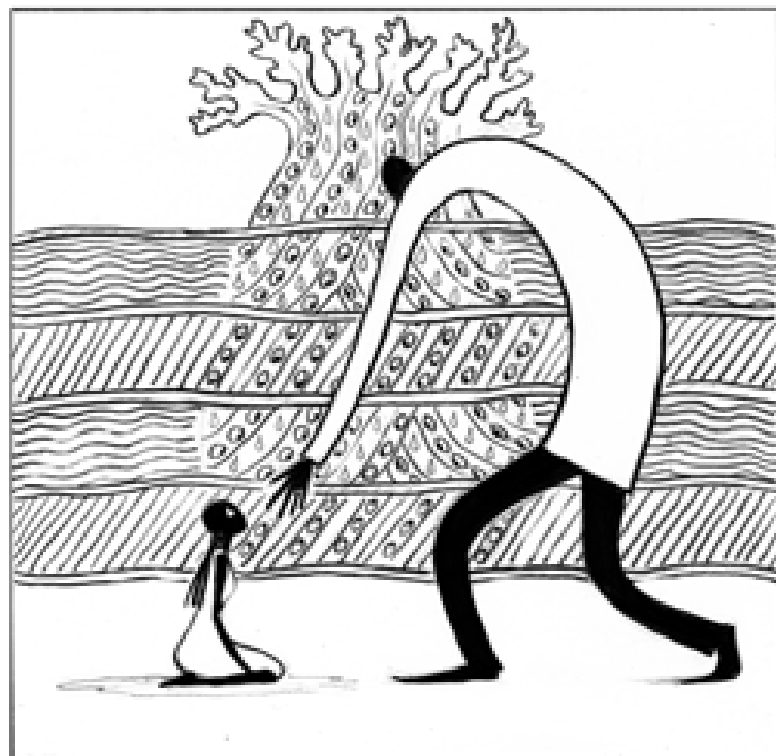


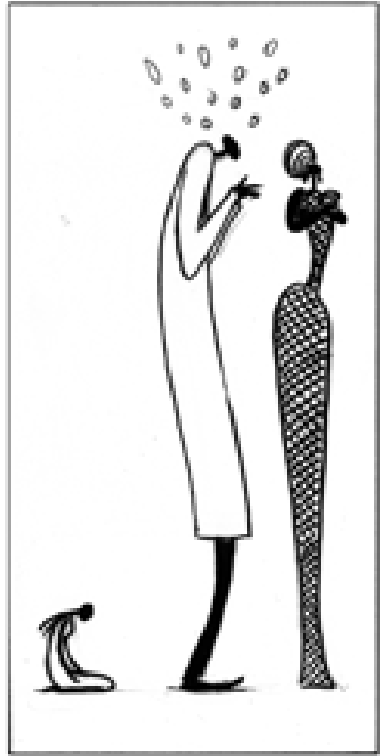
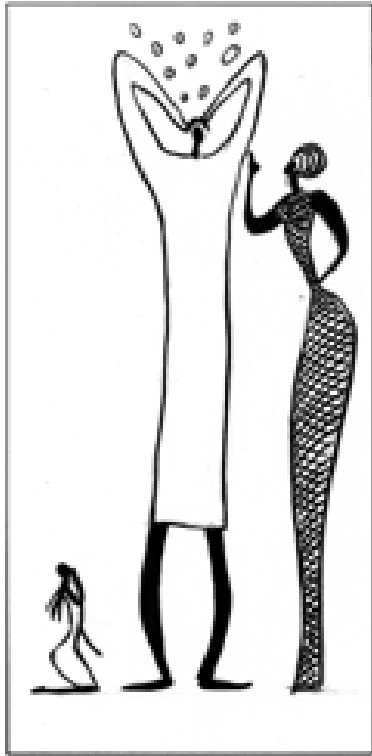
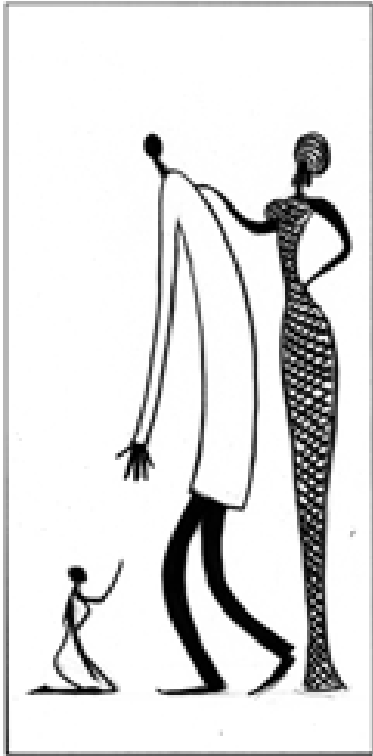


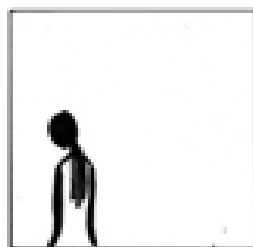


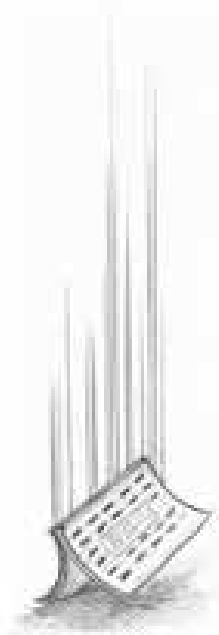


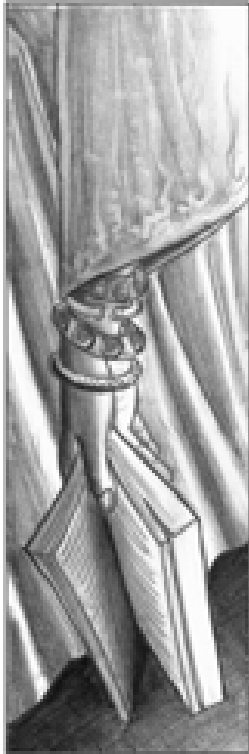










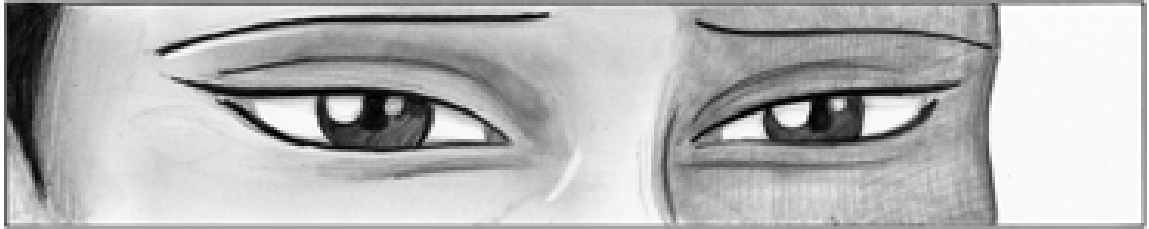


we would walk along the Dakar
Corniche, one of the most beautiful
in west Africa, a sheer work of
art wrought by nature...

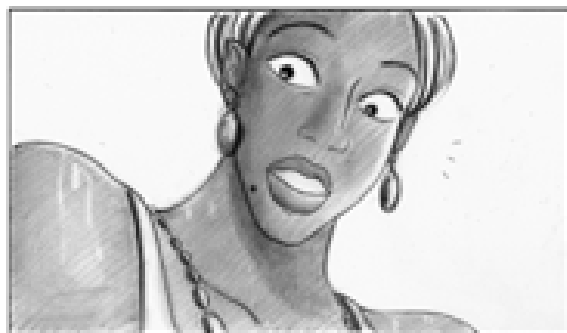




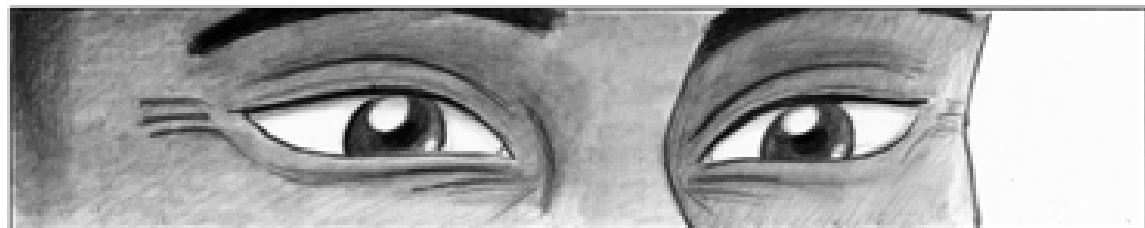
Rounded or pointed rocks, black or ochre-coloured, overlooking the ocean. Greenery, sometimes a veritable hanging garden, spread out under the clear sky. The sea air would put us in good humour.











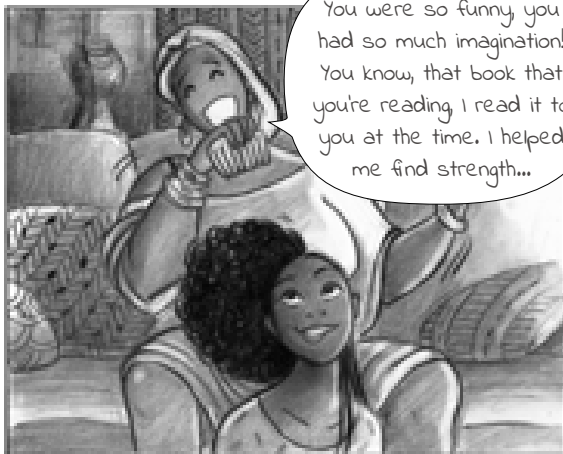


You remember when you were little, I would do your hair here, we had just arrived...

You would tell me stories.



And when you didn't like the ending, you would change it!

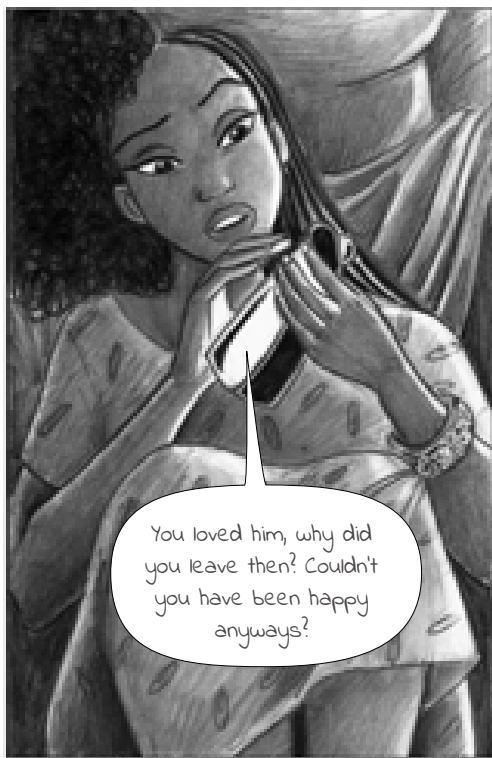
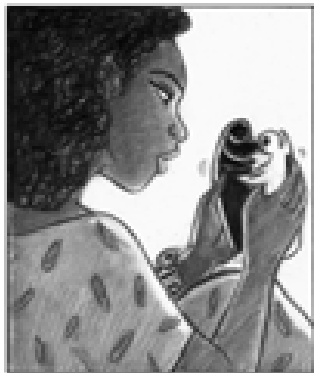


You were so funny, you had so much imagination! You know, that book that you're reading, I read it to you at the time. I helped me find strength...



...and it reminded me so much of your father; he took me often, unexpectedly, like that. He knew when I needed it.

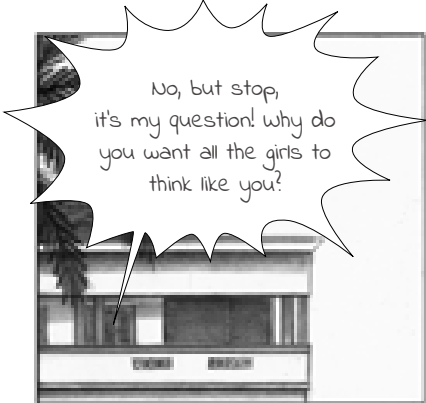




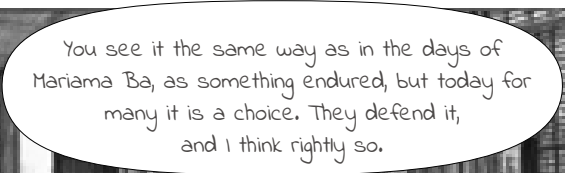


I left precisely because I loved him, because I didn't want to be happy 'anyways', like you say.






No, but stop,
it's my question! why do
you want all the girls to
think like you?



You see it the same way as in the days of
Mariama Ba, as something endured, but today for
many it is a choice. They defend it,
and I think rightly so.

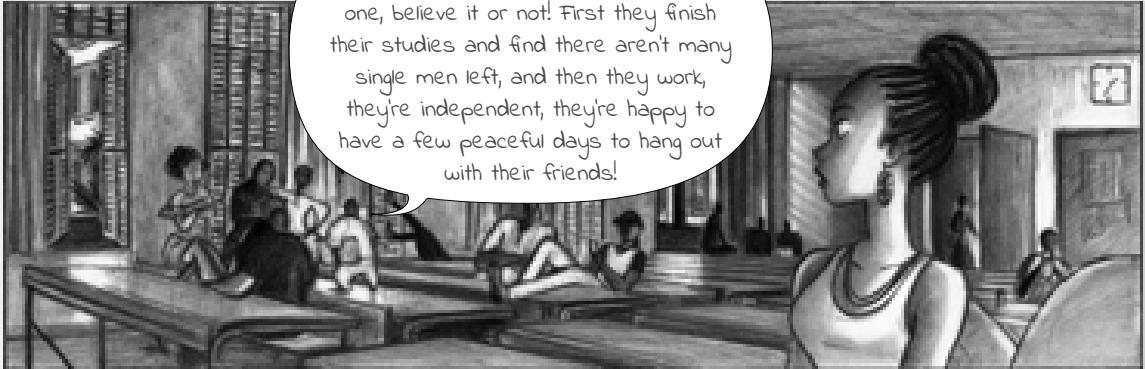


oh yeah?! And what
exactly has changed? No, but
who have you seen, huh?




who can explain to him that no woman chooses to share her man!!

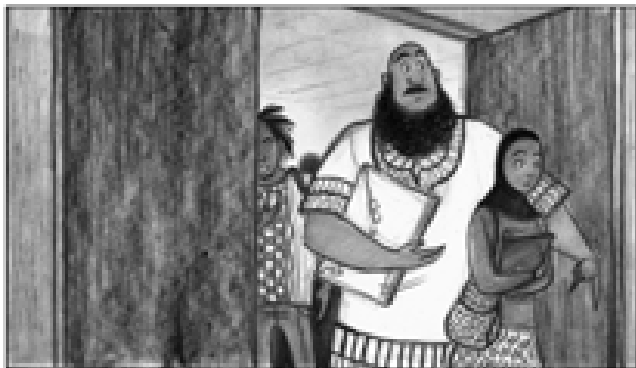


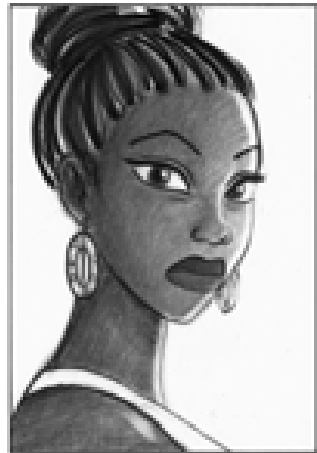


Calm down, I'm only repeating what they say, and I've spoken to more than one, believe it or not! First they finish their studies and find there aren't many single men left, and then they work, they're independent, they're happy to have a few peaceful days to hang out with their friends!



So, she is right, they struggle! Starting with the social pressure! If you aren't married by the age of 30, everyone thinks there must be something wrong with you...







we have far greater sexual needs. It is by the mercy of Allah that we have polygamy. I am devout, and so I can satisfy my needs lawfully.



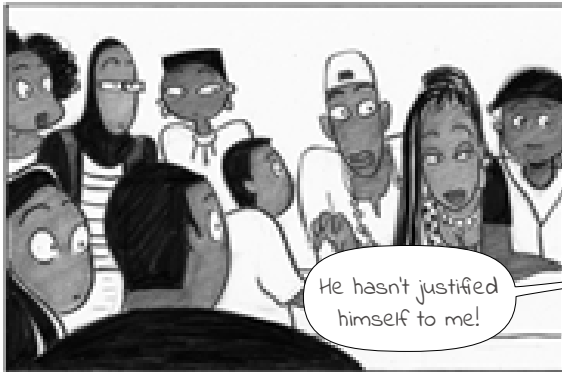
The flame has gone out, my second wife will rekindle it, and everyone will benefit!



My first is unable to give me a son! I have no choice!



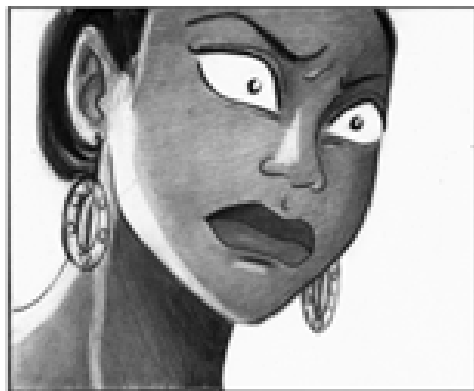
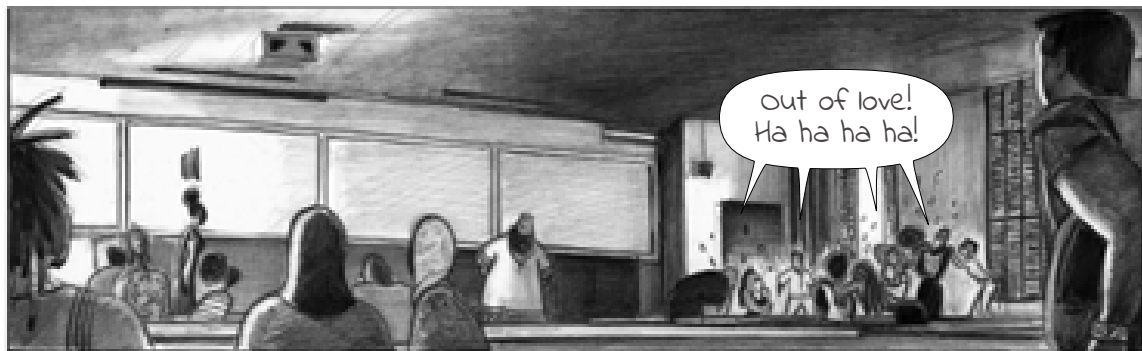
Love doesn't come in limited quantities, everything I give to my third wife takes nothing away from the first...



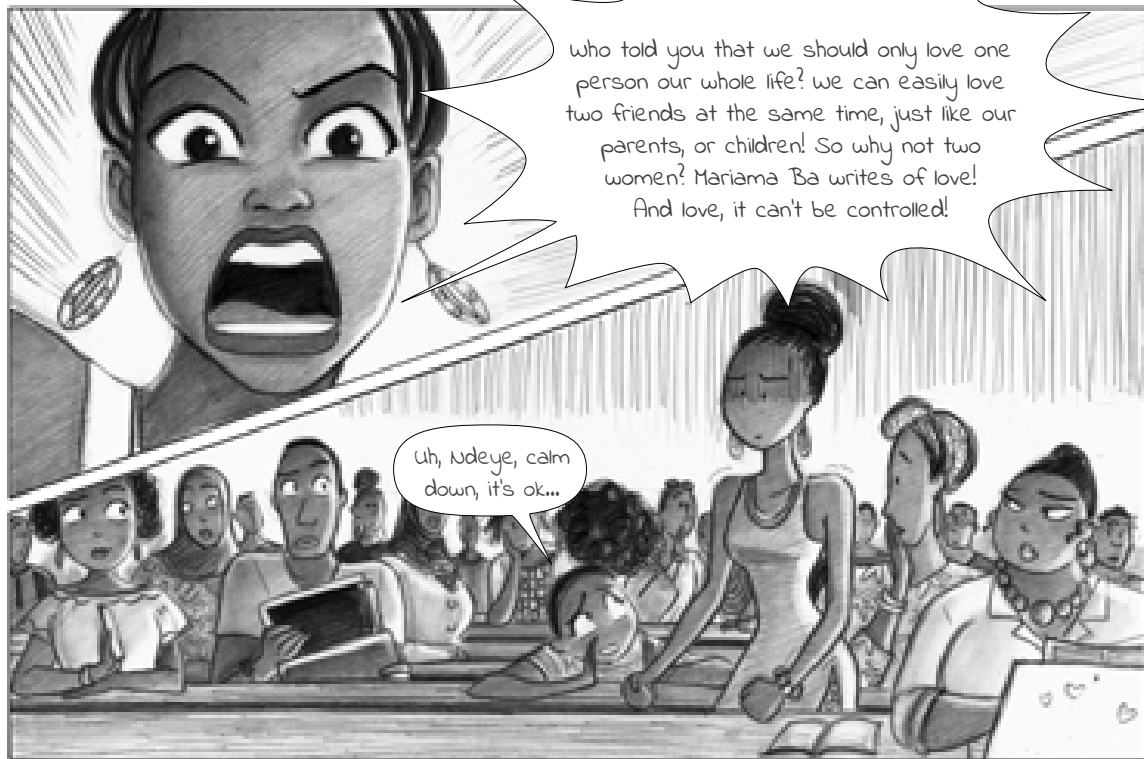
Yeah, another monogamist who signed a polygamous marriage contract without realising it!



I still prefer the greater sexual needs argument, it's less hypocritical!

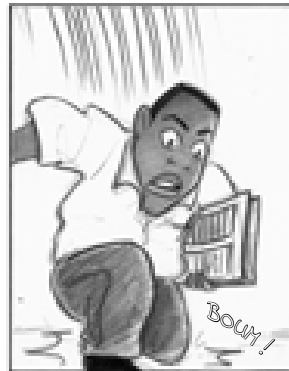


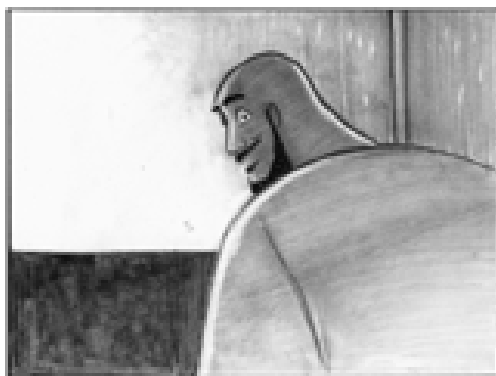
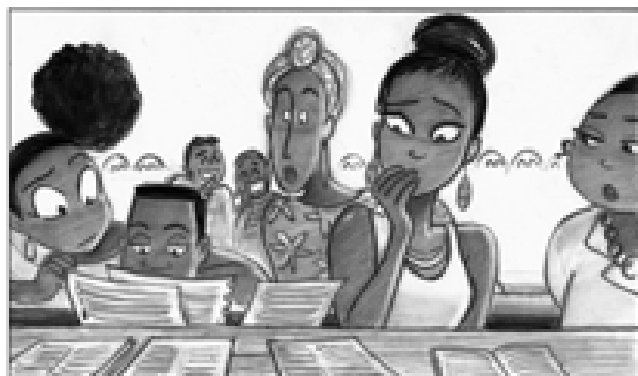




who told you that we should only love one person our whole life? we can easily love two friends at the same time, just like our parents, or children! So why not two women? Mariama Ba writes of love! And love, it can't be controlled!

uh, ndeye, calm down, it's ok...





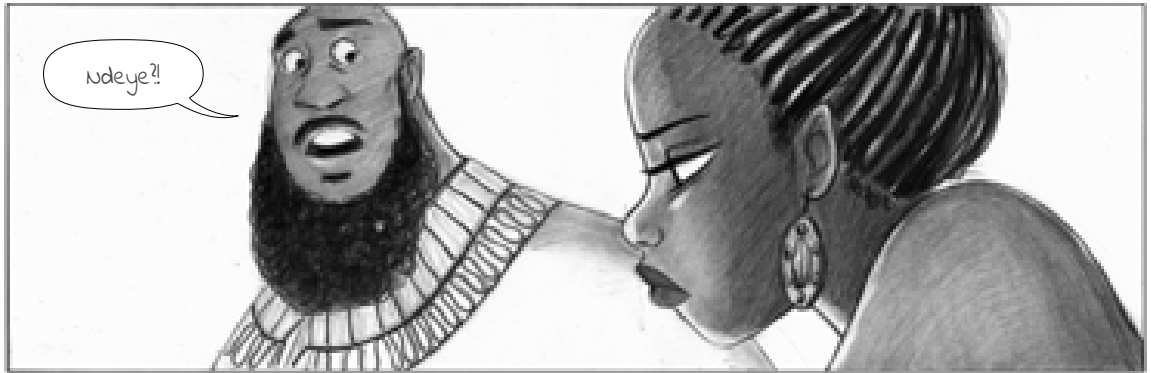


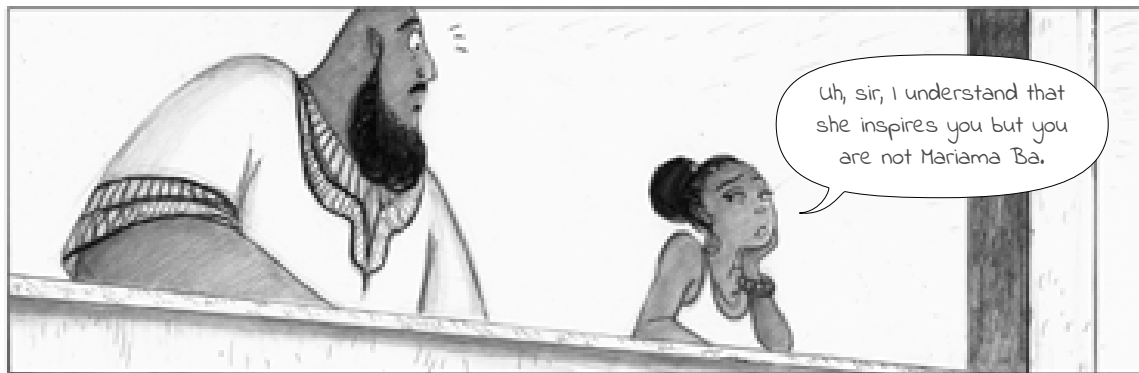
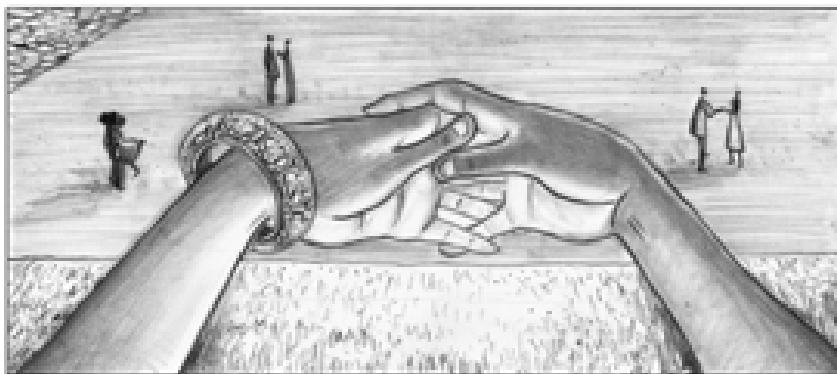
well, if you don't want to talk about yourself, it's your right! As for me, I'm going to talk about myself. I hesitate to publish my writings. I tell myself it's not too late, Mariama Ba published her first book at the age of 50, so why not me?



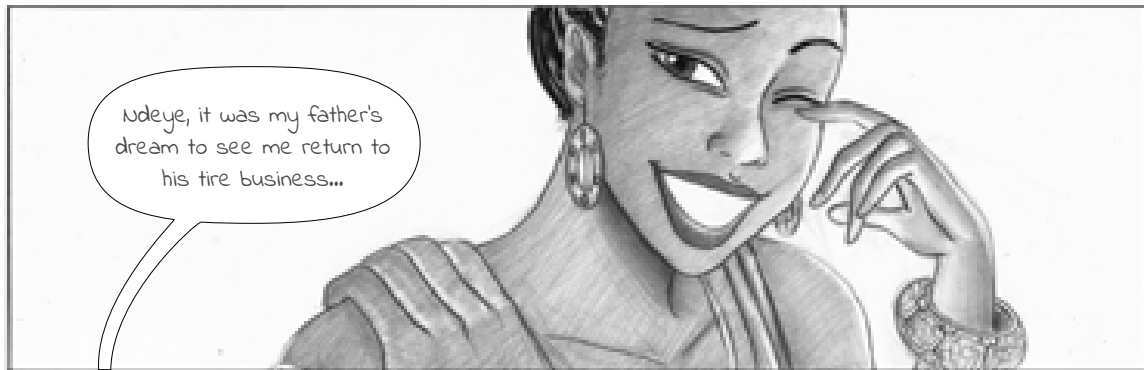
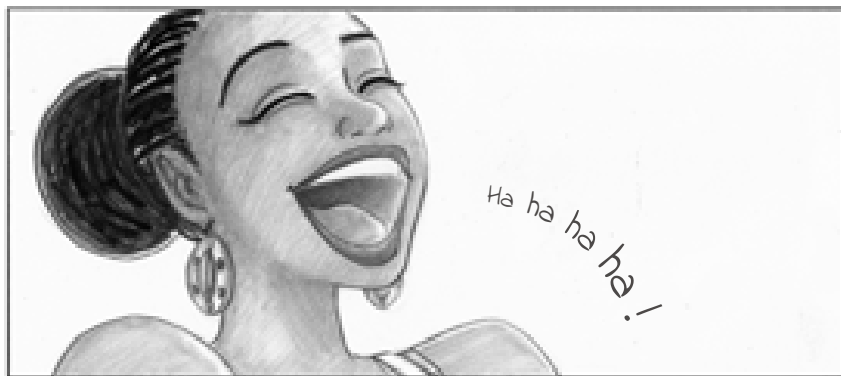
I imagine her walking there, giving me advise, encouraging me to follow my dreams.













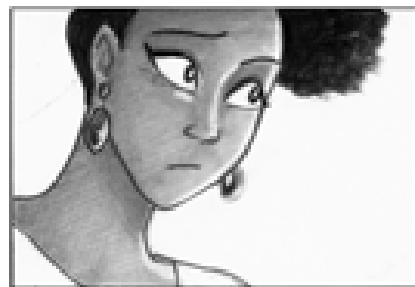
I wanted to get my doctorate to become what I am today. I was so torn, impossible to make a choice between the two...

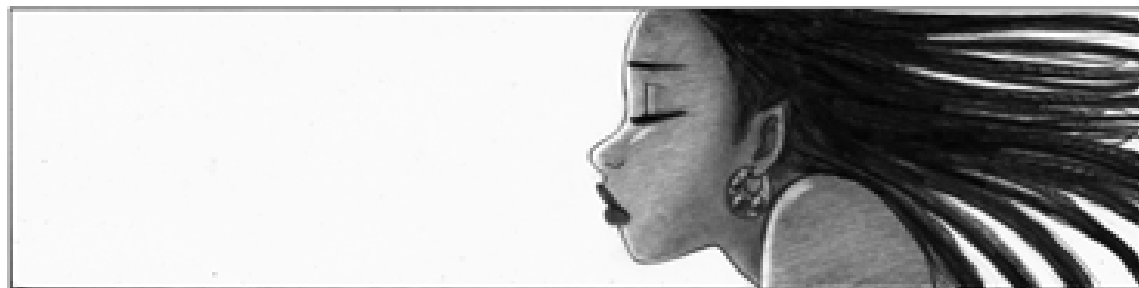
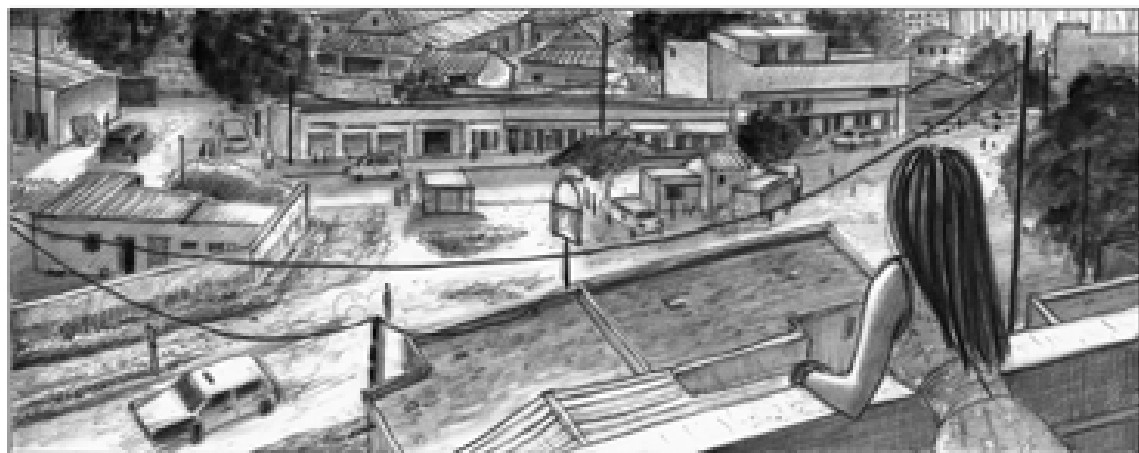
So, I threw a tire down the lane behind my house: if it went right, I would make my father happy if it went left, I would follow my own path.



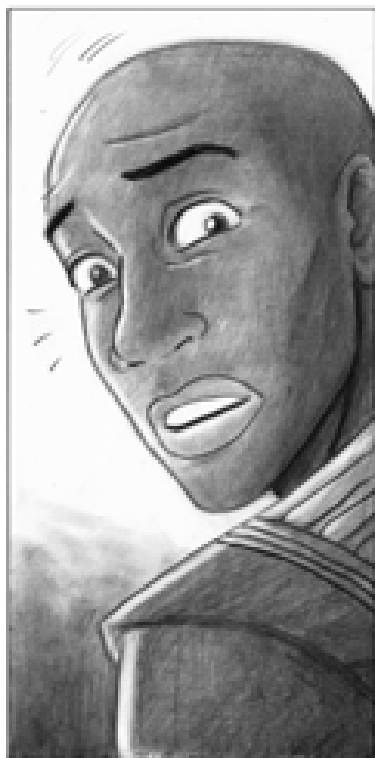
And well, it went right. I sat there for an hour staring at it and then I ended up putting it on the other side of the lane. It was at that precise moment that I understood that I couldn't let life choose for me.



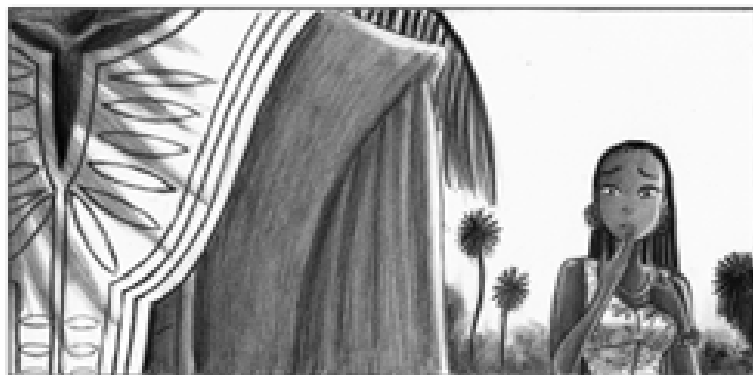


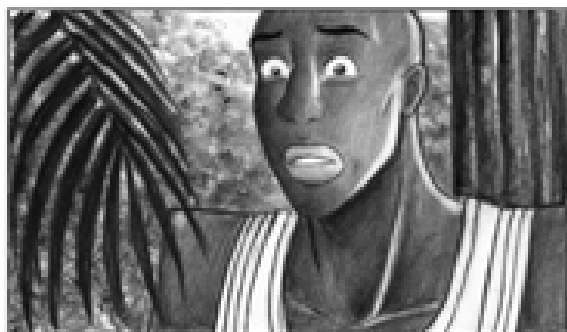
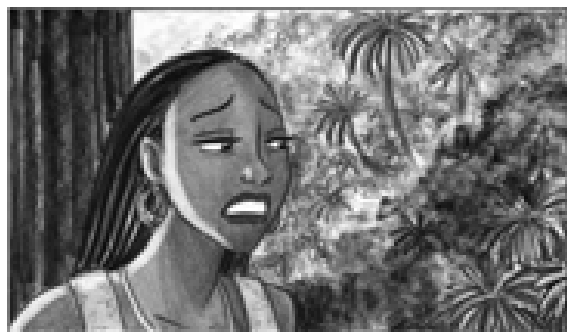






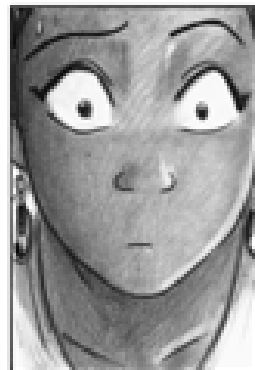
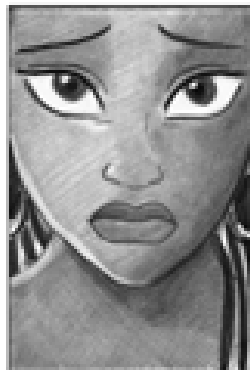






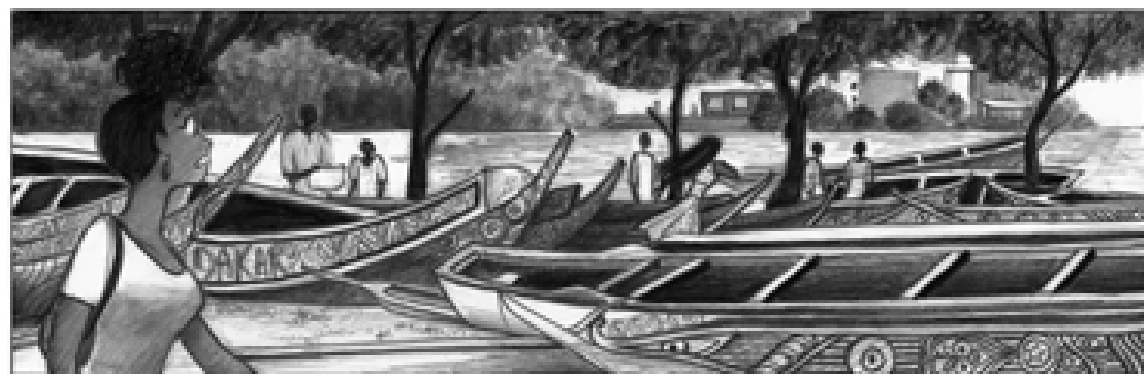






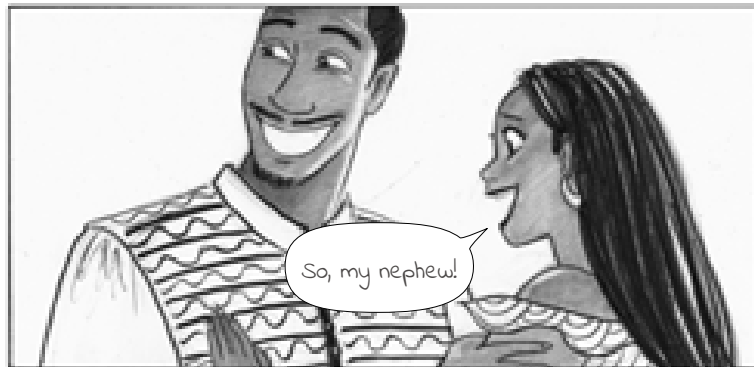
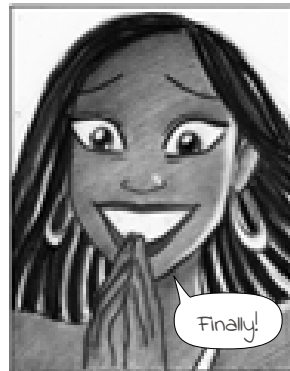
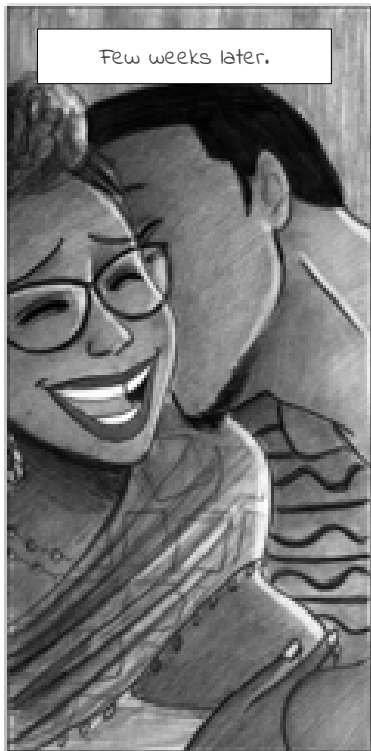


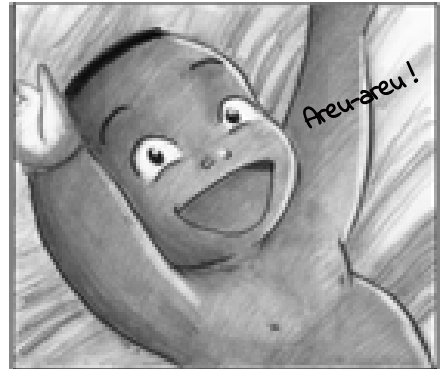


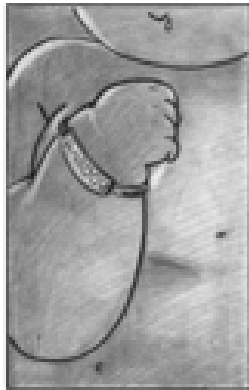
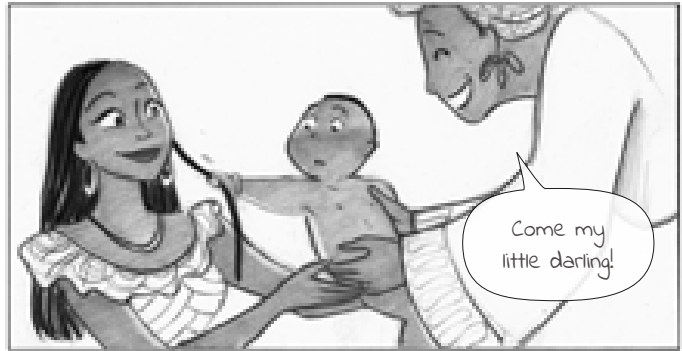














Hi hi hi hi!
Ha ha ha ha!

Mariama Ba

To educate, campaign and write in order to raise women's awareness and promote their rights: such was Mariama Ba's credo throughout her life. She belonged to the first generation of Senegalese women who attended French school during the interwar period. She was as much a pioneer in the domain of literature, as she was in the women's movement. The impact of her first novel in and beyond Senegal, in which she denounced polygamy and confronted the problems of the caste-system, testifies to her emblematic status.

Women in African History

By way of various artistic and pedagogical resources available online, this UNESCO project highlights a selection of historical female figures, from Africa and of African descent, who have distinguished themselves in the history of the continent in areas as diverse as politics (Gisèle Rabesahala), diplomacy and resistance against colonization (Njinga Mbandi), defence of women's rights (Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti) and environmental protection (Wangari Maathai).

The selection of women figures proposed in the framework of this project is not exhaustive and represents only a small part of the contribution of African women, known and unknown, to the history of their countries, Africa and all mankind.



For additional resources, please visit the web site www.unesco.org/womenin africa