On the Hospitality of Print: Ousmane Socé's *Bingo* and Its Publics

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ABSTRACT

This essay explores an understudied aspect of print cultures in Africa and beyond. One affordance of print forms is their capacity to actively play host to a variety of ways of relating to the medium of print itself. This capacity is called here the hospitality of print—an affect of openness and invitation that suffuses certain print publics that solicit and accommodate disparate kinds of attention and use. This phenomenon is analyzed through a discussion of the early years of the glossy pan-African periodical *Bingo*. Launched in 1953 and published in Senegal and France under the editorial direction of Ousmane Socé, *Bingo* aimed for a mass audience across the Francophone world. Under Socé, *Bingo* made the printed page into a social space for its readers by opening itself up to multiple modes of engagement.

What kinds of audiences can a printed page conjure? Readers of printed texts rarely find themselves all in the same place at once, so print audiences often acquire an abstracted, even virtual quality. Scholarship on print cultures has long associated such virtuality with the medium's extraordinary power to convene audiences that act and identify in new and surprising ways. Think of the imagined communities of Benedict Anderson: by projecting outward a shared, homogenous present from the reading situation, print forms such as newspapers or novels summon forth the nation. Anderson's work inaugurated an influential line of thought, in which the virtuality of a print audience is understood through a figure of projection. In this account, the audience radiates outward from the page. As useful as this interpretation has been for generations of scholars of print cultures, this projective model is but one of many possible configurations.

This essay explores a different and altogether more evanescent facet of the relationship between printed texts and their audiences. This is a capacity I will call the hospitality of print. One of the affordances of print, especially in lifeworlds

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where normative literacy is narrowly distributed, is the printed page's capacity to play host to a variety of ways of relating to and making use of the medium. Instead of projecting outward an audience of readers who are presumed to share the same reading practices, subjective dispositions, or temporal coordinates, a printed page may also open itself up to a multiplicity of audiences and forms of engagement.

We can hypothesize that the hospitality of print has been especially important in African print cultures. Although not theorized as such, hospitality seems to be a feature of a variety of African print forms from different locations and historical contexts: from the generic fecundity of Yoruba-language newspapers (Barber) and the translation work of Gikuyu bookkeepers (D. R. Peterson), to Ghandi's printing press (Hofmeyr), or the multiplicity of reading practices of *The Bantu World* (B. Peterson). Some of the most complex and generative interactions between printed texts and their audiences in African contexts have been in and around periodicals.[1] Over the course of the twentieth century especially, African newspapers, magazines, and other periodical forms have taken advantage of the sustained reflexivity of seriality as well as the abstracting possibilities inherent in all printed discourse to explore innovative and hospitable models of print culture. Drawing on the rich scholarship on African print cultures of the last few decades, I model here an approach to studying the ways in which printed spaces perform their own capacities to play host to their readers.[2]

A clear example of the hospitality of print can be found in the early years of the glossy pan-African periodical *Bingo*. Launched in 1953 and published in Senegal and France under the editorial direction of Ousmane Socé, *Bingo* aimed for a mass audience across the Francophone world. Under Socé, *Bingo* devoted considerable space to reader contributions (both letters and photos), was obsessive in its representations of the circulation and making of print, and was reliably creative in imagining uses for itself beyond literate reading. *Bingo* rarely conceived of itself as a consistent, textual message broadcast outward toward an audience that was already there and just needed to be reached; rather, under Socé's stewardship the magazine strove to be a social space that would remain hospitable to its reader-guests' various interests, needs, and sociabilities. My argument is not that *Bingo* is a unique case, but rather that its early years provide us with an evocative example of a larger phenomenon that is common to other print forms. I will not be offering a comprehensive historical or sociological study of *Bingo* (as Bush and Ducournau do helpfully in this same issue) so much as a theoretical reflection on print cultures that takes the magazine as its prime example. A clearer appreciation of the magazine's engagements with its publics will also gesture toward ways of enriching the study of print audiences in Africa and beyond. Before embarking on my discussion of *Bingo*, however, I will begin by offering a few theoretical remarks on the hospitality of print.

Hospitality is an affordance of print forms—a potential though not a necessary quality.[3] Many of the printed pages we encounter in daily life (including this one) are not terribly hospitable. They seem instead to presume a shared ideology of reading that is silent and private. There is, of course, nothing in the medium of print that dictates this model of uptake, which is a historically constructed norm. As scholars working in the field of reception studies have long shown, "reading" can encompass a variety of modes of attention and engagement, not all of which are easily assimilable to the narrowest senses of the term.[4] Someone encountering

a printed page might skim, dart between words and images, read aloud to a companion or an assembly, memorize, cut up a portion of the page, or scan for familiar words, images, or faces. The hospitality of print refers *not* to these phenomena of readerly creativity and appropriation, but rather to the capacity of print forms to incite or welcome such varied engagements. Any printed page may be received polyvalently. But only under certain conditions do print forms and the publics that take shape around them actively cultivate divergent and even incompatible uses.

What kind of a sign can a printed page be? What sensory modalities might it engage or accommodate? Hospitality describes a situation in which the answers to such questions are fundamentally open-ended. A printed page is experienced as a medium that welcomes a variety of modes of engagement—a space of accommodation, compromise, adaptation, even shelter. The concept of *semiotic ideology* is useful in understanding such a configuration of print culture. Webb Keane defines semiotic ideology as "people's underlying assumptions about what signs are, what functions signs do or do not serve, and what consequences they might or might not produce" (64). This framework can help scholars of print cultures study variation in construals of the printed page as a semiotic ground. In other words, it helps us attend to differential assumptions about what printed pages are and how they function. And to closely track the ways in which such assumptions are further refracted as communities of readers make use of print in diverse ways. The hospitality of print, then, describes a semiotic ideology in which an underlying assumption of open-endedness exists with regard to what a printed page is and what it might become.

But where might such an attitude of openness be located? Hospitality, as I understand it here, is not situated in individual readers, writers, or editors, nor in the printed page itself, but in *publics* that are constituted in and by the reflexive circulation of print forms. Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* inaugurated an influential approach to studying audiences that has since proved useful for a variety of fields, African literary studies not least among them. In *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics* Karin Barber adapted the study of publics for African literatures both oral and textual—building on her own longstanding interest in audiences in Africa.[5] Although Warner's and Barber's understandings of publics are not identical, their approaches harmonize and supplement each other in ways that are quite helpful for the study of African print cultures. For both Warner and Barber, a public is special kind of audience. It is a social space of discourse, a relationship among strangers that is constituted through attention (Warner 65–124). As Barber puts it quite succinctly, a public is

> an audience of a distinctive kind. It is an audience whose members are not known to the speaker/composer of the text, and not necessarily present, but still addressed simultaneously, and imagined as a collectivity.… Publics in this sense can be envisaged by the author/speaker as potentially vast in extent, reaching out beyond the known community to wider populations, whether politically or religiously defined. But they can also be more limited—the members of a town, a social class or a religious organization—often with an implied penumbra of potential listeners from further afield. The key thing about publics is that their members are conceptualised as anonymous, equivalent to each other and in principle interchangeable. A new form of address is needed, as the author/speaker beams out a text or performance to a mass of recipients who are not

> known to him/her or to each other, and who are not personally recognized or differentiated from each other in the address of the text—but who are nonetheless convened as if they formed a real, single, co-present collectivity. (*The Anthropology of Texts* 139–40)

As this definition suggests, a public does not refer to any given audience of readers, nor to the sociological realities of a text's circulation, nor even to particular practices or experiences of reading. A public is rather "the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" (M. Warner 90). Publics are not created by any single text; instead, they take shape through the concatenation of a feedback loop of discourse over time.

The recursive nature of publics helps explain how hospitality can be a feature of certain print cultures. On the one hand, publics are constraining—they are "a worldly constraint on speech" (M. Warner 73). Public speech always involves the postulation of forms of intelligibility as already being in place, since any address to a public has to make presuppositions about the character of the public(s) it will encounter. But this presuppositional quality is inherently unstable, since an address to a public must always include potential listeners or readers who are strangers—otherwise it would not be public speech at all. As Warner puts it, "writing to a public incorporates the tendency of writing or speech to go astray as a condition of possibility" (74). So a public is not only constraining, it is also creative—a "poetic world-making" (114). Warner suggests that an address to a public not only says "let a public exist," but also "let it have this character, speak this way, see the world in this way" (114). In other words, a public is necessarily engaged in an ongoing process of figuring out what its own world will be like, what the norms and terms of participation will be. This second, creative dimension of a public complicates the first, constraining one: a public is *both* a worldly constraint on speech and a form of world-making. The hospitality of print, then, emerges from the friction between the presuppositional and creative dynamics of print publics. It describes a kind of openness in the orientation of some print publics toward the questions of who can be a participant in their worlds and what types of participation will be welcomed.

But how can a feeling, an attitude, or a disposition be attributed not to individual writers, editors, or readers but to something as diffuse and emergent as a public? To answer this potential objection, it helps to sharpen our conceptualization of the nature of hospitality itself. Hospitality is an *affect*. A person, a comment, or an action might be made to feel welcome or unwelcome in a given situation, but the hospitality that conditions this reception often cannot be understood to exist in any one subject so much as in a general feeling that saturates the scene. A printed page may also be hospitable, to greater or lesser degree, in the ways in which it invites a plurality of uses to be made of it. Considered through the prism of affect theory, the hospitality of print refers to a generalized affect that can suffuse a print public, a sense of welcoming in a plurality of readers and forms of engagement. As Sianne Ngai points out, affects have an "in-between-ness or a besideness" to them (25). Whereas emotions typically require a subject, affects do not. Affects are often a question of the "global tone" of cultural artifact or scene, a matter of "unfelt but perceived feeling" (Ngai 28). Or, as Lauren Berlant puts it, affects "saturate" cultural forms (16). Thinking of a printed page in terms of affect

involves a reorientation in perspective—it leads us away from the study of textual meaning and toward ways of noticing the many ways that print forms generate modes of attention or attachment. As Kathleen Stewart puts it, affects work not through "meanings per se, but rather in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds. Their significance lies in the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible" (3).

Hospitality, then, refers to the extent to which a print public is saturated not only by an awareness of the potentially creative role of the reader and the possible plurality of uses a text may encounter, but above all by a specifically welcoming orientation toward these dimensions. The presence or absence of an affect of hospitality in a print public does not necessarily constrain practices of reading. My aim is not to propose a kind of affective determinism, but rather to draw our attention to a dimension of print culture that we rarely seem to detect: *not just* the potential for texts to be made use of in various ways (as reception theories teach us), but rather the ability of print publics to thematize and even invite such creativity. Hospitality is a positively valued awareness of the multiplicity of uses a printed text might expect to encounter. It is an attitude of invitation, encouragement, and accommodation that suffuses certain print forms and the publics that take shape through them and open them up.

To give substance to this theoretical outline of the hospitality of print, I will now turn to *Bingo* and its publics. I begin by briefly sketching, first, the position of the magazine within the broader field of periodicals in Francophone West Africa and, second, the trajectory of Socé, *Bingo*'s founding editorial director. From 1930 to 1960, Francophone West Africa was a hotbed of creative writing, with rather little of the output appearing in bound books. Newspapers and other periodicals were the dominant forum of print culture. According to the calculations of Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, 95 percent of literary texts published in French by West Africans in this period appeared first in periodicals (13). If we were to include within his measure the large body of creative writings by Africans in French that have a complicated relationship to the category of the literary, then the figure would be much higher. As I argued more extensively in *The Tongue-Tied Imagination*, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the print forms that flourished in French West Africa in the late colonial era was the development of a repertoire of reflexive strategies for engaging with the question of the audience. This reflexivity was differentially distributed across the network of periodicals spanning French West Africa and metropolitan France. Periodicals operating within the *métropole* tended to presume a certain commonality of reading practices among their readers and concentrate their energies on increasing their circulation. Periodicals published on the continent operated under different material and legal conditions. West African newspapers of the late colonial era demonstrated a greater concern with soliciting reader engagement. Far more than their metropolitan counterparts, African periodicals were often keenly aware that they would have to produce rather than merely reach the audiences they sought (T. Warner 96–120).

Bingo occupied an unusual position in this network. It was a "big" magazine, as Ruth Bush and Claire Ducournau put it in their contribution to this issue, a periodical that was glossy and pictorial in the style of a *Life* or an *Ebony* in the American market, or *Drum* in an Anglophone African context. *Bingo* had editorial offices in Senegal

and in Paris, but rather than contenting itself with being a regional periodical it cast itself as a pan-African illustrated monthly. Relative to its peers in the Francophone African periodical space, *Bingo* demonstrates an admixture of the dynamics outlined above: the magazine combines a concern with materially extending circulation with a high degree of reflexivity toward its future publics. In terms of its content, *Bingo* features a distinctively popular and even eclectic range of material. In a given issue, one might encounter photo collages, serialized fiction, folktales, comics, illustrated novels, essays, travel writing, and gendered self-care and -improvement guides. The magazine aimed to reach an emerging class of African consumers and featured ads for a variety of products, from cameras and refrigerators to aspirin.

Bingo seems to have circulated widely across the print networks linking West Africa, Europe, and further afield. In the 1950s, according to a list of distributors in its own pages, it was available in major and minor cities and towns across the federations of Afrique Occidentale and Équatoriale Française, from Saint-Louis to Ziguinchor, Gao to Conakry, Ouagadougou to Brazzaville.[4] The most well-represented colony for distribution was Senegal (37 points of sale), followed by Guinée (13), Soudan (12), and Côte d'Ivoire (7) and A.E.F. (3). Gambia, Mauritania, Haute Volta, Niger, Togo, and Dahomey each had one or two "dépositaires" ("Nos dépositaires"). Although the distribution points for *Bingo* in West Africa were concentrated in urban areas, reader submissions to the magazine index a greater reach. Letters and photos sent in to *Bingo* in the 1950s emanate heavily from areas with a newsagent selling the magazine, but there are also contributions from further afield. *Bingo* also seems to have circulated in France as well as among African soldiers serving in colonial wars in Indochina and later Algeria. The magazine eventually moved toward a subscription scheme in part to satisfy the demands of its readers in rural areas, who complain regularly that shops cannot keep *Bingo* in stock ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 9; "Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 16; "Lecteurs isolés qui ne pouvez pas facilement acheter").

Ousmane Socé's stewardship of *Bingo* was a landmark moment: *Bingo* was probably the first Francophone illustrated magazine under the editorial direction of an African. Socé is best known to literary scholars today as the author of two early Francophone novels, *Karim* (1935) and *Mirages de Paris* (1937). But Socé was also a fairly prominent public intellectual. A graduate of the École Normale William Ponty, Socé leveraged the success of his two novels to become a regular commentator on cultural and educational policy in French West Africa during the 1940s and 50s. He published journalism, essays, folktales, and fiction in outlets such as *Paris-Dakar* and *Dakar-Jeunes*. Although Léopold Senghor's 1937 speech and essay on "Le problème culturel en AOF" has become perhaps the most widely cited position on cultural questions of the late colonial period, Socé's interventions were also widely discussed at the time. In January 1942, for example, Socé contributed an article to *Dakar-Jeunes* that prompted an important debate on the state of culture in French West Africa.[6] Like many other writers and newspapermen of his generation, Socé also became a politician, serving as mayor of Rufisque and affiliated with the Socialist Party. He also maintained a close relationship with the editors of *Paris-Dakar*, the largest circulating paper in French West Africa, which was owned by the de Breteuil family. Through these connections, in the early 1950s Socé would become the editorial director of *Bingo.* The magazine was for a while a lynchpin in the de Breteuil group's stable of papers on the continent.

A major concern of *Bingo*, throughout the 1950s and extending into the 1960s, is the magazine's quest to document and promote its vision of African modernity. As one reader put it admiringly, the magazine attempted to give "un aperçu de ce que sera l'Afrique de demain" 'a glimpse of what will be the Africa of tomorrow' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 19). This involved, at once, the documentation and celebration of "traditional" lifeways, extensive focus on urban, cosmopolitan subjects, and portraits of occupations, spaces, and institutions associated with clean, modern living. This editorial line, pursued both visually and textually, exists in a clear line of development from Socé's earlier fiction and journalism, which leaned heavily and occasionally didactically on themes of cultural hybridity (*métissage culturel*) as an ideal model of African modernity. As he had done in his earlier fiction and essays, though, Socé was careful to cast the project of *Bingo* as existing predominantly on the plane of "culture" and to avoid any suspicion of "politics." In the first issue and throughout his tenure, Socé insisted time and again that *Bingo* would remain "apolitical." Of course, such disavowals are always political gestures themselves, and we would be right to be suspicious of *Bingo*'s protestations—as indeed its readers were as well. *Bingo* clearly did have an editorial line—it was both consumerist and politically reformist. But much as scholars have argued of Socé's own fiction, there is actually a great deal of ambiguity to *Bingo*'s vision of African modernity, and its project will come to seem more self-complicating than it might at first appear (Miller 88). *Bingo* also did things in and with the medium of print that are not reducible to its implicit editorial agenda. *Bingo* has a politics, if that term is understood in the broader sense that Rancière identifies: as a "redistribution of the sensible … an intervention upon the visible and the sayable" (233–37). Recast in these terms, Bingo's politics turn around a project of refiguring the space of print and what it is possible to do there.

Bingo's unabashed consumerism and lack of an explicitly committed editorial line meant that the magazine generated little scholarly interest until the last few years. Recent scholarship has tended to be recuperative and to explore *Bingo*'s cultivation of practices of reading, looking, and identifying among its audiences. In their contribution to this issue, Ruth Bush and Claire Ducournau make a persuasive case for rethinking the importance of "big magazines" to the print cultures of Francophone West Africa. *Bingo* and other similar titles had, they contend, a power to create "a sense of proximity, even intimacy" between their scattered readers, to generate "non-hegemonic narratives of nationhood," and to help fashion "a transnational pan-African public sphere for dialogue, critique, and creative self-expression" (Bush and Ducournau 46). Tsitsi Jaji convincingly argues that *Bingo* promoted an ethos of "black cosmopolitanism" in its pages by inviting "a diverse set of readers and reading practices" and allowing "complex reading publics to coexist, to read against the glossy grain of consumerism" (*Bingo* 116). Jaji terms the "structure of feeling" put in place by *Bingo*'s mix of words and images "sheen reading," which she defines as "a set of interpretative practices that blurred textual, visual and other forms of media literacy" (*Bingo* 113). In her contribution to this volume, Jaji expands on her earlier work to show how *Bingo* understood itself as a forum where all were welcome, a print community that sought to remain open to those with limited comfort as writers (Jaji 73–78). Jennifer Bajorek advances a similar argument in her analysis of the reader-submitted photographs that are common in the early years of the magazine. Bajorek suggests that *Bingo*'s call for readers to send in photographs

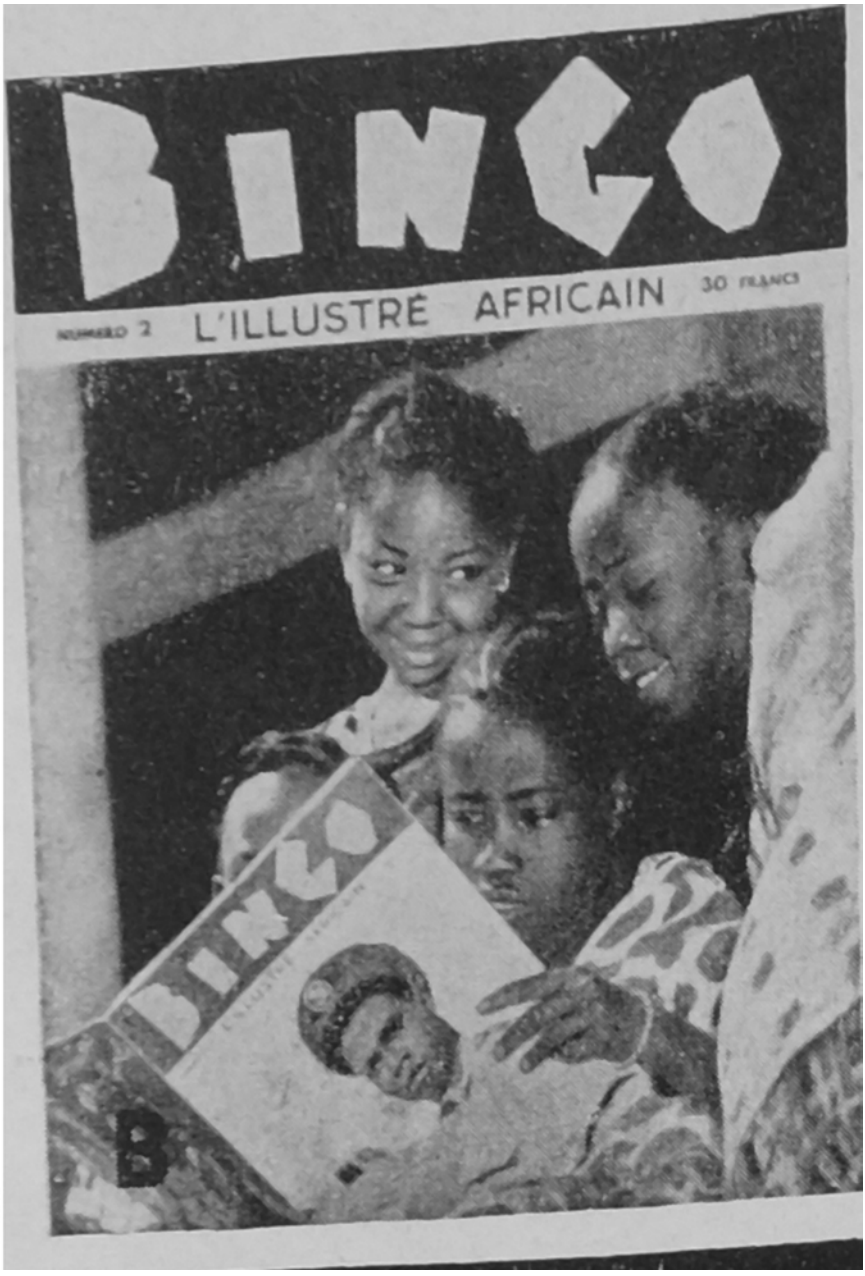

Figure 1: *Bingo,* no. 2.

helped to create space for an audience to "engage in photographic exchanges and related practices of looking [and] interpretation" in order to explore the terms of "an African identity that could be both envisioned and shared via photography across great distances and linguistic and ethnic divides" (144). My own reading of *Bingo* builds on and harmonizes with this recent work, while opting to focus more on the magazine's experiments with the possibilities of print as a medium.

What did it mean to be modern in *Bingo*? For *Bingo*, being modern and being African did not entail making use of the magazine in any one way. While the magazine was relentless and even pollyannaish in its depiction of a cheery, spotless African modernity, it remained more open to hosting different reading practices than other publications with less compromised politics that have gone on to attract far greater critical attention, notably *Présence Africaine*. In other words, while more engaged periodicals of the era had a clearer commitment to political critique, they also tended to address themselves to elite audiences who were presumed to be composed of normatively modern readers. One of the principal features of *Bingo*'s relationship to its audiences in these early years of Socé's tenure is that the magazine does not insist there is only one modern way to use it.

From its first few glossy issues, *Bingo* attempted not so much to hail an existing readership than to fashion a new kind of audience. This took the form of an extraordinary solicitude: a reader encountering the first few issues of *Bingo* was not only urged to pick up the magazine, but asked to take part in it and assured that they belonged in this world. This is strikingly captured in the cover of the second issue, which pictures a group of girls reading a copy of the first issue of *Bingo.*

In this joyful image (Figure 1), the girls appear totally absorbed in the page in front of them. None of the girls meets the camera's gaze—they are all looking either at the magazine or at each other. The most centrally placed girl holds a copy of the first issue, whose cover featured one of the first black pilots.[7] He is pictured staring bravely back at the camera. Although only two issues old at this point, *Bingo* suggests through the nested reflexivity of this image that it has somehow emerged fully formed into its own community of eager readers. More than this, though, the cover of the second issue works by creating a feedback loop: we (the readers of issue two of *Bingo*) are looking at the girls reading, but they are looking at the copy of *Bingo* issue one, and the magazine in turn stares back at us.

This recursive circuit of reading or looking is a visualization of *Bingo*'s public. In the cover of *Bingo* #2, we see the emergence of a social space, created by a reflexive and accumulated circulation of discourse over time. *Bingo*'s public has a certain temporality to it, defined by the superimposition of the two covers. Merely by glancing at the cover of the second issue, the "future reader" (as Socé would often describe *Bingo*'s audience) of the magazine is drawn into the social space of the magazine's public, joining the relay of reading that the image stages. In the cover of issue #2, we can also appreciate the affect of hospitality that is so characteristic of *Bingo*'s world-making. Through the nested perspectives of this image, the magazine makes an overture to its future readers, who are in turn called on not only to pick up the magazine, but to become a part of its world.

The implicit visual invitation on the cover of the second issue was made explicit discursively countless times in the earliest years of *Bingo.* A central feature of Socé's editorial practice with *Bingo* was his overtures to readers. Socé introduced the first issue of *Bingo* with a message of hospitality. He says that *Bingo* will attempt to satisfy

"tous les désirs manifestés par nos lecteurs" 'all the desires manifested by our readers' (Socé). The last page of the first issue reiterates the call for readers to participate, to implicate themselves in the magazine: "écrivez-nous pour nous dire ce que vous pensez, ce que vous désirez trouver … participez à sa vie en envoyant des photos" 'write us to tell us what you think, what you wish to find … take part in its life by sending us photos' ("Bingo est le reflet de la vie Africaine"). The invitation figures the magazine as a living thing to which the reader is encouraged to join themselves. Socé's gesture of hospitality would not go ignored. Readers inundated *Bingo* not just with letters but with photos, all of which Socé tried dutifully to reprint—at least for a while. *Bingo*, under Socé's leadership, maintained a long-running dialogue with its readers, a conversation that took place in photography as well as writing.

In this first decade, a good portion of the pages of each issue are dedicated to readers' contributions of one form or another. One of the most distinctive was a feature called 'The Page of Bingo' "*La Page de Bingo*." This was a collage of reader-submitted photographs, complete with captions. The feature seems to have been popular, judging from references in the (curated) letters to the editor and Socé's replies. As I have argued elsewhere, one noteworthy aspect of these collages is the way they advance a more capacious understanding of what it means to be a "reader." The magazine describes these photo collages as "Our Readers," but nowhere is it made obligatory for a "reader" of *Bingo* to be literate in the narrowest sense (T. Warner 116–18). Here I want to explore a different aspect of these collages: the way in which they form one aspect of the hospitality of this periodical. After inviting photos from its readers, *Bingo* would describe itself as being flooded with submissions. Rather quickly, readers start to express disappointment that their contributions have not yet appeared ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 18). Socé hastens to explain that every photo sent to *Bingo* will be reprinted, but that it may take some time. Patience is a major theme of his responses to his readers in these early years. Socé is constantly asking his readers to be patient with their magazine, reiterating the promise of hospitality that began the first issue: "il faut donner satisfaction à tous !" 'we must give satisfaction to everyone!' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 19). Despite the increasingly unmanageable mailbag, Socé continues to cast the magazine as a space whose goal is to play host to its readers' desires and interests and even to be shaped by them.

This give and take is amplified in another important feature of reader involvement: written correspondence. In their letters to *Bingo*, audience members describe what the experience of reading *Bingo* was like for them. One refrain is the thrill and shock of encountering images of people they knew in a magazine. One letter-writer observed, "On retrouve dans Bingo des personnes dont on connaît et dont on ne sait plus où elles se trouvent actuellement et on dirait qu'elles sont devant soi vivantes !" 'In *Bingo* we find people we know but whom we are no longer sure of their whereabouts, and it is as if they are right before us in the flesh!' ("Nos Lecteurs et Nous," *Bingo*, no. 16). Another reader who sees a photo of his daughter who lives far away reflects in rapture: "Sans bouger de chez moi, je me vois à Dakar, embrassant ma fille, saluant M. Akibode, et frappant à la porte de M. Boissier-Palun, dont votre illustré m'a apporté par l'image." 'Without leaving my house, I see myself in Dakar, embracing my daughter, greeting Mr. Akibode, and knocking at the door of Mr. Boissier-Palun, whose image was brought to me by your magazine' ("Nos Lecteurs et Nous," *Bingo*, no. 5). Other correspondents

describe the editorially curated photos as both immersive and physically transporting—they feel taken out of themselves and into a different world as they glimpse other parts of the Federation ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 5).

Letters to the editor also capture some of the many possible ways of being a reader of *Bingo.* The experience of turning its glossy, illustrated pages is often described as being more like a "film" than other print forms. One letter writer describes his entire family reading it together, some looking at images and some at articles: "*Bingo* s'offrait à ma famille tel un ciné ce soir-là" 'Bingo presented itself to my family like a cinema that night' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 16, p. 27; "Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 6, p. 1). Correspondents observe that *Bingo* circulated not primarily from newsagents, but from hand to hand, and that in these peregrinations it did not always stay in one piece. Cutting up the magazine is frequently mentioned as a way in which the periodical is being used ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 6, p. 1; "Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 7, p. 1). Another letter writer on a military base notes favorably that the magazine is read both by "lettrés et illetrés" 'literate and illiterate' soldiers, but that the literate ones read it "avec passion et précaution" 'with passion and precaution.' He goes on to personify the magazine, noting that *Bingo* is known to "se promener de main en main" 'stroll from hand to hand' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 16, p. 26).

Bingo's mixed format of words and images had its admirers, but it also elicited strong criticism. More than one reader would derisively call *Bingo* a "journal pour illettrés" 'newspaper for illiterates' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 25, p. 35; "Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 31, p. 2).[8] Another complaint was that *Bingo* was too elementary—it lacked in-depth discussions of working and economic conditions in French West Africa ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 20, p. 3). A further objection was to the insistent focus on city life.[9] As one critic put it, synthesizing both these points, "Nous voudrions voir les journaux africains exprimer les réalités africaines elles-mêmes, s'intéresser à nos parents qui peinent et souffrent dans les champs." 'We wish to see African newspapers express African realities themselves, to take an interest in our relatives who suffer in the fields.' Socé replied: "Nous nous interdisons toute polémique, nous recherchons pour nos lecteurs ce qui les unit, ce qu'ils ont en commun et non ce qui les divise." 'We refrain from all polemics, we search only for what unites our readers, what they have in common and not what divides them' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 22, p. 29). This exchange epitomizes the limitations facing any attempt to salvage *Bingo.* The magazine's critics were not wrong about its blind spots. I want to suggest, though, that some of the contemporaneous dismissals of *Bingo* as a mere newspaper for illiterates may be quite inadvertently hitting on what made the magazine so successful and, in a paradoxical way, quite radical—not in its editorial line, but in its experimental orientation toward the printed page.

The hospitality of *Bingo* to its readers in its early years extends beyond soliciting contributions. *Bingo* also experimented with a greater variety of content than many other Francophone African periodicals of its time, from comics and illustrated novels to quizzes and collage. Taken together in a given issue, these formats invited and accommodated different modes of attention, looking, and reading. In other words, each issue laminated different engagements with print onto a single page. Dovetailing with its diversity of offerings, *Bingo* was also regularly creative in imagining uses for itself beyond literate reading. For example, one issue included a guide for building a frame for the cover of each issue, which was then

to be hung on the wall ("Pour vous monsieur...," p. 27). Being a reader of *Bingo* was regularly imagined as not reducible to a private reading experience.

The most striking feature of *Bingo*'s hospitality is its attempts to figure the medium of print itself. In these early years, *Bingo* is nearly obsessive in its representation of scenes of reading. The magazine often depicts individuals holding the magazine itself, from celebrities such as Josephine Baker and Camara Laye to less famous individuals ("De Passage à Tanger," p. 3; "Galas littéraires," p. 23; "Escale de l'Urania à Casablanca"; "La Page de Bingo," *Bingo*, no. 5, p. 9). (See Figures 2–5, following pages.) In 1960, an advertising campaign for *Bingo* employed images of photogenic young people reading the magazine. The act of reading *Bingo* was positioned as an index of modernity—all modern Africans read *Bingo*, the ads proclaimed ("Que lit ce jeune fonctionnaire?"; "Que lit cette charmante jeune fille?"). (See Figures 6–7.) But other scenes of reading in *Bingo* go beyond promotional shots staged by Socé's editorial team. The regular collages of portraits also very often feature reader-submitted scenes of reading. *Bingo's* readers send in photos of themselves posing with the magazine, sometimes in a performance of reading, other times in other forms of display ("La Page de Bingo," *Bingo*, no. 13, p. 10; "La Page de Bingo," *Bingo*, no. 24, p. 25). (See Figures 8–9.) In picturing themselves with copies of the magazine, readers stage similar gestures to the one performed by the magazine in the cover of the second issue. They are joining the circuit of reading that the magazine opens up, not merely by consuming the magazine but by "contributing to its life." This appears to involve not merely reading the magazine quietly, but above all being seen with and in its pages.

Figure 2: "De Passage à Tanger, Josephine Baker assiste au tirage du numéro anniversaire de *Bingo*." *Bingo*, no. 13, Feb. 1954.

Figure 3: "Galas littéraires." *Bingo*, no. 13, Feb. 1954.

Figure 4: "Escale de l'Urania à Casablanca." *Bingo*, no. 9, Oct. 1953.

Figure 5: *Bingo*, no. 13, Feb. 1954.

Such scenes of reading are only one facet of the magazine's investments in representing its own medium. The early issues of *Bingo* frequently depict not just readers, but also the making, circulation, and many uses of print. These include photos of the production of and distribution of periodicals, from printing presses and newsrooms to newsagents, newspaper boys, and even a *Bingo*-mobile (Figure 10). Some of these images are "in-house" and document the making of either *Bingo* or other periodicals held by the de Breteuil family. But other shots are of the staff of Anglophone African glossy magazines, notably *Drum* ("Notre confrère Paris-Dakar reçoit," p. 11; "*Paris-Dakar* vient de 'tomber,'" p. 16; "La Page de Bingo," *Bingo*, no. 7, p. 5; "L'équipe de notre confrère," p. 2). These shots not only heighten the public's awareness of the making of *Bingo*, they invite readers into the scenes of its creation.

This depiction of a world of print extends beyond periodicals. *Bingo* consistently figures a broader range of print. In images of soldiers at typewriters, officials proudly displaying an open civil registry, or post office workers sorting letters, *Bingo* depicts a material world of paper for its readers ("Les Africains en Indochine," pp. 18–19; "La Page de Bingo," *Bingo*, no. 7; "Nous avons visité pour

Figure 6: "Que lit ce jeune fonctionnaire?" *Bingo*, no. 91, Aug. 1960.

vous," pp. 16–17). This world takes shape both through the submissions sent in by readers themselves and in photos commissioned by Socé's editorial team. Readers of *Bingo* seem to have been eager not only to appear in print, but to appear *with* print. In a sense, the true protagonist of *Bingo*'s early years seems to be the medium of print itself—a world of paper that the audience is invited to join and to remake in its image.

Many depictions of this world of paper appear in a recurring feature on work, in which *Bingo* highlights what it calls 'the beautiful occupations' "les beaux métiers." In keeping with the implicit editorial line, these are nearly invariably urban jobs that are coded as "modern" and described in a relentlessly optimistic light. A surprising portion of these occupations are related to the making or

Figure 7: "Que lit cette charmante jeune fille?" *Bingo*, no. 93, Oct. 1960.

distribution of print. One particularly evocative feature focuses on a print shop. The images are all from the Grande Imprimerie de Dakar, where *Paris-Dakar* was being printed. Workers are depicted next to the presses themselves, shown alongside printing materials such as proofs and stereotypes. The caption paints an evocative picture of their labor:

> Toutes les douleurs, toutes les joies de la vie passent entre les mains de l'imprimeur. Les événements les plus graves comme les nouvelles les plus futiles s'expriment, sous ses doigts, en caractères plus ou moins gros. Infatigable, mais philosophe, il accorde aux unes et aux autres une attention polie. Il met en forme, chaque jour, (du moins dans l'imprimerie d'un quotidien), l'histoire des dernières 24 heures et il sait qu'il recommencera le lendemain…. Et, chaque

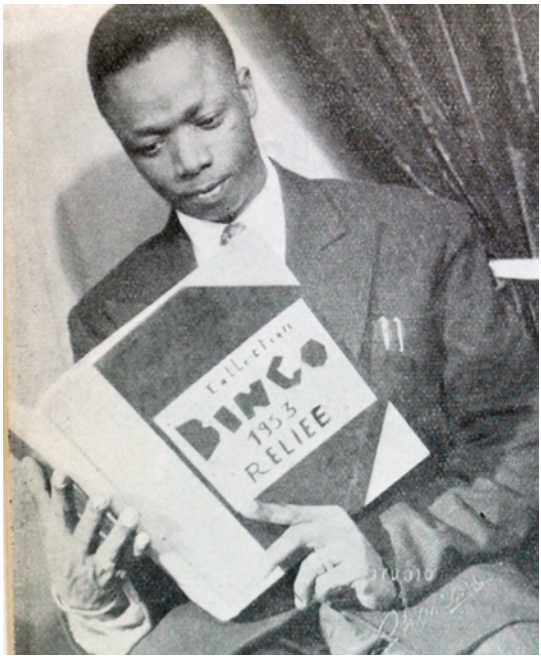

Figure 8: "La Page de Bingo." *Bingo*, no. 13, Feb. 1954.

Figure 9: "La Page de Bingo." *Bingo*, no. 24, Jan. 1955.

Figure 10: "La Page de Bingo." *Bingo*, no. 19, Aug. 1954.

> jour, en regardant cette forme, il lit le monde à l'envers … ("Les beaux métiers: l'imprimeur")[10]
>
> All the pains and joys of life pass between the hands of the printer. The most serious events and the most futile bits of news all find expression under his fingers, in characters of varying size. Indefatigable, but philosophical, he accords each one a polite attention. Every day, he forms the history of the last 24 hours, (at least in the printing of a daily paper), and he knows that he will begin all over again the next day…. And, every day, in looking at this form, he reads the world backwards…

The last phrase—*reading the world backwards*—captures the curious status of *Bingo* as a social space for its audiences. This world of paper and print exists in relation to our world but it is not entirely coextensive with it. What *Bingo* attempted to conjure

in these early years was not an audience so much as another world, a public that was a reflected, typeset version of the actual world, a space in which readers from far flung areas could connect and identify in new and unexpected ways.

Bingo's hospitality to its audiences was subtly transformed over time. While there is no question that the magazine remained interested for many years in cultivating its audiences and in soliciting reader photos and letters (as Bush and Ducournau show in this volume), the reflexive and collaborative nature of this relationship softens in the early 1960s. We can see this in the way the "Page of Bingo" changes. Initially, anyone who sent in a photo could see it reprinted and see themselves described as "readers" of *Bingo*. Despite the magazine's consumerism, there was no obligation to purchase anything to be represented in its pages. But the magazine gradually moved toward only publishing photos of individuals who had either bought or subscribed to *Bingo*. In 1956, the regular feature of reader photographs includes an announcement that explains that due to the volume of photos received it will now be impossible for them to publish every one. Instead, photos will be chosen on a lottery system, and each prospective submission must be accompanied by a coupon cut out from an actual issue of *Bingo* ("Nos lecteurs se retrouvent"). The name of the page of reader submitted photographs would change as well. After having been subtitled "our readers," the "Page of Bingo" shifts to 'Our Readers Meet Up' "Nos lecteurs se retrouvent," and by the late 1950s it has become 'Our Subscribers Meet Up!' "Nos abonnées se retrouvent!" and finally just "Club Bingo." It also shrinks in size—from a peak of two full pages in the early 1950s to a small, crowded corner taking up just a fraction of a page by the 1960s.

The pages of letters and photos from readers also start to become sites where audience-members demand to be put in touch with each other. Subscribers write in and ask for their address to be shared with other readers for the purposes of correspondence. *Bingo* obligingly starts to publish the addresses of readers and suggest that it can put them in touch with each other ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 19, p. 3; "Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo*, no. 42, p. 4). Eventually, this tendency is formalized in 1959 into a new feature called "Correspondants, correspondantes."[11] The apparent gender mix of the photographs also changes. Whereas the typical "Page" of *Bingo* in the 1950s features men and women, elders and children, by the early 1960s the overwhelming majority of the photos appear to be of young men who wish to correspond with young women. Although similar in appearance to the "Page of Bingo" that preceded it, the feature becomes closer to a personal ad in function.

The publication of letters in *Bingo* would also be transformed as part of a broader editorial reorientation. The clearest signal of a new attitude toward reader contributions came in July 1960. In the magazine's momentous 90th issue, whose cover celebrated the independence of Congo, Somalia, and what was then the Mali Federation, a small and somewhat testy announcement ran on the letters page.

> A Nos Lecteurs : De nombreux lecteurs se plaignent de ne pas voir figurer leurs lettres dans notre rubrique. Qu'ils nous permettent de leur redire à nouveau que notre correspondance est tellement volumineuse qu'il nous est matériellement impossible de la citer même en résumé. Nous nous efforçons de mentionner autant qu'il est possible les extraits les plus intéressants mais nous sommes obligés de consacrer l'essentiel de nos pages aux articles, enquêtes, reportages,

> chroniques, et rubriques qui forment le fond de notre revue et assurent sa popularité. ("Les lecteurs écrivent")
>
> To Our Readers: Many readers complain of not seeing their letters in this feature. May we remind them again that our correspondence is so voluminous that it is materially impossible to give even an abbreviated summary. We make every effort to mention as much as possible the most interesting extracts but we are obliged to devote the bulk of our pages to the articles, investigative pieces, reporting, chronicles and other formats that form the basis of our magazine and *Bingo*'s raison d'être.

This marked a departure. Whereas *Bingo*'s raison d'être had previously been presented as its dialogue with a readership that was invited to "take part in its life," the essential nature of the magazine was now being identified with editorial creation rather than curation. Although *Bingo* would continue to solicit and welcome reader contributions for decades, it did not return to the same degree of open-ended engagement with its publics that existed in its early years.

The gradual shift in *Bingo*'s orientation toward its readers appears tied to the departure of Socé, who in the 1960s was moving away from the publication. His successor, Paulin Joachim, seems to have had less interest in Socé's experiments. Decolonization is a further contextual consideration. Many African periodicals adapted their orientations toward their audiences in the 1960s in a climate of rising cultural nationalism. But there are also likely pragmatic reasons. The responsiveness of *Bingo*'s readers to the magazine's hospitality seems to have surprised and even overwhelmed the editors. Just a few years in, readers were already complaining that the magazine was not living up to its commitments, and Socé, like a host who has promised too much, was having to explain the limitations of print to the audiences he had invited in. When the announcement of a shift in editorial policy came in 1960, Socé was still at the helm.

Bingo's gradual reorientation may also have to do with changing attitudes toward the medium of print itself. As an affordance of a printed page, hospitality seems closely alloyed with the novelty of the medium as a social space—as readers, editors, and other users start to coalesce around a shared understanding of what a printed page is and what it can and ought to do, the openness I have studied here may start to give way. The hospitality of print may be most available wherever and whenever print forms such as newspapers and periodicals function as new media. In a print public saturated by hospitality, a page is experienced and practiced haptically more than hermeneutically—primarily as an assemblage of different properties and potential ways of feeling, identifying, and acting and only secondarily as a carrier of discursive meaning. This may be why the most striking properties of *Bingo*'s publics—their photo-sharing and intense stranger-oriented publicness—seem to anticipate so many characteristics we recognize from contemporary social media. Indeed, further consideration of the hospitality of print may suggest that some of the properties we associate with "newer" digital media are in fact not all that new, since they seem to find such clear precedents in earlier print cultures. It may well be the case that hospitality is an affordance not just of print but of many technologies of communication, but one that comes with a certain expiration date. Hospitality may exist wherever semiotic ideology remains relatively fluid. As a medium gets "figured out" by its users and precedents of past

public speech start to become sedimented, open-ended invitations to reimagine the unfolding conditions of a social space may start to give way to more established configurations of audience.

In the 1950s, *Bingo* opened itself up to a variety of uses by inviting audiences into a space for which they too would be responsible. The magazine asked its readers to add images of their faces and their bodies to its pages, and even to cut up these pages if they deemed fit. *Bingo* not only invited readers in, it tried to make an affective relationship to the medium of print part of its representational focus. It invited readers to learn about how a world of print was made and distributed and to share their experiences of relating to it and across it. Above all, it asked its readers to make themselves at home in this world of print.

The case of *Bingo* demonstrates how hospitality can become a central feature of certain publics. Instead of imagining readers who are hailed by or projected outward from the page, print forms can also seek to welcome different modes of engagement and attention along a spectrum that extends from reading to looking and beyond. The hospitality of print names an internally diverse model of print culture in which there is both an awareness and active solicitation of this spectrum: a printed page becomes a space that does not so much address a readership as *host* a variety of audiences. Print forms organized around hospitality tend not to conceive of the printed page as a stretch of discourse that spreads radially outward into the world. Instead, a printed page is imagined and practiced as a world unto itself—as a world that can invite in audiences of various kinds, guests who will in turn dictate some of the conditions of that world. The worlds that are made by such publics are, of course, not divorced from what we might wish to call external or material reality. Rather, like the printer whom *Bingo* celebrates, they are social spaces shaped by "reading the world backwards," through the lens of print itself.

NOTES

1. See the foundational work on colonial-era newspapers and literary culture by Karin Barber and Stephanie Newell.
2. See especially Peterson, Hunter, and Newell.
3. On affordances—"potential uses latent in a material"—see Levine (6–11).
4. Scholars whose works have been grouped under the banner of reception studies have long shown us that reading practices are diverse and that audiences are always the co-creators of meaning: that a dialectical relationship exists between textual production and a readership's horizons of expectation or implied qualities (Jauss, Iser); that certain modes of transmission or inscription partially determine what kinds of responses are possible (Hall); that reading is an inventive rather than passive practice, replete with strategies of subversion and appropriation (De Certeau); and that readers must be understood as the co-creators of plural and mobile meanings (Chartier). As Isabelle Charpentier points out reception studies is not *a* field so much as a diverse set of approaches whose apparent unity is the product of a shared rejection of the privileging of intrinsic, textual meaning (5–8). Although the insights of reception studies are invaluable, my focus in this essay lies elsewhere: not on the creativity of audiences, but rather on the ways in which such creativity is welcomed into the reflexive circulation of discourse. My aim, then, is not to dismiss reception studies, but rather to bring into focus a different and yet complementary set of research questions.
5. See also Barber, "Preliminary Notes on Audiences in Africa."

6. See Socé, "'Un témoignage: l'évolution culturelle de l'AOF." On this debate, see also Gamble.

7. Jaji (123). See also Jaji's fascinating discussion of Aïda Wade, the girl who is pictured holding *Bingo* issue #1 on the cover of issue #2.

8. As another letter writer put it, "Bingo vous offre plus à regarder qu'à lire." '*Bingo* offers you more to look at than to read.'

9. "Ne vous serait-il pas possible de publier quelques photos de nos paysans ? Il me semble que vous négligez la campagne au profit de la ville ?" 'Would it not be possible for you to publish a few photos of our peasants? It seems to me that you are neglecting the countryside in favor of the city?' ("Nos lecteurs et nous," *Bingo,* no. 30 July 1955, 3)

10. Printing would be one of few occupations to be highlighted twice in *Bingo*'s pages. See also "L'Imprimerie, facteur de notre évolution" from March 1955.

11. "La jeunesse d'Afrique a un splendide désir de connaître l'immense continent. Et comment mieux faire pour apprendre à aimer un pays que d'entrer en contact avec ses habitants et ses habitantes ? BINGO reçoit depuis quelques mois un très volumineux courrier émanant de jeunes garçons, de jeunes filles, d'hommes et de femmes désireux d'entrer en contact les uns avec les autres pour correspondre. BINGO consacre donc dans ce numéro une page entière à ces demandes. Vous qui cherchez des correspondants, des correspondantes, écrivez à BINGO ou choisissez déjà parmi les postulants et postulantes ci-dessous ceux avec lesquels vous désirez correspondre" ("Correspondants, Correspondantes," p. 40). 'The youth of Africa has a splendid desire to know the immense continent. And how better to get to know a country than to enter into contact with its inhabitants, both men and women? BINGO has been receiving for several months a large amount of mail coming from young boys, young girls, from men and women who desire to be in contact with each other for purposes of correspondence. BINGO therefore devotes an entire page to these requests in this issue. You who seek pen pals, whether men or women, write to BINGO or pick immediately from the candidates below the ones with whom you wish to correspond.'

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