



Mari Maasilta

African Carmen

Transnational Cinema as an Arena for Cultural Contradictions



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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To all my transnational friends around the world.

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Preface

Background of the project

Every research project has its history and in the case of this project, the roots lead back to the 1980s when, as 25-year-old student, I first became acquainted with Senegal. The main purpose of the journey was to do volunteer work in an agricultural project in the southern part of Senegal, Casamance. As an enthusiastic ‘filmaholic’, I also took advantage of the opportunity to find out what was going on in Senegalese and Gambian cinema. After one month of physical work in the countryside I first headed to Serekunda, a suburb of Banjul, and later to Dakar. In both cities I lived with local youngsters and students of my own age and got to know local cinema, popular music and dance.

In those times, I knew hardly anything about African cinema but as a media student of the 1980s I was more than familiar with theories of media and cultural imperialism, and observed my new media environment through these lenses. This is illustrated in the two quotations below from my travel diary in which I describe my two first encounters with Senegalese and Gambian cinemas. Even considering their naive Eurocentrism, the seeds of this study are already to be seen in them.

“Yesterday we went to see one incredible, stupid American film full of rats and violence. A really sick film! According to the trailers of three other films, screened before the main film, the other supply seems to be the same kind of trash. One can not claim that

these films would develop one's artistic taste." (Banjul, Gambia 31.8.1985.)¹

"Senegalese middle classes seem to lack the kind of national enthusiasm that in Finland helped to create the Finnish identity in the end of the 19th century. How otherwise could it be explained that people want to live and behave like Europeans, even though in theory they declare to be Africans and want to preserve their traditions? – *Xala* by Sembene Ousmane, which I saw on Wednesday, gave a good overall picture about the life style of the Senegalese elite and the contradictions they live with. There seem to be a clash of two different worlds; people don't feel at home in either of them, which makes them behave in a ridiculous and irrational way – at least when seen by the eyes of an outsider." (Dakar, Senegal 20.9.85.)²

The first quotation describes my first experience in a Gambian cinema. An open-air cinema in Serekunda with thousands of broken seats under a wide starry sky screened the worst American B grade film I had ever seen. The tickets were so cheap that even an unemployed Gambian friend could afford to pay them. The repertoire of that cinema – old American B grade action films and

-
- 1 "Eilen olimme katsomassa myös yhden uskomattoman typerän amerikkalaiselokuvan, jossa vilisi väkivaltaa ja rottia. Kuvottava. Ja koko muu tarjonta näytti olevan samaa roskaa, koska näimme myös kolmen tulevan elokuvan mainokset. Eivät juuri ihmisten taiteellista makua kehitä." (Banjul, Gambia 31.8.1985)
 - 2 "Porvaristolta tuntuu täällä puuttuvan täysin se kansallistunne, joka Suomessa vallitsi 1800-luvun lopulla ja joka loi suomalaisen identiteetin. Miten muuten on selitettävissä se, että ihmiset haluavat elää ja käyttäytyä kuin eurooppalaiset, vaikka teoriassa kannattavat afrikkalaisuutta ja oman traditionsa säilyttämistä? – Kaikenkaikkiaan keskiviikkona näkemäni Ousmanen filmi *Xala* antoi tiivistetyn kuvan yläluokan elämäntavasta ja siihen liittyvistä ristiriidoista. Kahden maailman yhteentörmäys, jossa ihmiset eivät enää ole kotonaan, vaan käyttäytyvät – ainakin ulkopuolisen silmin – täysin naurettavasti ja irrationaalisti." (Dakar, Senegal 20.9.85)

Asian martial arts films – was typical of African popular cinema in the 1970s and 80s. The third popular genre, especially among women and children, already in those times, was the Indian melodrama.

Some weeks later, I had an opportunity to see a *real* African film, *Xala* (Senegal, 1974), made by the Senegalese director Sembene Ousmane. It was a matinee screening with only a handful of people in the centre of Dakar. The ticket sellers were so enthusiastic about giving a young European visitor an opportunity to see this film that they offered me free entrance and an overview of the film. The overview proved useful, since I have to admit I understood very little about the events of the film even if the copy happened to be the French version. Only several years later did I realise that the copy I had seen was the mutilated version of *Xala* with ten cuts due to the demands of the Senegalese Board of Censors. The cuts had spoiled the narration so badly that during the first release of the film in Senegal the director had distributed fliers describing the censored scenes so that people could get an idea of what was going on. The censors did not, however, succeed completely in their work, since even I managed to get the gist of the film: criticism of the new bourgeoisie in power in postcolonial Senegal.

Seeing *Xala* was a memorable experience and aroused my interest to seek more opportunities to see African films. This enthusiasm caused me to participate in several African film festivals in Europe and North America. As a freelance cultural journalist I also had an opportunity to interview and talk with several African filmmakers. I soon found that there is in Europe and in North America a real flourishing African cinematic sub-culture, even though mainstream cinemas rarely screen African

films. Visiting these festivals made me consider cinema as a kind of meeting place of cultures: spectators are like tourists travelling with films from one culture to another, but how do they interpret what they see? How do the cultural symbols and conventions of films cross national and cultural borders? This question struck me in 1987 when queuing in Strasbourg with a French friend to see a Malian film, *Yeleen* (Mali, 1987), and chatting with some other French people waiting to get their tickets for another marginal film, *Ofelas* (Norway, 1987), by a Sami director, Nils Gaud. The same questions preoccupied me when watching Finnish films with foreign friends. How on earth could they enjoy a film by Aki Kaurismäki if they had not the slightest idea what kinds of cultural connotations are carried by the yellow plastic bag of the *Valintatalo* cut-price store or a ready-made minced liver dish, which a solitary bachelor (Matti Pellonpää) was heating up for his dinner in *Shadows in Paradise* (Finland, 1986)? It seemed that through cinema we were all looking for some kind of exoticism we imagined to exist in other cultures. At the same time, the viewing experience was often frustrating since the films contained textual or aesthetic elements we could not understand.

It took, however, 15 years to develop these vague ideas into a research project. The long ‘preparatory period’ gave me time to collect more in-depth knowledge about Senegalese society and culture both in theory and practise. I became a regular visitor to the African film library of the Association for the Diffusion of French Thought³ and the information centre of Third World Films⁴ in Paris and of several African and Third World Film Festivals in Europe and Canada.

3 Cinémathèque Afrique (www.adpf.fr)

4 Médiathèque des trois mondes (www.cine3mondes.fr)

The first step towards the academic research project on Senegalese cinema was my second journey to Senegal in 1994. This time, the purpose of the two-month visit was to get acquainted with the local film 'industry', the infrastructures of production, exhibition and distribution of Senegalese cinema. It turned out that the best places to find information about West African and Senegalese cinema were not national institutions but two French institutions, the French Cultural Centre in Dakar and the Catholic Daniel Brottier Centre in Saint-Louis. The French Cultural Centre owns a remarkable collection of African films, which are unfortunately in very bad condition, and organises film screenings and conferences. For people working in film production, the Cultural Centre was also at that time an important meeting place to make contacts and to meet people. The Daniel Brottier Centre had a collection of African films on video and a library with film journals and articles. Neither of these centres, however, focuses on Senegalese cinema only and their collections are very haphazard.

During the journey, I interviewed filmmakers and spectators, collected material in archives and tried to see as many African films as possible. The results of the journey, however, were meagre for reasons related to the economic situation of the country. At the beginning of the 1990s, Senegalese society was experiencing a severe economic depression: the Senegalese GDP decreased by 2.1 percent in 1993 and the nation seemed to have more important issues to consider than the future of its filmmakers. In 1994 Senegal undertook an ambitious economic reform programme with the support of the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and the World Bank. This reform began with a 50 percent devaluation of the Senegalese currency, the

West African franc CFA, in January 1994. Even if the end result of the reform programme was positive and Senegal succeeded in increasing its GDP, the social ramifications of the devaluation were drastic for the population as most essential goods are imported. The increase in unemployment caused a mass exodus abroad of cultural intellectuals, filmmakers, and others. During my stay in Dakar, I regularly found myself sitting with frustrated filmmakers at the tables of the Cultural Centre and listening to them complain about their living conditions. The consequences of the devaluation were also disastrous for Senegalese film production and consumption, as will be discussed in this work.

In the second half of the 1990s, I had an opportunity to teach African cinema at the University of Tampere and several other institutions. Discussions with Finnish and foreign students taught me a lot about how people watch the films of 'others'. The interest and enthusiasm of students also encouraged me to do this work which, in the Finnish academic setting, has no place in the mainstream of media studies.

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Working on the research project on Senegalese media in Finland was sometimes quite lonely, but fortunately there were open-minded professors and experienced colleagues who understood and supported my offbeat research interests. This work would not have been possible without help from my supervisors Kaarle Nordenstreng and Ullamaija Kivikuru who for years have encouraged my interest in African media – the interest in Senegalese cinema being, however, only due to my own

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The work on a transnational research project has naturally profited from transnational relationships with many networks, colleagues and friends. To start with Senegal, I owe my thanks to Joseph Ramaka, Ibrahim Haidar and the Senegalese cultural journalists who accepted to be interviewed for my project. In Senegal, I also got help from Mansour Kebe, the archivists of the Senegalese National Archive and the Société Sénégalaise de Presse et de Publications, my research assistant Fatou Kane and many others who cannot be named here.

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My first-hand experience of the life in a transnational family comes from living with my ex-husband Pascal and our daughters Salia and Charlotte. They were also good company during the fieldwork in Senegal. I am grateful for having two wonderful daughters, Salia and Charlotte, who have given me a reason to keep on working. Our Lappish dog, Karmen, deserves mention for keeping me physically active. Many important ideas have been born on the paths around Iidesjärvi while walking Karmen. Last but not least, I owe my thanks to several dancing clubs and

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Tampere 15.5.2007

Mari Maasilta

1

Introduction

Studies on African cinema have mostly concentrated on the role of cinema in nation-building and its relation to economic and political power characterised by colonialism, imperialism and nationalism (e.g. Diawara 1992; Ukadike 1994; Gugler 2003). My interest in this work is to challenge the dominant emphasis on national cinema and focus on that category of cinema which is less attached to a certain nation. This new cinema is created by cosmopolitan and diasporic directors travelling between an old home country and a new host country. Their cinema is located both in and out of Africa and can be understood as *national*, *foreign* or *diasporic* according to the context of its reception. Here this cinema is called *African transnational diasporic cinema* and defined as cinema made and received in a postcolonial,⁵ global situation in which directors, funding bodies, film crews, films and spectators travel between and beyond geographic, national and cultural borders and change their identity according to the actual location. The main interest of my study is in francophone West African transnational cinema, which is scrutinised through a case study from Senegalese cinema.

5 In addition to the period after independence of formerly colonised areas, postcolonial refers here to the constructed nature of nationalism, and national borders, deterritorialisation and the obsolescence of anticolonialist discourse (Shohat and Stam 1994, 38)

The films of diasporic directors are engaged in a dialogue with both the home and host societies and their respective national cinemas. They have to reflect the needs and aspirations of at least three different interpretative communities: *national audiences at home*, *transnational diasporic audiences* living in the new host country in a similar situation as the director, and the *national audiences of the host country*.

When transnational films are screened in the director's home country or seen by compatriot diasporic audiences they are considered to belong to the body of national cinema of that particular country and are received and criticized as such. Here the origin of the filmmaker is a more important source of identification than his or her actual place of residence, the production context of the film or the composition of the crew. Abroad the status of these films varies from diasporic to foreign films. Very often the label that the film receives in the new host country depends on the settings of the film in question. Films depicting the filmmaker's home country are considered to be foreign films while films depicting the new host country are classified as diasporic films. Technically, they can also be included into the national cinema of the new host country if they fulfil the criteria of the national cinema bodies.

Films, like other media, participate in articulating not only *individual identities* but also *cultural* and *national identities* and shaping real or imaginary cultural borders – who belong to 'us' and who belongs to 'them' (Anderson 1991). As the Colombian scholar Jesús Martín-Barbero (1993) has stated, cinema can put at the centre of the stage the gestures and patterns of life of national reality. It has the capacity to give national identity a face and a voice. The popular masses do not go to see films only to

be entertained but also to see their daily life and their codes and customs represented on the screen (Martín-Barbero 1993, 195).

The role of cinema in this kind of identity building was an established idea in francophone Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. New emerging cinemas were linked with the nation-building and the Afrocentrist ideas of the pan-African identity. The new African cinema⁶ was given an important task: to re-memorise African pre-colonial history and to describe and recreate African cultures ignored by Euro-American cinema. Local filmmakers were supposed to make films for African audiences in African languages and to address African subjects created by African narrators. These efforts proved, however, economically short-lived since distribution companies functioning on a commercial basis had no interest in fostering the development of national film production or taking local productions for distribution. As a consequence, filmmakers could not recoup the costs of the films with the limited distribution they were able to organise by themselves, and they had to start searching for new markets for their productions beyond the African continent. (Diawara 1992, 39–45.) Expanding globalisation with increasing cultural exchange and the mobility of people, finance and technologies since the 1980s and 1990s have offered new opportunities and new audiences for African filmmakers; it also challenged the idea of one common African cultural identity.

According to present sociological understanding (Hall 1990, 222–226; Mercer 1990, 50; Appiah 1992, 177–178) cultural and national identities are born in the course of history but they are

6 In the 1960s and 1970s African cinema could be spoken in the singular as a united cinema with certain shared ideas, but today one should rather speak about different African *cinemas* since the continent of Africa is very diverse and contains several different film traditions.

never lasting, permanent, single or inherent. Rather, they are continuous processes growing out of changing situations and as a response to economic and political forces. They are culturally and politically constructed through political antagonisms and cultural struggles. Communal identities become an issue especially when they are in a crisis, when “something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty” (Mercer 1990, 43). I understand cultural globalisation and the increasing displacement of African people in the beginning of the 2000s as a critical situation, which has given rise to a ‘crisis of identity’ and activated identity speech also with regard to African cinema. In this new situation it is worth asking what the role of African transnational diasporic cinema is in constructing new global and transnational identities and what problems it faces in this new situation.

Research task

In this work I study *transnational diasporic cinema in the context of deterritorialised West African francophone directors*. The main concern of this analysis is *the discrepancy between differing and even contradictory expectations of national and international audiences*. On the one hand, the films of West African filmmakers are expected to be authentic representations of their culture of origin while, on the other hand, they should meet the expectations of audiences of different cultural backgrounds in order to succeed in international film markets. This problem is created by the spectatorial environment of displacement “that produces different demands and expectations, which are torqued not only

by market forces but also by nationalist politics and by politics of ethnic representation” (Naficy 2001, 6).

In the empirical part, I study *how African transnational diasporic cinema speaks to different discursive audiences on the basis of contextual analysis of one transnational film and its mediated reception in the home country and abroad*. The film chosen for the case study is *Karmen Gei* (Senegal/France/Canada) made by a Senegalese director, Joseph Gaï Ramaka in 2001.

Transnational cinema is defined in my study according to the following properties:

1. *Deterritorialised location of the filmmaker*. Transnational films are made by deterritorialised filmmakers living away from their home country or moving between their country of origin and their new host country for various reasons. Transnational filmmakers are not bound to a certain geographical area or particular place but rather represent new global and transnational moving subjects who live dual lives, speak two or more languages, have homes in two countries, and make a living through continuous regular contact across national borders (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999, 217). They may also be resident abroad against their own will for political, social and other reasons or they may belong to those *diasporic* (Cohen 1997), *travelling* (Clifford 1992) or *unhomely* (Bhabha 1994) subjects moving flexibly from one place to another according to the opportunities these places afford them. To live away from the original home country does not, however, mean that the displaced person is homeless or has severed all ties with his/her original home place. On the contrary, these subjects may identify simultaneously with several communities and contribute both to the development of their

original community and to their diasporic community (Olwig 1997). Films by transnational filmmakers may focus on their original home countries, their new host countries or on any other countries.

2. *Interstitial production, distribution and exhibition context of the film.* The interstitial production context means that transnational filmmakers have to resort to several different production modes, both dominant and alternative, according to the facilities available in the given situation. The funding sources of transnational films vary and films are often co-produced by companies originating from different nations. Films may be distributed by mainstream distribution organisations but they are also screened at festivals and by non-commercial academic and community institutions. According to Naficy (2001, 46), to be interstitial means that one has to “operate both within and astride the cracks of the system, benefiting from its contradictions, anomalies, and heterogeneity.”
3. *Hybrid blends of different generic, thematic and aesthetic conventions.* Transnational films are often bilingual or multilingual and combine generic and aesthetic characteristics from several film traditions, creating a new hybrid collage. They strive for universal appeal in order to please audiences in different cultural contexts.

According to the tradition of humanist film studies, every film can be understood as a field of identity negotiation. Every film has an implied or ideal spectator, to whom it best speaks and who will best respond and understand the meanings proposed by the text. These identity positions might help a spectator to identify with or feel alienated from the film. For instance, the choice of

subject, different aspects of style, the narrative point of view or interplay of picture and sound tracks may strengthen the bond between spectator and film while others may weaken it. (Hartley and Montgomery 1985, 234; Chatman 1978, 150; Larsen 2002, 129.)

In this study I explore how *Karmen* is constructed to address and appeal simultaneously to different discursive audiences. How is the hybridity constructed in the film's generic templates, in the languages, subtitles and the music used, and which aesthetic and narrative conventions are chosen? With the help of genre analysis I explore which spectator positions are privileged and with which stylistic and narrative aspects the film addresses different audiences.

Regarding the reception of a given film, I am not interested in finding out how individual spectators react to the film, but rather *how the film is negotiated in the public sphere⁷ and how it was used to negotiate the cultural and national identities both at home and abroad*. These questions are divided into the following sub-questions: How is the film criticised in domestic film reviews? How do domestic reviews differ from those published abroad? How is the film covered in newspapers and magazines in the home country of the deterritorialised filmmaker and how is it discussed in Internet forums?

Karmen Gei (later abbreviated to *Karmen*) is the first African adaptation of *Carmen*, the famous opera by Georges Bizet, composed in 1875. Original short story *Carmen* was written by

7 According to Habermas (1991) 'public sphere' refers to all the places and forums where the important issues of a political community are discussed and debated and where information essential to public participation in community life is presented. In this study the public sphere is limited to information, discussions and debates communicated through media.

the French author Prosper Mérimée in 1845. The story has been adopted innumerable times for stage and film. More than 50 film adaptations of *Carmen* had already been made when Ramaka decided to produce his version. The director originally comes from Senegal but has been living in France for 19 years. The film is a French-Senegalese-Canadian co-production balancing between industrial and artisanal production modes.

Karmen offers a rich set of data for study due to its mixed reception in Senegal and abroad. The film premiered in Senegal in July 2001 but six weeks later was accused of blasphemy and withdrawn from distribution. Senegal is a Muslim dominated country with about 93 per cent of Senegalese people belonging to the mystic path of Islam, Sufism, whose main Senegalese orders are *Tijaniya*, *Mouridism*, *Qadriya* and *Layène*. The reason for the accusations of blasphemy was that, in one scene a lesbian character in the film was buried accompanied by a song by the founder of *Mouridism*, Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. After a demonstration by a large number of Mourids the film was withdrawn from the screen. Domestic films have often fallen foul of Senegalese film censorship since the 1970s but *Karmen* was the first film to be banned due to the demands of a religious pressure group. This made the film front-page news and boosted public debate about respect for religion and freedom of expression. Abroad, the film was distributed first in France and later in Canada and the United States.

The research data consists of the film and its promotional material, reviews of *Karmen* from Senegal, Canada, France and the USA, news and opinion stories collected from the Senegalese press, and the discussions from two Senegalese Internet forums.

Autonomy of Senegalese cultural production

The French sociologist and cultural anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) analyses the relationship between politics and art/popular culture in a wider social context in his *field theory*. According to Bourdieu, society is structured by way of a hierarchically organised series of fields, such as fields of politics, economics, religion, cultural production, etc. Each field is defined as a structured space with its own agents, laws of functioning and relations of force. Fields are relatively autonomous from each other and also from the dominant field of power, but the degree of autonomy varies from one field to another. Fields can be differentiated according to the kinds of specific capital they can offer, be it material or symbolic. Each field is also structured around the opposition, which reflects the overall class division in the society in question. The opposition is structured between the “heteronomous” and the “autonomous” pole. The heteronomous pole represents economic and political capital, which are external forces on the field, and the autonomous pole represents the specific capital unique to that field. No field is entirely autonomous, but the level of autonomy of particular fields varies in different societies and at different times. There is total domination when one field dominates all the others and there is only one acceptable “definition of human accomplishment” for the entire society. The autonomy of the field should be valued, because it provides the pre-conditions for the full creative process proper to each field and, ultimately, resistance to the “symbolic violence” exerted by the dominant system of hierarchisation. (Johnson 1993, 6; Benson 1998, 464–465.)

Following from the current historical situation in which economic capital dominates cultural capital, the field of cultural production is dominated by economic and political fields (Benson 1998, 465). In Senegal the field of cultural production, in addition to economic and political fields, is dominated by religious power. The political system of the country is based on secularism but the majority of its 11 million inhabitants, about 94 per cent, are Muslims. According to the Constitution, religious parties are not allowed in the Senegalese National Assembly, and education and religion are separated from each other. In practice, religion and the religious elite, however, are important participants in political decision-making (Renders 2002, 79). The religious elite can interfere in all fields of Senegalese society, in politics as well as in the everyday lives of citizens or in cultural policy. Prominent members of Muslim organisations have strong political or personal links with the 'secular state' and can be considered 'political actors'. They use hidden power through third persons, their adherents, politicians or public authorities following their advice in their public roles. It is not uncommon for decision makers to ask religious leaders for advice before making important decisions.

According to the Senegalese media scholar Ndiaga Loum (2003, 18), the autonomy of the whole Senegalese media field is questioned by the dominance of the power of Muslim leaders. If the field of cinema were autonomous in the sense that Bourdieu defines autonomy, filmmakers would be able to make films according to their own rules and would be judged by their peers according to standards based purely on their own criteria. This is not necessarily the situation, due to interfering fields of power. Agents of the field of cinema, filmmakers, film critics, cinema

owners and others meet agents of other fields and strive to define and negotiate their autonomy from these fields. In the negotiation about transnational Senegalese cinema, and the case of *Karmen*, there is a question about the legitimisation of a new cinematic paradigm and the redefinition of the norms of national cinema in relation to other cinemas. The arrival of a new film in the Senegalese field of cultural production creates a situation that activates the agents in the field of cinema and also in the other fields, causing them to evaluate the new phenomenon. The new situation put the earlier rules of good and evil, morality and acceptability to the test and might even bring about a restructuring or challenging the whole field.

The concept of field is useful since it enables the analysis of both the actual state of affairs and the way change occurs. When analysing the Senegalese field of cinema it is possible to study not only the division between heteronomous and autonomous forces of the field but also how the new entrants to the field influence the fields in question. An influx of new agents into the field of cultural production can serve both as a force for transformation and for conservation. New agents can establish themselves by showing how they differ from those already in the field, but increased competition due to new entrants might also make cultural production more cautious and conformist, contributing to simple reproduction of the field. (Benson 1998, 467–468.)

In any given field, agents engage in competition for the control of interests or resources specific to the field in question. These interests and resources may be material or symbolic. In the cultural field, competition often concerns the authority inherent in recognition and prestige, especially when the production is not aimed at a large-scale market (Bourdieu 1979, 226–228; Johnson

1993, 6–7). In Senegal, the field of cinema can offer very little economic capital, but symbolic capital may be just as desirable and worth pursuing. What a filmmaker can expect to gain is public recognition and social acceptance from those in power. The recognition and positions tend to change over time. For example, an established Senegalese filmmaker, Sembene Ousmane, who is now considered the Father of African cinema, was in the 1960s and 1970s regularly in trouble with the local political authorities and was not considered eligible to represent his country abroad.

The Senegalese field of cinema is dependent not only on the national field of power but also on the international field of cultural production. This is explained through a short history of Senegalese independence and lack of resources as well as the globalisation of film industry. Until independence in 1962, Senegalese cultural production was a part of French cinema. Nowadays the Senegalese field of cinema is still closely intertwined with the international, and especially the French field of cinema nourishing Senegalese cinema with, for example, professional training, technical know-how, and financial assistance. A certain amount of Senegalese films are, in fact, technically labelled as French in order to obtain aid from the French National Film Centre (Centre National Cinématographique, CNC). For Senegalese cinema, the lack of recognition from the international field put the whole existence of this cinema in jeopardy, whereas, for instance, French cinematic field need not legitimise itself abroad since it has its established home audiences and autonomous institutions for honouring, regulating, or criticising itself. For this reason, it is necessary to understand and analyse the interference of Senegalese and international fields of cultural production and to analyse the role of international field of journalism in negotiations about Senegalese diasporic cinema.

The concept of field also helps to enlarge the analysis of mediated reception of transnational cinema beyond the limits of journalistic texts and to analyse the socio-cultural context of journalism. The sub-field of journalism is situated very similarly to that of the field of cinema, both belonging to the same field of cultural production. The agents of the fields of journalism and cinema are in a reciprocal relationship; each needs the other. Filmmakers, actors, and other film professionals need journalists to become known and recognised. Likewise, for journalists, personal relationships with film professionals are often the only way to get news and information. Personal contacts with the main sources of cultural production may raise their status as cultural professionals. Agents from the field of power, the authorities and politicians regulating cinema and creating the conditions for film production, are also used as news sources and cited when film policy is discussed in the media. The field of journalism thus interferes with and mediates all the other fields, but it also submits to the same field of power as other fields of cultural production.

In Europe, the influence and pervasiveness of journalism have increased in throughout society but journalism has, at the same time, become less autonomous from the economic field. In Senegal, meanwhile, the emergence of private media has increased the autonomy of media from political power but it has not alleviated the dependence of journalists upon religious power (Benson 1998, 463; Loum 2003, 18). In both Europe and Senegal, however, the news media serve as agents of dominant power and undermine the autonomy of other fields.

Methodology

Case study approach

Since the empirical part concentrates on one specific film, my approach can be considered as *a case study*. Robert Yin (1994, 10) defines case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” The case study approach is often chosen when contextual conditions are considered highly pertinent to the object of study and there is a need to cover them profoundly. The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situations in which there are many more variables of interest than data points. As a result, one relies on multiple sources of evidence, benefiting from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin 1994, 10.)

Different researchers have different reasons for studying cases. Robert Stake (1998) proposes a typology of three types according to the purpose of study. In an *intrinsic case study*, study is undertaken in order to understand a particular case. The case is not studied because of its representativeness or its illustration of a particular trait or problem, but because the case itself is of interest. By contrast, in an *instrumental case study*, a case is examined to afford insight into an issue or refinement of theory. The case plays only a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The choice of case is made because it is expected to advance our understanding of that other interest. If there is still less interest in one particular case, researchers may concentrate on studying a number of cases

jointly in order to inquire into a given phenomenon. This case is called a *collective case study*. In most cases the interests are intertwined and researchers and their reports seldom fit into only one category. (Stake 1998, 88–89.) According to this typology, my study can be classified somewhere between an intrinsic and an instrumental case study. The purpose of studying *Karmen* is to understand the reception of one specific film, but the case also provides more general knowledge about the complexities of relations between African transnational cinema and its local and global audiences.

The purpose of the study defines what kind of case is chosen for study. A specific, unique case is chosen to test a theoretical or conceptual model or to study typical traits of a new phenomenon. A typical case is chosen to eventually apply the results to other similar cases. (Stake 1998, 88; Syrjälä and Numminen 1988, 19.) Sometimes a researcher may have occasion to study a revelatory case, which allows her to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation (Yin 1994, 38–40). For Stake the opportunity to learn is the most important criterion when choosing a case to study. In this case, the potential for learning is a superior criterion to representativeness (Stake 1998, 101).

Karmen was chosen as a case to be studied because it is both typical and exceptional. It is a typical transnational African cultural product with its stylistic and textual hybridity, interstitial production context and displacement of its author. What makes it exceptional is the public attention the film received in Senegal. The censoring of *Karmen* caused a lively public debate in Senegal, which offers a good opportunity to study identity negotiations of transnational cinema in the Senegalese public sphere and to

compare the reception of this cinema at home to that abroad. Had I chosen a typical case there would have been much less material to be studied since the release of a new Senegalese film usually passes in the country without specific notice. The case of *Karmen* offers rich and varied data emanating from natural circumstances without interference from the researcher.

The case study approach is preferred in examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. It relies on many of the same techniques as history, but adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historical research: direct observation and systematic interviewing. The strength of the case study approach is its ability to deal with the full range of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews and observations. (Yin 1994, 7–8.) As I arrived in Senegal five months after the film had been withdrawn from distribution, the opportunities for such extensive evidence were no longer available. Had I been in Senegal during the time *Karmen* was screened, I could have accomplished more ethnographic work by observing public screenings, press conferences and the demonstration, and by interviewing audiences and people involved in the protest.

Contextual approach

The second methodological choice made in this study is that the focus is not only on the analysis of the text (the film) or in its reception, but on the whole process, production included. Senegalese transnational diasporic cinema is the product of several determinants: the intentions of an individual author, production conditions, local and global reception and several

institutions related to them. None of these alone is determinant; the cinema is rather developed dialectically in relation to society and its institutions (Williams 1977/1988, 105–106; Laine 1999). The deterritorialised situation of cinema must also be kept in mind in the entire analysis process. Researching cinema from different angles imposes new challenges on methodology: How is it possible in the analysis to simultaneously consider production and reception, film texts and the institutions mediating cinema that are in continuous movement beyond national and cultural borders?

Kimmo Laine (1999) has proposed three premises for an analysis focusing on production, text and reception which I have found useful for my study. The first premise is that production and consumption should not be separated from each other but they should be understood to exist in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship. The mode of production does not necessarily determine, in a causal or in any other simple way, the meaning or reception of the texts. On the other hand, the spectator is neither fully independent in his or her choices of production or marketing. Other institutions, such as censorship, film criticism, distribution and exhibition practices and star systems, affect meaning making processes. Cinema is thus seen as the crossroads of several determinants, which are even contradictory to each other. (Laine 1999, 31–32.)

The second premise is that the relationship between text and context should be redefined in a more complex way. Citing Tom Gunning, Laine proposes that an analysis should not seek to discover the ‘true’ meaning of the film but rather the variety of conflicting discourses and readings crossing each other at every historical moment. The dynamic of the text derives directly from

this complex relationship between text and context. From this perspective the issue of determination has to be re-evaluated: if text and context belong to the same field of discourses, can the film be causally determined by the mode of production? (Gunning 1990, 11–14; Laine 1999, 32–33.)

The third premise states that the traditional sender – message – receiver relationship has to be reformulated in such a way that it considers both the polyphony of the message and the active participation of the receiver in the meaning making process. The film is thus seen as a network of multiple symbols and signs, which can be wholly controlled neither by the producer nor by the receiver. (Laine 1999, 32–33.)

An analysis made according to these premises must consider the whole process. The analysis does not end at the film text, since the meanings are found not only in the text but are also articulated, actualised and rearticulated in the cycle of production, text and reception. In my study, I attempt to solve the problem by combining multiple discourse analytical approaches from culturally oriented film and media studies to the mediated reception of the film. The film analysis is not tied to one interpretation only, but proposes several readings depending on the cultural context of the audiences.

Mediated reception and question about audiences

Unlike post-structuralist film analysts focusing on textually constructed spectator, cultural studies audience research from the 1980s onwards has been interested in real audiences and what they think and feel about the films they watch. In these

studies, the audience is seen to take an active role in meaning making, and media content is understood as polysemic and open to various interpretations. Cultural studies approaches have argued that cultural meaning does not reside exclusively within the text but is rather constructed by the audience interacting with the message. The interaction between text and reader has been in the foreground in order to look at the meanings produced in specific conditions. These studies have employed a variety of methods, such as interviews, analyses of letters and media diaries, questionnaires and participant observation, to investigate the processes of cultural consumption. Besides an interest in how people negotiate the meanings of popular culture, cultural studies has emphasised the significance of the context of consumption, that is, the social lives and domestic habits of the audiences under scrutiny. Thus, their readings of particular texts are shaped and influenced by social identities and cultural differences such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality and class (see, e.g. Radway 1984; Bobo 1988; Morley 1992; Stacey 1994).

While the cultural studies tradition has a long-standing concern with audiences and questions of cultural consumption, film studies has continued to concentrate on textual analysis and has mostly ignored the empirical spectator. Much of the ethnographic work is within the study of television and video (see however Stacey 1994 and Meers 2001). This is especially true with the study of African cinema. The reasons for the reluctance on the part of African film theorists to venture into areas of audience and reception studies are likely, at least in part, economic and institutional. The ease of conducting textual analysis certainly compares favourably with the uncertainties and practical problems of audience research: textual analysis is more

straightforward, less time-consuming and can be conducted at home by an individual working alone. The film text is a discrete, more easily accessible object of study, in contrast to audiences who have to be selected and contacted, and whose tastes, opinions and feelings have to be collected before any analysis can even begin. In the case of African cinema, merely gaining access to the films to be analysed is not always an easy task; thus it is no wonder that researching audiences has remained rare and occasional efforts.

Another reason for the lack of empirical audience studies on African films is certainly that African audiences seeing African films hardly exist. Throughout its existence African cinema has been struggling for the right to be exhibited and distributed on African screens and has thus had difficulties in finding spectators. Even today the situation is not much better, and indeed more to the contrary, as will be discussed in the third chapter. While audience and reception studies are mostly concerned with the reception of popular cultural products, African cinema has had little to offer scholars interested in empirical audience studies. An exceptional example of studies focusing on West African film audiences are the works of late Pierre Haffner (1978; 1983), but even those concentrate on the reception of popular karate and Hindu films. Haffner conducted extensive ethnographic studies among several young audiences in Bamako, Mali and in Dakar, Senegal in the 1970s. In the heyday of the cultural imperialism paradigm, Haffner's studies highlighted active meaning making processes and the capacity of local audiences to adapt foreign films for their own purposes. He observed how the enthusiasts of Bollywood cinema took advantage of films they had seen and used these experiences for purposes of civil education by playing 'Indian theatre' to disseminate information about family

planning, unemployment and other topical issues. (Haffner 1978; Haffner 1983, 150–151.)

The complexity of empirical audience research in this study is solved by combining the textual film analysis with the analysis of the *mediated reception* of Senegalese transnational cinema both at home and abroad. By *mediation* I refer to Martín-Barbero's concept, "the articulations between communication practises and social movements and the articulation of different tempos of development with the plurality of cultural matrices" (Martín-Barbero 1993, 187). The analysis of mediations entails looking at how culture is negotiated in popular cultural practices and how it becomes an object of transaction in a variety of contexts. From the standpoint of consumption, the syncretic nature of popular culture and the way it contributes both to the preservation of different cultural identities and their adaptation to the demands of the present have to be recognised. Mediated reactions and reception are not uniform and homogenous but rather form a rich field of ambiguities and contradictions between ethnic groups, classes, regions, religions and cultures. They also have the capacity to resist and transform dominant cultures in ways unheard of in simple theories of domination. (Martín-Barbero 1993; Schlesinger 1993, xiii–xiii.)

The strength of the mediated reception approach is that it allows the study of meaning construction in a larger social context and in relation to other contemporary discussions than would be possible through individual interviews. Audiences do not judge films only according to their own life histories and viewing experiences but in social interaction with the opinions of other viewers, media publicity and film criticism. Unlike in traditional audience studies, cinema is not seen as a separate field of culture but as lively interacting with other fields of society.

The study of mediated reception here means that the reception of *Karmen* is not analysed through the 'real' reception by interviewing film spectators but through media texts: news and opinion stories from newspapers and magazines, film reviews and Internet forum messages. In other words, the purpose of the study is to analyse how journalists, public intellectuals and others participated in constructing "the case of *Karmen*" in the media and the consequences of these representations, rather than to study how real spectators received and discussed the film. It has to be noted that most contributors to Internet discussion forums had not seen the film, but they can still be considered as 'possible audiences' as they might have liked to see the film if it had been in distribution or if it had been appropriate for their taste.

The fact that I focus my study on media discourses is not to downplay the importance of other public discourses in other forums. Media discourses do not dominate over other public discourses; each system interacts with the other. Instead of speaking about a single public discourse, it would thus be more useful to think of a set of discourses that interact in complex ways (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 2). Especially when studying a community-oriented society like Senegal, where technical means of communication are often deficient, one has to keep in mind that many individuals construct meanings in face-to-face discussions with other individuals without any direct interference from print or audiovisual media. Scholars have, for instance, accentuated the role of rumour in the meaning making processes of illiterate societies such as Senegal (see, e.g. Loum 2003, 133).

Senegalese people were most probably involved in several face-to-face discussions with relatives, friends and other people about the case of *Karmen*, but to capture the meanings created in

these meetings would have necessitated an extensive ethnographic study. Besides within informal everyday communication, the case was discussed at least in the National Assembly and in other governmental institutions by Senegalese political officials directly involved in decision-making regarding the issue, and at Friday prayers and other Muslim ceremonies, in which religious leaders attempted to influence their adherents and the decision-makers. An exploration of the interaction between media discourses and other public discourses would have required an analysis of all of these systems.

The analysis of media debates and their relationship to power demands that the researcher knows the society under scrutiny. In this study, it has to be noted that I am not a member of the society I am studying and my knowledge of Senegal is largely based on texts and other linguistic material. This may be a strength but also a weakness of the present study. On the one hand, as an outside researcher, I am free from the power relationships of which a local researcher would be part. On the other hand, my understanding of reality is influenced by the same data that is also the object of study. In other words, when constructing a general image of the course of events I have been obliged to rely on the image given by the media, other people and literary documents, not on my own first-hand experiences of the event. The fact that I as a researcher do not share the same culture with my object of study comes out in all phases of the study and adds to the possibilities of erroneous interpretations. In fact, a transnational researcher is in the same situation as a transnational filmmaker or a member of transnational audiences, who has to always consider all possible cultural interpretations and misunderstandings and be aware of them.

Global and diasporic media studies

Global media studies is an interdisciplinary branch of research seeking to enlarge the scope of research interests from the dominance of U.S. and Western productions to other consequences of globalisation, and to move beyond the frameworks of the individual nation-state and the binary division between the so-called First and Third Worlds. These studies have emerged from the cultural imperialism tradition of international media studies focusing on imbalances between the Western modernised world and the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s. The main claim of the cultural imperialism paradigm is that cultural products spread from the First modernised World (centre) to the Third World (peripheries) in largely one-way flows and, in so doing, destroy Third World cultures.⁸ The main target of criticism has been the United States with its allies and their corporate representatives

8 I use the terms Third World and South interchangeably in this study being conscious about their problems. Both terms refer to the earlier colonised nations whose structural disadvantages have been shaped by the colonial process and related inequalities. The term Third World was coined in the 1960s to challenge the earlier patronising vocabulary positing these nations as 'underdeveloped', 'primitive' and 'backward'. It illustrates the political division of the world into three camps during the Cold War: in the rich capitalist First World (West), the socialist Second World (East) and the marginal Third World situating mostly in the southern hemisphere (South). In today's political situation this division has proved in many ways problematic since the tripartite division does no longer exists. Also problematic is the South-North polarity not only because some rich countries are located in the South but also because North and South as well as First, Second and Third Worlds today are more or less mixed because of migration. For further criticism of these terms, see e.g. Shohat and Stam 1994, 25–26.

accused of spreading American mass culture products, especially films and audiovisual programmes, to other parts of the world.⁹

From the 1980s and 1990s, culturally oriented globalisation theories started to challenge the cultural imperialism paradigm by arguing that centre-periphery relations are much more complex than earlier presented. On the one hand, globalisation has made distances irrelevant and people living far from each other more interdependent. According to Roland Robertson (1992, 8), globalisation has led to “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole,” while Anthony Giddens (1990, 64) has described globalisation as the “intensification of world-wide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.” On the other hand, globalisation has led to the strengthening of communal identities. Social and cultural identities, be they national, regional, ethnic, or religious, have become an issue of negotiation and re-negotiation. Recent years have also witnessed the growth of political movements aiming to strengthen these collective identities. These political movements are critical of globalisation processes, which they see as threatening local characteristics and self-determination (Eriksen 2005, 27–28). As globalisation creates conditions also for localisation, Robertson has proposed that the process should rather be called glocalisation (1992, 173–174).

9 The founding texts of the cultural imperialism thesis included texts of scholars such as Mattelart and Dorfman (1975), Schiller (1976), Tunstall (1977) and Mattelart (1979). For a more detailed discussion of the development of cultural imperialism thesis, see e.g. Tomlinson 1991, Kraidy 2005, 22–33.

One basic problem of the cultural imperialism thesis is that it treats audiences as passive cultural dupes rather than as active meaning makers. Several audience and reception studies, though, starting as early as the 1950s, have evidenced empirically that audiences are more active, complex and critically aware in their readings than cultural imperialist scholars assumed. When allowed to choose, local audiences prefer domestic to imported programmes or, in the absence of local films or audio-visual programmes, might use hegemonic texts as a basis for discussions of relevant local issues. Popular classes especially prefer nationally or locally produced material that is closer to their regional, ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities (Straubhaar 1991, 51). The preference for domestic cultural products has been interpreted variably as evidence of cultural asymmetry and proximity (Straubhaar 1991), of similar cultural context of allusions, jokes, or stereotypes (Pool 1977, 143) or of the mutual cannibalisation of cultures (Appadurai 1990).¹⁰ Cultural flows do not move only from peripheries to centres, but new centres can also be created from regional basis as the scholars such as Ulf Hannerz (1992), Mike Featherstone (1990), Joseph Straubhaar (1991) and Arjun Appadurai (1990) have argued. Powerful Third World countries can also dominate their own markets and even become important cultural exporters. Local/regional/national cultures are, thus, able to fight back and resist influences coming from centres in several different ways. For instance, a Brazilian audio-visual media network, Rede Globo, is now the fourth largest network in the world exporting its *telenovelas* to more than eighty countries around the world. Similarly, the Bollywood Hindi language

10 On active audience studies see e.g. Liebes and Katz (1993), Tager (1997), Katz and Wedell (1977), Lee and Chong (1990), Fiske (1987).

cinema is popular not only in India but also in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and among South Asian diasporas. (Shohat ja Stam 1994; Desai 2004, viii.)

The influences of cultural globalisation and the tension between global and local have been conceptualised in two competing scenarios. The first, represented by the cultural imperialism thesis, views cultural globalisation as the *homogenisation of worldwide diversity* into a pandemic Westernised consumer culture, while the other, supported by active audience researchers, regards cultural globalisation as *a process of hybridisation* in which cultural mixture and adaptation continuously transform and renew cultural forms (Kraidy 2005, 16). The first scenario emphasises the global and the second the local. Empirical studies give support to both scenarios, but there is no sufficient evidence for one over the other. Even if there is a lot of evidence about active resistance to hegemonic tendencies in the Third World, questions about the effects of accelerated international exchange in the domain of communication and cultural production have not lost their topicality. For instance, the spread of new technology has created new and more intricate problems. The debate about the digital divide has once again proven that new technology, computers and information highways are not the solution to the unbalanced distribution of information when the economic structures between rich and poor countries remain unchanged. Cultural hybridity has also raised criticism for neglecting the questions of power and inequality. For example, Schiller (1991) has argued that the preference for national programmes found by active audience researchers can also be interpreted as the further confirmation of American cultural domination, since many local programmes nowadays

imitate familiar US formats. In my work the cultural hybridisation of transnational cinema is taken as a point of departure for the analysis, and reactions and responses to this development are explored in the empirical part of the work.

Global media studies include strains such as multicultural, transnational and diasporic studies, which aim to grasp the multiplicity of the globalised media world of today. They have criticised earlier research based on the fact that it has been mostly interested in how Asian, African and Latin American audiences receive American films. Rarely has the question been reversed: What kind of cultural meanings do the cultural productions of other continents carry or how are they received by Western audiences? Even if most of the world's films are produced in such cinematic 'super powers' as India, Egypt, Mexico, Argentina and China, the existence of these films has only recently been recognised in the West. India alone produces between 700 and 1,000 fiction films a year, and is the leading producer of feature films in the world if made-for-TV films are excluded. Still the study of these films in the West has started only recently. (Shohat and Stam 1996, 148; Desai 2004, viii.) The imbalance between actual film production and research is naturally explained by the fact that film theatres, video stores and television channels in the Western part of the world are dominated by Western films, but this does not legitimize the situation to continue as such in the multicultural, transnational world characterised by the global circulation of peoples and cultural products.

Diasporic studies have emerged in the field of postcolonial studies by scholars critical of the concepts of home, nation-state, race, and identity or by those who cite their demise. Cultural studies scholarship on diaspora has often criticised the racialised

formation of national identity and questioned the rooted, static and sedentary logic of modernity. Diasporic critique has also challenged narratives of the purity, rootedness and timelessness of nationalist belonging. (Desai 2004, 18.)

‘Diaspora’ means literally to scatter or sow across. In the Old Testament it was used to refer to the dispersion of Jews from their promised land across the world, but has nowadays been taken up by other dispersed people as well. The ‘classic’ definition of diaspora assumes that diaspora, like exile, begins with trauma or rupture and involves the scattering of populations to places outside their homeland, the most obvious example being the shipment of Africans as slaves to the American continent. Sometimes, however, this scattering happens voluntarily due to desires for a better and more affluent life. For instance Cohen (1997) has wanted to enlarge the scope of the term diaspora to include populations that have not suffered any catastrophic traumas. He classifies diasporas according to different motives for displacement: victim diasporas such as the Africans and Armenians, labour and imperial diasporas such as Indian contract workers and British population movements to overseas dominions, trade diasporas such as the Chinese in North America and Lebanese merchants in West Africa, and cultural diasporas such as Caribbeans living abroad (Cohen 1997). In current discourses on migration and transnationality, diaspora often is used interchangeably with terms such as immigrant, exile, and refugee, as will be discussed in Chapter Two. In these formulations, diaspora is forwarded as potentially undermining nationalist narratives. However, as scholars have noted, diaspora as a political category may work with and not against the nation-state. (Desai 2004, 18.)

In diasporic media and film studies, scholars have been interested in issues such as how migrants use global media, host-country media, media transmitted from the country of origin, or media produced by migrant communities to come to terms with their new lives and to make sense of the migration experience. They have also been concerned with identifying the role that media images and sounds might play in the identity politics of migrant communities. (King and Wood 2001, 4. See also, e.g. Gillespie 2002; Sreberny 2002; Tufte 2002.)

My study is a part of these multicultural, transnational and diaporic media studies aiming to enlarge the corpus of films studied in mainstream film and media studies. The interest in films by African dislocated filmmakers has become avoidable because of shifts in the global configuration of capital, power and media, and with the massive displacement of peoples over the world. African diasporic filmmakers belong to those “tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons who constitute an essential feature of the modern world that is in a constant move” (Appadurai 1990, 297). Their works are born as a consequence of increasing transnational flow of cultural commodities and cultural influences and are worth study in this context.

Composition of the study

This study is divided into ten chapters of which this first one serves as an introduction to the whole study. It has introduced the reader to the main problematic of the work and presented the research questions and the major lines of methodology. I have

also situated my work in the field of global and diasporic media studies.

In the second chapter I present the empirical research material and methods of analysis. I also describe my fieldwork and the process of collecting material in Senegal in the spring 2002.

In the third chapter I present the theoretical framework of my study, the concept of transnational diasporic cinema made by Third World/Southern filmmakers from the point of view of African diasporic directors. Transnational cinema is a target of several differing expectations due to its nomadic position. On the one hand it is expected to correct the distorted representations of ethnic minorities in the West; while on the other hand, it should fight its niche in the commercialised global film scenery. Another dilemma of transnational cinema is to negotiate its position between and in regard to the discourses of authenticity and cultural hybridity. For the purposes of this study, hybridity is defined as a cultural strategy with the purpose of making films that speak simultaneously for audiences coming from different origins and cultures.

In the fourth chapter I argue that, from the point of view of production, distribution and exhibition, West African francophone cinemas have never been truly national but rather transnational. This is explored through the infrastructures of Senegalese cinema which have, from the very beginning of this cinema, been intertwined with international, especially French, production, distribution and exhibition institutions. Due to this overlap, even filmmakers living in the home country have been obliged to negotiate between the interests of foreign financing bodies and their own and national interests.

The chapters from five to nine concentrate on the empirical case of *Karmen*. In the fifth chapter I analyse the textual identifications proposed by *Karmen*. Special attention is given to the multigenerality and multiple aesthetic conventions of the film as an expression of hybridity and interstitiality of transnational cinema. The purpose is not to try to find ‘the real meaning’ of the film nor to analyse the film instead of real audiences, but to illustrate how different viewing positions can offer new meanings for the film.

In the sixth chapter I describe the controversy created by the film in Senegal. To give cultural background for the censorship of the film in its ‘home country’, I introduce the reader to cinema censorship, religious scenery and attitudes towards homosexuality in Senegal.

In the seventh chapter I move to the analysis of the mediated reception of *Karmen* and compare the critical reception of the film at home to that in Canada, France and the United States.

In the eighth chapter the mediated reception analysis moves to the Senegalese public sphere and explores the press coverage of *Karmen* in Senegalese newspapers and magazines. The main task of this analysis is to study how the case of *Karmen* was negotiated in the journalistic field and which agents and other fields were active during the debate.

In the ninth chapter the focus is on the Internet debate *Karmen* provoked in two Senegalese online forums. The debates are analysed within four main interpretative packages.

In the tenth chapter I conclude with the results of the empirical study and reflect upon some methodological problems. I also discuss the case of *Karmen* in the light of the Senegalese religious scenery and connect the debate to other controversies created by transnational cultural products.

2

Material and methods

The primary research material for the study on *Karmen* was collected during my stay in Senegal from February to June 2002 and with the help of the Internet before and after this journey. Besides allowing me to collect research material, the stay in Senegal acquainted me anew with the situation of Senegalese cinema, which had experienced several important changes since my last visit in 1994. Many of these changes were due to economic hardships and the devaluation of the CFA, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter. The Senegalese media environment had also changed remarkably from the beginning of 1990s due to several new actors on the field: the decade had seen a number of new independent newspapers and radio stations appear and disappear, and introduced Senegalese people to new media, especially the Internet and mobile phones. Four months may be considered an extravagant period for conducting fieldwork for a case study on one specific film but, in my case, it was barely enough to collect sufficient material. In this chapter I describe how the material was collected, reflect on the shortcomings and problems of the material and the collection process, and present the analytical tools of the study.

Fieldwork in Senegal

When I arrived in Senegal, my research idea was not yet focused on one specific case; my purpose was to collect material about the production and reception of several Senegalese transnational films made at the turn of the new millennium. Possible material included unrealised and realised versions of scripts, original plays, promotional material, interviews with people involved in production, documents and information about censorship, and criticism and public debate about films. The material was not specified more fully than this, since it was expected that every film would offer its own research questions and also different research material (Laine 1999, 33). As I was interested in how transnational Senegalese cinema was discussed in the public sphere of the home country of diasporic filmmakers, I also planned to collect a systematic sample of articles related to Senegalese films from local newspapers and to interview Senegalese cultural journalists. The whole Senegalese production of the 1990s had been about ten feature-length fiction films and some thirty short films;¹¹ my purpose was to concentrate on four to six films, which would correspond one or more of the following criteria: 1. Films thematically related to economic, political or cultural globalisation; 2. Hybridised films mixing 'African' and 'Western' cinematic genres and aesthetics; 3. Films made by filmmakers living between or in two cultures; and/or 4. Films

11 I have listed 40 Senegalese films shot either on film or on video 1990–2000 in Appendix 1. The list is not necessarily complete but gives a general overview about the scope and quantity of Senegalese feature film production.

made in a transnational production context or exhibited and distributed transnationally.

The original plan changed quite soon after my arrival in Senegal since it appeared that the case of *Karmen* alone would offer an interesting and varied material for the study. This film had aroused my interest already before I went to Senegal when the first pieces of news about its censoring in Senegal were published on two African cinema related email lists, *H-AFRLITCINE* and *Afrique-cinema*, and in Senegalese newspapers in autumn 2001. Only some weeks before leaving for Senegal, the petition to defend the film was published on the Internet.

The first person I was in contact with in relation to *Karmen* was Brahim Haidar, the president of the committee *Libérer Karmen*, acting to liberate the film from censorship in Senegal. The committee was composed of Senegalese intellectuals, “human rights activists from the 1960s” and friends of Joseph Ramaka (Interview with Brahim Haidar 29.3.2002). I contacted Brahim Haidar by email and was invited to participate a private screening of *Karmen* in the *Centre culturel français* in Dakar on March 16, 2002. This was the second or third screening in a series of private screenings the committee had organised in order to get the film back on screen. Upon arriving at the *Centre culturel français*, I was astonished by the lack of posters or information about the screening. It was only when I mentioned the name of Haidar that the doorman invited me to enter the hall and join the audience of some forty people waiting for the film to begin. I was later told that the committee was still cautious not to attract too much public attention for fear of violence. The screening started with welcoming words from one of the spokespersons of *Libérer Karmen*, who informed the audience about other forthcoming

screenings in Dakar organised by the committee. The short discussion after the screening concentrated mostly on the film's controversial excerpt. Being mostly non-Senegalese, non-Muslims and non-Mourids, this audience had neither recognised nor understood the significance of the religious song *khassaid*, which had caused the controversy, and was therefore curious to know more about the events and reasons that led to the censoring of the film.

Joseph Ramaka did not attend this screening but I met him at another similar screening organised by *Libérer Karmen* in the *Centre culturel français* on March 29. This time, most of the audience were Senegalese and the debate after the screening concentrated on the copyright of the song by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba. There had been doubts in the media that copyrights had not been respected in the film but members of the crew rectified this.

These two screenings were my only opportunities to be in contact with 'real' audiences of *Karmen*. Arriving at the screenings unprepared and not knowing what would happen caused me to miss an opportunity to systematically observe the debates or interview the spectators. After the second screening, I interviewed Brahim Haidar and, with his help, also got an appointment with Ramaka. I conducted the interview with Ramaka at his home the Yoff quarter on March 31.

During my stay in Dakar, I received valuable help from my Senegalese research assistant Fatou Kane. She helped me to make appointments with my interviewees, participated in searching for archival information and transcribed part of the interviews. The most valuable for my work, however, was her in-depth knowledge of Senegalese culture. Being herself Mourid and speaking Wolof, she could explain local religious customs

and norms and translate Wolof expressions in the newspaper articles and Internet messages.¹² She could also explain terms and references to persons and places unknown to me. Searching for information was, for example, much easier when one knew that the names Ahmadou Bamba, Khadim Rassoul and Serigne Touba all referred to the same person or that certain phrases were direct citations from the Koran. To test her explanations and to enrich my interpretations, I picked out similar issues in informal discussions with other people. Even if the explanations were not always sufficient for academic purposes, they helped me to orient my information search in the literature and on the Internet.

Senegal is one of those African countries where deterritorialisation and immigration are the part of everyday life. It is estimated that 75,000–100,000 Senegalese citizens are living in the diaspora, not counting the people travelling abroad for long periods because of family, on business or for other reasons. Many of those with citizenship of their new host country have preserved tight bonds with their homeland and there is a continuous flow of people, material and finance travelling between the homeland and the host land. The travelling situation of Senegalese intellectuals was also an important context for my fieldwork during my stay in Senegal. It appeared quite complicated to conduct interviews and meet ‘natives’ in their home country since they might stay long periods abroad or either travel continuously back and forth. For this reason, I had only one opportunity to interview Joseph Ramaka even if I would have liked to clarify the first interview later. Professor Souleymane Bachir Diagne, the only academic

12 *Wolof* was used in the Internet messages mostly to express feelings and hostility. Many *Wolof* expressions were vulgar insults to other discussion participants. In the press material the use of *Wolof* was limited to singular or specific words, whose meaning would have been difficult to translate.

contact I had made in advance, was teaching in the United States during my stay in Senegal and I could be in contact with him only by email. I also had to wait for several weeks to make appointments with cultural journalists who attended festivals and conferences in different parts of Europe and Africa. My experiences come close to those of the American female historian Carol Breckenridge, who once arrived in Madurai, India, waiting with bated breath to see her closest informant and friend with whom she had worked closely during her fieldwork in India for several decades but she soon discovered that he was in faraway Houston in the United States (Appadurai 1996, 56–57). I certainly felt sometimes as disappointed as Mrs. Breckenridge when noticing that I should rather have been in Paris or New York than in Dakar to get information about Senegalese transnational cinema.

Research material

The material collected in Senegal consists of three kinds of texts: press articles on the exhibition, criticism and censorship of *Karmen* published in Senegal, interviews with Senegalese cultural journalists, and messages collected from two Senegalese Internet forums. In addition, as described above, I interviewed the director of *Karmen*, Joseph Ramaka, and the president of *Libérer Karmen*, Ibrahim Haidar. Other data for the study are two video copies of *Karmen*, posters, websites and other promotional material for the film and film reviews collected from Canadian, French and American newspapers and periodicals.

The Senegalese press material consists of 118 articles published in local newspapers and periodicals from April 2001 to July 2002. The criterion for the data collection was that *Karmen* had to be mentioned by name in the article, although it needed not be the main or the only subject of the story. The material was collected from three main sources: the Senegalese National Archive, the archive of the biggest Senegalese daily newspaper *Le Soleil*, and the collections of the *Libérer Karmen* committee.

The press archives were problematic because the material was not systematically collected and I had to be content with the haphazard choices made by archivists. The Senegalese National Archive was a dusty cellar where the best I could get was three or four cartons filled with clippings about Senegalese cinema from the last 30 years. The clippings proved to be mostly from *Le Soleil*. On its own, this archive was not of great use for my work but had to be supplemented by other material. The archive of *Le Soleil* and *Scoop* was better organised and also contained articles from other newspapers than those published by the Société Sénégalaise de Presse et de Publications (SSPP). In this archive there was even a separate folder for *Karmen* clippings. Ibrahim Haidar had also collected articles about *Karmen* for the purposes of *Libérer Karmen* but not in a systematic way either. With the help of this collection I could access the articles from the scandal paper *Mœurs*, which the two other archives had not preserved.

Besides these three compilations, I trawled systematically through the three most important dailies, *Le Soleil*, *Walfadjri* and *Sud Quotiden*, from July 1, 2001 to January 31, 2002 and added to the material with the help of two Internet archives: that of *Sud Quotidien* (www.sudonline.sn/) and of *All Africa* (fr.allafrica.com/) from February 1 to July 31, 2002, when I returned home. Since a

part of the material is only in electronic form without photos and graphics, I could not systematically pay attention to visual means of information. The use of photos is therefore only occasionally referred to in the analysis.

All in all, my press material consists of articles from 11 newspapers and magazines: *Frasques*, *L'Info*, *Le Matin*, *Mœurs*, *Nouvel Horizon*, *La Nouvelle*, *La Pointe*, *Scoop*, *Le Soleil*, *Sud Quotidien* and *Walfadjri*. Most of the material published in the three biggest newspapers was collected systematically and rightly belongs with my data. The rest of the material was collected as widely as possible from the most relevant sources at hand but still remains, to a certain extent, haphazard. There are no newspaper archives in Senegalese libraries and trawling systematically through all relevant papers would have demanded still more bureaucracy, such as permission from every newspaper, and searching in several different places. Another problem was that two short-lived independent newspapers, *Mœurs* and *Frasques*, had ceased to be published before my stay in Senegal and it was not possible to get hold of all this old numbers. When reading the press material through, I found some references to articles reporting on the shooting period of *Karmen* which had been published before my actual research period started. In that phase, however, it was too late to get hold of them. Another lack in the analysis material is the absence of the radio and television programmes concerning *Karmen*.

There is little literature about Senegalese journalism and still less about cultural journalism. In order to contextualise the press material collected and to obtain more background knowledge about the field of cultural production and the work of Senegalese cultural journalists, four local cultural journalists were interviewed. The interviews with journalists do not belong

to my primary data set and are not analysed as texts; they were, however, a great help for the final analysis by proposing possible alternatives and explanations for my interpretations.

I established contact with the first journalist interviewed through my personal acquaintances in Senegal. To contact the other three, I used the so-called snowball technique, according to which new informants are recruited by earlier interviewees (Schröder 2003, 162). The circle of cultural journalists in Senegal is tiny and everyone working in the field in Dakar seems to know each other.¹³ This soon led to the saturation point, where interviewees started to suggest those who had already been interviewed. Three journalists of those interviewed appear in the press material as reporting and reviewing *Karmen*. They closely followed the whole case from the film's premiere to its being banned. The fourth journalist had left active journalistic work in 2001 and was employed as a press counsellor in the Ministry of Culture. In this position he had been involved in the case of *Karmen* as the Information Officer of the Ministry.

The themes discussed with the journalists included the career of the cultural journalist, the relationship between cinema and journalism in Senegal, and their opinions about the state of Senegalese cinema in the 1990s (Appendix 2). The interviews lasted 30 to 90 minutes and were conducted either at the interviewee's workplace or, in one case, in a café. As I have worked myself as a cultural journalist and as we had a common interest in cinema, the atmosphere of the interviews was quite informal, and

13 This statement was confirmed by Sembene Ousmane in Helsinki in April 2006. According to Sembene, in the Senegalese capital of 3.5 million inhabitants "all directors, musicians, artists and others know each other" (Sembene Ousmane in a discussion in the cinema Orion, Helsinki, 1.4.2006).

even confidential. All the interviews were conducted in French. They were recorded and transcribed and only the citations used later in this study were translated into English.

The public debate was not only limited to conventional media, newspapers and audiovisual media, but the film was also discussed on two Senegalese Internet discussion forums: the forum of *Le Soleil* (www.lesoleil.sn) and the forum of the *Karmen* website (www.lesoleil.sn/karmen/frame1.htm).¹⁴ All together, 274 messages were posted to the forums from August 2001 to January 2002. In the forum of *Le Soleil*, two discussion threads had *Karmen* as their main subject. The thread *Polemic about Karmen* consisted of 82 messages and the thread *For or against the censorship of Karmen?* had 24 messages. The *Karmen* website's forum received 168 messages during the analysis period. In addition, *Karmen* was occasionally mentioned in six other discussion threads in the forum of *Le Soleil*; however, these messages do not belong to my research material.¹⁵

To compare the reviews of *Karmen* in Senegal to those abroad I collected a sample of film reviews from three Western countries in which *Karmen* had been in distribution. Reviews from Canada,

14 The *Karmen* website no longer exists on the web but the author of this work has paper print-outs of all the messages sent to the website.

15 The six other discussion threads mentioning *Karmen* in one or two messages concerned the corruption of good manners (« Les autorités religieuses face à la dégradation des mœurs au Sénégal »), subjects concerning homosexuality in the forum (« Pour qu'on nous enlève tous les sujets sur l'homosexualité car c'est une agression »), the scandal of Senegalese models at the airport of Dakar (« Scandale à l'aéroport de Dakar »), the Senegalese athlete Amy Mbacké (« Un grand bravo pour Amy: nouvelle église nationale »), globalisation (« Globalisation est elle aussi un danger de mort de notre culture? ») and the politics of President Wade (« Le président Wade a-t-il perdu la boule, ou bien n'a-t-il encore une fois de plus rien à cirer du peuple sénégalais qui l'a élu? »).

France and the United States were collected with the Google search engine after my return from Senegal. The Senegalese reviews naturally belong with the press material collected in Senegal, but they are analysed mostly in connection with other reviews. The criteria for the reviews were that they had to be published in newspapers or film periodicals, and they had to have bylines. Textual advertising and the reviews consisting primarily of interviews were excluded. There are, however, differences in style since the genre of reviewing in Senegal is not as standardised as in the West. For this reason, some Senegalese reviews also contain news material and pieces of interviews. All together there are 35 reviews in my data: 8 from Canada, 9 from France, 11 from the USA and 7 from Senegal. This is not a complete collection of *Karmen* reviews but since all of the most important newspapers and periodicals reviewing African films in general are included, this was considered a sufficient amount for a qualitative analysis.

Film analysis

In the analysis of the film I paid special attention to the generic definitions of *Karmen* in an effort to appeal simultaneously to several discursive audiences. The point of departure for the analysis is that genre designation is an important marketing strategy by which alternative, minor, or accented films are re-inscribed in recognisable cinematic forms to attract larger audiences. Audiences used to seeing genre films often decide which films to see or not see according to the genre. This might lead a filmmaker to make and market his/her film as belonging to certain familiar genres that facilitate an audience response

(Naficy 2001, 57; Desai 2004, 45). On the other hand it has to be recognised that Hollywood companies also often choose to present a mixed image about the character and genre of films to create an idea that the film has something to offer all kinds of audiences (Altman 1999, 57).

Many genre theorists agree that genres are not just tools for static categorisation or classification but that they should instead be regarded as processes of difference, variation and change. They build upon a system of expectation or *contract* that ensures the relationship between the production, the audience and the text (Neale 1990; Naremore 1998; Altman 1999, 14, Valaskivi 1999, 56–62). The genre contract works both ways; it is not only the genre that has to fulfil the expectations of the audience but the cultural product – music, film, book etc. – must also be appreciated by the audience as a work stemming from that specific genre. Genres provide spectators with means of recognition and understanding, and help render films intelligible and explicable. With the help of a genre system, spectators can understand separate elements or events in the film. If a character, for instance, bursts into song without any visible reason, the spectator is not completely lost if accepting this as a characteristic of a musical genre. As Neale (1990, 46) has stated, “Singing in a musical is not just a probability, it is a necessity.”

In my analysis, I examine how *Karmen* manifests itself as a hybrid combination of different genres to fit with different interpretative horizons of male and female, national and international, and African and non-African discursive audiences. The purpose is not to situate the film within certain fixed borderlines or to consider audiences as homogeneous units within which there would be no conflicting voices. I aim, rather,

to illustrate how different genre definitions offer new viewing positions for the film in order to indicate how a transnational Senegalese film can strive to escape an 'African ghetto' by adapting and borrowing from different conventions. When reading the analysis it is important to keep in mind that one film may very well belong to several genres without especially aiming to do so. The history of genre theory shows that it is quite difficult to classify texts on the basis of simple, well-defined features, or to make genres form a clear-cut, unambiguous system (Larsen 2002, 133).

The hybrid approach adopted in the study concedes the need for culture-specific film theories for the analysis of Senegalese cinema because 'Africanness' is understood as an ingredient of this cinema. I dissociate myself, however, from the kind of generalisations that see African cinema "as the product of certain Africanness" or consider "the majority of black African filmmakers as united by their art and ideology" (Ukadike 1994, 3). I do not understand 'Africanness' and 'Senegaleseness' as permanent or descriptive properties of a culture but as discursive concepts that can be used only in relation to other discourses, and which change their meaning depending on the context in which they are used. The elements considered African or Senegalese at the beginning of the colonial period are certainly not the same as today. In fact, there is no certain essential Africanness distinguishing all African films from, say, European or American ones. These concepts are constructivist in nature and depend as much on their users as on the real characteristics of the culture. There are always good reasons to include certain properties about a culture and exclude some others depending on the purpose for which the concepts are needed. One can, for example, interpret the fragmented structure

of certain African films as influenced by European art cinema while, from the point of view of theories of African orality, they are considered as expression of oral tale structures adopted by a new film medium (see, e.g. Tomaselli and Eke 1995; Gabriel 1989). All aesthetic traditions are however relative. For instance, Bazin's definitions of Neorealism can be criticised on the basis that not all neorealist films were shot on location and the lines of amateur actors were re-recorded in the studio, which proves that natural means of expression were not sufficient for cinematic needs (see e.g. Aumont et al. 1992, 119–122). Different aesthetics can result from conscious choices by the filmmaker aiming towards a certain style (such as the demands of Ramaka for live sound) or from limited shooting conditions (lack of studios in Senegal). Certain traits of African film aesthetics are thus not necessarily related only to oral traditions but also to production conditions. In some cases material necessities have led to the development of new cinematic styles, as with the Third aesthetics, the aesthetics of hunger or in intercultural cinema. (Gabriel 1989, Shohat and Stam 1994; Marks 2000.) To conclude, different generic and aesthetic conventions are not understood in my study as mutually exclusive; it is rather proposed that they can be interpreted from several angles and thus produce different meanings.

In the genre analysis I draw attention to the *semantic*, *material* and *syntagmatic* aspects of the text that help to point out the larger groups of films to which this particular film belongs. The semantic aspects of the text focus on 'content' and 'theme' of the film, or what the film is about. They may also raise questions about the relationship of the text to its socio-historical context and reality. Material aspects of the text focus on discursive substances of communication or, more

importantly, on the questions of 'style' and '*mise-en-scène*'.¹⁶ The substance of communication can be understood as a combination of elements forming the discourse while the *mise-en-scène* is composed of multiple ways in which events are staged for the camera, for example in terms of setting, lighting, costumes or character behaviour. The syntagmatic aspects refer to the actual structuration of the text and its sequential organisation, such as linear or non-linear composition of the film. (Larsen 2002, 133–134.)

For the analysis I first used the VHS copy of the film and later the DVD copy distributed by *California Newsreel* (<http://newsreel.org/nav/title.asp?tc=CN0134>). Both copies were original versions in French and Wolof with English subtitles.

Analysis of press material and Internet forums

The theoretical framework for the analysis of all empirical data is critical discourse analysis, which aims to study media texts in their concrete social situations and in the context of larger social practices. Critical discourse analysis was chosen as a method since it is not interested in the opinions of individual authors but the ways that issues are represented and the consequences of journalistic choices. While analysis of the media texts is the main focus of the approach, Fairclough (1989, 62–63) insists that studying power *behind* media discourses is as important as studying power *in* these discourses. In my empirical study this is

16 See Bordwell and Thompson (1990, 127–155).

understood as a need to explore the discursive practices in which the material in question is produced, consumed, and received, and their possible consequences to the texts. The news coverage and opinion stories on *Karmen* are contextualised with the analysis of the field of Senegalese journalism and democratisation. In the chapter about the film reviews, I discuss the tradition of film reviewing both in the West and in Senegal. The Internet messages are considered from the point of view of new media and its possibilities to increase the access to public sphere. (Jokinen 1999, 131; Pietikäinen 2000, 135–136.)

All the material was first transformed into electronic form in order to be analysed with the computer-based ATLAS.ti programme (version 4.1). The final analysis methods of each material were chosen inductively according to the quantitative and thematic pre-analysis done on all material (Bruhn Jensen 2002, 247).

Film reviews

Film reviews were chosen as analytical material because the tradition of reviewing recent films exists in all the countries in question and the reviews offered comparable data from these countries. Film reviewers have a special role in the field of cultural production when influencing the success and reception of new films and constructing – together with the promotional material – a certain viewing strategy for every film. The reviewer's power is considered remarkable, especially in the case of domestic and marginal films (Pantti 2002, 103). Bodies of conventions constitute norms of what is appropriate or expected in a particular film tradition and the ways in which artists obey or violate the

conventional norms, relate their works to other works and thus facilitate audiences' ability to interpret the text (Bordwell and Thompson 1990, 38). Reviewers use these conventions to classify a new film within a certain film genre, to compare and contrast it to other films or to earlier works of the same filmmaker which, in this way, gives readers clues as to what kind the film is in question and if the film is worth seeing or not (Altman 1999, 126–127; Barker, Arthurs and Ramaswami 2001, 157).

Journalistic film criticism, or film reviews, as I call them according to the proposition of Bywater and Sobchack (1989, xii),¹⁷ focuses on immediate responses to individual films. Films are usually discussed as whole texts whose value is manifest in the immediate experience of the viewer; little or no consideration at all is given to other films or to the viewer's observations about the world outside the film. The meaning and value of the film are to be found mainly in the narrow confines of an isolated cultural event (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, xv). A reviewer typically writes his/her review after a special previewing session with a tight time schedule and has no opportunity to see the film more than once. Since the time for critical contemplation is limited, the reviewer's first impressions are the ones that count in the reviewing process (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 4; *Film criticism in America today* 2000).

17 I use the term 'reviewer' instead of 'film critic' in order to distinguish the function of reviewers from that of film critics, whose primary aim is to investigate the medium as an aesthetic, social and historical phenomenon in specialised magazines and academic circles (Bordwell 1989, 20–24). Most of the reviews in my data were published in the popular press but the reviewers of *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Variety* might deserve to be called critics rather than reviewers because of the aesthetic orientation of their publication.

Merja Hurri (1993) has proposed that cultural criticism can be classified as *aesthetic*, *ideological* and *popular* according to the relationship of cultural journalists to other actors in the cultural field. This classification was used as an analytical tool in my analysis of film reviews. In *aesthetic criticism*, a cultural journalist has close affiliations to other specialists in the art form in question. S/he has internalised the norms of this field and assesses art works according to the artistic and aesthetic norms of the field. A typical example of aesthetic criticism is a reviewer who practises the same art form she s/he is reviewing, for example, an author writing literature reviews or a composer reviewing musical performances. An advantage of this kind of affiliation is that a reviewer knows the field profoundly but, on the other hand, there is a danger of losing touch with the audience's needs. In *ideological criticism*¹⁸ a journalist is closely affiliated to the political opinions, policy and practices of her or his publication. Even if cultural affairs in general are considered to be quite independent of the newspaper's political intrigues, there exist multiple examples of politically and ideologically tainted cultural criticism. In this kind of criticism, judgements are not based on the aesthetic norms of the art but rather on external political and ideological norms. In *popular criticism*, the closest reference group for a journalist is his/her audience, and reviews are written in accordance with the norms of the audience. According to Hurri, the advantage of popular criticism is that journalists strive to use comprehensive style and language in order to appeal to the widest audience possible, but the disadvantage might be that

18 Hurri also calls 'ideological criticism' 'journalistic criticism' but in order to distinguish this from Bordwell's journalistic criticism I prefer the term 'ideological criticism', which corresponds better to the basic idea.

reviewers abandon their critical role and concentrate on pleasing their audience. (Hurri 1993, 51).

Another division of affiliations of cultural journalists proposed by Ulf Hedetoft (2000, 284–285) is interesting from the point of view of my analysis focusing on cultural specificity and universality. I call these affiliations *universalist criticism* and *culture specific criticism*. Universalist criticism refers to the fact that all cultural journalists and reviewers are affiliated to the same transcultural elite and share a common professional identity. As the interviews with Senegalese cultural journalists will show, they share several common factors with American, Canadian and French journalists as they know the same films and film history, their work includes a lot of international travelling and meetings at various film festivals, and their educational background is much the same as that of their Western colleagues. As the dominant cinematic values are mostly determined by Hollywood cinema, it is expected that reviewers from different countries will adopt the standards and conventions of this cinema as their reference point. This does not necessarily mean that the quality of all other films is measured according to the norms of Hollywood cinema but that the consciousness of the hegemonic position of this cinema affects the interpretation of all other cinemas (Hedetoft 2000, 282).

On the other hand, transnational identity need not mean that cultural journalists and reviewers should give up their national belongings and presupposed affiliations. Culture specific criticism refers here to the fact that journalists are also in many ways bound to their national community, not only because of their own national allegiances and *habitus* but also because of those of the media and audiences they represent. Newspapers

and magazines for which they write mostly define themselves as national; they use national languages and their primary readers are citizens of their respective nation-states. When writing a review the journalist has to take into account the cultural, historical, communicative, aesthetic and political assumptions, knowledge and expectations of his/her primary audience. (Hedetoft 2000, 283.)

Aesthetic, ideological and popular criticism, on the one hand, and culture specific and universal criticism, on the other, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but it is necessary to separate them for the purposes of analysis. Besides the different kinds of criticisms, I also explored and compared the semantic, material and syntagmatic aspects of the film to which the reviewers drew attention. The elements identified were then more closely analysed and compared to the reviews of the countries under scrutiny. Like the analysis of the other press material, I finally focused on the rhetoric and linguistic features used to construct the reviews.

Press coverage

The press coverage of *Karmen* was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the quantitative analysis, the categories of analysis were: date of publication, name of newspaper or magazine, journalistic genre, actors of the story and the main news subject. They are presented in Appendix 3. The distribution of stories, journalistic genres and news subjects helped to create an overview image of the press coverage and to identify different phases of the debate. The purpose of the category of actors was to explore which agents and from which fields of society – the

heteronomous or the autonomous pole – were given a voice in the press coverage. In every story all individuals cited directly or indirectly were coded as actors. In the opinion stories, the author of the story was coded as actor. Thus if the whole story was considered to express the opinion of a journalist, as in film reviews and commentaries, the journalist was coded as actor, and, similarly in the case of letters to the editor, the person who had signed the letter was coded as actor.

A ‘cultural clash’ appeared in the analysis of the press coverage due to the differences between my professional training compared to that of Senegalese journalists. Senegalese news journalism has been influenced by the political/literary model of French journalism, which is more opinion-oriented than the Anglo-American news-focused journalism favoured in Finland. When analysing journalistic genres I sometimes had difficulties in deciding if certain stories were news or commentaries since the facts were not separated from opinions as in the Anglo-American tradition practised in the Finnish press. I ended up coding as news both the stories reporting only facts and the stories containing facts and opinions if there was a clear news item in the story.¹⁹ For instance, a story in *Frasques*, “Do you know the theory about the maximum embarrassments?” (17.9.2001), was coded as news despite the feature-style title and ironic comments by the journalist. This was because the article contained a real news topic: Joseph Ramaka and Jeïnaba Diop Gaï could not return Senegal after the Toronto festival as planned since all the

19 The division between fact-centred news journalism and fact and opinion-centred news journalism is artificial as well, since even the most neutral news language is not free from opinions, appreciations, and deprecations as many studies based on discourse analysis have shown (see e.g. Fairclough 1989, Pietilä 1995).

flights were cancelled due to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre. Another ironic story of *Frasques*, “The fatwa of Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté against Karmen Gei” (10.9.2001), on the contrary, is coded as commentary since the journalist only refers briefly to Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté’s radio programme, but the reason for the story is to comment on what Diakhaté has done and said:

Pape Daouda Sow (editor-in-chief of *Mœurs*) must be happy when such a respectable and honourable man as Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté reads *Mœurs*! Besides, Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté has reacted in a similar way as Imam Khomeini, who pronounced a fatwa on the author of *The Satanic Verses*. Diakhaté had not seen the film by Joe Ramaka Gaye and Khomeini had not read the novel by Salman Rushdie. Usually this is called relying on second hand information... (*Frasques* 10.9.2001)²⁰

The difficulties I had, and the observations I made in the course of the quantitative analysis made me focus my analysis of the press coverage on the rhetorical and linguistic features of the text. My initial intention had been to analyse both the press coverage and Internet messages according to the analysis model of Gamson and Lasch (1983) in order to find out if the same frames existed in both media. The characteristics of Senegalese news journalism, however, made me question the adequacy of my language skills in deciding in which frames the most sophisticated journalistic

20 Ma foi, c’est PDS (Pape Daouda Sow) qui va être content. Un homme si vertueux et prestigieux qui lit “*Mœurs*”! De façon subsidiaire, il faut faire remarquer que Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté a procédé comme feu l’Imam Khomeyni qui avait sorti la fatwa condamnant l’auteur des «*Versets sataniques* ». Le premier n’avait pas vu le film de Joe Ramaka Gaye. Le second n’avait pas lu Salman Rushdie. On appelle cela se baser sur des infos de seconde main pour trancher... des têtes à fiction. (*Frasques* 10.9.2001)

texts should be situated. Senegalese journalists have developed rhetorical features like irony, satire and indirect expressions to such an extent that is difficult or even impossible for an outsider to read between the lines to infer what is 'really meant'. The opinion columns of my data were more straightforward than the news stories but, their number being so limited, I ended up concentrating on the rhetorical features and giving up clustering the press coverage. The rhetoric analysis is limited only to the most interesting part of the press coverage, the debating publicity phase.

There are a number of ways proposed by different researchers for analysing the rhetorical devices of media texts. When developing my analysis method, I incorporated the ideas of Arja Jokinen (1999), Jonathan Potter (1996) and Pentti Raittila (2004). Jokinen divides the devices of analysis into those related to the source of the argument and those related to the argument (Jokinen 1999, 132–133). In my analysis I concentrate on the following (1) *devices related to the source of the argument* (actor):

Justification by devoting to the authorities. It is not unimportant by whom a fact or an opinion is expressed. Sometimes the source of the information can be even more important than its content. The efficacy of this device assumes that the audience is conscious of the existing power hierarchies of the field and accepts that certain speakers have more right to certain information than others. (Jokinen 1999, 135).

Naming the source. The rhetorical devices related to speaker pay attention to the fact that it is easier to get support for an argument presented by a reliable source than for an argument whose source is not known or recognised.

Passivisation. The use of the passive voice and generic expressions without a subject may indicate unconscious uncertainty or a conscious will not to express one's personal opinion. On the other hand, a passive voice is a way to express neutrality in journalistic texts and could be explained as such.

Quotations. Quoting an interviewee's words in a journalistic text may be a sign of accuracy or neutrality but it can also be interpreted as uncertainty or unwillingness to express one's own opinion. Either a journalist puts the words into the mouth of someone else to express his own opinion or he uses citations to avoid this opinion being connected to his own (Raittila 2004, 108). The distinction may have implications for the accountability of the news since the reader is more likely to believe the statements of the author presenting some factual accounts as his or her own than those put into the mouth of someone else (Potter 1996, 142–143).

The purpose of (2) *the devices related to the argument* (text) is either to make the argument more attractive and easier to adopt or to alienate the audience from the argument. In many cases the devices related to the text are overlapping those related to the speaker. (Jokinen 1999, 132–133.) In my analysis I pay attention to the following text-related devices:

Categorising. A choice of one category instead of another is part of persuasive rhetoric. When speaking about issues, events or persons we continuously categorise them. In most cases one can choose between categories

that serve different functions, for example, criticism, justification or acceptance. (Jokinen 1999, 141–142.)

Naming and vocabulary. Through the choice of words, the author orients the reader to choose his or her point of view.

Euphemisms. Euphemisms are a special case of naming or vocabulary. They can be used to embellish the state of affairs or to hide their consequences. (Raittila 2004, 109.)

Extreme case formulations. Extreme expressions strengthen the meaning of words. They may be unconditional formulations like *completely, forever, every, not a*, which hide the possibility of other interpretations. (Raittila 2004, 110.)

If-rhetoric. By if-rhetoric Raittila (1996, 158) refers to a conscious way that journalists hunt for those guilty in certain events by speculating with eventualities. Most often if-rhetoric is explained by the need to shorten expression and create drama in news-writing. The end result, however, is often that the claim first presented as an eventuality will later be considered as a fact.

Internet forums

For the analysis of the Internet discussions I adopted the idea of *framing* from Erving Goffman (1974/1986) and the methodological tools for their analysis from William Gamson and Kathryn Lasch (1983). Goffman has used the concept of framing to analyse how individual events, situations and phenomena are

defined and interpreted differently by different people. These interpretations do not tell only about reality but about people interpreting the reality and culture in which they are living (Goffman 1974/1986). Frame analysis was first developed for the study of everyday communication but it has also been used in media research to analyse journalistic culture, how journalistic texts are produced, and how they are received (Välvirronen 1996, 107–108; Karvonen 2000, 79–80; Horsti 2005). Since Internet debates are both part of everyday communication and media texts, the idea of framing offered a convenient approach to their analysis.

Gamson and Lasch use the term *interpretative package* to describe how different idea elements are grouped into more or less harmonious clusters in media and other public discourses. The interpretative packages have an internal structure in which the idea elements mutually support and reinforce each other. At the core of the package is a central organising idea, or *frame*, for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue. This frame implies a *position* or a range of positions allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame. In my analysis I make a distinction between a *core position* to Karmen and a *core principle* referring to the issue in larger context. The second half of the package is composed of a number of *symbolic devices* that suggest the frame, core principle and core position in shorthand. These are pieces of a potential argument that one might evince in justifying or arguing for a particular position on an issue. The devices suggesting a framework (*framing devices*) can be classified as metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images, and the devices providing justifications or reasons for the general position (*reasoning devices*) as roots,

consequences, and appeals to principle. (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 398–401.)

In my analysis I have used following framing and reasoning devices:

Metaphors are paradigmatic choices that activate an additional frame of reference. Metaphors include the *principal subject* that the metaphor is intended to illuminate and the *associated subject* that it evokes to increase our understanding. The associated subject contains two kinds of entailments – attributes and relationships – that suggest two kinds of metaphors: dynamic and single-valued metaphors. In dynamic metaphors, there are two or more entities in the associated subject, acting in relation to each other. In single-valued metaphors, the focus is simply on the attributes of a single associated subject. (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 399.)

Exemplars indicate how real events of the past or present are used to frame the principal subject (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 399). Forum participants often put the debate on *Karmen* in the context of earlier corresponding or contrasting events and use them to argument the case.

Catchphrases indicate the habit of commentators to try to condense their essence into a single theme statement, tagline, title or slogan that is intended to suggest a general frame (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 399–400).

Catchwords in my analysis refers to the device Gamson and Lasch call *depictions*, some colourful string of modifiers characterising principal subjects of packages (1983,

400). Catchwords were mostly already identified in the heuristic coding of the material because their use was so frequent and prominent in the material. The same catchwords – *globalisation*, *intellectual* – might be used in different packages in contradictory sense to indicate either negative or positive connotations.

Roots in the Gamson and Lasch vocabulary refers to the causal dynamics underlying the events. The packages may differ in the way they explain the origin of the problem or event in question. (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 400.)

Consequences refers to the fact that every package has a characteristic analysis of the negative or positive consequences emanating from different policies. Some packages may focus on short-term and others on long-term consequences (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 400).

Appeals to principle refers to moral appeals and rules of behaviour characteristic of every package (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 400).

The role of Internet messages is twofold in my analysis: on the one hand, they are media texts like any other texts published in media; on the other hand, they are the closest I could get to ordinary citizens or the general public. This data thus offered an opportunity to explore the interaction between media discourses and other public discourses. Newspapers and magazines mostly provide space for members of the political and cultural elite while Internet forums also offer public access for ordinary citizens. The interpretative packages of Internet discourses are produced in

a complex process involving an interaction between the public, media and other sources. When online discussions on *Karmen* started, the media had already created their frames for the issue and this certainly influenced the Internet discussions, but forum participants also drew their ideas and language also from other forums with which they interacted. Forum participants paraphrase and quote both media and other sources in their messages.

The participants of the forum discussions do not represent a cross-section of the Senegalese population. However, their messages enlarge the spectrum of the Senegalese public sphere even beyond the national boundaries since many contributors are immigrant Senegalese living outside the home country. The fact that the contributors do not necessarily participate in the discussion inside the borders of the Senegalese state illustrates how audiences, not only directors, are living in transnational situations and continue to contribute to the development of their country. This also illustrates the variety of cultural contexts in which the film is discussed by Senegalese people.

The quantitative results presented in the analysis chapter give an idea of frequency: how often different frames were found compared to other frames. The media works ideologically in such a way that even a unique and exceptional opinion by one individual participant might gain importance if it is sufficiently repeated and represented by the media, while the opinion of the majority, even though widely accepted 'in real life', may be ignored if it does not gain access to the media.²¹ However, I was not so interested in finding how many forum participants accepted

21 On the media representation of public opinion see Brookes, Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen 2004.

or did not accept *Karmen* but, as in the press coverage analysis, the ways in which the opinions about the film were justified and framed. The messages were also sometimes so polysemic that it was not possible to classify them in one interpretative package only. For this reason the numbers referring to the popularity of different packages given in the analysis chapter do not refer to the number of messages but to the number of 'utterances', that is, how frequently utterances belonging to a certain package were expressed in the data. Utterance is defined as a paragraph concentrating on a certain kind of framing and justifications in one message.

3

Transnational diasporic cinema

The word 'transnational' began to replace the earlier used 'international' in interdisciplinary work on culture in the 1990s (Kraidy 2005, 14). It refers to a combination of civil-political memberships, economic involvements, social networks and cultural identities that link people and institutions in two or more nation states. Key actors of transnationalism are international migrants who are assumed to create new transnational spaces beyond the national borders. The question is not about the weakening of the nation state but about de-territorialising and extending it (Mirdal and Ryyänen-Karjalainen 2004, 7). Accordingly, transnational cinema is the cinema created by migrant filmmakers living in a transnational situation and profiting from the infrastructures of at least two nation-states.

Transnational cinema is a heterogeneous category including films by directors of different origins and referenced in the literature with a varied terminology. Films may be made by Eastern European political exiles in Western Europe, migrant Indian directors in Canada or exiled Algerians in France and be called 'postcolonial hybrid' (Shohat and Stam 1994), 'transnational' (Naficy 1996), 'intercultural' (Marks 2000), 'accented' (Naficy 2001), 'immigrant' (Thackway 2003) or 'diasporic' (Desai 2004) cinema.

In this study I concentrate on films by displaced francophone West African filmmakers in Europe and America, calling their works African transnational diasporic cinema. Despite differences in subject matter or the origins of directors, transnational films share certain modes of production, exhibition and distribution, and certain aesthetic and stylistic characteristics, which create the specific identity of transnational cinema discussed in this chapter.

The need to develop a specific film category for films made in transnational situations has evolved from difficulties in assigning the works of displaced filmmakers to any of the earlier established film categories. The works of Third World or postcolonial filmmakers living in the First World are often regarded as belonging neither to the national cinema of their country of origin nor to their new host country. In the First World, the works of diasporic filmmakers focusing on their home countries have been classified as 'ethnic', 'regional', 'Third World', or 'Third Cinema'. Some auteur filmmakers, who have gained international reputation, have also been included in the category of 'world cinema' or 'global cinema'. Most often, however, they are pushed to the margins in opposition to the mainstream cinema of the First World. (Naficy 2001, 221; Desai 2004, 39.) In their original home countries, the works of diasporic filmmakers may be included in the national cinema of the home country or of the new host country depending on the affiliations they express. Sometimes they may be highly appreciated at home precisely because they have succeeded in entering the halls of discursive power in the First World; sometimes they are simply excluded from the national canon for political or ideological reasons.

Before embarking on the discussion about transnational cinema, let us look at some of the earlier film categories and how they fit with the works of exilic and diasporic filmmakers. The categories vary according to the setting of the film or to the origin of the filmmaker but also according to the context in which the classification is needed. Film festivals, marketing, and film and research literature all have their own classifications, which may differ from each others.

National cinema

Nationalism has been the dominant paradigm in cultural production since the nineteenth century and cultural achievements have been routinely claimed for nations (Nederveen Pieterse 2004, 82). Nationalism leads to a notion of culture as something possessed by all humankind, but in separate, bounded and unique cultural wholes, which correspond to distinct and localised social groups. This has given rise to the idea that each of these socio-cultural wholes should be described and analysed on their own terms in order to document the cultural variety and particularities of humankind.

Nationalist ideology is indicated in the concept of *national cinema*, which is commonly understood as the cinema industry of a certain nation. This definition can be problematised and challenged by asking: where the 'national' films are made, by whom, and who owns and controls industrial infrastructures, production companies, distributors and exhibition circuits

(Higson 1989, 36–37)²². In reality, many national films are more or less multinational, international or transnational. They may be co-produced by companies of different national origins, produced entirely by a foreign company, or distributed and exhibited outside rather than inside the country of origin, as is often the case with francophone West African films. National cinema can also be defined according to the audiences and consumption of cinema within a nation state. From this point of view, it would appear that in many cases Hollywood, Bollywood and other popular cinemas should be called national African cinemas, rather than the films made in a particular nation-state, because they are the cinemas preferred and consumed by national audiences. There is also the so-called “criticism-led” approach to national cinema, which focuses on the best cinematic works of the nation (Higson 1989, 37). This approach sees national cinema mostly in terms of art cinema and ignores those national films aiming “to beat Hollywood at its own game” by imitating Hollywood style and narratives (Crofts 1993, 56). This limited understanding of national cinema would, however, exclude, for instance, a large number of popular Nigerian films.

National cinema can also be considered in relation to national and cultural identity and to local traditions. The focus on the national and cultural identity of national cinema arouses interest in the content or subject matter of a particular body of films: which subjects do these films discuss, which are excluded, what kind of world-views do they express, and what are their formal systems of representation? The concept of ‘national’ tends to imply a demand for a certain purity or authenticity imagined

22 See also Hill’s (1992) distinction between *national film industry* and *national cinema* in his article “The Issue of National Cinema and British Film Production”.

to exist in these communities. This is contradictory since it may camouflage the heterogeneity of the nation and silence the polyphony of social and ethnic voices within a nation. The hegemonic conception of national cinema may marginalise or leave unrepresented ethnic, religious, or other minorities within a nation. It may also exclude expatriates, immigrants, and all those living outside the nation as not belonging to the 'real nationals'. (Higson 1989, 43; Göktürk 2003, 179, Naficy 2003, 204.) Ethnic and regional minorities have tried to compensate for hegemonic national tendencies by creating their own ethnic and regional cinemas, which are expected to better represent the identities of these groups. Because of their disintegration from the nation-state and its homogenizing discourses, as well as a lack of financing possibilities, however, they often have difficulties to get their films made.

In the last ten years, films by migrant filmmakers and/or about migration have sometimes succeeded in challenging and enlarging the narrow notions of European national cinemas. In these cases, films by immigrant filmmakers have been included in the canon of 'new national cinema'. These films proclaim about a transformation in European popular culture as much as about the lives of immigrants and illustrate how culture moves in both directions (Göktürk 2003, 178–179). An expression of this kind of transformation is a recent volume on British cinema entitled *Dissolving Views* (Higson 1996), which features on its cover a still from a popular British-Asian film *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993) and in which Malik (1996, 202–215) discusses Black British cinema of the 1980s and 1990s as a part of British cinema. Similarly, at the Berlin Film Festival in 1999, films by young Turkish filmmakers were screened under the title 'New German Cinema' (Göktürk

2003, 190). German-Turkish, British-Asian and French-*beur* and *banlieue* cinema have also won considerable public and critical acclaim, capturing mainstream audiences. It takes, however, quite a long time before the films of diasporic filmmakers are recognised as a part of the national cinema of their host country. More commonly, they are classified as a part of the national cinema of the filmmaker's home country and remain marginal in the new host country.

Participation in film festivals and international competitions sometimes raise questions as to which nation the diasporic filmmakers belong to and which national cinema they could represent. For instance, in the 1970s, the Chilean military regime did not accept that exiled Chilean filmmakers, constituting a Chilean cinema of resistance, could represent their country of origin abroad. In the 1980s, the famous Turkish filmmaker Yilmaz Günez met the same problem when his Turkish citizenship was revoked after he had escaped to Europe to finish his film *Yol* (*The Way*, 1982), which criticised the Turkish military rule (Naficy 2001, 54). An illustrative example of the complexity of national labels is also the fate of an Asian-British film *The Warrior* (2001) by Asif Kapadia, which contains less than ten minutes of dialogue in Hindi as it narrates the journey of a man travelling from Rajasthan to the Himalayas. In Britain, the British national cinema had defined the film as British and nominated it as Britain's entry for the Oscars, but it was rejected by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the U.S. on the basis that the dialogue was not in an indigenous language of Britain. An further justification by the Academy was that if the film had been about Hindi speakers in Britain it would have been acceptable (Desai 2004, 50–51).

If diasporic filmmakers enter their films in the main international festivals, they are usually screened in the categories for independent, non-commercial or experimental films such as *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes or *International Forum of New Cinema* in Berlin (Hoefert de Turégano [undated], 4). It is, however, more likely that they will be screened only in film festivals specialised in certain geographical area, such as *Milan African Film Festival*, *Los Angeles Pan African Film Festival* and *New York African Film Festival*.

Commercial film and video distributors do not handle a lot of films by migrant Southern filmmakers but when they do, these films are most likely to be found in the categories 'diverse' or 'art cinema' while independent film distributors use more specified categories. For instance, *California Newsreel* and *Médiathèque des trois mondes* specialised in the distribution of Third World films classify the films regionally (Arab, Asia, Latin America, Africa), thematically (immigration, diaspora, African/American) and sometimes even generically but not nationally.

The specific problem of African diasporic filmmakers is that the production of the whole continent is so small that their films are often referred simply as 'African films' without making any distinction between the productions of different countries or even sub-regions. This is true not only in film and video distribution or in festivals but even in the research on African cinema. As Melissa Thackway has pointed out, an often-repeated sin of Western critics of African art is to overlook the diversity within the African continent because we are better able to note the differences between 'us' and 'them' than the differences between African groups. (Thackway 2003, 50.) This has caused many francophone African filmmakers to complain that they

have been put in an 'African ghetto', which stigmatises their works and encourages western spectators and critics to see them as a homogenous entity having no more than an exotic interest in nature and traditions. The term 'African filmmaker' erases the diversity of African films and the cultures they reflect and imposes a restrictive vision of what African films should be like (Thackway 2003, 2).

In reality, the vast African continent includes several different film traditions which, besides national categories, could be identified further according to their colonial languages (francophone, lusophone and anglophone African cinemas), film traditions (art film oriented francophone African cinemas, popular Nigerian and Ghanaian cinemas) or ethnic origins (Yoruba cinema in Nigeria). Of these, only Nigerian cinema has succeeded in developing a specific identity recognised beyond the national borders of the country on the whole African continent and also worldwide.

The inadequacy of national and regional categories for African diasporic films appears, for instance, in Melissa Thackway's work, *Africa Shoots Back* (2003). Thackway considers the films made by African diasporic filmmakers based in Europe as a sub-genre of Sub-Saharan francophone African cinema on the basis that they reflect an African point of view to the questions with which they are dealing. It is typical in these works to focus on the experience of African characters and communities either in Africa or in diasporic communities in Europe. There are, however, certain films made by filmmakers of African origin featuring African and other multi-ethnic characters, which Thackway (2003, 137–139) would rather call 'French' than 'African' films. Med Hondo's *Watani* (France/Mauritania 1998), for instance,

features a multi-ethnic group of second-generation immigrant youth as if to affirm the cosmopolitan nature of contemporary France. In films such as Hondo's *Lumière noire* (France 1992)²³, Jean Odutan's *Djib* (France/Benin 2000) and Zeka Laplaine's *Paris: xy* (DRC/France 2001), the protagonists are also completely Europeanised and the films do not refer to African immigration as such. The multicultural nature of these and many other films suggests that "a new and still embryonic generation of films is beginning to reflect our increasingly globalised world" (Thackway 2003, 139). These films blur national film boundaries, as is inevitable in a nomadic or migrant cinema and should, in my classification, be called transnational African films.

Third World cinema and Third Cinema

Films by Southern filmmakers have also been classified as belonging to Third World cinema or to the more narrowly defined Third Cinema. The category of 'Third World cinema' refers to the films made in the developing countries of Asia, Africa or Latin America (Armes 1987) but might include also films made by First or Second World people in support of Third World peoples and adhering to the principles of Third Cinema and the works of diasporic filmmakers from the South (Shohat and Stam 1994, 28). The common features of these films are that they focus on the formerly colonised parts of the globe or on the diasporas

23 *Dictionnaire du cinéma africain* (1991), a catalogue of African cinema published by the French Ministry of Development Cooperation, considers all the films of Med Hondo as African according to the Mauritanian origin of the filmmaker.

in the First World, and strive to challenge and “unthink” the Eurocentrism of dominant Hollywood, auteur and avant-garde cinemas (Shohat and Stam 1994).

The inclusion of diasporic films in the category of Third World cinema blurs the specificities of these films and situates them in the marginality of margin. After living in some cases for several decades in Europe or America, diasporic filmmakers often want to detach themselves from the third worldist cinema even if they are not able to identify with the mainstream European and American cinemas.

‘Third Cinema’ refers to the politically engaged and critically aware film movement of the 1960s and 1970s. It was born as a consequence of a wave of militant film declarations and manifestoes of Third World film theorists and festivals such as Glauber Rocha’s *Esthetic of Hunger* (1965), Fernando Solanas and Otavio Getino’s *Towards a Third Cinema* (1969) and Julio Garcia Espinosa’s *For an Imperfect Cinema* (1969). Third Cinema criticised the mainstream, capitalist ‘first cinema’ and the petit bourgeois, authorial ‘second cinema’ and proposed instead unprofessional and imperfect ‘third cinema’ made by Third World filmmakers and their Western engaged allies (see Solanas and Gettino 1976; Gabriel 1982; Pines and Willeman 1989). Third Cinema has also volunteered to offer a home to such diasporic filmmakers as those who escaped Pinochet’s military dictatorship in Chile or those exiled from and/or imprisoned in Turkey (Crofts 1993, 54).

According to Naficy, transnational diasporic cinema is one of the offshoots of the Third Cinema sharing certain characteristics with this politically engaged film movement. Both are historically aware, politically engaged, critically aware, generically hybridised, and produced in an artisanal way. The main difference is that

transnational diasporic cinema is more directly concerned with displaced subjects and diasporic communities, while the Third Cinema films made in the 1960s and 70s did not challenge the European model of the nation-state but rather adopted its ethnocentric, patriarchal, bourgeois, and homophobic ideals. The political engagement of these cinemas is also differently manifested: if Third Cinema advocated class struggle and armed liberation struggle, transnational diasporic cinema favours more discursive and semiotic struggles. (Shohat and Stam 1994, 248–288; Naficy 2001, 30–31.)

The problem with the Third World cinema and Third Cinema categories is that like the category of African cinema, they lock filmmakers into ‘discursive ghettos’, failing to reflect or account for the filmmakers’ personal and stylistic transformations over time. These categories narrow the marketing and critical discourses about these films by encouraging audiences to read them in terms of their ethnic content, ideology or identity politics rather than their authorial vision and style. Limited categories do not attract commercial distributors since they seem to indicate that there is no interest in these films beyond the audiences belonging to this same group or sharing the same ideology. (Naficy 2001, 17.)

Characteristics of transnational diasporic cinema

Hamid Naficy first theorised transnational cinema in his article “Phobic Spaces and Liminal Panics: Independent Transnational Film Genre” (1996) and later in his book *An Accented Cinema*.

Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking (2001), calling it ‘accented cinema’. The term accented cinema is borrowed from linguistics, where it refers to a different pronunciation that marks the user as foreign or from a different social or educational background. The accent becomes a mark of personality and identity. The linguistic concept is used to highlight that the kind of cinema he identifies is different from the standard, neutral and value-free dominant cinema produced by the society’s reigning mode of production. Naficy defines accented cinema as an aesthetic response to the experience of displacement through exile, migration or diaspora.

Another important source for my discussion is Jigna Desai’s work on South Asian diasporic cinema, *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film* (2004). Theoretically Desai, however, borrows heavily from Naficy’s work, which has become a basic reference for any study on transnational diasporic cinema. The difference between them is that Naficy mostly situates accented cinema as an alternative to the hegemony of Hollywood cinema while Desai also places South Asian diasporic films in opposition to global Bollywood cinema. Both are interested in cinema addressing the social processes of exile and migration, and they discuss films that emphasise issues of identity, mobility and location, and all kinds of displacement.

Laura Marks discusses the cinema movement she calls ‘intercultural cinema’ in her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (2000). This cinema is often made by cultural minorities, recent immigrants from Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa living in the West, and also by First World filmmakers. For her, “intercultural cinema is characterized by experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural

regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West” (Marks 2000, 1). Displacement and immigration, however, are not as marked in her work as they are by Naficy, Desai and myself since, even if the British, Canadian, and American intercultural filmmakers that Marks studies identify with more than one cultural background, they live in the country of their birth. Desai and Naficy also concentrate on oppositional films, documentaries, experimental and avant-garde films that have less chance of commercial distribution, while both Desai and I are also interested in films that borrow from mainstream narratives and have had or may have access to wide distribution.

Dislocated filmmakers

Transnational diasporic filmmakers from the South have come to live and make films in the West in two general groupings. The first group arrived between the late 1950s and the mid 1970s as a consequence of Third World decolonisation, wars of national liberation, and a general trend of Westernisation. The reasons for the arrival of the second group in the 1980s and 1990s are more varied, including phenomena such as the failure of nationalism, socialism, and communism, economic globalisation, the rise of militant Islam, the changes in the European, Australian and American immigration policies, and the technological developments and consolidation in computers and media. Transnational filmmakers are, according to Naficy, “the products of this dual postcolonial displacement and postmodern or late modern scattering” (Naficy 2001, 11). The reasons for their arrival are multiple and can be divided into at least three

different groups: *exilic*, *diaspora* and *ethnic* filmmakers according to their reasons of displacement and identifications (Naficy 2001, 10–11).

Exilic filmmakers have left their country of origin voluntarily or involuntarily for political reasons rendering home unsafe. Exile explicitly invokes a home and a homeland, and exiles often maintain an ambivalent relationship with their past and present places and cultures. (Naficy 2001, 12; Peters 1999, 19.) Home and the home country are places to which one can possibly never return but for which one still longs. Exilic filmmakers' desire to return home is manifest in their films in the form of sounds, images and repeated chronotopes.²⁴ Positive chronotopes of home are the nature, mountains, and monuments of the home country, while negative chronotopes describing both homeland and life in exile are claustrophobic places like prison or other closed spaces. Exilic filmmakers are characterised by their need to represent their homelands and people more than themselves. (Naficy 2001, 12.)

Naficy's second category, *diasporic filmmakers*, is more varied than the first one and more difficult to define, as already discussed in the Introduction. Many definitions of diaspora, in fact, include exile, and are thus overlapping. The nurturing of a collective memory and an idealised homeland are constitutive of diasporic identity even if this does not necessarily include the desire to return physically to the homeland (Naficy 2001, 14). Tölöyan has proposed that it would make more sense to think of diaspora or diasporic existence as involving "a *re-turn*, a repeated turning to the concept and/or relation of the homeland and other

24 Cinematic chronotopes refers to certain specific temporal and spatial settings in which stories unfold.

diasporan kin” (Tölöyan 1996, cited in and emphasis added by Desai 2004, 19).

Unlike exiles, whose identity entails a vertical and primary relationship with their homeland, diasporic consciousness is horizontal and multifaceted, involving not only the homeland but also compatriot diaspora communities elsewhere. As Peters (1999, 20) has noted, “exile may be solitary, but diaspora is always collective.” As a result, the dominant structures among diasporas are plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity, while among the political exiles, binarity and duality rule. These differences tend to orient filmmakers differently so that exilic filmmakers focus more on the representation of their people and politics at home while diasporic filmmakers accent plurality and performativity of identity both in their homelands and in their host countries (Naficy 2001, 14).

The postcolonial *ethnic* and *identity filmmakers* are both ethnic and diasporic, since many of them are either immigrants themselves or have been born in the West to non-white, non-Western and postcolonial immigrants. In Europe, the best known film movements by ethnic and identity filmmakers are the *beur* or *banlieu cinémas* of the second generation North Africans in France and the *Black Cinema* of the descendants of African, Asian and Caribbean immigrants in the UK (see, e.g. Tarr 1993; Bloom 2003; Givanni 2004). They differ from diasporic filmmakers in their emphasis on identity and ethnicity politics in their host countries. They are no longer concerned with their remote or lost ‘homelands’ but rather the exigencies of life here and now in the country in which they reside.

The categories of exilic, diasporic and ethnic filmmakers are not static or singular since many filmmakers undergo transformation, or their transformation is impeded, by the legal

status with which they enter the new country and by the work they do there, as well as by the host society's historical perception and current reception of them (Naficy 2001, 15–17; 237). There is, however, no direct or predetermined progression from one state to the next. Furthermore, the movement may also be back and forth as illustrated in the works of the ex-Mauritanian Med Hondo. After dealing explicitly with the questions of African immigration in France in *Soleil O* (France, 1969) and in *Les bicots nègres vos voisins* (France, 1974), Hondo made *Sarraounia* (France, 1987), set in West Africa and later, two films, *Lumière noir* (1992) and *Watani* (1998), focusing on multi-ethnic communities and multicultural society in the new homeland.

In this work I include all the aforementioned groups in the category of transnational diasporic African filmmakers with some reservations to the second and third generation immigrants born outside Africa in the new host country and having the nationality of their country of birth. Their situation is not simple since, in addition to the nationality of their country of birth, they may have the nationality of their African parent(s) even if they had never visited this country, or conversely, they may have spent long periods in the home country of their African parent/s but without any official attachment – nationality or passport – to the country. The fact that they were not born in an African country situates them differently in relation to home and foreign audiences in contrast to the previous generation, but they still have affiliations to their African origin, wanted or not. Due to their appearance or ethnic or 'racial' characteristics, both African and non-African audiences project on to them their expectations, which are not necessarily characteristic of the filmmakers themselves.

Often Third World displaced filmmakers do not enjoy the same transnational freedom of movement as their First

World counterparts. Transnational Third World filmmakers are often forced to stay in the country they have chosen or which has chosen them. Although their profession carries a cosmopolitan aura, they face the same xenophobia and racism as their compatriots in less advantageous positions. Difficult immigrant experiences are also reflected in their films. According to Thackway, the first wave francophone West African immigrant filmmakers, from the 1950s to the beginning of the 1970s, focus thematically on the disillusion of immigrant characters when faced with racism, housing problems and other hardships of life in Europe. The films of second generation immigrant filmmakers, on the other hand, describe difficulties in obtaining residence permits or the danger of deportation, which have become topical with tightened immigrant policies in Europe since the late 1980s (Thackway 2003, 121–145).

Production, distribution and consumption

The second characteristic of transnational diasporic cinema is that most transnational filmmakers operate independently, outside the studio system or the mainstream film industries of their host countries. They live in otherness, and the biographical elements and feelings of this otherness are interwoven in their films. The production, distribution and consumption modes of transnational cinema take several forms, the most important being the interstitial form.

Interstitiality of accented filmmakers means that transnational filmmakers are not only working on the margins of society and film and media institutions but also inside them. To be interstitial means that they “operate both within and astride

the cracks of the system, benefiting from its contradictions, anomalies, and heterogeneity” (Naficy 2001, 46–47). There are always pockets of alternative film practices available in the shadow of dominant ones. Transnational filmmakers are simultaneously global and local in that they resonate against prevailing cinematic production practices while at the same time benefiting from them. For instance, South Asian diasporic filmmakers have gained access to production with the help of sources as different as Hollywood financing, state funding, and multinational sponsorship, while some African diasporic filmmakers have chosen to finance their films with money collected from family and friends (Desai 2004, 38). As Homi Bhabha (1994) has noted, it is necessary to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities, such as institutional locations and geopolitical locales, and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. It is in the emergence of interstices that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated (Bhabha 1994, 1–2).

Transnational filmmakers are interstitial, partial, and multiple also in terms of the various roles they play in producing and making their films.²⁵ Perhaps the lion’s share of their time is spent on financial and production functions, as they have to seek financing for their projects from multiple sources, be they public or private, or national or international institutions. They also write their scripts, act, edit and market their films. Once the film is completed, the work of the filmmaker continues in the field of distribution, that is, if one is not satisfied with the limited

25 In this work I use the terms ‘director’ and ‘filmmaker’ synonymously to indicate the multiple roles transnational African filmmakers have to perform.

distribution of art house cinemas or TV transmission during non-prime-time hours. Performing multiple roles in the filmmaking process is not only a way to save money but also to control the film's vision and aesthetics. However, the involvement in all phases of filmmaking is not a universally desired ideal but often a stressful condition for realising the project. (Naficy 2001, 47–49.)

The multilingualism of the filmmaking process increases the complexity of interstitial filmmaking. Two or more languages might be spoken both on and off camera. Multiple languages are used in the character speech and dialogue of the storyline and also in communication between the members of the multinational production crew, which necessitates extensive translation, dubbing and subtitling throughout the process. Multilingualism also affects the film's reception, as different languages serve different communities of address, often prioritising one over another. (Naficy 2001, 49–50.) Because of the limited space, subtitles must condense several lines of dialogue into brief textual snippets timed to the flow of images. Such condensed subtitles do not necessarily succeed in conveying the subtle differences in characters' accented speech, possibly implying important power differences. Conversely, subtitles may be too long to be read in time, or one set of subtitles may partially cover over another set in a different language if subtitles are used already in the original copy (Naficy 2001, 122–125).

Interstitial films demand skilful translation with a lot of sensitivity for culture-specific expressions and vocabulary. One problem is that dialogue often includes symbols and meanings that are difficult to translate in a transparent way into the terms and concepts of another language. But if left in the original language – as is sometimes done in subtitling – they impair the

understanding of the film.²⁶ In practice, subtitling from a non-European language to a European language is often done through a third language, even through other subtitles that necessarily transform and reduce original meanings.

Interstitial filmmakers also face various political constraints when shooting their films. For political reasons, shooting on the intended location, be it in the country of origin or in the host country, may not be possible, or the conditions for shooting are so restricted that it affects on the final result. All these constraints naturally delay the process of filmmaking and sometimes even interrupt or completely block the completion of the film. (Naficy 2001, 49–51.) As a consequence, the output of interstitial filmmakers is often meagre, and filmmakers successfully making one film every two or three years are rare.

In distribution and exhibition, interstitiality means that transnational cinema has to find alternative exhibition and distribution options within their reach. The major film and video distribution companies or chains rarely take transnational films in distribution, which forces filmmakers to rely on independent, non-profit, and politically or ideologically committed micro distributors and cultural institutions such as museums, art cinemas, universities and colleges. The distribution channels for transnational diasporic films are often the same as those available to Third World and other minor cinemas. The small-scale, viewer-oriented technologies of production and consumption, such as Hi-8 video cameras, VCRs, CD-ROMS, DVDs, and cable and satellite television have made possible low-tech, personal and contingent filmmaking and film viewing that was difficult to realise before.

26 I owe this remark to Sini Fabre studying subtitling and translations of the films of Sembene Ousmane in her Masters' thesis for the University of Turku.

The development of digital and satellite television, with their need for a large supply of cultural products, has also opened up new markets for transnational films. (Naficy 1999, 129; Desai 2004, 40.)

Transnational filmmakers have sometimes formed ethnically accented film collectives whose purpose has been to counter negative stereotypes of these ethnic groups. In the United States, the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s influenced the development of Asian-American independent filmmaking with the formation of federally funded art programmes. During this period, community and collective organisations such as Visual Communications and Asian CineVision worked for better representation of Asian-Americans. More recently, the National Asian-American Telecommunications Association became a major distributor for Asian-American media. Many of these organisations have screened the films of transnational diasporic filmmakers at film festivals (Desai 2004, 47). In Britain, Black workshops and collectives of African, Asian, and Caribbean filmmakers were born as a consequence of social unrest and riots against police harassment, racism, and unemployment, and for “black representation” in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The protests and movements resulted in the formation of state-sponsored organisations structured to facilitate the emergence of black British cultural producers. (Naficy 2001, 87–95, Desai 2004, 53.) Unlike in the USA and Britain, the production of *beur* and African transnational cinema in France has mostly remained independent and artisanal due to the lack of public funding for collectives (Tarr 1993, 322–323).

Transnational style

The cinema by transnational filmmakers is by no means an established or cohesive cinema, which could be described as having certain common features. In terms of output, transnational cinema production translates into thousands of films and its makers represent a wide range of ethnic and national cultures of origin. This necessarily means a great variety of forms, styles and narratives. The main characteristics of transnational style are hybridity, intersituality and liminality (Shohat and Stam 1994; Naficy 2001; Desai 2004).

According to Shohat and Stam the alternative aesthetics of transnational cinema includes forms of expression such as hybridity, carnivalesque, syncretism, media jujitsu and anthropophagy that challenge the aesthetics of dominant cinemas. They are often rooted in non-realist, non-Western or para-Western cultural traditions featuring other historical rhythms, narrative structures and views of the body, sexuality, spirituality and the collective life. They question the nationalist discourses through the grids of class, gender, sexual, and diasporic identities and fuse paramodern traditions into clearly modernising or postmodernising aesthetics. Alternative aesthetics also challenge Manichean dichotomies, which see people in traditional societies as incapable of cultural 'progress' and change, and only Western people as able to produce modern and paramodern aesthetic innovations. They do not see the cinematic aesthetic innovations, like non-linear narrative structures, collective agency and provocative symbiosis of music and orality of diasporic films, as imitations of Western cinema but as influenced by "archaic" orality, which is found in both

Western and non-Western founding narratives. Diasporic films are neither 'Western' nor 'authentic' but hybrid formations of different origins. (Shohat and Stam 1994, 295–333.)

Understanding the nature of orality also helps to understand the hybridity and transcending of genre boundaries in African transnational cinema. Traditional *orature*²⁷ storytellers cleverly adapted their narratives to suit the mood and tastes of different audiences by incorporating new, outside elements and blending genres and forms. This is particularly noticeable in the way tales are constantly modernised so that they continue to reflect changing socio-cultural realities. (Thackway 2003, 92; Vuorela 1991, 66.) For this reason, even the most experimental and contemporary works can be analysed in terms of the influence of orality.

According to Naficy, deterritorialised experience has produced certain accented aesthetics, which are composed of certain common stylistic features. The accent permeates the entire film from narrative and visual style to characters and plot. The accented markers are visible all over the film, interfering with the comprehension and interpretation of the film. The style is not, however, unitary or homogenous but each film partakes of some or all of the constituting elements of this style in different measures. (Naficy 2001, 289–292.) According to Naficy's empirical study on mostly Arab and Asian exilic films, the most intriguing features of the "accented style" are epistolary narratives, an interest in territory and territoriality and certain repeated chronotopes and transnational places. Epistolary narratives involve film forms such as film-letters, letter-films

27 Orature refers to multiple forms of oral literature, poetry, fables, proverbs and others. (Finnegan 1984/1976).

and telephonic epistles, which originate from the exilic situation necessitating communication between the place of origin and the actual place of living (Naficy 2001, 101–151).

Not surprisingly, accented films are concerned with territory and territoriality either due to certain missing territory or to difficulties in a new place of living. The attachment to the lost home country is expressed in certain chronotopes, such as natural landscapes, mountains, monuments and reminiscences, while the contradictory relationship with the homeland or the new host land experienced as hostile is associated with prisons and closed apartments. Films also feature important transitional and transnational places, such as borders, tunnels, seaports, airports and hotels and different vehicles of mobility (Naficy 2001, 152–221). Transnational films cross borders both thematically and stylistically. Journeying is described in the form of home-seeking and homecoming journeys, journeys of homelessness, or journeys of identity. Border-crossing is visible not only thematically but also in regard to film genres and aesthetic conventions. Even if accented films are driven by the aesthetics of juxtaposition and by the binary structures comparing “there with here, then with now, home with exile”, they generally “derive their power not from purity and *refusal* but from impurity and *refusion*” (Naficy 2001, 6).

Diasporic films may be hybrid also in the way they combine aesthetic forms and narrative structures from other global cinemas than Hollywood. According to Desai, global Bollywood cinema has visibly influenced diasporic South Asian films. For example, they employ musical sequences to interrupt the narrative of the film in the same way as do commercial Bollywood films, or use Bollywood music as background music or as part of

the narrative structure. The same actors and actresses may appear both in Bollywood and diasporic films and Bollywood is also referred to thematically in several of these films. (Desai 2004, 42.)

Dilemmas of transnational diasporic cinema

Burden of representation

Transnational diasporic filmmakers do not make their films in a cultural void; they have to balance between different demands and expectations created by commercial market forces and those created by different audiences at home and abroad. In the global market, the media and other cultural productions occupy a dual position. They are simultaneously commodities in the transnational economy and important political institutions doing identity work in local, national and global level. This duality helps to identify conflicts, which enter into processes of globalisation.

The needs of Western audiences may concentrate on entertaining and enlightening transnational films, sometimes at the expense of the integrity of filmmakers' native culture or, on the contrary, they may want to see films of diasporic filmmakers as ethnographic documents of 'other' cultures and as portraying the 'other' through cultural difference. It is not unimportant what kind of image the transnational film conveys of the host society. Overly negative and distorted representations given by an 'outsider' are not easily swallowed, as shown in certain British criticism of the films of Hanif Kureishi (Desai 2004, 60). The financial success of transnational diasporic films might

also depend on the language used in the film. Diasporic films in European languages are more likely to gain access to resources, be marketed and achieve commercial success than those made in non-European languages (Desai 2004, 45).

On the other hand, home audiences and displaced diasporic communities often demand 'authentic' and corrective representations of their image. As a consequence of historical discrimination, hostility and stereotyping transnational, ethnic communities in Western societies are often very sensitive to how they are represented by cinema and other media. They are aware that any negative character belonging to a certain ethnic community is rarely seen as just an individual character but is easily taken to represent the entire ethnic community by non-members of this community (Sreberny 1999, 30). Critics reviewing the representations of immigrants in French films express a common concern that new immigrant/*beur* films should not continue the tradition of 'miserabilism' of the 'first generation' immigrant films, which showed North African Arabs as passive victims of French racism. According to the same critics, new films should also go beyond the stereotypical depiction of Arabs in certain French films of the 1970s and 1980s associated with criminality and violence (men) or sexuality and eroticism (women). (Tarr 1993, 324–325.)

The protectiveness and defensiveness of the 'home' audiences force diasporic filmmakers to balance ethnic and national loyalty of their compatriots with their personal and artistic integrity. This *burden of representation*, named as such by Mercer (1990), may bring filmmakers into direct conflict with their 'own' communities at the same time as they are doing their best to counter negative or inaccurate stereotypes. In many cases the filmmakers are criticised by both their own ethnic community

at home and in diaspora, and by the host community. (Shohat and Stam 1994, 183; Naficy 2001, 64–65; 82–93, Thackway 2003, 37, Desai 2004, 58–69.)

Dependence on European public and private subsidies has influenced the content of diasporic films. As discussed earlier, Euro-American audiences have certain expectations of what an African, Asian or an immigrant film should be like, and Western sponsors more readily finance films that conform to audience expectations than films that reflect the ideas of the director or expectations of diasporic audiences that possibly contradict mainstream expectations. In order to obtain funding, filmmakers are expected to make films about the problems of their community and to represent their culture as ‘other’ in terms of common assumptions and popular misconceptions. They may also have more difficulties in finding funding for films representing their home countries if financing bodies, such as those in the UK and Canada, more readily recognise the necessity of addressing the settings and problems of these countries. Such influences have been reported, for instance, on Turkish immigrant cinema in Germany (Göktürk 2003, 182–183), on black Asian, African and Caribbean film in Britain (Malik 1996, 206, Desai 2004, 48), and on African films in France (Thackway 2003, 120–121).

The need for ethnic communities to also see positive representations of their community in cinema and television is not necessarily contradictory to the needs of production and distribution companies looking for large audiences and better profits, as shown by the recent commercial successes of popular Black British films like *Bhadji on the Beach* (1993) and *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) by Gurinder Chadha and several others. *Bhadji on the Beach*, the first feature film directed by an Asian woman in Britain, depicts the reality of Asian women’s heterogeneous and

often complex lives. Unlike other British-Asian films depicting Asian women in the private space of the home, in *Bhadi on the Beach* women are temporarily seen to inhabit a public sphere, Blackpool beach. At the same time, the film does not give the sense that any culture has ‘crossed over’ or been assimilated, but that a new form of cultural identity is emerging (Malik 1996, 212–213). Similarly, *Bend it Like Beckham*, depicting a young Punjabi British woman in her quest to play soccer, challenges the submissive role of a traditional Punjabi woman. It also breaks the stereotype of the patriarchal and abusive Asian father since it is the father of the protagonist who finally becomes the supporter of his daughter’s career.²⁸ The film surpassed all box office expectations earning approximately \$26 million in the U.S. alone; it was selected as the best comedy film of the year in Britain (Desai 2004, 50.).

In the globalised world marked by displaced people and multiple ethnic minorities, there is a growing market for multicultural representations. Everyday life in Europe is far more cross-culturally connected than media depictions show, which has caused ethnic minorities to complain that they have to rent or buy videos in order to see themselves represented as public and commercial television channels lag behind their needs (Sreberny 1999). If the diasporic communities are not fairly represented in the mainstream European and American mainstream media, they are likely to turn to their own transnational satellite-mediated media as South Asian diasporas have done already.

28 Another commercially highly successful British Asian film, *East is East* (1999), was severely criticised for perpetuating the stereotype of an oppressive Asian father (Desai 2004, 50).

Cultural specificity vs. universality

Another dilemma of transnational diasporic filmmakers is the tension between *culture specificity* and *universalism*. If the film is 'too culture specific' or 'too local' it may fail to attract foreign audiences, but if it does not respect certain cultural conventions and norms, domestic audiences may reject it. What constitutes the universal and specific is not an easy question to answer, however. Each director has to decide and define for him/herself what it means.

The Hollywood film industry, which for a long time has been committed to the project of making films with universal appeal, represents *the hegemonic form of universalism* that is undergirded by an oppressive will to power (Naficy 2001, 82).²⁹ Hollywood films are carefully balanced and modified to be understood but not to harm any religious, cultural or other groups (see, e.g. Liebes and Katz 1993, Mattelart 1984). In Hollywood films, American problems are given an all-human universalistic/global spin even if, as Hedetoft (2000, 280–281) points out, their interpretive framing and sets of ideas and values are completely American. Despite the universal/global appeal, certain national cinemas also receive their national specificity according to the origin of the filmmaker, shooting locations, location of the events or other local situatedness. The asymmetry between the more powerful and the less powerful nations makes the more powerful nations tend towards universality of meanings, impact and acceptance as their national-cultural currency becomes transnationally

29 Hollywood cinema is not the only hegemonic cinema since there are also other regionally important film hegemonies, such as Bollywood cinema in Asia and Africa, Hong Kong cinemas in the Far East and Mexican and Brazilian cinemas in Latin America.

adopted. The less powerful ones always carry the label of national or cultural specificity. (Hedetoft 2000, 281.)

The imbalance of the film industry has created a situation in which Hollywood film conventions look natural or universal in the eyes of other national audiences while non-Hollywood conventions are considered more or less odd, since global audiences are not used to receiving them.³⁰ As Higson (1989, 40) has stated, in order to be nationally popular a cinema “must also be international in scope. That is to say, it must achieve the international (Hollywood) standard.” Hollywood conventions are so widely accepted as universal that even African audiences consider the productions of their own countries too slow or too educational compared to those they are used to seeing in cinemas and television. If there were more cultural exchange between African and Western countries film industries and more African productions available, non-African audiences could become accustomed to different ways of representation as well. More multicultural offerings could also be fruitful for the development of mainstream cinema, which could take new ideas and influences from other cinemas much in the same way that African ‘primitive’ art has influenced European modern art or ethnic or world music Euro-American music.

Naficy differentiates the hegemonic form of universalism from the localist form of universalism, which is obtainable through cultural specificity. This has been the choice of many art film directors, who claim that their works become more universal when they have drawn strength from the local experience. In their

30 Shohat and Stam (1996, 148) make an apt remark about the yearly Oscar ceremonies, where the audiences are global but the product promoted is almost always American. The rest of the world outside of America is put in only one category, that of the ‘foreign film’.

films, universally recognisable problems are given local treatment and solutions. This is exemplified in the works of directors such as Satyajit Ray, Akira Kurosawa, Aki Kaurismäki or Sembene Ousmane, who have gained their reputations as narrators of their own people's stories even if they have made films outside their own countries. One of them, Jean Renoir, has recalled how he first tried to imitate the American way of making films but understood finally that he "could only create works of quality by following the traditions of people like himself" (Naficy 2001, 83). Localist universalism, however, should not be obscured with another understanding of cultural specificity, which emphasises the authenticity of a certain culture. Authenticity easily translates to nationalism, xenophobia and racism, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Discourses of African authenticity³¹

The cultural specificity of African cultural productions has often been discussed in terms of 'authenticity' and 'tradition'. In these discussions, the value of African arts and cultural products has been measured according to their African identity³² – mostly understood as inherited, stable and unchangeable – that is, according to their 'Africanness'.

31 Discourses of authenticity do not concern only the African continent but all non-Western and non-hegemonic cultures seen as 'other' to hegemonic Western cultures.

32 In these discourses Africa is seen as a homogeneous entity that is expressed in this chapter with general singular formulations like 'African culture', 'African identity' and 'African people'.

The origin of the struggle for African authenticity can be traced back to European colonial discourses, which situated African people on the lowest step of the evolutionary hierarchy, somewhere between the apes and the humans. Africans, however, were not doomed to this primitive level forever but, with the help of Europeans, would have the chance to climb upwards in the stages of social evolution. This evolutionist schema advancing from primitivism through the stages of savagery and barbarism to civilisation thus furnished a justification for the colonisation of Africa. Imperial management was only the duty of a white man in order to develop the primitive black man. The attitudes of colonial masters towards Africa, however, were ambivalent since this remote site of primitivism, savagery and barbarism also came to represent an object of desire and celebration not found outside of Africa. The redefinition of savagery began to take shape at the end of the 19th century with the 'recovery of unconscious'. The main idea of the 'recovery of unconscious' is inherent in psychoanalysis and in the attitudes towards primitive and colonised peoples. According to this discourse, "civilized man is painfully divided between the desire to 'correct' the 'errors' of the savages and the desire to identify with them in his search for some lost paradise", as observed by D.O.Mannoni (1950/56, cited in Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 37–38) about European writing on Africa. For the critics of Western modernity, the African Other came to signify an attractive difference "to which the overdeveloped Westerner should turn in search of salvation" (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 9).

This new admiring interpretation of the *sauvage* inspired several European painters and artists at the end of 19th century to explore 'true' and 'untouched' cultural expressions of Africa. For example, for Picasso, 'wild' and 'primitive' became terms of

praise and appreciation and the primitive sculpture strongly influenced the new style of cubism he developed after his journey to Africa (Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 39). Inherent in the search of European artists was the Hegelian idea of Africa as a part of the non-historical world showing neither movement nor change. The critics and artists using Africa as their source of inspiration have played a crucial role in promoting an image of African cultural production as other and authentic (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 9).

A group of Western critics and consumers of African cultural productions still expresses this kind of ambivalent relationship with regard to African productions. On the one hand, African cultural productions are not considered interesting for the tastes of cultivated, modern Western audiences because of their primitivism and traditionality. On the other hand, they are appealing because of their very exoticism and difference, their *authenticity*. If these unchangeable and authentic art forms are not found in African cultural productions they are accused of mimicry and lack of originality (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 8–9).

The notion of African authenticity was also advocated in colonial Africa, where the development of Pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism and the discourse of authenticity can be understood as counter-movements to racism and the suppression of African peoples during the colonial period. The nationalist discourses of African independence were heavily influenced by the Black Nationalist movements in the African diaspora in North America and Europe, accentuating the common experience of discrimination among people of African descent in Africa and in the diaspora. The early Pan-African ideology was based on the idea of race, that the people of Africa had a common destiny because they belonged to a specific race. While the main concern

of Pan-Africanism and nationalist movements was the political and economic liberation of Africa, the culturalist version of Pan-Africanism extended its demands to the decolonisation of African art, philosophy, literature, film, etc. The purpose was to rediscover and revalorise the traditions derived from common African origins and to make them living in contemporary cultural productions. (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 9.)

The most influential cultural expressions of this ideology came from francophone Caribbean and West Africa with the *négritude* literary movement of the 1930s and after. Its founding fathers, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, emphasised African cultural and psychological distinctiveness from European but did not have a special political programme to implement this. For the *négritude* concept itself, the most influential figure was Senghor – the first president designate of Senegal. His thought was developed in France in the 1930s on the basis of the experiences of prejudice which African and Caribbean students, visitors and immigrants encountered there. According to Senghor, it was only after going to Paris that he “became conscious of belonging to the basic category of Negro.” The idea of a shared common identity of those coming from different colonies of the French empire was thus born mainly of the prejudices of others. (Howe 1998, 26–27.)

For Senghor, the difference between a European and an African personality is that the African personality has special qualities of intuition, spontaneity, creativity and spirituality, while the European has strengths in logical and scientific thought. Césaire did not subscribe to Senghor’s biological determinism but preferred a cultural constructionist understanding of black identity. Senghor and Césaire agreed on the presence of black

specificity but, unlike today's separatist Afrocentrists, they did not see the differences in absolute terms. They considered basic differences between Europeans and Africans rather complementary than antagonistic and accentuated the shared human traits and an intercultural dialogue between Africa and the West. In Senghor's early writing, the universalist category of humanism was consistently used as a positive term and the creation of the category of *négritude* did not mean a total rejection of Western civilisation and of universalist ideas. (Howe 1998, 26–27; Kraidy 2005, 69.) Senghor insisted repeatedly that *négritude* should be Africa's contribution to the coming universal civilisation, to which all people would contribute and which would be unattainable unless narrow nationalism was transcended (Cook 1965, vii). Later uses and abuses of *négritude* in the service of Afrocentrist ideology and separatist Black Movements have, however, tended to retain the essentialist claim about specific racial mentalities while abandoning the universalist humanism promoted by Senghor. This has also justified the criticism of *négritude* and the discourse of authenticity on the basis that they come to support racist stereotypes and uphold unequal power relations and a racial division of power.

The idea of an essential difference between European and African continues to operate both in the level of everyday speech and in cultural criticism even if the idea of race has mostly been discarded and replaced by notions of culture and civilisation (see, e.g. an interview with Mudimbe in Palmberg 2001, 248–251; Barlet 2002). The idea of the racial and cultural specificity of Africa has had a great influence on ideas of the role and purpose of cultural production. According to this concept, the cultural production of Africa shares special traits, which are

not common to any other cultural production. It is different from any other culture and its primary role is to assert this difference. The discourses of authenticity claim that particular criteria and standards should be adopted in relation to cultural production in Africa. These criteria mean that African cultural production should be valued and analysed in terms of its 'Africanness'. What follows is that cultural borrowings and adaptations from other cultures are not encouraged but, rather, they are considered as mimicry or betrayal of one's own cultural values and traditions. The artist is presented as a westernised African implementing the colonisation and Westernisation of the mind. Another criticism that can be addressed within the discourse of authenticity is how cultural identity is understood in this discourse. Defenders of authenticity seem to understand cultural identity in terms of one shared identity, which does not leave space for variations or differences, nor for change or evolution. (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 9–11.)

The Afrocentrist standards are adopted and expressed both by certain Western and African critics and audiences. In Africa, it is mostly the group that have special experience of European racism and imperialism, the well-educated elite in Africa and in diaspora, who have made themselves guardians of authenticity. People outside the political and intellectual elite seem less affected by the agony of non-authenticity. In the diaspora, Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism have since the beginning been preoccupied with questions of identity, which they have, to some extent, shared with the intellectual and political elite in Africa but less with the vast majority of the African population struggling with issues of everyday living. These differences are also reflected in cultural production in such a way that authenticity often plays

a central role in the cultural politics and discourses of the elite, while in popular culture it plays a less important role. (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 11–12.)

Cultural hybridisation

Colonisation was not only a process of cultural and political suppression accentuating the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but also of *cultural hybridisation*. In the colonial discourse, half-caste, mixed-breed and *métis* were dominantly associated with negative connotations by the 19th century race theories because, according to them, in any mixture the ‘lower’ element would predominate. The idea of mixing went against all doctrines of purity, strength and sanctity, of which ‘race science’ and racism have been modern, biologised versions (Nederveen Pieterse 2004, 52–53). In contemporary writing on globalisation and culture, both the idea of pure, distinctive cultures and the idea of one universal culture are disappearing and in human and social sciences there is a consensus that global culture is hybridised, mixing heterogeneous elements into recombinant forms. Hybridity calls attention to multiple identities generated by geographical displacements and has been elaborated especially by intellectuals, who themselves are diasporic and hybrid. There are, however, different conceptions on how equally cultural hybridisation can take place. For certain cultural critics, hybridity is just a new way to masquerade the efforts of dominant cultures to penetrate and transform other cultures.

The notion of hybridisation was already in positive use in the Latin American and Caribbean literary modernisms in the 1920s

and 1930s and by the Tropicalia movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In these movements, hybridity and several other terms such as *mestizaje*, *indigenismo*, *creolité* and *raza cósmica* described a fruitful influence of linguistic, cultural and religious coexistence of different cultures. Each of the terms has its specific history but their multiple usages have led to a confusing situation where the expanding scope of the term has diluted their meaning.

The term *mestizaje* refers to boundary crossing mixture. In several Latin American countries it was adopted as the official ideology of nation building in the wake of postcolonial decolonisation. *Mestizaje* was an attempt to ease tensions between indigenous populations and the descendants of Spanish colonialists by positing the new nations as hybrids of both worlds. The concept, however, contains residual imperial relationships and has been considered by its critics as an ideology of a hegemonic elite referring to the ‘whitening’ or Europeanisation and striving to erase the African black heritage in Latin America. (Nederveen Pieterse 2004, 70; Kraidy 2005, 51.)

The notion of *transculturalism* emerged in Cuba and Brazil in the mid 1930s and early 1940s as a variant of *mestizaje*. In Cuba the notion of transculturalism was developed to understand Cuba’s experience of racial and cultural encounters, while in Brazil it was used to explain the racial and class dynamics of the country. Transculturation (and *mestizaje*) entailed a more egalitarian cultural exchange process than assimilation and acculturation, but in its institutionalised form it was an efficient tool to integrate precolonial natives into a new emerging nation. The ideology of transculturation was considered as a way to prevent the gradual degradation and disappearance of precolonial cultures and integrate them into the dominant culture by welcoming certain non-threatening cultural forms of the natives

while imposing upon them Spanish or Portuguese language, the Catholic faith, and colonial and social organisation. (Kraidy 2005, 53–54.) More recently transculturation has been adopted to denote cultural mixture in literature and music, for example, to describe emerging forms of ‘world music’ (Wallis and Malm 1984, 300–302).

Creolisation (*creolité*) is a term derived from Creole languages and linguistics. In the Caribbean and North America it refers to the mixture of African and European while in Latin America *criollo* originally denotes those of European descent born on the continent (Nederveen Pieterse 2004, 70) or of African slaves relocated on the American continent (Stewart 1999, according to Kraidy 2005, 56). Like *mestizaje* the use of *creolité* came to life in the wake of European colonialism in the New World and has since developed multiple usages, which have made it one of the most confused terms used to describe global culture (Kraidy 2005, 55–57). Benedict Anderson writes about “Creole pioneers” who led the establishment of nationalism on the American continent and the states it created. He used creolism to describe all American states – also the United States – that were “formed and led by people who shared the common language and a common descent with whom they fought” (Anderson 1991, 47). According to Anderson, Latin American creolism was the source of a movement of national coalescence and unity whose project was the establishment of independent nation-states. In these early liberation struggles language was never an issue. In the United States creolism is associated with the confluence of British, French and African elements in the state of Louisiana, referring today especially to the tourism and culinary sectors. In the structuralist approach creolism is discussed as an identity derived from “birthplace, ancestry and race and culture” (Kraidy

2005, 56–57). In academic parlance Ulf Hannerz discusses creole cultures as a metaphor of the global ecumene of today's world. For Hannerz, creole cultures are “intrinsically of mixed origin, the confluence of two or more widely separate historical currents which interact in what is basically a center/periphery relationship” (Hannerz 1992, 264). Hannerz has been criticised for choosing the term, which has been burdened with colonial and biologicistic connotations and which is thus laden with multiple and confusing meanings (Kraidy 2005, 57). The literary scholarship of Mihail Bakhtin on polyphony develops a strand related to creolisation. For Bakhtin, linguistic hybridisation signifies “a mixture of two social languages within the limit of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (Bakhtin 1981/1988, 358).

In the African context, V.Y. Mudimbe has conceptualised the hybridity of the colonial encounter as an *espace métissé*. In Mudimbe's exploration of Christianity in Central Africa, this *espace métissé* is presented as a form of acculturation process. It does not imply that the dominant culture completely absorbs the weaker culture nor an adoption or integration of elements in the dominant culture by the weaker; rather it is a transculturation process – the creation of a new mixed cultural order. Contrary to the expectations of missionaries and colonisers, the mission did not lead to complete conversion. The institution of a perfect western model was impossible due to the spirit of resistance created by the oppressive system of colonisation. It was also impossible since missionaries and colonised subjects did not fully understand each other due to translation problems and linguistic misunderstandings. The problem of translation means that the

symbols and meanings of a given culture cannot be translated in a transparent way into the terms and concepts of another culture. Something in the “original” is always lost but sometimes misunderstandings can also lead to new syncretic innovations. (Eriksson Baaz 2001, 12–13.)

In the post-colonial discourse, hybridity is understood as the positive ability of local cultures to fuse ‘foreign’ ingredients with ‘indigenous’ ones and to put things together in new ways. In his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993/2000), the British sociologist Paul Gilroy examines the transatlantic flow of people, ideas and culture that began with the slave trade. In this work, a slave ship symbolises the intellectual journey between the point of departure and the destination, between Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean. Gilroy attacks the ethnocentrism and exclusionism of both Afrocentrism and British cultural nationalism and explores the hybridised character of Black musical and literary cultural production. This Black culture is characterised by a double consciousness, which follows from being at the same time both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the West and modernity. Gilroy himself has focused his empirical analysis on diasporic cultural productions, such as hip hop music and the writing of African-Americans but subsequent scholars have also made efforts to discuss his conception of ‘countercultures of modernity’ in relation to African cultural production (see e.g. Helgesson 2001, 23–38).

In the work of Homi Bhabha (1994), the discourse of hybridity accentuates the capacity of peripheries to talk back. Bhabha re-evaluated the cultural mixing of colonial exchange and called attention to the equivocal, hybrid, and unstable nature of this exchange. According to Bhabha, what at first glance looks like colonial servility or mimicry is revealed on closer inspection as a

symptom of resistance by the colonised to criticise nationalism, nativism and modernity. (Bhabha 1994, 85–92) He emphasises the ability of hybridity to challenge dominant discourses and to reappropriate them to create new ‘cultures of a postcolonial *contra-modernity*’ captured by the notions of ‘the third space’ or ‘in-betweenness’ (Bhabha 1994, 6).

Scholars of hybridity have been criticised for the fact that speaking about hybridisation of cultures easily leads to the essentialised idea according to which the cultural currents joined through hybridisation had originally been culturally ‘pure’ or ‘authentic’ until they were thus joined (Friedman 1994, 208; Hannerz 1997; Moore-Gilbert 1997, 129). On the contrary, if it is conceded, as Bhabha did, that all cultures are impure, mixed and hybrid, what is the use of concepts like ‘the third space’, ‘hybridity’ and ‘in-between’ and how can they be understood as specifically postcolonial modes or spaces of cultural intervention? (Moore-Gilbert 1997, 130; Tomlinson 1999, 144.)

Another criticism has stated that the vision of hybridity neglects material inequalities existing in the previously colonised world. Those celebrating hybridity stress the reciprocity of exchange and reject the idea of one-way processes in which oppression obliterates the oppressed or the coloniser silences the colonised in absolute terms. But, as Shohat and Stam (1994) have pointed out, hybridity also implies asymmetry and imbalance of power, often inherited from the colonial period. Not all participants in the processes of hybridisation have similar technical, economic, cultural or other means to influence others. The power relationships affect cultures by shaping material and power conditions to which cultures adapt, and through the more direct influx of initially alien meanings and cultural forms. The

global distribution of power tends to make First World countries cultural 'transmitters' and to reduce most Third World countries to the status of 'receivers'. (Shohat and Stam 1994, 43; Kraidy 2005, 58.) Transnational postcolonial films, rap music, cross-kitchen and ethnic fashion are examples of hybrid cultural commodities of peripheries that have succeeded in entering the global market and finding their niche in the world metropolis on the conditions of the First World structures by using the same organisational forms and technology as the centre.

Hybridity as cultural strategy

My interest in this study is in the dialectics between cultural specificity and universality in transnational African cinema. In the next chapter, I explore cultural hybridity as a strategy of a transnational cinema to cope with the dilemma between cultural specificity and universality. Hybridity is understood as a cultural strategy to resist both nationalist and homogenising processes: it does not mean a series of simplistic relations between one influential sender (in the First World) and several passive receivers (in the Third World) but it is expected that active meaning making happens in the both ends. A sending culture is a diverse, assimilationist cultural rag-bag, of which only certain influences are adopted by the receiving culture. Similarly, a receiving culture reacts only to certain foreign influences and reinterprets them in the context of its national history and culture (Hedetoft 2000, 280–281).

The hybridisation of cinema is a process in which a local/national film unconsciously or consciously reacts to foreign

influences and adopts and reformulates some of them for its own needs. Partly local cinema is stripped of excessively culture-specific features in order to please unspecified global audiences, and partly it preserves certain specific characteristics for the same end. Hybridity is thus understood both as *a natural result* of the meetings of different cultures and the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relations, and as *a conscious strategy*, which is the result of artistic intention and stylistic organisation to make films that speak simultaneously to foreign and national/local audiences³³. Culturally strange content can be made more approachable by using familiar aesthetic conventions, like genres, narratives and camera angles. They serve as signposts, helping the spectators receive and enjoy the film even if they are not familiar with the cultural contents. As Teresa Hoefert de Turegano (Undated) has stated, the experience of a European seeing a non-European film should be like “going out for Chinese food or for an Indian curry: the food should be authentic, spicy but not too spicy so that it becomes inedible.”³⁴

The basic demand for reading a film or understanding its denotation is to recognise the objects and actions shown in the image (Aumont, Bergala, Marie and Vernet 1992, 83). A

33 These two ways of understanding hybridity come close to Bakhtin's terms *organic unconscious hybridity* and *intentional hybridity*. (Bakhtin 1981, 358–360)

34 This kind of balancing between African traditions and western audiences is reported by Ken Harrow in a discussion about authenticity of African cinema: “Some time ago when yeleen (sic) had come to Washington for a film festival, I asked cisse (sic) about his use of mask in a tree. The mask looked like a haloween (sic) mask, and I wondered why, with africa's (sic) own rich masking traditions, he used something that looked like a western imitation of bad African art. He answered that he was trying to reach the widest possible audience, and that they would respond more to something that was familiar” (Harrow 4.5.1999).

western viewer of an African film might even have difficulties in distinguishing between different black characters in African films because they are not used to seeing films with African/black actors only.³⁵ This is an example of the most basic obstacle TO the reception of a film; if one cannot differentiate the actors, it is not possible to follow the narrative and enjoy it. Similar problems arise if the formal conventions, or the 'grammar of the film' as Aumont and others (1992, 83) call it, are very different from those to which the audience is accustomed. Since viewers make sense of the film by recognising formal elements and reacting to them, they might feel lost if the formal conventions do not correspond to those with which they are familiar. Narrative conventions of Western mainstream cinema presuppose, for example, that every element has a function or a motivation in the film or that there is a certain amount of repetition and variation in a film. The generic conventions of Hollywood cinema are familiar also to global audiences; one cannot, say, imagine a love story without a happy end or a comedy without a surprise effect causing a laugh. (Bordwell and Thompson 1990, 34–50.) This is not to say that every film should follow familiar conventions – such a statement would mean to neglect the value of all experimental and avant-garde cinemas consciously aiming to break established cinematic

35 This remark is based on my experience of Finnish and foreign university students when watching African films on my course "African Cinema South of Sahara". The students commented that they had difficulties following the narrative because they could not differentiate who was who in the film. Similarly Japanese viewers of *Dallas* have claimed that they have difficulties in following the series because all the actors look alike and are indistinguishable from each other (Liebes and Katz 1993, 134). I do not know if African viewers have similar problems with Western films since they have been exposed to Euro-American films for a long time and may be more used to seeing white actors while Western audiences rarely see films dominated by black actors.

conventions – but it is more to draw attention to their significance for the good travelling of films. As Bordwell and Thompson (1990, 38–39) write,

A highly innovative work can at first seem odd because it refuses to conform to the rules we expect. Cubist painting, twelve-tone music, and the French ‘New Novel’ of the 1950s seemed difficult initially because of their refusal to adhere to conventions. But a closer look may show that the unusual artwork has its own rules, creating an unorthodox formal system, which we can learn to recognise and respond to. Eventually, the new systems offered by such unusual works may themselves become models of new conventions and thus create new expectations.

In the analysis of *Karmen*, I explore how hybridity makes sense in the production, marketing and textuality of a Senegalese transnational film. In the following chapters the focus will be on the reactions of Senegalese and foreign film critics, the Senegalese press and ordinary Senegalese people to the strategy adopted. However, before moving on to the empirical analysis, I will introduce the reader to the transnational infrastructures of Senegalese cinema. It must be noted that interstitiality and liminality are not only the condition of diasporic Senegalese filmmakers but also characterise Senegalese film production as a whole.

4

Transnational infrastructures of Senegalese national cinema

Unlike traditional forms of communication like oral storytelling, music or dance, cinema was originally the product of a limited number of Western countries. As a modern form of communication it was introduced into Third World countries by Western powers and their capitalist enterprises during the colonial period. Although most Third World countries today have at least some production they call their national cinema, the inception and development of most Third World national cinemas have remained closely tied to Western capitalism (Armes 1987, 35). The only exceptions are countries with sufficiently large domestic audiences and well-developed domestic distribution and exhibition circuits such as India, Mexico or Brazil.

In this chapter, I discuss the links between Senegalese cinema and the Western film industry. My purpose is to argue that, despite efforts to create Senegalese national cinema, these efforts have succeeded only at the level of content and issues. Regarding production, exhibition and distribution, Senegalese films have always been transnational and interstitial. For individual directors, to make films in Senegal has meant a lot of travelling between the home country and at least one Western country to obtain professional training, to find financial and technical support, to do post-production work and to promote the

marketing of the films. Many are also filmmakers who after these experiences have joined the African labour diaspora in Europe in order to be able to continue their work.

Dependence on external finance

The film industry consists of three parts – production, distribution and exhibition – but the power in this triangle is concentrated on the distributor. The producer, who in most cases of Senegalese cinema equals the director, has to cede the rights of his film to the distributor, since he needs a distribution guarantee to raise the risk capital. The distributor does not, however, need to submit the rights in turn to the exhibitor, since the latter needs the films only for short-term hire. The distribution company, which is not bound geographically to either the producer or the exhibitor, may be located anywhere and has no obligations to local film production. State contributions in the form of quotas, tariff controls, exchange regulations, and the like could give the film industry a chance of survival. Not even the distribution company controlled by local capital is tied to local production and sees no interest in distributing local films if the supply of foreign films has proved sufficiently profitable. (Armes 1987, 37.) This is exactly the dilemma of Senegalese cinema, which has never succeeded in developing the infrastructures that could create capital for future filmmaking.

Due to the lack of domestic capital coming from public funds or private investors, Senegalese filmmakers are heavily dependent on foreign donors. The relative paucity of funding sources obliges filmmakers to spend many years and a lot of energy trying to get

their projects financed. The most important support today still comes from France but, since the 1980s, new opportunities have emerged in other Western countries and through international organizations. Foreign support has helped Senegalese filmmakers to realise their projects but, according to several critics, it has also retarded the emergence of national film industry and influenced the style and content of cinema.

After independence in 1960, the audiovisual needs of Senegal were focused on news and documentaries, but the state was not yet able to provide resources to produce the material. To fulfil these needs, an agreement on newsreel production was signed with the French production unit Consortium Audio-visuel International (C.A.I.), which promised to provide the technical staff and to be in charge of filming two newsreels per month for the Senegalese news agency Les Actualités Sénégalaises. The material was sent to Paris, where it was developed and edited according to the wishes of the Senegalese Ministry of Information. When the demand for more newsreels emerged, the authorities wanted to give an opportunity to the local filmmakers who had graduated from French film schools and who were anxious to make their own films in the home country. In 1962, the Senegalese film unit Service de Cinéma was created to produce and co-produce documentaries. Under the direction of Paulin Vieyra, Senegalese filmmakers started to produce documentaries and newsreels for different branches of the government. (Diawara 1992, 58–59.)

The first Sub-Saharan African feature film *Afrique sur Seine* was made by two Senegalese film students, one of whom was the aforementioned Paulin Vieyra in France in 1955. As the colonial law *Decr e Laval* (1934) inhibited African students from shooting

films in their home countries, Vieyra and his companies focused on the lives of African students in Paris. In Senegal, feature film production started in 1963 when Sembène Ousmane, who had spent several years abroad and studied filmmaking in the Soviet Union, came on the scene with his short film *Borom sarret* (Senegal, 1963). His film was realised with the support from the French Ministry of Cooperation which, in 1963, had created the Bureau de Cinéma for the production of francophone African fiction films. Generous funds were made available to aspiring African directors, and a laboratory and an editing room were installed for their use at the French Ministry of Cooperation in Paris. The role of the Bureau de Cinéma was to act as producer or to pay the production costs of the film in return for limited distribution rights. The importance of the Bureau de Cinéma for francophone African filmmaking is well illustrated by the fact that of 185 short and feature length films made in francophone Africa from 1963 to 1975, four fifths were produced with the help of the Bureau. (Diawara 1992, 26–27.)

The Bureau de cinéma was re-organised in 1979 due to criticism from both the francophone African and the French authorities. On the one hand, the African authorities considered the Bureau's aid to be an indirect way of influencing domestic politics since the support had sometimes been given to films critical of local authorities. As a consequence, many films supported by the Bureau de cinéma had been censored in their home countries. (Diawara 1992, 27–28.) On the other hand, according to Tapsoba (1995b, 57), support was cut because some members of the French government had expressed their reluctance to finance films they judged to be critical of the French government. New forms of indirect support from the Bureau de

Cinéma introduced after 1979 were earmarked for the promotion and distribution of francophone African films in France and for the development of the African film industry and the film school in Ouagadougou. (Diawara 1992, 27–28.)

Since the end of the 1990s, French public subsidies have been channelled through several mutually complementary bodies: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Francophony, and the National Film Centre (Centre national de la cinématographie, CNC). Their funds are mostly intended to be spent in France and to also benefit the French cinema industry. For example, the umbrella organization of the aforementioned Ministries, Fonds Cinéma Sud, offers selective aid to filmmakers from developing countries provided that the film has a French production company. A French producer is presupposed to control and handle the grants. The funds of Fonds Cinéma Sud have to be spent in France for post-production operations, the purchase of film, salaries and social costs of French technicians and the costs of subtitling in French. (Cantaloube 1996, 7; Barlet 2000, 262.) Before the film project is submitted for Fonds Sud approval, it is presented to professional screenwriters who might either judge it suitable for production or might require improvements. In the last-mentioned case, the filmmaker may be granted aid for rewriting and advice through the intermediary of a professional screenplay writer of his/her choice. Once ready, the scenario follows the typical procedure of the Fonds Sud and might, according to the budget of the year in question, get a production grant of 400.000 – 1 million francs. In the years 1991 to 1994, 135 short and 43 feature films, both documentaries and audiovisual productions, profited from aid from Fonds Sud. (Tapsoba 1995b, 55–56.)

The establishment of the EEC-ACP cultural chapter of the Convention of Lomé III in 1984 strengthened the role of the European Union in the support of African cinema and made the EU one of the most important partners of independent African filmmakers and producers. The EU participates in financing the bi-annual FESPACO festival in Ouagadougou and in restructuring the organisations of the Federation of Pan-African filmmakers (FEPACI). Besides, the EU contributed over 3 million Ecus for the production of African cinema in 1992–1994 (M'Baye Sène 1995, 79; Kolla Maiga and Tapsoba 1993, 85).

Another important international body financing African cinema is the Intergovernmental Agency of the Francophone (Agence Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, formerly the Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique, ACCT) founded in 1970. The aim of the Agency is to support French-language film production in order to challenge dominant Anglo-American productions in the international competition. It has contributed to African cinema through film competitions and support for audiovisual productions. Several young Senegalese filmmakers have won prizes in competitions organised by the Agency: *Kodou* (Senegal/France, 1971) and *Jom* (Senegal, 1981) by Ababacar Samb Makharam in the competition of feature film scenarios; *L'enfant du Ngatch* (Senegal, 1979) by Ousmane M'Baye in the international competition of encouragement for filmmaking; and *Gety Tey* (Senegal, 1978) by Samba Felix N'Diaye and *Le certificat d'indigence* (Senegal, 1981) by Moussa Yoro Bathily in the international short film competition. (Nikiéma 1995, 70–71.) *Karmen Geï* participated in the competition for the international promotion of films from the South in 2001, but did not win the prize. With the fund for audiovisual production of the South set

in 1988, the Agency aims to promote audiovisual cooperation in francophone regions. It pays special attention to the projects that have already obtained support from other institutions, such as *Téléfilm Canada*, *CNC* or *Ecrans du Sud* in France and *Fonds audiovisuel de la Communauté Française de Belgique*. Ten Senegalese feature films of the 30 projects supported since 1988 have profited this fund. (Nikiéma 1995, 71.)

According to some African filmmakers, the subsidies given by the Intergovernmental Agency of the Francophone are not real support because they are linked to distribution rights on TV5.³⁶ They have criticised the link between the grant and the distribution rights on the grounds that the acquisition of a film's audiovisual rights represents a low level of investment for the company; still, it gives the agency the role of distributor for three years, whereas during this period it is difficult to find a distributor for the films in Africa. (Barlet 2000, 276.)

Financing for filmmaking can also be found in other Western countries, from private foundations such as the *Monte Cinema Verità Foundation*, the *Hubert Bals Fund* and *Vues d'Afrique* and from a handful of television channels such as Britain's *Channel 4* and Germany's *ZDF*. Many of them have become important partners of African cinema, but it is not easy to ascertain the real volume of aid given by each country or institutional body. A given country may make its own bilateral contribution and, at the same time, participate in the financing of African cinema through certain transnational institutions. For example,

36 TV5 is a francophone transnational satellite television owned by French, Canadian, Belgian and Swiss governments, whose mission is to defend and propagate the use of French language in the face of the anglophone influence all over the world. *TV5 Afrique* is a free channel distributed in Africa affiliated to TV5.

Canada and Belgium can participate within the framework of the Intergovernmental Agency of the Francophonie and other European countries through the European Union. (Nikièma 1995, 66–68.)

International co-productions

International co-productions are an important mode of production of African and Senegalese films. They may be either “equity co-productions” constituting a strategic and temporary partnership between two or more companies, driven by the search for maximal profits and usually not eligible for treaty status, or “treaty co-productions” meaning collaboration between producing companies from two or more nations, under terms defined by formal agreements between the governments involved. Treaty conventions also involve issues of national identity and cultural policy. (Kraidy 2005, 101–102.)

Co-productions between two or three European governments started in the 1920s in an effort to protect European cultural identity against American cultural hegemony and to find new audiences in the United States. The emergence of sound film first created problems for co-productions but after the Second World War the efforts to create co-productions intensified anew. Co-productions were believed to provide better opportunities for small nations to produce films capable of competing with American productions. The benefits of European co-productions were considered to be a larger pool of available capital and access to the subsidies and markets of all the participating nations (Lev 1993, 19–20). Co-productions also spread risk so that different

parties share the burden of a potential commercial failure. Reducing risk is related to the bigger markets reached by the companies that enter in the co-productions: if a film fails in a national or regional market somewhere, commercial success in a different market will recuperate the losses (Kraidy 2005, 101). For African filmmakers, co-operating with European or American producers means better chances to enter to the Western film market.

Most treaty co-productions are made between the countries of the European Union. “The European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production” (<http://conventions.coe.int/>), signed on October 2, 1992, specifies the terms of co-operations dealing with issues such as how the finances will be handled, how many actors and members of the technical crew must come from each of the participating nations, etc. The convention also gives to the co-productions rights to the same national subsidies the films produced by a single nation have. To regularise the status of African films with regard to European regulations and GATT rules, some European countries have concluded bilateral agreements similar to the European Convention with West African countries.

The co-production treaty between Senegal and France, “Accord cinématographique entre le gouvernement de la République française et le gouvernement de la République du Sénégal” (1992), was signed the same year as the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production. It provides uncontested status to co-produced films, which *inter alia* allows them to be shown on French television channels and film screens as part of the European film quota. To belong to the European quota is important for African films since otherwise it is almost

impossible to get into the foreign quota already filled by American films.³⁷ If at least one participant of the co-operation is of French nationality the film can be considered French and can also profit from the subsidies of CNC³⁸ (Barlet 2000, 270–271). Besides co-productions with France, a number of co-productions between Senegal and Italian, German, British and Canadian television companies has emerged.

Constraints related to foreign donors and co-productions

The dependence on foreign finance and on increased co-productions has raised various criticism among African filmmakers and critics about their influence on the development of African cinema. The older criticism is related to France's efforts to preserve its interests in the francophone African film industry, while more recent criticism is based on the fact that, despite legal agreements, partners do not have equal economic resources in the coproductions. This raises questions about the possibility of Western partners influencing the content and style of African films in such a way that African audiences no longer recognise them as their cinema.³⁹

37 According to the Television Without Frontiers (TVWF) directive (89/552/EEC), agreed on October 3, 1989, at least 50 percent of European television programmes have to be European.

38 See details about the procedure of defining the nationality of films used by CNC in Cocq and Messerlin 2005, 49.

39 Similar problems have been reported between other countries having structural inequalities in their film industries. (See e.g. Mattelart 1984, 82–86.)

According to the African film historian Victor Bachy (1982, 25–26), French production of African films was a way to continue economic, political, and cultural dependency of the francophone West African states on France. African filmmakers were made to believe that they still needed French technical know-how, laboratories and well-trained staff. Another film scholar and Algerian director, Ferid Boughedir (1986, 31) considered French support an indirect way of protecting the monopoly of the French distribution companies SECMA and COMACICO in West African countries after their independence. Even if French companies did not distribute films by West African filmmakers in African countries, the financial support for African filmmaking kept directors from reacting radically against the takeover of the markets by foreigners. According to Manthia Diawara (1992, 31–34), many African filmmakers accuse the French support of trying to influence their artistic ambitions in ways that are deleterious to African values and culture; they also accuse the French Ministry of Cooperation of distributing African films only for educational and non-commercial purposes, thus discouraging commercial distribution of African films in Europe.

A lot of the criticism presented above dates back to the period of Jean-René Debrix as head of the French Bureau de cinéma from 1963 to 1978, but only as recently as 1995 Clément Tapsoba listed three main problems linked to foreign aid for African cinema. The first constraint is that in order to get his scenario accepted by a funding organisation the filmmaker has to rewrite it in co-operation with foreign professional scenario writers. Even though this co-operation may enrich the filmmaker's own view, it may also lead to films strengthening Western clichés about Africa. Sometimes the refusal to rewrite the script has

hindered or at least delayed the receipt of the support. (Tapsoba 1995c, 92.)

The second constraint is related to the control of the aid. According to French regulations, an African filmmaker cannot himself control the aid granted to his project by the French Ministry for Cooperation; rather he has to find a French producer who will be responsible for the budget. This demand has caused several long-lasting legal disputes between African directors and their French producers, who have not agreed on the shares, distribution rights or other paragraphs of the agreement. In many cases, the acceptance of a French producer also involves the use of a French technical crew and the renting of material on the spot or the development of film materials in French laboratories. This may lead to sharper and more perfect images, but it may also cause the artistic conception of the film to lose its soul. According to Tapsoba (1995c, 92), “under the influence of non-African technicians and anxious to present technically perfect films, certain filmmakers have ended up making films that are excessively aspetic, which are neither like African nor European films.”

The third problem discussed by Tapsoba is the use of French language in the films, which tends to negate the cultural specificity of national African languages. This problem has nowadays mostly been surmounted thanks to new treaty terms (Tapsoba 1995c, 92). After the French Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production was signed in 1992, co-productions no longer need to be made in French to fully benefit from the subsidies, as was the earlier case.

The criticism of foreign finance and international co-productions comes out today especially from those filmmakers

and critics defending the specific cultural identity of African/Senegalese cinema. One of the most prominent opponents of Western support in Senegal has been the best known African filmmaker, Sembene Ousmane, whose most critical films towards colonial and neo-colonial relationships between France and Senegal, *Emitai* (Senegal, 1970), *Xala* and *Camp of Thiaroye* (Senegal/Tunisia/Algeria, 1987), did not receive French public funding. *Camp of Thiaroye*, depicting the massacre of a battalion of African sharp-shooters demanding their wages from the French colonial army, also got very limited distribution in France despite the fact that it had won the Grand Prix of Venice in Italy (Boughedir, 1995, 36). These experiences have made Sembene, the old supporter of Afrocentrist ideas, look especially for opportunities for African co-operation. His latest film *Moolade* (2002) was co-produced with Burkina Faso, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon and France, and some of his other films were made completely without European support.

Sembene remains, however, a unique example of his genre, as the younger generation of Senegalese filmmakers voluntarily co-operates with European partners. They accept the conditions of co-production treaties as a normal part of cooperation and see them as beneficial for marketing and distributing their films. Reading and re-writing of scripts is considered a usual procedure in professional filmmaking, whose purpose is to improve a film's chances of success in commercial film markets.

Exhibition and distribution of Senegalese films in the home country

The foundation for the Senegalese cinematic exhibition was laid during the French colonial period. The first film screenings of the Lumière brothers' *L'arroseur arrosé* were organised in Dakar in 1900, only five years after the invention of cinema. After the First World War, French authorities set up a network of cinemas showing imported films in Senegal. Cinema was used as a means of colonial assimilation policy to teach Senegalese people to appreciate and assimilate to French culture. New audiences were welcome clients for French distribution companies, which hegemonised the francophone West African markets until 1974.⁴⁰

In Senegal, film distribution and exhibition were nationalised in 1973 with the establishment of the Société internationale de distribution et d'exploitation cinématographique (SIDECE). SIDECE had a monopoly on distribution and exhibition in Senegal and, with its stock of five thousand films and an additional four hundred new films a year, it succeeded in assuming the role of international distributor also in other West African francophone countries. During the first decades of independence, from the 1960s to the 1980s, going to the cinema was a popular leisure time activity for Senegalese families and youngsters in urban areas, and cinemas existed in every urban neighbourhood (see, e.g. Haffner 1978; Haffner 1983). By the end of the 1970s, about 80 cinemas existed in Senegal, although nowadays only a handful of them is left (Pirès 1999).

40 For more on the activities of the two French distribution and exhibition companies COMACICO and SECMA, see Diawara 1992, 105–110.

Today's crisis of Senegalese cinema exhibition dates back to the beginning of the 1990s when the consequences of the first structural adjustment programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) became apparent. IMF programmes pushed Senegal into tighter economic integration with the industrial powers, forcing the country to intensify production for export, reduce state subsidies, cut social spending, police copyright infringements, sell off state property to the private sector, remove the remaining barriers to foreign trade and investment, and devalue the West African currency CFA. The programmes might also have had positive consequences for the Senegalese national economy but one cannot deny, as Chibani (1997) states, that structural adjustment programmes had "adverse effects of higher level of poverty, unemployment, exclusion and illiteracy as well as general deterioration in the health of the population, particularly the poorest areas. --- The decision to devalue the CFA franc (in 1994) prompted the exorbitant rising of prices; and almost half of the 52 African countries experienced negative GNP growth in 1996."

The negative consequences of the devaluation of the CFA in January 1994 were soon visible in Senegalese cinema distribution and exhibition. The debate about the price of cinema tickets started at the beginning of February when three French distribution companies doubled their prices for film rentals. A month later the decision was taken to increase ticket prices on average by 50 to 87 percent (Diop 1994). As a result, several theatres had to close their doors since people struggling with everyday living could no longer afford tickets. From 1992 to 1999, 18 cinemas of the 38 existing in Senegal were closed (Diop 2001). In May 1994, changes in the Senegalese cinema scene were plain even a visitor to see. Several cinemas I remembered from my

first visit to Dakar in 1985 no longer existed. The most exclusive cinema of Dakar did still premiere *Cliffhangers*, the Hollywood blockbuster of that period, and some popular theatres offered old westerns or martial arts-films, but if the Swiss-Senegalese cultural exchange programme *Cinéma itinerant* had not been ongoing, I would not have been able to see any new Senegalese film.⁴¹

Diminishing audiences and deserting cinemas continued until the beginning of the new millennium, the last straw being the suppression of *SIDEC* in autumn 2001. In its heyday, the *SIDEC* run altogether 72 cinemas, but by 2001 the number had dropped to five. The last remaining cinemas were sold to the private sector and new private proprietors were left on their own to find films wherever they could. In spring 2002, during my fieldwork period, the only functioning cinema in the centre of Dakar was *Le Paris*. Another surviving cinema in the centre, *La Plaza*, was undergoing renovation, and four to five small cinemas continued to exist in the suburbs. The French Cultural Centre's cinema also continued to occasionally show French and African films but going to the cinema had become extremely expensive for ordinary people. The price of the ticket at *Le Paris* was 2,500 CFA (4.15 euros) and in the French Cultural Centre 1,000 CFA (1.6 euros). In the suburbs the prices were lower, about 500 CFA, but the film copies were old and of poor quality.

Another reason for the disappearance of cinemas and film audiences is the same as all over the world; the concurrent rise of satellite television and video. The first satellite television channels began to operate in Senegal in 1991 and, at the same time, well-

41 *Cinéma itinerant* screened six African and five Swiss films from May 4 to July 2 in 1994. The Senegalese films shown were *Hyènes* by Djibril Diop-Mambety, *Picc mi* by Mansour Sora Wade and *Boxulmaleen* by Ahmet Diallo.

off middle-class families started to buy videocassette players. As early as 1988, marketing research in Senegal revealed that 17 percent of Dakar households owned a videocassette player and by the end of January 1996 there were 10,500 subscribers to Canal Horizon (Cable & Satellite Express 1996). Today, videos and television are the most popular leisure activities of urban Senegalese and popular films are watched with friends and family at home. The most popular TV channels are the national channel *Radio-Television Sénégalaise (RTS)* and French or francophone satellite channels *TV5 Afrique*, *Canal Horizon* and *Canal France International (CFI)*.

The economic resources of the national channel *RTS* are very limited and its opportunities to encourage local film and fiction production are few. Most of the *RTS* coverage consists of news, current affairs and religious programmes; part of the programming is also devoted to programmes made in local languages. The fees offered by *RTS* to local producers are so meagre that many filmmakers do not allow their films to be shown on *RTS*, while some others give distribution rights practically free of charge only to support national television. In some cases a minor involvement of *RTS* in the production has guaranteed the national channel the right to distribution.

In the late 1980s, the French government started to worry about losing its influence in francophone West Africa because of the decreasing volume of French programmes in West African television. To fight back, from the beginning of 1990s, the French government has taken measures to break into African markets with new force through satellite, cable and even pay television. The first French-owned satellite channel, *CFI*, began to operate in Senegal in 1989 first only by transmitting French programmes for

the African national channels but from 1993 as an independent channel. *Canal Horizon* started in December 1991 and *TV5 Afrique* was launched in francophone West Africa in 1992. In 1994, *Canal Horizon* had 10,000 subscribers concentrated around Dakar since the channel could be reached only within a radius of 20 kilometres of the city. (Ba 1996.)

The mission of French satellite channels is to promote the French language and a French presence in francophone West African countries, but the French government has also striven to refute accusations of cultural imperialism by seeking to establish new policies based on increased exchange of cultural productions. The results of this policy can be seen on *TV5 Afrique* and *Canal Horizon*. During the first years of *TV5 Afrique*, African programmes, especially news and music programmes, were offered for one hour per day; this amount was supposed to increase to two hours during the next few years. *TV5* also transmits programmes dealing with Africa made by European and Canadian television seven hours per week (Ba 1996, 106–114). The policy of *Canal Horizon* is also to favour African productions but, in practice, it is not possible to augment the amount of African programmes if the channel does not invest in the production thereof. In Senegal, the agreement between *Canal Horizon* and the Senegalese government states that *Canal Horizon* should reimburse three percent of the benefit in Senegal for national television and another three percent for the production of Senegalese feature films (Faye 1999).

Growing markets for Senegalese and African films on videocassette and DVD could develop in Senegal if ever the problem of piracy were solved. Video cassettes are nowadays sold and rented in all African marketplaces but most of the copies are

illegal and do not bring the director or official distributor a penny. During my fieldwork in 2002, I regularly found Senegalese and other African films in hand-made video copies of poor quality sold for 5,000 to 7,000 CFA in Dakar. On the contrary, original copies were not available in video shops or market places. Flavia Bianchi, an Italian producer of African videos and films, told me in an unofficial discussion that if Senegalese films were distributed on video first in Italy or in Germany it might take a little longer for the pirate copies to reach Senegal. If the distribution was first made in France, however, illegal copies would arrive in Senegal in days thanks to the large Senegalese diaspora population in France.⁴² In any case, video distribution is not yet a lucrative business in Senegal and the danger of piracy is considered so important that directors avoid having even a single video copy of their films in the home country.

Exhibition of Senegalese films abroad

As opportunities for distribution in Senegal are rare, directors have to target foreign markets to get their films released and to recoup their costs. Outside the African continent, the main distribution channel for African productions is international festivals. In the 1980s an increasing number of African films was screened at prestigious European festivals like Cannes, Venice and Berlin, but during the 1990s and at the beginning of 2000s the tide has turned and there is a marked preference for Asian cinema. Today there are about 30 festivals around the world

⁴² According to Robin (1996) there were roughly 44,000 Senegalese living in France, 2,000 in Germany and 27,500 in Italy in 1993.

especially devoted to promoting African Cinema.⁴³ Only a few of them, such as Ouagadougou, Carthage, Khourigba, and the Southern Africa Film Festival of Harare, are held on the African continent.

Festivals might provide opportunities for African filmmakers to achieve international recognition and opportunities to be distributed for more than artistic or educational purposes. There is a danger, however, that the films will be labelled only as festival films. According to Wollen (2001), festival films form a genre of their own. They are films made according to their own rules and traditions in order to win prizes at festivals, and immediately recognizable as such by juries, critics and audiences alike (Wollen 2001, 123). In 1993, African filmmakers gathered at the Southern African Film Festival in Harare expressed their concern about the fact that festivals could lead to the non-commercialisation of African films and recommended that FEPACI and national associations of filmmakers take appropriate steps to stem the tide of African film festivals undercutting commercial distribution possibilities outside the continent. (*Cinéma africain et festivals II* 1994, 55.)

Besides festivals, African films are screened in the art house cinemas of large cities, but the main distribution channel remains video and, more recently, also DVD. *California Newsreel* in the United States, *Mediathèque des trois mondes* in France and the *African Video Centre* in the UK are the biggest distribution

43 Among them are *Cinémas d'Afrique* in France, *Films from South* in Norway, *Fribourg Film Festival* in Switzerland, the *Milan African Film Festival* in Italy, *Africa at the Pictures* in the United Kingdom and *African Cinema Festival* in Belgium. In the United States the biggest festivals are the *Los Angeles Pan African Film Festival* and the *New York African Film Festival* and, in Canada, the *Vues d'Afrique* in Montreal.

companies concentrating solely on the distribution of Black or African films. In the United States, university programmes teaching African cinema are also an important market for African films (Cham 1997, 45–46).⁴⁴

44 African Film Studies programmes are available in such universities as Howard University in Washington, DC., the University of California at Los Angeles, New York University, Emerson College in Boston, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and Michigan State University at East Lansing.

5

***Karmen* as hybrid and multigeneric transnational Senegalese film**

Karmen is an example of an African hybrid transnational film constructed to appeal to several discursive audiences at home and abroad. I approach the film from three different perspectives, each time accenting a different film tradition and genre. In my first reading, the point of departure is Ramaka's explicit aim to make a commercial *film musical*. The musical is an old well-known Hollywood genre having its roots in European operetta, American vaudeville and music-hall performance designed to appeal to global mass audiences and to be screened in big mainstream cinemas with developed sound systems. In my second reading, the point of departure is the *European art film* tradition in which Ramaka was trained while studying in France and which he practised in his first feature film, *Ainsi soit-il*. This tradition implies non-commercial distribution institutions such as art cinemas and festivals, and intellectual audiences preferring different national and auteur cinemas. According to my third reading, *Karmen* is interpreted as an *African social realist film*. Despite several entertaining elements, the film also speaks about current social and political issues related to Senegalese society. These elements are not necessarily understood or appreciated by non-Senegalese viewers but they might appeal to Senegalese/African and diasporic audiences and fit the agenda of non-commercial distribution institutions in the Western world.

Two qualifications and reminders have to be repeated about my interpretations: the first about the concept of *genre*, and the second about *possible audiences*. As discussed in the fourth chapter, the genres do not form unambiguous systems that can be classified in only one way. Taken strictly, only musical is a film genre in the traditional sense of the word; European art films and African social realist films are rather larger categories subsuming several sub-categories and genres. For the purposes of this study, however, it was necessary to separate groups of films whose development is related to certain national and cultural contexts. This leads to the second qualification about possible audiences. The audiences discussed in the following pages should not be understood as real but discursive; in reality the different audiences of African transnational diasporic films are not separate, clear-cut entities having nothing in common with each other. Neither should home, host and diasporic audiences be seen as homogeneous groups having no conflicting voices or heterogeneity within the groups. Senegalese or African audiences are not expected, in reality, to read films only in a certain way; every 'real' spectator can and does interpret the film from several angles. As the real reception of transnational diasporic films has shown, there has been as much variety within the reactions of every audience group as there is between home, host and diasporic audiences (see e.g. the reception of British-Asian diasporic films in Desai 2004).

Plotline of *Karmen*

In the original short story by Mérimée, Carmen is a gypsy woman from Seville working in a tobacco factory. Don José, a soldier falling in love with her, used to serve in the Spanish army before his passion for Carmen causes him to join a gang of smugglers and brigands. Carmen first loves Don José but finally loses interest because of his jealousy, and turns to a new lover, the toreador, Lucas. Don José tries to persuade Carmen to abandon the brigands and to start a new life in America but Carmen prefers to be killed than to lose her liberty. (Mérimée 1845/1992.)

The main events of the original story are adapted quite faithfully in Ramaka's *Karmen* – even some excerpts of the dialogue are borrowed directly from the short story or the opera libretto – but the filmmaker has added his personal interpretation to the story when situating the events in contemporary urban Senegal and presenting the protagonist as bisexual. This time Karmen is a female leader of a Senegalese gang of smugglers and her lovers range from an old smuggler, Samba, to the singer Massigi, and from a police officer, Lamine, to a prison warden Angelique. Despite its European origin, the film resonates Ramaka's autobiographical nostalgia for the memories of his Senegalese youth and childhood and for a feminised homeland common to many interstitial filmmakers (Naficy 2001, 169). Ramaka considers his film as a kind of tribute to Senegalese women. In his own words, the short story reminded him of something he “already knew through the women [he] had known, something of [his] aunts, [his] mother or friends or mistresses”

(Interview with Ramaka 31.3.2002).⁴⁵

The film opens in the women's prison Kumba Castel set on the isle of Goré, where the prisoners have gathered together in the round court to enjoy recreation and to dance together accompanied by the group of drummers. It is here that Karmen seduces the prison warden, Angelique, and invites her to a sensual dance. The following night, Karmen makes love to Angelique in her bed and, as compensation, regains her freedom. At sunset, Karmen leaves the prison and heads towards the city. In the next scene she is seen terrorising the wedding of Corporal Lamine Diop and his bride Madjiguène, the daughter of the police commissioner. Karmen shocks the elite guests with her provocative dance and the insults she addresses to the respected family and the ruling power of society. The dance ends in complete disorder and a fight between Karmen and Madjiguène. Lamine is ordered to take Karmen to prison but on the way to jail she succeeds in seducing him and runs away. As punishment, Lamine, depressed and astonished even himself by his foolish conduct, is put in a cell. Meanwhile Karmen is back with her gang, Old Samba and other smugglers, and persuades them to free Lamine from jail. Once Lamine is free, he has his brief moment of happiness with Karmen in Ma Penda's (mother of Karmen) place. But this is interrupted by the arrival of Massigi, Karmen's old lover, and the police making a raid on Ma Penda's restaurant.

Karmen continues her criminal life with the smugglers, and Lamine, who can no longer return to his decent life, joins them in plotting a new smuggling job on the coast. On the surface,

45 Ma rencontre avec Karmén a été une retrouvaille avec un esprit que je connaissais déjà, avec une femme que je connaissais déjà ou avec des femmes que je connaissais déjà; qu'elles soient des tantes, qu'elle soit quelque part ma mère déjà, qu'elles soient par ailleurs des amies des amantes que j'ai pu avoir que j'ai eu.

Karmen is the incontestable leader of the gang but there is already a smell of death around her. She is tired of her lovers, especially of Lamine, who has proved to be too possessive. The only person she could have truly loved was Angelique but this love was impossible and “too sad”. After Karmen’s departure, Angelique’s life in prison becomes quiet and unhappy. One of the prisoners tries to seduce her but the warden cannot forget her true love. Despite her efforts, Angelique does not find Karmen and, desperate and lonely, she commits suicide by drowning. Karmen hears the news about her death when she returns from an unsuccessful smuggling job and is resting at Massigi’s place. It is in this scene that Massigi sings the famous song of the founder of Mouridism, Ahmadou Bamba, in memory of Angelique that raised the accusations about blasphemy.

After a successful robbery in a warehouse, Karmen gives Lamine her share of the haul and asks him to leave her in peace. Lamine would do better to return to Madjiguène, who is still waiting for him, but, unable to accept the separation from Karmen, he remains on her heels and tries to persuade her to escape with him. Finally Lamine, blinded by his jealousy, kills Karmen in the flies over the stage of the theatre, where the great Yandé Codou Sene is singing Karmen’s praise; this is the theme song of the film.

Joseph Ramaka – a transnational diasporic filmmaker

Joseph Ramaka was born into a Catholic family in St Louis, in the north of Senegal in 1952. After finishing school in Dakar in 1982,

he headed to France to study visual anthropology at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and cinema at the Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques (IDHEC) in Paris. He started his filmmaking career in the period between 1985 and 1989 with three anthropological documentaries about the rites and cults of Senegalese ethnic groups: *Baaw-Naan/Rites de pluie* (1985), *La musique lyrique peul* (1986) and *Nitt... D'Doxx / Les faiseurs de pluie* (1989) and a short document *Portrait d'un mannequin* (1986). After these he continued as a documentarist and feature director with the films *Ainsi soit-il* (1996), *Karmen* (2001), and *Et si Latif avait raison?* (2005).

Ramaka is among those diasporic filmmakers whose displacement was motivated by the better educational and employment opportunities available in Europe rather than by political or economic necessity. His professional status compels him to travel frequently between his original home country and his new host country, and to be in constant contact with his compatriot community. Even critical towards the Senegalese government, he has no political reasons to reside abroad but neither has he strong nationalist feelings towards his home country. In the interview, when I asked about his permanent domicile, his response was that it is something he always carries with/on him: “Je crois que mon domicile permanent je le porte en moi.”⁴⁶ The cosmopolitan attitude was dear to him already in the 1970s when, as a young human rights activist still resident in Senegal, he admired the ideas of world citizenship and the universal language of Esperanto. For more than twenty years Ramaka has been “shuttling between the two countries” without

46 “I think that my permanent domicile is inside me.”

choosing one over another. At the beginning of 2001, for the first time after his departure for France, he bought a house in Yoff, a suburb of Dakar, with the purpose of settling down more permanently in Senegal. In practice, however, this has not changed anything in his lifestyle. (Interview with Ramaka 31.3.2002.)

It was typical for the first African filmmakers trained in France that their stay in Europe was temporary. After independence most of these young professionals found positions in their home countries and became pioneers of new national cinemas. Today, transnational Senegalese filmmakers differ from their predecessors in that they live in two cultures, both in Senegal and abroad, and practise their profession where they find the best chances for their work. Ramaka is a typical example of this kind of transnational and interstitial position. Travelling and movement constitute a normal condition for his professional and personal life but displacement from his native site has not meant being uprooted or the loss of cultural foundation (Olwig 1997, 17–19, Bhabha 1994, 9). Despite his long stay in France, Ramaka has preserved his Senegalese nationality, but carrying the passport of his original home country causes him continuous trouble when crossing borders. (Interview with Ramaka 31.3.2002.)

Ramaka has contributed much to the development of cinema in Senegal by trying to revitalise and modernise Senegalese cinematic infrastructures. Besides his work as a director, he has promoted Senegalese and African cinema both in Senegal and in France. In 1990, he created his own production, distribution and marketing company *Les Ateliers de l'Arche*, which operated first in France, and, from 1999, also in Senegal. The company has

produced Ramaka's own films – all set in his country of origin – and several films of other Senegalese⁴⁷ and African filmmakers. From 1999 to 2001, *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* was also involved in a cinema exhibition in Senegal by running the cinema *Bel Arte*. During its time of operation, *Bel Arte* was the most modern cinema in all of West Africa, equipped with a digital sound system and a 16-metre screen. The films screened included those from festivals in Cannes, Venice, and Los Angeles as well as children's films and other films not available in other African cinemas. Ramaka also has plans to construct the first film studio in Senegal. The planned digitalised film studio in the Technopol of Dakar would improve working conditions not only for Senegalese filmmakers but also for those from neighbouring countries. In fact, *Karmen* was planned to be the first film shot in the new studio but since the project was delayed it was shot on location.⁴⁸

Interstitial production mode

Ramaka's interest in remaking "Carmen" was born in his mind at the beginning of his studies at the IDHEC in the early 1980s. However, it took some 15 years before the initial idea was developed into a film. The script of *Karmen* was finished in 1997, after the commission of the Centre National Cinématographique (CNC) rejected another of Ramaka's project proposals, *Baby*

47 The company has produced Amet Diallo's *Boxulmaleen/L'an... Fer* (1990) and Clarence Delgado's *Niiwam* (1994) and acted as a distributor for *Mossane* (1993) and *Jom* (1993).

48 Still in 2007 there is no film studio in Dakar.

Sister, and he decided to concentrate on the old idea to remake “Carmen”.

Like many diasporic filmmakers, Joseph Ramaka performed multiple functions in making his film. He served as screenplay writer, producer and director, was involved in the training of non-professional actors, participated in planning the marketing and distribution of the film, and even shot the draft photo for the main poster. When setting to work on his film, Ramaka was already an experienced film professional wanting to create a solid production structure that would ensure that the film would find its audiences once it was made. He did not want to produce films “alone against all odds” (Gugler 2003, 9), as African independent filmmakers often do, but decided to launch the project only if the prepared budget was accepted and there was a chance to shoot the film in a professional manner. A budget of 16 million French francs made *Karmen* the most expensive Senegalese and African film ever made. On the European scale, however, the film belongs to the category of low-cost independent films, the average budget of French films being about 25 million francs.

A happy coincidence for the production of *Karmen* was a meeting between Toscan de Plantier, an experienced French producer of several opera films, and Joseph Ramaka, at the opening of *Bel Arte*, in which de Plantier participated as the representative of the *Ligue française*. Because of his earlier experience as the producer of Francesco Rosi’s *Carmen* (France, 1984) de Plantier became interested in Ramaka’s plan of to remake “Carmen” as a Senegalese film musical and proposed to participate in it. The final production organisation was built on the basis of international co-production with two French companies, de Plantier’s and Frédéric Sichler’s *Euripide Production*

and Philippe Cosson's *Zagarianka*, Ramaka's Senegalese company *Les Ateliers de l'Arche*, and a Canadian *Les Productions Mataranka Inc.* *Euripide Production* and *Mataranka* were the majority partners. The film received subsidies from two French television channels, *Arte France Cinema* and *Canal+ Horizons*, several French, Canadian and EU public organisations, and the Senegalese Ministry of Communication and Culture and the Ministry of Finance.

As discussed earlier, African filmmakers often complain about the efforts of their non-African partners or co-producers to influence their artistic choices. These constraints were not recognised by Ramaka. As the majority partners, *Euripide Production* and *Mataranka* were responsible for planning the film's financial base while Ramaka retained his artistic rights to the script. According to the co-production agreement with Canada and France, two actors had to be chosen and post-production was to be completed in Canada, and the shooting crew was to be from France. *Euripide Production* and *Mataranka* also had their say in the final choice of principal actress but otherwise Ramaka was free to cast the film according to his preferences.

One aspect of the interstitiality of transnational film is the involvement of family and friends and the use of non-professional actors in the filmmaking process. The final credits often reveal that actors, assistants, technical staff and others carry the same family name as the filmmaker (Naficy 2001). In the case of *Karmen*, the final cast was a mixture of professional and non-professional actors and actresses. The Senegalese cast included several professional actors, such as Thierno Ndiaye Dos (as Old Samba), Magaye Adama Niang (as Lamine), and Seun Sène (as Karmen's fellow prisoner), and two famous Senegalese singers, El Hadji Ndiaye and Yandé Codou Sene. Two Canadian actors, Stephanie Biddle as Angelique and Wildemar Normil as the

chief of police, were also professional actors who had appeared in several films and television dramas in Canada.

The main actresses, Jeïnaba Diop Gaï as Karmen and Aïssatou Diop, the sister of the former, as Madjiguène, represent the non-professional cast that did not have earlier experience acting in theatre or on screen. They, along with other actors, were chosen during a training course organised by Ramaka with a Russian theatre trainer in Dakar in 1999. Besides acting, Jeïnaba Diop had to learn to dance, sing, and swim for her role. During the shooting period, Ramaka and Jeïnaba Diop became involved and got married. After this, she and Aïssatou Diop also participated in other filmmaking tasks, Jeïnaba Diop as a dialogue translator and Aïssatou Diop as an assistant director. Both women have continued to work with *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* after *Karmen*.

The soundtrack of the film was composed by a well-known American jazz musician, David Murray, and interpreted by 40 Senegalese *sabar* drummers led by Doudou N'Diaye Rose, the chief of the Senegalese National Ballet and the composer of Senegal's national anthem. Julien Jouga, director of a Senegalese Catholic chorus was engaged to compose a requiem for the memory of the deceased Angelique.

The technical cast, cameramen, sound recorder, and others came from France. They belonged to the group with which Ramaka had already worked in his earlier productions. The film was developed in France and the post-production and laboratory work was accomplished in Montreal and Toronto in the second half of 2000.

Due to the multiculturalism of the production crew, several languages were spoken during the film making process as well as in the film itself. Ramaka in his script had tried to characterise the characters with the language or languages that would be in

harmony with each character's background. Using Wolof and French, *Karmen* conveys the actual communication habits of a multiethnic and multicultural country like Senegal having French as its official language, Wolof as the lingua franca, and several other local languages as the means of everyday communication. Unlike in many African films of the 1970s struggling over national identity through language, there is no moral approach to the characters shifting between French and Wolof in *Karmen*.⁴⁹ The characters change from one language to another just as in everyday life on the streets of Dakar or in European and American metropolises.

Despite several features of artisanal and interstitial filmmaking, the making of *Karmen* obeyed the rules of the capitalist mode of production, which emphasises strict time and financial management. During the intensive shooting period of eight weeks in February and March 2000, everything was calculated in advance and there was no room for changing plans. Due to the tight time schedule, Ramaka was rewriting the dialogue and rehearsing with the cast in the daytime and shooting the film at night. Most of the film was shot on location on the isle of Gorée and on the coast near to Dakar. Some scenes, like the robbery of the police station and the murder of Karmen, were

49 The career of Sembene Ousmane demonstrates the dynamics of the interplay of national languages in African countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Only his first features *Borom sarret* (Senegal/ France, 1963) and *La Noire...* (France/Senegal, 1966) were made entirely in French. *Mandabi* (France/Senegal, 1968), financed partly by CNC, was made in two versions, French and Wolof, while all the following films employed Senegalese languages. In *Xala* (Senegal, 1974), the controversy between local and colonial languages is portrayed in the level of dialogue, the protagonist El Hadji speaking French to his Wolof-speaking daughter Rama.

shot in the *Theatre Sorano*, the main theatre stage of Dakar, due to the lack of a film studio.

Distribution and exhibition

Karmen was first screened in Europe at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2001. The national French premiere was on June 27, 2001. The film was screened at five cinemas in Paris, of which two belonged to the biggest European exhibition company Union générale cinématographique (UGC). The final audience total in France was 19,738 spectators, which is a relatively good result compared to those of Senegalese and African films in France on average.⁵⁰

In Senegal, *Karmen* premiered in *Bel Arte* July 22, 2001. The first screening was followed by several others in *Bel Arte* and in another cinema run by Joseph Ramaka in a suburb of Dakar during a six-week period. Unlike other Senegalese filmmakers, Ramaka had put a lot of emphasis on the marketing and distribution of his film in the home country. As the owner of *Bel Arte*, he could control distribution in Dakar, but besides this, the film was planned to have the largest national distribution ever seen by a Senegalese film in the country. Ten copies were prepared to be sent to regional capitals Thiès, St Louis, Kaolack and others at the beginning of October 2001. The regional distribution, however, was never realised because of the

50 In 1998, the Senegalese film *Mossane* attracted 12,322 spectators and another, *Tableau ferraille*, only 1,519 in France. The same year a retrospective of the films of Sembene Ousmane was seen by 2,320 spectators.

censoring in September. The African release, originally planned to start in the Ivory Coast in December 2001, was also delayed until August 2002 because of the confiscation of the copies meant for the African release. Before the film was censored, some 2,500 spectators saw it in Senegal.⁵¹

In the United States the premiere of *Karmen* was in New York in April 2002. The film was screened in five American cities. In Canada the film premiered at the festival *Vue d'Afrique* in Montreal on April 18 and in ordinary cinemas on April 19, 2002. In Toronto and Vancouver, the film opened in May 2002. The film also toured a variety of festivals from 2001, most of them African or gay/lesbian festivals. In 2001, *Karmen* appeared at the Sundance, Toronto and Turin festivals; in 2002, at the Chicago, Hong Kong, Karala, Los Angeles, Milan, Montreal, Moscow, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Washington DC and Yaoundé festivals; and in 2003, at the Athens, London, Miami, Michigan, Newport, New York, Sarasota and Tampa festivals. In Finland, *Karmen* was screened in connection with the small Turku African Film Festival in October 2003. The film won several international awards: Best Music at the American Black Film Festival in Miami, Best Film at the African Film Festival in Los Angeles, and 3rd *ex aequo* prize at the Festival of African Cinema in Milan. It also toured at several American universities during 2002 and 2003. Video and DVD copies of the film are distributed in North America by the *California Newsreel* (Powrie 2004, 284).

51 Compared to international successes like *Harry Potter* (total of 4,000 viewers in Senegal) or *Star Wars* (2,000 viewers during the first week of May 2002) the audience rates of *Karmen* were exceptionally promising (*Le Soleil* 25.7.2002).

Commercial film musical

According to Ramaka, the intention was to make *Karmen* as a film musical, which could be seen by “whoever” and which could also succeed commercially, that is, to make money for its producers (Interview with Ramaka 31.3.2002). The visual material used in the promotion of the film illustrates the same purposes, presenting *Karmen* as a Hollywood-style musical spiced with sex and exoticism. In the main poster printed in intense red and black, Karmen sits in a provocative position her bare thighs spread gazing flirtaciously straight at the camera (see Photo 1). The intention to create an impression of the Hollywood star system film is strengthened with the name of Jeïnaba Diop Gaï written with big capital letters under her photo. The decision of Ramaka to make *Karmen* as a musical does not surprise us, since the story of Carmen became known from the very beginning due to the music. It can even be claimed that the opera by Bizet has made “Carmen” far better known than Merimée’s short story could ever have done.

A classic film musical is a feature-length narrative film whose plot is built around a romantic couple coming together within a recognizably human society. An American musical centres on two sexes, two attitudes and two protagonists, the dynamic principle remaining the difference between male and female. The final decision for the male/female opposition, which eventually resolves them into harmonious unity, is marriage. Seen as a cultural problem-solving device, the musical takes on a new and fascinating identity. Society is defined by a fundamental paradox: both terms of the oppositions on which it is built (order/liberty, progress/stability, work/entertainment) are seen as desirable,

Karmen

**Quinzaine
des Réalisateurs
Cannes 2001
Séance Spéciale**

Magaye Niang • Stéphanie Biddle • Thierno Ndiaye Dos • Djeynaba Niang • El Hadji N'Diaye • Aïssatou Diop

[illegible]

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Photo 1. Poster of *Karmen*

FIGURE 1. POSTER OF KUMAMECHU.

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yet the terms are perceived to be mutually exclusive. Every society possesses texts that obscure this paradox, prevent it from appearing threatening, and thus ensure the stability of society (Altman 1989, 27).

The main narrative of *Karmen* centres on the relationship between Karmen and Lamine, even if earlier lovers, Angelique, Old Samba and Massigi, complicate this relationship. The first sequence in which Karmen and Lamine meet at the wedding of Lamine and Madjiguène, highlights the opposing attributes between the main couple: while Lamine represents order, discipline and organised society, Karmen exemplifies disorder, revolt and liberty. Her provocative appearance in the party as a gatecrasher disturbing the celebration positions her against the stable world of Lamine. Karmen both attracts and frightens Lamine, but his desire for her is stronger than his reason, and she succeeds in drawing him to her side and making him join her smuggling gang. The tragic end with the death of Karmen joins *Karmen* – and other Carmen film musicals – more to the realist Hollywood musicals of 1960s, first exemplified by *West Side Story* in 1961, than to the American film musicals in their heyday from the 1930s to the 1960s that were supposed to arrive at a happy ending with marriage between the main characters.

Another characteristic of the American film musical is the use of *diegetic music* performed by the characters in the film. In *Karmen*, it is interesting to find how the use of diegetic music combines the conventions of musical genre with African oral tradition. In the American non-musical film, invisible instrumentalists record the music track and thus the music and diegetic tracks remain entirely separate (*non-diegetic music*) while in the musical there is a constant crossing-over. Music appears

on the diegetic track, and correspondingly diegetic noises are transformed into music. By breaking down the barrier separating the two tracks, the musical blurs the borders between the real and the ideal, the elements Altman calls *audio dissolve* (1989, 63). The presence of diegetic music alone is, however, not enough to produce a musical. It is the tendency to transform diegetic music into supra-diegetic music that distinguishes the musical genre from other genres. If the diegetic songs of the film do not reverse the traditional classical narrative hierarchy of image over sound at climatic moments of the film, we cannot, according to Altman, classify the film as a musical (Altman 1989, 71).

In francophone West African cinema, the difference between a musical film and a non-musical film is not as obvious as it is in American film genres.⁵² Music and dance are never simply illustrative or decorative elements in any films but they play an important role in the narrative development or in the overall meaning of an event. This role is explained as an influence from African oral storytelling, *orature* integrating different art forms (Finnegan 1976/1984). In traditional societies, music, song, dance and *orature* were totally integrated into and related to the daily existence of people. There was no strict limit between the storyteller and his/her audience but the audience played a central role in the performances of the oral narrator. When oral tales were narrated by a storyteller, audiences regularly joined in the narration by singing codified call-and-response refrains or by clapping accompanying rhythms. Songs completed the story

52 This might be the reason why F  rid Boughedir (2000), in his effort to classify African auteur films into genres, does not distinguish a film musical as an independent African genre. Boughedir mentions musicals only as a subcategory of the comedy and fantasy genres, but does not analyse the characteristics of this sub-genre in more detail (Boughedir 2000, 117).

that was going on, encapsulated its moral or just continued the narrative. Such participatory practices have been transferred to popular films and other non-live imported media in Africa (Thackway 2003, 52). In African cinema, songs and dances highlight the continuity and progression of the action. Songs emerge out of what has happened earlier or what has been said or done before drawing attention to what follows and what may later develop (Ukadike 1994, 216–217).

European distributors in charge of sub-titling films have often failed to appreciate the importance of the narrative role of music in francophone African and transnational African films. Because of this, many films have lost part of their meaning when the songs sung in local languages have not been translated in the sub-titles.⁵³ The lack of translation also complicates the interpretation of some parts of *Karmen* in which music is used in the same way as in African storytelling sessions.

At the beginning of *Karmen*, there is a sequence where Karmen is singing and entertaining her cellmates. In this scene, there is a clear audio dissolve from spoken dialogue to song, much as in Hollywood film musicals, but the call-and-response singing is based on African music and *orature* tradition. The women are not just singing for fun; the words of the song also predict coming events. The song describes the qualities of Karmen and how she succeeds in making both men and women fall in love with her. The singing in Wolof is only elliptically sub-titled in English, but even as such, the subtitles help draw the spectator's attention to the qualities of Karmen. It is more difficult to interpret the meanings

53 For instance, in the case of Sembene's *Xala* the sub-titles never included the words of Wolof songs telling about the injustices committed by the main character El Hadj, which easily makes the end of the film incomprehensive.

of the song by the *griot* character⁵⁴ Yandé Codou Sene, who praises Karmen Geï first in the excerpt where Angelique is looking for Karmen and talking with Ma Penda on the beach and, at the end of the film, on the theatre stage. One must know the Senegalese story of Ndéye Guéye, to which it refers. Ndéye Guéye was an admired, beautiful Senegalese woman who made all the men of Dakar fall in love with her but never consented to marry any of them. The story about this woman might be familiar to Senegalese spectators, or at least they can understand the words of the song in Wolof. But for non-Senegalese spectators, the appearance of the singer remains unconnected to the main narrative of the film due to deficient sub-titles. The story about Ndéye Guéye inspired Doudou Ndiaye Rose to compose the drumming rhythms of the film. She also gave her name to the complete title of the film, *Karmen Geï* (Guéye). The name Gaï can also be interpreted as a pun from 'gay' referring to the bisexuality of Karmen.

A remarkable difference between *Karmen* and most American film musicals is the use of live recordings. In American film musicals, music is recorded separately from the image in studio conditions in order to ensure the quality of the sound. This means resorting to all kinds of techniques, such as dubbing, rerecording, looping and post synchronization, which ultimately casts doubt on the whole idea of diegetic sound, as Altman (1989, 64) has noted. For Ramaka it was out of question to use recorded music in his film. His intention was to create strong emotional intensity and a sense of tragedy, which he considered impossible to achieve with the synchronization of lip movements and other

54 In traditional West African societies *griots* were the carriers of tradition who told the history of the group in their songs.

technical devices. For him this was possible only through the use of live sound and live music performances. The effort was still more risky since Jeïnaba Diop Gaï was not a professional singer but only started to train in singing for the role of Karmen.⁵⁵

In African films the use of live sound has been a common practice because a lack of studios has forced filmmakers to adapt those aesthetic devices that are available. This has created a certain kind of aesthetics that also creates the specificity of this cinema (cf. aesthetic of hunger, Shohat and Stam 1994, 256–260). The choice between two different aesthetics was one of the occasions where the multicultural production team had to negotiate between different views but, in this case, the filmmaker prevailed – however, not without debate. The French-Canadian crew expected the music to be recorded in the studio and to use all the available technical equipment and was at first suspicious of his intention to use live music:

That's something different and they [=the other members of the crew] were sceptical about it but they had confidence in me. They seemed to believe that I knew what I was going to do and I was given a chance to prove it. I was though prepared to give up and to record the music if ever they had disapproved. (Interview with Ramaka 31.3.2002.)⁵⁶

55 Unlike Ramaka, Francesco Rosi had cast only true opera singers in the main roles of his *Carmen* (http://www.tenorissimo.com/domingo/Various/carmen_making84.htm).

56 C'est spécial. Ils ont été scéptiques mais ils ont eu confiance. Ils ont dit, tien, il a l'air de savoir comment il veut y aller bon; on te fait confiance donc tu dois nous prouver que tu réussiras à le faire. Je m'étais néanmoins engagé au non, au prêt de la production à doubler les voix si jamais je me cassais la gueule.

Independent art film

Authorial expressivity, realism and ambiguity are the three characteristics that, according to Bordwell (1999), define an art film. In the art film, what is more important than the narrative itself is the enigma created by the author: who is telling the story this time, how will s/he tell the story and why is it told in this way? Realism refers, for example, to shooting at real locations, representing real problems and using realistic or psychologically complex characters. Ambiguity, for its part, is an effort to solve the problem created by the difficulty to merge together realism and authorial expressivity that otherwise seems contradictory. The art film is non-classical in that it foregrounds deviations from the classical norm. Certain gaps, breaks in cause-effect linkages and in temporal and spatial construction are typical for art films but they are resituated as realism – in life things happen this way – or as authorial commentary – the ambiguity is symbolic. Art films require that the audiences know how to read such films in order not to get lost whenever confronted with a problem with causation, temporality, or spatiality. They also need the ability to tolerate uncertainty and unfinished plots since art films often have open and arbitrary endings and leave the spectator with more questions than answers. (Bordwell 1999, 717–722.)

The fact that *Karmen* draws its inspiration from an old well-known story already assumes an artistic approach of the subject. Since the original story had been told so many times in opera, theatre and cinema, the story itself was not sufficient reason for a remake. There were already 52 film adaptations of *Carmen* made by such directors as Carlos Saura, Charlie Chaplin, Francesco Rosi and many others when *Karmen* premiered in 2001. Since then

at least a South African version has to be added.⁵⁷ In Ramaka's *Karmen* the interest for non-African art cinema audiences is that they can both recognise the origin of the storyline but also find new elements in the adaptation. This time, the familiar story is set in a new cultural sphere accompanied by folkloric African music, and the roles are played by black actors. Moreover, the director has included a new element, a love-relationship between two women, in the plot, thus modernising and queering the old story. These transformations justify the remake of a story filmed already more than fifty times. In the old film adaptations, the events of "Carmen" have already been located in a military camp in the United States (*Carmen Jones* by Otto Preminger, 1954), in a Spanish dance studio (*Carmen* by Carlos Saura, 1983) or on the Mediterranean coast (*Carmen Baby* by Radley Metzger, 1967). The music has varied from 60s swing to flamenco. Carmen has even been a black character, played by the African-American Dorothy Jean Dandridge in the American *Carmen Jones*, but never has the story been told by an African filmmaker in Africa by African actors. In Ramaka's film, even the title is Wolofised by writing Carmen with K as *Karmen*.

The connections to the opera of Bizet and the European art film are not as obvious in the promotion poster and the film trailer as they are in two small brochures and on *Karmen*'s website. In the poster, only the quotation from the opera libretto, "If I love you, be on your guard!" ("Si je t'aime, prends garde à toi") above the photo recalls the origin of the script while a small-sized *Karmen* brochure and the website explain the connections in more detail with drawings, photos and text excerpts. They tell about Prosper Mérimée's short story, the history of Bizet's opera

57 Mark Dornford-May: *U-Carmen E-Khayelitsha* (South Africa 2005).

and also refer to two earlier film versions, those by Carlos Saura and Francesco Rosi. Below these excerpts and images, the photo of Joseph Ramaka positions him as the latest link in the long chain of authors remaking “Carmen” (See Photo 2).

The impression of realism is created in *Karmen* with realistic locations and a natural soundtrack. The classical European music is replaced with indigenous Senegalese drums, and the languages spoken are those heard on the streets of Dakar. The realist impression, however, is broken with some surprising gaps in the narrative and with flash-forward predicting the final outcome. For example, we are never explicitly told why Karmen gatecrashes the wedding party of Lamine, insulting the guests, and why she is so angry at the ruling powers. Similarly, at the end of the film, there is no obvious reason based on the narrative why Karmen suddenly appears in the flies of the stage where Yandé Codou Sene is singing her praises, when she has just been seen wondering in the alleys of the market place. The excerpt with Karmen playing cards with Samba and other smugglers and having a vision with white-faced characters also remains inexplicable until the very last minute when Lamine has committed the murder. It is only then that the spectator understands that Karmen’s vision when she got the black card was a premonition about her own death. The technique of tantalizing the spectator with knowledge to which only the narrator in *Karmen* is privy is quite similar to that used by Mérimée; from the very first chapter, the reader of the story knows that Don José has committed a murder but whom he has murdered, why, and how, remains a secret until the end of the story.

The realism of art cinema also includes sexual realism. According to Bordwell (1999, 718) the aesthetics and commerce

Carmen le mythe



La Carmen de Mérimée

Personnage essentiel dans l'histoire de la littérature et dans l'histoire de l'opéra, Carmen est née de l'imaginaire de Prosper Mérimée, qui voit dans un coin de l'Espagne, cette gitane révélant l'histoire d'une femme qui conduit l'homme dans cet univers d'amour et de mort, au cœur de cette Espagne goyescque, faite d'ombre et de lumière, d'or et de sang.



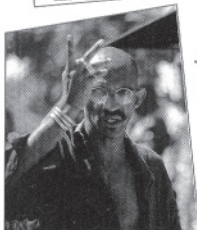
Carmen l'opéra

Ce n'est que dans les dernières années de sa vie que Georges Bizet travaille à l'œuvre qui sera son plus grand succès, son opéra Carmen. Pourtant lors de sa création en 1875, l'œuvre, trop indécente, sera censurée dans l'indifférence du public. Il faudra attendre que cette œuvre soit complétée de récitatifs pour que Carmen devienne un grand opéra et connaisse un succès définitif. Bizet a été vengé depuis : c'est aujourd'hui l'opéra le plus joué au monde.



Carmen au cinéma

Carmen c'est aussi l'une des plus grandes réussites du film d'opéra avec cinquante-deux films. On peut la découvrir dans la version de Carlos Saura et de Francesco Rosi (1984) avec Julia Migenes, Plácido Domingo et Ruggero Raimondi. Ce film a été produit par Daniel Toscan du Plantier, réputé pour avoir produit de nombreux films tirés d'opéras.



Joseph Gaï Ramaka - Auteur réalisateur

De la nouvelle de Mérimée au Carmen Jones de Otto Preminger, j'ai bien vu une dizaine d'adaptations de Carmen, et j'ai toujours la même fascination, le même étonnement face à cette forte et complexe personnalité que j'ai souvent rencontrée chez les femmes (tante, amante, amie ou tout simplement une passante) de mon pays. Quand je fermais les yeux et que ces femmes envahissaient mon esprit et mes sens, ce n'est point Bizet que j'entendais, mais le rythme de Doudou, les Polyphonies de Tonton Julien, la voix tragique de Yandé Codou ou la complainte de David au Sax.

Photo 2. A page from the promotion brochure of *Karmen*.

of the art cinema often depend on an eroticism that violates production codes of pre-1950 Hollywood. Sexual realism has not been a part of francophone West African cinema, which has been very modest with regard to sexual matters. Sexual encounters have rarely been filmed and same-sex relationships especially remained almost a complete taboo until the later half of the 1990s. The very first francophone West African film describing a homosexual relationship was a Guinean film *Dakan* (Guinea, 1997) by Mohamed Camara, which received a chilly reception in the African film festival of Ouagadougou.

In recent years several accented films, including *Karmen*, have questioned and subverted traditional notions of sexuality prioritising heterosexual relationships, and taken homosexual relationships as their issue (Naficy 2001, 111 + footnote 11).⁵⁸ *Karmen* breaks sexual taboos by portraying nudity, promiscuity and a sexual relationship between two women. It proposes new post-modern queer identifications by bringing up the possibility of open lesbian relationships, also in Senegalese society. The violation of Senegalese moral codes led to the censoring of *Karmen* in the home country while in the international market this increased interest in the film, which was interpreted as a defence of the human rights of Senegalese homosexuals. The fact that *Karmen* was screened in gay and lesbian film festivals in the United States and Europe exacerbated negative reactions towards the film in the home country, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

To Senegalese people “Carmen” is not as familiar as to European audiences, even though the short story by Mérimée used to be included in regular school readings in Senegal during

58 On the reception of Deepa Mehta’s *Fire*, see Desai 2001, 159–192.

the colonial period. In Senegal, the story's localisation works the other way round than in Europe: an unknown story is made more accessible by situating the narrative in the familiar surroundings with several recognisable elements: the isle of Gorée, well-known Senegalese actors and musicians and local languages. In francophone African cinema, using a non-African text as a basis for the film script is a rare and quite recent phenomenon. The small number of adaptations of non-African texts is explained by Pan-African and Afrocentrist ideologies, which considered cinema as a tool for constructing African identity based on African myths, history and literature. In Senegalese cinema, the only exception to this 'rule' is Mambety's *Hyènes* (Senegal/Switzerland, 1992) based on the Swiss Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit of the Old Woman*. In the case of *Hyènes*, a European story acquired important local and geopolitical connotations by being set in the Senegalese suburb of Colobane and making an old lady symbolise the World Bank. The political message conveyed by Mambety succeeded in hiding the non-African origin of the script and connected the film directly to African social realist narratives.

The isle of Gorée as a location in the film, as the last stop for captured slaves waiting to be shipped to America, carries special significance for many African and diasporic African audiences. The old slave fortress has become a target of pilgrimage for diasporic Africans scattered around the world. It is also familiar to Euro-American tourists as one of the most famous Dakar tourist attractions. The isle of Gorée and another slave fortress in Ghana have been used in several films by displaced African-origin filmmakers as a symbol of origin of the displacement and black diaspora (e.g. *Sankofa*, US/Ghana, 1993), *Little Senegal*, Algeria/France/Germany, 2001).

African social realist film

African social realist narratives define themselves by thematising topical sociocultural issues. Numerous African filmmakers have used their cameras to address a whole range of political and social issues: corruption, neo-colonialism, the plight of women and children, health care, education etc. The filmmakers have often used a traditional position to criticise and link certain forms of modernity to neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism. (Diawara 1992, 141–152.) The last few decades have seen this tendency to give space for other themes and genres, but still we can say that mainstream African cinema deals with socio-political issues in one way or another. *Karmen* is not an exception to this mainstream but, unlike Sembene and many other West African filmmakers, Ramaka has not highlighted his role as the heir of *griots*, the oral story tellers. In a traditional African society, hereditary *griots* enjoyed more freedom of speech than other individuals and were thus allowed to criticise the abuses of power and authority. The tales of *griots* provided a forum for protest and criticism in the same way as politically committed cinema in a modern society. (Thackway 2003, 54–58.)

Social protest and criticism are present in *Karmen* but in a more indicative way. The social criticism put in the mouth of the main character seems to be directed towards the suppressive power, but its basic target is not specified. The provocative lines of Karmen at the wedding of Lamine, “You are evil. I say you are all evil. You’ve swallowed up the country”, are the key lines of this criticism but once they are uttered the issue is not developed much further. Whether Karmen and smugglers are living on the margins of society because of their criminal way of life or because

they are in political opposition is left to be determined by the spectator. The assaults and harassment by the police are also presented without comment as though they were a natural way for Senegalese authorities to function.

Another critical element connecting *Karmen* to the social realist tradition of African cinema is the attention paid on the role of women. Throughout the history of modern African literature and cinema, authors and filmmakers have focused on the role of women in the construction of the new Africa. They have criticised the treatment of daughters and wives, their lack of education, and other injustices suffered by women. The tendency has been so strong that Diawara (1989, 203) has named these narratives a new 'emancipation of the daughter' myth, parallel to older myths found in oral tradition but emerging only contemporaneously with the advent of African modern literature and film. The 'emancipation of the daughter' myth can be interpreted as a modern version of 'revolt daughter' tales telling about the ill fate of a disobedient daughter who has not consented to marrying the husband chosen by her parents (see e.g. Vuorela 1991). In traditional tales, the daughter's revolt had to be punished in order to preserve the stability of the community, but in modern literature and cinema, the success of the daughter evokes the will of the 'new griots', the authors and filmmakers, to transcend the established order and create a new one. The new myth serves more feminist and revolutionary purposes and the desire to create a new order. (Diawara 1989, 210.)

At the beginning of the film, Karmen succeeds in getting rid of the oppressive jail system and ridiculing the representatives of power. Even when arrested again she makes fun of the police officer by escaping from him. The close-up of the astonished face

of the car driver and Karmen's loud laugh and provocative gesture when she nearly bumps into a car after she has run away from Lamine indicate her power to resist the suppressive system. She has the capacity to reject the role proposed for a woman in a Senegalese society as daughter, wife or mother when leading her life according to her own rules and desires. She even has a sexual relationship with another woman, her jailer, and thus questions the necessity of patriarchal family.⁵⁹ Her physical and intellectual talents have allowed her also to turn around the rules of power in the gang of smugglers; it is she who commands the gang. Contrary to the traditional 'revolt daughter' tale, she can also decide herself with whom she wants to share her bed and property. As a critic of the patriarchal order Ramaka joins the long line of African filmmakers wanting to transcend the established order and create a new one, but the tragic end of *Karmen* throws a shadow of suspicion over his intentions. Is Karmen still "too free" as her mother warns her if she has no other choice than to choose between losing her liberty or death?

African aesthetics of orality meets Hollywood visual conventions

The basic difference between African and Western cultures is the focus on community in the former and the focus on individuals

59 The patriarchal family system has also been challenged in two other transnational films, *Chinese Chocolate* (Canada, 1996) and the aforementioned *Fire* (India/Canada, 1998), which caused similar protests in India, the home country of its diasporic filmmaker Deepa Mehta, in 1998, to those against *Karmen* in Senegal (Desai 2004, 159–192).

in the latter. Francophone African cultures share a holistic understanding of people, the community, and their environment, which in turn points to the traditionally communal nature of societies, their art forms and the role of the arts. These societies consider the role of people as members of the community to override notions of individual fulfilment, while in Western cultures people are primarily identified as individuals, not as a part of a group. The importance of a human being belonging to a community is reflected by many francophone African filmmakers in several structural and stylistic ways in their films. According to Thackway (2003, 51–52), one manifestation of the symbiosis between individual and community is seen in *the spatial organisation of films* giving as much importance to the surrounding environment as to individuals in the shots. Relations between an individual and the environment are also reflected in the way filmmakers favour long or medium shots framing characters frontally in groups in relation to their surroundings rather than isolating them.⁶⁰

Thematically it is difficult to interpret *Karmen* as a community focused film since the narrative focuses on the need for individual freedom in a repressive community. In the original short story, the freedom of Carmen is limited by the other Romany living in the community, and in Ramaka's film, it is the Senegalese patriarchy that sets the limits for the female character. For this reason one could rather expect visual framing

60 A good example of this kind of framing is found in *Tilai* (1990), a Burkinabé film by Idrissa Ouedraogo portraying the conflict of the main character between patriarchal tradition and his love for the woman given as a wife to his father. The pressure of the tradition is portrayed visually with shots that hardly ever show the main characters in close-up but frame them with the surrounding terrain or other villagers.

to accentuate the individual than the community. Interestingly however, Karmen is rarely seen in close-up, and when she is, the framing accentuates strong emotions: love and affection (the face of Karmen alternating with that of Lamine when Karmen confesses her love for him), sadness (missing Angelique on the beach) or fear (seeing her future in the cards in a scene with white masks) in similar ways to mainstream Hollywood cinema. Global audiences are used to interpreting close-ups as indications of strong emotions; this kind of representation facilitates identification with characters and helps to interpret the meanings of the film. But most of the time Karmen is seen in long or medium shots, dancing her seductive dance or giving orders to her men. While in prison or with the smugglers, Karmen is almost without exception framed as a member of the group, even if a head taller than the others, and positioned in the centre of the shot.

The visual portrayal of Karmen is quite opposite to that of Angelique, the second female protagonist, who is regularly framed in close-ups looking somewhere beyond the camera. She is hardly ever seen in the same shots with other characters of the film. The close-up framing of Angelique underlines her solitude and raises the question about the consequences of open homosexuality in the community.⁶¹ Is she deemed to be ostracised from other people because of her sexual identity? This interpretation is supported by the shots of Karmen changing their quality every

61 A similar kind of framing is used in a Senegalese tele-film *Ca twisté à Poponguine* (Senegal 1993), where the homesickness and outsiderness of the French schoolmaster, Mr. Benoît, are accentuated with close-ups separating him from other inhabitants of the Poponguine village, who, on the contrary, are regularly seen in long shots framed with other people. (Maasilta, 2001, 56)

time she is shown to have feelings towards Angelique. In these shots she is also isolated in close-ups, which suggest that love for Angelique would mean exclusion from the community for her as well. Interestingly, when Angelique is dead, her coffin is shown in the long shots carried by other wardens and deposited in front of the mourning community in the church. This suggests an interpretation of the film urging tolerance, as proposed by some critics and debate participants analysed in the later chapters. Once dead, the soul of the sinner needs to be forgiven and the whole religious community support her ensuring her the last mass.

Favouring long and medium shots of *Karmen* also accentuates the corporality of Karmen. For Ramaka the tragedy of Karmen lies in the relationship between the individual and her body. To focus on this tragedy he has chosen to use close-ups sparingly and instead “to show a lot of bodies, naked and dancing bodies, young and old bodies, but always in a way that commands more desire than tries to capture the libido” (www.lesoleil.sn/karmen). In several long shots Karmen is presented as an object of desire for a man or for a group of men. In the scene where Karmen lies in a round bathtub giving orders to her men, she is positioned in the centre of the shot and portrayed like a queen receiving her subjects. This is accentuated with the shot of Lamine waiting until Karmen is ready to get out of her bath and putting the bathrobe on her shoulders like a maid. The celebration of the female body is quite rare in earlier African cinema. Even if a naked female body is not a taboo, it is mostly portrayed in connection with everyday activities like breast feeding or washing.

6

Controversy over *Karmen*: Accused of blasphemy

Karmen had its premiere in Senegal on July 22, 2001. The first screening was a well prepared and anticipated event supposed to be a new start for domestic cinema after the difficult decade of the 1990s. About 1,200 viewers, both invited guests and film enthusiasts, attended the premiere and gala soirée in the theatre *Bel Arte* of the Centre International de Commerce Extérieur du Sénégal (CICES) in Dakar. After the premiere, several public screenings were organised in the two cinemas owned by Ramaka's company even if officially the film had not yet launched in cinemas.

Karmen was accused of blasphemy for the first time in a popular weekly newspaper *Mœurs* at the end of August. *Mœurs* article raised the interest of a Mourid religious leader, Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté, who made the film an issue on his religious radio programme on *Diamono FM* on September 7. The reason for his anger was that the religious song *khassaïde*⁶² was presented in the film in memory of a lesbian character, the prison warden Angelique, who had committed suicide because of her desperate

62 *Khassaïdes* are religious odes written by or about the founder of the Mourid sect, Ahmadu Bamba. They are sung at the various religious ceremonies and form the main corpus of religious Mourid texts together with the Koran and Sunni prophecies.

love for *Karmen*. Diakhate vigorously condemned the film and demanded Ahmadou Bamba's song be cut out. Otherwise, he threatened, religious people would protest against the film. This statement was later considered as an invitation for *Mourids* to demonstrate against the film.

On Saturday September 8, about 300 *baye fall*, a group belonging to the Mourid brotherhood, gathered in front of the cinema *Bel Arte* where the film was supposed to be screened the same evening. Armed with sticks, hatchets and knives they tore up *Karmen* posters, sang religious songs and promised to prevent the coming screening even by force of arms if necessary. After a meeting between religious leaders and the owner of the CICES building which housed the cinema *Bel Arte*, the Minister of the Interior decided to ban the film temporarily. Since the rioters had threatened to set the cinema on fire, authorities feared more violence if the film were to continue to be screened in Dakar. (Fall 2001; Nzale 2001c.)

During the protest, Joseph Ramaka was in Canada attending the Toronto International Film Festival, and was informed about the problems caused by his film only later by phone. Aïssatou Diop, the director of the company *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* running the cinema *Bel Arte*, was not present at the scene of the demonstration; neither was she invited to participate in the negotiations with the authorities and protest participants. She was only informed later that the screening of the film was banned. When Ramaka returned home, he and Jeïnaba Diop Gaï, his wife and the leading actress in *Karmen*, received anonymous harassment phone calls and death threats. Otherwise, the demonstration ended without physical damage other than torn posters.

After the incident, the Minister of Culture, Amadou Tidiane Wone, announced that the ban on the film would continue until the Committee for Cinematic Control had time to screen the film, at which time the authorities could decide if the film could be distributed in Senegal as such or if the controversial scene had to be cut. The Committee for Cinematic Control is an organ with an advisory role in cases in which films are suspected of containing harmful or distasteful material. It consists of members from different ministries, the Association of Senegalese Filmmakers (CINESEAS) and parents' organisations. The problem with the Committee, however, was that it had not been functioning since 1999, when the CINESEAS delegation had abandoned the committee due to a disagreement about the screening of foreign pornographic films in Senegal. (Faye 2001.) The authorities declared that the committee would be reorganised as soon as possible, but it soon appeared that this would not happen so easily. According to the newspapers, the member organisations did not agree on who was responsible for sabotaging the committee's earlier work, and new members had to be appointed to replace those who had abandoned the committee. Later that autumn, some of the committee members were abroad and could not participate in the meetings. When the committee was finally reorganised the next year, Ramaka announced that there were no more copies of *Karmen* in Senegal to screen the film. (Nzálé 2001d; Nzálé 2001a; Nzálé 2001b; Gueye 2002.)

Three months after the ban on the film, in December 2001, Joseph Ramaka presented the case in the Senegalese court. Among those he prosecuted were the editor-in-chief of *Mœurs*, Pape Daouda Sow, the religious leader Serigne Moustapha Diakhaté, a Member of the National Assembly and Alliance of

Progress Forces (AFP), Abdoulaye Babou, the president of the religious NGO *Jamra*⁶³, Latif Guèye, and the owner of the CICES building, Adama Sall, all of whom had contributed to the decision to ban the film. They were accused of inciting people against the film and of threatening the life of the filmmaker and his family. Adama Sall was also accused of breaking the contract with *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* running the cinema *Bel Arte*, and of confiscating ten copies of the film because of rent arrears.

The case of *Karmen* provoked two debates about freedom of expression and democracy in the Senegalese National Assembly. In mid-December 2001, a question about the future of *Karmen* in Senegalese cinemas was presented to the Minister of Culture in the National Assembly. According to *Wal Fadjri* (Gueye 2001), a Socialist member of the National Assembly, Papa Babacar Mbaye, urged the Ministry to take measures to “replace the moral, artistic and economic consequences caused by the incident to the filmmaker.” In his reply, Amadou Tidiane Wone denied his Ministry’s responsibility for the event but promised to personally ensure that the Committee for Cinematic Control would take up the case and find a solution. The subject resurfaced in the Assembly in July 2002 in connection to the TV documentary *Almodou*⁶⁴, whose screening on national television had also raised criticism from religious leaders. The same actors as earlier, Abdoulaye Babou of AFP and Papa Babacar Mbaye as his

63 The NGO *Jamra*, founded in 1988, aims to work towards the moralisation of state and society. It is mainly concerned with problems affecting urban youth, such as drug addiction, prostitution and AIDS. (Renders 2002, 77.)

64 The documentary *Almodou* by Almadou Thior deals with the practice of certain imams sending the children of Koranic schools into the streets to beg for money for their teacher instead of providing them with proper education (For more on this problem see Loimaier 2002; Maasilta 2003, 39–40).

Socialist opponent, voiced their opinion against and for the films like *Almodou* and *Karmen*. At the same time, the Committee for Cinematic Control was reorganised and was planning to review *Almodou*. The case of *Karmen* remained unresolved, however, since there were no copies for the Committee screening. (Gueye 2002.)

At the end of January 2002, a group of human rights activists and intellectuals founded an association called *Libérer Karmen* to free the film from censorship and to fight for more freedom of expression in Senegal. Leading the committee were two intellectuals, Brahim Haidar and Boubacar Diop Buuba, representing the Senegalese Committee for Human Rights. The purpose of the association was to get the film released or at least to get an official judgement on the case. The modes of action were private screenings and debates, direct efforts to lobby on the Ministries concerned, and an international collection of petitions on the Internet on behalf of the film. (Interview with Brahim Haidar 29.3.2002.)

Cinema censorship

Senegal is situated in a geopolitically and ideologically interesting zone influenced by both the Western and Arab Islamic worlds. Unlike most Western countries, rich Arab Islamic countries continue to pay considerable attention to African countries and support them financially. As a consequence of this, sub-Saharan Africa has become more integrated into the Arab world during the last few decades. What kind of cultural effect this closer integration with the Arab Islamic countries will have on African Muslims and on African countries in general is a complex issue,

especially considering the simultaneous move in the opposite direction, towards the secular, technically advanced Europe and the United States. Living between and being influenced by both Islamic/Arab and Western cultures is visible in all fields of society. Filmmakers also tread a fine line between different interpretations: what is and what is not acceptable in artistic expression. In this chapter, I compare, first, freedom of expression and cinema censorship in Western and Islamic countries, and then move to cinematic legislation and censorship as practised in Senegal.

Scholars of cinema censorship differentiate three types of censorship: official or direct censorship, unofficial censorship and hidden censorship (Schlosberg 1955; Boughedir 1995; Lyons 1997). Official censorship refers to direct censorship based on legislation and exercised by state and municipal authorities. Unofficial or non-institutional censorship is practised by religious and other pressure groups and occurs often as a result of protests. The category of hidden censorship contains mechanisms of self-regulation established by the film industry or directors themselves (Schlosberg 1955, 65; Lyons 1997) and economic censorship exercised by exhibitors and distributors (Diawara 1992; Boughedir 1995). Censorship tends to be imposed in three main areas: sex, violence and politics (Boughedir 1995, 35–41; Hayward 1996, 35).

According to the definition in Cassell's Concise English Dictionary (1994), in legal circles, censorship is mostly understood as happening *before* publishing. With '*censor*', the dictionary refers to "a public officer appointed to examine books, plays, etc., before they are published, to see that they contain nothing immoral, seditious or offensive" (Concise English Dictionary 1994). Many

constitutional lawyers in the Western world hold that democracy should guarantee a free marketplace of ideas and the public has the right to see or read whatever expressions. The most dangerous attack against the freedom of expression is when communication is banned in advance and thus never reaches the public. In legal parlance this is known as “prior restraint”, which is considered practically a synonym for censorship. Another broad view of censorship includes extralegal censorship and actions occurring after an expression has been published and is within the public’s reach (Lyons 1997, 4–5).

In many Western countries, official censorship is today quite benign and limited to rating systems that protect minors and inform audiences of the content of a film. The relaxation of censorship, however, is quite recent, in the late 1960s in the United States and the mid-1970s in the United Kingdom, France and Spain. In some countries, like the United Kingdom, there still exists a legally constituted board that is responsible for approving, banning or cutting offensive materials. Before any film can be publicly shown in the United Kingdom, it has to be classified by the British Board for Film Classification. If the board denies a film a classification status it means it will be illegal to show or market the film publicly but one can own it privately. In the United States, the production code established in 1934 by the film industry itself was discarded in 1968 in favour of a ratings system still prevailing today. (Hayward 1996, 35–37.)

In Islamic societies, official censorship is still the dominant form of censorship. How strictly cinema is controlled varies from one country to another. In *Taliban* Afghanistan, cinema was entirely forbidden since the strictest version of Islam does not allow making images of human beings. Most Islamic countries

accept, however, the existence of cinema, but they restrict its content so as to be in harmony with religion. There are a certain number of restrictions common to most Islamic countries concerning the way in which bodies or male-female relations can be portrayed on screen (Devictor 2001).

The Islamic Republic of Iran, until today, has been the only regime attempting to transform its national production into an Islamic cinema. According to Mohsen Tabatab'i, the director of Islamic film production, Islamic cinema "must play its own role in propagating Islam, just like a mosque" (Allamehzadeh, 1997, 130). The Iranian state has implemented a censorship system that contributes to the creation of a new cinematic language and a new narrative style. Censorship is exercised in four phases. In the first phase, the script is approved for appropriate content. Forbidden are, among other elements: tight female clothing, showing any part of a women's body except the face and hands, physical contact and tender words or jokes between men and women, negative characters with beards, and foreign music or any type of joyous music. Films should also include a prayer scene and exalt religion and heroism during war and denounce Western cultural invasion. The second phase is the production approval, when a list of the cast and crewmembers is submitted for a production permit to be granted. In the third phase, the film is sent to a censorship board, which approves the film, requires changes, or bans it all together. Finally, in the fourth phase, the producers apply for a screening permit that includes a ratings system for the film. The ratings system – A, B, and C – determines the film's booking and its access to the media for promotion. Unlike in the U.S., the ratings system has nothing to do with the content of the film but with the quality of the films. A-rated films are allowed to be advertised on national television and screened in the best

theatres, while advertising and screening of C-rated films are very limited. (Coopersmith, Everett and Nakamura, 2002; Mostyn 2002, 168–169.) During the last few years, censorship has banned the works of ‘non-believing’ directors who were barred from post-revolutionary filmmaking not because of the content of their films but because they did not belong to the faithful. (Allamehzadeh 1997, 131.)

It should be noted that Iranian censorship was created in the special context of post-revolutionary Iran and should not be generalised to other Muslim countries. It has, however, served as a model for several fundamentalist groups working in countries in North and West Africa. In North Africa, there are several examples of films censored because of sexual taboos. Portraying a naked body or hetero- or homosexual relationships are more often censored in local films than in foreign ones. It has also happened that a film has been censored on the pretext that it “offends good manners,” although the real reason was political. The field of cinema at large has been relatively free compared to television programmes, since going to the cinema is accessible to fewer people than is television viewing. In sub-Saharan West Africa, official censorship has been more interested in politics than sexuality, which may be due to the fact that African filmmakers have until recently not been eager to show images of naked body and sexual acts (Boughedir, 1995, 34–40).

If official censorship is exercised as efficiently as in Iran, there is no apparent need for unofficial censorship. But when it has relaxed in many parts of the world as a consequence of the democratisation process, unofficial censorship seems to be becoming more prevalent. Protest groups have started to struggle for better representation of religious, sexual or ethnic minorities or to call for the screening of violence, blasphemy or sex to be

forbidden. They do not always strive for censorship but might use protests only to express their demands or opinions. But when, because of protests, a film is reedited or withdrawn from theatres, such protests can be said to result in censorship. (Schlosberg 1955; Boughedir 1995; Lyons 1997.)

In North African countries, non-institutional censorship is today even more important than direct political censorship. Islamist groups have successfully disrupted film shoots, closed cinemas and cut the cables of dish antennas of television stations suspected of transmitting immoral images on their channels. Even if these groups do not represent the government's opinion, they have succeeded in influencing the everyday lives of many non-fundamentalist people and official censors who take precautions against disturbances caused by fundamentalists. Boughedir remarks, however, that the generalisation of unofficial censorship is not typical only for fundamentalist Islam but the same kind of development is found in extremist movements in the Western countries (Boughedir 1995, 40–41). For instance in the United States, the protests of the New Christian Right led to the decision of three major film chains not to screen *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Martin Scorsese in 1988 and several small cities around the country cancelled the film's screenings (Lyons 1997, 187). The same happened in France, where the Roman Catholic Church and the secular state are supposed to be separate: the Catholic lobby forced the mayors of Versailles and other small cities to cancel all screenings of *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Hayward 1996, 36). Protests by antipornography feminists, Asian Americans and gays and lesbians in the United States have also tried to ban films containing harmful images of certain minority groups, but they have been far less successful than religious groups (Lyons 1997).

The most dangerous form of hidden control, according to Schlosberg, is self-censorship practised on all levels of film production. Producers are afraid of distributors, exhibitors of audiences or of religious or political pressure groups, and even the directors and scriptwriters are afraid of each other. Self-censorship “endangers the originality and specificity of the films and produces the cinema afraid of taking the slightest risk” (Schlosberg 1955, 65). It happens in broad and covert ways, in the form of the film studios’ infamous ‘script notes’, self-censorship, market or economic censorship, and film ratings. According to Lyons (1997, 183), “Anyone in the movie industry knows this kind of censorship even if none of these actions may be legally defined as “censorship”, yet each helps produce a different film than the one its creators had in mind.”

The French government and distributors have been accused of using economic censorship against African films which are too critical of French colonial politics. *Camp of Thiaroye* (1988) by Sembene Ousmane and Thierno Faty Sow, depicting the massacre of the battalion of African sharpshooters who demanded their wages from the French colonial army, is one of the victims of this kind of censorship. The same happened to two films by Med Hondo, *Sarraounia*, which portrayed the atrocities of the French army in Africa, and *Soleil Ô*, which spoke out against neo-colonialism. (Boughedir 1995, 36.) The Senegalese filmmaker Mahama Johnson Traore states that *Sarraounia* was released almost secretly in France since “‘they’ could not forbid it, but neither did ‘they’ do anything to help its release” (Traore 1996, 68). Diawara, however, has an opposite view about French distribution policy; he remarks that African repressive governments should take a lesson from France, which has bought

and distributed all the anticolonialist films of Sembene instead of trying to stop them (Diawara 1992, 81). This example clearly shows how problematic the concept of economic censorship is: what for one person is censorship for political reasons is, for another, simply an economic necessity. No matter what real reason determines the poor distribution of films like *Sarraounia*, *Soleil Ô* and *Camp of Thiaroye*, the films do not belong to common repertoire of French cinemas or festivals. Then again, neither do many other African films. French film audiences certainly do not rush to see films depicting the atrocities perpetuated by their countrymen, but on the other hand, the audience ratings would be better if the films were better promoted.

As discussed earlier, some African filmmakers consider that European donors and co-producers also limit their freedom of expression. African filmmakers cannot choose the subjects according to their own interests but have to think about the interests of European audiences in order to find financing for their films. Banned or uninteresting subjects include those related to African colonial history and political current issues because the Northern producer does not wish to get involved in the internal affairs of an African country (Traore 1996, 69). Likewise, the films made for European audiences may be censored in the home countries because their moral codes are not in harmony with local ones. For instance, *Visages des femmes* met significant commercial success in Paris, where it was simultaneously shown in eight cinemas, while at home in the Ivory Coast, it was banned for eight months because of its sexual audacity. The film includes the most explicit intercourse scene in African cinema, lasting for about eight minutes. The film also raised significant controversy between the filmmaker and festival participants at the 1987 Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou (Pfaff, 1996, 257). A

similar controversy was also created over *Dakan* (Guinea, 1997), which depicted a relationship between two young men (Tapsoba 1997, 33–35). The most recent example is a Cameroonian film, *Les Saignantes* (Cameroon/France, 2005) by Jean-Pierre Bekolo, which was under threat of censorship in its home country because of accusations of pornography and attacks against the government.

Officially there is no preventive censorship in Senegal, but the films should be accepted and rated by the Committee for Cinematic Control before they are distributed. The implementation of the law has, however, varied according to the interest and eagerness of the authorities. The lethargy of the Committee for Cinematic Control made it possible for any film to reach the Senegalese screens without control. In earlier times, the President, an individual minister or a religious chief had the opportunity to ban or censor a work of art. The main reasons for censorship were due to political and religious issues which, in the case of Senegal, are inextricably linked while pornography or sexual excerpts had not previously been a reason to ban a Senegalese film. This may, however, be because of the autocensorship and decency of Senegalese filmmakers. Overt sexuality or sexual relationships were rarely explicitly shown in Senegalese films before the 1990s. For instance, Sembene depicted the naked female body in many of his films but it was always done in such a way it did not contradict with the moral codes of Senegalese audiences.⁶⁵ The best-known cases of cinema

65 One famous example of the culturally accepted way to film sexual intercourse is in Djibril Diop Mambety's *Touki Bouki* (Senegal, 1973, *Journey of the Hyenas*) where a love scene of a young couple is depicted with the images of a Dogon cross, symbolising fertility and the storming waves suggesting an orgasmic burst (Ukadike 1994, 221).

censorship date back to the 1970s, a time considered the golden age of Senegalese cinema.

In 1974, three films raised controversy among Senegalese authorities: *Kaddu Beykat* (Senegal, 1975), *Xala* and *Njangaan* (Senegal, 1975). *Kaddu Beykat* portrays the hard life of poor peasants in the home village of the director, Safi Faye. The film orients its criticism against peanut monoculture, which was considered the main reason for the villagers' economic problems. Peasants were forced by the government to cultivate peanuts for export instead of growing millet for local consumption. The Senegalese authorities of the period did not accept excerpts in which government civil servants were shown to cheat poor illiterate peasants, and Safi Faye was ordered to cut two sequences of the film. She refused, and the film was banned entirely in Senegal for over ten years. *Xala*, by Sembene, criticises neo-colonialism and the corruption of the new Senegalese bourgeoisie. The censorship authorities insisted on ten cuts from the film: among them were "the shot of 'Marianne' (the symbol of France) being put out onto the steps in the opening sequence (which it was thought would offend the French), the shots of the élite finding money in their attaché cases, and the scene where one of the beggars comments that prisoners are better fed and housed than the ordinary African" (Ashbury, Helsby and O'Brien 1998, 89). Both *Xala* and *Njangaan* were also critical with regard to religion, and this was the main reason for the censorship of *Njangaan*. The film by Mahama Traoré tells a fictitious story of a small boy sent to a Koranic school headed by a religious teacher, *marabout*. The *marabout* sends the schoolchildren out to beg for money ending up in his pocket as payment for their education. The boy's parents, who believe that Koranic education is unparalleled, do not raise any objections even when the boy

is hit and killed by a car. As the *marabouts* constitute a strategic national constituent in Senegal, the criticism of Koranic schools has always been a sensitive issue, as showed as recently as in 2002 with the TV documentary *Almoudou*.

For the government it was confusing that films like *Njangaan* and *Xala* produced by the national production organisation Société Nationale de Cinéma (SNC) were also commercial successes. According to several scholars, the success was due to the censorship, which increased interest in the films (Fall 1987, 372; Diawara 1992, 61). The same had already happened for a short film *Reouh-Takh* (Senegal, 1972), which was also banned in Senegal for “being too critical of that country’s socio-political laxities” (Vieyra, 1983, 81). Everyone wanted to see *Reouh-Takh* because it was the first film censored in Senegal. The project of SNC was phased out by 1976, partly because of such occurrences.

Ceddo by Sembene Ousmane was censored in 1976. The pretext for the censorship was a semantic disagreement between the former President, Leopold Sédhor, and the director Sembene Ousmane. Senghor had decided that the title of the film should have been written ‘*cedo*’ (meaning an outsider or non-Muslim) instead of ‘*ceddo*’. The real reason for censorship is more likely to reside in the film’s message. *Ceddo* purports to tell the story of the wars between the aristocracy and Muslim communities in the 17th and 18th centuries, but it in fact relates to the involvement of religion, *marabouts* and bishops in the political conflicts of contemporary Senegal. Especially at the time of its release in 1981, *Ceddo* was a majestic uprising and provocation against the arrogant versions of memory propagated by the brotherhoods, claiming to replace the memory of the agents of empire and post-colonial modernisation, while at the same time redefining and appropriating the oral traditions (Diouf 1996, 244). Ukadike

considers *Ceddo* a prophetic film, which makes one “reflect disastrous consequences lodged in the gulf between opposing imported religions” in African countries. This type of criticism of ‘cultural colonialism’ was too hard-hitting to swallow for Muslim-dominated Senegal and the film was banned for eight years. (Ukadike 1994, 184.) In Senegalese society, relations between Islam and power have been – and still are – a controversial subject. Even if the religious elite do not wield any official power, government has been on the alert to refrain from offending its spiritual authority.

In the 1980s and 1990s, production activities were so scarce that there was little need for active censorship, but upon entering the new millennium, the situation seems to be changing again. As *Karmen* and *Almoudou* have shown, critical voices now emerge among religious audiences and it seems that the mode of censorship may be changing in the same direction as in Western and North African countries.

Mouridism

Karmen was accused of blasphemy by the Senegalese Mourids because the religious hymn “*Kalamoune*” of the founder of their brotherhood was used in the film. Mouridism is the most influential of the Senegalese Sufi brotherhoods. The founder of the brotherhood, Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke (1850–1927), known also as Serigne Touba, was a nephew of a rebellious Wolof king and a member of a powerful Muslim family. Historically Bamba is not only an important religious character but also a national revolutionary hero. He became famous because of his

brave opposition to the French colonial rule at a period when the Wolof nobles and the French colonial troops clashed in the Wolof region of Senegal. The growing number of the adherents of Mouridism worried French authorities, who were afraid that they would start a rebellion. Bamba was arrested by French authorities in 1885 and deported, first to Gabon, then to Mauritania and finally to northern Senegal. He was able to return to the Wolof area only in 1913, where he died in 1927.

After the fall of the Wolof army in Dekhele in 1886, Islam became the next form of resistance against the oppressor in Senegal. Mouridism was initiated in 1887 one year after the end of military resistance in Senegal and two years after the Berlin Conference, during which Africa was divided by the European powers of the time. According to Thiam (2005), the key to the success of Mouridism among the Senegalese Wolofs was that Ahmadou Bamba avoided the Arab cultural dimensions of Islam and proposed a new way of reading the Koran based on a Wolof traditional perspective. Mouridism marked the beginning of what Mourides like to call “black Islam.” Bamba also succeeded in gathering together numerous disciples who were organised into groups for farming, growing first millet and then groundnuts. This came to be the base for the Mourid brotherhood’s economic power, remarkable even today. (Thiam 2005.) Today the Mourids are estimated to represent 33 percent of the Senegalese population.

The *baye fall* is a branch of Mouridism founded by Sheikh Ibra Fall, a devout believer and one of Ahmadou Bamba’s first disciples. For the *baye fall*, hard work for the benefit of their religious leader, *marabout*, substitutes common religious rituals. Prayers and fasting are expected to be done for them by the *marabout* in exchange for manual work the *baye fall* do for him.

Groups of *baye fall* exist throughout Senegal, and some of them still wear dreadlocks and traditional clothing made of patchwork reminding of the poverty of Sheikh Ibra Fall. They are responsible for several kinds of unskilled work, like public transport in the surroundings of Dakar and many businesses and commerce in Senegal. Even if the *baye fall* are not specialists of the Islamic faith, they are often the most fanatic devotees of the doctrine. Senegalese newspapers have reported several occasions where groups of *baye fall* have taken the law in their own hands and organised violent attacks against people breaking the rules of Islam, such as going into nightclubs or drinking alcohol (Loum 2003, 169; Al Khidmat 2006).

During the last several years, the original idea of *baye fall* has been in some ways inflated, since the sect is not officially organised and anyone who wants can call himself *baye fall*. Some '*baye fall*' are today dwelling in the streets of Dakar begging for money not for their marabouts but for their own benefit and harassing people, taking drugs and committing petty crimes. The patchwork clothing of the *baye fall* has also achieved new cultural meanings in the service of tourism. Colourful clothes made of patchwork have become the most common souvenir sold at the Sandaga market for foreign tourists.

Homosexuality

Homo- and bisexuality are strong cultural taboos in Senegalese society. Same-sex relationships are also criminalised by the Penal Code, whose paragraph 3 states: "whoever will have committed an improper or unnatural act with a person of the same sex will

be punished by imprisonment of between one and five years and by a fine of 100,000 to 1,500,000 francs. If the act was committed with a person below the age of 21, the maximum penalty will always be applied.” (Penal Code n° 66–16 of 12 February 1966, article 319, paragraph 3, cited in *Behind the Mask* 2001.) Unlike in many other African countries, the Senegalese Penal Code also criminalises female same-sex relationships. According to information from the Swedish Embassy in Senegal, some individuals have been sentenced to imprisonment under this law in recent years (*Behind the Mask* 2001).

The fact that homosexuality is criminalised does not mean that there are no same-sex relationships in Senegal. Several observations and studies from different historical periods describe male homosexual relationships. Female same-sex relationships are far less reported in ethnographic studies but, as shown in the survey from the 1970s, there is no reason to suspect their existence. According to this non-random survey, 17.6 per cent of Senegalese men and 44.4 of women reported having had sexual experiences with same-sex partners (Murray and Roscoe 1998, 107).⁶⁶

In the 1930s, in Wolof societies, there were so-called men-women, *gor-digen*, who dressed like women. They were socially well tolerated with the exception that they could not be buried in Muslim cemeteries. The name *gor-digen* has also been used for boys having paid sex with other men. A writer, Michael Davidson (1998), described his visit in 1958 to special brothels on the outskirts of Dakar that were filled with boys in drag. Due to the establishments’ remote locations, these were evidently

66 Most of the studies cited in my work are conducted by Western scholars. Due to the “code of silence” there are very few studies on sexuality in general and even fewer on homosexuality by West African scholars.

not for foreigners but for local Senegalese themselves (Davidson 1998, 111–114). Today the oral storytellers, *griots*, are often gay, and quite recently there were vague rumours of male same-sex weddings and married men who take on other men as their second or third ‘wives’.

According to a recent study conducted at Cheikh Anta Diop University (Niang et al. 2002), the lives of homosexuals in contemporary Senegal are characterized by violence and rejection. Homosexual men report that they have suffered physical abuse such as stone throwing by family and community members and policemen. It seems that hostility is directed especially against the ‘Eurocentric’ homosexual identity, which refers to open homosexual behaviour, marriages between same-sex lovers, public representations of same-sex relationships, etc. ‘Afrocentric’ homosexuality presumes respect for the “code of silence” but allows a relationship with same-sex partners and marriage and children with the opposite-sex partner simultaneously.⁶⁷ West Africans rarely identify themselves as homosexuals because of possible negative consequences, or simply because people are not generally identified according to their sexual orientation as ‘homosexuals’ or ‘heterosexuals’. According to Ajen (1998, 131), “Sexual behaviour is considered private and not characteristic of one’s personality and identity; it does not influence people’s

67 Two kinds of lesbianism, *mati-ism* and *black lesbianism*, are reported to exist among black women in African-American Diaspora. *Mati* (or *matisma*) is the Sranan Tongo word for women who have sexual relations with other women, but who typically also have simultaneous relationships with men. More often than not they will also have children. While both types can only be understood via a constructionist view of homosexuality, the institution of *mati-ism* will be shown to have retained more Afrocentric, working class elements, while black lesbianism has more middle class, Eurocentric features (See Wekker 1993, 145–158).

behaviour in general or lead to a lifestyle. People are seen as people, and their sexual expression is considered their private choice. Provided they apply discretion in their sexual behaviour, there is really no issue.” Gloria Wekker (1993) has also suggested that the Western categories, ‘homo’, ‘bi’ and ‘hetero’ have insufficient justification in some black situations, in diaspora and in original home countries. The concept of ‘homosexuality’ introduces an etic category that is alien to the indigenous, emic system that exists in some sections of black communities. (Wekker 1993, 152.)

Another, if not sufficient, explanation for hostile attitudes to homosexuality is the dominance of Islam and Roman Catholicism in Senegal. Both religions are known as active opponents of homosexuality. The holy texts of Islam, the *sharia* and the *hadith*, have generally been interpreted as condemning sexual relationships between persons of the same sex even if there is no uniform legal position in relation to sex between men, even in the states that have penal codes based on the *sharia*. Usually states that have instituted the *sharia* regard sexual relationships between same-sex partners as illegal (Wafer 1997, 87–88). Catholic attitudes towards homosexuality are not very tolerant either.⁶⁸

Despite negative publicity and concrete measures against same-sex relationships, men and women identified as gays and lesbians have become more active and visible in Senegalese society. This may be proof of an increasing understanding of homosexuality as a human rights issue and that homosexuals can be seen as a minority in need of legal protection against

68 On Roman Catholicism and homophobia in cinematic representations see Taira 2004.

discrimination (Dunton and Palmberg 1996, 39). In 2001, an organisation, *Groupe Andligeey*, was founded to advocate for people having same-sex relationships in Senegal. The attitudes of authorities towards the organisation seem, however, to be contradictory. In January 2001, the group was reported to have received some assistance from the Senegal National AIDS Program and the National Alliance Against AIDS, while in July of the same year, the Interior Ministry took “preventive measures” to forestall the planned mass meeting of the organisation because it “cuts across our morals”. (Behind the Mask 2001.)

7

Reviews of *Karmen* in the home country and abroad

The ban on *Karmen* in Senegal did not impede the release of the film abroad, except that it delayed its distribution in other African countries during the time the film copies meant for African distribution were blocked in Dakar. It was even commonly believed in Senegal that the news of the Senegalese censorship increased interest in the film, which otherwise could have fallen into oblivion abroad. As *Karmen* had been in circulation in France already before its domestic distribution in June 2001 the censorship at home could not have any influence on French audience rates. In Canada and the United States the film was distributed in the spring of 2002 but on the basis of my research material it is not possible to assess if American audiences knew about the censorship of the film at home or, even if they did, if it had any significance. However, compared to other West African francophone films, *Karmen* succeeded quite well in international markets and was even able to recoup its production costs.

In this chapter I analyse the critical reception of *Karmen* in the 'home' country and compare its 'domestic' reception to that in three foreign countries; Canada, France and the USA. The analysis is based on 35 reviews published in newspapers and magazines. Before going into the results of the empirical analysis, it is worth taking an excursion to Senegalese journalism and film criticism.

State of Senegalese journalism

The Senegalese political system can be described as a liberal democracy with periodic multiparty elections, an elected national assembly and a strong president. The constitution outlines civil liberties such as freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of religious practice. The roots of Senegal's liberal democracy lie in the French colonial period and the post-colonial governments of Léopold Sedar Senghor and Abdou Diouf. During the presidency of Diouf from 1981 to 2000, the political system was further liberalised and several new parties and civil society groups were formed. Democracy, however, was not fully developed in the country since the same political party, the Parti Socialiste (PS), remained in power from independence until 1998. There was a widespread belief among opposition parties and ordinary citizens that the PS engineered the elections. (Patterson 1998, 44.) It was only in the parliament elections in 1998 that the major opposition party, the Parti Democratique Socialiste (PDS), succeeded in gaining a majority in the National Assembly. In March 2000 former President Diouf, who was considered the embodiment of a corrupt political system, lost the second round of the presidential elections and the leader of the PDS, Abdoulaye Wade, was elected as the new president thanks to votes from urban youth and women. The election has been referred to publicly as a great change, *sopi*, which also meant the end of the 40-year domination by the Parti Socialiste (PS).

Senegalese media have led the process of democratising African media. The monopoly of the one party paper, *Le Soleil*, was broken at the beginning of the 1980s and since then a variety of newspapers, independent or close to different parties, has

emerged. The flourishing independent media is free from official control and actively contributes to the process of democratisation by criticising the Government and other state organs. They are, however, not always as critical vis-à-vis the opposition or other ethnic, religious and regional pressure groups and lobbies. In several West African countries, the democratisation process has increased unprofessional and unethical journalism due to private newspapers and radio stations struggling for existence. Private media do not always shun whatever means to gain cheap publicity in order to augment their readership. Also in Senegal, some private newspapers and radios have been sponsored by certain individuals or interest groups if they have consented to blackmail other institutions, individuals, or interest groups. (Nyamnjoh 2005, 56.)

Even if the Senegalese constitution guarantees freedom of speech, at the same time it qualifies it by stating in another section that this freedom is subject to showing respect for the honour of other persons. What this 'honour' consists of is so much a matter of personal opinion that the constitution does not really serve to guarantee freedom of speech (Ogbondah 2002, 63). The freedom of the press is also restricted by press law and the penal code heavily inspired by the French corresponding laws. These laws have provisions which seek to protect public authorities against false information and to punish those guilty of treating the President or other constituted bodies of the state and public officers with contempt or inciting to revolt against the government and institutions. For instance, Article 80 of the penal code provides for three to five-year prison sentences for acts compromising public security. Journalists are still jailed and harassed for their reporting, even though President Wade has promised to remove Article 80 and criminal sanctions for press

offences (World Press Freedom Review 2005). According to Loum (2003, 113), Senegalese legislators do not follow the general principle, which demands that more protection should be given to private citizens than to public authorities because the latter have more opportunities than the former to defend their honour in public. On the contrary, Senegalese politicians and public officers are offered a higher level of protection against libel and invasions of privacy than ordinary citizens.

According to Loum, social and cultural factors, especially religion, have more influence on Senegalese journalism than political or economic factors. The power of *marabouts* is so entrenched in the system that every subject related to Muslim brotherhoods and their chiefs has to be considered with caution. When reporting culturally sensitive issues, even journalists working in independent media exercise conscious self-censorship. They prefer to leave the judgements and conclusions to the audiences and avoid directly expressing their opinion for fear of direct confrontation with their relatives and neighbours or with religious groups. This sometimes leads to a toothless journalism, where journalists hide behind the audience's back. (Loum 2003, 158–235.)

The biggest Senegalese daily is *Le Soleil*, and is today completely dissociated from the ownership of the ruling party with its average edition of 25.000 copies. After the Presidential elections of 2000, the head of the newspaper was changed and the editorial line of the paper was removed from party politics (Nyamnjoh 1999, 43–44; Loum 2003, 151). The newspaper is owned by the Société Sénégalaise de Presse et de Publications (SSPP), which also publishes a popular newspaper *Scoop*, founded in 2001. The biggest independent newspaper, *Sud Quotidien*, with an edition of 20,000 copies, is published by the multimedia

group *Sud Communication*. It has existed since 1982, first as a weekly *Sud Hebdo* and from 1993 as a daily. The second important independent daily, *Walfadjri*, with an edition of 14,000 to 20,000 copies, was established in 1984. It has been published as a daily since 1994. In my study, *Le Soleil*, *Sud Quotidien*, *Walfadjri*, and three other small independent newspapers *Le Matin*, *L'Info*, *La Pointe* and *La Nouvelle* represent the serious or elite press while *Scoop*, *Mœurs*, *Tract* and *Frasques* belong to the popular press. *Nouvel Horizon* is a weekly current affairs magazine founded in 1996.

Senegalese journalists, on average, are well trained due to professional training offered by two public institutions Centre d'études des sciences et techniques de l'information (CESTI) and the new private journalism school Institut Supérieur des Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication (ISSIC) owned by the group *Sud Communication*. Many journalists have also studied at French universities and training institutions. The influence of French training is apparent in Senegalese journalism, which follows the "political/literary model of French journalism." According to Benson, French journalism places greater emphasis on political critique and literary style than the "fact-centred discursive practice" of Anglo-American journalism. Important aspects of this journalism are particular narrative formats, such as interview, commentary, and reactions stories, and a style of writing that combines descriptive and normative statements (Benson 2002, 53–63). Historically the French journalistic professionalism has not been defined as detached or distant from political or ideological allegiances, but as the right to hold and defend a set of ideas. For Howard (1980, cited in Nyamnjoh 2005), the French or Latin style of journalism in francophone African countries means "the tendency to wait for events to

happen before they are reported” as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon style of “investigative reporting à la Watergate.” Put simply, francophone African journalists favour stylistic devices and sharp opinions while Anglophone journalists are more inclined to rely on facts and avoid opinions (Nyamnjoh 2005, 89).

Cultural journalism and criticism

There is no specialised cultural press in Senegal, but in important newspapers and magazines there is a specific desk with one or two journalists concentrating on cultural issues. Only the biggest newspaper, *Le Soleil*, can afford to employ three cultural journalists. Senegalese journalists working on the cultural desk cannot be specialised in one domain of culture but they have to be all-round experts writing one day on cinema and dance and another on music and literature.

Cinema is not a well-developed sector in the Senegalese cultural sphere and, compared to music or other popular art forms, it produces little news and other articles. News about cinema appears on the cultural pages only when someone is shooting a new film in the country, there is a new Senegalese film coming to cinema theatres or if a local film has been screened at international festivals or distributed abroad. In the 1990s, cultural journalists monitored closely, for example, the reorganisation of the Senegalese cinematic sector and the economic difficulties caused by devaluation. A remarkable news event was also the death of veteran filmmaker Djibril Diop Mambety in 1994.⁶⁹

69 Observations on Senegalese film journalism are based on a sample I collected from *Le Soleil*, *Sud Quotidien* and *Walfadjri* from 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2001, and on the interviews with the cultural journalists.

Film criticism is a relatively limited activity and developed in Senegalese newspapers only recently. According to Merja Hurri (1994, 39), the appearance of cultural journalism and art criticism assumes that at least two socio-cultural factors exist: increased literacy and organisation of cultural institutions. If there are not enough works of art and cultural products to be criticised or a critical mass of consumers to support the cultural activities financially there is no need for criticism. In most African countries, except the Republic of South Africa, Nigeria and some North African countries, there simply are too few films for there to be a need for film reviewing. Besides, the problem of cinema is that potential readers of film criticism have no access to the films reviewed because of lacking structures of distribution and exhibition. According to Tapsoba (1995a, 157), African cultural journalists would also need more training in cinema and in writing reviews.

Freedom of expression and free media are also important preconditions for film and other art criticism to emerge. During the first thirty years, film criticism was mostly ideological. African journalism suffered from single-party politics that did not allow free discussion in the press of the works of critical-minded filmmakers, and the journalists working for the government newspapers could not afford to write against official policies. Thus, film criticism was based more on politics and opinions expressed in the film than on cinematic quality (Tapsoba 1995a, 157).

According to the Senegalese journalists interviewed for this study and my own reading of Senegalese newspapers, film reviews belong to the staple cultural supply in Senegal if only there are films to review. In spring 2002, the only functioning cinema, *Le*

Paris, organised previews for cultural journalists in order to get the films reviewed as soon as they appeared in the cinema. The journalists interviewed had different attitudes on these previews: one of them felt obliged to review every film he had seen, others reviewed only the films they considered worthy or if they had space for the review. Nor did they consider that it was necessary to publish the review at once the film had come out.

In Senegalese cultural criticism, there are traces of the ideological criticism of earlier decades but cultural journalists also try to adapt their opinions to the taste and norms of average Senegalese audiences. Writing popular criticism in Senegal means that cultural journalists have to balance between their own 'more cultured' opinion and the taste of an average Senegalese. Journalists belong to the few Senegalese elites who are educated in the Western style, have obtained university degrees, and can afford to consume high culture (Appiah 1992, 148). They cannot, however, write only for the educated elites but have also to consider the reactions of ordinary audiences.

When writing about culture we have to think about the diversity of our readers, we cannot write only for elites. It is often considered that only the intellectuals are interested in literature, cinema or theatre. But we try to remember that an ordinary Senegalese can not afford to buy a book, which costs 30,000 CFA. We cannot be too absolute when writing about culture. But we don't take things too easy either. We have to try to balance between the two extremes and to stay in the middle.⁷⁰

70 Ces sont les domaines assez diversifiés. Quand on écrit sur la culture, il faut rendre compte de ça aussi, on peut pas se dire qu'on écrit pour une elite. Souvent on dit que la culture, c'est l'intelligentsia qui s'intéresse sur la littérature, sur le cinéma, sur le théâtre. Souvent le sénégalais moyen, n'a pas la possibilité d'acheter un livre qui coûte 30,000 CFA, on essaye de rendre compte de ça. Quand on écrit, on essaye de ne pas être très ferme.

I think that one has to separate two things. The opinion of the journalist is not necessarily the same as his readers. I have studied at the university and have my own conception of culture, which is not the same as that of the other Senegalese people. It's a real problem that a journalist has to review a film in regard to the other people and their culture.⁷¹

The cultural journalists interviewed for this study considered themselves less religious and more tolerant in regard to taboo issues, like sex and eroticism, than ordinary people. On the other hand they also feel pressure to promote national culture and arts. According to the interviewees, new Senegalese films are so rare that each of them deserves to be noticed. For this reason they give more space for African and Senegalese films than for other films. Journalists consider themselves a kind of advocate of national culture and as their duty to inform readers about the appearance of new Senegalese cultural artefacts.

It's true that cinema is an important part of Senegalese culture. The cinema is a means of communication and our role as journalists is to make it visible in the press. Our task is to monitor the development of Senegalese cinema and the development of society.⁷²

On écrit pas aussi d'une façon très léger, il faut essayer de faire la balance entre les deux extrêmes et d'arriver juste au milieu.

- 71 Je pense qu'il faut faire la part sur les choses. L'opinion de journaliste ne recouvre pas obligatoirement l'opinion du grand public. J'ai un cursus universitaire, peut-être j'ai ma propre sensibilité, ma culture personnelle, qui n'est pas nécessairement partagée au Sénégal. C'est ça le véritable problème, que le journaliste qui doit apprécier le film, doit le faire par rapport aux gens et par rapport à l'histoire.
- 72 Oui, c'est vrai, le cinéma fait bien parti dans la culture au Sénégal. Le cinéma est un véhicule, un moyen de communication. Nous aussi en tant que journalistes, notre rôle, c'est de permettre à cet moyen de communication d'être visible sur le plan journalistique. Notre rôle est de s'accompagner ce cheminement du cinéma sénégalais et la marche de la société.

They consider themselves to also serve filmmakers by criticising their works and making them to better understand the needs of their spectators. It is important to try to preserve a distant position in relation to filmmakers and other cultural actors because only in this way they can maintain their critical attitude:

Cultural journalists have to preserve the distance in relation to the actors of the cultural sphere in order to be objective and to be able to criticise properly their productions and to help them to do their best. Criticism is the way to develop their work but if the criticism is too complacent, cultural actors will make less effort and that will be a reverse for cultural creativeness. Without criticism there is no dynamism and quality in the cultural life.⁷³

The need to be critical and 'objective' in relation to domestic productions is not always understood by filmmakers. In this sense Senegalese reviewers are in a similar position to their Western colleagues who often feel that they are imposed by the cinema industry. In Senegal, the pressure comes directly from individual filmmakers while, for example, in the United States, production companies are those putting pressure on cultural journalists (Film criticism in America Today 2000). As one Senegalese journalist puts it: "Sometimes they [directors] even stop to greet us"; not greeting someone in Senegalese culture is an extreme insult to another person.

Senegalese cultural journalists are convinced that their reviews have impact both on audiences and on cinema owners:

73 Les journalistes culturels doivent être critiques et distants par rapport aux acteurs culturels pour pouvoir critiquer et apprécier objectivement leur production et pour pouvoir promouvoir la production culturelle s'améliorer. C'est comme ça que la créativité va améliorer mais si la critique est trop complaisante, les acteurs culturels mettront moins d'efforts et la créativité va prendre un sacré coup, elle ne sera pas dynamique, elle ne sera pas de qualité.

The feed-back? Yes, I have noticed that we have influence on audiences. Especially those who are interested in cinema read what you write and you can influence them. Sometimes, if the film is good they might want to go and see it themselves but if the film has not succeeded they won't go and that might economically harm the filmmaker. Sometimes the film is even withdrawn from distribution.⁷⁴

This optimism is contested by Loum, who argues that because of economic conditions and illiteracy, traditional oral media, like rumours or information spread by word of mouth have more influence on Senegalese people than official media (Loum 2003, 132–133).

Reviews of *Karmen* in Senegal

When *Karmen* opened in Senegal in July 2002, Ramaka's name was already known in the country because of his earlier films, especially *Ainsi soit-il* (1997), which won the Silver Lion for Best Short Film at the 1997 Venice Film Festival and was also praised by local reviewers. The opening of *Karmen* was a major event with a number of influential invited guests: government members, deputies and other distinguished people. As the Senegalese journalists explained, every new Senegalese film deserves to be

74 Le feed-back? Oui, je me suis rendu compte qu'on influence beaucoup au public. Quand tu écris, le public lit, surtout le public cinéophile et tu peux influencer. Par fois, si c'est un bon film, ils ont envie de le voir. Si c'est un navet, un mauvais film, il n'ont pas envie de le voir et ça peut être une perte pour le réalisateur de point de vue commercial, de diffusion et même le diffuseur peut retirer l'affiche.

noticed since they are so few, but this time the atmosphere of glamour around *Karmen* was still more remarkable than usual. Ramaka, a French trained, experienced filmmaker knew how to promote a new film and had put a lot of attention to raise interest in his film.

Karmen was reviewed in all the major Senegalese dailies and weeklies immediately after the premiere. The data for the reviews analysis consists of the reviews in the dailies *Le Soleil* (23.7.), *Wal Fadjri* (23.7.) and *Sud Quotidien* (24.7., 14.8.),⁷⁵ the weeklies *Le Matin* (23.7.) and *L'Info* (23.7.) and the magazine *Nouvel Horizon* (27.7.). They were written by the leading cultural journalists of the country and most of them were published with a shot from the film. The importance of the premiere is reflected in the length of the reviews. *Le Soleil* reviewed *Karmen* with a photo of the director and the leading actress in five columns and *Sud Quotidien* devoted a whole page with three different stories about the film: a news story about the premiere, a story with interviews of the audience members, and the review. Other papers published an ordinary film review as the main story of the cultural pages. The evening paper *Scoop* had already published a review of *Karmen* in June after the French premiere, but it was an excerpt from a French magazine *Monsieur Cinéma* and is not included in my data. The Senegalese premiere of *Karmen* was covered by *Scoop* only as a news event but still in two pages.

A common feature in the Senegalese reviews was that they were rather ambivalent about the film. Some reviewers were even so cautious in their praises and criticism that for the researcher

75 *Sud Quotidien* published a second review of *Karmen* three weeks after the premiere (14.8.). The publishing of this review appears to be more or less an aberration since there is no apparent reason why the film should have been reviewed twice in the same newspaper.

it was difficult to evaluate if they appreciated the film or not. The cinematic elements, especially the soundtrack and beautiful visual images, were praised while contextual elements were criticised. The main criticism was that the film was not consonant with the morals of Senegalese audiences regarding to the portrayal of same-sex relationships and sexuality. However, the journalists appear reluctant to express this criticism overtly but use several indirect means, like passive voice and ambiguous expressions, to avoid direct criticism.

The review of *Le Soleil* is a good example of how a journalist tries to balance between criticism and praise. At the beginning of his review, Mamoune Faye raises the question: “How to film nudity without shocking and without voyeurism?” He then devotes one third of his story to this question. This is also his first critical point concerning the film. The most controversial scenes, according to Faye, are those where Karmen makes love with another woman. “The practice of lesbianism may hurt certain consciences especially in the Senegalese society still marked by taboos.”⁷⁶ The criticism, however, is mitigated by giving Ramaka a chance to respond to it. In a direct citation from a press conference with Ramaka and in the excerpts from the press release, Faye cites the director’s point of view:

“No, I don’t have a feeling that the audience felt insulted. I have only wanted to show love, sensuality and beauty”, defends Joseph Gaï Ramaka in the press conference held in the Cinema Bel’Arte Friday evening straight after the premiere. (Faye 23.7.2001)⁷⁷

76 Cette pratique lesbienne pourrait heurter certaines consciences, surtout dans une société sénégalaise encore marquée par les tabous.

77 “Non, je n’ai pas eu le sentiment que le public se soit senti agressé. J’ai seulement voulu montrer l’amour, la sensualité, la beauté”, se défend Joseph Gaï Ramaka qui rencontrait la presse, vendredi soir à l’Espace Bel’Arte, juste après la Première de Karmen.

Faye concludes the first criticism by saying that *Karmen* should not be considered pornographic but “the director has, however, gone a little bit too far, at least he has been more daring than his other Senegalese colleagues.” Then he picks up a second questionable element:

The critics could also argue about the choice to portray so overtly the body of a woman, especially the body of one’s own wife, even if love portrayed by Joseph Gai Ramaka is enveloped in aestheticism and in the beautiful photography, which are quite rare exploits in African cinema dominated by ‘cinéma-calebasse’.⁷⁸ (Faye 3.7.2001.)⁷⁹

Straight after this, he also finds positive things to say:

One can blame the director for many things but he has also succeeded in making a film in which beautiful images, pure voice, real setting (most of the scenes are filmed on the isle of Gorée) and costumes are in harmony. (Faye 23.7.2001.)⁸⁰

The third criticism concerns the film’s exoticism, which, according to Faye, is made for Western people used to seeing Hollywood productions, not for Africans. Here again, Faye first presents his

78 ‘*Cinéma-calebasse*’ refers to African cinema dominated by village sceneries and peasant life. This kind of cinema is often criticised as being made for Western audiences and repeating an old stereotypic image of traditional Africa.

79 Et les critiques pourraient bien épiloguer sur l’opportunité de montrer aussi ouvertement le corps d’une femme, surtout celle de son épouse, même si l’amour filmé par Joseph Gai Ramaka est enveloppé d’un esthétisme pur et d’une belle photographie, prouesses assez rares dans un septième africain où prédomine le “cinéma-calebasse”.

80 On peut, en effet, tout reprocher au réalisateur, mais il a réussi une œuvre où la beauté des images, la pureté du son, la justesse du décor (la plupart des scènes se passent à l’île de Gorée) côtoient une harmonie des costumes.

critical argument and then gives a word for Ramaka, who explains that he had wanted to make a film in honour of Senegalese women and to speak out for tolerance. The reviewer acknowledges this effort but considers that the director has been too clumsy in his efforts. As proof of this, he takes the scene where the Catholic prison warden is buried, which is accompanied by the song by Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba. This same scene was later to be the reason for the *baye fall* demonstrations.

The review is constructed like a dialogue between the reviewer and the filmmaker. Every time there is a critical comment by the reviewer, the next turn is given to the filmmaker or there is a positive comment from the reviewer himself. This structure causes one to ask if there really are different traditions in reviewing films than those used by Western reviews. The structure analysed here is more reminiscent of the way problems are discussed and consensus found among village elders in a traditional African village meeting than a cultural review in the Western press.

Senegalese reviewers use a lot of passive voice and ambiguous expressions, which leave the reader unsure as to the personal position of the reviewer. For example, Faye suspects that the film might “hurt certain consciences” and in the quotations above he uses a passive voice like “the critics could argue” and “one can blame the director” as if he himself did not agree with the criticism or would not like to subscribe to it. In the whole review he never uses the personal pronoun ‘I’ to express his personal opinion; either he writes in the passive voice or the opinions are expressed as facts in the third person. Marianne Guillon in *Wal Fadjri* and Abdoulaye Ndiaye in *L’Info* also use the same tactics to hide their own opinions from the audiences. Instead of saying

what they think about the film, they anticipate negative reactions from the audience:

The question about the opinion of Senegalese audiences remains. *Karmen Geï* is a modern film playing with the taboos of the Senegalese society. The camera of Ramaka does not hesitate to peek under clothes or to openly show female sexuality. (Guillon 23.7.2001.)⁸¹

The director, wanting to make a 'film about liberty and love' has shot several erotic and audacious scenes. With the risk to shock more than one cinephile he has even taken the liberty of using the *khassaïd* in the funeral of a Catholic person. (Ndiaye 23.7.2001.)⁸²

Only *Le Matin's* Massamba Mbaye identifies himself as a part of the audience by using 'we' instead of 'they' or 'one', when he criticises the scene where the song of the Mourid leader is used:

This film troubles us in another way by using a Sufi text of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba as the funeral music for the suicide lesbian woman. It is too easy to defend this indecent and blasphemous approach in the name of freedom of expression. (Mbaye 23.7.2001.)⁸³

81 Reste la question de l'accueil du public sénégalais. *Karmen Geï* est un film moderne et qui se joue des tabous de la société sénégalaise. La caméra de Ramaka n'hésite pas à soulever les pagnes et filme l'amour au féminin sans détour.

82 Le cinéaste, qui a voulu faire un «film de liberté et d'amour», n'a pas été avare en scènes érotiques et autres plans osés. Au risque de dérouter plus d'un cinéphile, il s'est permis jusqu'à la diffusion de *Khassaïde* pendant l'enterrement d'un catholique.

83 Ce film nous trouble autrement par un autre choix de texte soufi du Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba comme marche funébre d'une homosexuelle suicidée. Une légèreté dans l'approche qui est purement indécente et blasphématoire. L'amalgame est trop facile au nom de la liberté de création.

There is one exception to this passive style of Senegalese reviews. In *Sud Quotidien*, the review is straight and ‘objective’ without any efforts to justify the faults of the director or to avoid critical judgements. The reviewer uses the passive voice and third person but includes himself in the audience (“our pleasure of view”). The review was written by an old cultural journalist, Baba Diop, who today mostly concentrates on teaching and making his own radio programme, but still sometimes writes reviews. Diop’s review, entitled “Black Karmen – Les amours indécises”, follows a classical model of a review (Bywater & Sobchack 1989, 21). It begins with giving some background information about the origin of the script and points out that “this is not the first time a filmmaker from sub-Saharan Africa has made a film based on a story coming from another cultural sphere.” He cites films such as Djibril Diop Mambety’s *Hyènes* and Cheikh Oumar Sissoko’s *La genèse* and then continues with his review of *Karmen*. In the third paragraph Diop describes the choices Ramaka has made concerning the soundtrack, setting and scenery and concludes: “All this is very beautiful except the instable choreography, which disturbs the pleasure of the eye.”⁸⁴

From the very first paragraph, however, we learn that Diop is not content with the film, but only in the last chapter he reveals the reason for his criticism: he considers that the film does not fulfil the promises Ramaka had given during the shooting and that the story is descended into a debauchery, giving too much emphasis to erotic scenes and nudity. He criticises the work of the actors and the lack of motivation in the characters’ action without searching to justify or defend them. The lack of moral statements

84 Tout ceci est fort beau en dépit d’une chorégraphie chancelante qui perturbe notre plaisir de l’œil.

and concentration on aesthetic elements make the review of *Sud Quotidien* look more like the Western reviews analysed in the next chapter than like other Senegalese reviews.

Reviews of *Karmen* abroad compared to those in Senegal

In the three Western countries studied – Canada, France and the United States – the arrival of *Karmen* on the screens was not a big event like as it was Senegal and the film did not receive any special attention compared to other non-Western films. African films belong to those marginal films that are reviewed if there is space in a newspaper or magazine or if a reviewer is especially interested in a particular film. As *Karmen* was screened in small art cinemas rather than large multiplex cinemas, its review was not a ‘must’ as are big Hollywood premieres. There are no complaints from producers or distributors if the review of an independent or marginal filmmaker is omitted as would happen if a review of a mainstream film were not published (Film Criticism in America Today 2000).

The pressure that the cinema industry puts on reviewers suggests that journalistic reviews are believed to influence possible spectators. American film reviewers interviewed in *Cineaste* (Film Criticism in America Today 2000) tend, however, to downplay their opportunities to influence the spectators. According to them, the power of promotional campaigns is so vast that the reviews have no impact on the success or failure of big Hollywood films. Instead, they may have influence when presenting new independent filmmakers or marginal films that

would not otherwise get any promotion, as says David Ansen from *Newsweek*:

Our relationship with foreign and independent films is another story. Lacking the millions for marketing, the smaller distributors need good reviews (and almost as important, good placement on page one of the Friday entertainment section) to sell their movies. A pan from The New York Times of a foreign art film can not only kill the movie in New York, it also may mean the movie never opens anywhere else in the country. (It took years for Leon Carax's *Les Amants de Pont Neuf* to even open in New York after Vincent Canby savaged it at its New York Film Festival premiere). (Film Criticism in America Today 2000.)

The first French review of *Karmen* was published in *Le Monde* after the Cannes Film Festival in May 2001. The other French reviews in my data were published in big newspapers (*Le Monde*, *Libération*, *L'Humanité*) and in periodicals (*Africulture*, *Cahier du cinéma*, *Le Point*, *Afrik*, *Monsieur Cinéma*) after June 27 when *Karmen* premiered in ordinary cinemas. *Karmen* was screened in five cinemas in Paris, of which two belong to the biggest European exhibition company Union générale cinématographique (UGC). During the first week, the film had 12,000 spectators and the final audience count in France was 19,738.

In the United States, the premiere of *Karmen* was the following spring, in April 2002. The film was screened in five American cities but the 11 reviews in my data come only from New York dailies (*New York Times*, *New York Daily News*, *New York Post*), weeklies (*The Village Voice*) and magazines (*Variety*, *The Onion*, *TV Guide*, *Film Threat*, *Film Journal International*, *SciFiNoir*, *The Nation*). They were mostly published in April 2002.

In Canada, *Karmen* premiered at the festival *Vue d'Afrique* in Montreal on April 18 and in ordinary cinemas on April 19, 2002. In Toronto and Vancouver, the film opened in May 2002. Four of the eight Canadian reviews in my data were published in francophone Quebec and four in anglophone cities. The first reviews are from Montreal: *Le Devoir* (13.4.2002 and 20.4.2002), *The Gazette* (19.4.2002) and *La Presse* (18.4.2002). The anglophone reviews are from *Toronto's Eye* (23.5.2002), *The Globe and Mail* (25.5.2002) and *Toronto Star* (24.5.2002). *Calgary's News & Entertainment Weekly* reviewed *Karmen's* screening at the Afrikadey Festival in August 2002.

The length of a review is a measure of significance attributed to the film. As expected, the reviews are longer in Senegal than in other countries (Table 7.1). The American reviews are almost as long as those in Senegal while in Canada and especially in France they are clearly shorter. In *Le Monde*, the first review from the Cannes screening is 130 words and the second from its commercial premiere is 231 words. *Cahier du cinéma* reviewed *Karmen* in 233 words. This may be because African films are more common in France than in the USA and they may have lost their position as an exotic curiosity. Usually, reviews are longer in French than in American papers, at least if one looks at the reviews in such papers as *Le Monde*, *Libération* or *Cahiers du cinéma*. According to my observations African films regularly get very short reviews in *Cahiers du cinéma*, which, however, reviews all African films premiering in France.⁸⁵ Even if the *Karmen* reviews in the USA seem to be quite long, they are brief compared to the reviews of American or European films by important

85 John D. H. Downing (1996, 223, footnote 3) has criticised *Cahiers du Cinéma* for lack of interest in African cinema compared to other non-European cinemas.

filmmakers. For instance, both *The Village Voice* and *The New Yorker* often devote three or four thousand words to a film review (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 11), while *Karmen* was reviewed in *The Village Voice* in about 400 words.

Table 7.1

Number of Karmen reviews and their average length in the countries studied.

Country	Number of reviews	Average length of the reviews (words)	Variation in length of the reviews (words)
Canada	8	385	249–532
France	9	287	102–479
USA	11	507	176–789
Senegal	7	533	253–1011
Total reviews	35	440	102–1011

Evaluation of the Film

The purpose of a film review is to evaluate the quality of the film. Even if most reviews contain both positive and negative elements, it is usually easy to determine if the general overview is positive or negative, that is, if the reviewer liked the film or not and on what basis. In my analysis, I interpreted a review as positive if it had more positive than negative utterances and vice versa. If there were as many positive and negative utterances, the review was considered neutral.

Twelve Western reviewers rated *Karmen* neutrally and eleven rated the film as good (Table 7.2). Positive elements mentioned include soundtrack, performance of actors and scenery. Four reviews rate the film as poor, mostly because of the poor narrative structure and dialogue. One review was written in such a way it was not possible to determine the opinion of the reviewer. The most positive reviews were the American ones: six reviews out of eleven were positive, four were ambivalent, and only one reviewer rated the film as poor. In France, *Karmen* was rated neutrally in four reviews, as poor in three reviews, and two reviewers rated the film as good. Three Canadian reviewers rated the film as good, four neutrally and one review did not contain any evaluation.

Senegalese reviews were very different from the foreign reviews in their evaluation. All five reviewers were ambivalent but their criticism was not based only on cinematic elements. Each also considered contextual elements related to the content and morality of the film, while Western reviews do not mention such elements at all.

Table 7.2
Evaluation of Karmen in Canadian, French, American and Senegalese reviews.

Evaluation	Canadian reviews	French reviews	USA reviews	Senegalese reviews	Total
Poor film	0	3	1	0	4
Neutral evaluation	4	4	4	5	17
Good film	3	2	6	1	12
No evaluation	1	0	0	1	2
Totals	8	9	11	7	35

Genre

Reviewers participate in the construction of a certain viewing strategy for spectators. One important element of the viewing strategy is that the film can be categorised into a certain cinematic genre. In the reviews analysed, the reviewers use two textual ways to classify *Karmen* into a certain genre: either they name the film as a representative of a certain genre, like calling it “a naturalistic musical,” or contextualise it systematically in relation to other films belonging to a certain genre.

In the Western reviews, *Karmen* was mostly considered to be a film musical. This classification emanates from the promotional material and Ramaka’s interviews, in which *Karmen* is presented as “the first African filmed ‘musical’” or as a “musical film.” Even if the reviewers mostly agree that *Karmen* is a musical, they seem to refer to different kinds of film musicals according to their local traditions. While American critics draw special attention to the fact that there are no production numbers in *Karmen*, this is not worth mentioning for Senegalese reviewers. In African films live music is more the rule than the exception while American musicals rely on pre-recorded music and production numbers. American reviewers call *Karmen* “a naturalistic musical,” referring to musicals in which song and dance move the narrative, and the progression from song to dance is natural; this is different from Hollywood musicals that rely on pre-recorded scores (Hayward 1996, 238). The absence of production numbers in the musical deserves several comments in American reviews:

The fickle temptress swings both ways, and this rendition is touted as the first movie musical produced in sub-Saharan Africa – no production numbers per se, but plenty of song and dance and declaiming on the shores of Dakar. (Winter 3.–9.4. 2002.)

There are no real “production numbers,” sole non-naturalistic device being the neat use of ensemble-mimed choral ecitative, which offers populist p.o.v. commentary on the action during numerous sequences. (Harvey 27.9.2001.)

Ramaka stages Karmen Geï as a naturalistic musical, with chanting in the streets and saloon-sung pop ballads standing in for the big production numbers of a conventional musical. (Murray, Printed 2.8.2002.)

Other categories proposed by Western film reviewers are soft porn and film noir. *Karmen* is never directly called an erotic film but the titles such as “tragedie charnelle” and the sensual ways of describing the film suggest this genre:

The lead attraction in this sexy film is Djeinaba Diop Gai, who plays the barefooted Karmen. Her eyes and lips are in constant come-on mode, while her long hair caresses her swerving hips and her shapely legs seem able to stretch from Dakar to Timbuktu. Dirty-dancing her way through life, the enchantress uses magnetic charms to get her business done. (Royer 19.4.2002.)

The reviewer of *Variety*, Dennis Harvey, is first attempted to classify *Karmen* as a gay-film or “software-kitsch” similar to Radley Metzger’s *Carmen Baby* but changes his mind as the film progresses:

That proves a red herring, and indeed updated story’s lesbian aspect – though handled with notable, dignified sympathy later on – emerges as a less than central current. Overall, debut feature from French-trained Senegalese director-scenarist Ramaka sticks to the narrative outline first penned by French author Mérimée (then popularized by Bizet’s opera), adding flavorful, mostly organic currents of bisexuality, political commentary and local culture to the sturdy basic tale. (Harvey 27.9.2001.)

It could be argued that the “Carmen” adaptations form a genre of their own since their number runs to 50 but, in fact, there is a lot of variety in the genres of the earlier versions. Harvey’s choice to compare Ramaka’s *Karmen* to *Carmen Baby* (1967), which integrates women’s liberation and countercultural motifs into its revamping of the Carmen story, creates different genre expectations than the reviews comparing the film to independent art films of Francesco Rosi, Carlos Saura or Jean-Luc Godard. It is no wonder that the film most often mentioned is Otto Preminger’s working-class musical *Carmen Jones* (1954), which before Ramaka’s *Karmen* was the only *Carmen* adaptation with a black leading actress. The reviewers do not agree how much new material *Karmen* brings to the myth of Carmen since some reviewers consider it as a simple remake of the original story while some others think that it “approaches the story from an entirely new perspective.”

Karmen is not directly classified as belonging to the genre of *film noir* but in several American reviews the main character is referred as *femme fatale*, a typical character of this genre. She is compared to the main characters of *The Blue Angel*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *Lolita*, *Something Wild* and *Fatal Attraction* who are not “nice girls” and “attract men like insects to a spider’s web”, as Maria Garcia writes in *Film Journal International*. But she is not only *femme fatale*; she is also “*femme vivre*” or “a *femme fatale* bursting with life”:

Occasional minor missteps aside, *Karmen* manages to transcend tourist exoticism, thanks in part to star Gai’s formidable presence – hers is the rare Carmen to really possess, rather than “act,” a self-possessed sexual magnetism that’s more *femme vivre* than *fatale*. (Harvey, 27.9.2001.)

Diop Gai's performance is equally beguiling: She's both bold and mysterious, a femme fatale bursting with life. (McDonald, Printed 2.8.2002.)

Senegalese reviewers classify *Karmen* quite differently compared to Western reviewers. In these reviews, *Karmen* is placed within the context of other African films rather than within the context of Western cinematic genres. When they try to define the genre of *Karmen*, they vacillate between musical, crime film (*histoire policière*), tragic love story and erotic film. This hesitation can be interpreted in several ways. First, it may reflect the journalist's general embarrassment with regard to the film, which has not followed the conventions of Senegalese and African cinema. Secondly, it might be read as criticism against the filmic qualities of *Karmen*. Like some Western colleagues, Baba Diop considers that the film misleads audiences by mixing genres: "One regrets that the plot gets off the subject towards a crime film thus leading the spectator astray."⁸⁶ Thirdly, it might reflect the opinion of those who claim that the genres created for Hollywood cinema simply do not fit the categorisation of African films.

Senegalese reviewers mention that the film is based on the original short story by Prosper Mérimée and the opera by Bizet but they do not refer to other versions of *Carmen* made in the Western countries as Canadian, French and American reviewers do. Instead, they compare *Karmen* to other African films like Mambety's *Hyènes* and Ramaka's earlier film *Ainsi soit-il*.

Only one American and one Senegalese reviewer drew attention to the cultural hybridity of *Karmen* while the majority

86 On regrette que l'intrigue s'égare dans une histoire policière mal ficelée qui dérouté le spectateur.

of reviews accentuate the Africanity of the film. Dennis Harvey compares *Karmen* to *Black Orpheus*, which is “the prototype for resetting Western romantic mythology amidst Third World cultural carnavalia.” The Senegalese Baba Diop reminds the reader that there are only two other West African films that adapted a Western original story as the basis of the script. Djibril Diop Mambety’s *Hyènes* was an adaptation of a Swiss Dürrenmatt’s play *The Visit of the Old Woman* and Cheikh Oumar Sissoko used some chapters from the Bible as the point of departure for *La gènesse*. The justification for these kinds of adaptations, according to Diop, is that they form a part of the global patrimony, which is not the private property of any particular nation or institution. Susan Walker of the *Toronto Star* also refers to the universality of the myth of Carmen: “Carmen is like Hamlet – composed of mythic elements that go back as far as Eve, or more likely, Lilith.”

Narration

In mainstream narrative cinema, the director is expected to respect certain rules of narration. It is assumed that there will be characters and some action that will involve them with one other. The series of incidents should also be connected in some way and the problems or conflicts arising during the film should achieve a final state in the end of the film (Bordwell and Thompson 1990, 54–55). As many Western reviewers had difficulties in following the story line of the film, they criticise Ramaka’s narrative skills. One reviewer even claims that “only a press kit could tell me what was supposed to have happened.” Sequences that do not seem to belong together raise questions about the motivations of the characters and the logic of action:

The film drifts illogically, often losing track of its purpose and serving up sequences which make absolutely no sense (why is Karmen Gei the entertainment at a wedding and why did she suddenly decide to assault the bride?). (Hall 13.4.2002.)

The criticism about the narrative skills of the director comes only from Western reviewers while the Senegalese reviewers, all except one, do not have difficulties in following what is going on in the story. This reminds us about different traditions of cinematic narration in Africa and elsewhere as discussed in Chapter 3. Eva Jörnholt (2001, 95–96) states that every time a new West African film has entered the European or North American film market, American and European critics have complained that African directors do not master the art of telling a story in moving images and sound. According to Jörnholt, this is not necessarily because African filmmakers have failed in their narration, but because their narratives obey ‘rules’ that are based on African oral tradition and that are different from the narration rules and practices of mainstream narrative cinema in the West. West African filmmakers tend to invite their audiences to ‘work harder’ than is common in international mainstream films. Their stories are rarely made only to entertain audiences but they also strive to provoke or disturb them by taking up controversial or topical issues that will not leave African spectators indifferent. Moreover, spectators may often have to complete the story by filling in gaps in the narrative, or by interpreting and decoding paradoxes, symbols and allegories. In fact, spectators are invited to join the filmmaker in the creation of the narrative in the way the oral storyteller creates his/her tale in co-operation with the audience. (Jörnholt 2001, 103.) As mentioned in the methodological

chapter, the differences between Western and West African cinema are not absolute, and non-linear narration also exists in Western art cinema. In Hollywood's so-called Golden Age, in the 1930s and 1940s, permanent narrational gaps were considered unpermissible flaws, but from the 1960s onwards European art films especially have distanced themselves from the fundamental closure of classical cinematic narration. However, the closed narrative is still considered the norm in Western cinema, while in West African cinema open-ended narratives are more the rule than the exception (Jörnholt 2001, 103–104). Besides, in Western art cinema non-linear narration is used as conscious effects while in African cinema it is a natural consequence of oral story-telling and may thus manifest itself differently.

Western reviewers may also lose part of the narrative of the African filmmaker because they are not familiar with the issues in question or because they are not able to interpret allegories and symbols. Very often there are elements, like names, songs, costumes, language or everyday objects, in the narrative that are more loaded with information than in mainstream Western films. The symbolism of *Karmen* is not discussed in the Western reviews but a Senegalese reviewer, Mamoune Faye, sees in *Karmen* a similar kind of symbolism to that which was typical of films by Mambety. However, he does not specify to what kind of symbolism he is referring.

Actors

The performance of the actors is mostly praised by the Western reviewers. Jeïnaba Diop Gaï is the actress who is mentioned most often in the Western reviews. However, she is not especially

praised because of her talents as an actress but because she can dance and sing and because of her beauty and sensuality. Some critics even say that her acting register is somehow limited but far more critics praise her beauty and suitability for the role of Karmen.

Stephanie Biddle's performance in the role of the prison warden is noted in four Canadian reviews in which she is both praised and criticised, while the main male protagonist, Magaye Niang as Colonel Lamine, is almost completely ignored. His performance is mentioned only twice and in both reviews he is considered to remain in the shadow of Jeïnaba Diop Gaï.

And Mr. Niang isn't quite up to the goddess charisma of Ms Gai, though it's hard to say if this lack comes from the actor or the clumpish constraints of his role; even Harry Belafonte couldn't do much more than smooth his shirt over his impossibly flat dogface's stomach in 1954's *Carmen Jones*. (Mitchell, 10.4.2002.)

Biddle and Lamine, however, are criticised as actors and with regard to their performances, while Gaï is mentioned as a personality or a type. "I'm not certain if you could call her an actress, but who cares if she is acting? Diop Gaï is truly an African goddess come to life, towering physically and emotionally over everyone around her". (Hall, 13.4.2002.)

The European tradition of naturalising and eroticising African women is found in many Western reviews describing the qualities of Jeïnaba Gaï. She is described as "libidinous" and "oozing sexual power" and to be sweet like "a statue carved of chocolate with an extremely high cocoa content" or an "irresistible honey-pot." This tradition originates from France where *Le Vénus noire*, the poem by Baudelaire in 1842, served as a model but

many of his expressions have spread later to other European and American countries. According to Nederveen Pieterse, the colonial construction of the exotically and erotically dangerous black woman is an important thread running through the stage personae of a whole range of popular performers (Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 184).

Fanon also calls attention to the “animalizing trope,” a discourse rendering the colonized as beastlike and animalic (Fanon 1963, cited in Stam 2003, 19). The trope is also alive and well in reviews describing Jeïnaba Diop with metaphors like “gazelle” and “tiger”. Her unbelievably long legs “able to stretch from Dakar to Timbuktu”, luscious skin – like “shining ebony” – and other external attributes are repeatedly mentioned like markers of a rare species of a “gracious animal.” In fact, one can compare the reviews of Josephine Baker’s performance in Paris to those written about Jeïnaba Gaï and observe that much has not changed in eighty years. In 1925, Paris magazine *Comoedia* wrote about Baker: “When Miss Baker raises her arms in phallic invocation, this pose evokes all the enchantment of Negro sculptures. We are no longer facing the frolicking Dancing Girl, but the Black Venus.” (Eichstedt and Polster 1985, cited in Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 143.) In 2002, Maria Garcia writes about Jeïnaba Gaï in *Film Journal International* in the same mode: “Now there’s Karmen Gei (Djeïnaba Diop Gai). Not your conventional femme fatale, Karmen is a Senegalese goddess, the true realization of Mérimée’s character and Bizet’s gypsy heroine. Her power is primitive, numinous, destructive. When Karmen dances, the earth’s magma seems to rise in her loins.”

Partly the vocabulary describing Jeïnaba Gaï is explained by the character she interprets; according to Mérimée, Carmen “était

une beauté étrange et sauvage, une figure qui étonnait d'abord, mais qu'on ne pouvait oublier. Ses yeux surtout avaient une expression à la fois voluptueuse et farouche que je n'ai trouvée depuis à aucun regard humain" (Mérimée 1845/1992, 40). There is, however, a difference in vocabulary between Senegalese and Western reviewers when they depict the female protagonist. Senegalese reviews are far more sparing and less colourful in their words when depicting Gai's performance and appearance. In general, Senegalese reviewers do not accentuate her role for the entire film, as do their Western colleagues. This may again be due to different narrative traditions in Africa and in Western countries. In Western cinema, a narrative is usually built around one central character, an individual hero or heroine, while in African films the principal character is the group, the collectivity (Cheriaa 1985, 109). This tradition may also have created a different way of reviewing the work of actors.

Soundtrack

Music is the one element that reviewers of different origins agree to be the most successful part of the film. There is only one negative judgement among the 23 compliments made about the score of the film. The reviewers praise especially the blend of different musical traditions, the use of music as a natural part of narrative and the performances of certain musicians. In the early days of making film musicals the whole genre was perceived as a vehicle for song and dance while the plot was not considered so important (Hayward, 1996, 235). This may explain why the soundtrack of the film was given so much attention in the reviews.

Western reviewers compare earlier versions of *Carmen* and Ramaka's *Karmen* to each other with regard to music, its fidelity to the original text, and in relation to the actors. Ramaka's *Karmen* is not the first version made with a completely new soundtrack instead of the music of Bizet, which originally created the reputation of *Carmen*. For reviewers, Bizet's music is not a necessity; on the contrary, a more innovated choice of music is even an advantage for a text incarnated over fifty times as a film. The score of *Karmen* mixes jazz, African percussion, and pop music. This blend is enthusiastically welcomed by critics of four nationalities.

Another successful musical element is the way in which music is used as part of the narrative. Unlike most Western film musicals, Ramaka has chosen to use live performances of musicians and choruses. This choice is remarked upon especially by American critics, who note that "there are no real 'production numbers'," but that is what makes the film one of those rare opera films "where the music becomes an organic part of the way the characters lead their lives, instead of having them break meaninglessly into song."

Canadian and French critics also praise the use of music as a natural narrative element. Sometimes this naturalness and easiness are combined with the origin of the film: "Africa and its strong rhythmic tradition seem to support this singing and dancing shebang much more naturally than most other continents can." The origin of this statement can be found in an old recurring theme of white-on-black-imagery, which attributed the special musical gift and the gift of emotional expression to black people. It dates back to slavery, when it was the fashion in Europe to include a Moorish percussionist in military and court orchestras. (Nederveen Pieterse 1992, 136.)

The only criticism concerning the music comes from Phil Hill, who, in fact, was the only American critic to dislike the film. According to Hill, there were “brief and occasional music numbers scattered about which literally come out of nowhere and disappear just as abruptly.” He also criticised Ramaka for choosing the “tepid” music of Murray in his film.

Violation of cultural norms vs. pleasure of African exoticism

The main difference between the Senegalese and the foreign reviews was that the Senegalese reviewers evaluate *Karmen* as a part of the Senegalese and African film tradition while the Canadian, French and American reviewers see *Karmen* as a continuation of the musical genre and other Carmen adaptations. Senegalese reviewers do not consider only aesthetic and narrative elements but also the content of the film while Western reviews do not make any moral statements on the content. Their main concern is aesthetic criticism. Both local and foreign reviewers appreciate the soundtrack and beautiful images of the film. The main differences and similarities of the reviews are summarised in Table 7.3.

The Western reviews of *Karmen* are ambiguous in that they praise such exotic and ‘authentic African’ elements as beautiful scenery, music and dance but criticise the film’s digressions and multiple, layered narrative structures borrowed from African orality. When criticising the narrative structure of *Karmen* they posit the linear narration found in European and American cinema as the only possible model to make a narrative film. This kind of

Table 7.3

Main differences between Senegalese and Western reviews.

	Senegalese reviews	Western reviews
Proposed viewing strategy	<i>Karmen</i> as a Senegalese/ African film.	<i>Karmen</i> as a new version of Carmen filmatisation. A mainstream narrative film. 'African Carmen'.
Focus of criticism	Content (and form).	Form.
Interest	Respect for Senegalese culture.	Aesthetic pleasure. Entertainment.
Negative comments	Contradiction of Senegalese moral norms.	Narration.
Positive comments	Beautiful images Soundtrack.	'Africanness'. The leading actress. Beautiful images and scenery. Soundtrack.

criticism can be interpreted as a continuation of the Eurocentrist model of thought established in the nineteenth-century that is based on notions of the racial superiority of Europeans. On the one hand, Western reviewers may be fascinated by elements like nature, eroticism and musical rhythms, which 'by nature' belong to African cultures but, on the other hand, they expect that African films should follow the dominant Hollywood film model. This kind of cultural criticism tends to take Western forms as universal and as a normative model instead of trying to

understand the non-Western influences at play in non-Western cultural texts. It overlooks the specific identities and merging influences in non-Western works, thereby foreclosing the possibility of diversity (Thackway 2003, 18).

Despite the ambiguities with regard to average Senegalese people expressed in the interviews, Senegalese cultural journalists identified with their readers and the Senegalese cultural norms in their texts. They situated *Karmen* within the tradition of Senegalese and African cinema and criticised the film according to the conventions and model of this cinema. One cultural journalist even admitted in the interview that he had liked *Karmen* very much and even considered it one of the best Senegalese films in recent years; as a servant of his audience, however, he wrote quite critically about the film. Even at a textual level, the reviews referred to the taste of Senegalese spectators, anticipating their reactions.

Differences between Senegalese and Western reviews of *Karmen* might also be considered in relation to different functions assigned to cinema in Senegal and in Western countries. In Europe and America, cinema is considered mostly to be entertainment whereas, in African societies, the social and political meanings of cinema are also accentuated. Local critics may be more likely also to read local films as ideological texts than European and American audiences.

8

Coverage of *Karmen* in Senegalese press

In the hierarchy of news journalism, issues related to arts and cultural production are rarely considered important enough to appear as front page news of major newspapers. The case of *Karmen* was an exception in Senegal, breaking onto the front pages of several dailies on September 10, after the *baye fall* had succeeded in banning screenings of the film. The case remained an issue in the newspapers for several months, which suggests that the film had succeeded in addressing some important socio-cultural values in Senegalese society. In this chapter, I describe how Senegalese journalists covered the film and the events surrounding its censoring and the kind of public debate the events raised in the press. Connections between press coverage and Internet debates will be studied in the following chapter, whose purpose is also to situate the case in wider socio-cultural contexts both in Senegal and in the transnational cultural sphere.

Three phases of *Karmen* coverage

The press coverage of *Karmen* can be divided into three phases according to the focus of the news topics. In the first stage, called *first-night publicity phase*, the news was the film itself. The news

stories of this phase in Senegal concentrated on reporting on the premieres first in France and later in Senegal, on presenting the filmmaker and actors, and on reviewing the film. In the second stage, it was no longer the film itself but rather its censoring and the consequences of being censored that made the news. I call this stage the *debating publicity phase* because of the increasing number of stories debating the film. In the third stage, interest in the issue began to wane but the film was still mentioned repeatedly in connection to other news issues. The stage derives its name, *follow-up phase*, from the stories referring to *Karmen* as a signature exemplar to frame the subject that the news is about (Gamson and Lasch 1983, 399). In the third stage, the position of *Karmen* as part of Senegalese cinema history was established since the way in which it was referred to in newspaper articles assumes that the case is generally known.

First-night publicity phase

The *first-night publicity phase* covers the period from April to July 2001. During this phase the main news topic was the appearance of a new Senegalese film in cinemas. The journalistic genres of this phase were interviews (10), news (7) and film reviews (7). Altogether there were 24 stories about *Karmen* during this period (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1
Journalistic genres during the three phases.

Phase	News stories	Film reviews	Interviews	Others	Commentaries by journalists	Letters to the editor	Totals
First night publicity phase	7	7	10	0	0	0	24
Debating publicity phase	50	1	9	0	12	8	81
Follow-up phase	6	0	2	2	2	1	13
Totals	63	8	21	2	14	9	118

In April, *Karmen* was selected to be screened in a section for promising new directorial talent, *Quinzaine des réalisateurs*, at the Cannes Film Festival in France. The news about this event made the front page in the popular evening paper *Scoop*, which devoted two whole pages to the subject. Even though the film was chosen to be screened in Cannes out of the competition, *Scoop* evoked the idea of black *Karmen* going to conquer the festival with the title “Karmen’ la noire à la conquête de Cannes” (*Scoop* 26.4.01).

The screening of *Karmen* in Cannes was covered on the front page of *Scoop* three weeks after the festival, in the middle of June, when the issue was no longer a real piece of news but rather a feature referring to the coming premiere in Senegal. The subject, however, was given a lot of column space. In addition to the main news story and an interview with Aïssatou Diop, two extracts from the French film journal *Monsieur Cinéma*, which had reviewed the film and interviewed Ramaka, and an excerpt of *Scoop*’s own earlier story in April, were cited. In all, *Scoop* devoted to *Karmen* three pages, six stories and ten photos in the issue of 13.6.2001.

The next important news during the first-night publicity phase was the release of *Karmen* in Dakar on July 20th. Most Senegalese newspapers reacted to the release; either carrying a news story about the premiere (*Scoop*, *Sud Quotidien*), interviewing the director or other members of the crew (*Le Soleil*, *Scoop*, *Tract*, *Nouvel Horizon*, *La Nouvelle*), reporting the first reactions of the audience (*Sud Quotidien*) or reviewing the film (*Le Soleil*, *Walfadjri*, *Sud Quotidien*, *Le Matin*, *L’Info*, *Nouvel Horizon*). Altogether there were 15 articles about *Karmen* in July.

During the first-night publicity phase, the coverage of *Karmen* was mostly positive and enthusiastic but some critical

voices were also heard. In the *Sud Quotidien*'s interviews, one first-night spectator commented on the film:

Ndéye Khady Touré (24 years): I was really shocked after the screening. When I watched the film, I felt very uncomfortable since many excerpts of the film were clearly pornographic. (*Sud Quotidien* 23.7.2001.)⁸⁷

Similar opinions were expressed in some reviews by Senegalese cultural journalists, as discussed in the previous chapter:

One should not consider *Karmen* a tribute for an African woman, who is much more than the pair of buttocks, breasts and thighs constantly spread apart. (*Le Matin* 23.7.2001.)⁸⁸

Most of the stories still stressed the film as an achievement of the national film industry and expressed pride in its screening in a festival as prestigious as Cannes.

Debating publicity phase

During the *debating publicity phase* from August 2001 to January 2002, the news topic was the controversy the film created among some religious Senegalese audiences and the efforts to solve the problem. The issue was covered in 81 stories, mostly in news (50) but also in a number of opinion stories (20). Twelve

87 Ndéye Khady Touré (24 ans) : "Je suis ressortie de la salle très choquée. Durant toute la projection, j'ai été très mal à l'aise. Je trouve que beaucoup de séquences relevaient carrément de la pornographie" (*Sud Quotidien* 23.7.2001)

88 Et c'est là où il est déplacé de parler d'hommage à la femme africaine car celle-ci ne saurait se réduire à des paires de fesses, des gorges passablement flétries et à des jambes interminables et toujours écartées. (*Le Matin* 23.7.2001)

commentaries and eight letters to the editor are quite a number of opinion stories compared to Senegalese journalism at large.

After the first-night publicity phase, *Le Soleil* took an active role in promoting public discussion about *Karmen*. Two weeks after the premiere, *Le Soleil*, *Scoop* and the Association of the Senegalese Cultural Press (APCS), organised a special screening and a discussion on *Karmen* in the film theatre *Bel Arte*. In a short piece of news marketing the public discussion, *Le Soleil* hints at a debate raised by the film: “As you remember “Karmen” (an African adaptation of “Carmen” by Mérimée and Bizet) raised debate because of some daring scenes, especially the one where the heroine has a sexual relationship with the female prison warden.” (*Le Soleil* 4.–5.8.01.) According to my research material, the media reactions to *Karmen* had until this time been limited to some hesitant comments and questions but, according to the excerpt above, the debate was already going on in certain spheres. This debate became public and mediated by the article in *Le Soleil* reporting the above-mentioned debate (“Scènes osées ou hypocrisie sociale? Mots libres sur Karmen Gueï”, *Le Soleil*, 6.8.2001).

The scandal paper *Mœurs* was the next medium to react to the film. The first article about *Karmen* was published at the end of August. By the end of 2001, *Mœurs* had published nine stories on *Karmen*, of which all except one letter to the editor were critical of the film. The coverage of *Mœurs* will be studied in detail later in this chapter.

The peak of the debating publicity followed the demonstration of *baye fall* on September 8. In September alone there were 49 stories on the issue. Most of the journalistic reactions were news stories (29), but nine interviews with

authorities and film professionals, five journalistic commentaries, and six letters to the editor were published. Several newspapers made the “case of *Karmen*” a cover story the day after the protest. The first news presented the issue from the point of view of the film’s opponents, while the director’s views were voiced two weeks later after he returned from Canada, where he happened to be during the event.⁸⁹

The peak of interest in the censoring of *Karmen* diminished in some weeks but every new turn in the case was promptly reported in the press during the next four months. Journalists kept the case on the agenda by tracing the discussion about the recreation of the new Committee for Cinematic Control. Unfortunately I did not access the news about the recreation of the body – if there was any. The article in *Walfadjri*⁹⁰ in July 2002, however, suggests that the Committee was re-established during spring 2002, but there is no accurate information on this issue. Ramaka’s decision to prosecute those inciting the *baye fall* to protest against the film caused a small news peak of 14 stories in December 2001. At the end of January 2002, the news topic was the creation of the committee *Libérer Karmen* in support of the film.⁹¹

Follow-up publicity phase

During *the follow-up publicity phase* from February to July 2002, *Karmen* was no longer an important news topic but appeared

89 *Sud Quotiden*, *Le Soleil*, *Walfadjri*, *Scoop*, *L’Info*, *La Pointe* and *Frasques* 19.9.2001, *Nouvel Horizon* 21.9.2001

90 *Walfadjri* 10.7.2002

91 *Le Soleil*, *Walfadjri*, *L’Info* 31.1.02.

as an issue in the context of other issues related to the national cinema. After the launching of an email list and the collection of petitions in defence of *Karmen* in January, the film was a news topic only when it was screened at the festivals of Los Angeles (*Le Soleil* 19.3.2002), in Yaounde (*Sud Quotidien* 5.7.2002) and in Chicago (*Walfadjri* 29.7.–4.8.2002, the exact date missing).

In March 2002, the Senegalese National Assembly launched a proposal for new cinema legislation. In the context of the news coverage of this issue *Karmen* was used as an example to illustrate the need for such legislation. According to the new law, every film screened in Senegal would need a visa delivered by the Minister after approval by the Committee for Cinematic Control. According to the article, “the system should guarantee that troubles such as with *Karmen* do not repeat” (*Walfadjri* 21.3.2002).

In May, *Le Soleil* published in its supplement *Femina* three articles concerning the image of women in Senegalese films. The issue was raised in interviews with a film critic, a filmmaker and two actors. In these articles, *Karmen* was presented as representative of a new film trend, which gives women more active roles than in earlier films. Questions of nudity and homosexuality were also raised.

The natural end point for *Karmen* coverage was reached in July 2002 and the circle was in a way closed when a new controversy around a similar issue was created with the screening of Almadou Thior’s documentary *Almodou* on the Senegalese national television channel. *Almoudou* describes Senegalese Koranic schools criticising the practice of some imams of sending the children out to beg for money for their teacher instead of providing them with proper education. This kind of criticism was not approved by certain Muslim associations, who insisted

that the documentary be censored and that the director publicly apologise for vilifying the imams in much the same way as happened with *Karmen*. The event led anew to similar discussions about freedom of expression in Senegal as *Karmen* did the year before.

Role of different newspapers

The two major newspapers, *Le Soleil* and *Sud Quotidien*, published most of the articles on *Karmen*. *Le Soleil* treated the subject in 30 stories in various journalistic genres and from several angles while of the 22 stories in *Sud Quotidien* two thirds were news stories. *Walfadjri*, which is about the same size as *Le Soleil* and *Sud*, ran only 15 stories, most of them news (Table 8.2). The explanation may be that the cultural desk of *Le Soleil* is larger and has more resources for cultural affairs than *Sud Quotidien* and *Walfadjri*. During the first-night publicity phase, the big dailies reported the premiere of *Karmen* and reviewed the film but their interest grew after the protest. *Le Soleil* also had an important role in activating audiences to discuss the film in its online forum, as will be seen in the next chapter.

For the popular evening papers *Scoop*, *Frasques*, *Tract* and *Mœurs*, the issue of *Karmen* offered glamour and beautiful actors during the first-night publicity phase and dramatic events and a whiff of scandal during the debating publicity phase. *Scoop* followed the subject as eagerly as *Walfadjri* with 15 articles but, unlike the quality dailies, its stories concentrated more on events and celebrities around the film than the film itself during the first-night publicity phase. *Frasques*, *Tract* and *Scoop* also published

Table 8.2

Karmen articles in 12 Senegalese newspapers and magazines.

Newspaper or magazine	News stories	Film reviews	Interviews	Commentaries by journalists	Letter to the editor	Others	Totals
Frasques	3	0	1	2	0	0	6
L'Info	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
La Nouvelle	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
La Pointe	4	0	1	1	0	0	6
Le Matin	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Le Soleil	16	1	6	4	2	1	30
Moeurs	2	0	0	4	3	0	9
Nouvel Horizon	3	1	2	1	0	0	7
Scoop	7	1	7	0	0	0	15
Sud Quotidien	14	2	4	1	1	0	22
Tract	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Walfadjri	10	1	0	1	3	0	15
Totals	63	8	22	15	9	1	118

several large photos of the film's actors and actresses. *Mœurs* was the only newspaper paying no attention to *Karmen* during the first-night publicity phase but it played a special role in the public debate, as will be seen later. Of nine stories published in *Mœurs*, seven were opinion stories written either by its own journalists or by members of the public.

Of the small quality newspapers, *La Pointe* was the only one to devote to the issue several news stories and even one commentary and an interview. Other small newspapers, *L'Info*, *La Nouvelle* and *Le Matin*, reported on *Karmen* only in the context of the first screening and the protest by *baye fall* but did not follow the case more in-depth.

Who was quoted?

In order to explore which actors were considered eligible to comment on the issue of *Karmen*, I categorised all the actors cited directly or indirectly in the press coverage. The categories of religious and political or public authorities proved problematic, since some individuals appeared in several roles and it was difficult to know if that person had been as a news source because of his political or religious authority. Thus, when coding the actors I relied on the identifications by the author of the story: if the actor was identified as a member of the National Assembly he was coded as a political or public authority but if the same person appeared in another story as a religious person he was then coded as a religious leader.

Joseph Ramaka was quoted in the press coverage 31 times (table 8.3). His high profile resulted at least partly because of his

Table 8.3
Actors in different newspapers.

Newspaper or magazine	Joseph Ramaka	Members of the Karmen crew	Other film profes- sional	Ordinary citizen	Journalist	Academic person	Political or public authority	Religi- ous leader	Totals
Erasques	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	1	7
L'Info	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4
La Nouvelle	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
La Pointe	3	1	0	0	1	0	3	1	9
Le Matin	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4
Le Soleil	9	2	7	5	15	11	8	0	57
Moeurs	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	1	7
Nouvel Horizon	3	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	9
Scoop	5	8	1	0	1	0	2	0	17
Sud									
Quotidien	3	0	6	4	3	1	5	0	22
Tract	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Walfadjri	3	0	0	1	2	4	9	1	20
Totals	31	15	15	12	25	16	32	5	159

active PR policy consisting of several press conferences and press material sent to journalists both before the premiere and after the film was banned. In the first press conference after the banning of the film, Ramaka had an opportunity to express his point of view about the banning; the second was to announce lawsuits against those obstructing the distribution of his film, and the third to launch the campaign *Libérer Karmen*.⁹²

Political or public authorities appeared as actors in 31 articles and religious leaders appeared in five articles. For instance, Me Abdoulaye Babou was presented in the articles either as a member of the opposition party AFP, as a member of the National Assembly, as a president of the religious NGO Jamra, or as a Mourid believer and as a lawyer. Other public authorities cited as news sources were the Ministers of Culture and the Interior, members of the National Assembly and public film authorities.

Journalists also actively used their own voice to comment the issue. Journalists appear as actors eight times when writing film reviews during the first-night publicity phase and 14 times when writing commentaries during the debating publicity phase. In three cases a journalist is cited as a news source in a story written by another journalist.

Members of the film crew (actors Jeïnaba Diop, Aïssatou Diop, Magaye Niang, Diéye Madièye, Thierno Ndiaye Doss, musicians Julien Jouga and Doudou Ndiaye Rose and the fashion designer Mame Faguèye) were interviewed in 11 stories during the first-night publicity phase. Only Aïssatou Diop also appeared

92 The active role Ramaka took in defending his film in the public sphere led some Internet debate participants to argue that the director took advantage of the negative publicity since publicity usually arouses interest in the issue in question be it negative or positive. According to them, even if in Senegal the film had already been withdrawn from screens, the publicity could add to the interest in *Karmen* abroad.

four times during the debating publicity phase, but in these stories she was not in the role of a film actress but in the role of the manager of the cinema *Bel Arte*. Other film professionals appeared as actors 15 times. The Senegalese filmmakers Clarence Delgado and Johnny Spencer Diop were cited as spokespersons of the association of the Senegalese filmmakers *CINESEAS* while two Senegalese filmmakers, Ben Diogaye Beye, Moussa Sene Absa, and one West African filmmaker, Cheikh Omar Cissoko, expressed their personal opinions as representatives of their profession.

Academics or intellectuals, such as university teachers, art critics and professionals from different fields of art, appeared as actors 16 times and members of the public twelve times in the coverage.

Journalistic style

News stories reporting the protest against *Karmen* are characterised by accented neutrality and the detached voices of the journalists. The stories are told with such rhetorical devices as repeated use of the passive voice and direct quotations from news sources. The *Sud Quotidien* article “Baye fall obstruct the distribution of *Karmen* in CICES” (10.9.2001), is an illustrative example of reporting in which the journalist seems to distance himself from the events and to over-accentuate his neutrality (Appendix 4). The rules of neutral news writing are carefully respected: sources and their role in the action are documented, the course of events is described succinctly, and the opinions of both parties are represented. However, small linguistic details reveal that a journalist does not agree or doubts the information given by certain news sources.

In the first paragraph of the story, the author recounts the events that took place in front of the film theatre on the evening of September 8. He makes it clear that the *baye fall*, not the author, considered the film blasphemous. Doubt about the point of view of *baye fall* is created with quotation marks around the adjectives “blasphemous” and “damned” used by *baye fall* about the film. The author gives a voice to both sides: to Me Babou supporting the protesters and to the former Minister of Culture Abdoulaye Elimane Kane defending freedom of expression. He seems, however, to question the authority of Me Babou by putting his qualifications in quotation marks: “who has reacted as a Mourid and a politician.”

Another example of the journalists’ disagreement with news sources comes out in the news reporting about the role of the Committee for Cinematic Control. When the distribution of *Karmen* was forbidden in Senegal, the authorities emphasised that the ban was only provisional and promised that it would last only until the Committee for Cinematic Control had time to screen the film and judge if it was blasphemous or not. In the news headlines, the decision to remove *Karmen* from the screen was, however, immediately interpreted as censorship: “Baye fall are censoring Karmen” (*Le Soleil* 10.9.01) and “Baye fall decide to censor Karmen” (*Walfadjri* 10.9.01). Some popular newspapers went still further and called the ban of Karmen a *fatwa*. *Frasque* headlined the news about the protest: “Fatwa of Serigne Moustapha Diahkhaté against Karmen Geï” (10.9.2001), and *La Pointe* (10.9.2001) called the ban a “a fatwa of Mourids” (“une fatwa mouride”).⁹³

93 The word fatwa or the name of Salman Rushdie were mentioned all in all in eight articles. *Mœurs* 27.8.–2.9.02, *La Pointe* 10.9.02, *La Pointe* 10.9.02, *Frasques* 10.9.02, *Le Soleil* 12.9.02, *Wal Fadjri* 12.9.02, *Mœurs* 22.–28.10.02 *Le Soleil* 14.12.02.

It may be an exaggeration to claim that the decision to publicly name the prohibition as censorship instead of using more neutral words automatically posits the text on the side of those defending freedom of expression and condemning the ban. There is, however, a difference between a journalist's voice speaking about censorship – without quotation marks – and the authorities' voice preferring expressions such as “suspending the distribution temporarily,” “temporary ban” or “temporary detention.” In the news, the suspect is accentuated with quotation marks, which are in frequent use in throughout coverage of the case.

Senegal has pursued a reputation as being one of the most democratic and liberal African countries. The protest against *Karmen* was embarrassing for the Senegalese public authorities since it brought to light religious tensions underneath the secular surface and threatened to spoil the positive image of the country in the eyes of Western authorities. On the other hand, the Senegalese authorities could not remain inactive when facing pressure from certain religious citizens. The choice to accentuate the temporary character of the ban can thus be interpreted as their attempt to balance between two opposite forces and to preserve the democratic image of the country. This, however, was not accepted by journalists, who wanted to call the event by its right name.

The Committee for Cinematic Control as the villain of the piece

To condense a complex news event into a familiar cultural narrative makes the news more interesting and easier to

understand. For this reason news are often narrated as drama, in which both heroes and villains play an important role (Raittila 1996, 151). One could have imagined that the newspapers would quickly take sides either with the *baye fall* or with the filmmaker, but this never happened. The main culprit for the controversy was the “lethargy” of the Committee for Cinematic Control, which was presented in journalism as the main reason for the controversy about the film. The reorganisation of the Committee was also seen as the only way to solve the problem.

In journalism, placing blame may be done either explicitly or implicitly (Raittila 1996, 156–158). An example of explicit blaming is how the National Committee for Cinematic Control was called guilty in the headline of *Sud Quotidien* (11.9.2001): “Distribution of Karmen: The fault of the National Committee for Cinematic Control.” The headline was based on the press conference given by the Minister of Culture, Amadou Tidiane Wone. According to Wone, the whole controversy could have been avoided if the Committee had been functioning properly. On the 3rd of October, the *Sud Quotidien* continued in a similar vain, blaming the Committee for not solving the situation: “The Committee for Cinematic Control continues to hang back on the decision about Karmen, the film by Joseph Gaye Ramaka, which is ‘temporarily suspended’ from distribution in Senegal on the basis of ‘public order’.”

If the headline of the first *Sud Quotidien* story made an explicit claim about the culpability of the Committee, the story itself used so-called if-rhetoric speculating with eventualities (Raittila 1996, 158): “If the Committee for Cinematic Control had assembled to filter the images of Karmen, we would not have had this ‘alarming situation’ on Saturday September 8 in *Bel Arte*. This is the condensed opinion of the Minister of the Culture

Amadou Tidiane Wone about the case of *Karmen* expressed yesterday September 10.”⁹⁴ The *Sud Quotidien* (11.9.01) makes one understand that if the Committee had been functioning, the controversial excerpt of the film would have been cut or censored and thus the problem would have been solved. This makes the Committee also the possible hero of the drama.

The reorganisation of the Committee came to be one of the main threads pursued in the *Karmen* press coverage. The reorganisation was announced several times by the authorities but every time new reasons were evinced why this could not happen. First, the president of the Committee was said to be abroad and certain members of the organisation were removed or had moved away from Dakar or Senegal (*Sud Quotidien* 13.9.01). In November 2001, the National Assembly and *CINESEAS* were accused by the Ministry of Culture of obstructing the reorganisation since they had not named new members to the Committee (*Sud Quotidien* 23.11.01, *Walfadjri* 25.11.01). Some days later this was denied in the *Sud Quotidien* by the President of *CINESEAS*, who claimed that they had not even been asked to name a new member. There is no coverage in my material about the final recreation of the Committee but, in July 2002, the control institution suddenly seemed to exist. The Committee could not, however, perform its task since the director had announced that there were no copies of the film available in the country (*Walfadjri* 10.7.2002). The hero could, thus, never save the country from this “alarming situation.”

94 Si la Commission nationale de contrôle cinématographique s’était préalablement réunie pour filtrer les images de «*Karmen*», on n’aurait certainement pas vécu la «situation de feu» du samedi 8 septembre au «Bel Arte». Tel est en condensé le sentiment exprimé hier, lundi 10 septembre, par le ministre de la Culture Amadou Tidiane Wone au sujet de l’affaire «*karmen*». (*Sud Quotidien* 11.9.2001)

Once the responsibility of the Committee for Cinematic Control to solve the case was constructed and repeated often enough in several stories, it transformed into an established fact in the journalistic coverage. The attention of readers was directed to follow the re-establishment of the Committee, which led to other possible points of view and consideration of other possible solutions to the problem being ignored.

Conviction of *Mœurs*

The scandal paper *Mœurs* was the only Senegalese newspaper to take a clear position against *Karmen*. Because of the personal attacks against the filmmaker, the editor-in-chief of *Mœurs* was among those prosecuted by Ramaka in November 2001.

Mœurs started its career in Senegal at the beginning of 2001 but was suppressed one year later when its editor-in-chief was sentenced to prison. The style and content of *Mœurs* differed from that of other Senegalese dailies and weeklies: its news stories, mostly about crimes and sexual affairs, were written in a colourful language and facts, rumours, and opinions were all mixed together. Due to public criticism, certain vulgar expressions were expurgated in order to maintain good relationships with religious leaders. The editor-in-chief of *Mœurs* even announced in a press conference that in the future they would, for example, use the word 'orange' instead of speaking about the 'clitoris' (*Le Soleil* 28.7.2001). The Senegalese Syndicate for the Information and Communication of Professionals (SYNPICS) and the Committee for Media Ethics (CRED) criticised the content and language of the newspaper, and none of the five journalists of *Mœurs* was

accepted for membership of the national syndicate of journalists. The paper became famous for its lawsuits, in which private persons accused the paper of wrong information and defamation. During its short-lived existence, *Mœurs* was a popular publication with a controversial reputation. For some, it was a pornographic scandal paper, guilty of crimes similar to those it reported. For others, it was a vehicle for the survey of good mores and religious morals, as already stated in the title *Mœurs* (in English ‘morals, manners, customs’).

It would have been easy to ignore *Mœurs* as insignificant gutter journalism but the examples such as *Radio Mille Collins* in Rwanda have proved the power of media to mobilise people for ethnic, religious or other purges in such a way that the phenomenon demands more attention. As mentioned earlier, the unprofessional and unethical independent press has been guilty of fuelling intolerance, fanaticism, and extremism of all kinds in several West African countries. Some newspapers have even served as the organs of divisive forces reproducing incitements to murder, destruction and hatred. (Nyamnjoh 2005, 56.) This also seemed to be the role of *Mœurs* in its crusades against *Karmen*.

The first article about the film, “Karmen – Porno – Khassaïde, Outrage à Serigne Toub,” written by the editor-in-chief Pape Daouda Sow and the journalist Pascal Guèye, was published on the first page of *Mœurs* at the end of August. In this story, *Karmen* was accused of blasphemy and of offending Senegalese nationalist feelings. The situation was constructed as a drama positing the defenders of *Karmen* as villains attacking basic Senegalese values of Islam, Mouridism and nationalism. The juxtaposition is created at the beginning of the story. The first phrase consists of two parts: the factual news item: “the film Karmen arouses debate even before entering in distribution”

("Karmen, le film X de Joseph Gaye Ramaka défraie la chronique avant même de sortir en sale"), and the side comment in the form of a rhetorical question about the religious conviction of Joseph Ramaka: "is he a son of Islam?" ("est-ce qu'il est un fils de musulman?"). The side comment already portrays Ramaka unfavourably in the eyes of Muslim readers, but at the end of the first paragraph, the good and the villains are even more defined. The defenders of freedom of expression, Joseph Ramaka and pornographic films, are situated on the side of the bad guys while Muslims and *Mœurs* are on the good side. *Mœurs* directly addresses its readers by speaking about the damage to "your national pride" ("votre fierté nationale") and presents itself as a spokesman of those offended by the film. There is a slight effort to balance between those who like pornography and want to make such films: "Joseph Gaye might be free to make his wife act naked in homosexual scenes --- --- only he has no right to do it in public," but the juxtaposition is made clear with the choice of words and naming. *Karmen* is called an "X film", "porn", or "*a film Machiavélique*," Ramaka "a son of Satan" and audiences of the film "hooligans, orgiastics, *mbaloumen*, *chatties* and lesbians" ("*voyeurs, partouzards, mbaloumen, tapettes et gouines*").

The seriousness of the blasphemy is accentuated with extreme case formulations that strengthen the meaning of the words and accentuate the dangerousness of the film: "*the most serious* aspect of *Karmen* is..., she is *not even* a Christian, *Karmen* is *very dangerous*" (emphases by the present author). The way homosexuality is presented naturalises the opinions of those opposing the film and excludes completely the possibility of same-sex relationships between women: "In Senegal like *all over the world*, feminine homosexuality and pederasty are *against nature*" (emphases by the present author). ("En tout cas, au

Sénégal comme partout ailleurs, pour le commun des mortels, l'homosexualité féminine et la pédérastie sont contre nature depuis la nuit des temps".)

Disgust at the film was expressed in harsh language and colourful style, which made *Mœurs* difficult for the foreign researcher to read and understand. From the point of view of Senegalese readers, Wolof words and popular expressions make the language more readable. The bi-sexual character, for instance, is referred to in the paper as 'gouine' – in ordinary French 'lesbian' – and 'quarrels' as 'grabuge'. Representative examples of the style are also the following titles: "Can a filmmaker be a liar?" ("Un cinéaste peut-il être menteur? ") or "Karmen: ass and commercialism" ("Karmen: Cul et mercantilisme").

Letters to the editor

Three letters to the editor deserve especially to be noted in the press coverage since they represent the main distribution of opinions on *Karmen*. The letter of the religious leader Serigne Moustapha Diakhate in *Mœurs*, like his earlier reaction on radio Diamono FM, accuses *Karmen* of blasphemy and encourages those individuals who opposed the film, while the letters of two Senegalese intellectuals, Iba Ndiaye and Madièye Mbodj, evinced grounds for those defending *Karmen* on the basis of freedom of expression.

Serigne Moustapha Diakhate addresses his letter to the Minister of the Culture in *Mœurs* (10.–16.9.01). He uses polite, correct language that could be found in any quality newspaper. However, the fact that Diakhaté sent his letter to *Mœurs* and not,

for instance, to *Le Soleil* or *Walfadjri*, indicates that his purpose was not so much to address the Minister as it was to address the populace. He asks in his letter that the Minister take all measures “to remove from the film the excerpt with the *khassaid* to prevent serious consequences for public security.” Diakhaté bases his demand on the declaration of his religious community, *daara*, to prohibit using the *khassaid*s of Serigne Touba for entertainment purposes. Diakhaté makes no secret of the fact that he has not himself seen the film, but he cites the editor-in-chief of *Mœurs* and the opinions of those who had assisted at the premiere and seen *Karmen* to support his claim that the film is “a perfect illustration of perverse manners.”⁹⁵

In the same week, a letter from the art critic Iba Ndiaye was published in three newspapers, *Walfadjri* (“Karmen – representation d’une société ou triomphe du ‘je’?” 11.9.2001?), *Le Soleil* (“Une censure à l’arme blanche” 11.9.01) and *Sud Quotidien* (“Karmen’ Une censure à l’arme blanche” 11.9.01), and a letter

95 As a result of the fact that opponents did not want to see the whole film, the controversial excerpt of *Karmen* was continuously cited incorrectly in public. It was claimed that Ramaka combines the Catholic funeral of a homosexual woman with a holy song of Ahmadou Bamba. In reality, there are two separate excerpts in the film that together give this impression, but neither of them alone has the alleged content. In the first excerpt, Karmen learns about the death of Angelique in a telephone call when she is visiting her former lover Massigi. Sad and weary she rests on the sofa listening to Massigi playing the piano and singing the song of Ahmadou Bamba. During the song, the camera angle moves to the outer door of the women’s prison where the coffin of Angelique is carried out of the prison on the shoulders of four prison guards. The camera angle then returns to Massigi and again back to the prison outdoors. The whole scene with “Kalamoune” lasts about one minute. After this scene there is a short cut to Karmen’s accomplice, Old Samba, who is battered by police. Only then comes the scene of the funeral in the Catholic church but in this scene the music of Bamba is no longer heard; rather the funeral is accompanied by Catholic chants.

from Professor Madièye Mbodj in two papers, *Le Soleil* (“Faut il brûler Karmen?” 12.9.01) and *Walfadjri* (“Faut il brûler Karmen?” 12.9.01). These letters represent a typical intellectual style of letters to the editor in Senegalese newspapers. Both authors are academics writing sophisticated literate French and stating their opinion profoundly and at length. The fact that the letters are given so much space in *Le Soleil*, *Sud Quotidien* and *Walfadjri* can be interpreted as these newspapers supporting the opinions expressed in the letters. The support is however given in such a way that neither the newspaper nor an individual journalist claim responsibility.

Mbodj’s letter is constructed in the form of questions and answers. The headline, “Should Karmen be burnt?,” refers to the old tradition of burning dangerous books and works of art in bonfires. This might be interpreted as a claim that a similar injustice is now happening to *Karmen*. What follows is a group of rhetorical questions whose purpose is to undermine the conviction of those accusing *Karmen* of blasphemy: “Who can seriously claim that the film of Jo Gaye Ramaka accepts homosexuality, pornography and suicide or disregards of religion? Who is not able to see that the *khassàids* sung in the Catholic funeral make an allusion to the Ave Maria sung for deceased Muslims?” The main argument of Mbodj is that Senegalese society traditionally is religiously tolerant and Ramaka only wanted to transmit this idea in his film. To prove his claim, Mbodj cites an event he has witnessed about ten years ago and which he believes to have influenced on Ramaka’s film: “Jo Gaye Ramaka had seen at the funeral the group of baye fall singing the *khassàids* of Serigne Touba in memory of a deceased Catholic person.”

Mbodj's letter of is cautious not to offend Senegalese Mourids but accents the difference between "orthodox Mourids" and "authentic Mouridism." The adherents of the first type are accused of "calculated hypocrisy" while authentic Mourids "had not found anything blasphemous in *Karmen* before this idea was evoked by a local paper." At the end of his profound discussion the author can only conclude by responding to the question of the headline: "No, *Karmen* should not be burnt."

The expertise of the second author, Iba Ndiaye, is based on his professional status as a well-known art critic both in Senegal and France. He had also defended *Karmen* in the discussion after the screening organised by *Le Soleil*. Like Mbodj, Ndiaye defends *Karmen* on the basis of freedom of expression. He also alludes to Senegalese reality, which, according to the author, in no way contradicts the verisimilitude of the film. According to Ndiaye, if spectators cannot endure seeing the reality such as it exists, with its positive and negative phenomena, they could appreciate the film as a work of art whose purpose is neither to make moral justifications nor to report the social reality.

Unlike the authority of Mbodj and Ndiaye, which is based on academic education, Diakhaté represents religious authority acknowledged by a large number of Senegalese Muslims. Even if the intellectuals neither challenge the respect for Ahmadou Bamba nor defend overt homosexuality, two widely accepted taboos in Senegalese society, their language and rhetoric are far from those used in popular discourse and it is not difficult to guess whose argumentation will be more easily accepted by Senegalese audiences.

From the field of cinema to the fields of power

According to my analysis, during the first-night publicity phase, the coverage of *Karmen* concentrated on the field of cultural production and cinema. The director and actors were the main news sources and the coverage was mostly positive and stressed the film as an achievement of the local film industry. The stories were published on the cultural pages. To find out how corresponding events have been reported earlier, I examined the articles about *Hyènes*, a film by Djibril Diop Mambety screened in Cannes in 1992. At that time, the popular evening press did not yet exist in Senegal, but the two main dailies, *Le Soleil*⁹⁶ and *Sud Quotidien*,⁹⁷ covered the event in much the same way as *Karmen* was reported. According to the journalists interviewed for this study, Senegalese films usually command attention in the home country if they are screened, win prizes or come in for any attention abroad. With these stories journalists carry out the task of promoting national culture and cinema, as was explained by one of my interviewees:

Cinema is an important part of Senegalese culture. Cinema is a vehicle, a means of communication. Our role as journalists is to make this means visible in journalism. Our task is to follow the development of cinema in the society... It is my opinion that the role of the journalist is not only to write about cinema but also let filmmakers speak about their work, their sorrows and difficulties. This can help the authorities to understand the cinematic sector

96 "C'est déjà la surprise..." 7.5.1992, *Avec la certitude indifférente des poètes...* 7.5.1992, Djibril Diop Mambety: "Je suis un terroriste" 25.6.1992

97 Djibril Diop Mambety, *Cannes dix-neuf ans après* 23.4.1992, *Deux Tenors de Tiers Monde* 14.5.1992

and the life of the film professionals. (Interview with a journalist 23.4.02.)⁹⁸

The lack of publicity campaigns, advertisements and other promotional efforts on the part of the film industry is compensated by cultural journalists committed to the promotion of national cultural products. From this point of view, positive coverage of national cinema screened abroad can be interpreted as supporting the construction of national identity at home.

As soon as it appeared that the content of the film might challenge established religious doctrine, the issue was transferred from the cultural pages to the front pages of newspapers. In the debating publicity phase, the case generated important political meanings since the reputation of Senegalese religious and national identity was now considered to be in danger. The case, however, was presented in the media mainly as an administrative problem, culminating in the fact that the democratically elected body, the Committee for Cinematic Control, was not functioning and no decision about censorship or screening of the film could be made. The ministers and authorities interviewed or cited in the articles did not publicly express their opinion for or against

98 Oui, c'est vrai, le cinéma fait bien parti dans la culture au Sénégal. Le cinéma est un véhicule, un moyen de communication. Nous aussi en tant que journaliste, notre rôle c'est de permettre à ce moyen de communication, d'être visible sur le plan journalistique. Notre rôle est de s'accompagner ce cheminement du cinéma sénégalais et la marche de la société.--- Je crois que le rôle de journaliste c'est, non seulement de montrer ce-là mais aussi de permettre aux cinéastes parler le processus de cinéma, de s'exprimer, de donner leur opinion et de faire parler de leur griefs, de leurs difficultés. Je pense que ça peut aider de rapprocher aussi bien des autorités qui doivent gérer ce secteur-là et les professionnelles qui en vivent. (Interview with a journalist 23.4.02)

censorship or commit themselves to the controversial content of the film, but instead concentrated on the administrative and legal process. The concern about the administrative problem might also have served to camouflage the fact that the issue was too religiously and politically sensitive and there were neither political agents nor journalists brave enough to deal with the real issue.

Even if the film was accused of blasphemy, the press coverage did not discuss the concept and content of blasphemy more profoundly. No important Mourid leader was asked to clarify how blasphemy was defined or understood by the Mourid *savants*; rather the issue was covered and discussed mostly by secular persons. In the quality newspapers, the issue was also covered with studied neutrality. Both opposing and defending arguments were given space, but no religious authorities, with the exception of Moustapha Diakhaté, were cited as news sources. When religious arguments were evinced, they were presented by political authorities as also having a recognised role in national politics, not just in the field of religion. Even in the most prominent opponent of *Karmen*, in *Mœurs*, stories were written by journalists and the only religious authority directly cited was the initiator of the debate, Moustapha Diakhaté.

During the follow-up publicity phase, the news value of the case gradually faded and there were fewer stories only about *Karmen*. The case was referred to several times in the context of issues related to the state of Senegalese cinema, cinema legislation and censorship during the next six months. It seems that *Karmen* served a catalyst or an excuse for the issues already in some way in the air. The same impression is strengthened by the analysis of the online discussions on *Karmen*. Those

participating in the discussions have mostly not seen the film but they use the occasion to discuss their religious and national identity and related issues.

9

***Karmen* debate on two Internet discussion forums**

The debate about *Karmen* started in the forum of *Le Soleil* at the beginning of August several weeks before the protest of *baye fall* and the banning of the film. Once the film was censored in Senegal, the film's own website also came to be a lively forum of discussion. This chapter analyses the frames in which the case was discussed in the forums. However, before going to the description of the debate, I will describe the distribution of new online media and access to the Internet in the Senegalese public sphere.

Internet in Senegal

Internet services have been available in Senegal since 1996 and the national domain was created the same year. Services are provided by Société Nationale des Télécommunications du Sénégal (Sonatel), owned by the Senegalese government and the French multinational enterprise France Telecom (Brun 2001). Sonatel already constructed connections to all major Senegalese cities in 1999, but 98 percent of Internet users are still based in Dakar.⁹⁹ According to the *CIA World Factbook*, there were 672

99 47 % of Senegalese population live in urban areas. During the last few years, mobile phones have created the technical option to be connected

Internet hosts and about 225,000 Internet users in Senegal in 2003. The average price of Internet dial-up access in Senegal for 30 hours on-peak usage per month is around US\$ 92. Even with off-peak rates at around US\$ 38, the price makes up seven percent of the Senegalese GDP¹⁰⁰ per person. For this reason, an individual connection to the Internet remains an urban luxury for the wealthier part of population. (Afemann 2003.)

Most of the users access the Internet in *cybercafés*, which exist in every quarter. In April 2002, there were 300 to 500 cybercafés, with a minimum of 10 computers connected (Afemann 2003). Competition among private cybercafés has reduced prices but, in a country where two third of the population lives on less than two dollars a day, even the present prices are often too high for other than educated middle class people. In 2002, the cost of using the Internet per hour was 500–1000 CFA (US\$ 0.98–1.97) in the centre of town and about 250–500 CFA (US\$ 0.49–0.98) on the university campus of Dakar.

The main reasons for not using Internet services are due to economic and educational barriers (Tanner 2001, 387). To connect to the Internet, one needs a computer with a modem, a telephone main line and electricity to operate the computer; these are all rather the exception than the rule in Senegal (Afemann 2003). Educational barriers are due to the high rate of illiteracy. The use of the Internet requires one to be literate in French or English and to have competence in computer use. In a country where only 50 percent of men and 30.7 percent of women are literate, the goal of making Internet services available to all is still far from

even in rural areas if only people could afford to use them. (World Bank, 2002 World Development Indicators statistics).

100 Gross national product (GNP) measures total value added from domestic and foreign sources claimed by residents.

being accomplished (CIA *World Factbook* 2006). In addition to these problems, there are also technical barriers due to the poor infrastructures of the electricity and telephone services. Even in Dakar, cuts in telephone and electricity connections are so frequent that one can easily be discouraged when trying to make an Internet connection or write an email.

To summarise, the majority of Senegalese people are not regular users of the Internet for economic, educational or technical reasons. There are, however, educated, middle-class, mostly male urban populations who have access to ICT and who regularly use the Internet for professional and personal purposes. A similar profile of net users has been found in several surveys in different parts of Africa (see e.g. Leslie 2002; Nyamnjoh 2005, 9) and is also supported by my observations in Senegalese cybercafés in 2002.

Online forums of *Le Soleil* and *Karmen*

Le Soleil started its version as the first online Senegalese newspaper in 1996, and the online discussion forum was opened in March 2001. The forum functioned from March 2001 to August 2002 and soon became an active discussion arena for multiple issues concerning Senegalese society. During the 18 months that the forum was functioning, all together 23,267 messages were sent to the forum. The discussion arena was divided into eight thematic sections: *Politics*, *Economics*, *Society*, *Sport*, *Miscellaneous Affairs*, *Elections 2001*, *Football Can 2002*, and *World Cup 2002*, and each of them had several concurrent discussion threads. Compared to the traditional letters to the editor section

published in the printed version of *Le Soleil*, the forum multiplied the opportunities for readers to give feedback about newspaper contents, to debate public issues and to participate in various discussions (cf. Tanner 2001, 387). The online forum also allowed Senegalese immigrants living abroad to participate in discussions going on in the home country.

The other forum in which *Karmen* was discussed was established to market the film in August 2001 by *Les Ateliers de l'Arche*. The website was linked to the front page of the online version of *Le Soleil*, which made it easy for local Internet users to find it. The main content of the site consisted of background information about the film, but the site also served as a distribution channel for posters and promotional photos and hosted the discussion forum. Between August and February 9, 2002, when the site was closed, 168 messages were sent to the forum.

Both discussion forums could be accessed and joined without any registration procedures. The difference between the *Le Soleil* and *Karmen* websites was that the first was moderated and the second was not. It is not possible to evaluate the influence of moderators on the content of *Le Soleil*. But at least personal attacks, insults and profanities were nonexistent in this forum, while in the forum of *Karmen*, flames and insults were frequent. According to my observations, the moderators of the forum of *Le Soleil* did not censor any subjects or limit the discussion even if this kind of moderation was required by some participants. As far as it was possible to assess afterwards, neither the number of participants nor length of submissions was limited in the forums analysed (Tanner 2001, 387).

Overview of discussions

During the research period, from August 7, 2001 to January 31, 2002, 274 messages were sent in the forums of *Le Soleil* and the *Karmen* website (Table 9.1). More than a third of them (102 messages, 37 per cent) concentrated on the week following the *baye fall* demonstration from September 10 to September 16 but there were also smaller peaks before and after the film was banned.

The first discussion thread, *Polemic about Karmen*, started in the forum of *Le Soleil* after the public screening and discussion organised in *Bel Arte* on the 4th August (described in Chapter 7). *Le Soleil* reported the event in its next issue, and the same article reappeared on the online forum three days later, acting as a catalyst for the forum discussion. The discussion continued until November 29. It was at its height in August before *Karmen* was banned: 50 messages were sent to the forum between August 6 and September 2. Another peak was reached in November when it was promised that the film would be screened for the Committee for Cinematic Control – but which did not happen. Twenty five messages were sent to the forum between November 19 and December 2.

The *Polemic about Karmen* with its 82 messages was one of the most popular discussions in the forum of *Le Soleil* during the time the forum was open. It was published under the theme *Society*, which contained altogether 368 discussion threads with 8,827 messages. 344 threads had fewer than 80 messages, 13 threads received 81 to 160 messages and only 11 threads received more than 161 messages. Other threads raising as much or more interest were about moral and religious issues, such as polygamy,

Table 9.1

Messages sent to the forums of Le Soleil and Karmen.

Period	<i>Polemic about Karmen/ Le Soleil website</i>	<i>For or against the censorship of Karmen?/ Le Soleil website</i>	<i>Discussion forum of the Karmen website</i>	Total
6.8.-12.8.2001	28	0	3	31
13.8.-19.8.	15	0	7	22
20.8.-26.8.	0	0	7	7
27.8.-2.9.	7	0	3	10
3.9.-9.9.	1	0	8	9
10.9.-16.9.	4	19	79	102
17.9.-23.9.	0	0	9	9
24.9.-30.9.	1	0	5	6
1.10.-7.10.	1	0	5	6
8.10.-14.10.	0	3	3	6
15.10.-21.10.	0	0	4	4
22.10.-28.10.	0	0	2	2
29.10.-4.11.	0	0	0	0
5.11.-11.11.	0	0	0	0
12.11.-18.11.	0	0	2	2
19.11.-25.11.	9	0	1	10
26.11.-2.12.	16	0	1	17
3.12.-9.12.	0	0	1	1
10.12.-16.12.	0	0	3	3
17.12.-23.12.	0	2	8	10
24.12.-30.12.	0	0	8	8
31.12.2001–6.1.2002	0	0	2	2
7.1.-13.1.	0	0	4	4
14.1.-20.1.	0	0	0	0
21.1.-27.1.	0	0	0	0
28.1.-3.2.	0	0	3	3
Total	82	24	168	274

mixed marriages, Westernisation of culture, the Islamic law *Shariah* and feminism. The most popular thread (472 messages) concerned Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, which partly explains why the issue of *Karmen* also became so important.

The second thread concerning *Karmen* in the forum of *Le Soleil*, *For or against the censorship of Karmen?* started on September 11, three days after the *baye fall* demonstration and continued until December 19. Of the 24 messages sent to this thread, 19 appeared between September 10 and September 16.

The first message in the forum of the *Karmen* website was sent by members of *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* in August, informing people about a contest to win *Karmen* posters or free film tickets in quiz games published on the website. Some other messages about the air conditioning of the cinema, future screenings and feedback about the website appeared in August, but otherwise the forum remained silent during the first weeks. The real discussion started on September 10 and continued in a lively fashion for five days. During these five days, 79 messages were sent to the forum. After this week, new messages appeared occasionally one by one but there were no other peaks in this discussion.

Observations on debate participants

Before going on to an analysis of the debate, it is worth asking who the people participating in the debate were and what motivated them. Access is no guarantee for participation in public discussions, since one has to be motivated and to have a need to communicate. People struggling with the basic problems of survival are certainly not eager to participate in discussions

on cultural issues; neither do they have the economic means for participation. When basic needs are satisfied, the motivation for communication can emerge, for example, from the need to belong to a community. The needs are usually satisfied in one's physical environment, spiritual atmosphere or in face-to-face communication with other individuals but, in the global information society, the satisfaction can be reached also in a virtual community (Viherä 1999, 45–47). This is especially true of diasporic Senegalese people, for whom online forums offer a means to communicate with compatriots living in the home country.

The following analysis is based on information given by the participants in their messages. However, it must be conceded that online discussion forums do not demand that participants reveal their offline identity, and the information participants give about themselves is not necessarily reliable. One can participate anonymously or give incorrect information about one's sex, age, dwelling place etc. (Rice 2002, 117). The possibility to construct an imaginary online identity does not mean that this is done in all online forums. According to an ethnographic study conducted in Trinidad, the offline/online distinction played little if any role in people's use or experience of Internet. Trinidadians had integrated and added various Internet media into their existing social practices. As a highly diasporic country, expatriate Trinidadians used the Internet to virtually construct their 'imagined community' in very concrete ways by sending e-mail to family members and friends to sustain relationships with home. Trinidadians living 'away' also performed key aspects of their culture in chat rooms with other Trinidadians (Slater 2002, 540). According to my observation, the forums of *Le Soleil* and *Karmen* resemble those of Trinidadians. Discussion participants seemed

to be serious with their messages and I could not find any identity play in these forums. Besides, 'gender switching' is not very likely in such a gender-divided society as Senegal, and when it comes to the religious identity, this is not an issue to play with in a Muslim society.

According to the names or nicknames the forum participants used to identify themselves, there were at least 92 participants in the discussions, but the participants may have used several names or nicknames. Moreover, 45 messages were sent without a name or under the label *Anonymous*;¹⁰¹ eight messages were quoted directly from the newspapers *Le Soleil* and *Sud Quotidien*.¹⁰² Four names or nicknames appeared in both forums.

Most participants (62/96) sent only one message to the forum but there is a lot of variety in their activity (Table 9.2). An active nucleus of ten participants contributed more than five times during the discussion. On both forums there was one active person contributing as often as several times a day and sending altogether 20 messages to the discussion. One person contributed 10 times and seven people from five to nine times. Concentration of participation has been found in many studies on Internet discussions; typically 10 percent of participants write about 40 to 70 percent of messages and the share of those contributing only once varies between 53 to 71 percent (Pietilä 2001, 21; Ollikainen

101 The personnel of *Les Ateliers de l'Arche* used both the name *Equipe Karmen* and *Anonyme*, but I have classified them as *Equipe Karmen* whenever it was obvious according to the context.

102 The first article was on the offline debate about *Karmen* (Habib Demba Fall, "Mots libres sur Karmen Gueï." *Le Soleil*, 6.8.2001); the second, the news about the ban (Mamoune Faye, "Quand Karmen allume les tensions", *Le Soleil* 11.9.2001) and the third, about the promised meeting of the Committee for Cinematic Control (Nzale, Félix, "Affaire Karmen, La balle dans le camp de la primature." *Sud Quotidien*, 23.11.2001) All these articles caused several reactions and provoked discussion.

2004, 62). Even if both forums were easily accessible from the front page of the online version of *Le Soleil*, the participants were loyal to their own forum. Only four participated in both forums, whereas the participants of *Le Soleil*'s forum were active in both threads concerning *Karmen*.

Table 9.2

*Number of messages sent by each participant.*¹⁰³

Messages sent to forums	Participants in the forum of <i>Le Soleil</i>	Participants in the forum of <i>Karmen</i>	Total participants
1	18	44	62
2–4	10	14	24
5–9	3	4	7
10–19	–	1	1
20–29	1	1	2
Total participants	31	64	96

According to names and nicknames and several textual indicators, both discussion forums were dominated by men. I could recognise 69 male and 11 female names or nicknames, the remaining 16 being impossible to identify.¹⁰⁴ Many participants in the forum of *Le Soleil* seemed to know each other from other discussions

¹⁰³ According to the table there are 96 participants, even if I could identify only 92, but this is due to the fact that four participants are counted twice because they participated in both forums. Anonymous messages and eight articles from newspapers have been omitted from the table.

¹⁰⁴ About the difficulties of assessing the gender of African Internet users see Spitulnik 2002, 200.

in which they had already participated and gave indications about the gender of other participants by addressing them with feminine or masculine endings or referring to them with the French pronouns '*elle*' ('she') or '*il*' ('he').

In order to distinguish men and women, I also examined the content and language of the messages. According to Herring (2004), there are clear differences in male and female styles in online discussion forums. Men use an adversarial style with a lot of put-downs, strong, often contentious assertions, lengthy and/or frequent postings, self-promotion, and sarcasm, while the female-gendered style is marked by supportiveness and attenuation. The use of "derogatory, obscene, or inappropriate language" and "personal insults" is also more typical for men than for women (Herring 2004). Both online forums studied were dominated by the male style. There were few negotiating or compromising utterances and the participants often used personal offensives towards other participants, especially on the non-moderated *Karmen* forum. The small number of women participating in the discussion may indicate the marginal access to the Internet of Senegalese women but also a general absence or under-representation of female voice in Senegalese public discussion (Afemann 2003). Social norms defining Senegalese gender relations dictate that women respect men and that they do not undermine male authority in public decision-making (Patterson 1998, 436).

Contributors often identified themselves according to religion. Over 90 percent of Senegalese are Muslims, and Islam was also considered the implicit norm among the contributors: participants speak about "our values" and "our morals" when they refer to Islamic values and morals. By contrast, the few Catholics participating in the discussions make it clear that they contribute

as Christians or as Catholics: “As a Catholic I don’t have the right to judge who should be buried in a Catholic graveyard or not because God is the only judge.”¹⁰⁵

The most recognisable Muslims in the discussion were the members of *baye fall*, who showed their belonging to the group with nicknames such as *baye faN*, with direct identifications: “I introduce myself I am baye fall...”¹⁰⁶ or by informing about their participation in the demonstration: “i have never imagined that kind of foolish i was in cices”¹⁰⁷ ready to give my life so that this kind of shit wouldn’t be distributed.”¹⁰⁸

As noted earlier, the use of the Internet demands a certain level of education. This is not, however, to say that all the participants in the forums were well educated people. The lack of education can be deduced from the orthography and grammatical faults in French language. Minor spelling lapses and careless writing are common in all online discussions since messages are normally quickly written, but such lapses differ from those made by uneducated people.¹⁰⁹ French is the official language of Senegal,

105 En tant que chretienne Je ne me donne pas le droit de juger qui devrait ou non etre enterrer dans un cimetiere catholique ou non car Dieu et le seul juge. (fan de karmen, 20.10.02, 13.52)

106 je me presente je suis baye fall... (khaliffa, 11.9.01, 11.24)

107 CICES is the International Center of External Trade of Dakar where the film theatre *Bel Arte* was situated and the film was supposed to be screened.

108 un imbecile comme ca je l’ai jamais imaginé moi j’étais au cices pret à donner ma vie pour que cette merde ne soit pas diffuser. (moktar 11.9.01, 11.38)

109 In my translations into English I have attempted to preserve the original structure and style of messages as faithfully as possible. Capitals and small initials and punctuation are also left unchanged. French versions are reprinted in footnotes in the same form they were published with punctuation, typing errors and spelling mistakes. Names and nicknames of the contributors are preserved since they do not reveal the authorship of the contributor.

but the literacy rate being on average 40.2 percent, writing skills are often not fully developed. Some participants also write French phonetically, like using *k* in stead of *c* or *q*, *i* instead of *ui*, but this does not necessarily indicate to a lack of education. Rather it might, for example, indicate to young authors, since the same kind of orthography is also found in other francophone forums, be it in France or elsewhere:

Defendre nos valeurs et ce ken [should be: qu'on] a de sacre, c'est ca regresser. Espece de con, c [c'est] plutot le contraire ki [qui] est regresser. Ces blancs ki [qui] vous mettent dans la tete la liberte de creation... ils defendent leur culture et tout ce kil [qu'ils] ont de sacre face aux americains. C ca [?] continuez a croire k'evoluer [qu'évoluer] ou grandir c [c'est de] laisser tomber nos valeurs pour faire le Toubab.

Broken French is used and well tolerated in Senegal and in Senegalese Internet forums and does not impair the understanding of the content. There are several participants who write decidedly deviant French but who are not commented on. On the contrary, critical comments are addressed to one contributor writing too sophisticated French language: «papisco, write shorter phrases, you are incomprehensible.»¹¹⁰

The only contributor who could be reliably identified was the director of *Karmen*, Joseph Gaï Ramaka, who appeared in the forum of *Karmen* when responding to some concrete questions.¹¹¹ In other cases I believed that it was he who replied to some direct attacks, but because of the anonymity of the messages, this could

110 fais des phrases moins longues papisco, tu es incompréhensible (Anonyme, 24.11.01, 22.25)

111 Ramaka signed his name twice. Other contributions from the personnel of *Bel Arte* were signed collectively by *Equipe Karmen*.

not be confirmed. However, it was evident that participants were aware of or expected his presence on the *Karmen* forum since several messages were addressed directly to him: “What are the authorities waiting for to put your film in the rubbish! Do you understand how you are degrading our mores? God Almighty will chastise you and burn you in hell.”¹¹² The presence – or possible presence – of Ramaka may also have provoked participants’ personal attacks, which in this forum were not abolished by the moderators as they were in the forum of *Le Soleil*. Abuse was found in 37 messages in the forum of *Karmen*.

For the most part, forum participants had not seen the film; thus, they are not, in the real sense of the word, audiences of *Karmen*, but their interest in the film was aroused because of other reasons. The online discussions may have concentrated on completely different aspects had they been started by real spectators of the first screenings or had the film continued to run in cinemas. The participants in the debate were aware of the second-hand knowledge on which they had to rely when discussing the film but they had a different position towards this ‘problem’. For some participants the question of not seeing a film was a moral choice:

I have not seen the film and I pray Allah preserves me from seeing it because according to the article it is only a perversion. Certain artists try to legalise whatever Satanic practises in the name of freedom of expression and I don’t even know which others. (Ousmane 8.8.01.)¹¹³

112 Qu’attendent les autorités pour jeter ton film à la poubelle. Te rends tu comptes de la dégradation de nos mœurs que tu veux instaurer. Que Dieu le tout puissant te chatie, te brule. (Anonyme, 10.9.01, 17.13)

113 je n’ai pas regardé ce film et qu’ALLAH nous en préserve car je n’y vois que perversion d’après les articles ci-dessus certains artistes essaient de

For others, the fact that they had not been able to see the film limited the discussion:

No, I have not seen the film, which limits the objectivity of my criticism. On the contrary, I have read the article above and I would like to ask what kind of insults we have still to swallow in the name of the art and in the name of freedom of expression? (DofBi, 8.8.01.)¹¹⁴

Many of us have not seen a single minute of the film Karmen. So we base our opinions only what we have read in Senegalese papers or here in the forum. For this reason our vision is very limited. Despite the content of the film, I defend simply the right of existence of the works of art in the places reserved for art: in art galleries, museums, film theatres, concert halls, spaces open for audiences... (Amadou, 29.11.01.)¹¹⁵

Only one participant overtly claimed to base his/her opinion on what s/he had seen:

Basing my judgement on what I have seen, I estimate that our brother director should think about the desperation of the Mourid

legaliser certaines pratiques sous le nom de la liberte d expression et je ne sais quelles autres satanites (ousmane, 8.8.01)

114 Ben non, je n'ai pas vu ce film, ce qui limite l'objectivité de ma critique. Par contre à la lecture de l'article ci-dessus, je me demande quelles couleuvres ne va-t'on pas nous faire avaler au nom de l'art et de la liberté qui en est son essence créatrice? (DofBi, 8.8.01)

115 Beaucoup d'entre nous n'avons pas vu une seule minute du film Karmen. Donc, nous nous basons seulement sur ce que nous lisons par ci et par là, dans les journaux sénégalais et ici même dans le forum. Donc notre champ d'action est fort limité. Cependant indépendamment du contenu, moi je défends tout court la viabilité des oeuvres artistiques dans les espaces réservés pour l'art: galeries d'art plastique, musées, salles de cinéma, théâtres, salles de concert et oeuvres musicales, espaces publics ouverts... (Amadou, 29.11.01)

community, which has been associated to a Senegalese film in a way they do not recognise themselves. (Papisco, 24.11.01.)¹¹⁶

Not seeing the film is not a problem for my analysis, since I understand reception in a broader context than only as seeing and responding to a certain film. Besides, non-reception is also a form of reception; to not see a film may be a conscious decision that tells about underlying expectations and values as stated in one of the messages above.

Struggle for right of representation

The advantage of online forum discussions is that it allows communication between people who are spatially dispersed. When participating in the forum discussions, Senegalese immigrants abroad are able to participate in the discourses going on in the home country. Nicknames, such as *Modu USA*¹¹⁷ and *stlouisien*, and references to other geographical locations tell about the places in which the contributors were living: "...this film has been a success here in France, where word of its quality has travelled from mouth to mouth"¹¹⁸ or "We will see the film in New

116 Retenant mon jugement sur le fond du film que j'ai vu, j'estime que notre frere regisseur devrait considerer l'exasperation de la communaute mouride qui se voit associee a la metaphore d'un film senegalais dont ils ne s'y reconnaissent pas. (Papisco, 24.11.01)

117 '*Modou modou*' refers both to the laborious ideal type of Senegalese migrant, who knows trading well, is good at saving money and invests in glamorous things when he is back home (Riccio 2001, 113) and to the model of the new hardworking Mourid man and woman (Thiam 2005).

118 ...ce film a eu un très bon succès ici en France, le bouche à oreilles à son sujet a très bien marché ... (Junior, 28.8.01, 14.54)

York in the next months...”¹¹⁹ Besides Senegal, the participants were located in Mexico, France, Belgium, Italy, Great Britain, and the United States and other countries.

Contributors living abroad consider themselves equal with those living in the home country and defend their right to participate in the discussion about their ‘own national cinema’. There are, however, other participants living in Senegal who do not agree with this opinion: there is a tendency to try to exclude and to nullify the opinions of those not living in Senegal. In the following example one contributor attacks another trying to exclude him for the sake of his (assumed) professional status and the fact that he has immigrated to the USA:

Modu, USA, I am astonished that a street sweeper from New York can participate in a discussion that is beyond his abilities. I take my responsibilities in Senegal where I live as a Senegalese. You have chosen to live in a small room, which leaves a half of your body outside, and to pace American streets in order to pick up a few dollars.¹²⁰

Living abroad was interpreted as giving up one’s Senegalese identity. Such expressions challenged those living abroad and pushed them to justify their claims more profoundly than was asked of those living in Senegal: “I know my culture and its values (maybe not like you but sufficiently), since I have been living

119 Nous allons visionner les mois a venir le film a New York. (Modu USA 12.9.01, 20.09)

120 MODU USA, Mon cher, je suis étonné que balayer les rues de New York puisse te permettre d’intervenir dans un débat auquel tes inaptitudes t’excluent. Je prends mes responsabilités au Sénégal ou je vis en tant que sénégalais. Tu as choisi de dormir dans une pièce avec la moitié du corps dehors et d’arpenter les rues de l’Amérique pour ramasser quelques dollars. (PISCO, 12.9.2001, 22.57)

in Senegal until I was 20 years old and have visited the country every two years since then” or “I want to specify that your Senegal is also my Senegal.”

The struggle about the right of representation reveals and reproduces dichotomies existing in the discourses on migration in other Senegalese media representations (and in real life). On the one hand, there are ‘good’ Senegalese migrants who have preserved their Senegalese cultural identity and, on the other, there are those behaving like an uprooted *toubab* forsaking family ties and obligations (Maasilta 2001, 56). The word ‘*toubab*’ originally meant ‘European’ and was used to describe white French people in Senegal; nowadays the word has acquired a broader typological meaning, becoming a synonym for thinking and behaving like a Westerner. This Western model of behaviour, associated with materialism and forsaking God, solidarity, tolerance, moderation, hospitality and other major Senegalese values, has become the entire negative symbol that summarises the faults condemned in the view of Senegalese popular culture of the West (Riccio 2001, 113). These dichotomies are also found in the following interpretative packages.

There is a struggle about citizenship and participation going on in several fields. Those who speak up in public discussions have better chances to negotiate Senegalese identity than those who are excluded. Mitra (2001, 54) has proposed that the Internet can be used as a voice for socially or politically marginalised groups and can produce alliances with unique characteristics and renegotiate identities in a structured social system. The combination of voice and cyber community can also help locate like-minded others, speak freely and forge solidarity between marginalised groups (Lindlof and Shatzer 1998, 174). In the

case of expatriate Senegalese, the forum discussions seemed to serve these purposes. Expatriates may even have been in a better situation than those living in Senegal thanks to their more accessible technology. The most active participant, Amadou, contributed from Mexico as much as several times a day, which indicates that he had a permanent Internet connection.

Unlike expatriate Senegalese people, another socially marginalised group, people in same-sex relationships, was not at all represented in the forum debates. Even if the representation of homosexuality was the focus of the discussion, not one of the 274 messages was written by a person identifying himself or herself as homosexual or lesbian. This may be due to the fact that same-sex relationships are criminalised and, as discussed earlier, very few West Africans use categories like homosexual or bisexual to identify themselves. It is, however, remarkable that neither the newly founded activist group *Groupe Andligeey* nor its individual members voiced their opinions in public to defend the right of homosexuals to be represented in cinema.

Four interpretative packages

In this chapter I present four interpretative packages found in the analysis. They address issues like national cinema, globalisation, freedom of expression and the role of cinema in society in light of the *Karmen* discussion. I have named the packages according to the frames they use to discuss the issue: (1) *Religion*, (2) *Afrocentrism*, (3) *Development* and (4) *Freedom of expression* (Table 9.3).

Table 9.3
Interpretative packages of the Karmen debate.

	Religion	Afrocentrism	Development	Freedom of Expression
Core frame in which the case of Karmen is discussed	Religion is the highest authority to judge what is acceptable in cinema and what is not. The issue is how to protect people from the efforts of the Devil to destroy their morality.	There are basic differences between Western and African cultures. The issue is how to protect Senegalese culture from the corrupting effects of the Western culture.	Cinema is a means in the service of the development process of the society. The issue is what kind of cinema can best perform this task.	Cinema is art and art has no limits. Freedom of expression has to be respected. The issue is how to increase democracy and human rights in Senegal.
Core position to Karmen	<i>Karmen</i> is blasphemous because a Muslim song is presented at the funeral of a Catholic homosexual woman and the film depicts female homosexuality.	<i>Karmen</i> is not a Senegalese film because it is not based on African and Senegalese culture and values.	There is nothing wrong with the film, which truthfully depicts the problems of Senegalese reality.	<i>Karmen</i> is an art film and art has to be free.
Exemplars	Fatwa on <i>The Satanic Verses</i> . <i>Tableau ferraille</i> . Senegalese runner Amy M'Bbacké.	---	Religious tolerance and homosexuality existing in Senegal.	Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. Mexican cultural exhibitions.

Metaphors, catchwords and catchphrases	Filmmaker as “a son of Satan.” The film as “a product of Satan.” “Degradation of morality.” “Tolerance” (negative connotation). “We will all meet on the Day of Judgement.” “We have to fight against Evil.”	“So-called globalisation.” “So-called intellectuals.” “Foreign influence is destroying our own culture.” “There is a cultural battle going on in the world.”	“Humanism.” “Tolerance” (positive connotation). “No one is obliged to see a film he does not want to see.”	“Democracy.” “Human rights.” “Freedom of expression.” “Senegal has not yet achieved the maturity needed.” “Cinema is first of all art.” “One has to learn to separate reality and fiction from each other.”
Roots	All evil originates from the Devil. The filmmaker has broken religious laws.	The film was made for foreign audiences, not for Senegalese people.	Some people are hypocrites and do not want to admit all sides of Senegalese reality.	There is no democracy in Senegal.
Consequences or possible solutions	Films like <i>Karmen</i> have to be censored in order to prevent them from destroying the moral of people.	Senegalese filmmakers have to take their inspiration from their own culture; if they do not, they had better move abroad.	Freedom of expression has to be respected so that cinema can fulfil its role in society. Cinema can be controlled with the codes of ethics.	Freedom of expression has to be respected so that people learn to judge for themselves. Globalisation will free people from local dictatorship.
Appeal to principle	Religious morality.	We have to protect our cultural values.	We have to be honest in order to develop our society.	Freedom of expression is a universal value.

Religion

The core frame in the first package is that cinema is a tool in the service of God and all films should be in harmony with His doctrine. The main issue then is how to protect people from the efforts of Devil to destroy their morality with degrading films like *Karmen*. The following quotation presents the frame and also the solution to the problem:

I argue as Muslim and Islam is a global (universal) religion. The sound art should never oppose Islam. If a work of art is in contradiction with Islam it has to be censored. (ousmane 9.8.01, 9.15.)¹²¹

According to the package, religious laws are universal and apply to all regions and cultures and to every domain of life, be they related to art, code of dress, or sexuality. Tones of Islamic fundamentalism are heard in this view but the package can still not be interpreted as solely a Muslim discourse since it is also supported by Catholic contributors:

“A CATHOLIC CANNOT BE HOMOSEXUAL OR LESBIAN.
Karmen is a SERIOUS BLASPHEMY AGAINST MY RELIGION.

I WISH THAT ALL THE CATHOLICS BOYCOTT THIS FILM, THE
FRUIT OF THE DEVIL. (CATHOLIQUE 10.9.01, 3.48.)¹²²

121 Moi je raisonne en tant que musulman et l'islam est une religion mondial (universel) un art sain ne doit jamais s'opposer à l'islam. si une oeuvre d'art est en contradiction avec l'islam, il faut la censurer. (ousmane 9.8.01, 9.15)

122 UN CATHOLIQUE NE PEUT ETRE HOMOSEXUEL OU LESBIENNE. *Karmen est un BLASFEME GRAVE CONTRE MA RELIGION. JE VOUDRAIS QUE TOUS LES CATHOLIQUES BOYCOTES CE FILM FRUIT DU DEMON*» (CATHOLIQUE 10.9.01, 3.48)

Measured in numbers of utterances, the religion package was supported in 66 and was the most prevalent of the four packages identified.

The core attitude to *Karmen* is that it is blasphemy because it associates the religious song with a sinful practice, homosexuality, and because the Muslim song is performed at a Catholic funeral. Besides, the film depicts taboo issues like homosexuality and nudity.

The signature exemplars of the package relate to two other cases in which religious norms have been violated. It is proposed that the *fatwa* imposed on Salman Rushdie because of *The Satanic Verses* should also be imposed on Joseph Ramaka.

Joseph a film like this with a lesbian, and still worse with a lesbian accompanied by this song! Think about it, you risk your life for nothing, it's sad. You know that FATWA threatens you. (dame faye 11.9.01, 11.35.)

Another warning exemplar comes from current sports events: coinciding with the debate on *Karmen*, there was another discussion going on in the forum of *Le Soleil* about the improper dress of a Senegalese female runner, Amy Mbacké.¹²³ She had won a gold medal in 400 metres in the 2001 World Championships but was reprimanded in public for wearing an overly revealing outfit – shorts and a sleeveless shirt – in the competition. The case of Amy Mbacké was cited as a parallel exemplar to *Karmen* about the corruption of Senegalese morality. The third signature exemplar of this package favourably compares the Senegalese film *Tableau ferraille* (Senegal, 1997) to *Karmen*. A lesson to be

123 The discussion thread *Un grand bravo pour Amy: nouvelle église nationale* in the forum of *Le Soleil*

learned from this exemplar is that religious music can be used in cinema if this is done in harmony with the religious doctrine. In *Tableau ferraille*, a *khassaïd* was used to accompany the funeral of a deceased Muslim.

“God save us from the sin that is going to swallow us” and “We will all meet ... at the Day of Judgement”¹²⁴ are the catchphrases of the package, and its catchwords include Ramaka as “a son of Satan” and his film as “a product of Satan.” Cinema, freedom of expression and tolerance are tools to spread sins like homosexuality and other decadent habits among innocent people. For this reason, catchwords like “tolerance” and “freedom of expression” include negative connotations in this package. They are used almost as swearwords: “Stop that nonsense which you try to defend in the name of tolerance” or “Begin by respecting people before speaking about freedom of expression, this bloody western thesis.”

A root cause for the events around *Karmen* in this view is that the director has not respected moral rules and even earns money by consciously provoking people against good conduct. The real root cause, however, lies in the Devil, since all evil originates from him. To oppose the film is equated with the struggle against the Devil: “All decent people must combat evil with all their might, since this is our duty in this world.”

A short-term solution to the destruction of decent manners would be to restrict freedom of expression and to censor the film. There is, however, a range of positions in regard to the censorship. For some, it is enough to cut the *khassaïd* out of the film and to replace it with Catholic or military music. For others, censorship

124 «qu'Allah nous preserve du mal de ceux qui veulent nous les faire gober!» or «Mais nous verrons tous... le jour des comptes».

is not a sufficient punishment but all copies and negatives of the film should be destroyed and the director should apologise in public. In the long term, all art should be subservient to religion and promote religious purposes. In this, the package can be seen as propagating the model of Iranian cinema after the Islamic revolution (see e.g. Dabashi 2001).

Afrocentrism

The second package has several traits in common with the religion package but it shifts attention from religious arguments to the cultural and national differences assumed to exist between African and Western cultures. 'African' and 'Senegalese' identifications are used interchangeably and seem to be equal in this package. Unlike in the religion package, Ahmadou Bamba is not referred to only as a religious leader but also as a national hero having contributed to the birth of Senegalese unity. Similarly, Mourids or *baye fall* do not only represent religious groups but people working for and participating in the nation-building process. The fact that the filmmaker has misused the religious music of Mourids is also an insult to nationalist feelings. The package is supported in 28 utterances.

According to Giddens (1981), regressive identification with a leader-figure and with the symbols represented by that figure or comprised in his or her doctrine, carried with it the essential feature of nationalism. In times of crises, people tend to become more vulnerable to ideological offensives levied on national leaders. This nationalism may be benign or militant and combine a strong psychological affiliation with an 'in-group' differentiating

from, or rejecting, 'out-groups' (Giddens 1981, 195, see also Tomlinson 1991, 85).

The core frame is how to protect Senegalese culture from the corrupting effects of Western culture, and the lesson to be learned is that Senegalese cinema should be in harmony with African and Senegalese cultures and consider first the needs of Senegalese audiences, not those of Western audiences. As a consequence of Afro-national emphasis, *Karmen* is an easy target for criticism since it is an adaptation of a story written by a European author. The package finds support from the declarations and resolutions of Pan-African Filmmakers accentuating the role of cinema in service of strengthening African identity and self-understanding in the 1970s and 80s.¹²⁵ The tones of cultural imperialist discourses are also heard in the catchphrases such as: "Foreign influence is destroying our culture."

Depictions of homosexuality in cinema are not accepted but the reasons for their rejection differ from those of the religion package. If the first package considers homosexuality to originate from Satan, here it originates in Western countries and is considered completely alien in African cultures.¹²⁶

Homosexuality has become a culture, or let's say a sub-culture there and they want make us to accept it in all possible ways (television, papers, films like *Karmen* etc...) by using terms like tolerance,

125 Resolutions of the Third World Film-Makers' Meeting in Algiers 1973, the Algiers Charter on African Cinema 1975 and the Niamey Manifesto of African Film-Makers 1982.

126 Situating homosexuality among others is a common rhetorical strategy of denial. In Great Britain black pressure groups argued in the 1970s that homosexuality was introduced into the black culture by Europeans, 'it is an unnatural set of acts that tend toward genocide' (Mercer 1990, 49). In Finnish media discourses in the 1960s, homosexuality was often situated among the neighbouring Swedes (Juvonen 2002, 222).

modernity or progress. It won't work. The Senegalese sinking in these vices had better stay where they are if they don't want to risk their life. (Mame, 28.8.01, 22.27.)

The catchphrases challenge the opinions of the “so-called intellectuals” defending globalisation and freedom of expression. Globalisation is equated with Westernisation, whose purpose is to spread Western values around the whole world and to merge African cultures into Western ones even if, as one contributor puts it, only “a minority of Senegalese people is so extrovert or blinded by foreign demons that they would like by all means to destroy our own culture in the name of so-called globalisation.”¹²⁷ Another keyword, “intellectual,” also has negative connotations. Intellectuals are referred to as “pseudo-intellectuals,” and “those who call themselves intellectuals” volunteer to accept whatever Western humanist or universal norms because of globalisation. The following message is a representative example of the framing and reasoning devices used in the Afro-nationalist package:

Stop talking about universalism of art to us. It's sad to see that only the poor Africans have to accept whatever nonsense in the name of 'universalism' while the others couldn't care less, who we are and what we represent. Let's stop imitating others in the name of universalism and 'globalisation', the words admired so much by our pseudo-intellectuals. They force us to forget our own values. Instead of imitating the obscenities of others, we should produce art basing on our rich cultural patrimony – this might even interest those who would seriously like to learn something about us – before adopting

127 Similar kind of hostility to Western values was found among Israeli Arabs in the cross-cultural reception study of *Dallas*. The researchers explained the hostility by a different stage in the modernization process, by the colonial past and the equating of Israel with the Western colonial power. (Smootha 1984, cited in Liebes and Katz 1993, 118).

all the nonsense from abroad. Bass, please open your eyes, this extroversion of Senegalese people is becoming a real sickness. (Kocc Barma, 9.8.01, 13.25.)¹²⁸

There is no clear signature exemplar for this package, but the metaphor of “cultural battle” by Pisco refers to the Huntingtonian clash of civilisations (see Huntington 1996), whose existence is taken as a fact:

There is a cultural battle going on in the world. In certain countries they are even struggling to get a marriage between homosexuals accepted. The struggle started by promoting the idea in films in order to get the new legislation accepted. Cultural products have a role in legitimising these practises. I hope you would soon have an opportunity to see *Karmen* to understand that there is a powerful lobby against Islam behind *Karmen*. It's a trial balloon. You haven't been wondering who has financed the film. (PISCO, 15.9.01, 16.09.)¹²⁹

A root cause for the problem is that films like *Karmen* are made for foreign audiences, not for Senegalese people. In order to attract

128 Arrête de nous parler de l'universalisme de l'art. C'est triste de voir que ce ne sont que les pauvres Africains qui reçoivent tout et n'importe quoi au nom de cet “universalisme” et que tout le monde se fout de ce que nous sommes et représentons. Arrêtons please de courir derrière les autres au nom d'un universalisme de façade qui veut nous ne véhiculons pas nos valeurs dans cette fameuse “globalisation” qui enchante tant nos pseudo-intellectuels. Pourquoi ne pas produire des oeuvres à travers notre si riche patrimoine culturel – cela peut intéresser les gens qui veulent sainement nous connaître – avant d'aller prendre des conneries ailleurs. Bass s'il te plaît ouvre les yeux; ça devient une véritable maladie cette extraversion des sénégalais. (Kocc Barma, 9.8.01, 13.25)

129 Il y a un combat culturel dans ce monde. Le mariage homo est un combat qui a abouti dans certains pays. Cela a commencé avec des films avant d'avoir été traduit dans des lois. La culture joue dans ce domaine un facteur de légitimation. J'espère que tu auras l'occasion très bientôt de voir *Karmen* pour te faire une idée. Car derrière *Karmen* se trouve un puissant lobby contre l'islam. C'est un ballon d'essai. Tu ne t'es pas demandé qui a financé le film (PISCO, 15.9.01, 16.09)

Western audiences and to earn money, filmmakers consciously break Senegalese moral codes. The core policy suggested in this package is that Senegalese authors should take their inspiration from African stories and make films that respect African and national cultures. Those filmmakers who are not ready to accept this policy should move out of the country and distribute their films elsewhere. In its extreme form, the package demands all Western-minded people to leave the country. If they want to see liberal films or practise homosexuality they are free to do so outside the country.

Development

The development package discusses cinema within the frame of development of society. The function of cinema is to serve development by raising awareness about social problems; the issue becomes: what kind of cinema can best perform this task. In this package *Karmen* is accepted as an example of cinema discussing real problems – homosexuality and immorality – of Senegalese society. The development package was supported in 15 utterances and was thus the least popular discourse in my research material.

“Humanism” and “tolerance” appear as common catchwords in this package, but unlike in the religion package, they have positive connotations. The signature exemplars include real-life examples about the religious tolerance in Senegal. Muslim and Christian songs, for example, are sung at funerals to honour the memory of the deceased family member or friend and it is not unusual for homosexual people to be buried in Muslim graveyards.

Provocative dances and scantily clad women are seen all over in the streets and nightclubs of Dakar, as writes pseudonym Vérité:

The film we are talking about is not about Mouridism, still less about religion, it's a "realist fiction" about the life we are living in this country. In the nightclubs people are dancing salargrilou and ndalgati based on religious music interpreted by our famous musicians without any problem, it would be more pertinent to expose the behaviour of the so-called Mourids who smoke... USE DRUGS, etc. down with "the religious jealousy", long live tolerance. Let's leave the beautiful karmen in peace. (vérité 11.9.01, 10.36.)¹³⁰

The lesson is that it is hypocritical to judge *Karmen* as pornography if the same kind of behaviour depicted in the film is accepted in real life. Admitting the existence of homosexuality in Senegal does not, however, mean, in this package either, that the practice was accepted. This position is clearly reiterated in several messages.

The roots of the problem created by *Karmen* are due to the hypocrisy of people who want to close their eyes to certain sides of Senegalese reality. The core policy position suggested is that in order to let cinema fulfil its task, freedom of expression must be respected. Films like *Karmen* are necessary for the healthy development of society and should not be censored. The authorities could, however, rate films according to their

130 Le film en question ne traite pas du mouridisme, encore moins de la religion, c'est une "fiction réelle" de ce qu'on vit dans notre pays. Mieux, dans les boîtes de nuit, on danse le salargnilou, et autres ndalgati au rythme de chants religieux interprétés par des chanteurs de renommée, sans que vous criez de grace, il est plus pertinent de dénoncer le comportement de ces soi disant mourides, qui fument le.... SE DROGUENT, etc. a bas "la jalousie religieuse", vive la tolérance alors laisser la jolie karmen. (vérité 11.9.01, 10.36)

quality and limit the entrance age of children and youngsters for susceptible films. The package also points out that going to see a film in a film theatre is based on the conscious choice of spectators: “No one is obliged to see a film he does not want to see.” If a film was screened in public television channel, the restrictions for certain films should be stricter.

Freedom of expression

The core principle of the freedom of expression package is the defence of human rights and freedom of expression. Cinema is first of all art, and an important dimension of art is that it is free from all kinds of restrictions.

It is shocking to notice that freedom of expression is not progressing in my country. On the contrary, it's becoming more and more a country of anarchy. Why is it that a formerly respectable authority like the Minister of the Interior can go so far as to restrain from screening a work of art? (Amadou 25.11.01, 17.21.)¹³¹

As in the development package, there is an implicit idea of inevitable evolution going on in society. Freedom of expression belongs to the higher stage of society, which Senegal has not yet achieved. Typical catchphrases are: “Senegal has not yet risen to this stage” or “Senegal has not yet achieved the maturity” needed.

131 Ce qui me choque dans tout cela, c'est que mon pays ne progresse pas encore sur le côté liberté d'expression. Au contraire il devient plus en plus une terre où sévit l'anarchie. Comment une autorité autrefois respectable comme le Ministère de l'Intérieur puisse être amenée à interdire la projection d'une oeuvre d'art? (Amadou 25.11.01, 17.21)

In order to discuss the subject, one has to “regress” to the level of Senegalese people or “return to the Middle Ages.”

The ideas supporting this package are expressed in 33 messages but they are based on the opinions of only a couple of participants. One of the contributors supporting the freedom of expression package was the most vociferous of his forum and put a lot of time and effort into persuading others and providing grounds for his arguments and, thus, succeeded in dominating the discussion.

If the two first packages considered cinema a dangerous means of spreading bad habits among people, this package tends to downplay the ability of media to influence people. Cinema is no more than one form of expression and cannot alone harm or influence its spectators. Unlike in three other packages cinema is also understood as entertainment:

Senegalese people cannot distinguish between a film whose purpose is to entertain or to make one think and everyday life. This film has been a success in France, where a word of its quality has travelled from mouth to mouth. (Junior, 28.8.01, 14.54.)¹³²

Globalisation is seen more as a promise than a threat in this package. The Internet and video allow people to access media contents that are not otherwise accessible to them. Globalisation also curtails the power of dictators and “religious terrorism” and

132 Parce que les gens au Sénégal ne savent toujours pas faire la différence entre un projet cinématographique, supposé divertir ou faire réfléchir (parfois) et la vie de tous les jours, ce film a eu un très bon succès ici en France, le bouche à oreilles à son sujet a très bien marché, pour une fois que l'on montrait une autre facette et manière de jouer un rôle et de surcroît par une sénégalaise, non, jusqu'au bout on ira contre l'ouverture d'esprit et celle sur le monde. (Junior, 28.8.01, 14.54)

brings “new blood” into all domains of society. The spread of globalisation cannot be halted.

Art is universal, we cannot demand it should reflect only the society where it is born. Let’s not forget that this film is destined for the whole world and for this reason it need not respect literally certain Senegalese moral principles. Try to widen your horizons, my friends. The world is not only limited to our dear home country. Fortunately, I have to say!! (Bass, 9.8.01, 00.30.)¹³³

The visit of the Senegalese ballet to Mexico is used as a signature exemplar of how both freedom of expression and religious values can be respected. When the group was performing in Mexico the dancers were allowed to be topless when the performance was inside the theatre but outside, in a public park, the breasts had to be covered. Freedom of expression does not mean anarchy but in a democratic society it is possible to make laws regulating art in order to protect minors or other vulnerable groups. Censorship is not needed.

Another signature exemplar shows what can follow if the system is too restrictive. Films, comics, make up etc. were banned during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan but immediately after the change of power the people rushed into bars, cinemas and restaurants. The same happens with children if they are forbidden to watch television or use the Internet. These examples show that people are curious by nature and more you forbid things the more appealing they become.

133 L’art ayant une vocation universelle, il ne peut essayer de ressembler à tout prix à la société même si celle ci peut l’inspirer. Ne pas oublier non plus que ce film est destiné au monde entier, il n’était donc pas tenu de respecter à la lettre certains principes moraux de la culture sénégalaise. Essayez d’élever un peu vos esprit, mes amis. Le monde ne se limite pas à notre cher pays.. heuseusement d’ailleurs!! (Bass, 9.8.01, 00.30)

The core policy proposed by this package is that people need education, not prohibitions. If Senegalese society wants to develop as a democracy and respect human rights, people must have access to all kinds of information and entertainment. Instead of being always controlled from outside like small children they have to learn to judge like adult people.

Conclusion of Internet debates

Karmen was discussed in the Internet forums in four different interpretive packages, which illustrate the wide spectrum of opinions in the Senegalese public sphere. The main statements of the packages are concisely summarised in Table 9.4. The table can be read from left to right in such a way that the most critical and normative attitudes towards *Karmen* and national cinema are found in the two first packages on the left. According to these, religion and nationality should define what kind of cinema is acceptable or not. Cinema is also seen instrumentally as a tool in the service of these ideologies. Moving from left to right in the table the packages transform into more liberal notions both towards this film in particular and national cinema in general. The last two packages are modernist in that they affirm the power of human beings to improve and develop society. Also, in the development package, cinema is seen instrumentally as a tool in the service of modernity and development while in the freedom of expression package, cinema is considered first of all art and has value as such. Modernist ideology is implicitly expressed in the freedom of expression package by speaking about different stages of society.

Table 9.4

Main statements of the interpretative packages.

	Religion	Afrocentrism	Development	Freedom of Speech
Dominant ideology	Religious-moralist ideology.	Afrocentrism. Nationalism.	Modernism.	Modernism.
Role of cinema	A tool in the service of God.	To serve cultural and national identity building.	A tool in the service of modernity and development.	Cinema is art.
Relationship to reality	What is denied in reality is denied also in cinema.	Cinema has to reflect African reality and values.	Cinema has to reflect reality as it is.	There is no relationship between reality and cinema.
Limits of freedom of expression	Religious conviction has to be respected.	National culture and “shared consciousness” of Senegalese people have to be respected.	Truth has to be respected.	Art has no limits.
Cinema censorship	Accepted if the film offends religious feelings and good taste.	Accepted if the film does not respect local culture and habits.	No censorship. Ethical codes and age limits accepted.	No censorship. People are free to decide themselves.
Homo-sexuality	Against religious teachings, depictions in cinema are not accepted.	Does not belong to African culture, depictions in cinema are not allowed.	A part of Senegalese reality; depictions of homosexuality in cinema do not mean that the practice itself is accepted.	Can be depicted in cinema like any other subject.
Globalisation	Islam is a universal religion, religious laws are valid all over the world.	Equated with Westernisation, threatens national culture and spreads degenerate Western habits in Africa.	Not explicitly discussed.	Democracy and human rights are universal values. Globalisation can help to fight local dictators.

The religion and freedom of expression packages are universal in that they consider religious norms and freedom of expression to be similar all over the world. The religion package cites the Koran and considers its teachings valid to all contexts and cultures while the freedom of expression package considers the idea of freedom of expression as self-evidently suitable for all. The Afrocentrism package is according to its name culture-specific and considers issues like national cinema, cinema censorship, freedom of expression and homosexuality from the African and Senegalese points of view. The development package does not position itself neatly in one of the categories; it is universal in seeing that a society develops through certain stages to a higher level but culture-specific in considering certain problems and phenomena specific for Senegalese society.

Respect for religion and the taboo of homosexuality were the two elements of the Senegalese identity shared by all the packages. Religious statements were found especially in the religion and Afrocentrism packages but the two remaining packages were not anti-religious or anti-Islamic either – they only emphasized other themes and subjects. The practice of homosexuality in real life was not condoned in any of the interpretative packages either, but its representation in cinema was acceptable in the development and freedom of expression packages as a means to raise consciousness about the “problem”. The Afrocentrism package considered homosexuality to be a non-African practice introduced into Senegal by Western and Westernised people, media, and cultural products, while the religion package denounced homosexuality on the basis of religious doctrine. It was common to all the packages was that homosexuality was considered a problem in society.

The religion and Afrocentrism packages are very close to each other and to separate them into two different packages

might have done harm to these discourses. Both of them echo the discourse about the clash of civilizations and the division of the world into two opposing camps, Western and Islamic worlds, but the difference I found in the utterances was that the religion package is closer to the 'pure' Islamic doctrine while the Afrocentrism package reflects the specificity of Mouridism and its connection to Senegalese nationalism. Both are in opposition to Westernised Senegalese intellectuals, whom they consider as traitors to Senegalese people and lackeys of Western power.

The question about freedom of expression is evoked in all of the packages, but the phrasing varies depending on the context. The religion package demands that religious feelings of people be respected and that the limits of freedom of expression be set by religion. Similarly, according to the Afrocentrism package, freedom of expression can be limited by national culture. Cinema censorship is also accepted if the films do not respect religious and national values. The development and freedom of expression packages are concerned with questions of freedom of expression and a demand for greater freedom of art. The development package emphasises tolerance and humanism existing in Senegalese society and warns people against giving them up, while the freedom of expression package criticises the Senegalese political system for the lack of democratic rights. Neither of these packages accepts cinema censorship.

The number of utterances supporting a certain package does not correlate with the number of contributors supporting certain ideas, as was already pointed out in the methodological chapter. The freedom of expression and development packages are supported by fewer contributors but these contributors happened to be the most active of the forums. The number of participants

expressing religious-nationalist opinions is larger than those supporting universalist-modernist ideas, but expressed in fewer messages. This can be explained by the fact that the most active supporters of universalist-modernist opinions are abroad and may have had better opportunities to access Internet than those supporting religious-nationalist ideas and contributing to the debates in Senegal. This exemplifies how important it is to have access and to own a means of communication in order to get one's voice heard in society.

10

Conclusion and discussion

My interest in this study has been to explore the work of deterritorialised francophone West African directors within the theoretical framework of transnational cinema. I was interested in the contradictions that transnational films might create when screened in different cultural contexts at home and abroad: how do they cope with the burden of representation and how they try to balance between universality and authenticity in order to appeal simultaneously to domestic and diasporic ‘home’ audiences as well as foreign audiences abroad. Hybridity was proposed as a cultural strategy that could respond to different needs of different audiences.

In the 1990s when I became interested in the cultural travelling of African films, I often called them in my mind “suitcase films”. With this metaphor I referred to African films, which were more often abroad than at home. They were carried to international festivals and special screenings by the filmmaker him/herself, screened once or twice and then packed up again in order to be screened elsewhere. But there were a few places where the film could have stayed for a longer period and feel at home. The other side of the fascinating itinerant life was that suitcase films seemed to be homeless, without identity and not to belong to any particular audiences. Most of the time these films spent in their boxes waiting for someone to remember their existence, just like asylum seekers who are packed into special centres to wait for

the decision of the authorities if they can stay in a new country or if they will be deported back home.

The concept of transnational diasporic cinema has helped me to find a home for this cinema and situate it as a part of our globalised world culture. West African suitcase films are not homeless, but rather unhomely in that they propose identity positions simultaneously for several audiences and help them to see themselves from several angles at the same time. Transnational African films can contribute to the identity work of both those at home and those abroad. As Amadou, the most active expatriate Senegalese Internet forum contributor living in Mexico, expressed several times during the debate on *Karmen*, the film made him feel proud to be Senegalese and wait for an opportunity to show the film to his new countrymen in Mexico. At the same time he felt obliged to participate to the discussion about the film in order to contribute to the development of freedom of expression at home. There are more and more global citizens like Amadou who are living in and between two cultures but who have difficulties in expressing themselves, when they do not identify with the 'traditional' images given about the home country neither by the mainstream media of the new host country nor by nationalist compatriot filmmakers. Transnational hybrid cinema offers them a chance to be a part of both old and new, modern and traditional, familiar and foreign, not to choose only one.

However, diasporic African audiences are not a homogeneous group and Amadou's position is just an example of the reactions of Senegalese diasporic audiences. The weakness of my research material was that it mainly concentrated on the Senegalese reception of the film and thus the analysis of the

mediated reception remained focused on the national reception at home and the critical reception abroad. When searching for the empirical research material, I was not able to locate any other media of Senegalese immigrants than the websites, which concentrated on religious and social issues but which were not relevant for my research issue. Even if Senegalese immigrants actively followed the domestic media through the Internet and were also active in the Internet forums studied, it was not always easy to separate the messages written by expatriate Senegalese from those written by Senegalese living in the home country, which limited the possibilities to analyse diasporic discourses separately from local Senegalese discourses. Due to this problem my analysis could not sufficiently consider differences between the Senegalese discourses born in Senegal and those by expatriate Senegalese living abroad. In the future, it would be necessary to focus more on the discourses of diasporic African audiences, who are living in similar situation to the diasporic African filmmakers and to study how they interpret transnational hybrid cinema.

Despite the fact that I, as a researcher, found that transnationality and hybridity offered a fruitful perspective for the analysis of the film, the main finding of my study is that national and cultural categorizing is still the dominant way of evaluating and negotiating cultural productions. The demand for cultural purity and the attachment of culture to a certain geographical area are deeply rooted in the minds of both cultural critics and consumers of cultural products. In the Senegalese press and Internet forums the value of *Karmen* was mostly discussed from the perspective of national cinema: how well the film represents Senegalese culture and what is Senegalese and what is not. In international reviews, too, *Karmen* was considered

as a representative of African cinema not as a representative of transnational cultural production or as universal art. The discussions, however, revealed breaks and discontinuities in the homogeneous Senegalese identity, which has been confronted by pressures of globalisation both from abroad and from inside the country.

The contradictory reception of *Karmen* at home and abroad was not a unique case among transnational cultural productions. Transnationalism has added possibilities of conflicts and controversies since different groups make different interpretations of these cultural products. The opposition to *Karmen* has several points in common with other protests against transnational cultural products in different parts of the world. To conclude my study I compare the protests against *Karmen* to those against Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* and the Hindu nationalist attacks against Deepa Mehta's South Asian diasporic film *Fire* in India. *The Satanic Verses*, *Fire* and *Karmen* are all significant case studies of metropolitan migrant cultural production, which have to be read in the context of globalisation and transnationalism.

Before going to these two themes, I will summarize some of the most important findings of the empirical analysis.

Summary of empirical analysis

Karmen was a representative example of transnational cinema because of its generic hybridity, blend of music, languages and aesthetic conventions. The explicit purpose of the director was to make *Karmen* a commercial film musical but besides this,

the film also includes several characteristics of European art cinema and African social realist films. Like many transnational films, *Karmen* focuses on marginal characters, like homo- and bi-sexuals, criminals and outcasts of the society, and thus describes the experience of living on the margins. The film location, the old slave fortress, and the coastal scenery also refer to the origins of transnational African migration. The creative combination of several genres and hybrid aesthetic and narrative conventions offer points of identification for several kinds of audience members and might have helped to bridge the cultural gap between African and Western audiences. At least, *Karmen* was an exception in international film markets in that it – unlike most African or transnational African productions – succeeded in getting out of the ghetto of African film festivals and was screened in several Western cinemas. Even if the audience rates were not that large, *Karmen* was able to recoup its production costs. Some Senegalese journalists and contributors of the forum debates, however, suspected that the reason for this success was related as much to the noise the film created at home as to the qualities of the film, but this cannot be evaluated through my study.

Karmen was confronted both by the demands for the authentic representation of Senegalese culture and the demands for the ‘positive’ portrayal of Senegalese women. In the Senegalese mediated reception there was very little interest in aesthetic and generic matters and the concern was mostly in the cultural content of the film. At the beginning of its domestic distribution, *Karmen* was undoubtedly considered in Senegal to be a Senegalese national film, but the identity of the film became an issue of re-negotiation when accusations about blasphemy were made.

When the film appeared in the Senegalese public sphere, the nationality of the director and the use of local actors, settings and music were sufficient markers to define the film as belonging to the corpus of national cinema even if the production, distribution and exhibition context of the film were transnational and it was based on a classic foreign text. It was only when the religious and moral content of the film was challenged that the question about the European origin of the script was raised. More important than the origin or subject of the film were the issues and symbols related to the representation of sexuality and religion.

The most important national and cultural marker for Senegalese audiences was a symbol related to Senegalese Islam, the Mourid hymn “*Kalamoune*”, which was performed in the ‘wrong’ context, in memory of a lesbian woman who was not even a Muslim. The film was also criticised in public for overly sexual excerpts, which were not “in harmony with Senegalese values”, but this criticism was less serious than that regarding blasphemy and would not alone have led to the ban of the film.

The analysis of the Senegalese press coverage and film reviews revealed that Senegalese cultural journalists encounter in their work the same kind of burden of representation as transnational African filmmakers. Because of their academic background, continuous travelling and contacts abroad Senegalese cultural journalists have more in common with their transnational foreign colleagues and filmmakers than with Senegalese readers at large. In their work they have to balance between their “more cultivated taste” and the taste of ordinary Senegalese people. This balancing act sometimes leads to toothless coverage, where journalists tend to hide behind their interviewees or readers. When reviewing *Karmen*, cultural journalists avoided taking an

explicit position towards the film but tried instead to balance between the anticipated opinions of readers, of the filmmaker and their own opinion. Similarly, when covering the censorship of *Karmen*, journalists often over-accentuated their neutrality using rhetorical devices like irony, citation marks and the passive voice, which a reader could interpret according to his/her own wishes. This “sitting on two stools” might be one reason for the brain-drain to Western countries of African intellectuals, who have got a taste of freedom of expression abroad and feel their working options limited at home.

An important distrust and suspicion of “the Western world” was revealed in the analysis of the Senegalese media. Press coverage and Internet forums were used to discuss differences between Senegalese and Western cultures not so much to discuss the film in question. Also, the Western reviews of *Karmen* were used to negotiate the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the Western world and Africa. Foreign reviewers accentuated the Africanness of *Karmen* and reproduced old colonial stereotypes about authentic African cultural features by highlighting the musical and rhythmic talents of musicians and actors, the eroticism of *Karmen* and the beautiful African landscapes. However, the confrontation between African and Western cultures was more hidden in the reviews than in the forum discussions, which quite explicitly revealed the hostility against the Western culture.

For my research questions, the Internet debates offered most fruitful and interesting research material. At one stage, I had even wondered whether I could include this material at all in my research material and what might these messages give to the study of transnational cinema if most of the contributors had not

even seen the film under scrutiny. However, it appeared that the forum discussions explicitly brought out several contradictory tendencies of the Senegalese society the press coverage and reviews discussed only implicitly. While the press coverage considered the problem of *Karmen* to be an administrative problem that could be solved if only the cinematic institutions, like the Committee for Cinematic Control, worked properly, the forum discussions revealed more profound ideological reasons behind the controversy.

On the one hand there were people, who were attached to the idea of a permanent homogeneous Senegalese identity composed of the 'traditional' religious and moral norms of Senegalese culture. For them, globalisation of cultural production with phenomena like transnational cinema and representations of homosexuality were symptoms of the cultural invasion of the West trying to suppress their own culture. *Karmen* was dangerous because it threatened the stability of the Senegalese national and cultural unity. On the other hand, there were other people for whom *Karmen* and other transnational cultural phenomena represented a positive cultural change or evolution. They accept that Senegalese national and cultural identity will change as a consequence of increasing exchange with other countries. Contrary to the claims of the opponents of *Karmen*, those defending cultural hybridisation and cultural change do not consider themselves Westernised or uncultured; rather they were as committed to the development of 'their culture' as were the defenders of the traditional identity. The two groups and the views they represent were neither wholly incompatible nor separate since they also share common elements of identity like the respect for religion and the taboo of overt homosexuality.

Senegal, religion and Westernisation

When starting the work I was astonished at the intensity of the reactions to a single film in a country, where the film could get at best an audience of 5,000 people. Why on earth was one film with some possibly blasphemous excerpts was considered so dangerous that it was worth of censoring, even though only a handful of people can access to cinemas? My analysis suggests that the importance of *Karmen* lies in the fact that it provided Senegalese people living in the country and abroad with a channel to negotiate the burning psychological, political and ideological issues related to the Senegalese identity and society of today. Thus the film itself was only a pretext for the debate, which could have articulated through any other cultural product or event. In fact, when collecting my research material I came across to six other discussion threads, mentioned in the fourth chapter, which referred to *Karmen* only in one or two messages and were for this reason excluded from the main research material. A closer look at this material showed that the issues discussed in these threads were quite the same as in the debate on *Karmen*. The contributors of these discussions were as worried about the corruption of good manners, the public representations of homosexuality, the influence of Western culture and the state of democracy as the contributors of *Karmen* discussions.

The debate about *Karmen* activated especially Senegalese religious and nationalist groups to articulate their fears and hopes about the state and future of the Senegalese society and the nation-state. The adherents of several Muslim tendencies profited from the occasion to negotiate their identity with regard to each

other and especially with regard to more secular Westernised intellectuals.

Under the surface of “universal” Islam there is a tension between the adherents of ‘traditional’ West African Sufi orders and of reformist Islamic tendencies in Senegal.¹³⁴ Representatives of both camps participated in the discussions about *Karmen* and were against the film, but the debate also revealed disagreements between these groups. The rise of reformist Islam occurred in Senegal, as in many other Muslim countries, after the Islamic revolution in Iran. Religion has increased its importance in public life to such a degree that some observers of the Senegalese politics have been worried about the stability of the country. According to Westerlund (1982) the reformist Islamic movements in sub-Saharan Africa can be interpreted as a reaction against Westernisation and materialism of the industrialised world. In the eyes of the reformist movements, social and economic problems of industrialised countries are due to secularisation: Western capitalists have committed the sin of polytheism, which is the worst of all sins since a man is put in the place of God, who becomes redundant. The only solution to the problems of the modern world is submission to God and His law, the *sharia*. (Westerlund 1982, 49.) In Senegal the rise of reformist movements has also been interpreted as a reaction towards the perceived illegitimacy of the political system due to political stagnation and the crisis of “democracy” or as a consequence of the generational tension within the leadership of the major Senegalese religious families (Villalón 1999, 129–131).

134 More orthodox and less secularist concepts of Islam have been referred to in literature with several terms, like militant or reformist Islam, fundamentalism or re-Islamization. See a discussion about these terms in Westerlund 1982, 7–11.

The main concern about the blasphemy in *Karmen* arose among the Mourid brotherhood. Their confusion in regard to the use of Ahmadou Bamba's poem has to be understood in the context of the role religious leaders, *marabouts* have in the Senegalese *Mouridism*. Sufism was born in the eighth century as a reaction to 'cold' and formalist tenets of the scripturalist Islam, which places great importance on the absolute gulf between man and God. In Sufi brotherhoods, this relationship is partly replaced by the close link between the disciple and his *marabout* considered as an intermediary in the disciple's search for blessing, *baraka*, and efforts to enter Paradise after the earthly life. (Westerlund 1982; Fatton 1986, 749; Evers Rosander 1997, 3–4; Villalón 1999.) The importance of the master – disciple relationship is manifest already in the name of Mouridism, which comes from the Arabic word '*mûrîd*' meaning "a disciple completely committed to following a master" (Vuillemin 2000). Senegal, more than any other West African country, is the country where the link between the *marabout* and his disciple is strongest (Westerlund 1982, 10). Characteristic of Senegalese *maraboutism* is the omnipresence of the icons of affiliation with a Sufi order and the *maraboutic* guide in all public life. Every adherent of Mouridism has his or her marabou and the portraits of *marabouts* are seen everywhere in business and office premises, public transport and private homes.¹³⁵ In this context, every single issue possibly defaming the honour of one of the greatest masters will gain a lot of attention in the Senegalese public sphere.

When reformist movements started to emerge in West Africa, *maraboutism* was one of the most important objects of

135 The affiliation is also seen in *Karmen*: in the controversial scene where Massigi sings the poem of Sheikh Ahmadou Bamba, the camera pans to the portrait of a *marabout* on the wall.

criticism and the aim of reformists was to purify African Islam from syncretic distortions of the original Islamic message. The supporters of reformist Islam considered that the respect given to Sufi leaders blurs the central role of Prophet Mohammed and the Koran in Islam. More recently reformist movements have started to co-operate with Senegalese Sufi orders and have focused their activities on the opposition of Westernisation and other socio-cultural subjects. (Evers Rosander 1997, 1; Villalón 1999, 136; Loimaier 2000, 183.) Echoes of the criticism of *maraboutism* were also found in the *Karmen* debate. For example, there was a provocative question of *Lahat* (28.11.01), a member of the reformist movement *Ibadou*, who was wondering if the film had been attacked in Senegal if there had been a *surah* from the Koran instead of a *khassaid*. This can be interpreted as criticism of the Senegalese Muslims, who know better and respect more the writings of their *marabouts* than the *surahs* of the Koran.

Another aspect of the Senegalese Sufi model besides to *maraboutism* is its unique organisational infrastructure, based on the institution known as the *daaira* (or *daara*), which unites disciples of particular *marabouts* in well-organised cells. This has placed *marabouts* at the center of highly structured and dynamic social networks with obvious political potential. Close ties between *marabouts* and political power have given to *marabouts* a reputation as power brokers in Senegalese electoral politics, especially during the President Diouf's era (see more Villalón 1999). Until recently, no political official could have been elected without the approval of the *marabouts*. The acting president, Abdoulaye Wade, himself a *Mourid*, has continued the Senegalese tradition of buying political support from Sufi brotherhoods even if, on the surface, the time when the religious leaders instructed their followers how to vote in elections is over (Vuillemin 2000).

As noted earlier, the rise of fundamentalist Islamic movements is also linked to the growing discontent with the political system due to political stagnation and the crisis of democracy, which has manifested itself especially among a small but important minority of students and other intellectuals (Villalon 1999, 131–133). The political tension was momentarily reduced due to the presidential change in 2000, but in recent years, reformist groups have again welcomed every opportunity to express their disenchantment with the government. The inactivity of Wade's regime in the case of *Karmen* was interpreted by some reformist debate participants as a new proof of the immorality of the secular government and as a lack of courage to oppose western values. One contributor to the *Karmen* debate, for instance, suspected that the hesitation of the government was due to the fear of President Wade, "who is too afraid of being pointed at finger by those defending human rights".

From official censorship to cultural wars

The decision to withdraw *Karmen* from Senegalese screens was the first time any film had been censored in Senegal due to the demands of the religious pressure group rather than as a consequence of official censorship. The case is reminiscent of several internationally well-known cases in which religious or other pressure groups have tried to obstruct the production or distribution of cultural products or works of art. The augmented protests are partly due to development of freedom of expression as individual people and pressure groups today have better possibilities to express themselves in public without repressive

interference of authorities. When there are fewer and fewer countries where official censorship would inhibit in advance the exhibition of artistic works, there is also more space for the activities of pressure groups. The globalised world has also become more sensitive to issues of representation of different ethnic, religious or cultural groups and the representatives of these groups easily voice themselves for better media representations.

The most significant effort to censor a work of art by a religious group is the *fatwa* declared by Ayatollah Khomeini against Salman Rushdie and his *Satanic Verses* in February 1989. The efforts of Imam Khomeini were not limited to the prohibition of the novel in Iran; he wanted it to be banned wherever it was published. The consequences of the *fatwa* led to a diplomatic crisis between several EU countries and Iran, and riots against the novel spread around the world causing the deaths of over twenty people. As a result of the riots, the book was banned in countries with majority or plurality Muslim governments and in several countries with substantial Muslim minorities. Even in Japan the sale of the English-language edition was banned (Pipes 1990, 143).

Another controversial case has been the South Asian diasporic film *Fire* about a middle-class Indian family breaking apart when the two sisters-in-law fall in love with each other, which provoked conflict in India at the beginning of December 1998 as members of a Hindu nationalist movement Shiv Sene attacked the film. The members of Shiv Sene closed theatres and condemned the film for its “deviancy” because they identified the film as lesbian and stated that lesbianism is not Indian. Unlike *Karmen* in Senegal, *Fire* also mobilized feminist, celebrity, lesbian, anticommunal, anticensorship and antifundamentalist groups to

defend the film and to counter-protest the violent acts of Hindu nationalists. (Desai 2004, 159–160.) Another difference from *Karmen* is that *Fire* was approved in advance to be screened in India with an adult certificate by the Indian censor board. The film played in theatres for about two weeks before the state minister for culture in the state of Maharashtra in Mumbai was asked to ban the film. At the same time, the theatres playing the film in Mumbai were attacked and they were forced to be closed. The riots soon spread in several cities in northern India and continued into late December and mid-January. (Desai 2004, 177.)

At first glance, it may seem an exaggeration to compare *Karmen* to the case of *The Satanic Verses*, whose geographical dimensions were so different: *Karmen* was a local event known only inside the borders of Senegal while *The Satanic Verses* became a symbol of the confrontation between the Islamic and Western worlds even if the case itself started as locally as the riot against *Karmen*. In the case of *Karmen*, accusations against the film did not touch the basic values of all Muslims like in the case of Rushdie. The most serious crime of Rushdie was that he questioned the core tenets of the Islamic faith, the origin of the *Koran* as revelations made to Mohammed by God through the archangel Gabriel. If *Karmen* had offended more basic Muslim values, the film would certainly have aroused interest at least in those Western it which it was distributed since they have remarkable numbers of Muslim minorities. As shown in the case of the Mohammed cartoons in Denmark in the winter 2006, diasporic Muslim immigrants are very much concerned with how their religion is represented in Western media.

The case of *The Satanic Verses* was well-known in Senegal. It was also in a recent memory of the protesters and journalists

reporting the case of *Karmen*. The Senegalese government had banned the book according to the recommendation of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in mid-March 1989, but the ban did not mean that there had been an overall acceptance of the *fatwa* or that people would not have been eager to read the novel. Some copies of the book reached Senegal from the United States and were photocopied many times over (Pipes 1990, 201–202). One of the Senegalese religious leaders, Ayatollah of Kaolack, Ahmed Khalifa Niasse, even condemned the edict because Rushdie had not been properly tried and also because he lived in the United Kingdom, a country that is not ruled by Muslims (*Le Monde* 4.3.1989, cited from Pipes 1990, 93). The ban in Senegal was neither as complete as in some other countries since foreign magazines with extracts of the book were allowed (Pipes 1990, 144).

Thomas Hylland Eriksen has considered the case of Rushdie as an expression of the globalised identity politics between ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’. This presumed opposition has been subjected to an enormous amount of attention among both Western and Muslim people and elsewhere (Eriksen 2005, 30). This was manifest especially in Pakistani demonstrations against *The Satanic Verses*, which were the most violent during the whole event. An interesting trait of these riots was that they were oriented towards the American Embassy but not towards the British Embassy, even though the novel had been published in the United Kingdom and Rushdie was living in London. Apparently this was due to the fact that the book was labelled in the media as an intrigue of “the West trying to dictate to Islam”. (Radio Tehran 10.3.1989, cited from Pipes 1990, 129.)

Similarly, in the cases of *Karmen* and *Fire*, the main front lines between the adversaries were drawn between Islam and the

West and the debates were connected to dangers of globalisation, “clash of civilizations” and Western hegemony. Ramaka, like Rushdie, came to be labelled as an errand boy of the West. Rushdie was seen by fundamentalist Muslims as “an inferior CIA agent” or an errand boy of the United States who did not write the book on his own initiative, while Ramaka was accused of destroying the morality of Senegalese people by promoting homosexuality, considered a Western phenomenon. (Pipes 1990 24–26, 130.) In India, the juxtaposition between “the West” and “the Rest” was working in the activities of women assaulting and closing the theatres and leading the Hindutva movement against *Fire*. Hindu women have become active and respected members in the Hindu nationalist Bharata Janata Party as protectors of Hindu culture from Western imperialism, and defenders of the moral, spiritual, and cultural elements of the nation. From this moral and cultural standpoint, the protestors against *Fire* also objected to the contamination of India and Indian womanhood by Western imperialism. The issue was the control and power of the Indian national culture identified most clearly as a threat to the institution of heterosexual marriage in the face of globalisation. (Desai 2004, 178, 184.)

In the public debates, complaints about the representation are often related to the question of the verisimilitude of the representation. In the case of *The Satanic Verses*, Muslim critics complained that Rushdie had not told the truth about Islamic history ‘such as it was’. The critics did not consider the fictional character of the book but assumed that Rushdie personally subscribed to every word he had written. (Pipes 1990, 110–112) In the *Karmen* debate, the questions of verisimilitude concerned the existence of religious tolerance and homosexuality in Senegal.

The film was also accused of distorting the image of Senegalese women. Ramaka had defined in several interviews his film as a tribute to Senegalese women but for many debate participants it was shameful to compare Senegalese women to the bisexual, impudent rebel *Karmen* and to distribute this kind of image abroad.

The financial consequences of the protests against the works of art have often been contrary to those desired by the opponents, since censorship, or even the threat of censorship, has rather increased interest in the works in question. In the case of *The Satanic Verses*, censorship was achieved in the majority of Muslim or Muslim-minded countries and even in countries like South Africa, India and Japan. European countries and the US were united in opposing the censorship and none of them decided to ban the novel. Speaking only about money, the reputation of *The Satanic Verses* made Rushdie a multimillionaire, although at the expense of his personal freedom. Also for *Fire*, media attention to the attacks caused a resurgence of interest in the film and audience numbers rose in cities where the film continued to play (Desai 2004, 177). For *Karmen* the Senegalese censorship did not cause financial damage since African films usually earn their money abroad. However, this time the commercial success in the home country would have been better if the film had been released as planned. The audience rates from the July 20 to the September 8 were high: about 2,500 people had seen the film, even though it was not yet in official distribution. The success abroad was however favorable and within a year the film had become one of the rare African films to cover its costs (Nzale, 5.7.2002).

Controversial cases can also contribute to democracy and freedom of expression by provoking discussion about these issues. Both opponents and defenders of these works demand their rights to be protected: pressure groups claim the right to oppose depictions that offend their feelings and destroy their media image, and the defenders of artists demand the right to depict whatever subjects in the name of human rights. In democratic societies the dominant understanding of this dilemma is that both groups have their rights, but when expressing one's opinion or fulfilling one's conviction, one should not harm the other. In some cases the existing laws and codes have offered a solution while in others cultural wars have pushed governments and authorities to change outmoded legislation. In Senegal the problem was that the institutions responsible of the control of cinema were not functioning, and even though the case was taken to court, no judgement was made and the situation remained unresolved. In the public sphere authorities were accused of not fulfilling their role as executors of the law, and claims about the lack of democracy were expressed. The burden with *Karmen* might also have activated Senegalese authorities to advance the renewal of outdated cinema legislation, which had been demanded by the Senegalese association of filmmakers for several years. However, the new law, passed in March 2002 by the Senegalese National Assembly, rather harms than improves the freedom of expression, as it states, among other points, that to be screened in Senegal every film needs a permit delivered by the ministry responsible for cinema and audio-visual sectors.

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Appendix 1

SENEGALESE FILMS IN THE 1990s

Film	Director	Language	Format	Length
<u>1990</u>				
Ken Bugul	Moussa Sene Absa	Wolof	16 mm	80 min
<u>1991</u>				
Niiwam	Clarence Thomas Delgado	Wolof	35 mm	88 min
Boxulmaleen	Amet Diallo	Wolof	16 mm	30 min
D'ou viens-tu?	Moussa Sene Absa			55 min
Crepuscule	Alhamdou Sy		16 mm	26 min
Toubab-bi	Moussa Touré	Francais	35 mm	96 min
Taal peex	Mansour Sora Wade	Wolof	35 mm	26 min
<u>1992</u>				
Un point, c'est tout	Linda Arzouni	Francais	35 mm	8 min
Hyènes	Djibril Diop Mambety	Wolof	35 mm	110 min
Aida Souka	Mansour Sora Wade	Wolof	35 mm	16 min
Yexu, le mariage	Fousseynou Diagola	Soninké	Beta SP	18 min
Guelwaar	Ousmane Sembene	Wolof	35 mm	111 min
Fann Ocean	Mahama Johnson Traore	Wolof	Video	8 x 26 min
Picc Mi/ Loiseau	Mansour Sora Wade	Wolof	35 mm	16 min

Film	Director	Language	Format	Length
<u>1993</u>				
Ca twisté à Popengue	Moussa Sene Absa	Francais	Video	87 min
Biliyaane/ L'archer bassari	Moussa Yoro Bathily	Francais	35 mm	9 min
<u>1994</u>				
Bandit cinema	Bouna Medoune Seye	Francais/Wolof	35 mm	23 min
Le Franc	Djibril Diop Mambety	Wolof	35 mm	45 min
Le symbole	Ahmadou Diallo	Francais/Peul	16 mm	7 min
Yalla Yaana	Moussa Sene Absa	Wolof	16 mm	45 min
<u>1995</u>				
Mariage Precoce	Amadou Thior	Francais/Wolof	16 mm	19 min
Bandit Cinéma	Bouna Medoune Seye		35 mm	24 min
<u>1996</u>				
Mossane	Safi Faye	Wolof	35 mm	105 min
Moytuleen	Ben Diogaye Beye	Wolof	35 mm	13 min
Idylle	Dominique Camara	Francais	35 mm	14 min
Mouso	Cheikh Ndiaye	Francais	35 mm	17 min
Erreur de jeunesse	Seydou Nourou Kane	Francais	Video	
Les bijoux	Khady Sylla	Wolof	16 mm	22 min

<u>Film</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Format</u>	<u>Length</u>
<u>1997</u>				
TGV	Moussa Touré	French/Wolof	35 mm	90 min
Kine	Assane Diagne		Beta SP	82 min
Coumba	Assane Diagne		Beta SP	64 min
Ainsi soit-il	Joseph Gaye Ramaka	Francais/Wolof	35 mm	33 min
Tableau Ferraille	Moussa Sene Absa	French/Wolof	35 mm	100 min
<u>1998</u>				
Walu wa alawira	Amadou Fall	Wolof	Beta SP	90 min
Kinkeliba et biscuits de mer	Alhamdou Sy	Wolof	Super 16	29 min
<u>1999</u>				
Faat Kine	Sembene Ousmane	Wolof	35 mm	120 min
Ganaw ker	Alassane Diagne		Video	26 min
La petite vendeuse de Soleil	Djibril Diop Mambety	Wolof	35 mm	45 min
Premiere nuit sur le trottoir	Alioune Badara Seck		Video	14 min
<u>2000</u>				
Colobane express	Khady Sylla	Wolof	Beta SP	52 min

Appendix 2

INTERVIEWS WITH CULTURAL JOURNALISTS

Connaissance de base

Nom et la position dans le journal ?

Combien du temps avez-vous travaillé dans le journalisme?

Et dans votre journal actuel?

Etes-vous spécialisé dans certaines domaines plus que dans les autres?

Le rapport entre le cinéma et le journalisme au Sénégal

Quelle est la politique de votre journal par rapport aux sujets culturels?

Comment voyez-vous personnellement le rôle de la presse dans la promotion de la culture locale?

Et plus précisément par rapport au cinéma?

Comment choisissez-vous les sujets à écrire?

Quelles sont vos sources d'informations les plus importantes?

Ecrivez-vous les critiques des films?

Comment choisissez-vous les films à critiquer? (tous les films, seulement étrangers/africains/sénégalais; par rapport au qualité...)

Le cinéma sénégalais des années 90s

Selon votre opinion, quels sont les trois films sénégalais les plus importants des années 90s?

Pour quelle raison, ils sont importants?

Pouvez-vous nommer quelques sujets ou evenements importants concernant du cinéma sénégalais pendant les dix dernières années (que vous avez possiblement couvert vous-même)?

Est-ce que vous rappelez, s'il y a eu des debats publics lié au cinéma au Sénégal?

Quelle a été la rôle de journalisme dans ces debats?

Appendix 3

CODING CATEGORIES FOR THE PRESS ARTICLES

1. Date of publishing

2. Name of the paper

- 01 Le Soleil
- 02 Sud Quotidien
- 03 Walfadrji
- 04 Mœurs
- 05 Nouvel Horizon
- 06 Scoop
- 07 Le Matin
- 08 L'Info
- 09 La Pointe
- 10 Frasques
- 11 La Nouvelle

3. Journalistic genre

- 01 News story
- 02 Film review
- 03 Interview
- 04 Letter to the editor/other contribution from outside
- 05 Commentary by a journalist
- 06 Other genre

4. Actors

- 01 Joseph Ramaka
- 02 Member of the *Karmen* crew
- 03 Other film professional
- 04 Journalist
- 05 Academic person or intellectual
- 06 Politician or public authority
- 07 Religious leader
- 08 Ordinary citizen

5. News subject

Appendix 4

KARMEN

Des “Baye Fall” empêchent sa diffusion au Cices

“Karmen”, version sénégalaise de la “Carmen” de Prosper Mérimée, a été sérieusement balafmée samedi 8 septembre, aux environs de 22 heures, par une horde de mourides ulcérés par certaines scènes du film jugées par eux «blasphématoires». Notamment la scène où il est question de récital de «Khassaïdes» mourides accompagnant l'enterrement d'un homosexuel, de surcroît chrétien.

En nombre impressionnant, les assaillants ont rallié avec coupe-coupe, haches, gourdins et couteaux, l'espace Bel Arte du Centre international du commerce extérieur (Cices) où la projection du film du réalisateur sénégalais Joseph Gaï Ramaka venait à peine de débiter. Ils ont détruit toutes les affiches sur les tableaux d'affichage avant de faire une irruption musclée dans la salle de projection. Scandant à leurs tour des «Khassaïdes» à la gloire de Serigne Touba, ils ont promis, à la prochaine diffusion du «film maudit» de «mettre le feu au Cices et à toutes les salles où il sera projeté». «Si nécessaire, nous couperons des têtes», pouvait-on entendre. En attendant, la salle du Bel Arte reste fermée «jusqu'à nouvel ordre».

Me Babou de l'Alliance des forces de progrès (Afp) qui a réagi «en tant que mouride e l'homme politique», a approuvé la sortie des assaillants. «Il est inadmissible que l'on utilise les «Khassaïdes» de Serigne Touba pour égayer des films d'homosexuels. C'est de la provocation», s'est-il emporté. Pour sa part, Abdoulaye Elimane Kane, ancien ministre socialiste de la Culture a estimé que «les

pouvoirs public devraient faire attention à ce qui touche à la créativité» où, à défaut, aller jusqu'au bout de leur logique. C'est à dire «interdire la diffusion de films genre «Sublime mensonge» qui étalent aux yeux des enfants des scènes choquantes». «Je suis contre tout ce qui touche à la liberté des créateurs», a-t-il conclu.

«Le film sera diffusé quoi que cela puisse nous coûter», jure-t-on du côté du réalisateur Joseph Gai Ramaka. Ce dernier s'est d'ailleurs envolé la nuit de «l'affaire Karmen» pour Toronto, où il présentera... «Karmen» au Festival international du film africain. (*Sud Quotidien* 10.9.2001.)