

# Queer African Cinemas



LINDSEY B. GREEN-SIMMS

Queer  
African  
Cinemas

A CAMERA OBSCURA BOOK

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Homay King, Tess Takahashi, Constance Penley, and Sharon Willis

# Queer African Cinemas

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To those for whom  
queer African cinema  
is lifesaving

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*Queer African Cinemas* has been over a decade in the making. The project began, albeit in a different iteration, when I was a postdoctoral fellow in Women's Studies at Duke University in 2009–2010. There I had the opportunity to present and develop some of my thoughts on the two films that would become the basis for my first chapter. I am therefore very much indebted to formal and informal feedback and conversations with Jennifer DeVere Brody, Tina Campt, Rey Chow, Ranjana Khanna, Negar Mottahedeh, and Charles Piot, as well as Brian Goldstone, Ignacio Adriasola Muñoz, and many of the graduate students and other fellows there at the time, all of whom helped to set this book into flight. The postdoctoral fellowship at Duke also funded my first research trip to Nigeria in the summer of 2010. There, I met up with the formidable Unoma Azuah and conducted many interviews with Nollywood filmmakers, distributors, audiences, and censors that have helped me to understand the multiple complexities of gay-themed Nollywood films. I want to thank Patricia Paulina Bala, Andy Chukwu, Kabat Esosa Egbon, Dakore Egbuson-Akande, Dickson Iroegbu, Emem Isong, Afam Okereke, and Ikechukwu Onyeka for granting me interviews. After watching almost two dozen films together, Unoma and I wrote up some of our findings from this trip in an article titled “The Video Closet: Nollywood’s Gay-Themed Movies” published in *Transition*, and I am incredibly grateful for Unoma’s continued support and conversations, as well as to all of those who have engaged with that article.

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As I was working through the revisions of *Queer African Cinemas*, I was also putting together a special issue of the *Journal of African Cultural Studies* on “The Possibilities and Intimacies of Queer African Screen Cultures” with Z’étoile Imma. I want to thank Z’étoile, as well as all of the contributing authors (Grant Andrews, A. B. Brown, Lyn Johnstone, Gibson Ncube, Kwame Edwin Otu, and Lwando Scott) and the editor, Carli Coetzee, for the opportunity to think through so many different ways that queer African screen media can create new intimacies and possibilities.

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earlier reviews of the films *Ifé*, *Under the Rainbow*, and *Rafiki* appeared on the blog *Africa Is a Country*—much thanks to Sean Jacobs, too, for making that blog such a dynamic and queer-friendly space.

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# Introduction

## Registering Resistance in Queer African Cinemas

In their Nairobi apartment, Liz and Achi, two women who have lived together as a couple for three years, sit on a couch watching a news broadcast. Their expressions are deadpan. They barely blink. Liz moves her hand slightly so that it rests on Achi's upper arm. It is 2014 and the voice from the television, that of Kenyan politician Irungu Kang'ata, explains in a matter-of-fact tone that there has been a recent promotion of gay activities (or what he calls "gayism"), in Kenya and Africa as a whole, that he finds concerning (figures 1.1 and 1.2).<sup>1</sup> He notes that people go to hotels and have demonstrations supporting "gayism" and that there have been "situations where some writers have gone publicly saying that they are gays," referring to the coming out of the famous Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina, who published "I Am a Homosexual, Mum" online in early 2014. But what seems to anger Kang'ata the most is that the Kenyan government has failed to do anything to stop these things from happening. He calls upon the police to arrest those promoting "gayism" in Kenya and notes that if the police do not take action, the law allows for "citizens' arrest of gays." Midway through the broadcast, Achi gets up and walks into another





FIGURES 1.1 AND 1.2. Stills from *Stories of Our Lives* (2014). Liz and Achi (*top*) watch Irungu Kang'ata (*bottom*) on the television in their living room.

room, where she begins applying lipstick. Moments later Liz, recognizing the couple's vulnerability, follows Achi and asks, "What do we do?"

This is how "Each Night I Dream," the last of five vignettes in the film compilation *Stories of Our Lives*, begins. I begin my discussion of queer African cinemas with "Each Night I Dream" because of the way that it imagines the quiet and loud, public and private, and hopeful and fearful ways of resisting and evading state-sanctioned homophobia that are at the heart of many of the queer-focused African films and videos I examine in this book. *Stories of Our Lives* was made in 2014 by members of the Nest Collective, a Nairobi-based arts collective, and directed by the Nest Collective member Jim Chuchu, whose

original music also provides the film's soundtrack. Though it has received many accolades and awards, the film was, in some ways, an accidental film. The Nest Collective had been working on a book of the same name, collecting stories from queer-identified people around the country, and decided to turn a few of the stories into short films to show to the community of people they had interviewed. They filmed sparsely in black and white using a single Canon DSLR video camera. One of these shorts was shown to a curator of the Toronto International Film Festival, who asked if the Nest Collective could make more vignettes for a feature-length film. The collective agreed, and *Stories* was slated to show in Toronto before the film was even finished. The first four vignettes reflect the stories they had collected, either as a direct dramatization of a person's stories or as a composite of several stories in order to show the many different lived experiences of queer Kenyans. (The first vignette is about two high-school girls separated by their school principal; in the second, a gay man outruns a homophobic friend; in the third, a farm worker confesses his love to his sympathetic but straight best friend; and in the fourth, a Kenyan researcher in London hires a white male prostitute for himself.) But at the last minute the collective decided that a fifth short they had filmed did not work well in the collection, and, rather than making another one from the stories they had gathered, they created "Each Night I Dream," a film that, to me, perfectly captures so many of the multiple and conflicting and intimate forms of resistance found in queer African cinemas and discussed throughout this book.<sup>2</sup>

After asking Achi what to do about the threat of the citizens' arrests advocated by Kang'ata, Liz begins to narrate "Each Night I Dream" from off-screen, explaining how she and Achi have always kept a low profile and have never expressed intimacy outside of the walls of their shared apartment. But as Liz lies awake next to a sleeping Achi, she tells the audience about her constant anxiety: "Every night I wonder what we will do when they come for us. Will we fight or will we run?" At first, she envisions fighting, and the camera cuts to Liz and her friends staring down an angry mob (figure 1.3). Then she contemplates the possibility of running and becoming a fugitive, wondering out loud what they would take with them as the camera shows them grabbing a framed photo of themselves, embracing affectionately, and leaving with little else. Liz also wonders where they would run to, noting that all the countries around them have worse conditions for LGBTQ citizens.<sup>3</sup> And then she fantasizes about running away to an island of their own, a safe haven to which "everyone who needed to run could go." At this point, a chanted, dreamlike song (composed by Chuchu) begins to play, and the two girlfriends are shown



FIGURE 1.3. Still from *Stories of Our Lives* (2014), showing Liz's vision of what it would be like if she and her friends were to physically fight homophobic violence.

dancing and walking in slow motion on their island as bubbles float across the screen (figure 1.4). Achi dances with a sparkler, and they both have glitter on their faces as they kiss playfully on the cheek and smile. Like several of the other vignettes in *Stories of Our Lives*, “Each Night I Dream” demonstrates the persistence of pleasure in queer lives, the “thinking, imagining, and creating [of] queer African pleasure itself” (Munro 2018, 664) even as it is under threat.

But as the island fantasy ends, Liz also considers the possibility that fleeing might not be feasible, that hiding might be a better option. She then recalls a traditional Gĩkũyũ myth, in which it is possible to change one's sex by walking backward around a Mũgumo tree seven times.<sup>4</sup> Liz imagines herself walking around the tree and coming home as a boy. When police officers come to their door, presumably to arrest them for homosexuality, Liz responds, “You think I’m a woman?” and then drops her pants to prove that she is not. The crowd gathered behind the police gasps and she shuts the door on them. The film then leaves Liz's fantasy sequence and returns to the present, back to Liz lying awake next to Achi and back to the footage of Kang'ata on television talking about how “gayism” is not African. In light of the traditional gender-bending story Liz has told about the Mũgumo tree, Kang'ata's claims—that queerness “is against our culture, against our tradition, against all the religious belief”—ring hollow, though they are no less dangerous for that.

In the final segment of the short, Liz muses on the absurdity of saying that African people are un-African, a refrain often used by homophobic politicians.



FIGURE 1.4. Still from *Stories of Our Lives* (2014), showing Liz's dream of an island where she and Achi could escape and live freely.

She looks down, examining her hands, turning them over, and asks, “If we are not African, then what are we?” She offers one possible answer: “Maybe we are aliens. Maybe we come from a place where gender and sexuality are silly ideas. Primitive ideas. Maybe we came here to find out what it’s like to be human. And maybe it’s time for us to go back home.” The camera then cuts to a shot of the stars, taking the viewer farther and farther into the universe as the soundtrack overlays multiple indistinct, staticky voices. Then a male voice takes over, narrating the last minute of the vignette as the camera continues to pan out into the universe. Though few outside the queer activist and artist community in Kenya would identify it, the voice is that of Anthony Oluoch, a prominent activist who has worked for several queer African organizations, including Pan Africa ILGA, Kaleidoscope Trust, and Gay Kenya Trust, and who was the cohost of the podcast *Kenyan Queer Questions* and, more recently, of the podcast *Padded Cell*. In his deep, resonant, and calmly confident voice, Oluoch delivers the following monologue:

There’s a law in this country that says that a man and another man are not allowed to express love. This law justifies violence, evictions, being excluded by your family, being blackmailed, being harassed by the police, losing your job, and many other things. I want to live in a place where I’m allowed to love who I want to love. I want to live in a place where my life is not constantly monitored and I have to justify how I live it. This is my country, and as a Kenyan I want to live here. I would not want to run

away. I am a homosexual and I am a proud homosexual and I have never felt ashamed of who I love. . . . All of us are different. All seven billion of us on this planet are different. But all of us need love.

When he is done talking, the screen goes black, and as the credits roll, the dreamlike chanting music from the island returns. This final monologue of the film imagines a journey not just to outer space but also to a Kenya where queer people would not in fact want to run away, a Kenya that activists like Oluoch and artists like the Nest Collective are trying to create, so that queer Kenyans can stay and live on and love whom they please without shame. It is, given the realist documentary news footage that opens the vignette, a decidedly defiant and even abstract way to conclude an anthology of films highlighting multiple stories about the challenges of queer love and intimacy in Kenya. But what this ending demonstrates is that, although Liz dreams of all the worst-case scenarios, queer African cinema can also register dreams for different possible presents and futures, presents and futures that are often even in conversation with more traditional and fluid understandings of gender and sexuality. Here, then, I follow Elena Loizidou who, expanding our ideas of what might be considered political resistance, writes that “we can think of the dream (its experience and a recounting) as an extension of the political actions of demonstration and protests, tracking the *flight* to freedom” (2016, 125). In this way, the final shots of the stars and constellations show that *Stories of Our Lives*, despite its documentary foundations, should be understood not in terms of a singular or concrete visibility project but as a film that illuminates planetary dreams in which there is “a kernel of political possibility within a stultifying heterosexual present” (Muñoz 2009, 49). Or, as Z’étoile Imma and I write of queer African screen media more broadly, the vignettes as a whole “offer us a new visual language, one that speaks in terms less invested in explicit narratives of resistance and domination, but instead enacts visions of interaction, touch, and longing which anticipate African queerness as possibility and belonging” (Green-Simms and Imma 2021, 5).

But just as it is important to highlight *Stories of Our Lives*’ investment in love, pleasure, and imaginative possibilities, it is no less essential to underscore how the film records and tracks the increased fear, anxiety, and vulnerability many queer Africans were experiencing both in Kenya and across the continent at this particular historical moment, as public outings, violent attacks, and calls to further criminalize homosexuality were proliferating in many African countries in the first decades of the twenty-first century. For instance, in 2014 when Kang’ata was delivering his hateful message on television in Kenya and actively

trying to strengthen the country's antihomosexuality laws (which he was not successful in doing), Nigeria's draconian Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA), first introduced in 2006, had just been signed, emboldening many Nigerian citizens to lure and attack queer people. Only a month after Nigeria's law was signed, so too was Uganda's Anti-homosexuality Act (AHA). Like Nigeria's SSMPA, the AHA was many years in the making and likewise based on British colonial law. And though Uganda's law would be overturned later that year because it passed without the necessary quorum, the antigay violence it unleashed and encouraged persisted. Likewise, Ayo Coly (2019, 44) notes that in Francophone Senegal, political leaders also "engaged in a performance of virile postcolonial African nationhood" that aimed to show the world that they too could resist emasculation by embracing antigay rhetoric. Indeed, the increase in antigay rhetoric in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, even when not accompanied by calls to further criminalize homosexuality, affected many queer Africans across the continent.

What I want to emphasize, then, is that *Stories of Our Lives*, like many of the films discussed in this book, registers the upsurge in homophobia that swept up many African countries in the first decades of the twenty-first century and, at the same time, attempts to find alternatives to the violent heteronormativity that continually threatens hopes of queer belonging and life-building. But what is important for the purposes of this book is that the films discussed here do so by indexing multiple and sometimes conflicting or even opaque or muted forms of resistance and refusal—forms that include loving, touching, fighting, running away, staying put, staying quiet, taking refuge in customary practices, and dreaming of otherworldly possibilities—that are often practiced from a position of vulnerability. What I argue in this book is that queer African cinemas articulate forms of resistance that cannot be understood through narrow understandings of resistance as visible or audible strategic opposition to the status quo. Here, I follow Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (2016, 6), who argue in their introduction to *Vulnerability in Resistance* that resistance needs to be understood outside of the context of "masculinist models of autonomy," that it needs to be understood as drawing from vulnerability and not mutually opposed to it, and that it must be tracked across its different and conflicting registers.

Moreover, as I suggest throughout *Queer African Cinemas*, if one is to understand all the complexities of resistance in queer African cinema, one needs to look both at and beyond the text and to the politics of production, consumption, and distribution. For instance, *Stories of Our Lives* was banned in Kenya in large part because of its hopeful ending. According to Chuchu and fellow Nest

Collective member and cowriter Njoki Ngumi, the Kenyan Film Classification Board thought that the end of the film was too positive, too progay, and told the Nest Collective that if they wanted the film to be shown in the country they needed to either drop the final vignette or change it. The Nest Collective, however, stood their ground, and the film was censored in Kenya. George Gachara, who was listed as the producer, was arrested for filming without a license. The charges against him were eventually dropped, but if the Nest Collective violated the ban and showed the film in Kenya or uploaded it to the internet, the government said they would pursue charges.<sup>5</sup> In this case, the Nest Collective not only made a resistant film but at the same time faced a growing resistance to queerness and queer expression in Kenya. They kept the ending they wanted but also chose to comply with the law and not risk the safety of their members by screening or uploading the film, even though this meant that the film is nearly impossible for Kenyans to see unless they are able to access it internationally or obtain a smuggled copy.<sup>6</sup> These complex decisions and maneuvers by the Classification Board and the Nest Collective—each practicing and pushing back against the other's practices of resistance—show that resistance does not follow any neat or discernible path, that it is never as simple as simply showcasing forms of agential resistance or celebrating transgression against power.

Though I begin my discussion here with *Stories of Our Lives*, a film made by a director who identifies as queer about the lived experiences of queer Kenyans, it is important to note that while the Nest Collective's film anthology embodies so many of the different forms of resistance that I see in queer African cinemas more broadly, it is not necessarily typical of the films discussed. The films and videos I examine throughout *Queer African Cinemas* come from a range of African countries, all with their own cinematic traditions, aesthetic practices, political histories, and sets of censorship regulations that determine not only the types of queer stories that are told but also how the films circulate locally, regionally, and globally. Moreover, what I am calling queer African cinemas in this book are not only films made by queer filmmakers or their allies. In fact, many popular films that portray queer characters, especially those emerging from West African video film traditions like Nollywood, are structured as cautionary tales intended to warn audiences against the dangers or threats of homosexuality. It has indeed been a challenge to put the types of films that queer Africans have largely found to be homophobic, films that often resist projects that make queer African lives habitable, next to life-affirming films like *Stories of Our Lives*. But it is precisely this juxtaposition that has helped me to understand how all queer African films, regardless of why they were



made or who made them, invite an understanding of resistance as a messy process that entails both opposing and consenting to forms of power, that involves fearing for the worst but dreaming of the best, and that sometimes demands slow or imperfect forms of negotiation. In this way, the films discussed in this book do not pit a “noble, heroic subaltern” against a “corrupted, malicious state,” to borrow the phrasing of Ebenezer Obadare and Wendy Willems (2014, 9) in their introduction to the collection *Civic Agency in Africa: Arts of Resistance in the 21st Century*. Rather, each film I discuss here—and I examine a range of audiovisual output across the continent that includes avant-garde films, realist dramas, popular melodramas, occult films, and a music video—reveals how the types of resistance in queer African cinemas are always multilayered, always determined by a complex entanglement of racial, gendered, and sexual identities and national politics as well as by conventions of genre and format and modes of circulation. But it is my contention that paying attention to these multidirectional vectors of resistance makes palpable the way that the precarities and vulnerabilities of queer African life exist alongside modes of survival, practices of care, and aspirational imaginaries.

### *Queer and African and Cinemas*

I situate this project within the emerging and burgeoning field of queer African studies. Though there is still some debate about the applicability of the term *queer* to same-sex practices and desires in Africa, it has been the case that, at least for the past decade, the word *queer* has been widely used by those on the continent as a mode of thinking through and about diverse, nonconforming African sexualities and of challenging heteronormative assumptions. As Zethu Matebeni, a leading South African sociologist, curator, and filmmaker, and Jabu Pereira, director of the Johannesburg-based LGBTI+ media advocacy organization Iranti, write in their preface to *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities*, the use of *queer* is “understood as an inquiry into the present, as a critical space that pushes the boundaries of what is embraced as normative” (2014, 7). But Matebeni and Pereira also understand that the term *queer*, like the acronym LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) that it often stands in for, has the potential to conflate very different types of people and to reinforce invisibilities within the broader queer community. They also make clear that *queer* should be applied not just to twenty-first-century identities and that gender nonconformity in different forms has existed on the African continent for centuries, despite false claims that it is un-African. Thus, Matebeni and Pereira use the space-making and



boundary-pushing term *queer* to acknowledge many forms and local categories of nonheteronormative sexual identities while emphasizing that it is far from perfect and that it has much work still to do. The Ugandan intellectual and activist Stella Nyanzi articulates some of this work when she argues that queer inquiry in Africa must take on a “two-pronged approach, namely queer-ing African Studies on the one hand, and Africanising Queer Studies on the other hand” (2015a, 127). Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi (2016, xiv) writes in his introduction to the first queer-focused special issue of *Research in African Literatures* (RAL) in 2016 that the question now is “less about the applicability of queer and more about the already-existing applications of queer in Africanist research.”

This, of course, does not mean that *queer* is a universally accepted term. As Serena Dankwa argues in *Knowing Women: Same-Sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana*, her study of intimate friendships between working-class women in Ghana, many people who engage in same-sex practices in Africa are uncomfortable with or unfamiliar with the language of sexual identity (e.g., *queer*, *gay*, *bisexual*, *lesbian*) that is more common in larger cities and activist or “Afropolitan” circles. Although she judiciously avoids using the term *queer* to describe people who would not use it to describe themselves (preferring instead to underscore the multiple and sometimes ambiguous ways same-sex-desiring women “know” each other), Dankwa, like the thinkers above, also recognizes the strategic usefulness of *queer* in literary and activist spaces across the African continent. While not ideal, part of the appeal of the term *queer* is that it can be more flexible as well as more inclusive of indigenous same-sex practices that fall outside of “gay” identities and that it can, despite its association with Euro-American spaces and identities, provide theoretical tools that unsettle rigid, Western understandings of sexual identities (Dankwa 2021, 24, 37). My own position follows the scholars above: despite its imperfections, the term *queer* is useful in naming both a range of nonheteronormative sexualities and the critical possibilities and openings they afford.

But what exactly constitutes queer African cinema? While the African literary scene has seen several queer-identified African authors—such as Binyavanga Wainaina, Jude Dibia, Unoma Azuah, Kevin Mwachiro, Frieda Ekotto, Frankie Edozein, Akwaeke Emezi, and Romeo Oriogun—making public statements, going on book tours, or publishing work that explicitly challenges homophobia, the same cannot be said of the African film scene. Feature films about queer African characters tend not to be made by people who publicly identify as part of the queer African community. Many, in fact, are not made by Afri-

cans at all, and some are made by African filmmakers who make films to depict homosexuality as a threat to the social order. Unlike queer African writing, queer African films often run into problems with national censorship boards that determine what can and cannot be said or shown. In their wonderfully ambitious and carefully argued book *Queer Cinema in the World*, Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt address this challenge with regard to queer cinema throughout the world. Citing the limitations of narrow definitions that reduce queer cinema to productions by or explicitly for queer people, the authors prefer a model that is more capacious and that is free from Western cultural presumptions about what a gay director or gay audience might look like. Schoonover and Galt (2016, 14) argue for an approach that does not “determine in advance what kinds of films, modes of production, and reception might qualify as queer or do queer work in the world,” and they set out to answer an equally capacious question: Given that queer world cinema is such an open-ended category, “where in the world is queer cinema?” Their response takes them to queer film festivals in New York and India and Botswana, and to video stores, BitTorrent sites, underground DVD markets in Iran and Egypt, and, of course, to sites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Such an itinerary allows them to leave open the definition of cinema, claiming that it is “a space that is never quite resolved or decided” (3), and to sidestep the tangled debates about how one defines world cinema. Rather, they opt for a discussion of a queer cinema that “enables different ways of being in the world” and “creates different worlds” (5), and they focus on “cinema’s unique role in sustaining and making evident queer counterpublics” (2).

Because the categories of “queer” and “cinema” can encompass so many different forms, I follow Schoonover and Galt in keeping the definition of the terms as capacious as possible. Additionally, one must always keep in mind that “the invention of Africa” by colonialists, as V. Y. Mudimbe puts it, means that “Africa” as an epistemological object of knowledge is also always a bit unresolved. This means that I am working with several terms—*queer*, *Africa*, and *cinema*—that are all multiply and sometimes arbitrarily determined and boundless. However, because one of the goals of this book is to think particularly and regionally about queer African cinema and the politics of place, I argue that in order to understand the world of queer African cinema, one must pay attention not only to the porousness of categories but also to the various material and political challenges faced by African audiences and African filmmakers in a global world. In other words, while Schoonover and Galt (2016, 30) privilege films that partake in “worlding,” a term that is necessarily diffuse, a more specific set of questions arises when trying to define queer African

cinema, especially considering the paucity of publicly queer-identified filmmakers and the role of state censorship boards in trying to limit or prohibit films with queer African content. My aim, then, is to attend to the unique complexities and challenges of filmmaking, exhibition, and distribution in Africa, complexities that sometimes make it difficult to fit queer African cinema neatly into broader projects of “worlding” and creating queer world cinema counterpublics.

In order to understand the particularities and specifics of queer African cinema, I would like to begin by outlining three main categories into which it can be grouped: 1) international art films; 2) popular melodramas made for local audiences; and 3) documentaries by and about queer African communities. International art films, or those feature films that primarily circulate at global film festivals, are oftentimes the most visible and well-known queer African films to both local and global audiences. Though there were a few Senegalese films in the 1970s that had minor queer characters, as well as a few relatively obscure anti-apartheid films with queer content made by white South Africans in the 1980s, it is Mohamed Camara’s *Dakan* (1997) that is most often considered the first global African feature film about homosexuality. *Dakan* is a Guinean film about two teenage boys, Sory and Manga, who fall in love, are separated by their parents, and then reunite. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival as part of the Director’s Fortnight and went on to tour at primarily international gay film festivals. In 1998 it won the Los Angeles Outfest award for “OUTstanding International Narrative Feature” and then opened in French cinemas the following year. Though the film screened at the French-Guinean cultural center in Guinea as well as at the 1999 FESPACO (Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou)—Africa’s most famous film festival, which occurs every other year in Burkina Faso—almost all of its accolades were received abroad, where international Black audiences had a much more positive reaction to the film than audiences based on the continent. Four years after *Dakan* was released, *Karmen Geï* (2001), a Senegalese version of Bizet’s opera *Carmen* in which Karmen’s lovers are both male and female (see chapter 1), was selected at major film festivals such as Cannes, the Toronto International Film Festival, Sundance, and the New York African Film Festival. It also screened for about six weeks in Dakar but was eventually banned after the theater was stormed by two to three hundred people wielding machetes who threatened to burn the theater down. Though the protest was technically over the use of a Mouride (Sufi Muslim) holy song during the scene in which Karmen’s female lover is buried in a Catholic cemetery—and not over the first-ever depiction of African lesbian