

The Representation of Globalization in Films About Africa

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
the College of Fine Arts of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2012

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This dissertation titled
The Representation of Globalization in Films About Africa

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ABSTRACT

MOHAMMED, ABDULLAH H., Ph.D., August 2012, Interdisciplinary Arts

The Representation of Globalization in Films About Africa (200 pp.)

Director of Dissertation: Michael B. Gillespie

This dissertation explores how films about Africa depict contemporary economic globalization. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which narrative styles and visual imagery are used to project themes of economic globalization and how these styles are ideologically framed to reflect the neoliberal economic policies in Africa. By concentrating upon the ways in which these films represent globalization, this project breaks from the popular tendency in discussions related to cinema and globalization in Africa to apply a political economy approach that focuses mainly on the socioeconomic and political structures of film industry in Africa. Accordingly, this dissertation generates a dialogue between the art of cinema and the critical discourse on globalization through a theoretical framework informed by African cinema, social realist cinema, and Third Cinema. This dialogue is developed as the dissertation responds to two posed basic questions: What socioeconomic realities in regard to economic globalization are presented in contemporary films about Africa? And, secondly, what cinematic modalities are used to narrativize these socioeconomic realities?

The study focuses on four films: *Hyenas* (Djibril Diop Mambety, 1992); *Bamako* (Abderrahmane Sissako, 2006); *Darwin's Nightmare* (Hubert Sauper, 2004); *End of the Rainbow* (Robert Nugent, 2007). It includes an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction provides a brief overview of the study and a literature

review. Chapter one offers a discussion on the *Hyenas* focusing on the violence associated with the implementation of the neoliberal economic policies in Africa. Chapter two is an analysis of *Bamako* centering on the destructive nature of the economic globalization. Chapter three provides an examination of documentary film depiction of the agent of economic globalization as reflected in *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare*. The conclusion finalizes the discussion with some recurring insights regarding the general representation of economic globalization in films about Africa.

Approved: _____

Michael B. Gillespie

Assistant Director of Film

DEDICATION

To

My mother, Rehema Mussa Mohammed, who, even though she has never been to school herself, never retreated from challenging me to stay focused and from policing my academic life by kicking me off my bed at dawn to get ready to go to school during my early days of academic journey, or by repeatedly asking me in the recent past months, “when are you coming back?”

and to

the memory of my father, Hamza Mohammed Ali (May Allah rest his soul in peace), who provided me with opportunities to explore my own career and taught me how to live.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An undertaking like the writing of a dissertation depends on inspirations, support, understanding, and encouragement of a countless number of individuals. Unfortunately, space cannot accommodate an extensive list of individuals who helped me directly or indirectly during the course of writing this dissertation. However, I take this opportunity to thank those that I can quickly recall, and those without whom this work would not have seen the light of realization.

I thank my academic advisor and my dissertation director, Dr. Michael B. Gillespie, for his inspiration, guidance, and generous mentorship. His advice from the conception of this study through the proposal writing and later the actual writing of this project was instrumental in shaping this dissertation into the form it is now. I am indebted to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Andrea Frohne, Dr. Ghirmai Negash, and Dr. Marina Peterson, for their invaluable feedback, insight, and guidance. Their quick responses and invaluable comments fashioned my thoughts to this printable text. Dr. Dora Wilson, the director of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts, deserves special thanks for her continued support, encouragement, and her tireless attention to my questions. My thanks are to the rest of the faculty of the School of Interdisciplinary Arts at the Ohio University – Dr. William Condee, Dr. Charles Buchanan, and Dr. Vladimir Marchenkov – for their relentless patience and unwavering direction. I really appreciate their thoughtful academic advising that sharpened not only my writing but also my thinking through my academic life at Ohio University. I wish to extend my gratitude to Brenda Llewellyn for tolerantly managing my administrative issues.

I would like to thank the School of Interdisciplinary Arts at Ohio University for offering me a three year graduate assistantship and the University of Dar es Salaam for granting me a study leave and financial support for the duration of my studies in the United States. I would also like to thank the African Studies Program at Ohio University specifically Dr. Steve Howard, and LKCCAP particularly Dr. Thomas Smucker and Dr. Edna Wangui, for the financial support I received at crucial moments during the writing of my dissertation. Their funding stopped me from quitting, packing, and going at the times when funds from other sources ended. I wish to express my thanks to the administration of the Department of Fine and Performing Arts at the University of Dar es Salaam and to my colleagues who supported my initiative to challenge myself for the doctoral program. I am specifically grateful to the head of department, Dr. Herbert Makoye, and to Professor Amandina Lihamba for their corroboration and inexorable support in resolving many of the crises I faced in the course of my studies be them administrative and/or financial.

I am thankful to Dr. Ryan DeRosa for his belief in me and for his insightful advising during my first two years in the program. His ideas molded my perception in film studies and informed my analytical stance on cinematic texts. I am indebted to my friend and peer advisor, Dr. Spreelin MacDonald, for his intellectual nourishment, generous time set for brainstorming on weekly basis at Baker Center's Front Room, for reviewing my proposal drafts, and for his patience to listen to at times meaningless points that I was trying to make. His mentoring and unswerving help constitute a model and have left a permanent mark on my academic and personal life.

Special thanks to my friend and personal advisor, Dr. Raphael Mutepa and his family. His diligent advising and indefatigable reviewing of the first drafts of this dissertation were instrumental to the completion of this study and of my graduate program in general. I am grateful to him for spending countless evenings either face-to-face or over the phone discussing points that I was grappling with to make this a readable document.

My thanks also go to my friends, Abdulmajeed Alsaadoun, Stephen Ndibalema, Salah Elsheitami, Francis Semwaza, Abobo Kumbalonah, Kingsley Antwi-Bosieko, Edwina Lebbie, and Jacob Okumu for their moral and material support. To Dr. Frowin Nyoni and Dr. Augustin Hatar for their valuable support and just recruitment at the beginning of my career at the University of Dar es Salaam, and to Professor Mbye Cham for proposing globalization films about Africa from which I got a sample for my study. I am thankful also to Dr. Francis Godwyll for his constructive ideas during the brainstorming session that led to designing this dissertation, and to my editor, Patricia L. H. Black, for her sharp eye and editorial skills that not only have cleared most of the errors but also polished my work.

Most notably, I would like to thank my immediate and extended family – my mother, Rehema Mussa Mohammed; my father, Hamza Mohammed Ali (R.I.P.); my siblings Mussa, Mohammed, Jokha, Gharib, Ahmad, Faried, Biache, Fatawi, Abass, and Seif – for their love, constant belief in me, and unconditional support that has been a constant expression of their confidence in my academic pursuit. Without their encouragement, moral and financial support, I would not have academically and

substantially ascended this far. I am indebted to my father and mother-in-law, Kassim Ali Khamis and Fatma Abdallah Nassor respectively, for taking care of my wife and children during my seven years in the United States.

Finally, I am especially grateful to my wife, Khadija Kassim Ali, and our three children Munir, Yaser, and Fatma. I am thankful for her patience and for understanding the challenges I was facing in my academic endeavor and for not complaining over my abandonment of the family. Instead, she chose to motivate me and to accept the burden of taking care of our children alone and of frequently answering their streams of questions, “where is my father?” and “when is he coming back?”

To all I say, “Asanteni Sana.”

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation contributes to the on-going debate about globalization with particular interest in how globalization is represented in cinema. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how films about Africa depict contemporary economic globalization. The study analyzes the artistic representation of globalization in films about Africa. It focuses on four films – *Hyenas* (Djibril Diop Mambety, 1992); *Bamako* (Abderrahmane Sissako, 2006); *Darwin's Nightmare* (Hubert Sauper, 2004); *End of the Rainbow* (Robert Nugent, 2007) – to investigate how these films question and comment on the consequences of contemporary economic globalization. In other words, the study examines the popular narrative styles used to project themes on economic globalization and how these styles are ideologically framed to reflect the neoliberal economic policies in Africa, policies that are implemented as part of economic globalization. This dissertation situates the selected films as art that participates not only in the academic but also in the political debates concerning contemporary economic globalization. By generating a dialogue between the art of cinema and the critical discourse on globalization, this dissertation is situated within a theoretical framework informed by a broad scholarship on African cinema, social realist cinema, Third Cinema, and globalization theories.

Recent scholarship on Africa and globalization tends to take a political economy approach to address the relationship between cinema and globalization. This approach focuses on globalization affects the socioeconomic and political structures of a specific

African nation or a particular African film industry.¹ In these studies, the authors explore how the film industry infrastructure has been affected and/or facilitated by global economic changes. These changes are discussed together with reference to the countries in which local film industries adapt to global changes. The present study, however, examines the visual imagery and the messages with which the films are loaded to precisely examine the meaning of globalization. This meaning is significant because the messages of these films contrast with the popular narratives in conventional cinema and pro-economic globalization literature. This dissertation reveals both the challenges globalization policies face and the aesthetic representation of these challenges.

This study puts equal emphasis on themes in films critical to economic globalization and on the cinematic techniques films employ to present these themes. This emphasis is necessary if we consider the function of film as an art form within the African context wherein art in its traditional sense is always multitasked. Ukadike views African cinema as a social, political, and cultural force engaged in reflecting Africa's sociopolitical life.² This view tasks cinema with the responsibility to address socio-cultural and political issues apart from providing entertainment to the mass whose image on the screen has consistently suffered negative representation since the invention of the film apparatus. With this didactic function, African cinema in general and films about

¹ Mhando, Martin. "Globalization and African Cinema: Distribution and Reception in the Anglophone Region." *Journal of African Cinemas* 1.1 (2009): 19-34. Accessed on 12 Nov. 2010.

² Ukadike, Nwachukwu F. *Black African Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Africa in particular have to deal with the projection of a wide range of issues in order to educate the masses.

In this dissertation, however, I push beyond discourses on the didactic role of cinema in the postcolonial African context, to recognize both the phenomenon of globalization and the efforts to narrativize globalization in Africa, and thus, gauge the aesthetic, political, and ideological ramifications of this narrativization. I contend that issues related to globalization and the impact of global economic policies on local communities is viewed differently at various places despite their common features and this might have influenced the way films present their stories. This dissertation, therefore, endeavors to answer the following basic questions: What socioeconomic realities of economic globalization are presented in contemporary films about Africa? What cinematic modalities are used to narrativize these socioeconomic realities?

Film has continued to play an important role in the on-going debate on globalization in all its facets. On one hand, the debate is concerned with globalization's impact on the changing nature of the film industry, namely financing, production, distribution, and exhibition processes. On the other hand, globalization has become a frequent theme in films made worldwide, particularly in Africa. These films have served as a medium in projecting the various meanings which audiences across the globe associate with African globalization. More importantly, films addressing globalization have become a quick material reference to the detailed conditions of the people and their environments. Furthermore, these films have facilitated intellectual debates on the controversies brought about by globalization.

This dissertation presents a detailed analysis of the representation of economic globalization in contemporary films about Africa, and explores their narratives within an interdisciplinary field of critical discourse on globalization. It should be understood that globalization is a sweeping, though heterogeneous, phenomenon affecting the world today while finding complex depictions in many contemporary films about Africa. For as long as globalization is a dominant force in Africa and the world, creating economic, political, and social dichotomies, filmmakers will be drawn to the theme of globalization and its effects. Thus this study lays the groundwork for critical discourse on globalization and films about Africa that will surely be of central importance to the study of African cinema.

In this section, I discuss and analyze basic issues in regard to representation within African cinema, Third Cinema, and the general consideration of economic globalization with particular interest in neo-Marxist understanding. I also present the outline of this dissertation as the conclusion to the section.

Africa and Its Cinematic Representations: Issues and Styles

Cinematic representations that reference African socio-economic and political issues have been common in films made across the continent since the early 1960s. These films include educational documentaries, promotional videos, shorts, and feature-length films. Since the early 1990s, however, interest in the production of films that respond to neoliberal economic policies has grown. Films generally referred to as globalization films are characterized by plots that are primarily centered on the implementation of economic

policies adopted by most African countries since the mid-1980s. Thematically, the films range from critical of the policies and therefore a reaction against them to being supportive of global economic intervention in Africa. Apart from the four films mentioned at the beginning of this study as its focus, other globalization films from Africa include *ARLIT: Deuxieme Paris* (Idrissou Mora Kapi, 2005); *The Debt of Dictators* (Erling Borgen, 2005); *Thomas Sankara: The Upright Man* (Robin Shuffield, 2006); *Clouds Over Conakry* (Cheikh Fantamady Camara, 2007); *Les Feux de Mansare* (Mansour Sora Wade, 2009); and *A Screaming Man* (Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, 2010), to mention just a few. These films include both fiction and non-fiction.

Cinema, and particularly African cinema, has played three significant roles simultaneously: educational, entertaining, and political. In its educational role, African cinema is referred to by Ousmane Sembene, its most famous director, as “night school of my people.”³ That is, cinema has to educate the audience while delivering a political message at the same time it entertains. According to Sheila Petty (1996), African filmmakers working in the immediate postcolonial context “were concerned with the role cinema would play in the political, economic and cultural development of the continent” (6). As championed by seminal figures such as Viera, Sembene, and Cisse, the educational role has been heavily emphasized in discourses about African cinema. The entertaining role serves as the ground on which both the educational and political roles will to be carried out. In the African cinematic context, therefore, cinema was seen as the

³ Quoted in Ukadike, Nwachukwu F. *Black African Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 97.

vehicle through which political and educational messages could be transmitted to the broader audience.

Consequently, the imagery and atmosphere of the films in this dissertation demonstrate the African audiences' multiple interpretations of their situations enhanced by understanding of their own societies, particularly the economic challenges of the current economic globalization. Thus, the selected films – *Hyenas* (1992), *Bamako* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow* (2007) – play an important part in evoking the discussion about the present situation and participate in the debate as material that critiques the inefficiency surrounding the present approach of economic globalization. Suzan MacRae (1995) holds that “African audiences recognize issues in the narrative and perceive the direct relationship of the film to their own social and political problems” (57). This recognition necessitates a mixed approach in terms of narrative styles. That is why to flavor some globalization films and make them more compelling to their audience and sponsors, some directors of fiction films about Africa employ documentary techniques as Abdulrahmane Sissako in *Bamako* (2006). This is to say, the documentary trope dominates the narrative structure of globalization films in Africa. This interesting observation has, therefore, swayed this dissertation to incorporate both fiction and documentary films about Africa. Studying these two forms helps to explore various narrative styles as well as the ideological significance of a particular aesthetic style that a film employs.

Films from Africa that depict African issues within African perspective consistently demonstrate a non-western cinematic aesthetic. Indeed, this consistency has

an ideological urgency the foundation of which is resistance to the capitalist life style and its manipulation of the art of cinema. Josephine Woll (2004), for example, finds a clear connection between the Soviet cinema and that of Francophone Africa. *Hyenas* (1992), *End of the Rainbow* (2007) and *Bamako* (2006) come from Francophone Africa. Woll acknowledges the aesthetical influence based on Soviet cinematic tradition such African filmmakers as Sembene, Cisse, and Sissako have developed by being trained in the Soviet Union. This influence is evident in the tone that is constant in the works of these directors. The socioeconomic and political issues reflected in the films to be analyzed in the following chapters have been influenced by filmmakers' training and interactions with global filmmaking techniques in the way they tell their stories.

Social Realist Cinema

Both stylistically and thematically, films about Africa draw a great deal from social realist narrative techniques. These techniques interrogate people's lives very closely through depicting images that are similar to day-to-day experiences of the audience, covering a wide range of socioeconomic and political issues in a less-fantasized way. In his typology of African cinema, Manthia Diawara (1992) identifies a social realist narrative modality together with colonial confrontation and return to the source. He argues that social realist cinema "defines itself by thematizing current socio-cultural issues" (141). This contextualization of narrative movements, and more specifically social realist cinema, provides a way to consider the films selected in this dissertation in relation to African social realist tradition.

Dickson Eyoh (1998) argues that “a greater sensitivity to the cultural and symbolic dimensions of political power enables social realist cinema to avoid some of the more profound limitations of the radical political economy perspective” (113-114). Building upon Eyoh’s analysis, I argue that such limitations are currently sidestepped in African social realist cinema. Recent releases suggest that these films are now engaging to discussions of socioeconomic and political issues in a kind of an open forum to accommodate different ideological perspectives. In addition, emphasis on encountering external forces in regard to damage to the culture and the economies of African nations provides an open-ended creativity in terms of narrative structure and production techniques that do not necessarily have to maneuver around the political powers in place.

The terms *social* and *realist* are understood in this dissertation in relation to Carrie Moore’s (1973) reading of Sembene’s work as *social* because of his rejection of “any artistic activity which is not socially redemptive and which does not reflect his society” and *real* because “although the creative process is nourished by imagination, it frequently draws on the real” (30). It is within this understanding that the films discussed here illustrate social and economic issues drawn from the lived experiences of African people. These issues, in fact, reflect people’s challenges and their struggles to survive.

Indeed, social realist films are characterized by themes of existing sociocultural problems set in binary opposition, centered on stories of marginalized groups of people, and using a double perspective.⁴ This characterization conforms to the central themes in *Hyenas* (1992), *Bamako* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow*

⁴ Eyoh, Dickson. "Social Realist Cinema and Representations of Power in African Nationalist Discourse." *Research in African Literatures* 29.2 (1998):112-127.

(2007), films that are categorically about existing socioeconomic issues. Eyoh (1998) observes that this thematic category “share(s) the discourse of radical political economy of the 1970s and early 1980s on the postcolonial experience” (113). Such discourse dominated the social, economic, and political discussion around Africa based on Marxist/neo-Marxist ideas echoed by African intellectuals, political activists, and heads of state, as well as artists. It is within this concern that film joins in fostering discussion of the contemporary socioeconomic and political issue. In films about Africa, social realist narrative techniques, together with other anti-capitalist cinematic techniques, are used both to explore and to critique the neoliberal economic practices. These techniques include Third Cinema approaches.

Third Cinema

Third Cinema originated in Latin America as both a theoretical concept and an aesthetic expression. Paul Willemen (1989) argues that “its immediate inspiration was rooted in the Cuban Revolution (1959) and in Brazil’s Cinema Novo” (4). The term Third Cinema was co-founded by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino and acquired its popularity towards the end of 1960s with the release of Solanas and Getino film *La Hora de los Hornos (The Hour of the Furnaces, 1968)* and the manifesto they authored after the film release, especially the one titled “Towards a Third Cinema.”⁵ The manifesto, Ukadike posits, “addresses two major concerns, calling for the

⁵ Pines, Jim and Paul Willemen (eds.). *Questions of Third Cinema*. London: BFI Publishing House, 1989, p.5.

rejection of the cinematic model imposed by Hollywood tradition and the need to create a new cinema that would fulfill ideological and revolutionary purposes” (98). Indeed, both the film and the manifesto publication reflected a revolutionary mission aimed at addressing the socioeconomic and political tensions of its times. This revolutionary mission coincided with revolutionary movements in different parts of the world including struggles for independence in Africa. Anthony Guneratne (2003) calls this coincidence the “same tricontinental call to arms against social injustice and post-imperial exploitation” (4). Some postcolonial African filmmakers who were angered by colonialism, disillusioned by their post-independence governments, and struggling for a film language to vent out their anti-imperial thoughts, found a niche in Third Cinema and consequently borrowed its cinematic aesthetics. Ukadike (1994) sees this attempt by African filmmakers and those in developing countries as “perhaps the basic concept of film as an artistic tool with which to counter the hegemony of imperialism” (7).

Considering globalization as a phenomenon with imperial and neocolonial implications, it becomes important to attend to the insights that may arise from interpreting the selected films through the anti-imperial and anticolonial questions characterized by Third Cinema. Situating this study within African social realist cinema discourse and reading its function as a tool that opposes socioeconomic inequality provide an avenue to examine the films in a radical political approach that is artistically informed by Third Cinema. Solanas defines Third Cinema as “... the expression of a new culture and social changes. Third Cinema gives an account of reality and history. ... [I]t

is the way the world is conceptualized and the genre.”⁶ However, the conceptualization of the world and of the social changes takes different forms and need an informed perspective to theorize and reinforce action. Hence, Third Cinema emerged as not only a concept but also an artistic force to counter the dominant culture that was and still is thought to threaten cultural and economic development of the evolving nations.

It should be understood that this study by no means reads African cinema or even films from Africa, as referred in this dissertation, as synonymous to Third Cinema even though some elements of Third Cinema are found in each of the films examined in this study. This is because not every film from Africa is radical and politicized, and therefore qualifies exclusively as Third Cinema. For example, the commercial video production boom in Africa led by Nollywood does not generally reflect Third Cinema characteristics even though some of its films conform to the Third Cinema agenda. Yet, a great body of African cinema produced within the tradition of the first and second generations of African cinema shares Third Cinema and Third World cinema valued characteristics. Ukadike (1994) quotes from Teshome Gabriel (1982) four trends of Third World cinema that African cinema has adopted – to (1) decolonize the mind; (2) contribute to the development of radical consciousness; (3) lead to a revolutionary transformation of society; and (4) develop new film language with which to accomplish this task” (7). The contemporary commercial videos have successfully altered the audience’s dependency on the conventional Hollywood films and have yet to transform society or develop a radical consciousness. Instead, they try to imitate a film language close to the dominant narrative

⁶ Quoted Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (eds.). *Questions of Third Cinema*. 1989, p. 9.

of Hollywood, a narrative of which Third Cinema proponents have called for its rejection.

This dissertation recognizes Marxist aesthetics that stylize these selected films for the study. This concern is crucial because the films analyzed here deal with almost the same issues central in postcolonial Africa – such as inequality, social unrest, poverty, and underdevelopment. In this regard, immediately after the independence, it became obvious for filmmakers to adapt a theoretical and technical framework of Third Cinema that Gabriel (1982) opines to be “that cinema of the Third World which stands opposed to imperialism and class oppression in all their ramifications and manifestations” (2). Although Third Cinema has had a central political function, it had at different moments since its inception been featured differently and reformed consistently to fit the filmmaking need of film at a particular time in history.

According to Michael Chanan (1997), there have been shifts in both the theoretical and practical uses of the Third Cinema concept over time and across different social and cinematic contexts. He contends that “[T]he original Third Cinema was premised on militant mass political movements of a kind which in many places no longer exists, and upon ideologies which have taken a decisive historical beating” (388). In fact, Chanan’s contention restates what Gabriel (1982) posits, “The concept and proposition of ‘Third Cinema’ used to refer to a special kind of Latin American film. Of late its use encompasses all films with social and political purpose” (121). Yet, despite the many reformulations of Third Cinema’s thesis, it is evident that the cinema has consistently been defined as against the imperialist and neocolonialist aesthetics.

Among the issues that African cinema has critically addressed is the general tendency of African states under globalization to seek financial assistance from international financial institutions. Ukadike (1994) argues that “foreign aid and IMF [International Monetary Fund] loans have not provided any long-term bailout for black African economies,” and instead “the countries that have mortgaged their economies to the IMF use more than two-thirds of their individual GDPs to serve the loans obtained from the World Bank” (66). This issue of foreign aid and the debt question is among the central issues that *Bamako* (2006) addresses. A lawyer for the African Society presents the debt growth of different African countries to indicate that the issue is all over the continent and to show how countries are struggling to repay the debt. In its worst scenario, any attempts to repay the debt, of which the interest grows bigger and bigger, worsens the social services in the country concerned. In *Hyenas* (1992), the debt issue is addressed through individuals introduced to a materialistic atmosphere when foreign money is promised to them. Discussions of these films demonstrate the existence of an alarming problem associated with foreign aid and grants from the multinational institutions.

Robert Cancel’s essay “Come Back Africa: Cinematic Representation of Apartheid over Three Eras of Resistance” (2004) is of particular interest. Cancel’s essay reviews films made between the 1950s and the 1980s in South Africa which are based on the anti-apartheid movement. The review is a snapshot of trends in which South African film evolved with a clear “sociopolitical context of their times” (16). The author contextualizes and historicizes the films with reference to political struggles of the times

of their production to evidence the divergence between Black and White South African populations caused by apartheid policies as depicted in the selected films. The three eras “marking the context, strategies, and intensity of anti-apartheid struggles,” reflect events that changed anti-apartheid actions and reactions of the authorities (16).

This dissertation is also informed by Teshome Gabriel’s *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (1982) that discusses Third Cinema theory and ideology. Gabriel contends that Third Cinema “is a cinema that is committed to a direct and aggressive opposition to oppression. Its purpose will be validated only if it integrates its objectives with the aspirations, values, struggles and social needs of the oppressed class” (15). This commitment leads Third Cinema to involve itself in dealing deeply with “the lives and struggles of the people” (xi). When looking at the issues raised by *Hyenas* (1992) and *Bamako* (2006) or *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow* (2007), it is obvious that these films have adopted some basic characteristics of Third Cinema. As Gabriel elaborates, the connection between style and ideology and their interdependency confirms that style illuminates the ideology.⁷ It is within this understanding that Third Cinema is contextualized within “Marxist or Marxist-inspired cultural theories.”⁸

According to Nwachukwu Ukadike (1994), many leading directors—Ousmane Sembene, Med Hondo, Sara Maldoror, and Djibril Mambety—have characterized African cinema as a weapon to reclaim cultural representation, and as an educational device for

⁷ Teshome Gabriel’s *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (1982)

⁸ *Questions of Third Cinema* (1989), Jim Pines and Paul Willemen

transforming postcolonial society. To Africa struggling for freedom, Ukadike maintains, “cinema was one of the weapons in the war for liberation and an instigator of revolutionary transformation of consciousness,” but to independent Africa, “it became an ideological tool for national development and cultural growth” (304). Based on such functions, addressing issues of globalization can be considered an on-going struggle in which films about Africa participate.

Hyenas (1992), *Bamako* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow* (2007), play a specific ideological role. Each film strives to activate and create a sense of consciousness about contemporary economic globalization policies in Africa. The impact of the messages and the technical representation of these films are examined with the intention of realizing the socioeconomic details that the films explore in making a critical argument on the issues. I argue that globalization arises both thematically and formally as a key aspect of contemporary film about Africa, that in fact, it impresses itself upon filmic narratives about Africa as both of these questions. This dissertation demonstrates how certain formal aspects of these films index political questions surrounding globalization and its effects and realities within Africa. The discussion to come in the subsequent chapters focuses on how contemporary films demonstrate their contributions to these questions.

Documentary: An Alternative Narrative

This dissertation considers the impact of the documentary trend on increased documentary film production with reference to globalization and its impact to local

African communities. These films observe the lived experiences of real people, showing how they are confronted with the new economic waves of change and detailing their struggles and, where necessary, their resistance. Although the stories might be fictional, the reality on the ground legitimizes the commentaries that the films make in regard to the people's struggle against economic globalization processes on the continent and beyond. These commentaries are important because as Third Cinema theorists and filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino argue, "documentary [cinema] is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking," aligning their argument on the fact that "Testimony about a national reality is also an inestimable means of dialogue and knowledge on the world plane."⁹

The documentary option for films dealing with the issues of resistance ideology and struggle is not a new phenomenon in films about Africa. Ukadike (2004) examines "new African documentary practices and the strategies utilized in the construction of cinematic 'reality' of Africa" (159). He considers documentary as an emerging alternative genre in the attempt to "redefine the relationship between the dominant (Western) and oppositional (pan-Africanist) cinematic representations of Africa" (ibid.). Ukadike also emphasizes the role of the documentary as a social art seeking to interrogate the African experience in a context of issues that capture a larger geographical dimension and, of course, a higher sense of reality. Ukadike's emphasis on the aesthetic value of documentaries in dealing with social issues, functions as this dissertation's starting point to explore what documentary films contribute to the debate surrounding economic

⁹ Quoted in Buchsbaum, Jonathan. "A Closer Look at Third Cinema." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 21.2 (2001): 153-166, p.160.

globalization. To Ukadike, the practice and style the films employ are the product of socialist ideology that influenced most of the first and second generation of African filmmakers and was reflected in the general African film practices. This idea is clearly presented in my analysis of *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) and *End of the Rainbow* (2007) whose directors are known for their stance against economic and cultural imperialism that globalization endeavors to inculcate.

Looking at the release dates of these films, an increase in the production of films featuring the globalization theme with emphasis on varied narrative styles becomes evident. It should also be noted that most globalization films from Africa are documentaries, just as in other parts of the world. Laurent Marie (2005), for example, notes an increase in the production of films in France that focus on globalization in the early 2000s, with an average of six to seven films produced annually since the mid-1990s.¹⁰ Globalization documentaries in the other parts of the world produced under the sponsorship of anti-globalization organizations and television networks include *This Is What Democracy Looks Like* (Jill Friedberg and Rick Rowly, 2000), *Breaking the Bank* (Deep Dish Television and Independent Media Center, 2000), and *Life and Debt* (Stephanie Black, 2001).

Economic Globalization

Globalization has become a default word to denote increasing worldwide human, financial, and technological mobility. Jan Aart Scholte (2005) distinguishes five common

¹⁰ Marie, Laurent. "Le Reel A L'Attaque: French Documentary and Globalization." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 23.3 (2005): 89-105, p.90.

conceptions of the term *globalization*, namely, internationalization, liberalization, universalization, westernization or modernization, and respatialization (16). Generally, although the term *globalization* covers this larger spectrum of issues, it is usually defined as the increasing fusion of the world's economic system facilitated by the reduction or removal of obstacles to international trade.¹¹ In other words, globalization defines the integration of regional economies, societies, and cultures which is made possible via communication, transportation, and trade. This collage of processes expresses how broad globalization can be as a topic in academics. The discussion within this study, however, will focus on contemporary economic globalization. To be specific, this dissertation restricts its analysis to films that deal directly with issues of trade liberalization and free market economy. The decision to concentrate primarily on economic globalization was partly influenced by my own personal experience with current economic practices in Africa, and partly because economic globalization is a branch of globalization the impact of which can be clearly identified everywhere. To facilitate my analysis, the study uses a limited juxtaposition of different perspectives on globalization, painting a picture of how local people in different parts of Africa respond to the implementation of neoliberal policies. These responses are critically analyzed along with specific stances on globalization to comment and facilitate the interpretation of the images which are projected on the screen in films.

¹¹ Bonanno, Alessandro et al. "Powers and Limits of Transnational Corporations: the Case of ADM." *Rural Sociology* 65.3 (2000): 440-460.

Economic globalization that Kavaljit Singh (2005) defines it as the “breaking down of national barriers on trade, production and finance” (14) is becoming an increasingly common theme in films and literary works. As mentioned earlier, the interest in making African films centered on current features of economic globalization can be traced only from the early 1990s. Research at hand documents, and at times, challenges the implementation processes of economic globalization, as well as the impact it has on individual countries and their communities. As Bruce Podobnik and Thomas Reifer (2004) argue, “Projects of globalization promoted by world elites have been met with resistance from people on the ground whose livelihoods have often been threatened. As the geographic scale has expanded, and its penetration into daily life has deepened, the scale and intensity of resistance to this system has grown as well” (3). As part of this resistance and as a response to economic globalization challenges, films from and about Africa have joined the trend of giving to the audience views of economic globalization practices. For instance, the films selected for study here dwell upon the role of international financial institutions in the developing world, Africa in particular. Such interest can be associated with the growing awareness of global issues by both African filmmakers and their audience. This awareness is facilitated by increasing technological media advancements.

The films analyzed in this study explore the facets and effects of contemporary economic globalization on African local communities in places where the films have been produced. It should be understood that economic globalization has been critiqued worldwide more than it has been admired for its socioeconomic impact, mostly on local

people around the globe. Within the African realm of globalization scholarship, the voices of Samir Amin and Issa Shivji are familiar in consistently critiquing globalization as an imperialist agenda. The critique is skewed toward neo-Marxist views of globalization with which my dissertation sides. Samir Amin (1999) denounces the present global market system calling “globalization via the markets, a reactionary Utopia” (66). To Amin, globalization is a failed project that has never helped developing countries. This failure is due to the fact that the globalization process gives little consideration to equally engaging people of all walks of life, an issue clearly discussed in *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004), *Hyenas* (1992) and *End of the Rainbow* (2007). Amin sees globalization as generating “conflicts between groups of firms,” which in turn is disastrous to the countries they fight over. He argues for regionalization, which he considers “the only efficient response to the challenges” of the globalization process (54). Amin’s view evidences doubts over the sustainability of globalization in its present exploitative mode. As Alessandro Bonanno (2004) maintains “The situation indicates that globalization is not automatically a sustainable system of capital accumulation and social growth” (41).

The neo-Marxist critique on globalization questions the present-day economic recovery in Africa for its imperialistic approaches. Amin (2008) views globalization as “nothing other than the strategy of conquest” executed to institute financial domination “on a global scale” (55). He views international financial institutions as instruments created to foster an imperial agenda of conquest through debt, unrealized promises of free markets, and the “pseudo-floating foreign exchange markets” (ibid.). Considering the

depiction of economic globalization on the screen, Amin's position becomes important in analyzing films about Africa. In his article "Africa: Living on the Fringe" it is clear that "globalization does not offer Africa solutions to any of its problems" (50). This theme is central in most films on globalization in Africa. Films depicting this theme generally question the idea in Western political and economic policies that a liberalized market economy provides poor nations and local African communities with opportunities for economic success and prosperity. A close study reading of *Hyenas* (1992), *Bamako* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow* (2007) reveals how disastrous foreign investments structured by international financial institutions are to African nations. Films on globalization have devoted a great deal of interest on foreign direct investment in "mineral and other natural resources" that, instead of opening up market opportunities for African goods, insists on foreign imported goods and massive extraction of resources.

Amin and Shivji's writings revolve around the political stance that explains the situations projected in the selected films. Shivji (2002) argues that the vanguard of this dominant discourse along with mainstream economists believes in the inevitability of globalization in that it provides economic "opportunities" necessary when utilized by policymakers. These economists believe that globalization promotes economic growth and a diversified trickle-down effect to political stability and cultural prosperity. Contrary to such neoliberal perspectives, Shivji maintains, are the proponents of the critical discourse, those who "demonstrate extreme polarization, inequalities and inequities" of the globalization process and "the ruinous effect it has on the livelihoods, environment,

[and] ecology of the planet” (104). This perspective is engineered by people politically centered within the “ideologies of resistance” and scholars whose theoretical framework is based on neo-Marxist perspectives. Whereas the former is less evident, the latter school of thought is explicitly reflected in the films analyzed in this dissertation. It can be argued that in these films there is an indication of Soviet influence in film practice, a byproduct of the Soviet-influenced training of some African filmmakers of the postcolonial era such as Sembene Ousmane, Souleymane Cisse, and Abderrahmane Sissako, the director of *Bamako* (2006).

The involvement of Africa in neoliberal globalization is critically examined by Joseph Mensah (2008) among others. Most interesting in the collection of essays edited by Mensah is the way the authors highlight the social, political, cultural, and economic consequences of contemporary neoliberal globalization, a system considered unbalanced in terms of sharing global wealth and power between Africa and the rest of the world. Mensah notes, “When it comes to free trade, the West hardly practices what it preaches to Africa,” referring to unbalanced wealth and power relations (6). Such an imbalance is at the core in several scholarly essays and public views in and outside the development circles. Financial and human immobility, and one-way traffic of natural resources, the issues dealt in *Bamako* (2006), *End of the Rainbow* (2007), and *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004), support theoretical discussions regarding the costs of adapting the neoliberal global policies as clear experiences. These films evidence the impact caused by the policies and their articulation as well as providing resistance techniques to confront contemporary economic globalization.

The question of inequality among individual people, communities, and nations is central to the discussion when arguing against economic globalization. It is not only a question of who invests what, where, and how big the capital is, but also a question of who benefits from the investment. Films analyzed in this dissertation evidence these inequalities. Studies on globalization have noticed an increased inequality among world populations, as John Rapley (2004) ponders the question of inequality and its consequences on state stability. Discussing the relationship between dominant and subordinate classes, Rapley argues that globalization's impact is evident in the way it alters not only political institutions but also political regimes. According to Rapley, the dominant class benefits from globalization at the cost of the suffering subordinate class whose needs are not addressed. This same concern is raised by interviewees who respond on camera in two documentaries under study: *End of the Rainbow* (2007) and *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004). The mine company in *End of the Rainbow* (2007) and the fish industry in *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) represent the characteristics of the dominant class whose tendency is to accumulate wealth in order to achieve the objectives of a neoliberal policy.

Consequently, this tendency to accumulate wealth leads to instability of nations because of the increased inequality between the rich and the poor. Rapley demonstrates a clear correlation between material inequality and political instability, conditions that can lead to violent reactions and ultimately to the fall of nations. This correlation between material inequality and political instability occupies an important place on the spectrum within themes of globalization films. In our case, the issue is quite relevant in *Hyenas* (1992) in which society sacrifices a prospective mayor for promises of wealth from the

foreign investor, and in *Bamako* (2006) in which a former school teacher dreams of having the heads of African heads of state in one basket. In *End of the Rainbow* (2007), violence is evident in the village chief who in despair calls for people to steal from the mine after admitting that the spirits (ancestors) “have abandoned us.” Similarly, in *Darwin’s Nightmare* (2004), the correlation is epitomized by fights among the street children; life here is governed by, as one respondent puts it, “survival of the fittest.”

Taking into account the issues of inequality and sociopolitical instability, globalization is viewed in the films discussed in this dissertation as being violent or at least operating in a violent manner. Jonathan Friedman (2003) associates globalization with worldwide violence at the local level due to disparate conditions occasioned by implementation of transnational economic policies. Violence accompanies states as they adjust themselves during the transformation processes towards global labor markets as part of a free market economy. It should be understood that economic transformations currently happening do not involve local communities from their inception. Consequently, they do not affect just the economy of these people but also disorient their day-to-day lives. That is, instead of benefiting local societies, globalization is blamed for increasing economic dependency, class divisions, immigration conflicts, and corruption brought about by or directly associated with the transnational corporations. It has, as Bonanno (2004) would argue, “increased socio-economic polarization” (38).

These anomalies and other violent acts are consistently depicted in films about Africa. Lindiwe Dovey (2009) views violence as a crucial aspect of African cinema. In her analysis of how African films represent and critique violence on the screen, she calls

for “the need to address forms of violence other than civil war,” and mentions among others things, “continued hegemonic violence through Western institutions and companies” (197). In this dissertation, Dovey’s observation is taken as an essential insight in looking at representation of contemporary economic globalization in *Hyenas* (1992), *Bamako* (2006), *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), and *End of the Rainbow* (2007). Although violence is evident in all these films, I devote discussion of it only on *Hyenas* (1992), a film Clyde Taylor (2000) singles out as “singular in leaving no ideological or sociological space for any viewer to hide, African or foreign, black or white, female or male, in witnessing the moral crisis of contemporary humanity from an African viewpoint” (142). It is a “moral crisis” when a community sacrifices a fellow member who at some point had earned the community’s highest respect. The film uses the lead character’s revenge to outline the way in which the World Bank and IMF use a nation’s weaknesses to impose conditions for the loans and grants they offer. In his analysis of *Hyenas* (1992), Samba Diop (2004) describes the violence in the film as “the violence dictated by fear and the instinct for survival as found in the animal world is also the lot of humans” (77). What Diop and the film propose is that human beings can be corrupted and cross the line to live like animals to fulfill desperate needs or simply due to greed. In this dissertation, violence is analyzed to explore the visualization of the moral and the economic damage caused by the contemporary economic globalization in Africa, a concern that can be viewed as both a cultural and a political failure of African nations.

Much blame for economic globalization is directed toward transnational corporations because they are the visible evidence on the ground. Singh (2005) observes

that globalization “has been shaped by complex and dynamic set of interactions between transnational capital and national states” (14). This observation is an important one for locating the core executing process of the economic globalization agenda. Sheila L. Croucher (2004) argues that globalization is driven by a combination of “related changes that are increasing the interconnectedness of the world,” occurring in “economic, technological, cultural, and political realms” (13). If the world is to be interconnected, then different nations attempting to become one will have to employ intermediaries in order to reach the same common denominator.

Speaking of economic interconnectedness, multinational corporations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization play an important role in what Croucher (2004) calls “linking together far-flung regions of the world” (10). This linking has been received differently in various parts of the world and is distinctly reflected in the films under study. Shot in four different African countries and at different times of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in Africa, the films provide an example of a filmic trend in reexamining the impact of multinational corporations on the African economies. Hence, the effects of globalization have not only become topics of interest in academic publications and economic reports, they have also turned into themes in works of art, including film.

Chapter Overview

Generally, I use textual analysis in this dissertation to understand the position of the selected films in their larger socioeconomic and historical environment. That is, the films are analyzed to establish their connection to the contemporary economic globalization practices in Africa. This connection is important in order to understand the views of the film artists in regard to the on-going debates on the consequences of economic globalization to African economies. Their visual and aural representations of these consequences are examined side-by-side with the responses and critiques that view economic globalization as contrary to enabling African economies and their people to profitably address their economic crunches. This examination reveals how, as far as the films are concerned, globalization has been constantly depicted as a threat rather than a recovery strategy or an encompassing and enabling opportunity to the African population.

This dissertation comprises an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction contextualizes the economic globalization in relation to its depiction in films about Africa within the context of the African social realist movement and Third Cinema theory and practice. It examines the prevailing styles and foregrounded issues that dominate the screening of globalization in the African film practice. That is, the analysis in this study is centered on exploring the aesthetic aspects of how the socioeconomic and political phenomenon of globalization is represented in films about Africa. These aspects include, but are not limited to, the inventive approaches concerning modes of address, realist aesthetics, experimental modalities, and narrative structures. In other words, the

study undertakes a close-up examination of the ways these films negotiate the relationship between film styles and the issues they address.

This dissertation, therefore, evokes a discussion about the depiction of issues related to violence and social unrest in four different countries. In *Bamako* (2006), the immigration issue as related to structural adjustments in Mali is dramatically presented among other socioeconomic issues. The study unveils corruption in the wake of economic recovery programs in Senegal in *Hyenas* (1992). In *End of the Rainbow* (2006) we witness a clear visualization of corruption and a community turned nomadic because of the privatization of a gold mine in Guinea. Finally, *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) captures the predatory nature of transnational trade. Thus, the study views the visual representations and their accompanying verbal testimonies as documented evidence to support the critical debate on the trends of economic globalization.

I offer a brief discussion of economic globalization in general and current economic globalization in Africa, with specific emphasis on IMF and the World Bank policies of the mid-1980s with reference to four films selected to represent issues from four different countries: *Hyenas* (Senegal, 1992), *Darwin's Nightmare* (Tanzania, 2004), *Bamako* (Mali, 2006), and *End of the Rainbow* (Guinea, 2007). The dominant narrative on globalization and its counter narratives that question globalization policies and its implementation strategies are introduced. The discussion on current economic globalization is both situated within the framework of African social realist cinema and connected to issues that the films depict. These selected films are given reference to the

theoretical framework of Third Cinema to open up an avenue to explore their ideological and aesthetic elements.

Chapter 1 examines the depiction of the international financial institutions (World Bank and IMF) in the *Hyenas* (1992). The chapter views the film as an artistic reaction suggesting a reexamination of power relations between Africa and the multinational corporations which represent contemporary economic globalization. The discussion borrows from Johan Galtung's typology of violence¹² to explore the extent to which *Hyenas* dramatizes and thus suggests the role of the World Bank and IMF in instigating both structural and physical violence in the countries to which they offer loans. This depiction is aimed at evoking national consciousness and reexamination of the institutions economic interactions. The analysis is centered on the visual structures that represents the World Bank and IMF and shows how these structures are employed to associate the modern economic globalization in general and the international financial institutions in particular with violence. I argue that throughout the film these institutions are portrayed as violent – physically and morally – to emphasize the danger of corrupting African nations. The film sets this violence as leading to total destruction of local investment to be replaced by foreign investment as an act that endangers local entrepreneurship, economic infrastructure, and the freedom of the nation in question.

Chapter 2 explores the use of four aspects of *Bamako* (2006) — space, montage, parable, and soundscape — as significant ways in which the film articulates the complexities caused by World Bank and IMF policies in Africa. Using the trial which is

¹² Galtung, Johan. *Peace, Research, Education, Action*. Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1975.

the film's central plot that guides the storyline, the chapter shows how the use of various stylistic features entices the audience into questioning the authenticity of the trial and its proceedings. At the same time it builds consciousness of the question of justice as opposed to juxtaposed images of injustice. On one hand, *Bamako* is read as an experimental film whose abstraction in its narrative, as with muted testimonies and the use of local space (a courtyard) as a court, is meant to challenge the traditional ways of storytelling. On the other hand, the film's interactive nature allows the audience to critique the handling of the trial and the film's documentary look is a way of demonstrating Third Cinema aesthetics. Both techniques give the audience a chance to internalize both the message and a command to react to it. I argue that *Bamako* employs a pan-Africanist approach that basically understands African struggles within the context of the whole continent rather than individual countries, in dealing with the current economic globalization debate and its impact in an extremely localized setting. The chapter suggests that the setting is meant to emphasize the widening of the burden of economic globalization shouldered by African nations. It is a call for collaborative action by African nations to fight the systematic institutional vandalism visited on the continent, and a digest of the issues for a common person to understand.

In chapter 3, this dissertation analyzes two documentary films: *End of the Rainbow* (2007) and *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004). It proposes that the documentary style functions as an alternative to fiction film and is a challenge to common understanding of economic globalization within the African context. The chapter interrogates the documentary styles of these films that differ not only in the methods of projection but

also on the issues emphasized to provide an avenue for a broader debate detailing the effects of economic globalization because of their geographical diversity. The discussion is centered on the intertextual dialogue within *End of the Rainbow* (2007) to explore the impact of multinational corporations on the mining industries in Guinea. The chapter explores the use of imagery that compares and contrasts the lives of the people and their environments to pose questions of power relations between the powerless local communities and the powerful transnational trade represented by the corporate system. In *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004), the discussion revolves around how the film frames the nightmare it addresses—the interrupted natural ecosystem and globalization that disrupts the social ecosystem in Tanzania. I argue that both *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) and *End of the Rainbow* (2007) use the voices of marginalized and exploited groups of people to reevaluate the multinational corporations and the general idea of a free market economy. I posit that the production of documentaries of this kind is facilitated by the technological development in film production and exhibition as well as by an ideological necessity to critically offer images that are close to reality in order to make a clear political statement on the growing questions of the continued consequences of economic globalization in Africa.

The last section of this dissertation reflects on the analysis and the general arguments raised by the films under study. Major trends in the representation of contemporary economic globalization on the screen in regard to formal approaches and thematic emphasis as well as the prospective stylistics and ideological challenges are summed up. I reflect on the use of multiple cinematic modalities in the presentation of

economic globalization in the fiction films analyzed, such as, social realism, use of African traditional art forms, and Third Cinema aesthetics. I argue that, various modalities are used including popular traditional storytelling approaches to facilitate the possibility for the audience to make quick reference to their artistic experiences and thus acquire multiple benefits the African art offers including simultaneous education and entertainment. As to the documentaries, I argue that their capturing of actual events gives the economic globalization debate a factual evidence to refer to.

CHAPTER 1—*HYENAS*: “AS VIOLENT AS THE WORLD BANK”

Free markets (“laissez-faire”) and free trade {“laissez-passer”}: these are the two age-old articles of faith of the doctrine of ultraliberalism. And, as inevitably happens with articles of faith, they take precedence, whatever the circumstances, over other considerations or values at issue.

Bernard Cassen (2000)

This chapter examines the depiction of international financial institutions (World Bank and IMF) in *Hyenas* (Djibril Diop Mambety, 1992). It considers the film as an artistic examination of power relations between Africa and multinational corporations, which represent contemporary economic globalization. In an interview with Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike (1999), Mambety clarifies his task in making *Hyenas* as “to identify the enemy of humankind: money, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank” (144). Following this identification, I read *Hyenas* both as a critique of economic globalization and as a cultural product, which, from its time of production to the present, has successfully outlined the superficial nature of foreign-based development agendas in Africa. This superficial nature is due to the fact that the grants provided are always attached to conditions that in most cases benefit the grant givers instead of the grant receivers. Indeed, the film shows that the receivers are morally and economically corrupted by such offers.

Consequently, my interpretation of the film will develop as a three-part analysis. First, I will describe the way the film establishes the socioeconomic dynamics that led to

the call for the intervention of foreign institutions. This section will reflect the social values cherished despite the tough economic situations. It will also consider whether these values can withstand the challenges presented by the newly adopted lifestyle. Such reflection gives a foundation to discussion of technique and the film's underlying message. The second part will address the film's aesthetics, the ways in which *Hyenas* (1992) interlaces different narrative styles, and African oral traditions in particular, with visually rich cinematic techniques to artistically present a political and economic argument of our times. Third, I will discuss the film's ideological urgency, for example, the use of hyenas and their relation to African socioeconomic policies. I will argue that the stylized narrative in *Hyenas* (1992) is meant to establish a correlation between economic globalization and western economic ideologies.

My analysis is centered on the visual representation of the World Bank and IMF in the film and on how these structures are employed to associate the agents of present economic globalization with violence. It will be argued that, throughout the film, these institutions are portrayed as violent to emphasize their threat of corrupting African nations. The film sets this violence as leading to total destruction of local entrepreneurship which is then replaced by foreign investment, an act that not only endangers the economic infrastructure but also the very freedom of the nation in question. The discussion will maintain that the film situates this violence at a national level and thus represents more of a nationalist critique than a pan-Africanist one.

It is important to acknowledge that *Hyenas* is not the first film from Africa to deal with economic globalization. Ousmane Sembene's *Black Girl* (1966) and *Mandabi*

(1967) both highlight pertinent economic issues that can be loosely considered part of economic globalization in post-independent Africa. *Black Girl* sheds light on relevant economic issues that can be loosely considered as part of economic globalization in post-independent Africa, particularly the South-North dependency. In his analysis of *Black Girl* (1966), Rahul Hamid (2002) asserts this aspect of globalization:

It is worth noting also, that although Diouana and her nation have gained independence, she still believes that it is necessary for her to look to France for employment and a future. The boyfriend (Momar Nar Sene) Diouana left behind believes in independence and mocks her Francophilia. The argument between these two characters poses the larger question of whether or not political freedom is viable without financial independence.¹³

In *Mandabi* (1967), the money order that the protagonist, Ibrahima Dieng, receives from his relative in France highlights the postcolonial Senegalese dependence on French support as the solution of its economic affairs. The film not only outlines the consequences of expectations that grow out of African economic dependency on resources from Western countries, it also highlights the adaptation of lifestyles and managerial systems that impose unnecessary bureaucracy.

Despite these early cinematic representations of the socioeconomic issues, *Hyenas* (1992) can be considered a whistle-blower in regard to the economic globalization practices that followed the late 1970s drought and early 1980s economic crises, leading many African nations to accept and implement World Bank and IMF economic policies. It is a whistle-blower because it was the first fiction film to expose the unpopular

¹³ Hamid, Rahul. "Introduction to *Black Girl*." http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2002/cteq/black_girl/. Accessed on 22 March 2012.

neoliberal economic policies that were adopted by African countries in the post-1980s economic crises on the continent. *Hyenas* is the first of its kind to detail the socioeconomic conditions that paved the way for the World Bank and IMF to step in and take over the fixing of the endangered economies of African countries. It also outlines the techniques used by the investors in order, as Eric Edi (2007) argues, “to annihilate individual or collective attempts that threaten their hegemony” (50). In addition, as Djibril Diop Mambety argues in one of his interviews with Nwachukwu Ukadike (1999), the film expresses the ways in which neocolonial relations in Africa are "betraying the hopes of independence for the false promises of Western materialism" and the way in which material sentiments corrupt Africans (139).

It is important to keep in mind how often the visualization of Africa in conventional Western cinema occurs through development project advocacy videos and tourist documentaries that depict extremely stereotypical Africa. Akachi Ezeigbo (2011) considers these works within mainstream film productions as “more interested in the African landscape, in its mystical cum mythical attributes and the flora and fauna of the continent than in the people inhabiting it” (42). In fact, this is how Africa has been featured since it became known in Western literature. On one hand, are images of exotic and sandy beaches or wild adventurous lands full of wonderful animals to hunt, places for leisure, and human species that offer thrilling research projects to discover more about them. On the other hand, there are images of Africa in crisis. These images feature violent and barbaric people, power and blood mongers, hungry children and helpless women, or a poverty- and disease-stricken continent. The former images aim at selling

Africa as a site for discovery, leisure, and escape for stressed but rich Westerners. The latter images aim at yearning for Western involvement with the hope of alleviating a problem or bringing about civilization and peace. Indeed, there is a benefit in these kinds of popular works, in which, the audience is entertained and the industry or the philanthropic organization that produces them is rewarded.

Even though politically correct, the decision and methodology of intervention used by the conventional cinema to address the presented need, they are at times physically violent and morally unacceptable. This imbalance and the lack of effort to correct such projections on the screen is clear and understood considering the ideologies that govern the production of mainstream films. In the recent past, however, African films that feature contemporary economic globalization have striven to ignite an alternative perspective as a way of both questioning and challenging the morality and practicality of what is enclosed within programs spearheaded by multinational financial institutions, the mainstream media, and transnational corporations. *Hyenas*, one such film, offers a different approach in telling the African story in regard to Africa and its interaction with the West. The focus in *Hyenas* is on the consequences on Western economic ideology to Africa.

Hyenas (1992) is an adaptation of *The Visit* (1956), a satirical play by Swiss-German playwright, Friedrich Durrenmatt. Using the play's basic storyline, the film details the impact of foreign intervention on local economies as African nations are forced to merge with the contemporary economic globalization. The film chronicles the return of an old woman, "richer than the World Bank," to her village, Colobane. The

woman, “Linguere Ramatou” (Ami Diakhate), was forced into exile by the Colobane community following her teenage pregnancy that was denied by her onetime lover, “Draman Draameh” (Mansour Diouf). Her return is motivated by: revenge, justified in her mind as a restoration of justice that was denied her by the community thirty years ago. To fulfill her plan for revenge, she offers gifts and enormous amounts of money to community members to side with her and betray and kill Draman, who seems to be a man of the people. Dennis Essar (1996) maintains that:

Chronological references in the film situate the action in about 1975, after the early stages of Senegalese independence, when new African nations by the score found their earlier optimism stifled by the hard realities of international finance, Cold War, postcolonial boundaries, and the difficulties of accommodating modern infrastructure, industry, and armament within traditional culture (80).

Essar’s setting of the film’s action in the mid-1970s is significant because at this time most African nations south of the Sahara started to abandon socialist-motivated economic systems that they had attempted to build in their respective countries during the early decades of their independence in favor of a capitalist-oriented economy. This abandonment was necessitated by the gradual collapse of the then socialist economic block led by the Soviet Union. It was a time when African countries gradually engaged first in three-years and later five-years Economic Recovery Programs (ERPs) before signing for a grant. As Ghelawdewos Araia (2003) puts it, “... after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were notable shifts in African political economy. Almost all of these [African socialist] countries were either gradually seduced or forced by structural adjustment programs (SAPs) to adopt a market economy” (200). Whether Essar’s timing is correct or not, it is a matter open for debate. Mambety himself has clearly referenced

the film with regard to the greed of multinational financial institutions whose interest in investing provoked the collapse of African economies in the 1980s.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the “earlier optimism” to which Essar refers is one among many issues presented in the film. *Hyenas* manages to outline the African socioeconomic crisis, ground the difficult conditions of the continent, and prophesize the worst possible scenarios of Africans and their economies. In short, using symbols and actual representations, the film presents the socioeconomic crisis prior to the intervention of the international financial institutions. An obvious example of this symbolical expression in *Hyenas* entails how the natural growth of the nation is chronicled by the life of one character, Linguere Ramatou. I argue that the denial of Ramatou’s teenage pregnancy should be understood as a metaphor for the development hopes of the newly independent African countries, hopes of change in people’s lives, intellectual growth and economic progress. However, later in the film, we learn that Ramatou’s baby died after one year. By extension, the death metaphorically suggests the political and economic failure of the then new nations. In other words, the film tries to show that the prospects and hopes of the people were not realized and that failure of the nation is not necessarily a result caused by Africa itself. The return of the mother, Ramatou, whose wealth was earned in the Western countries and during a fully adopted Western lifestyle, reiterates the dependency concept that African growth depends solely on the North. In addition, the retribution that Ramatou seeks is a challenge to African leaders who have failed on political independence. Therefore, the death of Draman towards the end of the film is

questioned by a shot that resembles an enslaved community, a community that works to satisfy its material dreams even though its morality is destroyed.

As Joya Uraizee (2006) illustrates, *Hyenas* is “a hybrid” film for it knits together film “elements of three different genres: namely, social realism, magic realism, and allegorical history” (313). This collage of narrative styles opens a wide range of possibilities to address in *Hyenas* although social realism seems to dominate. It should be understood that the theme and fictional setting are both social and reflect the real economic conditions of the people in the wake of the implementation of economic recovery programs in Africa. They are social because they address the effects of neoliberal economic policies on the African population at the particular moment when the film was produced. They reflect the existing economic conditions because the effects are felt even now. More importantly, human greed is real, disillusionment is real, economic hardship is real, foreign investment is real, and the means to address these issues is real as well. The violence of and by the agents of multinational corporations and financial institutions and the corruption of humankind are real and social issues. These facts make it necessary to approach the globalization issue in multiple cinematic ways but to crystalize the approaches that reflect the experiences of the people in their own settings to solidify the argument. In *Hyenas* (1992) these multiple narratives fused together in one film reflect a particular ideological function. They suggest an experimentation of narrative modalities in the African cinema analogous to the experimentation of neoliberal economic policies in African economy. In the following, I consider *Hyenas*’ (1992) presentation of the socioeconomic crisis prior to adoption of economic recovery

strategies, the way in which the film struggles with styles to merge the style and the comment it makes, and finally, the way the film represents economic globalization as violent and adamantly against the growth of local economies in Africa.

On Rags, Gifts, and Betrayal

In the early scenes of *Hyenas*, we are introduced to critical social and economic unrest as well as environmental disaster that require not only immediate attention but also serious intervention measures. A sequence of a migrating herd of elephants is emphasized by close-up shots of the elephants' heavy feet and the dust that fills the air. Other shots detail the different sizes and varied ages of the elephants. The dust signifies a dry and empty land, denoting lack of productivity. Thus, the sequence suggests economic and social crisis, a signifier of disaster. The elephants' migration should be read as escape from the alarming man-made insecurity. It is symbolic of the socioeconomic insecurity that faces Colobane. The social insecurity is symbolized later in the film by the growing greed and enmity among the people of Colobane. The economic insecurity is elaborated by drought and the economic crisis that is detailed in the following sequence. The last sequence of *Hyenas* also details the migration of the elephants and a Caterpillar clearing the land emphasizes the insecurity that necessitates a the escape of the herd of elephants.

As the herd of elephants fills the screen, the shot dissolves to another march. As Essar suggests, “[I]n the following sequence, the animals become a group of men” (79). It is a march of human beings dressed in rags, walking as a group with their hands locked behind their backs. This silent march implies another migration. Whereas the first march

leaves the audience in suspense since it is not possible to speculate the elephants' destination, the second march ends at Draman Draameh's convenience store where they are given drinks. In this sequence, Draman, who is later introduced as an aspiring candidate for city mayor, is portrayed as "a man of the people," a kind and generous man ready to share even the last stocks in his store with his community members. His generosity is made vivid when he hides a bottle of wine that he was offering his visitors when his wife, Khoudia Lo, who seemed against Draman's entertaining behavior, opens the door to come to the store.

The store does not seem to have a lot, is almost empty but accommodating. Kenneth Harrow (2007) refers to the shop before the arrival of Ramatou as "without event," elaborating that "the monkey splayed along the axle of the cartwheel spoke to the life of ordinary existence and of impoverished conditions" (182). Such a reference considers *event* only a lively exchange of money and goods, that is, business transactions. It ignores other events that seem to enliven the store, the social aspect. At Draman's store shoppers chat with the owner, kids receive gifts from the store owner, and customers receive more even if they pay less. At times they are given additional amounts of whatever they buy for whatever they can pay if they cannot pay the full cost. In one sequence, for example, a group of women come together to shop and a medium close-up shot reveals Draman pouring rice into the shopper's container before weighing it, thus he giving the rice free. As if this is not enough, only one woman among the shoppers pays, adding "this is for the three of us," after each had received part of the weighed amount in her bowl. Draman does not even count the money. The group shopping and the way the

storeowner responds are meant to express the communal life where the storeowner is more of service provider than profit maker.

That is why this particular store has a place for the tired folks to rest, get a free drink to quench their thirst, play music, and dance with the owner to celebrate the hospitality of their friend. At this point, the film portrays both Draman and his guests singing and dancing. This unplanned performance grows vigorously. The growth of the performance and the general atmosphere it creates reflect Draman's cheerfulness as a host on one hand, and a sense of togetherness, selflessness, and solidarity on the other. By extension, I argue that it also levels classes among the Colobane people. Hence, to establish the need for a socioeconomic makeover due to social and economic unrest, the dance is frequently interrupted, with cut-away shots. These shots include a restless sequence where a truck hauls furniture from City Hall following the city's failure to pay rent. This scene is followed by a verbal exchange between the city mayor and his wife. The sequence ends with the arrival of a group of street drummers in front of the store, calling for people to come out in big numbers to give a warm welcome to Ramatou, a wealthy Colobane woman who is returning home.

In this regard, the film gradually establishes the situation the community is in. The film's beginning brings to the viewer's attention three important elements that sum up the social and economic situation of Colobane. First, the film presents the deteriorated condition of the people. Their clothes reflect absolute poverty. Their dusty bare feet and their posture as they walk are an indication of disappointment and despair, as Kenneth Harrow (2007) concludes, "[t]here is nothing in their lives and nothing in their future;

nothing to resist if someone were to offer them money” (178). Second, the empty shelves in the store express the lack of basic supplies for the local community. It is an economic crisis. That is, the sequence is basically outlining the difficult economic conditions of individual people, the local business in the community, and a clear economic stagnation of the City of Colobane. Third, the scene establishes that there is a sense of communal life in Colobane, the lifestyle that later in the film is contradicted. That is why the scene details the situation where, despite the socioeconomic difficulties that the community faces at their local level, people are still tied together. As Dayna Oscherwitz (2008) argues, “[p]rior to her [Ramatou’s] arrival, Colobane was, despite its poverty, characterized by a spirit of community and cooperation” (232). In fact, the sequence provides a viewer with a short tour to see what Essar (1996) calls “a dying breed” of traditional African life as represented by Draman, “a tenacious proponent of traditional values and comportment” that is soon (as the film later reveals) to be forced out by “the contemporary African society on the brink of catastrophic change” (78).

Mambety compares hyenas to the World Bank in his elaboration on the nature of hyenas. This is meant to establish a relationship between the institution and the character of an animal, and more specifically, an animal that is associated with deceit in African folktales. J. F. Rayfield (1995) clarifies that “[i]n Wolof tales, it [hyena] tricks other animals and is completely unscrupulous” (81). The trickeries of transnational corporations at present and those of the former colonial agents are vivid enough to validate Mambety’s perspective on the financial institutions. Suffice it to say, cries over the tricks surrounding the agreements made between individual countries and the

multinational financial institutions, the malicious ways in which these institutions handle agreements, and their velocity in implementing the said agreements all resemble the character of hyenas.

In *Hyenas* (1992), the figure that represents the trickery of hyenas is Ramatou, a rich woman. It should be understood that this reference is of great significance in the film in relation to the real nature of hyenas. Whereas this is intended to establish Ramatou as a woman's voice within the Senegalese culture (in which power is retained by men), in order to execute her power and revenge, it can be equally argued that it reflects the characters of the hyenas in the wild. It is believed that when hyenas walk together, they are led by a female. As a leader of her pack, the female hyena chooses places to hunt, decides on a hiding place, and protects the weak against threats. Consequently, Ramatou's wealth and her powerful voice are made to comment on the extreme power exchange within the society that men decide everything. It is an expression of a socioeconomic "U-turn" from socialist-oriented to capitalist-manifested economic systems, a fact that is not easy to accept but one which is obvious.

Ramatou's out-of-wedlock pregnancy and her subsequent life as a prostitute act are equivalent to the prostituted economy of African nations. It is a metaphor for neoliberal economic policies that enforce the removal of any regulatory control by the government. Richard Porton (1995) is right when he considers prostitution in *Hyenas* "a metaphor for how a distorted conception of modernity has made a whole continent subservient of the West's paternalistic ideology, and it is entirely fitting, within this context, for a woman to unmask the ethical morass that has contributed to the current

economic debacle” (100). In fact, Ramatou’s comment to Doctor and Le Professeur (her former teacher) relates to Porton’s argument in relation to prostitution. She observes, “[T]he world made a whore of me, I want to turn the world into a whorehouse.” Such a comment questions Ramatou’s reputation and the institutions she represents. As Mamadou Diouf (1996) puts it, “[O]ne must finally ask if the World Bank is not a high class prostitute, with identical conditions of those of Linguere Ramatou, calling for blood, sweat – as the mayor and deputy mayor abundantly prove – tears and death” (247).

Nothing explains better why *Hyenas* begins with shots expressing urgency than does Mambety’s own definition of hyenas. In an interview with Rachel Rawlins (1993), Mambety observes, “[y]ou know Hyena is a terrible animal. He is able to follow a lion, a sick lion during all seasons. And during the lion’s last days it comes down and jumps on him and eats him, eats the lion peacefully. That is the life of the World Bank”. Considering the hyena’s nature that does not normally kill but has the ability to smell dying animals, it makes sense to establish the urgency so that hyenas can take their opportunity to eat quietly. As Chandra Hardy (1986) reiterates, “by the time a country requests assistance from the IMF, the financial situation is often desperate. The need of stabilization is thus not in question, but rather at issue are the scope and speed adjustment and required policy mix” (458).

It becomes clear that Ramatou’s visit is in response to the urgency established at the beginning of the film. The announcement of the arrival of Ramatou, a Colobane-born old lady, who is coming back to her hometown after thirty years of exile, is received with pride and excitement. The street drummers interrupt any conversation going on in the

streets as they call people to give Ramatou a warm reception upon her arrival as she is “richer than the World Bank,” a phrase frequently used to define the fabulous economic power of the old lady. Sandra Grayson (2001) observes that “[t]he repeated references to Linguere in *Hyenas* as richer than the World Bank establish the connection between character and the institution, as well as mark her as an enemy” (138). This enmity is connected to the institution with which she is associated. Indeed, the connection is meant to introduce the socioeconomic solution as the city life taking a different pace and reception preparations express the excitement of the people regarding the restoration of their economy and their lives in general.

Hyenas (1992) highlights Ramatou’s power and control before she even comes to town through the calls of village criers, the excitement of the Colobane administration, and the freeze of people’s activities when word of mouth spread over her arrival. She forces the train to stop at the Colobane station though it had been abandoned for a long time. This train-stop sequence draws attention to the station closure that, by inference, was necessitated by the reduction of social services to qualify for loans from the Western debt providers. Advisors of these institutions forced the government to reduce the running costs in social services such as education, transportation, agriculture, and health. These are among the sectors that used to receive government subsidies before loan agreements between the World Bank and IMF and the recipient countries were signed to implement the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs. As Araia (2003) observes, “[S]tructural adjustment as a development strategy argued the necessity of downsizing

the bureaucracy, privatizing state enterprises, devaluing national currency, and reducing government expenditure in order to boost the domestic economy” (204).

Various reverse shots and the dialogue in the reception scene dramatize not only the engine driver’s frustrations regarding an emergency stop but also evidences Ramatou’s financial power, a power that can buy the attention of individuals and institutions. The reward the driver receives (500,000 francs) to calm him down seals any possible doubts about what Ramatou can do to restore the dying Colobane. Following the driver’s comment on the amount he has been offered, Ramatou cuts off his speech by asking him to use the money to improve the Colobane Women’s Fund. When the driver responds that such a fund does not exist in Colobane, Ramatou replies, “Then, create one.” This seems to be direct ridicule aimed at nonprofit organizations syndrome embedded within the neoliberal economy agenda as a way to facilitate development projects. Development funds from donors have been directed to nonprofit organizations as a way to avoid government bureaucracies, financial embezzlement, and project mismanagement. It is true that the funded projects get completed in this way but the governments have been disempowered. It is the donor institution that has the control over all matters regarding the projects. Ramatou’s appearance and her control of the situation are aimed at instilling a precise dosage of fear and respect in the people she will be dealing with in order to achieve her preconceived plans.

Additionally, the conversation articulates a clear ignorance of the working class by the economically or politically influential individuals. Instead of Ramatou responding directly to the driver, she talks to Gana, her assistant and lawyer, through a set of

rhetorical questions. The film provides a glimpse of the arrogance of those considered investors and their undeservedly one-sided commanding character that ends with their controlling the decision, for no direct negotiations are permitted. Her attitude demonstrates control over the situation since stopping the train interrupts the mayor's speech and the plans regarding her reception as well as her actual disruption of the mayor's welcome note. To direct more attention on her and to let her dominate the scene, the mayor and his people are shot from a high angle and Ramatou and her entourage from a low angle.

On Ramatou's first encounter with Draman, who approaches her in welcome, we come to understand that she is a survivor of a plane crash and has an artificial physical body. Harrow (2007) describes this as an expression of being different, adding, "[S]he is different in the way a prosthesis is different – she is unnatural, and as such acts as a foil to the others whose appearance and behavior all fall into the definitions of natural" (180). The artificiality refers to the superficial nature of the institutions in question, the World Bank and IMF. What the film tries to establish here is the artificiality of the neoliberal policies on economic recovery. Her appearance as an artificial woman, as Grayson (2001) would put it, is "[l]ike the commodities of doubtful value that she imports into Colobane, she does little to improve the conditions of the town" (138). That is, the promises and plans are not original, not real, and not dependable. They are artificial and cannot help with managing the African economic crisis represented in the film as Colobane. As John Saul (2003) eloquently puts it, the "deepening capitalist relations of production that are enforced upon Africa under firm pressure from the international financial institutions

(IFIs) and other structural adjustment programs (SAPs), amongst other influences, do not generate development to any serious degree” (186).

Yet, one of the things that are made quite clear in *Hyenas* is the offering of gifts and promises as a way to win favor from the people of Colobane. On her arrival Ramatou offers 100,000 million CFAs to fix Colobane’s economic problems. As usual, however, gifts from powerful institutions (that Ramatou symbolizes) are accompanied by some surprising conditions. Araia (2003) observes that “while it is true that the IMF does not come to African countries until they are about to crumble, it is also true that the ‘conditionalities’ imposed by the institution have contributed to many countries being pushed further into political and economic chaos” (206). In the case presented in *Hyenas*, the condition is to kill Draman, Ramatou’s one-time lover who denied her pregnancy when she was a 17-year-old girl. Killing is a violent act that people refuse to engage in as a way of meeting Ramatou’s demand for justice when she was forced into exile. Colobane’s people unanimously reject the offer, “Madam, we hold fast to the moral principles of our civilization,” as the mayor responds to confirm the townspeople’s solidarity, civility, and resentment. The response is met not only Ramatou’s smile but also with a respond, “I will wait,” for sooner or later they will accept the offer because her words, or more precisely her offer, as Harrow (2007) posits, “not only corrupts them but also correspond to their weaknesses” (180).

Two weaknesses of the Colobane people are forwarded by the film: poor socioeconomic conditions and their readiness to change for personal gain even though acceptance of the offer might indicate a shift of power from the people to the visitor. The

film complicates the situation by emphasizing the wealth of the visitor parallel to the extreme poverty of the people who surprisingly refuse the offer on the first attempt. Thinking of Ramatou as a representation of multilateral financial institutions whose operations hand out not only money but also ideas, one should conclude that at times these ideas are difficult to internalize and be executed by the receivers of the money. Ramatou's statement, "I will wait," sounds familiar in the realms of negotiations between donors and/or grant providers and the governments seeking loans or assistance. There are a series of pitches before the loans are given and accepted. These pitches are necessary because of the conditions set prior to delivery of the accepted amount. The film here gives a glimpse of evidence that such a process is sometimes brutal and violent.

Ramatou's "I will wait" is accompanied by fabulous offers and gifts to the people of Colobane. People who used to walk barefooted now wear yellow leather shoes, which Joya Uraizee (2006) considers "a metaphor for Draman's betrayal," underscoring "the fact that the entire town, from the Mayor down, has 'sold out' to Linguere's offer" (317). The shoes become a signifier of bribes and an expression of solidarity in betrayal. The police officers become busy on telephones and on physical contacts with the customs officers and border patrol to clear the way and provide the needed protection for a convoy of trucks carrying Ramatou's goods for the people of Colobane. At the border, the gate opens smoothly when the trucks approach. Ironically, later in the film this same gate will not open until the guard comes down and investigates the car Draman is driving on his way to the death scene. Apparently, easing the border crossing for investor's imports seems a more urgent matter for the Colobane administrative and security organs than

providing security or even listening to the claims of their community member. This dramatized sequence represents the real favors investors receive when they decide to work in a particular African country.

The gifts penetrate all walks of life, from the common people to the dignitaries' wives, who express their wealth by shopping for large amount of goods on credit but are confident of soon paying the debt. It is the money they have been promised, the gift. This is an expression of what has been referred to as a "consumer society" where "Colobane becomes a 'credit junkie' dependent on foreign debt."¹⁴ The communal life expressed in the first scenes of the film is challenged and replaced by people who crave a material life. Grayson (2001) comments, "[a]s a result of her presence and proposal, the people become materialistic and seemly obsessed with accumulating goods," adding that "[i]n addition, they slip deeper and deeper into debt (all of their purchases are on credit)" (138). The mayor's office receives a new typewriter, "Remington," the deputy brags, and City Hall changes not only furniture but the chandeliers as well.

The film gradually introduces the changes from individuals who boost themselves with their yellow shoes or buy expensive cigarette and alcohol brands to institutions that accept major renovations to public properties. Uraizee (2006) maintains that "[t]he yellow shoes sequence in *Hyenas* is built up slowly, through several different scenes that describes Draman's increasing panic and he realizes he is going to be betrayed by the very people who stood behind him when Linguere first made her offer" (316). Neither the mayor nor the spiritual leader whose positions represent institutions not individual figures

¹⁴ See California Newsreel. "*Hyenas*" at <http://newsreel.org/video/HYENAS>. Accessed on 10 March 2011.

can stand out of the crowd and save Draman. They are part of the deal about to be visually signed. In a shot just before the arrival of Draman in his office, the mayor is seen accepting orders of the newly imported televisions and refrigerators from a lady who later at the carnival is introduced as the first lady. When Draman manages to seek help from the spiritual leader, he is only advised to take the train and escape. The advice is ridiculed by the installation of new chandeliers in the first floor of the City Hall a few moments before Draman descends from the stage where he met the spiritual leader. It is at this moment that he realizes that even the spiritual leader has betrayed him. Descending the spiral stair then becomes a metaphor for the moral and physical decline of the community and Draman, respectively.

Ironically, *Hyenas* reveals these changes gradually through the eyes of Draman, who sees the corruption of his people by the material life. The betrayal unfolds as he tries to seek support from his friends and city officials. In the City Hall, Draman sits on a bench. He watches a television which a long shot shows people queuing to receive food assistance in a drought-stricken land. Draman wipes his face in disgrace after seeing the shot. He is frustrated. His frustration is cut by the arrival of the spiritual leader and the installation of chandeliers in the City Hall. Whether this is meant to detail the present situation in one part of the African continent through the power of the recently introduced development of television, or is a prediction of the future for accepting the present offers is not clear. What is clear is an impending danger. Even Draman's wife, Khoudia Lo, takes her share of the old woman's wealth in the following carnival sequence. She buys all the available appliances after the first lady's turn during the auction in the carnival

scene, filling her store with new unopened boxes of electric appliances and goods with foreign labels such as Dunhill.

Lindiwe Dovey (2009) argues that “the film signals the growing acceptance of Ramatou’s vengeful request by revealing more and more anonymous feet shod in the yellow leather shoes” (62). As the shoes represent only the individuals and the peasants, the renovations that Draman witnesses represent a wider institutional collaboration including the police, the mayor’s office, and the spiritual leader. It becomes clear that the project to revive the city for the price of “our friend” is done and sealed. The new chandeliers are switched on, illuminating the faces of the spiritual leader and Draman. In the subsequent shot, the glittering lights transform into fireworks at the carnival where the mayor, playing a saxophone is leading a parade.

The carnival scene visually epitomizes the way the film intensifies the hypothetical change of the lives of the people of Colobane. Goods recently imported are exhibited and given or sold to the people. They include electric appliances such as new fans, and are indeed intended to introduce the people to the world of commodities; the material lifestyle, the modern life. As Harrow (2007) maintains:

Ramatou makes it visible when she fills the lives of the people with “useless” commodities whose lack they never felt before. Having not had air conditioners, they never missed them and had fans they could wave. Now the “ladies” at the fair are told they won’t need their fans any more: the air conditioners are the lack that they bring into existence the moment they come into the scene. Their name, of course, is “modern life,” and it is that which Ramatou introduces with her wealth, gifts, and power (189).

It becomes apparent that the imported commodities are a mere illusion, not only for their “useless” nature, but the way they are owned, and more importantly, given away at the carnival which is by itself an illusionary and borrowed concept.

The question here is whether the people really need these modern appliances or do they need sustainable programs and funding. Experience shows that, as mentioned earlier, funding provided to needy people by the powerful financial agencies comes with a package that holds the ideas of the donor. Jim Igoe (2004) maintains that “[t]he problem is that the ideas attached to the money are almost always those of powerful people who run the institutions in this global network,” adding that “[t]he ideas of marginalized people are almost never considered or implemented” (11). The gifts are “useless” commodities because they do not help people to move forward but rather paralyze them. Acceptance of the so-called “modern life” requires abandoning their local and traditional materials and lifestyle. This abandonment is meant to represent accepting imported goods and abandoning locally produced goods. In other words, the modern life is aimed at suggesting people’s willingness to substitute their locally grown economy for the one that is taking over. Such acceptance is questionable because the infrastructures to support the “modern life” is not yet in place nor are the knowledge and capacity to go with it.

While these gifts are distributed, another proposal is tabled by Ramatou. It is a people’s proposal, one that does not correspond to what she is giving out. It expresses the real need of the people but as Igoe (2004) has cautioned about the tendency to ignore the ideas of the common people, this proposal is rejected. In this particular scene in *Hyenas* (1992), Le Professeur and Doctor who have come to visit Ramatou, are sitting on the

stairs. At the top end of the entrance, Ramatou is seen sitting comfortably with all the signs of authority as her assistants braid her hair. The visitors request, “We need credit, so we can work and our economy can flourish again.” Harrow (2007) observes, “Ramatou refuses the doctor’s and teacher’s request for help that would enable them to move the town out of poverty” (192). The refusal is a clear reiteration of the tendency to refuse proposals by the local educated community – refusal of development programs that are people-based – that the World Bank and IMF, as well as the foreign-donor community, have been repeatedly alleged to exhibit. These are country ideas. They are people-based development plans. They are what seem necessary. In other words, they are proposals to facilitate and support people development instead of bringing what outsiders see as development, “material” acquisition as opposed to “capacity” building.

Hyenas provides a snapshot of what development means to foreign investors. To Ramatou, representing the international financial institutions and, to be precise, the World Bank and IMF, development has to follow her directives. Oscherwitz (2008) posits, “The film draws attention to the false promises of prosperity that once lured African nations into accepting such policies and such values and to the role of the West in creating the indebtedness that has virtually crippled Africa” (235). False promises of prosperity need not necessarily be the amount of money offered at the beginning of the film but can be economically unsustainable gifts that take townspeople and peasants only temporarily out of their rags. It is that short time of illusion that ends with celebrating and carnival-like happiness. The *Hyenas* mocks this happiness with a sequence in which the local people are seen buying expensive brands of cigarettes and cognac that normally

these peasant or even Le Professeur cannot afford, the cognac that makes people drunk enough to betray their friend in their repeated chant “solidarity dead or alive.”

Hyenas’ Aesthetic: Contemplating Narratology

The general question with which this section grapples is what narrative tools *Hyenas* uses to allow a 1950s European story make sense to a contemporary African audience? To be precise, this part addresses the narrative style of the film and explores to what extent do the weaving of different modalities and selected African traditional performances, make *Hyenas’* filmic technique classic and original and its message relevant. I argue the adaptation of the European play set after World War II signifies the present implementation of a Western economic system in Africa after the 1980s economic crisis. That is, *Hyenas* uses Western artwork to present its ideological argument by allegorically mocking the Western ideology that serves as the basis for neoliberal economic policies. The engagement of western film trope is aimed at critiquing Western economic policies. As Oscherwitz (2008) argues, “*Hyenas* suggests that the western serves as a narrative that promotes and legitimizes” Western economic imperialism (224).

As mentioned earlier, *Hyenas* uses the theme and the plot of Friedrich Durrenmatt’s play, *The Visit*, as a background to present some currently debated socioeconomic issues in Africa. The play which has been staged several times and even adapted into a film in 1964 is about a woman who is returning home after thirty years in exile. When she was a girl she was in love with a man of a higher class who denied fathering her pregnancy. She became a prostitute and consequently a wealthy woman. On

her return, she will help her small town that is in economic collapse if the townspeople murder the man who betrayed her. Similar storyline is found in *Hyenas*. The Senegalese city, Colobane, in which the film is set, as Porton (1995) observes, “serves as a microcosm reflecting Africa’s current economic crisis” (97). Hence, the exploration of *Hyenas*’ narrative structure provides a glimpse of an artistic assortment in which various modalities including social realism and African performative elements enrich the film’s visual quality and, as most films of its kind do, help the outlining of a fundamental message.

Western critics have attacked *Hyenas* and Mambety’s films in general as more Western than African. Writing in the French Journal, *Le Film Africain*, as a comment on *Hyenas*’ reception, Jean-Pierre Garcia, a European press reporter, points out technical aspects of structure and style. Using the film’s rhythm and editing, Garcia argues that the film possesses a Western quality and that the only African elements are the landscape, language, and acting.¹⁵ Garcia’s view seems to label, or rather code, an African film with unwavering qualities in terms of its structure and style. His views suggest that any attempt to alter such well-established cinematic techniques as slow pace and gentle edit is to temper not only the quality but also the originality of the film. Such journalistic views are shared by some scholars as well. Rayfield (1995), for example, argues that structurally and stylistically, Mambety’s films “are more European than African” although both the setting and the theme are exclusively African, representing social and political messages (78).

¹⁵ Quoted in Mermin, Elizabeth. "A Window on Whose Reality? The Emerging Industry of Senegalese Cinema." *Research in African Literatures* 26.3 (1995): 120-33.

Both Garcia and Rayfield represent a distinct perspective as to what kind of cinematic techniques African film should employ. The existence of a particular vision or set of technical rules by which a film should abide to be considered African suggests that a film is subject to being viewed as not representing an African aesthetic if it possesses a Western look even if this aesthetic borrowing deals with African issues. These rules sound rigid and restrictive. Elizabeth Mermin (1995) thinks such views and criticisms are futile because they are coded within “a familiar binary structure of the technical versus the natural” (131). Instead, she views the fusion of different elements an artistic maturity, commending the film for its successful blending of both European and African elements, integrating the natural and technical traits and addressing both cruelty and tragedy (ibid.).

Indeed, *Hyenas* demonstrates a successful combination of European and African artistic elements. The plot and dialogue of *The Visit*, from which *Hyenas* is adapted, dominate the film presented through a blend of Western and African cinematic props. This combination goes hand-in-hand with a variety of traditional oral and performance media to tell an African dilemma of the twentieth century. It is an African dilemma not just because the hyena is, as Mambety has repeatedly claimed, “an African animal,”¹⁶ but because of the institutional critique the film makes. Through the return the film’s main character, her actions are associated with institutions whose activities are real and current on the continent. Oscherwitz (2008) argues that the film seems to engage in analyzing “the effects of the influence of such institutions [World Bank and IMF] on Africa and Africans” (224). Equally important, the whole idea of binary structure – past/present,

¹⁶ An interview with Ukadike, N. F., in *Transition* 78, 1999, p. 148; Preface to the film script quoted from Rayfield, J. F., 1995, p. 81.

natural/technical, tradition/modernity – paralyzes the aesthetic expression and the ideological debate regarding African development in general and African cinema in particular. As David Murphy (2000) points out, debates regarding “the nature of African cinema have too often been trapped within a reductive opposition between Western and African culture” (241). For more than three decades now, there has been a clear revision in the techniques African films employ as compared to firm rubrics advocated during the time when African film was at its infancy stage. This revision makes much sense when viewed as an improvement rather than an impediment.

It is true that the founders of African cinema had established some structural and stylistic binary restrictions. However, these restrictions are waived in works like *Hyenas* in which the film experiments with different filming techniques as Mambety attempts to invent his own ways of telling stories. In this case, the binaries to which Murphy refers should be ignored in discussing the art of meshing together the cinematic props and the multiplicity of narrative modalities encompassed in *Hyenas*. One of these binaries is the viewing of modernity as a threat to tradition as if African cultures are static. In such cases, Jude Akudinobi (1995) cautions, “the realities of contemporary African experience cannot be productively assessed without the revision or abandonment of the tradition/modernity schema,” (25). This schema tends to look at everything African as bound to tradition and established values and aesthetics in the West as modernity. In fact, Akudinobi’s argument applies to the stylistic/structural aesthetic binary which seems to block celebration of the artistic beauty of films like *Hyenas* (1992). In fact, as Porton

(1995) would argue, *Hyenas* and other Mambety films, “explode this kind of binarism, posing these alternatives not as choices but as self-consuming artifacts” (98).

Hyenas (1992) fuses together various known narrative modalities. Uraizee (2006) observes that the film’s narrative “is presented through an odd mixture of social realism, magic realism, and allegorical history” (314). This observation is due to the fact that the film directly or indirectly critiques socioeconomic problems facing the Colobane community, namely, sexism, greed, materialism, marginalization, and consumerism. These problems are detailed by the film’s technique as it frames the socially and economically troubled community and individuals so that the viewer chooses the characters with whom to identify. Thematically and stylistically, the film identifies itself with social realism. Interestingly, most of the major actions in the film are magically presented whether using bizarre, fantastic, and dreamlike imagery or with real magic represented by the diviner who advises Khoudia Lo, Draman’s wife, to slaughter a black bull in order to overcome her problems. The film also manipulates ideologically and aesthetically genres such as the western. Oscherwitz (2008) identifies several dominant western film components including “the gun, the horse, the train, the wagon, the saloon” as well as typical western film characters such as “the prostitute, the sheriff, [and] the saloonkeeper” together with the film’s richly employed narrative style in shots, acting, sequence, costumes, and the set (228). These features appeal to most of the audience. By extension, the elements of western films demonstrate an iconic existence of Western dominance in a dramatized socioeconomic crisis which is the basic ideological argument *Hyenas* attempts to complicate. The fusion of narrative modalities is, then, a reflection of

this connectedness between the Western economic system and the economic crisis that neoliberal policies are imagined to address. This imagination is suggested in magical representation of both the benefits and consequences of the policies to emphasize the inability of the policies to address the economic crisis.

Various sequences of *Hyenas* are designed to reflect magic or dreamlike qualities. The carnival sequence, for example, is presented in such an inexplicable way that the viewer is made to question where it happens and why it happens with that particular spectacle. The lighting of scenes, fireworks, and enjoyment is extraordinary. A sequence follows immediately after the City Hall renovation in which the mayor tells Draman to take the stairs leading to the basement of the hall. According to the mayor, this route will lead Draman to heaven. This is a spiral stair and Draman's descending expresses his panic and increases his frustration. In fact, the stairs lead him into exploring more disasters haunting mankind through a televised program as he rests on newly installed benches.

The tendency in *Hyenas* (1992) is that whenever hyenas appear or are heard, they indicate an impending tragic event. In the escape scene, for example, shots of hyenas are juxtaposed over one of an owl and later of Draman at the station. Their appearance later dissolves to a group of townspeople including the deputy mayor with torches. The torches are the only light and intensify not only the night shot but also the magic presented by the animal world (hyenas and owl) earlier in the sequence. The presence of hyenas alone and the ways they effect the action to come is magical. Despite townspeople preventing Draman from boarding a train and hence abort his escape plans, they also wish him "good

luck in Ethiopia,” for Ethiopia is among the least socialist African countries to merge into the free market economy. The wish can be an extension of the heaven proposed by the mayor, for the newly adopted system and the greed that it propagates is an obvious hell to Draman.

Following his failure to escape, Draman later appears in a shot where he sits and looks down the hill. There is quick point-of-view shot of a hyena dragging something that looks like a skin. The color and the size of this object resembles Draman’s jacket that is left after the death scene. The general assumption here is that Draman was dreaming his fate. I would rather emphasize here that this is among the shots in which hyenas are physically captured in the shots.

The death sequence is one of the most outstanding in terms of employing magic realist components in the film. It starts with the mayor and his group visiting Draman at his store. After a short dialogue, the mayor hands Draman a gun with which to either shoot himself or else decide to attend the judgment meeting in the valley. The manner in which the gun is handed to Draman resembles the way the police officer, Bagaya, throws a gun to Draman, telling him to defend himself when he asked for protection earlier in the film. Draman returns the gun as he did in the earlier attempt. He opts to attend the meeting, knowing the preconceived verdict as evidenced by the series of signs of betrayal presented to him. From this scene to the end of the film, the camera follows Draman with minimum cut-aways. There are few point-of-view shots and they all involve people for whom the judgment has a direct or indirect connection. There are cut-away shots of

Draman driving to the death scene and the group of Colobane people walking to the valley.

On his way, Draman makes the viewer identify two different hunters and their positions in the society. The first is a traditional hunter. This is the one who throughout the film is seen walking with his gun as his identity. After seeing a jacket, the remains of Draman, towards the end of the film, he throws his gun away symbolically quitting hunting. Second, there is a modern hunter, Ramatou, who follows her prey like the hyenas waiting for his death. In the film, Ramatou does not kill but the people of Colobane kill for her to be satisfied. Whereas the traditional hunter is shot in isolation and generally ignored by the community, Ramatou is representative of an institution and is surrounded by assistants and agents, including the community itself, in its move to fulfill the contemporary hunter's desire for revenge. Hence, the film outlines in this sequence the clear face of the institution Ramatou represents and its greed and inhumane treatment are disguised within modernity and materialism vis-à-vis the vanishing of Colobane's moral and humanistic sense.

Despite these juxtaposed actions, the death sequence comprises a wide range of shots of varied sizes and composition and the editing blends both a slow and a fast pace. Such composition and editing is aimed at suggesting both urgency and suspense on one hand and a sense of mobilization on the other. If it was not for the scene where Le Professeur and the doctor meet Ramatou, this would be the only scene that is predominantly made of medium and close-up shots in the film. Here townspeople are featured as individuals and as a group to intensify the act of killing as well as that of

deciding who to kill; an act that seems both individual and communal. Uraizee (2006) argues that “long and medium shots are used to suggest impersonality and distance, as well as to indicate the number of people involved” (318). Acting as well as shot variation and fluidity in both shot size and editing is significant in this scene for the magical climax where Draman’s body vanishes after being surrounded by the people.

Technically, shot sizes, for example, long shots that expose wide and open spaces or surrounded by massive natural features – land, sea, sky, mountains – seem to create a sense of collision between nature and humans. At this point, it is important to emphasize that even though shot variation is a normal camera use in filmmaking, in *Hyenas* it is meant to produce an ideological challenge. For example, in every sequence that involves gradual doubt, the scenes are created in a way that not only emphasizes the size and the pace of the shot but also makes rich use of landscape as an entity to express the infinity of nature as opposed to the limitations of the ‘human vision and control’, i.e., what is provided is only a glimpse of what the human self can explore and blur with natural colors to the horizon that part that the human cannot reach. Moreover, the landscape in *Hyenas* evokes “orality,” a common feature within African oral tradition. It is a sense of the storyteller to prolong the journey or complicate the narrative. For example, in most storytelling, the narrator makes a lot of repetitions such as “and he or she goes, and goes, and goes, and goes, and” The repetition is meant to prolong time and distance to show the hardship of the journey. In *Hyenas*, the landscape represents this sense of distance. It is used here as well as an ideological capital – as an expression of empty land, empty in the sense that it has not been yet been utilized while people confront in small/limited city

areas. At the same time, it questions the infrastructural set-up that fails to reach outside the old developed sites. The core of the action is set to happen in a valley to emphasize sinking as they go down the valley. That is to say, landscape is used in *Hyenas* both as artistic and as a political/ideological tool.

African oral tradition and performance – drumming, dance, storytelling, court set-up, proverbs and sayings – play an important role in the *Hyenas* narrative. The presence of these literary features is no accident. They are meant to set an aesthetic tone as well as make a thematic comment. Mohamed Abusabib (1995) posits, “in non-literate societies oral traditional forms are the reservoir of theoretical and practical knowledge. Proverbs, sayings, dictums, verse and many other poetic formulations are loaded with meaning reflecting the society’s outlook and experience in all aspects of life” (76). *Hyenas* is stuffed with a variety of proverbs such as, “It is I who proposes the affair, and I dictate my conditions” and “I cooked the pudding and now I am going to serve it.” The affair here is the proposal to help and the condition Ramatou demands is to see the community kill Draman. This echoes recovery conditionalities set by the financial institutions. The pudding proverb refers to the power the institution has to decide the amount and the manner in which the grants are offered and these cannot be dictated by the people who seek for the aid.

All these proverbs are spoken by Ramatou who has had much worldwide experience as well as experience with her own society. Samba Diop (2004) contends that sayings and “proverbs come from the tradition and denote a certain ancestral wisdom” emphasizing that their usage demonstrates “a certain maturity on the part of the user”

(52-53). Hence, the way these proverbs are used in *Hyenas* raises questions because even though it is easy to judge Ramatou's age and she looks mature, it is difficult to trace her "ancestral wisdom." Yet, it can be inferred that the film presents these proverbs as an expression of two things. First, it is the global experience and the hidden knowledge that Ramatou, as an institutional representation of the World Bank and IMF, has compared to the Colobane people and their elders, including her own teacher, Le Professeur. Second is the economic power. That is, "the ancestral wisdom" here is replaced by her wealth and thus the film demonstrates how the power of money can be read as a substitution of wisdom. Summarily, the use of proverbs equips the film with an oral African tradition that, as Abusabib (1995) would argue, "usually contain deep artistic and aesthetic insights which reflect the prevalent principles and canons of criticism, evaluation, creativity, etc." (30). Ramatou's use of these proverbs aims at challenging the knowledge of Colobane elders as well as expressing the power shift where wisdom is suppressed by wealth.

Street drumming is another traditional element used to reflect a traditional way of message delivery. As Draman and the group of visitors dance at his store, a group of drummers intervene. The way they are introduced seems accidental but in fact, their appearance is of a great significance in the film. What the film introduces is the role of the art groups at this particular time of African socioeconomic, cultural, and political history. It is a marker of the use of traditional medium to communicate as well as reflecting on their role in the community at large and the political involvement in particular. Aaron Mushegyezi (2003) maintains that "indigenous media such as very specific performances – dance, music, drama, drums and horns, village criers, orators and

storytellers – continue to present themselves as effective channels for disseminating messages” (108). In *Hyenas*, the presence of drums should be read first as a signifier of the role of traditional art forms in delivering sociopolitical messages and conserving local culture, and second, as disdain of the actual neglect of artists. As evidence of this, after this sequence, nowhere else in the film do drums appear whether performed by the same artists or in a manner that resembles the street drumming. They are marginalized in the real political and economic life of the society. For example, despite drummers’ participation in the welcoming of the rich old lady, their music is not part of the carnival. Street drums face the same fate the dance of the peasants played earlier at Draman’s store and later in the closing scene of the banquet sequence. Their performances are replaced by the mayor’s saxophone and the marching band exhibition.

Hyenas here refers to the way leaders use local artists during contract signs, then leave the poor and the artists ignorant of what is happening regarding implementation of the projects. That is to say, the film also deals with the issue of marginalized groups of people within the society. Together with the artists are women, the poor, and children. Their appearance is only projected as following what well-to-do, powerful men have decided for them. For example, the people strongly support Draman and call on the diviner to advise them. In this scene, as women sit at Draman’s store, woman diviner comes to sit in the stairwell behind the counter of the shop. She speaks of the trouble Draman’s wife is going through and advises her to sacrifice a bull in order to regain her wealth. However, the bull is killed by men not women, as it is in the insert shots of a bull and a girl dancer during the court sequence. The killing of a bull has its own significance

in *Hyenas* (1992) even though in film, animal killing is a common practice, whether for sacrificial purposes or as an expression of a character's strength.

The bull killing and the girl's dance are metaphors. Their presence infers a hidden meaning beyond the visual acts. The bull killing represents the actual killing, to com, of a man, Draman, which can also be looked at as the execution of local business for Draman is a local businessman. The dance represents the sexual relationship of Draman and Ramatou. The dancer is a teenager and the dance gets vigorous when Ramatou presents her story before the people of Colobane. At one point, the dancer falls on the ground and rolls. This act is a cut-away shot within the court scene as the relationship is mentioned and the pregnancy case is presented. That is to say, the dance replaces the actual sex scene that in most films, particularly commercial films, might be included.

The combination of Western techniques and African oral traditions and performance in presenting on issues of this nature is necessary. The meshing of these elements offers a material value of the film. As Jerry White (2003) puts it, "[a]ppropriating conventional narrative forms and investing them with more localized meaning is a central part of a postmodernist or hybridized film practice" (489). Despite its being an ongoing film practice, it should be understood that the issue of socioeconomic problems in Africa cannot be thought of in isolation. It has to be understood within Africa's relation to Western partners. *Hyenas* (1992) outlines this understanding with two important references. First, it blends narrative tools. A mixture of editing styles, variations in shot and camera angles, traditional costumes, extensive use of figurative language, the setting, and a variety of narrative modalities enrich the visual

presentation of the central theme in *Hyenas*. Such a tendency in the film, Imruh Bakari (2000) would argue, sets an African film “towards exploring and reconciling the infinite possibilities simultaneously existing in both tradition and modernity” (13). Second, the film intersperses characters from different corners of the world and makes Ramatou, the protagonist, a product of both Africa and Europe which also signifies the wealth sent back as grants is a collective wealth generated by the interaction of the economies of the two continents. Summarizing the artistic and thematic visualization of Ramatou in *Hyenas*, Elizabeth Mermin (1995) observes, “her reconstructed body blends the technical and the natural, Africa and Europe, cruelty and tragedy” (131). Suffice it to say, Ramatou’s body becomes an interesting signifier of a well-interwoven narrative structure that *Hyenas* utilizes to deliver its cross-continental issue. It is an artistic collage of multiple narrative tools that both appeals and frustrates audiences with different ideological backgrounds.

Unpacking Violence in *Hyenas*

Globalization is an infamous phenomenon to a majority of the African population. Interestingly, the elite who comprise a small portion of the population – scholars, politicians, and the business community who directly or indirectly benefit from the opportunities created by globalization – can make elaborate sense out of the term. Ironically, though, to the majority of people, is known for its consequences and more specifically consequences associated with the adoption of unpopular neoliberal economic policies. The vast portion of the population experiences the pressures, pains,

consequences, and challenges of globalization in their day-to-day survival. This group is marginalized in decision making, exploited by the policies, and forgotten when it comes to sharing the benefits. Acknowledging this view, *Hyenas* captures one memorable scene in which Draman tries to plead the town's case and grounds his pledge on addressing the issues of the life-threatened poor. Ellie Higgins (2002) describes a poor man wandering in the background of this scene as "the only character truly in rags – sits alone, representative of those whose plights are rhetorically significant in international development discourses but are not included in conversations between development institutions like the World Bank and the bureaucrats who use them to argue for more funds" (59). People like this poor man view the agents of globalization, particularly the funding agents, as operating in a violent mode because violence does not allow room to listen to people's opinions.

This scene in *Hyenas* is one of many scenes in the film that express violence. Most of them involve Ramatou who, as mentioned earlier, represents multinational financial institutions, the World Bank and IMF. That is to say, the film represents these institutions as violent. Johan Galtung (1975) outlines three categories of violence: physical violence that includes killing, torture, and rape; cultural violence that involves discrimination and marginalization of a group of people based on religious belief or race; and structural violence which is basically a systematic victimization of people through socioeconomic systems (111). Looking at *Hyenas* very closely, one can see that all these types of violence are demonstrated. The film's storyline clearly outlines acts of violence, instigators of violence, and the performers of violence through well-calculated

cinematography that provides a precise description and actions of different characters as they collaborate to finalize their violent acts. It is important to emphasize that Ramatou's character in *Hyenas* represents the World Bank and IMF. Her desire for violence against Draman, who not only represents humanity but also local entrepreneurship, denotes the actual violence exerted by the institutions she represents. Using Galtung's typology of violence, this section will unpack violence-related representations in *Hyenas*. The discussion will be basically on the representation of physical and structural violence with reference to Africa's socioeconomic realities.

Physical violence, killing in particular, is extremely graphic in the film. The investor, Ramatou, states forthrightly that money to finance the recovery of Colobane will be disbursed only if the people will kill Draman. The set condition evokes committing an act of violence. If this is a shocking statement from a woman who in the film is an institution in her own right, it does not shock Djibril Mambety (1993) who, in responding to an interviewer question, says:

... if you want money one of you will have to be killed. The World Bank and its International Monetary Fund did the same ... with the poor South of the world. They tell the African people "we know that you're poor but you have too many peoples working and you don't have enough money to pay them so you have to kill some of them. Then we can give you money. You have to clean up your economy. Kill enough people and we will give you money."¹⁷

Mambety's reference to the World Bank and IMF is serious but when juxtaposed to Ramatou's demand, it sounds like a duplicate of what is happening in the court scene in *Hyenas*.

¹⁷ Rawlins, Rachel and Djibril Diop Mambety. "Interview with Djibril Diop Mambety." *Africa Film and TV Magazine*, 1993. Web. 12 Feb. 2011.

In this particular scene, Ramatou's lawyer, Gana, presents the case by bringing evidence of Ramatou's denial of justice thirty years ago. Ramatou, who assumes a queenly posture and seems more judge-like than plaintiff, is seen sitting in a throne-like structure, surrounded by her female assistants and her Japanese bodyguard, high above the building used to imitate the courtroom. The window in a thick wall behind which she sits provides a frame within a frame. Reverse low- and high-angle shots are used frequently to establish her superiority to the townsmen who occupy the lower level of this dramatized courtroom. The shots are steady, particularly when Ramatou talks, to suggest what Dovey (2009) calls "the social realities" (63). It is in this scene that she offers 100 million francs. Although tempted, the people unanimously stand behind Draman when Gana, Ramatou's lawyer, finishes narrating the story as an appeal for Ramatou's version of justice. Ramatou's comment "either you get blood on your hands or you stay poor forever" complicates the people's excitement and hopes, leaving them at a crossroad between solidarity for morality and betrayal for survival.

It is worth noting two violent acts that can serve as examples of both physical and structural violence symbolically presented in the court scene. The first act is connected to the caged witnesses presented by Gana to testify against their earlier alleged testimony. When brought forward, the witnesses assert that they lied on their testimony thirty years ago when, to save Draman who bribed them to present a false witness, they claimed having had sexual relationships with Ramatou. As a result of the false testimony, they have been tortured by Ramatou who finally subjected them to "the people from the east" who castrated them. Torture is explicitly physical violence. Castration as presented in the

case is part of the torture. I, therefore, argue that its mention in the scene is meant to symbolize Africa's sterilized economy because castrated men are understood to be unproductive. It is a structural violence representing the incapacitated local production in such sectors as agriculture that had had impressive returns to the gross domestic product (GDP) of individual African countries prior to the implementation of the World Bank and IMF policies.

Removal of subsidies and government funding supporting local economies has clogged the ability of the once-growing production industry and as a result firms are forced to close or are sold to private investors who sometimes do not task them to their production capacity. In the scene where Le Professeur and Doctor visit, Ramatou, she takes them by surprise with her reply, "I had my agent buy the whole lot, I closed the factories," a reply typically experienced in countries that are bailed out by the World Bank and IMF. The closure is to stop production, to castrate. Indeed, castration is symbolic of the impotence of the African economy and politics. This violence is directly related to Ramatou whose wealth that made her "richer than the World Bank" gives her the power and the means to command evil acts like this. I would also argue that the mention of "the people from the east" transfers the blame to the eastern bloc on which most African political economy models are based. Thus, blame for the economic failure should be directed to the socialist ideologies embraced by African countries which later trumpeted the World Bank and IMF capitalist ideologies as the only saviors.

The second structural and physical act of violence is embedded in a bull-slaughtering sequence. In it, there are several cut-away shots of people caught

slaughtering a bull at the middle of the desert. A group of people bring a black bull to the middle of the ground where they tie and slaughter it. The slaughtering-scene shots are run in juxtaposition to the procession in the court scene as if they are part of the presented evidence. Symbolically, the slaughtering of the bull suggests the murder of Draman. His objections against Ramatou's demands and his fighting for protection are presented by the struggle of the tied bull at the hands of a dozen men who, in the end, just before the court is adjourned, bring the bull down in juxtaposed shots that complement the court session. Oscherwitz (2008) observes that "[t]he presence of the guns suggest violence, as does the sacrifice of the bull, which is presented through montage" (233). As happens to Draman at the end of the film, the actual slaughter is shown to observe restrictions on cruelty to animals. Thus, when the people leave, we see the dead bull lying on the ground as we later see Draman's jacket on the ground when his murderers leave the scene at the end of the death sequence.

The bull killing is in fact, preparing the viewer for the final act of murder. The viewer is gradually primed to witness Draman's murder as an ultimate expression of the greed of the townspeople disguised within an appeal for revenge. In an interview with Ukadike (1999), Mambety describes the townspeople's objective in killing Draman as "to amass as many riches as possible and to create the deadly harmony that Linguere Ramatou desires" (148). Although the execution of Draman, as the film reveals, is done magically by his own people, foreign pressure represented by Ramatou's distant surveillance is clearly captured. The death is considered magical because the film does not show exactly the method used to kill Draman. Uraizee (2006) observes, "since

medium shots are used, we cannot clearly discern their method of attack” (318). No doubt the actual killing is hidden to evoke the very sense of hyenas expressed earlier, “they never really kill.” Grayson (2001) observes that “[m]ontage sequences pair hyenas with the townspeople in *Hyenas* and repeated references associate the citizens of Colobane with their animal counterpart” (138).

In the death scene, the townspeople, all men including Le Professeur, Mayor, and the spiritual leader, dressed in old rice sacks and buffalo-horn-like white wigs, meet in the valley. As they are assembling, Draman arrives and his case is presented for final judgment. The verdict is passed by each man raising his hand as a sign of acceptance. This is followed by the men walking closer to Draman, supported by a rhythmic chanting, “We accept the verdict, we agree.” He is surrounded and when they totally converge at the center where Draman is, they start to disperse, leaving only his jacket on the ground. Clyde Taylor (2000) describes the killing “as though signifying his being devoured by a pack of hyenas” (142).

The scene is composed of varied shots with plenty of reverse and cut-away shots – close-ups, medium, and long shots – of Ramatou and Gana looking from different angles of Ramatou’s castle balcony. Mermin (1995) describes Ramatou as “both the hyena who waits for her prey to die before she descends and the omniscient bird described by a song ... ‘the soul of the dead’ who promises liberty” (131). It seems as if the act is presented through point-of-view shots of Ramatou and Gana who in the final scene walk away in separate shots. Ramatou’s smile as she leaves the balcony denotes her “mission accomplished” satisfaction. This expression of satisfaction scorns the

townspeople's claim that, as Murphy (2010) observes, they commit this collective murder "in the name of justice but the film makes it clear that this righting of an earlier wrong is in fact an attempt on the part of the residents of Colobane to enter the promised land of capitalist modernity" (66).

But the ticket "to enter the promise land of capitalist modernism" comes with a price. As Ramatou emphasizes to Le Professeur, "[y]ou can't walk in the jungle with a ticket for the zoo. If you want to share the lion's feast, then you must be a lion yourself." Surprisingly, the last scene after the killing of Draman, the line of council members suggests a different opinion. Instead of being lions and who hunt and enjoy fresh catches in "the promised land," the townspeople have become prey. The shots of their walking away from the murder scene are intertextually dialogued with those of Ramatou, first viewing the vast open beach and the infinite sea view, and later descending from the castles' rooftop. As Harrow (2007) puts it, "[t]hese shots of Ramatou are cross-cut with those of the townspeople marching solemnly along the edge of the escarpment: they are walking single file, in silhouette, hands behind their backs – evoking nothing so much as a line of slaves, a cordelle, bound and marching to their fate" (181).

The fate that Harrow refers to here should be understood as the consequence of committing murder of a countryman that is both immoral and a clear betrayal. The march shows the intention to kill which is literally a physical violence. Looking at *Hyenas'* visualization of Draman's killing, however, symbolically evokes structural violence, for it signifies the killing of local entrepreneurs for foreign investment. It is shutting down local production and industrial firms in place of imported goods even if it is yellow shoes

from Burkina Faso or an imported morality to kill in order to fulfill Ramatou's revenge. By extension, the fate is likely to be interpreted in two ways: a fate into slavery (an immoral act) which represents a moral decay for betraying and killing a countryman for promised material gain; and a fate into a superficial life and unstable economy that is much more controlled by the donor which is another form of enslavement, economic dependency. Adetayo Alabi (2008) maintains that "[m]any of the policies of the IMF and World Bank have not favored African economies. The loans they give, the exchange rates they set, and other policies have made life most uncomfortable for several African countries" (3). *Hyenas* reflects a huge disappointment of African countries through the "slave caravan" shot. It raises suspicions of realizing superficial dreams of accumulation of wealth or solutions for the chronic economic unrest that takes a dramatic turn. The single-file caravan is the opposite of the earlier lifestyle of the people of Colobane who walked in the beginning sequence of the film as a group and attacked in the last sequence as a group. They are individual bodies chained by debt and by their immoral act of exchanging their community member and friend for the promises of the investor.

Structural violence is also evoked through different types of corruption in *Hyenas*. The film details corruption at different levels to emphasize the power of money to disrupt the proper functioning of the administrative structure and service provision. Plenty of scenes detail dubious acts by Ramatou that suggest attempts to disharmonize Colobane's normal life. She bribes the train driver in the beginning of the film to stop at an abandoned station; she offers gifts and cash to convince people to accept her proposal to kill Draman, and she renovates public building to influence the politicians as well as earn

a favorable opinion from leaders in the community. All these are corrupt ways to disorient the traditional way of running the daily business of the people. These offers transform not only the look of the people and their ownership but also their way of thinking. As Grayson (2001) argues, “[a]lthough they publicly refused her proposal, the people have already accepted a down payment for the murder Linguere said they must commit to receive her money” (138).

In the last scene of *Hyenas*, a shot of migrating elephants dissolves to a Caterpillar at work. It makes sense to interpret the caterpillar shot as the outcome of money promised by Ramatou. The city has started to benefit. I would argue, however, the shot is complicating the development dream. I look at it in two ways. First, it is destruction as opposed to construction. The caterpillar seems to chase the elephants away to pave the way for new roads and modern construction. This raises alarms of an environmental crisis. It suggests replacing natural with artificial. It is a dream about development without necessarily considering of its consequences which include loss of lives and ownership. It is extended structural violence to the land and animals who occupy this land. Second, it seems the caterpillar is clearing the mess away. In the previous sequence, Draman has been killed but we do not see how he is buried. The burial cannot be detailed because the killers have assumed animal character. As Mambety (1999) puts it, “[s]o the people of Colobane become animals. Their hair makes them

buffaloes. The only thing they have that is human is greed.”¹⁸ This death of morality in humankind is replaced by mechanical life, the Caterpillar.

Hyenas is without a doubt one of the “new” classic African films. Despite being produced twenty years ago, its theme is still valid and highly appealing. The film addresses the economic crisis of present-day Africa and outlines the continued threats that haunt the development of the continent. Although *Hyenas* is an adaptation of a European play, the film explores a universal phenomenon of “money and greed.” The theme is addressed in a holistic way even though the emphasis is centered within on African setting. Cinematographically, *Hyenas* enmeshes a variety of styles that facilitate the narrative flow in the film as well as making an ideological comment. For example, African folklore tricksters, hyenas, symbolically represent unjust policies of the World Bank and IMF as well as bring magical realism in play side-by-side with a social realist structure. This interweaving of varied styles basically authorizes the film to cross genre barriers and coding and at the same time comment to each other. It seems the African film tendency to use multiple styles in combination with African oral traditions, particularly in globalization films, has its own political merit as will be seen in the following chapter on *Bamako*.

¹⁸ Ukadike, Nwachukwu F. and Djibril Diop Mambety. “The Hyenas Last Laugh.” *Transition* 78, p.147-8.

CHAPTER 2—*BAMAKO: GLOCALIZED*¹⁹ STAGE, PAN-AFRICANIZED DIALOGUE

Globalization is bringing us more choices and new opportunities for prosperity. It is making us more familiar with global diversity. But globalization also brings uncertainties. Millions of people around the world experience it not as an agent of progress but as a disruptive and even destructive force, while more millions are completely excluded from its benefits.

Kofi Annan, the Former UN General Secretary (2000).

This chapter examines the significant use of space, montage, parable, and soundscape in *Bamako* (Abderrahmanne Sissako, 2006) and the way the film articulates the complexities caused by World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies. The chapter demonstrates how these features engage the audience not only by questioning the authenticity of a trial and its proceedings but also by facilitating a consciousness of the question surrounding justice. On one hand, I read *Bamako* as an experimental film. The abstract approach of its narrative suggested by muted testimonies and use of local space (a courtyard) as a courtroom challenges the traditional ways of storytelling. On the other hand, I consider that the film's interactive nature allows the audience to analyze the handling of the trial as a way of demonstrating a Third Cinema

¹⁹ First popularized by sociologist Roland Robertson in 1990s and developed by Zygmunt Bauman – a blend of two terms, global and local – *glocal* suggests the relationship between the local and the global.

aesthetic. Both techniques give the viewer a chance to comprehend the film's message and potentially take action.

I argue that *Bamako* represents the World Bank and IMF as destructive to both the social and the economic life of the African people. The destruction of social life is expressed through the dismantling of marriage, dishonesty among family members, and the growing distrust among community members. The economic destruction is expressed through issues of unemployment, market liberalization, budget deficits, and the ever-growing debts of African nations. The case presented at the trial mentions countries such as Kenya, Mali, Cameroon, and Senegal. In this way, the case suggests a pan-African struggle rather than that of an individual nation. That is, *Bamako* employs a pan-Africanist approach in dealing with the contemporary economic globalization debate and its impact even though it does so in an extremely localized setting. The phrase "pan-African approach" is here used loosely to mean an approach that considers the African struggle beyond the strict national boundaries of individual countries. Such an approach is meant to emphasize the widening of the burden of economic globalization shouldered by African nations. Also, this approach calls for collaborative action among African nations to fight the systematic destruction of the continent triggered by the international financial institutions. Furthermore, this approach pursues an address of globalization in terms that a common person can understand. The discussion views *Bamako* as using an African social realist narrative while trying to push that narrative beyond its boundaries by using experimental film techniques through a series of abstractions.

Abderrahmane Sissako's film, *Bamako* (2006), has been extensively reviewed. These reviews both express a broad reception and appreciation of its cinematography and address its major theme. Franco Barchiesi (2007) qualifies it as "a healthy counterbalance to the silences, omissions, and simplifications ... in social movements-oriented cinema" (184). Vanessa Walters (2007) refers to it as a "genuinely African vision of the continent" (3). And Ali Jaafar (2007) commended it as "an impassioned analysis of the economic and social devastation wrought on Africa by Western monetary policies" that demonstrates a multifaceted unification of political testimony and aesthetic novelty.²⁰ Thematically, it is an all-in-one understanding of the impact of globalization. More specifically, the film details the impact that multinational financial institutions (World Bank and IMF) policies have had on the lives of local African communities and the reaction of the local people to these policies. *New York Times* film reviewer, A. O. Scott, admits that *Bamako* (2006) is a "seething, complicated, and disarmingly beautiful investigation of Africa's social, economic and human crisis."²¹ The film explores the economic and social destruction as an outcome of the neo-economic policies. The destruction is evident in uncontrolled corruption, increased migration, growing insecurity, rocketing unemployment, unresolved health issues, suicide, and unstable relationships which the film engages in detailing them.

Stylistically, the film provides a simple yet unconventional narrative trope that blends a political tone disguised in intellectual speeches and artistic adventure

²⁰ Jaafar, Ali. "Finding Our Own Voices." *Sight & Sound* 17.2 (2007).

²¹ See Scott at <http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/02/14/movies/14bama.html>. Accessed on 25 October 2010.

characterized by a combination of a cast of real judicial practitioners and professional as well as unprofessional actors, on the one hand, with a satiric plot on the other. The film's plot is built on a trial set in the courtyard of the filmmaker's family home in Bamako, the capital of Mali, an uncompromisingly innovative setting that allows the filmmaking process to interact with people's everyday life.

The highly localized setting of the trial is powerful enough to charge the globally reputable and most influential agents of economic globalization for their injustice to Africa. Such a *glocal* set-up opens up myriad ways to engage the local African population at the center of discussion on what matters in their social, economic, and cultural affairs. This engagement gives the marginalized and disadvantaged groups an opportunity to share their understanding and pains of neoliberal economic policies. At the same time, they can voice their concerns that provide an alternative perspective to the World Bank and IMF economic liberalization policies whose advocates, Shadrack Nasong'o (2008) argues, view them as "the most effective way to promote rapid economic growth" (108). Sissako is clearly aware of the role African people take in dealing with their social, political, and economic crises. To Sissako, Africans should be positioned at the center of thinking and decision-making regarding their continent instead of being sidelined while arming other people to think for them and decide on their behalf. Abderrahmane Sissako has publicly admitted that his "objective in making this film was not necessarily to change things, but rather to bear witness to reality," adding "the people coming into the courtyard to be witnesses knew that they would not change their lives that day, but they got to say what they had to say" (3).

Bamako opens with a night shot of dimly lit street accompanied by the sound of footsteps. After two subsequent shots, we are introduced to a man dressed in a long light blue robe. As the image of this character becomes clearer, a woman's beautiful singing voice breaks the silence and the shot that follows introduces us to Mele (on the stage), a night club singer and the wife of Chaka. The rest of the film is a hearing before three African judges where the defendants' (the World Bank and IMF) attorneys, and the plaintiff's (African civil society) attorneys are presenting their cases. Witnesses comprise a former Malian Minister of Culture (Aminata Traore), a former schoolteacher (Samba Diakite), a youth (Madou Keita), a professor (Georges Keita), a civil society leader (Assa Badialo Souko), and a goat herder (Zegue Bamba). The witnesses take the stand one after another to testify about the effects of the neoliberal economic policies imposed on African countries by the defendants.

This cross section of the people called to testify represents all cadres of the Malian population in the debate: intellectuals, youth, women, politicians, elders, experts, and local citizens. Interestingly, life goes as usual – women take care of their household chores, a married couple's relationship is melting down, jobless and bystanders listen to the court proceedings through the speaker set outside the courtyard, an informal sector represented by cloth dyers and a hawker on the go – and occasionally the hearing is interrupted by social proceedings or unpredicted commentators. Woven as subplots, these background activities are by themselves part of the trial as witnesses. The film does not provide any trial ruling as it ends with Chaka's funeral following his suicide using a stolen gun.

This outline of the film identifies the scope and nature of *Bamako*'s political argument. *Bamako* details the power relationship between international financial institutions and the African masses in countries where these institutions are operating and the relationship surfaces as the primary problem. The film implicitly poses alternatives that involve either open debate to weigh the gains and losses or total elimination of the traitors, the heads of the privatizing governments and the corrupt international financial institutions. *Bamako* involves all classes of people as witnesses or audience in posing its political agenda. Their challenging views on the social and economic experiences they encounter on a daily basis are crucial in rethinking the implementation of economic reforms in Africa. The film generally endorses the necessity for change not only of the economic relations between north and south but also of the political structures in African countries. Through the evidence presented at the trial, juxtaposed with the everyday happenings in the background, the film provides an opportunity to witness and consider the impact of neoliberal economic politics engineered by the World Bank and IMF. The basic function of the film here becomes the dramatization of the interdependency of the economic powers and the social relations among the people in the society and simultaneously, as Manthia Diawara (2010) notes, "brings attention to the voices and images of the victims of capitalism" (108).

Visually rallying against capitalism, as *Bamako* (2006) does, is to evoke Third Cinema aesthetics. It should be understood that to argue that *Bamako* is aesthetically conversant with Third Cinema differs from Keyan Tomaselli's sweeping opinion that "[m]uch African cinema is Third Cinema in nature, if not in direct derivation" (25). This

is because by its very nature African cinema in general and *Bamako* (2006) in particular resist many generalized statements about the characteristics or genre categorization to which African films belong. Scott Durham maintains that *Bamako* (2006) “conforms to none of the most familiar strategies associated with engaged film.”²² Films from Africa possess differences in form and content that make them difficult to categorize or brand them to a particular style or genre. However, the argument is that *Bamako*'s form and content explicitly evoke Third Cinema aesthetics. In other words, although *Bamako* is among the “new” classical African films, it employs much of Third Cinema style in boldly presenting the audience with both its content and its revolutionary styles in African filmmaking. The film's style is revolutionary in the sense that it introduces Sissako's new cinematic aesthetic that differs from his previous works. This style contrasts with the conventional Hollywood style. One among the basic foundations of the Third Cinema movement was to counter Hollywood's autonomy in style. The shots and the storyline in *Bamako* are interestingly challenging the familiar film styles and the narrative structure in filmmaking in general and in African filmmaking in particular.

In *Bamako*, Third Cinema aesthetics is evoked in two important aspects: the techniques involved in its production and the revolutionary message it puts forward. Technically, *Bamako* mixes documentary and fictional filming styles. For example, the trial scene is completely shot as a documentary. Sissako himself admits in an interview with Marie-Eve Fortin (2007) on the documentary look of his film as he says “we had to

²² See Durham, Scott. “‘The Center of the World Everywhere’: *Bamako* and the Scene of the Political.” http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_2/PDF%20Docs/DurhamPDF.pdf. Accessed 26 March 2012.

film the trial as one would a documentary: a scene couldn't be interrupted, a witness wouldn't have been asked to repeat a sentence and we let the court president and the lawyers listen to testimonies and intervene as they saw fit". Sissako also adds that scenes outside the trial followed fictional shooting techniques. Thematically, *Bamako* presents the African version of contemporary economic globalization and its impacts on local African people, a version that is relatively different from what has been presented by Hollywood-stylized films such as *The Constant Gardener* (Fernando Meirelles, 2005), *Babel* (Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, 2006), and *Blood Diamond* (Edward Zwick, 2006).

The convergence of these two styles in the production of *Bamako* exposes the fictional narrative presented by the World Bank and IMF. Further, the evidence collected and presented in the trial acts as visual documentation of verbal testimonies. The documentary here endorses the realist approach necessary both in the making of a comment on what is presented and as a reminder to the audience by using images that they can relate to. Conversely, *Bamako* details the everyday activities of the Malians whether social or economic in a juxtaposed manner and sometimes allows them to interact freely with the testimony or interrupt the hearing of the trial where necessary. Diawara (2010) observes, "[T]here are sequences in *Bamako* that look more like they belong to "the making of" than the title film itself" (115). These "making of" sequences which generally give the film its documentary look deconstruct the film language to allow the audience to interact both with the filmmaking process and with the hot discussions that the film raises. In general terms, such deconstruction is meant to be a technical tool the function of which is to involve the audience simultaneously in the

filmmaking process and in generating their self-awareness of the film's theme which is equally seized within the film narrative.

Third Cinema is generally understood as functioning against Hollywood dominance in narrative style and markets. *Bamako* introduces a counter approach in filmmaking, one which is less familiar but instantaneously challenges the conventional narrative style to evoke such an uncompromisingly function of Third Cinema.

Nwachukwu Ukadike (2007) maintains, "[T]hroughout the film Sissako eschews the Hollywood norms of narrative progression, instead introducing the stretching of time, the repetition of scenes or voices and nonsensical juxtapositions to draw attention to a distorted reality."²³ Ukadike's observation stems from the fact that *Bamako* does not take any short cuts in telling the story. It repeatedly juxtaposes issues to emphasize social discontent that resulted from budget cuts in social services that were either free or subsidized before the adoption of the neoliberal economic policies. The style is not just a way of boycotting a particular pattern endorsed by Western filmmakers it is also experimenting with the film apparatus by letting the style be dictated by the story itself. That is, the film content commands the form by appropriating film techniques equivalent to the issues the film address.

²³ Ukadike, Nwachukwu F. "Calling to Account." <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/3691/> accessed on 15 April 2011.

Bamako and the Space: Centering the Periphery and Setting the Ideological and Political
Perspective

Bamako's choice and use of space is vital in centering the periphery to the core of argument. The periphery in this context means the subaltern, the local urban dwellers, rural farmers, and the working class at large. The core argument is the economic and social wreckage that people at the periphery experience. One has to bear in mind that although *Bamako* deals with a burning African theme common to citizens, it is not primarily targeting this African audience. It is a revolutionary film aimed at African politicians earlier referred to as heads of privatizing governments and the broader audience outside Africa, as Sissako himself has consistently admitted in several interviews including one with Fortin (2007), "I want to say that there are not only wars and famine in Africa, but also an Africa which is conscious of what is happening to it." It becomes evident that the film wanted to correct some stereotypical Western perceptions about Africa.

In an interview with Vanessa Walters (2007), Danny Glover, the co-producer of *Bamako*, eloquently maintains, "[P]eople in the West talk of Africa, of poverty, of war and of sickness, but never of people who are conscious of what is happening."²⁴ This perception views people in Africa as unaware of global politics. Even though this should not necessarily be the center of argument in the film, it highlights the intention of correcting stereotypical views about Africa. The localized setting implies an African perspective built on the stereotyped perception about the people and their environment

²⁴Walters, Vanessa. "African Dreams: The Continent Must Express Itself on Film, Danny Glover and Abderrahmane Sissako." *New Statesman*. 2007. Accessed on 15 April 2011.

but at the same time shifts to their engagement into the principal agenda. However, if we consider the secondary audience as the African elite and the general public, then, the film tries to suggest a collaborative effort by African nations in addressing the neo-liberal economic crisis through an interactive approach manifested within a local space, the courtyard.

The courtyard setting is strategic. It needs to be understood that the characteristics of courtyards over almost all of Africa are the same or very closely related. In the courtyard, children play and adults meet for casual talk or discussion concerning serious family or community issues. The courtyard acts as a place for prayer and supplication, gossip, leisure, celebration, grievance, and work. In *Bamako*, the courtyard hosts the content of the film, the cinematographic qualities which detail the making of the film, and the complexities of the issues discussed within the film itself. Diawara (2010) outlines the courtyard in *Bamako* as follows:

The yard is not only the setting of a world tribunal, but also the house of a young woman who is an artist and who is estranged from her husband; it is the work place for a group of women working with tie-dye, a grandmother weaving cotton, a hospital bed for a patient, and the roaming place of a belligerent white ram. In addition to these diverse occupants of the yard, we are also made aware of the presence of cameras, microphones, [and] people listening to the deliberations of the court on the radio, and spectators who are watching the event live. (116 – 117)

This overloading of activities is essential in setting a forum for Sissako's own political view of Africa as one society that has diverse social and economic activities. Therefore, the courtyard is meant to bring the discussion into an African forum where concerns will be raised, debated and where possible, resolved. *Bamako's* argument is to be understood within the understanding of the trial that is happening in the courtyard. The courtyard

provides the context through its crowded environment. More importantly, the argument is communicated by providing a voice to local people who question and articulate their concerns.

In an interview with Fortin (2007), Sissako observes that "... a courtyard could function as a miniature society. There are men, women, children, some who work, [and] some who do not. Therefore, I had a capacity to show Africa through this courtyard, to not be speaking of an imaginary world and people that we do not see." Moreover, this is exactly what is seen in every single sequence of the film in *Bamako*. We see men and women working or talking, we see a sick man in bed being nursed, food being cooked, babies being fed, etc. It is a snapshot of African life. In short, it is a staging of the everyday life in just a few consecutive shots.

To Sissako, then, the courtyard is an open stage that brings people of all calibers together. It is a traditional setting where people come together to reconcile their disputes as well as being simultaneously a private and a public space. The opening and closing of the main gate to the courtyard and the restrictions imposed by the guard when the hearing is in session justify the changing status of this crucial space in the film. It is completely private when all the daily activities are over for the night. In one shot, the nightclub singer, Mele, has to climb over the gate to get in when she comes home late from a performance. In addition, it is public when the need arises in such cases as meetings, weddings, trials, funerals, and other social functions. By African standards, therefore, a courtyard is not a periphery but center stage. Based on these flexibilities and the qualities that characterize a courtyard, this local space is hosting a global theme, the injustice of

multinational financial institutions in *Bamako*. It becomes evident that the film *glocalizes* the space in order to bring front and the center the African community that in most cases has been relegated to the periphery even in making decisions about its own fate.

Bamako's staging of an extraordinary trial in a courtyard sounds strange. It is strange because trials of this nature are held in court settings of comfortable rooms with adequate security. As word of mouth goes, discussions among state officials, transnational elites, and the World Bank and IMF or corporate managers and representatives are held in five-star hotels. Such discussions are inaccessible to common people who in the long run are the victims of decisions made on their behalf. In an interview with a Cannes Festival official Sissako maintains "no court of law exists to call into question the power of the strongest. It wasn't so much a question of laying the blame on who is guilty than denouncing the fact that the predicament of hundreds of millions of people is the result of policies that have been decided outside their universe."²⁵ This denouncing is repeatedly manifested to express the knowledge of the local African people and, more importantly, their disapproval of the present economic reforms that deny their right to be part of the reforms rather than the victims.

Bamako proposes a possibility of breaking a taboo of not questioning the strongest. Consequently, it places the trial in the middle of the everyday activities of the common people. Ideally, this narrative choice is meant to artistically present an alternative voice, the voice of the marginalized people that is suppressed and normally

²⁵ See interview with Abdulrahmane Sissako in the Cannes Festival Press Release at http://www.louverturefilms.com/misc/sissako_interview.pdf, p.6. Accessed 12 January 2011.

ignored. Letting a serious trial interact with African daily experiences under the ongoing economic reforms provides a material evidence of the consequences brought about by neoliberal economic reforms. In reviewing the film, Barchiesi (2007) observes, “the movie’s devastating impact is not the result of the rhetorical boasting, clichéd dramatic crescendos, or self-reassuring sloganeering. Rather, it consists of a perceptive, sociologically acute, and complex balance between a scathing indictment of neoliberal policies and an honest, incisive, critical commentary on the politics of formal, progressive organizing” (185-186). The character’s physical interaction with the court proceedings, their struggles, and their views of the approval and disapproval both of the arguments presented and of the experiences expressed contribute to making the case. Indeed, the interaction proposes lifting of the barrier between the perceived inactive African communities and the neoliberal economists. In this case, their active presence and interaction question the general tendencies of ignoring them as if they do not know what is going on in relation to their own countries’ economic situations.

When the film opens, Sissako establishes three usable spaces separated by a series of walls. As Diawara (2010) observes, the director collapses “several spaces into one” (116). Such a collapse is intended to eliminate barriers established by classes of people or borders of the countries in which the institutions are operating across the African continent. These spaces include the exterior courtyard, the courtyard, and the interior of the house that hosts the courtyard. Although these spaces host different activities that carry different meanings in and outside the film, their interaction here does not cause any contradiction of each other but rather aid each other to complete the narrative. Diawara

(2010) also notes, “It is like having split screens with several events that are contiguous in space and time, and which may ignore one another’s presence or enter into conflict with each other. For example, a woman working on tie-dye leaves her post to interfere with events taking place in the tribunal; a policeman for the court reaches over to a private sphere to help a woman fix her top” (116). These atypical responses at the court whether interrupting the proceedings or trespassing to assist residents with personal matters endorse the flexibility of the space and waive the rigidity of the actual court process.

As it proceeds, the film reveals to the audience that the exterior courtyard is a space for the jobless, job hunters, local entrepreneurs, and other life struggles. The first film sequence shows Chaka with some papers in hand walking on the road in an industrial area and ends when he enters his home. This sequence elaborates the exterior space as a place of despair and struggling, particularly when the audience later learns that Chaka has lost his job, which causes turbulent relations with his wife, Mele. Subsequent sequences that feature Chaka are mostly made up of interior and courtyard shots reflecting the psychological troubles of losing a job. In the film that is connected to the loss of manhood and power in the household. The economic power shift is manifested visually through the framing of Chaka taking care of his daughter. This role and many other household chores, to borrow from Gayatri Spivak (1996), are “according to the explanation and culture” (30), and in African cultures specifically, are customarily regarded as a woman’s responsibility. The film also portrays Chaka as silent except for learning Hebrew and few comments that he makes when chatting with Falai, a

videographer in the film, who dismisses Chaka's dreams of becoming a security guard at the Israeli Embassy, an office that has yet to be established in Mali. Chaka's silence reflects how the loss of his job has muted him, restricted his command, and fully disempowered him in his household and the community at large. In its broader sense, his job loss has shifted power in his house to his wife who sells her voice in a nightclub. It is not an overstatement to argue that this shift demonstrates, as *Bamako* emphasizes, the loss of physical and production industry in Africa with a growing entertainment industry as its replacement.

The exterior courtyard is also a space for exploration. Saramba (Helene Diarra) is tie-dyeing and has employed a group of men and women to help her with her entrepreneurial endeavor. However, the film complicates the exterior courtyard during the trial through the border-crossing story of one witness, Madou Keita, whose attempt with twenty-nine other youths turned tragic, silencing the hearing for a moment and breaking the audience into tears. The terrible experience expressed here challenges a fancy notion that globalization, as Singh Kavaljit (2005) defines, is "the intensification of trans-border interconnectedness in all spheres of economy, politics, society, and culture" (13). It is not an exaggeration to argue that the exterior courtyard is as restricted as the interior of the house, with some exceptions. In Madou Keita's sequence, a group of youths is wandering in the Sahara as they return from an abortive attempt to reach out of African boundaries. The shots here are predominantly long shots and pan to follow the character's movements with unlimited space at all sides of the screen. Although the film juxtaposes shots from the trial and exterior shots from the desert, the emphasis remains

on the tragic journey shots whereas the trial shots generally bear witness, providing some reactions from the audience.

The courtyard is also set as a vibrant space for discussions and social interactions. It is the space between interior and exterior, the center. It is a meeting point between domestic issues and foreign or external ideas as well as an open forum for free interactions and interruptions. At least the way it has been used here, I suppose, suggests a hybridized arena where tradition and modernity can co-exist. Dickson Eyoh (1998) argues, “the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity allows for the representation of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural arrangements of postcolonial societies as hybrid constructs” (118). For example, in different shots we see people using both tap and well water. The existence of both a tap and a well in the courtyard can be read as an expression of the possible co-existence of African countries’ economic systems and those proposed by the financial institutions. In other words, economic reforms need not abandon the present economic systems in the countries; the two can co-exist and support each other when the need arises.

The interior of the house whose courtyard hosts the trial is a private space. It is locked and can be accessed through at least two doors. In addition, the court is in session, with the permission of the security guard or gatekeeper, which indicates that the area is a no trespassing zone. However, the film suggests there is room to negotiate between the private and the public. Although it has very few shots of the interior of the house, there are moments in which the film comments on the restrictions that govern the private and public spaces. At one interesting moment a boy is peeping through the window staring at

Mele, the singer, as she applies lotion to her body after a shower. Whereas this is not meant as approved behavior, the contrast between the two shots, one of Mele's eroticized body sitting in front of the mirror and the juxtaposed shot of the sweating boy outside the window, proposes both trespassing and borderlessness. In another sequence court bailiff reaches forward into the private sphere to help Mele tie up her dress when the young man she normally calls to assist her is unreachable. Jacqueline Maingard (2010) refers to this act as "a normally intimate gesture within the domestic space that becomes eroticized as public display" (400). Mele's frequent interruptions, whether drawing someone's attention to zip her dress or passing through the crowd to get a bucket of water from the tap holding up the hearing process for a moment are an indication of a borderless courtyard.

One room of the house is set up as a sickroom for a person whose condition is connected to what is going on in the trial. This scene connects the testimony presented about the impact of World Bank and IMF policies on the government disengagement from social services including health. In this nursing scene, two important observations can be drawn. First, it becomes evident that people opt to take care of their sick people at home instead of taking them to the hospital because they cannot afford the medical costs. It should be understood that in most African countries, medical services were free prior to the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programs that led to the mushrooming of privately operated hospitals and the disabling of public health centers for lack of required medical supplies and manpower. As is widely known, the implementation of economic recovery programs is preceded by an acceptance of various conditions aimed at, as

Rwekaza Mkandala (1994) argues, loosening up and shrinking “state tentacles and let the market self-regulate” (2). As a result, serious government cuts in health and education have replaced free medical services. Terrence Turner (2003) argues that for the states involved in the global system “[t]o fulfill their functions at the global level, however, they have been obliged to attenuate or abandon many domestic functions, above all, those associated with social services and support of the relatively poor and unproductive segments of the population” (53).

Second, there is a connection between the person who is nursed and the defendant’s attorney. The scenes draw attention to the patient who is nursed to contradict or rather refute the rhetoric on good services propagated by the World Bank and IMF as articulated in the film by the attorney, Mr. Rappaport. In other words, these cutaways are used to present a counter argument. As A. O. Scott observes, we witness “the nonrelationship between discourses concerning the global system as a whole, contested here in the language and forms of law and justice, and the immediate experience of some of those it governs, as that experience unfolds in the daily rhythms of a life which does not seek to explain or justify itself” (2). It is an African perspective that is aimed at critiquing the projected benefits of the predatory policies implemented by African leaders that in general terms drastically affect common people and the ailing African economies. It can be further argued that scenes of a sick person are an expression of an extreme imagery of the impact of the policies and the programs they implement. In fact, if the sick person can be inferred as Africa, *Bamako* is calling for an immediate response to rescue the seriously sick economy and the general survival of the continent now nursed in bed.

In this sense, the interior space is used not only to intensify the necessity for action but also the possibility of policies to interrupt the private sphere and the life of individual nations.

Montage: Compromising with the Ideology

From the opening to the end, *Bamako* plays with both the visual and the aural juxtaposition of conflicts. Visually, shot compositions suggest the presence of conflicting personalities as represented by the characters' movements, postures, dress, and the positions they occupy in the frame. For example, the fancy costumes of the judges and the lawyers who are eloquent and aggressive in addressing issues raised at the trial are set in opposition to the dress of the witnesses, particularly the goatherd and the former schoolteacher who cannot communicate in proper court language (French) which indicates the untranslatability of their thoughts and their testimonies. This opposition suggests not only the existence of class among the court participants but also imposes an impression of who has the power to speak and who does not. Diawara (2010) argues that "*Bamako* is based on a binary conflict between the powerful and the disempowered" (115). This binary conflict is necessary to expose, as Marcia Landy (1994) would call it, "corrupt and destructive political attitudes and practices" (37). Such attitudes and practices in our case are the policies proposed by financial institutions and implemented locally by African political authorities. These policies by their very nature are corrupt and destructive. It is necessary to draw the attention of the audience to the confounded

situation of the marginalized as referenced to middle- and upper-class members of the society.

Aurally, the film uses silences and at times opens up for the performance of the African oral tradition. Both silences and audible performances fulfill the function of intensifying the visually destructive images of economic globalization. The mise-en-scene composed of shots of different sizes and movements reflect *Bamako*'s power to expose the disrupted social harmony against the false promises of the economic reformists. It should be understood that *Bamako*'s mise-en-scene, as is the case with other political films, is composed around a certain framework that exposes Sissako's ideology. Augustine-Ufua Enahoro (1988) argues that "[t]he aesthetic of representation of the artistic medium is usually informed by the artist's social vision" (138). Considering the tonality of Sissako's previous films, one is convinced that *Bamako* reflects the director's obsession with the Soviet montage, in which shots that are originally unrelated juxtaposed in a sequence to create a message that will introduce a particular response to the spectator.

The film's trial, which is the central plot, is by itself an interesting setting for discussing issues of montage. As Diawara (2010) observes, "the same courtyard in the film becomes the setting of several scenes that take place at the same time but are relatively autonomous from one another" (116). *Bamako*'s simplified setting, complex in terms of accommodating unrelated activities that concurrently inform the central theme, is indeed a composition of its kind.

The trial sequences are composed of static shots, and no camera movements are involved. Sissako maintains that this was a technical constraint manifested by the decision not to interrupt the testimonies. That is, any camera movements to maneuver reverse angle shots and framing adjustments would have interrupted the flow of the narrative and ultimately the natural flow of the trial. Whereas such a technical malfunctioning answers any doubt about whether the film aims at evoking a documentary aesthetic or not, it does suggest the impotence of the trial. It makes it doubtful that the trial will come up with a decision that would end the stalemate between the African people and the financial institutions in question and their operations in Africa. The dominance of static shots denies the life that is supposed to be experienced in a normal trial setting. As different as they appear compared to exterior shots or real life shots in the communities, static shots in *Bamako* are crowded with didactic agency.

The shots of the people's lives and their daily activities are energized with movements and, in contrast to static shots, include various pan and tracking shots. The composition of the shots which involve the civil society lawyers making their case are packed on their backgrounds with much of a crowd of people signifying support as compared to those of the World Bank and IMF lawyers which are predominantly single medium shots. I can assume that shot composition in *Bamako* aims at serving a particular ideological purpose, to challenge the dominant discourse on the strength of the neoliberal policies by showing them as fragmented while reflecting the community coalesced as one group of firm and knowledgeable people.

Cinematically, Sissako juxtaposes single shots of Mr. Rappaport, the lead attorney for the financial institutions over alternative shots of clusters of local people, a sick man in bed, and unemployed Chaka. Rappaport's speech is interrupted by juxtaposed shots of Chaka's melting marriage to Mele, a retired schoolteacher's dream of a basket full of heads, and the failure of technology and power. These shots are aimed at contrasting the financial institutions' rhetoric with the everyday life of the people in places where these institutions operate. In one sequence, Rappaport's speech on the amount of money his client offers to Mali is complemented by a juxtaposed shot of the sick man turning his face away from the audience to endorse disapproval of false allegations. In another shot, his speech is echoed by the squeaking sound of baby shoes. This juxtaposition symbolizes the harmonizing rhythm of the "song" that people have been hearing since the implementation of the World Bank and IMF financial policies in most African countries.

There is another interesting sequence in regard to this kind of interruption. It shows a baby playing with the trial files. The child later picks one page from the files and hands it over to a police officer. Earlier, we have seen this baby sitting in a toddlers' bath basin. As the sister washes the baby, she sings a song in Wolof (a Senegalese language). The song is not subtitled in English but it is the film's theme song that expresses despair and disappointment. Such an expression suggests the destruction associated with the economic sabotage by the financial institutions in the country and what the sister does is to warn or rather transfer her understanding of the situation. Although these two sequences are related neither visually nor aurally (which is the way that montage normally works), when connected they generate an interesting ideological sentiment.

They develop a sequence that in the first part can be interpreted as a demonstration of an initiation process of the future generation. The final shot of the sequence in which the baby hands the paper to the police officer endorses the views that the young generation would prefer not to continue listening to lies from the attorney, but instead would proceed into prosecuting the attorney and his client. As it is not satisfactory to express the anger against this side in the trial, Sissako ironically extends the anger to the financial institutions and their proponents beyond human anger, as Elisabeth Lequeret (2007) decodes the abnormal reaction of a goat attacking one of the World Bank and IMF lawyers, Mr. Rappaport, during the hearing session recess.²⁶

Bamako's most stunning montage sequence is presented within Madou Keita's story of the aborted migration. Several shots are systematically juxtaposed to build up the testimony. It should be pointed out that the gatekeeper prevented Madou from entering the courtyard in the beginning of the film because his name was not in the list of witnesses. When he comes back for the next session, Madou gets through to the stand to provide his testimony. *Bamako* uses Madou's story to outline the impact of economic policies on the generation of youth. The sequence has mixed shots in terms of location, size, and camera movement to emphasize the consequences. Interestingly, this testimony has tragic moments and reverse shots between the desert scenes and the trial scenes alternate systematically to unveil the deep feelings of the trial audience. Maingard (2010) describes this montage sequence as follows:

²⁶ Liqueret, Elisabeth. "'Bamako.'" Trans. Paid Fileri. *Film Comment*. 43.1 (2007): 71. Accessed on 5 April 2011.

The image cuts to a close up of the red water, stained from the cloth-dyeing process, draining away. We hear only the ambient sound of the swirling water. Here icon and historical reality merge: the cloth is literally the fabric of this local community's life; symbolically it is Africa's life-blood draining away. The placement of this shot and its emphasis on the blood-red dye and its thematic meaning can be seen as illustrating the connection made by Eisenstein between [color] and 'imagery structure', particularly with regard to a 'work's theme and idea'. [6] This holds for the continuing montage where, in the next shot, the ochre-stained cloth hangs full-screen, still moist from the dye, moving very slightly in the breeze, performing a further symbolic statement about the fragility of this local community's inner core and, by extension, of Africa's future. The threads of Africa's fabric, represented by this beautiful image, are clearly too fragile for the dominant global economic order. The silence over this montage sequence makes it all the more evocative. (401)

This testimony sequence uses reverse angle shots of varied compositions to build suspense, as well as to dramatically bring to the audience the ultimate humiliation caused by the economic recovery policies. The sequence details the restlessness of the youth, the most productive group of the nation. Madou's testimony details the absence of jobs and access to education as a result of the government's failure to create opportunities for the youth. This testimony freezes all other activities that normally continue parallel to the court sessions, exposing how each in the community is involved in feeling the effects of the issues under discussion. Everything comes to a temporary halt followed by juxtaposed close-ups of varied contents projected on the screen with the intention of emphasizing how people of all walks of life relate the story to their customary routines. A woman behind the jury's table stands cautiously, holding her baby tight to her chest; a man listening to the testimony carefully between the hanging cloths; a young woman working on tie-dye looking attentively over ropes supporting dyed cloths; Saramba, the tie-dyer, interrupts the lawyer accusing him of betraying his country by siding with

capitalist claims; and a woman in the audience who had earlier appeared as a witness dissolving into tears when she learns of the climactic tragedy to befall a female migrant and a dozen of other youths in the Sahara Desert. The reason for mixing camera angles and the interrupted flow of the story becomes clear. The audience is being prepared for an extraordinary destruction – economic and social – caused by the predatory economic policies imposed to serve the capitalist ideologies.

The Trial or the Trailer: Multiple Narrative Modes in *Bamako*

Harold Scheub (1985) observes that “[t]here is an unbroken continuity in African verbal art, from interacting oral genres to such literary productions as the novel and poetry” (1). Whereas Scheub’s observation ends with the novel and poetry, there has been a growing use of oral genres in other popular art mediums, including film. African filmmakers have been borrowing from and invested in the oral traditions as their narrative agents. Such films include Gaston Kabore’s *Wend Kuuni* (1983), Jean-Marie Teno’s *Afrique je te plumerai* (Africa, I will fleece you – 1991), Haile Gerima’s *Sankofa* (1993), and Dani Kouyate’s *Keita! L’heritage du griot* (1994), to mention just a few.

Enahoro (1988) notes that “African cinematographers are attracted to the traditions of their people; they use myth, history, music, dance, and songs” to communicate their messages to their African audiences (140). This not only continues the African oral tradition, it also is the most appropriate way to reach an audience which is accustomed to oral genres. As Enahoro would argue, this opens up “the aesthetic potential of reality and reveals its beauty while it uncovers and debunks the ugly” (138).

African films utilize oral aspects to expose and question difficult topics. I consider the trial in *Bamako* to be part of this tradition. The people who come to testify are more like storytellers narrating the present history to their audience. Using figurative language devices such as metaphors and parables in their stories, they symbolically take the audience with them, to experience the hardships of the characters in the stories, and give the listeners time to internalize and relate with their own experiences, just as a normal storyteller would do. Madou's testimony in *Bamako* takes this style, using journey as metaphor. Tomaselli et al. (1995) maintain that "[t]he metaphor of the journey is a feature of folk narrative, taking the form through a quest, a movement in search of something lost or yet to be found" (27).

A quick analysis of Madou's story leads to the conclusion that the group of youth was trying to migrate to Spain seeking for greener pastures and a better life. In other words, they are economic migrants because, as Madou testifies to the World Bank and IMF lawyer, his government is unable to provide a good education and a better life in his country. This is common rhetoric on issues of migration. In addition, what *Bamako* does is explore not only the economic difficulties in African countries, but also the failure of African governments to offer basic services and employment to their people, coupled with the dreams of the youth for a better life in Europe. According to the film's central theme, we are exposed to a bigger question of borderless financial institutions and restricted movement of African subjects to Europe and across Africa.

The restriction endorses a commentary on two false assumptions. First, it comments on the attitudes of African nations against migrants of other African

nationalities. Algerian soldiers opening fire on African immigrants in their country highlights the difficulties within the African continent and specifically within the African Union charter on Africa as one. It is a political commentary on the border issue that is, as Ali Behdad (1998) puts it, “not just a territorial marker of the modern nation-state—defining its geographical boundary—but an ideological apparatus where notions of national identity, citizenship, and belonging are articulated” (109). It exposes a false relationship among the African countries and their people. Madou’s aborted mission with his fellows is a metaphor for critiquing the African Union, an expression of differences among the nations in the continent. That is, deaths in the desert and the shooting by Algerian soldiers show not only dozens of young lives lost but also extermination of resources and human capital. The point is that a fragmented Africa cannot fight a West united in its exploitative policies imposed through the World Bank and IMF.

Second, the restriction challenges the whole idea of world as a village and free mobility of resources, a common rhetoric shading the positive aspect of globalization. Vera Mackie (2001) holds that globalization “involves the circulation of capital and commodities, information, signs, symbols and representations and also the movement of people” (187). In its place, the film demonstrates that, whereas mobility of finance and transnational agents operations are easy across Africa, there has been a resistance to African bodies crossing borders outside the continent. If there is a flow at all, it is one-way, a flow from Europe and other Western countries to Africa and not otherwise. On the ground, the erasure of borders between African countries and beyond regarding extended financial access and cultural integration or technological advancement is so far

impractical. In fact, it is still illusionary except in the flow of products that do not have a tangible economic impact.

Bamako uses parables in a political docudrama as a device to deliver political commentaries that are difficult present in the normal narrative setting. These remarks are necessary to awaken people to the context of their own experiences. Such commentaries by filmmakers, as Tomaselli et al. (1995) argue, “criticize the present to encourage change; re-examine and reconstruct the past to shed more light on its effects on the present; and they transmit cultures and histories from the past generation to those who are present” (32). At least three parables are incorporated in *Bamako* to politically critique and to suggest possible solutions to Africa’s economic dilemma. One parable speaks the language of the World Bank and IMF, and the other two depict extremes in regard to Africa’s relationship with the World Bank and IMF policies on economic recovery. Whereas the first parable is metaphorically presented within a western film sequence inserted in *Bamako*, the extremes are wrapped in a parable in a wider sense in the trial that characterizes the plot of the film. But in the specific addresses the parables work through the narratives of the unemployed man, Chaka, and Samba Diakite, the former schoolteacher. [Here emphasis should be *former* and not retired because it might be he no longer teachers due to Western policies].

Bamako has an insert of a short sequence of a spaghetti western film titled *Death in Timbuktu* featuring Danny Glover, Elia Suleiman, Zeka Laplaine, and Draman Bolero (Sissako himself). The sequence acts as a fill-in for the television news following a technical failure at a local television station. Michael Sicinski (2007) interprets this

sequence as “an in-joke” to Third Cinema. He argues that, “*Death in Timbuktu* recalls the Brazilian Westerns of Glauber Rocha, which used the framework of genre as an armature for radical comments. Likewise, the fact that various Bamako citizens sit down in front of the television to absorb this “entertainment” implies that not everyone has the luxury, or even the desire, to check politics at the door and veg out” (17). Sicinski’s interpretation is correct, particularly on the genre’s using of the insert to launch radical and political comments. However, I doubt the use of *Death in Timbuktu* in *Bamako* is “an in-joke.” I consider the sequence to be a continuity of political commentaries on the failure of the local system despite promises by World Bank and IMF lobbyists whose economic recovery proposals project an overnight change into a better life. It is a commentary because the western clip becomes a substitute for the news broadcast in which the newscaster who is washed-out on the pale blue screen framed on the left half on the screen but when film begins it is screened on a full screen. The contrast in color tone, the framing of the image on the screen, and the length of the sequences, as well as the functioning and malfunctioning of the screen images and their contents, endorse the imagination of the Western (foreign) as powerful and dominant over the newscasting (local) which is perceived as weak and subjugated.

The newscasting is a metaphor for the “real” content that is ready transmission but is restricted by technical problems, to be replaced by entertainment, a western movie. The reason for the malfunction of the news program, the half-screen framing of the news anchor, and the faded colors becomes clear in reference to the storyline. The movie itself is another level of metaphor that represents the physical destruction of the World Bank

and IMF. Scheub (1985) argues “[w]hen the realms of art and reality are brought into contact and that relationship is caused by metaphor, the audience is in the presence of myth” (3). The art in this case is the movie on the television screen and the reality is the actual presence of the audience and their experiencing the content of the movie. The television set is placed in the courtyard and the audience is seated in front of it just as the audience sat earlier in the day at the trial hearing, as if the television-watching session were an extension of the trial. In this extended part of the trial, the audience is presented with another fact – technical communication failure. It is the failure of the government institution to communicate with the local people, instead the film that represents the storyteller intervenes.

The western movie sequence is not a simple dramatization of the historical cowboy actions but an elucidation of the present historical facts of the real Western invention into the socio-economic well-being of Africa through the international financial institutions as evidenced in the hearing of the trial. In other words, the movie is presented as a testimony against the policies confirming the prior testimonies using chaotic and tragic evidence. The western sequence shows full shots of cowboys in action, shooting left and right at the intersection of streets, costing the life of an innocent woman passing by. The woman is left dead in the street with her helpless baby crying. This is a visualized death but is not the only death in this series of ruthless acts of the cowboys. One enters a classroom and gunshots are heard. When he comes out, happy and laughing crazily, the cowboy proudly tells others that he has shot and killed a teacher. He signals two when asked how many. Another cowboy shoots a teacher after being told by his

fellows to kill one of two teachers standing beside a classroom wall with three children. His response is “Too many, they don’t need two teachers,” confirming it was right to kill the teacher as a way of reducing their number. This recalls the parable that wraps the World Bank and IMF policies whose grants and loan conditions include shrinking government budgets by laying people off. Poor countries in which social sector budgets include health, agriculture, transportation, and education have to experience major cuts. These cuts devastate the ability of the governments to provide basic services to their people and at times prompt social unrest.

An interesting observation within this sequence is worth being outlined here. The cowboys are blacks and whites. In an interview following the premier of his film, Sissako makes it clear that the blame for the African troubles should not be laid only on the West because African leaders have their share too. That is why he cast as the killer of the teacher who was considered “extra” an African, a black cowboy. Sissako elaborates, “I saw this Western sequence as a metaphor of the World Bank’s or the IMF’s mission – since these missions are carried out jointly by the Europeans and the Africans.”²⁷ This elaboration not only refutes the “in-joke” argument that Sicinski (2007) poses but also confirms the corruption within the local systems in the victimized countries as metaphorically presented in the sequence and the failure of the news broadcasting.

The killing of an “extra” teacher represents job layoffs and reduction of the work force, and consequently, an increase in the unemployment rate and lowered productivity.

²⁷ See interview with Abderrahmanne Sissako in the Cannes Festival Press Release at http://www.louverturefilms.com/misc/sissako_interview.pdf, p.6. Accessed 12 January 2011.

Bamako emphasizes the issue of unemployment as a consequence of implementing economic recovery policies. The anger and trauma embedded within the issue of unemployment are set in the film to haunt Chaka and Samba Diakite. The two have different approaches to dealing with the troubling experiences in their lives that also affect many other people around them although when *Bamako* introduces them it brands them with one common character, silence. They are both muted in their first appearance on the screen. However, as the movie continues we find the inner feelings of the two through the parables that we have to uncover.

Chaka decides to take a courteous way of dealing with issues that embarrass his existence and social life as caused by losing his job. As outlined earlier, the job loss not only has the economic impact of losing income, it also has shaken his marriage and reputation in the community. Chaka invests in religion, moving from one to another seeking peace of mind and solutions on the earth, as well as salvation in the afterlife. At the beginning of the film we see Chaka as a practicing Muslim, in one shot joining others praying in the courtyard. He later expresses his inspiration to serve as a security guard for the Israel Embassy when the office is opened in Mali. This inspiration is elaborated by his practicing Hebrew every night in bed before falling asleep.

Towards the end of the film, Chaka turns to evangelism to find a way out or rather to escape his troubles. However, evangelism does not save him; he commits suicide toward the end of the film. Tejumola Olaniyan (2008) associates Chaka's death with the "social stasis" represented in the film with death as the climax of the immobility of the people's hopes as he puts it, "[d]eath, the ultimate stasis, is better than a life without

rations” (136). What the film seems to suggest in Chaka’s parable is that death is the ultimate impact of the economic policies that depress people through preretirement-age layoffs, loss of jobs, and loss of power and control in family matters.

Contrary to Chaka, who ends his life to escape the troubles, the former schoolteacher, Samba Diakite, takes a different approach and sees the solution is to deal with the problem-makers. His story, the dream of heads in a basket, is another parable of a more radical way of dealing with the socioeconomic impact of the World Bank and IMF policies. Earlier, this former schoolteacher is summoned at the trial as a witness. When it is his turn to go to the stand, he only mentions his name and profession. He remains silent and lets some minutes pass before returning to his seat. James Genova (2009) translates the schoolteacher’s silence as “The potency of a man whose profession is about the verbal conveyance of knowledge to youth appearing mute before the court speaks volumes for the impact SAPs have had on the educational infrastructure of Africa” (142). Towards the end of the film, Samba Diakite sitting with a security guard (the gatekeeper), reveals his troubling dream that he has been experiencing frequently in recent days.

Diakite dreams about heads in a basket. He picks up the heads but every time when he reaches into the basket he picks up the same head. When asked if this head is white or black, he responds “that makes no difference” (*Bamako*). It makes no difference because what happens on the ground is a collaborative work between African authorities and their supporters, the donors. Diakite’s revelation through a dream functions in the film both as a continuation of oral tradition and an indirect way of expressing the

opinions of the character. Tomaselli et al. (1995) argue that “[a]s important features of folktales, dreams give the stories that ‘surrealistic quality’” (29). In other words, the revelation qualifies as an alternative strategy, a solution for ending the monopolistic conditions of the Western financial institutions. In general terms, the dream can be interpreted as a radical proposal to confront the corrupted heads of state who are working together with other economic reform champions for their own benefit as opposed to working for the benefit of the masses.

The dream becomes the solution surpassing the legal action in process, the trial. The sequence when Diakite reveals the dream unveils the parable of silence when he was called to testify earlier. The silence was meant to question not the legal process but the power invested in the judges as the tendency has been that the powerful always wins over the powerless. Considering that the revelation is made outside the courtyard at the same spot where listeners have begun to question the length of the trial, the dream is talking to the disappointed Africans who might have to disperse, as Olaniyan (2008) posits, “in the charade with cudgels and guns and then install a new regime of rationality that will distribute rations fairly; this is to foment a revolution” (134). Diakite’s dream is again narrated as a story to a particular audience, the local Malians, to whom the trial and the legal process is too formal and a joke. *Bamako* shows the urgency of the oral tradition as the most effective way to communicate to the common people in an African setting. Even though the trial has been extended, the testimonies relate more to African oral tradition.

Diawara (2010) considers *Bamako* a political cinema and he compares the film with other works of Third Cinema filmmakers. He argues that the handling of the film

language in *Bamako* “is as important as its deconstruction of the world financial system” (116). The film language to which Diawara refers includes the filming equipment such as cameras and sound equipment, the actors’ movements and poses as they wait to enter the scene, and the frequent “uncontrollable objects” that overcrowd the scenes. Together with challenging the film language, these features of *Bamako* reinforce Sissako’s attempt to experiment with the film apparatus. This attempt is endorsed by the featuring of a mixed cast that includes professional lawyers and judges, professional actors, and local people who volunteered to appear as witnesses. Another basic feature of experimental film that *Bamako* exposes is the very filming process that sacrifices filmmaking rules for the sake of a much more realistic, or rather a natural flow, of the plot in general and the trial in particular.

Soundscape: Silence as a Narrative Agent

This section examines the soundscape in *Bamako* with emphasis on the use of silence. Sissako believes that African society is one that is considered equally both by speech and by silence.²⁸ It is argued here that *Bamako* uses silence as a narrative agent. *Bamako* is no exception in Sissako’s tendency to take communication – hearing, listening, and, of course, vision – as a primary theme and put particular emphasis on the use of silence as a communication style in his feature films. It appears that Sissako is not the only African filmmaker who puts emphasis on the way film communicates. As Enahoro (1988) outlines, “Ousmane Sembene, the ‘father of African Cinema’, believes

²⁸ See Fortin, Marie-Eve. “Interview with Abderrahmane Sissako, Director of *Bamako*.” *Offscreen*. 11.6 (2007).

that the film must communicate with African audiences and that there is a virtue or necessity in the substance, form and technique needed for the communication of the artist's view point" (137). *Bamako*'s style utilizes a variety of sounds that includes silence to generate suspense and restrict the message where necessary. In this case, restriction is mandated for conservatory reasons that include an expression of inscrutability of the local language and African local knowledge in general. The voices of the characters are purposefully restricted to signify the inefficiency of the spoken word.

Bamako's soundscape is stylized to have a particular narrative effect. Whether in the presence or absence of sound, the audience is engaged and connected to a concern of access and denial represented by the two opposing sides of the trial. *Bamako* simultaneously alerts the presence of a variety of audiences. There is the immediate audience at the trial and those who do not have a permit to attend the sessions but can participate through listening and commenting at their own right. Maingard (2010) argues, "[t]he to-and-fro movements through the courtyard door are matched by the sounds and the silences of evidence being given in the courtyard, simultaneously heard through the makeshift loudspeaker outside" (400-401). This technique of playing with levels of sound is intended to position the cinematic audience, she adds, "on both the inside and the outside, just as the locals are" (401). This is indeed a correct proposition regarding the position of the audience when considering *Bamako*'s theme and its use of shifting levels of sounds and silences to connect the already-divided society. This society used to be one but is depicted in the film as divided by setting them both inside and outside the

courtyard. Sound derivation is also used as an attempt to incorporate and inform people in the larger audience that share the cinematic experience that the film presents.

In addition to this observation, however, *Bamako* utilizes silences as a way to restrict views and ideas that are not perceived as rational. These silences are categorized in two main clusters – straight silences and technical silences – and I intend to bring them into discussion here. These silences can be collectively considered as a missing narrative at times restricted all together or folded within songs and oral performances throughout the film. They are a missing narrative because the audience is not provided with the exact text for interpretation, but rather is left to guess the meaning through connecting other relevant sequences. The straight silences are those silences in which no voice is articulated, and thus, the audience is prevented from accessing the sound of the character. For example, as Olaniyan (2008) outlined, “[t]here is the witness who poignantly stayed silent in the witness box” (135) referencing a former schoolteacher who approached the witness box but could not say anything before the court. This teacher’s testimony is wordless and the only evidence available can be read through his face across which fleet all signs of disappointment, tiredness, and insecurity. Silence here indicates a missing narrative although it might be translated as a sign of boycotting, to show the present court authorities, as Ukadike (2007) interprets, “how deeply discouraged he is.” The silence behind the schoolteacher’s appearance endorses the possible message “My look tells it all,” meaning that no other evidence will prove the devastation caused by the neoliberal economic policies more than his appearance and the fact that he is unemployed.

The former schoolteacher is not the only silent witness to let the audience speculate about his testimony. There is also a woman who takes the oath in the witness box but her testimony is skipped, it is not featured at all in the film. Her oath taking shot is succeeded by a wedding sequence. Considering that, to use Olaniyan's (2008) words, *Bamako* brings "many scenes in the film seemingly unrelated to the central court trial" (134), replacing the witness's verbal testimony with the wedding sequence opens up another avenue of speculation that would relate the sequence with the projection of Western culture. This sequence is an endorsement of free market policies and cultural globalization. The judge calls for a court recess to allow the wedding procession to continue. Then, through a wedding videographer's footage the details of the wedding are viewed. The groom and the bride are dressed in Western style, reflecting the overwhelming domination by Western culture, which metaphorically represents an acceptance of the new Western economic system.

This wedding sequence symbolizes regeneration and extermination simultaneously. It symbolizes regeneration because in many cultures the wedding legitimizes a unity for recreation. *Bamako* endorses the marriage between the Western economic system and culture to the African ways of life. In addition, it symbolizes extermination because the dress code denies the fabric products that are processed just outside the courtyard where the wedding is taking place. Here, the narrative missing in the woman's testimony which leads into seeing the impact of the free market economy that provides access to European goods and simultaneously neglects homemade African products. This conclusion comes from the fact that almost one third of the film projects

the efforts by the tie-dye entrepreneurship. Their products, however, are deemed unfit for an African wedding. Even the details provided by reverse shorts of the wedding procession express the extermination. A female body, the bride, is silenced. There is a shot that reveals the bride (African body) fitted in the white bridal dress, likely a metaphor for the common phrase “one size fits all.” This phrase has been used by critics of the structural adjustment program policies to question the appropriateness of Western economic structures imposed by financial institutions. The way the recovery programs are proposed by these financial institutions implies all countries have similar problems that require the same recovery procedures.

Another withheld voice is Chaka’s. This kind of silence is of particular interest in relation to the missing narrative. In one scene, Chaka is asked to express his views for the second time because the earlier recorded interview has been lost. He refuses to restate his speech, arguing that it is not important. The content of this lost interview is never known and thus is restricted. The reasons for its restriction are open for speculation in relation to Chaka’s character that, despite expressing some ambitions to find employment, reveals obvious depression. His dissolving marriage, unemployment, and loneliness complicate his situation. Chaka’s character reflects insecurity, his speech is either irrational because of his anger at his situation and the fact that the reporters have no power to change the situation or inscrutable because of its impact on the broader audience.

Technical silences are silences in which the audience hears or sees the character speak but there is a communication breakdown because the message cannot be accessed. This inaccessibility is due to the spoken words being in a different language with no

subtitles provided. Olaniyan (2008) calls a local language that cannot be interpreted or permitted by the court of law “unauthorized language.” He refers the *griot* as “the old man who spoke eloquently but in an unauthorized language, unauthorized because it is not in the rational language of a court of law” (135). It is unauthorized because the court uses French and the dialogues are subtitled throughout the film to help the non-French speaking audience. There is even an interpreter for the court who assists the witnesses, the lawyers, and the audience to understand speeches in a language that is unfamiliar to the parties involved in the hearing, the ‘unauthorized language’.

The *griot*, an elderly goatherd, Zegue Bamba, was silenced in his earlier attempt to testify at the beginning of the session. He explodes out of permission and approach the stand, as Jaafar (2007) explains, “wail[ing] a lament imbued with sorrow and defiance.” The *griot*’s use of Bamana (Malian language) and the director’s decision not to subtitle his speech leave the audience to connect the story depending on his facial expressions. These visual expressions reflect not only pain but also deprivation and exploitation of a poor African man. Sissako leaves the lament untranslated, maintaining that he saw no need to translate a scream.²⁹ This decision suggests a restriction of the accessibility of some African knowledge. Also, it is a commentary on the didactic and legal rhetoric as a way of denouncing the lies of the powerful financial institutions. The scream comments on the inability of a foreign language (French in this case) to express the real feelings of the people who have suffered enough through the language and the masters of the language who extend the suffering in the new economic system packages.

²⁹ Fortin, Marie-Eve. Interview with Abderrahmane Sissako, Director of Bamako. *Offscreen*. 11.6 (2007).

It should be understood that the *griot*'s eruption has a particular role in expressing the climactic anger of society against the destruction that has been presented as evidence by the previous witnesses. Enahoro (1988) argues that “[t]he griot’s pronouncement is the community’s medicine for the worst disease of the mind, the corruption of the consciousness” (137). The *griot*'s scream concludes the hearing session in *Bamako* by being the final testimony. The testimony that was earlier silenced and which later forced itself into the proceedings to fulfill what the *griot* said earlier, “my voice will not live on” (*Bamako*), acts as a closing statement to end contradicting arguments presented earlier. The straight silence and the technical silence merge in the missing narrative through the connected visualized expressions to which the audience refers and connects with the sufferers’ pain.

In conclusion, *Bamako* basically utilizes mixed stylistic approaches in delivering its central message. It depicts resistance to monstrous neoliberal economic policies that powerful Western nations are imposing on poor African countries through their multinational financial institutions. Basically, resisting imperialistic and/or oppressive acts is among the functions of Third Cinema. This oppression can be through cultural domination, such as that infiltrated through conventional Hollywood films, or economic, such as monopolization. In film, this resistance should be expressed both visually and aurally, the task that *Bamako* manages through its narrative style and theme. The film features important sentiments that can be both emotional and revolutionary in terms of the content it drives and the style it utilizes to involve the audience. For example, the goatherd, Zegue Bamba, leaves his seat, to borrow a phrase from Ukadike (2007), “to

electrify the audience with a powerful chant in his native dialect.”³⁰ This electrification should be understood as *Bamako*’s approach to expressing people’s resistance to the unjust economic practices of the World Bank and IMF while creating awareness in the people to seek ways to stop the institutions’ invasion.

³⁰ Ukadike, Nwachukwu F. “Calling to Account.” *Sight and Sound* 17.2 (2007). Web. 15 April 2011.

CHAPTER 3—DOCUMENTARY FILMS AND GLOBALIZATION: *END OF THE
RAINBOW AND DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE*

*The pleasure and appeal of documentary film lies in its ability to make us see timely
issues in need of attention, literally.*

Bill Nichols (1991)

In the previous two chapters, I have discussed two basic trends, among others, that African fiction films centered on economic globalization issues have in common: 1.) social realism and 2.) the use of multiple cinematic approaches. This present chapter focuses on documentary films as a way of bringing a different narrative modality into the discussion. According to Bill Nichols (1991), realism in fiction films “serves to make a plausible world seem real; in documentary, realism serves to make an argument about the historical world persuasive” (165). This is because in most cases documentaries present things in the way they appear in actual life tuned according to the filmmaker’s point-of-view and artistic mastery. It is this art of capturing actual life and then manipulating it while maintaining a sense of realism that John Grierson calls “the creative treatment of actuality.”³¹ William Stott (1973) defines documentary as “the presentation of actual facts in a way that makes them credible and telling to people at the time” (73). Following Stott, I examine the depiction of economic globalization in two African documentary films that pose a powerful critique of neoliberal economic policies: Robert Nugent’s *End of the*

³¹ Quoted in Hardy, Forsyth. Ed. *Grierson on Documentary*. University of California Press. 1966, p. 13.

Rainbow (2007) and Hubert Sauper's *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004). Using simple narrative styles and inexpensive documentary film techniques, these two films explore the effects of transnational corporations on the local socioeconomic operations. Taking into account the financial constraints surrounding filmmaking in Africa and the number of documentary films produced as opposed to fiction films on the issues related to economic globalization, an increased interest towards the production of documentaries is evident. Elizabeth Coffman (2009) maintains that "the public's appetite for documentaries has increased, and the costs for production have decreased" (62). In the case of Africa, there seems to be an emerging trend in which documentaries function as an alternative to fiction films in challenging the economic globalization in Africa.

Cinematic representation plays an integral role not only in the depiction of issues related to contemporary economic globalization but also in the debates regarding the impact of globalization processes in Africa. Even though "[i]n the dominant tradition of African cinema," as Nwachukwu Ukadike (2004) argues, "the fictional and the documentary coexist to expand the borders of reality," for decades this imagery has primarily been captured in fiction films (166). Recent releases, however, indicate an increased interest in recording this socioeconomic agenda in documentary narratives as well. As demonstrated in *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare*, this increased interest provides an avenue for a broader debate on the effects of economic globalization in Africa. It is worth noting that the approaches used in these films to spotlight transnational cooperation activities on the continent differ greatly from conventional film practices inside and outside Africa. In *End of the Rainbow*, I examine the intertextual

dialogue between the representation of the company and that of the villagers as the film presents conflicting views of the impact of transnational corporations on the gold mining industry in Guinea. These dialogues open a window to compare and contrast the lives of the people and their surrounding environment. They pose questions of power relations between the powerless local communities and the powerful Western corporation that cares little about the environmental and economic concerns of the communities surrounding their mines. In *Darwin's Nightmare*, I center my discussion on how the film frames the nightmare it addresses. I argue that there is a relationship between the predator fish around which the film story revolves and the operation of the global fish market as an agent of global economy.

I contend that both *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare* use the voices of marginalized and exploited groups of people to call for a reevaluation of the involvement of transnational corporations in the economies of the countries in question. The films focus attention on one of the complex realities of the unpopular economic liberalization policies in Africa through the stories of ordinary people whose voices are rarely heard in mainstream television programs or conventional cinema. Judith Pernin (2010) observes that this tendency of documentary film to focus on ordinary people given “a space for speech” and their stories developed “in full-length movies” while “rejecting any kind of didactic purpose” are intended in auteur cinema standards, as well as “at a certain degree of ‘truth’” (22). This truth can be presented by anyone who can see signs of divergence from it. Interestingly, neither *End of the Rainbow* nor *Darwin's Nightmare* was made with funds from Africa or from an African director. This fact offers the possibility of

exploring some stylistic and ideological diversity in representing economic globalization and how the fictionalized stories share certain degrees of truth with the documentaries. As the debate on economic globalization grows, it also generates more avenues that influence the employment of diverse addressing techniques. Thus, the two films are remarkable for their ways of addressing crucial and current socioeconomic issues, not only in Africa but worldwide.

For most parts of Africa, fiction films have effectively dominated both in public cinemas and in the privacy of homes. Their popularity is unquestionable because they are the most available. However, African audiences have equally accepted documentary films. The growing audience appreciation of documentaries is facilitated by the fact that most documentaries project images and stories that are close to the daily-life dramas of the audience. That is, these stories are part of people's own experiences because, as Ukadike (2004) posits, "[T]here is a relationship between history/politics in society and history/politics in the text" (160). *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare* as texts are a reflection of the history, culture, and the politics of neoliberal economies in their respective societies.

While it is obvious that numerous momentous documentaries from Africa focus thematically on economic globalization, both *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare* possess a uniquely moderate narrative style. In "*Le Reel A L'Attaque: French Documentary and Globalization*," Laurent Marie (2005) admits that almost all films within the body of globalization documentary "are either overtly critical of the globalization process or purely and simply against it" (91). This admission leads Marie to

categorize the films into two groups. The first includes those documentary films that deal with counter-globalization movements using footage of meetings and demonstrations complemented by authoritative voices to advocate equal sharing of resources and wealth. The second group involves films that not only detail the globalization process but also examine its various facets in relation to existing socioeconomic fields. Films in the first category mostly tend to adopt the traditional documentary style that, as Bill Nichols (2001) asserts, uses “voice-of-god commentary, interviews, cutaways from a given scene to provide images that illustrate a point made within the scene” (26). Films in the second category rely on what happens in the actual location wherein the voices and images of the victims and their detailed environment lead the narrative. Although the voice-of-god is avoided in these films, there are features that suggest the voice of authority such as of opinion leaders in a given society. *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin’s Nightmare* are in this latter category. Their narratives are entirely guided by the victims of economic globalization processes with the devastated conditions of the communities set in opposition to the common rhetoric of beneficiaries of the processes.

End of the Rainbow

End of the Rainbow (2004), a 52-minute Australian-French production, examines a conflict between a local community in Guinea, West Africa, and a transnational gold-mining corporation that has acquired a 925-square-mile mining field from the government of Guinea. The film presents the chronology of events that led to disharmony in the village. Following the signing of a controversial memorandum of understanding

between the government of Guinea and the mining company, the local population is financially compensated in order to vacate the area and thus pave way for the construction of the mining operation. According to Roy Maconachi and Gavin Hilson (2011), many places across Africa South of the Sahara, artisanal mining generates “incomes for hundreds of thousands of families, providing them with means to subsist and support their farms” (598). In *End of the Rainbow*, however, the local population that depended for years on agriculture and artisanal gold mining for their living is now detached from its normal life style. Ironically, the country’s army is charged with enforcing the company’s policies, including provision of maximum security to the company.

The village’s agony is presented through focus on the story of the village chief and the critical narration of the *griot* whose voices act as the voice of authority. The two (chief and *griot*) represent the views of the local community. Their views coincide with Joseph Grieco and G. John Ikenberry’s (2003) observation that “[t]o others, however, economic globalization is fostering uncontrolled and unsustainable exploitation of the world’s natural resources; it is producing economic and social inequality both within and among nations” (207). From the transnational corporate viewpoint, the head engineer of the mine leads in provision of information regarding the company’s best practice. Because of the cinematic and rhetorical strategies employed in the film, one is likely to read *End of the Rainbow* as a realist documentary. To someone experienced in the way transnational corporations work in Africa, the film offers a glimpse of reflection of transnational experiences, considering the framing of the shots as well as the techniques

used to mesh the story together. Ukadike argues that “the documentary frame presents what might be seen as a transparent window on history, culture, and other issues of resistance” (159). *End of the Rainbow* employs cinematic and rhetorical strategies that make it likely to be read as realist documentary.

End of the Rainbow opens with a long-written disclaimer on a black screen that introduces not only the place of where the film is based but also a political snapshot of the country. The disclaimer reads:

Conakry, Guinea, West Africa, is a one-party state ruled by Lansana Conte since 1984. In 2006 the government granted a 925 square mile concession in the remote north eastern part of the country to a transnational gold mining corporation. Apart from unspecified payments to the central government, the local population, the Mandinka, would receive only 0.4% of the profits from the mine.

The above disclaimer that precedes the title and the credits in the film is compact.

Besides introducing the viewer to the place where the film belongs, this excerpt endorses three critical issues. First, the disclaimer questions the administrative structure of the country, thereby proposing a case of an undemocratic regime where the decision to appropriate land has been reached through dictatorial means. That means there were no negotiations between the local population and the government nor was there a cost-benefit analysis made within the country. This kind of consultancy would have involved civic organizations, opinion leaders, economists, environmentalists, and business professionals.

Second, the disclaimer suggests fraudulent activities that could have surrounded the agreement. Mentioning “unspecified payments to the central government” and the insignificant percentage allocated to the local population in the text, without detailing the

sharing of the remaining earnings between the company and the government, signposts the presence of corruption. Third, the disclaimer critiques the bipolar nature of transnational corporations and their funding institutions. It is well-known that transnational financial institutions call for both political and economic transformations in the country before offering loans and grants as economic recovery strategies. Normally, countries that demonstrate an improved move towards democratic leadership, i.e., involvement of grassroots in decision-making as well as free and fair elections, are the ones that benefit from the offers. Dictatorial regimes do not qualify either for loans or for investment opportunities unless they soften their powers. The prologue suggests the opposite of this position advocated by the institutions.

The disclaimer is followed by a sequence that details the dismantling of a mining firm in Borneo, Indonesia, and the viewer is informed of the plan to move the firm to Conakry, Guinea, in West Africa. Pointing to the world map on the wall, the head engineer explains how the dismantled plant will be shipped to Conakry via Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The plan is visually complemented by the actual dismantling of the plant and a montage comprising cargo ships transporting trucks and other equipment of the plant. The sequence becomes what Bill Nichols (2001) calls “material evidence to form a conceptual coherence, an argument or story, according to a logic or economy proposed by the text” (125). The logic of this introductory sequence is to demonstrate the company’s competence to implement the project. It is intended to launch the company and its operations with a transnational respect for its experience and technological power that earned a worldwide reputation and trust. Nowhere in the film is the viewer told

where exactly the head office is located. This is meant to offer a sense of a free market economy where capital and resources theoretically flow unrestricted. Seeing the boxes of gold loaded in the plane at the end of the film, the viewer is led to speculate that the cargo is heading far away and probably out of Guinea's borders.

The film is poetically narrated as an attempt to weigh the images of the company and those of the local people. There are shots that detail the hopes of the people for a better life with the coming of the company as well as their disillusionment when these hopes are not met. For example, the equipment-shipping montage with background music of a Greek singer, Savina Yannatou's, *Y Una Madre*, is succeeded by a guitar and song of the *griot* and his actual performance. This juxtaposition is intended to set the tone of the film by suggesting that the African oral tradition as the voice of authority. It should be understood that in this particular African culture, the *griot* is a storyteller and a historian. His presence and performance signify the existence of a witness who informs of the past, records the present, and alerts the future. The *griot's* narrational voice that follows appears as though the story were told from his point-of-view: "Whether you accept it or not, gold is a force. Man does not put the minerals in the ground ... only God ...," the *griot's* song goes, supplemented with various cutaway shots. The shots include an audience of mixed ages sitting around a fire listening, artisanal mining activities, scaling and selling of gold, farming, and the arrival of the mine company experts. The *griot* sings and poses to let his music fill the vacuum. From his song and the visual images juxtaposed in the scene the viewer is left to speculate that there is a general acknowledgement of the value of gold, "gold is force," or as the *griot* ends his song,

“That is why we are here.” This is the financial power attached to gold which is later reiterated by a guitarist singing alone around the fire almost in the middle of the film saying, “the house is full because of gold.”

In addition to this acknowledgement, the *griot* highlights the general belief of the community that the mineral is a natural, God-given stone and thus there is no need to be tightfisted with it. This view expresses the ambition of people to let others share the benefit of their endowment by massive extraction. In this case, the film depicts the welcoming nature of the community but also their readiness for development, a move towards industrial society. In this scene, however, we learn of the worries of dishonest investors. The *griot* prays in his song that the foreigners who are coming will be good people, will live side by side with the local community without misunderstandings. The prayer comes at the end of the song. All during his performance, there are cutaways of shots of his audience and the arrival of the mine engineers. The shot in which the *griot* makes the prayer follows immediately after a kitchen scene in which the engineer and his roommate are talking. The engineer is showing his expertise in roasting a chicken in a kitchen with shelves full of bottles of wine and spices, with a refrigerator and a microwave and well-lit. On the contrary, the shot of the *griot* singing around the fire was taken in almost complete darkness. The only light on the scene is from the golden flames of the fire, giving a chiaroscuro effect. This contrast establishes class differences between the newly arrived investor and the local community. It presents those who will dominate the screen and those who are faded in. Unquestionably, however, the *griot* as the archive of the community and as a storyteller is informed of the past colonial experience and is

here cautioning the people as they deal with foreign investors. The caution is reiterated by the chief who says, “We are watching them.”

Stylistically, *End of the Rainbow* differs greatly from many globalization documentaries, because, in most cases, these kinds of documentaries present critiques from a single perspective. Even though *End of the Rainbow* focuses primarily on the mayhem of the marginalized, their account is not left unchallenged. At various times in the film, shots of the company representatives join in to air a counter argument. In other words, the film tries to weigh the views of both sides. The vulnerability of the local population to the extended domination of the mining company is woven as a consequence of multilayered events, from willingness to accept foreigners to the government’s disrespect of its own people’s rights. This technique allows the audience to hear from both sides in the conflict and deciding who deserves sympathy is left up to the spectator. In addition to this approach, the film explicitly challenges both the country’s administration and the mining company. On one hand, the film portrays the Guinean army officials charged with mine security as rigorously and blindly taking orders from the company management without thought of the reality of their fellow citizens. On the other hand, the company is critiqued for its expansionist nature and intolerance to letting the local people benefit from what they thought to be a development initiative in their community. In fact, the juxtaposition of the army’s actions and that of the company side-by-side to the activities of their villagers explores the conflicting interests and contradictions that emerge in mining compounds. Bonanno (2004) argues that “Because of the contradictory relations between TNCs and the nation-state, the state is called to

support and legitimize corporate actions in a situation in which TNCs tend to by-pass state demands and consequently limit the state's ability to assist them. This situation also opens up a crisis of legitimation in which the state is called to justify actions that it cannot fully control and regulate (38).

End of the Rainbow features women expressing disillusionment over the company's presence. Their laments repudiate earlier testimonies in which four different young men testify about the benefits of having the company in their village. Among them is a former high school English teacher who proudly admits that people quit teaching in order to take company jobs because the company pays more. In another scene, a guard says he joined the company because he has future plans that will be facilitated by the earnings from the company. But as the film unfolds, it becomes clear that these were short-term earnings. With the exception of few local people who are employed as guards, no one is seen working for the company during the whole film except in one other scene. Their absence suggests they were temporary employees who worked only to build the plant. This seems to be the case for the testimonies in the beginning. As Allen Johnson (2005) posits on the nature of employment opportunities created by the global market, "[t]he point is, while globalization does bring jobs to a region, they are of such quality one wonders if its people's lives have really been upgraded."³² Indeed, experiences in *End of the Rainbow* teach us that local people hardly benefit from foreign investment in their land.

³² Johnson, G. Allen. "Darwin's Nightmare." San Francisco Chronicle. 2005 Oct. 14, p. F12-13.

The testimonies ridicule the common rhetoric of the marketers of globalization who always convince the public that activities related to economic globalization are held in a fair manner beneficial to developing countries. The IMF, for example, describes globalization as “the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology.”³³ According to what we learn from the film, there is a unidirectional capital flow from Africa to the Western world. The imported technology does not benefit the majority of local populations nor the host country if the local community is to receive only 0.4% of the profit. We see that foreigners make up the majority of the workers employed by the company. These foreigners rather than the local population are the beneficiaries. The expatriates are seen in the bar at night, watching soccer, enjoying music, and playing poker games and pool.

Almost in the middle of the film, *End of the Rainbow* has a scene featuring a group of women contesting their earlier testimonies. The shot shows the women cleaning and sieving soil at the river bank to find gold. In the first shot, a company security official pauses for a photograph being taken by a local security officer, with the river bank and the women in the background. The shot establishes the distance between the local people and the foreigner. It becomes clear that the local people have been pushed into the background. The local security officer as photographer assists the foreigner in taking over

³³ See Wolf, Martin. “Why This Hatred of the Market?” a Financial Times article of May 1997 reprinted in *Globalization Reader*, eds. Lechner, Frank and John Boli, 2000, p. 7.

the foreground and thus the photograph demonstrates the foregrounded dominance of the village by the foreigner.

Simultaneously, one woman speaks directly to the camera in the following shot, “Since the company arrived here, our husbands spent their time looking for work at the mine. We always went mining in dry seasons, but now all our places are occupied.” This is a clear indication of growing unemployment as opposed to the employment opportunities that were expected from foreign investments in countries like Guinea. The film recalls the past and repeatedly laments the occupation at different occasions and by different people. There is no doubt that this occupation, together with disappointment over the employment by the company, is at the center of conflict.

Towards the end of the film, another woman comes forward at the village meeting to air her views in regard to ill-treatment by the army: “The army is hassling us miners. There is not enough rain in the fields, so we go to the pit to help our husbands. The whites use the military to chase us away. Our children are starving. Help us or they will die of hunger.” The comment reminds the viewer of the traditional economy of the community – agriculture and artisanal mining during dry seasons – thus lack of rains and inadequacy of land for both farming and mining are an alarming danger to the families. This is the second shot in the whole film which a woman directly critiques the operation of the company and the only one in which a woman speaks in public. The speed and the firmness of this woman’s speech are outstanding and call for serious measures to alleviate the situation. She is shot walking from the back of a group of standing people and followed by the camera as she comes to the front of the crowd. As she speaks, the

bodies and heads of people standing around her function as a background to emphasize a sense of community support. Lack of camera movement adds stress to both her gestures and the message she is sending to the community elders who patiently listen to her laments. When she finishes her speech, the camera zooms out and ends with a pan shot. Because of the camera zoom, the speech is emphasized to suggest a lasting impact.

This scene, the climax of the film, is meant to instill courage in community members and stir changes. The subsequent shot shows the village chief proposing a solution:

At this stage we are totally in the dark. In our ancestors' days, there were spirits. They protected Africa, but now they have gone. Everything is different. The spirits have all abandoned us. Some white people are thieves but so are some black people. If they chase us away we have no choice, but to steal.

Indeed, this is a critical disappointment. From the chief's response, the film shows the character development of a naïve but suspicious village leader who extends a hand to welcome the foreign company to a man who is aware of his people's rights and courageous enough to propose resistance. The chief even becomes aware of his enemies, those he calls thieves. But the response is more than just an expression of a society that is aware of its rights. It reveals serious moral decay resulting from the practices of irresponsible government and the unfriendly mining company that does not provide enough work opportunities to local people. For example, the suggestion to steal denies the desire of the chief who, in the closing scene of the film, plans to go to Mecca for pilgrimage, to build a house, to build a mosque, and to pay the bride price for a poor man

as soon as he gets a kilogram of gold. It also denies his earlier hopes of prosperity, let alone his beliefs in sharing the land with all the humanity.

The chief's episode is made to highlight the critical situation of the community where religious commitments have been endangered by the presence of the mine company. George Soros (1998) would argue, "[B]y allowing the market values to become all-important, we actually narrow the space for moral judgment and undermine public morality."³⁴ When charged with fighting and injuring a security guard, one young man who introduces himself as "an Islamic student" says, "I am here because I am poor. I am the only son my parents have. My father is old. (...) I cannot steal from the poor. So, I steal from the company and tomorrow [on the Day of Judgment] I will confess that." Although he admits that God forbids crimes, he does it because he does not have any other means after being deprived from resources in his own land. This scene is shot in various close-ups and medium close-ups reversed between the army officers who interrogate the young man in a shabby small room. As the questioning accelerates, the man expresses both physical and emotional suffering and breaks into tears. As he cries bitterly while bending into his lap, he is ordered to calm down and given papers to sign with his index finger before being escorted outside by two army officers to serve his sentence. It becomes obvious that *End of the Rainbow* considers the presence of the company and its strict operations in the area as destructive to the social fabric and the economic systems of the community. The company paralyzes the production activities of the people as well as their moral principles.

³⁴ George Soros (1998), quoted in Lechner, Frank and John Boli. Eds. *The Globalization Reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000. p.7.

In one sequence, the chief is shot sitting in the doorway of a semi-finished house. In the background piles of disorganized belongings indicate a kind of temporary settlement. There is a young boy taking up space between the chief and the belongings. The boy's face displays a mixture of unrest and urgency; his posture details his ignorance caught in a life of uncertainty. The boy's presence in this steady shot makes him the witness of his troubled generation. The chief explains his disappointment:

They paid us compensation. They destroyed our houses and cut down our mango trees. If they give us money, we have to leave. If they don't, we still have to. That is the truth. The whole area now belongs to the white people. I am the son of an honorable man and a man of my word. The white keep their promises. What they say they do. We black people spoil the arrangements.

The chief's words and the way he is framed in the shot reveal some poignant issues. First, is the acknowledgement that they are paid before they are ordered to move. In the scene that follows immediately after this one, the head engineer takes the filmmaker for a tour around the village to see how the company contributes to the development to the local community. He complements people's ability to negotiate on the amount of the compensation they are seeking in order to move. The head engineer sardonically adds that the villagers go and find another valley to live in after demolishing their houses. In illustrating how the system works, the chief explains that the order to move has to be followed whether people are paid or not, an emphasis that functions as a critique of the country's dictatorial regime. In a way of condemning the existing administrative system and the financial power of the company, the Chief reiterates this point at the end of his explanation by saying, "We black people spoil the arrangements."

Second, is the whole question of the good times before the establishment of the mining company that was earlier mentioned by the woman. It is meant to remind the villagers of the loss of respect, dignity, and honor by being moved out of the land that originally belonged to them and away from the source of their income. The expanding mining area makes them nomads for life and that is why his response from this location is the most repeated in the film. The background in the shot functions as a character by itself to express temporality and instability. And if the honorable figure of the community is left to wonder, what could be the conditions of the normal residents?

Third, it is the issue of occupancy by white people. This is an expression of discontent from someone who had earlier welcomed these white people to share their resources. It is a way of questioning the understanding of the people when they were getting into some dubious agreements about which they did not know their long-term consequences. Fourth, it is the chief's acknowledgement that white people keep their promises. This acknowledgement is complemented by a cutaway shot of the gold processing plant from a high angle that seems to be a point-of-view shot of the chief. This shot functions as an emphasis of the promise to which the chief is referring. That is, the construction of a huge plant that produces in bulk as opposed to artisanal mining that produces in handfuls. To the viewer, this promise is connected to the head engineer's earlier explanation when he told the people who were dismantling the plant in Borneo that if they could disassemble it, he would reassemble it where it was going.

Technically, the film juxtaposes the events and lives of the people to emphasize the consequences of financial and technological power of globalization. Whereas this is

the central argument that the film presents, the vulnerability of the local community is made to be seen in opposition to the mine, machines, modes of transportation, well-furnished housing, and security. That is, the technological influence yields more financial power and a much more secure life. Conversely, the lack of this power results in lack of food, settlement, security, and moral instability. The details through juxtaposed shots evidence this throughout the film. For example, on the arrival of the company's equipment, a man riding a bicycle in the village is moved out of the scene and replaced with a truck transporting a bulldozer that is left to move in the shot until it fills the screen. In another sequence, a construction montage, a close-up shot of a man's hands and a foot fastening straws together to build a hut is contrasted with shots of steel bars of the mining plant under construction. On the one hand, these shots express the temporality of the local settlements and the strength and permanency of the transnational investor that is built for eternity. On the other hand, the shots suggest that only those well-endowed with technological and financial powers are to benefit from the treasures found in the village. As Michael Intriligator (2005) observes, "many of the gains have been going to rich nations or individuals, creating greater inequalities and leading to potential conflicts nationally and internationally" (71).

End of the Rainbow needs to be understood in the context of these contrasted actions. The spectator sees the artisanal and industrial mining processes at once in terms of their extraction, cleaning, scaling, transportation methods, and the security to understand the benefits of technological power. In different scenes, the film details the tedious extraction process and the cleaning of the soil to see if the work had brought a

little glittering stone. In one particular scene, the voice of a miner is heard from the pit at a distance that the camera cannot capture, while a group of other miners around the pit opening are pulling up a bucket of mud. There is a short verbal exchange between those who are outside sieving what they have pulled out of the pit and the one who is still inside the pit and unseen. This restriction of the unseen miner is meant to emphasize the depth of the pit and the hardship of artisanal mining. After a while, the miner emerges from the pit. There are other sequences in which the miners come back empty handed after spending the whole night digging in the restricted areas. All these sequences of hardship are separate from sequences in which miners sell gold at the local market. In other sequences, this detail on extraction is contrasted with land blasts, a huge contoured opening almost an acre wide, bulldozers and drilling machines, trucks transporting the dirt, an advanced industrialized cleaning process, and a gold transportation process that involves heavy military tools as a way of providing security. Although these sequences can be viewed just as a way of detailing the mining processes in the area, as well as showing how industrial mining yields more than artisanal mining, it becomes clear that the sequences also raise questions of the power of the corporate mining that is beyond the control of local governments.

End of the Rainbow unearths insecurity in the areas where there are corporate mining and foreign investment activities. This insecurity is expressed in various sequences to emphasize the disruptive nature of the contemporary economic globalization. Visually and through responses to interviews, the film details issues in regard to the uncertainty of local settlements, lack of sustainable economic programs, an

increased unemployment rate, lack of agricultural produce, and lack of land to cultivate or to raise animals. In addition to these issues, there is a concern about environmental degradation. Indeed, this is disillusionment to the local community that had expected to benefit from the coming of the mining company as expressed earlier in the film by both the chief and the *griot*. To the contrary, the local community faces a different experience. Instead of benefitting from the company, the people are expelled from their village. These communities see the growth of occupation of permanent residences for the company experts who are all foreigners. To underscore this, the film captures various signs of restrictions imposed on the villagers. These restrictions include fences, holed containers, and gates. Whereas fences and gates indicate restricted areas that limit the local community's access to the mining area, the container signifies a confinement to discipline those attempting to cross the socioeconomic lines that separate the villagers and the company.

There is a fenced compound, a gardener watering flowers outside the house, the head engineer's kitchen, a fenced playground, and, later, a bar. The compound's appearance is the opposite to that of the huts and the lifestyle of the neighboring community. The bar looks more like a members-only club. In contrast, after several shots detailing the space and the furnishing of the club, the sequence is followed by shots of a local disco hall full of people dancing. Space is compressed in a few shots indicating an overcrowded hall. The sweating dancers and their immovability justify the space compression.

The fence symbolically signifies the existence of classes. It indicates here that when people are not the same, they cannot share the same facilities. It signals that the transnational mine company owners cannot mingle with the local community either for security reasons or for socioeconomic differences. This interpretation is made clear when one army officer questions a group of artisanal miners who were caught mining in the company pit: “Can you and the machines work at the same area?” asked the army officer. To seal their freedom in their own land, the artisanal miners are locked in a shipping container with several small holes that look like windows. These small holes were made to allow the incarcerated breathe. The scene ends with an actual locking of the container door. Then, the camera wanders from one hole to another, detailing the faces and the attempts of the locked-up individuals to peep outside. Finally, the camera zooms out to show the abandoned container that now functions as a jail.

The sequence starts with a mass catch of villagers who had invaded the mine. The patrol car arrives and the security guards round up the artisanal miners in the contoured pit. Then, there are several cutaway shots of the corralled people at the bottom of the pit trying to escape. The film creates a clear contrast between the size of the pit and the bodies of the miners struggling in it. The camera follows the villagers to explore their drama and consequently unfolds a wider metaphor related to the inability of the African economy to get out of the pit into which it has fallen. The size of the walls becomes a huge and endless monster to climb out of. The walls represent the powerful body that the villagers cannot fight. The capturing and the treatment of the people caught by the Guinean army are one of the most emotionally moving acts in the film. The villagers are

forced to surrender what they got from the mine and the women are threatened to be shamed if they do not cooperate in surrendering what they have earned. Close-up and medium close-up shots are used to emphasize the anger of army officers and the humiliation of the villagers who are piled in a car bound for an unknown destination. Those interrogated are depicted as helpless, without shirts, and when asked why they were mining in the privately owned area, they reply, “Because we don’t have any other option.”

It generally becomes clear that the fences and the container in *End of the Rainbow* function metaphorically as signifies of a blockade that prevents villagers from accessing their anticipated economic goals. Naomi Klein (2002) describes fences as “barriers separating people from previously public resources, locking them away from much-needed land and water, restricting their ability to move across borders [...] Fences have always been a part of capitalism, the only way to protect property from would-be bandits ...” (xvii). The fences in *End of the Rainbow* mean the same as separating people from public resources. The public land that was earlier owned by farmers and artisanal miners is now legally owned privately by a transnational mine company. The local community has become “would-be bandits.” This evidence demonstrates the real nature of contemporary economic globalization operated under capitalist-oriented economic model. The government decision to privatize the land and to relegate the ownership to a foreign company is antagonized and illustrated by the barriers represented by a strong metal container.

The container underscores the rhetoric on neoliberal economic politics. It symbolizes the detention of the African economy as ruled by the capitalist economic model. It should be recalled that these containers were used to ship equipment for the plant which has replaced the artisanal mining. In this case, the desire of the locked villagers for the advancement of their economy, and therefore the economy of their country, is suspended as if the villagers were also a commodity ready for shipment. The last shot in this scene is a long take in which the camera pans right and left to explore the holes where the locked men adjust their heads to look outside. The camera finally rests at one hole for a moment and zooms out. As it does, we find out that the audience is gone, leaving the container abandoned outside the village. That is to say, the shot emphasizes that the presence of the mine company has arrested the village's human capital instead of using it. To underline this view, the immediate sequence that follows the container in the film is industrial cleaning of gold. We see a furnace, a drain of golden liquid, and finally a bar of gold that is cleaned and later handed over to a security officer who puts it in a wooden box and seals its top by driving a few nails. Several other boxes are locked by two different mine officers in a container. The following sequence shows the shipping process in which an armored car escorts another car to the airport. Then, the boxes are loaded into a private plane under strong security. When the plane takes off, the following shot is that of the chief explaining how he will spend his wealth if he ever gets a kilogram of gold: "First, I will go to Mecca for pilgrimage; second, I will build a house; third, I will build a mosque; and fourth I will buy a wife for a poor man." The wisdom in this plan is that the individual, the chief, and the community will benefit from the piece of

gold extracted from the public land. In other words, the community and the owner of the gold will equally benefit. The statement is therefore opposing the 0.4% profit share proposed earlier as what the local population will receive.

The successive sequences of men being detained in a shipping container and the final processing and shipping of gold bars is of great significance as far as the film is concerned. It should be understood that the number of people detained in the first sequence and the exact weight of the gold in the subsequent sequence remains unknown. The viewer is left to guess the weight through the reactions of the people who are lifting the boxes. The amount of gold shipped when compared to the shots earlier that showed local scaling and payment transactions between the artisanal miners and the local businessmen concludes the technological and financial power of the transnational corporations. It is the power to extract more ore within a short time. It is the power to rip off the African economy by not just by possessing the resources, the land, but also by detaining and controlling the means of production, i.e., the human resource. Martin Wolf (2000) argues that “[t]echnology makes globalization feasible. Liberalization makes it happen.”³⁵ In *End of the Rainbow*, the feasibility of globalization is the presence of an advanced-technology mining firm. The foreign mining company’s benefit happens at the expense of the local community. Summarily, the film makes the audience conclude that economic globalization under the neoliberal approach is yet to benefit the poor. In other words, the present economic system in Africa which delegates economic power to

³⁵ Wolf, Martin. “Why This Hatred of the Market?” *Financial Times*, May 1997, quoted from Lechner, Frank and John Boli (eds.). *The Globalization Reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000. p.9.

foreign firms to invest in the hope of recovering the local economies does not work. In the end, getting back the lands that the country has given to the investor is not an easy task, a task close to impossible.

Darwin's Nightmare

Darwin's Nightmare (Hubert Sauper, 2004) presents transnational trade as a predator of an ailing African economy in general and the Tanzanian economy in particular. The *New York Times* dubbed the film “a picture of hell on earth: a tableau of ecological catastrophe, economic exploitation, poverty and disease,” that deals with the fishing industry in Tanzania.³⁶ Sauper, an Austrian-born, Paris-based documentary filmmaker, exposes uneven gains between the countries that have natural resources and the countries that consume those resources under the present economic globalization as mirrored through a global fish market. I begin with providing a short overview of the film and its reception by the Tanzanian government, film reviewers, and Africanist critiques. I then interpret two nightmares that the film dialectically addresses: the interrupted ecosystem and its consequences to the local economy, and the foreign fish market as part of economic globalization and the inequalities it perpetuates.

Darwin's Nightmare was shot in Mwanza and its neighboring shore villages along Lake Victoria and focuses on the impact of the global fish market that has been greatly swayed by the international fish exportation to the European market. Using some conventions of traditional documentary film including segments of archival footage and

³⁶ Scott, A. O. “Darwin's Nightmare.” *New York Times*. 2005 March 26, A21.

interviews – sometimes featuring both the interviewer (not the filmmaker) and the interviewee – the film provides a forum for the apparent victims of economic globalization to share their experiences with the consequences of transnational trade.

In an interview with Nicholas Fraser of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Sauper observes that his aim in making the film “was to caution the people in Europe that natural resources in Africa were benefiting the West, leaving the African masses impoverished.”³⁷ This aim is addressed in the film by presenting multiple benefits of transnational trade, an enterprise that is predominantly under the auspices of Western countries. In opposition to these benefits, *Darwin’s Nightmare* features the local population dying of hunger and disease as a direct consequence of unequal economic gains from the fish industry in Tanzania. The Africanist critics of *Darwin’s Nightmare* have dismissed the film as a misrepresentation of the country and its people and they have stood firm against the film’s connection to the benefits of global fish marketers and the suffering of the Lake Victoria communities.³⁸ Paul Bjerck (2006) makes the misrepresentation clear as he states that the people “are not given justice in this otherwise courageous film” (43). Although I concur with the critical views expressed here and I take issue with some of the concerns raised in the film, a close reading of *Darwin’s Nightmare* supports Gordon’s (2007) argument that “... African cash crops, minerals, and fuels have continued to be transported overseas” even though it bitterly repudiates their

³⁷ www.tzaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf, p.6.

³⁸ See Maembe, Thomas and Alice Klaudia. “Open Letter to Hubert Sauper from the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).” Jinja/Nairobi, 8 December 2005. The letter corrects several serious misconceptions that *Darwin’s Nightmare* promotes.

assertion that these exports are exchanged with “Western manufactured goods, technology, financial capital, and Western lifestyles,” for none of these are shown to benefit the local population in Tanzania as far as the film is concerned (3).

Darwin’s Nightmare struggles in unfolding various stories and scenarios related to concerns brought about by the transnational trade in Tanzania, particularly the international fish market. These stories are presented visually with the support of several interviews and some sort of archival footage to construct what Dennis Lim (2005) calls “a detailed seismograph of predatory free trade’s ripple effect” (C68). Sauper posits that he “interviewed over 50 people without editing or doctoring anything.”³⁹ Responses from these interviews are interwoven, contrasted, and augmented to put forward a clear message about the inequalities of the global fish trade. Sauper calls this weaving connecting “dots that you [the journalist] might not have connected” when responding to B. Ruby Rich’s (2004) criticism that the film fails to show masses of corpses that the filmmaker argues is a direct effect of the presence of the trade (78). In fact, according to *Darwin’s Nightmare*, these dots are the underlying cause of the social collapse and environmental misery that the film depicts. They represent a multilayered interest exemplified by different actors including the fish factory owner, the European Union, Russian and Ukrainian freight operators, and the global fish market. Ernest Hardy (2006) refers to these dots as a “far-reaching indictment of globalization and its underpinning racism” (76). Basically, the film presents the decaying social fabric which results from the colliding interests of powerful nations scrambling for African resources, the unjust

³⁹ Quoted in www.tzaffairs.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf, p.6.

global market, leadership that does not care about its people, and the greed of local business firms. Johnson (2005) argues that “Sauper’s documentary is meant to reveal first-hand the devastating effects of globalization – at least, an irresponsible form of it – on a foreign culture” (F12).

Darwin’s Nightmare stages two opposing views of the way the transnational trade is understood. On the one hand, the local Tanzanians speak of the hardships brought about by the fishing industry going international, and on the other hand, the fishing company and the representatives of the European Union justify why they should reap all these benefits of the global fish market. These dialectic views of hardships versus benefits are capitalized in the film to evoke the unfair trade system. As Scott (2005) puts it, “[T]he inequalities of this system are summarized in his [Sauper’s] discovery that the planes that take the fish away from a country where millions live on the brink of starvation arrive empty, or else filled with weapons” (A21).

These opposing views are wrapped within a series of nightmares presented in the film and they seem to be related in general terms. Hardy (2006) argues, “[A]s we, like Sauper, discover that one injustice triggers and is interwoven with so many others, the effect is that of falling into a black hole of despair” (77). In other words, this “black hole of despair” is the transnational trade nightmare explored in the film. I confine my discussion to only two major nightmares in the film: first, the interrupted natural ecosystem as a consequence of planting a predator fish in Lake Victoria, and second, globalization policies that disrupt the socioeconomic structures of local communities

along the lake.⁴⁰ These two nightmares are metaphorically interconnected. The film uses the fish story to unveil the features of powerful global trade systems packed within the globalization agenda. As Bjerck (2006) argues, “The plainly disgusting process of industrial food production becomes synecdoche for the exploitative underbelly of an unregulated economy” (42). In other words, in *Darwin’s Nightmare*, the fish that is the center of the story is metaphorically presented as economic globalization narrowed to the global fish market.

Darwin’s Nightmare presents the story of the Nile perch, a fish that is not native to Lake Victoria. The British Colonial administration introduced the Nile perch into the lake sometime between the 1950s and the 1960s.⁴¹ It is believed that the introduction of this predator fish was executed as a “scientific experiment”⁴² as well as a means “to boost food supplies.”⁴³ The introduction of the Nile perch is the first nightmare discussed in the film because the fish has claimed sole dominance in the lake after decimating most of the indigenous fish.⁴⁴ This decimation has perpetrated the ecosystem disorder that has been in place from time immemorial. Despite this eco-crisis, the experiment has yielded good results when looked at through the commercial lens and more specifically in relation to the fishing industry. According to Tom Zaniello (2007), the Nile perch often measures

⁴⁰ Zaniello, Tom, in his book titled *The Cinema of Globalization: A Guide to Films about the New Economic Order* identifies the nightmares in *Darwin’s Nightmare* as the dumping of Nile perch, a vicious predator fish in Lake Victoria, globalization, and the living of the people on the shores of the lake.

⁴¹ Nevill, Tim. “Survival of the Fittest.” *kulturjournal*, March 2005, p.51.

⁴² Sauper, Hubert. “Darwin’s Nightmare.” [Distributor material] *Celluloid.*; Rooney, David. “Darwin’s Nightmare.” *Variety* 4 Oct. 2004, p. 114.

⁴³ Nevill, Tim. “Survival of the Fittest.” *kulturjournal*, March 2005, p.51-54.

⁴⁴ Sauper, Hubert. “Darwin’s Nightmare.” [Distributor’s material]. *Celluloid.*

two yards long and weigh more than three hundred pounds. This is an income generator for the fishermen along the shores and the fisheries (61). Its white fillet is exported daily and massively to Europe and Japan, where it fetches a lot of money while leaving the local fishermen with very little gain in return. Diamond, the factory owner who is among the interviewees in the film, observes that some 500 tons are processed for shipment monthly. He adds that “[a]ll the towns on the shore depend totally on Nile perch,” proudly pointing out that his factory has created employment for 1500 people. This economic benefit claim is repeated by the European Union development delegation that admits that the Nile perch has generated a successful export economy. According to a United Republic of Tanzania Report, over 100,000 people are employed in the fishing industry in Mwanza and the neighboring shores of Lake Victoria.⁴⁵

Darwin's Nightmare begins with the shadow of a plane descending over Lake Victoria in preparation for landing. This shadow is tracked by the camera with emphasis on the sound of the aircraft's engine before the shot cuts to an officer in the airport control tower. The shadow in the opening shot introduces some of the ambiguities that the film struggles to present. For example, later in the film, the interviewees are divided into two groups: those who believe that the cargo aircrafts that come for the fish fillets land empty and those who allege that the aircrafts bring in weapons. The shadow, then, expresses either emptiness or a hidden alleged truth that the cargo fuels wars in other parts of Africa. The aircraft shadow also introduces the guerilla filming technique that

⁴⁵ Daily News. “Mwanza Fish Industry Creates over 100,000 Jobs.” 24 Aug. 2006.

dominated the making of *Darwin's Nightmare*. In the distributor's material about the film, Sauper (2004) writes:

On the location in Tanzania we could never really show up as a regular film team. In order to fly with cargo planes we had to disguise ourselves as pilots and loadmasters and carry fake identities. In villages we were mistaken as missionaries, and in fish factories managers feared we might be European Union hygiene inspectors. We had to become Australian businessmen in fancy hotel bars, or just harmless backpackers in the African bush, 'taking pictures.'

The above technique has been questioned by some authorities in Tanzania and by some critics of *Darwin's Nightmare* who consider the film controversial. In Tanzania the film is banned and the people interviewed were questioned for their involvement in tarnishing the image of the country. That said, the film does present some interesting facts relevant to this study, especially its introduction of the Nile perch, a voracious predator fish dumped in Lake Victoria with market-oriented aims. The film also draws attention to those interested in debating the global fish market and its consequences as part of transnational trade. In this regard, this discussion is set within the context that surrounds debates on the issues of economic globalization brought by the film both aurally and visually.

The film wraps the consequences of economic globalization in the two nightmares it addresses. As mentioned earlier, the first nightmare is related to ecosystem disorder caused by the predatory fish. The story of the predatory nature of the fish is built in two scenes. In the first, the factory management responds on the origin of the Nile perch and calls the fish a predator. The term *predator* is used loosely to stress its sole dominance in the lake. The scene is intended to evoke the danger of the foreign fish in the lake.

Because the Nile perch is the basis of the global trade, it should be understood that the scene generally suggests a connection between the nature of the fish and the nature of the trade in which the fish is involved. This connection is stressed by the manager's note in which he admits "the price we are getting [for the fish fillet] is low."⁴⁶

In the second scene, reference to the predator fish is made in a short video shown at the "International Workshop on Community Participation in Fisheries Management on Lake Victoria" that was jointly organized by "the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization and The World Conservation Union (IUCN)" and mistakenly titled "IUCN Ecological Congress" in *Darwin's Nightmare*.⁴⁷ In this video, scientific evidence of the predatory nature of the Nile perch is presented. The video shows the Nile perch eating other species in the lake to highlight the ecological disaster brought about by the fish despite its monetary benefits. The tone of a disappointed man in the video expresses dissatisfaction with whatever reason led to introducing the fish into the lake. Hence, this video within the video suggests an ecological nightmare because the fish planted in the lake to boost the fish industry is endangering the life of other fish species.

Moreover, while the workshop was a concern on a global ecological issue, the response of one participant who accuses the video of stressing the negatives, dilutes the threat of the Nile perch. The participant argues, "[w]e are here for one common purpose. We are here to sell Lake Victoria." The inclusion of this conference section in the film

⁴⁶ Refer to an interview with the manager of fish factory, introduced in the film as Diamond, factory owner.

⁴⁷ See Maembe, Thomas's and Alice Klaudia's letter corrects several serious misconceptions that *Darwin's Nightmare*. "Open Letter to Hubert Sauper from the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization and the World Conservation Union (IUCN)." Jinja/Nairobi, 8 December 2005.

expresses the greed of individuals who are ready to disavow the facts. With this comment, the film unveils the selfishness of those who benefit from the fish and the system at large. I therefore argue that the inclusion of the comment is an attempt to highlight the deep-rooted problem, a problem which those in administrative positions do not see. It is a problem of failing to connect the dots that devastate the lives of the poor population. Cinematically, the clip comments on the larger text, *Darwin's Nightmare*, whose story is and will be, subject to critiques such as “What about the beautiful areas? It is all about negatives,” that one Tanzanian delegate at the earlier-mentioned conference asks. These are the dots of selling the lake and questioning attempts to produce “negative images” that would question the rationality of investing in a poor hygiene zone. They are the dots of the beautiful areas that please the European Union officials who later in the film acknowledge an improved hygiene satisfaction of the European market standards after visiting the fish processing industry.

It is important to acknowledge that the found footage in *Darwin's Nightmare* is used as factual evidence that connects the effects of globalization and the actual life of the local people. Rebecca Swender (2009) calls the indexical connection between the actual footage and the reality of the work it is attached to “a connection that is generally considered to provide a source of special authority” (4). The video used at the workshop fulfills this function because of its visual presentation and the scientific facts it provides. In addition to this footage, a number of television news broadcasts are used to complement the issues raised by the film. For example, when the issue of famine is heard on the radio for the first time in the street in one scene, the radio news is complemented

by news broadcasting on different popular television stations and front pages of newspapers complicating the famine issue. In two different scenes and through two different television stations, news anchors present the famine reports in some parts of Tanzania. In one scene, a Tanzanian politician comments on the failure of the government to address the situation, accusing government authorities of belittling the disaster. The people at the restaurant watching the news appear excited and concerned.

In another scene, a Russian pilot bored by famine news changes the channel to a musical comedy. Whereas in the former scene the archive footage provides a sense of authority, a comment on the real situation, and the connection that the film makes between global fish marketing and the devastated life of Tanzanians, the latter scene ignores the fact and turns away from reality. Such ignorance by the people in the business is emphasized in another scene in which, after the factory owner denies admitting the irrelevance of shipping fish to the global market while leaving Tanzanians to die of hunger, the owner switches on a toy fish in his office to play Bobby McFerrin's "Don't Worry, Be Happy." The choice of the television broadcast and its substitution need to be understood in the context of the ideological message they carry. Swender argues that "[t]he incorporation of the footage into a secondary text is achieved by the appropriation of certain selected attributes of the original footage. Those attributes can be eliminated, effaced, or foregrounded, depending on the evidentiary needs of the secondary text" (4). It can be argued, therefore, that in the case of *Darwin's Nightmare*, the footages reflect a concern for the suffering Tanzanians and the negligence of the business realm.

The second nightmare addressed in the film is the global fish trade. This nightmare is connected to the first nightmare because it features predatory characteristics. As David Rooney (2004) observes, “The fish story serves as a foundation and biting allegory for a large study of greed, opportunism and First World indifference toward the Third World” (114). Through various interviews that are complemented with enormous images of the suffering population, Zaniello (2007) points out that supplying “fish fillets to Europe and other destinations” destroys the local economy (61). This destruction of the local economy includes the local fishermen’s loss of jobs and the subsequent loss of income to maintain their families. They lose their jobs to bigger companies that have taken over the business with their massive catches facilitated by the use of very sophisticated fishing equipment. Even though *Darwin’s Nightmare* shows some local fishermen selling their catch to company agents, who at times reject the fish, suspecting they had been obtained through illegal fishing methods. Local fishermen also lose their local market that depends on selling staple fish – such as tilapia – to the local population.

Various species of fish indigenous to the lake have been wiped out by the Nile perch. As Dennis Lim (2005) summarily observes, “[T]he ruthless supremacy of the Nile perch and its devastating effect on the lake’s ecosystem constitute a gruesome resonant metaphor for the impact of global capitalism in local industry” (C68). In this case, *Darwin’s Nightmare* considers the decision of raising the Nile perch in Lake Victoria equal to the internationalization of the fish fillets that has collapsed the local markets. In

fact, according to the World Conservation Union report of 2001, the Nile perch is classified amongst the planet's 100 "worst invasive alien species."⁴⁸

There is additional evidence in the video footage discussed earlier that draws attention to economic nightmares. This reality is an economic globalization nightmare because the profit yielded by trading the fish fillet does not seem to benefit the people who appear in most parts of the film and their real lives. Michael Chanan (2010) argues that "[s]elf-consciously turning the camera on the real conditions of existence, where it everywhere perceives the signs of unequal development, it becomes a discourse on modernization as the promise of a future impossible ever to reach, modernization as a process so riddled with contradictions basically economic in origin that it negates its own potentialities" (149). *Darwin's Nightmare* participates in this discourse. Images of unequal development are evident and frequently juxtaposed to comment on the views expressed by those attached to the fish trade.

For instance, in one sequence, a fish factory worker points to a truck parked outside, saying that it is waiting for the 'fish frames' (filleted fish remains) for local consumption. As he is talking the truck starts with a rattling noise and leaves the scene. In the following scene, the factory worker explains the processing of the fish fillet once the fish arrives at the plant. His talk features shots of a clean and sanitized environment and a background of workers behind glass processing fish for export to Europe. He asks the crew to be careful not to leave any bone in the fillet because it is for export. He then adds that local people cannot buy the fillets because they are very expensive. The scene then

⁴⁸ Quoted in Lim, Dennis. "The Descent of Man." *Village Voice*. 3 Aug. 2005, p. C68.

shifts to an open-air fish processing area where local people attend the dumped 'fish-frames.' It is important to note that fish-frames commercialization has been popularized following the disappearance of other popular fish species that the local people feed on and sell at their local markets.

The scenery of this open-air-like factory is relatively opposite to that of the factory and, above all, it is very unpleasant. However, its presence in the film offers a visual parallel between the product aimed at the local market and the product intended for export. In other words, the scenery suggests a distinction between the real market that the global economy has created and the unidentified market, a collapsed market as represented by the leftovers of the filleted fish. Long tracking shots of the area, close-up shots of the workers and the products they process, and the wandering of the filmmaker to capture details unfold major contrasts to the factory shots of the standard food production workroom.

This open-air scene is immediately followed by a briefing scene in a hotel conference room. In this scene the delegation of European Union trade officials is not only commending the fish-processing improvements in regard to observance of hygiene measures by European Union standards, they are also investing a huge sum of money to continue improving the processing infrastructure. Indeed, it is the infrastructure of their market and not that of the local population. The previous two scenes of fish processing are quite opposite each other and no one can be convinced that the open-air processing is part of these officials concern. To contradict the views of the delegation in regard to development and improved infrastructure, the camera pans left and tracks the view

outside the first floor glassed conference room where it explores rough and dusty streets at seemingly one corner of the city before it tracks back and follows the delegation's briefing where the officials declare that the fish has opened up business prospects. This scene is then followed by a group of street children fighting for handfuls of rice. These contradictions between visual details of fish processing, the rhetoric of improved infrastructure on one hand, and the unpleasant environment and insufficient resources on the other hand, are a sign of imbalanced economy.

Visually, *Darwin's Nightmare* is rich in moments to reflect on the transnational trade. These moments are real despite the criticisms that the film receives. Sauper (2004) writes, "[s]o in a way it was easy to find striking images because I was filming a striking reality" (5). The reality that Sauper refers to here includes the real locations and the real people, and thus satisfactorily presents the impact of economic globalization by outlining who gains most in the global trade. *Darwin's Nightmare* shows that the beneficiaries are the corporate investors, particularly the European consumers who have the power to monitor and pump money into the business to ensure quality products at their standards. Whether related or not, the real life of the local population is not benefitting. The landing and taking off of aircrafts "motif" that interrupts almost every sequence of the film confirms a vibrant business of transnational exportation. In one scene, Diamond, the factory owner, responds, "Russian pilots are busy; airport is busy" signifying fish exportation to the global market is active. In this scene, there are juxtaposed shots of rows of boxes of fish in the factory freezers waiting for shipment to visually justify the estimated amount of 500 tons that the factory processes every month.

Contrary to the factory owner's promising and active market, a local community is pessimistic about the on-going trend of the business. The community sees how the effect of the business has affected the general social life and how the people's economy is worsening. Supported by real images and the comments from the interviewees, the documentary does what Sheila Bernard (2007) refers to as "exposing the harsh realities of a volatile world" to mesh together views that suggest their disappointment over economic liberalization (xiii). One respondent, Mkono, admits that the poor will continue to be poor and marginalized from the resources. He adds that it is "a vicious circle of poverty" where the poor father who is a victim of the system will rear a poor child. Mkono sees the present situation operating under the "law of the jungle, a scramble for natural resources" and associates this scramble with Europe's power because of Europe's ownership of the World Bank and IMF. In mentioning Europe and its relationship to the World Bank and IMF, Mkono seems to relate the current poverty with the economic liberalization policies in Tanzania, policies that have been inspired by multinational financial institutions. This view reflects the film's representation of economic globalization not only as a failed agenda in helping the local economies to grow but also its capitalization as the predatory nature of globalization. That is to say, the rhetoric over the global market or a global village is a way of taking advantage of the situation. As Rachel Langford (1997) argues, a global village "relies on what economists term 'local advantage' – the lack of homogeneity in the world, the cheapness of labor or raw materials in one part of the globe that makes it possible to gain competitive advantage in another part of the world" (102). It is this advantage that Mkono sees as causing more hardship to the local people.

Darwin's Nightmare plays with “vertical and horizontal”⁴⁹ motifs productively to underscore the ideas related to success and loss respectively. On one hand, the film presents all vertically oriented shots, that is, shots that include heights with the business. The landing and taking off of aircrafts is maintained all along to keep the film on flight rhythm so as to express how busy the airport is because of fish exportation. Equally, the factory's first floor that hosts both the processing room and the manager's office elevates the factory business compared to the local fish market. The same function can be referred to the briefing room where the European Union delegation expresses satisfaction over the production standards of fish factories in Tanzania. The shots in these scenes are steady, to imply stability in the business if compared to the street shots. On the other hand, the horizontal set up is associated with a sort of disorganized life and the lagging-behind market. It encompasses shots that involve fishing, local fish processing sheds, jobless corners, street kids, and the lives of the local people in general. And when the wandering camera in the streets captures local people within vertically architected areas, these local people are dwarfed against the tall walls of the building and are hardly identifiable as they mostly appear in the dark night shots.

Darwin's Nightmare denies any sense of benefit to the local people brought by the global fish market. One could posit that prostitutes are among the beneficiaries of the fish business by hanging out with aircraft pilots. In the beginning of the film, Eliza, one of the interviewees, is dragged mercilessly by one of her clients, a pilot, as she sings one of the Tanzania's patriotic chant, “Tanzania x2, Nakupenda kwa moyo wote. ...”

⁴⁹ See Rachel Langford's discussion.

(Tanzania x2, I love you with all my heart. ...) which is not translated in the subtitles. Bjerk (2006) argues that lack of translation of the song “is representative of the tragic shortcomings,” for towards the end of the film we learn that Eliza, whose ambition was to study computers, was killed by an Australian pilot, one of her clients (42). Despite her humiliation by a foreigner, Eliza’s continued singing confirms the comment made later by Mkono that the prostitutes are forced by circumstances to turn to prostitution. They do not become prostitutes by choice. In bolder way, the film ends with one more remark to those who would think there are benefits to local prostitutes who earn their living through the pilots. In the last scene, a woman that the viewer can identify as one of the prostitutes interviewed at the bar and telling about Eliza’s death is shown from the back, standing on the left corner of the screen. In this setting, she is standing on the hill, probably on one side of the airport from where she sees the airport runway. After some moments, the sound of an aircraft engine is heard, followed by a plane taking off. She watches the plane take off and disappear into the clouds. She turns back as if saying “gone” to speculatively underscore that even prostitutes do not earn enough to sustain their lives but rather they only enjoy short-term offers of beers and snacks. If one claims benefits, they are temporary. Their earnings should be considered hand-to-mouth and therefore are neither sustainable nor dependable.

To conclude, *Darwin’s Nightmare* has raised pertinent issues of economic inequalities perpetuated by the current economic globalization under the operating models set by current economic liberalization policies. At the center of the discussion, the film interrogates the presence of the Nile perch in Lake Victoria. The economic value of

the fish to the global fish market dealers is incredible. However, the fish has not fully benefitted the local people who are at the low end of the chain of the fish market. They can only be fishermen who sell to factory agents, workers at the factory without knowing the price of the fish or the factory sale returns, or processors of the “fish-frames.” In fact, the presence of the Nile perch has caused more harm than good because of its continued feeding on other fish species in the lake which the local people depend on for their meals and market. In other words, the Nile perch has collapsed the local market. That is to say, the foreign fish, the perch, benefits foreign trade and foreign consumers. The film is firm on visually putting this argument in context.

Hence, both *End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin’s Nightmare* attempt to address the question of unequal economic relations and the exploitative nature of transnational corporations. The narratives in each of these films revolve around one kind of natural resources available in Africa that has caught the attention of the global market. Super (2004) maintains that he “could make the same kind of movie in Sierra Leone, only the fish would be diamonds, in Honduras, bananas, and Libya, Nigeria or Angola, crude oil”⁵⁰ because the effects of economic globalization are almost the same everywhere. To bring this global sense, *End of the Rainbow* has a plane-landing shot that brings empty-handed mine experts and closes with a plane taking off with securely packed gold bars. In *Darwin’s Nightmare*, when the plane lands in the beginning of the film, the pilots walk out empty-handed and the film closes with a shot of plane that the conveyor belt had earlier loaded with boxes of fish fillets. Neither the plane in *End of the Rainbow* nor the

⁵⁰ Sauper, Hubert. “Darwin’s Nightmare: Distributor Material.” *Celluloid*. Cinefile, 24 Feb. 2012.

one in *Darwin's Nightmare* unloads any goods when landing, suggesting one-way traffic business. Thus, the films depict economic globalization in general and global marketing and trading system in particular as unequal. Sauper (2004) concludes, "After hundreds of years of slavery and colonization of Africa, globalization of African markets is the third and deadliest humiliation for the people of this continent" (5). It is a humiliation because these people whose resources are extracted are left without an alternative to support themselves. Unfortunately, decisions made in regard either to extract the resources as in *End of the Rainbow*, or to boost the product, as in *Darwin's Nightmare* do not involve the local people whose lives depend solely on what is available in their environment.

CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, films from Africa have primarily focused their attention on depicting socioeconomic issues. In recent productions, these films have addressed issues associated with the way African nations have adopted neoliberal economic policies and the variety of areas impacted by the current trends of economic globalization. As outlined in this dissertation, these depictions entail a wide range of stylistic modalities. This dissertation's examination of these modalities and dominant issues enacted in present films about Africa is centered on the questions of how socioeconomic realities in regard to economic globalization are presented in contemporary films about Africa, and what cinematic modalities are used to narrativize these socioeconomic realities. To address these questions, I focused on four films – *Hyenas* (Djibril Diop Mambety, 1992), *Bamako* (Abderrahmane Sissako, 2006), *End of the Rainbow* (Robert Nugent, 2007), and *Darwin's Nightmare* (Hubert Sauper, 2004) – a sample representing what is happening in four different African countries.

The study used textual analysis to explore how these films not only represent but also question and comment on the socioeconomic undertakings facilitated by contemporary economic globalization. In general terms, the visual representation and issues addressed in these films demonstrate a great concern for the art of film and how film might participate in the ongoing debate over the impacts of economic globalization. The films under study have visualized the deteriorated African economies and lives of the people through fiction and documentary films. These films are accompanied by critical views aired by local citizens who, according to the films' plots, are not part of decision-

making to adopt recovery programs even though they are the most affected when these programs are implemented in their areas.

In particular, this dissertation explored how films about Africa depicted the World Bank and IMF (*Hyenas* and *Bamako*) and transnational trade (*End of the Rainbow* and *Darwin's Nightmare*). These films, categorically referred to as globalization films, thematically deal with issues regarding the impact of globalization. Despite having a common theme, they incontestably differ in cinematic styles. The first two films are fiction films and the latter two are documentaries. Yet, even as fiction and documentary, they demonstrate a wide range of presentation modalities. This is to say, films about globalization in Africa offer a variety of filmic styles in an attempt to address a broader spectrum of questions about the implementation of globalization policies while capturing an audience of diverse tastes. As demonstrated in this study, the documentary trope dominates the narrative structure and offers a more realistic look at the challenges brought to the public by globalization. As Boger argues, documentaries “render authentic version of reality.”⁵¹ The increased representation of reality is influenced by ideologies that attempt to make a political statement of the ills of economic globalization as opposed to its benefits.

So, in addressing the first question, this dissertation identified a broader spectrum of issues raised in globalization films. The films feature almost similar problems although the problems themselves deal with diverse social and economic impacts on the

⁵¹ Borger, Astrid. “People’s Lives, Public Images: The New Deal Documentary Aesthetic.” Quoted in Pearson, Sarina. 2010, p.106-107.

communities depicted. The problems addressed include social and economic inequality between investors and local communities, structural and physical violence, corruption and unequal access to employment, dislocation of local people without sustainable returns, debt growth and the predatory nature of grant givers. Although these problems are explored in distinct ways in each film, all the films propose that these problems are associated with the current economic changes in Africa manifested by the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The way these problems are featured in the films reiterates April Gordon's (1996) remark that SAPs "designed to combat these problems, often compounded the hardships" (4). The films analyzed in this dissertation are, therefore, a set of art works that critique the implementation of SAPs by outlining the superficial nature of the foreign-based development agenda in Africa.

This dissertation provides a glimpse of the socioeconomic dynamics that necessitated the intervention of foreign institutions together with the prospects and readiness of the African people to take part in restoring their economies. However, these prospects are in most cases unfulfilled due to undisclosed investors' agendas or hard-to-implement conditions set by the funding agency. Grieco and Ikenberry (2003) maintain that "the IMF's lending programs have generally damaged the growth performance and prospects of the countries that have received its support" (279). In this regard, this dissertation has suggested that a reading of these globalization films shows how foreign intervention has endangered the established local entrepreneurship as well as the social values cherished by local communities.

The analysis of the films reveals that the World Bank and IMF grants, together with transnational trade, do not actually help the recipient nations but instead, undermine the powers of these nations. As Bonanno (2000) critically observes, transnational corporations weaken the nation-state and transform nations into agents of transnational capital due to their uncontrollable mobility compared to nation-states that are limited by their country boundaries. But as the films under study have demonstrated, the grants and operations of transnational corporations and their financial institutions have their stake in the growth of debts in these countries. In *Bamako*, the issue of debt is brilliantly depicted as the film presents growing debt figures of different African countries whose social services have simultaneously been declining. In *Hyenas*, the debt question is indirectly introduced by a new way of acquiring expensive imported goods that people readily buy on credit. In *Darwin's Nightmare* and *End of the Rainbow*, the transnational trades of fish and gold mine respectively have left local populations with shattered local economic activities. These representations challenge the policies of economic globalization in Africa. In particular, these films explore the appropriateness of these policies by comparing the wealth of foreign investments to the extreme poverty of the local people.

The films under study critique economic globalization for being unsustainable and illusionary. This critique is elaborated by the carnival scene, gifts, and credit purchases of expensive imported goods by the peasants in *Hyenas*. A similar critique is articulated in *End of the Rainbow* as the film examines the disappointment felt by the men and women who expected employment opportunities at the launching of a mining firm and who now must resort to stealing because of unemployment and lack of farm land. The critique of

End of the Rainbow reiterates globalization anxiety. As Jonathan Friedman (1999) suggests, “the defining anxiety in globalization is fear of rapid change from an enemy you can't see, touch or feel – a sense that your job, community or workplace can be changed at any moment by anonymous economic and technological forces that are anything but stable” (11). In *Bamako*, the World Bank and IMF are depicted as destructive of both social and economic life. *Bamako* portrays globalization and its agents as limiting African governments to address not only the growing unemployment rate but also the countries’ ability to offer other social services such as education, transportation, agricultural subsidies, and medical services. These constraints are expressively commented upon and visually presented through the abandoned train stations in *Bamako* and *Hyenas*, and the inaccessibility of land and its resources in *End of the Rainbow*.

Economic globalization and its agents are represented as violent and are generally described as predators on the local economies of the countries in which they operate. In *Darwin’s Nightmare*, the transnational trade echoes the voracity of the Nile perch, a predator fish in Lake Victoria for that is believed to have exterminated hundreds of other local fish species in the lake. The global fish market for the Nile perch is made the core of the film plot and the success of the business is juxtaposed side-by-side with an unpleasant social existence. The extinction of the local community/business for the expansion of the transnational trade is the main theme in *End of the Rainbow* in which the transnational mining company keeps expanding the area it owns while pushing the local community away from their villages.

The way the films in this dissertation represent the transnational trade suggests that continued extraction of African natural resources mostly benefits foreign companies. The representation therefore coincides with observation of Grieco and Ikenberry that globalization alters “the structure of many societies, creating vast new opportunities for some and wrenching, terrifying dislocations for others” (239). The expansion of the company’s extracting area not only dislocates the villagers but also restricts them from accessing the land they used to cultivate and mine. In this case, the local economy has automatically been disabled by the expansionist tendency of the transnational trade which can be generally equated to the Nile perch that exterminates all other fish species in the lake so as to dominate the whole available space. I would argue that Draman’s murder and the castration of witnesses in *Hyenas*, and the imprisoning of villagers in *End of the Rainbow* symbolically represent the incapacitating of the local economies in the respective countries. Summarily, extermination of local economic capacities becomes a resonating characteristic of economic globalization as evidenced in all four films.

While addressing the second question that guided this dissertation, it became clear that the films here examined demonstrate mixed cinematic modalities in depicting economic globalization. Carina Yervasi (2005) observes, “African films do not necessarily follow conventions of one genre or style, but rather represent a mixture of genres or political styles” (48). With respect to political styles, most of the films in this dissertation evoke Third Cinema aesthetics to suggest revolutionary urgency against the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in Africa. Third Cinema aesthetics is advocated through guerilla filmmaking techniques as in *Darwin’s Nightmare*, through the

films' plot in the subverted trial in *Bamako*, and experimental narrative styles as appeared in *Bamako* and *Hyenas*. The narrative styles in these films are used to specifically function as tools to critique the very idea of economic globalization and the ideology that it promotes. Whereas in *Bamako* just one sequence evokes Western narrative style, *Hyenas* predominantly employs this style. The Western narrative in both films is intended to use the Western art form to critique the present economic globalization believed to be a Western economic system. As Oscherwitz (2008) argues, a Western narrative is referenced because it "justifies and promotes materialism, American cultural hegemony, and Western economic imperialism" (224-5).

This dissertation also brought attention to another technical aspect in current films about Africa which is the presence of a documentary trope within fiction films. The case in *Bamako* can serve as the best example. I argue that the documentary look in *Bamako* was intended to capture the real version of globalization and its fictional part was meant to dramatize the contemporary economic globalization rhetoric that its agents use to promote the ideology. The convergence of the two styles seemed necessary to critique the fictional by exposing the documented evidence. Conversely, the mixed stylistic approaches, particularly in fiction films discussed in this dissertation, facilitated the exploration of both resistance and survival attempts of the local people from the challenges imposed by the neoliberal economic policies.

Moreover, numerous forms of the African oral traditions are deployed to address issues related to economic globalization and its impacts on African communities. The films use metaphors, parables, symbols, dance, and storytelling. The use of multiple art

forms emphasizes the impact of economic globalization while at the same time it avoids a sense of repetition and boredom for the audience. It is important to note that metaphors and symbols enable messages that cannot be spoken under normal discussions. The use of predator fish to represent economic globalization or Ramatou's prostitution to express the World Bank and IMF tendency to prostitute national economies of different countries or the castration of men to elucidate the sterilizing of local economies and the use of a container to restrict the growth of a challenging labor force for the African economy should be read as intended to figuratively reiterate the ills of economic globalization in Africa under the present terms. It becomes evident that multiple forms of artistic expression are meant to disguise the political and economic arguments. These political and economic arguments are juxtaposed to each other to comment and question the socioeconomic situation through the intellectual speeches, politically toned arguments, and the visualized social insecurity.

In the films discussed in this study, economic globalization is depicted as an undesirable phenomenon within African socioeconomic realms. It is undesirable because of its predatory nature which, according to Mbye Cham (2000), is due to the way it is "conceived and promoted in dominant corporate and economic discourses."⁵² These corporates are the ones captured operating on the ground in the films under study and even though in some cases receive a warm welcome as in *End of the Rainbow*, the communities gradually become suspicious and impartial over the impacts they cause. In this case, Cham posits that globalization "presents problems and challenges which call

⁵² Cham, Mbye. "Globalizing African Cinema?" <http://www.africanfilmny.org/2011/globalizing-african-cinema/> accessed 26 March 2012.

for rigorous critical engagement and viable alternatives.”⁵³ The films in this dissertation contribute in this ‘critical engagement’ and thus shade light on the debate on economic globalization by providing material evidence through images of people and their lives and through their comments whether presented as fiction or factual.

In the course of this dissertation, I realized that there is an impressive body of scholarship on economic globalization that generally speaks for the marginalized and calls for “viable alternatives,” to borrow Cham’s expression. Indeed, both the scholarship and the globalization films discussed contribute to the debate on economic globalization. The films especially provide an opportunity to air the views of the marginalized that do not appear on prime-time news. These views are necessary for increasing consciousness among the victims of economic globalization due to the fact that people from different corners of the world share almost the same consequences associated with the presence of corporate activities sponsored by a neoliberal economy. It stands out that these films contribute greatly in depicting cases that link economic globalization to a wide range of its consequences including poverty, inequality, unemployment, incapacitation of nation-states, and human dislocation.

⁵³ Ibid.

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