

Visual Perception and Reception of Boubakar Diallo's *Julie et Roméo* in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Modern African film cultures are receiving a new form of acceptability and audiences beyond the borders of Africa. This is illustrated by the growth, development and spread of the Nigerian and Ghanaian film industries. While African audiences perceive them as 'Pan-African', the development of film culture in Cameroon follows a different trajectory, with audience critiques of non-representativeness of Cameroonian films.

It is in this context that a Burkinabe film, *Julie et Romeo*, by Boubacar Diallo, itself an African adaptation of Shakespeare's play, became one of the most well-received films in Cameroon. Two factors accounted for this, the film's aesthetic appeal and the director's engagement with his potential audience. I argue here that audience sensitivity is neglected in Cameroonian accounting for low reception of Cameroonian films. By analysing audience reception of Diallo's film, I map out a strategy for audience engagement in the production and receptivity of Cameroonian films as a way of improving their aesthetics, quality and wider appeal.

KEYWORDS: *audience, culture, spiritualism, reception*

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in a very long while in the history of film projection in Cameroon, on 7th July 2012 at the Yaoundé congress hall, viewers gave a standing ovation to a film as credits ran. This was the fourth projection of the film *Julie et Roméo* (Boubakar Diallo, 2011) during the 16th edition of the *Ecrans Noirs* film festival held in Cameroon from Jun 30th to July 7th 2012. The film had a remarkable impact on viewers in Cameroon. Reactions during each projection ran contrary to usual criticisms by Cameroonian viewers on African films. Such complaints by viewers are registered during projections and on different forums on the internet where most Cameroonian viewers have found a voice to express both their love and frustrations about Cameroonian films. The unedited remarks below which cut across the internet; youtube, blogs, social network forums etc, are taken from youtube where two uploaders called *NollywoodLove* and *NollyAction* upload both short versions and full versions of African films.

Ish this movie is lame (all things mode 2013)ⁱⁱ

Am a Cameroon[ian], but i am not impressed. This acting sucks. (MsMimi1982 2013)

too much fake hair! too much bleach on skin! where is the tradition? (scorpiogirl522, 2010)ⁱⁱⁱ

This is really terrible. Waste of effort, finances and everyone's time. Have u ever watched a real movie? Please take this rubbish off the air and stop

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disgracing Cameroonians. Probably had no material to show...This is some B.S. (creativepower213 2013)
my comment is...no comment !!!(kzsweat 2008)^{iv}

Such comments which are also common during projections of Cameroonian films ratify a number of observations from different theories of audience studies.

Theories and methodology

Models from audience analysis such as encoding and decoding (Stuart 1973) where active audiences do not only use the media for gratification purposes but could accept or agree with a text's encoded meaning, accept and refine such meaning or are aware of the dominant meaning of the text but reject it for cultural, political or ideological reasons (Morley 1992). This and other approaches like psychographics which deals with the relationship between media text and audiences personal preferences such as personality, values, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles is used in this work to understand how viewers came to terms with the film even though it is not a Cameroonian film. Rey Chow (2000: 172) writes that 'film has always been, since its inception, a transcultural phenomenon, having as it does, the capacity to transcend "culture" – to create modes of fascination which are readily accessible ...'

Chow's assertion confirms the use of models that rely on reception theory as extended to the concept of the active

audience where individual psychographic and ethnographic circumstances impacted on the mediation between the media text and the audience. This reiterates Andrew Hart's (1991) contention that '...the meaning is not in the text, but in the reading' thereby emphasising the fact that if a film director, the producer of a media text, 'understands how the audience construct meaning and make sense of texts, [they] can change their texts so that audiences will read whatever meanings the producers want' (Hart 1991). The encoding/decoding model, psychographics, ethnography, and uses and gratification are used in this paper to show that even though *Julie et Roméo* is not a Cameroonian film, Boubakar Diallo used recognised conventions and drew upon audience expectations to elements such as storytelling, traditional idiosyncrasies and special effects to get his audience in a position of oneness of mind in the overall reading of the film (Abercrombie 1996, Stuart 1973).

Given that there has been no precedence in audience research in film studies in Cameroon, much of the data for this paper is from ongoing ethnographic fieldwork I am involved in since 2010 for my Ph.D. Through participant observation I have followed different productions from their inception through to exhibition and marketing. To guarantee credibility and avoid falsification I have attended public screenings of different Cameroonian films and have participated in domestic viewing in diverse households. Ensuing from such interaction has been the ability to observe and take note of spontaneous reactions void of any formal coining that could be imposed by the formal environment of research (Hoek 2010).

In a bid to understanding how viewers tended to become passive or active in the process of meaning construction in *Julie et Roméo*, I also had interviews with randomly selected viewers. This aimed at investigating how their personal experiences, social and cultural preferences, etc played on their perception of the film. From the points discussed in this paper, it turns out that the above elements played an important role in the remarkable reception of *Julie et Roméo*.

The outstanding reception of this film in Cameroon and the excitement of the audience every time it screened elicited a number of questions which form the basis for this paper. Why was this particular film received the way it was? What was unique about *Julie et Roméo* that is not found in Cameroonian films? Could this be a pointer as to audience taste to Cameroonian and other African filmmakers? Do style, subject matter, technique, genre and other elements of production have any impact on viewers' reception of a film? Did the audience make use of local perceptions to reconstruct the film's meaning or did different viewers read the film and inferred messages according to class, gender, ethnicity and religion? (Staiger 2000, Kuhn 2002). Arguments in this paper point to the fact that viewers did rely on social and cultural elements that affect their lives to read meaning from this film. This points to psychographic factors of reception but even more what could be referred to as a collective cultural memory (Halbwachs 1992, Kuhn 2002).

Audience reception in Cameroon, an overview

Audience reception studies remains largely unexplored in Cameroon especially in the film sector. From the inception of film production in Cameroon in the 1960s, production was geared at an external audience (Ngansop 1987, Tcheypap

2005, Nguéa 2012). Considering Tcheypap's arguments when he quotes Ngansop (1987) on the lack of a consistent film culture in Cameroon, it could be said that the absence of audience studies maybe one of the elements forestalling cinema development in Cameroon. Ngansop proceeds with his argument that

Without an industrial infrastructure, without stable finances, without laps, without film schools, Cameroonian cinema does not arouse the enthusiasm of intellectuals nor the diverse vocations (of producers, scenario writers, scriptwriters, directors, cameramen, set designers, costume designers, make-up artists, etc) that it requires (1987, 63).

Even though there has been a tremendous change since Ngansop wrote, there has still been no advancement at the level of audience studies. Nguéa (2012) observes that most Cameroonian filmmakers struggle so hard to overcome other production difficulties that they completely neglect the audience to whom their products are destined. Thus while the trend for audience reception of African films around Africa is changing, becoming more 'pan-African' (see Tcheypap 2005, Vieyra 1975, Chow 2000), especially with the impact of Nollywood and Ghanaian films, the situation in Cameroon remains precarious.

The situation is no less made worse by the closure of all cinema theatres in Cameroon. Except for a few occasions when public screenings are organised or when a film festival holds, collective viewing in Cameroon has been transformed into more private viewing. It is therefore complex to talk about a homogenous audience here in so far as collective viewing is concerned. However, as Andy Ruddock (2001) puts it,

media consumption is, even if you are by yourself, a social activity; consider for example, the fact that when you are watching television, millions of people around the country are doing the same thing, establishing viewing as an activity with a common cultural currency (8).

It is in this light that this paper considers the varying reactions by different individuals on the internet calling for more representativeness in Cameroonian films as a kind of collective call towards a broader social and cultural identity in Cameroonian films. Most of the comments do not directly talk about identity or representativeness but do strongly insinuate this through questions such as

Is this a Cameroonian movie? (allthingsmode)

This is a cameroonianmovie with cameroonian actors and is set in cameroon. It just has one nigerian actor (YiinkszTV 2013).

These comments about *Jungle of heirs* (2012) may seem to insinuate that the mix of Cameroonian actors with Nigerian actors is what is questioned by viewers. However exploring other comments gives an insight into exactly what viewers may be driving at.

This movie sucks and this is not...[Cameroonian] culture for the most part it's all Nigerian. Cameroonians dont talk like that. I am disappointed (lovelyticey 2013)

American movies = American English, UK movies = British English, Nigerian Movies = Nigerian English and why not Cameroonian English in our movies too... Dude this movie is not to copy but to portray typical Cameroonian style be it language(stainless).

Love it but... since when did Cameroon have an evil forest (karine 2013)

First of all this is de most impossible Stroy line eva. U guys r protraying de Cameroon traditions and Fons of our land to be very weak. Nobody takes de Fon out of his chair to their house wen the matter is nt one dt is totally out of hand talkless of one small tramp who even sounds like she is reciting poetry(Fonky 2012).

Most viewers thus have the feeling that Cameroonian culture in terms of language, costumes, movement, etc is not adequately represented in most Cameroonian films. Not to be misconstrued with aesthetic or technical problems that may lead to a film's classification as bad or good these comments stress on the use of locations, sets, costumes, props, etc that could be identified with Cameroon. When viewers say,

OMG!! I thought my ears 1st heard wrong!! Who knew Bakossi culture was so prominent?!! Wo' wo'!! A san' ndube ngumeh...(KonyMakox)

I recognized Cameroon and its flag! And i like the way that guy speaks french " tu ne dois pas faire ça ma chérie"(carnan777).

is this a cameroon movie, because of mr biya and the cameroon flag at the background? (goldens weet 123 2010).

Such comments refer to matters of identification and not film quality. The facts raised by the viewers above point to what the Cameroonian audience thinks would be representative of Cameroon in Cameroonian films. Just the use of the French language by an actor in the film is highly appreciated by viewers pointing to how viewers make use of personal preferences to accept or reject preferred meaning in a film (Stuart 1973). Comments like, 'mr biya and the Cameroon flag', 'who knew bakossi culture was so prominent' 'i am from Yaoundé!...Ca c'est quoi??' point to elements of set, location, props and language that viewers believe identify and represent them. Diallo's film is however not by a Cameroonian, neither is it shot in or makes reference to Cameroon. Why then did it mark viewers in Cameroon even at the level of representativeness? Diallo brings together production elements in a way that caters for the audience's desires thereby enticing them into reading meaning without completely rejecting his own inferred meaning. One of the first elements is the story.

Julie et Roméo, the story

Julie et Roméo is an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Boubakar Diallo stays faithful to the theme of the play, love, but departs from the end result. Roméo, a young man in love with Julie decides to get married to her. The day of the traditional wedding someone comes from the village to announce to the entire family that the two young lovers cannot get married. The reason for this being an age old

dispute between the two families caused by an abominable act that Roméo's family committed against Julie's family, which strained the relationship between the two families. Very disappointed, Julie locks herself in her room while Roméo heads back to his place. After futile attempts to get Julie out of her room one of her uncle's exclaim, '...on a tué Julie', [we have killed Julie]. A drunk who overslept after the failed night party misinterprets the expression for the literal death of Julie. He spreads this as rumour, amplifying it and stating unequivocally that Julie has killed herself because of the failed marriage. Getting wind of this, Roméo kills himself. How to bring Roméo back to life becomes the almost impossible mission that Julie embarks on.

The story takes a dramatic turn introducing what has now made it popular with viewers, African spiritualism and paranormal practices. In desperation, Julie turns to her maternal uncle Matao who is a chief priest, for help. This great chief priest whose fame transcends the boundaries of his village helps Julie through some spiritual practices to go back in time where she succeeds in averting the act that put their two families at loggerheads in the first place. She returns to find her fiancé Roméo alive and strong. Unlike in Shakespeare's play where the two lovers die, Diallo makes a turnaround and the two lovers reunite.

This story seduced Cameroonian viewers during the Ecrans Noirs festival in 2012. The simplistic storyline of this film could justify the number of questions that have been stated above as to the reception of this film in Cameroon. It even elicits yet another question, what is so special about this story that charmed audiences in Cameroon.

African spiritualism

One of the things that captured Cameroonian viewers was the treatment of spirituality. All spectators interviewed after five screenings of the film praised the fact that Diallo uses exclusively African cultural elements to illustrate his story. Gumai Olivier (2012) interviewed after the first projection of *Julie et Roméo* observed that 'from the perspective of culture, he [Boubakar Diallo] shows our [African] traditional practices through film. ... we realise that film can also be used to transform our African stories and transmit African tradition.' The simplistic treatment of the often mystified metaphysical connotation of African spiritualism debunks much of the postmodernist claims about the fuzzy and barbaric nature of such practices (see Jean Rouch's *Les Maîtres fous*, Prosperi and Jacopetti's *Africa Addio* 1966). Many Cameroonian films, like most Nollywood films, still have the tendency to depict African lifestyle and practices as nasty, evil and bloody (Akpabio 2007, Haynes 2000, Okome1997). Emini (2012), a spectator interviewed after the fourth screening, compares the visual perception attributed to spiritualism in *Julie et Roméo* and most Nollywood films; 'as a filmmaker, because I work in film, I say it's extraordinary and revolutionary because we generally watch films with a lot of witchcraft, Nigerian films where people kill and eat others and all that negativity'.

Many Cameroonian filmmakers (Neg ndg, Neba Lawrence, Forcho Henry) seem to be following this trend of things from Nollywood in such an ardent fashion that they even force scenes of gore, witchcraft and occultism in their films just to be en vogue. Neg ndg's *The Majority* (2010) has many of such cultic scenes without which the plot can run without any

problems. Most of the cultic scenes in Neba Lawrence's *Vanity Fair* (2010) are used so the film could be accepted by Nigerian marketers, some of whom seem to prefer films with such scenes (Akpabio 2007). Contrasting such films with Diallo's, Emini observes that '...this film [*Julie et Roméo*] shows a different image of the African society. With this new image of Africa, I think many people will rethink before completely condemning their cultures'. It could be read that Diallo strives to debunk the notions about the unpleasant nature of African spirituality, as he seems to hail this in his film. A follow-up of viewers through participant observation and interviews reveals that spectators responded favourably to this perception of African spirituality in Diallo's film. 90% of viewers interviewed were of the view that Boubakar Diallo has demonstrated an indebted understanding of traditional African practices especially in the scene where he describes the fundamental components of thunder and its function within the Bambara society. Nkoa Lucy (2012) interviewed after the fourth screening session said excitedly,

He [Boubakar Diallo] has demonstrated that African beliefs are not always bad. It is left for s/he that holds them to decide on how to use them. The beliefs in themselves are not bad. He made me see a different dimension of my culture. He completely changed my perception on magic, that it can be used for good.

Through five different projection sessions, different spectators could be heard, felt, and seen reacting to the seamless treatment of plot, technique and cultural elements. Asked as to why such a reaction to the film, an excited spectator at the June 2nd 2012 burst out,

Are you dreaming or what? Didn't you see that we were in Hollywood? The special effects in the film are great and without reproach. The person who made the film has succeeded in carrying us [spectators] into a dream world without us knowing it. I am very happy I watched this film and I thank the person who made it.

One major aesthetic element thus that marked both the collective audience and individual spectators are the special effects built into the narrative.

Well lined Hollywood style or well told story?

Like a spectator observes above, viewing *Julie et Roméo*, one could have the feeling of a Hollywood well lined and worked out special effects. The visual perception that Diallo constructs in his film of African spirituality is successfully conveyed using such effects, which succeed in capturing Cameroonian viewers. In the finale of the story Julie is propelled back into time using 3D special effects but from a purely African perspective.

Pitting it against Hollywood it could be said that Julie goes back into time just like Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) in *Inception* (2010) or Neo (Keanu Reeves) in *Matrix* (1999) to fix a problem that is preventing the present time from evolving or preventing a certain part of the society from progressing. Like in Nolan's *Inception* where characters go back in time to change events that had happened or may happen in the future and change the minds and thoughts of characters so they can do the things they have planned to do, Diallo succeeds in depicting a complex physiological transformation of the present through remapping and a

jump back in time. However, unlike Nolan's *Inception*, which is much more of a psychological journey, Diallo's voyage is a visual demonstration of the physiological transformation African spiritualism is believed to be able to achieve (Mbonji 2006). Here there is no physical manipulation of the body of the character. The character is transported back into the past through the manipulation of objects and the use of incantations uttered not by the heroine but by the chief priest. He has no physical contact with Julie who has to be transported or with the elements used to achieve this. Meanwhile in *Matrix* and *Inception* there is direct physical contact between the intermediary, the hero and the elements of transportation. In both *Matrix* and *Inception* the heroes are immobilised on a physical object (chair or bed) and then infused with an element (liquid or a computer virus or programme). These are the elements that help transform the human self thus transporting it through time and space back into time or into the future. Their physical selves can still be seen in the present world and in the present site where they started the journey. Their physical bodies also stay attached to the same objects as they were from the onset. Only their spirit could be said to habit the other world. Whatever happens to their physical selves in the present time affects them in the other world and vice versa. Actually their bodies could get disconnected from their spirit creating a break in communication between spirit and physical self thus resulting in death in the present world.

This is what happens to Neo's companion in *matrix* when his physical self is disconnected from the spiritual self. He dies and that is the end for him. In *Inception*, DiCaprio's wife Mal (Marion Cotillard) becomes obsessed with the illusion that the other world she travelled to through teleportation is now her real world. While back in the present world she throws herself off a storey building. Her physical self gets disconnected from her spirit resulting in her death. Boubakar Diallo could have chosen to use such complex Hollywood physical machinery to achieve his journey motive but he chooses to use a method common in some African societies, the use of thunder and lightning in the transportation of objects (Mbonji 2006). Audience reactions during the different screenings show that it was worth it as it turns out to be one of the main things that attracted viewers to the film as confirmed in an interview by Ateba Simon (2012)

What stroke me... was the spiritualism in the film. But the special effects impressed me most, ... the snake that guides the groove but most especially the scene where the girl [Julie] hits the snake. The synchronisation is so real one thinks the snake is touched meanwhile it's just special effects.

After a fifth screening on 12 November 2012 long after the *Ecrans Noirs*, Eloundou Longin (2012), a Ph.D. Student in the university of Yaounde 1 and specialist in film semiotics observed that the techniques in Diallo's film were great. He added that it is even more of the fact that one could not notice they were there that made it even more impressive. This reflects the thoughts of many film specialists and critics who hold that in order to keep the illusion of reality, the techniques used in making a film should be invisible to the audience (Pudovkin 1958, Ukadike 1994, Kaboré 1995, Goldman 1985, Bordwell and Thompson 1997, Ekuwazi 1991). Ukadike (1994) tells of the complete failure of one of

Nigeria's first features, *Son of Africa* (1970) and *Kongi's Harvest* (1970). The technical 'imperfections' of these two films as Ukadike puts it were the main contributing factors to their rejection by the public. Both films were so poorly received that even 'the major theatres... refused to handle [them]...' (145). Even the author from whose work *Kongi's Harvest* was adapted, Wole Soyinka, 'disclaimed it when it was released' (Ukadike 1994: 145). Technical imperfections in a film like noticeable edits, light defects, sound problems, framing issues and a lot more can stand in the way of viewers' perception of that film and may mar its overall reception (Staiger 2010). Minimising such defects was, among other things, one of the ways in which Diallo succeeded in attracting viewers to his film.

Boubakar Diallo, and Audience Politics

After a number of years in film business and with eleven films in his repertory in six years, Diallo seems to have understood a number of things about audience reception. He strives to build his films with a populist ideology in mind hoping through this strategy to be able to serve the audience what they expect and thus have them share in his meaning creation (Stuart 1973). His choice of subject matter, in this case, marriage and the reasons for some failed marriages in most African societies. The subject is simple, common place and touches a problem many African young persons and families go through; the utmost verification of ties between two families before marriage can be contracted. The use of African spirituality in positive terms, the use of special effects all go a long way to fulfil the marketing strategy of Diallo's production house which he himself states, 'consists of writing on subjects and sentiments that have a bearing on Africans. The successes of my first three films show the audience's love for the popular genre....' Gaston Kelman, president of the jury for the 2012 Ecrans Noirs film festival that chose *Julie et Roméo* as the winning film says that their preference for the film was because it made an effort in portraying a different vision of Africa.

We are tired of a confounded cinema. We hesitated with the choice of *Julie et Roméo* because it has a number of faults. But we finally chose it because it has a lot of potential. It's a film with a new way of looking at Africa, a different vision of Africa (dongmo 2012).

Julie et Roméo is thus created with the aim of seducing viewers by fulfilling certain audience expectations. Even with its downside it followed this line of thought and the audience still responded favourably.

Favourable Perception and reception in spite of pitfalls

Though spectators were thrilled by the seamlessness of the techniques in *Julie et Roméo*, a number of problems could be noticed at the level of cohesion between plot and technique. The technique of teleportation as used in the film is an illustrative way of transposing from one place to the other and in this case from the present to the past. It is used without any hitch in terms of screen movement, framing, lighting and transitions.

The emotionally broken Julie is amazed after witnessing the uncle receive within a split second a bag of groundnut from his friend who lives about 80 km from him. Julie is in doubt and her uncle explains the practice of 'teleportation' by thunder and lightning. She is curious to know if it is also

possible to transport living things. Not understanding what Julie is driving at, her uncle Matao, says it's possible though a tough fit to carry out. Julie asks the uncle to transport her back in time so she can thwart the incident that happened close to a hundred years back between her family and that of Roméo. The uncle is scandalized and refuses stating how dangerous this could be for her. Angered by the uncle's refusal Julie goes to the groove, source of power for the chief priest and breaks up a number of items. Matao is angry but is caught in his own trap when Julie reminds him that as his maternal uncle he has an absolute traditional obligation towards her; never to deny her the first wish she asks of him. Matao is caught between violating the same tradition he is out to uphold and putting the live of his niece in danger. He has no choice and is obliged to carry out the act.

Julie is transported through carefully worked out 3D techniques that awed different spectators that viewed the film. All the technical elements used to realise this trick are so well composed no one notices that is what has happened. Boubakar Diallo succeeds in integrating plot, technique and audience expectations in a way that wins over his viewers (Stuart 1973, Kuhn 2002). Some critics however think that Diallo was so much in a hurry to impress or to explore this aspect of African teleportation that he failed to bring in enough plot elements to support such phantasmagoria. Eloundou Longin (2012), a specialist in film semiotics in the University of Yaoundé 1 says,

the story is well told, the effects are well made, but there are not sufficient reasons to convince us about how Julie succeeds in bringing back Roméo from the past to the present when we all know that he is dead.

Eloundou's preoccupation brings out an element of the treatment of the fantastic in most African films. Most filmmakers have been seen to bring in such elements more for entertainment and to impress viewers rather than for justifiable reasons from the story itself (Haynes 2000). Julie succeeds in going back to the past, she succeeds in averting the incident that brought about the generational conflict between her family and that of Roméo. The question is how is this sufficient reason to bring back Roméo to life? The generational incident is only a catalyst for the conflict between the two families but not a reason for Roméo's death. It can be said that averting it re-establishes the friendly relationship between the two families and thus wouldn't have brought about the conflict that brought about Roméo's death. Nonetheless it must be noted that Roméo actually kills himself because of inappropriate communication between his friend and Julie's uncle and not really any direct link with what happened years back.

Viewers in Cameroon hardly noticed there was anything wanting with the contextual, textual and technical cohesion of the film. Cultural studies approaches have argued that this can happen as cultural meaning does not reside exclusively within the text but is rather constructed by the audience interacting with the medium (Radway 1984, Morley 1992, Stacey 1994). Francis Ameyibor, a cultural journalist with Africine.org, reviewing the 2011 FESPACO film festival criticises Diallo for negating cohesion in favour of socio-cultural elements nurtured by a zeal to valorise African culture.

Julie et Roméo is supposedly presented as a passionate, romantic, intense, and rhapsodic, love story. Unfortunately, the cast is without expressive exposure of extremes of emotional ecstasy, especially by lover bird Julie. The character Julie put out an image of a very strong, rigid, fearless and sometimes robust personality contrary to the dictates of romantic fantasies.

Another bizarre response: ...Julie ... entered into the powerful shrine cave of the uncle to destroy the things there. In the process... she was beaten [bitten]...by... bats but for the timely intervention of the uncle she would have been beaten [bitten] to death. But... Julie just walks out of the shrine cave without any visible scratch on the body (Ameyibor 2011)

The Cameroonian audience that is often so critical about film quality and story became blind, so to speak, to the flaws of Diallo's film.

One spectator observed that there is no verisimilitude in the actions of the actors when Julie is spiritually transported from the uncle's shrine to the past but she still loves the perception given to the act by the filmmaker. Like in an experimental or avant-garde film, the actors from both worlds show little or no surprise at seeing each other and in being in a different and strange environment. Eloundou Longin, one of the spectators interviewed, sees this as a remarkable oversight on the principles of verisimilitude. Ameyibor terms it '... [a]...point of departure from [the] realistic world'. However, none of these factors seem to have alienated viewers from the scenes or affected their overall perception of the film.

Conclusion

It could therefore be said that the perception of this film by viewers was not so much concerned with text, context and technique cohesion, but was influenced by some socio-cultural precepts supplanted in the minds of the spectators (Kuhn 2002). That zeal, as Sunjo Petra (2012), a filmmaker and spectator who viewed the film twice puts it, 'to live and relive in a sublime fashion elements of their culture and tradition that have so far been looked upon as evil.' Boubakar Diallo serves his audience with this as he uses complex 3D techniques to transport his viewers into the mystic world of African beliefs. The relationship between text and audience here relies on social and cultural experiences of the spectators to blur the artistic gap in the film thereby pointing to an indebt understanding of the psychographics of the audience he is dealing with (Kuhn 2002, Staiger 2000, Stuart 1973, Morley 1992). The seamless and hitch free technical creations and transitions between effects lures viewers to ignore other flaws in the film which however do not impair understanding and the gratification gotten from the film (Meers 2001, Stacey 1994).

The fact that the film spoke directly to the audience addressing their expectations, giving a positive verve to African social and cultural life made its reception a positive event with the Cameroonian audience thereby affirming what scholars of reception theory hold that producers of media text can draw from audiences' experiences/ expectations and use recognised conventions to pull the audience into a mediated understanding of the meaning constructed from that text.

NOTES

1. Ecrans Noirs is a film festival run by Cameroonian filmmaker Bassek Ba Kobio. It holds on a yearly basis in Cameroon
2. Jungle of heirs. (Neba Lawrence 2012)
3. Royal Destination. (Neba Lawrence 20)
4. China Wahala 2. (Joyce Kuchah 2008)
5. Gaston Kelman is a writer and author de l'essai "Je suis noir et je n'aime pas le manioc".

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