

*Karmen Geï and Ma Vie en Rose: An Exploration of Individuality in Heteronormative and Patriarchal Societies*

Presenter Rani Sharriff-Muhammad, Mass Communications major

Mentored by Dr. Lynn Anderson

Social conditioning is inevitable in socialized societies. This paper analyzes how Joseph Gaï Ramaka's Senegalese film, *Karmen Geï* and Alain Berliner's *Ma Vie en Rose* explore how heteronormative and patriarchal social conditioning can be detrimental and constraining to an individual. In Gaï Ramaka's 2001 Senegalese film adaption, *Karmen Geï*, loosely based on George Bizet's opera *Carmen*, the audience follows the alluring, vivacious, free *Karmen Geï* as she, like other *Carmens* that have come before, fights and resists laws, conventions, and human limitations in her desire to be free. In Alain Berliner's 1997 film, *Ma Vie en Rose*, the audience takes a journey with a seven-year-old transgender girl named Ludovic who searches for her identity in a town where she is not accepted. Both *Karmen Geï* and *Ma Vie en Rose*; feature protagonists who, with their grasps on gender and sexuality, resist the rigid heteronormative and patriarchal aspects present in their respective societies. *Karmen's* strong sexually fluid behaviors and desire for freedom speaks to *Ludo's* insistence on her personal identity, showing audiences a drive to establish an identity in a shortsighted society. Ultimately, this paper argues that heteronormative and patriarchal societies are social constructs that are developed through social conditioning and seeks to warn societies to be more cautious of imposing these restrictive norms.