

From Stage to Screen: Reimagining African Drama Through 21st-Century Media

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*Abstract - This article examines the digitalization of African drama and critically examines the re-envisioning of canonical stage plays through modern media. Using the films *Death and the King's Horseman* (Elesin Oba, Netflix, 2022), *The Chattering and the Song*, and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* as among the main case studies, the research places its analysis in Linda Hutcheon's theory of adaptation, Homi Bhabha's hybridity, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's decolonial aesthetics and Henry Jenkins' theory of media convergence. Using qualitative comparative analysis and semiotic analysis, the study shows that digital adaptation is a process of transformation rather than reproduction, in which ritual, resistance, and identity were translated into new cultural grammars of performance. The results indicate that Soyinka's tragic vision maintains metaphysical depth through the use of the cinematic image, Osofisan's revolutionary drama becomes participatory through the use of digital folk media, and Rotimi's satire transforms itself into feminist popular critique. The study concludes that the exportation of African drama into the screen is a sign of a continuous cultural renaissance in which the performance traditions are evolving dynamically to the technological modernity while they still retain the communal ethos and postcolonial critique.*

Keywords: *African Drama; Adaptation Theory; Postcolonial Hybridity; Digital Media; Nollywood; Performance Studies; Soyinka; Osofisan; Rotimi;*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study and Problem Statement
African drama which was traditionally based on oral performance, ritual, and communal esthetics has entered a new phase of digital transformation in the twenty-first century. Once exclusive to theatre stages and local audiences, African performance culture now flourishes on global digital platforms such as Netflix, YouTube and online Nollywood networks. This shift from stage-bound performances to screen-based re-creations has changed not only the aesthetic shape of African drama, but also, through them, the cultural scope, authorship, and ideological implications of the pieces (Krings & Okome, 2019; Haynes, 2016). The transposition of dramatic stories to film and digital media is part of what Jenkins

(2006) calls media convergence - the interconnection of traditional and new media systems and the participatory culture and transnational visibility they enable.

The digital turn in African drama represents a reconfiguration of cultural identity and storytelling. The formerly collective immediacy of live performance is reconfigured into a complex of cinematic, individual, and global visualities which circulate beyond national borders (Barber, 2018; Shoroye, 2021). For example, the Netflix adaptation of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (Elesin Oba, 2022) was able to make ritual tragedy engage with visual spectacle using cinematic language - lighting, music, montage - to appeal to both African and global audiences of Yoruba cosmology. Similar changes are possible in community theatre versions of Femi Osofisan's *The Chattering and the Song* and Nollywood versions of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, which combine political satire and popular realism in addressing digital audiences. In so doing, however, adaptations of African drama democratize the art, and yet run the risk of flattening out complex ritualistic, linguistic and ideological textures to service the needs of transnational consumption (Passchier, 2014; Okome, 2010).

Despite these developments, academic discourse has not yet approached the topic of digital afterlives of canonical African plays in a rigorous manner. Though a great deal of scholarship has attended to textual analysis and stage performance, there is a lack of emphasis on the implications of filmic and online adaptation for the processes of postcolonial identity formation and cultural memory. This lack of critical engagement is the core lacuna that this study tries to address.

1.2 What Is Known and Unknown

It has long been the work of such playwrights as Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, and Ola Rotimi whose plays comprise the philosophical, political, and aesthetic

canon of modern African theatre which critics of African drama have long acknowledged. Soyinka's drama, which is based on the Yoruba metaphysics and tragic myth, has been widely examined for its intricate negotiation of ritual and modernity (Gibbs, 2000; Jeyifo, 2004). Osofisan's socially engaged theatre, on the other hand, has been acclaimed for its Marxist re-interpretation of myth, its focus on collective action and the use of music and dance as revolutionary weapons (Banham, 2004; Osofisan, 2001). Rotimi's satire, especially *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, has been interpreted as a commentary on patriarchy, political opportunism and chaos in the postcolonial governance (Nwosu, 2017; Ogunbiyi, 1981).

While this scholarship has helped to clarify the theoretical works of these playwrights, there is still a conspicuous absence of critical engagement with the way in which their works are being reinterpreted in the digital realm. The reincarnation of *Death and the King's Horseman* into the Netflix Formula, for instance, places Soyinka's metaphysical themes back into a global filmic narrative, raising questions regarding cultural translation, visual semiotics, as well as reception (Krings and Okome, 2019; Shoroye, 2021). Also, the digital performances of *The Chattering and the Song* on YouTube tend to emphasize revolutionary fervor through popular participatory performance, while the Nollywood comedic adaptation of *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* emphasizes gender politics through visual satire and colloquial speech. Yet, these transformations on screen--which are full of ideological and aesthetic potential--have not been systematically analysed through the lenses of adaptation theory, postcolonial hybridity, or media convergence.

Thus, the unknown is not in the literary contributions of the dramatists but how the new media transform the ontology of African performance--the modes of representation, the cultural semiotics and the epistemological power--in a digitally networked world.

1.3 Aim, Research Questions, and Hypothesis

This article seeks to examine, by way of critical analysis, the process of reinterpretation of African dramatic traditions across the digital media platforms, in particular, focusing on the process of adapting canonical stage plays to filmic and online

performance formats. Drawing upon Linda Hutcheon's (2013) adaptation theory, Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity and third space, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) theory of decolonizing cultural forms, and Henry Jenkins (2006) theory of media convergence, the research is an analysis of the changes in African drama as it moves from stage to screen, and how these changes alter narrative, aesthetics and ideology.

The following are the guiding research questions:

1. How do digital adaptations re-construct African dramatic traditions in terms of narrative, aesthetics and ideology?
2. How do platforms such as Netflix, YouTube and Nollywood transform audience engagement and the meaning of culture?
3. What new theoretical insights does the stage-to-screen transition offer in regard to postcolonial identity, performance and technology?

The article suggests that digital adaptations of African drama are acts of creative reconfiguration and not replication. These re-imaginings create hybrid cultural forms mediating between ritual and spectacle, local and global expression, and text and visual storytelling. By examining these adaptations from a comparative point of view, this work contributes to a better understanding of how African dramatic heritage continues and changes in the digital age.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Adaptation Theory

Adaptation theory provides a framework for critically understanding the process of creative work change in various media and cultural contexts. Linda Hutcheon's (2013) *A Theory of Adaptation* describes adaptation as "repetition without replication" (p. 7), stressing the fact that adaptations are not the simple copying of some other thing, but are reinterpretations that create new meanings. For Hutcheon, adaptation refers to three dimensions that are interrelated in a formal process of transposition, a creative act of reinterpretation, and a mode of reception depending upon audience expectations. This three-part paradigm takes the study beyond the simple measure of fidelity criticism - the idea that adaptations must be "faithful" to their sources - towards the awareness

that each adaptation is a cultural and semiotic negotiation between text, medium and audience.

In African drama, this negotiation is particularly complicated as most plays are already a transformation of oral and ritual traditions (Barber, 2018). Hence, when Wole Soyinka's *The Death and the King's Horseman* or Femi Osofisan's *The Chattering and the Song* are adapted for digital streaming on Netflix or YouTube, they are being doubled adapted, from oral to written, and from textual to visual. Stam (2019) and Leitch (2017) allude to Hutcheon's intertextual approach by suggesting that adaptation is itself a dialogic discursive practice: each adaptation "talks back" to its predecessor(s), while conversing with new cultural temperatures. In this sense, the Netflix adaptation of Soyinka's play, *Ellesin Oba* (2022), is not just a cinematic repetition of the play but, rather, a reinterpretation of Yoruba ritual aesthetics in universal cinematic language. Adaptation theory, therefore, offers a basis for an assessment of how these screen adaptations reconceptualize African dramaturgy with new aesthetic and ideological terms.

2.2 Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory contributes to the field of adaptation studies, discussing power, identity and representation in cultural translation. Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity and the "third space" describes how postcolonial cultural expression is located in an "interstitial space" - not indigenous or Western - but a space of negotiation where meaning and identity are in constant re creation. This theoretical perspective is key for analysing African digital adaptations which exist in-between local traditions and global media forms. In the case of *Ellesin Oba*, hybridity is expressed through visual overlap of Yoruba ritual and Western cinematic framing, and represents the anxiety of the dialectical between cultural contingency and global openness.

Linguistic and cultural decolonization is similar to Bhabha's argument but, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) has pointed out, essentially different. In *Decolonising the Mind* Ngugi argues that effective artistic liberation cannot be achieved without reclaiming native languages and native aesthetics from colonial control. This role is in harmony with Osofisan's drama that encompasses Yoruba and Western performance idioms to achieve collective African agency (Osofisan 2001). Applying both Bhabha and

Ngugi allows us to do a double reading in which hybridity exposes creativity and fusion but decolonization reminds us of the political stakes of representing African culture on a global platform. Hence, digital adaptations of the African plays could be read, depending on the mediations of local voices through global visual codes, as both liberatory acts of visibility and sites of neo-colonial negotiation.

2.3 Media Convergence and Digital Aesthetics.

The theoretical perspective of media convergence, as coined by Henry Jenkins (2006), also locates African digital drama within the global technological change. Jenkins defines convergence as "the flow of content across multiple media platforms" and between producers and audiences (p. 2). In the African context, convergence is seen in relation to the relationship between stage theatre, film, and the internet distribution of films, through the emergence of hybrid theatrical forms such as Nollywood cinema and YouTube theatre (Haynes, 2016; Krings & Okome, 2019). These platforms make a sort of democratisation of performance possible, in which local narratives are addressed to transnational audiences and vernacular aesthetics are maintained.

Educational institutions may use Jenkins' concept of participatory culture for particularly useful digital versions of African plays. In particular, the communal nature of African drama is often digitally extended through the creation of online communities where audiences can become interactive participants in the performance-comments, remixes, sharing of performance videos-that allow community-based performances of Osofisan's works to be uploaded to YouTube or social media. Likewise, the case of the movie *'Elesin Oba'* is a testimony of how Netflix as a medium packages African cultural heritage for worldwide consumption, bringing together the old and the high-definition in its visual identity. As Rasmus Adejunmobi has noted, such digital circulation is part and parcel of a transmedial Africanity, whereby African expressive culture is a continuum across media outlets. Media convergence therefore reconceptualizes adaptation as a technological and cultural practice: not only reshaping the way African stories are told, but also the ways in which they are consumed and understood all over the world.

2.4 Performing and Adapting in Africa

Existing scholarship on African theatre has provided an account of the cultural and ideological importance

of dramatists such as Soyinka, Osofisan, Rotimi, but few studies have explored their digital afterlife. Jeyifo (2004) and Gibbs (2000) put emphasis on Soyinka's combination of ritual and tragedy, whereas Banham (2004), and Osofisan (2001) are emphatic about Osofisan's revolutionary theatre as a tool for political awakening. Deemed by Nwosu (2017) and Ogunbiyi (1981) as an example of critiques of patriarchal systems and absurdities within the postcolonial Nigeria's political framework, Rotimi's satire is a display of the satirical character of postcolonial Nigeria. However, as Shoroye (2021) and Passchier (2014) point out, the screen adaptations of these works are still critically understudied. While both the Nollywood and digital storytelling literature have grown (Krings & Okome, 2019; Haynes, 2016), there has been a dearth of comparative studies that examine the extent to which organizing for stage-to-screen transitions transforms performance aesthetics, audience engagement and ideological positioning.

This gap makes the present study important that bridges the gap between adaptation theory, postcolonial criticism and media convergence to examine the reconstitution of African drama through the use of digital media. By comparing Soyinka's, Osofisan's, and Rotimi's plays in their digital iterations, the study adds to the new discourse on African digital humanities and enriches the knowledge of how performance, technology, and postcolonial identity infuse in the new era.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research project uses a qualitative, comparative, and interpretive research design with the objective of investigating the digital adaptation of canonical African plays. An appropriate approach is one based on quality since the research is concerned with the meanings, symbols and interpretive processes rather than with data that is quantifiable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The comparative dimension allows an assessment of thematic, aesthetic and ideological continuities and differences between forum and screen adaptations of chosen texts. Furthermore, the interpretive element is consistent with hermeneutic and semiotic approaches that are based on the construction of meaning through performance, imagery, and narrative (McKee, 2003).

This methodological orientation is the interdisciplinary nature of adaptation studies where literary analysis, performance studies and media criticism fuse together. In other words, it enables the discussion of the textual structure as well as of the visual sign system as culturally located artefacts. In accordance with Hutcheon's (2013) conception of adaptation as "repetition without replication," each adaptation is analysed as a new creative event in the context of contextual and technological forces. Accordingly, the study asks how the African drama is transformed by digital mediation by interrogating the various theoretical perspectives such as adaptation theory, postcolonial theory, and media convergence.

3.2 Data Sources

The study is anchored on three major case studies reflecting the adaptation of African stage plays in various digital platforms. The cases were chosen purposively on the basis of their cultural importance, theme and availability in stage and screen mediums.

1. Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman* (Netflix, 2022)
 - Is ritual tragedy remade with high-budget digital cinematography.
 - Yoruba cosmology, moral responsibility, and colonial encounter.
2. Femi Osofisan *The Chattering and the Song* (1977) and *Community Based and YouTube Adaptations*
 - Portrays revolutionary theatre and musical performance adapted to participatory digital culture.
 - Used as the lens of a study of collective resistance and digital folk aesthetics.
3. Ola Rotimi, *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977) and *Nollywood and community re-creations*
 - Provides an example of political satire and gender critique in the idiom of the popular media.
 - Represents the adaptation of humour and realism to new audiences through vernacular film language.

These choices make it possible to perform a cross-platform comparative analysis from formal cinematic production (Netflix) to informal digital theatre (YouTube and Nollywood). They represent the range

of the practice of adaptation from its elites to its masses, from its textual to its performative, the global to the local, that is the range of African adaptation practice.

Supplementary secondary materials in the form of critical essays, interviews and review were used to contextualise audience reception and cultural framing. This triangulation adds to the interpretive validity, by placing textual analysis in the wider discursive contexts (Yin, 2018).

3.3 Analytical Framework

The study uses thematic and semiotic analysis to analyse the transformation of meaning from one medium to the other. This analytical framework is informed by three theoretical areas:

1. Adaptation Theory (Hutcheon, 2013)
 - Provides the basis for studying the development of dramatic texts through recontextualization and reinterpretation through specific mediums.
 - Emphasising changes in narrative, form, and tone - how Elesin Oba, for example, takes Soyinka's ritual tragedy and turns it into cinematic spectacle.
2. Postcolonial Theory (Bhabha, 1994; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986)
 - Sheds light on the power relationships and ideological negotiations that are embedded in African digital storytelling.
 - Frames the analysis of identity, hybridity and resistance in the plays, particularly in situations where indigenous storeys relate to global media conventions.
 - Facilitates important reflection about whether digital reimaginations (re)produce or challenge neo-colonial aesthetics?
3. Media Convergence (Jenkins, 2006)
 - Sets the study in digital culture with reference to cross-platform narrative and participatory audiences.
 - In doing so, the paper demonstrates that digital media offer new forms of spectatorship (interactive YouTube comments or community remixes) that echo the structures of

African audiences' traditional communal performance.

Together, these frameworks facilitate a triangulated reading of African drama as both a text and a digital phenomenon and bridge the gaps between aesthetics, ideology, and technology.

3.4 Instruments and Procedure

Two analytical instruments were used to ensure the methodological rigour and coherence:

- Observation Guide: Organized comparison grid capturing stage vs. screen characteristics performance space, costume, music, language, audience engagement. This guide allowed for the continuities and deviations between the live theatre and digital representation to be identified.
- Media Coding Sheet: Created for semiotic and thematic mapping with emphasis on recurring motifs, dialogue shifts and visual imagery. Codes included:
 - Ritual symbolism (e.g. masquerade, sacrifice, invocation of ancestors)
 - Resistance through imaging (e.g., protest, collective song, confrontation)
 - Gender representation (e.g. authority, agency, satire)
 - Technological mediation (e.g. framing, lighting, editing choices)

Coding was iterative and reflexive, so that patterns that were emerging could feed back into more profound interpretive understanding (Saldana, 2021).

3.5 Limitations

This study recognises multiple limits to qualitative interpretive research.

First, full-length screen versions of some of the adaptations, particularly community-created YouTube versions, were not available and use would have had to be based on excerpts and written reviews. Second, the study's sample size of three plays allows for little generalisation but provides depth and analytical focus. Third, audience reception data came from published reviews and comments from viewers instead of from primary ethnographic observation as time did not permit.

Despite these limitations, the triangulated design (integration of theory, text, and media) creates higher validity and originality of the findings. The methodology therefore offers a powerful framework

for comprehending the process of reconstruction, re-interpretation and redistribution of African dramatic traditions in the global digital landscape.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Digital Adaptation in the Aspect of Ritual and Cultural Continuity

Rather than spectacle, in *Death and the King's Horseman*, or in *Abiku* (1975), Wole Soyinka builds ritual as an ontological act which connects the individual sacrifice with a communal harmony (Jeyifo 2004; Gibbs 2000). The Netflix adaptation of the film, *Eleisin Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022) retains this metaphysical weight in its translation into the language of cinema. Through *mise-en-scene*, the film conveys the sacred temporality that marks the imminency of death, with its strong Yoruba costuming, percussive drumming, and *chiaroscuro* lighting. As Hutcheon (2013) argues, adaptation "reinterprets and re-contextualises the source in light of the new medium" (p. 7), thus *Elesin Oba* utilises slow pacing and bilingual subtitling to bring local and global spectators into ritual time. Attending to physical movement--the awkward dance of Soyinka's *Elepro* man or the choreographic coordination of the marketplace women--the camera's attention gives Soyinka's textual ritualism a visual semiotics of deferral, which places psychological and colonial drama at the heart of the tragedy.

By comparison, the ritual mobilized in Femi Osofisan's *The Chattering and the Song* (1977) is revolutionary. In respect of Yoruba myth and popular song, Osofisan has transformed it into a dramaturgy of political awakening (Osofisan, 2001; Banham, 2004). In both the community and YouTube versions, ritual is seen to be less a sacred observance and more of performative mobilization. Folk troupes intensify chant and dance, and are often filmed in public places among crowds of people, with an intention to capture energy. This participatory form clearly represents Jenkins' (2006) "participatory culture" in which audiences become co-performers and the line between art and activism is blurred. The mobility and immediacy of the digital camera replaces the theatrical unity with a kinetic realism in common with Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) call for people's theatre based on indigenous aesthetics.

In Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977), ritual is made into a mockery. Rotimi

desacralizes traditional as well as political rituals - wedding ceremonies, military drills, political rallies: they are revealed as hollow displays of authority (Nwosu, 2017). In Nollywood and YouTube versions these rituals are mocked in slapstick and melodrama with the result that sacred codes become popular satire. The ritual becomes ridiculous in this *mise-en-scene* - a form of humor that parodies, suggesting the popular, as Barber (2018) describes it, as "a site of both continuity and critique" (p. 112). In other words, ritual has become more of a comedic residue than spiritual fact; reflecting the postcolonial disillusionment of Nigerians with moral and political leadership.

In the course of these plays ritual seems to shift from a sense of sacred continuity (Soyinka) to collective renewal (Osofisan) to ironic reversal (Rotimi). This thematic line affirms Hutcheon's perception that adaptation is "a process of re-creation that both remembers and remakes" (2013, p. 9).

4.2 Resistance and Power: The stage revolt to the digital subversion.

Resistance is a continuous theme in all three plays but its manifestation changes radically in their digital representations. In *Elein Oba*, Soyinka's vision of resistance is metaphysical and not militant. Olunde's choice to sacrifice himself so that his father might live places spiritual obligation into the category of symbolic opposition to colonial rationalism. This ideological clash is strengthened in the film by the bilingual conversation between the colonial officer, whose staid English is sharply juxtaposed against the musical tones of the Yoruba, thus visually enacting the third space described by Bhabha (1994), a linguistic and cultural liminality, between meaning and language. Long shots of the disorientation of a British officer contrast with close-ups of Yoruba ritual and point to the incompatibility of the worldviews and the persistence of indigenous agency.

In *The Chattering and the Song*, the resistance is collective and specifically political. Osofisan (2001) writes, *The Chanter* in the play is both narrator and agitator, and he turns oral tradition into revolutionary education. In digital adaptations, especially those that are produced on a grassroots level via YouTube, resistance takes the form of interactive activism: actors directly address the audience as they shoot their videos, viewers respond with comments or re-ups, and performance is digital rallying. This re-embodiment of protest is in line with Ngugi's (1986)

call for participatory theatre as a means of decolonization. Hand held instability within the camera replicates the dynamism of street protest and carries Osofisan's dramaturgical performance of collective song into a semiotics of movement and immediacy.

Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* portrays resistance as gendered subversion and not ideological confrontation. Liza the Western-educated wife is able to deconstruct the macho politics of Lejoka-Brown and make the domestic sphere a site of feminist resistance. In digital versions, this inversion is accentuated: women's assertive gestures, over the top tone and defiant posture, represent what Haynes (2016) calls Nollywood's "vernacular modernity" - the use of melodrama to dramatise social aspiration and critique. Through humor and visual irony, Rotimi's narrative redefines resistance through everyday negotiation, rather than heroic sacrifice. Taken together, these adaptations mark a kind of ontogenetic evolution of power relations, starting from that of spiritual resistance (Soyinka) to that of collective insurgency (Osofisan) to that of gendered re-appropriation (Rotimi). The move from stage to screen does not thin the resistance, rather it increases the range of its modalities, reinforcing the fact that digital media create a wider lexicon of African revolt from the sacred ritual to the domestic satire.

4.3 Identity, Hybridity, and the Performance Aesthetics

Identity and hybridity are at the core of each adaptation, representing the third space of postcolonial expression described by Bhabha (1994). Olunde represents this hybridity in *Eleisin Oba*, who is educated in Britain, but is grounded in the cosmology of Yoruba culture. This duality is highlighted visually in the film through the costumes and the spatial opposition of the modern suit to the traditional agbada as well as the colonial compound to the market square. This aesthetic negotiation is akin to what Irele (2001) described as the "African imagination in translation" - a perpetual negotiation between indigeneity and cosmopolitanism, localism and globalization. The camera holds on Olunde's self-reflection, making hybridity no longer theoretical but experienced.

Osofisan's *The Chattering and the Song* is a counter-gesture to this in that it re-brands cultural hybridity with a re-indigenization. The Chanter's performance

uses Yoruba musical elements and oral narration to resist the Western dramaturgical realism. In community and digital performances this reversion to orality is intensified: the actors sing barefoot, the spectators join in singing, and there is only minimal editing of the filming. This aesthetic rawness is an example of Adejunmobi's (2019) concept of transmedial Africanity - the continuation of oral and communal aesthetics in digital media. Osofisan's digital versions, therefore, are de-colonial recuperations and participatory pedagogies.

Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* is comic fragmentation as hybridity. Lejoka-Brown's fusion of soldier, politician and patriarch is caricatured as the postcolonial subject persuaded between imported ideologies and indigenous values. In Nollywood versions, with its exaggerated gestures and Pidgin English dialogue, foregrounding of this fractured identity is in keeping with Barber's (2018) reading of African popular art as self-reflexive critique. The screen medium with its close ups and rapid cuts provides an externalization of inner contradiction: laughter becomes an instrument of recognition. In this manner, Rotimi's digital re-enactments represent postmodern performativity, making crisis of identity comic catharsis.

4.4 Comparative Insights

In all the three case studies, adaptation does not qualify as translation but as transformation. *Eleisin Oba* has the ritual solemnity while reimagining tragedy for global spectatorship; *The Chattering and the Song* turns ritual into collective resistance via participatory media; *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* parodies ritual to reveal postcolonial absurdity. Thematic continuities--sacrifice, power, gender--are refracted through distinct media grammars: cinematic composition and handheld digital immediacy and comedic montage.

These adaptations, taken together, suggest Jenkins' (2006) argument that new media create "convergence cultures" in which audiences and creators co-produce meaning (p. 3). Through this process African drama is both an archive and a new creation: as it preserves the traditions of oral performance and as it seizes digital opportunities. Thus, the mineness of digital adaptation comes to the fore as a continuum of cultural survival and shows that African dramaturgy, far from being pushed aside by technology, has reinvented itself in it.

V. DISCUSSION

5.1 Revisiting the Key Findings

The results from this study show that adaptation in African drama is an act of transformation and not replication. The exercise of transitioning from stage to screen across media platforms like Netflix, YouTube, and Nollywood does not negate the ritual, political and aesthetic premises of African theatre but rather re-contextualizes them for a new media ecology. As Hutcheon (2013) notes, adaptation is "repetition without repetition," or an interpretative act of preserving and re-creating meaning (p.7). In *Elesin Oba*, Soyinka's tragic ritual is given new vitality in its metaphors and in the pacing of the visual performance, which make Yoruba cosmology accessible to the whole world. In *The Chattering and the Song*, Osofisan's revolutionary theatre is still a communal force as digital folk performance, ritual is turned into participatory activism. Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* is a digital vernacular realism adaptation of satire with humour and spectacle serving as tools for the critique of gender and power.

Collectively, these adaptations attest to the fact that African drama is still a living cultural process, in constant mutation in the face of the changing media and audiences. The digital turn therefore represents not cultural dilution or Westernization but reassertion of African creativity through new technological affordances. Digital forms have been able to simultaneously achieve the goal of preserving oral aesthetics, communal performance structures, and critical consciousness, as well as the goal of expanding across geographies. The African stage has not disappeared, it has been digitized, redistributed and diversified.

5.2 Reflections: Comparisons and Contrasts

When situated within the broader set of African performance scholarship, these results reassert and extend current debates over ritual continuity and cultural negotiation. Scholars like Jeyifo (2004) and Gibbs (2000) have been emphasizing for long Soyinka's dramaturgy as an ethical theatre in which Yoruba metaphysics is fused with western tragic form. However, the adaptation *Elesin Oba* (2022) proves that this fusion does not only occur between text and performance but also in digital representation, confirming what Barber (2018) describes as "the mobility of cultural forms in the

modern African imagination" (p. 134). The Netflix medium retains the ritual gravity of Soyinka's play while adding cinematic semiotics - lighting, rhythm, and sound to visualize the cosmological tensions that are at the heart of Yoruba tragedy.

In contrast, Osofisan's adaptations are close to Ngugi's (1986) call for "the decolonization of the stage." His reindigenized performance style, particularly in YouTube and communityfication, opposes Western dramaturgical realism through foregrounding the local orality and participation as a collective. While Osofisan (2001) theorised theatre as a revolutionary forum for consciousness-raising, the digital versions make this vision a reality through participatory convergence that enables audiences from around the globe to interact, comment, and co-create. This corresponds to Jenkins' (2006) argument that convergence cultures empower audiences as meaning-makers and not mere spectators.

Rotimi's adaptations, in turn, take up Ogunjipe's (1994) feminist interpretations of African drama and Haynes' (2016) work on Nollywood as a platform for vernacular critique. The humour in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* morphs into a kind of feminist resistance in digital re-creations - women characters, empowered with close-up cinematography and expressive gesture, subvert patriarchal hierarchies. Unlike Soyinka's grave tragedy or Osofisan's revolutionary call, Rotimi's screen dramatisations transpose satire into pedagogy, and laughter into social critique. These findings build on Barber's (2018) idea that African popular forms are "performances of knowing" in which comedy and parody become vehicles of truth-telling in public culture (p. 95).

Thus, this study adds something to the current scholarship by redefining adaptation as a site of cultural negotiation rather than imitation. It contends that adaptation in African drama is a continuous conversation between text, performance and technology, one that negotiates between local identities and global visibility. The transformation of the plays across the platforms is one of the many ways in which the ideological kernel of African theatre (ritual theatre, resistance theatre, and identity theatre) would not die out with the removal of the theatre form.

5.3 Developing the Discussion: Adaptation as Negotiation, Not Imitation.

This study's comparative findings advance the discourse of adaptation by challenging the fidelity model, which tests screen versions based on how much they stick to the text of the screen version. Instead, as Stam (2019) and Leitch (2017) argue, adaptation should be read intertextually, as a form of rewriting which responds to cultural, institutional and technological conditions. The digital versions studied here are examples of how each adaptation makes different negotiations of meaning through the digital.

In Elaen Oba, one is certain that fidelity is not based on textual correctness but on aesthetic transference - the transference of Soyinka's metaphysics into visual symbolism. The Chattering and the Song maintains the spirit of revolutionary collectivity in its participatory modes of production, and echoes Bhabha's (1994) assertion that hybridity "reinscribes the history of cultural interaction as a history of negotiation" (p. 38). *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, despite its stylistic remote from the stage version, is true to Rotimi's ideological core: the unveiling of political hypocrisy and patriarchal absurdity.

Altogether, these cases demonstrate that African digital adaptations are not derivative but dialogic. They are examples of a form of transcultural authorship in which the adapter, actor, and audience work together in the re-creation of meaning. As such, adaptation becomes a continuum of African performance ontology - system, in which stories, rituals, and images move from media to media without losing their communal function. The study thus builds on the case that the digital turn in African drama is a cultural evolution and not erosion and it supports the survival of traditional vitality of performances within modern expressive economies.

5.4 Identifying the Study's Limitations

While the study adds original information to the study of African adaptation, there are some methodological limitations that should be acknowledged. First, access to full-length screen adaptations, especially community and online performances was limited. Many YouTube or grassroots recordings were incomplete, or poorly archived, which limited the scope of analysis of visual and audience. Second, the study's close corpus of three plays- therefore as rich as it is- analytically, is

limited in its capacity to speak more broadly about the vast world of African digital theatre. Third, because of time limitations, audience reception data were not gathered through empirical means but were sourced from reviews, online commentaries and critical essays. Such research can be extended in the future to include ethnographic methods, investigating how audiences receive digital adaptations as they are happening. Finally, a lack of industry-based interviews means that we miss the ability to have insight into the economics of production, copyright and the practical challenges of adapting African classics for streaming platforms.

Despite these limitations, the methodological triangulation of textual, visual and theoretical analysis renders interpretive validity. By negotiating with three different playwrights and various media platforms, a balanced cross-section of the negotiation of African drama with digital transformation is offered.

5.5 Implications: Towards Digital African Dramaturgy

The implications of these results are of an artistic, pedagogical, and cultural nature. At an artistic level, digital adaptation comes out as a democratising force in African theatre. Platforms such as YouTube and Netflix break spatial and economic barriers, which have allowed local performers to reach an international audience and create what Krings and Okome (2019) call the "transnational circulation of African visual culture." This accessibility fits into Ngugi's (1986) vision of decolonized art - culturally self-determined but globally resonant.

In terms of pedagogy digital versions of African drama provide dynamic instruments for teaching drama. Visual versions of canonical texts such as *Death and the King's Horseman* cross the boundaries between literary and performance studies and provide an opportunity to examine intermedial aesthetics, or the relationship between word, image, and sound. Moreover, the kinds of adaptations represent a model of how African creativity accommodates to globalized economies of representation in a demonstration of resiliency and creativity in postcolonial expression.

Culturally the study discovers that postcolonial hybridity is also not a homogeneous condition but rather a spectrum. Soyinka's negotiation of hybridity

is done through tragedy in tension, Osofisan through collective reclamation and Rotimi through comic subversion. Together, they depict a continuum of construction of African identity across the media. As Adejunmobi (2019) and Barber (2018) argue, digital culture has emerged as an important medium for re-designing African modernity a site where indigenous performance aesthetics flourish in the midst of technological mediation.

Finally, the process of digital reimagining African drama heralds the emergence of what this study calls digital African dramaturgy: a transmedial performance practice that combines the traditional ethos with the global connectivity. It is the embodiment of not the decline of the African stage, but of its evolution into new symbolic, interactive and participatory dimensions.

VI. CONCLUSION

The shift from stage to screen by African drama is a part of an ongoing cultural renaissance and not a break with tradition. The analysis of *Death and the King's Horseman*, *The Chattering and the Song* and *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* shows that digital adaptation does not water down the essence of African theatre but helps animate it within new expressive and technological parameters. The move towards digital media like Netflix, YouTube and Nollywood shows the dynamism and adaptability of African dramatic traditions to globalization. These adaptations reiterate that African performance is a living continuum, which is capable of regenerating across temporal, spatial and medial borders.

Central to the results of this study is the claim that adaptation is transformation and not translation. Through a theoretical framework constituted by Hutcheon's (2013) theory of adaptation, Bhabha's (1994) hybridity and Jenkins' (2006) media convergence, the research argues that the African digital adaptations are acts of re-creation - negotiating between ritual memory and modern spectacle, local idiom and global visibility. Each adaptation is a deliberate intervention of interpretation through which African playwrights and filmmakers make cultural agency in a digital mediated world.

Future research can expand this question in three important ways. First, audience engagement studies

in the multiple digital spaces in the form of comments, remixing, and streaming analytics would reveal the meaning co-production by spectators in African digital theatre. Second, comparative transnational analyses could be conducted of how African adaptations speak to the global media industries and diasporic performance traditions. Finally, further consideration of gender and performativity politics in digital remakings would contribute to a better understanding of how technology changes power relations in African cultural production.

Ultimately, this study attests to the fact that the journey from stage to screen is not a departure but an evolution, a reassertion of African creativity, hybridity and resilience in the twenty-first century.

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