



A Survey of Tunde Kelani's Interpretations in the Adaptations of Akinwumi Isola's *O Le ku (It is Complicated)* and Yinka Egbohare's *Dazzling Mirage* for the Screen.

ADENIYI, Kehinde Abimbola (PhD)
Department of Theatre Arts,
Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State.
Phone: +2348034246672
Email: kascholar2@gmail.com
orchid: <https://orchid.org/0009-0009-2726-8705>

BABATOPE, Johnson Babafemi (PhD)
Department of Theatre Arts and Music,
Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos State.
Email: femibabatope@hotmail.com
Telephone: +2348033519167
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1981-4819>

Corresponding Author : ADENIYI, Kehinde Abimbola (PhD) (kascholar2@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Adaptation is an age long phenomenon in the arts. Life writings were adapted into novels and largely novels to plays. The trends continue to date. Adaptations are meant to artistically metamorphose a previous creative endeavour into a new one. An artistic work from one genre is transformed into another genre without losing sight of the thematic preoccupation of the source. Tunde Kelani adapted Akinwumi Isola's classic Yoruba Novel *O le ku (It is Complicated)* and Yinka Egbohare's novel, *Dazzling Mirage* into films of the same titles, thus bringing the thesis of both works to a wider and heterogeneous audience. Despite the artistic and box office success of both films, and many essays on the film versions of the two novels, the extent of Tunde Kelani's fidelity to the thematic preoccupations and aesthetic considerations of the original works has not been academically interrogated. Therefore, this study examines the extent of Kelani's faithfulness to the ideology and aesthetic qualities of the original works. The primary data for the study depended on content analysis, structured interview and focused group discussion (FGD). Thus, the Akinwumi Isola's *O le ku* and Yinka Egbohare's *Dazzling Mirage* and Tunde Keleni's cinematic adaptations were content analyzed. Both the literary and audio-visual versions was subjected to seasoned focused group discussion (FGD). The film producer and director; Tunde Kelani was interviewed. Secondary data were sourced from a review of relevant literature. Sarris' Auteur Theory was adopted to drive the discourse. The paper argues that the differences in the media of expression significantly influenced the minor discrepancies between the literary texts and their screen versions. It also argues that Kelani's box office target distracted him for a flawless fidelity to the original works. The study concludes that cineastes should enlist literary experts, who are knowledgeable about the principle of adaptation, and film critics in their production crew.

Keywords Adaptation, Auteur, Cineaste, Film, Genre,

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.36349/olijhe.2024.v01i01.002>

Copyright Provided that the author(s) and the source are credited, noncommercial use of the article is allowed, including printing and distribution.

AUTHORS' BIO



ADENIYI, Kehinde Abimbola, PhD is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theatre Arts, Lagos State University of Education, Lagos-State, Nigeria. Adeniyi an astute scholar and researcher, is an Alumnus of Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, where he bagged the Degree of BA in Dramatic Arts Specialising in Film and Television Production in 1988. University of Ibadan where he obtained MA and MCA in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, majoring in Media Communication. He was at the University of Lagos for PGDE and Lagos State University for his PhD in Theatre Arts specializing in Film and Media Arts. Dr. Adeniyi, apart from publishing books and articles in reputable Journals has also attended local and International conferences for the presentation of his scholarly works. He is a member of many scholarly and professional bodies among which are AFTA in London, NANTAP, SONTA and NATE in Nigeria. He is well travelled and happily married with children.



BABATOPE, Johnson Babafemi, PhD. is an Associate Professor of Theatre & Film Arts and film and theatre practitioner He teaches Theatre and Film directing at the Department of Theatre and Film Arts, Lagos State University. Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria. He has produced, directed and acted in many stage and screen plays. He has published both locally and internationally. and attended many local and international Conferences. He has served the Lagos University, Ojo in many administrative capacities and currently the Ag. Head of the Department of Theatre and Film Arts. He has been privileged to win travel and Conference attendance grants. He is the CEO of *Artful Art Productions*, a multimedia entertainment and consultancy firm based in Lagos. He is a unionist and human right activist. He is a fellow of the British Arts Council, Nigeria.

Drama and film are forms of arts (Crow, 1983). Dramatic literature is a piece of writings creatively produced through the skilful use of words by an author (Jeyifo, 2014). He maintains that literature as an art form dated back to thousands of years. He agrees that film, a relatively young art form, has become a viable medium of communication which has given expression to different genres of literature. Film adaptation has become a viable source of cross breeding, cutting across different literary genres. Accordingly, film is all about motion and emotion, seemingly magical images with narratives in visual images woven into stories that connect the society's sub-consciousness, reflecting the societal values, customs, styles and life. As a medium, film communicates better than other art forms as it entertains, enlightens, informs and elevates the society (Chandan, 2019).

In projecting unique ideas, opinions and sharing knowledge about certain things portrayed through entertainment, filmmakers also inform and educate the audience. Chandan (2019) explains that the filmmaker is also a creative artist who, through his or her work, communicates his or her ideas, thoughts, visions, feelings, emotions and opinions into moving images to enable society to view what he or she conceptualized in his or her mind. Through the projected pictures, messages are conveyed to the mass audience. This demonstrates the essential nature of the film as a medium of mass communication. The advent of film in Africa and specifically Nigeria has been examined by scholars and researchers in film studies among who are Akashoro(2010), Ayakoroma (2014), Ekwuazi (1991), Shaka (2014) and Omoera (2024).

Ekwuazi (1991), establishes that the development of film is associated with the history of political struggles and development in most countries within the continent, starting with the activities of the colonialists who used it as tool for political propaganda and for propagating their culture and religion. Shaka (2014) and Ayakoroma (2014) segmented the development of film production into three periods pre-independence period, post-independence and the evolution of the indigenous film industry-Nollywood. The first segment comprises films focusing on propaganda by the colonialists to inform the world about the developments in the global war then and to inform the colonies about happenings in Great Britain. This was done using the documentaries that made use of short documentaries format that is regularly released for public viewing with news contents, stories, and items of topical interest of such events as the coronation of King Edward VIII, The King of England, which was held at West Minister Abbey in 1904, making vivid the presence of the Alake of Egbaland at the occasion. The films propagated the British style of governance, culture and

religion to their colonies (Akeh, 2008). To sustain these efforts, Britain established a Colonial Film Unit (CFU) affiliated with the Central office of Information in London. In the same vein, The Church and Missionary activities also helped to promote films to aid evangelism and educational services.

During the post-independence period, the Federal government of Nigeria took over the control of film activities through the film division in the Federal Ministry of Information. Agina (2015), claims that the state government following the example of the federal government also controlled the production and distribution of documentary films. All these laid the foundation for the indigenisation of the industry in 1972, and in 1979 the Federal Military Government, through Decree number 61 of 1979, also established the Nigeria Film Corporation (NFC). However, it was not until 1982 that the corporation became significantly functional. According to Ekwuazi (1991), the early efforts was focused on historical activities comprising documenting of the political, economic and cultural setting of Nigeria. Policies that encourage indigenous productions with marginal local content promulgated to support these efforts. Thus, the development of filmmaking in Nigeria results in the prominence of indigenous producers such as Ola Balogun, Francis Oladele; Sanya Dosunmu; Adamu Halilu; Jab Adu and Eddie Ugbomah, among others. The efforts also produce notable works that have led to the production of Epic films. Among these is Wole Soyinkas' film *Kongi's Harvest*.

Film is the juxtaposition of both the creative performative art and technology. The outcome is a product of harmonious creative people working as a team, in which the skills of each are important in arriving at the final product - the film from ideation, production to transmission to the audience. Literary adaptation is a process of converting a specific literary materials from one genre to another genre or medium, for instance from prose to drama and vice versa. Another instance of adaptation could be from one medium to another - say from literature to film. This is referred to as film adaptation: "the transfer of a written work to a feature film. According to Wachukwu and Ihentuge (2022), film adaptation is when a "movie ... that is based on something else that has already been written, such as a novel or a stage play" are converted to movie. Wachukwu and Ihentuge (2022) further explain that adaptation between the genre of literature, and among the media has been a source of cross breeding. They point out that literary works have been adapted in many forms; fairy tales as ballets, plays as operas, Novel as stage plays, stage plays as novels or short stories and in the film industry it serves

the purpose of visual translation. The concept of adaptation in literature refers to the representation of a specific creative work such as book, play text or movie to another format of a creative work. That is, the transformation of the creative artwork into another form, medium or translocation to another space. A literary text is a piece of writing, such as a novel or poem or drama that has the purpose of telling a story or entertaining or for propagating political messages and beliefs. David and Mellerski (2008), in *Essays on Adaptation* classified adaptation within the context of the Media into:

Creative Adaptation: Here the work is not just an edited version of an already existing plays with a few cuts and a number of original ideas thrown in, it is a new theatrical venture inspired by a non-theatrical source not necessarily sourced from a film or screenplay. When adapting from the play, there are different forms of adaptation text to film the setting dialogue and characters of the story could be tampered with but the theme is expected to remain as it is often the universal concept that binds the work as it transcends cultural barriers.

The Loose Adaptation: This is a film that keeps a few elements or some semblance of the original source materials to develop its own innovative ideas that is original and unique in its own ways. In adapting from any literary source to film, the producer must be familiar with the source and try to get permission from the original source to adapt their story. In addition, the producer should not be too attached to the story but respect it. The film producer should have a good understanding of the target audience in creating his narrative as they may not have familiar with the original script thus in adapting from literary source to film should not be a slave to the script, he is therefore free to broaden the script embellish it with new ideas that can make it suitable for the medium and acceptable to the projected audience.

Information technology makes daily interactions on the social media seamless. The outcome of the technologies aided interaction in the virtual space are the presence of multifaceted mobile devices such as smartphones, cell phones, palmtops, laptops and table top computers among others. The necessity for adaptation of the literary works such as major plays like Ola Rotimi's *Gods are not to Blame*; Wole Soyinka's film, *Kongi's Harvest*, by Ola Balogun and Francis Oladele respectively, is to make them accessible to heterogenous audience. Corroborating this, Jeyifo, (2014) argues that, often, one return to the intolerable fact that the best

work, the most profound creations of our literature are not accessible to even a large part of the very limited audience which problematic linguistic and sociological factors make inevitable for literary drama in English at this stage of our national history. Ukadike (2019) affirms that in African Cinema, there has been a deliberate attempt to use the film Medium as "a voice of the people" in film production for political and aesthetics purposes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is premised on the Auteur Theory. It is a film theory advanced by Andrew Sarris (1962) for appraising films with emphasis on the position of the film director as a creator whose artistic inclination and technological prowess determines the direction and eventual outcome of the production. The Auteur Theory in film criticism, in the words of Sarris (1962):

... Holds that a director's film reflects the director's personal creative vision, as if they were the primary "auteur" (the French word for "author"). In spite of - and sometimes even because of - the production of the film as part of an industrial process, the auteur's creative voice is distinct enough to shine through all kinds of studio interference and through the collective process. (p. 26)

Auteur Theory stipulates that films should reflect a director's personal vision. Reputable Filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, and Jean Renoir are known as absolute 'auteurs' of their films. Also, Auteur Theory draws from Alexandre Astruc's notion of the *caméra-stylo* or "camera-pen," which encourages directors to use cameras as writers use pens and to guard against the hindrances of traditional storytelling. The whole idea of this theory is that the director should use the commercial apparatus of filmmaking as a writer uses a pen, and, through the *mise-en-scène*, imprint his or her vision on the work (minimizing the role of the screenwriter). The auteur theory suggests that the screenwriter hands the script to the director and the director simply adds the performers and pictures. The pivot of the theory being that there are no good and bad movies, only good and bad directors. The theory is relevant to this discourse because its focus is on the interpretation /re-interpretation of the director of the films.

A Brief Biography of Tunde Kelani

Tunde Kelani (popularly known as TK) was born on 26th February 1948, a Nigerian filmmaker, storyteller, director, photographer, cinematographer and producer. He holds a Diploma in the Art and Technique of Filmmaking from the London International Film School, London, United Kingdom. He was able to garner parts of his traineeship experiences under the tutelage of some of the foremost filmmakers. Shortly after the celluloid film period, the

video film era emerged with the style of telling stories in pictures rather than words. After many years in the Nigerian film industry as a cinematographer, he owns and manages Mainframe Film and Television Production, an outfit he formed to document Nigeria's rich culture. He blends old and modern styles and techniques in achieving his filmmaking objectives. As a bridge-builder between the old and the contemporary filmmakers, his works revolve around his creative acumen in the use of new technology of making motion pictures, starting with the use of a black and white camera which was optical sound.

He experienced all the aspects of filmmaking, from the period of photography till the social media era. In this regard, Taiwo (2020), citing his interview with Oyetoro (2018), says: When you talk about the history of African film, Tunde Kelani is visible. In the technology of the film, Tunde Kelani is recognised. He went through the Alarinjo period,' in the days of late Hubert Ogunde; he was there as a young person, and he is also very relevant to today's film production with his cinematographic experience and knowledge. When talking about the technology of filmmaking today, Tunde Kelani is very relevant for his ability to blend the two traditions and come up with an identity for his production style (Taiwo, 2020).

Synopsis of the Film, *O Le Ku* (1997)

The film directed and produced by Tunde Kelani is a 1997 adaptation of Akinwunmi Ishola's novel of the same title. It tells the story of Ajani, an undergraduate of the University of Ibadan, who in his final year was under pressure by his mother to find a partner and he unwittingly find himself in a love quadrangle. He dates three women simultaneously; Asake, a secondary school teacher is his long-term girlfriend. He meets Lola a fresher, who is tall, slim and pretty. The situation gets complicated when he meets Sade, a childhood acquaintance who eventually takes the centre stage of the love drama. Asake's father compelled her to sever her relationship with Ajani but she, however, becomes pregnant and Lola finds out and Ajani has to choose a wife under duress from his mother. In the ensuing struggle to please all, Ajani is involved in a fatal accident and loses his life.

The Synopsis of the Film, *Dazzling Mirage* (2014)

The film directed and produced by Tunde Kelani is an adaptation of the novel written by Olayinka Abimbola Egbokhare, in lending her voice to creating awareness on sickle cell anaemia disease. The novel and Tunde Kelani's filmic interpretation discuss the issues of love, pain, trauma, inhumanity and stigmatization in a clear way. The film centres on a lady called Funmiwo, a sickle cell

disease sufferer. While she excelled in her chosen field in the public relations industry, the stress involves in pulling off the job threatened to have her hospitalized. Meanwhile Akindele, the man she is in a relationship with, is nowhere to be found, the reason for this is attributed to been his mothers' pet, his inaction is borne out of lack of self-confidence and unstable nature coupled with the domineering nature of his mother, Mrs Fadipe who unequivocally was against the relationship as a result of Funmi been a sickle cell disease sufferer.

The scene where she confrontationally accused her parents of been responsible for her current plight highlights the painful thoughts of sickle cell sufferers especially in situation where the two parents are medical practitioners who ordinarily in modern age can avoid the relationship by affirming their incompatibility through genotypes and blood tests, unknown to her however, is the fact that they are not her biological parents.

Tunde Kelani's Films and Production Techniques

His styles and techniques of cinematographic endeavours brought a new dimension and "revolution with Yoruba film into filmmaking through such productions as *Ti Oluwa Nile* (1993), *O Le Ku* (2011), (Taiwo,2020). According to Onikoyi (2017), Kelani has crafted an identity of "visual text... to the transformation of culture in Nigeria film industry". He observes that Tunde Kelani is unique and different compare to other filmmakers as a result of various influences and levels of inspirations tha every individual responds to, which makes two filmmakers reason differently. His style and inspiration are primarily products of his culture, the world of the Yoruba that he is accustomed to and familiar with, where he grew up and has access to its heritage. This enables his yearning for, and interest in pursuing what is deeply cultural, even in a world that is subverted by modernist inadequacies. Furthermore, he explores African cultural values utilising it in developing an instantly recognizable, idiosyncratic style which has permeated every single thing that he has touched (Adeniyi, 2022).

Adaptation is another style and technique adopted by Tunde Kelani, which gives his works credence and makes them unique. He adapts some from prose and drama texts, aside from the story narration that he has imbibed as part of his cultural philosophy. The essence of this is to tell the story in line with the culture of the people, particularly the Yoruba culture. As Oyetoro: (in personal communication 2018 Interview) maintains:

his style of work basically says; there is no pretence. One cannot be more English than the English people. So, do not 'ape' the English, reiterating the necessity to revisit the root of our culture and then, tell our story in the African way. He is a core African who believe so much in the Yoruba culture and value system, ready to promote and project it. Because of modern technology and his vision to project the Yoruba culture, he adopts modern technique so much that if a non-Yoruba speaker watches his films he would appreciate and understand them (Oyetoro in personal communication, 2018).

An Exploration of Tunde Kelani's Interpretations in the Adaptation of Akinwumi Isola's *O le ku* (*It is complicated*) and Yinka Egbokhare's *Dazzling Mirage* for the Screen

O le ku (1997) is didactic as it gives lots of messages to the youths about love, marriage patience and life generally. The film's most relatable lessons are that the young ones should refrain from parental pressures on marriage while parents should be less involved in the lives of the lovebirds. It speaks to the youth to eschew promiscuity and embrace faithfulness in relationship. If that had been the case with Ajani, the tragedy of his premature death would have been averted. The production is remarkable as it is full of exciting moments keeping the audience at the edges of their seat throughout the duration of the movie. Kelani, uses the film as a clarion call to the public, parents in particular, not to be overbearing on their children, children are to be guided and not bullied or needlessly be put under pressure. Many parents have nagged their children to depression over marriage. They do this under the guise of wanting to see their grandchildren. In the process, the children are influence into making wrong choices which they later regret. Kelani emphasises the need for patience. God time being the best.

Dazzling Mirage on the other hand, gives a detailed illustration of a proper sensitization outreach, the crowd, the setup, the roadwork and performance all made the sensitization realistic. The filmmaker's skilful presentation in bringing to life Funmi's dazzling future that's seems like a mirage as she confronts battle in several fronts and finally making her dreams come true is a masterpiece as it tends to motivates all sufferers and all around them to support and encourage them as a way forward. The movie *Dazzling Mirage*, an adaptation of Yinka Egbokhare's novel of the same title, is the story of a young woman with sickle cell disease, Funmiwo, who is faced with several challenges due to her health condition. Scripted by Ade Solanke, *Dazzling Mirage* dramatizes the travails of a young girl in her twenties. Funmiwo, an adopted child of Mr. and Mrs Femi Adebayo is a high flyer public relations executive. She is in love with Sanya, an only child of his mother, Mrs

Fadipe Despite her frailty, she refuses to be treated like a sickler. Unfortunately, Sanya, her fiancé succumbs to his mother's pressure not to continue with the relationship. Funmi becomes physically and emotionally broken but she is nevertheless determined to survive and succeed against all odds.

Dazzling Mirage revolves round determination, courage and love, Funmiwo eventually marries Dotun, her boss. Other themes are those of stigmatisation, trauma and the will to live. In *Dazzling Mirage* Kelani set the mood of the movie right from start by showing the protagonist's struggle against her medical condition.

That Sanya's mother refers to Funmi as “a walking time bomb” reveals the Nigerian society's perception about people living with disability as sub-human who should be avoided. A walking time bomb portrays Funmi, a representative of millions of people around the world as people who could die or explode at any time. This dehumanising, derogatory and insensitive description shows the depth of the stigma that people living with disabilities generally and people living with Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) are subjected to. This is one of the reasons several disability rights organisations exist across the globe to draw attention to the plight of people living with disabilities towards attitudinal, political and cultural change towards people with disabilities. Azeez & Babatope (2019:10)

Kelani reiterates Egbokhare's message that there is no shame in being a sickler. Sadly, the crisis happens when she's home and alone; there was no one to take care of her. This hospital scene remains one of the most revealing scenes about how a sickler can overcome or manage her condition to live a life of fulfilment. “This is one of the major messages in the film and one that is intended to change the perception of the society from one that sees a sickler as “a walking time bomb” to one who needs to be treated as a human being deserves all the rights accorded others without disabilities” Azeez & Babatope,(2019;11). Kelani uses his cinematic art to sensitise the public on medical issue. The film is a typical example of edutainment.

Conclusion

No doubt, literary materials concentrated on different areas of human lives have at one time or the other found their ways into becoming resources for film productions. The emphasis in time past have been the historical and literary materials whether fiction or non-fiction and whenever this happens the outcome has often been a

worthwhile productive effort. Through the film medium, the themes and entertainment possibilities of the Akinwumi Ishola's and Olayinka Egbokhare's novels are made accessible to a heterogenous audience that the written texts might not have reached because film is a very powerful tool for mass reorientation, entertainment, information and conscientisation.

Adaptation, when properly handled by experienced professional could result in a symbiotic relationship between the literary and film media resulting in successful enhancement of creative efforts, the outcome of which portends great benefits to human society, as it makes the messages, ideals and philosophy propagated by the writers to be clearer and more visible with access to greater number of audiences. The future of literary texts adaptation into film appears promising, given the current trend in technological development which when deployed tends to promote the mass media above all other media of communication giving the emerging communication devices access to more audience.

References

- Adeniyi.K.A.(2022). "Protest and Socio-Political Disorder in Selected Nigerian Films (1999-2020)". PhD Thesis, Department of Theatre Arts and Music, Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Lagos.
- Akashoro, G.O (2010). The African film makers and content of African films; a case study of the perspectives of the Nigerian film audience *Global media journal African Edition*. 4(1), 84-115. Accessed online 20/3/18. Doi.10.5789/4-1-14.
- Akeh. K. (2008). *The movie industry in Nigeria*. Speedy Prints Ltd.
- Ayakoroma,B.F (2014). *Trends in Nollywood: A study of selected genres*. Kraft Books.
- Azeez, T. & Babatope, B. (2019). Communicating Change: Social justice, human dignity and the intercourse of medicine and fiction in Tunde Kelani's *Dazzling Mirage*." In L. Oso et al (Eds.), *Beyond fun, media entertainment, politics and development in Nigeria* (pp.249-261). Multhouse Press Limited,
- Crow,B.(1983). *Studying Drama with an Introduction by Dapo Adelugba*. Longman Nigeria Limited.
- David Kranz & Nancy.C,Mellerski (Eds.)(2008). *In/Fidelity: Essays on Film Adaptation*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ekwuazi, H. (1991). "Towards the Decolonization of the African Film" in *African Media Review*. 5, (2).
- Jeyifo, B. (1981). "Literary Drama and the Search for a Popular Theatre in Nigeria", in Yemi Ogunbiyi (Ed.) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: a Critical Source Book*. Tanus Books Ltd.(411-421).
- Omoera, O.S. (2024) "Nollywood and Beyond: An Introduction to Nigerian Film," in Frauke Matz, Mark Stein, & Klaus Stierstorfer (Eds.), *Reading Nigeria: Learning with Nigerian Literature in the EFL Classroom*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag GmbH + Co. KG
- Onikoyi, T (2017). A cursory explication of the sociology and aesthetics of Nigerian film and literature: Viewership and readership. In *Inside Nollywood: Issues and perspectives on Nigerian Cinema* edited by Sola Fosudo and Tunji Azeez. Franklin International Publishers
- Taiwo, A.V. (2020). "Promoting Yoruba Culture through the Film Medium: A Study of Tunde Kelani's Productions." PhD Thesis, Department of Broadcasting, School of Communication Studies, Lagos State University, (LASU), Ojo, Lagos.
- Sarris, A. (1963). The Auteur Theory and the Perils of Pauline. *Film Quarterly*. 16, (4). 26-33, accessed online 23/04/2024 from <https://doi.org/10.2307/318595>
- SwetacheIn dan, G (2019). Cinema as a medium of communication. A seminar paper for communication student accessed online 19/08/2019 from <https://www.scribd.com/document/158673567/CINEMA-AS-A-MEDIUM-OF-COMMUNICATION>
- Ukadike. F. N. (2013). *African Cinema: Narratives, Perspectives and Poetics*. University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd.
- Wachuku. U.N and Ihentuge. C. U. (2022). *The Nigerian Film Industry and Literary Adaptation: The Journey of Things Fall Apart from Page to Screen*. Available on Phoenix File, accessed online on 12/07/2022.