

**Thesis Title:**

**The Hybridization of Cultures in My Creative Practice in Nollywood: *Sidibe* Screenplay in Focus.**

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This journey has been one of profound reflection, exploration, and growth. Writing this thesis has not only deepened my understanding of cultural hybridity in cinema but has also been a personal voyage in embracing the richness of diverse storytelling traditions.

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This work is dedicated to **filmmakers, scholars, and storytellers** who continue to push boundaries, challenge narratives, and celebrate the beauty of cultural fusion in cinema. May this research serve as a catalyst for more inclusive, globally resonant storytelling.

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## The Hybridization of Cultures in my Creative Practice.

### **ABSTRACT**

My study which is a practice-based thesis investigates the portrayal of 'Cultural Hybridity' in Nollywood. Cultural hybridity as postulated by Homi Bhaba (1994) argues for the (re)creation of new transcultural forms following the influence of colonialism. Conceptualising the notion of "third space" Bhabha observes that most colonised persons have a third culture, thus my study seeks to interpret this 'third space' within the context of films. Nollywood is the mainstream post-colonial Nigerian film industry that has earned a remarkable recognition in African Cinema for its subtle revolutionisation of African cinema through its culture of low budget productions (Obaiya, 2011). My research therefore interrogates the extent to which hybridity has manifested in the construction of identity in Nollywood filmmaking practice in Nigeria. The study stems from over 25 years of my practice in Nollywood and establishes my position as a female filmmaker in the context of filmic storytelling. I approach the study from the framework of post-colonial and feminist theories using auto-ethnography methodology.

This practice-based thesis will examine cultural hybridity as the conceptual underpinning of (trans)national cinema in Nollywood filmic culture and situate Nollywood, a 'home grown' film industry within the context of hybridity by examining the effect of 'third space' on selected Nollywood films. A critical analysis of two purposively sampled case study films; *Wedding Party* (Adetiba, 2016) and *Namatse Wahala* (Ahuja, 2020), as well as my own films; *Special Jollof* and *Love is in the hair* is embarked on with the aim of underscoring how Homi Bhaba's "third space" has influenced hybridity in Nollywood. Scholars like Bhaba and Fanon have argued that the originality and purity of cultures are unattainable. The question of hybridized cultural forms continues to resurge in scholarly discourse with emphasis

on the influence of post-modernism, migration, religion, and digitalization on cultural identities. The expression or nuances of the film space in Nollywood is interpretable via the lens of post colonialism and the sophisticated framework/theories which hybridity belongs. This research practice aims to redefine a deliberateness in Nollywood storytelling by engineering a thinking in society via our narratives that will contribute to the new understanding of Nollywood using my practice; a detailed screenplay; *Sidibe- The Castaway*, which hopes to propose a variant model of film hybridity in Nollywood.

Key Words: [Culture](#), Film, Hybridity, Nollywood, Transnationalism, Practice and Theory, Screenplay.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Hybridisation of Cultures in my Creative Practice

This study explores the concept of cultural hybridity within Nollywood, Nigeria's prominent film industry, through an inter-ethnic and transnational lens. Drawing from over 25 years of experience as a Nollywood filmmaker, the research delves into how global and local influences have shaped the industry's narrative forms, blending traditional Nigerian culture with Western elements. Central to the investigation is the theory of "third space" by Homi Bhabha, which offers a framework for understanding how postcolonial interactions give rise to new hybrid cultural forms. By analysing specific Nollywood films—including *Wedding Party* (2016), *Namatse Wahala* (2020), and my own works like *Love is in the Hair* (2016) and *Special Jollof* (2020)—this research seeks to understand how these hybridised narratives contribute to Nollywood's identity, its international recognition, and its potential as a cultural ambassador for Africa in the global cinema landscape. Through an autoethnographic approach, this study not only extends existing scholarship on cultural hybridity but using the screenplay *Sidibe - The Castaway*; a hybridised narrative, an Afro spiritualistic Transnational Screenplay, reflects on my personal

Cultural hybridity has been a recurrent discourse in Nollywood studies. Whereas many scholars have approached the subject matter from various perspectives, this research hopes to tackle hybridity from an inter-ethnic/transnational perspective, employing my experience as a Nollywood filmmaker to investigate the portrayal of 'Cultural Hybridity' in Nollywood. While Stanislavs (2014) examines how cultural hybridization in Nigerian video film has been facilitated by global media through transnational communication technologies, Euphemia (2015) submits that despite the role of film in purveying Nigerian indigenous cultures, foreign influences are drastically affecting its preservation of cultural heritage. Similarly, scholars like Igwe (2014), Diop (2019) and Dyikuk (2020) have examined the role of western culture in Nigerian cultural hybridity. In addition, Onuzulike one of the leading Nollywood scholars had in 2007, 2009 and 2018



discussed hybridity from different perspectives. In 2007, Onuzulike examined how Nigerian video films (re)presents hybridised Nigerian Culture, in 2009, he studied how Nigerian films reproduce cultural and technological hybridity and in 2018, he further analysed cultural hybridity in Nollywood from the angle of postcolonialism using the film *Osuofia in London* as a case study.

Beyond these body of works, studies like Adesoka (2014) and Effiong (2018) are similar to my studies. While Adesoka (2014) examined the role of trans-ethnic artistic practices in Nigerian film, foregrounding how urban pop culture attempt to forge a common Nigeria motif, Effiong (2018) examines the impact of multicultural features of Nigeria in developing culturally relevant films for global audience. However, the deliberateness in handling Transnational Screenwriting is yet to be given adequate attention by a lot Nollywood filmmakers. In this study of hybridity in Nollywood I will adopt Homi Bhabha's theory of "third space". Conceptualising the notion of "third space", Homi Bhabha (1994) argues for the (re)articulation of new forms of cultural hybridity following the influence of colonialism. Bhabha observes that most colonised persons have a third culture; thus, my study seeks to interpret this 'third space' within the context of transnational films, highlighting Hybridity as a cultural interaction that processes elements of various interacting cultures as a single culture. "Third space" on the other hand is a cultural experience outside one's culture which often gives birth to cultural hybridity.

Nollywood is the mainstream postcolonial Nigerian film industry that has earned remarkable recognition in African Cinema for its subtle revolutionisation of African cinema through its culture of low budget productions (Obiaya, 2011). My research seeks to explore the manifestation of hybridity in shaping identity within Nollywood filmmaking. Specifically, it analyses how cultural influences have contributed to the unique identity of Nollywood and investigates its distinctiveness in the process. The study is based on more than 25 years of my experience in Nollywood and establishes my position as a filmmaker within the framework of fiction film narrative. To place the Nollywood film industry in the framework of hybridity, this practice-based research in considering cultural hybridity through the conceptual foundation of (trans)national cinema in Nollywood filmic culture; analyses the impact of "third space" on two Nollywood films: *Wedding Party* (Adetiba, 2016) and *Namatse Wahala* (Ahuja, 2020), as well as my own films: *Special Jollof* (2016) and *Love is in the Hair*(2020).

The study further highlights hybridity in my research screenplay, *Sidibe - The Castaway*; an Afro spiritualistic Transnational Screenwriting technique, which I adopted to address Franz Fanon's assertions regarding the demise of African culture and the ascent of Western culture (1961) by balancing two divergent cultures within cultural hybridization. Transnational Screenwriting could be referred to the practice of writing screenplays that transcend national borders incorporating diverse cultural perspectives, storytelling techniques, and production frameworks. It reflects the fluid exchange of narratives, themes, and cinematic conventions across different regions, influenced by globalization, migration and co productions. Transnational screenwriting in my research is the process of crafting screen narratives that transcend national and cultural boundaries, integrating diverse storytelling traditions, languages and production influences. As Hall (2005) notes, the changes in human society reflect the dynamic nature of culture. Bhabha (1994) and Fanon (2004) have argued that the originality and purity of cultures are unattainable. Therefore, the question of hybridized cultural forms continues to resurge in scholarly discourse and it is interpretable via the lens of postcolonialism and to which hybridity belongs.

Afro spiritualism is a broad term that refers to the fusion of African spiritual traditions with contemporary cultural expressions, including film, literature, music, and philosophy. It centers on the resilience, transformation, and evolution of African spirituality within and beyond the continent, particularly in transnational and diasporic contexts. Therefore, through Afro spiritualism in transnational screenplay, I hope to explore how Nigerian screenwriters can reimagine African spiritual and futuristic narratives for global cinema. Through my screenplay *Sidibe*, I hope to argue that **Afro** spiritualism reflects the diverse and rich spiritual heritage of African cultures, both on the continent and in the diaspora. It emphasizes community, nature, and the spiritual realm, providing a comprehensive worldview that guides daily life and spiritual practices in the diverse African societies.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

Having worked as a writer, producer, and director in the Nollywood industry for more than 25 years and also played a significant role in the various struggles, epochs, and trajectories that the Nigerian film industry has undergone to become the second largest producer of films in the world, according to the UNESCO rating for 2021, with financial assets of over 6.4 billion dollars. The

rationale of this study is therefore based on the context of my role as a Nollywood filmmaker, who has experienced the hybrid tendencies of Nollywood and (un)consciously contributed to its nature. Being one of the pioneer filmmakers from the inception of Nollywood, I have witnessed several phases of Nollywood from the time of making video films with unsophisticated equipment like the Super VHS to Betacam tapes, to the DSLR cameras, and now with more sophisticated digital cameras that meet international standards. I intend to combine my experiences in filmmaking with scholarship to interrogate the recreation of hybridity in Nollywood. This is achieved in relation to epochal moments in the industry where filmmakers involved in hybrid tendencies are present.

As reported by several scholars (Shaka, 2002; Haynes, 2007a; 2016; Uwah, 2013; Ayakoroma, 2014; Shaka, Uwah & Uchendu, 2014; Krings & Onokome, 2013; Okwuowulu, 2018; Azeez, 2019), the Nollywood Industry grew by the creative resilience of filmmakers to (re)adapt to constant situations presented by the digital intrusion (hybridization) as well as the socio-economic realities of the Nigerian nation. Though the Nigerian government's efforts towards the development of its film industry can be considered infinitesimal, the growth of the industry has had tremendous effect on the Nigerian GDP through job creations. Moreover, the ever-growing interest in Nollywood has given rise to various scholarly enquiries which have interrogated Nollywood from different socio-cultural perspectives.

Again, in examining the historical trajectories of Nollywood, scholars such as Jonathan Haynes (2016), and Krings and Onokome (2013), have underpinned the growth of transnational co-productions as one of the giant strides of Nollywood towards gaining global recognition. Nollywood developed a production model with several countries as co producers making it a key example of Transnational Cinema. This research is, therefore, interested in examining how these transnational co-productions tend to birth an international screen motif (cultural hybridity) that is not peculiar to any culture. In doing this, I hope to carry out an autoethnographic study of how cultural hybridisation is forged in Nollywood in general through examining my creative practice as an insider-researcher. In articulating my creative story, efforts will be made to be methodological and dispassionate without assuming that emerging knowledge from my narrative is the scientific truth, but a creative construct from insider-researcher's perspective that presents the production context which is an example within the larger picture of the construction of hybridisation in Nollywood.

Following the commercial success of *Living in Bondage*, directed by Chris Obi Rapu in 1992, scholars in Nollywood studies such as Shaka 2002, 2007; and Haynes, 2007a, believe that the home-grown video film industry in Nigeria was established and subsequently garnered tremendous popularity. Since its early years, Nollywood has exhibited transnational elements in its filmmaking approach. A notable example is the 1994 production *Italian Connection* by Chika Onu., which integrated transnational storytelling by incorporating Italian settings that were recreated within Lagos (Communication with Chika Onu, the director of *Italian Connection*, October 2022). This film signalled the emergence of cultural hybridity within Nollywood's narratives, blending local and foreign influences within its story telling and production design. Since then, the Nigerian film industry has actively engaged with other global film cultures, forging co-production partnerships with countries such as India, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These collaborations have not only facilitated cross-border exchanges in talent, technology, and distribution but have also contributed to the evolution of hybridized narrative forms. As explored in Chapters Two and Four, these transnational interactions often result in films that merge distinctive storytelling traditions, thematic structures, and cinematic aesthetics from collaborating film industries, shaping a unique Nollywood transnational identity.

### **1.3 Problem of the Study**

However, most Nollywood filmmakers are marinated in colonial mentality where identity construction is usually influenced by the preference for everything foreign over the local. This has gained expression not just in our films but in other parts of our culture as well. Franz Fanon (1961) asserts that “the oppressed will always believe the worst about themselves” (p.3). The thinking that western values are superior has also gained expression in our manner of speaking, dressing, worship, aspirations to wealth and our manner of demonising our cultural values. The assignment of African cultural values as inferior is quite prevalent in Nollywood films. In our storytelling, (un)consciously, we have internalised colonial mentality. Many characters created for film by some Nollywood filmmakers are entrenched in colonial mentality. Many Nollywood films downgrade African deities but valorise the saints of Roman Catholicism, disregard African modes of education, communal lifestyle and social institutions, while valorising western ideas.

The dislocation of African culture by the domineering power of the erstwhile coloniser calls for serious attention which this research hopes to tackle by rethinking the ‘Third Space’ through practice-based research as an intervening space between interacting cultures, a liminal space that rebirths new culture, rather than assimilate any. The writing of *Sidibe* therefore contributes significantly to knowledge in transnational screenplay studies by exploring cultural hybridity, Afro spiritualism, identity conflicts, and psychological trauma through a cross-cultural lens. The screenplay blends African and Western storytelling traditions, showcasing how indigenous and colonial influences shape character development, narrative structure, and thematic depth. The juxtaposition of African mysticism with Western rationalism—embodied in the conflict between Sidibe’s artistic heritage and religious orthodoxy—reflects the tensions of postcolonial identity. Additionally, the screenplay’s use of *mise-en-scène*, music, and traditional dance enriches cinematic language, offering a framework for representing African cultural aesthetics in global film narratives.

In drawing attention to these issues of Afro spiritualism in Transnational Screenwriting, the goal of this study is to prove that, in a postcolonial world Nollywood can serve as an ambassador for African culture by achieving cultural hybridity through blending them with Western cultures. The study hopes to demonstrate therefore that in constructing third space (a hybrid space) in Nollywood, rather than privileging western culture over African culture, through negotiations and resistances, characters of different cultural extraction are made to interact within a liminal space to achieve cultural assimilation rather than annihilation.

#### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on English language films in Nollywood. However, there are mentions of a number of indigenous films that are also significant to the Nigerian film industry. These allusions stem from the fact that Nigeria's three main tribe – the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa – have contributed significantly to the growth of the nation's film industry. References are also made to several international films that address aspects of hybridity, in order to contrast their practices with those of the Nigerian film industry.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions are what serve as guide in exploring the research objectives in this study:

- (1) How is Cultural Hybridity embedded in Nollywood narratives?
- (2) How do I deploy the concept of hybridity in my creative practice?
- (3) How does my identity, limitation and perspectives manifest in formal and thematic terms in my films?
- (4) How has the various production conditions and visual culture influenced the construction of cultural hybridity in Nollywood and how has it impacted my work as a Nigerian filmmaker?
- (5) How have Bhabha's postcolonial theories impacted "third space" hybridity in Nollywood films?
- 6) What model of transnational effectively convey cross-cultural and hybrid elements within a global cinematic landscape?

## 1.6 Research Objectives

The aim of the research is to employ an autoethnographic methodology which allows for nuanced and specific knowledge about my field of study, towards examining how cultural hybridity is constructed in Nollywood cinema in general and my creative practice in particular. This aim is targeted to be realised through the following objectives:

1. To embark on conceptual review of relevant literatures and film texts on the subject matter, critiquing selected films by other filmmakers in Nollywood about hybridity and interrogating the extent to which hybridity has impacted Nollywood narratives. This will be realised in chapters two.
2. To employ auto-ethnographical methods towards re-examining how the concept of hybridity is employed in my creative practice. This will be realised in chapters three and five.
3. To account how my identity, limitation and perspective through subjectivity influence the (re) creation of cultural hybridity in Nollywood through an autobiographical review of two of my previous films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof* which constitutes the case studies in chapters three and five.

4. To provide a detailed insider-outsider account of various production conditions/visual culture which influence the construction of cultural hybridity in Nollywood, through interrogating the production contexts of two of my previous films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof* which constitutes the case studies in chapters four and five.
5. To demonstrate through my practice being my research transnational screenplay; “*Sidibe – The Castaway*”, how Bhabha’s postcolonial theories impacts on “third space” hybridity in Nollywood film. This will be achieved in chapters four and six.
6. To propose a model of Transnational screenplay that convey cross-cultural and hybrid effectively within a global cinematic landscape.

## **1.7 Justification of the Study**

I have chosen to embark on this autoethnography study, not only because of its instrumentality in establishing how the hybridisation of cultures can lead to the creation of new and unique works that are reflective of a diverse and inclusive society, but also because it portends a remarkable opportunity for me to creatively demonstrate how my cultural background as a filmmaker has impacted the way I create cultural hybridity in the whole process of (re)constructing identity in Nigerian Nollywood narrativity.

The study contributes to knowledge by introducing a novel approach to understanding cultural hybridity in Nollywood through the lens of Afro spiritualism in transnational screenwriting techniques. By employing an autoethnographic methodology, this research uniquely bridges the gap between theory and practice, highlighting how the blending of diverse cultural influences in Nollywood film narratives can result in the creation of distinct and hybridized cinematic expressions that resonate on a global scale. By foregrounding Afro-spiritualism as a critical element in storytelling, the study offers a new perspective on how indigenous belief systems can shape and enrich Nollywood narratives, making them more authentic and globally relatable. Through an examination of my own creative process, the study demonstrates how my cultural background as a Nigerian filmmaker informs the (re)construction of identity and cultural hybridity in the narratives I craft. In doing so, it underscores the potential of Nollywood not only as a platform for showcasing the diverse and rich spiritual heritage of African cultures, both on the

continent and in the diaspora, but emphasizes community, nature, and the spiritual realm of African culture, thus contributing significantly to the global cinematic discourses. This research, therefore, asserts that Nollywood's engagement with both local and global cultural elements offers a model for how film industries can engage in inter-ethnic and transnational storytelling to reflect and shape a more inclusive and dynamic world.

## **1.8 An Overview of Nollywood**

Nollywood is the mainstream postcolonial Nigerian film industry. From what was once considered a “Curio Status” (Okome, 2007), the hybrid iteration in Nollywood industry can be seen in its defiant shift in filmmaking from capital intensive, Western hegemonic production standards, to low budget productions using the home-video format (Obiaya, 2011). Nollywood is thus a formidable decolonisation agent of African Cinema. Its popularity is unrelated to the technical depth of the movies; rather, it is the stories that have expanded their mass appeal. By 2006, Nollywood stories began a gradual shift from African socio-cultural themes like family dynamics, spiritual undertones of sowing and reaping, which Emelonye describes as leading to “audience fatigue” (Kay, 2013). Haynes (2011a) and Okome (2007) highlighted some elements of hybridity in Nollywood films. For Haynes, these stories shifted to cosmopolitan-city themes significantly negotiating with western cultural norms (2011a) while Okome (2007) believes that the foundation of any Nollywood film was traditional story-telling translated to screenwriting. This stems from the African’s inclination to listening to and telling stories; essentially Africans are products of oral culture. Values including morality, interpersonal interactions and co-existence are passed on through the oral medium (Ajuwon, 1996). Oral artists, talented men and women who could narrate long oral literature, were responsible for keeping records of values, laws and beliefs (Ajuwon, 1985).

While these traditional narrative forms have greatly influenced storytelling in Nollywood, since 2006, several Nollywood screenwriters have shifted from these traditionally oriented story techniques to narrative approaches with a universal appeal, and this is believably the impact of hybridity. Thus, Nollywood story techniques have evolved from the narrative structure wherein the older is seen to narrate to the younger generation, to a diversification of a structure where narrative could be told from various perspectives, akin to the western narrative style. This has made Nollywood films increasingly universal in narrative structure. Before this diversification,



traditional stories are often told from the perspective of old “character personas”, however, family and religious stories which Nollywood was known for and was accused of recycling are presently being narrated presently with transnational elements. While Emelonye, according to Kay (2013), posits that Nollywood audience became weary of “recycled” stories, this research believes that hybridity often achieved transnational cinematic practices is gradually creating a universal film form/culture, with international attributes. To understand how hybridity has impacted Nollywood, a short history of film in Nigeria suffices.

## **1.9 Summary**

In summary, this study will explore the intricate dynamics of cultural hybridity within the Nollywood film industry, using an inter-ethnic and transnational framework to understand how global and local influences interact in shaping Nigerian cinema. Through the lens of Homi Bhabha's "third space" theory, as will be discussed in chapter two, the research will highlight the creation of new hybrid cultural forms in Nollywood films, such as *Wedding Party* (2016) and *Namatse Wahala* (2020), alongside my own works like *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*. By adopting an autoethnographic approach as will be discussed in chapter three, the research will also examine the personal influence of my cultural background on my creative process, underscoring the role of filmmakers in navigating the complex terrain of cultural hybridity.

The study hopes to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in Nollywood studies by offering a fresh perspective on how Afro spiritualism in transnational screenwriting techniques and the hybridisation of cultures within the industry can forge new and unique cinematic narratives. Thus, in the succeeding chapter, Nollywood's potential as a cultural ambassador for Africa is adequately discussed. By critically engaging with existing scholarship on the history of Nollywood, this work illustrates the industry's ability to reflect and shape cultural identity in a postcolonial world. Ultimately, succeeding chapters will present compelling arguments for the importance of cultural hybridity as a tool for both creative expression and global cinematic influence.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

## **2.0 REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This chapter will embark on a fascinating journey of the history of Nigerian Cinema that spans over a century, beginning in 1903 when the first films were screened in Lagos at the Glover Memorial Hall. Initially, these screenings featured imported films, marking the start of a cinematic culture that would evolve in significant ways. During colonial rule, cinema was heavily used as a tool of propaganda, with the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) established in 1939 to produce films promoting British interests. These films often depicted Nigeria through a colonial lens, reinforcing Eurocentric ideologies. However, as Nigeria gained independence and economic challenges arose, indigenous filmmakers began to emerge, gradually shaping the country's film industry. Despite early struggles with finances and production techniques, Nigeria's film industry, now known as Nollywood which started in the early 1990's has become one of the largest and most influential in the world. This history is rooted in both colonial legacy and the creative resilience of Nigerian filmmakers.

Again, the chapter hopes to explore the intersections of identity and cultural struggle, the concepts of Double Consciousness and Hybridity which offer compelling frameworks for understanding the complexities of racial and cultural integration. The chapter foregrounds W.E.B. Du Bois' notion of Double Consciousness where the African American experience is defined by an internal conflict of identities provides a lens for examining the psychological and social tensions of living between two worlds. Du Bois contends that the Negro's identity is marked by an ongoing strife, struggling to reconcile the dual forces of African heritage and American identity. On the other hand, Homi Bhabha's concept of Hybridity introduces a dynamic space of negotiation and transformation, where the hybrid identity emerges from the tension between colonial and native forces. This theoretical intersection offers a deeper understanding of how identity is formed, contested, and redefined within contexts of cultural conflict, shedding light on the broader implications of race, power, and social belonging.

### **2.1 The History of Cinema in Nigeria**

The history of film in Nigeria dates to 1903 when the first motion pictures were screened for the first time in Lagos at the Glover Memorial Hall (Owens-Ibie, 1998). The films screened at this time were imported. Besides screening, various film organisations were established and tasked by

the colonial administration with film-related issues in Nigeria and according to Owens-Ibie, the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established in 1939. The major aim of its establishment was to produce and distribute films that promoted British interests and values in Nigeria as a colony. Primarily made in documentary-style, these films focused on showcasing the British Empire's activities in Nigeria, such as infrastructural construction, educational activities and the civilising mission. Also included were films which documented Nigerian cultural values, often made from the colonial viewpoint.

The Colonial Film unit's philosophy was designed to improve standards in the areas of education, agriculture and industry among the populace. This is evident in the kinds of films produced. Among its documentaries were those on trade, mixed farming, and the fight against the menace of tuberculosis. Not only did the films serve educational purposes, but they also fitted into the general policy direction of the colonial government.

Through film, the colonial government reinforced and legitimised Eurocentric ideologies in Nigeria and propagated the superiority of the colonisers as well as conditioned inferiority mindset on Nigerian citizens (Ekwuazi, 1987). For instance, the film *Daybreak in Udi* (1949) features Africans involved in execution of projects for the development of their community; however, the most important figure throughout the film is the white man at the foreground who symbolises 'order' and without whom chaos reigns. The film highlights colonial attempt to project the works done in Eastern Nigeria, particularly in Udi. These projects include roads, schools, and other big projects. Just like other CFU films, *DayBreak in Udi* is an attempt to make Nigerian citizens think that British rule was desirable because it brought new way of life and assisted the natives in so many ways. These films seldom talked about the inadequacies of the British. Another example is *The Royal Tour of Nigeria* (1956) which captured Queen Elizabeth's second trip to Nigeria in 1956. Again, it valorises the perceived good deeds of the colonial masters, projecting how Nigerians were very enthusiastic about the British Crown. The film attempted to foster the bond between Britain and Nigeria by showing that the British royals and Nigerian elites were in a good relationship. Given these textual analyses, Ekwuazi (1987) submits that cinema in Nigeria before independence "were deeply rooted in colonialism. Because of this, their mission is nakedly ideological in that they function as a principal vehicle in the definition of social positions-within the colonial framework" (p.10).

With the establishment of the Federal Film Unit (FFU), the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) ceased to function (Ekwuazi, 1987). As much as the CFU was employed as a tool for colonial propaganda, promoting colonial interest, it played a significant role towards the formation of the present Nigerian film industry. While a lot of controversies have trailed the date of the establishment of CFU, there is no disagreement about when the CFU ceased to exist. Obiaya (2011) and Diawara (1992) agree it is stopped to exist in 1955. This was as a result of the establishment of Federal Film Unit (FFU) in 1950. FFU was responsible for promoting films that propagated government policies on agricultural and health concerns through the screening of documentary films. The film units organised and ran a type of mobile free cinema that covered the district headquarters and major trading centres of the country. The documentary films were popular and were greatly patronised. They were screened alongside Western cowboy films; a move intended to captivate and sustain attendance (Owens-Ibie, 1998). In 1979, the FFU metamorphosed into the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) and has since remained the highest policy making body in the Nigerian film industry. Hybridity in Nigerian films can therefore be traced to the activities of the CFU.

The Colonial Film Unit (CFU) later expanded its scope to include the production of primarily aimed at African audiences, which were strategically used for imperial control through censorship and racially segregated viewing. (Smyth, 1988). The CFU's efforts were distinct from the British documentary movement, placing an emphasis on creating educational films for African audiences (Smyth, 1988). This history reflects cinema's role in maintaining colonial power relations and educating colonised populations. Prior to independence, Nigeria established its own film production units, such as the Federal Film Unit, to create documentaries that promoted national identity. This move was part of a broader African trend where countries sought to replace colonial film units with national initiatives focused on promoting local culture and identity.

The post-independence period saw the transition from colonial-era film initiatives, such as the CFU and Nigerian Film corporation (NFC), to the emergence of Nollywood in the 1990s. Nigerian filmmakers began producing films that reflected local stories, cultures, and societal issues, marking a shift from the colonial legacies of film production. This shift is often seen as a decolonisation process, where the film industry moved away from colonial constraints to embrace local narratives and entrepreneurial filmmaking. Nollywood's rise represents a break from the past

and showcases Nigerian filmmakers' creativity and resilience in building a self-sustaining industry (Colonial Film Unit, n.d.; SpringerLink, n.d.). Nollywood's development was significantly influenced by economic factors, with a shift from traditional film formats (celluloid) to more cost-effective video production (Azeez, 2010). This shift allowed for the rapid growth of the industry in the 1990s, as filmmakers sought more accessible ways to produce films. Nollywood thus emerged as an adaptation of Western cinema, particularly Hollywood, with a unique Nigerian approach (Oparaugo, 2021).

Before the video film era, Nigerian pioneer filmmakers produced films using celluloid cameras, albeit with foreign technical assistance (Ekwuazi, 1987). Before some groups of 'independents' (Nigerian indigenes who just got independence) in the mid-1970s took up the challenge to initiate indigenous participation in the industry, the market was over-ridden with films from China/Japan, America/Europe and India/Middle East (Okome & Haynes, 1995). These foreign films enjoyed a huge monopoly as a result of their technological superiority. A pioneer film scholar in Nigeria, Ekwuazi (1987), believes that celluloid cameras have superiority in picture quality than video cameras. In the 1960s, indigenous filmmakers such as Francis Oladele, Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugbomah, among others, made several unsuccessful moves at creating an indigenous film culture in the country; however, the issue of finance enough to cover production cost confronted them. The implication of poor box office returns in early indigenous films laid claims to the great attention channelled to profit maximisation than strict cultural consideration. Filmmakers paid more attention to what could fetch money at the expense of creative interpretation of culture (Ekwuazi, 1987).

In the 60s and 70s, the first film production companies were established: Latola Film in 1962 and Calpeny Nigeria Limited in 1970. Suffice it to say that the current film industry in Nigeria is highly indebted to the practitioners of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre that branched off from mainstream theatre to celluloid (Clark, 1979). Hurbert Ogunde was one of the pioneers of Yoruba Theatre and produced the first celluloid films from theatres in the 1980s. His first films were *J'ayesinmi* (Let the world rest) and *Aiye* (Life) (Banham, Hill & Woodyard, 1994). However, in the 1980s, the film and theatre-going culture collapsed due to safety and security concerns at night in the cities (Haynes, 1999). Commentators have suggested that it is the country's economic downturn that dealt a big blow to the cinema. The government stopped subsidising the industry

and many people lost their jobs due to retrenchment because of the Structural Adjustment Programme (Haynes, 1999). This left people in serious economic difficulty resulting in fewer people being able to afford the ticket cost demanded in cinemas.

Arguably, the filmmakers were the worst hit as most film producers could not sustain 'expensive' celluloid film production. The filmmakers then will have to travel to United Kingdom to process their raw stock, and because of the economic downtown in Nigeria, filmmakers adopted the creative use of video cameras to tell their stories. The rise of a less powerful (in terms of picture quality) but more convenient form of film making using formats such as U-matic, Super VHS and standard VHS cameras gave rise to motion picture expressions, wherein filmmakers adopted long takes because of the convenient method of film production (Okome, 2000; Haynes, 1999; McCall, 2004; Ukata, 2010). Eventually, these initiatives led to the production of video films, known as home movies.

Every new form of communication strives to gain legitimacy within the context of existing media (Hall, 1977). Television provided a valuable alternative for many talented Nigerian filmmakers. Prominent Nigerian professionals such as Lola Fani-Kayode, Amaka Igwe, Zeb Ejiro, and Tade Ogidan, who had established successful careers in television production, returned to their areas of expertise, creating TV soap operas that aired on major Nigerian network channels. Examples of such soap operas include *Mirror in the Sun*, *Checkmate*, *Ripples*, and *Village Headmaster*. However, for various business-related reasons, government-owned major television networks introduced a series of regulations and censorships, which dampened the enthusiasm of independent producers (Adesanya, 1997, p. 15).

As economic pressures piled on the film industry, many filmmakers looked for less expensive ways of continuing. Hence, many of the celluloid film producers turned to video production as an alternative. Haynes (1999, p.140) notes that the cost of producing a video is "about a tenth" of the price of a celluloid film. The low cost of production meant that filmmakers could produce more content, which, in turn accrued more revenue. During this time (1988-2000), there was a boom in the availability of inexpensive video cassette players in many homes in Nigerian cities. This factor accelerated the increase in more video film production and successful distribution. According to the statistics of the National Film Videos Census Board (NFVCB), in 1994, three video films were classified. This number rose to 177 in 1995, and further increased to

233 the following year. In 1998, the number shot up to 356; and in the year 2000 it rose to 712. In 2005, a record 1711 films were produced. Video seemed to tame the storm to keep the ship afloat. The nature of video allowed production cost to decline as well as increased audience participation as the audience watched these films from the comfort of their home through Video cassette players, and this replaced choked up cinema houses.

Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) became a landmark in the evolution of video films in Nigeria, with its success both in audience patronage and huge financial returns to the video-filmmaker. The industry again began to attract professionals and businessmen. It soon exploded with indiscriminate patronage, which led to the production of low-quality films. The existence of a huge consumer market organised around home viewing contributed largely to the flourishing video production in the country (Haynes, 1999). According to Shaka (2003), the use of the video format as a narrative medium of popular entertainment in Nigeria grew out of two factors: firstly, the fascination with modern technology; and secondly, the desire to take domestic problems and transform them into something creative. The photographic camera, according to Shaka, was important equipment for documenting ceremonies. He adds that the traditional photographers were the first set of people to commercially exploit the video camera:

In retrospect, the popularity of the video format as a narrative medium was first established in private and domestic domain as equipment for ceremonial documentation. In the early days of its documentation, the work of the so called "video man" (camera man) was to document with the video camera such private ceremonies as weddings, child naming ceremonies, birthday parties, chieftaincy installation ceremonies, burial ceremonies and communal festivals. (Shaka, 2003, p.42)

Since then, the local producers have been working together with African audiences without governmental or Western assistance, and without the help of international film festivals (Chowdhury et al., 2008). This initiative has had a great impact on African cinema. According to Haynes, apart from homes where these videos enjoyed large patronage, the films were also being screened in theatres, small video parlours, and in rural villages where exhibitors came with television screens, cassette players or VCD and generators. Through their themes and storylines, Nollywood films depict the everyday life of the society they are produced from.

Going forward, Haynes (2016) divided Nollywood into two such as: “New” Nollywood and “Old” Nollywood. While this partition has sparked debates between practitioners and scholars, Iwowo (2020) supports this separation based on production values as equally alluded to by Haynes. However, to Iwowo, citing Charles Novia, the term "neo-Nollywood," was used instead of “New” Nollywood and this refers to the cinema-based segment, delineated from "traditional" Nollywood, which includes home-video and direct-to-DVD films, often associated with "Asaba Nollywood". Iwowo avoids using the term "inferior" to describe the "traditional" Nollywood which she observed has gained significant attention in film studies for its innovative use of limited resources, contributing 1.4% annually to Nigeria's economy by 2014 (2020). The notion of neo-Nollywood was also supported by Abutsa (2024) who in reviewing Biyi Bandele's *Eléşin Oba* (2022) observed the blend of contemporary cinema, incorporating Western and neo-Nollywood influences.

At present, digital platforms are a new form of distributing. Nollywood films are broadcast on television all over Anglophone Africa and even on western television channels such as Sky TV in the United Kingdom, Netflix, Tubi and Amazon Prime for the American audience. Furthermore, the widespread use of videos has improved with technological advancement. Films are readily available with the advent of online access as viewers can log onto internet websites and gain easy access to these films.

## **2.2 The Concept of Transnational Cinema**

It will be instructive to first define nationalism before espousing the concept of transnationalism in this study. The question of articulating a national ideology, culture, and tradition in a multi-tribal and ethnic nation seems a mirage. Again, that most African countries as presently constituted are given to ideological, cultural, and traditional modernity akin to colonial states (as I shall elucidate later), complicates the issue of true nationalism in African countries. Additionally, the fact that filmmaking in Africa is a postcolonial activity raises the question of how Nollywood can preserve its African identity in the middle of a global milieu that is becoming increasingly hybridised due to transnational cinematic interactions.

The notion of national cinema, as explained by Higson (2000; 1989), Shaka (2004), Ajebade (2013), Mette Hjort (2009), Higbee and Lim (2010), Shaw (2013), Ukadike (2013), and Hynes (2016), is a tradition which invokes the spirit of a nation-state. Scholarly arguments about



the possibility of uniformity in cultural and ideological motifs of the nation-state as opposed to considering film practices in their entirety appear to be a significant shortcoming of the concept of national cinema. This will constitute the subject of enquiry of this chapter, which will feature a concise history of the Nollywood film industry, giving an in-depth background of the nature of filmic practices in Nigeria as well as an attempt to underscore Nollywood as a national cinema in Nigeria. The chapter will equally review the concept of transnational cinema with discourse on issues surrounding Nigerian international cinematic practices.

Furthermore, the chapter will examine hybridity as the conceptual underpinning of (trans)national cinema in Nollywood filmic culture and situate Nollywood, a "home-grown" film industry, within the notion of (trans)national cinema by examining the effect of "third space" on selected Nollywood films. This will be achieved through the review of transnationalism with the aim of underscoring some features of transnational cinema.

Transnational cinema as a topic in film scholarship has been significant since the year 2000. Higson (1989) envisaged the futuristic emergence of transnationality and in (2000) conceptualised the notion of transnational cinema. Other scholars such as Mette Hjort (2009), Higbee and Lim (2010), Shaw (2013), and Hynes (2016) have studied various (trans)national forms in terms of technique and content, as well as the impact of globalisation on the formation of a hybridised cinematic culture. Being propelled by digitisation processes as well as colonialism and consumerism, the concept of transnational cinema grew out of strong criticism against national cinema discourse. Transnationalism was deeply expressed in the year 2009 screen studies conference in Glasgow, wherein key arguments by film scholars such as Higson, Deborah Shaw, Mette Hjort, and Steven Vertovec drew significantly on the deficiency of the national cinema concept because of its inability to underpin a nationalist ideal devoid of social class, economic class, sexuality, gender, generation, religion, ethnicity, political belief, and fashion factors. Furthermore, the increasing collaboration of many filmmakers from various countries propels transnational ideals in cinema.

Following this, Vertovec developed six conceptual premises of transnationalism which according to him, could overlap in order to properly conceptualise the notion of transnationalism. Accordingly, he examined transnationalism as:

Social morphology, as a type of consciousness, as a mode of cultural reproduction, as an avenue of capital, as a site of political engagement, and as a (re)construction of "place" or locality. (Vertovec, 2009, p.4)

While the six premises attempt to underpin the true concept of transnationalism, citing Higson, Higbee and Lim, argue that:

The concept of national cinema is often used "prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what is to be the national cinema, rather than describing the actual cinematic experience of popular audiences. (2010, p.7)

Higson (2000) affirms that the notion of transnationality in cinema is an offshoot of the inadequacy of the concept of nationality in cinema. Thus, the concept of transnational cinema has resurfaced in scholarship since Higson conceptualised it in his essay "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema" (2000). Since his conceptualisation, many scholars have attempted to (re) construct the ideological depth of national cinema. Building on Mette Hjort's *On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism*, where the concept of transnationalism was questioned on the ground of limitations in conceiving an unadulterated national ideal, Shaw developed models for transnationalism. Shaw's categorisation includes:

Transnational modes of production, distribution, and exhibition; transnational modes of narration; films with multiple locations; exilic and diasporic filmmaking; film and cultural exchange; transnational influences; transnational critical/transcommunity films; transnational stars; transnational directors; the ethics of transnationalism; transnational collaborative networks; nation films" (2013, p.52).

According to Shaw, Higson's conceptualisation of transnational cinema has become overtly popular because of the often-prescriptive nature of the imagined national cinema. She observes, however, that while Higson's essay on the conceptualisation of transnationalism was genial, he failed to foreground various features of transnationalism (2013, p.49). Andrew Higson's essays, *The Concept of National Cinema* (1989) and *The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema* (2000), have adequately explored various issues relating to transnationalism. In *The Concept of National*

*Cinema*, Higson attempted to reconcile the proper definition of national against the ideal conceptualisation of nationalism by scholars and other progenitors of the theory. Arguing that the true conceptualisation of nationhood/national identity "can only be successful at the expense of repressing internal differences, tensions, and contradictions-differences of class, race, gender, region, etc." (1989, pp. 43-44). He therefore argued the inadequacy of reducing the study of national cinema within a particular nation-state. A true definition of the nation, according to him, will take cognisance of:

The range of films in circulation within a nation state—including American and other foreign films—the range of sociologically specific audiences for different types of film and how these audiences use these films in specific exhibition circumstances—the range of and relationship between film discourses circulated within that cultural and social formation, and their relative accessibility to different audiences. (1989, pp.44-45)

He observed that for the concept of national cinema to be adequate, issues relating to bridging the gap between productions, textual analysis, and consumerism will have to be well defined. He thus signals the notion of transnationalism as an alternative conceptualisation.

Cultural mutation and invented traditions, according to Higson, have a significant overlap on the concept of national cinema; thus, in the article "The Limiting Imagination of the National Cinema," Higson argued that the question of nationhood is frequently portrayed as realisable. Thus:

While other communities reassemble quite differently for other relatively fleeting experiences, such communities are rarely self-sufficient, stable, or unified. They are more likely to be contingent, complex, in part fragmented, in part overlapping with other senses of identity and belonging that have more to do with generation, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, politics, or style than with nationality. (Higson, 2000, p.61)

He, therefore, proposes the concept of transnationalism as a way of studying these films:

I want to suggest that the concept of the transnational may be a subtler means of describing cultural and economic formations that are rarely contained by national boundaries. (p.57)

In his (1989) article, Higson signalled the issue of transnational cinema by underpinning the type of cinema that, according to him, "looks inward, reflecting on the nation itself, on its past, present, and future, its cultural heritage, its indigenous trading, its sense of common identity and continuity" from the cinema that "looks out across its borders, examining its differences from other national cinema." (2000, p.60). According to Higson, it is in this migration, this border crossing that the transnational emerges (2000, p.61). Following this conceptualisation, scholars such as Mette Hjort (2009) made a distinction between marked and unmarked transnationality, which, according to Hjort, will aid the practicability of transnationalism.

A film might be said to count as an instance of marked transnationality if the agents who are collectively its author (typically directors, Cinematographers, editors, actors, and producers) intentionally direct transnational properties which encourage thinking about transnationality. This kind of process may involve the foregrounding or making salient of certain elements through camerawork or editing, but it may also involve an intensive use of narrative techniques and devices that allow certain ideas to be constituted as fully developed themes (p.13). Going forward, Hjort proposed nine categories which if applied to the concept of transnationalism, will guide its proper conceptualisation. The nine typologies of transnationalism include: "epiphanic transnationalism, affirmative transnationalism, miler-building transnationalism, opportunistic transnationalism, cosmopolitan transnationalism, globalising transnationalism, auteurism transnationalism, modernising transnationalism, and experimental transnationalism" (2009, p.14) which he coined towards signalling the underlying orientation of different Cinematic transnationalism.

In Nollywood filmic culture, Scholars such as Haynes (2013), Musa (2019), as well as Krings and Okome (2013), agree that Kingsley Ogoro's *Osofia in London* (2003) opened the flood gate of international collaboration in film, thus large-scale initiatives involving British-American markets developed. This inflow of transnational co-productions according to Haynes was subject to delegations of Nollywood filmmakers and actors who visited abroad, championed by

filmmakers Association, USA with the aim of the organisation of Nigeria market and encouraging crossover project.

The Nigerian National film and censors Boards-sponsored Road show in London, and the inauguration of the Nollywood foundation's series of annual conventions, beginning in 2005, designed to build long-term connection between Nollywood and Hollywood (Haynes, 2013, p.74).

Haynes observes that *30 days* (2006) by Mildred Okwo and *Close Enemies* (2007) by Lancelot Imasuen were the offshoots of the project. Though there were transnational films before advent of Nollywood, Haynes traced the desire to make films abroad from Kenneth Nnebue's *Glamour Girls* (1994), and *The Italian Connection* (1994) which is about Nigerian prostitutes in Italy. The film storyline is structured as such that most actions are presumably set abroad (Italy). However, the filmmaker reconstructed Italy-set in Lagos, Nigeria, with derisory means. He cited films like *Dubai Runs* (2015), *Boys from Holland*(2006) which he observed invested little in representing the reality of their foreign lands as some of the attempts toward transnational cinema. He also noted that films like *Missing in America* (2005) though easily recognisable as Nollywood film was produced mainly in America (2013, pp.71-83).

Most of the films according to Haynes have:

Alienation/hardship sequence, in which the protagonists trudge disconsolately, carrying their shoulder bags, through the streets of the foreign city, unable to find a foothold and growing increasingly desperate. (2013, p.83)

Apart from the transnational coproduction of films as espoused, Krings and Okome (2013) observe that Nollywood production style has greatly influenced filmmaking techniques in other Africa climes. According to them:

In Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Africa for example, Nollywood has served as a model of film production and inspired the growth of local film industries, which in the case of Tanzania have already begun capturing a regional market. In these countries and elsewhere, Nigerian video films are appropriated and reworked into

local forms of filmmaking and other cultural model of narrativization with local inflections that borrow and copy heavily from Nollywood. (p.1)

Thus, the issue of transnationalism in the Nigerian film culture has been well established. There are thus multiple coproduction activities going on in Nollywood presently and as already established, the Nigerian industry has been uniquely influencing film industries in other African countries.

Finally, the transnational filmmaking paradigm and the rise of streaming platforms are deeply connected in shaping Nollywood's global presence. Streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime provide global distribution channels, enabling Nollywood films to reach international audiences beyond traditional local markets. This aligns with the transnational paradigm by promoting cross-border film exchange, collaboration, and access. Streaming platforms also facilitate co-productions and partnerships, bringing in international expertise and resources, which enhances Nollywood's production quality and storytelling. Additionally, these platforms encourage content tailored to diverse global audiences, prompting Nollywood filmmakers to adopt new techniques and universal themes. Financial investments from streaming giants further elevate Nollywood's competitiveness on the world stage. Ultimately, streaming platforms drive cultural exchange and the hybridization of cinema, allowing Nollywood to influence and be influenced by global filmmaking trends, solidifying its position in the transnational film ecosystem.

### **2.3 Cinema Exhibitions in Nigeria**

Nigeria as a country is a colonial construct. An amalgamation of three major ethnic groups, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba and many minor ethnic groups, with different languages and cultures. The amalgamation by Lord Lugard took effect in 1914, during British colonial rule. The history of Nigerian cinema is therefore diverse, often told from different perspectives, being influenced by the various cinematic encounters by different ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, many scholars such as Ekwuazi (1987), Shaka (2002; 2007), Haynes (2007b; 2016), Uwah (2013), Ayakoroma (2014), Shaka, Uwah and Uchendu (2014), Okwuowulu (2018), and Azeez (2019) agree that Nigeria has its first contact with the cinema in 12th August, 1903 at Captain Glover Memorial hall in Lagos, where a film exhibitionist, Mr. Balboa of Barcelona exhibited the film, *Coronation of King Edward VII at West Minister in Britain*.

This exhibition was projected within the Lagos protectorate. Recall that the exhibition took place shortly before the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates as one Nigeria. Shaka, Uwah and Uchendu observed that the exhibition had ten days duration (12th – 22nd August 1903). Balboa's exhibition was soon succeeded by Mr. Stanley Jone as Balboa moved to other African countries for film exhibition. Mr. Stanley who arrived at the middle of September 1904 had a remarkable exhibition on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1904 through the projection of the documentation of Alake of Abeokuta who was the Yoruba king, when he visited England. The sight of their king by the indigenous audience excited them and this aroused further interest in film exhibition in Nigeria (Shaka, Uwah & Uchendu, 2014; Ayakoroma, 2014; Okwuowulu, 2018; Haynes, 2016).

The success of Stanley Jone's exhibition propelled some European exhibitors to arrive in Nigeria to project their films in different town halls. This equally attracted religious evangelists to attempt the propagation of the gospel through cinematic content (Azeez, 2019, p.7). Therein, religious films were exhibited to indigenous protectorates to convince them of the superiority of Christianity over African traditional religion (Haynes, 2016; Okwuowulu, 2018; Azeez, 2019). Shaka, Uwah and Uchendu observe that these cinematic exhibitions had an interpreter who interpreted the messages in their local dialects, as most indigenous audiences were lacking in formal education (2014, p. 202). It should be noted that cinematic production and exhibitions at this stage were mainly colonial businesses that produced films and sent them to colonies for several purposes, which included civilisation, evangelisation, and reporting to the colonial officials in the United Kingdom (Ekwuazi, 1989, p.2).

It is also noted that the British government's involvement in film production started in 1929 as a result of an epidemic outbreak which led William Sellers, the chief health colonial officer, to adopt film production and exhibition towards dispelling the rumours that the epidemic ravaging the western Nigeria community was caused by rats. (Shaka cited in Ayakoroma, 2014, p.28; Shaka cited in Okwuowulu, 2018, p.131). It could be said that the success and impact of the production and exhibition is one of the reasons that made the colonial government adopt cinema as an instructional medium and distribute films to the hinterlands. This was achieved through the construction of Mobil Cinema Vans (MCVs), which were used for exhibiting instructional films in the hinterlands. Again, this led to the establishment of the Mobil Film Unit (MFU) by the colonial government in 1931 to intensify the production and exhibition of instructional

documentary films (Ekwuazi, 1987, p.2; Shaka, Uwah & Uchendu, 2014, p. 201; Okwuowulu, 2018, p.131).

During the Second World War (1939–1945), the colonists equally adopted film as a propaganda tool to influence the psychological disposition of the colonisers, convincing them that Germany was the common enemy. Thus, to achieve this, the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established in 1939, and the government fully went into film production as well as exhibited propaganda war films which valorised British war efforts. However, emphasis shifted from propaganda films to instructional films at the end of the war (Ekwuazi, 1987, p. 2; Shaka, 2007, p. 60; Okwuowulu, 2018, p.132; Azeez, 2019, p.6). In 1946, shortly after the war, due to the shift in the thematic preoccupation of colonial film from propaganda to instructional, the colonial film unit was renamed the Federal Film Unit in 1946, a pointer towards the development of the full-fledged Nigeria film industry. Remarkable on their production list was *Daybreak in Udi* (1949), a film shot with Nigerian indigenes of the eastern region, which scholars like Ukadike (2013) believe aided the establishment of Nigeria film culture.

Efforts towards indigenous filmmaking in Nigeria were made by three groups of individuals: firstly, the efforts of theatrical figures like Hubert Ogunde, Moses Olaiya, Adeyemi Folayan, and Wole Soyinka, who have made strong imprints on the Nigerian theatre culture. By 1945, Ogunde had made untiring unsuccessful attempts towards the transposition of his theatrical productions to the screen. Before Nigerian independence in 1960, the colonial government sent a couple of Nigerians to Accra, Ghana to study filmmaking. In the lists were Adamu Halilu, A. A. Fajemism, J. A. Otigba, and Mallam Yakubu Aina (Shaka, 2007, p.60; Shaka, Uwah, and Uchendu, 2014, p. 203-206; Ayakoroma, 2014, p.32; Okwuowulu, 2018, p.113). This group of people would later come back to help develop the Nigerian film culture. The third group of individuals who would aid in establishing indigenous film production are some Nigerian indigenes like Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugbomah, Jab Adu, Francis Oladele, Sanya Dosunmu, and Ladi Ladebo, to mention a few, who have travelled to different parts of the world to study film production. This group would also later come back to help develop the Nigerian film culture.

However, by 1949, the indigenous people who were sent to Accra had returned and were absorbed by the Federal Film Unit, albeit to be relegated to second fiddle as Federal Film Unit technicians in the ongoing film productions by the colonial administrators. The first Nigerian to



make a film was Sam Zebba's *Fincho* in 1957 (Balogun, 2014). By 1960, when Nigeria gained independence, interest in a fully indigenous, controlled Nigeria film industry was revitalised. Various attempts at film production were made by so many Nigerians. However, controversy over the first Nigerian indigenous film has continued to reoccur in academia. *Kongi's Harvest* (1970), a film written by Wole Soyinka and directed by an African American, Ossie Davies, and produced by Calpenny Nigeria Ltd., has often been considered as the first Nigerian indigenous film, although heavily contested by some scholars with the argument that the director's nationality determines the place of film.

Citing Wole Soyinka's disassociation of himself from the film, Haynes (2016) dowses the scholarly argument on *Kongi's Harvest*. Conversely, Mgbejumba believes that the film titled *Fincho* (1958) by Sam Zebba is rightly considered as the first Nigerian film. *Amadi*, an Igbo indigenous film produced by Afrocult Foundation Limited and directed by Ola Balogun (1975), is regarded by scholars like Ade Sanya as the first Nigerian indigenous film in the country (Ade Sanya, 1997, p.73). In spite of these arguments which have continued to rage, Ola Balogun is credited with having transposed many of Hurbert Ogunde's stage plays into films which was a major development in Nigeria's film history (Shaka, Uwah & Ucheudu, 2014, p.113).

Haynes noted that most of the Yoruba celluloid films, of which there were about one hundred produced between 1970 and 1992 which came as a result of the combined efforts of the trained Nigerian filmmakers abroad and the theatre-cross-over-filmmakers. According to Haynes:

Soyinka's unsuccessful (as he admits) experiments *Kongi's Harvest* (1970), *Blues for a Prodigal* (1984); a few government-sponsored projects like *Shehu Umar* (1976), from a Hausa novel by Nigeria's first prime minister, Tafawa Balewa; Eddie Ugbo's commercial thrillers *The Mask* (1979), *Death of a Black President* (1983), modelled at least in part on the American Blaxploitation films of the 1970s; Ladi Ladebo's ameliorative social drama *Vendor* (1988), *Eewo* (1989); The Ade Sanya brothers' search for a formula that would combine authentic African culture with commercial viability *Vigilante* (1988), *Ose Sango* (1991). (2016, p.6).

In 1959, a year before independence, Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) was established. It was later christened NTA-Ibadan, having been taken over by the Nigerian Television Authority after independence in 1960. At that material time, the television set was a selective commodity

(for the rich) and served as the major source of education, enlightenment, and entertainment. At the start of its existence, the University of Ibadan's actors and writers often produced English-language plays on WNTV. Several Nigerian authors, including Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, J. P. Clerk, Cyprian Ekwensi, Bode Sowande, Adebayo Faleti, Akinwum Ishola, D. O. Fagunwa, Abubakar Imam, Elechi Amadi, and Umaru Danjuma, to mention a few, had their works adapted for television (Ade Sonya, cited in Haynes, 2016, p.11).

It can, therefore, be argued that the television dramas that existed alongside the celluloid productions provided the narrative form on which the present Nollywood is modelled. The celluloid film tradition did not continue due to security challenges occasioned by the post-Nigerian-Biafran war in Nigerian society. After Nigerian independence, there was a civil (Nigeria-Biafra) war which had tremendous effects on the Nigerian economy. This was followed by a continuous coup d'état which culminated in insecurity as well as the destruction of Nigeria's economy. Thus, Nigerian citizens preferred the entertainment that sufficed on small television screens. However, as much as celluloid culture was developing in Nigeria, its production techniques were cumbersome and very expensive. With the downturn in Nigeria's economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) advised the then military Head of State to introduce a structural adjustment programme: a programme meant to restructure the economy positively. Consequently, the programme orchestrated the retrenchment of federal and state staff as well as the devaluation of the Nigerian currency (Shaka, 2002, 2007; Haynes, 2007a; Uwah, 2013; Ayakoroma, 2014; Shaka, Uwah & Uchendu, 2014; Okwuowulu, 2018; Azeez, 2019).

The effect of SAP also meant that it became extremely expensive to transport the raw stock (used for celluloid film's post-production) to London to edit due to the high inflation rates as a result of the naira devaluation. Again, by this period, the telenovelas of Latin America and *tele-Modus of the Indians* had made inroads to Nigeria through video cassettes and were widely accepted. The implication was that by the middle of the 1980s, middle class Nigerian families had a television set and a VCR player. Again, with the technological development of digital cameras, which were user-friendly, most would-be filmmakers started experimenting. A structural adjustment program had caused the retrenchment of many NTA staff. The implication of these was that (1) celluloid production became near impossible, and (2) there was an avalanche of cassettes containing the foreign films on sale in the Nigerian market. Again, (3) the experimentation by retrenched NTA staff (through producing dramas with user-friendly video cameras) all culminated

in the development of video films which were sold directly to Nigerians through the VCR cassettes (Shaka, 2002, 2007; Haynes, 2007; 2016; Uwah, 2013; Ayakoroma, 2014; Shaka, Uwah & Uchendu, 2014; Okwuowulu, 2018; Azeez, 2019).

These experiments were carried out in different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Scholars in different parts of the world, however, have documented some of these developments in their respective areas. Citing Israel Uge, Shaka asserts that:

The experiment in Onitsha was started between 1987 and 1988 by an Igbo producer known as Solomon Eze, who adopted the screen name of Mike Oreihedinma. His productions were not scripted. Rather, he addressed scenarios and stories in which he starred himself and which he also produced and directed. His productions have titles like *Ochoifeukwu*, *Adaeze*, the *Ola Nna Series*, the *Onyemachi* and *Ihe Ne Eme Na Series*. (2016, p.65)

Elsewhere, Haynes captured the contributions of videographers from western Nigeria. For him:

The honour of making the first Nigerian video film seems to be shared between Ade Ajiboye "Big Abass", who made *Sonso Meji* (Two Pointed Ends) in 1988, and Myideen Alade Aromire, who shot *Ekun* (Tiger) in 1986 but did not screen it until 1989... (Haynes, 2016, p.7).

Most scholars agree, however, that *Living in Bondage* (1992) directed by Chris Obi Rapu under the screen name (Vic Mordi) and produced by Kenneth Nnebue was very phenomenal and significant towards the formation of the video film Nollywood industry; an informal industry formed as a result of the economic downturn of the Nigerian Nation in the early 1990s (Shaka 2002, 2007; Haynes, 2007).

Before the production of *Living in Bondage*, Kenneth Nnebue, an Igbo business merchant who has been involved in the importation of video cassettes containing foreign films, made a Yoruba film in 1989 with Yoruba traveling theatre troupe leader, Ishola Ogunsola, titled *Aje Ni Iya Mi* (my mother is a witch), which was shot with a VHS camera and edited with two VCRs with a budget of less than \$200 and raked in a profit of hundreds of thousands of naira (Haynes, 2016, p.8). With the commercial success of *Living in Bondage*, which Kenneth Nnebue produced in 1992, many electronic dealers in Aba (Pound Road), Onitsha (52 Upper Iweka), and Lagos

(Idumota) rushed into video film production. This resulted in various developments in genres and stars in Nollywood.

## **2.4 Nigerian National Cinema/Contemporary Filmmaking**

Nollywood has been considered by scholars such as Shaka (2002; 2007), Haynes (2007a), Uwah (2013), Ayakoroma (2014), Shaka, Uwah and Uchendu (2014), and Okwuowulu (2018) as the umbrella name accommodating various film cultures in Nigeria's film industry. Despite these diverse cultures, Nigerian cinema is commonly referred to and identified as Nollywood. With the multifaceted nature of numerous film nomenclatures and cultures (which represent different ethnicities in Nigeria), the question of national cinema seems a mirage in Nigeria. This section foregrounds various implications and constraints of underpinning Nollywood as a Nigerian National Film Culture.

The issue of true nationality in the arts has received adequate scholarly attention, with most scholars such as Fanon (1961), Armes (2006), Higson (1989), Bhabha (1994), and Ranger (2013) advancing serious reasons why it is near impossible to have a national art. The article, "On the National Culture", which featured in the *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (1961), heightened the issues of cultural association by the colonised in the colonial culture, which robbed the colonised of their pre-colonial cultural heritage. Thus, the quest for national identity by the colonised is often misplaced, according to Fanon. Rather than articulating the cultural heterogeneity of different ethnic groups, the colonised try to collectively dismantle the economic foundation of colonialism. What, then, is the definition of national culture? According to Higson, in his celebrated article on the "National Cinema", he asserts that the problem with the nature of the national cinema is that:

It tends to assume that national identity and tradition are already fully formed and fixed in place. It also takes borders for granted and assumes that those borders are effective in containing political and economic developments, cultural practices, and identity. In short, borders are always leaky and there is a considerable degree of movement across them (even in the most authoritarian state). (1989, p.61)

He posits that this boarder-to-boarder migration birthed the transnational because of crossbreeding and interpenetration. Higson propounded the concepts of "home" and "away" towards the

articulation of the national cinema, which seeks to define itself firstly from itself by articulating its past, present, and future through its cultural heritage, indigenous, tradition, sense of common identity, and continuity, and secondly to articulate the differences it has with other cinematic particles, which helps it to assert itself as a nation (Higson, 1989, pp.60-61).

Furthermore, in his quest to underpin national consciousness in literature, Fanon located the question of national literature in the collective struggle for national existence. Such literature, according to Fanon, forms the "... will to liberty, expressed in terms of time and space" (1961, p.7). Conversely, he observes that creativity through imagination often deflates nationalist ideals in literature, ceramics, and pot-making. This view was also expressed by Terence Ranger (2013) in the article "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," wherein he argues against the purity of a particular tradition owing to colonial as well as ethnic influences on that tradition. The issue of traditional and cultural diffusion since the colonial conquest on African soil has been a recurring topic in scholarship.

The fact that the Nigerian nation has been heavily influenced by the colonial subjugation makes the attempt at unitary nationalism/national cinema an illusion. To buttress this point, Ames, citing Melissa Thackway (2003), has traced the similarity of most African cities and ways of life to their colonisers:

Their capitals were the colonial capitals, from which radiated the colonial infrastructures of roads, railways, and post and telecommunications. All retained, in some measure, the languages of the colonizers as languages of wider communication. (Thackway, 2003, cited in Ames, 2006, p.4)

Despite these adduced similarities to colonial cultures and established lack of cultural similarity, the question of how Nollywood film could be considered a national cinema in terms of its unitary form of expression resurfaces. As already established, various factors played key roles before the development of cinema in Nigeria. Key amongst these is the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), which Haynes observed played the fundamental role of "creating a sense of Nigerian identity" (2016, p.9) through their broadcast of national news, which was simultaneously watched all over the Nigerian nation.

Again, the ideology of unity in diversity, which later became a mantra in the Nigerian philosophy, was hitherto established in the cast of Olusola's *The Village Headmaster*, which was on air from 1968 to the mid-1980s. It has been observed that:

The cast reflected "a cross-section of socially recognizable types and exhibited" the nation's ethnic diversity. This was federal character in action, long before the term was officially coined (Esan, cited in Haynes, 2016, p.11).

Following this issue of unity in diversity as inferred from the above citation, which has become the mantra in Nigeria, it presumes that the multiplicity of ethnic differences in Nigeria seems to be its unification process, and applying such in Nigerian cinema, it therefore presumes that such a noticeable difference (in films of different ethnic cultures) makes it almost impossible to articulate a unitary national cinema. Again, the role of the native intellectual hampers the issue of uniformity in culture. That the native intellectuals who often underpin the people's true national culture are often disappointed as the people often negotiate cultural transmutation justifies Bhabha's observation that:

They construct their culture from the national text translated into modern western forms of information technology, language, and dress. The changed political and historical site of enunciation transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the laboratory signs of free people of the future. (1994, p.56)

This form of textual construction of culture from western forms is a serious challenge to the subject of nationalism. Again, this thought has been espoused by Arms (1988) and Ranger (2013). Bhabha observed, when discussing cultural assimilation from text, that:

The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical tradition, or "organic" ethnic communities, as the grounds of cultural comparativism, are in a profound process of redefinition. The higher extremity of Serbian Nationalism proves that the very idea of a pure, "ethnically cleansed" national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweaving of history and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood. (1994, p.7)

The various reasons advanced which are inimical to the concept of national cinema in Nigeria can be summed up with the notion of hybridised communities which are formed psychologically and the "new" internationalism which tends a paradigm shift from specific to general, material to metaphoric, leading to a contemporary culture which Anderson (2006) proposes as an "imagined community" rooted in a "homogeneous empty time" of political community. For these reasons, it is near impossible to develop a national cinema in Nigeria.

## **2.5 Concept of Hybridity**

This section reviews the literature on the concept of hybridity and its application to the creative industry. Works of key theorists and scholars are reviewed in order to underpin the theoretical framework towards examining the concept of cultural hybridity. One significant theorist, Homi Bhabha, in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) and *Our Neighbours, Ourselves: Contemporary Reflections on Survival* (2011) discusses the colonial biases and disruptions of hybridity. The major disciplines whose assessments may reveal deeper insights into hybridity in relation to the study include the fields of biology, race relations, linguistics, culture and postcolonialism.

Hybridity as a term takes its root and practice from biology and botany, where it designates the practice of cross-pollinating plant or animal species of different kinds to realise genetically different breeds. In genetics, a hybrid is an offspring of two separate and different organisms. The offspring, which is the hybrid, becomes entirely different from the parent species contributing to the hybrid. The Nigerian entertainment sector is widely recognised for its hybridised nature of vibrant cultural manifestations, characterised by a diverse blend of influences from varied ethnic and linguistic traditions.

To articulate the emergence of cultural hybridity in Nigerian entertainment, it is vital to contextualise it within Nigeria's colonial history, post-independence nation-building endeavours, and global cultural interactions. The amalgamation of indigenous traditions with external influences, including European colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and postcolonial globalisation, has played a pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's mixed cultural identity. Scholars such as Ekwuazi (2001), Shaka, Uwah and Uchendu (2014), Onokome (2007), Ajebade (2013), Haynes (2014), Ayakoroma (2014), Onuzulike (2015) among others, have significantly contributed to our understanding of cultural hybridity in the Nigerian creative sector, shedding light on the complex

dynamics of cultural exchange, identity formation, and globalisation within Nollywood and other sectors of the Nigerian creative industry.

Nigerian entertainment draws inspiration from a wide array of cultural practices and traditions, spanning through traditional storytelling, festivals, masquerades, music, dance, and theatre to contemporary forms such as film, music videos, and digital media. These cultural expressions mirror the country's diverse cultural heritage and act as a wellspring of artistic inspiration for Nigerian creatives. Scholars have utilised diverse theoretical frameworks to analyse cultural hybridity in Nigerian entertainment, with theories such as Homi Bhabha's (1994) on "hybridity" and Stuart Hall's (1994) on "cultural identity" providing valuable insights into the emergence of cultural hybridity through the negotiation of multiple influences and identities. Additionally, theories such as Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concept of "cultural flows" and Paul Gilroy's idea of "diaspora" (1994) offer perspectives on the transnational dynamics within Nigerian entertainment.

Afrobeat music, popularised by icons like Fela Kuti and contemporary artists such as Burna Boy and Wizkid, melds traditional African rhythms with Western musical styles, resonating with audiences globally. Similarly, Nigerian fashion designers draw inspiration from traditional textiles, modern trends, and global fashion hubs, producing innovative designs that reflect Nigeria's multicultural component. In his research on Nigerian hip-hop, Akande (2014) explored how hip-hop artists perform authenticity and establish legitimacy through the hybrid use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Nigerian languages. He argued that authenticity is paramount in hip-hop culture and is often associated with originality and creativity. Citing Pennycook (2009), Akande (2014) highlighted the localisation of hip-hop in various languages and cultures, emphasising the context-dependent nature of authenticity. Scholars such as Haynes (2014) have examined how Nollywood films blend indigenous storytelling with global cinematic norms, crafting narratives that resonate both locally and internationally. Despite the benefits of cultural hybridity in fostering global recognition, challenges such as Cultural Appropriation and Double Consciousness persist.

## **2.6 Parallels in Dubois' Double Consciousness and Bhabha's Hybridity**



The issue of Double Consciousness is often linked to identity crisis. It is a sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois, 1903, p.2). Du Bois' seminal work titled; *Souls of Black Folk*, espoused the concept of Double Consciousness of a negro. Du Bois believes that:

The history of the American Negro is the history of strife- this longing to attain self-consciousness manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging, he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He will not bleach his negro soul in the flood of white Americanism, for he knows that negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and American without a cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face (Du Bois, 1903, p.3).

However, since Bhabha's argument on Hybridity comes from the position that there are no original cultures, it presupposes that Dubois' statement, which suggests original African-Americanness, does not align with Bhabha's position.

Du Bois' critical observation above focuses on the condition of the hybrid, their psychology and the implications on their social life. It is revealed that the condition of the hybrid is an unsettled and fragile condition, a condition of explosive tension, of pity and terror. It is a condition of pity because it is a "world that yields him no true self-consciousness. It is a condition of strife because all through their lives, attempts are made to keep a "Double Consciousness". It is a condition of perpetual longing in which the hybrid yearns to merge his double- self into a better and truer-self (1903, pp.2-3). Du Bois' analysis of America depicts it as the home or space of the hybrid and recognises the effect of the American space as one that yields the Negro no true self-consciousness. This not only defines the nature of the hybrid space in general as an unjust space but also as one in perpetual tension, which Frantz Fanon (1961) describes as "occultic instability" and Homi Bhabha (1994) as "the third space of enunciation", Bois' essential contribution to the analysis of the condition of the hybrid seems to lie in his recognition of the strife and difficulty in the yearning of the hybrid to reconcile his double-self. His recognition of this attempt by the Negro to reconcile himself with both sides of the world mark the distinction between social and biological hybridity.

In the biological hybrid hitherto examined, the process of reconciliation takes on a genetic and scientific process that results in a distinct species, while in the social conditions of race and culture, the reconciliation takes on a dialectical process that results in several reconciliations. There is a sense in which Du Bois' reference or understanding of "Double Consciousness" may be considered as elementary or as a first phase of the double and dug deeper to reveal a more complex "Double Consciousness" which serves to do the real tearing apart. For instance, Du Bois' idea of Double Consciousness echoes the contradiction or collision between two forces, in this case, the African and the American, and the attempt to fold or unify these two forces into one, to turn them into "two souls in one body". The tension here is between two separate and independent forces or cultures – African and American, and the Negro is burdened with the challenge of resolving them. Although not without difficulty, the hybrid, in this case the Negro, has evolved several ways of resolving this tension. It has and will always be syncretic, that is, merging both cultures. There is an observable level of choice and freedom in which the hybrid here can find themselves, so that they can choose, though not without consequences, to be either African American or American African, each determined by the degree to which the ratios of the two worlds are given preference over the other.

There is another Double Consciousness locatable within this 'tensive' and explosive space, which situates the battlefield not between two cultures or "warring ideals within one dark body", but one ideal in one dark body forced to spin two warring spaces, and therefore denies the hybrid of any choice, since it cannot war with itself. In biological hybridity, the hybrid is neither the two crossbreeding species nor has any prior origination or ancestral mode of life before the crossbreeding. In the condition of slavery, such as in the "transplanted" or forcefully migrated African, the hybrid is one of the crossbreeding species. The two conditions of the biological and the social hybrid, therefore, differ essentially and reveal a more complex double, in that, in the biological context of hybridity, the hybrid is just and only a result, whereas in the social context – cultural and colonial – a hybrid is both a participant and a result, and there lies the real conflict, the complex double. The tension at the more complex double illustrated in the participant-result is proliferated and more dangerous psychologically. Invariably, this hybridity (a status conferred on him by virtue of his forced location) has to internally or psychologically war with himself. Left for the Negro in America, as recognised in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), he would

maintain the status of an African, for that alone can provide the claim of originality which would yield him true self-consciousness. The first psychological shattering, in the decision or struggle, to reconcile oneself with one's condition, takes place in the process of a conscious movement from the level of a participant (African) in the two warring forces (African versus American), to the level of a result – African American or American African. This is comparable to the denial and reiteration that Homi Bhabha – to whom I will return shortly – cites as undermining imperialist aspirations and rendering racial purity unfeasible (Bhabha, 1994).

However, according to Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), the term 'hybridity' goes beyond its biological and racial framework to embrace linguistic and cultural areas and embraces a linguistic version related to the concept of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia. Bakhtin's intervention and analysis of hybridity introduces another dimension into the discourse of hybridity. While Du Bois exposes the psychology and social condition of the hybrid or in hybridity, Bakhtin rather analyses the benefits of hybridity within the global discourse of power and power relations as it relates to language. He posits that the process of hybridisation entails the combination of two languages and undermines the notion of monological authoritative discourse. Implied in Bakhtin's idea is a certain kind of anti-monolingualistic power centralisation, which is within, and serves, a globalist agenda.

The creolisation (which is the process through which different cultures, languages, and traditions blend to create new, hybrid forms) of the English or its hybrid into pidgin serves, in Bakhtin's thoughts, as both a show of linguistic creativity as well as serving the greater purpose of destabilising linguistic supremacy or purity with which the idea of authoritativeness and power could have been perpetuated. Bakhtin sums up the characteristics of a novelistic hybrid, "as an artistically organised system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of a language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language" (1981, p.392). At the heart of this assertion is the capacity of hybridity to illuminate and to undermine or disrupt hegemonic powers. The process of illumination which the hybrid brings to bear on the hegemonic can be revelatory as well as exposing. The poet and politician, Aimé Césaire's *Discourses on Colonialism* (1955), analyses these illuminations in the colonial context, and proves, like Homi Bhabha, that the colonial context illuminates the colonial

real psyche and affords him a testing ground for its ideals, which it shatters though in a process of disavowal and repetition.

Robert Young's work in the field of linguistic hybridity stresses the creative impact of hybridity as well as opening up what could pass for the typology of hybridity by context. Hybridity in the social context is a phenomenon dependent on and influenced by several other factors which Young observes and defines thus:

The encounters and mixtures or blending of cultures as a result of hybrid processes open up new perspectives on the world and may result in artistic forms which can combine different styles... Hybridity works in different ways at the same time, according to cultural, economic and political demands of specific situations. It involves processes of interaction that create new social spaces to which new meanings are given (Young, 2005, p.13).

The economic, cultural and political dimensions of hybridity which Young recognises, have shown critical impacts in the history of Nollywood for instance, and many of African movie industries and other units of cultural productions such as literature or more precisely the decolonisation literature, whose elaboration we shall return to in the later part of this review. To understand the background of cultural hybridity in the Nigerian creative sector, a review of Nigerian social structure suffices.

There are multifaceted ethnic groups with Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba cultures as three distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with its unique customs, traditions, languages, and societal structures. Despite sharing the same geographical region, they exhibit significant differences in various aspects of their cultural practices. One notable difference lies in their languages. Hausa, predominantly spoken in the northern region of Nigeria, belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family. Igbo, primarily is spoken in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Yoruba, is spoken in the southwestern region, but is distinct from both Hausa and Igbo linguistically (Okaka, 2017). Culturally, each group has its traditional attire, cuisine, music, and dance forms. For instance, the Hausa people are known for their colorful kaftans and elaborate headgear, while the Igbo are recognised for their vibrant traditional attire, including the George wrapper and Isiagu top. The Yoruba, on the other hand, are famous for their intricate gele headgear, agbada robes, and elaborate beadwork.

Religious practices also differ among the three cultures. Hausa culture is predominantly Muslim, with Islamic traditions deeply rooted in their societal norms. Igbo culture, on the other hand, often incorporates traditional beliefs and practices, including ancestor worship and masquerade festivals. Yoruba culture is characterised by a blend of Christianity, Islam, and indigenous Yoruba religion, including the worship of orishas and elaborate festivals such as the Osun-Osogbo festival in Osun State. Despite these differences, there are also commonalities that unite the three cultures, such as a strong emphasis on family values, respect for elders, and a rich oral tradition. Additionally, globalisation and urbanisation have led to increased cultural exchange and integration, blurring some of the distinct boundaries between these cultures while also preserving their unique identities. Overall, the diversity and richness of Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba cultures contribute to Nigeria's vibrant tapestry of cultural heritage (Okaka, 2017).

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

This research adopts Bhabha's theory of 'Third Space' to interrogate the representation of hybridity in four film texts. According to Homi Bhabha (1994), hybridity developed through the interaction of two or more diverse cultures (with the process of negotiation and resistance) described as the "third space of enunciation". "The Third Space," is a space of hybridity where all cultural statements are constructed both by the coloniser as well as the colonised. Hybridity has been argued by the postcolonial study discipline to be production (Bhabha, 1994; Young, 1995; Bakhtin, 1981) in the destabilisation and deconstruction of cultural purity, authority and supremacy. Bhabha goes further to describe the 'third space' as a place, where hybrid identifications are possible and cultural transformations can happen. Therefore, my discourse on hybridity is well situated in the expression or nuances of the film space in Nollywood as interpretable via the lens of postcolonialism to which hybridity belongs.

## **2.8 Hybridity as a Site of Enunciation**

The discourse of hybridity has developed through the fundamental observations of the merging of two or more different cultural species, to the critical appreciation of the politics of reconstruction, negotiation, negation and resistance that go on within that space, described by Homi Bhabha as the "Third space of Enunciation". Bhabha's political dimension to the discourse of hybridity is intensified and reinforced in his location of the scene of hybridity within the colonial arena:

The colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency (Bhabha, 1994, p.111).

Bhabha insists that the “third space” is the scene where colonialism breaks itself and reveals its true self beyond its proclaimed “discipline”, ‘authoritative’ civilising mission. The process of this true-self-revelation and enactment of the inner desire takes on a process of realisation both by the colonised and the coloniser. The coloniser as well as the colonised realised that colonialism is incapable of taking the place of the natives’ culture, much less providing the material conditions and necessity for which they could give up their desire for dignity. What follows at this point of realisation are reactions, resistance and the search for self-reconciliation by the colonised, and the naked revelation of the inner make-up of the real psychology of the coloniser. Frantz Fanon described this process of realisation and revelation thus:

We must become convinced that colonialism is incapable of procuring for the colonised peoples the material conditions which might make them forget their concern for dignity. Once colonialism has realized where its tactics of social reform are leading, we see it falling back on its old reflexes, reinforcing police effectiveness, bringing up troops, and setting a reign of terror which is better adapted to its interests and its psychology (Fanon, 1961, p.208).

In the condition of race, such as articulated by Du Bois, we see the ambivalence occurring in the hybrid. Under colonialism, however, Bhabha locates the ambivalence rather in the coloniser who finds himself torn, pulled and pushed simultaneously from and to brutality and humanity. Finally, the coloniser is overwhelmed by its real psychology and unleashes the reign of terror. The colonised also, overwhelmed by the demand for self-restoration, responds with resistances in varying degrees and dimensions. “The third space”, therefore, which is the space of hybridity, is a space where, according to Bhabha, all cultural statements are constructed, both by the coloniser as well as the colonised.

It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. It is that Third Space, which, though unrepresentable, constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicised and read anew (Bhabha, 1994, p.37).

## **2.9 Use and Abuse of Hybridity in the Postcolonial Context**

Hybridity has been argued, within postcolonial studies, to be productive (Bhabha, 1994; Young, 1995; Bakhtin, 1981) in the destabilisation and deconstruction of cultural purity, authority and supremacy; as well as counterproductive to the production and survival of a uniquely African or native culture (Parry, 1987; Ahmad, 1992; Nasrullah, 2016). This has, however, been a deeply controversial debate. At the heart of this controversy is whether hybridity is ecliptic, dislocating and negatively disruptive of the flow of culture (of the colonised), or, in Bhabha's critical re-reading, rather productive for the colonised and defeating for the coloniser. Bhabha's insistence that what goes on at the "third space of enunciation" is rather a negotiation in which the colonial plan to produce mimicry turns into mockery of the entire colonial authority. This adoption in postcolonial reading of the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, demands a real critical enquiry, as it is at the heart of this research work.

Hybridity conspires in a system of resistance negotiation to shatter and destroy colonial agenda of a supremacist, disciplinary and authority, and makes "the hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994, p.37). Young equally subscribes to this subversive idea of hybridity in which it resists and "reverses the structures of domination in the colonial situation" (Young, 1995, p.23). He, therefore, traces Bhabha's idea of hybridity as a resistance tool to the transformation of Bakhtin's conscious or intentional hybridity, to define the dialectical mechanism in which the dominant colonial power or culture is deprived of its imposed and forcefully perpetuated authority and authenticity. Thus, Bakhtin's idea of the disruptive and oppositional power in multi-vocalism and polyphony of voices resulting from linguistic hybridity against the linguistic officialism of the elitist class and cultures, equally reinforces this stand that:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the "pure" and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but replicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (Bhabha, 1994, p.111)

The other deeper question, however, is, to what extent can the use of hybridity as a disruptive and shattering tool against colonial or global and supremacist authorities, offset its abuses on the colonised identity? The application of the term in postcolonial discourse is seen by some scholars (Parry, 1987; Ahmad, 1992; Nasrullah, 2016) as negating, neglecting and eclosing of both the imbalance or inequality in the power relations between the so-called negotiating and hybridising cultures, as well as obscuring the identity damage on the colonised or hybrid with the mask of disruption and resistance.

The idea of hybridity also underlies other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial process in expressions of syncretism, cultural synergy and transculturation. The criticism of the term referred to above stems from the perception that theories that stress mutuality necessarily downplay oppositionality, and increase continuing postcolonial dependence... there is nothing, however, in the idea of hybridity as such that suggests that mutuality negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an equal exchange (Nasrullah, 2016, p.3).

The degree or strength of the cultural statement made at the space of enunciation or hybridity, and whether hybridity becomes deflecting, (dis)empowering and (counter)productive, depends on



whether such hybridity is accidental or deliberate, or, in the division by Young (1995), conscious or unconscious. What is too often hardly pointed out is that if hybridity, whether in the colonial or postcolonial sense or scene breaks the authoritative “superiority” and proclaimed supremacy of the coloniser, it equally, if not firstly, takes away from the colonised that essential and unique originality which is needed to assert their fundamental difference in a world of varieties.

Hybridity is, first and foremost, a movement, a progression and transformation away from (not at all by or at least not as much by the coloniser as by the colonised) one’s unique self into the realm and identity of the other or imposed and influenced by the other. Although, in Bhabha’s critical re-reading of the concept of hybridity, the coloniser equally suffers a transformation from the claim of civility, nobility and humanity to a display of brutality, inhumanity and moral bankruptcy; their transformation is, as opposed to the colonised, a progression from the claim of ideality to the realisation of the truest but hidden reality. In the case of the colonised, however, the progression is rather one of a transformation from a loss and sacrifice of the true self to the birth of a transcultural, a universal and global culture that is neither purely nor uniquely African, for instance, nor European.

The identitarian abuse which hybridity causes the colonised, seems, therefore, to outweigh the possible gains in its potentially disruptive capacity. Even the colonised themselves, in the long run, understand this. Thus, Bhabha insists we see and read the space of enunciation. Citing Derrida, he avers that space of enunciation has opened up in writing itself, as that which not only carries the burden of the meaning of culture, but also where cultural statements are made; thus, we must equally begin to read the revolt and reactions which the colonised or hybridised makes as realisations of the insufficiency, if not futility, of exploring this hybridity, this 'Third Space', (just so that) we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves (Bhabha, 1994, p.38).

The rebellion which the colonised or hybrid mounts at some point in the course of their imposed transposition is primarily a rebellion against the coloniser, so much as it is against the danger and the threat in their loss of that which is essentially and uniquely definitive of their identity, their culture. Yes, “the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an *international* culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p.38). Frantz Fanon has

plotted the phases of the native intellectual as they recognise this fact, and has described the rebellion quite elaborately thus:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country...This is the period of unqualified assimilation... In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is...But since the native is not a part of his people, since he only has exterior relations with his people, he is content to recall their life only. Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies. Finally, in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honoured place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. (Fanon, 1961, pp.221-222)

Agreeably, the journey of the native intellectual serves to remind the colonised of the need for that which is essentially and uniquely theirs (the natives). The passionate search, as we have seen by the native intellectual, and as Fanon has noted, for a national culture which existed before the colonial era “finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped” (p.222). Hybridity, therefore, poses unto a people the danger of losing their identity and of becoming a lost people in the vast Euro-universalist culture. Thus, the researcher avers that since diversity can benefit us, there has to be a core, that which is essentially and uniquely one's own that must be protected.

## **2.10 Hybridity in African Cultural Industries: Nollywood in Perspective**

In examining hybridity in the cultural industry, I would like to refer briefly to the contextual hybridisation phenomenon in media and culture. Hybridity has become so pervasive in the contemporary digital age. Resourced essentially from the model and viewpoint of globalisation,

hybridity has evolved, especially with a strong Anglo-American cultural influence. Globalisation has, therefore, become a new form in which hybridity manifests itself around the world, imparting cultures, creating and generating new phenomena through unified and sponsored cultural production industries such as film, television, literature, fashion and the new media. Globalisation according to Giddens (1990), is the “intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa” (p.64).

Globalisation has become synonymous of the third space which Bhabha theorised as the space of enunciation. Unequal power relations in the discourse of and interaction between cultures in the “third space”, has made globalisation to become an unbalanced idea, as evidenced by how American popular culture is viewed around the world (Kraidy, 2009), instead of an equal cultural exchange or dialogue. Hence, during this research, I will be analysing a number of films from across the globe, but my emphasis will be on African cinema and Nollywood in particular in order to explore their imbalance. Hybridity within the cultural production industries like films, television, social media, the new media and literature, especially in Africa, has manifested itself both as cultural dialogue, exchange, imposition, resistance and subversive forms, as cultural survival patterns, and as a sort of proclamation of freedom, which Satoshi (2009) interprets Bhabha not to mean “the oppressed people making history by becoming its agent, but about them serving to deconstruct historical causality itself by their unrepresentable otherness” (p.15). For Satoshi, Bhabha feels that the oppressed people are serving to deconstruct historical causality itself by their unrepresentable otherness, rather than about them making history by becoming its agent.

A 1955 Senegalese production *Afrique-sur-Seine* (*Africa on the Seine*) was acclaimed the first film shot by a black African, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (1925–1987). It focused on the absorbed lives of several African students and artists living in Paris as they studied Africa's civilisation, culture, and future. However, other early productions include two Congolese short films, *La Leçon du Cinéma* (*The Cinema Lesson*, Albert Mongita, 1951), and *Les Pneus Gonflés* (*Inflated Tyres*, Emmanuel Lubalu, 1953). Ousmane Sembène's celebration of the daily routine of a Senegalese cart driver intrigued cinema audiences in the short film, *Borom Sarret* (1963). His first feature length, even so a progress in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1966, *La Noire de...* (*Black Girl*) made a clear statement of countering French or European racial profiling of Africa. *Black Girl* (1966) speaks to the subject of hybridity found in Bhabha's *Third Place*.

Ousmane Sembène's effort to consciously project African motifs with the two films, marked his attempts at balancing authentic African imagery with Europeanised or French cinematic mimicry of native authenticity. He championed '...the right of the socially excluded and illiterate to vocalise that authenticity' (Williams, 2019). Sembène's struggle within that space of ambivalence is recognised by what Haynes (2011b) profiles as a tension. Sembène, in the process of enacting a counter argument with a subjective native voice, re-strategized in 1968 to find his essential and authentic 'Africophone' as opposed to Francophone... He probed hybrid linguistic ambivalence with two versions of the same movie, *Mandabi* (Wolof) and *Le Mandat*.

This is the case in Nigeria, where confused cultural intakes of Anglo-American and French persuasions are reproduced through European-created boundaries. French language, which is the language of Sembene's dialogue very often, is also drawn into this third space where it is no longer utilised for the subjugation of the colonised, but it is utilised as a vehicle for exposing the atrocities of colonialism through the communication of the coloniser. The foregoing historical survey enunciates an agreement with Satoshi's assertion in his "Hybridity and History" that "hybridity helps the postcolonial critic to upset the discourse of imperialism that would otherwise remain 'unmixed', uninfluenced by anything other than itself" (2009, p.4). The film *Sankofa* (1993) by Haile Gerima, the Ethiopian director, is one of such films in Africa which portrays hybridity as the third space created by the meeting of two cultures in such a way that none can dominate the other. The camera, which traditionally was the coloniser's imposition, and oral storytelling, which is the precolonial form of storytelling, interphases, forging a narrative of the combination of African ideology and the colonist weapon. Thus, (Camera) in the visionary Africans no longer functions as a colonial weapon but a postcolonial vehicle for postcolonial iterations.

As with many African film and cultural interactions with the West, as seen above, the history of the Nigerian film industry, popularly known as Nollywood, reflects the many dimensions of hybridity. However, the history of hybridity in the colonial condition mostly assumes the almost two constant preconditions of unequal interactions with the coloniser as the lord, and a counter response by the colonised which, in most cases, takes the habit of subversion. The hybrid that results is then a sort of negotiation of cultural dialogue in which the colonial tools become tools for postcolonial interpretation and re-interpretation. Jonathan Haynes' observations in his *African Cinema and Nollywood* (2011) typifies this first unequal constant condition of perpetuation which enables the coloniser the foremost oppressive advantage:

These radically different formations spring from common ground: there are powerful commonalities in the history of cinema across Africa. Cinema arrived with colonialism and as a tool of colonialism. It was used to dazzle the “natives” with the superiority of western technology and to indoctrinate them. The British, French, and Belgian colonial authorities established film units to make propaganda and instructional films (on such topics as hygiene and farming techniques), tailored to their notion of African audiences. (p.68)

The use of film or colonial cinema to perpetuate the coloniser’s material and racial superiority and to indoctrinate the colonised is, as Satoshi reminds us, an effort to maintain an eternal and an unchangeable European presence, to “remain ‘unmixed’, uninfluenced by anything other than itself” (2009, p.4).

In appraising the nature of film in Nigeria from its inception, colonial foreign influences tend to show colossal fingerprints. Through film, the colonial government reinforced and legitimised Eurocentric ideologies in Nigeria. The colonial government propagated the superiority of the colony as well as conditioned the audience to civilisation (Ekwuazi, 1987). Film was equally utilised for developmental and indoctrination processes. Africans are shown in *Daybreak in Udi* (1947) carrying out community building initiatives; however, the White guy in the foreground, who represents "order" and without whom anarchy reigns, is the most significant character throughout the whole film. Colonial film had no native input or any agenda to the integration of the indigenous cultural heritage or ideas in its production, since that was going to hybridise and, therefore, taint the “purity” advanced and perpetuated by the colonialists and their cultural forms.

Diawara Manthias’s observation captures this aspiration to “purity” by the colonial authority succinctly in his assertion that, “colonial governments, missionaries, and anthropologists thus tried to give Africans a different cinematic heritage than the mainstream films of Europe and the United States of America” (1992, p2). Backing the effects of this up, Okome (1996) observes that since its primary goal was the hegemonisation of its own imperialist discourse, colonial cinema had a detrimental impact on all forms of indigenous cultural output. In the case of Nigeria, this resulted in a delay in the growth of film production and film studies. Aside from the hegemony achieved, Hyginus Ekwuazi’s observation that the minor technical roles only granted the indigenous people in the early films discouraged and ensured a failed transfer of meaningful

technology. In a sense, therefore, the colonial history of film in Nigeria falls short of what we may call hybridity, especially when we consider the term to connote an equal and balanced interaction or dialogue of cultures such that in that interaction, a new form is produced.

Hybridity, viewed in the interpretation of Pieterse (1993) as “the indigenisation of Western elements” (p.8), could be traced in the history of what has become known as Nollywood today, to the agitations for political independence and the need to redefine the African identity through the colonial instruments of film. This led to the beginning of indigenous inclusions and the gradual recreation of the film culture, and indeed, its domestication. In Okome’s words:

Political agitation and the consequent announcement of self-rule in 1960 slightly changed the pattern of film in Nigeria. Noticeable changes started appearing in the late 40’s, when it became obvious that independence was imminent. In 1947, the Film Unit was established to take over from the Colonial Film Unit. Originally conceived of as a Public Relations Section of the Marketing and Publicity Department of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Its functions were to explore the country's resources, and to enhance national growth. (1996, p.55)

Although this new creation is often criticised for not making “any appreciable in-roads towards creating an indigenous cinema”, for Okome, it nonetheless advanced the need for the Africanisation of the film medium. Nollywood, as a body of the Nigerian film industry today has been described as “a cultural and technological hybridity” (Onuzulike, 2009). If we follow Onuzulike’s periodisation of the Nigerian film history of the colonial period, 1903-1960, the independence period, 1960-1972, the indigenisation decree period, 1972-1992, and the Nollywood period from 1992 till date; the cultural hybridity occurred beginning from the second and the third period. The independent era, for instance, witnessed the upsurge of indigenous films or African oral and cultural stories told, using colonial tools.

In essence, at the meeting of African orality and the Western technology, the hitherto instruments of colonial perpetuation and domination became the instruments of indigenous cultural preservation. At this space of “enunciation” both meeting cultures lose their originality either in purpose or in structure. Nigerian oral history and literature turn into motion pictures for addressing social issues and contributing towards tradition and religion, value, beliefs and norms of Nigerians.

It became a means of upholding culture and making the people conscious of their environment on the consequences of their choices, especially when they are likely to affect the society at large. The colonial tool becomes transformed into a tool for the notation of indigenous life and culture and its circulation as against its alienation. It is by this hybrid interaction that the Nigerian video and film industry, Nollywood succeeded in meeting the cultural curiosity of the African diaspora and mediating the twin issues of culture and identity in the United States, as well as the United Kingdom, and the Caribbean.

Nollywood today thus serves as an example of hybridity. Echoing this, Okome (2001) argues that while Nollywood exhibits hybrid characters that are evidenced in numerous “forms of African popular arts, it is its acute notation of locality that goes to unprecedented acceptability as the local cinematic expression In Nigeria and indeed in Africa” (p.3). The mixture of Nollywood cinematic elements with non-African elements give rise to irresistible hybridity, especially when it exhibits an African indigenous flavour. Onuzulike’s description of cultural hybridity as a synthesis of distinct cultural identities that is not limited to language, religion, beliefs, norms and values, and artifacts, but has each of these elements possessing multiple cultural influences (2009, p.177); aptly captures the cultural transformation that has transpired in the hybrid notation that Nollywood has undergone through its colonial history.

From the other example which Nollywood offers us in its technological mutations and hybrid transformation. Onuzulike defines and distinguishes cultural and technological hybridity thus:

Technological hybridity is a fusion or mixing of three distinct technologies or conventions/concepts such as montage, mise-en-scene, and cinematography. It is not only technologically constructed but, economically, video is less expensive than film. The difference between technological and cultural hybridity is that the former predominantly incorporates equipment and convention/concepts, while the latter is more socially constructed (2009, p.177).

With the exit of the colonial film technology and expertise upon independence, the economic burden to afford the heavy technology, including the technical knowledge of the usage of the little film equipment left, became real challenges. The continued mass production of the very costly celluloid roll of raw film stock, as Barsam (2004), traces made the affordability of the film medium

even difficult. Faced with the “highly technological and capital-intensive character of production”, as Okome (1996, p.56), recognised, it became all the more difficult for the Nigerian film “to reclaim national cultural autonomy”. Survival meant the evolution of a new, affordable and domesticated film medium. This was the beginning of video film in Nigeria. Haynes (2000) describes video film as “something between television and cinema, and they do not fit comfortably within the North American structures” (p.1).

At the inception of Nollywood, video films particularly have very long duration, as compared to Hollywood. *Living in Bondage* for example is over five hours long. The agreement by scholars like Adeiza (1995); Adesanya (2000); Haynes (2000); and Onuzulike (2009), that the evolution of videofilms in Nigeria was, among other reasons, mainly economical, suggests and validates hybridity as a survival mechanism. As regards its quality sustainability while maintaining a relatively cheaper cost in its hybrid form, Onuzulike observes that:

video film producers started with less costly VHS cameras while utilizing a number of VCRs for editing. Nowadays, the movies are predominantly distributed on VCD and DVD. Also, they have been shooting with digital video cameras while utilizing contemporary computer editing programs for better quality... Through the low cost of video technology, Nollywood is a hybrid of African and Western cultures. Most filmmakers embraced the video as a survival option. (2009, p.176)

With the recent trend in globalisation, a new form of hybridity is neither an act of resistance nor a survival mechanism. Until recently, Nollywood was deeply steeped in African socio-cultural themes like, family dynamics, spiritual undertones of sowing and reaping, leading to “audience fatigue” (Kay, 2013).

Themes in Nollywood films presently have been transformed due to societal shifts, international trends, and the artistic judgment of filmmakers. Many other themes have emerged, including family dynamics, which examines the complexities of family relationships and touches on topics like love, betrayal, and reconciliation; Social Issues, which tackles issues like poverty, corruption, gender inequality, and the impact of modernisation on traditional values; and Cultural Heritage, which celebrates and examines Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, traditions, and customs. (Kay, 2013).



## **2.11 Afrospiritualism in Transnational Screenplay**

Afrospiritualism, also known as African spirituality, is a term that encompasses the diverse spiritual traditions rooted in African cultures. These traditions are characterised by their deep connection to the environment, communal worship, and reverence for ancestors. Afrospiritualism is not monolithic but comprises numerous indigenous practices, rituals, and belief systems that have evolved over centuries. One of the central tenets of Afrospiritualism is the belief in the interconnectedness of all life. This worldview posits that everything in the universe is interrelated and that a spiritual force permeates all aspects of existence. This force, often referred to as "vital energy" or "life force," is believed to animate all living beings and natural objects such as rivers, mountains, and trees (Nweke & Okpaleke, 2019). This holistic approach means that spirituality cannot be separated from everyday life and influences how people interact with the world around them.

Ancestral veneration is a cornerstone of Afrospiritualism. Ancestors are believed to play a vital role in the lives of their descendants, acting as intermediaries between the living and the spiritual realm. This practice involves rituals, offerings, and prayers to honor and seek guidance from ancestors. The belief is that ancestors continue to influence the lives of their descendants and that maintaining a strong connection with them is essential for the well-being of the community (Ayinde et al., 2021). This practice is prevalent across various African cultures and is a testament to the enduring importance of familial and communal bonds.

Afrospiritualism is also characterised by its adaptability and syncretism. African spiritual traditions have historically shown a remarkable ability to incorporate elements from other religious systems, resulting in a rich tapestry of beliefs and practices. This adaptability is evident in the way African spirituality has blended with Christianity, Islam, and other world religions, creating unique syncretic traditions. For instance, Haitian Vodou and Brazilian Candomblé are examples of Afrospiritual practices that have integrated elements of Catholicism due to historical interactions with European colonizers (Nweke & Okpaleke, 2019). In addition to ancestral veneration and syncretism, Afrospiritualism places a strong emphasis on the balance between the physical and spiritual realms. Health and well-being are seen as holistic, involving both physical and spiritual dimensions. Illness is often understood as a sign of imbalance, and healing practices may include

rituals, herbal medicine, and consultations with spiritual healers (Ayinde et al., 2021). This approach to health reflects the broader Afrospiritual belief in the interconnectedness of all aspects of life.

The diversity of Afrospiritual traditions is also notable. Each ethnic group in Africa has its own unique spiritual practices, rituals, and deities. For example, the Yoruba religion includes a pantheon of deities known as Orishas, each of whom is associated with specific aspects of life and nature (Belay & Wane, 2019). Similarly, the Akan religion of Ghana involves the worship of a supreme being as well as numerous lesser gods and spirits (Belay & Wane, 2019). These diverse traditions reflect the cultural richness and complexity of the African continent. Thus, Afrospiritualism is a diverse and dynamic spiritual tradition that is deeply rooted in African culture and history. Its holistic approach to life, emphasis on ancestral veneration, adaptability, and focus on the balance between the physical and spiritual realms make it a unique and enduring belief system. As Afrospiritual traditions continue to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, they remain an essential aspect of the lives of many people across Africa and the diaspora. I hope to examine the profound influence of Afrospiritualism on the Nigerian cinema, exploring its holistic approach to life and focusing on the balance between the physical and spiritual realms are reflected ought to be reflected in Nollywood transnational screenplays.

## **2.12 Hybridity and Bollywood Film Industry**

Comparatively, it is expedient to throw light on Bollywood as a parallel film industry that shares elements of hybridity with Nollywood, as will be further analyzed in the film *Namaste Wahala*; the shared similarities that have come to be accepted by the Nollywood film audiences. Hong (2021) observes that India's Mumbai-based film industry, known as Bollywood, has long held the title of the world's largest film producer and remains dominant in this regard. He identifies five main factors that attract Chinese audiences to Indian films as: engaging storytelling, cultural values, star appeal, audience feedback, and cultural connections. While examining the potential prospects for Bollywood in China, he observes that Bollywood bridges cultural divides, fosters closer ties between India and China, and contributes to mutual understanding and enhances India's soft power on the global stage.

Scholars such as Ganti (2004), Bose (2006), Clarke and Braun (2013), Curtin (2007), Dastidar and Elliott (2020), Devadas and Velayutham (2012), and Diwanji (2020) have variously discussed some of the features of Bollywood. It is known for several distinctive features that set it apart from other film industries around the world. Bollywood cinema is renowned for their elaborate song-and-dance sequences, which often serve as integral parts of the storytelling. These musical numbers feature vibrant choreography, catchy tunes, and colorful costumes, adding to the entertainment value of the films. Bollywood films often embrace melodrama, featuring emotionally charged narratives with elements of romance, family conflicts, and societal issues. The storytelling tends to be larger than life, with dramatic plot twists and heightened emotions that resonate with audiences. Bollywood places a strong emphasis on its actors, who are often considered larger-than-life figures. The industry is known for its star system, with leading actors enjoying widespread popularity and fan followings both within India and in diaspora communities worldwide. While Hindi is the primary language of Bollywood films, the industry also produces movies in other Indian languages such as Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam.

This diversity reflects the multicultural and multilingual nature of India and helps Bollywood reach a wider audience across the country. Bollywood films encompass a wide range of genres, including romantic dramas, action thrillers, comedies, and historical epics. This diversity allows the industry to cater to diverse audience preferences and ensures that there is something for everyone. The films are often longer in duration compared to Western films, with typical runtimes ranging from two to three hours. This allows filmmakers to delve deeper into the narrative and include multiple subplots, song sequences, and character developments. Bollywood has a significant international following, particularly in countries with large South Asian diaspora populations such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Middle East.

The industry's colorful visuals, catchy music, and universal themes have contributed to its global appeal. In recent years, Bollywood has seen a significant increase in production budgets, leading to higher-quality cinematography, visual effects, and production values. This has enabled filmmakers to compete on a global scale and produce films that rival Hollywood in terms of scale and spectacle (Ganti, 2004; Bose, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Curtin, 2007; Dastidar & Elliott, 2020; C. Devadas & Velayutham, 2012; Diwanji, 2020). The interaction between Nollywood and Bollywood, representing Nigeria and India respectively, offers an intriguing subject for exploration. One of the films selected for analysis explores the interaction between Nollywood

and Bollywood. Both industries share common themes such as family dynamics, romance, and societal issues, which serve as foundational elements in their storytelling. The project will point out some parallels in both film cultures in the later chapters, and most especially the uniqueness of Nollywood, which has come to be accepted by the Nollywood film audiences.

### **2.13 Summary**

This has been able to underpin the underlying theoretical framework on hybridity citing key theorists. My reason for choosing the theoretical framework of ‘Third Space,’ as articulated by Homi Bhabha (1994), is that it provides a compelling lens for analysing hybridity in cultural texts, particularly in the context of Nollywood films. This framework is especially relevant because it addresses the interplay between cultures, emphasizing negotiation, resistance, and the production of new cultural meanings. Nollywood, as a postcolonial cinema, often operates within spaces of cultural intersection, drawing from indigenous African traditions, colonial influences, and global modernity. The ‘Third Space’ theory, with its focus on hybridity, allows for a deep interrogation of these dynamics, making it an ideal choice for examining the representation of hybrid identities and cultural transformations in Nollywood films.

While Onuzulike (2009) describes cultural hybridity as a synthesis of distinct cultural identities that is not limited to language, religion, beliefs, norms and values, and artifacts, but possessing multiple cultural influences in each of these elements, Du Bois (1903) in his studies on hybridity portrayed the United States as the home or space of the hybrid, what Frantz Fanon (1963) describes it as “occultic instability”, and Homi Bhabha (1994) as “the third space of enunciation”. As explained above, “The third space”, is the space of hybridity where, according to Bhabha, all cultural statements are constructed, both by the coloniser as well as the colonised. These seemingly divergent analyses which point to a convergent concept as exposed have further reinforced the adoption of Homi Bhabha’s concept of “The third space” in serving as the theoretical framework upon which the study is explored.

The chapter began with a brief history of Nollywood, which foregrounded Nollywood as the main research focus. The concepts of transnationalism and nationalism were equally discussed. The question of articulating a national ideology, culture, and tradition in a multi-tribal and ethnic Nigerian nation seemed a mirage. In chapter three, I will discuss the reasons for adopting auto-autobiographical approach in studying Nollywood, foregrounding how this method emphasizes

the interconnection between my personal history, cultural identity, and the narratives presented in Nollywood films. By incorporating autobiographical elements, I hope to foster a deeper understanding of how Nollywood engages with themes of hybridity, Afro spiritualism, and cultural negotiation.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology that will be adopted in this research is an autoethnographic method. As a qualitative method, autoethnography merges personal narrative and cultural analysis, offering an innovative approach for researchers to explore the connections between their life experiences and the wider social and cultural world. This has been used in various areas including sociology, education and psychology as it provides insights that traditional methodologies may not uncover. Autoethnography is defined as an autobiographical genre of writing that connects the personal to the cultural (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It allows researchers to reflect on their experiences while situating them within larger societal frameworks. This method contrasts with traditional ethnography, where the researcher typically observes others from an outsider's perspective. Instead, autoethnographers engage with their own narratives, providing a rich framework of personal experience that informs cultural understanding (Chang, 2008).

### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design involves the approach employed in integrating different components of the study in a logical way to efficiently problematise the research and arrive at a verifiable conclusion. Citing Kerlinger, Aworh and others (2006), research design includes the plan containing the structure and strategy of enquiry which are structured in order to obtain solutions to research questions (p.41). This work adopts qualitative research methods. Various researchers have provided insight to qualitative research method. Autoethnography, which is part of qualitative research methods, according to Kaufman (2020), uses personal experiences and reflexivity to examine cultural experience. According to Kerlinger, Aworh and others, qualitative research involves gathering narrative data to gain insights into a particular subject matter. Herein, variables are often studied over an extensive period to examine ways things are, how and why they are that way, and what it all means.

In this type of research, the most common methods of data collection are observations, interviews and focus group discussions, which often guide and support the construction of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive (p.6). This research, therefore, aims at presenting a personalised account of cultural hybridity using my new screenplay. My method is twofold: the writing of the screenplay as well as the more academic reflection of the process (my thesis). These highly personalised accounts draw upon the

experiences of the author/researcher in an attempt to broaden the understanding of the cultural indexes in Nollywood.

To arrive at verifiable conclusions on construction of hybridity in Nollywood, this study adopts an auto-ethnographical research method which is aimed at defining the construction of hybridity in Nollywood through personal experience as well as critical reviews of literary and filmic texts. This is done with the understanding that research design is essentially “a scheme of attack; a plan and a strategy designed for systematically solving research problems” (Amara & Amaechi, 2002, p.7). Before continuing, a detailed explanation on what auto ethnographical research method suffices.

### **3.2 Autoethnographical Research Method**

Autoethnography, being a qualitative method, allows the research to systematically account for a profound, complex and specific knowledge about a particular field of study. In tracing the history, Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) observe that Karl Heider used the term "auto-ethnography" in 1975 to describe research wherein 72 cultural members share personal tales of their culture. Continuing, Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) noted that this novel research was referred by Walter Goldschmidt to as "self-ethnography", observing that such method includes personal investments, interpretations, and analyses. The term "self-ethnography" came into broader use in the 1980s as scholars began reflecting on their personal experiences as part of ethnographic research, often focusing on the researcher's own identity, culture, and subjectivity. Notably, works by scholars like *Richard Hoggart* in the 1950s and *Clifford Geertz* in the 1970s paved the way for this approach, though it became more formalized in academic discourse in the 1980s and 1990s, when the boundaries between researcher and subject became more fluid in social science research. Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) citing David Hayano (1979) equally observe that the term "auto-ethnography" was employed in referring to anthropologists who "conduct and publish ethnographies of their 'own people' " and who "choose a field location" related to one of their identities or group affiliations" (2015, p.16). Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) observe that, Heider, Goldschmidt and Hayano's divergent views on the emergent autoethnographic research methodology foregrounds the insider-outsider forte in ethnographic research.

Insider-outsider ethnography refers to the dynamic relationship between the researcher and the community or group being studied, specifically focusing on whether the researcher is

considered an "insider" (a member of the group) or an "outsider" (a non-member). This distinction has important implications for how the ethnographic research is conducted, how data is collected, and how the researcher navigates their role within the study. Therefore, while Heider argues for the relevance of cultural members sharing their tales, Goldschmidt asserts that all ethnographic work reveals the researcher's fingerprints, and Hayano discusses the significance of a researcher's identity and the adopted methodology (Cited in Adams, Jones & Ellis 2015, p.16). Besides the insider-outsider autoethnography methodology, the development of autoethnography is catalytic following the changing ideas and ideals in research wherein many researchers have become aware of the limits of scientific enquiry.

This leads to the emerging appreciation for personal narrative. In addition, an increased concern about the ethics and politics of research practices and representations also led researchers to (re)think, leading to new research methodology. Finally, the increased significance of social identities and identity politics is equally a strong factor towards the development of autoethnography (Adams, Jones, and Ellis, 2015, p. 9). Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) observe that it became "necessary and desirable" for ethnographers to acknowledge that they are a part of the subject matter they investigate and to demonstrate how their fieldwork experiences have "shaped and affected" them as researchers. Similarly, Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont (2015) state that "to deny the self an active and situated place in the field is only fooling ourselves." The idea that "the self and the field become one ethnography and autobiography are symbiotic" started to appear in ethnographic writings. Though it had been common but disregarded for women anthropologists to include the ethnographer's point of view within texts and tell personal and reflective stories using literary conventions, ethnographers soon started to produce works that openly embraced storytelling, personal experience, aesthetics, and literary practices (p.10).

Therefore, I intend to use my personal experience in interrogating cultural hybridity, illustrating filmmaking techniques in Nollywood, observing how reflexivity, cultural phenomenon affect the representation of cultural hybridity. In traditional research, according to Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont (2015), the researcher is expected to keep his/her voice separate from the data and context studied. However, the reverse is the case in autoethnography. Highly personalised accounts draw upon the experiences of the author/researcher as they attempt to broaden their understanding of the culture that is at the centre of their research. This research



therefore presents an account of the complexities, interpretations, and representations of a Nollywood filmmaker using my selected film narratives as the subject.

Through an insider's vantage point, I chronicle and trace the experiences of my own visual representations using the qualitative methodology of autoethnography. While every film culture has its own unique process and environment, the evaluation provided by autoethnography greatly facilitates an understanding of the uniqueness of my filmmaking portfolio. The experiences I have encountered, the problems I face, and the interpretations derived from them will provide insight into the ever-changing industry called **Nollywood**. **Additionally, my application of an auto-ethnographic approach has aroused the awareness in taking deliberate creative decisions as a filmmaker, in order to arrive at analytical conclusions.** Auto ethnographic method of research will effectively assist in analysing my contribution to cultural hybridity in Nollywood by not only foregrounding how my biographical experiences influence my construction of cultural hybridity but by equally foregrounding the extent of works done and the research gap (as indicated in my chapter one) in the studies of Nollywood's cultural hybridity.

Primary and secondary sources of data are therefore employed toward arriving at the research results. The primary sources are drawn from my experience (in artistic practice) as the autoethnographic research while the secondary data include conceptual and empirical reviews of literary and filmic texts. A total number of four films are studied; two: *Wedding Party 1* and *Namasta Wahala*, from selected Nollywood directors and two from my previous films *Love is in the Air* and *Special Jollof*. This research also highlights my adoption of Afrospiritualism in transnational screenplay titled, "*Sidibe- The Castaway*", a screenplay that explores the life of a woman in postcolonial Nigeria who is torn between addressing her mental health issues either through the colonially prescribed Christianity or the understanding of a Christianity that does not diminish the humanist essences of her traditional African religious/spiritual systems. This is a story about a young village girl Sidibe, who is suffering from a situation termed by medical experts on a volunteer program from abroad as 'dissociative identity disorder' but the villagers are convinced that she is the manifestation of the goddess and is the chosen one to be the custodian of their revered deity. Tired of everyone having a say in her life, Sidibe revolts and decides to take matters into her hands to solve the problem by herself.

Autoethnography was chosen as the research method because it allows for an insider perspective on cultural hybridity in Nollywood, drawing from personal experiences as a filmmaker. By using personal films (*Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*) alongside other Nollywood films like, (*Wedding Party* and *Namaste Wahala*), the research interrogates how individual experiences, production conditions, and cultural influences shape the representation of hybridity in Nollywood films. Additionally, autoethnography bridges practice and theory, allowing for a reflective, self-aware analysis that identifies research gaps in Nollywood's hybrid storytelling. This method not only showcases the researcher's creative contributions but also examines the broader impact of hybridity in transnational Nollywood cinema

### **3.3 Research Procedure/Process**

Since the problem of the study was to examine how cultural hybridity implicates Nollywood films, by means of autoethnography, such questions as to how to determine the conceptual and empirical frameworks of hybridity in Nollywood suffices. The research will, therefore, attempt to determine the extent to which the production conditions/visual culture and my identity, limitation and perspectives as a filmmaker influence my (re) creation of hybridity in Nollywood. The research design will examine possible ways of arriving at a verifiable result through embarking on conceptual and empirical reviews as well as providing a detailed insider-outsider account of autobiographical identity, limitation and perspective, production conditions/ visual culture which influence my (re)construction of cultural hybridity in Nollywood. This will be buttressed through the technical reports (production review) and analyses of my films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*. This is further deepened by a screenplay titled "*Sidibe*"; specifically written for the purpose of this research work to further validate my ideology of hybridity as a filmmaker in Nollywood. In addition, two purposively sampled films, *Wedding Party* (2016) and *Namaste Wahala* (2020) produced and directed by other Nollywood filmmakers will be critically reviewed to buttress the arguments already established on the subject matter.

My positionality in this study is framed by a dual role as both an insider (filmmaker) and an outsider (researcher) within the Nollywood film industry, significantly shaping the exploration of cultural hybridity. As an insider, my position will offer an in-depth, experiential understanding of the industry's production processes and socio-cultural dynamics. This firsthand experience enables an authentic insight into the creation and representation of hybridity in Nollywood films,

particularly *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*, which serve as primary texts for the study as well as the writing of Transnational Screenplay, *The Cast Away*. As an outsider, assuming the role of a researcher, I maintain a critical and analytical perspective towards the interrogation of hybridity as a subject matter. This detachment allows for objective reflection on both the Nollywood industry and its creative decisions, ensuring that personal biases are examined.

This duality being both an active participant and a reflective researcher facilitates a balanced approach to the study. I will also examine other Nollywood films, such as *Wedding Party* (2016) and *Namaste Wahala* (2020), to contextualise their own ideologies of hybridity within the broader Nollywood landscape. By bridging personal identity with professional practice, the research offers a comprehensive exploration of cultural hybridity, contributing both scholarly and practical insights to the field. This holistic approach enhances the understanding of how hybridity is represented in Nollywood's globally influential films.

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### **3.4 Researcher's Background, Influences, and Motivations**

My childhood felt restrictive. More akin to confinement than freedom. Raised in a family of six by academic parents, strict rules kept us from exploring beyond school friends. With just a few siblings and none of them close to my age, I often found myself isolated indoors and rarely played outside with others. This encouraged my deep interest in television programmes like *Mirror in the Sun*, *Cock Crow at Dawn* and other Tv dramas. However, despite their entertainment value, what captivated me were the intricate cultural dynamics shaping the characters' relationships. Nigeria's rich culture, reflected in these shows, inadvertently influenced my filmmaking, particularly in exploring themes of cultural resistance.

The formative years of my high school played a pivotal role in shaping my creative journey. Immersing myself in the vibrant atmosphere of the drama society, I found a sanctuary for artistic expression and exploration. Participating in several creative and captivating stage productions, my passion for drama was ignited, becoming an undeniable force in my life. This involvement led me to pursue a degree in Theatre Arts at the University level, a decision that diverged from my parents' aspirations for me to study law. However, it was this somewhat departure from the expected path that allowed me to embrace my true calling and embark on a fulfilling journey of self-discovery and artistic pursuit; and has also contributed in shaping my artistic life because I was very active in the drama society.

We had a lot of creative activities and many stage plays which ignited my interest in drama. While studying Theatre Arts, I was actively engaged in all forms of activities and various forms of stage plays, dance dramas and so on, participating in stage plays such as Wole Soyinka's play, *Death and the King's Horseman*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* and so many other literary works. We engaged with several literary pieces like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God*, etc. which told the stories of the cultural struggles between Europeans and Africans. Though their narratives were not mainly love stories which are my core fascination, I believe the cultural interactions and negotiations between tradition and modernity caught my fascination and may have been greatly influencing my arts presently.

After graduating, I entered the banking sector due to limited opportunities in entertainment. During my national Youth Service at the National Theatre in Nigeria, I took several certification courses in Computer Science with the intention of transitioning into the corporate world, particularly banking. I secured a position at Lion Bank, later renamed Diamond Bank, where I remained until the release of the first popular and influential home video in Nigeria, *Living in Bondage* (1992). Inspired, I left banking to join the Nigerian movie industry, drawing from my banking experiences in crafting intricate plots. I started as writer, then later became a producer and subsequently a director. In 1994, I wrote and co-produced my first movie, *Jezebel* and later wrote and produced *Breaking Point* in 1996. My aim was to have creative control over the filmmaking process. The success of these projects led to commissions for scriptwriting from various executive producers.

While growing up, I was an avid lover of romantic stories of love and adventure. Thus, I enjoyed novels such as *Beyond Pardon* by Bertha M. Clay, a romantic story which is woven around Lionel Ryder, Eleanor Ryder and Countess Vivian of Lynn. Lionel, Eleanor's husband embarks on an expedition after a few years. In that journey, Lionel falls in love with Vivian, countess of Lynn. Vivian, being forced to marry an old count, was unable to be impregnated by him for years. Meeting and falling in love with Lionel, their romantic affairs continued for years before she discovered that Lionel was married with kids. Shocked and in total regret, she left him to join a convent and became a Reverend Sister, Marie. While still away from home, Lionel's kid fell seriously ill. When his wife, Eleanor, asked a local convent for assistance, they send Sister Marie (Vivian). Sister Marie is informed by Eleanor that her husband abandoned her and the children in favour of countess Vivian of Lynn, and being unaware that she was the one being referred to,

Eleanor claimed that Vivian's guilt was "Beyond Pardon" even if she repented. When Lionel returned to his family later, Sister Marie felt bad and fled to China, where she was shot and killed while attempting to save two baby girls who had been thrown into a river. My fascination in this novel is firstly the triangular romantic love circle that exists in the whole narrative wherein the Lionel, a married man with children falls in love with Vivian, countess of Lynn.

Beyond this novel which I believe was one of the books that unconsciously shaped my arts, other fantasy films such as *Sleeping Beauty* (2011), *Beauty and The Beast* (1991), *Sound of Music* (1965), *Endless Love* (1981), *Pretty Woman* (1990) had enormous influence on my ideology while growing up. Apart from the high romantic nature of these creative works which held a high appeal for me, the protagonists in these films often fell in love with people of different nationalities or cultural affiliations, fought and conquered severe battles to win their love. Again, they had very complicated plot structures and engaging story lines which were often resolved in a melodramatic way, wherein the protagonist eventually succeeded in his quest for Love.

The film, *Coming to America* (1988), cultural hybridised film which combines love stories which traversed through diverse cultures had a huge impact on me. The strong impetus of cultural hybridity in my films would have been influenced by the interests I had in the above novels and films earlier mentioned. *Coming to America*, which featured Eddie Murphy as the main character – a prince from Africa (Zamunda) who goes in search of true love in the “Land of Queens” (America), which he eventually finds in Lisa, occasioning a royal wedding which brings two different cultures together in marriage had various elements of hybridity. Also, the film, *Slumdog Millionaire* displayed so many elements of hybridity. *Slumdog Millionaire*, directed by Danny Boyle and co-directed by Loveleen Tandan, narrates the experiences of Jamal Malik, a young man from Mumbai's slums who competes in the country's version of the hit game show, "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" Jamal is first seen in the film as a competitor who had come within taking home the show's top prize of 20 million rupees. Jamal's achievement raises suspicion from the show's presenter and the police, who accuse him of lying. He explains how he came to know the answers by reliving his life in defence.

The film, therefore, explores transnational cultural boundary and projects the issue of cultural hybridity in telling a story of Jamal's rise to stardom. Thus, the film explores themes of poverty, resilience, love, destiny and offers emotional portrayal of life in the slums of Mumbai, portraying the stark contrast between extreme poverty and the abundance of wealth in the game

show while showcasing numerous traces of cultural hybridisation. The film effectively captures the cultural diversity of India and demonstrates the fusion of different cultural elements through the incorporation of a blend of Hindi and English languages, reflecting the linguistic hybridity which is prevalent in urban India. Characters frequently switch between the two languages, creating a multicultural and multilingual atmosphere. Summarily, *Slumdog Millionaire* effectively demonstrates cultural hybridisation by exploring the coexistence, interaction, and fusion of various cultural elements in Indian society. It highlights the blending of languages, music, fashion, religious practices, film aesthetics, social dynamics, traditions, and urban landscapes, creating a rich and diverse portrayal of India.

Similarly, the film, *Coming to America*, a classic comedy released in 1988, which focuses on finding true love while portraying a hybrid of cultures – seen in fusion of African and American cultures. In *Coming to America*, the main character, Prince Akeem Joffer (played by Eddie Murphy), hails from the fictional African kingdom of Zamunda. Seeking to break away from the traditions and arranged marriage set up by his father, King Jaffe Joffer (James Earl Jones), Prince Akeem travels to the United States to find his own bride. His aim is to experience a different culture and find a woman who loves him for who he is rather than his royal status. While in America, Akeem disguises himself as a poor foreign student and works at a fast-food restaurant in Queens, New York. Through his interactions with the people of Queens, Akeem encounters a variety of cultural aspects, such as American slangs, fashion, and lifestyle. He immerses himself in the everyday lives of ordinary Americans, befriends residents, and falls in love with Lisa McDowell (Shari Headley), an intelligent and independent woman.

The film explores the clash between the traditional customs and values of Zamunda and the modern, individualistic culture of America. Akeem's journey represents a form of cultural hybridisation as he merges his own traditions with those of America. Throughout the film, Akeem learns about personal freedom, equality, and the importance of love, friendship, and self-discovery. Summarily, *Coming to America* explores the theme of cultural hybridisation through the journey of its protagonist, Prince Akeem, and portrays the blending of traditional African customs with contemporary American culture, highlighting the transformative power of cross-cultural encounters and the universal themes of love, friendship and personal growth.

*Coming to America* blends African and American cultural elements, reflecting the fluid exchange of traditions, values, and identities across borders. This mirrors the core of transnational

cinema, which transcends national boundaries to create hybridised cultural expressions. The film's depiction of an African prince navigating American society illustrates the negotiation of identity in a globalised world. Transnational cinema often explores themes of migration, diaspora, and cultural adaptation, all of which are central to *Coming to America*. The royal wedding symbolises the merging of two cultures, reinforcing the idea that transnational cinema not only depicts cross-cultural interactions but also fosters new, hybrid identities.

In the above reviewed films, which I watched while growing up, their thematic thrust is often centred on love stories with very complicated plot structure and engaging story lines which are often resolved in a melodramatic way with the protagonist eventually succeeding to win his/her love. Most times, two different cultures collide with two people in love from different cultural backgrounds, and these two love birds often have a burning desire to break cultural barriers and diversities to engage in burning romantic exploits. Though these films appealed to me because of their romantic exploits and complicated melodramatic plot structure, I was more enthused about the cultural hybridity inherent in them which were realised through the technique of transnational cinema. This invariably engineers a wider demographic fan base. Following my experience as a former banker, in marketing, I have always attempted to project diverse cultures of two love birds with the intention of capturing a transnational market. However, what makes my transnational screenplay technique different is the adoption of Afrospiritualism in Transnational Screenplay enables a fusion of African spiritual traditions with contemporary cultural expressions. Obviously, the above-mentioned films and novels which I encountered while growing up have (re)shaped my arts in area of hybridisation of culture which I believe are my strongest drives. From the modest analyses of these films and novels I encountered while growing up, it is evident that my films are being (un)consciously influenced by their narrative imports (as we shall see in the analyses of *Special Jollof* and *Love in the Hair*) as they predominantly revolve around love immersed in cultural hybridity.

For instance, in film, *Coming to America*, Akeem (Murphy), an African prince from Zamunda kingdom, disguises himself to be able to find a true love, Lisa (Shari Headley) in America. That Akeem undergoes his "Third Space" experience in America, a different cultural experience before winning the love of his life who he eventually marries have influenced my creative arts such that they often end in wedding ceremonies of two characters from diverse cultural backgrounds. This element of disguise is seen in *Special Jollof*, the CEO of Afro Spice

restaurant, Kenny (Joseph Benjamin), falls in love with Rachael after his first encounter with her and conceals his identity as the CEO of the restaurant. The relationship believably ends up in marriage just like in the film, *Coming to America*. However, Afrospirisualism in transnational screenplay which reflects African cultural endurance and identity is employed in *Special Jollof* through the Jollof rice as tangential to Afrospiritualist discourse. The symbolism in food (jollof rice) while not explicitly spiritual, is tied to the unity and cultural pride in African traditions which carry deep meanings beyond their surface appearances.

Again, the blend of American Indian cultures in *Slumdog Millionaire* especially the depiction of the slums of India, is seen in my production of *Love is in the Hair*, wherein I equally foregrounded the slums of India in the scenes where Johnny travels to India in search of Rhani. While *Slumdog Millionaire* employs a popular TV show to tell a love story, the concept of the popular artificial hair phenomenon – popularly known as the “Indian hair”, is adopted in *Love is in the Hair* to tell a love story. Just like *Slumdog Millionaire* which blended American Indian culture, *Love in the Hair* equally blended Nigerian Indian culture. However, *Love is in the Hair* embodies Afrospiritualism through its use of Juju, hair as a spiritual conduit, fate, and transnational cultural exchanges. While it presents these themes in a comedic and romantic framework, it still engages with deep-seated African metaphysical beliefs, a significant motif of Afrospiritualism in my transnational screenplay technique

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter has explained autoethnography research as research methodology which allows the researcher to draw on personal experiences and reflexivity to examine cultural phenomena (and as peculiar to this research) providing insights into the creation and representation of hybridity in Nollywood. It has established that the research will employ primary sources, including the researcher’s own films (e.g., *Love is in the Air* and *Special Jollof*) and secondary sources such as literary texts to arrive at a conclusion. The autoethnographic approach as established in this chapter will enable a deeper understanding of the insider-outsider dynamic, where the researcher’s dual role as both a filmmaker and researcher informs the analysis. The research also includes a transnational screenplay, *Sidibe: The Castaway*, which explores mental health and cultural conflict



in postcolonial Nigeria. The study seeks to contribute both scholarly and practical insights into the cultural hybridity prevalent in Nollywood

The next chapter will examine the concept of transnationalism, attempting to articulate the issues revolving around Nigerian national ideology, culture, and tradition in a multi-tribal and ethnic nation. Additionally, given that filmmaking in Africa is a postcolonial activity, the issue of preserving an authentic African identity in the middle of a global milieu that is becoming increasingly hybridised due to transnational cinematic interactions will form a significant discourse in this next chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FILM ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapters (particularly in chapters one and three), I have been able to establish the core aim of my research which is to explore how my previous experiences (by this I mean the films and novels I encountered while growing up) have influenced (and continued to influence) my creative practice. In chapter two, I have reviewed key concepts such as cinematic nationalism, investigating if Nollywood film culture can be considered a national cinema. Going forward, I extended the issues of cinematic nationalism to transnationalism, examining how cinematic transnationalism has continued to foster hybridity in global filmic culture. This chapter will feature the analyses of two Nigerian films by other filmmakers: *Namasta Wahala*(2020),and *Wedding Party*(2016), based on hybridity, with Bhabha's "Third Space" as a theoretical framework towards underpinning the hybrid nature of these films.

Again, in this chapter, I aim to reflect on how these artistic creations have influenced the concerns of cultural hybridity in my current creative work. I hope to draw significant attention to story and thematic thrust of most of these novels, films and Television drama which are often centred on love stories. The protagonist often falls in love with a person of a different nationality or cultural affiliations, faces severe battles through nature/peoples/culture who often oppose the proposed union. These oppositions and the protagonist's quest to achieve his/her aim invariably

imposes very complicated plot structure and engaging story lines which are often resolved in a melodramatic way, wherein the protagonist eventually succeeds to win his love. Thus, in this chapter, analyses of how my two films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof* have been influenced by my cultural experiences which is seen in some deliberate decisions I made through the planning and production of the two films. These conscious decisions are influenced by interactions achieved through intercultural resistance and negotiations in the third space of enunciation.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Two Nigerian Films with Elements of Hybridity

Bhabha and Fanon as have been expressed in the previous chapters argued that the originality and purity of cultures are unattainable. The question of hybridised cultural forms continues to resurge in scholarly discourse with emphasis on the influence of post-modernism, post-feminism, migration, religion, and digitisation on cultural identities. These indexes are articulated as **reaction, resistance, and self-reconciliation**. As already stated in chapter two, citing Fanon, Bhabha noted that colonisation is incapable of taking the identity and cultural heritage of the natives. Bhabha however espoused how the natives resist the complete annihilation of their culture and explained how the third space of articulation helps in articulating cultural difference, assimilation of contraries, as well as forging another culture that is perceived as an **international culture**, which is not based on multi-culturalism or cultural diversity but based on cultural hybridity (1994, pp.50-56).

Going forward, the concept of international culture seems to be fuelling the transnational concepts prevalent in Nollywood films currently, as evidenced in *Namasta Wahala*, an Indian-Nigerian film collaboration, one of the films under study. The film features the negotiation between Indian and Nigerian cultures, leading to the negotiation of another unique culture, which lends credence to Bhabha's concept of third space. This concept, as seen in the hybridised filmic forms, transforms the Nigerian Indian film technique into a new film form, such as the transformation of the *actor-standup-technique* (Indian) which refers to the dynamic, expressive, and often theatrical performance style in Indian cinema and *actor-sit-down technique* (Nigeria) which suggests a more dialogue-driven, intimate and often static acting style in Nigerian Cinema into a negotiated convergence *standup-sit-down actor technique*. This hybrid approach fuses elements of both styles, creating a balanced performance technique where actors alternate between high-energy movement and seated, expressive storytelling, adapting to the narrative's demands.

Through transnational cinematic exchanges, these two distinct performance styles have merged, resulting in a hybridised acting technique that balances physical dynamism with verbal and emotional depth. This transformation signifies a new filmic expression born of cultural exchange, where Nollywood and Indian Cinema influences interact to produce a distinctive performance style that neither fully belongs to one tradition nor the other but exists in a hybrid “Third Space”. This suggests how globalization and transnational cinema shape new storytelling and performance methods in Nigerian film.. Secondly film, the music is a blend of the two filmic clichés such that it produces an inter-sonic blend of Indian and Nigerian music concepts.

*Namaste Wahala* is based on a lone relationship between Raj (Ruslaan Mumtaz) and Didi (Ini Dima-Okojie). The duo had met along the beach and fell in love at first sight. Raj is an Indian, whereas Didi is a Nigerian. Didi’s father, Ernest (Richard Mofe Damijo), owned a big law firm and had trained Didi as a lawyer, positioning her to take over from him and manage his law firm. In order to actualise this, he positions Sumto (Ibrahim Suleiman), a lawyer, and his staff to marry his daughter Didi so that both will manage his law firm. Therefore, Ernest becomes very apprehensive when he realises that his only daughter, Didi, has brought in an Indian as her fiancée.

To Ernest, it was bad enough that his daughter’s proposed fiancé is not a lawyer, and yet, he is from India. His vehement rejection of the proposed relationship ignited the narrative’s conflict, which is accelerated by Raj’s mother, Merrra (Sujata Sehgal), who rejects Didi as her proposed daughter-in-law. Didi, who works at her father’s law firm, is currently attached to an NGO, being managed by an Indian Leila (Hamisha Daryani Ahuja). The NGO, being a human rights organisation, institutes a case of rape against Ernest’s law firm. Ernest’s client had raped a lady whom the NGO wants to get justice on her behalf. This implies that Didi (the prosecuting lawyer of the NGO) will be up against her father Ernest (the defending lawyer) in the law court. In spite of her father’s wish for Didi to drop the case, Didi insisted. This further degenerates the relationship she has with her father. Later on, the two parties decide to settle out of court with her father, Ernest, agreeing to pay the damage of seventy-five million naira only after Didi provides sufficient evidence of maltreatment of her client, evidence which Preemo (Osas Ighodaro), who works with Ernest, had tried to destroy.

*Wedding Party* (2016) is a comedy film that seemingly obeys the classical unity of time, actions, and place. Set on the wedding day of Dozie Onwuka (Banky.W.) and Dunni Coker (Adesua Etomi). The couple’s families are from different ethnic groups in Nigeria; Igbo and

Yoruba, as well as demarcated along class structure; rich and educated (for Onwuka's) and rich and non-educated (for Coker's) families. The clichés of various ethnic extractions as well as educated and non-educated natures of both families set the filmic conflict in motion. Conversely, in *Wedding Party*, at the inception of the narrative, the Onwuka and Coker families are seen preparing for the wedding ceremony of their children, whereas their children (who are about to wed) are seen in their various (hotel) rooms preparing for the wedding ceremony.

The film *Wedding Party* x-rays the contemporary realities and expectations of planning a societal wedding. In the narrative arch of the film, Dozie Onwuka (Banky W.), who is to marry Dunni Coker (Adesua Etomi), is portrayed as a chronic womaniser. Thus, while Dozie and his friends are dressing up in their rooms, Rosie (Beverly Naya), Dozie's ex-girlfriend, shows up inside the room, excuses everybody in the room, and puts a dirty underwear in Dozie's suit's breast pocket before his (Dozie's) father, Felix Onwuka (Richard Mofe Damijo), steps into the room, obviously to prevent the unthinkable.

The film presents adequate conflict created through negotiation and resistance of different ethnic, cultural, and class differences in the narrative. Most times, these conflicts are seen within western cultural intrusion through the continental wedding planning method as well as continental versus local dishes in the wedding ceremony. Again, conflict is built on the misgivings of Sola (Ikechukwu Onunaku), the best man of Dozie Onwuka, who is characterised as a joker. The buildup of the conflict is seen after the wedding. On their way to the reception hall, the newly married Dozie and Dunni start kissing and fondling themselves inside the car, and in a bid to bring out a handkerchief from Dozie's breast suit pocket, Dunni brings out a lady's dirty underwear, a situation that almost breaks the wedding. After much argument and negotiation, Dozie and Dunni believe it could be one of Sola's pranks.

While the conflict of the dirty underwear is raging between them, their parents and guests are already at the reception venue, wondering what could have been holding them from coming. Tinuade Coker's (Sola Sobowale) character as a non-educated Yoruba woman is well projected through her uncontrollable local Yoruba-trader mannerisms, anxiety, and anxious expressions. The later arrival of the couple sets the filmic pace in motion once again, as there is an exquisite wedding celebration. Again, during the toast, the drunken Sola mistakenly plays a wrong tape to the wedding audience; a tape where Dozie is seen involving himself in illicit behaviour with another girl during his bachelor's eve. In the middle of the video clip, Dunni runs out of the wedding hall,

and following her departure, the wedding guests also scatter. Later in the evening, Dozie traces Dunni to a beach and they make up.

In the two films under review, there are various forms of cultural resistance, negotiations, and recreation that underpin Bhabha's concept of **third space**. In both films, various social conditions underpin Bhabha's notion of a dialectical process of reconciliation. In "*Wedding Party*," for instance, two Nigerian cultures, Yoruba and Igbo, are presented. The conflict and negotiation between the Onwuka's, representing the Igbos and the Cokers, representing the Yorubas, foreground this dialectical process of reconciliation such that at the end of the film, Dozie Onwuka (son of the Onwukas- Igbos) and Dunni Coker (daughter of the Cokers—Yoruba) will, through biological and cultural negotiations, produce a hybrid offspring who is neither completely Igbo nor Yoruba. Again, this dialectical process of reconciliation is seen in the binary struggle between the couple (representing the younger generation) and the parents of the couple (representing the older generation). The couple in their conduct, characterisation, and mannerism are given to the modern life experiences (Western/European culture), whereas their parents have elements of African cultural indexes as seen specifically in Tinuade Coker's mannerism and conduct. This generational difference/gap is equally perceived when both the couple's parents (Onwuka's-Igbo's & Coker's-Yoruba's) dance in their individual cultural styles during the wedding ceremony. The Igbo and Yoruba traditional dance techniques and characteristics are very strongly represented in their dance. Contrarily, the couple dance in a western/European style.

It can be deduced that the two approaches to these dance patterns support the old and modern reconciliation processes by representing the old and Western/European. Additionally, this dialectical process is highlighted by the distinctive Igbo and Yoruba dancing forms. Hybridity in dance tone and movement is, therefore, achieved through this process. However, these cultural differences -of dancing styles that represent the different tribes- would be unintelligible to an uninformed, non-Nigerian audience and this can be said to be a kind of national product.

Though seemingly two cultures, the *Wedding Party* delineated three cultures which were eventually negotiated as one hybrid. At the surface level, it seems that the dialectical process is between Western/European and African culture, but with in-depth analysis, there is a tripartite struggle, resistance, and negotiation between two African cultures: Igbo versus Yoruba, in contention with the Western/European culture. This is not just evident in the dance, as explicated above, but in the dishes/foods (Oriental versus Traditional African; Igbo-Yoruba). The issue of the

*banga* soup, which Tinuade (Dunni's mother) specially made for her on her wedding day, is readily foregrounded to explicate this assertion. The same *banga* soup she had earlier used to embarrass her during her secondary school days because of its offensive smell. The issues of dialectical negotiation in oriental versus African dishes are also foregrounded in the wedding ceremony. The Oriental dishes are promoted and displayed prominently over the Yoruba traditional dishes, but the wedding guests preferred the African Yoruba dishes, which are in short supply. The preference of local dishes like *amala* and *ewedu* by a white lady, Deardre Winston (Daniella Down), Dunni's friend justifies this assertion.

Secondly, despite every effort made by the continental wedding planner to valorise continental dishes, they fell to their knees to Iya Michael, the lady that prepared Yoruba food, using Yoruba dialect instead of the initial Queen's English she is used to, to beg her for more local delicacies when many guests demand local delicacies. Her actions of not only begging the lady, but also kneeling to beg and speaking Yoruba dialect to appeal to her conscience, underpin "true - self - revelation," as explained by Bhabha in the third space. Though an African, she is earlier given to Eurocentric ideals, which failed her when it mattered most to her. "This true self-revelation" could put a check on such Eurocentric attitudes, leading to another form of hybridity from her double self: Afro-Eurocentrism. These various cultural indexes create the required tension in *The Wedding Party*. At the end of the film, a hybrid of both class is also achieved and a willing if mildly hesitant truce between both families.

The film showcases a filmmaking style influenced by colonial mindsets, blending cultural clichés and class struggles. This colonial influence is evident in the film's exploration of ethnic stereotypes, class divisions, and Western wedding practices, such as the intrusion of European cultural elements in the Nigerian context. The narrative builds on these cultural conflicts, offering a space for hybridisation, where the characters, through cultural negotiation, find common ground. This results in a reconciled, hybridised identity that navigates between African traditions and Western influences. The film reflects Bhabha's concept of *third space*, where no single culture dominates, but a new, blended cultural identity emerges, symbolised by the union of two distinct Nigerian cultures and the Western influence present in the wedding celebrations. However the two films; *The Wedding Party* and *Namatsa Whahala* did not explore Afrospiritualism in Transnational Screenplay while dealing with the issues bordering on cultural hybridity. Afrospiritualism in Transnational Screenplay as I earlier expounded enables a fusion of African spiritual traditions with contemporary cultural expressions and that is what my screenplay, *Sidibe* hopes to bring to the table , proffering Afrospiritualism as a model of Transnational Screenplay in Nigeria (Africa).

The third space is one of convenience as both families realise, they can do nothing to stop the love between their children. The tacit theme here is that marriage between people from different warring worlds is a recipe for harmony between the duelling families. ‘Romeo and Juliet’ died to achieve it. Dunni and Dozie live on, and the filial truce between both families usher all into a better place and the third space. These various cultural indexes create the required tension in the wedding party. As I have expounded, various cultural ideologies and worldviews lead through conflict to fruitful negotiation, which is best described as third space, leading to an international culture that is based on multinationalism.

*Namasta Wahala* presents two cultures: Nigerian and Indian cultures, which undergo various resistances, leading to Bhabha’s concept of reconciliation and an international culture. As previously established in reading Bhabha, **Third Space** often enters the negotiation between two cultures such that no culture is subdued; rather, it forms a hybrid. The film *Namasta Wahala* vividly explicates the concept of third space through the presentation of the social condition involving a dialectical process of reconciliation. Firstly, Raj and Didi, who are from India and Nigeria, meet and fall in love. Raj’s mother and Didi’s father strongly resisted such a relationship on the grounds of cultural differences. Unfolding events involving negotiations finally lead to their acceptance as well as their subsequent marriage. The fusion of the two cultures, Indian and Nigeria, in a film, therefore, not only develops hybridity in cultural indexes but a transnational film culture, which could be termed *Nolly-Bollywood*. While the transnational film culture could be seen in a hybridised Nolly-Bollywood form, noticeable in a blend seen in the Indian-Nigerian soundtrack, Indian-Nigerian blended costumes, and Indian-Nigerian dance steps and music tonality, all these new concepts are consolidated during the wedding ceremony between Raj and Didi.

Before these noticeably hybridised forms, various resistance and contestation are seen when Raj’s mother Merrra (Sujata Sehgal) and Didi cook in the same kitchen for Raj. Two types of food are presented to Raj by his fiancée and his mother, leading to a dialectical conflictual state. The confused Raj negotiated by eating both foods at the same time, eventually leading to the process of reconciliation. Again, food being a cultural motif is upheld in a hybridised method such that none subdues the other, valorising Bhabha’s concept of **third space**, which implies that no culture is presented as a weaker culture. This is further reinforced by the fact that Raj’s mother later tastes Didi’s food and confirms it wasn’t bad after all. In the future, their wedding will feature

Nigerian and Indian food, costumes, and dance steps, resulting in a hybridised new international culture that Bhabha refers to as "third space."

### 1.1 Comparative tabular analyses of *Namasta Wahala* and *Wedding Party*

Indices	<i>Namasta Wahala</i>	<i>Wedding Party</i>
1 Director (Gender/nationality)	Indian – Hamisha Daryani Ahuja (Female)	Nigerian – Kemi Adetiba (Female)
2 Shooting location	Nigeria (Lagos)	Nigeria (Lagos)
3 Cast configuration	Indian and Nigerian actors	Nigerian actors with one mixed race actress, Daniela Down,
4 Costume	Mixture of African, European and Indian Costumes	Mixture of European, Yoruba and Igbo Costumes
5 Prevailing Narrative Techniques	Indian-Nollywood	Neo-Nollywood
6 Main conflict	Didi and Raj are in love but are being prevented from marriage by their parents due to the different ethnicity. Secondly, Didi's NGO institutes a lawsuit with her father's law firm for sexual assault.	The Groom's past womanising life almost ruins their wedding as her former girlfriend inserts a dirty underwear into his wedding suit on his wedding day.
7 (Inter)nationality	Indian / Nigeria	Nigerian with one mixed race actress
8 Cultures	Indian / Nigerian (Igbo)	Yoruba / Igbo
9 Parent's resistance	Bride's father & mother as well as Groom's mother. Groom's father accepted	Bride's mother and father accepted; Groom's father accepted but Groom's mother resisted.
10 Food as cultural exchange/influences	Didi cooks noodles for Raj and the groom's mother tastes it and feels it is okay. A mixture of both dishes were served during Didi and Raj's wedding.	Though the presence of continental dishes, most indigenous Yoruba casts preferred the local delicacies during the wedding ceremony

The two films used shot/reverse shot, eye-line matches, point of view, and other characteristics that are derived from Western cinematic language and techniques to achieve their narratives. This style made sure that special African cultural storytelling techniques were combined with Western elements. The two films effectively exploited the shot/reverse shot technique, which involves moving the camera back and forth between two actors to create the spatial relationships between the characters and maintain the natural flow of the dialogue. This is a common approach in Western filmmaking. Furthermore, both films used the Eye-Line Matches technique, which is common in Western cinema. Here, the characters' off-screen gaze is revealed in the shot that follows, giving the viewer context and directing their attention. These western filmic styles employed in the two films which are culturally driven create a sense of visual hybridity wherein the films, though a combination of diverse stories from various cultures, tend to have a universal visual style. This runs at variance with Nollywood Screen culture which is given to long shot-takes, where camera



always remained static to take shots. This according to Ayakoroma (2014), is as the result of the influence of the long theatrical tradition equated to Nigeria film industry.

#### **4.3 Analyses of *Love is in the Hair*(2016) and *Special Jollof*(2020) directed by Emem Isong (Researcher)**

In this section, I draw attention to how the creative works I encountered while growing up have continued to impact on the issues of cultural hybridity in my current creative practice by adopting cultural hybridity theories of “third space” as reviewed in chapter two to analyse: *Love is in the Hair*, and *Special Jollof*. *Special Jollof* was primarily shot in Houston Texas, United States with few scenes shot in Asaba, Nigeria. Residing in the United States at the time prompted my concern about the perception of Africans there, motivating me to create a film addressing these stereotypes and fostering understanding. Casting mostly occurred through submission of head shots and profiles, except for the role of Racheal, played by a Caucasian actress, for which an open audition was held.

The story revolves around Afro Spice Restaurant, where Nigerian cuisine, including the famed Special Jollof Rice, is served. The staff, predominantly black, include Ijeoma (Uche Jombo) and Musty (Femi Adebayo), are managed by Mummy B. (Bukky Wright). The introduction of Rachael, a diligent worker, surprises and impresses her colleagues, except for Sherie, an African American waitress. Unbeknownst to them, Rachel harbours ulterior motives, seeking to expose the perceived disadvantages of Immigrants, especially Nigerians in the US. Rachael’s mission stems from personal betrayal by her boyfriend, Josh, who cheated on her with a Nigerian immigrant, Kiki, leading to a broken relationship and Rachael’s scepticism about Nigerian Immigrants.

Rachael suffers a heartbreak and a crack in her relationship, and being a journalist, when Rachael’s company seeks to embark on a month of celebrating black history, Rachael totally kicks against it. Still hurt by her heartbreak, she proposes to the company that blacks have often caused more harm than good, and to prove her allusion, she opted to embark on a three-month investigation to substantiate that immigrants have only caused trouble in the United States. All of this led her to carry out her mission in the Afro Spice Restaurant, which is filled with her target culprits.

At Afro Spice Restaurant, the owner, Kenny (Joseph Benjamin), falls in love with Rachael after his first encounter with her. Rachael, not knowing that she is relating with the CEO of the restaurant, is very professional in attending to him, and her diligence and strict adherence to the

policy of the restaurant endeared Kenny to Rachael. Unfortunately, Rachael already indicts Musty (Femi Adebayo), who is a legal immigrant but has plans on bringing his family over for a better life. She did this after eavesdropping on his conversation with his family. Musty is vindicated after Kenny (owner of Afro Spice) puts a call through to convince the necessary authorities that Musty is a legal immigrant. Kenny finds out about Rachael's mission, though Rachael is already in deep regret and becomes unable to help the situation. Being already deeply in love with Kenny, she apologises several times to him, which he rejects until he (Kenny) finally visits to inquire about her reason for her action. Peace, understanding, and love are fostered, which presumably leads to a marriage of the two cultures, thus achieving cultural hybridity.

*Special Jollof* is inspired by the state of the world with racial and tribal borders. Jollof rice is a West African delicacy that is one of the staple meals in Nigeria. There is an ongoing humorous war between Ghana and Nigeria about whose jollof rice tastes better. Jollof is also representative of unity in Nigeria because, regardless of the tribe one comes from, jollof is a meal that binds different ethnic groups in Nigeria. In this film, I explore Racheal's journey into Bhabha's 'Third Place' through her involvement in the restaurant. In the restaurant, she is subsumed in African cultural experiences of dresses, foods, music, language, and mannerisms, which eventually transform her into a hybridised personality'. In the film, there is a coexistence of people of various cultures, as seen in Racheal and the other Africans who work in the restaurant. At first, Racheal seemed to be ridiculed by the blacks who work in the restaurant for mispronouncing different African delicacies. However, there is gradual acceptance and assimilation by these blacks, who later become fond of her.

In Afro Spice Restaurant, food is used to establish a cultural rallying point amongst Africans in diaspora who are of different ethnic extractions. A 'special jollof rice' dish prepared in an American kitchen run by Nigerians furthers its hybrid essence by assembling Africans of different ethnicities in the diaspora who often meet to relish the taste of the food. By meeting in the restaurant, there is a cultural interaction that often leads to hybridity. The staple foods for the Igbo people of Nigeria before colonisation were yams and maize. The Yoruba's primary staple foods are solid foods that are typically cooked, crushed, or prepared with hot water. Other options include plantains, corn, beans, pork, and fish. Foods like iyan (pounded yam), amala, eba, semo, fufu, moin moin (bean cake), and akara. The Yoruba soup consists primarily of vegetables and soups such as egusi, ewedu, and okra. However, during colonialism, rice replaced most of these local

foods, chicken and beef were also introduced. Rice dishes like jollof rice and fried rice a unifying food that are very popular for great occasions. However, Yorubas unlike the Igbos still retain and celebrate some of their local foods like *gbegiri* and *amala* as seen in the film. The Igbo and Yoruba cultures are rich and diverse, they exhibit distinct characteristics in language, religion, social structure, arts and traditions.

The film can be said to be an attempt at infusing Nollywood narrative techniques with Hollywood screen culture through its narrative style of visual exposition, drone shots and shot duration on screen. The aspects of Nollywood narrative techniques can be seen in the mise-en-scene construction of the film, especially the scenes that were shot in Nigeria wherein the Nigerian scenic environment and costumes are vividly portrayed. Beyond the scenic environment of the scenes that were shot in Houston Texas, the Nigerian actors who serve Nigerians in Afro Spice restaurant have core Nigerian accent and mannerisms; a reason that facilitated the “third space” immersion of Racheal. Attention is drawn to issues of perception: Europeans versus Africans as well as Africans versus Europeans, which are key cultural elements. The film was shot in 2019 at a moment when immigration was a burning issue, during the Trump Administration. Racheal’s perceived experience of black Africans, indeed Nigerian immigrants, seems to reflect a general Europeanised worldview. I, therefore, employ the film to raise conversations about the lived experiences of African immigrants in foreign countries as well as the identity stereotypes that often inhibit certain Africans in diaspora from getting assistance from Westerners.

Afro Spice Restaurant could be likened to the third space where cultures collide as it forms a rallying point where people of different races are magnetised, just like Bhabha explains about the “third space”. This assertion is buttressed because Afro Spice Restaurant is a place where one culture seems to coexist with other cultures, albeit with mild osmosis between them. In this space, Rachael, in a bid to glean information from them, had to infuse herself into the culture with a remodelled experience of immigrants. The major point of hybridisation happened in her change of mind after learning about the people and embracing their culture. This is fostered through the friendship and love that are eschewed between Rachael, an educated white American woman, and Kenny, an educated and successful Nigerian.

In *Special Jollof*, the idea of global culture appears to be igniting the transnational notions currently common in Nollywood films. The film depicts the negotiation of the cultures of America and Nigeria, which leads to the negotiation of a third distinct culture and supports Bhabha's theory

of third space. Evidence of fast-pace-kinetic-shot-technique (American) and actor-sit-down technique (Nigerian) are transformed into a negotiated convergence of moderation in both filmic styles in accordance with this concept, as shown in the hybridised filmic forms. Secondly, the soundtrack combines the two clichés from the film, creating a sonic fusion of Nigerian and American musical ideas.

*Love is in the Hair* equally draws inspiration from African beliefs in Juju, intertwining them with the cultural significance of Indian hair. Filmed during a period when Indian and Bolivian hair were the rave of the moment amongst Nigerians, this comedy explores themes of love, fate, and cultural clashes. Shot in New Delhi and Lagos, the film employs a file cabinet casting approach. The story centres on Johnny, aka TF-twelve fingers (Ime Bishop), who dreams of owning the best salon in town but is disrupted by his violent girlfriend. Seeking refuge, he finds solace in his friend Raymond's hair salon, where he is employed by Raymond mainly because of his dexterity with his fingers in hair braiding. Johnny falls for Raymond's neighbour, Doreen (Omotu Blessing). However, his attempts at wooing her are thwarted when he discovers she has a boyfriend. Desperate to win Doreen's love, Johnny turns to a spiritualist who requests Doreen's hair for a voodoo ritual. Johnny obliges and finds a way to get a piece of Doreen's hair to the spiritualist who performs the ritual. Doreen invites him to her birthday party, which makes him feel the charm is working, but he gets the shock of his life when Doreen agrees to marry her boyfriend, who proposes at the party and Doreen accepts.

A twist emerges as the voodoo attracts the original owner of the Indian hair, Rhani (Vani Vas), who travels from India to Nigeria to find Johnny, the love of her life. Intrigued by Johnny's lifestyle, Rhani begins to bond with him, causing jealousy in Raymond's manager, who sabotages the voodoo at the spiritualist's shrine. Johnny in revenge, angrily destroys every voodoo doll and potion he sees at shrine thereby also destroying Raymond's ties with his wife. Following this destruction, Rhani returns to her family after the spell has been broken. Johnny discovers that he has truly fallen for her and begs her to stay but she insists on leaving. Johnny then sets out on a country-journey to India to search for Rhani against all persuasion, selling all his properties, and winning back the love of his life, irrespective of the fact that Rhani is engaged to be married to Raj Rhani, her uncle's choice for her. Rhani accepts to marry Johnny, and the story ends with a flashy Indian wedding between Johnny and Rhani. This marriage again foregrounds cultural hybridity.

I explore Rhani's journey into 'The Third Place' through her visit to Nigeria, where she is subsumed in a cultural experience that eventually transforms her into a hybridised personality.' While in Nigeria, the hypnotised Rhani made several efforts to win TF's love which include engaging a Nigerian to teach her Nigerian dishes, dances to please TF. Herein in the film, costume, music, and language which are definitive filmic elements, demonstrate how hybridity remains one of the most controversial and complicated theories and realities. In Nigeria, there are basically three different tribes: the Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, as well as many other ethnic extractions. These different tribes and ethnic extractions have their own unique traditional dress patterns, and these traditional dresses are normally meant for occasions.

However, we see the modern Nigerian costume, which combines jeans, shirts, and t-shirts, as daily wear in Nigerian society. The costume in the film was highly stylised in the sense that most key players wore jeans and t-shirts all through the film. Rhani, her uncle, and aunty are seen wearing hybridised traditional Indian flowing gowns. We see TF's visiting New Deli in modern jeans and a T-shirt, which are equally the regular costume in New Deli countryside. However, TF's wedding with Rhani showcases the traditional clothing of Indians. In the wedding too, African songs are played and danced with Indian dance patterns, producing a hybridised form of performance. This fascinating cultural fusion within the wedding scene, blending with the combination of African songs and Indian dance patterns creates a rich and unique art form that celebrates the diversity of the cultures involved. It is common in filmmaking to use music and sound cues to evoke specific settings. Employing Nigerian and Indian soundtrack clichés for scenes set in Nigeria and Indian soundtrack for scenes set in India helps reinforce the cultural authenticity of those settings within the film. This added depth and immersion to the storytelling by providing auditory cues that resonate with the audience's expectations and perceptions of the Nigerian and Indian cultures.

Issues of contestation and resistance between two families from different cultural backgrounds (Indian and Nigerian) who engage in a marital relationship are vividly presented. The process of "third space" of enunciation was assured in the film when both lovers at some stage visited the partners' countries wherein cultural assimilation and diffusion take place. The eventual marriage of the two lovers from different cultures, Johnny's and Rhani's, implies a formulation of a hybridised cultural concept, as witnessed not only in their assimilation of one another's cultural value in the film but in their presumed offspring.

#### 4.4 Similarities between *Special Jollof* and *Love is in the Hair*

Both films employ a hybridity of costumes, screenplay, music, dance, and language as filmic elements to tell love stories. *Special Jollof* tells the story of love, which is immersed in a hybrid of African and European cultures. In the film, Kenny, an African and the owner of the restaurant where Racheal works, falls in love with her. A love story between two people from different cultural backgrounds eschews resistance and negotiations. In the restaurant, Racheal (a white) is subsumed in African cultural experiences of dresses, foods, music, language, and mannerisms, which eventually transforms her into a 'hybridised personality'; while Kenny, an African living in American society, has equally been transformed into a hybridised personality. The major point of hybridisation manifests in Racheal's change of mind after being immersed in African culture through Bhabha's concept of "third space" during her involvement in the restaurant where she encounters African way of life. She renounced her quest for vengeance and turns a new leaf having experienced the friendship, kindness and love brewing between her (Racheal, the educated white American woman), and Kenny (an educated and successful Nigerian businessman).

Similarly, the film *Love is in the hair* is also a love story that integrates Indian culture with African culture. It tells the love story of Rhani (an Indian lady) and Johnny (a Nigerian guy). Rhani visits Johnny from India in Nigeria and gets assimilated into Nigerian cultural experiences such as dressing, food, music, mannerisms, etc. Johnny in turn also visits Rhani in India to make amends after they had issues in Nigeria and were well subsumed into Indian culture, making them both hybrid personalities, which is crowned by their eventual marriage.

The two films under review support Bhabha's notion of a dialectical process of reconciliation with various forms of cultural resistance, negotiations, and recreation. In *Special Jollof*, for instance, two Nigerian cultures, Igbo and Yoruba, are presented, and the negotiated relationship in Afro Spice restaurant between Ijeoma (Uche Jombo) and Musty (Adebayo Femi), who are from Igbo and Yoruba extraction in Nigeria. The Igbo and Yoruba cultures are two distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria, each with its own unique traditions, language, and customs. The newly negotiated relationship between Racheal, an educated white American woman, and Kenny, an educated and successful Nigerian will, through biological and cultural negotiations, produce a hybrid offspring who is neither completely Nigerian nor American, because of the conflict and negotiation between the cultures.

In *Love is in the Hair*, two cultures are portrayed: Nigerian and Indian, which encounter various resistances that are eventually resolved to reinforce Bhabha's concept of reconciliation. According to what was previously learned from reading Bhabha, Third Space frequently enters the negotiations between two cultures so that neither culture is suppressed but rather creates hybridity. The concept of third space is effectively explained in the film, *Love is in the Hair*, through the depiction of a societal situation involving a dialectical process of reconciliation. First, Nigerian born Johnny, a.k.a. TF-Twelve Finger (Bishop Umoh), falls in love with an Indian lady, Rhani (Vani Vas), who through voodoo means (supernatural powers) had arrived in Nigeria from India, locates and follows Johnny all around until she gets his attention. A relationship like this was fiercely opposed by Rhani's Uncle and Jonny's friends to cultural differences. These numerous resistances ultimately yield to Bhabha's concept of reconciliation.

It has been revealed through rereading Bhabha that Third Space frequently enters the negotiations between two cultures, preventing one culture from being subjugated and instead creating hybridity. The description of the social condition involving a dialectical process of reconciliation in the film, *Love in the Hair* vividly explains the idea of third space which is exemplified in Jonny and Rhani's experience, wherein, we see Bhabha's reconciliation through their subsequent marriage. This marriage ceremony often creates a balance between two hybridising cultures through dance, costume and food. Though these tensions created before now may not simply melt away in the process of reconciliation and may reassert themselves in different forms over the years, however, the emphasis to which the research draws attention is the fact that through the process of reconciliation, there is a marriage of culture which is embodied in the two characters from different cultural extractions physically getting married.

The film *Love is in the Hair* by is influenced by the concept of Afrospiritualism through its engagement with Juju (African spiritual practices), fate, and the cultural significance of hair in African and global contexts. In many African and diasporic traditions, hair is considered a conduit of personal energy and spiritual identity. The film's focus on the use of hair in a voodoo ritual aligns with Afrospiritualist beliefs that hair carries spiritual essence and can be used for supernatural interventions, such as love charms or protection spells. This reflects a deep-rooted African epistemology where bodily elements (like hair or nails) hold metaphysical significance. By weaving spirituality, love, and cultural trends into its narrative, I tried to subtly critique contemporary obsessions with beauty standards (imported hair) and reliance on spiritual shortcuts

for personal success. Here I presented African spirituality to interact with modern lifestyles, often revealing the consequences of misusing spiritual powers.

On the other hand, the film *Special Jollof* (2020), primarily explores themes of immigration, cultural identity, and love, particularly the relationship between a Nigerian immigrant and an African American journalist. While it is deeply rooted in African culture, the film does not explicitly engage with Afro spiritualism in the way that Nollywood transnational screenplays focused on mysticism, ancestral connections, or spiritual traditions. However, if we broaden the lens of Afro spiritualism to include cultural resilience and the ways African traditions survive in new environments, *Special Jollof* could be seen as engaging with Afro spiritualist themes in a subtle, modern way. The film showcases how African traditions, including food (jollof rice as a cultural symbol), serve as a link between the past and present, a key theme in Afro spiritualism.

## 1.2 Comparative tabular analyses of *Special Jollof* and *Love is in The Hair*

Indices	<i>Special Jollof</i>	<i>Love is in the Hair</i>
1 Director (Gender/nationality)		
2 Shooting location	Lagos)	Nigeria (Lagos)
3 Cast configuration	Nigerian and American actors	Nigerian and Indian actors
4 Costume	Mixture of African and modern costumes. African costumes are majorly used in Afro Spice Restaurant	Mixture of Western, Yoruba and Igbo Costumes
5 Prevailing Narrative Techniques	Nollywood-Hollywood	Nollywood- Bollywood
6 Main conflict	Rachael and Kenny fall in love but immigration issues almost abort their love as Rachael attempting to secretly investigate the black illegal immigrants in American almost indicts Kenny's staff	Jonny falls in love with Doreen who does not reciprocate his love. He consults the metaphysical means to get Doreen's attentions and he is required to get a piece of her hair. He cuts her presumed hair which is an artificial hair of Rhani (an Indian girl) who falls madly in love with him
7 (Inter)nationality	Nigeria and American	Nigerian and Indian
8 Cultures	Nigeria (Igbo Yoruba) and American	Nigerian (Cross-River) and Indian
9 Resistance in relationship	Kenny discovers Rachael's undercover mission	The spell cast on Rhani is broken by Raymond's manager out of jealousy
10 Food as cultural exchange/influences	Afro Spices provides local African delicacies which serve as an emersion point for Racheal who learn these different dishes.	The hypnotised Rhani learns and appreciate various forms of African dishes when he visits Jonny
11 Languages	Nigerian and American English and a bit of Igbo, Yoruba languages are	Nigerian and Indian English and a bit of pidgin English languages are



	employed at different scenes to create the required moods	employed in different scenes. Pigeon English is mainly use by Jonny and his friends.
<b>12</b> Soundtracks	A blend of Nigerian American musical instrumentations is evident in the film. While the filmic action that take place in Nigeria employ Nigerian soundtrack to create the mood of Nigerian locale, the filmic actions in America employ the America sound forms.	A blend of Nigerian Indian musical instrumentations is evident in the film. Indian soundtrack is employed to create the mood of Indian locale as filmic actions transposes to the Indian community.
<b>13</b> Afro spiritualism	Engaged subtly with Afro spiritualist themes in a manner that film showcases how African traditions- food (jollof rice symbolises unity.	Engaged Afro spiritualism through Juju (African spiritual practices), fate, and the cultural significance of hair in African and global contexts.

#### 4.5 Summary/Interlude

This research reaffirms Nollywood as a leading postcolonial Nigerian film industry that has revolutionised Black and African filmmaking while gaining international recognition. Chapter two explores Nollywood's role in transnationalism and its impact on other African film cultures, framing it within cultural hybridity as central to (trans)national cinema. Drawing from over 25 years of experience as a female filmmaker, an autoethnographic approach was adopted in chapter three to articulate Nollywood's hybrid identity, particularly through the script *Sidibe*. The research design integrates conceptual and empirical reviews to examine the role of filmmaker identity, limitations, and perspectives in shaping hybridity, aiming to develop Afro spiritual Transnational screenplay framework where no culture is marginalized, but rather foregrounding the spiritual essence of African culture in forging cultural hybridity in screenplays.

In this present chapter four, I undertook autobiographical analysis of *Special Jollof*(2020) and *Love is in the Hair*(2016), where I have attempted to propose a more balanced hybrid representation in screenplay borrowing the concept of "Afro spiritualism" as transnational screenplay technique. Apart from the fact that the films under review have a central theme of love, what is unique is, rather, the love encounter between partners from different transnational cultures (America-Nigeria) in *Special Jollof* (2020) and (Indian Nigerian) in *Love is in the Hair*. Beyond this uniqueness, I introduced the concept of Afro spiritualism in transnational screenplay *Love is in the Hair* which I further demonstrated in the research screenplay- *Sidebe*.

In the analyses of the four films as seen in this chapter, I espoused how the different characters who are in love with themselves went through this process of "third space" at different stages. This is vividly expressed in *Special Jollof* at the point in which Kenny is visited by Rachael. As Kenny takes her to his library, she asks if there are books on "*Shaku Shaku*" (African) dance.

Excitedly, Kenny asks how she knew that type of dance, and Rachael tells him that Ijeoma (a staff member of Afro Spices Restaurant) taught her the dance. Kenny rather prefers the American dance pattern, which he instantly lures Rachael to dance with him, enunciating that he is equally immersed in the western "third space" ideology. Both Johnny and Rhani take turns visiting their lover's countries to encounter this "third space" experience. *Love is in the Hair* embodies Afro spiritualism through its use of Juju, hair as a spiritual conduit, fate, and transnational cultural exchanges. In addition, using Homi Bhabha's "third space" theory, films like *The Wedding Party* (2016) and *Namaste Wahala* (2020) were equally analyzed in this chapter to highlight hybridity in Nollywood.

From the foregoing analyses it is evident that the films and novels I watched and read while growing up are (un)consciously impacting my creativity. This will be further demonstrated in chapter five which will feature the analyses of the screenplay, *Sidibe* – written for the project. I therefore suggest that in order to appreciate the analyses which comes up in the next chapter, I would suggest that you go read through the transnational screenplay- *Sidibe* as attached at the appendix wherein I proposed Afro spiritualism as a model for Nollywood transnational screenplay. In the succeeding chapters, having laid the theoretical frameworks in chapter two, I hope to answer some of the research questions I had raised in chapter one. Thus questions like; how cultural hybridity is embedded in Nollywood narratives; how I could deploy the concept of hybridity in my creative practice; how my identity, limitation and perspectives manifest in formal and thematic terms in my films; and what model of transnational screenplay could be adopted to adequately purvey Nigerian (African) cultural elements within the global space, will be addressed in the subsequent chapters.

Dear reader – we have come to the point of the screenplay which is the creative output of the research, Kindly go to the appendix and read the screenplay before reading the next chapter on the analyses of *Sidibe*, an Afro spiritual transnational screenplay which follows the journey of a young woman struggling with an identity crisis and a psychological condition intertwined with spiritual affliction. Gifted in sculpting and dancing, *Sidibe's* life takes a dark turn when the haunting 'Uyak' drumbeat triggers destructive episodes, leading her community to believe she is possessed by Uneke, the goddess of dance. Destined to serve as Uneke's priestess, she resists, spiraling into chaos. Simon, an English volunteer doctor, becomes fascinated by her artistry and resilience, determined to help her. With the aid of *Sidibe's* grandmother, a herbalist, and Uko, a

courageous villager, she is rescued from the village priestess who tortures her to force submission. Through this ordeal, Sidibe embarks on a transformative journey of healing and self-discovery, reclaiming her identity beyond spiritual bondage.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SCREENPLAY ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL HYBRIDISATION IN *SIDIBE***

## **5.1 Introduction:**

Cultural hybridisation is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon that reflects the globalised nature of contemporary cinema. This chapter explores key scholarly insights in analysing the screenplay, *Sidibe*, with the theoretical framework of cultural hybridisation within the realm of film. Therefore, as previously discussed in chapters two, three, and four, issues of identity crisis which explore different levels of cultural assimilation in creating character identity, will be considered in analysing the screenplay. Individual, ethnic, and international identity issues will be brought to light by this analysis. Discussions will also include topics related to the colonial legacy, which has had a significant impact on African identity and has resulted in the marginalisation and erasure of indigenous cultures. Undoubtedly, Transnational productions and globalisation have enabled the blending of cultures in African cinema; consequently, African directors are frequently exposed to an extensive array of global cultural influences. Thus, syncretism – the blending of components from many cultures to produce something new – as can result in innovative and unique forms of expression that draw from both traditional and contemporary influences, will be covered in this screenplay analysis.

## **5.2 Cultural Hybridisation in *Sidibe***

The screenplay, *Sidibe*, unfolds the story of a young woman, Sidibe, grappling with an identity crisis and a psychopathic condition. Gifted in sculptural artistry passed down from her grandmother, Sidibe is also a skilled dancer. Employing an element of concealment, the screenplay gradually unveils its filmic actions, building suspense. The narrative begins by immersing viewers in the serene beauty of Ikot Uboh, a tranquil village in Southern Nigeria, through picturesque opening scenes. Against this backdrop, Sidibe's eccentricity is introduced in scene three, marked by a sudden, jarring drumbeat known as the 'Uyak' drumbeat. This signals Sidibe's descent into destructive behaviour, as she recklessly damages plants and animals in the community before collapsing into oblivion.

Sidibe is foregrounded as a fighter driven by a strong sense of justice. She is believed to be possessed by 'Uneke' the goddess of dance and can only be liberated from this spiritual affliction by serving 'Uneke' as her lifelong priestess. Anytime Sidibe hears the 'Uyak' tune, she gracefully succumbs to the hypnotic rhythm and goes into rampage destroying everything on sight seemingly overtaken by a multitude of malevolent forces. One of these incidents almost got her

killed but was saved by the timely intervention of her father, Bassey, and Simon, a compassionate English volunteer Doctor working in her village.

Simon, captivated by Sidibe's artistic talents, resilience, and unwavering spirit, finds himself drawn to her. Despite the complexities of their relationship and the romantic tensions simmering between Simon and Omono, a colleague secretly harbouring feelings for him, Simon becomes determined to stand by Sidibe's and aid her in overcoming her affliction. With the help of Sidibe's wise grandmother, a herbalist deeply rooted in traditional practices, and the brave intervention of Uko, a young villager, Sidibe is rescued from the clutches of the village priestess. This harrowing ordeal sets her on a path towards healing and self-discovery, as she navigates the complexities of her condition and the enduring power of her own resilience. Sidibe later gets help through her grandmother who is a herbalist after Simon and Uko (a young villager) rescue her from the village priestess who subjects her to severe torture in the bid to get her to accept to become the priestess of Uneke.

Finally, Sidibe is able to overcome the illness which happens to be a reaction to the trauma of being raped by her uncle Okpoto on the night of their maiden rites' ceremony. Taking her innocence on same day, she is supposed to receive a special gift (dancing) from the goddess, who becomes a dark force which beclouds her gift and wrecks the manifestation of her gift of dancing. The story exposes the different cultural practices, perspectives, history, ideas, food, costume, dance of both Africa and Britain, although it all happens in Nigeria – Africa. These elements will be highlighted in this chapter to demonstrate how cultural hybridity is achieved in the screenplay.

In the opening scenes, particularly scene 10, Sidibe and her mother, Ekanem, engage in a verbal conflict about Sidibe's sculptural works, which Ekanem, citing the Bible; a colonial legacy, believes is a graven image, which is condemnable. The scene preceding scene 10, attempts to set the background of the film. Scenes 1 and 2 set the *mise-en-scène* background of the film. In scene 3, *Sidibe* is introduced with the effect of 'úyak' drumbeat resulting in the wanton destruction of things around her. These destructions are expository in scene 4 where the drummers, men in white wrapper around their groin and white chalk over their left eyes, are seen drumming. Nubile young maidens in skimpy white wrappers, beads around their waists, shake their waists vigorously to the rhythm of the music. This continues in scene 5 where a machete is seen swiftly running through crops chopping them down and subsequently ANIEFIOK, a young muscular man fiercely running down the road with machete in scene 6. In scene 7, we see hands covered in blood which raise a

croaking chicken. Scene 8 returns to the maidens dancing, and they resolve in a dialogue and the scene is subsequently filled with wanton destruction of plants and animals. These destruction in the village are revealed through an aerial shot in scene 9; a morning scene where we see a farmer who sees the destruction wrought upon the land and screams.

In scene 10, the implication of the argument or divergent views between Sidibe and Ekanem draws significant attention to the question of identity construction, relating to the various levels of cultural assimilation between people within a particular community. While Ekanem, an older woman (Sidibe's mother) is an ardent Christian who is not ready to bend or give in to her Christian faith for any reason, Sidibe becomes an example of the liberal mind that sees the sculptures as mere work of art, art pieces possessing no spiritual significance. These different views will still be applied in proposing solutions to the conflict created by the screenplay and will also draw significant attention to the role of cultural hybridity in resolving the conflict created by the screenplay.

The plot structure revolves around the enigmatic nature of Sidibe, whose eccentric behaviour, triggered by the distinct drumbeat known as 'UYAK' elicits various interpretations from those around her. Whenever Sidibe hears this drumbeat, she becomes engulfed by a frenzy, causing widespread destruction in her wake. However, upon regaining consciousness, she appears disoriented and devoid of any recollection of the chaos she has caused. On one such occasion, after hearing the "Uyak" drumbeat, there is so much destruction in the village, including the horrible slaughtering of livestock, that this makes the king summon everyone to the village square for an emergency meeting. Interestingly, Sidibe, who champions that the culprit be brought to book, is accused by Aniefiok of being the culprit.

#### ANIEFIOK

We saw you... (referring to Sidibe) naked, dancing beneath the moon like one possessed by gods of dance. At first, it seemed like new madness, but then you started to growl like an animal, destroying things like one possessed by a thousand demons.  
(Scene 12)

While this scene creates mystery and required suspense, hybridisation is, therefore, introduced in the screenplay through the introduction of Nigerian British medical doctors (doctors without borders) who are on a medical mission in Ikot Ubo, Nigeria. In the medical team are: Fiberesima (60s), Omono (late 20s), and Simon (34). As earlier conceptualised in my previous chapters, the collaboration and coexistence of many cultural components, traditions, and identities in a society is referred to as cultural hybridity. Issues of identity and representation, according to Stuart Hall (1994), highlight the understanding of how cultural identities are created and negotiated in heterogeneous societies. In Said's (1979) work on Orientalism, he underpinned the impact of colonialism on cultural hybridity. Fanon (2004) believes that the psychological and political consequences of colonialism and the role of violence in decolonisation provide insights into the complexities of cultural hybridity in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Cultural hybridity in film is, therefore, a reflection of our interconnected world, where different cultures and ideas collide, negotiate, and create new cinematic expressions.

In the screenplay, *Sidibe*, efforts were made to foreground African and British culture in collaboration towards forging a new cinematic appeal. Simon, a Briton, is in love with African sculptural works, and this endears him towards Sidibe, an African sculptural artist. His interaction with Sidibe, which goes ahead to create a "third space of enunciation", is highly opposed by Omono, a Nigerian but British trained medical doctor who feels Simon should rather have fallen in love with her than the "spirit-possessed" African-Sidibe. Therefore, she employs every method to have Sidibe disgraced in order to win Simon's love. Her actions seem to be at variance with the concept of cultural hybridisation, characterised by the blending of diverse cultural elements, which is a prominent phenomenon in the globalised world (Appadurai, 1996). However, Simon's action of falling in love with Sidibe's sculptural works and by extension falling in love with her seems to support Appadurai's supposition, as cited. While Omono draws Simon's attention to the similarities of their cultural experiences and educational qualifications as a niche for them to be married, Simon's view of multiculturalism seems to support Garcia's (2012) notion that globalisation fosters cultural hybridity, as interconnectedness allows for the exchange of ideas and practices.

Thus, Hybridity in film is proposed by the screenplay through the interaction between the British doctors and the Ikot Ubo community. Omono, who is in love with Simon and discovers that Simon was falling in love with Sidibe, decides to plan a surprise birthday party for Simon.

Simon, who is truly surprised by the birthday party, is given many gifts, including a sculptural work from Sidibe. Following Simon's deep-seated appreciation of the sculptural work, Omono exhibits her superiority complex by instructing that "Uyak beat" be played at the climax of the event, a situation that orchestrates Sidibe's manifestation and when she starts manifesting following the "Uyak beat", Omono enjoys it and takes video of Sidibe's destructive attitudes. Her conversation with Simon justifies her immersion in third space:

#### OMONO

I overheard the conversation the day she slept here. At first, I assumed it was a mere fable. It made no sense that some random beat Uyak or whatever could drive someone to the edge. (p.48)

The fact that Omono's "Uyak" beats setup works for her shows that she has been immersed by African cultural experiences. Again, though there were many gifts during the birthday, the fact that Simon prefers the sculptural piece by Sidibe is an indication that he is engrossed by African cultural experience. Again, the fact that Simon hummed a native song that controlled Sidibe's destructive attitude during the birthday shows how deeply he has been seduced by African cultural experience. The practice of serving a goddess in order to get healed from her torments is alien and incomprehensible to Simon, and the claim that the Uyak beat makes Sidibe act in such a crazy way is before now unfathomable to Omono because they are from an entirely different cultural background but have come to know the existence of such a tradition through their interaction and mixture with them.

Sidibe's condition draws significant attention to the crisis/levels of identity in Ikot Ubo. The people of Ikot Ubo are torn between traditional beliefs (religion) and western (Christian) religion. This creates a conflict of thoughts, identity crises, and foregrounds different levels of hybridisation in the Ikot Ubo community. In an attempt to reinforce what is wrong with Sidibe as well as proffer a solution to her problem, Ekanem (Sidibe's mother) looks for a solution through Christian faith, while Bassey (Sidibe's father), seems to buy the idea suggested by the king that Sidibe be taken to be examined by the doctor. Obong Ikpaisong, the king, had suggested that Sidibe be examined by the doctor rather than the priestess, and this is a strong pointer to the king's level of assimilation of the western healing system; though the two suggestions of Christianity and medical examination do not sit well with Bassey's cousin, Okpoto, who believes that the solution



lies in the traditional religion. He believes that Sidibe is possessed by a spirit, and he gives a bible quotation of giving to “Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” to justify that the solution to Sidibe’s problem can be sought through the traditional religion.

Very strongly, Okpoto believes that Sidibe is to become the priestess of Ikot Ubo and, therefore, should be taken to the shrine. He says he consulted with the oracle on this and believes that she will go mad if nothing is done about it. The narrative by Okpoto is almost believed by Bassey (who had wished that modern science is applied), but never by Ekanem, underpinning the interaction between African traditional religion (as represented by Okpoto), Christian religion (as represented by Ekanem), and modern science (as represented by Bassey). The interaction is a pointer that the three characters who hail from traditional African society have different levels of hybridisation, having received Christian religion as well as modern science. Identity is a central and complex theme within the context of cultural hybridity.

Cultural hybridity often brings about shifts and transformations in individual and collective identities. Cultural hybridity can lead to the formation of hybrid identities. Individuals or groups that are exposed to and engage with multiple cultures may develop identities that draw from and reflect the diversity of their experiences. These hybrid identities can encompass aspects of various cultural backgrounds, creating a multifaceted sense of self. In addition, the resentment of Sidibe by the market women when she had gone to buy items equally supports the notion that she is believed to be possessed by the spirit, a belief most Africans no matter their level of hybridisation, always hold on to (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). This reference equally reveals the level of assimilation and diffusion of social interaction between the two different religions (African traditional religion and Christian religion).

In the screenplay, the puzzle of Sidibe’s dual characterisation: in one place, a quiet, peace-loving twenty-two-year-old lady; and in another time, a destructive spirit-possessed lady who is so powerful and can fight multiple men, is a driving force of the plot. Her dual characterisation, which creates puzzles, mystery, and conflict in the screenplay, invites solutions from multiple sources, valorising the concept of hybridity. The key solution that the screenplay dovetails into is the growing relationship between Simon and Sidibe. Thus, in making concerted efforts to unravel the seeming mystery of the destructions in the village, some youths in the village accused Sidibe in his (Simon) presence of killing their animals with her possession and subsequently gives her a hot pursuit. By the next time they meet, Sidibe, who is on the run to another community, is accosted

by two men who she beats up in the presence of Simon. As she turns to proceed on her journey, the bewildered Dr. Simon offers to accommodate her for the night, creating an affectionate “third space” situation to integrate themselves.

During this process of integration, Simon is seen to be humming Sidibe’s favourite local song in scene 49, and the surprised Sidibe inquires; “Oyibo, how do you know this song?” Simon rather requests that the lyrics of the song be taught by Sidibe, as the song is quite soothing. The “Third Space” of enunciation is further explicit in the morning of the penultimate night. At Simon’s house, toast bread, boiled eggs, yam, butter, tea, sugar, coffee, and malt are served for breakfast. This manner of breakfast is not appreciated by Sidibe, who, in her words “eats by 11 a.m., and it is usually overnight *afang* and *fufu*, which will hold you all day and keep you fit for work”. (*Afang* is a vegetable soup popular among the Efiks and Ibibio people of Cross River and Akwa Ibom States of Nigeria while *fufu* is starchy fermented or fresh edible substance made from cassava roots; cooked, mashed and moulded and eating with *afang* or any other soup). However, Sidibe manages to eat the manner of breakfast served, foregrounding that European cultural emersion is taking place.

Here, food is deeply tied to cultural identity. It is a symbol of a character’s heritage and background. Food in film is not just for sustenance, but a storytelling device that can convey cultural hybridity, relationships, emotions, and more. Its sensory and symbolic qualities make it a potent tool to explore the complex dynamics of culture, identity, and human connections. Food is employed in the screenplay to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of the richness of culinary traditions from around the world. Again, Dr. Simon, having left Britain for the southern path of Nigeria, is being assimilated into the African cultural experience. These enunciation processes, which exist through the “third space”, as earlier explained, are explicit in the screenplay, where in Nigerian, Dr. Simon gets accustomed to the sculptural arts (a reason he is attracted to Sidibe), Nigerian food, and Nigerian songs. His attraction to these cultural elements valorises the concept of “third space”, as earlier explained.

Gradually, through Sidibe’s interaction with Simon, the mystery behind Sidibe’s possession seems to have been unravelled. Upon enquiry by Simon on hearing things that sound like fiction about Sidibe’s wonton attitudes, Sidibe shrugs and reveals that the whole thing is equally a puzzle to her. According to Sidibe, she does not remember anything, and she only recalls that whenever she hears some peculiar drumbeats, she passes out, and on regaining consciousness,

she is told to have destroyed a lot of things. The “drumbeat” element in the narrative which seems cultural needs psychological deconstruction. Following a series of pressures, Bassey invites the priestess to initiate Sidibe to the goddess of Uneke to save her life. Bassey's moves are not supported by his wife, who believes that Christianity is the only true solution. In the process of Sidibe’s initiation to the goddess of Uneke, she is greatly brutalised. Simon (who had already fallen in love with her) finds her in the priestess’ shrine and elopes with her to Sidibe’s grandmother’s house. As Simon is untying Sidibe from the tree where she is tied, Simon talks about taking her to a psychiatrist, and Sidibe rebuffs that she is not mad.

Sidibe’s grandmother is a traditional herbalist. Mama is revealed to possess the dancing and sculptural skills, and it is believed that Sidibe takes after her in these skills. Mama employs various traditional methods, including physical and mental exercises, spiritual birth, and traditional herbs, to restore Sidibe’s mental health. This counters Simon's allusion or suggestion to take Sidibe to a psychiatrist which is a pointer to his Eurocentric background that is still influencing his thought processes. That he could combine these thoughts with his attitude of humming the traditional song to abate Sidibe’s wanton destruction during his birthday party is a pointer that he is operating within the realm of the “Third Space”. She equally takes Sidibe through the ‘Uyak’ music dance as some old men play the beat. Mama confirms that Sidibe is not possessed by a demon (as many think) and that she has been cured of her mental ill-health. She further explains that what happened to Sidibe was a severe trauma. The interaction between Mama and Dr. Simon, both traditional doctor and modern (scientific) doctor respectively, is very instructive and underpins the hybridisation through the “third space”. Simon, who witnessed the healing process adopted by Mama, frequently queries some processes, and Mama reminds him that long before the incursion of the Whiteman, Africans cured various types of illnesses.

### **MAMA**

Son, long before the white man came, long before your forebears were taken to Europe for slavery, we had illnesses that we treated. Sicknesses of the body and mind. It is rude to imagine our methods are inferior, do you not think?

### **SIMON**

I see where Sid got that mouth and attitude from.

*Mama laughs.*

**MAMA**

You mean well, I know. And I have heard your opinion, what did you call it? Professional. It is well received, and I will have it in mind. Feel free to visit as much as you wish, perhaps you will learn a thing or two. Or who knows, I might learn a thing or two.

*Simon smiles-*

(Scene 28)

What is very instructive is that Mama seems to be abreast of the psychological condition of Sidibe, which is the reason why she is able to interrogate her into recalling and revealing her ugly past experiences that seem to contribute to her wanton possession and destruction whenever “Uyak” beats are played. This is evident in scenes 91-94.

**SIMON**

I don't know for how long I can hold off; he seemed worried. How is she?

**MAMA**

(Sighs) It's not demon possession or anything I've dealt with before.

**SIMON**

What is your theory?

**MAMA**

Something happened to that girl. Something terrible.

**SIMON**

But then how do you explain the dance? Everyone  
I spoke with said in her waking moment, she is a terrible dancer.

**MAMA**

The dance is the gift. Our powers are gifted us from birth but they do not come alive till later. Mine came in a dream when I was just newly

married. Hers is seeking manifestation, but something has it trapped.  
Something dark.

**SIMON**

Trauma.

*Mama nods.*

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Have you tried meditation? I read somewhere that-

*Mama shoots him a look.*

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

I'm sorry, I just-

**MAMA**

Tell me all about it.

*Simon nods. As he starts to narrate inaudibly (ADLIB)-*

**CUT TO:**

**92. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE: A ROOM- DAY**

*Sidibe seated on the mat, legs akimbo, hands spread, eyes shut-*

**MAMA (VO)**

This is a life changing moment. I want you to reach within. Deep within. In all of that silence, I need you to search... Find that one thing, that guest... a certain pain, hidden... It is right there. A worm trying to crawl deeper, but you must find it, quash it, burn it- for only then can true healing begin.

*Beat, she slowly turns on the radio, it is the úyak beat; Sidibe's head starts to shake-*

**CUT TO:**

**93. EXT. A HOUSE- DAY (BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN)**

Faint úyak beat plays in the background. Sidibe dressed in white like the maidens on cleansing rites happily shows up in front of a house calling out-

**SIDIBE**

Uduak! Uduak!

No response, she enters. Beat, dark screen, Sidibe screams.

**CUT TO:**

**94. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- DAY**

On Sidibe moving her head vigorously, Mama staring at her touches her face-

**MAMA**

Sidibe... Sidibe!

*Her eyes open, misty.*

**MAMA (CONT'D)**

Tell me everything.

**SIDIBE**

(Shakes her head) Darkness... just darkness.

Beat, Mama heaves a sigh, exits and returns with the statues. She places them around her and-

**MAMA**

This is a battle, and it ends today. Look, (she arranges the statues and sits among them) we are all here. To protect you, to guide you, to wage this war with you. You will return and this time, you will walk through that darkness, and you will speak.

**DISSOLVE:**

This is first observed in the screenplay at the beginning scenes, which is later revealed as a flashback. The action that has dislocated Sidibe of her mental health had happened during the maiden's night, when Sidibe had gone in search of her cousin, Uduak. Uyak beat was playing in the background. Uduak was not around, and Uduak's father, Sidibe's uncle, Okpoto, raped her, taking away her virginity. The grandmother, Mama, now unravels the mystery behind Sidibe's mysterious dance. Sidibe is gifted with the supernatural dance ability, which was to manifest on

the maiden's night as the Uyak beats played. However, this was stolen from her as she was raped by her uncle. It could, therefore, be deciphered that both cultures (Mama representing Africa and Simon representing Britain) believe in the same theory of medication but from different angles and views. Both believe that trauma can be the strong force that is behind Sidibe's illness, although Africans refer to it as a "dark force" and seek traditional means of solving it, while the Western method suggests meditation therapy, which is almost equivalent to the traditional healing method intended.

At the resolution of the screenplay, Okpoto is arrested by the police, and Sidibe, who is now fully healed, opens a dance healing school. Simon proposes and marries Sidibe. The proposal is rendered with the impression that both characters are hybridised in a very great measure.

**SIDIBE**

What... what are you doing?

**SIMON**

When I made the decision to volunteer in Nigeria as a doctor without borders, I didn't imagine this much sunshine would be waiting for me.

**SIDIBE**

Oh darling-

**SIMON**

As a man raised by a long line of strong women, you are the strongest woman I know. Your strength, tenacity, resilience, vision... In such short while you've turned what kept you down, to immense strength. A dance healing school! Your heart is so unbelievably large, Sid. (Beat) I guess what I'm trying to say is, (he takes out the ring case and opens it) Will you follow me to the place of my birth, not as a friend but as a partner, as my wife?  
(Scene 101)

During their (Simon and Sidibe) traditional wedding, Uyak beats are danced gracefully by Sidibe and the villagers who are present. During the traditional wedding ceremony, Sidibe's face breaks into a hearty smile as she is seen clad in the traditional Ibibio wedding attire, holding a horn of palm wine dancing gracefully to the uyak beats. Villagers so beautifully dressed are gathered. The atmosphere is festive, there is a surplus of palm wine, garden eggs. It is important to point that these foods are local and traditional foods of Ibibio people. As Sidibe dances towards Simon, he does not wait for her to get to him, he stands and moves to the beats, doing a combination of traditional and hip-hop movements, sending the villagers nearly off their seats with laughter and cheers. Sidibe laughs, dances up and kneels. She sips, he pulls her up and drinks the rest. Applause. Ekanem seated alongside Mama rises and skilfully blows a whistle with her fingers in her lips. Bassey and Mama laugh, she sits, all three hold hands.

In this scene, Simon's combination of traditional and hip-hop dance steps underpins a hybridised action that excites the villagers around him. Here, marriage is portrayed as an element of cultural hybridity, a dynamic process where individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together, exchange ideas and practices, and create a unique cultural blend that is reflective of their shared experiences and love. Believably, the marriage between Simon and Sidibe will enrich the cultural landscape and highlight the beauty of cultural diversity within the institution of marriage. Syncretism concerns arise from this marriage not just in the intimate and family facets of life together as husband and wife, but also in the areas where diverse cultural elements converge to form something entirely new. In the story, Simon, a Briton marries Sidibe, an African, thereby bringing about the fusion of the two cultures and forging a separate hybrid culture.

The screenplay *Sidibe* embodies Afro spiritualism by deeply engaging with African metaphysical belief systems, ancestral connections, and the intersection between spirituality, psychology, and identity. Through Sidebe's struggle, the screenplay highlights key themes of spiritual affliction, cultural mysticism, resistance to destiny, and the journey toward self-discovery, all of which align with the Afro spiritualist framework. Sidibe's mental state is triggered by the haunting 'Uyak' drumbeat, which suggests a mystical connection between sound, spirituality, and consciousness, an idea deeply rooted in African cosmology. In many African traditions, drumming is not just musical but spiritual; it can summon spirits, induce trance states, and serve as a medium for divine communication. Sidibe's reaction to the drumbeat signifies her spiritual heritage and the



inescapable power of ancestral calling, reflecting Afro spiritualist themes of predestination and the struggle between the physical and metaphysical realms.

The deity Uneke, whom Sidibe is believed to be bound to, represents the African pantheon's ability to shape individual destiny. The belief that Sidibe is destined to serve Uneke as a priestess mirrors the traditional role of spiritual mediums in African spirituality. However, her resistance highlights a common tension in Afro spiritualism, between self-determination and spiritual obligation. Her inner conflict can be interpreted as a metaphor for the modern African individual who grapples with inherited spiritual legacies while seeking personal agency. Simon, the English volunteer doctor, represents Western rationalism and biomedical approaches to mental health, whereas Sidibe's grandmother and the village herbalist embody African spiritual healing traditions. This duality is a central theme in Afro spiritualism, which often critiques the Western dismissal of African indigenous knowledge systems. Rather than positioning one as superior to the other, the screenplay suggests that true healing emerges from a synthesis of both, bridging science and spirituality, medicine and mysticism.

Furthermore, Sidibe's suffering under the priestess and her eventual rescue parallel initiation rites in African spirituality, where suffering, trials, and transformation lead to a deeper understanding of one's purpose. Afro spiritualism often emphasizes that individuals must endure spiritual trials to achieve enlightenment or liberation. Her journey from affliction to self-acceptance mirrors the trajectory of spiritual awakening in African traditions, where one must reconcile with their ancestral destiny to achieve balance. Afro spiritualism emphasizes the collective over the individual, as seen in Sidibe's story where her fate is not just a personal struggle but a community concern. The villagers, the priestess, and even her rescuers all contribute to her spiritual path, illustrating how African spiritual identities are often shaped and negotiated within communal structures.

One of the central elements of *Sidibe* is the portrayal of the characters of Sidibe and Simon. The former is depicted as a stereotypical African young woman who expresses her love for her culture through her art. Her beliefs, clothing, mannerisms, and choice of food are used to emphasise her rural background, which is in contrast with the urban lifestyle and belief system of Simon. The screenplay portrays Simon's transformation from a polished British medical doctor into a semi-African through a process of cultural hybridisation. His journey is marked by a series of encounters and experiences that challenge and reshape his identity. Initially, Simon clings to his

European identity, wearing European attire and exhibiting European mannerisms. However, as he spends more time in Ikot Ubo, he undergoes a gradual transformation through his interactions with the natives.

**SIMON**

What's with the music? The drumbeats.

**UKO**

Uyak, special drumbeats in honour of Uneke, the goddess of dance. It has been exactly one year since the leader of the market died. She was a very traditional person and a great dancer.

**BASSEY**

Fire dancer. That's what her peers called her.

**UKO**

Yes. Her family also donated massive land for the goddess Uneke's shrine. The market is doing this in her honor.

**SIMON**

Ah, that's some history there. Awesome

(Pg: 19-20)

The above conversation portrays the transmission of history from the Ikot Ubo people, which represent Africa, to Simon, who represents British culture. The story also captures cultural practices and perspectives and highlights the way individuals or groups view and interpret the world around them based on their cultural background, beliefs, values, and experiences. One of the central elements in the screenplay is the portrayal of the characters of Sidibe and Simon. The former is depicted as a stereotypical African young woman who expresses her love for her culture through her arts. Her beliefs, clothing, mannerisms, and choice of food are used to emphasise her rural background which is in contrast with the urban lifestyle and beliefs of Simon. Basically, *Sidibe* revolves around six characters: Bassey and Ekanem (Sidibe's parents), Mama and Okpoto (Sidibe's extended family-tie), Simon and Omono (Acquaintances), as illustrated in the table below:

### 1.3 Simon and Omono (Acquaintances)

Sidibe /Bassey/Ekanem- (Close family)	Sidibe/Mama/Okpoto (Extended Family)	Sidibe/Simon/ Omono (Acquaintances)
Sidibe is the daughter of Bassey and Ekanem. While her parents seem to be immersed with diverse cultural experiences, resulting to their different approaches in seeking solution to Sidebe's recovery. While Ekanem is convinced that Christian faith is the solution to Sidibe's health challenge, his father finally resorts to traditional method for solution. The interaction between western and traditional approaches towards solving the problem which involves the characters eventually leads to the process of enunciation	Mama is Sidibe's grandmother while Okpoto is Sidibe's uncle. Both characters though may have gaps in age but may have lived within the same geographical environment and may have encountered similar socio-cultural experiences. However, while mama, a traditional herbalist attempts every logical traditional method towards restoring Sidibe's health, Okpoto's past nefarious sexual act seemed to have put Sidibe in such a psychopathic condition. Thus their interpretation of Sidibe's condition differs and underpins their different levels of cultural immersion to the ideas of trauma.	Simon and Omono (educated African) seem to have the same level of educational exposure, while Sidibe and Simon have completely different worldviews. However, through the process of enunciation, both are at one time or the other are immersed in the cultural experience of the other character. While this leads to marriage which Omono had desired with Simon, the implication is therefore that the formation of a cultural hybridity between Simon and Sidibe.

This screenplay supports both Stam (2005) and Hjort and MacKenzie (2000)'s notions on fusing mixed cultural experiences in narrative for aesthetics. Stam's work, as outlined in his 2005 publication, delves into the concept of "cultural hybridity". He posits that narratives are crucial sites for the negotiation and representation of diverse cultural experiences. Stam emphasises the dynamic and fluid nature of culture, challenging fixed notions and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of how different cultural elements interact and merge in narrative forms. His approach encourages a departure from essentialist views of culture, highlighting the ongoing process of cultural exchange and hybridisation. On the other hand, Hjort and Mackenzie's exploration, as presented in their 2000 work, revolves around the idea of "world cinema". They argue for a more inclusive and expansive approach to film studies that goes beyond the dominant Western-centric perspectives. The authors propose a broader understanding of cinematic practices, one that incorporates diverse cultural expressions and challenges the prevailing norms of representation. In doing so, they advocate for a recognition of the multiplicity of voices in storytelling and a move towards a more globalised cinematic landscape.

When examining these notions collectively, a convergence emerges in their shared emphasis on the fluidity and intermingling of cultural experiences. Both Stam and Hjort and

Mackenzie underline the importance of avoiding essentialism, urging scholars and creators to embrace the hybrid nature of narratives. This approach acknowledges that cultural identities are not fixed entities but rather dynamic and evolving constructs that are continuously shaped by interactions and exchanges. Furthermore, both perspectives call for a re-evaluation of traditional frameworks in narrative aesthetics. Stam challenges us to rethink cultural categories and move beyond binary oppositions, while Hjort and Mackenzie prompt a reconsideration of the geographical and cultural boundaries that have historically defined cinematic canons. The combined insights from these scholars offer a rich foundation for understanding how narratives can authentically reflect the diverse tapestry of human experiences.

Thus, the screenplay is realised through shot descriptions which vividly visualised the filmic locale and intended picture. However, following debates on authenticity and appropriation of cultural hybridisation towards enriching artistic expression as posited by Naficy (2001), further analysis will underscore the significance of cultural hybridisation in redefining identity and shaping modern narratives, being that the process of globalisation, characterised by increased connectivity and cultural exchange, has had a profound impact on the development of cultural hybridity in film (Appadurai, 1996). As cultures intermingle through various forms of media, analyses of *Sidibe* will be achieved from a diverse pool of influences as posited by Stam (2005) such as narrative hybridisation, which involves the fusion of storytelling techniques, plot structures, and character development from different cultural backgrounds.

### **5.3 Summary**

The screenplay, therefore, underscoring through the interactive process of cultural enunciation based on “third space”, leads to cultural hybridity as evident in the marriage between Simon and Sidibe. Through the interaction of these six characters, their thoughts processes and actions towards resolving Sidibe’s health condition based on the theory of “third space” of enunciation in cultural hybridity is achieved. Cultural hybridisation in film is often driven by the concept of transnational cinema, as earlier discussed in chapters two and three and it often intersects with questions of identity. As films incorporate elements from multiple cultures, they reflect the fluid and complex nature of modern identity, challenging fixed notions of ethnicity and nationality (Nayar, 2007). The study of cultural hybridisation in film is an evolving field. Scholars such as Homi Bhaba, Hamid Naficy, Stuart hall, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam continue to explore the

implications of cultural hybridity for the global film industry, representation, and audience reception. This chapter has drawn attention to the phenomenon of hybridisation within the context of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry. Nollywood stands as a testament to the rich tradition of global cinema, where cultural hybridisation serves as a driving force. The industry's rapid rise is characterised by a blending of traditional African storytelling with modern cinematic techniques, resulting in a unique form of cinematic expression (Garcia, 2012).

These contemporary filmmaking methods include Point of View (POV), Eye-Line Matches, and Shot/Reverse Shot. While Point of view shots present the viewer with a character's viewpoint, a method, which is taken from Western cinema, is meant to make the audience feel as though they are actually experiencing the character, a visual connection is made using Eye-Line Matches. In order to set the scene and direct the audience's attention, a character's off-screen gaze may be revealed in the next shot. Again, editing techniques like parallel and crosscutting are used to move the story along, highlight character interactions, and create tension. Nollywood films use traditional African storytelling methods in addition to Western narrative systems which involve flashbacks, non-linear storytelling, and a focus on oral traditions and folklore to realise their narrative.

Filmmaking in Nigeria has been impacted by Western genres like drama, romance, comedy, and thriller. However, Nollywood has created its own distinctive subgenres, such as "Nollywood epic" and "Nollywood melodrama," which highlight peculiar thematic and cultural aspects in Nigerian setting. Thus, bright colours, expressive costumes, and dramatic camera motions are common aesthetical choices in Nollywood. Nollywood films often navigate complex terrain, incorporating elements from diverse cultures, genres, and artistic traditions, thus transcending national borders (Okome, 2007). This chapter has underscored the transformative potential of Nollywood as a prime example of how cultural hybridisation in film can challenge conventions and reshape the cinematic landscape. By examining how Nollywood defies traditional genre boundaries, incorporates indigenous languages and practices, and explores universal themes, it becomes evident that it occupies a significant place in the global cinematic discourse (Ukadike, 1994). However, it also raises questions about cultural authenticity and the ethics of representation in this dynamic process.

As an autoethnographic study, the process of writing the script for *Sidibe - The Castaway* has undoubtedly had a profound impact on me as a Nigerian filmmaker. Through this research

journey, I have experienced personal growth, gained deeper insights into the complexities of cultural hybridity in Nollywood, and confronted challenges that have contributed to my understanding of the filmmaking process. Writing of *Sidibe* screenplay have aroused my cultural awareness and sensitivity through the exploration of cultural hybridity in my films, enabling me to become more attuned to the nuances and intricacies of Nigerian and British cultures. This heightened cultural awareness has influenced my approach to storytelling, character development, and thematic exploration.

In addition, through creative exploration and experimentation, writing *Sidibe* screenplay has allowed me to experiment with different narrative techniques, cinematic elements, and storytelling conventions. I have pushed the boundaries of traditional Nollywood filmmaking by incorporating diverse cultural influences and exploring new avenues for creative expression. Besides, the process of writing the screenplay has prompted deep reflection on my own cultural identity, experiences, and perspectives as a Nigerian filmmaker. Through self-examination and introspection, I have gained a deeper understanding of how my cultural background shapes my artistic vision and influences my storytelling choices.

While the writing of the screenplay has been a transformative and enriching experience, there are areas where I believe the screenplay may have fallen short. These shortcomings could include; Character Development, Narrative Structure, Cultural Authenticity, and Audience Engagement: In some instances, the characters in the screenplay may lack depth or complexity, limiting their ability to resonate with audiences on a deeper level. Further development of character arcs and motivations could enhance the overall impact of the films. The screenplay may struggle with pacing, structure, or coherence, leading to inconsistencies or disjointed storytelling. Streamlining the narrative flow and tightening the plot could improve the overall cohesion and impact of the films.

Again, while the screenplay aims to explore cultural hybridity, there may be instances where cultural elements are misrepresented or inaccurately portrayed. Ensuring cultural authenticity and sensitivity is essential to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or misinterpretations. In addition, the screenplay may face challenges in effectively engaging and connecting with audiences, particularly those outside of the target demographic. Enhancing the emotional resonance, thematic relevance, and universal appeal of the films could broaden their audience appeal and impact.

From this research journey, I have learned valuable lessons that will inform my future filmmaking endeavours such as effective means of embracing diversity and inclusion, authenticity and integrity in screenplay, and empowerment through representation. I have learnt that embracing cultural diversity and inclusivity enriches storytelling and fosters a deeper understanding of human experience. By celebrating the richness of different cultures, I can create films that resonate with audiences on a global scale.

The filmmaking process is an ongoing journey of growth, learning, and self-discovery. Therefore, by this auto-ethnographic research, I will remain committed to honing my craft, expanding my creative horizons, and pushing the boundaries of storytelling to create impactful and meaningful cinematic experiences. I will also try to maintain authenticity and integrity in storytelling by staying true to my cultural roots, personal experiences, and artistic vision, creating films that are genuine, compelling, and resonate with audiences on a profound level. In conclusion, the writing of the screenplay for *Sidibe - The Castaway* has been a transformative journey that has shaped me both personally and professionally as a Nigerian filmmaker and through this research practice, I have gained valuable insights, confronted challenges, and embraced the power of storytelling to foster cultural hybridity, celebrate diversity, and inspire change.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

#### **6.1 SUMMARY**

The research has reaffirmed that Nollywood is a prominent postcolonial Nigerian film industry which has revolutionised black and African filmmaking while consistently establishing a noteworthy reputation internationally. Specifically, in chapter two where the issues of transnationalism were discussed, the role of Nollywood in revolutionising other film cultures in

Africa was established. To situate Nollywood, a "home-grown" film industry, inside the framework of hybridity, the thesis examined cultural hybridity as the conceptual foundation of (trans)national cinema in Nollywood filmic culture. To achieve this, it adopted Homi Bhabha's theory of "third space" to analyse selected Nollywood films to underpin the influence of hybridity in Nollywood. Films like *Wedding Party* (Adetiba, 2016) and *Namatse Wahala* (Ahuja, 2020), were critically examined to buttress this point.

Again, employing my experiences as a female filmmaker in Nollywood for more than 25 years, the study adopted an autoethnographic research approach to (re)articulate cultural hybridity in Nollywood, suggesting a paradigm of Nollywood film hybridity through the script, *Sidibe*. Some Nollywood films employ the concept of hybridity without necessarily ensuring that a balance between hybridising cultures is struck. These filmmakers often favour the dominant foreign cultures against the local film culture. This thesis has through an autobiographical analysis of the production contexts of my two previous films, *Special Jollof* and *Love is in the Hair*, which served as case studies, tried to (re)articulate a balanced form of hybridity which does not favour one filmic culture against the other. An examination of how my subjectivity, limitations, and identity affect how cultural hybridity is created and re-created in my films critically buttressed this proposition.

The research design examined potential approaches to arrive at a verifiable result through conceptual and empirical reviews, as the goal of the study was to use autoethnography to investigate how cultural hybridity is implicated in Nollywood films. It also provided a detailed insider-outsider account of autobiographical identity, limitation and perspective, production conditions, and visual culture which impact on (re)construction of cultural hybridity in Nollywood. This is due to concerns about the conceptual and empirical frameworks of hybridity in Nollywood, the degree to which the identity, constraints, and viewpoints of the filmmakers affect the (re)creation of hybridity, and possible approaches to presenting a balanced form of hybridity in which no culture is ostensibly marginalised.

The thesis has six chapters. Chapter one introduced the research, the background to the study, the research questions, the methodology as well as the aim and objectives. In chapter two, I undertook a literature review as well as the theoretical framework of the thesis, investigating the portrayal of "Cultural hybridity" in Nollywood, which was approached from the framework of postcolonial theories with emphasis on the 'third space' as postulated by Homi Bhabha in his book, *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's concept of hybridity which foregrounds the



creation of new transcultural expressions in the ‘third Space’ formed the theoretical framework on which the research was anchored. In addition, the chapter also attempted to examine the contributions of other significant postcolonial critics such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon towards the discourse on hybridity. Again, the issue of hybridity as the conceptual underpinning of transnational cinema in Nollywood filmic culture was discussed in chapter two. Transnationalism was viewed with the aim of underscoring some features of transnational cinema as was applied in the analysis of two of my case study films: *Namatse Wahala* ( and *Wedding Party* in chapter four.

In chapter three, auto ethnographic methodology which is the method of research was adequately espoused while in chapter four, a detailed analysis of the narrative structure of the two films underscored the (dis)similarities and departures between Western narrative structure, Bollywood narrative structure and Nollywood narrative structure. Chapter four also featured an in-depth analysis of my own films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof* which was embarked on with the intention of foregrounding my portrayal of what I term a balanced hybridity; here also, a highlight of how my biographical experience influenced my conceptualisation of hybridity in my films was refocused. I had mentioned some creative works which inspired me while growing up and which would have shaped my creative process and the creation of what I call a balanced hybridised film in opposition to some Nollywood filmmakers whose hybridised films are lopsidedly biased toward one culture over another. While growing up, I encountered creative works from *Coming to America*, and *Slum Dog Millionaire*. *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Sound of Music*, *Endless Love*, *Pretty Woman*, and *Beyond Pardon*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Death and the Kings Horse Man*, Nigerian soap operas such as *Mirror in the Sun* and *Cockcrow at Dawn*; and all of them had the common theme of either love which often met with resistance in various forms, or the theme of cultural interaction; and these have had a significant influence on my artistic endeavours, as evidenced by the recurring motifs that frequently appear in my creative works.

In chapter five, a critical analysis of my screenplay, *Sidibe*, which was written specifically for this project, was embarked upon. The portrayal of Sidibe and Simon, two people from two hybridising backgrounds, was one of the main themes of *Sidibe*. The former was shown as a conventional young African woman who used art to demonstrate her passion for her culture. Her beliefs, attire, demeanour, and food preferences highlight her traditional upbringing, all contrasted

with Simon's urban way of life and set of ideas. Through a process of cultural fusion, the screenplay depicted Simon's change from a polished British medical specialist into a partially African person. His path was characterised by a succession of meetings and events that tested and transformed his identity. At first, Simon maintained his European identity by dressing in European fashion and acting in European ways. However, as he spent more time in Ikot Ubo, he underwent a gradual transformation through his interactions with the villagers.

As a result, the screenplay emphasised how interactive cultural enunciation based on "third space" results in balanced-cultural hybridity, which was demonstrated by Simon and Sidibe's marriage. Through the interactions of six major characters in the screenplay, the "third space" notion of enunciation in cultural hybridity was attained through their cognitive processes and actions toward the resolution of Sidibe's health condition. The concept of transnational cinema often acts as a catalyst for the cultural hybridisation in film, which often collides with identity issues, as was previously highlighted in chapters two and three. This was amply demonstrated in the interaction between African and British culture towards forging a new cinematic appeal. Unarguably, chapter 5 underscored the transformative potential of Nollywood as a prime example of how cultural hybridisation in film can challenge convention and reshape the cinematic landscape.

A few questions have certainly been raised by this research, including the following: can a critical application of hybridity be used as an example to celebrate, preserve, and curate African cultures? Can it start fresh discussions about how to use hybridity in screenwriting? When applied critically, hybridity in Nollywood scriptwriting can inspire new concepts and approaches that embrace the blending of many cultural, narrative, and cinematic elements. More dynamic and inclusive narratives can be produced by embracing a wide range of cultural influences and reflecting the diversity found in Nigeria and throughout the African continent through Cultural Diversity in Storytelling. It can also incorporate customs, myths, and folklore from the past into contemporary narratives to provide a more immersive storytelling experience. Additionally, it will cover global perspectives, to explore themes and tales that are both universally relatable and uniquely Nigerian. Thus, the main point being presented here is how to produce scripts that will engage a larger audience by utilising global storytelling frameworks and approaches.

It should be noted, therefore, that the adaptation of stories and patterns or non-Nigerian narrative styles and techniques have come to enrich the Nollywood industry and to expand its

narrative horizon, creating the concept of cultural hybridity in Nollywood productions. In summary, the research has been able to achieve the following:

1. A detailed contextual review which revealed the extent to which hybridity has impacted Nollywood as well as the influences of other screen cultures in Nollywood.
2. A detailed analysis of selected films by filmmakers in Nollywood foregrounded through the lens of hybridity.
3. A detailed insider-outsider account and analysis of production conditions/visual culture which influence the (re)construction of cultural hybridity in Nollywood, as reflected in the interrogation of the production contexts of two of my previous films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*.
4. A detailed account on how my identity, limitation and perspective through subjectivity influence the (re)creation of cultural hybridity in my creative practice, as reflected in a thorough revaluation of my worldview in producing *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*.
5. A detailed screenplay: *Sidibe-The Castaway*, which was written to further demonstrate how I apply hybridity in my creative practice.

## **6.2 Contributions to Knowledge**

This research offers new scholarly perspectives that portends a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of Nigerian Cinema. Today, there are Hollywood and Bollywood stories domesticated and adapted into African settings and scenarios in a significant pattern/trope of Nigerian filmmaking. This research has been able to explore and analyse ways in which different cultures can be combined and integrated in creative ways to give birth to new things and developing screenplays that celebrate African culture within the global landscape. It is my belief that this thesis will also contribute to the development of storytelling in Nollywood and through my creative practice, I have been able to demonstrate how the hybridisation of cultures can lead to the creation of new and unique works that are reflective of a diverse and inclusive society.

I achieved this through an Afro spiritual approach to transnational screenwriting, striking a balanced hybridity between the two cultures. This involves seamlessly integrating and blending the spiritual elements of African cultural themes, narrative structures, and elements – ensuring that neither culture dominates nor is diminished in the process. This form of transnational screenplay is typically proposed to explore elements of spirituality in African worldview through the

interconnections between countries, communities, or identities, acknowledging and embracing the complexities of cross-cultural interaction without favouring one over the other. By hybridity, I refer not only to the cultural elements (such as language, traditions, and values) but also to the narrative and structural techniques that allow the story to reflect the peculiarities of multiple worlds.

The Nollywood film industry can, therefore, be said to be based heavily on a hybrid medium of style, story and content adaptation from foreign cultures. At the end of this thesis, the research outcome is a screenplay titled, *Sidibe*, which is deliberately written for this research and employed in demonstrating different levels of cultural hybridisation. In the screenplay, it is explicit that apart from hybridisation which occurs at the international level, hybridisation equally occurs at the micro level within the local, distilling various levels of colonial cultural assimilations of those involved. These characters may have gaps in age but may have lived within the same geographical environment and may have encountered (dis)similar colonial-cultural experiences.

The central character, Sidibe (daughter of Bassey and Ekanem) is created deliberately to have a firm belief in her African traditional practices as symbolised in her sculptural works. Her thought pattern and actions are purely African, while her parents seem to be immersed with diverse (colonial) cultural experiences, resulting to their different views in seeking solution to her (Sidibe) recovery. While Ekanem is convinced that Christian faith is the solution to Sidibe's health challenge, her father who at first believes in the scientific method finally resorts to traditional (spiritual) method for solution. He had wished that scientific method is applied towards the solution of Sidibe's health challenge. The interaction between western and traditional (spiritual) approaches towards solving the problem which involves the characters, eventually leads to the process of enunciation.

Again, Mama (Sidibe's grandmother) and Okpoto (Sidibe's uncle) believe in tradition for the solution to Sidibe's problem, albeit in different ways. While mama, a traditional herbalist attempts every logical traditional method towards restoring Sidibe's health, Okpoto, whose past nefarious sexual act with Sidibe which seemed to have put Sidibe in such a psychotic condition, thinks differently. He believes that Sidibe is possessed by a bad spirit which should be cast away. On the contrary, Mama knows it is a psychological condition which requires a traditional method of cure. Traditional methods of cure refer to the healing practices and medicinal systems rooted in the cultural beliefs, customs, and practices of various African communities. These methods are

deeply intertwined with spirituality, ancestral knowledge, and the natural environment. Thus, their interpretation of Sidibe's condition differs and underpins their different levels of cultural immersion to the idea of trauma.

Simon (UK citizen) and Omono (educated African) seem to have the same level of educational exposure; however, while Sidibe and Simon have completely different worldviews because of their various cultural experiences, Mama has different views to Sidibe's health Challenge. While Omono, an African, could not make any sense in the whole traditional narrative of Sidibe's health, believing it is a mere psychopathic condition; Simon, the Briton, who is already culturally immersed with African traditional beliefs, believes the narrative and follows through towards ensuring that Sidibe is healed, albeit using an African method. This screenplay with diverse character construct deliberately written to demonstrate various shades/levels of hybridity and which proposes a balanced form of hybridity, underpins my specific contributions to issues relating to hybridity in Nollywood films within the years of my creative writing.

Furthermore, this research has been able to demonstrate how my cultural experience as a filmmaker influenced my construction of cultural hybridity. Through the analyses of my films: *Love is in the Hair* and *Special Jollof*, the recurring motifs on hybridity which ran through them were reinforced by the following:

1. Contestation/resistance between two families whose sons and daughters proposed to marry – this resistance stemmed from the fact that both lovers hail from different cultural climes.
2. The films were shot in different locations: two countries with different narrative techniques (foregrounding of two filmic narrative techniques which often expresses the two lovers' narrative traditions)
3. The eventual marriage of the two lovers from different cultures, signalling the formulation of a hybridised film culture.
4. There is a Afrospiritualism transnational screenplay motif in both films, although it is more visible in *Love is in the Hair* than *Special Jollof*.

This specific style of achieving hybridity through Afrospiritualism in transnational screenwriting may not be conventional with other Nollywood screenwriters. In the case study screenplay, while trying to achieve hybridity, there is a deliberate attempt at ensuring that African cultural value is placed at the forefront through proffering solution to the issues raised in the screenplay. Many Nigerian films reflect the enduring influence of colonial mentality, which manifests in various

aspects of their storytelling and production. This influence is evident in the choice of subject matter, narrative structures, costume design, and language use, often privileging foreign aesthetics and values over authentic African cultural representations. Rather than striving for a balanced cultural hybridity, these films tend to reinforce Eurocentric ideals, marginalizing indigenous perspectives and diminishing the portrayal of African heritage within cinematic discourse. This phenomenon underscores the lingering effects of colonial legacy in shaping contemporary Nigerian Cinema. This research has by its analyses demonstrated how African spiritualism, which is the core essence of African culture can be retained through Afrospiritualism in transnational screenplay, as is with Bollywood.

The research has underscored the demands of cultural hybridisation in the middle of the unfolding globalist trends, essentially in preserving African culture and making effort to strike a balance by showing how African cultures and traditions can be preserved even in the face of hybridisation; through the fusion of African spiritualism and storytelling technique with western canons, using the universal language of film, to ensure a balanced hybridity. It has also analyzed the role of African storytelling in transnational narratives, positioning Nollywood and African screenwriters within global cinema discourses. All the films analysed often ended in the (proposed) marriage between the two significant characters who would have undergone the third space cultural experience from different cultural localities. This research has demonstrated from the two films and one screenplay – created by the researcher – that my creative practice has contributed significantly to creating a model of Afrospiritualism in transnational screenplay in Nollywood.

This research offers new scholarly perspectives that would advance the knowledge of Nigerian film and its influence on the formation of cultural identities. By fusing traditional Nigerian storytelling forms with Western narrative conventions, Nollywood filmmakers employ narrative techniques to negotiate cultural hybridity in storytelling. In my analysis, I have explored how filmmakers navigate multiple cultural influences to create distinctive and captivating narratives that remain authentic while appealing to global audiences. Again, by examining the portrayal of cultural hybridity in Nollywood films and its impact on notions of identity, the project has provoked thoughts on how characters negotiate their dual cultural identities, highlighting the nuanced ways in which cultural hybridity is depicted visually and thematically in Nollywood transnational films. It would certainly contribute to broader discussions on identity formation and representation within the context of Nigerian Cinema.

The writing of *Sidibe* therefore contributes significantly to knowledge of Afrospiritualism in transnational screenplay studies by exploring cultural hybridity, identity conflicts, and psychological trauma through a cross-cultural lens. The screenplay blends African and Western storytelling traditions, showcasing how indigenous and colonial influences shape character development, narrative structure, and thematic depth. The juxtaposition of African spirituality/mysticism with Western rationalism embodied in the conflict between Sidibe's artistic heritage and religious orthodoxy reflects the tensions of postcolonial identity. Additionally, the screenplay's use of *mise-en-scène*, music, and traditional dance enriches cinematic language, offering a framework for representing African spirituality in global film landscape.

Its contribution to inter-ethnic transnationalism in Nollywood films is seen in its blending of diverse cultural elements, bridging indigenous African traditions with Western influences, and fostering cross-ethnic dialogues within Nigeria and beyond. The screenplay *Sidibe* incorporates elements from different Nigerian ethnic groups, such as the Efik-Ibibio setting, traditional *Uyak* drumbeats, and spiritual beliefs, while also engaging with British colonial influences through characters like Simon. The conflict between Sidibe's artistic heritage and her mother's religious stance (influenced by colonial Christianity) highlights the postcolonial tensions between tradition and modernity, a key theme in transnational Nollywood cinema. The story portrays African spirituality through Uneke, the goddess of dance, while also addressing mental health and trauma, themes that resonate across cultures. Sidibe's struggle with her identity and the supernatural elements reflect a universal human conflict, making the narrative relatable to international audiences while maintaining its African roots.

The relationship between Sidibe, Simon (the British doctor), and Uko (the local villager) represents a transnational and interethnic dynamic, showcasing collaboration across cultural boundaries. Simon's role as an outsider assisting in Sidibe's healing symbolizes global humanitarianism, a recurring theme in transnational Nollywood films that seek to engage international audiences. The screenplay uses Western cinematic techniques like suspense, structured *mise-en-scène*, and character-driven storytelling, making it accessible to non-African viewers. By incorporating universal themes of trauma, resilience, and self-discovery, it aligns with Nollywood's ongoing evolution into a globally relevant film industry. *Sidibe* enriches inter-ethnic

transnationalism in Nollywood by merging indigenous storytelling with global cinematic conventions, fostering cross-cultural dialogues, and presenting African narratives in ways that resonate with both local and international audiences.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

As posited in chapter two, transnational cinematic exchanges often produce a hybridised narrative structure that heavily incorporates elements of both interacting filmic cultures. Due to the numerous transnational activities that Nollywood filmmakers have undertaken, as well as the examination of numerous academic works on hybridity and transnationalism in Nollywood cinema, two specifically sampled films – *Wedding Party* (2016) and *Namaste Wahala* (2020), produced and directed by other Nollywood filmmakers – were subjected to a critical review in order to support the previously established theories regarding the subject. As a result, evidence was found to support Nayar's (2007) theory that the blending of many elements from various cultures in movies subverts rigid ideas of ethnicity and nationality by capturing the complex and fluid character of contemporary identity. The study of cultural fusion in films is, no doubt, a developing area, and researchers are still figuring out how cultural hybridity impacts representation, audience reaction, and international film production.

The phenomenon of hybridisation has been highlighted by this thesis in the context of Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry. Hybridisation is distinctive to Nollywood, and it is the driving force behind the intricate web of global film culture as a unique form of cinematic expression created by combining modern filmmaking techniques with traditional African storytelling. Nollywood movies often cross-national boundaries by combining elements from other genres, cultures, and creative traditions, which allows them to navigate challenging terrain (Okome, 2007). This thesis highlights Nollywood's transformative potential as a prime example of how cultural hybridisation in film may challenge prejudices and change the cinematic landscape. By examining how Nollywood crosses traditional genre boundaries, blends indigenous languages and cultures, and tackles universal themes, it is evident that it adds to the global cinematic conversation.

### **6.4 Recommendations**



The screenplay, *Sidibe*, used for the purpose of this study, was intentionally written to challenge societal perceptions on hybridisation.

1. The following recommendations highlight how this research can be useful to other researchers for further contributions to the discourse:
  - i. That further studies should investigate how different cultures have influenced the development of a worldwide cinema language.
  - ii. More scholarly research on representation and issues of Identity.
  - iii. More scholarly investigation on how characters manage their multiple cultural identities as well as how viewers understand and engage with these representations.
  - iv. There is a need for analyzing how language influences cultural hybridity in Nollywood films.
  - v. That scholarly publications about the ways globalisation, transnationalism, and transnational migration of people, ideas, and media affect Nollywood's cultural hybridity, be further engaged.
2. This research serves as a foundation for further exploration into the landscape of Nollywood and its engagement with cultural Hybridity. The following are ways in which the study could be expanded.
  - i. Nigerian filmmakers should also see this work as a call to action to pursue their stories using a balanced hybrid form. cinema This research also recommends as a guide to filmmakers looking to craft compelling narratives that resonate across multiple borders, making transnational screenwriting an essential component of contemporary
  - ii. In achieving a globalised theme which often hugely combines western cultural norms and traditional stories, Nollywood filmmakers are challenged to be mindful in borrowing characteristics from Hollywood and Bollywood film cultures; this consciousness should be applied to the filmmaking traditions of Northern Nigeria, which are often greatly impacted by Bollywood productions, and Southern Nigeria, which frequently veer more toward Hollywood.

- iii. The adaptation of stories and patterns or foreign narrative styles and techniques should be applied in such a way that our essence and cultural values are not entirely lost.

In all, this research, hopefully, would serve as a contribution to Nollywood, which is a rapidly expanding industry, to tell stories more purposefully.

## 6.5 Limitations To study

While this research offers valuable insights into transnational screenwriting, it is not without its limitations. First, the study primarily focuses on Nollywood screenwriting, which, while significant, may not fully capture the diversity of transnational screenwriting practices across different global film industries. Theoretical frameworks and practical strategies proposed in this study are developed based on specific case studies and industry analysis, which may not account for rapidly evolving nature of global streaming platforms and transnational collaborations. The creative output of this research is a screenplay, and the films remain to be made. The screenplay is halfway there and in making the film, there could be changes in the process. The impact of emerging digital technologies, shift in audiences' preferences, and evolving funding structures for co-productions may require ongoing updates to the proposed strategies.

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## **Appendix**

### **SIDIBE Screenplay**

#### **1. EXT. IKOT UBO- MIDNIGHT**

The full moon illuminates this small, picturesque village. But for the sounds of squawking birds, it is another peaceful night. An ancient background voice holler...

### **ANCIENT VOICE**

Si-di-be!!!!!!

As the voice reverberates...

**CUT TO:**

### **2. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- MIDNIGHT**

Establishing shot of Sidibe's house; the eerie long, haunting howl of a dog filters in.

**ZOOM IN:**

### **3. INT. SIDIBE'S BEDROOM- MIDNIGHT**

SIDIBE, 20s, a ravishing beauty suddenly sits up in a rather robotic manner. But for the piece of shrivelled Ankara wrapper over her body and her long flowing kinky hair, she is practically nude, beautifully so. She casts her gaze on the window.

Via her POV: a piece of grotesque sculpture, like an ancient idol. Her view goes farther up the sky to the full moon. Suddenly, there's a loud drum bang, another one, and a full 'úyak' drumbeat. Sidibe inhales loudly, it comes off as a howl and she passes out, the wrapper barely covering the basics.

**CUT TO:**



#### **4. EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE- MIDNIGHT**

We see the drummers, men in white wrapper around their groin, white chalk over their left eyes, drumming. Nubile young maidens in skimpy white wrappers, beads around their waists, shake their waists vigorously to the rhythm of the music.

There's a swift movement in a nearby bush and one of the maidens quickly turns to look.

**CUT TO:**

#### **5. EXT. BUSH – MIDNIGHT**

We see a machete swiftly running through crops chopping them down.

**CUT TO:**

#### **6. EXT. ROAD PATH- MIDNIGHT**

On ANIEFIOK, a young muscular man fiercely running down the road with machete...

**CUT TO:**

#### **7. EXT. VILLAGE- MIDNIGHT**

Hands covered in blood raises a croaking chicken, a hand on the neck. Blood splashes on our screens.

**CUT TO:**

**8. EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE- MIDNIGHT (CONTINUOUS)**

On the maidens still dancing,  
an image again zooms past the bush path, another maiden looks. She taps yet another maiden and  
whispers into her ear (ADLIB). They slip out and head towards the bush.

**MAIDEN A**

Are you sure this is a good idea? What if he's not the one?

**MAIDEN B**

Who else? We'll be fast.

**MAIDEN A**

I have a bad feeling about this.

A disembowelled goat drops before them, they scream their lungs off. Other dancers quickly turn  
to face them. As soon as the two maidens make to dash, blood splashes all over them. One faints,  
the other flees. The dancers scream and disperse.

**DISSOLVE:**

**9. EXT. IKOT UBO/FARMLAND- MORNING**

Aerial shot of the village as light pour in. Narrow shot to a farmland to show a farmer in raffia hat heading up to his farm. He suddenly halts, sees the destruction wrought upon the land and screams.

**CUT TO:**

#### **10. INT. SIDIBE'S BEDROOM- MORNING**

Sidibe is still sleeping in the exact position she passed out. Her mother EKANEM calling out her name (ADLIB), walks in and taps her. No response, she taps again, even harder. Sidibe inhales loudly and sits up in her usual robotic manner.

**EKANEM**

This house could be on fire and you will not feel a thing. You sleep like the dead.

**SIDIBE**

Is it morning yet?

**EKANEM**

(Sighs) Hurry, you are leading prayers today.

As she stands to leave, she sees the sculpture by the window and stares at it-

**EKANEM (CONT'D)**

And Sidi, if you insist on moulding these ugly looking creatures, keep them out of this house.

Sidibe chuckles and stands.

**SIDIBE**

It is called 'Art' Mama. Good morning.

**EKANEM**

You call it art; the Bible calls it a graven image and warns against it. Get rid of it, now.

Sidibe rolls her eyes, grabs her shorts and starts to wear, Ekanem exits.

**CUT TO:**

## **11. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- DAY**

Sidibe with the sculpture heads out and slips. She turns to decipher the source and via her POV: a mutilated chicken. Her eyes widen. She quickly casts her gaze towards the poultry door, it is open. She stands in a struggle, limps to the poultry and finds lifeless beheaded chickens littered.

**SIDIBE**

(Terrified) Papa!! Papa!!!

Her father BASSEY and Ekanem race out and find the mess.

**BASSEY**

*Iyanmi!*

**EKANEM**

Jesus!

**BASSEY**

What in the madness happened here?

**SIDIBE**

(Livid) I will find them, every one of them and I will make them pay!

They turn to face her.

**BASSEY**

Which one of them? *Ehn* Sidibe? You've practically had someone from every single family in this village beaten up, so which one of them exactly is your suspect?

**SIDIBE**

You make it sound like I'm the problem. No, those are bullies beating up women and causing havoc in this village. It is my duty to stop them.

Bassey sighs.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

It must be that fool, Aniefiok. He will surely get what is coming to him.

She charges out.

**BASSEY & EKANEM**

Sidibe!

A little boy runs up and hurriedly bows before Bassey. Sidibe halts.

**LITTLE BOY**

My father said to tell you that there is an emergency meeting at the square by noon.

**BASSEY**

Who died?

**LITTLE BOY**

(Confused) You have not heard? The whole village is in mourning.

**BASSEY**

Iyanmi! Obong Ikpaisong?

**LITTLE BOY**

(Shakes his head) Enemies destroyed our barns (he sees the dead chicken), killed our animals and destroyed our crops.

Sidibe is puzzled.

**CUT TO:**

**12. EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE- DAY**

Villagers are gathered.

**MAIDEN 2**

It was as though it dropped from the sky but now that I think of it, it must have been from the bush. Before we could find out more, we were bathed in blood.

Reactions

**ELDER 1**

Some say it was a lion, others a horse, another, a goat.

**ELDER 2**

All my life in this village, I have neither seen nor heard of a lion or horse hovering. But then, how can a mere goat wreak such havoc in an entire village? What sort of a goat kills one of its kind and spills its intestines?

**BASSEY**

(Clears throat) Brothers, the strength of the crocodile they say lies in the water. This is a mystery beyond us. We must consult one who it is within their strength to know the secrets of the night.

**ELDER 3**

My father once told me a story that was told him by his father, many many moons ago. Young maidens just like last night presented their virginity to the gods, beneath the full moon. One of them was said to have been defiled and the god of purity struck. Men, women, animals dropped like flies. Could it be that history has repeated itself?

Silence...

**SIDIBE**

Elders, if I may speak, I respectfully disagree. If you ask me, the insect that eats the kola nut lives in the kola nut.

ABANG sweating profusely and rubbing his hands looks up to face her.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

This village has been peaceful long before I was born. The gods, for those who believe in the gods, send natural disasters when the land has

been desecrated. Flood, earthquake, erosion, a plague, natural death even, but all natural disasters, never decapitated animals. This is the handwriting of a wicked person or a group of people. Someone here did this.

People concur (ADLIB)

**A YOUNG MAN**

We should swear an oath. Every one of us!

They concur. Abang jumps up and raises his hand.

**ABANG**

No-no-no, no-no-no- nee- nee nee need!

Everybody turns to look at a stammering Abang.

**ABANG (CONT'D)**

I... I... kno- know- who di- di- did it!

**SIDIBE**

Good! Someone is speaking up. I am sure there will be more witnesses.

**ELDER 1**

Pray tell my son, who?

Aniefiok starts tapping a foot, Abang mutes. Sidibe looks at Aniefiok tapping a foot.

**SIDIBE**



(Gently, to Abang) I know this person might be your friend. (She glares at Aniefiok) But you owe it to your conscience, this village, to be truthful. People lost so many things...

**ANIEFIOK**

Leave him alone, you pretender!

**SIDIBE**

(Smiles) Turn up the heat and the snakes will crawl out.

**ANIEFIOK**

We made a decision not to speak but watching you lie and act like you are some hero sickens me! We were together when we saw you... naked, dancing beneath the moon like one possessed with the gods of dance. At first, it seemed like new madness but then you started to growl like an animal and destroying things like one possessed with a thousand demons. Abang, tell them!

Beat, Sidibe bursts into laughter. She sees no one is laughing with her and sobers, utterly confused...

**SIDIBE**

You don't believe this cheap attempt at diverting attention, do you? If there's anyone here with a reputation for violence, it is him! Aniefiok, I see the beating you got the last time has finally made you mad!

**ELDER 2**

Aniefiok, these are very grave accusations.

**ANIEFIOK**

I will swear! What are we saying, I swear it now! With my life! She did it!

Everyone turns to face Sidibe. Beat, she dives at Aniefiok, pushing him all the way down and raining blows on him.

**CUT TO:**

### **13. INT. DOCTORS'S QUARTERS- DAY**

DR. FIBERISIMA 60s, and OMONO late 20s are seated casually eating from a plate of seedless grapes, SIMON 34 with a camera hanging down his chest, enters. From their pristine British accent, we can tell they've practically been in England all their lives, only recently in Nigeria as volunteers of *Doctors without borders*.

**SIMON**

Time to meet this town, hopefully get some fresh air and create some memories

**FIBERISIMA**

Or you could just catch your breath first, we've barely arrived.

**OMONO**

How are you not jetlagged?

**SIMON**

Why do you think I need air?

**OMONO**

In that case, can I tag along?

**SIMON**

Actually, I was hoping for some-

**OMONO**

Kidding! The bed is calling. Knock yourself out.

Simon manages a smile and heads out. Fiberisima stares at Omono...

**OMONO (CONT'D)**

You would think a doctor at least knew the benefits of proper rest.

**FIBERISIMA**

Why not tell him?

**OMONO**

Like we don't all know that'd be preaching to a choir. That man's ears are for fancy.

**FIBERISIMA**

Not that, Omono. About how you truly feel about him

**OMONO**

(Blushes) What are you talking about?

Fiberisima just stares at her...

**OMONO (CONT'D)**

Oh my God, it's that obvious?

Fiberisima flashes a kind smile...

**FIBERISIMA**

Tell him, while you can.

**CUT TO:**

**14. EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE- CONTINUOUS**

On Sidibe raining down blows on Aniefiok. They pull her out and she still charges up angrily.  
Ekanem bellows-

**EKANEM**

Sidibe! Behave!

**SIDIBE**

No mama! You heard this imbecile accuse me falsely and you stayed there and did nothing! I swear this does not end here.

**ANIEFIOK**

Abang, tell them. Please.

**SIDIBE**

Abang, don't let anyone intimidate you. If there's one person here who always sticks by the truth, it is you. Don't let that change. You must tell the truth.

**ELDER 2**

Abang, who did you see? Tell us the truth, or you will leave us no option but to take you to the priestess.

All eyes on Abang

**BASSEY**

Tell us son, who did you see?

**SIDIBE**

You don't have to say anything. Just point

Abang turns to look at Aniefiok who's been beaten to a pulp. Beat, he turns and points at Sidibe. A confused Sidibe turns and looks behind her, no one, just her.

**ABANG**

I- I- I- ssss- ssss- saw you!

**SIDIBE**

Abang, I know you are afraid of him but-

**ABANG**

You! It wa-wa-was you!

All eyes are now on Sidibe and they are not friendly stares. She weighs her options, beat, she flees. The young people in their midst pursue. She runs so fast and suddenly halts, destabilising her chasers. Some fall, she takes another direction, the remaining pursue. She halts again in a dribble, some others fall. She takes another direction and speeds off as the remaining chase.

**CUT TO:**

**15. EXT. MARKET PLACE- DAY**

Simon shows up at the market square, smiles at the beauty around him and happily takes pictures. He walks up to local fruit sellers and starts to price their wares (ADLIB). He casually sights a sculpture shop showcasing art works. He excuses himself (ADLIB) and heads up-

## **16. EXT. SCULPTURE SHOP- CONTINUOUS**

Simon walks up, takes a couple of shots and starts to admire the art works.

**SIMON**

Anybody here? Anybody in?

He steps into the inner shop and is in awe of the moulded works of art on display. He walks through, examining them. Beat, he looks at his wristwatch and reluctantly heads out, Sidibe dashes in, they collide, she falls but not to the floor, in his arm. As Simon holds her up in his arm, their eyes lock in for a moment but it feels like forever. Sidibe snaps out of it as she quickly stands.

**SIDIBE**

Who are you and what are you doing here?

**SIMON**

Who leaves such valuable sculptures in a place like this and just struts off? Are you not afraid of theft?

Sidibe laughs.

**SIDIBE**

By who? Nobody steals from Sidibe. I know my pieces, every one of them. And this is a small village.

**SIMON**

I'm guessing you are the sculptor, not just the salesgirl.

**SIDIBE**

What do you want?

**SIMON**

Their stories; what inspired them?

**SIDIBE**

You are an art lover.

**SIMON**

I am. And this is gold!

Sidibe looks and sees a couple of angry looking villagers charging up with machetes...

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

They are all quite exquisite and very well-

**SIDIBE**

(In panic) Oyibo, take whatever you like and pay later. (As she dashes out) Don't let the devil tempt you, I will find you!

She disappears. Simon puzzled turns to stare after her; he sees the group of boys pursuing with machetes and stares, sorely bothered.

**DISSOLVE:**

## **17. INT. PALACE- DAY**

On the angry villagers standing before their ruler, the obong Ikpaisong; Sidibe is conspicuously absent.

### **OBONG IKPAISONG**

Unfortunately, the accused is not here to defend herself. (Beat) But for the testimony of these witnesses, is there any other proof? (To Abang)  
You said you saw her dancing so well...

Abang nods.

### **ABANG**

Ye- ye-ye yes!

### **OBONG IKPAISONG**

Can anyone here at least attest to this dancing skill of hers?

Silence...

### **MAIDEN 3**

In truth, (shakes her head) Sidibe rarely dances and when she does-  
(chuckles in spite of herself) it is a disaster.

### **OBONG IKPAISONG**

Is she one to be naked out at night?

Silence; some people shake their heads.



### **OBONG IKPAISONG (CONT'D)**

Is she one to be violent?

They split in their opinions, some echo their agreement (ADLIB), some shake their heads. An elder raises a hand, Obong Ikpaisong motions him to speak up.

### **ELDER 4**

Look at what she did to Aniefiok for daring to speak up. She is an animal!

Some echo their agreement.

### **VILLAGER 1**

I have personally seen Sidibe beat up a man at the market square just for beating a small girl.

### **VILLAGER 2**

The last time somebody stole one of those things she moulds, Sidibe beat and emptied a whole bucket of water on her. No, two buckets.

### **VILLAGER 3**

When she found me on the road after my husband beat me and shaved off my hair for just asking him to stop drinking too much, she went to my house, dragged him out and beat him so much, he needed the healer. After that, my husband is still afraid of chastising me, even when I am wrong. Indeed, she has the power of a thousand men.

### **OBONG IKPAISONG**

From all your testimonies, one thing is clear to me. This Sidibe always fights when a wrong has been meted. My question now is, what wrong did the whole village do that she would suddenly go on a destructive

rampage? And how can one woman destroy so much in such short while?  
From her parents' testimonies, they also lost all their livestock. Why  
would she destroy what belongs to them?

**ANIEFIOK**

I don't know, great Obong Ikpaisong, but she was like one possessed by  
the spirit of dance and of madness.

**OBONG IKPAISONG**

You saw her in the dark, I believe?

**ANIEFIOK**

Beneath the full moon! We could see almost as if it were day. It was her!

Some villagers echo their support (ADLIB)

**ANIEFIOK (CONT'D)**

Please summon the priestess, we are ready to swear an oath!

The villagers chant their support (ADLIB). Obong Ikpaisong raises a hand to stop them.

**OBONG IKPAISONG**

Hmmm. This is a grave matter and not one to be judged in a hurry.  
Return home, all of you. This will be thoroughly investigated and if she  
is found guilty, she will suffer to the full extent of the law. In the  
meantime, not a hair on her head must be touched until she is found  
wanting. Jungle justice remains a crime in this community. Am I clear?

**THE VILLAGERS**

(Reluctantly) May Obong Ikpaisong live forever and may his word never fall to the ground.

As they start to exit, Obong Ikpaisong whispers to one of his guards, he walks up and whispers to Bassey who looks at the king and returns.

**DISSOLVE:**

### **18. EXT. DOCTOR'S QUARTERS – NIGHT**

On Doctor Simon seated, smoking and staring at the iconic piece of sculpture on the table beside him. Omono in her nightgown appears at the exit door, sees Simon seated, stands and ogles.

**CUT TO:**

### **19. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- NIGHT**

Sidibe seated by the window, one leg in the room, the one outside dangling, just stares, lost in thought. Voices from within filter out...

**CUT TO:**

### **20. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: SITTING ROOM- NIGHT**

Bassey, Ekanem and Bassey's older stout pot-bellied cousin OKPOTO, are seated in grim silence. Beat...

**EKANEM**

How can he believe she did it? Does it even make any sense?

**BASSEY**

We all know Sidibe has been different since the last maiden rites ceremony.

**EKANEM**

Yes. But nothing like this!

Bassey sighs and shakes his head.

**BASSEY**

Evil grows.

**EKANEM**

I was in her room very early in the morning. She was just there, asleep in her usual manner, like the dead. If there was a sign of foul play, will I not know? Sidibe, dancing! Naked! How? No, this is a set up. Our child only fights for justice and you know this!

**BASSEY**

Obong Ikpaiong suggests we take her to be examined by a doctor, that the testimony of two witnesses is enough to have the priestess summoned.

**OKPOTO**

A doctor! (Scoffs)

**EKANEM**

A priestess! Hmm, not my child! We are Christians, not heathens. (Sighs)  
The finger of our enemies finally made its way to our pot of soup. But surely as long as the Lord lives, they shall fail! My Bible clearly states that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against-

**OKPOTO**

-Principalities and powers. True. But not when it is her call, you cannot wrestle it. Or have you not read the part of your Bible that says “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God”

**EKANEM**

Meaning?

**OKPOTO**

This is the handwork of Uneke, the goddess of dance! I made consultations before coming here this night because Sidibe is like my child and what touches her concerns me. The priestess revealed that she is to become the next priestess of Uneke.

Ekanem snaps her hand over head...

**EKANEM**

God forbid!

**BASSEY**

The priestess said this?

**OKPOTO**

Yes. Whatever is happening now is only a drop of water in an ocean. It will get worse and may blow into full madness if you do not take her to the shrine for-

Ekanem charges up.

**EKANEM**

Never! Never will anyone take my child to a shrine! Please get out! Get out of my house now!

Okpoto stands...

**OKPOTO**

I suggest we find this dark goat while it is still day, before it is late.

**EKANEM**

No child of mine will ever serve the devil, never!

Okpoto shrugs and exits.

**BASSEY**

Ekanem, would you rather-

**EKANEM**

No! No! No! There is nothing wrong with our daughter and if there were, we will hand it to Jesus, not to any shrine.

She angrily barges in. Off Bassey's helpless stare-

**CUT TO:**

**21. EXT. IKOT UBO/MARKET- DAY**

A sober Sidibe in a short flowing dress, new, fresh, feminine, enters the food market with her shopping bag, trying to mask her vulnerability. She walks up to a couple of food stalls and they snob her, some very rudely (ADLIB).

Exhausted, she makes to leave. The villager who earlier testified that Sidibe had saved her from a bullying husband surreptitiously motions her to meet her behind. They meet up behind, she takes Sidibe's money and her list and-

**VILLAGER**

I will bring it to your shop.

Sidibe makes to thank her but the woman quickly disappears. Rooted to the spot, she battles not to cry.

**CUT TO:**

**22. EXT. SIDIBE'S ART SHOP- DAY**

Simon walks up and peeks, no one. He sighs and makes to exit, almost barging into Sidibe.

**SIMON**

So sorry! We would have to find a way to stop meeting this way.

**SIDIBE**

At this rate, I might have to start wearing some protective armour.

Simon laughs.

**SIMON**

I was so worried about you. I have been here much more than I can count.

**SIDIBE**

You have my art.

**SIMON**

I do. Are you ok? The last time-

**SIDIBE**

I appreciate the care but I try not to discuss my personal business with customers. Do you have my money?

**SIMON**

How much is it?

Beat-

**SIDIBE**

You know what? You can keep it. For your worries!

Simon smiles, beat, he stretches out a hand-

**SIMON**



Simon, Medical doctor

Sidibe looks at him and his stretched hand and scoffs.

**SIDIBE**

I don't like you and your kind. You have that superiority thing going on and it irks me. You should leave.

**SIMON**

I guess this attitude right here is why everyone has been warning me to stay away from this shop and its owner.

**SIDIBE**

Any other thing you'd like to buy, Sir?

**SIMON**

No need to be rude.

**SIDIBE**

I would like to work. And I work in silence.

Simon manages a hurt smile, takes out an envelope and drops it on the table.

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

You make good art and I always pay for good art, always.

He drops the envelope and leaves. Sidibe stares after him, sad at her own conduct. She lifts the envelope, opens and finds a wad of brand-new *old* naira notes, her eyes pop.

**DISSOLVE:**

**23. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: SITTING ROOM- EVENING**

On an exuberant prophet in white flowing garment prancing around with a bell; Sidibe kneeling in the centre considers him warily. Ekanem in a fiery spiritual warfare mode is fervently invested in every word from the Prophet's mouth-

**PROPHET**

*(Chanting) Angel Michael is coming!*

**EKANEM**

Fire!

**PROPHET**

*Angel Gabriel is coming!*

**EKANEM**

Fire!

**PROPHET**

Ahh- Yee- I see it! I see a dark shadow hovering... Jah! Jah Jehovah!

*(Starts chanting) Brother Moses is coming!*

**EKANEM**

Fire!

He rings the bell-

**PROPHET**

Jah Jehovah!

**EKANEM**

Jah!

Bassey in a raffia hat, enters. He halts and watches in horror as the prophet displays.

**BASSEY**

What is going on here?

Prophet oblivious of Bassey's presence keeps ringing the bell and chanting (ADLIB). Bassey angrily charges in and returns with a glistening machete. The prophet sees this and flees. He angrily turns to face Ekanem-

**BASSEY (CONT'D)**

The next time you bring in any of those charlatans into my house, I will bundle you back to your father's house. Nonsense!

**DISSOLVE:**

**24. EXT. IKOT UBO/SIDIBE'S ART SHOP- DAY**

A shot of the village; thin down to the Art shop to show Sidibe busily moulding a portrait. A closer look shows it just might be the doctor's head in the works.

Úyak drumbeats (like the night of the maiden dance) begin to filter in. She looks up and tries to shake it off but it possesses and completely overpowers her. She takes in a long breath like a

howl and passes out. Beat, her eyes part, she stands in a dancelike manner and starts to dance. It is fluid and perfect. Next, she follows the sound of the music, dancing gracefully to it.

**CUT TO:**

**25. EXT. MARKET: BEHIND THE CENTRAL SPOT: DAY**

Úyak drumbeats weigh melodiously in the background as Simon in his lab coat examines and attends to the villagers; UKO 17 first in line, followed by Bassey. Done, he starts to write in a notepad-

**SIMON**

For a more comprehensive examination, I'm going to need you to come into the clinic. Don't worry, all tests are free.

Uko beams.

**UKO**

Thank you Doctor.

**SIMON**

Oh please just call me Simon.

**UKO**

Thank you, Uncle Simon

Simon amused, chuckles.

**SIMON**

What's with the music? The drumbeats-

**UKO**

Úyak. Special drumbeats in honour of Uneke, the goddess of dance. It is exactly one year since the leader of the market died. She was a very traditional person and a great dancer.

**BASSEY**

Fire dancer. That's what her peers called her.

**UKO**

Yes. Her family also donated a massive land for goddess Uneke's shrine. The market is doing this in her honour.

**SIMON**

Ah, that's some history there. Awesome.

Simon tears out the note and hands it to Simon. He bows, nods at Bassey and exits. Bassey steps up and sits. Simon grabs his note pad, flips to the next page and-

**SIMON**

I'm all ears.

**BASSEY**

My son, I have been having this pain here (points to his right abdomen), it comes and goes. I have swallowed too many pain relief medicine, mostly traditional, but each time it returns, it comes with a vengeance.

**SIMON**

How long has this been?

**CUT TO:**

**26 EXT. MARKET SQUARE- CONTINUOUS**

Sidibe all smile, takes the centre stage, jiggling and flapping so effortlessly and in tune. The people watch, entranced at the sheer beauty before them.

Beat, she halts and tilts her head as something within snaps. She immediately starts to glare at people as though they were strangers, enemies even. Quickly, she charges up with a deep throated grunt, pushing down people's wares in one sweep. People scream and scamper off. She reaches for a tree stem lying by and start to massively flogs anything and anyone in sight. Uko walks up, sees this, his eyes widen.

One of the women whose baskets of onions are now littered all over angrily start to pack and hurl them at Sidibe. Others reach for tomatoes, eggs, stones, anything in sight. As they stone her from different angles, destabilising her, a woman picks a huge stick, charges up and starts to flog her viciously. Sidibe growls at the woman and aims for her neck, grabbing and knocking her to the floor. More women flood in, overpower and beat her to a pulp. Uko flees.

**CUT TO:**

**27. EXT. MARKET: BEHIND THE CENTRAL SPOT- CONTINUOUS**

As Simon unstraps the blood monitor strap from Bassey's arm, the chaos in the market filters in.

**SIMON**

This uproar, like an altercation, Is it part of the tradition?

Bassey chuckles

**BASSEY**

It's normal. Every once in a while, someone tries to steal in this market. Sometimes they are sent to the Obong Ikpaisong, other times they are lynched.

**SIMON**

Lynched! As in, killed! Jungle justice?

**BASSEY**

(Shrugs) To deter upcoming thieves, there's need to sometimes set example.

**SIMON**

Oh no, this is barbaric. What can we do?

Bassey shoots him a look, amused.

**BASSEY**

Don't make yourself a victim, doc.

Uko runs in.

**UKO**

Sidibe! Sidibe! They are killing Sidibe!

Bassey jumps up-

**BASSEY**

My Sidibe?

A terrified Uko nods. Bassey screams and dashes out.

**SIMON**

The sculptor girl?

Uko nods and joins Bassey. Simon dumps everything and quickly follows.

**CUT TO:**

## **28. EXT. MARKET SQUARE: CONTINUOUS**

A young man runs up with what seems like a can of gasoline and starts to pour. Bassey races in and falls on his child, shielding her. The man keeps pouring, regardless. Simon runs up and yanks the can from him. The young man ignores him and reaches for matches to strike, Simon lands him a deafening punch, blood spurts. He touches his face, blood. He charges up, Simon knocks him down, knocking off the matchbox. The women pull back.

Simon picks the matchbox and taps Bassey, he refuses to let go. A terrified Uko walks up and whispers into his ear, a teary Bassey rises. Simon examines a now unconscious Sidibe and quickly lifts her in his arms. Uko leads the way, they all follow. Melancholic music.

**CUT TO:**

## **29. EXT/INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- NIGHT**

Sidibe's house at night. Zoom in to show her still asleep in her room, a few spots bandaged. The mother drowned in her own tears is sprawled out on the floor. Simon seated on a stool, stares at



her pitifully. Beat, he looks at the father standing by the door, pale; he stands and heads out. Bassey follows.

**CUT TO:**

**30. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- NIGHT**

Simon and Bassey exit the building and stand. Bassey turns to face him...

**BASSEY**

Today, I have gone through it all. Righteous indignation which is really stupid pride, nonchalance, fear, death, grace, shame, gratitude. But most importantly, you have taught me a life lesson. Kindness sowed could be kindness reaped. I would have sat down, nonchalant, while my daughter was- (his voice cracks as tears well up)

**SIMON**

It's ok...

**BASSEY**

No, it's not. You didn't have to put your life in line to help a total stranger, but you did. You fought like you were family, still stayed back and nurtured her back to life. How can I repay you, my son?

**SIMON**

Pay me for being human? I still insist this is reported to the police.

**BASSEY**

No please.

**SIMON**

But why? I am sure the penalty for stealing here is not death? And that's not to say that I agree she stole anything.

**BASSEY**

My daughter is not a thief.

**SIMON**

That is what I find the most baffling because she doesn't seem like one to me.

**BASSEY**

You see, she is suffering from an affliction by Uneke, the goddess of dance. She either accepts her call to forever serve in her shrine or a worse fate befalls her.

**SIMON**

I do not understand.

**BASSEY**

It is not something to bother you with. But know this, my family and I will eternally be grateful to you. Thank you, my friend.

**SIMON**

This is all strange. Have you tried talking to her? Perhaps, understand why she does what she does?

**BASSEY**

(Shrugs) She remembers nothing. Absolutely nothing.

**CUT TO:**

**31. EXT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS- NIGHT**

On Simon seated, smoking, morose.

**CUT TO:**

**32. INT. SIMON'S BEDROOM- NIGHT**

Simon in bed, stares up. Bassey's voice crashes in-

***BASSEY (VO)***

*You see, she is suffering from an affliction by Uneke, the goddess of dance. She either accepts her call to forever serve in her shrine or a worse fate befalls her.*

... ..

***SIMON (VO)***

*This is all strange. Have you tried talking to her? Perhaps, understand why she does what she does?*

***BASSEY (VO)***

*(Shrugs) She remembers nothing. Absolutely nothing.*

Beat, he turns off the bedside light and tilts.

**DISSOLVE:**

### **33. EXT. INT IKOT UBO/SIDIBE'S HOUSE- DAY**

A shot of the village as day breaks. Narrow to Sidibe's house and zoom in to show-

Simon all radiant, holding a local flower bunch, staring down at Sidibe, his finger in her unconscious firm grip. She opens her eyes and smiles...

**SIDIBE**

What are you doing here?

**SIMON**

Here. (Hands over the flower bunch)

**SIDIBE**

(Sniffs, sighs, smiles and stiffens) I still do not like you.

Beat, Simon chuckles, she chuckles right back.

**ANGRY MALE VOICE (VO)**

Where are they? Harbourers of witchcraft!

The two turn to face the door. Loud bangs filter in.

**CUT TO:**

### **34. INT. SIDIBE'S BEDROOM- MORNING**

On Sidibe, asleep, clearly dreaming. The bangs from the previous scene keep pouring in. She struggles a bit and opens her eyes. She turns to the position where Simon was hitherto sitting in her dreams, no one.

**ANGRY MALE VOICE (VO)**

Witches' coven! Open this gate now!

She makes to quickly stand but winces in pain. She halts, takes a close look at herself and finds patches of bruises and plasters. Shocked and confused, she looks up and finds all her artworks in her room. She manages up and grabs a pair of shorts.

**CUT TO:**

**35. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: MORNING**

Bassey and Ekanem (with wrapper over her nightgown) hurry out. Bassey briskly walks to the gate and as he unlocks it-

**BASSEY**

Oga Landlord, is all well?

**LANDLORD**

How can all be well when I have made the greatest mistake of my life, renting my house to a coven of witches and wizards? Open this gate!

Bassey opens the gate, he charges in.

**LANDLORD (CONT'D)**

Where is that witch?

Ekanem quickly walks up and barricades the way.

**EKANEM**

What is it? Are we owing?

**LANDLORD**

See madam, no be quarrel o, you have twenty-four hours to move out of my house or you will not like what I will do.

**EKANEM**

You will have to go to court o. The law says six months' notice and we just paid.

**LANDLORD**

Oh! Oh, you want to tell me you went to school. You know law! Is it until your daughter destroys my house with her witchcraft Or annoys the village so much that they decide to burn down this building, that you will leave? Wicked people!

**BASSEY**

But Obong-ikpaisong said-

**LANDLORD**

Obong Ikpaisong did not build my house! He did not contribute one naira to even fixing the window. Look, ask my other tenants, I have no business with the courts. I know how I send tenants packing!

**SIDIBE (OS)**

It's ok... (shows up slowly) I will leave.

Silence as they all stare at her.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

(Tears well up her eyes) I am very sorry, Sir. I don't know what I have done to deserve so much hatred but everybody cannot be wrong. SO I beg you Sir, whatever it is that I do, that I have no idea that I do, please leave my parents out of it. They have done nothing wrong. I will leave.

Tears well up Ekanem's eyes, she goes and holds her daughter. The landlord thaws-

**LANDLORD**

(Sighs) It's ok. It's ok. See, (To Bassey) You are a man. Go and look for the goat bleating in your backyard before night comes and it mixes with darkness. The next time I hear pim, I will not be coming alone. *This is the last and final warning!*

Bassey nods. Landlord hisses and storms out.

**DISSOLVE:**

**36.EXT/INT. DOCTORS'QUARTERS/SITTINGROOM- MORNING**

Fiberisima, Simon and Omono all seated, eat their breakfast quietly-

**FIBERISIMA**

(To Simon) The influx is getting overwhelming, you may want to come into the clinic today. The backlog from all your referrals from the market are returning today and we are already almost fully booked.

Simon chuckles in spite of himself-

**FIBERISIMA (CONT'D)**

I know, I know... I complained they were not showing up and now I'm complaining they are overcrowding the place.

**OMONO**

And for a community that seems so peaceful, the violence is shocking.

Simon and Fiberisima turn up to face her.

**OMONO (CONT'D)**

You didn't hear? The patients were all buzzing about it yesterday. Some girl was almost lynched at the market for witchcraft or something like that.

**FIBERISIMA**

What? (To Simon) Is this true?

Simon takes a napkin and wipes his mouth.

**SIMON**

It's the most terrifying thing I ever witnessed.

**OMONO**

Oh my God. (Touches him arm gently) Are you ok?

**SIMON**

I'm fine. The poor girl in question? Not so sure.

**OMONO**



Poor girl? Not that she deserves it but the list of her atrocities are overwhelming. But I know, jungle justice?

**FIBERISIMA**

I am mortified, to say the least. (To Simon) You have to stay off that market for a while. We can't afford to lose you.

**SIMON**

Oh don't worry about me, Fib. (Manages a smile) I'm fine.

Simon stands up, grabs his briefcase and heads out. Omono and Fiberisima exchange looks.

**CUT TO:**

**37. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: SITTING ROOM- MORNING**

Bassey, Ekanem and Sidibe are seated-

**EKANEM**

How? How can you not remember? Every day, we are risk of losing our lives, Sidi. We are like plagues, worse than outcasts. We can't go to the market, can't attend meetings, can't go to gatherings of any sort. How can you resist this devil if you claim you remember nothing?

**BASSEY**

It was almost midnight before we could make it your shop to get all your stuff because Uko heard a rumour that the youths have made plans to set it all on fire by morning. Some believe you might be possessed by them. If I didn't know how much they meant to you, I wouldn't have bothered. But Sidibe, this is no way to live. You must remember something, my child.

Sidibe starts to cry-

**SIDIBE**

God knows I want to remember. Maybe there is a part of me I do not know. A dark side. Or perhaps another soul... a strange spirit that shares this body with me.

Ekanem flips her hand over head

**EKANEM**

God forbid! (Angrily turns to face Bassey) See? If you hadn't chased the prophet-

**BASSEY**

Enough! I will not have that conversation, Ekanem!

Silence... Beat-

**SIDIBE**

I don't know if it was a dream but...

**BASSEY**

Go on, it could be it. A memory. Anything, something-

**SIDIBE**

A doctor. Simon... was he here? In this house.

Bassey deflates and nods. Sidibe smiles in spite of herself; husband and wife exchange looks.

**DISSOLVE:**

***SERIES OF MONTAGE SCENES... (BG MUSIC PLAYS)***

**38. INT. HOSPITAL WARD- DAY**

Simon busily examines a pregnant woman.

**CUT TO:**

**39. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- DAY**

Sidibe works on the art portrait with a renewed zeal.

**CUT TO:**

**40. EXT/INT. PRIESTESS'SHRINE- DAY**

Bassey and Okpoto seated, are engrossed in the old PRIESTESS' weird but synchronised dance. She halts, looks at them pointedly and starts to speak inaudibly (ADLIB).

**CUT TO:**

**41. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: SITTINGROOM – DAY**

Ekanem wearing a pristine white flowing garment, holding up a big Bible, prays fervently (ADLIB), albeit inaudibly, shaking up a storm.

**DISSOLVE:**

**42. EXT/INT IKOT UBO/SIDIBE'S HOUSE/BEDROOM- NIGHT**

Night falls. Thin down to Sidibe's house and zoom in to show her staring at the already completed portrait. She manages a smile, covers it and falls to the bed. Beat-

***LANDLORD (VO)***

*...is it until your daughter destroys my house with her witchcraft or  
annoys the village so much that they decide to burn down this building,  
that you will leave? Wicked people!*

She sighs and sits. Beat, she quickly springs up, reaches for a bag and hurriedly starts to pack. All packed, she looks at the wrapped portrait, ignores and sets for the wooden windows. She opens them, lets down her bag and quietly jumps.

**CUT TO:**

**43. EXT. IKOT UBO- NIGHT**

A dark night slightly ignited by the stars and the haunting cacophonic sounds of birds. Sidibe hurries down.

A whistling sound. Sidibe darts her eyes about, no one. She keeps moving. Beat, a lewd whistling, this time closer. She turns and before her are two grotesque faced men walking up behind. She quickly considers her option and breaks into a run, they pursue. She halts-

**SIDIBE**

Look, I want no trouble. I just want to leave quietly. Please let's not-

One of the men shuts her up with a slap. The other quickly grabs her bag. Sidibe snaps, as she quickly dives at the man that slapped her. He falls. She angrily punches away. The one holding the bag quickly scans the premises and finds a stick. As he lifts and makes for Sidibe's head, he gets an almost fatal punch instead. He falls. Sidibe turns and finds Simon staring down.

**SIDIBE**

You! (Stands) What are you doing here?

**SIMON**

You live quite a charming life.

She quickly grabs her bag, kicks one of the men and starts to leave.

**SIDIBE**

(Scoffs) Charming life!

Simon follows.

**SIMON**

Ah well, *res ipsa loquitur*.

**SIDIBE**

(Halts) If you are trying to rude, be bold enough to communicate properly.

**SIMON**

(Chuckles) Always so sensitive. *Res ipsa loquitur* is something my solicitor friend always says. Latin maxim for the fact speaks for itself.

Sidibe sighs and keeps moving.

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Last I checked, that's not the way to your house.

**SIDIBE**

Last I checked I didn't hire a bodyguard. (Beat) You need to stop following me. I am leaving this place. I'm going away.

**SIMON**

By this time of the night? Young woman, do you have a death wish?

**SIDIBE**

Knight in shining armour! (Beat, halts) You go home. Or wait... do you even a home? I'm beginning to think you just hover all over the place till the next day.

**SIMON**

Ouch. (Points) The doctors' quarters is just there. I always take a walk this time of the night for the air and the sound of nature. You are welcome to spend the night and continue your journey of no return

tomorrow. Hate me all you want but that's your safest option. Better safe than sorry.

Off Sidibe weighing her options.

**CUT TO:**

**44. INT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS: SIMON'S BEDROOM- NIGHT**

Door opens, Simon now carrying Sidibe's bag enters. Sidibe follows.

**SIMON**

That's the bathroom. A set of new towels are by the left. What would you like for dinner?

**SIDIBE**

Water is fine.

**SIMON**

You sure? Fruit salad? Tea?

**SIDIBE**

I had a large dinner. Thanks.

Simon manages a smile and exits. Sidibe sits for a while, beat, she opens her bag, takes out a towel and makes for the bathroom.

**CUT TO:**

**45. INT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS: SITTING ROOM- NIGHT**

Simon walks in, sits and reaches for a newspaper. Omono shows up.

**OMONO**

Tea?

**SIMON**

Please.

**OMONO**

Milk, sugar?

**SIMON**

Coffee. With milk.

Omono exits. Simon turns the newspaper page, beat, he tosses it, stands and exits. Omono shows up with the coffee, no one. Her eyes rest on Simon's bedroom door, she beams.

**CUT TO:**

#### **46. INT. SIMON'S BEDROOM- NIGHT**

Omono steps in, hears the sound of the splattering water from the bathroom, smiles, drops the coffee on the table and sits on the bed. Beat, she takes down her nightgown sleeve a notch and flips her hair.

Bathroom knob turns, Omono strikes an even sexier pose, gently lifting her nightgown and wearing her sultriest smile. Door opens. Sidibe in a towel, steps out. Omono screams. Sidibe confused and shocked, screams alongside.



**CUT TO:**

**47. INT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS: SITTINGROOM- NIGHT**

On Sidibe and Simon laughing.

**SIDIBE**

It was so embarrassing. Oyibo, you should have at least hinted you were expecting your girlfriend.

**SIMON**

For the umpteenth time, Omono is not my girlfriend. She is just a colleague.

**SIDIBE**

Are you blind though? She has the hots for you, and she's gorgeous.

**SIMON**

I don't do colleagues. (Clears throat) Is it me or does someone sound jealous?

**SIDIBE**

Oh please!

Simon laughs, Sidibe chuckles. Angle on an unamused Omono out of their view, eavesdropping, unamused.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

(Beat, sober) You were there that night. I remember hearing your voice. Like a dream, or maybe it was a dream. But the room had your... essence, whatever that means.

**SIMON**

I was just a doctor honouring the Hippocratic oath. I wasn't going to watch you die.

**SIDIBE**

You staked your life for me. I heard it all. I'm sure that's beyond the hippo-whatever oath. Granted, you can be really annoying sometimes but deep down, you are a good person. Thank you.

**SIMON**

Someone is being unusually nice today. You are welcome. (Beat) But I want to understand... I've heard stuff. They mostly sound a lot like fiction but... what's really going on?

**SIDIBE**

(Shrugs) Beats me. I mean, I wish I knew. I remember nothing, just gaps. It just always starts with drumbeats, I think... Peculiar drumbeats-

**SIMON**

Úyak drumbeats.

Sidibe looks at him and nods.

**SIDIBE**

I think I mostly pass out. And when I'm up I hear there's been a lot of dancing and destruction. It's a mystery... a destructive mystery.

**SIMON**

Tell me all about it.

Beat, Sidibe starts to explain albeit inaudibly (ADLIB) as background music overwhelms. Tight on the wall clock to show *11pm*. We pan down to see her still talking animatedly as Simon listens, wrapped up in her whole essence. Pan to the tabletop clock to show the time has moved to about 4am. Pull back to show a now sleeping Sidibe, her head resting on Simon's shoulder. Simon lost in his own thoughts turns to look at her, smiles and taps her gently, she snuggles up the more and sleeps even deeper. He looks at her, all that innocence, throws his head back, places an arm around her to shield her and joins in the sleep.

**DISSOLVE:**

#### **48. EXT/INT. DOCTOR'S QUARTERS/DINING ROOM- EARLY MORNING**

A visible stray cock, crows. Zoom in to show Simon setting the dining table; toast bread, boiled eggs, jam, butter, tea, sugar, coffee and milk. Sidibe all dressed with her travel bag shows up.

**SIDIBE**

I can't thank you enough for the hospitality. I have to run now so I can catch an early bus.

**SIMON**

Early bus to?

**SIDIBE**

(Shrugs) Anywhere. Aba, port Harcourt, Lagos. Anyone available and affordable.

**SIMON**

You have relatives all over the place?

**SIDIBE**

Not really, I... I guess I'll figure it out as soon as I'm out of here.

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Hmmm. Breakfast? Please?

Sidibe looks at the table and chuckles.

**SIDIBE**

Too early. I eat by 11 am, and it is usually overnight *afang* and fufu.

Delicious! Plus it holds you all day long and keeps you fit for work.

**SIMON**

Fufu in the morning!

**SIDIBE**

You should try it.

Simon chuckles, walks up and takes down her bag. He pulls out a chair and motions her to sit, she reluctantly obliges. He sits, butters a slice of bread and hands it over, Sidibe reluctantly takes a bite. As Simon pours hot water into a mug-

**SIMON**

What can I do to make you stay?

**DISSOLVE:**

**49. EXT. SIDIBE'S GATE- MORNING**

Sidibe hums a nice local folk song (ADLIB) as Simon carrying her bag walks her home. Beat, she sighs.

**SIDIBE**

I don't know how you talked me into returning here.

Simon ignores her and starts humming the folk song-

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

Oyibo, how do you know this song?

Simon laughs.

**SIMON**

You have to teach me the lyrics. It's quite soothing.

**SIDIBE**

(Chuckles) My grandmother used to hum it a lot back in the days. I agree, it is soothing. (Halts) This house, this village- (shakes her head) I don't want to be here.

Simon turns to face her.

**SIMON**

Again, I solemnly (raises a hand) swear to you that as long as I am here, not a hair on your head will be touched. I will make it my life's paramount mission to protect you.

**SIDIBE**

You are sweet and all, but what of what use is one lion in a gathering of lions, tigers and elephants.

**SIMON**

You underestimate a man's resolve, Sid. No one in this community is entitled to live here more than you do. Where their right ends, is where yours begins. You are a strong woman, that's what I admire most about you. Don't let anyone make you think less.

Sidibe nods.

**SIDIBE**

Ok, you have to start going. I'll take over from here.

**SIMON**

Take over what? We are already here. And no, it's not that I don't trust you darling but I will rather wait.

**SIDIBE**

It's still very early in the morning, the gate is locked and- You know what, don't say I didn't warn you.

She walks up to the gate, throws her bag in and scales over. Simon's eyes pop. Sidibe turns, winks and heads in. Simon chuckles. He is intrigued by this woman.

**DISSOLVE:**

#### **50. EXT. ROAD- ANOTHER DAY**

On Simon (with his camera) and Sidibe walking down the road, inaudibly chatting and laughing. Villagers pass by and shoot Sidibe unfriendly stares. Simon wraps his arm around her, silencing them.

**CUT TO:**

#### **51. EXT. SIDIBE'S SHOP- DAY**

Sidibe is seen teaching Simon how to mould a sculpture. A couple of villagers pass and look, Simon matches their stares, they walk away.

**CUT TO:**

#### **52. EXT. STREAMSIDE- ANOTHER DAY**

Sidibe dressed in a nice African pattern dress, strikes poses. Simon happily takes pictures. He hands over the camera and poses, Sidibe laughs and takes shots. They place the camera on a rock and stand together, flashlights.

**CUT TO:**

#### **53. EXT. STREAMSIDE- ANOTHER ANGLE**

Simon and Sidibe are seated, surfing through the images on his camera and reacting accordingly. Sidibe sees a picture and laughs, Simon stares at her, smitten...

**SIMON**

You are so perfect.

**SIDIBE**

Huh?

**SIMON**

It makes no sense. What they accuse you of. These few days with you have been the best days of my life. There's just no correlation between all they say you are and the woman I'm sitting with.

**SIDIBE**

(Blushes) Oyibo, easy with the flattery. (Beat) I don't know what I'm going to do though, when you are gone.

**SIMON**

If you want me to stay forever, just say it.

**SIDIBE**

Oh please! You are just saying that.

**SIMON**

Home is where the heart is, and my heart is here.

Sidibe looks at him, overwhelmed. A love song sets in. He looks at her... a moment... their faces pull up, they kiss. She looks away, flushed.



**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Or you could come with me. There are very many great art schools in the UK. You can-

**SIDIBE**

Simon, you really want to be with the future priestess of Uneke.

Simon speechless, stares, confused. Sidibe bursts into laughter. Simon eases up and joins in the laughter.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

You should have seen your face.

**DISSOLVE:**

**54. EXT/INT IKOT UBO/DOCTORS' QUARTERS- DAY**

A car drops Simon, he grabs his lab coat and bag and heads in. As soon as he opens the door-

**ALL**

Happy birthday, Doctor Simon!

A decorated room, birthday cake, drinks. Dr Fiberisima, Omono, Sidibe and a couple others are present. Simon stares, completely dazed. They start to sing-

**ALL (CONT'D)**

*For he is a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow, and so says all of us. Hurray! And so says all of us, hurray!*

**SIMON**

(To Sidibe) You did this?

Sidibe shakes her head and points at Omono. Simon smiles at Omono and walks up, they embrace.

**SIMON**

(To all) Thank you so much, everyone. Oh my God, thank you.

**OMONO**

Here, darling. Come and cut your cake.

Simon walks up and holds the knife-

**OMONO (CONT'D)**

3- 2- 1

**ALL**

Hurray!

Simon cuts the cake, they all clap and cheer. Omono passes the wine glasses and starts to fill them up. Simon walks up, embraces Fiberisima and shakes a couple of people. Lastly, he walks up to Sidibe-

**SIDIBE**

How long have you known?

Sidibe chuckles, grabs the covered sculpture by the side and places it on the table. Simon looks at it warily, uncovers and gasps. People turn and stare in awe. A misty-eyed Simon turns to face Sidibe-

**SIMON**

This is... perfect.

Sidibe blushes. Simon leans in and places a chaste kiss on her lips. Omono clears her throat.

**OMONO**

I'd like to borrow her for a second, please. (To Sidibe) Darling, could you please get the food packs from the kitchen?

Sidibe happily nods and makes for the kitchen. Simon walks towards Fiberesima. Omono takes out a DVD plate from her bag and wears a spiteful look. As her eyes rest on the dvd player-

**CUT TO:**

**55. INT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS: KITHCEN- CONTINUOUS**

Sidibe walks in, grabs a fine tray and starts to place the neatly packed food. Úyak drumbeats start to trail in. She pauses, shakes it off and keeps setting the tray.

As she lifts the tray and makes for the door, she gasps and collapses, food packs littered all over the place. Beat, her eyes yank open, she rises in a fluid rhythmic way and starts to dance.

Following the sound of the music, she dances out.

**CUT TO:**

**56. INT. DOCTORS' QUARTERS: SITTING ROOM- CONTINUOUS**

Attendees standing, gently move to the beats as they converse. Sidibe dances in, so gracefully, in sync. Omono sees this... and smirks.

Sidibe dances to the centre and enthrals everyone with such captivating performance; the flawless swaying of the hips, the rhythmic coordination of the hand and leg movement... Boom, something snaps, she traps a wine bottle and flings, people duck. It crashes on the wall, they scream.

### **SIMON**

Sid.

She lifts the cake to fling, Simon quickly makes to step in but too late, she hurls it at Fiberisima, leaving him covered in cake cream. Omono in a distance gets it all in a camera. Sidibe growls and reaches for the sculpture, Simon grabs her firmly as she struggles like one with the strength of a thousand men, twisting and turning, wriggling, grasping at and grabbing anything in sight.

Simon starts to hum the folk song Sidibe once hummed (see sc 49). Sidibe still struggling, starts to mellow. He keeps humming, she stops fighting and just stares at him helplessly. Beat, her eyes shut and she drifts off.

**CUT TO:**

### **57. EXT/INT. HOSPITAL/PRIVATE WARD- DAY**

Establishing shot of the community hospital. Zoom in to show Sidibe in bed, hand strapped to a drip, asleep. Surrounding her are Simon, Bassey and Ekanem. A nurse steps in.

### **NURSE**

The doctor is ready to see you now.

She exits. Bassey and Ekanem exchange looks-

**SIMON**

It's ok, I'll be here.

They exit. Melancholic music. Simon stares at Sidibe helplessly sprawled out in bed, and fights the tears welling up his eyes. As he rubs her hair gently-

**CUT TO:**

## **58. INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE- DAY**

Ekanem and Bassey seated opposite Dr OBOT watches as he flips through a file.

**DR OBOT**

I've gone through all her results, the MRI inclusive. (Looks up and shrugs) Nothing. There is absolutely nothing medically wrong with your daughter.

**BASSEY**

But there must be. Healthy people don't just pass out and-

**DR OBOT**

Keyword: medically. If I may, I've been privy to a couple of cases like this. In the end, their families resorted to traditional remedies and they are mostly fine.

**BASSEY**

Are you saying this is spiritual?

**DR OBOT**

I'm not an authority on spiritual matters but you might need to explore that angle.

**EKANEM**

I said it! The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty through pulling down strongholds. Our enemies will be put to shame in Jesus mighty name!

Dr Obot manages a smile.

**CUT TO:**

**59. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- EVENING**

BG music. Bassey, his cousin Okpoto and a couple of elders are seen whispering outside the house. Off Ekanem staring at them via the window, wary and unamused.

**DISSOLVE:**

**60. EXT. IKOT UBO/SIDIBE'S HOUSE- MIDNIGHT**

A shot of the village at night. Narrow to Sidibe's house to show the Priestess and her acolytes stepping in, in rhythm. As the acolytes hum a chant (ADLIB), they make extreme flexible body movements in sync with the rhythm of their muffled chants. The Priestess walks through the gate

which is already flung wide open, enters, and with one swing buries her staff deep into the ground.

**CUT TO:**

**61. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- MIDNIGHT**

A livid Ekanem barricades the door to prevent Bassey from steeping out to meet them.

**EKANEM**

Over my dead body, you hear me, over my dead body!

**BASSEY**

Ekanem, get out of the way.

**EKANEM**

My child is consecrated to the lord, she will never serve idols.

**BASSEY**

Don't make me move you.

**EKANEM**

I brought God's holy prophet to this house, you sent him away! And you have let the devil's agent into our home! You would have to kill me first, Bassey. Kill me!

Bassey shoves her to the side, opens the door and steps out.

**CUT TO:**

## **62. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- NIGHT**

Bassey steps out and bows before the priestess.

### **PRIESTESS**

Rise.

Bassey stands. The Priestess looks at her acolytes. They march up to her, one after the other. She whips out palm fronds and places them between their lips. They continue humming their chant in unison as they head in, led by Bassey.

Bassey leads them in. Beat, we hear Ekanem's screams and wailing. A weak but struggling Sidibe is dragged out. Bassey halts as they drag her to the priestess. She calls out to her father-

### **SIDIBE**

Papa...!

Bassey ignores.

### **SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

Papa!!

Bassey throws his face away. Sidibe's face falls and her struggle ends as they drag her out in slow mo. Ekanem falls to the floor and wails. Off Bassey now staring after them as a tear, trickles down his face.

**DISSOLVE:**



### **63. EXT. SHRINE- MIDNIGHT**

Sidibe is seated on the floor, out of spirit. The Priestess strides around her muttering inaudibly (ADLIB) and spraying a liquid content from a calabash with palm fronds. Done, she looks at the acolytes, they drag Sidibe up. She walks up and stares her in the eyes-

#### **PRIESTESS**

It is a great honour to be chosen by the great goddess Uneke. A call that bestows on a mortal, uncommon honour and privilege. But you have opted to run from your shadows. An act that has bestowed mayhem on an entire community.

#### **SIDIBE**

A goddess that can afflict her called with madness, destructive madness is useless to me. You, your gods, this shrine, you mean nothing to me!

The Priestess dazes her a resounding slap. Beat, Sidibe spits on her. The Priestess' eyes widen in shock. She wipes...

#### **PRIESTESS**

I was once like you. Feisty!

#### **SIDIBE**

Let me go!

#### **PRIESTESS**

Oh child, I will enjoy taming you.

The Priestess beams and touches her face affectionately. Beat, she scowls-

**PRIESTESS (CONT'D)**

Tie her up!

**SIDIBE**

You will not dare!

They drag her; she struggles, albeit weakly.

**CUT TO:**

**64. EXT. SHRINE: TREE ANGLE- MIDNIGHT**

On Sidibe tied to a tree, almost naked. One of the acolytes walks up with an earthen waterfilled pot and empties it on her. As she shivers in the cold, the priestess walks up with a long whip and starts to lash her, brutally. Sidibe tightens and groans with each lash. Tears flow-

**DISSOLVE:**

**65. EXT. IKOT UBO/DOCTOR'S QUARTERS- MORNING**

A shot of the community. Flip to the Doctors' quarters and zoom in to show Fiberisima and Omono fixated on the camera screen. Tight on the screen to show Sidibe's episode at the birthday. Simon set for work walks in unnoticed and stares at them as the altercation in the cam filter out. He walks up and looks-

**SIMON**

What is this?

Almost startled, they look up to face him.

**OMONO**

Good morning, Simon.

Simon takes the camera and watches up close. Tight on the screen to show Sidibe acting up at the party. He turns the camera off and turns to face them-

**FIBERISIMA**

How is she?

**SIMON**

Who- how did this-

**OMONO**

I did.

Simon stares at her, and for the very first time, we see him genuinely upset. Fiberisima clears his throat and grabs his bag.

**FIBERISIMA**

I have an early appointment.

He exits.

**OMONO**

I figured someone had to remind you what it was you were getting into.  
We do not belong here, Simon. This place is different. We have no  
business mixing with the locals.

Omono's role in this debacle starts to dawn on Simon-

**SIMON**

You knew... you had it all planned.

**OMONO**

Simon-

**SIMON**

You know I found your music choice weird. You knew. How?

**OMONO**

I swear to you, I had no idea it-

**SIMON**

How?!

**OMONO**

I overheard. The day she slept here. (Tears well up) At first, I assumed it was a mere fable. It made no sense that some random beat, úyak or whatever, would drive someone to the edge. I was curious. And maybe a little jealous. (Stands) Babe, I have been here. Right under your nose. We are both educated, both from civilisation, same class. No history of demon possession or any such foul thing. I am beautiful, I know this for a fact. Why can you not see me?

**SIMON**

Oh God, Omono. This is low. So low, even for you.

He turns to leave, returns, grabs the camera and exits. Omono sinks into a couch and sobs.

**CUT TO:**

**66. EXT. SHRINE- MORNING**

Sidibe tied up is sleeping on a bare ground, her body sore from the lashes and insect bites, eyes stained and shut from prolonged tears. A calabash of water is again emptied on her followed by a kick. Sidibe's eyes yank open. Reverse to show the Priestess unamused, staring at her.

Sidibe curls up, shivering from the cold. The Priestess looks at the acolytes, they pull Sidibe up. She moves, they follow, dragging her along.

**CUT TO:**

**67. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- MORNING**

Bassey and Simon are standing, conversing. Ekanem with puffy eyes from crying stares out via the window.

**SIMON**

Nothing, I just want to know she is fine.

**BASSEY**

(Manages a smile) She is better than ever. It's just, you know- she worked late into the night. But not to worry, I will tell her you checked, as soon as she is up.

**SIMON**

You are sure everything is fine, Sir.

Bassey smiles and taps Simon.

**BASSEY**

The good doctor! You worry too much, my friend. Please run along, I'm sure there are patients waiting. I will head in now, please close the gate after you.

He heads in. Simon stands and stares after him, beat, he exits.

**CUT TO:**

**68. EXT. SHRINE- DAY**

The Priestess is seated. The acolytes sing and tap the drums, but not in the characteristic manner Sidibe responds to.

**PRIESTESS**

Dance!

Sidibe just stares.

**PRIESTESS (CONT'D)**

The great goddess Uneke, commands you through her mouthpiece, in honour of her presence to dance. Dance!

Sidibe starts to move her body awkwardly, it is a disaster. The Priestess heaves a frustrated sigh. She looks at the acolytes, they stop playing. One enters and reappears with a whip. The Priestess nods. He walks up to Sidibe. Reverse and stay on the Priestess as Sidibe's muffled cry pierces via the resounding lashes.

**CUT TO:**

**69. EXT. SIDIBE'S ART SHOP- EVENING**

Simon arrives and finds the shop locked. Confused, he sits and stares, unsettled.

**CUT TO:**

**70. EXT. IKOT UBO/SHRINE- NIGHT**

Night falls. Sidibe is seen lying down on the bare floor, eyes shut.

**SIMON (VO)**

Sid... Sid...

Sidibe opens her eyes and darts them about, no one. She shuts them again as she slaps her body to ward off mosquitoes.

**SIMON (VO)**

Sidibe.

Sidibe opens her eyes and to her shock, Simon is before her.

**SIDIBE**

What- how- what are you doing here?

**SIMON**

Come on, let's go.

Sidibe makes to leave but is held back by strong rope holding her bound.

**SIDIBE**

Untie me, my love. Please.

**SIMON**

But I can't. You are the only one who can.

Sidibe shuts her eyes and shakes her head. She opens them, no one. She darts her eyes about. No one. She looks at the thick rope and attempts to untie herself, it is at best, an effort in futility. She starts to cry. Someone begins to hum her favourite folk song. She turns and on the tree is UDEME, her estranged maternal grandmother, seated, humming. Sidibe confused, calls out-

**SIDIBE**

Grandma... Mama-

No response, just the humming. Sidibe closes her eyes and starts to hum alongside. Beat, she opens her eyes and looks at the tree- no one. More tears cascade. She lays back and continues humming.

**CUT TO:**



**71. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE: SITTINGROOM- NIGHT**

On Ekanem holding her husband's shirt collar in a firm grip.

**EKANEM**

Our only child. Our girl! The only one. You will kill me today!

**BASSEY**

What do you want from me, Ekanem?!

**EKANEM**

My child! I want my child, Bassey! Is that too much to ask?

**BASSEY**

(Sober) And you think this makes me happy? You think if I had a better option, I wouldn't have taken it? We almost lost her! She was nearly lynched in the market, remember?

**EKANEM**

We should have kept on trusting God.

**BASSEY**

Oh please!

**EKANEM**

Oh, you better pray my husband. Pray! Because if anything happens to Sidibe, if as much as a hair falls off her head, I will set this on fire with you in it, and burn it to the ground!

**BASSE**

Eka-

She storms out. Bassey pales, sits and stares.

**CUT TO:**

**72. EXT. SHRINE- NIGHT**

Acolytes play the drum in that characteristic úyak tune. The old Priestess dances in a sensual, deep worship manner. Sidibe unbound, sprawled out on the floor, seemingly unconscious, gasps as her eyes open. She begins to move, in sync with the beats.

The Priestess halts as she watches Sidibe up on her feet, performing the most magical dance ever, a spectacle to behold. As she takes the centre stage, the Priestess bellows into deep laughter. She raises her staff-

**PRIESTESS**

Prepare, for today, an heir is truly born! The great Uneke has indeed chosen for herself a worthy successor!

**CUT TO:**

**73. EXT/INT. DOCTOR'S LODGE: SITTING ROOM– MORNING**

A shot of the lodge. Simon all set for work steps in. He finds Fiberisima seated, sipping coffee.

**SIMON**

Good morning Fib.

**FIBERISIMA**

Morning Simon.

**SIMON**

Have you seen Omono? She was supposed to-

**FIBERISIMA**

She left.

Simon takes a double look at him, trying to assimilate...

**SIMON**

Left, as in left for the hospital?

**FIBERISIMA**

All things being equal, she should be somewhere in (looks at his wristwatch) Heathrow, by now. Did you two have a fight? She wouldn't talk about it.

Simon thaws. He walks up and sits.

**SIMON**

Of course, I was mad. What she did was mean, despicable, beneath her, to say the least.

**FIBERISIMA**

(Shrugs) People tend to do strange things when they are in love.

**SIMON**

I never led her on. I've never seen or treated Omono as anything other than a colleague. (Beat; sighs) I'm worried about Sidibe. She has gone AWOL.

**FIBERISIMA**

Maybe it's for the best. Or maybe she doesn't want to see you? After what happened? Embarrassed, perhaps?

**SIMON**

She's just ill, you know? She never remembers any if it. Right after it happens, it's a clean slate.

Fiberisima drops her mug and stares at him-

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Mysteries, huh!

**FIBERISIMA**

Not quite. She may need to see a psychiatrist. Sounds like dissociative mental disorder.

**SIMON**

What's that?

**FIBERISIMA**

Presence of two or more personality traits. The second one is usually created as a reaction to trauma. That way, the patient doesn't have to be stuck with whatever memory they are trying to shut down.

**SIMON**

Here, they believe she's afflicted by the goddess of dance. That she can only be free is she opts to serve her.

**FIBERISIMA**

Ah well, who knows? But get her to see a psychiatrist if you can. At least, rule that out.

Simon stares, lost in thought.

**CUT TO:**

**74. EXT. SHRINE- MORNING**

The environ is a mess. Apparently, Sidibe has struck, right after the dance. The Priestess walks up to Sidibe on the floor, all tied up. One of the acolytes with patches of bruises all over, quickly presents a chair, she sits. They pull Sidibe up to a sitting position.

**PRIESTESS**

What demon has possessed you? There I was thanking the great goddess for gifting us a worthy successor. (Looks around) What a mess.

Sidibe just stares at her blankly-

**PRIESTESS (CONT'D)**

It is true. You go on a rampage, and in the end, you remember nothing.  
(Leans closer) Only a person who wants to be helped can truly be helped.

**SIDIBE**

(Beat) I want to be helped.

**PRIESTESS**

Swear your allegiance to the great Uneke, to serve out the rest of your days here in this shrine. For only then shall you truly receive freedom from this torment.

Sidibe stares thoughtfully, beat, she shakes her head.

**SIDIBE**

I just want to be free. I just want to be free.

**PRIESTESS**

Then you will swear. (To acolytes) Ready her.

**SIDIBE**

No... no... I do not wish to be a Priestess. I do not want to serve your goddess. I just want to be free.

The Priestess scowls.

**PRIESTESS**

Soon, you will beg for it.

She looks at the acolytes, they grab Sidibe and pull her towards the tree.

**SIDIBE**

(Weakly) Please- please-

**CUT TO:**

**75. EXT. SHRINE: TREE ANGLE- DAY**

The Priestess heavily rains down whips on Sidibe. This time, she lets it out and cries, broken.

**DISSOLVE:**

**76. INT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- SITTING ROOM- EVENING**

Bassey is seated, reading an old newspaper. There's a slight knock, Simon enters. Bassey looks up.

**BASSEY**

Doc.

Simon walks up and sits.

**SIMON**

Good morning, Sir. I... I thought I'd just breeze in and see how she is. I would have been here quite early in the morning but I thought not to disturb her sleep.

**BASSEY**

And unfortunately, she just stepped out, not too long ago. I think, to her shop.

**SIMON**

I was just there before I came here. As a matter of fact, I have been there every single day but that shop hasn't been open for a while. It is covered in dust as we speak.

**BASSEY**

Why does this feel like an interrogation.

**SIMON**

I am not the police, I just-

Uko enters-

**UKO**

Good morning, Sir. Good morning, Uncle Doctor.

Simon manages a smile and nods.

**UKO**

(To Bassey) The drum is full now.

**BASSEY**

I have a guest, return tomorrow for your money.

Uko nods and heads out.

**SIMON**

I'm not here to make trouble, I just want to know where she is.

Uko halts but doesn't look back.

**BASSEY**



Who knows? Maybe in one of her friends' houses. Who knows where young people go these days?

Uko exits. Simon's face falls.

**CUT TO:**

**77. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- EVENING**

Simon exits the gate. As he makes to walk down, Uko runs up, darts his eyes about and whispers into Simon's ear (ADLIB). Simon's eyes widen in shock.

**SIMON**

Are you sure?

Uko nods.

**DISSOLVE:**

**78. EXT. IKOT UBO/BUSH PATH- NIGHT**

A shot of the community environ. Thin down to a bush path to show Simon waiting, pacing, looking at his timepiece. Beat, Uko shows up, darting his eyes about.

**SIMON**

You said 10pm. This is almost 11.

**UKO**

I had to make sure no one saw or followed. Let's go.

He leads the way. Simon follows.

**CUT TO:**

**79. EXT. SHRINE- NIGHT**

Simon and Uko arrive the shrine and find Sidibe tied to the tree, bruised all over her body. Simon instinctively charges up but Uko pulls him back and points to one of the attendants walking up with a pot of water. They hide.

The attendant empties the pot on a sack and walks up to Sidibe. He unties her, she falls. He pulls her hands backwards, ties them up and drags her to the wet sack. Done, he darts his eyes about and heads to his cubicle.

As soon as he shuts the door, Simon and Uko exchange looks, and head up. Sidibe sees them, shuts her eyes and shakes her head. She opens her eyes slowly to still find them walking up-

**SIDIBE**

(Weakly) Go away. You are not real. Nothing is real. Go away.

**SIMON**

Shhh-

He walks up and starts to untie her. Sidibe shuts her eyes again, this time really tight, and opens them, Simon is still there untying her.

**SIDIBE**

Is this... are you really here?

**SIMON**

(Whispers) I'm so sorry, Sid. Everything is going to be alright.

He scoops her up into her arms; they quickly but quietly exit.

**CUT TO:**

## **80. INT. DOCTORS' LODGE- NIGHT**

Sidibe all bathed, wearing Simon's shirt and trousers is seen eating, battling tears in between.  
Simon stares at her-

**SIMON**

Sid, I had no idea.

**SIDIBE**

(Wipes a trickling tear) I know.

**SIMON**

Please let me help you. I've been making enquiries and I found this really great Psychiatrist whose specialty is-

**SIDIBE**

Psychiatrist! Why? I am not mad.

**SIMON**

No, you are not.

Beat, Simon takes the camera, turns it on, clicks and hands it over to Sidibe. She stares at her raving episode and the tears flow. She wipes and hands it over-

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

It's ok to need help. We all do, every now and then. Please let me help, my love.

Sidibe stands-

**SIDIBE**

Thank you for everything, Simon. But I have to leave now.

**SIMON**

There's no need to be embarrassed. It's me. I am with you in this, all the way. If you let me, I will do all within my power to protect you.

**SIDIBE**

That's what you said the last time, look where that got me. I can't be here. This place will kill me and there will be no flowers on my grave. I have to go. Anywhere. Any city. (Shrugs) My maternal home, anywhere but here.

**SIMON**

Your maternal home, where is that?

**SIDIBE**

Two villages away. It's my safest option because no one would know.  
Grandma is into herbal treatment and my mother considers anything  
traditional, witchcraft. They never see eye to eye.

Simon stands and pulls her into a warm embrace-

**SIMON**

I love you, so much. We are in this together, always remember that.

**CUT TO:**

#### **81. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- MORNING**

Simon and Sidibe arrive in a cab and alight. As they make to head in, they find MAMA, an old woman humming Sidibe's favourite folk song as she sprays some liquid all over the place, in what seems like a ritual.

Simon turns to look at Sidibe quizzically, she manages a smile and enters, limping. Simon follows. Mama turns, sees Sidibe and smiles.

**MAMA**

I have been waiting for you.

Sidibe limps up, they embrace. Simon walks up.

**SIMON**

Good morning, Ma'am.

Mama takes a thorough look at Simon, and smiles.

**MAMA**

Come in, you two.

She leads, they follow

**SIMON**

(Whispers) She knew we were coming?

**SIDIBE**

She's a seer.

**SIMON**

Hmmm.

They all head in.

**DISSOLVE:**

## **82. EXT. SIDIBE'S HOUSE- MORNING**

Bassey steps out and is somewhat taken aback to find the Priestess and her acolytes.

**PRIESTESS**

Where is she?

**BASSEY**

Where is who?

Ekanem heads out and joins her husband-

**PRIESTESS**

It is only an irredeemable fool that tests the depth of the river with both feet. I warn, do not test not the fury of the great Uneke. Bring that child out, now.

Ekanem turns to face Bassey

**EKANEM**

Which child? Bring who out?

**PRIESTESS**

It is great foolishness to dare to tie your wood with a viper because it resembles a rope. For the last time, bring your daughter out now.

Ekanem screams and faces the old Priestess squarely-

**EKANEM**

I pray those gods you call save you and all these people you parade with! Because if you do not provide the child, you came here and forcefully took without her consent or mine, you will know between you and I who the viper is!

**BASSEY**

(To Ekanem) You are talking to the Priestess.

**EKANEM**

As for you, heavens bear me witness, if anything happens to Sidi, there will be a grave here before nightfall and I will not be the one in it! (To Priestess) Aunty, you are still here, abi! Wait for me!

Ekanem charges in, Bassey quickly follows. The Priestess looks at her attendants, they all quickly depart.

**CUT TO:**

**83. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- DAY**

Mama walks Simon to a waiting cab. Simon turns to face her.

**SIMON**

Like I explained, you have to try. You saw the video; she doesn't remember any of it. She needs to see a professional. Dissociative-

**MAMA**

-mental disorder. You've said that like a thousand times. I'm old, not deaf.

**SIMON**

I'm sorry. It's just-

**MAMA**

Son, long before the white man came, long before your forebears were taken to Europe for slavery, we had illnesses that we treated. Sicknesses of the body and mind. It is rude to imagine our methods are inferior, do you not think?



**SIMON**

I definitely see where Sid got that mouth and attitude from.

Mama laughs.

**MAMA**

You mean well, I know. And I have heard your opinion, what did you call it? Professional. It is well received and I will have it in mind. Feel free to visit as much as you wish, perhaps you will learn a thing or two. Or who knows, I might learn a thing or two.

Simon smiles-

**SIMON**

I have a feeling we'll get along just fine.

Mama touches his face, smiles and takes a step back.

**MAMA**

Thank you.

Simon steps into the cab. It wheels out, Mama enters.

**DISSOLVE:**

#### **84. EXT. MAMA'S VILLAGE/HOUSE- DAY**

A shot of Mama's village. Narrow shot to Mama holding Sidibe's hand and leading her a open hut showcasing three female head statues. Sidibe's eyes light up. As she examines the sculptures-

**SIDIBE**

You made this?

**MAMA**

I wish. My mother did. She was the greatest sculptor of her time. The first one is her, followed by her mother, and her grandmother. These are her greatest gifts to me. I live here alone but I never feel alone. My forebears are here, always cheering for me and now I feel them cheering for you.

Sidibe's face falls.

**SIDIBE**

What is there to be cheered?

**MAMA**

Super powers, of which you are a great custodian, just like all of them before you.

**SIDIBE**

Super destructive powers, you mean?

Mama smiles and touches her face.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D)**

Perhaps, I shall make yours, you know, keep the tradition alive.

**MAMA**

Come with me.

**CUT TO:**

**85. EXT. ROAD- MORNING**

On Sidibe running fiercely-

**MAMA (VO)**

You do not stop when you are tired, you stop when you are done.  
Because the mind, the body, even one's spirit must be brought to  
subjection.

**CUT TO:**

**86. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- MORNING**

Sidibe races back, panting.

**MAMA (VO)**

For power in itself is often disguised in many different forms. The fiercer  
it is, the more tougher to control.

Mama waiting, hands her a wooden cup of herbal drink. She sips and pulls it out. She stares at  
her; she drinks it up and hands over the cup.

**CUT TO:**

## **87. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE: ANOTHER ANGLE- MORNING**

On Sidibe scantily dressed. Mama with white chalk etched beneath one of her eyes, bathes her as she mutters incantations inaudibly (ADLIB)

**MAMA (VO)**

It's a whole journey, each step, a move to dominate. But to build, you must first wipe clean.

**CUT TO:**

## **88. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- NIGHT**

A bunch of very old men are seated, playing the úyak beat. Mama takes the centre stage and begins to dance. It is easy to tell where Sidibe got her dancing gift from.

Sidibe as though in a trance, dances out. Together, they dance in sync. Beat, Sidibe flips, her eyes filled with rage, she lets out what seems like a battle cry and charges towards Mama. Mama as though in anticipation, dodges. Sidibe turns and swings an arm, Mama quickly retrieves a powdery substance from her wrapper, closes her nose and blows. Sidibe passes out.

**CUT TO:**

## **89. EXT. IKOT UBO/SHRINE- DAY**

Ekanem wailing, tries to charge into the shrine but is obstructed by the shrine attendants.

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**EKANEM**

Sidibe! Sidibe!! (She grabs one of the attendants) Where is my child?  
Where is my child!!

**CUT TO:**

**90. EXT. DOCTOR'S LODGE- DAY**

On Bassey pacing; Simon joins him.

**SIMON**

Sir?

**BASSEY**

Is she here?

**SIMON**

Who?

**BASSEY**

My daughter, she's... she's missing.

**SIMON**

Missing! She didn't return home last night?

**BASSEY**

Actually, she- You are sure she is not here?

**SIMON**

No. Should I be worried? Do we need to file a report with the police?

**BASSEY**

Oh no. I'm sure she is probably in a friend's house. Sorry for bothering you.

He exits, Simon stares after him.

**CUT TO:**

**91. INT. MAMA'S HOUSE- LATER**

On Mama and Simon seated.

**SIMON**

I don't know for how long I can hold off, he seemed really worried. How is she?

**MAMA**

(Sighs) It's definitely not demon possession or anything I've dealt with before.

**SIMON**

What is your theory?

**MAMA**

Something happened to that girl. Something terrible.

**SIMON**

But then how do you explain the dance? Everyone I spoke with said in her waking moment, she is a terrible dancer.

**MAMA**

The dance is the gift. Our powers are gifted us from birth but they do not come alive till later. Mine came in a dream when I was just newly married. Hers is seeking manifestation but something has it trapped. Something dark.

**SIMON**

Trauma.

Mama nods.

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

Have you tried meditation? I read somewhere that-

Mama shoots him a look.

**SIMON (CONT'D)**

I'm sorry, I just-

**MAMA**

Tell me all about it.

Simon nods. As he starts to narrate inaudibly (ADLIB)-

**CUT TO:**

**92. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE: A ROOM- DAY**

Sidibe seated on the mat, legs akimbo, hands spread, eyes shut-

**MAMA (VO)**

This is a life changing moment. I want you to reach within. Deep within.  
In all of that silence, I need you to search... Find that one thing, that  
guest... a certain pain, hidden... It is right there. A worm trying to crawl  
deeper, but you must find it, quash it, burn it- for only then can true  
healing begin.

Beat, she slowly turns on the radio, it is the úyak beat; Sidibe's head starts to shake-

**CUT TO:**

**93. EXT. A HOUSE- DAY (BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN)**

Faint úyak beat plays in the background. Sidibe dressed in white like the maidens on cleansing  
rites happily shows up in front of a house calling out-

**SIDIBE**

Uduak! Uduak!

No response, she enters. Beat, dark screen, Sidibe screams.

**CUT TO:**

**94. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- DAY**

On Sidibe moving her head vigorously, Mama staring at her touches her face-

**MAMA**



Sidibe... Sidibe!

Her eyes open, misty.

**MAMA (CONT'D)**

Tell me everything.

**SIDIBE**

(Shakes her head) Darkness... just darkness.

Beat, Mama heaves a sigh, exits and returns with the statues. She places them around her and-

**MAMA**

This is a battle and it ends today. Look, (she arranges the statues and sits among them) we are all here. To protect you, to guide you, to wage this war with you. You will return and this time, you will walk through that darkness and you will speak.

**DISSOLVE:**

## **95. EXT. IKOT UBO- DAY**

A car speeds past trees, we see the environ through the car's view. Sidibe's voice resonates...

**SIDIBE (VO)**

It is the maidens' night. I have been waiting for this day, all my life. I hear the drumbeats.

**MAMA (VO)**

Where are you?

**SIDIBE (VO)**

(Beat) Uduak's house. I have been calling, searching... she's not here.

**MAMA (VO)**

Go on...

**SIDIBE (VO)**

Uncle... Uncle Okpoto. He is looking at me, smiling... like he is expecting me.

Beat, we hear Sidibe's screaming voice.

**CUT TO:**

**96. INT. A HOUSE- NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN)**

Sidibe screams as a naked Okpoto chases her. She makes to exit, he hits her head with a stool, she falls.

**CUT TO:**

**97. EXT. A HOUSE (OKPOTO'S HOUSE)- DAY**

The van we've been following down the village road, wheels in. Simon, Bassey and Ekanem drenched in tears with two police officers, alight. The police officers alongside Simon, barge in. Villagers start to gather.

**CUT TO:**

**98. INT. SIDIBE'S ROOM- NIGHT (BLACK AND WHITE SCREEN)**

Sidibe with her now blood stained white (butt area), enters, breaks down and cries her heart out-

**SIDIBE (VO)**

I woke up and there was blood... He stole my innocence. A man I have called Uncle all my life, my father's brother, Uduak's father, he stole my innocence.

**MAMA (VO)**

Why didn't you tell anyone?

**SIDIBE (VO)**

Shame? Ridicule? I don't know. I wished it away. It was better to believe it never happened... safer...

Sidibe stands, throws a wrapper over her body, takes off the white and hides it in an enclosed section of a cupboard.

**SIDIBE (CONT'D; VO)**

That night, I prayed to God, to the gods, to every spirit alive and present, to help me forget. I willed myself to forget. It was a distant dream. It never happened.

**CUT TO:**

**99. EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- CONTINUOUS**

Mama touches Sidibe's face, she quickly bolts up, darts her eyes about, a tad bit confused.

**SIDIBE**

It never happened.

**MAMA**

Except it did. And no one paid. I see it now... You are gifted with the supernatural ability to dance. A gift that was to be born on the maiden night as the úyak beats played. But it was stolen from you, alongside your innocence.

Tears well up Sidibe's eyes-

**SIDIBE**

It never happened.

**MAMA**

All that rage, aimed at the innocent, at any and everyone around, belongs somewhere. And oh my child, I swear it, he will pay. He will pay.

Sidibe starts to cry. Mama also moved to tears holds her in a very tight warm embrace as she lets it all out.

**MAMA**

You are free. It's all over, you are free.

**CUT TO:**

**100. EXT. A HOUSE (OKPOTO'S HOUSE)- DAY**

The Police drag a bare chested Okpoto out by his shorts. Ekanem runs up and dives on him, pushing him down and raining fists on him. The Police manage to pull her out. More people gather, speak indistinctly and snap their fingers as the police tuck drag him into the van. As they make to pass Bassey, Okpoto looks at him and before he can speak, Bassey spits phlegm on his face. The police drag him into the vehicle and wheel out. The villagers rally around them, consoling and sympathising with a wailing Ekanem.

**DISSOLVE:**

**101. EXT. IKOT UBO/STREAM SIDE- DAY**

Shots of Ikot Ubo back to normal. Yam barns bursting with yams. Ducks quacking. Children racing down the street.

Thin down to the streamside to show Sidibe seated, beautifully dressed in African print, waiting. Simon, all dapper shows up.

**SIDIBE**

You are late.

**SIMON**

Forgive me, your Majesty. You are as beautiful as ever.

He walks up and kneels. Sidibe confused, stands-

**SIDIBE**

What... what are you doing?

**SIMON**

When I made the decision to volunteer in Nigeria as a doctor without borders, I didn't imagine this much sunshine would be waiting for me.

**SIDIBE**

Oh darling-

**SIMON**

As a man raised by a long line of strong women, you are the strongest woman I know. Your strength, tenacity, resilience, vision... In such short while you've turned what kept you down, to immense strength. A dance healing school! Your heart is so unbelievably large, Sid. (Beat) I guess what I'm trying to say is, (he takes out the ring case and opens it) Will you follow me to the place of my birth, not as a friend but as a partner, as my wife?

A tear trickles down Sidibe's face, she nods, Simon chuckles amidst budding tears and slides in the ring. As he makes to stand, the úyak drum beats start to play, tight on Uyak's face as she looks up-

**CUT TO:**

## **102. EXT. SIDIBE'S COMPOUND- DAY**

On Sidibe's face as she breaks into a hearty smile. We see she is clad in the traditional Ibibio wedding attire, holding a horn of palm wine dancing gracefully to the uyak beats. Villagers so beautifully dressed are gathered. The atmosphere is festive, there's a surplus of palm wine, garden eggs, etc.

As Sidibe dances towards Simon, he doesn't wait for her to get to him, he stands and moves to the beats, doing a combo of traditional and hip hop moves, sending the villagers nearly off their seats with laughter and cheers.

Sidibe laughs, dances up and kneels. She sips, he pulls her up and drinks the rest. Applause. Ekanem seated alongside Mama rises and skilfully blows a whistle with her fingers in her lips. Bassey and Mama laugh, she sits, all three hold hands.

Simon stares into his Sidibe's eyes, completely smitten.

**SIMON**

Hello wife

**SIDIBE**

Hello husband.

They lean in and kiss. Freeze. **THE END**