

A Critical Film Review of the Narrative Techniques in *Ije – The Journey*

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Abstract

In order to debunk the previously held view in some quarters that African films are not up to “the standard”, an attempt is made in this paper to identify and use the established principles of narrative construction in analysing the film *Ije - the Journey*, a Nigerian film of Igbo extraction. In carrying out this mission, the reviewers use formalism and related narrative theories in dissecting both the story and the structural techniques featured in this movie. In other words, basic principles of narrative construction are deployed to decode the story in this narrative and come up with analytical facts in determining whether or not the structural set up of this African/Nigerian film is in line with the established standard of narrative construction.

At the end of this critical evaluation, the reviewers are able to showcase the effective deployment of the principle of the story and plot, creative use of opening and closing, causality, time and space, the dramatic invocation and manipulation of the flow of story information as revealed in the film range of story information and the depth of story information. Consequently, from their findings, the reviewers are able to prove the fact that some Nigerian films are up to any given international standard in terms of narrative structure.

Introduction:

In some quarters, it is generally believed that African, especially Nigerian, narrative films are short of the so-called “international standard” in terms of narrative structure and filmic techniques, even though there is no clear-cut definition of what constitutes this “international standard.” Certainly, a film does not need a list of cross-border cast to meet the presumed “international standard”.

In an attempt to examine what constitutes the international standard in terms of narrative structure in film analysis and in decoding the basic principles of narrative construction of an African/Nigerian

film production, this paper will review the story and the narrative techniques used in the film, *Ije*. In evaluating this Nigerian film of Igbo extraction, the reviewers will use formalism and related narrative theories in dissecting the various techniques featured in *Ije*.

At the end of their assessment on the content and the narrative system of this movie, the reviewers are able to debunk the previously misconceived view that African films are substandard in terms of structural design and to prove the fact that some Nigerian films are still up to any international standard by showcasing the creative and effective deployment of some of the identified principles of narrative construction in this case study.

Generally, in examining the structural design of a narrative film, a critic is likely to apply the selected principles/components of narrative construction in scrutinizing the structural setup/organisational structure, the content of the story, and other structural systems featured in the film. Therefore, it is appropriate to first identify the various principles of narrative construction.

Basic Concepts of Narrative Construction in Film

Firstly, according to David Bordwell and Kristian Thompson (2004:69), the word “narrative” refers to “a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space. Narrative can thus be regarded as the term story.” Ola-Koyi Sunday (2010:4) opines that:

Visual narrative among other definitions could be seen as a process of a logical or cultural portrayal/emotional projection of issues, events, people or conditions with meaningful images, invented in order to entertain; educate or inform the audience. Most stories are designed and packaged in attractive form that is capable of eliciting reaction from the onlooker. Essentially, visual stories are apparently designed to serve different social functions, some of which have been identified as entertainment, information, education or religious purposes etc.

Some identified basic components/principles of narrative construction, according to Bordwell and Thompson (2004), include “opening and closing; plot and story; causality; time; space; the flow of story information which comprises both the range of story information and

the depth of story information.” However, the current reviewers intend to make reference only to the relevant components in this review.

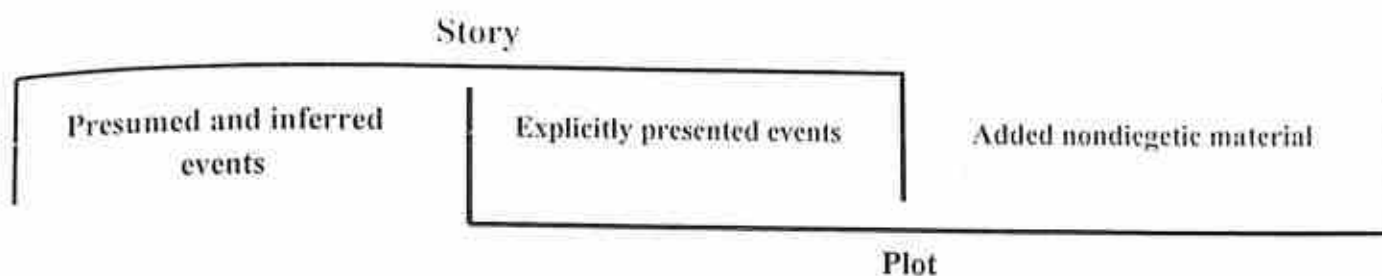
Story and Plot Relationship

It is on record that the deciphering process or the act of decoding a film, can occur at many different levels. For instance, one could go through meaning or interpretative approach or structural or cinematic analysis. In either way, the fact remains that, viewers often enjoy the various narrative and cinematic components presented on screen as a unified system while seeing a film, without being conscious or recognising how these intrinsic mechanisms work together to give pleasure to the audience. It is in this regard that Bordwell and Thompson (2004) submit that viewers usually engage in multiple activities that could be classified into two broad aspects of: (i) “inferring events that are not explicitly presented, and recognizing the presence of material that is extraneous to the story world” and (ii) “identifying narrative’s events and linking them by cause and effect, time, and space.”

It is also on record that:

the set of all the events in a narrative, both the one explicitly presented and those the viewer infers, constitutes the *story*” while “the term *plot* is used to describe everything visibly and audibly present in a film before us. In this case, a plot will include first of all, the story events that are directly depicted. Secondly, it may contain material that is extraneous to the story world.

These scholars further buttress their definition with a diagram of illustration on the distinction between *story* and *plot* sub-components in a film system which is analysed as thus:



Story – Plot Distinction in a Film Formal System
Source: Bordwell and Thompson (2004:71)

Opening and Closing

According to Tzvetan Todorov (1977:8), in his equilibrium theory, there is always a change from an initial condition to a final situation in any given story. Other scholarly discourses on this issue suggest that, it is often useful to compare the beginning of a story and the ending in order to understand how causality, time, space and other factors have created change or established a progressive movement from point “A” to point “B” in the course of relating a story. Based on the foregoing, one could say that the opening and the closing of a narrative are the most significant features of a narrative system. However, there are other components of narrative structure that are equally vital to any examination on narrative construction in film.

In Worthen’s view (1993:19-21), the form in Greek tragedy will naturally display the following features - a *prologue*, which serves as the entrance that may be in form of singing and dancing. But in the modern time, a prologue may commence *in medias res* (i.e. in the middle of a story), followed by the *parados* or the *rites*, usually covering the first quarter of the story or plot in modern term, a *parados* is known as the *setup* or the *exposition*. In most cases, the middle of a narrative in Greek drama is constituted by several *episodes* and *odes*, which is the main body of the performance. This section often contains other components such as *the conflict*, *the tension or suspense* and the *climax*. The *catastrophe* is next to *episode / odes* and this is the downturn, which marks the manifestation of the actual changes in the status quo, or in the role of each character; the *Exodos*, is the departure, where final song and dance are performed by the chorus in Greek drama. In modern time, the section usually reveals the consequence of the actions which may be in form of a punishment or a reward.

Causality

Causality basically deals with the various trends of cause and effect in a narrative. Even though, not all the causes and effects in a narrative originate with human character, most of them are connected with human figures in a film. In general, viewers actively seek to connect events in a narrative by seeking for the reason (i.e. the cause) behind every action/event. In other words, people usually seek for causal motivation behind every occurrence not only in narrative but also in human reality.

Time

The time factor in a narrative film has to do with temporal arrangement of every event in a story. That is, cause and effect system in a narrative often takes place in time, as story and plot distinction helps in clarifying how time shapes viewers' understanding of the narrative actions. Basically, the issue of time in a narrative film works with *temporal order*, *temporal duration* and *temporal frequency*.

The ***temporal order*** essentially deals with pattern of story event or plot development. It has been pointed out that it is possible for viewers to infer from the ***plot order***, the ***story order***. The normal order of a story/plot is to move from *the beginning* through *the middle* to *the end* but this order of 1-2-3 could be reshuffled to reflect 3-2-1 or any other format as the nature of the story/plot requires. In most cases, under this temporal order, flashback, flash-forward, or anachronism techniques are used in manipulating the flow of story/plot presentation.

The ***temporal duration***, on the other hand, deals with the amount of time involved in the unfolding events in the narrative. Temporal duration equally interacts with other three subcomponents of *story duration*, *plot duration*, and *screen duration*. The *story duration* is the total sum of the time involved in both the explicitly presented events and the inferred events in a given narrative. On the other hand, the sum of all the slices of story duration yields an overall *plot duration* while the *screen duration* is the amount of time taken in screening or watching a narrative movie. From all indications, the screen duration

could be seen as equal to the plot duration while the plot duration selects from the story duration.

The *temporal frequency* deals with the number of times story event occurs in the course of a narrative. In the natural order of things, a story event is usually presented only once in the plot, but in some cases, a single story event may appear more than once in a plot treatment. Again, flash-forward, flashback, and anachronism techniques could equally be used in the projection of temporal frequency in a narrative.

Space

The space could be seen as the venue, place, locale or the setting where the story/plot events occur. In other forms of narrative, the venue of the action might not be stated; thus, action could take place in a void and yet still appear meaningful. However, in narrative films, space is an important factor. Like the temporal factor, the special component equally interacts with three other sub-components: *the story space*, *the plot space* and *the screen space*. Oftentimes, the special factor of the story in a movie comprises both *the spaces explicitly depicted on the screen* and *the inferred or assumed locations*, while the special factor of the plot includes both *the explicitly presented locales* and *the spaces/settings incorporated into the plot through the use of computer generated images* or the inclusion of other *nondiegetic materials*.

Consequently, one could agree with the fact that, at a certain point both the story and the plot of a narrative share in most cases the same locations, even though some nondiegetic special factor might be introduced into a narrative in the course of editing the film or a member of the audience might infer some location in the course of seeing the film.

The Flow of Story Information

Basically, the flow of story information deals with systematic way/process in which a story is related to the reader/audience. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2004:83):

Narration is the moment by moment process that guides us in building the story out of the plot. Many factors enter into narration ...but the

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most important one for our purposes involve the *range* and the *depth* of story information that the plot presents.

Even though the range and the depth of knowledge could be seen as the two sides of a coin, in this discussion, these two would be treated as independent variables.

The range of story information could be seen as the pattern of story presentation. Under this range are: *the unrestricted/omniscient narrative method*, *the restricted narrative method* and the mixed method which combines the two methods in a single production. *The omniscient narrative method* will present a panoramic vision of the various events in the story, by allowing the audience to acquire more information on various occurrences in the narrative more than some characters in the story, while *the restricted narrative method*, is more economical and careful at the various points in which story information is divulged to the audience. In most cases, the audience knows little about the story information but builds on the pieces of information given at different times in order to make up the whole story at the end of the narrative. It has been observed that a narration in any given movie does not only manipulate *degree of knowledge*, but also manipulates *the depth of the viewer's knowledge*.

Consequently, *the depth of story information* deals with how deep the plot plunges into character's psychological states. "Just as there is a spectrum between restricted and unrestricted narration, there is a continuum between objectivity and subjectivity..." in the depth of story information. (Bordwell and Thompson, 2004)

When a plot confines the audience wholly to information about character's external behaviour, depicting what characters say and do then the narration is relatively *objective*. But when a plot grants the audience access to what the character sees and hears then the narration is *subjective*. In most cases, subjectivity in narrative film is invoked with a technique known as *the point-of-view-shot*. Under it, are *optical point of view* or *the sound perspective*. Other complementary techniques used in projecting *the point of view* include *flashbacks* in form of reflection, *flash forward* in form of character's vision or dream,

and *anachronism* in form of hallucination or constantly disturbed state of mind.

Due to its relevance, this theoretical exploration in this study could not be rounded up without due reference to Claude Levi Strauss (1955) binary opposition theory. In summary, Strauss' hypothesis suggests that all narratives share binary opposition system of the good and the evil, forceful and the gentle, the educated and the illiterate etc. Thus in this study effort will equally be made to see how this theory plays out in *Ije*.

The Structural Set-up of *Ije-The Journey*:

Having introduced the various theories / principles of narrative construction in a film system, attention will now be shifted to scrutinising the film: *Ije-The Journey*, by drawing from the film practical and appropriate references. Thus the workings of the following reshuffled components of narrative construction in film will be applied in this exploration: *plot and story; opening and closing; causality; time; space; the flow of story information* which comprises both *the range and the depth of story information*.

The Application of the Principle of Narrative Construction Plot and Story Relationship in *Ije*

The Plot:

As indicated above, the plot of the film, *Ije*, contains everything visibly and audibly presented in this narrative before the audience. Thus the plot in the narrative under review is divided into two segments; the first is the prologue - a documentary on the struggle against any form of women oppressions - a message from the Vow Victims Outreach for Women Foundation. The second is the main story of the narrative and this is the main focus of this review. As a way of introduction, the main story could be succinctly captured under the synopsis that follows.

The synopsis of *Ije: The Journey*

The narrative in *Ije-The Journey* tells the story of two sisters with unbreakable bond of loyalty and love that showcases the surviving

power of the human spirit. Hence, the plot of this film is based on the experiences of these two sisters. Although, these two share different life visions and dreams, wherever Anya (Precious Ebelechukwu Okaro/Omotola Jolade Kehinde), the elder sister, goes Chioma (Barbra Opara Chinma/Genevieve Nnaji, the younger one, will follow. Even though, the elder sister is a little rebellious right from her tender age and she is not afraid to pursue her dream of becoming a famous international singer, she fails to listen to the voice of caution from her sister on the dark side of the American Dream. She is very bold and candid whenever it comes to declaring her passion for singing even before her father who will do anything to protect his children from falling prey to the danger of inordinate ambitions.

When eventually Anya finds her way to Los Angeles, where she discovers that all that glitters is not gold, she ends up marrying a wealthy and powerful, Los Angeles record producer; who promises to make her dream of a famous star a reality. But unfortunately, in her short marital life with Michael Michino (Jon Morgan Woodward), Michino turns her into a free gift that his friends can kiss at will. In addition, she is seen and used as an object of sexual pleasure or as an article of gambling, until she finally explodes under the duress of sexual abuse.

Consequently, in this foreign land, she is charged with the murder of three American men and while in jail Anya writes to her sister, Chioma, in Nigeria, who travels to the United States of America (USA). With the aid of a young and disillusioned attorney, Anya and Chioma find themselves in a legal battle that showcases not only a flawed justice system, but questions the very notion of “truth” as the cultural value of “God’s own country.”

The Story:

As indicated above, a story is the constitution of all the events in a narrative, both the one explicitly presented and those the viewer infers while seeing the film. In *Ije*, one could observe that the movie begins its narrative with an *in medias res* opening i.e. starting in the middle

of the action. In this case, the explicitly presented sequence of events reveals a situation where the murder has already been committed in the U. S., and the alleged murderer, Anya Opara Machino, is already detained before she writes to seek for the assistance of her sister, Chioma in Nigeria, who eventually serves as a catalyst in the process of regaining her freedom. From all indications it is possible to conclude that the order in which the story is presented to the audience is based on a 2-1-3 narrative pattern.

Even though the story in this narrative should have included the experiences of these girls in schools/colleges, their experiences within their neighbourhoods in Los Angeles and in Lagos or the professional practices of these two sisters (i.e. Anya as a singer in USA and Chioma as a banker in Nigeria), yet, in order to make the plot more precise and coherent, the auteur introduces *ellipsis* (another narrative technique) so as to do away with all the inferred components of the story while presenting a clear-cut narrative structure.

As a result of the foregoing, the plot of this narrative succeeds in cutting out some events which include: the actual movement of Anya from her village in Nigeria to Los Angeles, USA, how and where she meets her husband, Michael Machino (John Morgan Woodward), a powerful record producer in Hollywood, and their wedding arrangement. From all indications, one could see that the plot in this film does not only omit these events/facts but provides clues that activate the viewer's imagination to infer these omitted pieces of information from the revealed images and dialogues on screen. Thus, the revealed pieces of information allow the spectator to reconstruct the story out of the plot.

Again, one could say that the Anya's journey to USA which is an unrevealed or an inferred piece of information in this narrative, is actually a component of the dual meanings of the title: *Ije*. Even though, the actual jolly migration of Anya to Hollywood, the capital city of entertainment in the world, is necessary to the narrative, it is deliberately omitted in order to conserve time and to emphasise in detail, the unpalatable journey of her sister, Chioma Opara (Genevieve Nnaji), who is compelled out of love, to embark on a rescue mission to the U. S. With this, the narrative is able to demonstrate how an African/Nigerian immigrant could be subjected to unfair treatment and

rigorous scrutiny at Western airports. Consequently, one could say that the invocation of the *ellipsis* technique in this case is to engage the viewers or to activate their curiosity.

A significant event/non diegetic element that is found in the plot but which is not part of the story in this narrative is the documentary at the prologue of the film. As established above, the focus of this documentary is on the campaign against women oppression and it is sponsored by a non-governmental organisation (an NGO). The sequence of this documentary could be interpreted as a modified style of opening glee - an opening device which is synonymous to the opening glee in a Nigerian stage performance or as a carried over stage technique. The style/technique is invoked to boost the pedagogical capacity of the film in sensitising the public on the need to stand against any form of oppression towards women.

Other non-diegetic components in the plot include the *opening* and *closing graphics*, a sample of which could be found in 01 and the *descriptive graphic* indicating the venue of the action as it is in 02, the invisible but audible sound tracks and the music by Reuel Meditz are all parts of the extraneous designs that are inserted into the production in order to generate meanings and to fulfil the other narrative requirements for the production.

Opening and closing:

Many viewers could easily overlook or ignore out of pleasure, the pictographic similarity between the opening sequence (03-04) and the closing sequence (05-06) of the film. However, only a critical reviewer would be able to identify this similarity. Sometimes, a critical thinker could interpret this pictorial similarity as a *metaphoric device* that reveals on one hand, the enthusiastic and vigorous spirits in which the two little sisters approach the world from their greenish country farmland and, on the other hand, the victory of overcoming accumulated better experiences at a brownish sea shore of a foreign country.

From the frames in 03 and 04, one could see that the environment in which these girls are placed is very fresh and friendly. This is obvious in the greenish state of the farmland and the blue hue of

the sky. Again one could see from the narrative that after the initial race, these two girls still have intoxicating energies left to engage in other physical games. By implication, these two are prepared to face the world with vitality and vigour.

Furthermore, when former frames are compared with the latter ones, one could see that these brownish frames in 05-06 radiate some element of victory over life challenges. Yet, one could see that these shots equally reflect a worn-out day spent by the beach of a sea that recedes into infinity. These shots could further be interpreted as a testimony or the reward of the two joyous sisters, after a traumatic experience that threatens the life of one of them.

In addition, if a spectator should compare the opening shot in 03 with the other one in 06, he will see that the race in 03 is towards the camera while the one in 06 is away from the camera. This creative use of processional and recessional races in the opening and the closing stages of this narrative could be commended for enhancing creativity and filmic aesthetics in the construction of this narrative.

From all indications, the story in *Ije* is not an open-ended one but a close-ended plot. The narrative actually creates a narrow channel towards its resolution while the lawsuit brought against Anya is not only resolved in her favour but the case challenged the code of murder or man slaughter in the United States, which does not make provision for murder committed under extreme sexual duress. Even when this code fails to make provision for this unique case in view, members of the jury are compelled to temper justice with mercy, as Anya is given lesser punishment for her action and then set free. Thus, viewers could see that both the climax and the resolution in this plot eventually engender emotional satisfaction which the spectator experiences at the end of the film.

In applying Claude Levi Strauss (1955) binary opposition theory to the narrative format in the film, one would notice that the two sisters are fighting the same course yet as a way of injecting a new style and enhancing creativity, this film still plays on the binary opposition theory by comparing the activities of the two sisters on so many levels at the *expository stage* of the narrative. For instance, in the first quarter of the narrative, the plot compares the maltreatments doled out to Chioma at the Los Angeles airport (07) with that of Anya as she goes

into incarceration at San Marcos Women's Correctional Facility (08). In 09, Chioma is shown putting on her jewellery (necklaces) after a thorough search under the scanner at the airport; while in 10, her sister Anya is putting off her jewellery (earrings) just before she is arrested.

Causality

In tracing out a series of causes in this narrative, one could easily identify the following:

- That Anya's desire for fame motivates her to travel to Los Angeles in pursuance of her career as a singer.
- Michael Michino's promise to make her a famous musician persuades Anya to marry him and this gives him the opportunity to see and use her as a sexual object and maltreat her.
- Michino's attitude of unconcern towards his wife and his love for gambling, causes him to turn his wife into an article of payment for a lost bet.
- Michino's failure to defend and protect his wife when she is sexually violated infuriates her to shoot him and his two rapist friends.
- Anya's violent action leads to her arrest and incarceration by the police while her detention in turn causes her to write to her sister Chioma.
- Chioma's journey to, and her investigative activities in Los Angeles, eventually lead to her

- discovery of the true circumstances concerning her sister's case in court.
- The presentation of the true circumstances concerning Anya's action for murdering her husband and his friends eventually attracts a lesser punishment and leads to her freedom.

The Flow of Story Information

In considering the *flow of story information* in this film, it is possible to discuss the innovative deployment of both *the temporal* and *the special factors* alongside *the range* and *the depth of story information*.

The narrative in *Ije* could still be categorised as a film with a mixed storytelling method on the flow of story information. In the first instance, one could say it is a mystery or detective story, yet it could be classified as well as a plot that uses both the restricted and unrestricted narration methods of presentation that are based on goal-oriented pattern of storytelling. Naturally, a goal-oriented pattern of storytelling will establish and manipulate a set goal against a counter goal and the end, either of these two will become victorious. Other factors that come to play while manipulating the flow of story information in a movie include: the *framing style* of the auteur, the *temporal* and the *special factors*, the *repeated action* or the *increased number of frequency of a single story event* in the pattern of presentation.

In looking at the framing style of the auteur, one could see that the narrative begins with the use of anachronism – a technique in which the present occurrences in a narrative are interchanged with historical experiences. The use of this technique starts from the exposition section of the film, where two parallel plots on the experiences of the teenage sisters and that of their adult experiences are interchangeably presented to the viewer. This invocation of anachronism still runs through to the middle of the narrative. For example, the story begins with a reflection of the two joyous teenage sisters in a race toward the camera 03-04, before revealing the unfortunate experience of the older sister who has just killed her husband and his friends in 13 - 14.

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The plot further intensifies the use of this anachronism when Chioma goes into her sister's bedroom where she recovers her string-beads. There and then Chioma recalls how her elder sister Anya once tested her love for this string of beads by throwing it into a stream. Again, when in 11, Chioma is temporarily incarcerated for the obstruction of justice, there again she recalls as in 12, how her stubborn sister Anya will sneak out at night to sing for other children in the neighbourhood.

Another narrative technique featured in the film is *flashback*. This technique is employed on so many levels for different purposes in the course of the narrative. For example, while giving his statement to the police after her arrest, Anya recalls a faction of the events that lead to the killing in her matrimonial home, a faction of the story that eliminates her rape experience, where her recount of the events is presented as a falsified record of the events. Secondly, when Chioma visits her in custody, she repeats the same false story but includes how her husband brings his gambling friends home instead of going to the casino; hence, this flashback could be seen as elongated faction of a single story event. Thirdly, when a new attorney visits her in detention she still repeats the same edited faction of events. She does not tell the truth until her sister Chioma has a premonition or dream in form of a *flash-forward* where Anya is revealed holding a gun, and aiming to shoot her, not until Chioma risks her life to cover up Anya's drug habits and goes into jail for attempting to obstruct justice and not after she discovers the hidden fear in Chioma, through an inmate, and then confronts her with the truth before she is able to come up with a genuine brand of the story events and this new evidence is then included in her final submission of her defence in court.

In looking at the temporal frequency in the film, one could see that both the flashback and flash-forward techniques featured in the story are used to elongate the plot. Thus a single incident of murder in the story event is presented in increased number of frequency. For the fact that the occurrence at the murder scene is revealed only through Anya, and then one could say that the plot in *Ije* equally makes use of

the *restricted range of story information* and the *subjective depth of story information*.

Once again, one can reiterate the fact that, the plot in *Ije* is presented in a 2 – 1 – 3 temporal order to enhance the suspense in the film. In other words, the plot commences with the arrest of Anya after killing her husband, before revealing the reasons behind her action. Furthermore, the story time could be placed around thirty years, while the plot and the screening time could be placed around one hour, forty two minutes, fourteen seconds.

In examining the special factor in this narrative, one could place the story locations in somewhere in the Eastern part of Nigeria and Los Angeles in the United States. The plot spaces specifically cover Opala's farmland and his village, Michael Machino's apartment in Los Angeles, his neighbour's apartment, Los Angeles Airport, a lodging house in Los Angeles, San Marcos Women's Correctional Facility, the court house, the lawyers' offices, the night club, among other locations/venues of events.

The Depth of Story Information:

In ruminating on the depth of story information in this film, one will need to reiterate the fact that the narrative uses both the components of restricted and unrestricted methods of story information in manipulating both the flow and the depth of story information. On the depth of story information, the narrative equally uses the flashback technique to reveal the psychological state of both Anya and Chioma in relating information to the audience. Thus, the point of view used comprises both the visual and audio components. A sample of this can be found in 11 and 12 where Chioma reflects on how her sister will go out in the night in order to sing for other children while other members of her family are in bed. The same psychological/subjective depth of story information is used when Chioma is making a final submission in court in her defence and through the invocation of this style of the subjective depth of knowledge, the director is able to convince not only members of the jury in the narrative but persuade as well members of the audience.

Apart from using the flashbacks to elongate the narrative, inject restricted range of knowledge to manipulate the story and the feeling

of the viewer, the inclusion of the subjective depth of story information is also meant to increase the level of viewer's identification with the lead roles, Anya and Chioma. In addition, it is used to cue the spectator on what to expect or suspect. An example of this can be drawn from a sequence, where Chioma has a premonition that her sister Anya is deliberately pointing a gun at her. This scene gives the audience the idea that Anya is working against Chioma's interest by failing to reveal the whole truth. That is, flashback is used to indicate Anya's motive for action as well as to showcase Anya's traits that she tells a lie in order to cover up her phobia for rape.

Conclusion

Although there is a minor error in the graphic identifier of the San Marcos Women's Correctional Facility, yet, due to its intrinsic standard of creativity and academic values, any critic who has seen this film, *Ije* will agree with the fact that this narrative is worthy of a serious academic study. In accomplishing the set objective of evaluating the narrative techniques used in the production of the film and in debunking the misconception on the standard of African/Nigerian films, the paper has been able to use components of formal principles of narrative construction and other narrative theories in evaluating the narrative system in the film under review. In other words, the reviewers have thus applied some selected components of narrative construction which include the *plot and story system*; the *opening and closing*; the *causality*; *time*; *space*; and the *flow and the depth of story information etc.* in assessing the narrative set up in *Ije*.

It is appropriate to point out that the narrative structure of this film truly displays aesthetical standard of high value that is worthy of critical evaluation. Consequently, it can be said that the high standard of creativity injected into the production is encouraging enough for any aspiring filmmaker to emulate.

From the evaluation and the submission made in this paper, it will be wrong for any serious critic to hold on to the claim that "African/Nigerian films are not up to the standard", when it is clear that there are some exceptional films on the Nigerian screen that have won

international recognitions and awards based on their narrative and cinematic qualities. Some Nigerian movies in this category include *Thunderbolt: Magun*, *Saworoide*, *The Narrow Path* and *Ije: The Journey*, that won four international awards based on the quality of the film. There are the *Golden Ace Award* in Las Vegas International film festival, *Best Film Feature* in Arizona Black Film Showcase, *Melvin Van People Award* in San Francisco Black Film Festival and *Sliver Palm Award* in Mexico International Film Festival.

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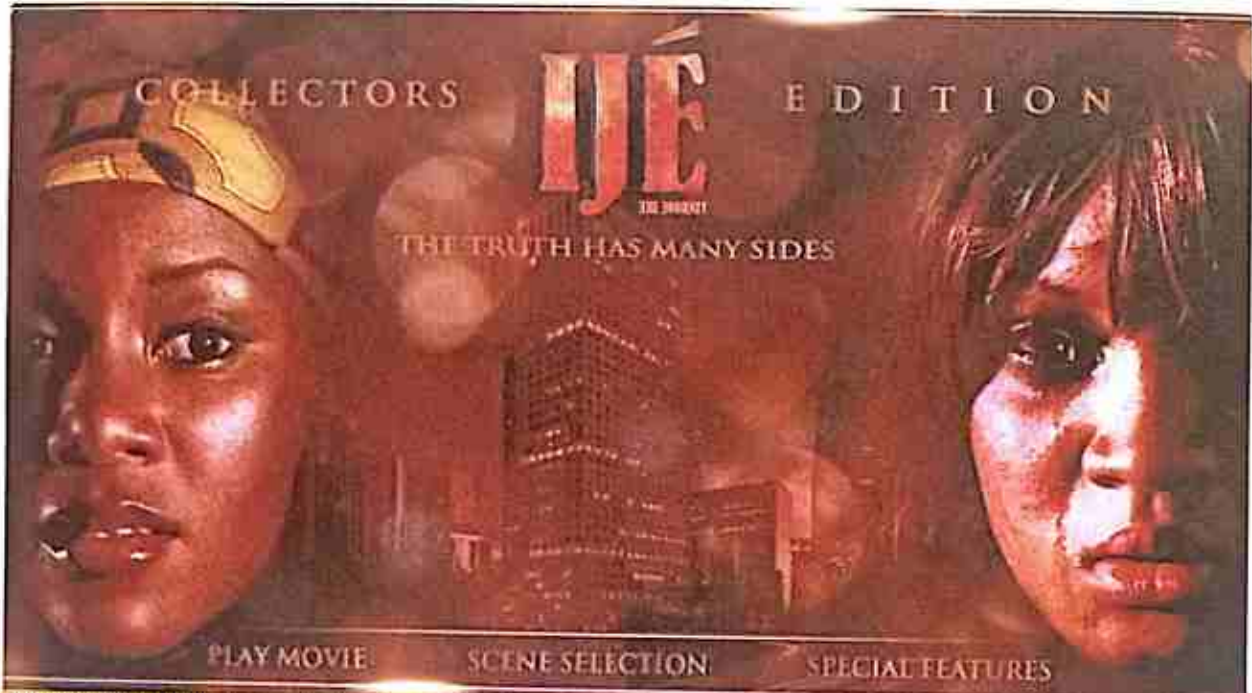
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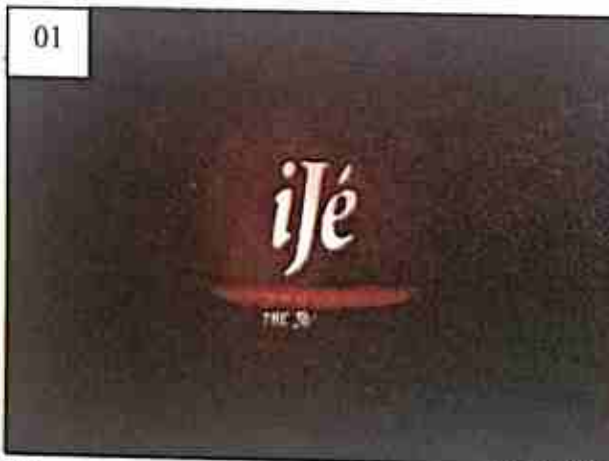
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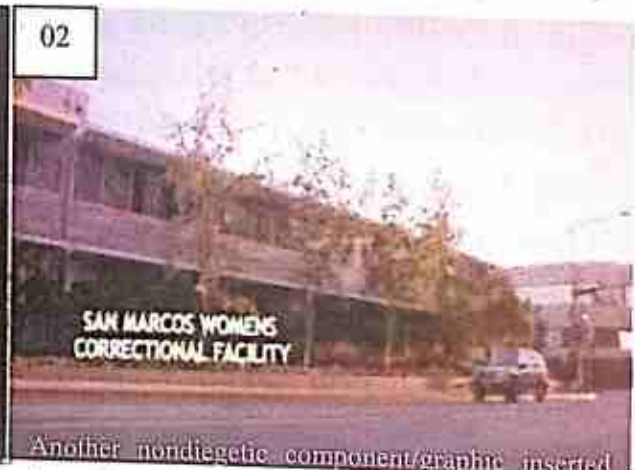
APPENDIX



Music: Revel Meditz. Casts: Genevieve Nnaji, Barbra Opara Chinma, Year of production: 2010. Company: Xandria Production Ltd. Director: Chineze Anyaene. Written by: Samuel Tilsen. Story by: Chineze Anyaene and Samuel Tilsen. Director of Photography: Keith L. Smith, Editors: Youssef Delara and Eric Brodeur. Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Precious Ebelechukwu Okaro, Odelys Garcia, Ulrich Que, Jeff Swarthout, Clem Ohameze, and Jon Morgan Woodward.



The opening graphic revealing the title of the film and a nondiegetic component inserted into the plot to make the film meaningful



Another nondiegetic component/graphic inserted into the plot to identify the venue of the actions/events. Yet the graphic is not without the error of omission of the apostrophe mark



The pictures in these frames reveal the enthusiastic and vigorous spirits in which the two little sisters approach the world from their greenish country home farmland



The shots here reveal the victory of these two sisters over accumulated better experiences at a brownish sea shore of a foreign country.