

**A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE NARRATIVE
STRUCTURE AND THE HUMANE QUALITIES IN
*GOLD STATUE***

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Abstract

The composition of literary or film narrative is permitted to borrow ideas from different experiences, ideologies or cultures but when a wrong concept is imported into a narrative at the expense of cultural values/humane qualities of *Omoluwabi* such adventure must be queried. The function of literature [film] is to provide the bank of images as a guide for acceptable behaviour, that is of crucial importance to a people's development in any community or country. Using the library research, the studio analysis approach and nonlinear structural analysis, as basic research methods; Isola's theory on "humane qualities" and Otunla's concept of *Omoluwabi* as theoretical frameworks, the study examines the narrative structure and the humane qualities of selected traits/characters in the film: *Gold Statue*. Findings reveal that components of nonlinear technique (i.e. non-chronological order of presentation, a story within a story/parallel plot lines, anachronism and flashback) are creatively and effectively deployed in this narrative. However, the narrative in *Gold Statue* only succeeds in reflecting corrupt levels of government officials and in measuring success in terms of materialistic substances and monetary gains. In this film, material values are placed over and above the humane qualities of

love and patriotism. For the fact that the lead role, Adewale Esho could not be seen as an ideal man, thus, the film fails to fulfil the basic function of projecting a model for young viewers to copy. It is therefore recommended that scriptwriters and film directors should ruminare and ponder more on the traits of their lead roles and use such in promoting acceptable behaviours, to prevent cases where corrupt images are projected as models for the public to copy.

Keywords: Gold Statue, nonlinear narrative, humane qualities, *Omoluwabi*, film evaluation

Introduction

Anyone who is seeing the movie *Gold Statue* for the first time is likely to be taken in by its cinematographic quality in which the director creatively deploys helicopter/drone shots in establishing different locales and settings for its actions and to bridge the scenes. Some symptomatic impressions in *Gold Statue* could be traced back to another film, *Figurine - Araromire*. Discernable and parallel features in *Gold Statue* and *Figurine - Araromire* includes the attitudes of the youth (especially NYSC members) toward ancient artefacts. While the production of *Figurine - Araromire* discourages the daring spirit of the young ones in trying to use the sacred artefact for any personal ambition/ gains by revealing a disastrous ending for such an attempt, the *Gold Statue* production encourages the prodigal venture of selling the ancient artefact to a merchant for monetary gains or personal aggrandisement. Both films reflect the length in which young ones could go in achieving personal goals and they do not mind stepping on toes to achieve their inordinate ambitions. For instance, the antagonist in *The Figurine - Araromire* does anything possible to accomplish his

impossible love while the protagonist in *Gold Statue* endures many body pains to sell his ancestral artefact for material wealth and personal gains.

Isola's translation of the proverbial prodigal son that "...a child not built-up morally will sell the house built by the parents" specifically captures the theme of the film *Gold Statue*. The lead role, Adewale Esho (Gabriel Afolayan) does not mind giving his parents traumatic experiences, destroying his family name and betraying his clan because of his inordinate ambition of selling the ancestral gold statue. In projecting the theme of this film, the director employs the nonlinear narrative technique, which to some levels, makes the production an interesting experience for the audience.

Using a nonlinear analytical metric system, Isola's theory on "humane qualities" and Otunla's concept of *Omoluwabi* as evaluative yardsticks, the study examines the narrative structure and the humane qualities of *Omoluwabi* in selected traits/characters of the movie *Gold Statue*.

Conceptual Framework

Linear and nonlinear narrative structure

In demonstrating how linear and nonlinear work Ola-Koyi opines that:

...the linear structure works with a unidirectional mode of association which is based on rational logic, while the nonlinear structure works with a multidirectional (metaphoric) mode of association that may appear irrational to physical order. Hence, a nonlinear structure could be used in explaining occurrences in abstract form or events in the metaphysical realm of existence such as the vision of metaphysical encounters, invisible experience, spiritual activities, mental sphere or human memory. (49)

The Features of nonlinear narrative technique:

The discernable features of nonlinear narrative techniques that are often used as yardsticks for analysing creative work can be succinctly itemised thus: one, a non-chronological order of presentation. This is a narrative technique which does not follow the direct causality pattern of the events but follows any other format except a 1-2-3 order of presentation; two, having multidirectional lines of presentation. That is incorporating techniques such as story within a story or parallel plot lines, dream immersions, anachronism, flash-forward or flashback; three, depicting a character-oriented mode of presentation. It focuses more on the character and his/her actions without the constraints imposed by a linear feature of logical cause and effect structure and registers a basis for a strong thematic unity. It is usually used as a driving force in building tension and suspense within a narrative and deployed as a basis for strong thematic unity.

Qualities of *Omoluwabi* - Theory on humane qualities/

In his paper on 'In Whose Image', Isola discusses the theory of humane qualities and the identified values he sees as components of intangible cultural heritage. While linking the humane qualities with physical development (or personal success) in a given society, he opines thus:

Without intangible development, there can be no sustainable development. There is a tendency to define and measure development through methods and measures that are primarily material: constructing roads, schools, hospitals, factories, dams, buying vehicles, ships and aircraft. But the truth is that these material goals cannot be

sustained by material means alone. To make these material goals socially sustainable, people require not only knowledge, skill and vision but also those humane qualities that constitute the intangible aspects of development - honesty, dignity, hard work and so on. Otherwise, as a Yoruba proverb says: a child not built up morally will sell the house built by the parents. (59)

The identified humane qualities from the foregoing if considered from Otunla's concept of *Omoluwabi* could be extended to include honour, integrity, love and patriotism. In his words:

Omoluwabi is, all that we know as recommended in the ancient Yoruba systems of thought and code of behaviour based on the twin ethical foundation of HONOUR, INTEGRITY. Its uniqueness resides in the humanity of its ethics... In this capsule, the individual is expected to conduct all social relations – inclusive of the political and economic, within and upon the basis of all that is honourable and with the highest regard for integrity, These are the “commandment” that the good and virtuous person but the Yoruba (OMO ODUDUWA) in particular must abide by for personal and group sanity in a SANE SOCIETY. (22)

The Features of humane qualities/qualities of *Omoluwabi*:

The main attributes of Isola's and Otunla's theories could be summarised thus, that the humane qualities of *Omoluwabi* comprise honesty, dignity, hard work, honour, integrity, love and patriotism etc. Furthermore, the humane qualities of *Omoluwabi* incorporate the intangible values that are required in human relationships, without which tangible development/personal

success could not be obtained or sustained. Finally, it is erroneous to measure success or development only through materialistic substances.

Synopsis of *Gold Statue*

The story in *Gold Statue* is an adventure of a young man, Adewale Esho (Gabriel Afolayan) and his friend Chike Okereke (Kunle Remi). These two are inspired at the University in unearthing the ancestral gold statue that was buried under a modern prison yard in Ilesha. After making the necessary plan, Adewale contacts Bryan (Kalu Ikeagwu) Bryan uses the modern gadgets at his disposal as a consultant archaeologist to trace this ancient artefact. To have access to this gold Adewale Esho decides to spend some time in prison by committing minor crimes and he is jailed and sent to Ilesha prison. His parents are traumatised because they could not understand the reason why a university-trained child would want to steal a car.

During his sojourn in prison, under the name Samuel Okon, Adewale Esho sells the idea of a jailbreak to “Capone” (Rycardo Agbor) the head of the inmates who consults Hammer (Kevin Ikeduba) his right-hand-man. Having received the required tools for the excavation of the gold statue, under the pretence of a jailbreak and several weeks of carving and moving through the tunnel, they excavate the gold statue and load the precious metal on a waiting truck while some Inmates flee before the local security men catch some of the prisoners in their attempt to escape. The excavated and telecast statue becomes a tussle between national and state governments. This gold statue which could have earned the lineage of Esho incorruptible international or state honour is sacrificed on the altar of personal greed and the craving for wealth/materialism. To get this artefact sold in the international

market, Adewale Esho bribes his way through some corrupt government official representatives. Thus the glorified state artefact is miraculously returned to Adewale Esho's den from where it is shipped overseas for sale, while the proceeds from its sales are shared between him, his cronies and some corrupt state officials.

The Exploration of the Narration in *Gold Statue*

The manifestation of a non-chronological order of presentation in the movie: *Gold Statue*, opens with an “in-medias-res” technique which is a style of commencing a story in the middle of the series of actions. The first frame in Frame 1 reveals a medium-wide shot of agitating crowd and like the audience, two boys are running toward the mob. The suspense in this opening is strong enough to activate the viewer's interest in knowing what is going on, on screen. In other words, a spontaneous act or the emergency gathering of people who must have left their various homes to accomplish different intentions for the day, suddenly aborting their purposes to assemble on the street is capable of inciting curiosity.

Thus it could be stated that the deployment of this *in-medias-res* technique in *Gold Statue* succeeds in capturing the audience's attention and propelling them into seeing the film through. As a member of the audience, one is compelled to find out through the second frame in 1, why Adewale Esho is been attacked by an angry mob. In satisfying this curiosity, the film further introduces the flashback technique which is another component of nonlinear structure. The flashback used is combined with *voice-over*. This documentary style of presenting what Ekwuazi regards as “a family pattern of story development” (2002), leads the audience back to

the beginning of the story. The use of this voice-over narrative technique is sufficient to qualify this film as a *docu-drama*.

In deploying the anachronism/flashback technique, the director uses helicopter/drone shots to establish some of the panoramic views of selected locations within the Lagos metropolis. Then fades back into an amusement park, where Adewale Esho and his friend Chike are having fun. Specifically, in Frame 2, the drone shot flies through the main gate of the University of Lagos campus and cuts into a large lecture theatre, where in Frame 3, a lady professor is delivering a lecture on the Ijesa people and their ancestral gold statue.

The presentation of activities in the lecture hall again unfurls another component of nonlinear narrative structure. The process in which a professor shares her lecture with both the on-screen students in the lecture hall and the off-screen audience at home is a system of “sharing a story within another story.” It is a style of developing a parallel plot technique in a narrative. As employed in this film, the technique is invoked with the aids of multimedia gadgets deployed as teaching aids for the lecture. During her oral delivery of the lecture, the teaching aids reveals some film clips and slide shots as evidence to support the Professor’s claims. The combination of these two components (the parallel plot technique and the use of the multimedia system) eventually enhanced and boosted the narrative quality of the film.

Moreover, one could see that the flashback or the anachronism technique is invoked to give an explanation or offer reasons behind certain actions and to establish the state of events. Furthermore, an anachronism is used in explaining why Capone (Rycardo Agbor) is on the execution list at Ilesha maximum prison and why he blindly supported the idea of jailbreak. The invocation

of the anachronism style equally helps in portraying *Gold Statue* as a movie based on a character-oriented mode of presentation.

The plot of this narrative is structured to give a mixed and fluctuating range of story information. For example, many pieces of information are revealed through the lines, the actions and the thoughts of the lead role: Adewale Esho. Less than thirty per cent of the total events in this story are shown without his presence. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that *Gold Statue* combines elements of both the *restricted* and *unrestricted* story presentation format. In other words, the restricted range of information often reveals events in a story through an individual who must be present at all the scenes, while the unrestricted range of story information is an omniscient narration system that divulges information through multiple means because information could be gotten from any of the characters or locations featured in the film.

To do away with the constraints imposed by a linear feature of logical cause and effect structure, this movie, *Gold Statue* uses a mixed method of story information to focus more on the lead character and his actions. This method allows the viewers to share the various depths of both the physical and psychological experiences of Adewale Esho. Consequently, viewers can see how the inordinate desire of the lead role to unearth the gold statue is used as a strong thematic unity that runs throughout the film. This desire to sell his ancestral heritage is used as a driving force in building tension and suspense within this narrative.

Having analysed the nonlinearity features in *Gold Statue*, attention will be shifted to diagnosing identified features of the humane qualities of *Omoluwabi*. In this assessment, the manipulation of the depth of story information or the depth of viewers' knowledge will be explored further. Fundamentally, the depth of story information is used to reveal both the objective and

the subjective traits of a character. While *objective mannerisms* are deciphered through physical qualities of body, voice or motivations, *subjective traits* are accessed through the perceptual subjectivity of sound, optical and mental components.

It could be established that there are some shots in *Gold Statue* which could be used to analyse *objective* traits of some characters (Adewale, Chike, Granpa Esho, Mr Esho, and Mrs Esho). For instance, the composition of the shots in Frames **4** and **5**, could be diagnosed to reveal external behaviours – actions, movements or speeches of Adewale Esho and Chike. A semiotic interpretation of “the body attitudes” of both Adewale and Chike in **4** and **5** reveals other useful pieces of information on the personalities of these two individuals and tells a lot about these two dominant characters.

In decoding the objective depth of knowledge in these frames, the semiotic/diagnosing variables or the identifiers of the *external behaviour* that would be used include *appearance, posture, stance, proximity or dialogue*. To be more specific, one could see that in appearance, both Adewale and Chike are young men between the ages of 21 to 28, from their costumes, the setting of the room and other accessories used, one could see that they are from well-to-do families. While their mannerism – body language, skills and compositions indicate that they are not only students but active individuals with bright futures. In Frame **4**, the facial expression of Adewale reveals him as a figure lost in his thought, as a forward-looking personality, he gazes on as if staring into the camera. The second figure on the left side of the frame, Chike is shown as a studious student who is jotting down information from the ongoing lecture on Ijesa people.

Similar attitudes are depicted by these two roles back in their room at the hostel (Frame **5**). While Chike is studying, Adewale is busy chatting on WhatsApp, looking for the means of actualising his dream. The nondiegetic element on the screen in

Frame 5: the WhatsApp subtitle graphic equally complements the intention of Adewale. The sitting arrangement in the lecture hall and their placement in their room at the hostel confirm the closeness of these two. That is in proximity, these two are close friends both in school and at the hostel and this equally adds up to the pieces of information on these characters.

Grandpa Esho (Peter Fatomi) in appearance is depicted as a wise old man in a white costume which in the Yoruba worldview connotes purity of body and soul. In posture and proximity, Pa Esho is close to his children and very friendly with his grandchildren. This old man is a true traditionalist and through his dialogue, one could see that he is trustworthy and instance, he is a custodian of cultural heritage who could not be lured into revealing secrets. Mr. Esho is like his father Grandpa Esho in stance and speech. He is revealed as a disciplinarian who will not condone any act of indiscipline from Adewale or his wife's over-pampered attitude towards her children. In proximity, Mr Esho is not so close to his son due to Adewale's lackadaisical attitude.

A critical look at the frames in Frames 6 and 7 reveals an appropriate use of facial resemblance/ physique in the casting of these personalities and their roles: Peter Fatomi as Pa Esho the grandfather; Richard Mofe-Damijo as Mr Esho, the father and Gabriel Afolayan as Adewale Esho, the son. The three men shared in common facial features of beards and moustaches. Pa Esho in appearance has grey hairs, a grey moustache, and a greybeard, while Mr Esho maintains a bald head, grey facial stubble and greybeard in appearance and Adewale Esho the youngest of them all in appearance has black hairs, a black moustache and black beard. Thus these roles in appearance maintain convincing and believable family resemblance/physiques.

Mrs Esho (Sola Sobowale) in appearance is a business tycoon dealing in clothing materials and accessories. She could be called a societal woman and a fashionable lady of elegance. Instance, posture and expression, she is a highly emotional woman

and a dedicated mother. In proximity (Frame 8), she is very close to Adewale and ready to indulge him with whatever he wants.

According to Bordwell and Thompson, viewers can deduce subjective facts from on-screen images through sound, optical and mental perspectives. In revealing the psychological/inner motifs for Adewale's actions through the subjective perceptual procedure, the plot of *Gold Statue* grants viewer access to what this lead character sees, hears and thinks. Therefore, these perceptual elements of sound, optical and mental views would equally be used to determine the qualities of Omoluwabi in Adewale Esho.

The frequent elements of the perceptual subjectivity used in portraying the psychological traits or the inner mind of Adewale in *Gold Statue* are the sound and optical views. In evaluating the qualities of Omoluwabi / humane qualities in Adewale Esho, one could recall that the narrative uses flashback and anachronism systems to offer the reasons behind some of Adewale's actions, that includes his reason for attempting to steal a car and the beating thereafter, his desiring to unearth the gold statue by all means and at all cost, and the revelation on how he comes to Ilesha while he is supposed to go to elsewhere for his NYSC programme. All these motifs are revealed on screen through the subjective/inner views of Adewale Esho. A specific example could be drawn from the first introduction of the flashback cum voice-over technique where viewers are taken through an audiovisual sequence which goes back into the lecture hall in Frame 3 where a Professor is delivering a lecture on Ijesa people and the worth of the gold status. According to Adewale, the experience shared in this lecture corresponds with a story Pa Esho once shared with him but the worth of the statue is not mentioned. Consequently, this flashback/audiovisual sequence enables the viewers to conclude that the worth of the gold statue indicated in the lecture in Frame 3 causes Adewale to ruminate further on how to unearth this statue in Frame 9.

Through the sequence in Frame 9, viewers are allowed to access and dwell further in Adewale's mental concept where they

can hear him wishing for his grandfather to die soon so that he could move on with his selfish interest of unearthing the gold statue for sale. From all moral standards, the act of wishing a family member evil, due to a personal desire of selfish gain is a vice. And it is contrary to the integrity virtue of *Omoluwabi*, where love and integrity "...ensure that one does not benefit, especially by design, from situations at the expense of or risk of obvious disadvantages to the OTHER in social relations."

The inner thought of Adewale Esho reveals in Frame 9, equally depicts him as a self-centred being that will do anything to have his way. If not that Pa Esho has not died naturally, Adewale could have murdered the old man. To buttress the identified evil traits in Adewale, one could see in Frame 6 where he tries to persuade his grandpa in telling him the location of the hidden gold statue, and when the old man refuses, Adewale devices other tactics through which he can unravel the mystery behind the location of this statue.

Another scene where his unhealthy manipulating skill is displayed could be found in Frame 8. Having convinced his mother she follows him to see his father, Mr Esho where they plead with Mr Esho so that he could ask his friend at the NYSC headquarters to change Adewale's NYSC posting to Oshun state. But when Mr. Esho refuses to dance to his tune, he still finds his way to Ilesha to accomplish his mission at all costs which brings emotional torment and sorrow to his parents.

It is obvious again that Adewale's actions in the sequence are contrary to qualities embedded in the *Omoluwabi* concept. Physically and psychologically Adewale Esho's actions could be interpreted as someone who lacks human dignity and integrity. He is willing to go to jail because of the material gain. Thinking from another perspective Adewale could be seen as a dishonest, stubborn, and ruthless young man. If Adewale is capable of putting his parents (especially his mother) through emotional torture, there is no one he can not run over in the course of achieving his desire.

As a deceptive being, Adewale Esho lures some of the inmates into excavating the gold statue for him under the disguise of “a jailbreak.” Luckily for him (Adewale), none of the inmates bothers to question his motif. As soon as the ancestral statue is unearthed, he also succeeds in enticing other gullible cohorts. And any government officer or agent who tries to stop him is invited to have a share of the proceeds from the sales of this statue.

In Frame 10, a mental perceptual view is again deployed to reveal Adewale Esho’s tricks after putting up a charade before national and international television channels announcing that the gold statue is to be donated to the government. This generates a tussle between his home state government and the federal government. This mental perceptual style enables Adewale Esho to directly address the viewers and confess his sins as if talking to a friend. There and then he formally re-introduces his cohorts and the corrupt government officials/collaborators and their roles in achieving his material success, as he unfurls the strategy, he deployed in retrieving the gold statue after it had been donated to the government.

In assessing the qualities of Omoluwabi through other selected characters, one could see that contrary to the values of dignity, honesty and patriotism. Some of the state/government functionaries projected in this narrative lack all these qualities. To be precise, the Head-warder (Ali Baba), is depicted as a corrupt man with some elements of kindness. The Zonal Commander of Prison Service (Segun Arinze) is projected as a deceptive and corrupt brute. The Minister of Mineral Resources is revealed as an unpatriotic being that lacks any spirit of loyalty. With these crops of characters in a narrative, one could say that the film practically promotes and glorifies the desire and craving for materialism that currently permeates Nigerian social space and government services.

Thus, the monetary value of the gold statue is placed over and far above the humane love to preserve the ancestral artefact as cultural heritage. Even the governor or the representative of state

government is busy arguing for some percentage of the total monetary worth of the ancestral artefact which is then put at ten billion dollars instead of conversing about the preservation of the gold statue on television.

Findings

In this study the following exercises have been carried out: critically demonstrate how a non-chronological order of presentation is creatively used to capture and retain the viewer's interest as well as create tension and suspense. Reveals how other techniques of nonlinearity such as story within a story or parallel plot lines, anachronism and flashbacks are effectively deployed to enhance the narrative qualities of the film. Objectively examines the traits of selected lead roles in this narrative and analyses how the character-oriented mode of presentation is deployed to create a strong thematic unity without the constraints imposed by a linear feature of the logical cause and effect. In evaluating the humane qualities or the qualities of Omoluwabi in the lead role, the study used subjective depth of story information in assessing the driving motifs behind most of Adewale Esho's actions. Demonstrate how some of these driving forces are used in building tension and suspense within the plot of this narrative.

Conclusion

Even though, the narrative techniques used and the deployment of advanced digital cinematographic methods enhanced the dramatic and filmic qualities of the film, in terms of humane qualities, except for two or three characters, the qualities of Omoluwabi exhibited by the lead role: Adewale Esho and some government officials are very discouraging. Even though, some viewers might argue that the film reflects the corrupt aspects of the modern society in Nigeria, the lead roles could have been made a sample of Omoluwabi, an image, any young man or woman could

emulate. Because the function of literature (ditto for a film) is to provide a bank of images as a guide for acceptable behaviour and the humane qualities of Omoluwabi are parts of the intangible aspects of human achievement/development.

Thus it could be stated that instead of projecting a genuine ideology of success and development, the movie *Gold Statue* deliberately glorifies moral decadence and debauchery. And the level of perversion displayed through the actions of some characters in this narrative is nothing but samples of corrupt beings which no viewer should emulate.

Recommendation

Hence, it is recommended that scriptwriters and film directors should ruminate and ponder more on the traits of their lead roles and that of other major characters. Actors on screen are models and they should be used in promoting acceptable behaviours, to prevent cases where corrupt images are projected as models for the public to copy.

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Frame 1: An in-media-res technique reveals an ongoing action where the furious mob unleashes terror on Adewale Esho after a failed attempt to steal a salon car...



Frame 2: A drone shot flies over the main gate of the University of Lagos campus, where a lecture is going on



Frame 3: The interior set of the large lecture theatre where a Professor is delivering a lecture on Ijesa people...



Frame 4: The facial expression of Adewale reveals him as a figure lost in his thought, while Chike is busy jotting down information



Frame 5: The facial expression of Chike reveals him as a studious person, while Adewale is busy chatting through WhatsApp ...



Frame 6: Adewale tries to bribe his grandpa with edible material: food, fruits and drinks in an attempt to cajole him into telling him the location of the gold statue...but the wise old man suspects his inordinate intention towards this ancestral heritage and declines in revealing the exact location of the statue to him.



Frame 7: Mr. Esho like his father, is a disciplinarian who will not condone any act of indiscipline from any of his children especially Adewale



Frame 8: In stance, posture and expression, Mrs Esho is highly emotional woman and a dedicated mother.



Frame 9: Viewers are granted an access into Adewale Esho's mind through voice perceptual technique where he wishes his grandpa should die soon...



Frame 10: After the putting up a charade of donating the gold statues to the government, Adewale Esho and his friend Chike Okereke come home to celebrate with their cohorts and corrupt government officials, their victory and the intended sales of the ancestral statue which if well preserved could be a cultural monument for tourists to visit. FOR TOURISM.