

## **Director's Advocacy Approach and Philosophical in Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen's Invasion 1897**

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### **Abstract**

The art of filmmaking is hinged on storytelling using visual and sound to communicate a message to an audience. Of significant importance to the director and audience is the great impact of the film and its impartation on the audience which originates from an idea that brings about the story, giving impetus to a script then to a screenplay that plays a pivotal part in it. Yet the creative aspect both interpretative and technical is the sole responsibility of the director. He develops the vision, determine the look and throws up the thematic preoccupation using his creative capacity and ability to push the technique of narration of phenomena artistic level in order to take the audience to the original opinion in his advocacy approach. This paper tries to analyse the auteur style of Nigerian Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen of narration couch in flashback that is used in exploring his advocacy approach of philosophy. First, theory is explored through primary and secondary sources to offer a background and understanding of the advocacy approach and philosophy. Second, it investigates Invasion 1897 as case study through content analysis of the film and bring to the fourths in-depth usage of the technique that exposes the salient but important theme of advocacy of return. In examining the Nigerian film, this paper observes that the Auteur theory and not the writer or collaborative theories promote and project the director, Lancelot, as the author of his film who find an artistic angle to direct the screenplay into an effective epic and sets the film in a philosophical cradle. To continue with this discourse there are three great quotations that gives direction: "The real human drama of our lives is the key to filmmaking" (Antoine Frequa qtd. in Afolabi, 2005: 36); "The most important skill that a director needs is a sense of story; how to tell a story" (George Roy Hill qtd. in Afolabi, 2005:27); and "Directing is knowing the concept you want and getting it" (Clint Eastwood qtd. in Afolabi, 2005:27).

**Keywords:** Director, Advocacy Approach, Philosophy, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, Invasion



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### **INTRODUCTION**

Film is a grand medium of expression with tremendous power to impart and impact on the minds and hearts of an audience. It could be used to change events and make things excel. Film emits power. It is pure magic and its magnetic force is a complete and total wonder. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen brings a universal appeal to Invasion 1897 that is an aspect of the history of his roots, the Benin people in South- South Nigeria. By telling their story, he has cleared the assertion that a people without a film is like a barber's shop without a mirror or at worst a people that does not create its image fades into oblivion.

Human beings and not technology make film. It is the human activities that is the source of filmmaking. It has to be retold to audience in order to heal, edify, comfort and direct the society. To retell this story is one who is not only a skillful storyteller but also one who knows life. There is no person who can tell the story of his own people better than oneself who is the source of the story. And this is only the director who knows the film from conception to actualization because he has the sweep of it in his system.

The film as a great medium of expression is indeed actualized by the director who collaborates with other creative talents that handles the technical aspects (technological

equipment) under his direction and he also directs the actor. It is basically through the actor who has the body and voice that is the face, eyes, mouth, legs and hands that tells the story the audience appreciates. *Invasion 1897* is Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun's instrument for mobilizing the audience- his people and the populace-for socio-political and cultural transformation and documentation of history. On this assertion Barclays Ayakoroma (2006:2) posits that, "the film medium has gradually become an invaluable source of historical documentation. Apart from the documentary film genre; filmmakers have directed their energies toward using historical events as subject matter for feature film productions".

To attest to Ayakoroma's stance, it is worthy of note that human beings are invaluable source of history which filmmakers re-enact through the use of the film medium to educate and entertain audience by transmitting intended messages. Its impact on the audience is either positive or negative in that a good film sometimes will find its audience who will come and see. But if it is a bad one it is counterproductive. The only thing that matters is what happens when the audience watch the film and that is the real moment of truth. *Invasion 1897* is Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun's re-enactment of the event of the invasion of the Benin Kingdom about 125 years ago to provoke to a remarkable extent a sense of faultfinding and thought-provoking line of action. This is to galvanise the audience-populace, nay Binis-to take charge of demanding for the return of their stolen art works over a hundred years ago that are caged in British museums. There priceless art works are the metaphor of their history.

The objective of this discourse is to analyse the advocacy of return approach of Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun in re-enacting the invasion of Benin kingdom in 1897 by the British colonial army. The narrative technique couch in flashback is used as a storytelling style that the director introduces. The storyteller or narrator is the character who is central to the philosophical approach that this paper is hinged on. He is the present storyteller in a British courtroom in 2014 who takes the audience through his narration of the events of the invasion by reconnecting to the clutch that is the dream or nightmare of **Prince Okowa** which he narrates to his father, **Oba Ovonramwen** who then swings into action by invoking the spirit of **Igini**. From hence the film is fast forwarded from 1897 Benin Kingdom before the invasion to London July, 2014.

It is expected that the audience is not shocked by the use of the camera time created by the director. This new filmic time emanates only from the perception which is directed by the figure and time of the different aspects selected for filmic representation of the action. As a longer lapse of over a hundred years the filmic time indicator of the date of July, 2014 is inscribed on the screen back up with a location of the city's most viable and prominent feature Big Ben and the Double Decker bus in transit on a street of London.

Of great importance to the director is the grasp of the film by the audience as he created its look and why he chooses to set the film in two different eras that pushes his advocacy approach and his philosophy. The ancient eras are linked together using the technique of flashback hinged on the narration of the modern era protagonist who brings to the fore the thematic preoccupation of the film. In the same vein it behooves that the specific theoretical model analysis is not lost by the reader. Rather than the Writer or collaborative theory, it is the Auteur's which deepens this discourse.

The auteur theory as it is today, largely affect the angle films are classified and discussed by its audiences and critics alike. It is the authorial signature and visionary aesthetics of Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun directing style that appropriates to his films as "Lancelot films", albeit not being the scriptwriter. The end-credit roll both on screen or jacket (cover design) accords him this right. Andre Bazin and Alexandre Astruce who originated the Auteur theory in **Cashiers du Cinema**, an influential French film magazine in the 1950s presented the auteur

theory that: "It is the director that brings the film to life and uses the film to express their thoughts and feelings about the subject matter as well as a worldview as an auteur. An auteur can use lighting, camera work, staging and editing to add to their vision" (David, 2013).

The director is placed in a unique and god-like position as the sole creator of all of the film's elements. The Auteur theory explores the notions of an individual's creative vision and control on set and this perspective creates a new pattern to judge the value of film that at the end creates an original means in placing films in a historical and creative context.

It is to the credit of Francois Truffaut who first advocated that the director and no other is a film's primary author- the idea that a film shows a director's personal creative vision, "an expression of his own personality" (Caughie, 23). In writing for the *Cashiers du Cinema*, he posited that a film was reflective of its director, showing the style and themes that is seen throughout his body of work. He emphasized and provocatively too that, "there are no good and bad movies, only good and bad directors" (Truffaut, 1984). To collaborate this position of the director as the author of the film, Sarris Andrew, an American who originated the term "auteur theory" in 1962 postulates that a director must accomplish technical competence in his technique, personal style in terms of how the film is shaped – looks and feels – and inner meaning (David, 2013).

The director is responsible for working with the cast and crew using the script and technical gadgets to create emotions, moments, scenes and sequences that impact on the audience. The story of the invasion of Benin Empire that culminated to the deposition of **Oba Ovonramwen** in 1897 is a great one. This great story gives impetus to its great script which affects its great screenplay that Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen transforms into a great film. The screenplay plays a pivot part in any great film as in "Invasion 1897" which brings the argument that the one who puts the actions of events in words on paper creates the story and that without the story that is planted in the script there cannot be a film. David Tregede summing up the postulation of an ardent scholar of the Writer theory, David Kipen espoused that rather than the Builder, buildings are credited to their architects (2006:26). Therefore, to him the writer is the architect of the film while the director cast and crew are but only the foreman and construction workers.

Writing the story is indeed an integral part of the filmmaking process but the writer is not the author as the auteur theorist argue. That other than putting the words on paper the writer has no contact with the cast, crew and technical gadgets as the director. It is worthy of note that the writer theory collapses on the issue of creative control. The writer loses control of the final outcome of his idea once the script is in the hands of the director. The director is licensed to rework/rewrite, edit and interprets a screenplay according to his heart desire (McGowan, 1951:312).

The Collaboration theory like that of the Writer theory debunk the auteur theory. To these theorists, films are not the exclusive creation of a single individual (Grant, 2008:193). Rather it is the coming together as part of the collective effort by cast and crew- artistes and technicians. It is from group intentionality moving towards a shared goal (Sellar, 268). Therefore, authorship is hinged on the "mutual interaction" between the world created and the creators (Gerstner and Staiger, 2003:212). The collaboration theorist posits that writers, producer and director create the work and the cinematographers' actors/animators and editors create the world that is perceived as the work. It is this perceived world of a film that is a collaborative entity that we view through the interaction of the cast and crew authored by multiple artistes and technicians.

Writers are of the school of thought that films have no plural authors but singular artistic creative force, who is the final authority that makes all the decisions. The director is the

commander of an army that hangs on his word for direction either to attack or retreat from the battlefield. Without the director as the guiding force the adage of “too many cooks spoil the broth” will ensue a flock without a shepherd the flock is in disarray. Albeit film is a collaborative medium but it is not a collaborative job. Once the director is on the “set at that location, he is conducting the whole thing and running the whole show (Robert wise cited in Emily, 1992:81). In the words advocacy approach of Yinka, “he is the most powerful person in the process of making film” (2016:64). Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen’s choice of the flashback technique informs the advocacy approach of *Invasion 1897*. Even though the Writer and Collaborative theories accentuate this discourse, the Auteur theory is the most suitable. The film version of *Invasion 1897* is a re-enactment of history that is not only a cultural product but also a creative work. It presents facts that are checkable or confirmable in historical literature. Lancelot strives to recreate an aspect of the history of Benin that is a cornucopia of events leading to the overthrown and banishment of **Oba Ovonramwen** and the carting away of their priceless works of arts which are today caged in British museums.

History has it that Benin kingdom was established in the 900s AD and rose to become the wealthiest and most powerful empire in West Africa by 1400AD. Orasaye Daniel (2005:5-6), dates the establishment of the kingdom at about 601AD. It has had forty (40) Obas with the present one **Oba Ewuare II**, who as the custodian of the tradition and custom of the Benin Kingdom ascended the throne of his forefather on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2016. The Benin people have, “Strong and principle leadership (trait), unweaving commitment to truth, courageousness, especially in military matters, cooperativeness, extreme loyalty to a cause, and primogeniture along the male line in the matters of inheritance and leadership belief”.

Lancelot reveals his mindset in his lead character. This is seen in the vent of **Igie Ehinare** to his white girlfriend when she asked him if he had stolen the art work that he is carrying in his hand. The same vent is witnessed when the museum security caught him with an art work he removed from the glass cage. Similarly, the same vent ensues in the crown court before a judge. Igie Ehinare paroxysm is the pivot of Lancelot’s advocacy approach. As director, Lancelot developed the vision for *invasion 1897* which he carried out to the finish. He decided what is done, why it should have and how it should look.

Film is a potent medium of expression which when a director creates it unfailingly creates something in his image. In its form as a presentation of a series of occurrences enmeshed in images, dialogues and sounds, it entertains and educates the audience. As a stirring and ideal tool of man for expressing his ethos and experiences in his existential terrain, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen through his artistic creation -directing- confronts the vexed issue of the stolen Benin art works stored away in British museums. He creates his philosophical approach as a midpoint to galvanise his audience for a collective and desired purpose which is the unequivocal demand or request for the return of Benin arts works that were stolen over a century ago.

The choice of Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen to use the film medium to juxtapose it with an action of the present to recreate history is a vista for African filmmakers. Film and not stage performance or books have the superiority of exact re-production. It has the probability of capturing events as they really occur. It is very clear what Lancelot as the director of *Invasion 1897* intends to achieve with the deliberate and apt choice of title.

### **Synopsis of *Invasion 1897* and Its Storyline of Historical Reality**

*Invasion 1897* was directed and produced by Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen in 2014. The executive producer is Senator Daisy Danjuma who is a Benin princess. The film was shot around Nigeria and in London. Several A-Rated Nollywood Actors starred in it such as Paul Obaseki, Segun Arinze, Idiata Otuagbe, Charles Inojie Mike Omozegbe and from abroad there are, Charles

Chucky Venn, Rodolph Walker, Anniko A. Lofti among others. The director's synopsis on the film jacket or cover reads thus:

**Igie Ehinare**, a Researcher student on African Art History gets more perturbed about the injustice of the British invasion of Benin. He wants to return the princess work of history and records to its original owners... but went about it wrongly and the law catches up with him... In trying to justify his action he narrates the series of events that led to the globally renowned epic story of one of the greatest kings of Africa, Oba Ovonramwen of the great Benin kingdom.... who until 1897 was the only kingdom still standing in the whole sub-Sahara Africa, a misunderstanding ensued that leads to deaths, destruction and the carting away of priceless works of arts which in truth was more than decorative pieces (G-Media, 2014).

With reference to the film's storyline, history has it that in the reign of Oba Ovonramwen in 1897, his son and heir to the throne, had a terrible dream that he quickly sought for the Oba's audience which he narrated it to him. It was about bloodshed in the land. Oba Ovonramwen invoked the spirit of Igini who told him that calamity was going to befall the kingdom. Soon strange happenings began to occur in the land such as a terrible ailment that afflicted the people killing them in their numbers. Nobody could find a cure to it. This worried the palace.

No sooner had the ailment receded after taking its toll on the Benin people than the British Colonial Government started plotting the takeover of the vast rubber plantation in Benin Kingdom to feed its growing industrialisation in England. A trade treaty document was drawn up and forced down the throat of Oba Ovonramwen to append his signature. The British officials who were uncomfortable with the great influence and power of the Oba continued with one of the chiefs to betray him. So when the British Colonial Officials sent emissaries to the Oba and were waylaid and killed, they now found reason to invade Benin kingdom and depose Oba Ovonramwen and exiled him to Calabar where he died.

During the invasion of Benin Kingdom by the British colonial military they looted and carted away priceless art works that are at present in several museums in Europe and in individual homes. History reveals that one of the salient but major point of the invasion was for the stealing of these eye-catching art works. And they made a haul of them including the original figurine of **Queen Idia** which was the adopted mascot for Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) in Lagos, Nigeria.

In telling the story, Lancelot whets the audience expectations with historical reality of events. He highlighted the audience's favourite which "is to have heroes that are the most amazing and glories of their kind that ever lived and villains that are the dastardliest evil and corrupt" (Yinka, 2016:13-14). The heroes are Oba Ovonramwen, Igie Ehinare (representing the living of the present age) while the villains are the British Colonial Officials. Furthermore, in the story introduction, Lancelot establishes the glitch which captures the audience's attention:

Outside the Oba's Palace. Oba Ovonramwen with his Chiefs and some subjects watch as two men who are to be executed kneel before him.

**1st Man:** (Kneeling with his arms tied behind him. Spits out blood) Son of Adolahor, let me remind you, king, that the land that drinks my blood shall Be bath by hale of fire. In case you do not know....

**2nd Man:** (In the same posture as 1st Man) You shall be consumed in the end of the intolerant spirit who is stronger than you and I... That day.... (The Executioner cuts off his head with one swing of the axe and it falls on the ground and blood gushing out of the neck)

**1st Man:** (Defiant) Remember, Ovonramwen, the heat of the morning sun touches everyone. The father of fire of your rage will bath the land... (His head is cut off) Pandemonium. Shooting and arson pervades the kingdom by invaders.

**Prince Okowa:** (Wakes up in fright. He was actually dreaming action). Gods of our land, what is this? He hurries off to the Oba's Council Chambers where he is in Council with the chiefs. He demands for an audience with his father, the Oba, and he is obliged. He narrates the dream to him. And the audience are transported from that remote past of Benin in 1897 to the present day London in July, 2014. This approximately adds up to 117 years after the invasion took place.

The director introduces the character of Igie Ehinare, a Research student of African Art History. Igie Ehinare's Art Professor ignited in him a burning passion to return the exquisite art works to the original owner – the Binis- Unfortunately, he goes about it wrongly and the law catches up with him. He is arraigned before a Judge of the Crown Court. One can adduce that Igie Ehinare's action was deliberate and premeditated so that he can be prosecuted in a court where he will be able to achieve his ultimate goal of exposing the British actions of 117 years ago. But neither the story nor the director gives the impression as such.

One thing that is certain is that the director establishes his advocacy approach. He reaches the audience by the help of Igie Ehinare's desire as his advocacy and conveys his same in his philosophical view. Invariably, Lancelot's mission is meeting the hopes of his audience via his advocacy and his philosophy in the film. His advocacy approach provides him a systematic method or technique to direct the film and to convey or transmit his message to the audience.

### **Director's Humanistic Philosophy in Filming**

A film must include philosophy based on its traditional outlook that convey some philosophical messages the director transmits to the audience. Lancelot directed *Invasion 1897* in an extraordinary style by using a philosophical method that reveals or exposes a unique approach that captivates this audience who finds his philosophy in the film interesting and with some exciting views and adventures. The philosophy of Lancelot shapes the most effective persuasion in his advocacy approach.

Ancient Greek in the 7th-5th B.C was the epicenter of knowledge from where great philosophers such as Pythagoras, Socrates Aristotle, Sophocles, Plato, Euripides, and Aeschylus emerged. The word 'Philosophy' which the Greeks scribed to as 'the love of wisdom' and "Aristotle referred to as the knowledge of truth" (Isidore Nnadi, 2006:13) is seen in this etymology: "Philosophy is the search for wisdom and knowledge, especially the type dealing with the ultimate reality, or dealing with the most general causes and principles of things and ideas and human perception and knowledge of them" "The core tenet of the wisdom as espoused by Greek philosophy is dependent on ultimate reality in everything, eternal truth.

It is instructive to note that there are several definition of philosophy. The definition of Omeregbe who refers to a philosopher as person whose mind, heart and soul is fixed on reality is considered apt by these writers to the nature of the context of this discourse. There are two ways that Omeregbe has postulated the same ideas cited by Isidore (2006:3):

1. Philosophy is a rational search for answers to the question that arise in the mind when we reflect on human experience
2. Philosophy is a rational search for answers to the basic question about the ultimate meaning of reality as a whole and of human life in particular.

Of the two Omeregbe postulations that in an attempt to discover reality, philosophy is a search, a reflective exploration, a pursuit of soul-searching question of existence (Isidore, 2006). Thus the prime purpose of philosophy is to identify reality and to enhance our ability to solve problems.

This research makes to distil key issues of philosophy that are demand of the knowledge sought, really useful for the director to convey his message to the audience. As director,

Lancelot has his own philosophy in his own approach and reveals it in his heroes and villains. He has a philosophy about his Bini roots that he uses in his film to narrate the authentic ploy for the invasion of Benin Kingdom, the deposition of Oba Ovonramwen and the shameless looting and carting away of priceless art works that are more than just decorative pieces. He communicates to the audience by transmitting a philosophical message through narration of a historical event (epic story) and via psychology intensity.

Lancelot's advocacy approach in *Invasion 1897* reveals his humanistic philosophy which attracts interest and admiration of his audience because of the education and entertainment it gives them. He conveys his humanistic approach through his philosophy: In his nature, human-audience-often behave with his feelings and he/she looks for sensitive clues on what he watches or touches. This is the reason the audience usually hope for some sensitive and humanistic and philosophical messages in any film (Sadat Cereci, 2013:994).

Therefore, whatever the interest of Lancelot is as director, he tries to communicate a polite or humanistic message to the audience and having a technique to create his approach as it is evident in *Invasion 1897*. In a way, Lancelot's approach which informs his philosophy is a meeting point between him and the audience. A fact that *Invasion 1897* has different themes yet all have philosophical approach and philosophical images.

Lancelot has his own style and an original approach to reach his audience via a philosophical way. In this film under study, Lancelot's philosophy naturally appears in an artistic image that gives explicit meaning to it and the image of him. Lancelot's approach is like a stamp that is pressed on the audience memory via his film which in turn leaves its heritage into the memory of the audience via his approach.

### **Film Predilection versus Theme of Advocacy of Return**

Even though the prominent issue of Lancelot's film is imbedded in its title, *Invasion 1897* with the rider 'The Deposition of the last King of Africa,' the underlying desire of the antagonist and protagonist is the same. Both of them desire one the priceless of Benin art works that is dear to their hearts. While the antagonist –British Colonialists- desire is for economic gains that of the protagonist is for the return of its treasure.

The storyline of the film is in three parts. The first part of the story is the dream had by the crown prince of Benin Empire, Prince Okowa which the director, Lancelot introduces as a clutch to magnate and captivate the audience. The audience is shocked with the realisation that the opening action was a dream after all –the beheading of the two men by the **Executioner** in the presence of the Oba, Chiefs and Subjects. Waking up from his dream, Prince Okowa goes to the palace to seek audience with the king, his father where he narrates his dream to him. The king, Oba Ovonramwen immediately invokes the spirit of Igini. Then the story transformed into the present, London July, 2014. The events that lead to Ehinare's arrest in the museum and arraignment in court is the second part of the story. The third part is the narration of the invasion of Benin Kingdom by the British Colonialists and deposition of Oba Ovonramwen and massive carting away of Benin priceless art work in 1897. The third part of the story is the continuation of the first part that the director links up with the use of flashback to achieve. The throw back to 1897 is the establishment of the craftsmanship of the Benin in the making of art works. This emphasizes the thrust of the film's predilection. Lancelot exposes the vocation of the Bini person who is renowned for his craftsmanship in making bronze art works of different hues and shapes.

The thematic preoccupation comes up when Hamilton, A British Colonial official is in disagreement with the Counsular to pursue peace than military might in the relationship between the Queen and Oba Ovonramwen. The untapped deposits of rubber in Benin kingdom

will serve the entire demand of European industries. Rather than a treaty, Hamilton is of the view that the Benin collections of art works will finance the rubber production. He casts his eyes on the priceless art works and wants Oba Ovonramwen out of the way to achieve his aim **Hamilton:**(Talking with the Consular in the latter's office) I suggest we apply the same strategy we did against King Jaja. We take him out and annex the city.

**Consular:** Is not that simple... listen to me Hamilton, it is not that simple. The British need to operate here in an atmosphere of peace and truth. That's why... that's why a treaty is the best approach. **Hamilton:** A treaty! I am afraid it will simply be impossible while the king is still around.

The dialogue exposes the mindset of Hamilton. His intention is revealed no matter the wise counsel of the Consular against the deposition of Oba Ovonramwen. He knows such an action will require huge finance to wage a war (being the only way to take out the Oba) and heavy casualties on both sides. But Hamilton effects his option when the Consular was not around. He waged a war against the Benin Kingdom, depose the Oba and cart away priceless art works racked in crates. These are in the British Museum to this date.

#### **London: July 14, 2014 (Lecture Room)-Day**

**Professor:** Yes, yes, yes it is recorded in European history, Egypt developed the art of writing. The African tribes did not write at the time. However, they developed another form of recording history. Today we call these decoration (slide projection) of a carved stool with the figure of a man in the Centre on whose head rest the seated and his seat stamped on the base as if holding it into place. His hands hold a done gun and a paddle on either side to complete the pillar structure) we call these arts. This was the... the library. The school of its time. The means by which knowledge itself was passed on to next generation and this and the next. And when the Benin Empire was looted by the British in 1897, they lost all their vital historical records. Oh, yes! And these records... these art works... And these great, great, great historical pieces of information... they can't be seen... oh, yes! Do you know where you can see them? Behind glass walls locked in museums around the world. These so-called decorated pieces, collected in people's homes, to the Bini, they are very sacred historical records of the people.

Professor's long lecture is the motivating factor, the antidote that fires on Igie Ehanire to take the law into his hand in order to draw attention to the grave injustice done to his people, the Benin's, by the British Colonial Government. His white girlfriend (Anika Aloft) spurs him on to take the part he chooses when after the lecture she came visiting him in his apartment and finds him holding an art work of bronze figurine, she jokingly asked if he has stolen it. His reply throws her aback:

#### **Igie Ehanire's Apartment (Day). Out on the Balcony**

**Igie Ehanire:** What are you talking about? How can I steal what belongs to me... what belongs to my people! This art piece was given to me by my granddaddy on my first trip to Benin where I come from. So I left them, there are so many more but they all gone now. Then at the museum his anger exacerbates due to the haughty and cheeky statement made by the Museum Guide to the sightseers.

#### **Museum (Day)**

**Female Museum Guide:** So, everybody this is the section of the museum that host the artefacts from the Great Benin Empire please have a look and try not to touch the glass Igie Ehanire goes to hide in the toilet until the close of the museum for the day. He comes out from hiding when it is dark and moves to a glass cage and takes out one of the art works thus trigger

off the alarm that sends the security personnel coming after on him while protesting that he is not a thief. His arrest leads to his arraignment in court where he accuses the British Empire of being the thief:

### **Courtroom (Day)**

**Igie Ehanire:** (Visibly angry): No, madam... your lordship. Yes, the piece was in your museum, it has been there for over one hundred years. But that does not change the fact that it does not belong in your museum. (Cut away to exhibit of 3 artworks). It belongs to my people, and it was taken from them. I wish you can prove that these artifacts were given and not taken, then I would happily plead guilty (shaking his head). But I know that is impossible. (Raises his voice). Because the real thief here is the British Empire in the year 1897. This set the point of narration that takes the audience back to 117 years ago when the invasion of Benin kingdom took place. The recollection of the event as narrated by Igie Ehanire before the Judge of the British Crown Court throws up the advocacy for the return of the stolen Benin art works caged in British Museum. This is highlighted with the judgment passed by the Judge and freeing Igie Ehanire of all charges and aligning with the advocacy.

In the field of theatre arts from where film takes its form, advocacy is seen as conscientisation. The audience is stimulated or galvanized to take action and demand for the return of their history imbedded in the form of the art works that were stolen by rising up to voice out. Secondly, it is a form of awareness. The invasion took place in 1897, yet the stolen priceless art works that are more than decorative pieces are still being kept in faraway British museum. Advocacy or return is to create awareness in the minds, hearts, and souls of the audience.

Thirdly, advocacy is for enlightenment. This is to bring to the knowledge or understanding of the audience that a need for the return of the stolen Benin priceless art works that is their history is a worthy cause. That the continuous caging of the art works in British museums is a deprivation of the Benin people historical documentations to be in its natural habitat.

Fourthly, demand for the return of the art works to its original place. It is to give back what belongs to the people. The art works are physically caged in the British museum and not that they are no more. So there is no need for reparation as a way of correcting a mistake. Rather than reparation, it is the advocacy of return.

Fifthly, advocacy is for Public Relations (PR) as communication processes based on a structured strategy with defined goals and measurement revealing issues pertaining to the public. It shapes the films image, build the brand and spread its message and minimizes the effect of negative publicity that may arise. As a strategic communication process it builds a sustainable perception that conscientises the audience to act for a cause to their benefits.

### **Perspective of the Characters of the Hero and the Villain**

As a great medium of expression that technology provide, the film is done by human beings. It is the director who interprets the script, assembles a crew and cast to create the look of content. The actor as cast is the one who plays or acts the character that the audience sees. The actor is the one with that body and voice-mouth, eyes, nose (Men) which is the face of the entire body- that tells the story which the audience appreciates.

Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun's *Invasion 1897* is the re-enactment of the events of the invasion of the Benin kingdom, the deposition of the Oba and the casting away of priceless Benin art works. Lancelot seeks to provoke some degree of fault-finding and thought-provoking feeling that will stimulate the audience to rise up and demand for the return of the art works. He describes the story's world to the audience opening it with a clutch that captures the audience's

attention, revealing the story's secret by unveiling the film's "heroes that are most glorious and amazing of their kind that ever lived and villains that are the dastardlier evil and corrupt." (Yinka, 2016:13-14).

The consistency of the characters helps in creating the conflict which helps in building the story plot around that emanates giving educational and entertainment values thereby achieving audience appeal. What is certain is that in films such as *Invasion 1897*, how the true characters in history look like is not their true selves in film. In the case of *Invasion 1897*, the invasion on the Benin Kingdom, deposition of **Oba Ovonramwen** and the carting away of priceless art works is a fact. An excursion to the museum could be a fact but not the breaking into the museum cages and court arraignment is a fact. Such an occurrence has never taken place. Lancelot uses his artistic license and ingenuity to bring about this film which is a fusion of historical (epic) event and a fiction story to achieve his philosophical approach of advocacy for the return of the stolen art works. The stolen art works are facts. The advocacy is fiction.

The director, Lancelot uses actors to interpret the characters- hero and villain- in the story. The other actors are supports that add value to the story what constitutes a character in a film emanates from a fact (idea) or imagination of both the scriptwriter and the director who are made up, garbed in costume and put in an environment. Finally, the character according to Sadat (2013:994):

Topic of film and character of director are mostly united by director in many films, therefore a film which resembles character of a director is always watched. While audience perceive philosophy of director in film and they permanently wonder director's next step and because of director's extraordinary approach.

The major character of the historical (epic) story is **Oba Ovonramwen** who is the hero while the British Government as represented in **Hamilton** who prosecuted or masterminded the invasion is the villain. For the purpose of this discourse which is the projection and exposition of the director's advocacy approach, the character of **Igie Ehanire** aptly assumes the hero. This is because it is his character that Lancelot's advocacy is built upon:

### **Courtroom**

**Igie Ehanire:** What I did was not stealing. I was attempting to return back lost property. Stolen property actually! Stolen by the colonials of a hundred years ago. The film's villain is the British Empire represented in **Hamilton** who is not of the present but had lived over a hundred years ago. It was his action of that time that propelled the action of the present. He was so blinded by his desire to dethrone **Oba Ovonramwen** in order to lay his hands on the priceless art works. Even as his boss, Consular cautioned him that the British need to keep peace and trust to operate in the kingdom, **Hamilton** posited that:

**Hamilton:** I suggest we apply the same strategy as we did against King Jaja. We take him out and annex the city. **Igie Ehinare**, the hero in the film is the protagonist. His burning desire is to have all the priceless art works caged in British museums returned to the original owners, his own people, the Benin's. The story does not begin with him but it ends with him. It is through him that the invasion of the Benin Kingdom, deposition of **Oba Ovonramwen** and stealing of the art works is retold by his narration. He is the link between the past and the present with a projection of the future.

He has a very strong personality and dares the establishment without giving a second thought about his action. It is the belief of these writers that **Igie Ehinare** deliberately took the action that he did to gain attention of the world. He knows the power of the media and he used it. He gambled and won the stake. There was a wide media coverage: **Reporter Julia (of Viva T.V):** Didn't you know you were committing a crime when you got arrested? **Igie Ehinare:** I

have not committed a crime! **Male Reporter:** Is stealing not a crime where you come from? What? Listen, I am not a thief. I didn't steal anything! **Igie Ehinare:** strong character and daring attitude also surfaced when he answers the Judge. **Judge:** I must ask you again. Do you deny the crime of an attempted robbery? **Igie Ehinare:** You honour, my lawyers here have told me which crime I am accused of. Now, according to your Theft Act of 1968, "a person is guilty if he dishonestly appropriates the property of another with the intention of dishonestly depriving the other of it." As the protagonist, **Igie Ehinare** is intelligent, brave, daring, witty, confident and an achiever. He may be accused of being arrogant but this is due to his strong willed trait of identifying his desire and going for it even if it brings him discomfort. **Hamilton** as the antagonist is the image of the British Colonial government and their African apologists. He is the villain who against good counsel carries out his desire. He is evil who careless about protocols and respect for constituted authority's opinion: **Hamilton:** A treaty! I am afraid it will simply be impossible whilst this King is still around. But prefers his suggestion be taken: **Hamilton:** I suggest we apply the same strategy as we did against King Jaja... Hamilton is so blinded by his desire that he goes against the Consular and puts his evil desire to effect. He carries out his evil desire of carting away priceless art works in loads of trunks by invading the Benin Kingdom under a stage-manage plan and which he succeeds in disposing the Oba in 1897.

The moment Hamilton appeared in the film he did not disguise his burning desire to oust Oba Ovonranwen in order to steal not only the palace's art works but that of the entire kingdom. This is manifest in the priceless art works caged in British Museums. On the other hand, Igie Ehinare displays bravery, intelligence, courage and determination. He put across to his Benin people and the world his message of advocacy for the return of the Benin art works adorning the British Museums back to its original owners and habitat.

## CONCLUSION

The film *Invasion 1897* is as a result of Lancelot's effort, point of view and his feelings. Due to this the film carries his stamp and signature as it is firstly presented by his name. He creates the spirit of the film, gives it a character and a humanist sense via his philosophy of advocacy. He is the primary element of his film which undoubtedly, belongs to him due to his pivotal role in it. Besides being a philosopher, Lancelot shapes his film as an artistic product which educates and entertains. His responsibility for the technical requirement and artistic angle of the film that he gives a spirit to the script via his narrative technique of flashback approach makes him more than just a creative force. *Invasion 1897* tries to catch lives of the audience by way of Lancelot's image in the approach. This is so far the fact that the audience looks for his life in film images to see himself. Therefore, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen teaches his audience by the help of his approach which he conveys in his advocacy for the return of the stolen art works of the Benin Kingdom displayed in British Museums to this day. In a nutshell, this paper presents Lancelot's mission as meeting the hopes of the audience via his advocacy approach and his philosophy in the film. This approach provides him a systematical method to direct *Invasion 1897* and to convey his message to his audience.

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