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"If it is not a train, then what is it?": A Study of Symbolism in the Film titled *Keteke* by Peter Sedufia

Daniel Kofi Brako & Johnson Sennah Kofi Gilbert

Abstract

*Trains have a distinct history in early filmmaking, where they were employed as major prop elements to tell narratives that moved most plots forward. Although trains serve as a means of transportation that commute people and carry goods from one destination to the other, they have been used dramatically to create awe or generate suspense in many films that is presented to an audience. As observed, preceding studies on Ghanaian films present a gap in the use of trains as symbols in visual narrative storytelling. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the use of a train as a major prop element to represent symbols in the Ghanaian film titled *Keteke* (2017). This paper employs a qualitative research approach which is descriptive and interpretive. It uses a purposive sampling technique in selecting *Keteke*, a Ghanaian film that has won awards on the international scene. Data is collected using an audiovisual document study and the results analysed. This paper argues that a train as a prop does not only serve functional or utilitarian purposes in films but rather plays major roles and symbolises other meanings in narratives.*

Keywords: narrative, props, symbolising, train

Introduction

PIONEER FILMMAKERS AND THEIR FASCINATION WITH TRAINS CAN BE traced in films by Auguste and Louis Lumiere, the two brothers representing the first filmmakers who used a train in telling stories on screen in film history. This film titled *The Arrival of a Train* (Lumiere,

1895) gained a lot of prominence when it was first screened to the public in January 1896. Although there may be no mention of it in literature, contrary to what some cinema publications claim, the film was not one of the ten short films selected by these filmmakers and screened at the Salon de Indien at the Grand Cafe in Paris on December 28, 1895. However, the film has received a deserved commendation from some film scholars. The likes of Christian Metz, Tom Gunning and Yuri Tsivian refer to the film as among the greatest train films ever made (Bottomore, 1999). As echoed by Loiperdinger and Elzer (2004) the film attracted a lot of attention despite its short duration and its subject matter which centred on everyday life at the train station. To the audience, it was the life-sized train that was captured in a close shot that appeared to be moving toward them in the cinema hall which created suspense, fear and panic. This kind of wonderful effect achieved in the early days of silent cinema established film as a powerful tool of communication. The effect known as *train effect* in film studies is explained as the nervous and terrifying feelings of an audience upon seeing approaching trains in early films (Tsivian, 1994/2005). Gunning (1990) notes that filmmakers were not only interested in creating a form of panic among the audience but to present some kind of thrill attached to the film medium as a new form of modern entertainment. Cook (2016) mentioned another train film that received a lot of attention as one of the western genres in the early days of cinema titled *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903). It also served as one of the cinematic milestone fiction films shot on location with a run-time length of 12-minutes (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003). The story in the film centres on a group of burglars who robs a passenger train. The film lasted for twelve minutes and involved fourteen shots that combined non-overlapping shots in the narrative. This enabled the director to shift attention by intercutting between happenings from diverse locations. In this film, the director, Edwin S. Porter, introduced fantastic editing techniques such as changing locations, cross-cutting and delicate camera movements which presented spectacular scenes in the film. In our opinion, the aforementioned silent films did not gain popularity only due to the cinematic techniques employed by the filmmakers, but rather the way the narratives in the aforementioned films were weaved creatively around trains which served as major props in the films. Also, the kind of awe and panic it caused when shown to an audience in the early days of filmmaking. Besides, it was about the visual power and aura that accompanied the new filmmaking medium in

history. To date, trains as props have been used as the main settings in some types of film genres and played the role of distinguishing moments in film narratives. Barsam and Monahan (2016) notes that props in general have become a necessity in visual narratives whether the films are shot on locations or in studios. Generally, props add some form of believability and realism to the creation of the decor in films. Therefore, selected props combined together with the interior, colours, and textures add to the story being told enabling the replication of reality. Props include objects handled by characters or found on set dressing forming part of the narrative in films. In every filmmaking conglomerate, the production designer, heading the *film art department* liaises with the property master in the selection of appropriate props for the narrative world. The property master or property man (props man) usually ensures the availability of all props needed, prepares and gets them ready for a particular shoot. Also, props add to the set dressing which enables the creation of the *look* in which the performance takes place. The set dressing may involve paintings, carpets, books, furniture and other decorative items. Nelmes (2012) refers to props as movable objects within a story which play relevant roles. As objects, they enable an audience to define characters' status, locale and identify the type of film genre they are watching. Hart (2013) describes props as physical items that an actor or actress uses in films. Props also enable the character to relate to the space in which the performance takes place when it comes to movement. In that perspective, trains in films that form part of a set or setting can be viewed as props since it has the ability to transport actors or goods from one destination to another. In addition, Strawn and Schlenker (2018) illustrated that when individuals move from one house to another, a van loads up all their belongings and reloads to unload them at the new house. This is how the meaning of a prop is related to in real-life situations. In this scenario, they further explained that the house becomes the scenery as well as all architectural elements like the walls, ceilings, floors and doors. However, movable items like dishes, furniture sets, picture frames, lawn tools and appliances are viewed as props. They are often referred to as non-permanent items or objects. As a result, there are three basic categories of props: hand props, set props, and set dressing. Hand props are things or artefacts that actors use and handle on set to enhance their performances. The big or moveable objects used to create and define a scene are called set props. An example is a furniture or wall drop as an element in the set. Also, the items used to adorn the set or surroundings in film sequences are collectively referred to as set dressing. Although props in films may

be static or movable, a train as a film prop can be used in two ways depending on the narrative being told. On the other hand, trains as props can be used as symbols or motifs to represent meanings in films apart from using other cinematic elements. As confirmed by Nelmes (2012) props can be used as metaphors symbolising other meanings or objects in filmmaking. This depends on how much emphasis is placed on that particular prop through dialogue and cinematography. In that manner, attention is usually given to the said prop which connotes certain meanings that an audience can infer to in the end of the narrative. In explanation, she mentioned two films such as *Pleasantville* (Ross,1998) and *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Greenaway,1982) which utilised props as symbols in the cinematic space. In *Pleasantville* (Ross, 1998), the apple presented to David (played by Tobey Maguire) by Margaret (played by Marley Shelton) shows some uniqueness signifying picking of the forbidden fruit in the bible. Therefore, the shot size of the apple received attention since the focus was on the picking of the apple which is relevant and accompanied by the glowing of a moon through the branches in the background. Again, in *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Greenaway, 1982), a fruit is used as a form of repetition in the film, displayed and consumed by characters. It represents sexual pleasure and the eagerness in bearing fruit by rich women. Again, props can be used as symbols through the narrative drive of a film giving feelings of mystery and suspense. As highlighted by Petrie and Boggs (2018), a symbol is basically anything or an object that represents another thing in all manner of works of art.

Benshoff (2016) notes that signs and symbols in film language have a relation between the meaning of an object and what it really represents. For instance, a dog is viewed as a four-legged animal that chases cats and other foes in nature. This particular animal is referred to as a dog in English, a chin in French, and a pero in Spanish. Over here, the difference is just a matter of semantics and therefore refers to a generic term which basically means the same thing. However, some societies may attach several representations to how they view the animal in diverse contexts. In that light, although the word dog may specify the same thing in different languages, its symbolic meanings may differ when attached to other words in diverse cultures and societies globally. It may also be based on their history with the knowledge of dogs, as some may consider it as evil whereas others see it as a god of protection. For instance, among the Akans of Akyem societies, in Ghana, animal symbolism forms a vital part of their belief systems. Therefore, various animals are used to represent certain clans

which is identified by the design of their traditional umbrellas, linguist staffs and other royal artefacts. The *Aduana* clan has a dog as one of their totems which represents a symbol of humility and friendliness. According to Quarcoopome (1987), these clans recognise themselves with such animals because they have qualities that members may want to emulate. It must be noted that this ideology can be related to some clans of various ethnic groups in Ghana.

In a research conducted by Arbi et al. (2021), they described the train as a symbol in the Japanese animation film titled *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train* (Sotozaki, 2020). It was revealed that the Mugen train as the main setting represents an infinity dream that has no end in the film. Also, Franklin-Ladi (2016), explored the symbol of trains in Hitchcock's films. One of the major findings indicated that trains serve as an identity in the films. Another study conducted by Harrison (2014) examined the cinema train in Britain which established that film trains expanded knowledge in distribution networks in Britain in the 21st century. It is obvious that the use of trains as symbols or otherwise in films have gained attention by some scholars elsewhere, however, there is a little devotion on the symbolism of trains in the Ghanaian context. This is the gap that this paper attempts to fill. Therefore, in this paper, the authors attempt to explore the use of a train as a major prop element to represent symbols in the Ghanaian film titled *Keteke*. This seeks to answer the research question: How does the use of a train as a major prop element represent symbols in the Ghanaian film titled *Keteke*?

What is Symbolism?

Historically, symbolism movement emanated in the 19th century during the era of the rebirth of all forms of arts. Proponents of the impressionists and post-impressionists were of the view that emotions and sensations played key roles in interpreting the world around them. Such concepts were related to visual elements that were visible in nature such as buildings, people and landscapes. However, in the late 19th century many artists moved from the real to the imagination or fantasy. In that context, in order to express their inner spirit, they disdained the real view of the world and resorted to fantasy. Therefore, artists of this particular movement were concerned with signs and symbols. From that point of view, the symbolists, whether painters or writers refused realism and saw it as trivial (Kleiner, 2017). In addition, they refused to see things as just mere objects but saw through them and interpreted with deeper meanings.

According to Miihlenbeck and Jacobsen (2020), symbolism is the art of employing symbols or giving symbolic meanings to objects. Considering our environment symbolism has the potential to be found in any given object. Thus, what we see with our eyes representing deeper meanings. Udechuku (2019), views symbols as objects or items which represents other things. It also enables to convey information and messages focusing on the human mind. Sadowski (1957) notes that a symbol is an image, item or icon. This may be included in figures or literary works which attracts deeper or metaphorical meanings. In that context, a painter may combine certain colours applied on a canvas to express deeper meanings and emotions in relation to their environment. Kadhim and Medhi (2022) postulates that symbolism plays a key role in literature due to its imaginative nature. Therefore, an author may use symbols to enhance the meaning and beauty of a literary piece. Although they are not easily identified, the reader must give a text keen attention before they can understand. For instance, an author may choose to use a symbol to give a meaning to an idea or object. That is using the colour red rose to describe love. Some accepted symbols in nature are national flags and traffic lights. Generally, filmmakers also use similar approach to represent certain objects and items as symbols in visual storytelling.

Symbology of trains in films

According to Franklin-Landi (2016), one of the most prominent film directors noted with the numerous uses of trains that played exciting roles in films is credited to Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock creatively used trains as symbols in *Strangers on a Train* (Hitchcock, 1951) and *North by North West* (Hitchcock, 1959). The two trains in the films represent 1950s America as well as its strength and modernity. As emphasised by Konuk (2018), the trains used in these films symbolised modernity and served as one of the early means of transportation after the industrial revolution. Therefore, Hitchcock, as a director, took an advantage of the situation and used two films to project the American image and identity across the globe. This served as insignia of the origination and growth of America. As part of characterisation in these films, he used trains to introduce the two protagonist characters. In the former film, the two main characters meet aboard a train. In the latter film, the train represents the *20th century Limited* which was prominent in that era to America and its innovation (Franklin-Landi, 2016). Further, Hanyu (2000) notes how in *Strangers on a Train* (1951), Hitchcock devises a clever scheme for an *exchange murder* scene involving two passengers.

This involves Bruno Antony (played by Robert Walker) and Guy Haines (played by Farley Granger) who are strangers on a train. Moreover, the tension is created by Bruno, a psychopath, pursuing Guy, who does not respond to him as expected during a chat. In this sequence, the train serves as a significant prop in the film. According to Haynu, it portrays the art of using the train as a major prop element. Also, Watanabe (2022) notes that in *Strangers on a Train*, the windows seen behind the two strangers sitting facing each other on the train in the opening sequence symbolises the mind. Thus, Hitchcock uses physical objects like train windows to depict the state of mind or individual perceptions of the two characters.

Also, mobility of trains from one destination to the other after the industrial revolution brought about people from all walks of life which created fear and panic. Further, Harrison (2018) emphasises on how the introduction of trains in cinema were used in Britain to project modernity. In her opinion, the train and cinema in early films show how people travelled and experienced modern machinery. On the other hand, the two mediums were used together as a form of commodifying Britain as a beautiful place of site seeing and travelling to the audience. Also, trains and cinema played major roles as tourists in a growing entertainment industry, it kept improving mobility in British society. Moreover, early filmmakers explored the use of a train as an object of criminal inventions. In actuality, the imagery of a train represented a setting where most crimes were committed. It is noted that filmmakers presented narratives to sensitise the audience about settings in trains where most crimes were committed. A typical example is the crime scene executed in *The Great Train Robbery* (Konuk, 2018).

According to Whiteley (2013), trains in films can serve as symbols of adventure. Through the journey of trains in films, the audience sometimes gets a feeling of travelling across different locations and countries. The depiction of shots showing the outside of train windows gives a feeling of finding oneself in diverse environs. She also established that trains can be used to depict a symbol of sex in films. She cited an example in the film *North by North West* (Hitchcock, 1959), where a train entering through a tunnel represent a sexual act. In the view of Whiteley, Hitchcock was aware that journeys on trains separate us from the natural world and gave people the chance to play different roles and act in an unanticipated manner. Moreover, she also explained that trains could serve as a symbol of love and romance in films. This assertion can be viewed in two forms such as tragic and happy love narratives in films. With the tragic narratives, the

train is not boarded in anyway till the film ends. For instance, in the film titled *Brief Encounter* (Lean, 1945), two characters meet in a railway station, become friends and falls in love. When their affection deepens and realises they cannot hurt their spouses, they part ways and never gets on board the train for a ride and remain in the cafe. Similarly, in *Before Sunrise* (Linklater, 1995), a happy love affair begins on a train and ends at a train station. This implies that people get the chance to travel and meet their loved ones occasionally. Semlyen (2010) reiterates that cinema without trains would amount to nothing because of the thrills and suspense they presented in early films to the audience. In *Arrival of a Train* (Lumiere, 1895), the sight of the locomotive engine steadily approaching the audience was not just about the awe but the fact that the audience were going to see that incident in films in later years. This concept confirms that the birth of films commenced with trains. In other words, Semlyen presented that the use of trains also established the first action film in *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter, 1903) which also marked the leading film shot on location taking a duration of 12 minutes. As echoed by Whitely (2013) trains can be seen as the greatest objects used in dramatic storytelling which plays a major in film history.

Edgar-Hunt et al. (2010) presents the meanings of signs and symbols as visual images in narrative films known as semiotics. They further acknowledge that every visual presented in films is not vague but has a meaning. Thus, these visual images may contain objects and items known as signs. The sign has two forms known as physical and psychological aspects in films. Therefore, the physical depicts the sign as an object (signifier) and the psychological refers to sign as a perception (signified). The signifier represents the physical forms of an object and the signified depicts its meaning in other words. This can be summed up as denotation and connotation of meanings of any sign or object. Denotation usually refers to the primary meaning. For example, a police uniform and the emblem on them may signify a particular rank, whereas, the same police uniform may mean order and law which is viewed as connotation.

Petrie and Boggs (2018) have explained how to create symbols in films. In their opinion, filmmakers cannot rely on predetermined symbols in society but rather create their own centered around objects or scenarios linking them with the film's context. Also, some four ways to create symbols are based on repetition; the value placed on an item by a character; the context in which an object is used and visual or aural emphasis. In the creation of symbols based on repetition, the filmmaker must place emphasis on a particular object by repeating them in a film.

In terms of symbolism by placing value on an object in films, characters refer to a particular object several times in the film or by showing keen interest or concern about it. In that light, the character may mention the object through dialogue several times in the narrative. This may add to its importance to the entire dramatic structure of the film. Another way symbols can be created in films is through context. In that way, an object or symbol is treated with a kind of significance. It can also be established by an object in relationship with others in the film. Moreover, through the juxtaposition of shots and also by placing importance on the film's structure. Finally, by creating symbols through visual emphasis, the filmmaker can use colours, close-ups, camera angles, freeze frames and lighting effects. The aural aspects of creating symbols may be executed through certain unique sound effects and music in the film. Generally, it must be noted that the symbols created in film narratives may be obvious, delicate or vague in execution. For instance, some symbols attached to ambiguity in films may not have one clear single answer or meaning. In view of that, the filmmaker's intention would not be to confuse the audience but rather to add some form of enhancement and authenticity to the film narrative.

Storyline of *Keteke*

Keteke (Sedufia, 2017) is a romantic screwball comedy set in the 1980s based on a satirising love story. The film is directed by Peter Sedufia, produced by Peter Sedufia and Manaa Abdullah. Its spectacular scenery is designed by art directors, Emmanuel Quist-Haynes and Benjamin Osei-Hwedieh. It featured top seasoned actors and actress in the likes of Adjetey Anang, Fred Amugi, Clemento Suarez, Jeneral Ntatia and Lydia Forson.

In the opening sequence, Boi (played by Adjetey Anang) and his pregnant wife Atswei (played by Lydia Forson), stands by a railway road at a train stop to catch a train. Their main wish is to get to Akete village on time for the safe delivery of their first baby. Boi, appears in an afro hairstyle, dressed in leather jacket over a shirt, wearing a pair of *bass* trousers and shoes. Atswei, wears a natural beautifully plaited hair, dressed in an African print sewn in a maternity style and a pair of slippers. As part of their luggage are two big suitcases and a chequered intertwined nylon tote bag (popularly known as *Ghana Must Go* in parts of West Africa). After standing for hours without hearing a sound of an approaching train, they carry their luggage and walks to the next train stop with the hope of catching a train. Atswei, upon hearing a trumpet sound of a train

alerts Boi who runs and encourages her to do the same rather than walk in order to catch that train. Regrettably, they miss that fast-approaching train which passes through the train stop and fades away. Since a train is the only means of transportation to get to the outskirts of town, the two couples never back down and continues their journey. Days after days, moving from one train stop to the other, the couple argue and plays prank at each other whilst they eagerly expect a train to the village by any means. Atswei becomes exhausted on the way, gets angry at Boi as she shifts blame on him as the cause of their struggles and predicaments in the entire journey. They blame each other as well as their mother-in-laws who are desperate to see their grandchild for putting them under such stress. To calm down tempers and ease tension, Boi makes some dance moves and stares at Atswei who ignores him and sits aloof. Boi takes out his boom box from the music suitcase and plays some soothing Ghanaian highlife music in Twi (an Akan dialect) to Atswei's hearing. Boi repeats his dance moves and invites Atswei to join him in dancing to the highlife music. They take a moment to hold hands, looks into each other's eyes, and kisses before continuing on their journey. They travel along the railroad with beautiful landscape of trees on either side while toting their bags. From a distance, Boi notices a house far end in the forest surrounded by clouds of smoke in the sky and draws Atswei's attention. Boi smells a sweet aroma of food in the air and asks Atswei whether she feels it too and confirms. To satisfy their hunger, Boi convinces Atswei and walks together further in that direction leaving some of their luggage behind. They get to the place and chances on two village huts in the forest. The two structures have one built with mud and roofed with raffia leaves and the other built with straw mat roofed with raffia. They knock after becoming terrified when they notice how silent the area is, but nobody responds. To their surprise, an old man, a Hermit (played by Fred Amugi) and a young man, his servant (played by Joseph Ostiman), appears bare-chested with body marks and clad in white cloths draped around their waists. The Hermit is adorned with a necklace of an animal skin and the servant in another made of cowries and a bangle. The servant is seen holding a stick in his hands. They give them a warm welcome and makes a commitment to provide Boi and Atswei with food, clothing and shelter. The Hermit initially enters his room and brings out a small black pot with concoction cleanse Atswei's hands and feet. Although she resists in the beginning as she finds it disgusting, Boi convinces her and she agrees for her hands and feet to be purified. Likewise, Boi's hands and feet are also purified by the Hermit in the same

manner. After that, the Hermit instructs his servant to take them to another hut where they are served with some local dishes and water. Boi plays some music and enjoys gulping the food whilst Atswei is gripped by fear and refuses to eat the food. The servant returns back and expresses shock as he finds Atswei sitting idle without eating the food. He convinces Atswei who later agrees to eat and grabs some of the food slowly into her mouth. Suddenly, she hears a trumpet sound from an approaching train and drops the food. She quickly jumps on her feet and pulls Boi along in order to catch that train. The Hermit's servant noticing this action, convinces the couple to stay behind but they refuse. The servant delays Boi and Atswei by convincing them to stay behind and runs to inform the Hermit. Boi and Atswei decides to leave when the servant return to inform them that they cannot leave but rather need to present their baby in exchange of the food they were served. The servant further insists that they wait for the Hermit to return soon to initiate Atswei's labour. In order to escape, Atswei ignores and hits the servant in his chest with the suitcase in her hand whilst he falls down. They bolt away as Boi complains about his broken music box suitcase they left behind. Unexpectedly, the Hermit appears, realises their escape and runs after them but gets surrounded by a cluster of fire flames which makes him immobile. He recites some incantations in order to pass through the flames to catch them but this does not yield any result. This occurs since he has been banished to live in seclusion and remain in that confinement. Boi and Atswei hurry through the forest and leaves their luggage behind to catch the approaching train. Boi instructs Atswei to run faster but she shows signs of tiredness. Atswei complains of stomach and abdominal pains and stops on the way. Boi offers Atswei some and carries her along. Atswei instructs Boi to put her down since she needs some fresh air. They appear at the railway road and realises they miss that train. Boi promises to get their luggage and hopes they catch the next morning's train. Boi moves to the direction of the luggage and hears Atswei screaming on top of her voice to signal that her labour time is due. Atswei lies down on the railway tracks feebly and Boi returns to assist her noticing stains of blood that have soiled part of her dress and other drops oozing out underneath. Boi comforts Atswei and promises her of the evening train arriving soon. Atswei expresses difficulty in breathing as she goes unconscious. Boi screams out loud for help and hears the sound of a train approaching. On board the train are some engineers enjoying sips of beer, singing and merrymaking. Boi screams out loud for help and runs to stop the impending train as the driver blares his horn at him. A train engineer notices and shouts at

Boi to stop and leave the middle of the railway road in order to prevent an accident. Boi ignores and moves directly towards the train waving his hands from side to side in the air which forces the driver to step on the brake that hisses and screeches for the train to slow down and stops. Boi explains the situation of her dying wife to the train driver and engineers on board. This catches a train engineer's attention; he gets off and runs to the next village to seek for help on behalf of Atswei. Other engineers on board drops off the train and offer some help to Boi in carrying unconscious Atswei on board. Atswei is placed on one of the double upholstered train leather seats, regains consciousness and gets served with water. Unfortunately, the engineers express worry as Atswei passes out again in the process of saving her life. Boi suggests he needs some music to revive her since they experienced same previously along the journey. Boi quickly runs to get his music box as the engineers sing some Acappella tunes to Atswei's hearing. Suddenly, Atswei opens her eyes as the engineers jubilate requesting Boi to return back since she has gained consciousness. Atswei is served with water once more, she shouts in pain and continues to scream as her labour pain increases irregularly. Boi requests for some tools from the engineers to enable Atswei deliver the baby safely. Boi encourages Atswei to attempt pushing the baby out. After several attempts, she takes a deep breath during multiple contractions and pushes for the last time till the baby is forced out. The baby finally appears crying out loud which present smiles on their faces as they scream with joy and proposes a toast to welcome the new baby. Boi runs to pick up their luggage with another engineer who narrates a story about an old wizard staying around who feeds on babies in a conversation. Boi becomes startled and expresses shock because the engineer's story reminds him of the Hermit they met earlier on in the forest. Meanwhile, the engineer encourages him not to be scared since the wizard is banished and cannot leave his confines. They join the train as the driver moves on whereas the engineer who leaves to seek for help initially from the next town to save Atswei's life returns. The train driver asks Boi of their next destination and he mentions Akete village. The train engineers (played by Clemento Suarez, Jeneral Ntatia, Raymond Sarfo and Edmund Onyame) on board expresses happiness upon seeing the baby girl and sings along in jubilation as the train moves away.

Symbolising the train in *Keteke*

In *Keteke* (2017), a train as a major prop used in the narrative helped to move the story forward and represented some symbolic meanings in the story world. In *Keteke*, two trains were used in the entire film which involved one that appeared in the beginning and another towards the ending scene. As established earlier in this writing, symbols in films can be created through the placing of emphasis and prominence on certain objects in films. Also, it can be achieved through the numerous recurring and repetition of a particular props or objects in films. In addition, symbols can be created through dialogue and creation of imagery in films (Petrie & Boggs, 2018). Therefore, it is evident enough how the filmmaker in *Keteke* creatively weaved his story around a train representing certain meanings. In *Keteke*, the filmmaker focused on a train as a prop in the following ways in creating symbols to generate further meanings in the film.

Identity

In *Keteke*, part of the opening scene shows Boi and Atswei in hurry running to get on board a moving train. This indicates their keen desire and quest to board a train to Akete village for the safe delivery of their unborn child. The body of this particular train that appears is painted with the national colours of the Ghana flag which designates the geographical locale of the film. The train is brilliantly decorated with red, yellow, green, and black star that are repeated horizontally to reflect the colours of Ghana's national flag (Sedufia, 2017, 0:8:28). In other words, this imagery represents the identity of characters in the film. As buttressed by Franklin-Landi (2016), Hitchcock used trains to represent the American identity in his early films. In our opinion, audiences who sees the imagery of the first train in the opening scene of *Keteke* can easily relate to its geographical location as the country Ghana. Also, the colours of the Ghana flag gives a clue of the film's identity in the global space.

Love

Throughout the entire film, from beginning to the end, several sounds of trumpet of a train are heard in the background whether approaching or passing through a train stop to the next town. Although these sound effects initiated a lot of suspense in the film, the goal of the couple to catch a train to Akete village for safe delivery in order not to lose the baby bonds them together as they show commitment to each other. Also, despite the struggles and predicaments they encounter on their

way throughout the journey, they support each other, till they finally get on board a train to Akete village. This represents an epitome of love between Atswei and Boi. In addition, Boi's braveness shown in stopping an approaching train on a high-speed which prevented it from passing over Atswei lying down helplessly on the railway tracks and asking for help confirms his everlasting love for her (Sedufia, 2017, 0:52:12). It is noted that Boi ignoring and doing otherwise can cause an accident resulting in serious injuries or death. According to Whiteley (2013), trains are used as symbol of love in films as seen in the film *Keteke*. She cites an example in *Brief Encounter* (Lean, 1945), where Harvey (played by Trevor Howard) and Jesson (played by Celia Johnson) meets in a railway station cafe, become pals and falls in love. Later on, they part ways when they both realises they cannot hurt their spouses. In her opinion, two kinds of romance are usually linked to a railway in films such as happy and sad love storylines. In the case of sad story narratives, the train never gets boarded whereas the happy ones have the characters boarding the train in the end. Therefore, the couple in *Keteke* represents the happy love storyline since they struggle and get on board a train together to their destination.

Journey

The suspense and anticipation surrounding the delay of an expected train that finally arrived at its destination represent the journey of the baby in Atswei's womb till delivery. This scenario involves the last few hours of the dilating period of Atswei's pregnancy and delivery. All the sequences and close shots of the rigid passing of the train on the railway road in the film are characterised by a certain speed and firmness on the railway tracks (Sedufia, 2017, 0:50:50). It enables the filmmaker to define the entire process and phases of their journey as well as the baby. Also, this is evident in the woes of the baby in Atswei's womb struggling to be pushed out. Above all, it symbolises the trajectory of their journey to Akete village and the obstacles they encounter on their way. As confirmed by Whiteley (2013), trains are used in films to symbolise a journey. This shows in the entire journey the couple embarked on as well as the baby's journey in her mother's womb until the delivery stage.

Sacred place

In *Keteke*, the delivery of the baby which takes place on board the second train scene in the film depicts the relevance placed on the train as a setting (Sedufia,

2017, 0:58:53). Pictorially, this second train which appears at the end of the film has its entire body painted in colours of tints of white and shades of blue arranged in horizontal lines across the length of the train. The white colour represents the pureness of the baby and the blue connotes calmness of the place of birth. Also, it represents the hospital where the baby is delivered. In the end, the entire delivery of the baby by Atswei in this particular second train brings hope alive and serves as a sigh of relief. In addition, it is noted that this particular train serves as a public and private space simultaneously in the film. In that light, the interior of the second train last seen in *Keteke* serve as a labour ward in hospitals where new babies are born defining it as a sacred place.

Hope and High esteem

The train is viewed as an object of hope and high esteem in the narrative. In *Keteke*, the opening scene begins with a moving train and ends with a train departing away (Sedufia, 2017, 1:02:50). Thus, in the opening scene where the two couples, Atswei and Boi are chasing a moving train to get on board. Also, the ending scene where the train driver departs away with an aim of stopping by Akete village for the two couples to get off from the train. In our opinion, the train serves as a symbol of hope attached with some kind of high esteem. In the end, the couple as well as the train engineers on board goes gay and eulogises upon seeing the arrival of the baby. It serves as a sigh of relief for Boi and Atswei as the baby is delivered on board the train. In that perspective, this represents a new beginning, freshness and hope for the newly born baby. As supported by Franklin-Landi (2016), trains are used to depict a sign of high esteem in films which is evident in some films made by Hitchcock.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to explore the use of a train as a major prop element that served as a symbol in the Ghanaian film titled *Keteke*. It is observed that the train represents identity, journey, love, sacred place and serves as a form of high esteem. It also accentuated that the entire suspense and anticipation created through the arrival of the train in *Keteke*, represents the trajectory of journey of the baby in Atswei's womb until delivery. It indicated that the train as a major prop enable the audience to relate to the locale which serves as a symbol of identity. Further, it showed that the train represents the epitome of love between the two couples. In addition, the delivery of the baby on the train symbolises the train as a sacred place, a form of hope and high esteem. Above all, in the narrative, the train used in the film created some form of believability and authenticity in the *look*.

Generally, the train as a major prop also exposed the internal and external struggles of the main characters. Besides, the use of train as a prop propelled the story forward. Further, it enabled the creation of several subplots by the filmmaker in the narrative world. It is evident that Ghanaian filmmakers can also endeavour to use trains as symbols in telling intriguing narratives either than their functional purposes in films. Finally, this paper establishes that locomotives should not be used only as functional props but symbolic objects with several deeper meanings in narrative films.

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Film Poster Design. Source: *Keteke* (2017)

