

Orality And Word Construction In Ahmed Yerima's *Iyase*: Conceptual Metaphor Theory Perspective

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Abstract

This paper is both a thematic and linguistic analysis of Ahmed Yerima's *Iyase*. It critically examines the place of language as a veritable tool of communication for literary artists. Since the paper delves on orality as one of the remarkable and dramaturgical features of Yerima's drama, attempt is made to contextualise orality and its mode as encapsulated in the play. The paper takes cognizance of the cultural and semiotic universe that Yerima's play is situated and its dynamics. It also examines the playwright's deployment and utilization of African proverbs, aphorisms, metaphors as elements of oral traditions to transmit his ideologies and communicate with his audience using the appropriate characters who are the repositories of the Edo cultural traditions, and who are also vested with the oracular and divine powers to speak the language of the elders. The theoretical framework of the paper is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) that recognizes proverbs and aphorisms as extended metaphors that are employed in various cultural traditions of the world to perform certain speech acts such as warning, threatening, directing, persuading, declaring, commissioning, apologizing etc. through the medium of language in line with the Speech Act Theory of J.L. Austin. Excerpts from the text that contain African and Edo proverbs, aphorisms and metaphors are analysed to reflect their different speech acts. The paper notes Yerima's linguistic dexterity in communicating effectively to his audience the nuances of Edo's cultural tradition.

Keywords: Drama, Criticism, Proverbs, Language, *Iyase*, Ahmed Yerima.

Introduction

Iyase is one of the recent plays written by Ahmed Yerima. His engagement in this play is very profound and contemporaneous that a literary scarification of the play becomes inevitable. Ahmed Yerima's contribution to African drama deserves the literary scalpel of critics judging from his ideological perspective, dramaturgical expertise, literary fecundity and theatrical perspicacity. His preoccupations in his plays are diverse, ethereal, mythical and terrestrial. Among the contemporary African drama today, Yerima's plays occupy a worthy place. His affinity and contiguity to the masses and the traditions of the people have shown tremendous effects on his theatre.

Yerima has demonstrated his patriotism and nationalistic inclinations in his theatre that all the ethnic groups in Nigeria are his consanguinities. His versatility in the various cultural traditions in Nigeria has made it difficult for his critics to easily identify his ethnic conglomeration. He displays diverse cultures and traditions with tremendous linguistic proficiency in his plays that showcases the playwright as a multilingual and multicultural scholar and dramatist. This he displays dexterously and ingeniously through his characters. Through Yerima's plays, it is easy to traverse round the world without leaving a spot. This is one of the remarkable and incredible hallmarks of Yerima's drama.

The Plot Structure of the Play

The plot of *Iyase*, is about Iyase, a senior Chief in the palace of the Omo n'Oba, son of Igodomigodo, Iyase Adolo son of Ehenedon who seeks revenge against Edaiken, an Edo prince and heir apparel who violated Ivie, Iyase's wife sexually. This is an act that Iyase considers a desecration of his matrimonial bed. Isekhure referring to the Benin tradition says that, "No man touches the Edaiken and lives" because the law of the land says, "the king takes what he wants... that is why he is a king." Angered by Ivie's adulterous deed, Iyase dismembers her and offers her to *Ogun*, a sacrifice that is considered forbidden by his mother, Omosefe. With the connivance of his mother, they lie to the family of Ivie that Ivie dies mysteriously. According to his mother, Ivie "died of a mysterious sickness and we were ordered by the priest to have her buried before the break of dawn." (29).

The lie is kept between Iyase and his mother Omosefe as a secret. Iyase accuses the gods of complicity in this matter by not avenging this dastardly act committed by Edaiken. In the words of Iyase, "But Ogun and Esu slept, while he slept with her" (13). According to Baba, the Ifa priest, he counsels Iyase to forgive Edaiken because "the Edaiken's skin is coated by the shield of the gods of the land. No man, single or many, can harm him without great repercussion. Even the thought of a death wish for the Edaiken is harmful to the plotter" (23).

Iyase wonders why the gods should support Edaiken's action against him. In Iyase's reply to Baba, he says, "the shield holds when the hands of the Edaiken are clean, not when his filth smells with the perfume of another man's wife" (23). Oba, the father of Edaiken, shortly before he dies pleads with Iyase to forgive his son and consider Edaiken's action as a "misguided abuse of a privileged lust of a prince" (32). Iyase consents to the Oba's proposal and pledges his loyalty to him and says,

Your word is law; no human being can go against the order of Oba. If that is the way you want it, so shall it be. I give you my obeisance. Uku Akpolokpolo, the one who kills on the day he desires, what you say has been heard by your subject 32).

Iyase reneges on his oath and goes to the shrine of Ogun to invoke Ogun spirit against the Oba and his son, Edaiken. Soon, the Oba joins his ancestors, and that is pleasing to Iyase. He is satisfied that Ogun has fought for him. When he is told by Imafidon to announce the death of the Oba as part of the rites that must be performed by him before a new Oba can be crowned, Iyase refuses. From this point, the dramatic tension in the play becomes heightened.

As the play progresses, Iyase and Imafidon visit Edaiken and the latter pleads with Iyase to forgive him for his misdeeds. Edaiken even offers Iyase five beautiful virgins for him to appease him and "wipe away the memory of the sad event" (46). Again, Iyase refuses Edaiken's offer and says, "My lord, indeed they are pretty but not even all them put together is fit enough to be equal to Ivie's left little toe" (47). Iyase threatens to kill Edaiken as he remains implacable. Unruffled and emboldened by the audacity of his princely and inviolability of his office, he orders that Iyase be taken away describing him as a blind and madman.

Infuriated by the action of Edaiken, Iyase invokes the spirit of Ogun for vengeance against Edaiken. He appeals to Ogun to "bind the eyes of my he-goat, cut off his manhood and shame him" (49). Isekhure warns Iyase that "no one touches the Edaiken and lives." He further warns Iyase not to disrupt the sacred rites that will be performed by the kingmakers. Despite, Iyase invokes the wrath of Ogun on the meeting of the kingmakers and asks Ogun to send fire and storm "to the shed where they will meet. Smoke them out like rabbits!" (52).

Edigun appears on the stage and asks Omosefe to warn Iyase her son. According to him, "He must remember that the Oba is a spirit and a god... Tell the Iyase... that the wind that blows coolly can also turn violent in a twinkle" (55). As the lights come on, Iyase narrates his nightmare to Imafidon where he is clothed with a black stinking shredded sack cloth and is being chased. According to him:

I ran and they all chased after me. In my blind panting state, I fell. All my feet bleeding. Then a blow from my best friend Osodin and blood flowed from my nose. I was dazed, I fell on my knees in front of the new Oba. The Oliha took his Eben and gave it to the new Oba who cut off my head with one slice. As I died, head cut off... I saw the face of the new Oba faintly (57).

Iyase remains undaunted and undeterred in his pursuit of justice. He says "All I wanted was fairness" (57). Baba, the old storyteller and Osodin visit Iyase. Baba says he has a message from the gods. Baba's message confirms Iyase's ill omen. Baba thus warns Iyase "I see death. Do not confront the new king." (58). Osodin also appeals to Iyase to heed Baba's warning when he says "Listen to him, friend, no man can confront the gods alone, unfollowed... lonely and uncared for" (58). Ose is later sent to Iyase to choose between the red flag and the white flag of war. Ose pleads with him to choose wisely. Iyase chooses the red flag and says "Now, I fight the world. Thus boxed, I must be a man" (59).

Both Iyase and Omosefe are prepared to confront the Benin soldiers. Omosefe holds the sword in her hand. She raises it and swings it from left to right. As result of her blindness, she is not sure of who she is going to attack. Ignorantly, she points the sword at Iyase and unfortunately, Iyase runs into it and dies. Iyase dies by the sword of her mother in error. Ironically, Omosefe's eyes are restored and she is able to see Iyase for the very first time in her life. She then breaks into a dirge over the death of her son as the soldiers come to the stage. Omosefe tells the soldiers "You came too late. Soldiers, go to the new Oba. Tell him what you've seen and tell him that our secret is sealed forever. Not a word again, until I die." The play ends on a tragic note.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the paper is based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) that recognizes proverbs and aphorisms as extended metaphors that are employed in various cultural traditions of the world to perform certain speech acts such as warning, threatening, directing, persuading, declaring, commissioning, apologizing etc. through the medium of language in line with the Speech Act Theory of J.L. Austin. Richards (1936) in Danesi (2004) posited that metaphor was a function of relationship of concepts and not of single words. The early work of Richards on CMT opened a new vista on the place of metaphor within the social sciences which the Gestalt psychologist Solomon Asch leveraged on. Empirical works on CMT blossomed between 1970 and early 1990s which

convinced linguists, social scientists and psychologists about the indispensability of the deployment of metaphor in human endeavours.

According to Danesi (2004), “proverbs are extended metaphors that people employ to provide practical advice when it is required in certain situations.” (135). According to Sotunde (2016) proverbs are pragmatic restructurings of human behaviour.” Therefore, proverbs cloak their messages in riddles to task the knowledge and skill of the decoder. Proverbs are therefore didactic, analytical and dialectical (32). Proverbs, which form an integral part of the societal code of conduct, are part of the cultural heritage of every society. Proverbs have therefore been utilised profusely in literature and in other disciplines because of their rhetorical and insightful qualities. It is in this light that CMT is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study.

Speech Acts

The following speech acts identified in the play are highlighted and discussed below from Excerpt 1 to 4:

Excerpt 1: Warning.

The sun may sometimes come out late, but it always does. Patience, son of Ogun. P. 25.

When trees fall on each other to block the path to the farm, we remove the trees starting from the one on top, and soon the path is cleared. P.42.

Tell your son that the stained left finger will soil his white robe. P. 55

The moon, it glides slowly to meet the sun, and all the stars follow to see the moon fall. Haha...death. P.58.

Do not turn yourself into an effigy of clay who decides to stand alone in the rain. You will turn to mud, my friend. P. 58.

Iyase, when walls remain agape, lizards crawl in. One does not fight fire with fire. Pick wisely. P. 59.

Please, resolve this rift without feeding the ever hungry bald headed vultures. P.59.

All the proverbs in excerpt 1 belong to the speech act of warning and caution. Iyase is consumed with anger and is poised for vengeance at all costs. Hence, the need to caution him to thread softly. In No 1, Baba tells him that the sun may sometimes appear late, despite its seeming lateness, it will appear and bring light to mankind. The sun becomes a metaphor and an image for caution. The sun becomes a concrete and natural image that is used to convey the message of caution and patience to Iyase.

Also, Edaiken in Proverb 2 warns Iyase to be cautious and act sensibly and reasonably. He tells him that when trees fall on each other to block the path for the farmer and hinder him from accessing his farm, wisdom demands that the farmer should begin the clearing by removing the topmost tree first and then down to the last under. Soon, the path will be cleared. In a traditional environment like Benin where farming is the occupation of most elderly people, it is common to find trees blocking the paths to the farm. The elders clear the path with patience and wisdom. That is what Edaiken offers Iyase. He wants to be calculative, sagacious and perspicacious in his actions rather than acting senselessly and inanely. Edaiken plans to ascend the throne of his father even as Iyase pledges loyalty but he wants to make peace with Iyase before the coronation takes place. Edaiken agrees he has greatly offended Iyase by defiling, Iyase's wife.

In Proverb 3, Edigun one of the witches whose duty is to protect the Oba reminds Omosefe that her son, Iyase is no longer protected by the gods. He reveals how Iyase kills his wife and also how he refuses to acknowledge, Edaiken the present Oba who has the power of life and death. Edigun predicts Iyase's fall. So, "the stained finger" refers to his murder of his wife which will contaminate his dignity and position of royalty. It is obviously proverbial.

Baba in proverb 4 also warns Iyase when he uses the images of the moon, star and the sun. Naturally, the moon is created to lighten the night, while the sun is made to control the day. The moon is to give support to the stars. It is unusual for the moon to meet the sun. That can be compared to when day and night meet. It is a taboo for the moon to come out in the day and for the sun to appear in the night. Iyase is the moon, while Edaiken is the sun. The sun is about 400 times of the moon. This therefore means that Edaiken is more powerful than Iyase. The people of the town are the stars who are waiting to mock at the fall of Iyase. Baba hereby warns and predicts the death of Iyase. Using the solar eclipse to predict Iyase's calamity is very instructive and apt.

Osodin, one of the custodians of Benin traditions whose traditional duty is to protect the household of the king and his son, Edaiken in proverb 5 also warns Iyase using the images of clay and mud. He warns him not to be like the clay who wants to play in the rain but who ends up being a mud. This is the same proverb in Yoruba that says, *Sigidi lohun fe se re ete, oni kan gbeun so mi* ("The statue of clay wants to disgrace himself and asks that it should be allowed to play in the rain"). It will end up in reproach. Iyase is portrayed as the effigy of clay while Edaiken is depicted as the rain that will disgrace Iyase's effigy. As no clay can stand the rain, Iyase cannot, therefore, stand Edaiken who is deified as second to none. His powers and authorities are unquestionable according to Benin tradition.

As preparations are being made for the installation of Edaiken as the new Oba, Iyase's opposition to the installation is also intensified. This heightens the play's dramatic tension. Ose is sent to Iyase to choose between the red flag and the white flag of war. According to Ose, "You are to pick one, and that will decide your fate" (59). In proverb 6, Imafidon, therefore, warns Iyase and says "when walls remain agape, lizards crawl in. One does not fight fire with fire" (59). This is a warning and also a counsel. Imafidon wants Iyase to choose wisely. He does not want him to open room for war. Any headlong with Oba and the entire Benin tradition will be calamitous. When fire meets with fire, there will be war. The walls of Iyase are agape, the only solution to close it up is for him to choose the flag of peace and forget the past.

In the last proverb on warning, Imafidon tells Iyase and says "The spirit is high for our new Oba, please resolve this rift without feeding the ever hungry bald headed vultures" (59). Edaiken and the witchcraft powers that support the Oba are depicted in an animal imagery of "bald headed vultures". Vulture is a scavenger, scrounger, an opportunist, a bird of prey and a master navigator. That the vulture is bald headed symbolizes maturity. Imafidon counsels Iyase to give peace a chance or else he will be eaten up by Edaiken and his supporters who are the "hungry bald headed vultures".

Excerpt 2: Threatening

You allowed yourself to climb an unbroken horse without a bridle. This time you will crash. p. 8.

The masquerade who dances to his own music, played in his head, will be lost in the crowd. P. 9.

Eni iku fe pa, tin gun Esin Ayan. p.26.

All the three proverbs in excerpt 2 belong to the speech act of threatening although they also share some semantic qualities with the speech act on warning. Warning as used in excerpt 1 refers to advice given to Iyase, while threatening as used in excerpt 2 refers to intimidation and it is a product of aggression and hostility. When Omosefe hears from her son, Iyase that he has killed Ivie his wife and offers her dismembered body to Ogun, she tells Iyase that his action is a dastardly one. She then says "Again, you allowed yourself to climb an unbroken horse without a bridle. This time you will crash." (8)

To climb an unbroken horse without a bridle is a proverbial as well as an idiomatic expression which predicts Iyase's death like the prediction of the blind Tiresias in the Greek plays. It means Iyase is riding a young, green, untrained and inexperienced horse without any rheostat that can mitigate any misadventure

during riding. Consequently, Iyase is going to crash because his safety cannot be guaranteed. Iyase in this construction is depicted as a man who lacks discernment, restraint and self-control and therefore he is unsafe.

In the second expression, Iyase's mother, Omosefe confronts her son and says "that the masquerade who dances to his own music, played in his head, will be lost in the crowd." (9). In this metaphorical expression, Iyase is compared to a masquerade who does not listen to the music of his cultic group but only to his. Such a person will be lost in the crowd. Iyase defies his mother's counsel, and he does not care about the consequences of his dastardly act. Such a person like Iyase is heading towards perdition.

Despite the appeals of Osodin and Baba, Iyase remains adamant. He insists on his opposition to the installation of the new king. In the third construction, Baba calls Iyase a fool. He also says "Eni iku fe pa, tin gun Esin Ayan." (26). This means that "The one that death wants to kill and is making himself vulnerable to danger." The import of Baba's proverb is that Iyase is endangering his life with his continuous rejection and defiance to every rational advice given him. "Esin Ayan" in Baba's expression is similar to an unbroken horse earlier mentioned by Omosefe. So, as strong as a horse can be in riding, it has to be prepared and trained or else it will be the source of its rider's waterloo.

Excerpt 3: Declaring

How many men have seen the embers of fired coal burn a hole into the very tender path of a man's soul. P.9.

No man remains sane at the sight of his wife with another man on her husband's sacred bed. P. 17.

Only the mother hen knows what it does to her eggs when she rests on them. P.10.

Son, let the secret of the tree remain in the tree, only the tree trunks can tell a tale but the good thing is that they never speak. P. 29.

The constructions in excerpt 3 are declarative expressions in form of rhetorical question, truism and aphorism. The first construction by Iyase when he asks Omosefe, his mother "How many men have seen the embers of fired coal burn a hole into the very tender path of a man's soul?" (9) is his response to his mother's proverb when she says "Remember, Son, that the masquerade who dances to his own music, played in his head, will be lost in the crowd. (9). Iyase's question is rhetorical and emotional. It is similar to the Biblical Proverbs 6:27-28: Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go on upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

Iyase wants his mother to realize the trauma, agony and the psychological distress that the defilement of Ivie, by Edaiken the heir apparel has caused him which will remain indelible and ineffaceable scar upon his heart. The violation of his wife's privacy and dignity is viewed by Iyase as sacrilegious. He compares it with the burning "embers of fired coal" which is very destructive and shattering. Hence, he is vehement on seeking vengeance despising all appeals because of his untamable temper.

In the second expression, Itohan, one of the wives of Iyase visits Omosefe, her mother in law and blames her husband's temper which he calls madness that possesses him the day Ivie enters into their home. She expresses despair about her future and the future of her child. In defence of Iyase's temper, Omosefe blames it all on Edaiken who pushes him to the edge. According to her "No man remains sane at the sight of his wife with another man on her husband's sacred bed." (17). Omosefe attributes Iyase's anger to the desecration of his matrimonial bed with royal impunity, kingly recklessness and the imperial terrorism of Edaiken. It is this tendentious and boisterous vadalisation of Iyase's inalienable conjugal rights that is responsible for Iyase's hysterical, frenetic and schizophrenic behaviours.

In the third word construction, Iyase does not bother about people's reaction to the circumstances surrounding the death of Ivie. She declares to Omosefe that "Only the mother hen knows what it does to her eggs when she rests on them" (10). It is a truism. Since nobody can explain the process of brooding by the mother hen except the mother hen therefore, nobody can explain Iyase's predicament and sense of loss except Iyase.

Similarly, the fourth construction is also a truism when Omosefe tells Iyase and says "Son, let the secret of the tree remain in the tree, only the tree trunks can tell a tale but the good thing is that they never speak." (29). Both Iyase and Omosefe have agreed to conceal the cause of Ivie's death but to say that she dies of a mysterious sickness. As the secret of a tree remains in the tree, Omosefe wants the secret between her and Iyase to remain secret and concealed. The tree as an inanimate object does not possess the vocal ability to communicate like man does. So, whatever secret that it has cannot be vocalized except in the metaphysical sense but from a metaphorical perspective, Omosefe and Iyase must remain dumb and mute like a tree in order to conceal the secret.

Excerpt 4: Regret

What burns the loom, resides in the sealed armpit of the cloth maker. P.55.

The crack within the palace allowed the big fat lizards to enter. P.62.

The two expressions in excerpt 4 are classified into the regret speech act. During the conversation between Edigun and Omosefe, Edigun warns Iyase through Omosefe of the impending disaster that will befall Iyase if he fails to change his belligerent stance against the Oba. Ogieva one of the wives of Iyase notices that Omosefe is not well composed psychologically. She politely accuses Omosefe of somniloquy, which is a parasomnia disorder. Omosefe giggles and says "Poor girl, if only she knew that what burns the loom, resides in the sealed armpit of the cloth maker" (55). She marvels at Ogieva's ignorance of her emotional disturbance. This maxim is similar to this Yoruba proverb that says "Iku ti n pode, inu apo lo wa. Iku ti n pomuwe, inu ibu lo wa." (The death of the hunter is in *apo*. The death of the swimmer is in the sea). The interpretation of Omosefe's statement is that her present predicament is self-afflicted. This is because the impending tragedy that will befall her family is being orchestrated by her son's intransigence.

In the last scene of the play that shows the encounter between the Benin soldiers and Iyase, Iyase apparently is now afraid as he is faced with reality that his tragedy is close. He then tells Omosefe that "The crack within the palace allowed the big fat lizards to enter." (62). It is generally believed that the traditional wall that is made of mud blocks cannot be penetrated by lizards except there is an opening. Iyase, with this statement, attributes his looming tragedy to betrayal by some forces within the palace. The "big lizards" symbolize the cabal that controls the palace who are indeed very influential and powerful.

Thematic Issues in the Play

Iyase the tragic hero in this play is portrayed by Yerima as a character who meets his fall as a result of anger his hamartia. The tragedy of Iyase is strengthened by his determination to revenge the sacrilegious act committed by Edaiken, an Edo prince against Iyase's wife. Iyase dares the Edo tradition and his own personal position to demystify the Edo tradition and culture exemplified in the Oba who is regarded as a god and whose authority cannot be questioned. Iyase's dependence on the supernatural powers of Ogun to help him fails as his plan for revenge as depicted by Yerima is considered an act of foolishness. The play, therefore, raises the issue of morality and justice in the face of tradition. First, is Edaiken, an Edo prince morally justified by any tradition to sleep with Iyase's wife without attracting any sanction? Can any tradition that supports adultery and infidelity be said to be upholding enviable cultural values?

Granted that Iyase is blinded by anger to seek for revenge at all costs, Edaiken too is blinded and drunk by the powers conferred upon him by the Edo tradition that makes his decisions at all times unquestionable and incontestable. That is why when Iyase asks him to apologise to him, Edaiken says "I can't" (45) He goes ahead to say "When I say breathe you breathe, when I say die you die, when

I say leave you leave.” (46) Women to Edaiken are pawns and dolls that can be used as play tools. It is quite natural for a man like Iyase whose matrimonial bed has been desecrated with utter impunity by the recklessness and princely rascality of Edaiken to be angry, although for Iyase too to have sacrificed Ivie to the gods out of anger is condemnable. Any tradition that dignifies and venerates oppression, injustice and tyranny like the Edo culture does in this play will make war and anarchy inevitable.

The play also raises the issue of predestination and inviolability of the gods. Baba, one of the custodians of Edo culture boasts to Iyase, after the latter has told him that Edaiken defiled his bed, that “Edaiken’s skin is coated by the shield of the gods of the land. No man, single or many, can harm him without great repercussion...” (23). Osodin even says that “The Edaiken is a spirit...and when he is Oba...” (23). The gods are blindly behind an adulterous, perfidious and treacherous prince like Edaiken who has committed an act that is commonly but grimly seen as abominable in every decent and sane society world over.

Even when Iyase consults the same gods for vengeance against Edaiken for committing the abominable, the gods are indifferent. Besides, from the dialogue between the blind Omosefe and the ghost of her late husband, Osaretin we are told that Iyase has been cursed and the curse is approved by the hysterical Ogun under the influence of palm wine. So, Iyase has been predestined to fall ultimately. That is why he is programmed by the supernatural powers to die in the hands of his mother and thus exonerating the hands of Edaiken and the people of Edo from his death.

Conclusion

Ahmed Yerima has aptly demonstrated his linguistic adroitness to communicate the Edo’s cultural sensibilities and the indigenous traditions as manifested in the Benin’s monarchical institution. However, the play appears to be promoting the theatre of the oppressor in line with the ideology of the classical theatre as against the modern dramatic art that promotes the theatre of the oppressed which Augusto Boal champions together with all other modern creative artists with similar Marxist inclinations such as Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare and Olu Obafemi. For instance, Osofisan in plays like *One Upon Four Robbers*, *Morountodun*, *No More the Wasted Breed*, *Birthdays are Not for Dying*, *Midnight Hotel*, *The Album of the Midnight Blackout* and others illustrate the themes of oppression, corruption injustice and social inequalities. According to Awodiya (1995), Osofisan frowns at all these objectionable features in the society. Also, Osundare in *The State Visit*, *The Wedding Car* and *The Man Who Walked Away* demonstrates his revulsion against the oppression of the poor in the society.

Iyase is a good imitation of the classical drama in terms of plot, the concept of heroism of the tragic hero with a hamartia which is the Achilles’ heel of the

protagonist like Sophocles' Oedipus who is pitched against some unforeseen forces. The play also captures the essence of tragedy as reflected in Aristotle's *Poetics* which is to arouse pity and terror. Iyase's actions in the play including his desperate moves to seek justice and revenge and the ultimate calamity that befalls him cannot but generate pity and terror for a man who is generally considered innocent but transformed to an iconoclast and a rebel because of his audacity to challenge the illegitimacy of Edo's tradition and its gods. Yerima has successfully blended the elements of oral traditions such as proverbs, metaphors, maxims, anecdotes, idioms and platitudes in addition to the code mixing of Yoruba and English and Benin dialect and English expressions to make his play indigenous, accessible, and reflective of the African cultural values.

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