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RE-ENACTING *OEDIPUS REX* WITH YORUBA WITTICISM

By

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Abstract

Yoruba proverbs are witty expressions, the effective use of which requires being apt and clever. These traits that dominate the work of Ola Rotimi, The Gods Are Not To Blame, do more than reflecting the Yoruba's perception of the world. Hence, this paper examines how strong opinions, foreboding and misfortunes are conveyed with the Yoruba literary devices to produce Sophoclean emotions. Yoruba Proverbs or witty sayings are demonstrated in this work as very rich in figures of speech and meaning: products of human experiences or relations as well as observation of natural phenomena, which are communicated with words of mouth, songs and talking-drums. These elements constitute the witticism shown in this article as powerfully employed by the playwright who has succeeded in recreating the tragedy of Oedipus Rex in a Yoruba setting, before, as it were, an African audience.

Key words: Yoruba Proverbs, Witty expressions, Apt, Clever *Oedipus Rex*, Re-enacted.

1.0 Introduction

Oedipus Rex is considered a founding text in European culture, a most revealing drama that portrays the often unknown limitations of man, who often relies on intellectual and rational ability to discover himself. In the true sense of tragedy, Sophocles depicts a man who struggles vulnerably, yet heroically, to avert a fatal end. From June 16 to 20, 1999, the feat of the literary giant, Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*, was re-enacted at Toronto, Canada, by a group largely made up of Canadian Africans with *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the work of a leading African playwright, Ola Rotimi' whose famous literature text was used in Nigerian high schools in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Even now, relative to other works of Ola Rotimi, *The Gods Are Not to Blame* remains what *Oedipus Rex* is to other plays of Sophocles. In this paper, the emphasis is on how Ola Rotimi has skilfully employed what is termed Yoruba witticism to transpose the Oedipus myth to a Yoruba belief setting. As soon as the story of misfortune starts in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, Odewale, the protagonist, with prompt and consistent use of apposite expressions, leaves no room for blinking. Ola Rotimi successfully portrays a tragic hero who encounters limits despite his great wish to achieve a lofty goal. The hero's fault (*hamartia*) is glaring even when he appears to be a paragon of virtue and justice. The drama, as a work of tragedy, with the use of fitting Yoruba symbolic expressions, creates an environment most suitable for the main character who suffers extreme sorrow as a consequence of a tragic flaw and circumstances beyond his control. Dreadfully, he falls off the precipice without any inclination to stop. Yet, the fascination

here is; he would not pause to think, for the words are either readily flowing from his mouth or supplied to set the stage for the inevitable calamity.

1.1 The Gods Are Not To Blame and Yoruba Witticism

Proverbs, the wisdom lore of the Yoruba, evidence the high value the people place on the use of witty expressions. Proverb as a literary device has served to settle disputes and bring intractable situations under control. Hence, anyone who can frequently and appropriately make use of proverbs to appeal to people's intellect, steer matters in the right direction and bring about conflict resolution, is greatly respected. In a traditional Yoruba society, an elder is expected to prevent the state from running into a chaos and this is sometimes accomplished with the use of wise, terse and pithy expressions.

Yoruba witticism in this work refers to the use of proverbs that are full of imagery, allusions and riddles which take poetic forms. This potent literary weapon has been skilfully utilised by Ola Rotimi to present a protagonist, King Odewale, who perfectly fits the picture of a tragic hero. The king journeys towards the final fulfilment of the prediction that he would kill his father and marry his mother, armed with all the force in Yoruba expressions, to the admiration of anyone who respects the words of wisdom that flow from the mouth of an elder. Although his people become despondent, having fought an outbreak of disease in vain, the king urges them on with fitting illustrations and allusions that got them back on their feet with the renewed determination to solve the problem. The shocking news of a murderer who is resident in his domain being the cause of the woes of his people arouses in the king a burning zeal to unravel the mystery of the killer of his predecessor and the culprit of incest. Even as he reaches the climax

of self-discovery, his wits, rather than failing him, elicit both awe and pity. With all courage he accepts the judgment he himself had pronounced.

1.2 The King Asserts Authority as the Saviour

The situation at the beginning of the play is well described by the Yoruba proverb, *Aìsì nílẹ̀ ológinní, ilé di ilé èkúté, baálé ilé kú ilé daoro* (**When the cat is absent, the rat takes over the control of the house; 'when the head of a household dies, the house becomes an empty shell'**) (1.i,10-11) This Yoruba expression suitably conveys a helpless situation that calls for a saviour. At the death of king Adetusa, Odewale's predecessor, the people of Ikolu began to harass the land of Kutuje. There were attacks; the invaders 'killed hundreds, they seized hundreds and enslaved hundreds more', plundering the village and leaving 'behind... hunger, thirst and fear' (Prologue, 96-100). When the need was most dire, Odewale came, saved the people and became their popular potentate; the highly esteemed one. But now, the people feel very insecure and powerless in the face of the terrible plagues that ravage the land and express their misgivings in the words above to Odewale.

The challenge before the king is further heightened when another citizen says: **'when the chameleon brings forth a child, is not that child expected to dance?'** (1.i, 15-16). It is interesting to consider the background to the Yoruba adage here rendered in English: *alágẹmọ̀ ti bi ọmọ̀ re naa, aimo jo ku s'owo ọmọ̀ alágẹmọ̀*. According to the Yoruba traditional belief, *agemo* (of the same root as *alágẹmọ̀*, which means chameleon) is a god who dances with a mat wrapped around his body. Dancing in this state requires the training and practice that *agemo* gives his child from infancy. As it were, the child is born from under the mat of the adult *agemo*. If the child grows up to be a poor dancer, the fault is his; he must

accept the responsibility. In this instance, Odewale's strength and intelligence, the traits that bring him closer to the gods, are highly

trusted in by the citizens who made him the king. And now, he is the chameleon that is expected to 'dance', yes, act by coming to the rescue of the people.

Yet, Odewale would not be ruffled by the proverbial sayings; rather, he is drawn out to a battle of words that will more than addressing the need of his people, redeem his glory that is seemingly taunted. Hence, he reasons with the suffering townspeople:

... Whoever the rain sees, on him it rains. You do me great wrong therefore to think that, **like a rock in the middle of a lake, forever cooled by the flowing waters**, I do not know, and cannot know the **sun's hotness that burns and dries up the open land**, indeed you do me a great wrong my people... (1.i, 38-45)

The sickness that afflicts the people, just like a rainfall, indiscriminately affects all and makes even the king no exception; he enjoys no comfort of a rock that is always cooled by refreshing waters, nor spared the discomfort characteristic of a land exposed to the burning heat of the tropics. Typical of the sympathy that a tragic hero often elicits, the passionate appeal that is made with the use of simile and metaphor produces the desirable effects as the people beg for forgiveness (1.i, 46). Nevertheless, practical steps must be taken to further remedy the situation. Hence, Odewale, basking in the glory of his ever-rising confidence, alludes to a risk of fire outbreak that may exist in a traditional village setting. He exhibits an admirable paternalistic sense of urgency and responsibility by saying:

*To what god have we not made sacrifice, my chiefs and I?
Sopona, the god of the poxes? Ela, the god of Deliverance?
What god? Sango, the god of thunder and rainfall, Whose
showers can help wash away the evil in the soil? On which
we stand? What god have we not called upon to help us?
(1.i, 77-82)*

Reminiscent of the Greeks making sacrifices to the gods to escape or pacify their anger, altars of the gods have been inundated with sacrifices. Similarly parallel to the ancient journeys to the oracle at Delphi, Odewale says: 'we have sent Aderopo to Ile-Ife (known as the Yoruba spiritual cradle of civilization), the land of Orunmila, to ask the all-seeing god why we are in pain'. Odewale possesses qualities that are akin to Oedipus' who solved the riddle of the Sphinx by his superior intelligence and suffered for his people like an ideal Greek king. Odewale delivered his people from the hand of their oppressors and he has not come to his wit's end. With all the strength in his words, more is done to demonstrate his mastery over the state affairs. He gives direction:

*...It is sickness that man can cure, not death. What did
you do to cure the sickness? Nothing? Oh, I see, your body
is too weak, your bone suddenly gone soft, You cannot
move, you cannot go into the bush and cut herbs to boil
For your children to drink. Is that so? Answer.
(1.1, 111-116)*

The Yoruba believe that all efforts must be made to save the life of a sick person. This informs the saying: *ìpé à npe sòkú, bí a bá pé wo aláàárè bèjè yòò yè* (The size of the crowd at a burial ceremony is sufficient to prevent a critically-ill person from dying). Hence, the people must muster up all the strength in them and no stone

should be left unturned to stop the affliction. Some of the citizens have acted, yet, the king knows what the problems may be. He further engages them with more questions:

Odewale: What herbs did you boil?

Citizen: Asufe eiyeje leaves.

Odewale: Y-e-s

Citizen: I and my household drank the medicine, yet we do not get better, my lord. (To this there is a quick response)

Odewale: For how long did you boil it?

Citizen: As soon as it boiled, I put it down.
(a quicker response now)

Odewale: No, no. You must boil it longer, woman longer, so that the medicines in the herbs can come out in full spirit to fight the sickness. Boil it longer. (1.i, 144-148)

Another citizen appears to have outwitted Odewale, claiming that he did the best:

Citizen: I boiled mine longer-a long time.

I even added dogo-yaro leaves to it.

Odewale: And how does the body feel?

Citizen: Not as well as the heart wishes, my lord.

(1.i, 149-152)

While the situation may appear frustrating, Odewale hardly feels defeated. Effective words are yet inexhaustible, and with the

confidence of a philosopher, he draws attention to a popular amateur observation concerning the movement of the moon that, although is hardly scientific is ably used:

*Our talk is of illness, sister. To get fully cured one needs patience. **The moon moves slowly, but by daybreak it crosses the sky.** Keep on drinking the medicine, one day you will see the change. Patience. (1.i, 153-156)*

As if the above is not satisfactory, he further uses an analogy: '**by trying often, the monkey learns to jump from tree to tree without falling**' (1.i, 163-164). Again, his reasoning works. Ultimately, he has not only elicited the sympathy of the townspeople, but has also engendered in them the strength to keep contending with the plagues, and with a rather more positive outlook, they begin to sing:

*Come round everybody,
let us go into the bush
get your cutlasses,
get your cooking pots
get ready for work
all herbs are medicine
all medicine are herbs.*

(1.i, 242-246)

The citizens are summoned to get ready for actions with their cutlasses. The remedy seems to be in the bush where herbs, the medicinal plants, could be obtained and then cooked in various homes with the pots that are specially designated for that purpose.

While this may appear to be a trial and error situation, no one dares contradict the traditional belief in the efficacy of herbs, especially in the face of a devastating plague.

1.3 A Hero with Renewed Determination to Expose the Murder

The background to the next episode is the Yoruba expression, *gbogbo aso k'ò là n sá loòrìn* (**some kinds of fabrics should not be exposed to the sun**). This is best understood with an experience of the intensely hot tropical African sun that may easily cause some fabrics to fade when dried with it after washing them. At a moment when matters should be kept confidential, it suffices among the Yoruba to tactfully use this phrase in obtaining private audience and preventing any unwanted publicity. However, the tragic hero, Odewale refuses to grant the request for privacy to hear the message from the oracle. 'NO!' he says, and urges on with other resourceful words: 'speak openly, son, before all- **a cooking pot for the chameleon is a cooking pot for the lizard**' (1.ii, 25-27).

Chameleon is a common name for a lizard with the ability to change colours, either when they are frightened or they are responding to light, temperature, and other environmental changes. This unique characteristics, it is believed, does not necessarily require for a chameleon a cooking pot that is different from that of other lizards. Saying that the chameleons belong to the reptile family and deserves the same treatment with other lizards probably lends support to the argument of Odewale. The king thinks that there is nothing to hide, and as shortly expressed by the queen, there is no need to dread bearing any possible dire consequences of breaking the news, since **'the horn cannot be too heavy for the head of the cow that must bear them'** (1.ii, 58-60). As it were, a cow can not assign the task of carrying its own horns, no matter their weight, to another cow.

Metaphorically, the horns are the burden or the responsibility that a king in a traditional Yoruba society is not expected to shrink back from but rather shoulder courageously. However, Aderopo, the bearer of the news from the oracle, believes that the unfolding situation requires caution. The condition is likened to a diseased condition of a tooth in the mouth which necessitates adjusting the eating style: **'until the rotten tooth is pulled out, the mouth must chew with caution'** he warns (1.ii, 94-96).

All the same, the king's composure does not falter; first, he hastily pronounces judgment on the unknown murderer: Slowly. We will kill him slowly, so that he spends the rest of his living days dying with each moment that passes.(1.ii, 104-106) Next, he proverbially announces his systematic search: **'when trees fall on trees, first the topmost must be removed'** (1.ii, 115-116). Ironically, as he burns with zeal to discover himself, unknowingly, as the murderer of king Adetusa, he becomes full of suspicion and insinuation. Alluding to the activity of amphibians and reptiles, he reasons:

When the frog in front falls into a pit, others behind to take caution... When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog.. All lizards lie prostrate: how can a man tell which lizard suffers from bellyache ?
(1. ii, 147-163)

Yet, doing all to retain his control as he becomes all the more embattled, he issues a threat to anyone who might harbour evil plans against him with a metaphor: 'in time', continuing with his allusion to the family of the reptile (the lizards that are lie face down), 'the pain will make one of them lie flat on its back ...' (1.ii, 164-165) he said. By this, he tauntingly pronounces that his imaginary enemies will die in silence with their supposed wicked intentions.

When Baba Fakunle, the most famous Ifa oracle priest arrives, Odewale, in the manner of a triumphant soldier who is rejoicing over the glory of a victory that is scarcely won, eulogizes the priest, having the conviction that his search for the truth will presently yield the much desired results. Referring to the insight of the blind old man that is allegedly not diminished by his loss of sight, the king sings the priest's praise in glowing terms: 'A chicken eats corn, drinks water swallow pebbles, yet she complains of having no teeth. If she had teeth, would she eat gold? Let her ask the cow who has teeth yet eats grass.' (II. I, 24-29)

However, this presumably hope-inspiring moment is short-lived. As soon as he is declared to be the murderer, the king's impatience and deadly temper become manifest. He abruptly replaces the respect and confidence he has had in the ability of the old seer to prophesy accurately with disdain for him. The irony at this point is obvious: Odewale has eyes but will not see what the blind old man sees until he becomes sightless! Nevertheless, until then, fulfilling his role as the tragic hero, the king must continue with grandeur to be apt in giving answers that heightens the pity he enjoys at his fall.

His disappointment, though, causes him to unleash more of his offensive verbal weapons and insult the priest with the idiom: '**let pigs eat shame and men eat dung**' (II. i, 72-73). A pig is known among the Yoruba to be a very dirty animal. Odewale believes the priest has succumbed to a dirty practice of accepting a bribe from the chiefs, an ignoble act that should bring shame upon the seer and a terrible humiliation to the chiefs who are to 'eat the dung'. Nevertheless, the old man would not yield to intimidation and with confidence in the triumph of Ifa whose message he convincingly bears, he challenges Odewale's bodyguards: 'Let

them attack me ... **Is it not ignorance that makes the rat attack the cat?'**

Odewale will never imagine himself to be a 'rat' at the mercy of a 'cat'. His overriding passion is anger that cannot tolerate any opposition. The monarch is determined to overcome every obstacle on his path as he persistently seeks to exonerate himself by exposing the truth. His suspicion is rife; not only over who is the murderer, but also over disloyalty among his chiefs and a threat to his life. The repository of the witty expressions is far from being exhausted as he addresses the situation: **'When evil-plotter beats drum for the downfall of the innocent, the gods will not let that drum sound!'** (II. ii, 1-3). Here is a reference to the message that may be sent through a Yoruba Talking Drum; it means a mere wishful thinking that cannot succeed because it lacks the backing of the gods. The beleaguered tragic hero finds solace in the belief that divine justice is on his side. He further argues:

The hyena flirts with hen, the hen is happy, not knowing that her death has come..

. I was happy, ignorant that plots, subversion and intrigues would forever keep me company.

Oh, but you wait...you will know me... (II. ii, 9-15)

The present situation is comparable to **when water is not enough in a pond or a river to submerge a fish; it is not difficult to imagine the fatal outcome.** Despite the dispute between him and Aderopo, the king has continued to swim in the water of the loyal supports of his subjects. They appear to be very much there to reassure him and urge him on, making him all the more oblivious of the evil that looms as he struggles unsuspectingly in opposition

to himself. The royal bard, accompanied by drummers, generates this sentiment:

There are kings, and there are kings If you mean to hurt our king you will fail: the lion's liver is a vain wish for dogs... Ehn... whoever thinks that he can rule better than our king, let him first go home and rule his own wives, then he will know how hard to rule is hard. Meat that has fat will prove it by the heat of fire!

(II. iii, 16-28)

No sane dog would crave for the liver of a lion who is recognised as the king of all animals in the Yoruba folklore. Similarly, king Odewale's position seems to remain unassailable, since he has done more than a man would do in managing a polygamous home. However, it is noteworthy that Act II scene iii opening part is foreboding and fittingly begins with a dirge:

*Onikuluku njeje ewure, ewure, ewure,
onikuluku njeje agutan
, agutan gbolojo Olurombi njeje omore,
omore aponbi epo,
Olurombi o join-join, iroko join-join
Some individuals promise goats, others promise
sheep, plump sheep, Olurombi, firm like an iroko
tree, promises her child, the pride of beauty (II. iii, 2-5)*

1.4 The Irony of a Man full of Force and Wits

This is a folklore setting of Ojuola, the mother, and now the wife of Odewale, telling her children the story of Olurombi. The story may invoke a wistful feeling, even in elderly ones who had heard the mythological narration when they sat peacefully as little children on straw mats under the moonlight in a village. A

version of the story goes thus: once upon a time, the people of a village generally offered the best of their flocks to no avail to end a pestilence. At last, the pestilence was halted when Olurombi presented her child, the pride of beauty. Similar in some way to Olurombi, the poor Ojuola will soon experience a loss of immense magnitude. The misfortune of Ojuola is well illustrated by the saying: 'Ojuola n ri iyonu'. Ojuola will shortly no longer thrive in any splendour of noble life. The royal bard and the drummer further make her most pitiable when naively they praise her and husband with words full of irony:

*You and your husband--two part of the same calabash,
split equal by the gods. Indeed, what is the difference
between the right ear of a horse And the left ear of that
same horse ? Nothing. (II. iii, 40-48)*

Indeed, of the same stock, no difference. Paradoxically, Odewale, commending Ojuola for taking sides with him rather than with her son, Aderopo, complements the picture of a woman heading irreversibly for misfortune. Full of confidence in his judgment, Odewale says:

*A son is a son; a husband is a husband. A woman cannot
love both equally. Everything has its own place Why, the
tortoise is not tall, but it is taller than the snail; the snail is
taller than the frog...the fly is taller than the ant; the ant in
turn is taller than the ground on which it walks.*

(II. iv, 9-15)

Good logic, one may conclude. But the psychoanalytical theories of Electra complex and Oedipus complex (that he is unwittingly enacting) tend to contradict the king's opinion on expression of love in a family circle. Fittingly, though, he portrays how

differences in heights determine the positions of the lowly creatures.

The protagonist is all the more impulsive, yet resolute. Considering himself far-sighted as an eagle, he believes his search will be fruitful. However, the time of the stark revelation is imminent and the audience, entrapped in high admiration of a man who has consistently been subduing with words must be emotionally set free. Before then, Odewale, speaking rather incisively with one of his guards whom he portrayed as impetuous, utters expressions that characterise the trait of a man reaching the climax of his tragedy:

*Man, man, man.... Look at him! Everything:
gira, gira, gira... (being impetuous) power, power,
force, force...action, action!
No thoughts, no patience, no coolness of blood,
yet you go about shouting that you are better than
women, superior to women. Get out braggart, go
marry a woman and learn coolness of mind
from her. (II. iv, 59-65)*

Ironically, Odewale here summarises what dominates his life; full of 'force'; full of 'action'. He is married, yet his temper easily becomes hot, indeed, lacking in patience. While marriage is seen as an evidence of maturity among the Yoruba, it is hardly so with a man living in a cocoon and completely unmindful of the impending doom. Below is a record of his *gira, gira, gira* (impetuosity) in resolving a dispute over a farm land, unwittingly, with his father:

*Remain standing, remain rooted-a tree stump never
shifts stand there...stand back and sleep, sleep
I say, sleep till the sun goes to sleep and you wake
up to know my power. Sleep...sleeps...sleep...
S-l-e-e-p (III. i, 188-193)*

The command to remain motionless is reinforced with the use of the repetition of the word 'sleep'; sounding like a pun, the old man is expected soon slips and sleeps just like the personified sun, although never to wake up again. The incantation was not sufficient, so he added more *force* to it:

*No termite ever boasts of devouring rock!...
Venom of viper does nothing to the back of tortoise...
the day partridge meets
the lord of the farm it jumps into the bush with its back or it
drops dead. Drop dead, drop dead... (III. i, 194-209)*

That also failed. He invoked more power: 'When Ogun, the god of iron was returning from Ire, his loincloth was a hoop of fire. Blood... the deep red stain of victim's his cloaks...Ogun says: flow ! Flow...flow...f-l-o-w... (III. i, 222 -232) Incantation, an item of the Yoruba culture that is 'channelled through words', involves uttering words that are considered magically potent. In the Yoruba traditional society, acquiring, understanding and skilfully employing of traditional sayings would be seen as crucial in determining the greatness of a man, and especially so when two men fight with incantation as their instrument of attack. By this standard, Odewale is indeed great.

However, just as his name suggests, Odewale is about to complete his assignment as a hunter; a man-hunter. The expression he used above, '*man man man...Everything: gira gira gira power power force force action action*', aptly applies to him. His confidence in the backing of Ogun, the bloodthirsty patron god, grows. It is interesting to note that the reference to Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron still worshiped by some Yoruba commercial vehicles' drivers, is symbolic and ominous. The god is appeased with blood.

Usually, his sacrifice is a dog and when a roaming dog, or any other dog is inadvertently killed by an automobile on the motion, the worshipers believe that a sacrifice has been made to Ogun. The adherents also use the epithet, *Olomi nile feje we*. Some Yoruba claim that an automobile accident resulting in loss of lives may indicate that Ogun is thirsty.

Interestingly, on the whole, the setting of 'The Gods Are Not to Blame' is the Ogun Festival. Ogun's thirst for blood seems to be reaching its peak, but hardly satisfied. Odewale tells his mother, the wife: 'the people come tonight, at the end of the feast of Ogun, for answers to their suffering. I must have something to tell them. I have sworn' (III. ii, 13-16) Ogun is 'seen as a symbol of the superior, conquering one', this does not only explain Odewale's earlier appeal to him when contending with his father, but also why he is confident of success at the end of the Ogun festival. Yet, before gratifying Ogun's thirst for more blood, he fights on with the potent missiles of his mouth. Still full of suspicions; he foretells his eventual lot: 'The monkey and gorilla may claim oneness but monkey is Monkey and the gorilla, Gorilla...The mangrove tree dwells in the river, but does that make it a crocodile?' (III. ii, 27-33)

Odewale's talk about where he killed his father does not only develop the theme of his misfortune, but appropriately introduces another aspect of the Yoruba mythology, which sets a perfect stage for the tragedy that must follow. The reference to '**the place where three footpaths meet**' brings to mind the favourite spot of Èsù, a companion of Ogun. 'The Yoruba believe that Èsù, can, and does instigate men to offend the god- thereby providing food for the angry gods'. Odewale now reaches the spot where Esu helps Ogun with victims. Yet, the blind hero fights to the end with his wits: 'Let no one stop us and let no one come with us or I shall curse him... When the wood-insect Gathers sticks, On its own head it carries them.' (III iv, 176-181)

1.5. Conclusion

True to what is expected of a true work of tragedy, Ola Rotimi has deliberately employed Yoruba witticism to paint a picture of a man struggling in the strength of his intelligence, striving in vain against the metaphysical powers that are to bring him to ruin; the man who has vehemently lauded virtues and condemned vices, pronouncing adverse judgement unwittingly against self. So to speak, he now descends the Olympic height and just at a short distance to Hades. The very baby that was counted unworthy of living has risen to greatness and then follows a precipitous fall. Yet, as he fulfils the dire prophesies, he will not seek an escape, but rather accept the responsibility. When his witty expressions appear to be bringing him close to remedying the situation, they bring him closer to his doom. Nevertheless, he never exhausted his arsenals of resourceful words.

To a very laudable extent, 'The Gods Are Not To Blame', reminiscent of 'Oedipus Rex', is indeed a successful experiment in a creative use of the Yoruba rich idioms and metaphors of the culture in adaptation of the ancient play. With incessant use of powerful and captivating elements of speech, the Yoruba witticism, Ola Rotimi, holds his readers with uninterrupted and burning curiosity from the beginning to the finale. His ingenious use of Yoruba names, the traditional settings and expressions typical of a sage in a classic Yoruba community, alternates fear and hope and ultimately invoke the sober feeling similar to what was evidently engendered in the ancient Attic audience of Sophocles. As the Ogun festival apparently ends, the pity and terror also reach the climax when the noble and innocent victim submitted to the will of unknown forces with which he has contended in futility.

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