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A REVIEW OF DANIEL INYANG'S *AUDACIOUS*

Title:	*Audacious*
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Reviewer:	Edem, Stephen Effiong Department of English, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, stephenedem61@gmail.com *08086964831*

Introduction

Audacious is a tragi-comedy written by Daniel Inyang Jnr. It mirrors a typical socio-traditional African society consumed by an insatiable quest for wealth and power. As the playwright warns, such an obsession inevitably breeds "strife and rancour as well as schemes and manipulations that draw both the immediate and extended families into a web of greed" (Daniel Inyang, 6). His aim in this compact yet deeply engaging work is consistent with the primary functions of literature: to entertain, to inform and to educate. Ultimately, the play underscores one timeless truth: greed always carries a hidden price.

At the heart of the narrative is Ufia, the village oracle, known as "The-eyes-of-the-gods." He emerges as a tragic hero whose fatal flaw and greed blinds him until he degenerates into a full-fledged villain. His schemes not only pit him against the Nsien family, but also against the entire council of elders. Set in an unnamed Ibibio traditional community, the play critiques the excesses of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and the exploitative dimensions of the kingship system. Although unconventional in structure, lacking Acts and Scenes, the play unfolds in well-defined stages that drive the drama with remarkable intensity.

Content

The play is populated by eighteen characters. Major figures include Ufia, Adia'bong,

Nsidibe, Akpan Nsien, Emaeyak, Udo Nsien, Ete'bong and Nyire, while others such as Chief Okon, the Village Head, Barrister, Pastor, Architect and Neighbours play supporting roles. The actions are situated in three key locations: the Ufia household, the Udo Nsien household, and the Nsiens' farm.

The story opens in Ufia's shrine, where his greed drives him to manipulate the gods in order to disrupt the Nsien family, hoping to claim their inheritance. He schemes by setting brothers against each other and attempting to use his daughter, Adia'bong, as bait to further his selfish ambitions. His cruelty extends to his wife, Nsidibe, whom he mistreats under the guise of divine authority, a situation reflective of many African traditional settings.

Conflict escalates in Udo Nsien's home, where Akpan Nsien confronts his younger brother. The altercation, however, is averted through the timely intervention of family members and neighbours. Meanwhile, in the Nsiens' farm, youthful romance blossoms between Ete'bong and Adia'bong, offering a touching contrast to the greed-fuelled strife tearing their families apart. Their love recalls moments of innocence and unity from their childhood, underscoring what the family has lost.

As the plot advances, tensions rise within Ufia's household when his wife openly challenges his cruelty and selfishness. Supported by his kinsmen, she resists his oppressive rule, exposing the destructive consequences of his obsession. The climax occurs during the reading of the will, where expectations of inheritance are dashed. The late Nsien bequeathes 20 percent of his wealth to charity and assigns the remainder to government partnership with his grandsons, thereby disarming the greedy aspirations of Ufia and others. Ufia's despair culminates in suicide, sealing his tragic downfall.

Evaluation

Though brief, *Audacious* is both powerful and spontaneous. It captures, with sharp precision, the corrosive effects of greed within a communal setting. The play operates as a moral warning, showing how unchecked desires can corrode family bonds and ultimately destroy lives. Its language is clear, accessible, and unpretentious, qualities that make it appealing not only to advanced readers but also to students at all levels. The occasional code-mixing and code-switching enrich the dialogue, adding a layer of authenticity and immediacy that mirrors real-life speech patterns in African communities.

One of the striking thematic explorations is madness and power. The proverbial assertion that "They first make mad, before they destroy" (Inyang, p. 12) establishes a theme of spiritual and psychological manipulation. Madness in the play is not merely an illness; it is divine trial, ancestral punishment and social breakdown. This is exemplified in Adiaha'bong's outburst, "Nung Nsien have gone mad!" (Inyang, p. 13), which doubles as both a literal remark and a metaphor for a society descending into chaos.

Equally central is the conflict between tradition and rebellion. Ufía, stoic and ritualistic, defends ancestral ways, declaring that "The gods don't give any mortal a yoke they can't carry" (p. 21). His statement reflects a fatalistic acceptance of suffering. In contrast, Adiaha'bong's defiance disrupts silence and exposes hypocrisy. Her audacity lies in speaking when tradition demands silence, positioning her as a revolutionary voice against patriarchal suppression (Inyang, p. 22).

The theme of inheritance, greed, and betrayal continues the concerns of Inyang's earlier works. As one of the characters laments, "The quest for inheritance of a kindhearted, wealthy deceased has birthed not only strife and rancour but schemes and manipulations. . ." (Inyang, p.31). Inheritance becomes a catalyst for familial disintegration; mirroring how political leaders manipulate communal wealth for selfish gain.

The motif of female oppression and trauma emerges in the paradoxical description of Nsidibe as a "muted, vocal housewife and an academic" (Inyang, p. 40). Her tragic resolve, "a death-blow that numbs her body against the pains she is used to enduring for her daughter's sake" (Inyang, p. 41), shows the extremes of psychological violence endured by women. In this sense, the play elevates women as both the most silenced and the most radical agents of resistance.

Religion and spirituality also feature prominently, particularly through rituals of wine, cock and shrine. The lament, "My ancestors. . . It is no longer news that the property left for [me]. . . is gone" (Inyang, p. 48), underscores a dual dispossession: material inheritance is usurped and ancestral blessings are desecrated. This loss signals that tradition, once a moral refuge, has become complicit in exploitation.

In a sharp paradox, love itself becomes resistance. The narrator observes, "This amoral rendezvous upsets the apple cart and becomes a major ploy to undo the villain, Ufía" (Inyang, p. 53). Here, love transcends private emotion and becomes audacious, a

revolutionary force that destabilises tyranny and unmasks hypocrisy.

Furthermore, the play is deeply invested in exposing hypocrisy and social contradiction. The pairing of opposites, "Love and hate, strife and peace, division and unity…" (Inyang, p. 60), captures the ironies of African society. Leaders preach unity but sow division; families praise love yet plot betrayal. This irony and satire become the hallmarks of Iryang's tragicomic style.

Stylistically, *Audacious* relies on symbolism and imagery. The shrine, cock and wine symbolise corrupted tradition, while red attire connotes danger and spiritual invocation. Vivid ritual description, "Ufía, adorned with awful mostly red, stands holding a gourd of palm wine in the hand, and a white cock in the left. . ." (Inyang, p. 67), evokes ancestral presence. Oxymoron, as in the phrase "muted, vocal housewife" (Inyang, p. 40), dramatises contradictions.

Philosophically, *Audacious* is a call for courage. It insists that peace comes only through resistance, reminding readers that "after the storm comes calm" (Inyang, p. 72). The play ultimately warns that inheritance cannot replace identity, and that tradition without justice is hollow. Its message is clear: the audacity of individuals, especially women and the youth, remains society's last hope for renewal.

Characterisation

The central figure, Ufia, is a carefully crafted tragic character. As an oracle, he is meant to embody spiritual authority, yet he perverts his office to advance selfish ambitions. The epithet "the eyes of the gods" drips with irony. He sees nothing of truth; instead, he weaponises ritual and invokes the divine to justify cruelty toward his family. His moral degeneration into villainy demonstrates Aristotle's principle of *hamartia*, where a tragic flaw leads to downfall. Unlike the noble heroes of classical tragedy, however, Ufia's nobility is counterfeit, making his fall both inevitable and instructive.

Adia'bong, by contrast, represents innocence and moral clarity. She becomes a foil to her father's corruption. Her love for Ete'bong is not only romantic but also symbolic: their union represents generational renewal and the possibility of harmony after conflict. Nsidibe, Ufia's wife, dramatises the resilience of women in patriarchal societies. Her open confrontation with Ufia subverts the stereotype of silent suffering. Her resistance also dramatises the play's

thematic core: the fight against greed is not merely communal but begins in the family unit.

Secondary characters enrich the narrative. The Barrister embodies the intrusion of modern legal frameworks into traditional conflicts. The Pastor and the Architect, spotted earlier in the farm, serve as foreshadowing devices: their hopes for land use introduce broader social stakes. Neighbours and elders provide the communal chorus that both enables and challenges corruption.

Structure and Devices

Inyang's choice to structure the play into stages, with the name of the location rather than acts and scenes, mirrors oral performance traditions in Africa. Each stage encapsulates a moral or thematic unit, creating rhythm without sacrificing cohesion.

Dramatic devices abound. Irony is central: the oracle, presumed to reveal truth, becomes the prime deceiver. Satire operates in depictions of elders bickering over property, exposing the absurdity of greed. Tragic reversal (*peripeteia*) is achieved in the will-reading: the inheritance is diverted away from greedy expectations to socially constructive ends. Catharsis is achieved not in Ufia's grandeur but in the audience's relief that his schemes are thwarted and his daughter spared.

Dialogue is crafted in simple, accessible English, interspersed with code-switching. This linguistic register makes the play legible to both academic and non-academic audiences, while at the same time preserving cultural authenticity. Code-switching also underscores character identity and situational context, an important device for African drama that must balance intelligibility with rootedness.

Themes

Greed is the dominant theme in the play, dramatised not abstractly but through interpersonal conflict. Family disunity, betrayal and eventual reconciliation illustrate the social costs of selfish ambition. The romance subplot highlights the resilience of love and innocence. The will, as both legal document and dramaturgical device, embodies the theme of justice: true legacy lies not in property hoarded by the living, but in investments that sustain the community.

Language and Style

The language of *Audacious* is plain but powerful. Its unpretentiousness ensures accessibility. Inyang avoids rhetorical flourish and instead uses simple declaratives to land moral truths. The code-mixing and code-switching enrich the dramatic texture, lending authenticity to dialogues and anchoring the play in its Ibibio setting.

Publication Quality

From the edition under review, DI Brainz Media demonstrates commendable production standards. The cover design is simple yet evocative, hinting at the play's tragi-comic nature. The paper stock is durable and opaque, ensuring comfortable reading without ink bleed. The font is a clear serif typeface at an appropriate size, supporting readability even for prolonged study. Line spacing is adequate, margins are balanced and stage directions are distinguished by italics, making it easy for performers and readers alike. Errors in grammar or spelling are minimal, reflecting careful editing. These qualities make the text suitable both as a classroom text and as a performance script.

Conclusion

Daniel Iryang Jnr's *Audacious* is not merely a play, but a profound cultural commentary and moral compass. It deepens our understanding of African traditions, while exposing the destructive power of greed that corrodes both family and society. By weaving together themes of love, family, conflict and reconciliation, the play transcends its Ibibio setting and attains universal resonance. In many ways, *Audacious* extends the concerns of *The Peephole* and *The Ufias I*, fusing domestic struggles with ancestral invocations to create a drama that is simultaneously personal, spiritual and political. Through its layered use of symbolism, ritual imagery and ironic contradictions, the text confronts greed, betrayal, female oppression and cultural stagnation; yet it also celebrates the courage of those who dare to resist. Ultimately, *Audacious* is more than a title; it is a moral imperative. The play summons its audience to boldness, urging them to speak, to challenge and to confront the fractures of society with unwavering courage.

Recommendation

I strongly recommend this play to lovers of literature, students and scholars alike, particularly those interested in African literature, cultural studies and drama. *Audacious* is entertaining, instructive and thought-provoking, a text that both captures the richness of

tradition and cautions against its possible abuse. For readers in Africa, Nigeria, and especially Akwa Ibom and Cross River States, this play is not just recommended reading, it is required reading.

Works Cited

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Edem, Stephen E., 2025
stephenedem61@gmail.com
08086964831

Stephen Effiong Edem, fondly called *De Optimist*, is a teacher, writer, and youth advocate from Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A graduate of English and Literary Studies from the University of Uyo, he is currently pursuing a Master's in English Studies at the University of Port Harcourt. With over eight years of teaching as well as some remarkable leadership experiences, Stephen inspires young minds through education, poetry, and community service. His research focuses on African literature and masculinism, while his writings champion values of integrity, resilience, and moral reawakening for youth empowerment.

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