

Spiritual Manifestations in J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's *Song of a Goat*

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Abstract

In other studies, *Song of a Goat* might have been scrutinized or analysed with either Aristotelian or other European theories. However, in this study, an African conceptual approach is employed in the exploration of the spiritual manifestation and connotation in *Song of a Goat*. In this exercise, structural analysis, based on Dennis Duro Aiyejina's (1995) characteristics of metaphysical world in African plays and other concepts on African/Izon world view, is deployed as theoretical framework.

Structurally, the study succinctly relates the synopsis/plot in *Song of a Goat* while using identified gauges on spiritual manifestations in the African drama. The critical analysis in this exercise identifies and illustrates those various spiritual manifestations and connotations. At the end of this critical examination, the study uncovers the spiritual codes buried in the plot, the characters, the language and other metaphoric symbols creatively used in the dramaturgy of this text and concludes that the spiritual forces in the drama are creatively deployed as catalysts which bring about the repercussion(s) on each erring soul in *Song of a Goat*.

Introduction

The interest of writing this paper emanated from Ebun Clark's (1991) textual annotation of *Song of a Goat*. There, she gives an insight into many aspects of this dramatic text which includes a brief biography of the author, the culture of the text and short performance history of this drama. Despite her in-depth explanations, one is still challenged to explore various supernatural manifestations and connotations in this text.

In her notes, Ebun Clark (1991) takes the reader through the short biography of the playwright, Johnson Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, where she traces his birthday to 6th of April 1935 and his birthplace to Izon clan. She claims that Clark was born at his maternal grandmother's home in Erhuwaren, an Urhobo village near the Izon town of Kiagbodo in Delta State. She equally comments briefly on the Izon's world view, where she observes that Izon people are culturally monolithic, but there are, of course, minor cultural variations among the different clans. She observes that the philosophy which influences the concepts in the *Song of a Goat* is that of Izon.

Her notes equally cover a short performance history of the play, where she establishes the fact that the drama was first performed at Mbari Club, Ibadan, by Wole Soyinka's 1960 Mask with Soyinka himself playing the lead role as Zifa. Her notes equally include, a short explanation on verse plays and how to study the play, as well as the definitions of plot and story before she rounds off her discussion with a study of each movement in the play. Through her notes, one is made to understand the real causes of the chains of actions, as she equally ruminates on the main theme and sub-themes in the drama. Again, through Ebun Clark's notes, one is given a clear insight into what critics think of J. P. Clark's early plays. His plays are said to be

influenced by the style and content of Classical Greek tragedies, mythologies, and other European literatures. Orukorere, for instance, is often compared with Cassandra in Greek mythology and drama. She was the daughter of King Priam of Troy, who had the gift of prophecy, but cursed at the same time by the gods that her prophecies would never be believed.

Clark's response to such criticism especially on *Song of a Goat* is equally captured thus:

It is quite possible that Sophocles and Euripides are in that play. It's quite possible the Elizabethans are there too. But this business of looking for sources can be misleading. I remember that one of the first persons who saw the play in manuscript said 'Oh, J.P., you've been reading Lorca.' I said, 'Who is he?' So he lent me his volume of Lorca's tragedies,

and there I read "for the first time *Yerma*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and *Blood Wedding*, but, you see, by that time I had already written my play. What I am trying to say is that the influences may be there, but there are coincidences, too, because we are all human beings with the same basic emotions and experiences (Ebun Clark, 1991).

From all indications, it is clear that the drama text, *Song of a Goat*, has been scrutinized or analysed with either Aristotelian or other European theories/concepts. However, in exploring the spiritual manifestation and connotation in this drama, a structural analysis based on Dennis Duro Aiyejina's (1995) characteristics of metaphysical world in African plays and other concepts on African world view will be used.

Theoretical Framework

Dennis Duro Aiyejina (1995), in his study, employs a descriptive structuralist model in identifying supernatural components of African drama. There, Aiyejina acknowledges the fact that literature is a socio-cultural phenomenon like other creative elements that are intertwined with the value system of the community. Thus literature, in Aiyejina's words, is "developed and practised within particular socio-cultural context." Hence, literature is meant to preserve, propagate and clarify the vital socio-cultural elements of a given group.

In Aiyejina's submission, it is observed that closely linked to this value system, is a belief system which is another vital socio-cultural element that often features in African literature. From all indications, African's faith in the supernatural is so strong that it shows almost in all African creative works such as prose, poetry, dramas, films, music or any other artistic design.

In his attempt to illustrate the characteristics of the metaphysical world, Aiyejina (1995) uses a prominent modern scientific concept, propagated by Albert Einstein. Hence, the following features are so identified: a complete abrogation of time and space; the presence of "isness", absolute complete form and the existence of incorporeal entities.

On the abrogation of time, Aiyejina (1995:4) explains that:

...in the natural realm of existence, time proceeds in a straight line from the future, through the present, into the past. Hence, physical things and events are located either in the past or in the future or in the present. Time in the supernatural mode of existence is different. In this mode, past, present and future, all exist now. Events exist not in time, but in an external now... one sees everything at once... Everything that was, is...

He proceeds to describe the abrogation of space thus:

Unlike the physical realm of existence in which space is fragmented into many separate and discrete entities, as Nigeria is separated from Tanzania... the supernatural is limitless and un-separated. In the supernatural mode of existence, space [demarcation] is abrogated.

Aiyejina further explains the state of “isness” in the supernatural world as a state of being which is very much

...unlike those of physical reality; supernatural things and events do not develop or change, neither are they liable to destruction. They exist in their absolute complete form....

On the status of the inhabitants of the metaphysical world, he suggests that the supernatural realm is teeming with figures who are incongruous and in form of extremely large imaginary creatures, while the natural world is inhabited along with other living and non-living things by human beings and animals. Consequently, one could classify these inhabitants of the supernatural realm thus: the almighty God/Supreme Being, gods, ancestral spirits and ghosts, fetishes, totems, heroes, human souls, sprites or witches, etc. According to him, the inhabitants of the supernatural world are figures whose characters are superior to that of man and who are conceived of as being more powerful than man. Also, they are believed to control man's existence and therefore may be conciliated or involved by this man to secure advantage over nature and over his fellow men.

On the issue of cultural and religious perception of supernatural world in Africa, Aiyejina claims that communion is very strong in Africa as Africans experience the universe as a religious entity in which the natural and the supernatural co-exist and are interwoven. That the exchange of beings by way of death and birth goes on constantly between the two worlds. He also suggested that the occurrence of binary opposition experiences in human reality is believed to be under the control of the supernatural. Thus unlike the Izon's world view, Aiyejina believed that experiences such as life and death, success and failure, fertility and sterility in person life and other vital issues that man has not control over are dictated and directed from the forces in the supernatural realm.

In buttressing the above claim, E. G. Parrinder (1975:10), opined that "To Africans the spirit world is so real and near, its forces intertwining and spring the visible world that, whether pagan or Christian, man has to reckon with being invisible to mortal sight." While J. S. Mbiti maintains that African lives in a religious universe in which "...there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the supernatural and the material areas of life."

Quoting Keir Elam and Charity Pever-Ge, Aiyejina (1995) in his study further categorises the four Barthesian codes of semiotics (*Proairetic, Hermeneutic, Symbolic and Referential Codes*) into two basic types of *cultural code* and *logical code*. While the *cultural code* encompasses *referential code*, *symbolic code*, and *symptomatic/proairetic code* on the one hand, the *hermeneutic code* is regarded as the *logical code* on the other. In justifying his stand Aiyejina (1995) declares that:

...the African dramatic text or production is easily illuminated through two major codes: *The Cultural Code* through which the real is conceived by those operating in the light of certain cultural norms, beliefs and world view. And *the logical code* which illuminates the general principles of cause and effect, necessity and possibility,

especially in the cultural logic rather than the rational logic of the audience.

By implication, the last sentence of the above quotation reaffirms the fact that occurrence in the supernatural realm of existence may not follow rational logic where time and space are strong determinants but follows cultural logic where the operating system is based on the abrogation of time and space and the universe is seen as one indivisible physical and metaphysical entity.

In addition to these, it could be suggested that, in drama text as it is on stage, human could easily access the supernatural realm through the use of words in combination with other means, such as wine, song, charm or musical instruments etc. Here time and space could easily be abrogated and every occurrence could be reduced to the state of "isness" or "infinitive now" where object could only exist in complete form. Therefore *the creative use of words and interpretative decoding of its usages* in narrative could be additional code of illuminating supernatural component in African drama.

In Aiyejina's submission, the basic characteristic of metaphysical realm is established. While his world view also acknowledges the existence of a dynamic inter-relationship between the supernatural and physical realms, but his hypothesis does not give a comprehensive analysis on the nature of this dynamic inter-relationship. However, from available evidence, one could interpret as a true symbiosis, the dynamic inter-relationship between the supernatural and physical realms of existence thus: the mortal beings are seen as clays in the hands of the potters who are the supernatural entities. This could be the reason Aiyejina observes in reality that, the occurrence of binary opposition in form of life and death, success and failure, etc. are under the control of the supernatural and this, according to Ebun Clark, is contrary to the Izon's world view. In this sense, the supernatural beings are perceived as powerful forces that can shape the physical world into any form of their choice. Moreover, they could also be appeased by mortal beings to intervene in the physical matters.

The concept of the supernatural world as all powerful could be seen from another perspective which is in line with Izon outlook on life. That is, the metaphysical entities derive and rely on human beings

to accommodate their influence or to acknowledge their status. In other words, supernatural forces are of no value without the mortal beings establishing their importance or according them prominence. By implication, the supernatural beings can hardly influence physical realm without the cooperation and the efforts of mortal agents. It is through these mortal beings that the importance, status and eminence of the spiritual entities are established and preserved.

Even in decoding the events in the supernatural realm, mortal knowledge and cultural logic are required. Consequently, in the African world view, one could say that as mortal beings hold their existence to the influence of the supernatural forces, so also the existence of the metaphysical beings are dependent on the knowledge and the cultural logic of the mortal beings. Based on this conviction, majority of African creative artistes often inject elements of the supernatural forces into their creativity. Thus one could classify into two broad categories, the various ways in which the metaphysical elements are injected into creative works: (i) manifesting as causality agents – protagonists or antagonists, and (ii) serving as catalyst, as a means to an end or as an aid to human character.

Synopsis:

In restructuring the plot in this drama from 2-1-3 presentation format to that of 1-2-3 format (i.e. from beginning, through middle to the end), it could be reiterated that because Zifa's father killed members of his clan, he is cursed by the gods with leprosy for his abuse of power and disgraceful act until he dies. Due to his love for his old man, Zifa lays to rest the soul of his father before the appointed time given by the gods and as a punishment for his actions, Zifa is cursed with impotence which prevents him from having other children after the birth of his first son, Dode. Through the discussion of the neighbours, it is revealed that, due to Orukorere's refusal to serve the sea gods as handmaiden, her talent of prophesy is cursed not to be believed, and each time she prophesies, she is seen as a wailing mad woman that makes no sense.

As a result of her husband's illness of impotence, Ebieri suffers sexual frustration which brings untold mental and physical strain and anguish into her life. In order to overcome her pain Zifa sends Ebieri

to the Masseur who is the messenger of the oracle. It is then revealed that Ebiere who first rejects that solution given to her by the gods on her sad marital problem, on second thought proceeds to carry out the advice of the gods without following the due process prescribed by the Masseur: that is, offering the appropriate sacrifice to the gods. Naturally, the prescribed sacrifice is meant to grant Ebiere permission from the gods to do what the society sees as a shameful and forbidden act of having sexual affair with her husband's brother without retribution. But since she ends up having intercourse with her brother in law without prior and required sacrifice, she ends up committing a taboo. Thus her action leads to a total disaster for herself and her family in which both her husband and his brother commit suicide – one by hanging, the other by drowning.

Textual Analysis

From the foregoing, one would agree with the fact that spiritual agents in this *Song of a Goat* drama manifest as catalysts or a means to an end. From all indications, the plot of the drama presents a family which is largely doomed because of its members' overwhelming pride in their status and achievements. In this narrative, each motive for subsequent event(s) is based on human error while the spiritual beings or the gods, on the other hand, only serve as the catalysts which bring about the repercussion(s) on each of these human errors.

In probing further into spiritual manifestations in *Song of a Goat*, the deployment of metaphysical components as creative devices in the drama could be examined through the creative use of both the temporal and the infinite times in the drama. While temporally projected/ascribed time in the play could be divided into: story time, plot time, and production/presentation time, the spiritual time, on the other hand, is infinite and thus projecting a state of "isness".

The story time featured in *Song of a Goat* starts from the time when Zifa's father was alive. As a warrior, Zifa's father committed the error of inability to control his rage by killing not only the enemies of his people, but some of his kinsmen and his error by the gods and some members of his community was seen as an

abuse of power hence, Zifa's father was punished for his actions with the curse of leprosy. Thus the story time in this drama still covers the period of his punishment to the point of his death and burial. Consequently, for the story time which covers the experience of Zifa's father, one could infer a period of thirty years. Between the birth of Dode, and the time after Zifa has buried his father, the drama identifies additional three years when it points out that Zifa suffers for "three floods" before he sends Ebiere to consult the Masseur. The story time between Ebiere's consultation and the time she copulates with Tonye could be put at a week, while the time between Zifa's suspicion and discovery of the incestuous act between his wife and Tonye could be assumed as a month. The time between Zifa's call for a sacrifice of purification and the suicide of Tonye and his could be said to have occurred in a day. In all, the story time of the *Song of a Goat* drama could be estimated between thirty three and thirty four years.

The plot time as presented, on the other hand, can only cover the events succinctly presented to the reader or the audience in the play. Naturally, the plot time, unlike the story time, excludes all the implied or assumed events. Therefore, the plot time could be estimated between four and six weeks. This is a period starting from Ebiere's consultation with the Masseur, her copulation with Tonye, through the period of Orukorere's prophecies, to the time of Zifa's call for a sacrifice of purification and Ebiere fainting till the time Tonye and Zifa commit suicide. Judging from the standard time for stage production of similar length and volume, the production/presentation time on stage or on screen for *Song of a Goat* could not be more than ninety minutes or one and a half hours.

In considering the infinite nature of the spiritual time in line with the plot of this drama, readers are able to access the spiritual realm/infinite time through the use of words and through the use of the anachronism method of narration. Through these two methods, the playwright is able to establish a state of "isness" in his text. Here, the past, the present, and the future events are presented and reflected as activities occurring in a timeless realm or in an "infinite now". This is

why in *Song of a Goat*, the error committed out of pride and arrogance by Zifa's father becomes a generational curse. Thus, every member of his family continues to commit one blunder or the other. Succinctly put, the curse on Zifa's father exists not in time, but in eternity. According to Ebun Clark:

We, therefore, have before us a family which is largely doomed because of its members' overwhelming pride in their status and achievements. The excessive pride of Zifa's father as a warrior leads him to kill not only enemies of his people, but also 'within the clan'. For this he is cursed with leprosy, which leads to his ignoble death and burial. Zifa's wilfulness and arrogance in turn leads him to take cosmic laws into his own hand; he rashly brings the spirit of his father home before the appointed time allowed by the gods, so he is cursed with impotence. Orukorere's vanity and pride in her beauty and high position dooms her to the life of a frustrated prophetess. The family is arrogant, violent, and therefore responsible for its calamity.

From all indications, one could see that, the playwright is able to reveal the infinite nature of this generational curse on Zifa's family through the method of anachronism. This is a technique in scriptwriting through which the scriptwriter will bring the past into the present in the course of revealing events in a drama. In the case of *Song of a Goat*, the reader is able to access the past through Eberie's conversation with and Zifa's lamentation before the Masseur when he proclaims thus:

I have been to all the experts between swamp and sand. What has any of the lot been able to do but suggest I adjust myself to my curse? Curse! My father who they dared not spit at when he lived is dead and lying in the evil grove. Was that not enough penalty? Of course, I have recalled him into town so at times of festival he can have sacrifice.

For interfering with his father's punishment, Zifa ends up incurring another brand of curse for daring the gods, (i.e. he is cursed with impotence). One could see how the playwright creatively uses Zifa's infertility as a motive for other problems such as disobedience and the

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error of judgment, incest and its consequential suicides that befall his (Zifa's) family.

It could be observed that, words/dialogues/language or chorus are equally used in *Song of a Goat* to access the metaphysical realm, which eventually helps in abrogating both time and space, where every occurrence happens in the state of "infinite now." For instance, the error of Zifa's father and his encounter with the gods who cursed him are revealed through dialogue while Orukorere's vanity and pride in her beauty and her refusal to be the handmaid of the gods and her frustrated life of unbelievable prophetess, is also revealed through the chorus – the townspeople and commentators in the play. Basically in this drama the technique of anachronism is invoked through the dialogues in the plot of this text, where the reader is able to see everything at once. Thus "everything that was in the play, is".

In examining the *cultural/referential code* featured in *Song of a Goat*, through Ebun Clark's submission, one could see that:

All societies have their distinctive thoughts or philosophies about life. There is no fixed universal theory about existence. Beliefs about creation, the role of man in his universe, his destiny and so forth, differ from nation to nation, or even within the different ethnic groups that make up a nation such as Nigeria, which is a nation with as many languages, philosophies, religions and cultures as there are ethnic groups.

In reflecting his socio-cultural identity and the belief system of the Izon clans of Delta State, River State and other delta areas like Ondo, Ijebu-Waterside and Lagos, J. P. Clark-Bekederemo creatively presents the concept of destiny (or *teme*) in his play as human challenges in which man can change for the better if only he can follow the laid down rules and cultural doctrine. For instance, Zifa's curse is seen as a biological and metaphysical problem. In his effort to proffer solution to his problem, Zifa consults many traditional healers. Even when he sends his wife to consult with the Masseur, he has faith in

the supernatural ability of the man, who, in fact, provides solution to his marital problem. According to Ebun Clark, after examining Ebiere, the doctor part of the Masseur discovers that nothing is wrong with her, but the priest side of him, makes him to see her plight which is primarily emotional and spiritual. He then tactfully shifts his examination to a subtle interrogation of his patient in order to learn the real reason behind her present problems. Through their roundabout conversation Masseur learns that Ebiere is frustrated, because her husband is impotent, and that he has been so since the birth of their first child, Dode.

As a way of overcoming this challenge, the Masseur proceeds to suggest the cure, which would be for her husband to make her over to another member of the family. In order to overcome the seeming taboo solution given and for Ebiere to accomplish her desire, the old man recommends a ritual process and the offering of sacrifice. However, Ebiere's reaction is a total refusal to accept the practicability of this suggestion proposed to her. Out of shock, she rightly reminds the old man that his proposal is, "What the dead forbid you to speak of" and such a "...relationship would be incestuous", which according to the culture of Izon is "a taboo." The Masseur readily agrees with her, but as a problem solver, he equally informs her that with the correct sacrifice, his proposal will be permitted by the gods. Thus, he recommends the following items for the spiritual exercise and sacrifice:

... Blood of goat

So large a cowrie may pass through its nose,

A big gourd of palm wine and three heads of

Kolanut split before the dead of

The land, and the deed is done, (*Song of a Goat*, 2007:38 lines 80 - 84)

According to Ebun Clark, "some cultures (such as Classical Greece) believed that destiny could not be altered as established in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*." However, with the Izon culture, and as revealed in the plot of *Song of a Goat*, one is able to see that fate could

be altered if only the person concerned is willing to make the necessary sacrifice. This is why, the Masseur, after proffering what seems like an incredible solution to Ebiere's marital problems, equally gives metaphysical leverage of averting the wrath of the gods, with an "if clause". That is, if only Ebiere would provide the prescribed sacrificial items and carry out a sacrifice. Unfortunately, rather than heeding the old man's advice, Ebiere vehemently refuses to listen to the Masseur. Out of anger, she takes a wrong step by rejecting both the practical solution and spiritual passage to resolution on her marital problem and thus committing an *error of judgment*.

From Ebiere's experience in the drama, there is a clear manifestation of Africans experiencing the universe as a religious entity in which the natural and the supernatural co-exist and are interwoven. Here, it is revealed that both the action and inaction of a living person could lead to the death of another being which attests to the fact that, "the exchange of beings by way of death and birth goes on constantly between the two worlds." Ebiere's experiences equally demonstrate how it is possible for the supernatural to control the occurrence of binary opposition experiences in human reality.

Her inactions and pride also reveal how one's desire could lead to a consequence of life and death, success and failure, fertility and sterility in reality. Ebiere's conditions demonstrate how a person's inaction could affect vital issues that seem to be beyond the control of man and thus leave such issues for the dictation or direction of the supernatural ones. To be more specific in this drama, Ebiere could have appeased the ancestral spirits of the land who dwell in the spiritual realm, in order to engage in what they forbid but, due to her pride in womanhood, she could not comprehend why her husband should make her over to another member of his family and thus she ignores the counsel of the wise one, the messenger of the oracle. But as the natural desire takes its toll on her, she ends up making herself over to Tonye, her brother in law, whom she once looked down upon, thus committing an error of judgment.

Again, Ebiere's inactions and actions clearly demonstrate a condition of an unchangeable destiny in human life. This is a situation

when the person concerned in a prescribed ritual refuses to follow the laid down rules/sacrifices on how his/her fate could be altered. In other words:

If a man discovers his fate is unfavourable, he can seek the advice of the gods through the oracle on how to change it. Tragedy only occurs, when after consulting the that oracle the petitioner refuses to obey the advice of the deities. (Ebun Clark, 1991)

As revealed in this drama, one could see that, Ebiere is given the choice to change her misfortune by following required sacrifice but she rejects, out of pride, the prescribed choice of reshaping her destiny and that of her family with her own hands for good; rather, she ends up incurring the wrath of the gods.

In *Song of a Goat*, one could also see that there is the manifestation of a very strong communion between the physical and the metaphysical worlds. In this drama, the universe is revealed as a religious entity in which the natural and the supernatural co-exist and are interwoven. This fact of interaction between the living and the dead is attested to by revealing how the error of a dead father, could lead to the death of his two sons: Zifa and his brother Tonye.

The relationship that exists between the natural and supernatural realms in Izon's world view is further explained in Ebun Clark's assessment that, "Loyalty to the gods must flow up from man, so that maintenance of cosmic order can flow downward from the gods...." Again, the occurrences in this drama also affirm the fact that there is ongoing exchange of beings in these two worlds. In the drama, one could see that "communal or personal tragedy occurs when the cosmic chain is broken through man's disobedience or negligence towards the gods." In identifying an instance of disobedience, the plot reveals how Zifa brings the curse of impotence on himself when out of his love for his father, he violates the cosmic laws of the land by bringing the spirit of his father home before the appointed time allowed by the gods.

Furthermore, one could see an act of negligence, when Ebiere refuses at first the advice of the Masseur with a prescribed sacrifice in warding off the wrath of the gods on an

incestuous act which she calls "a taboo" only to end up committing the same incestuous act without performing the required sacrifice, thus bringing woe onto her family and the community.

The chain of cause and effect in this drama reaffirms Izon philosophy that man is the architect of his destiny. The evil which befalls Zifa's household is brought about by the action or inaction of other members of this family, thus the situation presented in *Song of a Goat* is a confirmation of Ebun Clark's claim on the Izon outlook of life that, "...it is man who determines his fate on earth and not the gods." Based on the actions in the plot of the drama, the reader could see that "man is still the architect of his destiny." From all indications, one would agree with the fact that the gods in Izon world view are not deities who determine the fortunes of man according to their whims; but they are catalysts who take close and keen interest in the actions and affairs of each man and help to bring about repercussions on each erring soul.

In considering the spiritual manifestation in the drama from the symbolic perspective, it could be observed from the Second Movement that Orukorere's wailing announcement of the doom that will befall her family is never taken seriously by anyone until her prophecies come to pass because this woman is seen as a possessed being or a person suffering from a psychological/mental disorder or seen as a mad woman. However, the presence of Orukorere, an old woman who is Zifa's aunt in the drama, is another interesting character. She is presented as the only surviving old member of the family whose pronouncements should have been taken seriously. In examining closely the nature of her prophecies, it could be noticed that the playwright uses metaphoric images in her prophecies as symbolic codes and creative device, which serve as a dramatic plant or a trance, through which the plot reveals what, is yet to come in this narrative. Thus her prophecies reveal some symbolic codes. For instance, in considering the animal images in her vision in line with African concepts, it has been observed that the animals she sees are those of evil and death. That is, a goat is a sacrificial animal, a leopard a preying

animal – a killer, and a snake is a symbol of evil or fertility (Ebun Clark, 1991).

In the following scene which is the Third Movement, the meanings of the symbolic images used in Orukorere's prophecies become clearer, as the scene reveals how Ebiere's unbearable sexual frustration causes her to provoke Tonye, her brother-in-law, into a fight, that ends up with the two wrestling on the floor which eventually leads into copulation. Dode, who is a witness of the initial fight, thinks his uncle would kill his mother and, in terror, he calls for the help of his 'grandmother' who, on seeing the two entangled in a love making wrestling fight, tells Dode that, "...these are no leopard and goat interlocked between life and dead, but two dogs at play..."

As usual, her pronouncement is a confirmation of her earlier prediction, thus she assures Dode that it is not his uncle who will kill his mother but, "... rather it is she who may kill your uncle." Again her assurance to Dode is another premonition of what is to come. Although Orukorere's prophecies are creatively used as flash-forwards, all other members of her family are designed with inability to decode her warnings. The readers of this drama text would agree with fact that, "the couple's love fight clarifies Orukorere's vision." Thus Ebiere could be seen as the leopard, the killer and '...the snake who has 'coiled' itself 'into a pad to pillow', while Tonye could be seen as the sacrificial goat.

From all indications, it is in this Third Movement that the tragedy occurs. It is here that Ebiere makes her major error of judgment. She takes an action which would have been acceptable, had she permitted the Masseur to appeal to the gods on her behalf so that the supernatural would allow her sexual union with Tonye, as their tradition requires. This is in keeping with Ebun Clark's claim that, it is Ebiere's uncontrollable desire for sexual fulfilment that leads her to commit incest, which pollutes both her family in particular and the community wellbeing at large. Nevertheless, one cannot but recognize or pity Ebiere's plight because, "like any devoted wife, Ebiere is torn between her loyalty

towards her husband, and her own acute need for biological satisfaction which Zifa cannot provide in his condition."

Conclusion

By highlighting cogent points, the paper reviews Ebun Clark's (1991) critical appraisal of *Song of a Goat*. The theoretical framework for the study is based on Dennis Duro Aiyejina's (1995) theory on supernatural components in African dramas where he uses a descriptive structuralist model in identifying these supernatural elements.

In this exercise, the established synopsis succinctly relates the plot in *Song of a Goat* while the critical analysis carried out identifies and illustrates the various spiritual manifestations and connotations of this drama. Here the study examines how the spiritual forces in *Song of a Goat* serve as the catalysts which bring about the repercussion(s) on each character for his or her human flaw. Thus the study has been able to unearth how the infinite state of a generational curse on Zifa's father, who suffered leprosy and death, brings unfortunate occurrences that run through his family.

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