

The Use of Archetypes in the Drama of J. P. Clark-Bekederemo

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Abstract

Critical interest in Clark-Bekederemo's drama has not favoured his use of archetypal resources. This study, therefore, initiates inquest into that neglected aspect of the Nigerian dramatist's craft. It, therefore, investigates the presence, use and role of archetypal materials in the making of the predominantly tragic theatre. Qualitative in its method of enquiry, the study discovers that Clark-Bekederemo deploys archetypal resources of diverse categories in fashioning the content and form of his drama. And based on established theoretical opinions on the meaning and constitution of archetype, the study discusses family/generational and community curse, rivalry among brothers, fratricide, the avenger, the unfaithful wife, the witch, the trickster and the buffoon as the predominant archetypes in Clark-Bekederemo's drama. While locating these instances within such larger units as archetypal subjects, archetypal situations, archetypal themes, and archetypal characters, the study underscores the playwright's use of the prototypical resources in actualizing the tragic effectiveness of his individual plays. In conclusion, the essay accentuates the fundamentality of archetypal resources to the profundity of Clark-Bekederemo's dramatic content and craft.

Keywords: *Archetype, Drama, Clark-Bekederemo, Generational curse, The witch*

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Background to the Study

J. P. Clark-Bekederemo is a popular Nigerian writer who, like his compatriot and contemporary, Wole Soyinka, straddles the genres of drama and poetry in his literary creativity. This study borders on his drama. Interestingly, the sizable dramatic output of this Ijaw-born writer has witnessed unceasing critical attention, but, surprisingly lacking in the rich body of criticism, is a study that investigates the playwright's use of archetypes. This essay, therefore, seeks to bridge that gap by sieving through the content and form of the plays to determine the extent to which the Niger Delta dramatist deploys archetypes in the making of his theatre.

Archetype: Meaning and Manifestations

“Archetype”, stems from the Greek word “archetupon” which means “pattern” or “model” (*Guide 1*). Thus, an archetype is defined as the original model or pattern from which copies are made or from which something develops. It is also a symbol, theme, setting, or character that recurs in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore, dreams, and ritual (*Guide 1*). The same idea is reiterated by Maduka and Eyoh who define archetype as “any image, symbol, theme, situation, character type or setting which recurs in myths, literature and dreams across ages and places” (56). Simply put, therefore, archetypes are universal symbols or what Jung calls “primordial images” (48) realized through repetition.

The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics provides an extensive insight into what constitutes archetype. According to the encyclopedia:

... birth, coming of age, love, guilt, redemption, and death are archetypal subjects; the conflict between reason and imagination, free will and destiny, appearance and reality, the individual and society, and so on, are archetypal themes; the tension between parents and children, the rivalry among brothers, the problems of incestuous desire, the search for the father, the ambivalence of the male-female relationship, the young man from the country arriving for the first time in the city, and so on, are archetypal situations; the braggart, the buffoon, the hero, the devil, the rebel, the wanderer, the siren, the enchantress, the maid, the witch, and so on, are archetypal characters; and certain animals, birds, and natural phenomena and settings are archetypal images. Any of these elements in a [literary work] either alone or in combination when treated in such a way as to bring forth its general and universal attributes, forms an archetypal pattern or patterns. (48)

EneIgbifa adds to the endless list paradise, hell and the reformatory as archetypal settings; the scapegoat, the creator, the cruel step-mother, the helpless orphan and the ungrateful son/daughter as archetypal characters; exorcism, initiation and rites of passage as archetypal rituals; and the phallus, the monster, etc., as archetypal symbols (108). Plato is credited as the first philosopher to use archetypes, especially those of beauty, truth, and goodness; Sophocles those of blindness, patricide, incest, and fratricide, and Hawthorne and Melville those of sin, retribution and death (*Guide 1*). But Carl Gustav Jung it is who, in two seminal publications (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* and *Psychological Reflections*), has provided us with a psychological insight into the subject of archetype by identifying archetypes in the collective

unconscious of mankind: the ideas or modes of thought derived from the experiences of a race such as birth, death, love, family life, struggles, which are inherited from ancestors, repressed in the subconscious of an individual and expressed in dreams, myth and literature. In addition, the psychologist introduces the *shadow*, the *persona* and the *anima*, “structural components of the psyche that man has inherited, just as the chicken has inherited his built-in response to the hawk” (Nnolim “Jungian Archetypes” 30).

While the critic of the archetypal approach should be concerned with the above components, he/she is also expected to be conversant with such other constants as the death/rebirth theme (described by Abrams and Harpham as the “archetype of archetypes” 16) which is commonly manifest or paralleled in the cycle of the seasons and the organic cycle of human life. Others are the subject of the god who dies to be reborn, the journey underground, heavenly ascent and search for the father, the archetype of the earth goddess, mother earth, and others. Archetypes, like myths, when employed in literary works, enrich such works and help to project the authors' artistic vision. For example, the *femme fatale* archetype could serve the purpose of moral instruction when recreated in a literary work. The universality of this image is part of its “archetypality.” In Greek mythology, it comes through in the character of Helen of Troy, who caused the Trojan War, thus inflicting pain and death on the entire city of Troy. In the fictional Renaissance England, Shakespeare recreates the image in Lady Macbeth and it serves as basis for the tragic consequences of excessive ambition. Back in Africa, the same image is central to Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and is realised through the character of Ihuoma. Amadi on his part links this archetypal character with the supernatural essence of the African worldview. Amadi seems, in the use of this image, to drive home the belief that supernatural forces are in control of the affairs of men.

With most of his plays rooted in folklore, myth and ritual, Clark-Bekederemo's drama is undoubtedly replete with resources of archetypal significance. Obviously present in the drama are instances categorized under archetypal subjects, themes, characters, images and situations which do not just reveal the playwright's rounded artistic vision but also help to put a stamp of classicism, authenticity and naturalness on his theatre. In what follows, we examine the use of archetypes of the subject matter and theme, situation and character sub-categories. However, it must be noted from the outset that only slim lines differentiate these types, hence overlaps should be expected in the course of the following discussion.

The Curse Subject the Tragic Impulse

Curse is an archetypal subject that underlies J. P. Clark-Bekederemo's largely tragic theatre. It is perhaps one of the greatest subjects for tragedy as most classic examples of that drama sub-type are based on that ubiquitous and timeless material. Clark-Bekederemo's deployment of this subject or motif in most of his tragedies and perhaps his manner of handling it accounts largely for the popular critical opinion that considers him as an imitator of 5th-century Greek tragedians like Sophocles and Aeschylus whose explorations of the same subject matter have long gained the significance of a standard or model. The fact, however, remains that archetypal materials are universal, or to paraphrase Jung, they are the contents of the collective dreams of mankind, and as such, they are open for use by all literary artists across

cultures. Clark-Bekederemo has himself stated that it “is not that one group of people borrowed this and that property from another but that there can, and in fact, there do occur areas of coincidence in the way of living among several peoples separated by vast distance and time ...” (qtd. in Ashaolu 179 180).

The predominant type of curse in Clark-Bekederemo's drama is the family or generational curse, and this is coincidentally the type that Sophocles and Aeschylus explore in the *Oedipus* and *Oresteia* plays. Hence, Anthony Astrachan is not wrong when he observes that reading Clark-Bekederemo's tragedies makes one “look to the *Oedipus* plays for analogy” (21). But, Martin Esslin could partially be wrong when he notes that Clark-Bekederemo is struggling, in those plays of his, to create “something in the nature of a cycle of plays on the working out of a family curse” in something like “a Nigerian *Oresteia*” (37). Esslin is wrong by attempting to pigeonhole the entire world within Aeschylus' craft or within the European standard. He seems not to appreciate the fact that while the source materials may be universal, their use is more of an idiosyncratic affair coloured by taste and the social, cultural, religious, moral and ideological differences of writers. Therefore, because Clark-Bekederemo and Aeschylus belong to different socio-cultural and ideological milieus, there are bound to be coincidences and divergences in their manner of handling the same subject.

As in the *Oedipus* and *Oresteia* plays, curse is at the foundation of six out of the nine plays of Clark-Bekederemo, but while the first and second plays of the first trilogy and the entire second trilogy explore family or generational curse, the fourth play depicts a slightly different kind, namely, communal curse. Similar to the house of Laius and Atreus, there is a curse on the house of Zifa's late father. His curse is explained by the white taint disease affliction that he bears till death and expectedly, his body is buried in the evil. This is all the information given about Zifa's father in the play whose main focus is life in the family's second generation headed by Zifa who, himself, is afflicted with impotence for calling home the spirit of his late father “a little bit early” (12) and for failing to offer the gods their routine sacrifices as Deinogbo tradition demands. The reader is also informed that the epileptic fit constantly suffered by Orukorere, the half-crazed aunty and “mother” of the family, is also a curse for refusing to serve the gods from the sea as Priestess (20). Tonye and Ebiere (Zifa's younger brother and wife, respectively) are doomed for involving in an illicit romance. Tufa, the stepson of Zifa's and the protagonist of the second play, *The Masquerade*, bears the curse in the third generation for being a product of the illegitimate union in *Song of a Goat* and because his mother died while giving birth to him. Apparently, the abominable end of each of these characters (except Orukorere) is directly or indirectly linked with the curse upon them and the family: Zifa drowns himself in the sea; Tonye commits suicide by hanging; Ebiere dies while giving birth to the incestuous child; Tufa dies by the bullets of his father-in-law upon the latter's discovery of his cursed background.

A similar curse runs through the second trilogy which spans three generations, beginning from *The Boat*, going through *The Return Home* and ending in *Full Circle* wherein the curse has, true to the play's title, run its full course. The cause of the curse here is, however, not obvious, but the gods' onslaught on the family is clearly evident with their human agents ironically and

unmistakably the mothers of the conflicting brothers in the first and last plays of the trilogy. Umuto in *The Boat* and Tibo in *Full Circle* are each manipulated by the gods to wreak havoc on their own children and families. They are made to manifest unbalanced love for their sons and so instigate the younger and more-loved sons against their older brothers. The result in *The Boat* becomes Biowa's killing of Bradide over the use of their jointly owned boat, and then the villagers' execution of Biowa (by drowning) as punishment for his sin and to prevent any imbalance that may cause future fatal rift between the offspring of the unfortunate brothers. Similarly in *Full Circle*, Ojoboro kills Kari (both Bradide's grandsons) while trying to rescue their unfair mother from him during a fight. Here, unlike in the first play, is the turning of the tide, first, as the less-loved of the brothers becomes the murderer and second, as the villagers decide to break with the precedence of *The Boat* especially because Biowa's murder is a mistake. Rather than an instigating mother in the intermediary play, *The Return Home*, there is an instigating peer in the near-fatal fight between Egberibo and Fregene, sons to Biowa and Bradide, respectively.

Unlike the foregoing, the curse in *Ozidi*, the individual play standing between the trilogies, is communal rather than familial or generational. The Orua community is cursed by the gods for enslaving too many and ravishing too many lands (147), and their punishment is the successive death of six kings within four years. This curse upon Orua ends, as it were, with the death of the sixth king, while the subsequent death of Ozidi, which marks the end of the first phase of the play's plot, is the beginning of the divine ritual cleansing of Orua. Couched in the form of a revenge mission, the cleansing ritual begins properly with the incarnate Ozidi's onslaught against all the sinners in the land chief of which are his assailants in his previous life. It is only at the completion of the cleansing process that peace and rightful leadership are restored in the land, for "Later, the dance flows back with the Story-teller as Ozidi at its head. It draws all the players into its wake, so that a long processional dance finally forms in which all spectators may join" (265).

"Curse causeless shall not come" says the Bible in Proverb 26:2. This is indeed a universal truth, for most curses are tied to a cause even in the generational kind. Anthony Astrachan suggests that a generational curse must be renewed by a fresh act every new generation wittingly as in Antigone's burial of her brother or unwittingly as in Oedipus's slaying of Laius and marrying of Jocasta(23). Based on this, Astrachan dismisses Clark-Bekederemo's handling of the generational curse subject in his drama as ineffective. While Astrachan's observation is not true of *Song of a Goat* where there are fresh acts in the second generation (Zifa's premature home-calling of his late father and refusal to offer sacrifices to the gods; Tonye's making over of Ebire to himself without the requisite sacrifices), it may be true of *The Masquerade* and *The Bikoroa Plays*, for there is no clearly-defined cause for the chief character's obvious curse. But, as already noted, there are bound to be justifiable differences and coincidences in individual tragedians' handling of the same subject matter, and such disparities are traceable to personal and societal factors.

Thus, beyond the various and obvious instances, one significant area in which Clark-Bekederemo shows divergence from his European counterparts in his exploration of the

family or generational curse subject, is in the attitude of the dying hero to his plight. While Oedipus in his lamentation prior to his death pleads his innocence and blames the gods for his situation (“Such was the pleasure of the gods ... You'll find no guilt to accuse me of – I am innocent! (*Colonnus*), Tufa accepts his fate, and rather than blame the gods, faults Orukorere for preventing his supposed killing at the point of birth as an abominable child:

TUFA: ... I am that unmentionable beast
Born of woman to brother and for whom brother
Drove brother to terrible death. That's not
All. My mother who they say engendered
The seed, on expulsion of it, withered
In the act, and it was left an old woman
Without wit to pick me up and take
Into another country. Why did she do it? Oh,
Why did she escape their strangling me at first cry?
Others for no reason but that they prefer
To travel double, or too impatient, fail
To collect their kits complete,
Get instant snuffing out or
Are tossed among the reeds to rot away
Far from contamination of the stream.
But I whose coming, right from conception
To this apparent deception, has
Been the draining of all that was pure and
Lovely, how is it they left me loose
To litter such destruction? (88-89)

This difference in the “innocent” heroes' attitude to their plight emanates from the difference in African and European worldviews with regard to ritual. Based on insight from Wole Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World*, I have noted elsewhere that Africans perceive the universe in terms of a cosmic unity, which implies that all forces including the natural and supernatural, are in harmony with each other unlike the situation in the West where such a relationship have been severed by extraneous practices and beliefs like the Platonic-Christian culture and Buddhism. To buttress this, I cited Kennedy Chinyowa's view (quoted by Reiss) that Africans “believe that they can plead, question and dialogue with the forces that govern and control their lives” (“Experimenting...” 41-42). The essence of Tufa's position in the lament is, therefore, that his human forebears should have exploited the privilege of pleading, questioning or dialoguing with the gods and so prevent the fate that has befallen him. The implication, therefore, is that had his stepfather, Zifa, atoned for his own and father's sins through sacrifices, had his biological and stepfathers made the sacrifices required by tradition to legitimize his birth, and had Orukorere not averted tradition by ferrying him to hiding at the point of his sacrilegious birth, Tufa would not have met such a tragic end as he does in the hands of his father-in-law.

The fall of every tragic hero arouses pity and fear says Aristotle, but ElechiAmadi notes that the arousal, particularly, of fear becomes possible only if the tragic catastrophe is masterminded by a supernatural force ("Gods and Tragic Heroes" 68-69). The tragic end of Clark-Bekederemo's protagonists evoke fear because of their rootedness in curse which is punishment from the gods, but not all of them elicit pity. Zifa's tragedy, for instance, does not evoke much pity because he is the architect of his own misfortune - his bane is hubris and arrogance. Worse than Zifa's, Tonye's suicide does not attract any pity at all but anger and condemnation because of his failure to resist the temptation of incest and adultery against his elder brother. But very much like Oedipus', Tufa's tragedy is pitiable as he is neither responsible for his birth nor for the actions that bring the spell upon him.

Rivalry among Brothers and Fratricide

The most prevalent archetypal situation in Clark-Bekederemo drama is the rivalry of siblings. In all his tragedies, the playwright uses rivalry between and among brothers to give vivacity to the plot. Enjoyable in these plots is their usual seamless progression from exposition to complications using such contentious issues as the rivalry of brothers. These rivalries usually metamorphous into fierce conflicts that help propel the plots to their catastrophic climaxes and fearful, sometimes pitiable, denouements. Clark-Bekederemo's beloved tragic ending is death either in the form of murder or suicide.

The rivalry of brothers over a woman is perhaps the fiercest of all brotherly oppositions, hence its suitability for a tragic plot. Clark-Bekederemo's exploits this and other types, for they are not alien to his cultural environment. According to one of his characters, brothers' rivalry over a woman is the commonest among the people:

PELETUA: ... I said only when there was open dispute,
and always it was over some strange woman ... Oh, why
can't we as a people die for some better cause? (*The Boat*
293-294).

It is eventually in the development of the tragic plot of his first play that Clark-Bekederemo calls to his aid the rivalry of brothers over a woman. Incidentally, this particular case is not the regular run-of-the-mill competition over a strange, beautiful, unmarried woman. The bone of contention here is, alarmingly, a married mother of one child who, ironically, is wife to one of the contenders. Tonye and Zifa are rivals over Ebiere, Zifa's wife. The image of the woman as lover to the two brothers is best expressed in the following scene:

ZIFA: .. There he sprawls on
My bed when I thought he was still out
Inspecting hooks in the bush.
And when I would call up the boy,
She comes between us holding my hand
With the injunction, oh let the man sleep
He is tired and mustn't be woken up at
This dead of night. The man
When did he become man to her? (32)

What makes this case fascinating is the paradox of sacrilege and piety associated with Tonye and Ebiere's erotic relationship. The affair is on the one hand a "great betrayal of our race" (30) and on the other hand "a thing not forbidden" (30). Ebiere seduced Tonye because she had been told by the Masseur that making her over to a virile member of her husband's family is a thing not forbidden, but the sustained amorous relationship and lack of remorse from Tonye suggest that he, all along, had an eye on the woman's thighs. Ebiere simply needed sexual satisfaction and more children which her husband could not afford. This is why when she achieved these she is partly satisfied hence "I am so happy today. I think what I/Told you is true. Come and feel it" (37); but Tonye is nowhere near satisfied, hence his interest is not in ending the adulterous adventure but in making sure it continues unnoticed:

TONYE: We must be careful, Ebiere. My
Brother and aunt, they were here
Together just now. ...
No, No, we must not do that hereunder
Light of day. (36-37)

The curse in the family may have been responsible for Tonye's unabated amorous feelings towards Ebiere, but he seemed to have been struggling all the while to subdue it. Zifa's eventual impotence and Ebiere's lure, therefore, served to erupt the repressed erotic urge for his brother's wife, hence his justification of his action: "... If you leave your piece of cloth in the open/All night, what becomes of it?" (40).

The interlude between the periods of suspicion and confirmation of the great betrayal is to enable Zifa's internal turbulence to gather enough momentum for a truly tragic consequence. It is, therefore, deliberate that the rivalry is made to take on a natural progression from muted affair (on the part of Tonye) to suspicion to discovery to confrontation and then death.

Both brothers may have taken their own lives - one by hanging and the other by drowning - but, each of them is actually killed by the other as Orukorere envisaged when, during their confrontations, she ululates "my sons, my sons, they have both/Turned beasts and will devour each other (40). Zifa acknowledges that he actually killed Tonye: "... You see the wretch has gone and/Hanged himself on the loft. But it is I/Indeed have killed the boy - my brother" (42). He had already killed the boy many times before the suicide. First, was when he discovered what the boy wanted to remain a secret; second, was when by a symbolic mock drama Zifa underlined the risk in the randy boy's act of betrayal; third, was when Zifa went after him with a knife. Likewise, Tonye murdered Zifa the day he usurped his bed, for Zifa had vowed, "I will die first" (15) when Masseur muted the idea of making over Ebiere to a potent member of the family. Tonye has flung his brother's worst fear in his face, so Zifa cannot bear the shame of being labelled "the cock with the flaming red crest/But touch the thing and you'll find it/Colder than a dog's nose" (13).

In *The Boat*, Bradide and Biowa are rivals over a jointly-owned boat. They are to use the boat in alternate months each beginning from the spotting of the new moon. Based on this lousy arrangement, it is obvious that conflict is in the offing, but before the big and catastrophic

conflict occasioned by the loose arrangement comes minor incidents between the brothers concerning Biowa's reckless use of the boat. Bradide is a more conscientious handler of the boat and he expects same from Biowa especially as the craft is jointly-owned. Their first altercation is minor and it comes as a result of damages on the boat following Biowa's return from Lagos on a business trip:

BIOWA: I agree it's in a bad shape. We suffered a number of mishaps
BRADIDE: The prow is broken.
BIOWA: That was when we tried to dock at Ereko. We misjudged our speed combined with that of the ebbing tide.
BRADIDE: So you rammed *her* straight into your jetty and broke *her* nose
BIOWA: I said it was an accident.
BRADIDE: Accidents do not just happen; they are caused.
BIOWA; All right, all right
BRADIDE: What happened on the port side? The gunnel is split down the side, and half the thwarts are loose at one end” (286)

As already hinted at, the main cause of the conflict that ends in the death of the two brothers is the loose arrangement in the use of the boat. After repairing the boat, Bradide makes ready to embark on his own business trip, but Bradide, already instigated by their mother, claims that Bradide has cheated him in the bargain, firstly, by eating into his remaining time during the repair and, secondly, by lying about spotting the new moon.

The joint ownership of a property is a sign of love and unity between the owners, thus, one is led to conclude that Bradide and Biowa were, initially, two loving brothers. The ensuing animosity between them, therefore, causes one to believe that something went wrong along the line. It is easy to misjudge Umuto, the brothers' mother, as their curse (305) given that she constantly fuels the rivalry between them; but it is more plausible to see Umuto as the mercenary of the angry gods who have placed a curse on the brothers. The handicap in this assessment may be the absence of an offense from the allegedly cursed duo; but that huddle gives way when one recalls that “The gods can as well lay a curse on an innocent person purely as a victim of their envy” (Ifie 146). The gods may have grown envious of the success made of the imperfect arrangement between the mere mortals (the brothers) and decided to bring them down by capitalizing on that weak bond and on the frailty of their natural source of unity - their mother. Thus, Umuto becomes the envious gods' mercenary for the purpose.

Destroying Biowa and Bradide should, therefore, begin with manipulating Umuto to sow a seed of discord between them. This works perfectly, and as in most tragedies, the scale does fall off her eyes, but only when the damage has been done:

UMUTO: Hold them, please hold them! One's rushed indoors, and the other going to the beach. Don't let them meet! Oh, my sons! *What have I done!* (304)

Too many exciting parallels could be drawn between *Song of a Goat* and *The Boat* in relation to the situation of rivalry among brothers. The boat is comparable to Ebiere as the cause of the fatal rift between two brothers. Like Ebiere, the boat is conceived of as a female, hence the

reference to it in feminine adjectives. For example, when Bradide asks Biowa “And you rammed *her* straight into your jetty and broke *her* nose” (286), he is talking about the boat. Biowa is the equivalent of Tonye in his brashness, carelessness and less-loving disposition to the jointly-owned property, yet selfish in his use of it. Recall that Tonye's love for Ebiere is merely to satisfy his lust, so also is Biowa's connection with the boat merely for enhancing his business trips. The older among the dueling pairs, are more reasonable, conscientious and considerate than them. Both brother-pairs die as a direct consequence of their involvement with a common “property”, but it must be reiterated that their deaths are remotely controlled by the unflinching gods.

In *Ozidi*, the rivalry is between Ozidi Senior and his fellow warriors of Orua. By being citizens of the same Orua community, these persons are considered brothers although in the African sense of the word. The rivalry between Ozidi and his fellow warriors stems from their envy of him as the bravest of them all, hence their plot to kill him. He, indeed, is killed by them, thus, making the rivalry a little bit lopsided. But the requisite balance is later restored when the reincarnated Ozidi engages the assailants and destroys them all as they did to him in his previous life. Implied in the foregoing discussion is the theme of fratricide. This is the biggest or the overarching theme in Clark-Bekederemo's tragic theatre. In most of his plays, characters come to their fatal ruin by the hands of their own brothers or townsmen.

The Avenger, the Unfaithful Wife, the Witch, the Trickster and the Buffoon

It is easy to classify Clark-Bekederemo's dramatis personae based on established archetypal character types. Predominant are such types as the avenger, the hero, the unfaithful wife, the stubborn maiden and the spirit suitor, the siren, the *femme fatale*, the witch, the trickster, the buffoon, the creator the hero and the scapegoat. In an essay in which I examined the myth of Ozidias a type of monomyth, I dealt extensively with the hero and scapegoat archetypes. Based on the limitations of size, this section of the present study shall examine only the avenger, the unfaithful wife, the witch, the trickster and the buffoon archetypes.

The avenger is a character born with the sole purpose of avenging the death of someone with whom they have blood ties, usually their father treacherously murdered especially out of envy either of his position or his wealth. The avenger is often the son or relation of the murdered person whose life, either from birth or from the time he learns of the murder, is regimented towards the fulfillment of this purpose, and very often that is the subject of a whole myth or an epic story. Ozidi is an example in this category of archetypes in Clark-Bekederemo's drama. Outlining the tenets of the archetypal vengeance plot, J. B. Egberike writes as follows:

The ethos of blood vengeance or the principle of exacting 'blood for blood' undertaken by the survivor on behalf of a murdered kinsman is an ancient and a recurrent theme in the folk sagas of European and African traditional communities. It belongs in the heroic tradition. The more usual patterns of this myth of heroic revenge are of two categories. In the first category, a father is murdered before the birth or in absence, of the son by a kinsman or a co-warrior who consequently supplants the deceased. The surviving son, isolated at the material time from the scene of the incident, eventually returns, after gaining full manhood and maturity, from his exile or sojourn to his

home country, and led by a mentor, he exacts a blood vengeance on his father's murderers to achieve a personal redress. In the second type, the avenger is the father while the son is the victim who suffers a cruel death at the hand of (usually) a rival lover. (117)

Ozidi belongs to the first category and ranks among such other avengers as Orestes in *Agamemnom*, Hamlet in *Hamlet* and Malcolm in *Macbeth*. Orestes avenges his father, Agamemnom, killed by his (Orestes') uncle and mother; Hamlet avenges his father, Hamlet, also killed by his uncle and mother; Malcolm avenges his father, Duncan, killed by his cousin, Macbeth. Ozidi junior is the avenger *per excellence*. The plot of the *Ozidi* play depicts a hundred percent replication of the tenets outlined by Egberike. Ozidi junior is born strictly to avenge the murder of his late father treacherously cut down by his fellow warriors of Orua chief of whom are Ofe, Azezabife, Oguaran and Agbogidi. Hence, revenge is the subject of the play thus, it is not surprising that we begin to get a hint of it even before the birth of the avenger when Old Woman informs Orea that she is pregnant with: “a son who Oyin Almighty/Herself is *sending forth to put to right / The terrible wrong done to his father*” (172). In fulfilment of his mission, the avenger kills all the murderers of his father, ably mentored by Oreame, his maternal grandmother and witch of renown.

The unfaithful wife is often an adulterer. Writes Ann Dobie, “As she appears in Flaubert's *Madamme Bovary*, the unfaithful wife, married to a dull, insensitive husband, turns to a more desirable man as a lover, with unhappy consequences” (61). Clytemnestra, wife of Agamemnom in *Agamemnon*, and Helen, wife of Menelaus in the same play, are other classic examples of the unfaithful wife archetype. While Helen eloped with her lover, Paris, the Prince of Troy, Clytemnestra allows herself to be seduced by Aegistius in protest against her husband's murder of their daughter. Ebieri in *Song of Goat* is the only example of the unfaithful wife archetype in Clark Bekederemo's drama. Like Flaubert's unfaithful wife, turns to the more desirable Tonye as a lover after her husband had grown dull and insensitive to her desire for sexual satisfaction and more children. She seduces him thereby arousing his suppressed desire for his brother's wife.

Because of the tragic consequences that often attend the infidelity of the unfaithful woman, that image often conflates with that of the siren or *anima* to form the *femme fatal* or dangerous woman archetype. Dire consequences, therefore, trail the unfaithful woman's infidelity. Helen's infidelity sparks off the bloody Trojan War and Clytemnestra's results in her eventual murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra. Ebieri's unfaithfulness triggers the harvest of deaths in *Song of a Goat* and forms the foundation and remote cause of a similar harvest in *The Masquerade*. When we come to the “witch” or its image, we come, perhaps, to a much more predominant feature of Clark-Bekederemo's drama than the avenger and unfaithful wife archetypes. Witches are “humans with some mysterious or supernatural powers with which they can do harm to their fellow human beings - power which is purely psychic” (Effiong, *Witchcraft* 78). Further, according to Effiong, witches could be men or women, and citing Nadel, Effiong stresses that “women are the most dangerous witches” (82). The witches in Clark-Bekederemo's drama are predominantly women except, of course, Bouakarabiri in *Ozidi*, who is a man and described as a “wizard.”

Accounting partly for the abundance of witches and witchcraft activities in Clark-Bekederemo's drama is the drama's localization within the Ijaw and Urhobo areas of the Niger Delta where witchcraft is a popular feature of the peoples' belief system and religio-cultural life. Other reasons may include the capacity of witches and their activities to inject tension and seriousness into the tragic plots, to influence the plots' catastrophic endings thereby instigating the requisite tragic emotions of pity and fear, and finally, to provide some kind of entertainment to the audience through their breathtaking actions. As in some Shakespearean plays like *Macbeth*, some of the tragic outcomes of Clark-Bekederemo's plays are linked to the activities of the witches in them. Umuto's role in catastrophic ending of her sons, Biowa and Bradide, has already been noted. As the mercenary of the gods' onslaught on her children, Umuto is imbued with a witchcraft spirit, and this is what instigates her unwarranted divisive actions that bring doom upon her sons. A similar scenario is dramatized in *Full Circle* with Tibo as the witch bringing ruin to her own son, Kari.

Witches and witchcraft activities are much more prevalent in *Ozidi* than in other plays of our author and this is explicable because the play is hewn out of a mythic source. Their major function here is to aid the development of the revenge component of the play's plot. The youthful avenger needs the assistance of such superhuman beings as witches to succeed in the ritual cleansing of Orua, for he will be wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against such demonic rulers of darkness in the high places of Orua as Ofe the Short, Azezabife the Skeleton Man, Oguaran the Giant, Agbogidi the Nude, Badoba the Tree Man, Tebesonoma of the Seven Crowns, Odogu the Ugly, Engarando the Smallpox King, et cetera. Hence, the witches' assignment begins with spiriting the unborn hero to safety, for without knowing it, Orea had miraculously conceived the chosen baby boy. The choice of Old Woman for this assignment is deliberate: she is Oreame's colleague in the club (coven) where she is a member and Oreame the president (172). Ododama, Oreame's town, is also the right place of safety since it is not only far from Orua but also the home of the supreme witch, grandmother, controller-general and mastermind of the imminent revenge mission. The role of the only male witch, Bouakarakarabiri, is to prepare the young avenger for the dangerous assignment ahead. As I have noted elsewhere, *Ozidi* senior is the choice of God and the gods for the mission of cleansing Orua of her blood-guiltiness, but to succeed in this, he must first be made perfect.

This, therefore, is the significance of his death, hence *Ozidi*'s murderers are unwittingly doing the will of God and the gods. The sinful but chosen *Ozidi* must die to be reborn as sinless and perfect for the job, which only the clean can embark on. The idea of the hero's perfection is so important for the plot development that it attains the status of a leitmotif. The motif is interestingly couched in the hero's all-round association with seven, the number of perfection. Young *Ozidi* is born in the seventh month; he comes from the seventh district of Orua; he is fortified via the content of seven boiling cauldrons; he is made a seven-pronged sword for the war ahead, and he will emerge the true seventh king of Orua at the end of the town's cleansing. Temugedege's kingship was merely an interim and emergency arrangement.

Another witch is Azema. Her role is to bring a sense of balance to the uneven battles in which Ozidi had enjoyed mysterious advantage over the demons based on inspiration from his grandmother. In the battle between Odogu and Ozidi junior, the audience enjoys, for once, a balanced encounter both between the two male fighters and their witch-mother inspirers. The men's even duel is exciting, but much more enticing is the battle of their witch mothers. Their mysterious acrobatics and flying acts are worthy of recounting to demonstrate the tendency towards excitement and balance:

The two witches fight. Azema tears at Oreame's hair. She seizes upon her head to bite it off with her cannibal teeth. Oreame cries her off and flies above her head of fire. Oreame turns herself into tsetse-fly, sticking needles and pins at Azema; streams of blood in the air. Azema develops a headache, she flakes Oreame with sparks of fire, Oreame replying with a shower of sand. Both witches are driving themselves to a standstill as did their sons when a loud peal of laughter breaks from the forest. Both witches recognize it immediately as of the old wizard of the forest Bouakararakabiri, and they break off, listening intently. 256

Oreame is clearly the most important witch in the play. Unlike other witches, her role is the most sustained for she, like her grandson, is a divine accomplice in the cleansing/ revenge task. Her assignment begins from when she gets delivery of her pregnant daughter brought home by her colleague. Thus, she is present all the way from the avenger's incubation period, his birth, infancy, and adolescence to the appointed time when he begins and concludes his assignment. Oreame's job ends after Ozidi's defeat of Odogu. This is why she is, ironically, cut down by the same son whom she had guided through thick and thin to success. In the mythic source account, she is revived after being cut down, but in the play, Clark-Beekederemo hands her a permanent death perhaps to ensure that neither Ozidi (later purged of revenge blood stain by the Smallpox disease) nor the cleansed Orua is re-contaminated by her.

Generally speaking, certain magical activities of witches both in *Ozidi* and in the other plays, inspire a combination of awe and excitement, and these emotions are capable of instigating repeat readings and live viewings of the plays. One of these magical fits is the ability of the witches to transform into other creatures, things and objects and to surf the waters or fly the skies in unimaginable vessels. Chief among the creatures into which witches could transform are bats, owls and cats (often black cats). Others may include goats, dogs, tsetse flies and fireflies thus justifying the claim that witches “give out glowing light” (Effiong 84) at night. Bats and owls are the chief animal symbols of witchcraft in these parts. In *Ozidi* the supreme witch, Oreame, is “the old bat” (226). When Oreame “the witch appears against a sky scurrying with clouds” (225) and the Old Woman (Oreame's colleague) “*spirit[s]*” Orea to Ododama (172), we understand that it is by means of either of the ominous bird symbols.

Witches and wizards are blood suckers and cannibals. According to Offiong, “they excise the soul of their victim and turn them into a goat or some other animals they wish to eat; once the animal is killed, cooked and eaten (in some mysterious manner), the victim dies” (113). Their cannibalism is enabled by their ability to magically grow fearsome razor-sharp teeth at will. Often razor sharp and sticking out beyond the lips, these teeth make the tearing of flesh

(especially human flesh) easy, hence Azema's "teeth [is] dripping with blood of victims she has eaten raw" (225) while she "tears at Oreame's hair ... seizes upon her head to bite it off with her cannibal teeth" (256). Kari paints the same picture of his mother when he says amidst their fight, "Take your hands and teeth off me. Take them, you witch! Or are you not satisfied with blood you've sucked already?" (388). Another is their ability to take some postures uncommon to ordinary beings. We are told at the fight between Oreame and Azema, Azema's face is "perpetually fixed in the sky" and "she carries a crown of volcano" (112). The person and posture of the old wizard is also what recounting:

...Bouakarakarabiri, the old man of the fo1-est. He is half-human character who can walk on his head and in his hand lie the secrets of all life and leaves in the forest. Standing on his head, his feet in the air, he has dozed off, reclining against a tree, and is snoring quietly and at uneven intervals in his corner. (182)

From the witch, we come to the trickster archetype. There are two convincing trickster figures in Clark-Bekederemo's drama who double as buffoons. They are Ogro in *The Raft* and Ewiri in *Ozidi*. A trickster, according to Dobie, "is mischievous, disorderly, and amoral. He disrupts the rigidity of rule-bound cultures, bringing them reminders of their less strict beginnings" (61). The trickster thus tricks other characters and this presupposes that he possesses wisdom and common sense in good measure. Ogro is a mischievous character, and he, ironically, is considered the most stupid person on board the raft when actually he is one of the wisest. He, for instance, tricks Olotu into smelling his shit in the name of fish bet. The rhetoric he employs to cajole his friends into peeping into the tin is evident of mischief and trickery:

OGRO: ... But seriously
 As I am Ogrope, born in the laps
 Of the nine rivers and still suckling
 On their breast, which of you shall have
 The first look and so live again? (108)

Quite disorderly and amoral, Ogro is rascally and his disorderliness manifests in his incessant singing amidst trouble; and his immorality hits the climax many times when he speaks of being in bed tonight with some decent girl even at the tick of their trouble. Part of the significance of Ogro's role is to provide the necessary intermittent comic relief in the heavily-tensed plot of the play in which the lumbermen are drifting to perdition at the sea. The trickster *per excellence* is Ewiri. In addition to providing comic relief to the tensed plot of the *Ozidi* play, Ewiri's trickery is deployed to ensure, enhance and speed up the necessary cleansing of the land of Orua. Ewiri does not only subtly goad the assailants of Ozidi senior into fighting Ozidi junior in order that they may be killed, he also tricks Ozidi junior and Tebesonoma into a fight. Perhaps the greatest weapon of all tricksters is the virtue of self-effacement, and Ewiri possesses this in great measure. Listen to the modesty in the character's response to Ozidi junior who seeks to confirm his (Ewiri's) ability at interpreting dreams:

EWIRI: No special powers, boy, no secret
 Powers whatsoever. I do not boast of
 Strange possessions; such things we leave to your grandmother
 It's commonsense alone I wield to effect. (235)

Related to the trickster character is the buffoon. The regular buffoon is a clown whose role it is to induce laughter in both the internal and external audience. Clark-Bekederemo exploits this archetype to dilute the often high tension in his tragic plays. The classical tragedians did not quite provide their audience with intermittent comic relief in the all too tensed tragic plots, but Shakespeare did. Therefore, Clark-Bekederemo's introduction of comic relief into his tragic plots could be described as one of his debts to the one he calls "master in and out of the trade" ("Blurb" *Example*). Ogro and Ewiri could pass as buffoons (while the former sleepwalks, croaks like frog while talking and also sings in the midst of trouble, the latter drinks and often scuttles in his walk and speech to the amusement of other characters), but character most fitting to that image is Burubo in *The Boat* who is also referred to in *The Return Home*. The character's physical defect as a cripple seems to combine very well with his wit to emphasise his buffoonery image. Now, imagine a cripple comparing himself in speed with those who have legs and what you will get is a man whose mission is to humour the crowd. In response, for instance, to Biowa who says he should not have bothered coming to welcome him, Burubo (the cripple) says, "I carry no crutches for anyone to knock down, and I came as fast as any waking" (273).

Part of the characteristics of the regular buffoon is that he/she is omniscient in the affairs of his immediate community. The regular clowns of world literature and real human societies are not just the first to get wind of the latest news in town, but are all-knowing as far as secrets home and abroad are concerned. In *The Return Home*, Maika, the only surviving elder from the days of *The Boat* recalls, for example, that Burubo was he "who, on his legless stool, heard before everybody all that happened on land and water". Same is true of Ewiri. There is nothing happening in Orua that eludes Ewiri. And we will recall that he is the one who brings news of Ozidi junior's arrival to the Ofe-led gang; he is present at all the fights; he is at the scene where Orea and Ozidi despair over the meaning of Ozidi's dream and goes on to interpret it; et cetera. This, in fact, is why he is "the Amananaowei of Orua" - the owner of town of Orua.

Conclusion

This study has examined Clark-Bekederemo's use of archetypal materials in his drama. While it has been noted that materials of archetypal significance permeate the different strata of Clark-Bekederemo's theatre from his subject matter through themes and satiations to character types, the study has closely investigated a few examples of that aspect of the playwright's dramatic creativity. It has been underscored in the study that Clark-Bekederemo depends for the effectiveness of his predominantly tragic theatre, on family or generational curse as subject matter. Mention has also been made of his exploitation of another kind of the same subject, namely, community curse in the play, *Ozidi*.

The essay has also shown how the playwright's deployment of the archetypal situation of rivalry among brothers has enabled him to effectively dramatise the implications of curse as a subject matter. The rivalry situation, it has been noted, provides for the dramatist, the requisite fierce conflicts that will result in catastrophic denouement. Like Shakespeare, Clark-Bekederemo's choice end for his tragic heroes and characters is death. Based on this, fratricide has been underlined as one of the principal themes in the tragic plays of the author.

In addition to the foregoing, the avenger, the unfaithful wife, the witch, the trickster and the buffoon have been examined as some of the archetypal figures that form Clark-Bekederemo's dramatis personae. The study has demonstrated that these character types are deployed for purposes ranging from the authentication of setting and source background to the acceleration of plot events, the creation of excitement and the inducement of comic relief as purgative strategies in the tragic plots of our author. It is, therefore, obvious from the foregoing that the effective use of archetypal resources lies at the heart of the timelessness and classical status that Clark-Bekederemo's theatre has assumed.

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