
**The Power of Fate or the Gods' Fault: A Semiotic Analysis of
*The Gods Are Not to Blame***

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Abstract

Fate is a force, a principle with decisive or far-reaching consequences that inevitably happens to somebody or something. In Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the destiny of Odewale, the main character of the play, has been predicted at birth that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Thus, mixed up incidents work out to make things so mysterious that the predicted fate comes to pass. This paper, through a semiotic approach, analyses the different elements of fate that worked out against Odewale leading to his downfall. It also discusses the passive role played by the gods and how this fact has negatively influenced characters' lives showing that the gods are to blame too.

Keywords: Power, fate, irresponsible, gods, blame.

Résumé

Le sort est une force, un principe ayant des conséquences décisives ou de grande portée qui arrive inévitablement à quelqu'un ou à quelque chose. Dans *The Gods Are Not to Blame* d'Ola Rotimi, le destin d'Odewale, le personnage principal de la pièce, a été prédit à la naissance qu'il va tuer son père et épouser sa mère. Ainsi, un amalgame d'incidents ont rendu les choses si mystérieuses que le destin prédit a fini par se réaliser. L'article, à travers une approche sémiotique, analyse les différentes forces du destin qui se sont mobilisées contre Odewale et qui l'ont conduit à la chute. Il pose également un regard de critique sur le rôle passif joué par les dieux et comment ce fait a influencé négativement la vie des personnages, montrant que les dieux sont aussi à blâmer.

Mots-clés : Pouvoir, destin, irresponsabilité, dieux, blâme.

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Introduction

Fate is one of the most explored themes in literature. In Greece, China, Italy, England, America and Germany, many writers have raised the issue of fate and its implications. In ancient Greece, many legends and tales teach how futile it is for somebody trying to escape an “inexorable fate” that has been “correctly predicted” (Karamanolis 610-611). This portrayal of fate is present in works such as *Oedipus Rex*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and *Theogony*. *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is a direct inspiration from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*.

In English literature, fate has played a notable role from the Elizabethan to the twentieth century. Therefore, dealing with fate invites great writers like Sophocles, William Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, Samuel Beckett and William Wymark Jacobs. From Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606), Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891) to Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* (1957), and W. W Jacobs’ popular short story “The Monkey’s Paw” (1902); elements and the influence of fate are fully depicted. As a result, these works involve a protagonist who cannot escape their destiny, however hard they try.

Fate, for Vasily, is “an invisible force’ the ‘weight’ and ‘hypnotic power’ of which can crush an individual or character ‘forcing him to think as it wanted, to write as it dictated. This force was inside him; it could dissolve his will and cause his heart to stop beating” (x). Bollas argues that fate is “a prophecy’ the knowledge of which comes through ‘an oracle’ either through a ‘verbal statement or riddle” (205). Doob speculates that fate has a “negative connotation’ because of ‘its relationship to words like *fatal*, *fateful*, and *fatalism*, all of which resonate unpleasant events or dispositions” (206). Fate can be defined in the context of this paper as a force, principle with decisive or far-reaching consequences that inevitably happens to somebody or something. Whether one believes it or not, there are some supernatural forces that are beyond one’s control. These are the forces of fate or destiny that determine what direction an individual’s life takes.

For people who are fortunate, the forces of fate help them swing in a good direction that brings peace, health and wealth but for others like Odewale, they drive them to unbearable situations like agony and misfortune. In Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the destiny of Odewale, the main character of the play, has been predicted at birth that

he will kill his father and marry his mother. Thus, mixed up incidents work out to make things so mysterious that the predicted fate comes to pass. Beside these incidents is that, Odewale's gods have not fully and efficiently played their role. These gods have not been as protective as they might be to thwart the danger hovering on Odewale.

The paper, through a semiotic approach, sorts out and analyses the different elements of fate that worked out against Odewale leading to his downfall. So, the study takes into account the very incidents which occur right from the birth of Odewale to the responsibility he has taken, his heroism down to the discovery of his true identity. It also discusses the dangers of the information given by the Oracle and takes a critical look at the passive role played by the gods and how this irresponsibility has negatively influenced characters' lives showing that the gods are to blame.

Semiotics is used as the methodological approach, in the analysis of the different formal and thematic elements that work out against Odewale leading to his downfall. It helps decode and grasp the meaning of the different signs in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. The understanding of this theory has helped me shed more light on Ola Rotimi's play. Defined by Eco as "a theory of signs" (70), semiotics dates back to the philosophy of John Locke and has been given a systematic exposition by Charles S. Sanders Peirce. Semiotics is about the properties of signs and their functions, that is, it deals with the way in which signs operate in designating an object for an interpretant. Morris, a leading semiotician of the twentieth century argues, "the work of art consists of iconic signs or is an iconic sign itself" (18). Peirce goes on to point out the role of semiotics as "a formal doctrine of signs," which is 'another name for logic as epitomized by the properties of signs' (73).

Considering character, narrator, plot line, and story in narrative as "super-signs" (75), semiotics, in this essay, has not only helped generate a general meaning contained in the play but it has also helped analyse the different characters with regard to what they say, how they say it and why they are saying it, all this, to get the meaning embedded in them by the playwright. In the context of this study, semiotics helpsscrutinise the different symbols used in the play in order to derive their implied meaning.

The paper first, explores the power of fate as a source of tragedy. It then examines characters and other fateful elements to show how they have precipitated Odewale to a sad end. It finally discusses the dangers of

the information given by the Oracle which shows the limits of the gods' power and charges them with murder.

1. The Power of Fate as a Source of Tragedy

Fate has posed many challenges to Odewale in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Right from the birth of Odewale at the opening of the play, bad and ill-fated omen have succeeded one after the other to later concur for his downfall as a brave king. After the birth of Odewale, the first deed carried out is the respect of the custom which is “to divine the future that this boy has brought with him” (Rotimi 2). This incident – ceremony of their custom, gives a fertile ground for Odewale's fate to sprout. The question that rises is this: what is the use of knowing a child's future at birth when there is nothing to be done to avert the newborn's fate? It can be said that, this ceremony sparks off everything and casts a bad spell on Odewale. Had it not taken place early at his birth, chances are that Odewale would have stayed with his biological parents to grow up. And if Odewale had stayed in Kutuje, his native village, he could have taken time to know his biological father and mother.

So, this piece of knowledge could have guided him in his decision to run away. The fact of staying in Kutuje would have spared both Odewale's life and his father's. This, in return could have helped him avert his fate – killing his father, patricide, and proceeding to marry his own mother, incest. Therefore, Ojuola, his mother's grief-stricken death at the end of the play would not have happened if Odewale had known her as his biological mother. The confusion which shoves Odewale to his abominable situation is nothing but the real manifestation of the power of fate on him. Yet, the influence of fate creates this confusion at the beginning of the play to take root. And luckily for the playwright, he found the very bait – ceremony, which will catch the fish – Odewale.

So, once fate finds a place, it proceeds through different agents to carry out its negative impact on Odewale. That is why, the reader is not surprised to see that Baba Fakunle is the first actor to carry out the fatal activity on Odewale, for after having cast his “Opele, stringed objects of divination” (2), he could vomit nothing but ominous fate about Odewale: “This boy, he will kill his own father and then marry his own mother!” (3). It can be underscored that Odewale's fate starts working at the very moment when Baba Fakunle accepts to divine the baby's future. That is

the reason why Baba Fakunle serves as the first person through the mouth of whom, the bad news about Odewale comes forth. It must be noted that Baba Fakunle is not acting on his own will but he is rather under the control of Odewale's fate. Therefore, the exclamation "Bad word!" (3), as the narrator labels this bad news, is an indirect exercise of the power of fate on Odewale.

Another ominous element is the dirge sung by the Townspeople after having learnt about Odewale's bad future. It is surprising that a dirge is sung at the shrine of Ogun during a blessing ceremony. Singing 'softly' a dirge, at the birth of a baby, creates a paradoxical situation in the readers' mind. The execution of a dirge at birth is a bad omen foreshadowing the sorrowful situation that befalls Odewale at the end of the play. Tongue-tied, this is how the narrator presents Odewale's fatal situation:

Mother weeps. Father weeps.
The future is not happy,
but to resign oneself to it
is to be crippled fast.
Man must struggle.
The bad future must not happen.
The only way to stop it
is to kill,
kill the unlucky messenger
of the gods,
kill the boy.
Mother sinks to the ground,
in sorrow for the seed
that life must crush so soon!
Father consoles her, in his own grief. (3)

While analysing the above quotation, it can be understood that Ola's diction itself portends bad omen. The weeping of Odewale's father and mother shows us that the future is not a happy one. Were it a bright future, the parents would rather be celebrating and rejoicing. So, the parents understood early at the beginning that, in order to stop their weeping, resigning is not the solution but that they must rather struggle to prevent the bad future from happening. The struggle is rude and undesirable because it is dreadful and infanticidal to kill one's offspring. According to the narrator, the parents have no other way than killing the "unlucky messenger" in order to solve the dilemma. From this point lies the negative impact of fate because, according to the demands of

Odewale's fate, the "only way" for Odewale's parents to "stop the bad future" is to kill their son – infanticide. Once again, the child's fate creates a confusion in the minds of the parents. This terrible situation plunges both King Adetusa and Ojuola, his wife, in a dilemma.

Are Adetusa and Ojuola going to spare their own lives by killing their very first son or will they allow Odewale to live to kill the father and marry the mother? The weeping of Odewale's parents confirms the difficulty in their choice, that is, to offer their son in sacrifice to the gods. Odewale's fate has blurred their choice and turned it to a dilemma for the parents. They have no choice, sparing Odewale's life straightforwardly means to lose theirs. So, from the 'weeping of the father and mother' through a 'future which is not happy', to the killing of 'the unlucky messenger in order to stop the misfortune', are not mere coincidences but rather the true manifestation of fate which prepare Ojuola to "sink to the ground, in sorrow for the seed that life must crush so soon!", and for Adetusa to console 'her, in his own grief' (3).

An unlucky messenger with a bad future and who, must at all cost be killed, could offer nothing better to his parents than sorrowful action verbs like: "Mother 'weeps'. Father 'weeps'. [...] Mother 'sinks' to the ground, in sorrow [...] and Father 'consoles' her, in his own grief" (3). Well drenched with sorrowful conjugated verbs like: weeps, sinks and consoles, Odewale's parents have had no chance left to think of other alternatives than surrendering to the demands of the boy's fate – allowing the priest of Ogun to tie Odewale's feet with a string of cowries as a sacrifice to the gods. From this choice of words, it can be argued that Ola Rotimi knows what he wants and how to get it. Fate wields a negative power on parents so much so that they are all caught in its noose. Fate is not the only element that negatively contributes to Odewale's tragic end, characters are also carriers of fatal incidents.

2. Characters as Fate Related Elements

Many important incidents are characteristic of the negative impact of fate on Odewale. These incidents are discovered through the analysis of other characters who serve as channels of fate. With regards to how fate operates, it can be argued that, even if an event had been fated to happen, someone or something must necessarily be responsible to make it happen. In other words, something must be the cause for something

else to happen. In *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, characters like Gbonka, Ogundele and Alaka have directly or indirectly participated in the downfall of Odewale. Thus, it is their inaction together with Odewale's hasty and harsh action toward Aderopo and Baba Fakunle that give strength to the so-called fate to come to pass.

After Baba Fakunle who, first discovered and served as a medium to the accomplishment of Odewale's fate, Gbonka comes as the second character whose betrayal and disobedience have helped fate to wield its power on Odewale. Gbonka is first introduced as King Adetusa's (the late king's) "special messenger" (3) and at the same time, happens to be the one who is sent to dump Odewale in the evil grove. The word 'special' shows that it is not Gbonka's first time to kill babies with a bad future. He is a master in that domain, if not, a well-known in these sorts of sacrifices. As a result, his 'secret mission' consists in killing Odewale and by so doing, to stop the bad fate. Yet, through the narrator, we come to discover that Gbonka did not kill the little boy as he is instructed but out of sympathy, he rather handed Odewale over to Ogundele, a hunter from Ijekun who nurtured him to maturity. The question which is raised is: if Gbonka is used to killing other babies in the evil grove, how come that he, all of a sudden, decides in this specific case to spare Odewale's life? As an answer to this question, two critical perspectives can be considered.

The first analysis is devoid of fated elements and therefore blames Gbonka for all that has happened to Odewale. As a special messenger to King Adetusa, Gbonka's inaction is synonymous with betrayal and disobedience to the King. Well known and trusted by King Adetusa, Gbonka could have sacrificed the child in respect of what he is told and also to preserve the life of Adetusa. He, instead, disobeys the king by letting Odewale live. Most definitely, the catastrophe would have been averted if not for the disobedience of Gbonka. Likewise, he has disobeyed the Ifa Priest, for if he had obeyed the king and the Ifa Priest by sacrificing the ill-fated boy to the gods in the forest as he is instructed, perhaps the evil would have been averted.

The act of betrayal shows up at the moment when Gbonka hands the baby over to Ogundele, a childless hunter, to raise. As he is instructed to kill the baby in the evil grove, he thus betrays Adetusa, the Ifa Priest, the gods and all those who have lost their life, by sparing Odewale's life. If the poor Odewale grows up to carry out the evil acts of murder and

incest unknowingly, it is because Gbonka betrays him too. Had Gbonka for an instant thought about the misfortune to befall Odewale when he grows up, he would have reduced the poor child's pains by killing him. Gbonka has been in position of power but has decided to be apathetic to both Adetusa and Odewale. He holds it a secret and never dares to inform Adetusa about the existence of the child nor tries to raise Odewale's awareness about his true identity, even when Odewale grows up. Since Gbonka knows that the evil destiny from the gods can only be fulfilled as long as the boy lives, he could have at least revealed in time the whole truth to Odewale. Maybe this information could be useful enough to save Adetusa and his son's lives. It goes without saying that if King Adetusa had been aware of Gbonka's act of betrayal, he would have inflicted him a severe punishment. If Adetusa and the Ifa Priest had known that Gbonka has no intention of killing the baby, they would have chosen somebody else.

The second critical perspective takes into consideration the fate-oriented aspect of Gbonka's actions, that is to say, the negative power of fate on Gbonka, which makes him carry out Odewale's destiny. In this specific case, it can be understood that Gbonka is not acting on his own but he is rather fulfilling the task imposed on him by Odewale's fate. Therefore, he is not to blame, because, humanly speaking, any sensitive person would have pitied the innocent child as Gbonka does. Gbonka is not only kind-hearted but also spiritual. He understands the sanctity of life and for this reason, he does not want to kill Odewale. But acting under the impulse of fate, he is obliged to do things he could have done otherwise. His betrayal and disobedience to Adetusa, things he never did in his past life, are not mere incidents but the manifestation of the power of fate. It is this very manifestation of fate which prevents him from killing the boy and thus making a step further toward Odewale's sorrowful end. When he has the possibility, the same fate refrains him from informing, in time, none of the potential victims. Woes befall Odewale not because of his sincere act of sympathy but rather because of the invisible power of fate which forces his hand. This influence has led to the abominable acts of murder and incest committed by Odewale when it was too late.

Gbonka is not the only character to undergo the machination of fate. Ogundele the hunter and his wife Mobike have also participated in the achievement of Odewale's fate. Ogundele's irresponsibility is shown

from the fact that he has never revealed Odewale's true identity nor his own. If Ogundele has told Odewale that Mobike is not his mother and that he himself is not the boy's biological father, this could have perhaps helped Odewale in making his decision – to stay with them forever. Ogundele does not play his role as a 'father' and this failure creates the confusion which in turn has helped the poor boy's fate to come to pass. Not only does he remain deaf and dumb but he does not also die early to allow Odewale to discover the truth. He is so fate oriented that he dies when Odewale is a fully grown up man – he has already murdered Adetusa, his own father and married Ojuola, his own mother with whom they have got four siblings.

Another character who betrays Odewale in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, is Alaka. Though Alaka has been Odewale's childhood friend, the force of fate prevents him from telling Odewale his true paternity and the fate that awaits him if he visits Kutuje. Here again, the negative power of fate has been displayed through Alaka's testimony which comes too late – until when the deeds have been done. Had it come a bit earlier, such a revelation would have made Odewale angry or suspicious but it would have helped him to escape his ominous fate. Alaka's delay has sped up Odewale's doom. Alaka's total silence shows that he betrays Odewale and for this reason cannot be called his friend. Alaka would rather be called Odewale's "fiend", because just like this bad fate, he has not been helpful to him. What role has Alaka played for Odewale in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*?

Being well aware of the crucial role played by a true friend in one's life, it can be argued that everybody could have refused to help Odewale except Alaka. Alaka does exactly to Odewale what Gbonka does to King Adetusa. The manifestation of fate is shown in the fact that Alaka, not only reacts too late, when the deed is done but he also shows up to blame Odewale for events he has no control over. If Odewale's childhood friend like Alaka has tried to convince him with the timely details as it is the case at the end, chances are that Odewale would have taken it more seriously to avoid Ede, where he kills his own father; Kutuje, where he marries his mother – the direct cause of the plague.

A clear analysis of what is going on in *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, shows that Odewale has done all he could to avoid committing both patricide and incest but fate would not let him escape. It is possible to say

that the gods are not to be blamed and that Odewale is free to make his choice. Indeed, Odewale exercises his freewill to choose, but a series of incidents and fated elements have negatively influenced him in such a way that his choice is not good enough to save him from his doom. Any normal and sensitive human being would have acted as Odewale does, that is, to avoid a sorrowful situation in life. No one would deliberately choose a life of sorrow, and for this reason, it can be argued that, in Odewale's case, it is rather sorrow which comes uninvited to him. This is known as the power of fate.

Most definitely, fate is not the only cause, the gods also are to blame. If the gods had fully played their role, no element of fate could have been a catalyst to speed up Odewale's waterloo.

3. The Gods are to Blame

Also known as deities, the gods are spiritual and supernatural beings, especially with male attributes, viewed as influencing human fate. Being defined so, it can be understood that the gods are believed to be endowed with immortal powers, which they use to preside over, control and even affect the course of human life. If the gods are meant to protect, control and decide human fate, what had been the role of Obatala (the god of creation) before the birth of Odewale? And where was Ogun (the god of Iron and War) when Odewale was struggling with his fate? Answers to these questions are meant to prove the contribution of the gods to Odewale's misfortune and the dangers of superstitious beliefs.

Odewale does not decide by himself to come into the world, if he comes into being, this has been possible through these "lazy and powerless" gods who, failed to prepare a good coming to him. First of all, the gods could have kept the couple barren for this period of evil fate to pass before the conception of Odewale if they were really powerful and presiding over them. Second, the gods could have prevented Odewale from coming into being – destroy the foetus from the mother's womb. Where is their power when they fail twice to prevent the evil in Adetusa's family? They proved powerless until the birth of Odewale to claim the boy's blood as a sacrifice to purge the evil – they are infanticidal gods. This is plotting against the child, if not, what is the use of permitting a child to be born and claiming his blood as a sacrifice? They never care about the Odewale's prenatal protection but are too hasty to reveal that the child has

a bad future. This news came sooner than necessary; why not allowing Odewale to grow up, consult and leave his biological parents for a village different from his native one? The gods are to blame for confusing both Odewale and his parents. This incompetence shows the limits of their power. Their irresponsibility comes from the fact that they did not kill Odewale themselves but left their job or task of protection to human beings who are more fragile.

Knowing that they are powerless, they could have kept quiet at the birth of the child (Odewale) and leave it to him to decide when he grows up. As it is the custom, he could have consulted these very gods to be aware of his fate. In this case, Odewale is not to blame because, the decision he has taken at Ijekun, would have proved better if the powerless gods have been wise enough to hold their tongues at Odewale's birth. They have rushed to give the information which has complicated and worked out against Odewale's plan to avert the misfortune. Odewale knows nothing about his coming into being and even his existence and when he grows up, he has never been given the chance to decide either. While Odewale is struggling to know the nature of the curse "What kind of curse, Old One?", the gods confirm their evil role in the forthcoming murder: "...the gods have willed that you will kill your father, and then marry your mother!" (60). The gods are the ones who killed Odewale.

Benevolent gods would not have 'willed' to kill an innocent child. Odewale rather bumps into some wicked gods who want to swallow him up. While trying with his retrospective question "Me! Kill my own father, and marry my own mother?" to unknot his dilemma and solve his problem "What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?" (60), the gods remain indifferent to his case. Instead, they rather condemn Odewale replying that they could do "Nothing. To run away would be foolish. The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell. Just stay where you are. Stay where you are... stay where you are..." (60). Comparing Odewale to a snail makes things clear that he may will but he cannot cast off his shell which represents here Odewale's fate. There is a discrepancy between the fact that, the gods are compelling Odewale to stay without giving him the reason why he must do so. Ignoring one's true identity like Odewale will be silly to stay and kill one's father and marry your mother. It does make sense when Odewale decides to flee because "...the toad likes water, but not when the water is boiling" (60).

Another element which, proves the gods' crime, is the message of the Oracle of Ijekun which Odewale consults when he grows up. It is a wonder to know if the gods of Ijekun are the same or different from the ones of Kutuje. If they are the same gods, it confirms the idea that they are all to blame. If they are different, one can charge the gods of Ijekun of complicity in the murder of Odewale. If not, how come that the Oracle (through these very gods), does not take time to clarify things for Odewale? Why not telling Odewale that he is not living in his native village, that Ogundele and his wife Mobike are not Odewale's biological parents? All these details could have made things clearer for Odewale not to run away. Odewale could have sought additional information from Alaka who is still alive. Not running will be synonymous with avoiding to kill his father in order to marry his mother. This is the reason why it can be argued that the gods have not been helpful to Odewale. The gods never want Odewale to live, that is why, from his birth till his death they have kept him in ignorance to better shove him to destruction. The only say from the Ifa Priest is a warning "You cannot run away from it,..." (60).

Without any clarification about Odewale's identity, any normal human being would have reacted as Odewale does – that is, running away from one's "biological" parents to avoid committing both incest and patricide, which are abominations. Yet the gods keep quiet, hide the information about Odewale's true identity from him and precipitate his downfall. To Odewale's question "Am I not who I am?", I am shocked to the dark answer "You have a curse on you, son" (60), given by Ifa Priest. The gods never help Odewale to decide, if they do, they would have provided him with as much information as possible about his true identity in order to convince him to stay far from his fate.

Another reason is that, though the public ignores the clemency of Gbonka (the information of sparing Odewale's life) toward Odewale, the gods are fully aware of the existence of Odewale, the sacrificial child. How can it be proved that the gods are aware? Two reasons corroborate the fact that the gods are aware that Odewale is still alive. The first reason is that, as a sacrifice destined to the gods, these very gods never receive their sacrifice (Odewale's blood) and cannot tell us that they ignore his existence. As the gods have not yet received Odewale's blood as a sacrifice, they and Gbonka know fully well that Odewale is still alive, a clue that the rest of the general public do not have. Yet they never reveal it to the public

especially Odewale's parents – as a precautionary principle, and this for the father not to engage himself in a fight with young men of his son's type. Keeping both the parents and the son ignorant of the information that each of them needs to save their life, shows that the gods have knowingly decided not to help the Child. This also shows the negative role played by the gods and confirms thus their evil contribution to the tragic end of Odewale. Odewale is an unassisted innocent and fragile child who, normally needs protection from the gods to make good decisions in order to avert his fate. But unfortunately, the gods who are supposed to protect Odewale rather turn out to be the ones who exposed him to his fate.

The analyses prove that the gods are doing the opposite of what they could have done to save Odewale. The gods speak where they are powerless and there is even no need but rather keep quiet where they are expected to reveal the truth. Odewale needs more information of his identity when he consults the Oracle as a grown up than when he is powerless and innocent at birth. Of course, Gbonka does not kill Odewale to prevent the bad fate but the gods could have proved fairer and helpful to the child that everything could have moved smoothly without endangering people's lives. If they are not bloodthirsty gods, what costs them to reveal the whole truth to Odewale? This very truth could have convinced him to remain in his foster family.

The second reason is the presence of the plague – omen, both people and animals die. These omen send a straightforward message – the existence of Odewale, destined to kill his father and marry his mother. With all these reasons, the gods cannot say that they are not to blame. To be innocent could have demanded more from the gods than a mere information at the birth of Odewale. The gods could have practically committed themselves to and continued their endeavours to help the grown up Odewale to take the right decision to avert his fatal situation. But alas! The gods fail to protect Odewale and rather plot against the innocent child, whom they want as a sacrifice.

Odewale's misfortune also serves as a satire to correct the countless crimes committed on innocent children thrown or killed in the evil grove. This, not only shows the limits of superstitious powers but also proves how people's ignorance has led to ignominious crimes. The people of Kutuje believe in the existence of the gods who can tell them what is right to do and how to act in life. So, the blind implementation of the gods'

demands and orders costs the lives of innocent people like Odewale. In addition, it exposes the dangers of such practices for society – the plague. Ogundele who accepts Odewale, represents the advent of Western religion. With the coming of Christianity, scorn is poured on many African practices and by so doing, some are completely suppressed as being inhumane. As a result, many ‘possessed children’ are picked up from the evil forests and raised. These children, unknown to their biological parents, grow up to carry out their fate one day. This happens because neither these children nor their true parents, are aware of the existence of the other. And Odewale is a case in point – the direct consequence of the clash between traditional customs and the Western religion, especially, Christianity.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been, first, to explore the power of fate as a source of tragedy; then, examine characters and other fateful elements to show how they have precipitated Odewale to a sad end and discuss the role played by the gods in Odewale’s downfall. The analysis has proved that, Odewale’s fate along with its impact on other characters and the gods, are the elements which have worked together to ruin his life. Odewale’s predicament shows that fate does not operate alone and, in most cases, “human beings are better off not knowing their fate” (Bargdill 208). But once, one happens to know one’s fate, like Odewale does, the best solution is not to run away but rather, to stay and courageously face it. If Odewale had stayed in Ijekun to bravely face his fate, he could have avoided abominations like patricide and incest which, lead to his self-destruction. It also blames the gods for being powerless and irresponsible. The gods hide behind fate to sentence Odewale. The analysis ends up raising people’s awareness on the dangers of superstitious beliefs. So, the responsibility is shared here as fate, the gods and Odewale himself, are to be blamed.

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