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National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Literary Corner: Eldred Jones on Chinua Achebe (side b)

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WEBVTT

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<i>Eldred Jones</i>: --Clark is probably second only to Shiyenka in terms of the level of sophistication in his writing.

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Clark, in addition to being a dramatic writer, also writes prose and poetry.

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But he's most noted for his drama.

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And I think in writing, his works,

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the prose and poetry, and the drama, and in reading it, you can see the overlaps in terms of style in his various works.

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Clark's best play was probably his first play which was "Song of a Goat."

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Briefly, the plot is very simple: Zifa, who is the major character, loses his virility.

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Um, Zifa's wife Ebiere, in frustration, turns to make love with Zifa's brother Tonyá.

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Zifa becomes furious and seeks to kill Tonyá,

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because of all of this turmoil going on around him, he hangs himself.

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Ashamed by his own sterility, and his brother's death,

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Zifa walks into the sea, drowning himself.

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Very interesting play.

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But, as a sequel to "A Song of a Goat", Clark went on to write "Masquerade"

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in which the child conceived during Tonyá's and Eibere's relationship depicted in a song of a goat,

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that kid, the child that is born of that relationship becomes a main character in the "The Masquerade",

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which is Clark's second play.

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From "The Masquerade," Clark went on to write "The Raft",

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his third play and the latest play is "Ozidi".

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From "Song of a Goat" all the way up to "Ozidi" we find Clark defining people, a concern with lineage,

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people suffering because of what their ancestors did and so on.

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But above all of those characteristics, you have a very strong presence of arbitrary in this.

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Incidents seem to happen to the characters for no reason at all.

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Just out of the blue, the characters find themselves in some kind of an ordeal,

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um, but overall, Clark is just a fine writer.

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And you'll hear the quality of his work as you hear a brief excerpt from his third play, "The Raft".

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I want you to notice, as mentioned earlier, Clark's interest in defining people.

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As a setup to the excerpt, the characters in "The Raft"--



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