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# Ideological Shifts and Cultural critique in Wọlé Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel

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## Abstract

The Lion and the Jewel offered a strong template for the discussion of ideological shifts and cultural critique in which the crisis thereof has culminated into the richness of the controversy of the dramatic conversation and debate of the play. This was done with a view at critically examining the shifts in ideals and cultural beliefs from both the indigenous African cultural perspective and that of the Western modernization. This study, therefore, took a cursory but brief historical leap into the idealization for the liberation and decolonization of the African continent that took its shape ideologically in the first half of the 20th century started by its key pioneers and intellectual founders like Edward Wilmont Blyden (1832-1912), W.E.B. Du Bois and others. The creation of a level playground for the African culture to ideologically clash with that of the Western modernization in the play was a deliberate attempt at critically assessing both cultural values from an empirical prism before drawing one's conclusion for the decolonization agenda of African nationalism of the 19th and early 20th century that was meant to agitate for a unified African identity. Using a postcolonial theory for this study whilst adopting a qualitative approach method, (Jasper, J.M. 2010) argued it that pragmatism means rethinking action, meaning and emotion while feminism is to mean the investigation of cultural processes and micro-level interactions between oppressor and the oppressed in which gender is based on cultural processes such as the internalization of dominant ideas than into class or race and ethnicity. The deep concern and the finding of this study was that the assertion for the sexual preference and Baroka's will to overpower that of Lakunle over Sidi, was something that must creditably be given to the social movement of resistance, pragmatism and feminist struggle once mentioned by Jasper.

**Keywords:** Ideological Shifts, Cultural Critique, Feminism, De-Yorubanization, Self-Determination

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## Introduction

Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel is not just a comedy of manners but a serious social commentary and a sharp attempt at viewing ideological exegeses of a cultural norm at both ends. This study at its best is for re-imagining of African emancipation history and rereading of its postcolonial experience and eventual liberation from the grip and fear of colonization torture that began from the 1884-85 Berlin Conference where Europe had divided Africa and shared the continent among itself without the consent of the African leaders acquiescing to such a deliberate pillaging that had led to the beginning of colonialism in Africa.

The liberation movement that trailed colonialism in Africa centuries later was for the African continent to fight for its freedom and self-determination. In 1905, the Maji-Maji Tanzania rebellion had led to a resistance by African fighters against German rule. In 1912, the formation of the South African Native National Congress that later changed to African National Congress also formed the first major political resistance and national liberation movement by Black South Africans against the white minority rule of apartheid. Ethiopian's resistance against Italian's invasion in 1935 could also be regarded as a form of movement against foreign rule.

In 1945, the Pan African Congress in Manchester by Pan Africanists like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya began the ideological shifts for the independence movements and self-determination of the African state that started in 1952. This, of course, had also led to the uprising of Mau Mau of 1960 in Kenya against the British rule. Ngugi wa Thiongo, in his prison memoir, Wrestling with the Devil, also describes how the national leaders of this movement were detained or brutally murdered. But in 1957, Ghana became the first African sub-Saharan country to gain independence from colonial rule where Kwame Nkrumah had declared that the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of Africa.

But in 1960, the independence of seventeen African countries marked a significant change in global politics to declare the year as the year of Africa. 1975-1994 were remarkable moments of revolutionary battles and struggle for survival in African history. This had also culminated to the independence of several other African nations and also the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and South African general elections of 1994.

(Falola, 2004) is of the opinion that this kind of struggle by the African intellectuals who had led the movement on the inter-related issues of power, identity politics, self-assertion and autonomy for themselves and also for their continent was because these Western-educated Africans had wanted to create a better Africa through connecting nationalism to knowledge. Based on this argument, this narrative of historiography, according to (Falola, 2026) can help us redefine and question our understanding of history and its creation. Not only that, it also helps in the deconstruction of Eurocentric knowledge systems.

(Ngugi, 2004) in his 'Decolonizing the Mind' thesis had attributed these factors mentioned by Falola as basis for the need to liberate the African continent from the shackles of colonial bondage because imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases had continuously "press-ganged" the African man in the past to plough and turn the soil over. After this, blinkers were placed on him as may be determined for him by the master who was armed with the bible and the sword while controlling Africa's economy, politics and cultures. In fact, he had accused the oppressive system of the European imperialists for using every means and power within it to also kill the creative initiative of the Black people in history through a real control of all the means of communal self-definition in time and space.

Therefore, the use of language choice in any creative work and the use to which this can be put, like Soyinka had done in The Lion and the Jewel, are central to a people's definition of their identity

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consciousness, and also in relation to their natural and socio-cultural environment. How has all these factors mentioned affected the postcolonial experiences of the African people who may still be nursing their wound of colonial brutality?

In view of this, creative writers like Ngugi and Soyinka must have therefore, taken to their art of writing to reflect this thought of mine in their works as I have no doubt that Soyinka's style in honoring the path of the colonial past in Africa and the postcolonial experiences gathered in time and space could be in the creation of his four important dramatic characters in The Lion and the Jewel to depict the colonial strangulation and the resistance of its horror by the African people.

One of these four characters is the schoolteacher, Lakunle. The schoolteacher is an embodiment of the vicious force that straddles two different cultural worlds of the European ideals and that of the African to depict grave incursion and over ambition of the European power. He's of Yoruba origin but his acts are in sharp contrast with the ideals of the Yoruba people to make someone doubt his true identity. The European Whiteman who had ruled the Apartheid South Africa in the past may have had this same mentality that South Africa and her mineral resources actually belonged to him because of his power of gun and bullet, but the truth had remained that he was not actually the son of the soil. Is Lakunle truly the son of the soil for him to have behaved in such manners in the play?

The Yoruba people have a name for a person like Lakunle, and the name is in the metaphorical disposition of name classification that bat is neither a bird nor an animal because of its mammalian traits. Although, biological mammal classification has put it that bat is actually an animal. Therefore, Lakunle is a hybrid character who floats between two different cultural worlds. The second character is Sidi (the village belle) who is the symbol of African beauty and its abundant resources that were made available for pillaging through European incursion. The third character is Sadiku; the oldest wife in Baroka's harem. She represents a dissenting voice for the feminist movement against the patriarchal hegemony of the African society which now becomes a battle of twist between two struggles in pre-coloniality and postcolonial Africa.

Baroka is the fourth character. As the village head, he's known as 'Bale Ilujinle'. He's a character whose instinct is in sharp contrast with that of Lakunle, the schoolteacher. His character is a true symbol of full resistance against European aggression and oppression. The personalities of these four characters and the ideological views they share are different from one to another. These four characters are a subset collection of individuals creatively designed by Soyinka for the purpose of carving out a cultural phenomenon around a specific subject matter in order to weave a dramaturgical experience of conflict and crisis as dramatic elements for his work.

Among the Yoruba people of Southwest Nigeria, the issue of bride-price is a traditional custom that is to serve as a pre-condition requirement that must be met by any suitor seeking the hand of any bride in marriage. But here is Lakunle, an educated Yoruba man who teaches in a local school of Ilujinle village but who frowns at such a traditional custom. According to him, bride-price is savage and outdated. The practice is to him an accursed and crude culture. Can we now see his hybridity here? A Yoruba man accusing his own people of a custom in which he was born into. How did his own father as a Yoruba man marry his own mother? But to Soyinka, this conflict of ideas is more than the issue of marriage or bride-price payment. Soyinka is pointing at the issue of people's identity and a strange ideal that has to be forced and foisted on them by the European culture that Ngugi wa Thiong'o refers to in his prison memoir as a culture of "fear and silence" to weaken the African people before the might of European powers. (Ngugi, 2018).

Lakunle's intention is that bride-price is a crude culture that should be completely rejected by anyone,

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because it's retrogressive and remarkably unpalatable. Lakunle doesn't just wake up one morning to start his campaign against this important aspect of his people's culture in which he was born into; something must have prompted him into doing so. What could that thing possibly be that's responsible for his resentful action? Perhaps, this could be as a result of his acquisition of Western knowledge that Falola, Toyin had talked about in the deconstruction of Eurocentric knowledge systems.

It's rational by anyone to contend that marriage should be contracted on the basis of love and agreement by two consenting individuals and that a woman must not be subjected to commodification or objectification. But I think rationalization of bride-price to mean commodification or women objectification is a poor generalization that is too weak and not holistic enough. We should all agree that commodification or objectification of the female gender is cruel, archaic and anachronistic, according to Lakunle's rationalization. Yes, I agree that the female gender must never be objectified or commodified for any reason. But this does not in any way make bride-price payment to mean objectification or commodification. In fact, in some cultures, as against the bride-price payment, the use of dowry is a means by which the bride's family transfers their wealth to the husband of the girl.

(Shukla, 2025) writes to confirm this that dowry involves wealth transfers from the bride's family to the groom's. I disagree with (Shukla, 2025) and other scholars who, in their appraisal of this marriage customs had to conclude that the dowry practice has evolved into a systemic tool of oppression that could be linked to domestic violence, financial burdens, and the commodification of women without citing instances of abuse and exact places where this had occurred in the past.

Of course, there are human tendencies in abusing any kinds of customs but I believe that any form of abuse in this regard should be based on the exact cultural environment where this may have occurred and not to generalize the abuse. Another question is that, if it were to be in the culture of a dowry payment where the bride is the one expected to pay to the man seeking the hand of the woman in marriage; would Lakunle still reject such an offer?

Therefore, there's no way Lakunle's abhorrence and his dishonor for this traditional custom in relation to marriage custom will not deepen the crisis between Sidi and Lakunle who are both lovers despite the noticeable disparity in their social and educational backgrounds. Sidi is a village illiterate but a beautifully overrated girl. Unlike Lakunle, she culturally represents the undeniable African pride and its deep honor. Sidi emphatically asserts this in the text by affirming that she would never make herself a cheap "bowl" for the village "spit" by allowing anyone marry her without paying her bride price.

This marks the beginning of the conflict in the text and the reason for Sidi's skepticism and aloofness in agreeing to marry Lakunle, although, she's in love with him. This ideological shift between these two lovers becomes escalated the moment the village head, Baroka, who is also interested in marrying Sidi, signifies his intention by asking Sadiku to play the role of a go-between to seek Sidi's hand in marriage for him. Meanwhile, Sidi does not actually love Baroka. Her affection towards Lakunle cannot be compared to that of Baroka due to several factors. The number one factor is the age difference between both intending suitors. Lakunle is young, well-travelled, handsome, single, educated and sociable. Baroka is old and ugly. His popularity is only known in the obscure village of Ilujinle where he's made the village head. Besides, he's a polygamist whose sexual energy must have been spent already through many wives and through the procreation process.

Apart from the issue of bride price crisis that is exteriorized in the text, there is also a major cultural ideology of the African/Yoruba society relating to virginity and the purity attached to it. This virginity perspective is also considered as both sacred and important in their marriage system. This is because in many African traditional societies, according to (Olamide & Olamilekan, 2025) female sexuality is more

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than a biological instinct, but a dynamic and socially constructed concept that is shaped by cultural norms and religious beliefs. This is closely tied to family name, its honor, social control and patriarchal norms.

Therefore, any attempt by anyone within that same stratum of the Yoruba society to break the sanctity of the virginity rule will be considered as a taboo that must attract commensurable punishments varying from one community to another. In fact, the marriage rite is not complete in a traditional Yoruba cultural setting until the virginity test has been passed by a newly wedded bride on her honeymoon or consummation night. Tradition is that the blood-cloth containing her purity is taken by the husband of the new bride and handed over to the head of the family who must subsequently take it back on a visit to the family of the bride with a lot of gift if the new bride's virginity is met at the first night of having sexual intimacy with her husband.

On the contrary, should the new bride fail this vital test, an empty match box is taken to the bride's family as an 'aroko' (communication symbol) if the bride had lost her virginity to someone else before her wedding night. And this is to indicate emptiness and shame. Therefore, with this notion of the respect and dignity attached to the issue of virginity in traditional Yoruba setting, a bride's virginity remains her pride and honor that must not be tampered with through any promiscuous act. And of course, there is no Yoruba community that will pray that their daughters will bring any shame to the family name and reputation they have built over the years, hence the reasons they will always train, caution and warn their female children to maintain that cultural dignity till their wedding night.

However, as beautiful as this practice may look to anyone, I doubt it if this is still being practiced largely by anyone in modern marriage system within the same African society of today. Meanwhile, scholars have argued it that in some African communities in Nigeria among the Elele-Alimini, Zulu people of South Africa where Umhlanga is a ceremony for the celebration of virginity and Zimbabwe among the Shona people, there's a strong emphasis on the preservation of female virginity and male potency still being held in high esteem because of the honor the practice gives to the individual and the family at large. This is cited in (Oba, & Lawrence-Hart, 2024), (Mabiza, & Mazuru, 2027) & (Chitakure, 2016). Meanwhile, Research findings by sexuality scholars have revealed that virginity is no longer valid in the present time in which we have found ourselves because the idea is already an obsolete one, due to modernity, social development and exposure to the Western culture.

**Characters, Motives, and Moral Intent in** The Lion and Jewel

Soyinka makes use of characters to enact intent and motives of personal desires, vanity and cultural survival driven by human behavior. Discussion of the major character behaviors of Baroka, Lakunle, Sidi and Sadiku will be explored further here to see how the playwright has woven the actions of each of the four major characters into a major discussion of the subject matter and sub-themes of the text.

a. **Baroka:** (The Lion) Soyinka's use of metaphor to coin an appellation for Baroka as the Lion of Ilujinle is to protect and preserve the traditional institution of marriage and patriarchal headship of the family and community system of the Yoruba culture where men are exclusively the household leaders who must take vital decisions relating to family matters, affairs and wellbeing of a community in which their families are domiciled.

This patriarchal and family system is predominantly common in Africa which places premium importance on the powerful role of the father as the head of the household. (Dankwa, 2021) affirms that these family ideals are controlled and shrouded in a patriarchal way where men tend to benefit at the expense of women. Baroka's actions represent this cultural adherence that (Olowoniyi, 2022) refers to as a means to having undue advantage over women's bodies which of course, contradicts globalization ideals and the

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principles of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to (Adebayo, 2021) SDGs are conceived as yardsticks for global development in the twenty-first century as this should also be allowed to impart on African culture.

While the polygamous lifestyle of Baroka should not be seen as evil practice, his lewd method of luring Sidi into a romantic sex is deeply manipulative. His predatory faking of his impotence is alarmingly disturbing as a custodian of a people's culture and tradition that he professes to defend. This singular action by Baroka can as well be considered as having thwarted the destructive elements of rapid change for westernization that Lankunle seems to be canvassing for. No wonder that Lakunle rebukes his personality in the Noon scene where Sadiku appears to convey Baroka's love intention towards Sidi. "Lakunle (bounds forward, dropping the wood.) What! The greedy dog! Insatiate camel of a foolish, doting race; Is he at his tricks again?" (Soyinka, 1984, pg.19)

b. **Lakunle:** This character represents a reformist descent into Western ideals that are meant to tackle some aspects of the culture of Yoruba people. Some of his character traits are considered to be in support of the principles of the United Nation's Sustainable Goals (SDGs) that (Olowoniyi, 2022) refers to as a means to counter men who are having undue advantage over women's bodies. But as good as these ideals may sound to the adherents of the Western culture, Lakunle's advocacy for a complete eradication of the bride-price may not go down well with some of those who have affirmed that the bride- price culture can help create marriage stability by giving women whose bride-price payments are made a kind of respectable status within the society.

In Igbo culture for instance, according to (Oboko & Ifeanyichukwu, 2021) payment made as a bride-price over a woman does not reduce that woman to a mere commodity. The scholars affirm that this rather confers a more prestige on both the men who can afford such an obligatory financial commitments to women they love and intend to get married to. (Omotayo, 2023) in her structure of traditional marriage in the Yoruba culture, raises the issues of bride-price, virginity and fertility as vital components tied to the Yoruba traditional marriage. According to her, virginity is associated with purity and good character that a particular woman possesses to show that she is not wayward, loose or promiscuous.

Meanwhile, the payment of a bride-price by an intending suitor on a woman who possesses these charisma and virtues simply built on virginity and innocence will confer the right of legitimacy of consummation and canal knowledge of this woman immediately the marriage rite is completed. Apart from this, this also confers the rights to the wedded-husband to control the wife. Not only that, the payment of a bride-price allows the woman to maintain a legitimate and bona fide position within the family circle where she is married.

Lakunle's motive to re-modify and reform Ilujinle is borne from his Western enculturation and not from the perspective of him deeply understanding his own Yoruba root. He sees himself as a moral crusader and agent of progress and social development, whereas, his actions are deliberate at 'de-yorubanizing' his people's culture. His fakery of grandiloquent English accent depicts hypocrisy and arrogance that makes him look stupid by derogating cultural obligation that his own culture attribute to marriage institution. His argument strength is weak and docile and his approach is already dysfunctional. His claims that, "within a year or two, I swear, this town shall see…" is too parochial and it also sounds very unrealistic.

c. **SIDI:** If Baroka is pronounced as the Lion of Ilujinle, definitely, Sidi is the Jewel who metaphorically stands for the beauty of African culture and tradition, including the abundant resources that can be found anywhere on the African soil. Sidi is beautiful but she's not smart enough to quickly discover when a trap is set to lure her into it. Her flawed arrogance is decipherable through her regular glossing over her beauty that is displayed on the pages of a city

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magazine by a stranger. She is torn between her desire and arrogance that makes her fall into Baroka's trap.

Sidi rejects Lakunle not because she's not in love with him but for his radical ideas that threaten her cultural worth. But rejecting Baroka because of her pictures that are displayed on the pages of a city magazine is concealed in deceit and arrogance. She should have rejected him because she's not pleased enough that Baroka is old, and perhaps ugly and that he's also a polygamist. Her moral intent is driven by arrogance that is brought to her personage through the cheap popularity that she considers as a global fame only flaunted through a city magazine. She turns down Baroka's genuine intention to marry her as his newest wife by asking Sadiku why Baroka did not make his request before the stranger brought his book of images.

SIDI: … Why did the Lion not bestow his gift

Before my face was lauded to the world?

Can you not see? Because he sees my worth

Increased and multiplied above his own:

Because he can already hear

The ballard-makers and their songs

In praise of Sidi, the incomparable,

While the Lion is forgotten… (Soyinka, 1984, pg.21)

However, that moral dignity could not be sustained to the end by Sidi because she's sheepishly goaded into believing that Baroka has lost his manhood and that she (Sidi) can approach Baroka's bedroom to mock his impotency. This is a big lesson that arrogance and overconfidence can lead to a disastrous end.

**d. SADIKU**: She is the head wife to Baroka. And with her position in the palace, she's expected to be in charge of executing Baroka's wills, one of which is in the recruitment of new wives to his harem. She therefore, represents the patriarchal agent of enforcement of male domineering positions in African cultural traditional system. Sadiku in the play stands for feminist struggle and patriarchal solidarity. Soyinka may have deliberately forced that male name appendage on a woman character of Sadiku.

The name appendage is really a male-derivation of an Arabic-Yoruba hybrid name adopted and popularly answered to among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. It is an adaptation of the Arabic name, Sadiq. It means "the truthful one", "honest" "loyal" and "faithful", to denote someone who possesses high integrity, absolute truthfulness and reliability. Soyinka's technique in this play is characterized by this unique style of a symbolic essence to drive his strong argument on why and how certain characters display their nuanced behaviors the way they do. The oscillations of actions through this characterization technique by him are the reasons his characters behave the way they do.

Sadiku as a character carries a dual-face that supports the patriarchal system one way by acquiescing to seek Sidi's hand in marriage for Baroka. On the other hand, she exudes her feminist resistance and victory over the loss of Baroka's manhood, seeing this loss as a victory for womanhood. In order to test Sadiku's loyalty and allegiance if she could keep her husband's secret, Soyinka dwells more on the ideological principle that Sadiku stands for. Is she expected to be loyal to Baroka, Sidi or Lakunle?

Of course, Sadiku's allegiance to the patriarchal position that Baroka occupies in Ilujinle is not to be doubted but her celebration of the loss of Baroka's manhood raises a concern that while she claims to be

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loyal to her husband, she still believes in the feminist struggle to liberate herself and other women from the domineering powers of a patriarchal Ilujinle where Baroka is the Bale (Village Head). This can be seen through Sadiku's commentary here

**SADIKU:** … We women undid you in the end. I was
there when it happened to your father, the great Okiki.
I did for him, , the youngest and freshest of the wives. I
killed him with my strength. I called him and he came at
Me, but no, for him, this was not like other times. I, Sadiku,
Was I not flame itself and he the flax on old women's
spindles? I ate him up! Race of mighty lions, we always
Consume you, at our pleasure we spin you, at our whim
We make you dance; like the foolish top you think the
World revolves around you…fools! fools! ... it is you
Who run giddy while we stand still and watch, and draw
Your frail thread from you, slowly, till nothing is left but
a runty old stick. I scotched Okiki, Sadiku's unopened
treasure-house demanded sacrifice, and Okiki came with
his rusted key. Like a snake he came at me, like a rag
he went back, a limp rag, smeared in shame…(Soyinka, 1984, pg.32)

Even when Sidi sneaks on her and is asked of the battle she has won for her hour of victory, Sadiku replies her back that Baroka's impotency remains a victory to everywoman and that she's glad to see Baroka fizzle with the "drabbest puff of a mis-primed sakabula." A character like Sadiku is a double-faced human being who cannot be easily exonerated from the guilt of a conscious effort towards or against a particular course of struggle.

And as against the meaning of her character and portrayal of that name, she is expected to be completely loyal to Baroka by not discussing the secrecy of his manhood loss at the center of the village where anyone may be hiding while listening to the secret of night. The question to be raised in this regard is that if Baroka has factually lost his potency, is that how his secret would have become a public issue for discussion after this has been tested to be true by the audacious courage from Sidi who could intrude into the private room of Baroka to dare the lion in his den?

Sadiku's fear of Baroka getting to know that she has exposed his secret is established at the first instance when she boldly disagrees with Sidi in daring Baroka to confirm his present state of losing his manhood as a man. It's the same fear that is being held widely by the female sex in a patriarchal society like Ilujinle where male dominance is paramount. This can as well go for same action of Sidi that is also regarded by Lakunle as a means of tormenting a man who will immediately realize that such a visit is meant to jeer at Baroka who may later take his vengeance for ridiculing him by beating her up.

Is Sadiku actually "the woman of the bush", according to Lakunle who accuses her of not capable of keeping any secret? If this is Lakunle's perspective about a woman of Sadiku's status, it then speaks a lot about the way women's roles are viewed by men in a male dominated society in African culture. Sadiku's

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feminist instinct fights back by dropping a jab at Lakunle that his betrothed is already on her way to sup with the Lion and that Lakunle couldn't afford the bride-price because he's lazy and poor.

Her vituperation against Lakunle is that he should have done what other men of his position would do by taking to the farm for a season, reap the harvest and use the proceeds to pay the bride-price instead of condemning the old traditional practice. A descent into a conversation of this nature between both genders can be related to argument and counter argument on feminist struggle in a male dominated society.

**De-Yorubanization exegeses, wits, actions, humor and satire in the text**

De-Yorubanization is carefully conceived here as the deliberate erosion and abandonment of traditional Yoruba cultural ethos that could be found within the cultural environment of the Yoruba people in favor of Western ideals. This exegesis is not presented in the text as a mere transition but as a multi-complex pressure that is socially forced, mischievously driven, maliciously and systematically facilitated by both external and internal factors.

There are both ways to look at Lakunle and Baroka's actions including their characters in the text towards marriage and bride-price issue. Lakunle suffers from identity crisis that is often made conspicuous in his nature of the culture alien that makes him speak grandiloquent English. His forced modernization on Ilujinle is superficial. His ideas lack originality by thinking that he could singularly change the way of life of the village people. This is also evident in his dress culture choice of the colonial old-style English suit, threadbare, tie-knot, twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers and Blanco-white tennis shoe to express colonial bias. Lakunle's action towards certain Yoruba traditional practices is genuine but his approach is questionable. His interrogation of some aspects of the people's culture as unhealthy is scientifically proven to be true but his explanation on them is too superficial. What is responsible for this might be that he either lacks a deep understanding of the Western philosophy that he preaches or that he's confused in understanding his own people's way of life.

His approach and criticism of a woman carrying a load on the head as a complete bad idea which he tells Sidi, it could hurt her spine and shorten her neck should have been explained in a way that Sidi who is a complete illiterate will understand. (Dave et al., 2021) reported that axial loading on the cervical spine can lead to injury. Lakunle can prove this to Sidi without denigrating her as a 'bush woman' (village woman).

He refers to the Yoruba way of fetching water, cooking, child-bearing and scrubbing as "ignoble custom", "infamous", and "ignominious." According to him, to pay a woman's bride-price would mean "to buy a heifer off the market stall." And that should he wed Sidi, she would not walk or sit tethered, as it were, but that both will sit at table and not on the floor and eat, not with fingers, but with knives and forks and breakable plates like civilized beings. He continues by saying that she should choose between being a modern wife or remain a village woman. Are village women savages or beasts?

Baroka's attitude to preserve the status quo is commendable, although his overbearing and manipulative approaches in achieving his goal in marrying Sidi should also be considered from a moral perspective. His mischief is a human weakness that can be found in any culture. And since postcolonial theory provides a kind of means by which manipulation, exploitation and discrimination by whatever means must be challenged and defied in time and space, Baroka's effort is a form of resistance that is well established in the text.

In the instance of reading of this particular text, the deliberate tendency of culturally manipulating the indigenous Yoruba African culture through an imposed Western modernization brought to the village of Ilujinle by Lakunle is strictly restricted through Baroka, Sadiku and Sidi. Sidi who is the jewel figure stands in the middle of the conflict and crisis that are created by both Lakunle and Baroka.

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This must be carefully studied. And also, there's need to consider the consequences of Baroka's actions as the village head who should also be seen as an extreme abuser and breaker of the people's cultural norms. His seduction, manipulation and deceitful method used to defile the purity of the virginity of the village belle, Sidi, should have raised certain concerns that must also have some damning consequences and punishments in the play text. But the question that readily comes to mind is if Baroka is really to be punished for breaking a cultural code?

However, the refusal of the playwright in punishing the actions of the character of Baroka, who, on moral ground is the custodian of the people's tradition violated by him, is disturbing, and this is expected to be taken up by literature critics. Why should a village lion and custodian of people's tradition devour the virginity of a defenseless and helpless Sidi through such a manipulative means without consequences? Of course, the young woman has to pay for her senselessness and sheer arrogance. But if Sidi is to pay for her senselessness and arrogance, how come that Baroka has to be compensated with marrying Sidi without the bride-price payment in contention?

On Lakunle's insistence to still marry Sidi after her defilement but without the intention of paying the bride-price is relatively fair enough at that stage against the denial from the beginning. But is it enough for him to insist not to pay even after Sidi's first consent before she eventually changes her mind to opt for Baroka who has actually defiled her? Despite the fact that Lakunle is well grounded in the culture of the Yoruba people is enough for him to quickly realize on time that there might be consequences for his dithering. And that no matter what one's belief is; a people's culture remains the totality of their lives that must be respected by others.

Even as an African wanderer, if one eventually becomes so entangled in the European sun that one must forget home, returning to one's root should be in the decolonization of the mind. However, Lakunle remains one of the lost children of Africa who will embrace the culture of the West by his two arms while pointing the left finger at his own. A scholar, (Moaward, 2016) reflects this focus by Wole Soyinka in demonstrating how Soyinka uses characters, themes and plot to investigate this conflict of culture within the text.

A play text is well interpreted when it is performed on stage no doubt, but reading of such a text can as well bring about a different interpretation. Why did I conclude so? The essence of stage direction in a dramatic text is to aid the understanding of a text in performance. With this, the crowd of youths, drummers, and of girls in various stages of excitement who appear to mock Lakunle through a dance performance is to discuss a stranger who had visited Ilujinle in the past to appreciate Sidi's beauty. What does this mock dance stand for? This intrusion is Soyinka's stylistic and deliberate manner of describing the colonial invasion of the African region by the White Europeans who came to plunder the natural resources of the African continent as indicated in the beginning of this discussion.

Soyinka symbolically describes the character figure of the stranger from the outside world as a clown who came to fall in love with the beauty of the land. Ilujinle in this regard symbolizes the African land while Sidi as the face of the village of Ilujinle is to symbolize the bountiful resources abound in Africa during the period of European incursion into Africa. Sidi's participatory role in the mock dance performance is to serve as the complicit action of the Blackman who acted as an accomplice by playing along with the imperialists before realizing the need to fight for Africa's liberation.

Wole Soyinka's poetic artistry in alluding through the character of Sidi that a certain man once rode on the devil's own horse to appreciate Ilujinle village by documenting and imprinting Sidi's picture on the pages of a city magazine is explanatory enough to depict a deliberate imperialist incursion on African soil and the resistance that had later followed suit.

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Meanwhile, while the pictures of Sidi, as the village beauty are projected conspicuously on the cover page and center spread page of the city magazine, Baroka's own who is the village head of Ilujinle is put in a little corner page somewhere near the picture of the village latrines. This despicability may be as a result of some interpretations adducible to the callous misrepresentations of the African regions as crude and dirty by the foreign powers who were only interested in the beautiful resources of the land.

At the instance of this stranger, pictures of the village, those of Baroka and Sidi are deliberately exported to the city for foreign exposure and exploitation. A copy of the magazine is later imported back to Ilujinle for the village people to marvel at. Will this not suffice enough to indicate how mineral resources were carted away from Africa so cheaply only to be brought back to us and sold at an expensive rate because the continent lacks the capacity to develop her own resources? The confusion brought to the village of Ilujinle through the magazine of the "stranger with the one-eyed box" is immense and greater than the popularity acclaimed through the naivety of Sidi who is to serve as a cultural symbol in the play. Sidi's flawed arrogance is displayed in the text through her self-ululated comments to confirm her naivety and unnecessary excitement about her seeming popularity. Let's hear from Sidi herself.

**SIDI:** If that is true, then Iam more esteemed

Than Bale Baroka,

The Lion of Ilujinle.

This means that Iam greater than

The Fox of the Undergrowth,

The living god among men… (Soyinka, 1984, pg. 11)

Lakunle's form of resistance to stop Sidi's superfluous delusion is a deliberate attempt to decolonize her mind to see reason that the display of her pictures on the pages of a city magazine is a decoy and only a means of exploiting her innocence by the strange photographer. But Sidi is not pleased with this kind of resistance which to her, may mean that Lakunle is only filled with spite and jealousy, having recognized that she is now known to the whole wide world beyond the obscurity of Ilujinle village where Lakunle is only an ordinary teacher and also someone that is too mean to pay the bride-price like a man.

This jealousy that is conceived in her mind makes her to make public pronouncement that she's not even sure that she would want to marry Lakunle. The continuation of the mock dance by the young girls is to put Sidi at the center stage of the crisis caused in the play through the conflict created through Lakunle, the strange photographer from the city and Baroka, the village head. The mock dance is to heighten the suspense of how none of the three could possibly become suitable suitors who can perfectly satisfy the traditional requirement to marry Sidi. As a way of subduing Lakunle and his strange philosophy, he's forced to participate in the mock dance and also to act the role of the stranger from the mad outer world.

Lankule, who sees their mock performance as foolery and also as a game of idiots does not want to participate in it, but Sidi's claim is that for Lakunle's strange teachings and indisposition to bride-price, he's a book-worm who already knows the walk of drunks, and who must play the role of the stranger. Bale Baroka and his attendants also later join them in the mock dance. There and then, Lakunle and Baroka as main opposing forces face each other. But Lakunle is later subdued by Baroka who makes him prostrate by force. Baroka accuses Lakunle of forcing false doctrines on the head of Sidi who is the face of Ilujinle.

The display of verbal wits and dexterity in the play through language weaponization is commendable. This is done to assert African dominance after her independence from the European grip. It also depicts negotiation of social grandstanding and mockery of the European Westernization, colonization and

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misrule. At the village center later in the day after Baroka has tested Sadiku's loyalty by raising falsehood around losing his potency, Sadiku displays her comic subversion of her husband's authority and patriarchy into a victory chant by bursting into a derisive laughter.

While doing this, she declares as thus; "Oh high and mighty lion, have we really scotched you? A-ya-ya-ya… we women undid you in the end." This derision is deliberately meant to jeer at and also to mock Baroka's patriarchal dominance and loss of manhood that she had thought may pave way for feminist dominance as against patriarchy that the African society valorizes. Also is Baroka's use of proverbs and metaphors in deceiving Sadiku into believing that he has actually lost his virility. Baroka puts his own witticism to play here.

BAROKA: The time has come when I can fool myself

No more. Iam no man, Sadiku. My manhood

Ended near a week ago.

SADIKU: The gods forbid.

BAROKA: I wanted Sidi because I still hoped-

A foolish thought I know, but still- I hoped

That, with a virgin young and hot within,

My failing strength would rise and save my pride.

[Sadiku begins to moan.]

A waste of hope. I knew it even then.

But it's a human failing never to accept

The worst; and so I pandered to my vanity.

When manhood must, it ends.

The well of living, tapped beyond its depth,

Dries up, and mocks the wastrel in the end.

Iam withered and unsapped, the joy

Of ballad-mongers, the aged butt

Of youth's ribaldry. (Soyinka, 1984, pg.29)

Sidi's own character wit is considered as sharp but shallow in the real sense. The display of her photos on the pages of the city magazine makes her think she could mock and despise Lakunle's poverty and Baroka's old age and physical appearance. This flawed arrogance is what has led her to her own downfall for Baroka to use subtlety and manipulation to deflower her without even paying the bride-price as a pre-condition requirement before her wedding.

The play as a comic satire is full of sharp irony, slapstick and humor engagement to deliver on its concrete message. This belief is the same as the one that is put up by Arthur Polland in the 2018 book publication titled, Satire, that it can heal and restore. Satire in this regard is described as capable of being able to consciously differentiate between what things are and what they are not and what they ought to be in a human society that the satirist himself therefore, mirrors, to expose the differences between appearance and reality and especially to expose hypocrisy. It's the same thing that can be ascribed to (Hodgart, 2017)

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while quoting Jonathan Swift that satire is a mirror where beholders generally discover everybody's face but their own.

**Conclusion**

The Lion and the Jewel offers a strong discussion of ideological shifts and cultural critique in which the crisis thereof has culminated into a rich conversation and debate. Having critically examined the shifts in ideals and cultural critique of both cultures, it's good to find out that there's no culture of the world that is absolutely perfect or completely bad.

The fact remains that the creation of a level playground for the African culture to ideologically clash with that of the Western culture in Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel is a deliberate attempt and a means to rally support for the decolonization movement discussed during the introduction segment of this study.

Looking at it from this angle, therefore, there is need to affirm that the African people must actually decolonize their mind and completely wriggle themselves from the grip of colonial oppression, subjugation and manipulation. And of course, it's a germane and beautiful debate such as this that is predominantly put to play in Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel.

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