
**CHARACTER AS SOCIAL SEMIOTIC IN WOLE SOYINKA'S
THE LION AND THE JEWEL**

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Abstract

Semiotics is context bound. Therefore, it is appropriate to situate the locale of any interpretation of art as veritable vehicle for proper understanding. In this regard, Wole Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel as a dramatic text derives a better metaphorical essence when assessed as a semiotic correlative of the socio-political conditions in the Nigerian post-colonial experience. Beyond its engagement in the dramatization of events that constitute narrative, character plays a pivotal role as a means by which thematic concerns can be mirrored. In other words, in all ramifications of its application, character usually plays representative roles, especially considering the fact that fiction aims at reflecting what is obtainable, probable or conceivable in a given context. Relating the dramatic events that played out in the text, it is observed that The Lion and the Jewel in its characterization captures a proper representation of socio-political personalities in Nigeria, including the author, Soyinka. From the jewel of contest which is the political power to the predatory turncoats who plunder and rape the patrimony, the drama demonstrates how character can assume a mimetic essence that indicates prophetic act. Just as it is common practice to tag an overbearing political leader the Orwellian Big Brother, and considering how the drama has succeeded to relate or relay socio-political identities, it is duly recommended that examination of characters in literature, especially African literature, should account for their roles as counterpart identities of politically exposed persons. Thus, there is a Baroka in the politician who snatches power by unorthodox means; a Lakunle in the upstart whose feeble attempt to contest political power is laughable and a Sadiku who is an accomplice in spite of being a victim.

Keywords: Character, Social semiotic, Wole Soyinka, Political identities, Nigeria.

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Introduction

This discussion is a re-examination of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* in relation to the concepts of semiotics and autogenesis. By semiotics and autogenesis it is meant the capacity of a literary text or parts of same to self-generate meanings in varying dimensions and with respect to contexts of consideration. It means yielding autochthonous interpretation which might be more or less drastically different from what previous scholarships have revealed or even, perhaps, what is originally intended by the creative writer. While not contesting the author's original intention as a valid way of locating significance and looking at interpretation in literature, it is important to reiterate that literature derives essence in metaphor. Metaphor itself is a form of representation and representation may accommodate divergent layers of meaning that can be acquiescent to different perspectives. "Meaning here ought to be understood inclusively—from the ontology of art, the nature of fiction, the nature of representation, and the mechanisms of emotional response to art to the nature of aesthetic properties and their relation to artistic, cognitive, or moral ones" (Peter Swirski, 2010, p.11). Put differently, the interpretation of metaphor or an apprehension of the representative essence of a work of literature may be stretched to accommodate quite extensive and far reaching meanings. These resultant meanings accruing to art or literature, sometimes, may be quite diverse and even in contrast to what may have been the motivation of the creator of the interpreted piece of art.

It might be preposterous to contest the validity or veracity of each interpretation or reading accruing to literature especially if in any way such a reading, in one way or the other, bears a streak of analytical bearing relative to the context of the particular work in question. In the analysis contained in this discussion, the form and content of character and characterization in *The Lion and the Jewel* engender special and particular significance in such a way that certain semiotic underpinnings are sustained by successive recurrence of relative events, character disposition or utterances. These engender interpretations which offer a distinguishing correlative to identifiable features of the social context on which the play is set.

The mimetic theory assumes that literature engages reality by trying to proffer a depiction of what obtained or what may have had the potential to obtain. This depiction might be idealized or grotesque, or an admixture of both. This essay intends a different application of the mimetic theory. The approach is different because whereas mimesis essentially deals with the past and therefore is anaphoric, the play, *The Lion and the Jewel*, offers a cataphoric reflection of contextual

events. Therefore, following the logic of analysis herein adopted in the examination of the play, what obtains, in terms of relative semiotic assessment, assumes a prophetic dimension. By the account of this discussion therefore, it may easily be concluded that Soyinka, in this particular mimetic enterprise, does not mirror or reflect reality on the basis of or as a consequence of a set of residual experiences but by accident or coincidence his work yields to interpretations that post-date their origin or context of enactment. Hence, the main concern in this essay is to establish a reading or analysis which reveals the role of the text as a vehicle for symbolic references that assume relevance not just to the immediate context in temporal dimensions but to other timeframes within the same spatial dimension.

Synopsis of the Play

Sidi, a village belle, gets self-conceited on account of her well-publicized beauty. She is the centre of attraction, not only to Lakunle the school teacher but also to Baroka the Bale of Ilujinle. In his characteristic manner, Baroka, the Bale, extends an invitation to a dinner to Sidi with the expressed intention to get her to marry him. Sidi, who has all but fallen for the school teacher – the only barrier being the latter's refusal to pay the customary bride price – rejects the Bale's invitation and proposal to marriage. She is convinced that the Bale is old and spent, and therefore not meriting of the love and intimacy of a young and vibrant belle like herself.

On receiving the answer, that is, Sidi's rejection of his matrimonial gambit, Baroka becomes slighted but also resolves to get Sidi by other means. Hence, the Bale sends a false signal of his having lost his sexual ability. Sadiku, his chief wife and go-between falls for the false alarm. A known gossip, she carries the news of Baroka's loss of sexual capability to town. She particularly makes sure Sidi gets to know about it. Sidi, in a bid to authenticate the veracity of Sadiku's news as well as mock Baroka's loss of virility, sets out for the Bale's palace. She hopes to derive pleasure in seeing the Bale regret his loss, she is also bent on increasing the Bale's agony by pretending she is now ready to accept Baroka's initial marriage proposal.

In a private chat with Sidi, which consists of riddles and proverbs, Baroka succeeds in hypnotizing the simple and evidently less-experienced Sidi. She is overwhelmed by the Bale's oratorical ability and sense of humour and falls too easily to his whims. Eventually, she realizes, but quite too late, that the Bale was still a man in spite of the false kite initially flown in relation to his sexual ability. Having succeeded in having his way with the belle, it becomes difficult for Sidi to turn her back on the Bale. She has lost her maidenhood and in the context

which she operates, she is devalued and cannot hope to bargain in any marital affair without conceding the fact that she is disadvantaged. Lakunle is the loser and as sure as it is characteristic of him, he soon gets distracted by other foibles as the curtain draws, signifying the end of the drama.

Review of Related Literature

BernthLindfors (2008), views *The Lion and the Jewel* as “a brilliant sex comedy in which the magnetic field of attraction and repulsion between three characters caught in an amusing African variation of the classic love triangle is presented with absolute clarity” (p.166). Indeed, the play is a comedy by simple classification. It could be termed melodramatic because of its reflection of normal existence without tilting towards either the humorous or the utterly tragic. This is so because Sidi’s ‘fall’ at the end of the drama could be termed tragic considering the events leading to her final forced espousal to Baroka, the Bale. It is also essentially tragic on the part of Lakunle who loses out at the end of the game. But these, the ‘fall’ and the ‘loss,’ indicate normal occurrences in the social context such that, fundamentally and relatively, there is no undue pain or sorrow attached to them. One major opinion that captures the intent and purpose of this discussion is Jeyifo’s comment about Soyinka as a creative writer. According to him:

Soyinka has produced a quantitative and, more importantly, *qualitative* body of works which, for a long time to come, is sure to generate diverse revisionary studies and totally fresh works of interpretation and evaluation” (BiodunJeyifo, 2004, p.xi/13).

It is agreeable that Soyinka’s mastery and use of language often provokes a potential for a multiplicity of interpretations with respect to, and in connection with diverse and divergent contexts which animate his creativity. For instance, and with respect to this present essay, if placed under the crucible of contemporary post-colonial discourse, *The Lion and the Jewel*, as a metaphor of sorts, captures significant events and features among present players in the Nigerian political space. And, beyond this, the character of Lakunle, in very symbolic ways, strongly reflects a representation of Soyinka to the extent that somehow, perhaps unconsciously, the playwright engages in a “textual construction of his personality” (Jeyifo, p.xx). This is because to many analysts of the Nigerian politics, like Lakunle, Soyinka presents a clear cut caricature of a contestant in all his attempts at being effective in

local politics. Thus, his “activist involvement and interventions in the political life of his country in the last four decades” (Jeyifo, p.282) notwithstanding, Soyinka cannot lay claim to having acquired the desired victory in wresting power out from hands of the Baroka-like conservatives who are consistently engaged in the raping of the Nigerian political space and socio-economy. As recent as at the time of this writing, specifically in July, 2019, Soyinka gave a Press Conference where he renounced his hope in the capacity of President MuhammaduBuhari to offer the leadership the country required at the moment. This is against the backdrop that he actively campaigned against President Goodluck Jonathan who contested with Buhari in 2015.

Diala (2014) identifies what he termed “The Soyinka Model”. This “model”, according to him, compels a theatrical aesthetics...anchored in the Nigerian political experience” (p.26). It is therefore no surprise that when stretched for interpretative correlation, *The Lion and the Jewel* yields a semiotic reading quite relevant to the socio-political experience in contemporary Nigeria. The play bears a mark of the author’s context. This mark of context therefore constitutes the semiotic ingredients which offer readings and significance beyond the immediate confines of the dramatic enactment.

Semiotics, Autogenesis and a Writer’s Original Intention

Explaining semiotics as a process arising from the relationship between meaning and signification, Udumukwu (2017) recognizes the duality of signification inherent in literary texts. According to him:

It is because the literary text can be viewed as a spacious series of pure and impure essences, of dependent semantic and formal fields, that guarantees a double reading at any given time. (p. 119)

In furtherance to this opinion, Udumukwu reiterates Julia Kristeva’s observation that “the major constraints affecting any social practice lies in the fact that it signifies” (p.154). Thus, as process/enactment reflexive of the social condition of a given context, Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel*, as literature, presents a duality of representation whereby the characters function as correlative of personalities or socio-political figures in the Nigerian context. This implies that, in generating a substantive reading for the text, the imperative of context cannot be overlooked. Thus, in any semiotic analysis, context is crucial because it encases socio-cultural, political and other such indices that imbue literary texts with relevant

significance. This is because context encases socio-cultural, political and other such indices that imbue literary text with relevant significance. Hence, reading or interpretation arises as a product of the recipe of setting, text and context.

On Semiotics and Art as Representation

The Lion and the Jewel qualifies as that type of text which “has something to say that goes beyond the confines of the text” (Birch, 1989, p.30, cited in Udumukwu, 2006, p.93). In this regard, play, character and characterization, in more ways than might be exhausted, “become paradigmatic of effects to construct endless centres of meaning in the nation”. (Udumukwu, p.94). The question, therefore is, “How does an event mean or help to construct an *endless* centre of meaning in a semiotic capacity and especially as related to the nation? Udumukwu (2017) in the introduction to his book, *Literary Theory and Criticism*, recaps that literary criticism as it pertains to all genres of literature should emphasize the function of art as representation. In his exact words, “literary theory and criticism must be socially responsible by underscoring the nature of literature as an object of art, and by emphasizing the functions of literature as representation” (xii). Quite significant and relative to this present discussion, Udumukwu’s submission thereforere-emphasizes Soyinka’s stance that “the relationship between the writer and the nation must be gauged on a claim to a national sense of “self-apprehension” (Soyinka, ix, quoted in Udumukwu, 2007, p.5).

In another instance, Udumukwu similarly maintains that the “fixed homology between the writer and the nation has been vigorously interrogated by scholars who tend to suggest “that the social responsibility of the writer cannot be measured in the light of a fixed apprehension of social experience but in the power of literature to transform those experiences to represent them, in a diverse levels of apprehension” (p.15). Here, without clearly specifying it, Udumukwu’s recommendation advocates the recognition of a special relationship existing among *setting*, *text* and *context* in literary work. This is where autogenesis applies as a literary essence. Among these indices, context differs because it indicates a fluid or shifty characteristic. It is bound by the vagaries of temporal exegesis especially in relation to the respective milieu. Therefore, the “diverse levels of apprehension” from which a literature can be appreciated are the consequence of autogenetic and semiotic tendencies of the literary work. They are engaged in semiotic-shift by way of constantly engendering readings and interpretations that accrue to successful appreciations of the piece of work. And by autogenetic, it is meant that they instantiate self-

originating approximation of correlatives in the context in which they apply. Identifying "Semiotics" as one of the critical approaches to the appreciation of literature as a vehicle for societal representation, Nwahunanya (2007), observes that:

(t)he question is often asked: what is the relationship of literature to reality? This question arises when the picture of society and life presented in literary work is such that the reader is compelled to believe that life in reality is only being replicated in fiction (p.6).

It can be said that this replication, however, may be anaphoric or cataphoric. It is cataphoric when it depicts an illumination of events that would play out after the enactment of the dramatic events presented in the work. Nwahunanya also sees, and rightly so, especially in the light of the re-interpretation of Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, the writer "as a kind of prophet and visionary, a repository of social conscience and communal weal" (p.57). He also notes that Soyinka sees the modern African writer as one who should function in the "African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his time" (p.58). This validates the position that *The Lion and the Jewel*, upon delicate analysis such as done in this discourse, generates an interpretation which points to the fact that beyond representation, literary works offer a projection of what has the potential to occur in a given context.

Social Semiotic Role of Characters

Sidi

From authorial comment or stage description, "as soon as Sidi appears on the stage, the school master's face also appears at the window". At this time, the topic being taught by the school teacher is the "multiplication table". There are two sides to the significance of this. First, "multiplication" could connote the multiplication of intellectualism, academic successors. Furthermore, multiplication may also represent the scientific feature of the education process. Whatever it implies, it is important that Lakunle abandon this process to get the attention of Sidi. In this regard, Sidi's presence is an attraction to the school teacher as well as a distraction to the process of inculcating knowledge on the school children.

Thus, Sidi represents the fledgling republic (or prerequisite power with which it is run) that comes with a lot of promises and sensational attraction by reason of nationalistic feeling, self-control and possession.

State affairs, interest, like negritude etc., were quite a number of attendant issues that occupied the upcoming intellectuals including Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Chinua Achebe and others.

As already stated, it is significant to note that the school teacher abandons the pupils, leaving them to their fate in order to get the attention and acceptance of Sidi, the object of attraction. In this regard, future intellectuals, scholars or leaders, who perhaps could have taken over from the likes of Soyinka, Achebe and the rest, were left (in the lurch) to their personal devices. There is no replication of self in continuity rather interest is directed to the (state) affairs of politics over which the intellectuals failed ultimately to achieve a significant control. This is double tragedy as they could not reproduce themselves by continuing or sustaining the process of technological development and intellectual growth, neither could they succeed in seizing or appropriating state power and authority to effect the achievement of the lofty ideals of a modernized society.

However, it is important to note that Lakunle's intellectualism, in a sense, more or less his adequacy/suitability, is called to question when Sidi, in a derogatory remark bursts out: Is it you, Lakunle,

Telling me that I make myself common talk?
...Or you with your fine airs and little sense!

This calls to question the type or nature of education acquired by the earliest set of intellectuals (academics) like Soyinka and Achebe. Theirs was a pursuit of the liberal arts involving a mastery of the use of words, high-sounding words that lack effect on the socio-economic and technological development of the society. In response to Sidi, Lakunle retorts:

For that, what is a jewel to pigs
If now I am misunderstood by you
And your race of savages, I rise above taunts
And remain unruffled.

Lakunle's response here is symptomatic of an aloof disposition and a sense of elitist self-conceit. Inured to criticism, he sees Sidi as a part or statistic of: your race of savages.

There is an inferential presentation of 'otherness' in Lakunle's reference. Sidi is in effect a part of these 'other' as constituted by both the 'savages' and the 'weaker sex' class. The deictic modification here highlights the opinion that Sidi is representative in her capacity as character. In other words, the class, "savages", indicates a possessive feature and Sidi which is being represented by the second person possessive pronoun, "your", is the possessor. However, at

another level of representation, Lakunle, initiating a kind of damage control, tries to clarify that he meant no direct or personal insult to Sidi. He rather claims that what was said or the opinion he holds about Sidi's (her class') intellectual inferiority stems out of proven scientific postulations. Thus, in a later instance, he clarifies:

...I didn't mean you in particular
 ...The scientists have proved it. It is in my books.
 Women have smaller brain than men
 That's why they are called weaker sex.

There is a symbolic recourse to stereotyping at different levels of semantic mapping here. The stereotyping is hidden, yet it could be retrieved from the initial statement by Lakunle. The references "you", "your race of savages", and "women" hold the key to subtle stereotyping implication that is almost racial had Soyinka been anything else but black. Diagrammatically this referencing as presented indicates the following:

"you" (Sidi) -----> race of savages (plural,
 therefore captures the context being
 represented by Sidi) -----> women.

In medieval times, diverse opinions were held to the effect that "savages" possess "smaller brains" and, as a result, lower intelligence than the civilized people hence the need to evangelize, colonize and reform/refine them. In this regard, the intellectuals, as was done by the colonialists who bred them, hide behind their books (beliefs) to propagate unsubstantiated claims of inferiority of one race to the other or superiority of one sex/gender to the other. And in spite of this, the so called civilized would not let the savage be. Thus, Lakunle, in an emotional appeal to Sidi's sensibility, bursts out:

My love will open your mind
 Like the chaste leaf in the morning, when
 The sun first touches it.

The nominal references "love" and "mind" betray the intangibility of Lakunle's gift to Sidi. What he brings to the table, based on delicate appraisal, is an abstract noun "love", not a material factor that can visibly alter the condition of Sidi. This reinforces the limited contribution of the colonialists to the development of the colonized. They offered the liberal arts, aesthetic values and rhetoric but not much of science and technology. Sidi is, therefore, quick to denounce this by violently responding:

I had enough of that nonsense yesterday.

Sidi's role as contextual representative is further highlighted when Lakunle refers to her thus: (Sidi having rejected emptiness of a mouthed love) But you, you and the dead of this village.

Trample it with feet of ignorance. Sidi thus represents not only the living but also, as Lakunle states: the dead of this village.

Representing the virgin and untapped context of wealth of Africa, Sidi is highly attractive to the outside as well as the inside male (phallic elements) who want to share relate with her. The itinerant photographer/photo journalist thus represents the outside world who is also as much interested in the prize as the contending forces of local politicians and intellectuals. As the "First Girl", one of the characters the reenactment, reveals:

The stranger. The man from the outside world
The clown who fell in the river for you.

To Sidi, just as the colonized country, a connection or relation with the outside world usually promises fulfillment of lofty dreams. It promises development that makes the one so related or connected comparatively better. It usually promises enhancement of beauty and propelling of the one concerned to greater heights (recall Lakunle's promise of red lips and high heels). All these are usually contained or enshrined in a book as represented by religion and treaties. Therefore, in an ecstatic mood, Sidi's surprise as well as high hopes is captured when she exclaims:

The book? Did you see the book?
Had he the precious book
That would bestow upon me
Beauty beyond the dreams of a goddess?
For so he said.
The book which would announce
This beauty to the world –
Have you seen it?

The "Second Girl", another character, captures the description of the political class as represented by Baroka thus:

...But it would have been much better
for the Bale if the stranger had
omitted him altogether. His image
is in a little corner somewhere in
the book, and even that corner
he shares with one of the village latrines.

In the Nigerian context there is a generally accepted opinion that politics is a dirty game. Members of the political class are usually 'ugly', brash and uncouth, yet they win elections at the end. Chief

Olusegun Obasanjo, who was elected president of Nigeria years after he had served in the same capacity, was not quite a good head of state in his first regime as a military man. He was imprisoned and shortly after his release he was voted into power again. Muhammadu Buhari's first stint as head of state was at best generally described as a disaster. A greater percentage of the people from all works of life, irrespective of their religious and tribal divide, celebrated his ouster by General Ibrahim Babangida. Buhari was generally perceived as inept, dictatorial, nepotistic and corrupt. Yet, in a surprising display of historical or administrative amnesia, he is once again voted into power by the same people who rejected him. Correlatively, Sidi and the girls lampoon Baroka, yet at the end, the Bale captures Sidi, the coveted prize. This is surprisingly after Sidi has boastfully asked Sadiku:

Ho ho! Do you think that I was only born
Yesterday?
The tales of Baroka's little suppers,
I know all.
Tell your lord that Sidi, does not sup with
Married men.

"Married men" here is a correlative of corrupt/uncouth/spent or re-cycled politician. In spite of the electorate's knowledge of their ineptitude, they (politicians) still win at the end. But Sidi's representative role indicates an ambivalent situation. Africa, nay Nigeria, embraced foreign education and religion. This embrace has come with a resultant sense of high fulfillment as religion promises great hopes of a blissful hereafter and education brings about exposure and a better future in temporal terms. However, being overtly religious has not translated to a society of reduced corruption, nepotism and other negative or bad indices. Likewise, being literate or exposed to western education does not seem to have brought about the capacity for the so-educated to engage in rational choices and preferences that could benefit the population in relation to matters of politics. Thus, it is not uncommon to see otherwise highly educated or exposed citizens arguing and canvassing support for politicians who in a better organized society would have been labeled "bad market". Therefore, Sidi's exposure to books – of Lakunle and the photo journalist – has not translated to a better choice in a matter concerning her personal welfare. Thus, the knowledge of and acceptance of biblical or koranic principles and preaching, as well as the adoption of western education, have not helped the Nigerian society as they should.

Lakunle

Lakunle does not like to live the lazy and lascivious life of the ruling class yet he is innately enticed to the exploration of the luxury associated with such life as led by Baroka, the Bale. In an unguarded moment he confesses to Sidi:

Yes, one must grant him that.
Ah, I sometimes wish I led his kind of life,
Such luscious bosoms make his nightly pillow.

However, Lakunle is far lost to the context and contest because he has assimilated another culture which is divergent and which drastically disconnects him from his roots. He has embraced the “book” (p.28). The same book as representative of the one which bears Sidi’s images makes Lakunle see things differently. Books in form of foreign education, religion and other external exposures which bring along with them self-consciousness (as also is with Sidi) make the African way of life old-fashioned and outdated to the likes of Lakunle. At first, Sidi despises Baroka just as Lakunle mocks the idea of the bride-price. These lines of thought emanate from the exposure as brought about by the books. In effect, Sadiku is seriously concerned about the source of Sidi’s new ideas and her motivation for the rejection of Baroka’s offer of a dinner (a prelude to marriage). She expresses this concern when she confesses to Baroka:

If you ask me, I think that she is
really off her head. All this excitement
of the books has been too much for her.

The grammatical number (plurality) of “books” is noteworthy. There is a suggestion that the “books” referred to in this instance goes beyond the magazine of the stranger, the *book* which brings about Sidi’s self-consciousness. The reference, *books*, rightly captures those to which Lakunle exposes Sidi. In this regard, Lakunle is an agent of exposure to the inexperienced Sidi in the same way Soyinka and other first generation scholars offered vistas of mentorship and enlightenment to the vastly uneducated populace in the Nigerian context.

However, in order to ultimately win the price which in this case is Sidi, while Lakunle appeals to books which symbolizes foreign or western education/exposure, Baroka appeals to native pragmatics consisting in riddles and narratives, which are symptomatic of oral tradition. The *lion* crafts a narrative. He appeals to history; employs his most reliable ally – gossip – Sadiku. He wins at last. Baroka’s victory over Lakunle is foreshadowed when Sadiku questions and derides Lakunle’s masculinity. Thus, in affirming that Lakunle was not man enough (as Baroka), she declares to Sidi (in reference to Lakunle):

Come on, dear girl, let him look
on if he will. After all, only men
are barred from watching this ceremony.

This implies that Lakunle, being less a man than the likes of Baroka, is free to watch, though, not free to participate in the all-female dance drama. The stature of Lakunle as ascribed to him by Sadiku essentially correlates to the nature of the intellectuals with respect to nation building in the context, Nigeria. The likes of Soyinka, who constitute the literati, lack the requisite drive, courage and capacity to engage or fully partake in the contextually 'dirty' craft of local state engineering. They can only contemplate and extrapolate but not participate in factual wielding of state/political power.

As Sidi represents the cherished prize of state power, Lakunle functions as the intellectual class who appeals to the symbolic rather than the pragmatic. In this capacity, Sidi being representative of state power, as earlier indicated, functions as a correlative of the context. Lakunle, in an outburst instigated by the desire to possess the coveted prize speaks: Swear you will be my wife and I will Stand against earth, heaven, and the nine Hells...

Lakunle craves a control. He desires a total and absolute possession of the coveted prize. He is prepared, according to him, to sacrifice and risk all within and even beyond his powers (nine Hells) in order to achieve his desire. Thus, instead of continuing with the *multiplication* (pun of multiplication table, unintended) of his kind by means of sustained class or academic occupation, he unnecessarily, albeit unsuccessfully, gets entangled with the pursuit of state power. In this, he leaves his pupils vulnerable as there is no transfer of knowledge or intellectual ability.

The arising conflict here is that the ability to possess state power (in this instance, Sidi, as representative) comes with a higher price than mere compromise of abandoning intellectual duties. Sidi symbolically makes this much clear:

I've told you, and I say it again
I shall marry you today, next week,
Or any day you name.
But my bride-price must first be paid.

A price must be paid before power (of total possession) is given. This price may, and more often than not, amount to conflicting compromises. In this instance and in the context, rules pertaining to ethics and conscience must be broken. These rules of ethics and conscience are those acquired and inculcated during the process of intellectual training which is foreign or western in origin. They form the

basis of the existence of the intellectual. Lakunle stubbornly clings to these acquired principles rather than compromising the principles with local or contextual realities. This is what obtains in politics. The likes of Achebe and Soyinka may never be able to pay the price which local politics demands having acquired the type of lofty principles they got as first generation colonial master trainee. They are not ready to pay the price for political power hence this susceptibility to loss or failure. What Lakunle seeks is a process that comes without what he sees as compromise. This compromise entails a mutually benefitting process and situation where equality of the ruled and ruling class would be ensured. But this is unnatural to Sidi. It is intricately against nature for him to state (to Sidi) Sidi, I seek a friend in need. An equal partner in my race of life.

This is contextually an aberration because in the African context or society what obtains between the ruled and the ruling class is something of a relationship between a vassal and an overlord. This is why when Sidi retorts: Then pay the price

Lakunle, in an attempt to enlighten the recalcitrant and stubborn Sidi, bursts out:

To pay the price would be
To buy a heifer off the market stall.
You would be my chattel, my mere property.

This essentially captures the reality in 21st century African society, particularly Nigeria, where buying of votes with amounts as low as two dollars apiece has become a means by which the political class acquire power. The electorates are essentially bought "off the market stall" and are therefore comparable to a "chattel", a "mere property". It is a common practice that on election days, political parties send out their agents to lobby voters to vote for them in exchange of immediate gratification which is most often in form of an instant payment of a negotiated sum. In South West Nigeria, as in other parts of the country, this has become the norm to the extent that a former governor (of Ekiti State) who was out-bargained by a rival party called the game "see and buy".

During the 2017 gubernatorial election in Ondo State, a state in the South West, the catch phrase was:

E dibok'esebe
which in English roughly translates to
You vote and you cook soup

Thus, on this day of election, you are assured of a good soup if you cast your vote for a particular party.

Is it possible for the likes of Soyinka to engage in vote buying considering the kind of training and orientation they received as first generation colonial undergraduates? Of course, the answer to this is No. Getting the prize (of political power, as represented by Sidi) demands a price. The price is playing by the local rule of engagement which amounts to playing dirty. Baroka, at home with what it takes, just as Nigerian politicians (including British and American trained, the writer refrains from name calling) applies the violent act of rape to snatch away the prize. Sidi sees this as normal just as Nigerian electorates see the denial of their right for a free and fair election as a normal thing. Thus, in the context of its occurrence, rape is a normal thing. It is just like taking a due advantage. Sidi, in her semiotic capacity as the representative of the masses, rather than seeing Baroka as an adversary, embraces him as the victor, the rightful winner in the context. Lakunle whose rule of engagement is in consonance with what should be the universally accepted practice is left in the lurch. He loses out to Baroka.

Lakunle's loss is engendered by his lack of contextual originality. He is not real. Comparatively, and to Sidi, he lacks pre-requisite self-esteem and substance hence his reliance on non-indigenous ideals rather than local realities. In one of such grand hopes and aspiration, he says to Sidi:

Side by side and arm in arm
Just like the Lagos couples I have seen
High heeled shoes for the lady, red paint
On her lips. And her hair is stretched
Like a magazine photo.

Lakunle's deployment of similes in this speech is highly significant. The similes smirk of false perception rather than substance. Thus, he hopes to be like "an OTHER", and not necessarily true to his own type/nature. He promises a similarity that is contextually foreign and strange to Sidi. His is a personality, or a process that resembles but does not correlate to the truth of local reality. The "red paint" on lips and "high heeled shoes" to make the wearer taller are axiomatic of a fake personality. The paint hides the dark skin or dark side of Sidi while the high heels give her a false height. These go to show that Lakunle is utopian in his concept of ownership or possession of the coveted political power. He is not in tune with the harsh and dark side of a contextual reality which encourages unorthodox methodology in acquisition of political power and in which the victim or oppressed see the oppressors as deserving of their right to ownership.

It is not because Lakunle lacks virility or vitality but because he is essentially out of touch with local practices and principles. He goes

“down on his knees” and “covers Sidi’s hands with kisses to express his love”. Thus, this amounts to sentimental posturing disconnected with dictates of struggle for local political power. It is foreign just as the fable of praise names of Ruth, Rachael, Esther and Bathsheba used by Lakunle in describing Sidi, are incongruous to Sidi’s orientation and disposition.

Representative of the polity, Sidi protests the appellations Lakunle tries to give her. She wants to be called by what name she deserves, local politics, however unappealing this may sound to Lakunle.

Now that’s your other game;
Giving me funny names you pick up
In your wretched books.
My name is Sidi. And now, let me be.

Soyinka and his ilk refuse to address and approach state power by what it is called or classified based on the local context. They are uncoordinated and never make any formidable attempt to employ pragmatic and context sensitive/dictating means to assume leadership or appropriate political power.

Sadiku

Sadiku significantly reflects the middle class who often negotiate the political relationship between the masses and the would-be leaders. She is not just the opinion molding middle class through whom the largely ignorant and gullible populace who constitute the overwhelming percentage of the citizenry and electorate acquire their preferences and sentiment, but she is also a victim. Her victimization is bilateral because what affects the locale directly affects her. Included in the category which Sadiku represents is the fourth estate of the realm that carry-out the marketing and de-marketing of contestants to the possession of state power, that is, the press. It is surprising that the Nigerian press and opinion leaders in a drastic U-turn succeeded in raising and sustaining a clean bill of health for a candidate like Buhari, for instance.

In spite of having been used and characteristically dumped by similar previous (and present leadership) as symbolized by the former Bale from whom Baroka inherited her, Sadiku does not see herself as dehumanized or marginalized in any way. Nigerian elite and middle class are culpable. They are the greatest victims of the ineptitude of bad leadership yet they continue the self-abnegation.

Sadiku helps in presenting a derogatory picture of Lakunle just as the press and opinion leaders in the country usually present narratives to diminish the chances of better contestants to state power. In her reference and quite early in the drama, she initiates the bathos and anti-bathos (climactic) reference in Lakunle and Baroka, respectively. While consistently

retaining the image of conquering predator in reference to Baroka, she does not hesitate to denigrate Lakunle at any point of mention. It is a kind of a game comprising of *hide and highlight*. The press and other opinion shapers *hide* the dark side of the candidate they elect to market and *highlight* the worst qualities of the one they want to de-market. She comments when Lakunle joins in her dance with Sidi:

The scarecrow is here. Be gone fop.

A delicate semiotic assessment of the metaphor, "scarecrow" indicates that it is a false reality; a false personality which lacks the power ascribed to it. Scarecrows are meant to send away birds by acting a real human. They are not real human beings and cannot perform real duties of a person especially in relation to being dynamic. Lakunle lamely returns this denigrating reference by saying:

What is the hag gibbering?
to which statement Sadiku emphatically replies
You less than man, you less than
The littless woman...

In this conversation, the core/centre of discourse was on Lakunle's masculinity or lack of same. The main issue is that he lacks the power to possess that which he desires. Thus, he can only desire but not deserve or possess. Lakunle, like the intellectual he represents, can only contemplate the harmony or beauty between the marriage of the people and their elite. And when Sadiku retorts:

Come on, dear girl, let him look
on if he will. After all, only men
are barred from watching this ceremony

she highlights this lack of capacity to take charge and appropriate power of possession in Lakunle and by extension, the elite class he represents. The likes of Achebe, Clark and Soyinka, in a way, got distracted by other things and looked on while poorly trained Yakubu Gowon, Tafawa Belewa and the rest, got state power. They could not afford to pay the price. Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Awo) and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) were technically sidelined by a craftier Belewa. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the leader of the short-lived Biafra Republic, had to pay the price of enlisting as military recruit after graduating with an enviable degree at Oxford before he got a chance to be relevant. The latter was ultimately unsuccessful in his bid to appropriate absolute leadership by realizing his idealistic vision of a seceded Biafra.

When Sidi says of Lakunle:

Him? Pay no more heed to *that*
Than you would a eunuch

she also, like Sadiku, does not only state the obvious in Lakunle's incapacity to appropriate the power of state control but also sustain that characterization which is earlier initiated by Sadiku. Significantly, in Nigeria just as in other countries of the world, popular or public opinions are propagated by the press or elite/middle class. These are in turn picked up and popularized by the masses who constitute the majority of the citizenry.

Baroka

It is curiously foreshadowing that while Sidi refers to Lakunle as a eunuch; she, several times, calls Baroka the lion. She consciously tags the Bale and does not hide her caution and apprehension. She says:

Ha ha. Sadiku of the honey tongue.
Sadiku, head of the Lion's wives
You'll make no prey of Sidi with your wooing tongue.

In the subsequent response to Sadiku's entreaties, Sidi continues this reference to Baroka using the image of a worthy and deserving predator. She sustains the image of the brave, bold and brash individual in Baroka. Thus, the Bale is the king of the jungle. He reigns in the jungle where might is right. Power resides in the barrel of the gun. And in this case, Baroka's phallus, which achieves the desired goal of forceful acquisition of state power, is contextually effective. Thus, when Sidi tastes the strength of the ravaging and ravishing lion, she needs not be told that she has been conquered at last by a more deserving and better contestant. She gives up all pretensions to principles of price-paying before consummation and yields to the great force of phallic (gun) assault. This, however, does not happen before Sadiku has noted that Lakunle has driven the poor girl mad by initially feeding her with notions which go against the grains of contextually consistent realities. This is also why Sidi does not refrain from saying things which would have otherwise been considered blasphemous. For instance, in a self-adulation and making reference to her breasts, Sidi says See, I hold them to the warm caress of a desire-filled sun.

Such strange imagery or comparison is certainly inconsistent with the simplicity of a rustic thought pattern expected of Sidi. It is an expression of grossly inadequate independent mindedness such as atheism. To Sadiku, and essentially every other local inhabitant of Ilujinle, it is a reflection of insanity and this much she denounces as she exclaims:

May Sango restore your wits.
For most surely some angry god
has taken possession of you.

Here, Sadiku invokes the intervention of the gods because the people, as represented by Sidi, seem to have momentarily rejected and renounced their heritage. Things that once looked good, like the idea of being married to a polygamous Bale, are now being despised or denounced. Self-consciousness which is achieved as a result of the exposure to outside influence has pitched the people against their culture or world-view. Sidi is the toast of both the foreign and indigenous, the new and the old. The people are dragged between the two forces. These two forces manifest in Baroka and Lakunle.

But the land as represented by Baroka makes for keeps. It does not let go of its claims. Thus, it is like the saying, "once black, there is no going back". Sidi references the nature of Baroka when she affirms that:

Every woman who has supped with him one night,
Becomes his wife or concubine the next.

In reiterating this nature of Baroka, and sustaining the image of predator for the Bale, Lakunle, interjects Is it for nothing he is called the Fox?

Baroka is the Fox because going by Lakunle's reasoning, and based on uncontested stories, he has effectively blocked previous attempts at mental or social invasion of his territory. In his words:

(Baroka's) wiliness is known even in larger towns
Did you never hear
Of how he foiled the Public Works attempt
To build the railway through Ilujinle?

Baroka is unarguably experienced in winning. He won at first when he undertakes to protect his land against invasion by forces of civilization. He wins again when he gets Sidi even after accidental/incidental exposure to the books (of Lakunle and the photo journalist). Thus, though he could not utterly prevent Sidi's exposure (to foreign influences such as western religion and education) and self-consciousness, he nevertheless wins her back and appropriates her as his own. Thus, when Baroka repeats Sidi's reply to his marriage proposal in the following words She says...that I am old That I am much too old!

He merely captures the essence of his representative role as against that of Lakunle. He represents the old ways, the land, the ruling class and all that is traditional. This old way is being challenged by the attendant exposure to "books" as Sadiku reflects

If you ask me, I think that she is really
off her head. All this excitement of the books
has become too much for her.

As has already been stated, book is a metaphor for western education (and foreign religion) which brought with it undue excitement as well as an altered self-consciousness. Evidently, there is no mention of a foreign religious activity in the drama as against the reference to western education by mention/association of a "school teacher" and pupils engaged in the recitation of the multiplication table. Notwithstanding, the nomenclatures of Sidi and Sadiku infers a non-indigenous influence. Sidi is the short form of Sidikat, a Moslem name. Invariably, Baroka has to contend with these external influences. He has to win the sole object, albeit representative, of contention. In order to succeed in winning back the land, the prize, in this case, Sidi, the *Lion* crafts a narrative, appeals to history, employs gossip which is personified by Sadiku, and snatches the prey at its most vulnerable moment. He wins.

In the context of Nigerian politics, the most dominant argument with respect to winning an election or occupying a political post is the primordial narratives of tribe, religion and ethnic affiliations. Political offices, right from the Presidency to all other national positions such as Speaker of the House and President of the Senate are zoned or contested based on regional or tribal affiliation. Tribes and ethnic nationalist are played against each other so that the political class can have their way.

Conclusion

The Lion and the Jewel is set in a Yoruba village. The Yoruba, which is Soyinka's nativity, is a major ethnic group in Nigeria. The Yoruba has a saying regarding the significance of an uttered word or expression to wit that: "*The word is an egg; when it is broken, it is impossible to gather*". When this maxim is extended to the significance of literary piece, it behoves a potential for multiplicity of readings by different analysts and from different contextual standpoints. When smashed on the floor, the broken egg usually leaves traces of diverse shapes. Depending on one's standpoint, the shapes could assume different interpretations. Context, which includes both temporal and spatial dimensions to a text, can play very significant roles in offering relative readings and interpretations. Thus, depending on what is prevalent or potential in a context, shapes would derive their meanings from the experience of the analyst (in relation to what is obtainable). For instance, in a context where the pestle as a kitchen or household utensil is non-existent, what looks like it (pestle) to one observer may appear as a dagger, pistol or even the phallus to another observer. This gives credence to the validity of

the diverse shapes and lines traced by a single broken egg of the Yoruba adage.

In this discussion, a marriage of text and context, especially in relation to post-colonial experience of contemporary Nigerian politics, has yielded a re-interpretation of Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* as metaphor. All the major characters, in their respective representative capacities, play social semiotic roles in relation to the Nigerian political space. Baroka is the uncouth and brash but crafty politicians who always have their way in the country. The Nigerian politician always wins no matter whatever ugly side he presents as a personality. (For instance, a governor was caught in a video recording receiving bribe money in hard currencies, yet he won a re-election. Although this governor denied allegation by presenting his own side of narrative that it was a doctored video recording, he did not institute legal action against the journalist or source that leaked/uploaded the video to the internet). Sadiku, the gossip, the fifth estate of the realm, does her job to get Sidi hooked by Baroka. She does not mind the fact that being 'a left-over wife' of the previous Bale and inherited by Baroka, she is a clear victim of rejection who has been used and dumped. The elite in Nigeria, especially those who control the media, always fall in tow to bring bad leaders to power. They seem to suffer from historical amnesia and are all too eager to launder whoever presents the highest bid for their service. This bidding may not always be in cash. The bidding may be, and is often the case, in something as mundane as tribal and religious affiliation. Although this may be unstated, it is almost always the basis. Had Goodluck Jonathan, the former President of Nigeria, come from the "right" tribe, he would have sailed through in his bid for a second term in office. The Barokas in the Nigerian political space seem to be conscious of the limitations of the electorate and public opinion shapers in making better decision than that motivated by mundane inclinations of religion and ethnicity. The current vice president of Nigeria occupies his position not because is the most competent (and in truth, being a highly accomplished attorney, administrator and academic, he can adequately compete with any candidate if competency were the criteria) but it was expressly declared by the president that he was chosen because Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) had to be dropped on the basis of the latter's faith, Islam. The party was not going to run a Moslem-Moslem ticket for the position of president and vice president.

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