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The depiction of masculinities in Wole Soyinka's play, *The Lion and the Jewel*

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ABSTRACT

This paper challenges static notions of masculinity by examining its portrayal in Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. Through textual analysis, it argues that masculinities within the play are socially constructed and fluid, adapting to specific situations. While feminist analyses have dominated critical interpretations, this paper foregrounds the male characters (Lakunle and Baroka) to explore their performances of masculinity within the play's gendered landscape. Drawing on Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity and Butler's concept of performativity, the analysis demonstrates the characters' negotiations with and subversions of dominant masculine ideals. This approach aligns with a constructivist perspective on gender, which views masculinities as shaped by social expectations rather than inherent traits. By examining the play as a reflection of social realities, the paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of masculinity as a dynamic and context-dependent concept.

KEYWORDS: Tradition versus Modernity, Power and Control, Performance and Image, Vulnerability and Insecurity, Choice and Agency

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Introduction

This paper is a textual, literary analysis of Wole Soyinka's (1963) acclaimed play, *The Lion and the Jewel*. In this text, Soyinka tells the story of three villagers: Lakunle, a young, arrogant schoolteacher; Baroka, an elderly king, "Bale" of Ilujinle village; and Sidi. Lakunle and Baroka seek the hand of Sidi, the "Jewel" of the town, in marriage. Sidi ends up choosing Baroka.

This paper delves into the depiction of masculinities in the play. It examines how figures like the "Bale" (Chief) Baroka and the schoolteacher, Lakunle, represent distinct approaches to masculinity. Baroka, the powerful yet ageing leader, embodies a traditional form of dominance rooted in physical prowess, fertility, and control over women. Lakunle, on the other hand, embodies a more modern ideal, emphasising education, intellectualism, and a more progressive approach to gender roles.

Through their competition for the beautiful Sidi, the play exposes the limitations and vulnerabilities of each masculine ideal. Baroka's reliance on brute strength and societal expectations ultimately proves insufficient. Lakunle's focus on progress and education alienates him from the cultural context. Furthermore, the play explores the anxieties surrounding masculinity in a changing society. The arrival of Lakunle disrupts the established order, forcing Baroka to reassert his dominance and traditional masculinity.

By analysing these contrasting masculinities, this paper aims to illuminate the complex social dynamics at play in Soyinka's work. It explores how the text reflects the anxieties of a postcolonial society grappling with modernisation, and how these anxieties are manifested through the characters' struggles to define and maintain their masculinity. Ultimately, the paper argues that *The Lion and the Jewel* does not present a single, heroic form of masculinity. Instead, it offers a nuanced exploration of men's challenges and contradictions in a rapidly evolving society.

In doing this, Lindsay and Miescher's (2003) conception of masculinities, the synchronisation and disjointedness of rigid constructions of gender roles, and the impacts on and implications for the male body and masculinity, as located in the play, are explored and emphasised. The aim, therefore, is to understand masculinity in post-colonial Nigerian contexts. This aligns with Newell's (2009, p. 247) remark that "exploring masculinities through the local structures is very important."

In addition, the understanding that African masculinities can be seen as a notion complicated by the idea of Africa as "a historical and transnational space" (Morrell & Ouzgane 2005, p. 2). The analysis in this text is carried out within an intersectional framework. Crenshaw (1991 p. 1299) coined the term 'intersectionality' to describe the complex interplay of social identities. It highlights how our experiences are shaped by the intersection of various factors like race, class, gender, and sexuality. In simpler terms, intersectionality acknowledges that identities are not single-layered, but rather formed by the interconnectedness of multiple social positions.

While this text is concerned with the fictional depiction of gender roles, it nonetheless recognises that relational trajectories exist (Hopkins & Noble, 2010) that create different types and roles of power. This implies that Intersectionality helps to understand the innumerable exertions of social authority as they interact with the dynamics of the social reproduction of masculinities and male sexualities (Moolman, 2013). The play under review showcases how Soyinka's representation endorses or reinforces patriarchal hegemonic constructions of gender roles, as seen in the male lead characters.

Gender dynamics, societal expectations and the quest for power, and dominance

The play under review is a captivating exploration of gender dynamics, societal expectations, and the quest for power and dominance to aid the importance of exploring masculinity in the play. It is pertinent to explicate the socio-historical context in which the play was written. Soyinka wrote this play during the period of Nigeria's struggle for independence, a time marked by the clash of traditional African values with the influence of Western values. This context is expedient as it sheds light on the tensions between the old and the new, and the shifting gender dynamics that occurred during this transitional period. Soyinka through this narrative, highlights traditional gender roles prevalent in Nigerian society. The male characters, particularly, Lakunle and Baroka, represent two distinct manifestations of masculinity.

Lakunle embodies the modern Western-influenced man, striving for progress and equality between genders. He challenges traditional gender roles by advocating for women's education and empowerment. Conversely, Baroka personifies the archetypal African male, valuing power, virility, and dominance

over women and lesser men. Soyinka uses these characters to explore the clash between traditional and modern masculinities, and the consequences of dinging to outdated ideals.

The play is closely intertwined with power dynamics and patriarchy. Baroka as the village chief, asserts his authority over women through polygamy and sexual conquest. His desire to possess Sidi, the village belle, represents a struggle for dominance and control. In contrast, Lakunle, a schoolteacher, challenges the existing power structure by attempting to liberate Sidi from Baroka's influence. Through these characters, Soyinka portrays the multifaceted nature of masculinities and the various ways they can be used to assert power or challenge oppressive systems.

While the paper primarily focuses on masculinities, it also offers a nuanced portrayal of female characters, particularly Sidi. Sidi embodies the conflicting desires and aspirations of a young woman caught between traditional expectations and modern influences. She represents the changing role of women in Nigerian society, torn between the allure of traditional values and the promise of progress. Through Sidi's interactions with Lakunle and Baroka, Soyinka explores the complexity of female agency within a patriarchal framework and raises questions about the true nature of liberation and independence.

The Lion and the Jewel serves as a profound exploration of masculinities within the context of Nigeria's independence struggle. Through the playwright's portrayal of male characters, he probes into the clash between traditional and modern ideals, power dynamics, and the complex interplay between gender roles. The text raises thought-provoking questions about the nature of masculinities, the influence of societal expectations, and the evolving role of women.

Understanding masculinities

The study of masculinity emerged towards the end of the 20th century, initially as a response to feminism and gender studies. Instead of considering masculinity as an inherent aspect of male identity, research on masculinity has focused on how it is constructed within the broader framework of gender relations, in which both men and women participate (Connell, 1995). This approach aims to challenge the dominant narrative that traditionally granted men more power, wealth, and cultural authority than they should have (Adams & Savran, 2004). This is in line with Connell's hierarchy of masculinities which is a significant theory in understanding men and gender relations. Top on the list

is hegemonic masculinity. It is the idealised form of masculinity in a particular culture, often associated with traits like toughness, dominance, and emotional stoicism. It does not necessarily represent most men, but it sets the standard. A prime example of hegemonic masculinity in the play, is Chief Baroka, the village head. Baroka constantly asserts his authority over others, particularly women. He has multiple wives and expects their complete obedience. He sees himself as the ruler of the village and the women in his life. Baroka boasts about his past as a wrestler and warrior, emphasizing his physical dominance. This links masculinity with physical power. Baroka mocks Lakunle, the educated but physically unimposing schoolmaster, for his perceived lack of masculinity. He sees education and intellectual pursuits as feminine and inferior to physical strength and dominance. Baroka upholds the traditional view of men as providers and protectors, while women are relegated to domestic duties. He sees any challenge to this structure as a threat to his power. Baroka's character represents the societal ideal of masculinity within the play. His dominance, physical prowess, and adherence to traditional gender roles solidify his position as the village leader. However, the play also critiques this notion of masculinity through Lakunle and Sidi, who challenge these norms.

There is a subset of hegemonic masculinity known as toxic masculinity that emphasises violence, stoicism, and the suppression of emotions. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Chief Baroka embodies toxic masculinity. His pursuit of Sidi is not driven by genuine love or respect. He sees her beauty as a trophy and a symbol of his power. He disregards her desires and feelings, focusing solely on his gratification. Baroka constantly belittles Sidi's intelligence. He views her as a beautiful object incapable of independent thought. This reinforces the stereotype of women as intellectually inferior to men. Baroka's possessiveness towards Sidi goes beyond normal jealousy. He tries to control her every move, restricting her freedom and agency. This behaviour stems from a need to dominate and possess, rather than a healthy relationship. Baroka uses threats and intimidation to control Sidi. He subtly implies violence as a way to keep her in line. This toxic behaviour creates a climate of fear and reinforces his dominance. Baroka's actions highlight the negative aspects of masculinity. His obsession, possessiveness, and use of threats create a destructive dynamic. While he may be seen as the epitome of masculinity within the village, the play exposes the harm caused by such toxic traits.

Another is complicit masculinity where men who benefit from the overall system of hegemonic masculinity, even if they do not fully embody it, might conform to some aspects for social acceptance. It is important to note that the play also presents other characters who challenge these traditional notions of masculinity. Baroka, for instance, represents a more complex and nuanced form of masculinity. However, Lakunle serves as a clear example of complicit masculinity within the play. Baroka represents the traditional patriarchal society. He embodies a stubborn refusal to change his ways, clinging to his power and dominance over women. Lakunle, the schoolteacher, initially appears to challenge these traditions but ultimately fails to confront them directly. His inability to act decisively reinforces the status quo. Baroka's praise singers are other characters who blindly endorse Baroka's actions and reinforce his sense of entitlement. Their unwavering support for his dominance over women exemplifies complicit masculinity.

More also is the subordinated masculinity. Here men who are disadvantaged by the current definition of masculinity could be due to factors like race, class, or sexual orientation. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, the main example of subordinated masculinity is the character of Lakunle, the schoolteacher. He reflects on this concept by prioritising European customs and technology, mimicking them and looking down on his cultural traditions. This suggests a sense of inadequacy in his own cultural identity. Lakunle constantly criticizes Baroka, the Chieftain, and the village's established practices. This highlights a dependence on external validation and a dismissal of his heritage, a trait associated with subordinated masculinity. Despite his supposed modernity, Lakunle loses Sidi to Baroka, who utilizes a blend of tradition and cunning. This reinforces the idea that Lakunle's masculinity is defined by external forces rather than his agency.

Additionally, there is marginalised masculinity where men who completely reject hegemonic masculinity or even challenge it, might face social stigma for not conforming. A prime example of marginalized masculinity can be seen in the character of Lakunle, the schoolteacher. Lakunle's character showcases a form of masculinity that is deemed inferior within the context of the play. His blind adherence to colonial ideals and his ineffectiveness in wooing Sidi position him as a marginalized figure in the realm of masculinity.

Understanding masculinity is crucial for analysing Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, a play that explores gender dynamics and societal expectations. Masculinity is not a monolithic concept. It varies across cultures, social classes,

and historical periods. The play portrays contrasting masculinities between Lagos and the fictional village of Ilujinle. Men actively construct and perform their masculinity through actions, speech, and dress. In the text, characters like Lakunle and Baroka exhibit contrasting performances of masculinity.

Nigeria's colonial past shapes the play's portrayal of masculinity through a conflict between traditional and Western ideals. Set in a period of social change, the play explores this tension as characters like Baroka embody the challenges to established notions of manhood. Connell's (1995) framework proves insightful in analyzing these complexities. Though not without limitations, it fosters crucial discussions about gender and power dynamics. This paper provides the theoretical foundations and tools for examining masculinity to explore the processes and politics that shape the systems of male power.

While masculinity studies have primarily been the domain of sociology and cultural studies, recent decades have witnessed a fruitful interdisciplinary engagement with literary scholarship. This is due to the wealth of male characters in literature who embody and grapple with various ideals of masculinity. Through textual analysis, literary scholars can examine how these ideals are constructed, contested, or even satirized. Traditionally, literary criticism often presented masculinity as a binary opposite to femininity. Masculinity studies, however, offer a more nuanced lens, allowing scholars to explore the intersections of masculinity with race, class, sexuality, and historical context. This approach enables the reinterpretation of classic works, revealing previously overlooked layers of meaning. For instance, a masculinity-informed reading might uncover the internal conflicts of a seemingly stoic hero, exposing the emotional costs associated with adhering to rigid masculine expectations. By incorporating masculinity studies, literary analysis gains depth and complexity, fostering a richer understanding of both the characters and the cultural milieu that produced them. This development coincides with a heightened focus on masculinity within literary criticism, mirroring the emphasis placed on femininity through feminist studies. Masculinity studies enable a nuanced examination of male characters, not only as individuals but also concerning broader power structures. Literary texts can then be analysed to reveal how these power dynamics are often portrayed as fluid and constantly in flux.

Understanding masculinity presents a complex challenge due to the diverse perspectives employed across various academic disciplines. A singular definition remains elusive, as evidenced by Mutunda's (2009) work. Anthropologists view gender variations as adaptations to specific environments, highlighting

the cultural construction of gender and its dependence on social organisation (Mutunda, 2009). Conversely, biological approaches, exemplified by Beyon (2002), posit inherent temperamental traits in men, suggesting a biological basis for masculinity that can be measured through physical characteristics. Sociologists, on the other hand, emphasize the role of social institutions like family, schools, and religious organizations in shaping masculinity through the enforcement of gendered expectations and behaviours.

Psychological models further contribute to the understanding of masculinity's influence on individual development. These models posit that male autonomy and independence emerge from a process of distancing from the mother figure (Mutunda, 2009). Cultural conditioning discourages boys from forming strong emotional attachments to their mothers, potentially fostering a perception of weakness. This perspective associates masculinity with independence and abstract reasoning, potentially implying a developmental lag in females. However, feminist scholars challenge this assumption, arguing against any inherent advantage for males in abstract reasoning.

Colonialism and its impact on gender in *The Lion and the Jewel*

Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, set against the backdrop of a colonial encounter, transcends the realm of political struggle to illuminate the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in the social and cultural spheres. The play depicts the disruption of established gender roles as colonial forces introduce new definitions of masculinity and femininity. Lakunle, a character embodying Westernised masculinity, stands in stark contrast to Baroka, who represents a more established Yoruba patriarchal ideal. This clash reflects the broader tension between colonial ideologies and indigenous ways of life.

The play explores the colonial encounter as a discursive struggle on both literal and metaphorical levels. This struggle involves material and symbolic prizes, represented by the competition for a bride (cultural vindication) and land (freedom). The play utilizes allegory and stereotypical colonial figures to depict characters embodying specific positions within colonial discourse. While these positions initially appear fixed, Soyinka demonstrates the characters' potential to subvert and transcend this framework. On the surface, the play appears as a conventional comedic exploration of tradition versus modernity in a colonial context. Lakunle, the schoolmaster, embodies a stereotypical fascination with European customs, while Baroka, the chieftain, represents a stubborn adherence

to tradition. However, Soyinka complicates this binary. Baroka, unlike Lakunle, possesses a capacity for trickery and manipulation that allows him to navigate beyond the limitations of colonial discourse. This ability is reminiscent of the Yoruba trickster god *Esu*, signifying Baroka's potential to disrupt and exploit the system.

Baroka's victory lies in his ability to occupy a liminal space within the boundaries of colonial discourse**.** He utilizes both traditional and seemingly modern elements (for example, the stamp) to achieve his goals, demonstrating his mastery of manipulation and subversion. This 'daring duplicity' leaves his opponents disarmed. The use of the stamp, a practical tool rather than a mere image, highlights Baroka's ability to transform modern symbols into instruments for his purposes. By offering Sidi the prospect of her image traversing the world on stamps, Baroka transcends the limitations of the photograph as a mere representation of beauty. This proposal elevates Sidi beyond the realm of the stereotypical "village belle" and imbues her with the power to connect people across space and time. In contrast, Lakunle's embrace of modernity appears superficial and uninspiring against Baroka's playful manipulation of both tradition and innovation. Ultimately, Baroka's triumph signifies the limitations of colonial binaries and the potential for resistance through subversion and trickery.

However, *The Lion and the Jewel* avoids portraying women as passive victims of this transformation. Characters like Sidi and Sadiku actively navigate the changing social landscape, asserting their agency and challenging the expectations of femininity imposed by colonialism. Their actions highlight the multifaceted nature of colonial influence. Rather than simply imposing new gender norms, colonialism creates a space for both negotiation and resistance. By examining these dynamics, *The Lion and the Jewel* offers a nuanced exploration of the ways colonialism shapes identity and social structures. The play reveals how the encounter between coloniser and colonised disrupts traditional gender roles, prompting a re-evaluation of masculinity and femininity for both men and women.

5. Methodology

This paper employs textual analysis, a cornerstone methodology across various disciplines. Textual analysis offers a systematic approach to dissecting and interpreting written, spoken, and even visual messages (Scribbr, 2023).

It transcends surface-level meaning, aiming to uncover underlying themes, messages, and symbols (Lettria, 2023). This process allows researchers to glean valuable insights into authorial intent, the cultural context surrounding the text's creation, and its potential impact on the audience.

Textual analysis involves a close and critical examination of the text, deconstructing its elements for holistic comprehension (McKee, 2020). This includes analysing content, language choices, and structure/organization. By meticulously examining these aspects, researchers identify patterns and relationships that unlock deeper meaning. Textual analysis is adaptable to diverse research questions and disciplines. Literary studies might focus on deconstructing symbolism and figurative language (Scribbr, 2023).

Conversely, communication researchers might utilize it to understand persuasive techniques in political speeches (AFinn, 2003). The specific approach depends on the research goals and the type of text being analysed. This paper benefited from textual analysis because researchers' interpretations of Soyinka's text are guided by observations that aid in constructing meaning from the work.

This paper adheres to the constructivist model, which involves several phases, including the identification of primary and secondary texts (Mahonge, 2016). A single text was chosen from Soyinka's extensive literary oeuvre: Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963). This play's selection is due to its canonical status among the playwright's major works and its exploration of the first generations of Nigerian literature and theatre.

This paper adopts a close reading approach to extract pertinent data concerning masculinity within the chosen text. The theoretical frameworks of Connell (1995) on masculinity and Butler (1999) on gender performativity inform the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. Following a thematic analysis, the paper will present its key findings regarding the construction of masculinity. Narrative techniques are also employed. The central characters are identified and their connection to the plot is established. A meticulous examination of plot elements is undertaken to reveal their contribution to the research question. These characters drive the narrative forward, while focalisation allows for a deeper understanding of how each character functions in the portrayal of masculinity.

Through a critical analysis of language use, this paper examines the construction of masculinity in Soyinka's play. Drawing on Butler's (1999) concept of gender performativity, the analysis explores how characters, particularly through

their use of similes, metaphors, and symbols, articulate and construct their masculinities. By examining the representation of both male and female characters, the paper investigates how masculinity is not only performed but also challenged within the text. Furthermore, the interplay between plot and character development is explored to demonstrate how seemingly straightforward events are interrogated and reinterpreted to generate meaning regarding the exploration of masculinity.

Lakunle and Modern Masculinity

In Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, Lakunle, the young schoolteacher, embodies a nascent masculinity that disrupts the established patriarchal norms of the village. He represents a generation shaped by Westernisation, education, and modernity. These influences, as Barker and Ricardo (2005) suggest, can foster "regressive masculinity" – a departure from traditional expressions. Soyinka utilises Lakunle to illustrate how these external forces transform young men, granting them access to social power that validates their masculinity in novel ways. This shift in ideals creates a conflict between generations, as the 'conventional' and 'contemporary' forms of masculinity clash, leading to tension and misunderstanding.

Lakunle's relative social isolation further distinguishes him from the dominant masculine archetype. Unlike Baroka, the village head, who expresses masculinity through displays of sexual prowess and control over women's bodies, Lakunle exhibits a distinct indifference to such conventions. Soyinka portrays him as uninterested in performing masculinity through the traditional lens of male dominance and physicality. Instead, Lakunle seeks validation through his academic achievements. This is evident in his failure to understand Sidi's desire for a bride price. He misinterprets her motivations, highlighting the disconnect between his perception of masculinity and the established social order. Sidi's pragmatic perspective exposes the limitations of Lakunle's modern approach, demonstrating the enduring value of traditional practices within the village context. See the below quotation:

> ***. . . I have told you, and I repeat it, I shall marry you today, next week, or any day you name. However, my bride's price must be paid. Aha, now you turn away. However, I tell you, Lakunle, I must have the total bride price. Will you make me a laughingstock? Do as you please, but Sidi will not make herself a cheap bowl for the village spit (****The Lion and the Jewel,* ***1963, p. 3).***

Lakunle, a young, Western-educated schoolteacher, from the above, finds traditional customs, particularly the concept of bride price to be "barbaric, outdated, and redundant" (*The Lion and the Jewel,* 1963, p. 7). He prioritises intellectual discourse with Sidi, the titular 'jewel', viewing it as a means of establishing his place within the community. This self-absorption manifests in his delight at the departing pupils, who create a space for his "lyrical self-expression and exploration" with Sidi (*The Lion and the Jewel,* 1963, p. 1).

While Lakunle's masculinity lacks overt sexualisation, it arguably stems from a similar sense of ego as his rival, Baroka, whose approach is overtly chauvinistic. Both men relegate women to a marginal role, neglecting their agency within the social sphere, be it sexual or intellectual. Lakunle's initial belief in education's transformative potential suggests a desire to disrupt established systems. However, his self-importance and preoccupation with his knowledge hint at a nascent sense of male superiority. This aligns with a broader cultural construct where men hold dominant positions and women remain peripheral figures. This analysis acknowledges Lakunle's initial faith in education's power for change. However, it highlights the potential contradiction within his character. His self-absorption can be interpreted as a desire for male cultural mastery, where women are secondary to his intellectual pursuits.

In this sense, despite Lakunle's progressive thought on modernity, his views of women depict normative, heteropatriarchal assumptions which subordinate the female to the male ordinance. He seems to view women as distractions, and their "uniformity makes him feel indignant and superannuated" (*The Lion and the Jewel,* 1963, p. 2). To Lakunle, women do not seem to have individualised identities, and he, therefore, divests them of any autonomy and personhood – and yet, as captured in the word 'superannuated,' there is this unconscious fear within him about the latent power that the women have over him. However, he does not consciously think this and cannot properly imagine or express the interrelation. More conventionally, he holds dominant, complacently negative views about women as the inconsequential and biologically inferior gender and perceives them as mere objects (Mtenje, 2016). For example,

> ***. . . For, as a woman, you have a smaller brain than mine. The scientists have proved it, it is in my books, that women have a smaller brain than men. That is why they are called weaker sex" (****The Lion and the Jewel,* ***1963, p. 4).***

Despite seeming to single Sidi out for remark, Lakunle approximates her in this way. However, when Lakunle sees the girls being in various stages of excitement for Sidi over her portrait on the cover of the city man's magazine and Sadiku coming to ask her hand in marriage on behalf of her husband (Baroka), one notices a subtle shift in his views on women. He moves from viewing Sidi as insignificant to being aware of her as a human with individual qualities as he is seen humbly making sly reconciliatory gestures such as kneeling and kissing Sidi's hands as well as equating her with beautiful women in the Bible, all in an attempt to woo her to his side. He calls her "Ruth, Rachael, Esther, and Bathsheba" (*The Lion and the Jewel,* 1963, p. 9). Noticeably, others' words and excitement compel Lakunle to see Sidi correctly, for the first time, with a shock of sensory recognition. However, Soyinka's phrasing of this emotional event is very complex. Lakunle's response is marked by the patronizing assumption of male power since he designs to grant her unique singularity and the metaphors which ostensibly praise her ability to conceal her attractiveness while simultaneously depicting her as creaturely rather than human.

Overall, the passage is so riven with such contradictions as to imply that Lakunle's desired authority and autonomy are severely compromised. Beneath his display of masculinity lies an unsettling intuition that his power is only relational, his super-ordination entangled with the woman's powerful capacity to exert attraction and various female agencies. In Soyinka's discussion of women about traditional ideals and abuse of human rights, his writing hopes to overturn normative social roles. The portrayal of Sidi and Sadiku mocking Baroka's fake sexual impotence shows that the women are not subservient: they are enraged and provoked to rebellion by patriarchal exigencies. They step aggressively beyond domestic hardships of sexual servitude with the likes of Baroka.

Baroka and traditional masculinity

Baroka, 'the lion' of Ilujinle, is the prototype of patriarchal power. According to Assiba (1986), patriarchy is a communal arrangement that gives male rights and control while creating an inferior position for females. In addition to this, Vogt (2003) views patriarchy this way:

> ***A practice by men that represents an attitude and an attempt to create an all-encompassing (economic, political, sexual, and spiritual) system that aspires to dominate by conscious control of all people, places, and things, both organic and inorganic. [it is] a pattern of prowess, competition, and strength exercised to exclude others for political, social, and economic control (pp. 6-9).***

One such instance from the above quotation is the power to control the female mind and body. Baroka is a controversial character who conceivably stands for the concept of hegemonic masculinity in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*. The reader can recognise, in this aged man, a seeker of sexual pleasure. The stage direction comments on his admiration for Sidi, the heroine in the magazine but does not say why he was attracted to the magazine:

> *[… Baroka is left sitting by himself wrestler, who accompanied him on his entry, stands a respectful distance away-staring at the flock of women in flight. From the folds of his agbada, he brings out his copy of the magazine and admires the heroine of the publication. Nods slowly to himself.]* ***Yes, yes… it is five whole months since last I took a wife…five full months…*** *(The Lion and the Jewel,* ***1963, pp. 18 and 1).***

Baroka's statement above signifies his obsession with the subordination of and power-wielding over women. The statement adds that he often changes women's clothes, an attribute of polygamy. Polygamy is one of the ways to express masculinity in African society. The more wives a man has, the more he displays his courage, physical strength, and sexual potency. Many men marry several wives because it is seen as a mark of bravery, and patriarchy admires it. The scene where he instructs his favourite wife on how to pluck his armpit hairs lends credence to this point:

> ***You have no time my dear. Tonight, I hope to take another wife. Moreover, the honour of this task, you know, belongs by right to my latest choice. However -A-ah-now that was sharp. It had in it the scorpion's sudden sting without its poison. It was an angry pull; you tried to hurt, for I had made you wrathful with my boast. However, now, your anger flows into my bloodstream. How sweet it is! A-ah! That was sweeter still. Perhaps I think I shall let you stay, the sole out-puller of my sweat-bathed hairs. Ach!*** *(The Lion and the Jewel* ***1963, p. 27).***

Given his speech and action above, marriage for Baroka is not for domesticity; instead, it is a way to please his sexual urges and, thus, a revelation of his love for hegemony. Baroka deals with marriage as a manifestation of a firm belief in the worth of hegemonic masculinity. Marriage can be understood as a means by which patriarchal society terminates any anticipated female rebellion or threat to the established male-controlled order (Gallimore, 2010). The proof is found in Baroka's insistence on marrying Sidi, the representation of the rebellious victim female in the text, who initially turns his proposal down. Baroka consequently represents a fanatical patriarchal society impatient with women's self-reliance. His attitude shows gendered discrimination, oppressiveness, and hegemonic tendencies.

Furthermore, being polygamous suggests masculinity because it entails having a large family to support, which is proof of courage and fame. The more wives a man has, the more labour force and riches he controls, the more respected a household head he becomes (Cartoon, 2000), and the more successful homestead he builds. It guarantees a man respect, security, and autonomy. In the words of Sidi, "Baroka merely seeks to raise his manhood above my beauty. He seeks new fame as the one man who has possessed the jewel of Ilujinle!" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 1963, p. 21). It is essential to see sexuality as closely connected to broader gendered patterns. Sexuality, according to Weeks (1985, p. 16), is a diffusion girdle for more general social concerns. This suggests that contestation over sexuality is much more than uncomplicated sex. In another way, the cultural politics of having many wives overlapped with similar contests for societal respect, which can only be earned by controlling women (Hunter, 2015). Sexuality is when a man proves his power to marry what blood is to any living thing. It gives meaning to marriage and nourishes and fortifies it. According to Brittan (1989):

> ***Sexuality was discovered to have some essence, some core constantly seeking instant release. Instead of the overview that had defined it in terms of its reproductive function, it was now seen as the root of identity (p. 48).***

By this understanding, proof of marriage becomes punctured once the groom/husband is declared impotent. What makes the fate of a man in this position more tragic is that he not only loses his wife but his honour is also whittled down. This is the case of Zifa in *Song of a Goat* (Clark, 1964). Thus, some disrespectful women do not hesitate to make advances to poke fun at such a man. This is the case of Sidi in the text. Immediately she hears about the ordeal of Baroka from Sadiku, the chief wife; Sidi decides to honour the king's invitation (which she formerly turned down) to mock him. In her statement, she said this:

> ***Stop. Sadiku stop! Oh, so much an idea is running in my head. Let me to the palace for this supper he promised me. Sadiku, what a way to mock the devil. I shall ask for forgiveness for my hasty words" (****The Lion and the Jewel* ***1963, p. 34).***

In a typical Nigerian society, an impotent man can be likened to a castrated bull. They both share a similar characteristic that contributes to the growth and development of their kind. The difference is that the bull will be sold and killed while the man is humiliated and defaced (Loum, 2010). This is Baroka's supposed situation, but it was used as bait to entrap Sidi into his den and it paid off well for him.

In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka paints different pictures of masculinities to show that masculinity encodes a multiplicity of biological attributes and sex-based roles and features. He sets his story in two worlds: Ilujinle, the remotest village in Yoruba, the Western part of Nigeria, and Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria. This comparative and contrastive approach shows that the construction of gender, especially the attributes attached to masculinity, depends on such parameters as history, place, people, and culture. Connell (2001) states as follows:

> ***Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behaviour average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and the relationship through which men and women conduct gender relations, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality, and culture (p. 34).***

The Yoruba woman in Soyinka's text is a victim of masculine sexual desires and patriarchal violence. Nwankwo (2001) professes that the type of predicament in a society determines the disposition of the characters that a playwright will portray in a literary work representing that society. In the case of traditional culture, the notion of power and its modes are essential. Nwankwo's submission recalls Hearn's (2004) kind of power embodied in the character of Baroka, the representative of the concept of patriarchal authority in Yoruba society. He is an apparent articulation of hegemonic masculinity and suppression of femininity. His character plays an essential role in the development of the plot through the tendencies he reveals for the subordination of females and even of males who refuse to succumb to his whims and caprices.

Like Bale, Baroka sees himself as the embodiment of all good about his people. He exudes strength and then ruminates over his substantial qualities to prove himself good enough for any woman of his choice; that is why he considers Sidi insane for initially rejecting him. Just as Sadiku says to Sidi:

> ***For most surely, some angry gods have taken possession of you. Shockingly, the proposal by the 'worthy Baroka' (by the people's standard) would meet such stern rejection by a mere young virgin (****The Lion and the Jewel****, 1963, p. 23).***

Moreover, Baroka's cleverness which marks him as being of significant worth for any woman he chooses is further proven by his clever and successful action of deception and trickery, which he applies to Sidi in the end. In further vocalising his strength as a man, Baroka protests:

> ***Did I not at the festival rain defeat the men in the log-tossing match? Do I not still, with the most fearless ones, hunt the leopard and the boar at night? Moreover. Save the farmer's goat from further harm. Do any of my wives report a failing in my manliness? The strongest of them all still wearies long before the Lion does! (****The Lion and the Jewel,* ***1963, p. 28).***

The reader does not miss its significance when Baroka readies himself for his nefarious activities and calls himself a "lion" (*The Lion and the Jewel*, 1963, p. 28). The lion (*Kiniun* in Yoruba) is frequently invoked as a symbol of masculinity, again unclearly, without articulating which features the male should emulate conceit, strength, rapaciousness, merciless killer–instinct, or thirst for blood (Gallimore, 2010). However, even when men like Baroka think they are emulating the lion's positive traits of strength and bravery, their execution of these can be revoltingly depraved. Their line of action is to break down resistance at all costs and by any means available.

Thus, the main motive behind Baroka's lure of Sidi to bed, for example, is to humiliate her and punish her for refusing his marriage proposal. Baroka further speaks of the expected qualities of a true man when he rhetorically asks Sidi:

> ***Is he not wise? Is he not sagely . . .? Does he not beget strength on wombs? Are his children not tall and stout-limbed? (****The Lion and the Jewel,* ***1963, p. 46).***

He leads his people to battle against any opposition, such as the construction crew. He sends them packing to prove that every man has a price. He sends them packing as soon as he knows the surveyor's cost. Baroka must have realised that if the railroad were allowed to pass through Ilujinle, it would end his hold on the people, and his popularity and political power would wane. He worries that he is also losing his manliness, and to stop such a catastrophe, which is synonymous with becoming a woman, he bribes his way through.

Furthermore, he believes that travellers would come and influence his people with new ideas and thinking, just like Lakunle, and he cannot afford that. He had to think fast and divert the rail track from his domain. According to Wetherell and Edley (1999), masculinity signifies not a specific type of man but rather a way that places men through expansive practices. Similarly, Jefferson (1994) urges critics to ask how real men respond to those various virilities with their peculiar profiles and particular cognitive developments. He reiterates that the male folk choose those discursive situations to help dispel nervousness and feelings of weakness. It is given this that Baroka acted to secure his masculine identity. The men in the play enjoy a game of power monopolization aiming to construct a hegemonic patriarchal society.

In the politics of sex, women in the text remain the real victims of the games of power and seduction. They are seen in the play as objects meant for men (Gajowski, 1992) who cannot make decisions independently. This is evident in Sadiku's proclamation that she had enjoyed her place as Bale's wife for forty

years, and she encourages Sidi to do the same. Even Sidi, realising how beautiful she is, delights in the thought that her beauty would grant her the opportunity to possess the finest, wealthiest, and most potent men (*The Lion and the Jewel* 1963, p. 42). As one sees on pages 63-64, her words of scorn to Lakunle at the end, when she eventually leaves to join Baroka's harem of wives, bespeaks, of this point.

It is so evident from those exchanges between Sidi and Lakunle that this time around, having tested Baroka's sexual prowess, Sidi no longer considers the fact that Baroka is much older than she is as this was the reason for her initial refusal of him ". . . I am young and brimming; he is spent. I am the twinkle of a jewel. But he is the hind-quarters of a lion!" (*The Lion and the Jewel* 1963, p. 23). Women are often lured into doing exactly what the male characters want, such as when Sidi is drawn into sleeping with Baroka. The text nourishes the notions of negligence, degradation, and dehumanization of women in favour of hegemonic masculinity.

Taking us further is the libidinous staging of wrestling by the dramatist making it a notable exploit in the underlying portrayal of masculinity in the text. Barthes (1972) submits that wrestling and theatre give understandable depictions of the moral situation, which are usually private (p. 18). According to Senanu (1980), the wrestling contest between Baroka and his chamber wrestler, in which Bale successfully displays his competence and strength, foretells the seduction of Sidi by Baroka and her eventual acceptance of his marriage offer. This also supports Barthes' claim, which, as referenced above. Sidi patiently awaits her seduction as Baroka wrestles; she celebrates his victory when he angrily throws his opponent. This amounts to an admiration of Bale by Sidi and also confirms a "Freudian slip (*parapraxis*) in her subconscious" (Muhammad, 2002, p. 78). Reinelt (1996) opines that in terms of wrestling, one would find it challenging to be disinterested because when watching it, one must support a party. Thus, as it offers a vivid discrepancy between good and evil, it prompts moral judgment. In short, it is a perfect feat for feminist dramatisation (p. 41) and a glorified moment in the masculinist world. The display, therefore, is invariably not between the two wrestling males but for the sexes and a show of manly ability to trap innocent women (Muhammad, 2002). The playwright uses wrestling as a metaphor for an exhibition between the sexes. It is also a metaphor for gender exact subjugation and domination. It is not the court wrestler who loses to Baroka but Sidi and the rest of the women. The play explains precisely through

the metaphor of wrestling the relationship between patriarchy and the class society—one substitute and is, in turn, subdued by the substitution.

Additionally, the lost traveller's dance on pages 14-18. It is about the loss of a traveller who captures Sidi's images in pictures and calls attention to her prettiness, conceit, and susceptibility. Lakunle, who plays the traveller in the play within the play rides maids as the stage prop for the motor car of the traveller:

> ***The four girls crouch on the floor, like the four wheels of a car. Lakunle directs their spacing then takes his place in the middle and sits on air; he alone does not dance. He does realistic miming. Soft throbbing drums gradually swell in volume, and the four 'wheels' rotate the body's upper halves in perpendicular circles. Lakunle is clowning the driving motives, obviously enjoying this thoroughly. The drums gain tempo faster, faster, more quickly. A sudden crash of drums and the girls quiver and the dance stall. Another effort of rhythms fails, and the 'stalling wheel' gives a corresponding shudder, finally, and lets their faces fall on their laps. Lakunle tampers with several controls climbs out of the car and looks underneath it. His lips indicate that he is wearing violently. Examining the wheels, pressing them to text the pressure, betrays the devil in him by seizing his chances to pinch the girl's bottom (****The Lion and the Jewel****, 1963, pp. 14-15)***

The stage direction above is well-flavoured with sexual images that are libidinal and phallocentric. It depicts the act of sexual domination of women by men. The role of the drums deploys the expenditure and difficulty as well as the vagaries of love-making in which the shattered female partner quivers, trembles, and stalls. The stage direction quoted above is the playwright's exploration of male chauvinism in linguistic terms. According to Keyssar (1996), if language itself is patriarchal, then even the expressions or acts that challenge the dominance of patriarchy still inescapably speak from the ideology of the male-dominated tradition (p. 8).

Another dance is Sadiku's in the opening night scene, which is rich in sexual exploits. She celebrates the feigned 'collective emasculation' of the lion (Baroka) by herself and the other women. The 'impotence of Baroka' is her reason for dancing, but it turns out to be a trick. According to Senanu (1980), the ultimate stage introduces the dance that reveals the betrayal of Lakunle and the nuptial union of Sidi and Bale (p. 77). However, the celebration is not about marriage; it is instead the celebration of bravery, virility, and patriarchy in which the women are required to approve their subjugation, as it is with Sadiku and Sidi, who are used as the central characters.

The attempt to assert the masculine identity is present not simply in the actions of Soyinka's male characters but, most specifically, in their language. Obafemi's (2009) analysis of Soyinka helps to spell out the use of language within Soyinka's plays to privilege male activity over female activity even, or perhaps especially, as the male's activity faces failure. Soyinka's male characters may often inhabit a world without women. Still, Obafemi points out that through their dialogue, they often accuse women of being the architects of their problems in the male's world (They are daughters of Eve and daughters of discord according to Jero in *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1969) by Wole Soyinka). Soyinka's characters speak of a particular masculine dialect that defines their way of speaking, as men. The most precise language in his play is the excessive use of the popular half-pidgin, the half-standard language of Samson and Salubi in *The Road* (1965), Professor's half-mystical, half-mundane rhetorical and the incoherent, disconnected speech in *Madmen and Specialist* (1970), the praise poetry of Saruni in *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), the cultic musical dance rhythm of Elesin Oba in *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), as well as the proverb-ridden discourse of Baroka in *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) (Obafemi, 2009).

Conclusion

This paper examined Wole Soyinka's (1963) *The Lion and the Jewel* as a nuanced exploration of masculinity in a postcolonial Nigerian society. The play presents two contrasting masculine archetypes: Baroka, the traditional leader, embodies dominance through physical prowess and control over women. Lakunle, the modern schoolteacher, prioritizes education and a more progressive approach to gender roles. Through their rivalry for Sidi's hand, the play exposes the limitations inherent to both models. Baroka's traditional masculinity is challenged, while Lakunle's modern perspective isolates him from the cultural context. *The Lion and the Jewel* reflects anxieties about masculinity in a society experiencing rapid social change. Lakunle's arrival disrupts the established order, forcing Baroka to defend his traditional dominance. The analysis utilizes concepts of masculinity, intersectionality, and social identities to demonstrate how the play eschews a singular 'heroic' form of masculinity. Instead, it highlights the challenges men face in a rapidly evolving society.

This paper contributes to the understanding of masculinity in postcolonial literature by focusing on *The Lion and the Jewel.* It demonstrates how the play challenges monolithic notions of masculinity in a newly independent Nigeria.

The exploration reveals a clash between traditional and modern forms, suggesting neither is ideal. This reflects anxieties about the evolving roles of men in a rapidly transforming society. While this paper offers an analysis through the lens of masculinity, it acknowledges the existence of ongoing critical discourse surrounding the play. Future research opportunities could explore how other female characters beyond Sidi perceive masculinity within the play. This investigation could consider how their perspectives might differ based on factors such as age, social status, or marital situation. The exploration of these nuances presents a compelling avenue for further research.

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