Chapter - III

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY
Soyinka’s plays defy classification. The characteristic stamp of intensity can be traced in all the works of Soyinka - hilarious comedy, scathing satire and profound tragedy alike - but very little else in terms of thematic similarity binds them together.

The conflict between tradition and modernity is the central thematic concern of the plays like *The Lion and the Jewel*, *Camwood On The Leaves*, *The Kongi’s Harvest*. *The Lion and the Jewel*, though a deft comedy which provides excellent theatre to the audience, it draws heavily on the theme of colonial conflict. The main characters of this play can be classified into two groups - Baroka, Sadiku and Sidi represent the traditional African values, whereas Lakunle, the village school master stands for modern European, especially British values of life. The conflict between the two value systems triggers off the germination of amorous love between Sidi, the village belle of about sixteen years and Lakunle, a young school master of Ilujinle.

As is natural for a young man, Lakunle is infatuated with Sidi as the latter happens to be a pretty young girl in the African village of Ilujinle. When she is passing through the lane near the school, Lakunle chances to see her and begins to express his appreciation of her beauty and a special concern for her well-being. As he sees her carrying a pot of water on her head, he feels anxious for her and therefore advises her:
I have told you not to carry loads; On your head. But you are as stubborn; As an illiterate goat. It is bad for your spine; And it shortens your neck, so that very soon; You will have no neck at all. Do you wish to look; Squashed like my pupils' drawings?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.4)

He taunts her by saying that “Only spiders Carry loads the way you do”. He advises her to cover up her chest thereby discouraging the idlers of the village. Lakunle’s initial infatuation matures into his desire to marry Sidi. When she asks him for his pail which he has snatched away from her, he lays the condition:

Not till you swear to marry me.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.7)

He also explains why he wants to marry her. He thinks her to be an intelligent girl who can understand him, and therefore support him in his struggle for life.

Sidi, a man must prepare to fight alone; But it helps if he has a woman; To stand by him, a woman who; Can understand... like you.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.7)

Lakunle tries to court the village belle because he believes in the modern European concept of love finally resulting in marriage. It is here that the crux of the problem lies. Though Lakunle is an African by birth, he has Europeanized himself by his modern education and contact with alien culture. In fact he has acculturated himself to the extent that he has imbibed the values of European culture. But Sidi remains a traditional girl to the core. She believes
in the orthodox African values of life, including the conventions of marriage. She, therefore, does not believe in the European concept of ‘love marriage’. She expects, jfsisSt5, clings firmly to the native tradition of giving bride price to her parents by Lakunle.

*The Lion and the Jewel* develops a meaning almost classical in its validity with the juxtaposition of two sets of values creating vital dramatic conflict. The play has the genuine flavor of African village life at the precise stage at which the concept of progress begins to undergo a radical change. The customs of polygamy and bride-price are being challenged. The play begins with the scene of the market, dominated by the immense ‘odan’ tree. It is a village centre. The wall of the ‘bush’ school flanks the stage.

Lakunle, the main source of humor has touches of comedy of manners, with the exaggerated, caricature like portrayal. But the cunning old fox, the Bale Baroka, is quite convincing throughout in his stealthy warfare against modernism, and in the firm but sly methods adopted to perpetuate polygamy. Lakunle, the self-styled advocate of ‘progress’ and of ‘civilized romances’ fails Sidi at the critical moment as a gallant but quixotic knight of the Romances. Sidi, intoxicated with her own beauty, keeps her head against Lakunle, but loses it when pitted against the old Lion. Along with other village girls, Sidi completes a realistic picture of the heart of an African village, as against Lagos which has already become a symbol of progress according to Lakunle’s definition.

The play presents the village scene of Ilujinle, a typical Nigerian rural atmosphere. The Bale Baroka, the old Lion of the village, stands for the traditional, good and bad alike. Enjoying all the luxury that money and power could provide, the Bale has a harem full of the prettiest women in the area, fresh stock being added frequently. Still, Soyinka takes great care to show that
the Bale's hard-headed conservatism gains, where Lakunel's muddle headed sloganeering fails to convince. He considers himself to be the agent of the great modern revolution against men like the Bale and declares what he considers a moral war. Lakunle gets acquainted with Sidi, the village beauty, and begins his process of modernization with an attempt to reform 'the bush-girl'. Gerald Moore attributes the originality of Soyinka's comedy to two factors.

"Firstly, the great scope which he allows here for mime and for dramatically expressive dance and movement; secondly, the deliberately provocative moral of the ending, which reverses the assumption of so much of culture conflict literature that the heroine must always plump for progress and enlightenment". (Gerald Moore, Wole Soyinka, Africana Publishing Coporation, New York, 1971.)

Lakunle, the school master is nearly twenty-three. He is dressed in an old-style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed, obviously a size or two too small. His tie is done in a very small knot, disappearing beneath a shiny black waistcoat. He wears twenty-three-inch-bottom trousers, and blanco white tennis shoes.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.1)

Sidi, the village belle, is so much interested in this village school master Lakunle, more as an amusing character, telling her funny and strange stories, than as a reformer. She is, however serious, serious when he mentions marriage and is willing provided he honours the custom of paying the bride-price. She feels all the more amused when he dodges the issue in the name of modernism.
Soyinka very dexterously presents the conflict of tradition and modernism in the issue of marriage linked with bride-price. Sidi stands for tradition. She is presented as the embodiment of native African culture. Lakunle represents modernism which finally loses its ground. Sidi says:

\[ I, \ ye \ told \ you, \ and \ I \ say \ it \ again; \ I \ shall \ marry \ you \ today, \ next \ week; \ Or \ any \ day \ you \ name; \ But \ my \ bride - \ price \ must \ first \ be \ paid; \ Aha, \ now \ you \ turn \ away. \ But \ I \ tell \ you, \ Lakunle, \ I \ must \ have; \ The \ full \ bride-price. \ Will \ you \ make \ me; \ A \ laughing- stock? \ Well, \ do \ as \ you \ please. \ But \ Sidi \ will \ not \ make \ herself; \ A \ cheap \ bowl \ for \ the \ village \ spit. \]

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.8)

There is a striking difference between the two about the bride-price. Sidi has her own reasons for insisting upon the bride price. If at all she marries without a bride-price, the traditional society will cast aspersion on her sexual purity. She insists on her version repeatedly because:

\[ They \ will \ say \ I \ was \ no \ virgin; \ That \ I \ was \ forced \ to \ sell \ my \ shame; \ And \ marry \ you \ without \ a \ price. \]

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.8)

For this Lakunle replies in an appaling way criticizing the evils of bride price:

\[ A \ savage \ custom, \ barbaric, \ out-dated, \ Rejected, \ denounced, \ accursed, \ Excommunicated, \ archaic, \ degrading, \ Humiliating, \ unspeakable, \ redundant. \ Retrogressive, \ remarkable, \ unpalatable. \]

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.8)
When Sidi seriously insists for bride-price, Lakunle tries his best to convince her that he wants to marry her without paying the bride-price and elaborately quotes in flowery language the evils of this system. In his view paying bride-price is an 'ignoble custom', infamous, 'ignominious' shaming the African heritage before the world. At one stage in a fit of anger Lakunle says:

*Ignorant girl, can you not understand? To pay the price would be; To buy a heifer off the market stall. You'd be my chattel, my mere property.*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.9)

In his discourse to convince Sidi, Lakunle expresses his condemnation of native traditions and how he appreciates the modern culture linked with materialistic pleasures.

*When we are wed, you shall not walk or sit; Tethered, as it were, to my dirtied heels. Together we shall sit at table; Not on the floor - and eat, Not with fingers, but with knives And forks, and breakable plates; Like civilized beings.*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.9)

In his view civilization, modern culture is following the footsteps of the British, or the Christians in cities.

*I want to walk beside you in the street, 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.*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.9)
Unable to convince Sidi about the idea of bride-price he considers himself as the great Messiah of civilization and consoles himself with these words:

   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.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.5)

Sidi and Lakunle differ in the concept of traditional marriage, lifestyle and also in their views about kissing. Lakunle considers it 'a way of civilized romance' and requests her to give him a kiss.

   ... Be a modern wife, look me in the eye; And give me a little kiss - like this [Kisses her].

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.10)

Sidi does not like it because she looks at it from the African point of view. She considers it rather unhygienic.

   No, don't! I tell you I dislike; This strange unhealthy mouthing you perform.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.10)

Meanwhile some interesting incidents happen in the life of Sidi which change her ideas of life. The European and mechanical amenities help her to have an unprecedented confidence in herself. For example, a European riding a 'new horse' into the village. He has brought with him 'a one eyed box'. He has taken the snaps of many villagers including Sidi and printed them in a book. Sidi who has seen her own photograph beautifully printed on the front cover of the magazine as bush beauty develops a new confidence about her youthful
beauty. She develops a bloated egoism about herself especially when her attention is drawn to the fact that Baroka’s “image is in a little corner somewhere in the book, and even that corner he shares with one of the village latrines”.

The wide publicity gained by her beauty through the European photographer kindles pride in Sidi and she begins to look down upon even Bale Baroka, the Lion of Ilujinle. She expresses her pride playfully before Lakunle:

Well, don’t you know? Sidi is more important even than the Bale.

More famous than that panther of the trees. He is beneath me now - You fearless rake, the scourge of womanhood! But now, He shares the corner of the leaf; With the lowest of the low - With the dug-out village latrine! While I - How many leaves did my own image take?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.13)

Infatuated with the pride of beauty Sidi refuses the request of Baroka who wants to marry her as his prettiest and latest wife. When she saw her colorful photograph with her full blown chest in the magazine, she does not want any certificate from anybody:

My name is Sidi, And now, let me be. My name is Sidi, and I am beautiful. The stranger took my beauty and placed it is my hands. Here, here it is. I need no funny names To tell me of my fame. Loveliness beyond the jewel of a throne - That is what he said.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.20)
She questions Sadiku, eldest wife of the Bale who came with the proposal of marriage.

You waste your breath. Why did Baroka not request my hand Before the stranger Brought his book of images? Why did the Lion not bestow his gift; Before my face was lauded to the world?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.20)

In her opinion her beauty would add to the pride of Baroka.

Barolia merely seeks to raise his manhood; Above my beauty. He seeks new fame; As the one man who has possessed; The jewel of Ilujinle!

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.21)

She has other reservations also about Bale Baroka. His old age happens to be one of the hindrances in her possible alliance with him.

He's old I never knew till now, He was that old...

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.21)

The new awareness of her beauty makes her almost blind to others' point of view. She grows narcissistic about her physical charm:

... To think I took; No notion of my velvet skin. How smooth it is! And no man ever thought; To praise the fulness of my breasts...

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.21)

Sidi bluntly refuses to marry Bale Baroka on the grounds of physical charm. Sadiku, the senior wife of Baroka notices Sidi's resentment. She
changes her strategy. She requests Sidi to go and have supper at Baroka’s home in honor of her being recognized as the prettiest girl of Ilujinle. Sidi is very clever and very smart. She sees through the wiles of Baroka. She bluntly refuses to sup with married men, as she very well knows the consequences.

Can you deny that; Every woman who has supped with him one night, Becomes his wife or concubine the next?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.23)

Sadiku is nonplussed by Sidi’s pointblank refusal to Baroka’s proposal to marriage. When Sadiku conveys the same to Baroka, he also feels insulted and embarrassed. For a little while he does not know what to do to attract Sidi into his bed. Then he hits upon a clever plan and pretends to have lost his virility.

The time has come when I can fool myself; No more. I am no man, Sadiku. My manhood; Ended near a week ago.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, pp.27-28)

He explains to Sadiku why he wants to have a young wife like Sidi:

I wanted Sidi because I still hoped - A foolish thought I know, but still - I hoped; That, with a virgin young and hot within, My failing strength would rise and save my pride. A waste of hope. I knew it even then. But it’s a human failing never to accept; The worst; and so I pandered to my vanity. When manhood must, it ends. The well of living, kapped beyond its depth. Dries up, and mocks the wastrel in the end. I am withered and unsapped,
the joy of ballad-mongers, the aged butt of youth's ribaldry.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.28)

Baroka pretends importance, thereby giving an artificial satisfaction to Sadiku. He sends Sadiku to plead again with Sidi to become his wife. Sadiku employs a new technique of weaning Sidi to her husband's bed, by misleading her about the whole issue. She tells Sidi that it is time for women to rejoice over their victory over men who have lost their virility. Sidi is not able to see through the wiles of Sadiku when the latter invites her to participate in a ritual.

The scarecrow is here. Begone fop! This is the world of women. At this moment our star sits in the centre of the sky. We are supreme. What is more, we are about to perform a ritual. If you remain, we will chop you up, we will make you the sacrifice.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.31)

Sadiku further rouses the curiosity in Sidi by stating that it is only women who are allowed to watch the ritual and not men. This kind of prohibition for men further appetises Sidi's curiosity. Sadiku uses the resourceful wiles of her sex in such a subtle fashion that Sidi develops an irresistible urge to participate in the ritual and mock at the 'impotence' of Baroka.

Stop. Sadiku stop. Oh such 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.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.32)
Brain washed and misled by Sadiku in addition to her own bloated and narcissistic ego, Sidi does not heed to Lakunle’s precautionary words:

No, Sidi, don’t. If you care; One little bit for what I feel, Do not go to torment the man. Suppose he knows that you have come to jeer - And he will know, the is not a fool - He is a savage thing, degenerate: He would beat a helpless woman the could...

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, pp.32-33)

Running off gleefully she meets Baroka in privacy but is finally deflowered by the virile man of sixty. Sadiku is very happy, that she has succeeded in her trick of fooling Sidi and causing the latter’s loss of virginity. But Lakunle feels hurt to see his beloved deflowered by his rival. Yet his liberal out look enables him to forgive Sidi for her loss of virginity and offers to marry her. But at the same time hesitates:

But I must prepare myself; I cannot be; A single man one day and a married one the next. It must come gradually. I will not wed in haste. A man must have time to prepare, To learn to like the thought. I must think of my pupils too: Would they be pleased if I were married; Not asking their consent...?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, pp.55-56)

But Sidi who has experienced sexual joy with Baroka refuses to marry Lakunle and says:

Marry who... ? You thought... Did you really think that you, and I.. Why, did you think that after him, I could endure the touch of another man? I who have felt
the strength, The perpetual youthful zest; Of the panther
of the trees? And would I choose a watered - down, A
beardless version of unripened man?

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.57)

The final surrender of Sidi to Baroka is evidence of the victory of
traditional African values over the modern European ones in the African
context.

Sadiku is very happy about the success of her trick in pushing Sidi
into Baroka’s bed. She and her husband do not believe in the importance of sex
for itself. On the contrary, they respect sex for its procreative purposes. That is
the reason why she blesses Sidi:

_I invoke the fertile gods. They will stay with you._
_May the time come soon when you shall be as round-
bellied as a full moon in a low sky._

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.57)

Here the playwright vividly portrays the conflict between African
values and modern European values and ultimately resolved in favor of the
traditional values. Lakunle, inspite of his European ways of life, is looked
down upon and finally Sidi rejects him. She confirms to the African tradition
by marrying Bale Baroka even though aged sixty. Sidi, who at first jokingly
considered Baroka as equal to her father in age and physical features has finally
accepted his hand in matrimony. She wholeheartedly accepted him as her bed-
mate and life partner. At the same time Bale Baroka who used to address Sidi
as ‘a child’ or ‘a daughter’ has finally initiated her into the unforgettable joys
of matrimonial sex. Soyinka lucidly portrays the contrast between traditional
African value system and modern European value-system. Clear comparison is
made between the African conventions of marriage like payment of bride-price
with Lakunle’s modern. European ways of courting, wooing, loving a woman to marry her. Soyinka dexterously presents the ways of convincing a lady for marriage in the different, diagonally opposite ways and finally the traditional ways are crowned inspite of their lapses. Lakunle’s rational method of convincing a lady into accepting the marriage proposal is overpowered by Baroka’s cunning ways of drawing a lady into bed. Compared to the animalistic, functional and powerful sexual pleasure offered to Sidi by Baroka, Lakunle’s aesthetics of love and poetic sensibility have no significance in the tradition ridden society. Lakunle praises the charm of Sidi in flowery rhetorical phrases, but Sidi considered his admiration as ‘funny names picked up from wretched books’.

Soyinka portrays the conflict between tradition and modernity and finally modernity is defeated by tradition not only in the case of marriage between Bale Baroka and Sidi but also in other social matters. When the surveyor comes to Ilujinle to cut down the forest and lay the railway track, the Bale of Ilujinle feels that the integrity of the country is threatened. Lakunle describes Bale Baroka as the antagonist of modernity or progress.

*My father told me, before he died. And few men;*  
Know of this trick - oh he’s a die-hard, rogue; Sworn against our progress... yes... it was. somewhere here; The track should have been laid just along The outskirts. Well, the workers came, in fact; It was prisoners who were brought to do; The harder part ... to break the jungle’s back...

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.23)

Baroka, enemy of modernity and progress avoided the laying of the said track by bribing the surveyor with a wad of pound notes, kola nuts, a coup
of hens and a goat and palm wine. Lakunle point out how old fashioned Baroka is. The paradox is that the old fashioned Bale is powerful enough to avoid the entry of modern civilization into the heart of traditional Africa.

Lakunle dreams about the effect of modern civilization in their rural area. They aspire that construction of motor roads, and modern transport system would bring a remarkable change in their lives. He gave constrastive pictures of the traditional and the modernized Africa. In his view the conventional polygamy would be replaced by monogamy, the system of paying bride-price or selling the women in marriage would be substituted by courting, loving and love marriage, the clay pots would be replaced by saucepans, modern parks would be laid for lovers and palm wine habit would be replaced by tea with milk and sugar. He aspires that they would publish their own newspaper, build new factories and send their girls for beauty contests.

Within a year or two, I swear, This town shall see a transformation; Bride-price will be thing forgotten; And wives shall take their place by men. A motor road will pass this spot; And bring the city ways to us. We'll buy saucepans for all the women; Clay pots are crude and unhygienic; No man shall take more wives than one ... We'll burn the forest, cut the trees; Then plant a modern park for lovers; We'll print newspapers every day; With pictures of seductive girls. The world will judge our progress by; The girls that win beauty contests. ... We must reject the palm wine habit; And take to tea, with milk and sugar.

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.34)
Soyinka portrays Lakunle as an embodiment of modern European life. As an educated man, he has filled his head with many new ideas. He dreams of translating them into action one day. But the African way of life is diametrically opposed to Lakunle’s dream of modernity. Baroka for example, is an incarnation of African life-style. He is uneducated, has no poetic heart or romantic sensibility. He doesn’t believe in attracting women by appealing to their heart. He has no art of appreciating the beauty of a woman. Yet he wins women by his power, wealth and stealthy ways. His illiterate indifference to women’s beauty is amply expressed in his words to Sidi:

*Now that Is a question which I never thought to hear Except from a school teacher. Do you think. The Lion has such leisure that he asks; The ways and wherefores of a woman’s; Squint?*

(Collected Plays 2: The Lion and the Jewel, p.38)

Sidi’s approach to life is complementary to Baroka’s. Being deeply rooted in the African tradition, she is not attracted by Lakunle’s Europeanized and sophisticated approach to life. Her traditional roots are unshakable by the winds of modernity. Her philosophy perfectly matches Baroka’s animalistic and ritualistic one. That is the reason why she is magnetically attracted to him after testing his virility in bed. She bluntly refuses to marry Lakunle. This phenomenon testifies to the deep-rooted strength of tradition unshaken by the superficial mind of Europeanization or modernity.

“The final triumph of African tradition over modernity and westernization is obviously an objective correlative of Wole Soyinka’s philosophy which recognizes the postcolonial need for nativization or reculturation and rediscovery of the past glory and grandeur”. (Basavaraj S.Naikar, ‘The Conflict Between Tradition and Modernity in whole Soyinka’s,
Gerald Moore rightly says that, “the surprise ending of *The Lion and the Jewel* presents a substantial moral - Man, be thyself". (Gerald Moore, Twelve African Writers Hutchinson, 1983, London, p.221).

Soyinka’s lesson is obviously, a model for all postcolonial writers of the world. Soyinka presents a vivid contrast between the two major opponents in the play - Lakunle and Baroka in regard to role playing and use of language with particular Subtlety. In ‘Morning’ the gauche Lakunle has to be bullied into taking part in the ‘Dance of the lost Photographer’, once involved he performs with grace and reveals a mischievous sense of humor. Baroka, however, needs no begging, he is ready ‘on cue’ and plays his part with relish of an experienced, indeed an habitual, actor. Both men enjoy using language. Lakunle has a knowledge of local idioms which he can employ with wit effect, for instance, he picks up Sidi’s ‘have you no shame?’ and aptly points out ‘That’s what the stewpot said to the fire... But she was tickled just the same. ‘However the school master frequently lapses into barren, borrowed and bombastic rhetoric. His memory is cluttered with alien images and with quotations from romantic fiction and the Christian liturgy. He pleads:

*Sidi, my heart; Burst into flowers with my love.*  
*But you, you and the dead of the village; Trample it with feet of ignorance.*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.7)

While enumerating the evil of the custom of bride price with a list of fine sounding words which he has learnt from shorter Companion Dictionary, he runs out of appropriate adjectives; he calls into service others of doubtful
suitability and eventually splutters to a halt. At this point Sidi asks, in an image which sums up her response to Lakunle’s use of flowery language.

*Is the bag empty? Why did you stop?*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.8)

Baroka’s attitude to language is entirely different from Lakunle’s: he handles words with care, delighting in their individual qualities. His manipulation of sense, image and sound is well illustrated in the seduction scene, where he speaks, for example of progress:

*I do not hate progress, only its nature; which makes all roofs and faces look the same.*

(Collected Plays 2: *The Lion and the Jewel*, p.47)

In these lines the very stench of decay is presented in positive terms for the decaying vegetation of today will, promote the growth of tomorrow. Baroka, is a conservationist ahead of his times, who regards isolation as part of a plan for the future.


In the view of James Gibbs, *The Lion and the Jewel* stands at the confluence of two traditions: The Yoruba mosque and the European satirical musical. It is an early masterpiece, capable of unleashing tremendous power of the stage, of provoking and entertaining of speaking to those familiar with
either the Yoruba or the European tradition, and of challenging them to respond
to a new theatrical experience". (Ibid., p.53.)

"Bale Baroka and Lakunle represent opposing values which in more
somber works are equated with the opposed principles of life and death".
(Eldred D. Jones, The Writing of Wole Soyinka, Heinemann, London 1973,
P.29.)

J.Z.Kronenfeld opines that "no one in The Lion and the Jewel is
consistently and disinterestedly modern or traditional in his or her thinking or
behavior and the result is that terms like "progress" and "tradition" have no
meaning outside of the highly relate and pragmatic use to which they are put by
characters in the play". (The Communistic African and the Individualistic
Westerner: Some comments on Misleading Generalizations in Western
Criticism of Soyinka and Achebe in Lindfors, Critical Perspectives on Nigerian
Literature, pp.237-64.)

According to Gibbs-"There is no clash of cultures, because Lakunle's
undigested ill-assimilated values signify only a pseudo westernization, a
travesty of a western culture that is not in fact, represented in the play". (Derek

In Derek Wrights view "There is no clash of cultures in The Lion and
the jewel but there is the confluence of two specific traditions, the Alarinjo
mask theatre and the European musical comedy". (Derek Wright, Wole Soyinka
and Derek Wright's are not acceptable to majority c. critics on Soyinka.

"The final surrender of Sidi to Baroka is evidence of the victory of
traditional. African values over the modem, European ones in the African
context". (Dr.Y.S Sarada, 'The Portrayal of Traditional and Cultural values in

"Soyinka is no doubt saying to his people, Don't throw away your heritage" which still has much to offer you, for the glossy manifestations of western. (Dr.Y.S Sarada, 'The Portrayal of Traditional and Cultural values in Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* in *Journal of English Studies*, Vol. No. 1, p.67-July-December, 2004, Dept. of English, S.V.U., Tirupati. p.68.)

"*The Lion and the Jewel* cannot be considered as a serious presentation of conflict between tradition and revolt. The character delineation in general and Lakunle in particular, is an indicator of Soyinka's purpose. The pioneer of modernism in the backward village of Africa should have been a strong character, with proper awareness of what would suit the relevant context, and what would not. Instead the spokesman of modernization is a caricature himself. In Lakunle, Soyinka has portrayed the return of the foreign-educated African student in 'The Other Immigrant', showing off his 'three piece suit' and aping the whiteman without discretion. He cannot be an intellectual herald of the revolution against the hackneyed customs and superstitions. He does not, represent enlightenment, and it is Soyinka's impish delight in thriving on irony that has made him a school teacher".

(Dr.Radhamani Gopalakrishnan, *At Ogun's Feet* (Wole Soyinka, The Playwright), S.V.U., Tirupati 1986, p.29.)

Another play of Soyinka which portrays the theme of conflict is *Camwood On The Leaves* subtitled A rite of Childhood passage. "The play explores the tensions of adolescent awakening set against the internal conflict of generations in a modern Yoruba family against pressures of European Christianity on the traditional cultural pattern of West African life. In this play, these tensions are expressed in terms of conflict between the Reverend
Erinjobi, a severe minister, imbued with a sense that his own family’s conduct must be beyond reproach, and his son, Isola, who revolts against his father’s religion as well as his authority and defies them obsessively in defence of his own independence and that of the girl whose lover he has become”. (Wole Soyinka, *Camwood On The Leaves*, A Methuen Playscript, Great Britan, 1973.)

*Camwood On The Leaves* broadcasted in 1968 but not published until 1973, tells us the story of the 16 year old Isola’s traumatized childhood at the hands of his savagely repressive, puritanical father, the insecure Christian pastor of a still largely “Pagan” parish. Isola’s father Erinjobi disowns him for taking part in an innocent egungun. His mother Moji pleads after him to pardon him. She entreats her son to ask pardon of his father, but the strict minister pounces on his wife and orders:

*Moji! From now on you commit a sin against God every time you call that creation of the devil your son.*

(*Camwood On The Leaves*, p.9)

Here is the conflict between the fatherly authority and motherly affection. Moji pleads for mercy. The strict husband Erinjobi orders to stop her behavior of pleading for her son. Then she entreats:

Reverend, I am a weak woman. I have not your strength.

(*Camwood On The Leaves*, p.8)

After being mercisessly beaten, Isola flees to the forest and in the “chapel” of a clearing, builds an alternative world that nevertheless mirrors that of his home life: he projects upon a mother tortoise and a fearsome boa constrictor that dashes the tortoise’s eggs against the rocks the identities of...
Moji, his timid and powerless mother, and Erinjobi, his brutal father. Here his childhood sweetheart Marounke becomes his lover; when her pregnancy is exposed, Isola is accused of her abduction and becomes the victim of a campaign of lies orchestrated by her outraged father, the influential Olumorin.

Olumorin, father of Morounke accuses Erinjobi for the act of Isola and threatened him.

... *You cannot throw dust in my eyes, Pastor. I have warned you often that I did not want your son near my daughter. But still he managed to take advantage of her and put her in the family way. Now he's absconded with her and still you say you know nothing about it.*

*(Camwood On The Leaves, p.21)*

Mrs. Olumorin also starts and announces to set the law on Isola. Erinjobi swears on God and asks Mrs and Mr Olumorin and others:

*Follow me and see for yourself God is my witness. I have ordered him out of my house ... I have denied him of my name ... my whole life is soured by this son of evil... But what more can I do?*

*(Camwood On The Leaves, p.22)*

At the behest of Olumorin, Isola is hunted down to his forest hide out by an a mob. Then Moji, the mother pleads.

*What will you do? Are you going to hunt him now like an animal? What has my son ever done to any of you? You say he stole your daughter. I say that your daughter stole him from us. She led him astray.*

*(Camwood On The Leaves, pp. 23-24)*
Though Erinjobi, somewhat mellowed by a night of prayer at this church, manages to deflect the mob, the identification between Python and Pastor becomes complete when the son, driven by persecution to madness and murder, confuses the two and at the play’s climax shoots the father with the bullet intended for the snake.

The moral logic of Camwood On The Leaves is clear enough. The play is not a cautionary homilitic on the impiousness of the filial rebellion: Isola’s initial disobedience and defiance of his father are not conceived as the first faltering step along a wayward course that culminates inevitably in parricide. Rather, the father’s hatred and rejection of his son being an equally unnatural fate down upon his own head. It is the self-righteous cruelty and blind intolerance of the parents, and their hysterical rage against all natural instinct, that harden their aptly named son’s desperate isolation.

“Camwood On The Leaves is a penetrating psychological study of the neurotic effects of an alien, puritanical religion on the minds of the new African middle class—a class fearful for its exemplary position, obsessed with respectability, and brainwashed by colonial Christianity into despising the custom of its own people” (Derek Wright, Wole Soyinka Revisited, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1973, p.43.)

In this play Soyinka presents the battle between parental dogmatism and youthful rebellion. Erinjobi chides his son Isola for his misbehavior. He ordered:

... bring my stick. Hurry up and don ’t waste my time.

(Pulls him through and begins to flog him)

You ’re a child of sorrow, do you hear? A child of sorrow. You are lost, past redemption. I thought this
was a Christian house, but you seem determined to turn it into a house of pagans. Don't bring shame to my house! If I have to kill you I will see that you do not shame my house.

(He lays the stick down, breathing slightly heavily)

No tears, eh! Look at him. No tears at all. Oh, you 'ye sold yourself to the devil and no mistake. Look at him. His eyes are completely dry... no sign at all that he had just taken a punishment. (Shouting.) Put up your hands! (Slaps him.

(Camwood On The Leaves, p.27)

In this play Soyinka vividly portrays the deeper conflict between Christian and African belief. Erinjobi, an embodiment of Christian pastor beats his son Isola for his pagan activities and questions him:

... You dressed yourself as an egungun and paraded the town like a pagan. In this or is this not a Christian house? Have I not brought you up as a Christian...; An egungun - that's his latest employment. Soon I suppose we shall wake up one morning and find a bestial sacrifice at our door - a dog split into two or some equally revolting mess. Is that what my house must become on account of you, you child of the devil!

(Camwood On The Leaves, p.28)

"Like much of Soyinka's works, Kongi's Harvest is a great deal more subtle then it appears. It is a perfectly satisfactory play, even if it is taken only as the representation of clash between a modern dictatorship and the traditional system which it has effectively replaced. It is ultimately a representation of

The language used in the play constantly links some characters with life and growth, others with death in a way which makes the representation to Kongi of the head of Sagi’s father a fitting symbolic climax of this more fundamental struggle.

‘Hemlock’ the beginning of the play, is a thematic microcosm of the whole play, Hemlock, obviously reminiscent of the death of Socrates, marks the enforced end of ancient wisdom. It is that poison that is at the very roots of tyranny. Indeed much of what a thematic analysis of the play eventually yields is summarized in the three images which open the satirical anthem with which it begins:

*The pot that will eat fat; In bottom must be scorched. The squires that will long crack nuts; Its foot pad must be sore. The sweetest wine has flowed down; The tapper’s shattered shins.*

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi’s Harvest, p.61)

At the surface level the play represents the clash between modern dictatorship and the traditional system of kingship which it had succeeded in replacing. But the meaning goes far deeper, as the main characters assume symbolic significance. The Yoruba proverbs convey the significance of the play. One has to pay the price to attain a goal. The final couplet means much more. It refers to the sweet wine that has flowed away in mockery of the tapper’s efforts - the colossal waste of human energy, while no purpose has been served.

Even the satirical opening of the play has obliquely presented in imagery a situation of fruitless labour. The jingling anthem goes on further to
portray the prevailing political situation. The new regime built on new political theories - the ism of Ismaland has contemptuously displaced the old:

*The demonstrate the tree of life; Is spring from broken peat; And we the rotted bark, spurned; When the tree swells its pot; The mucus that is snorted out; When Kongi's new race blows; And more, oh there's a harvest of words; In a penny newspaper (Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.61)*

'Ismaland', obviously, is the land of 'isms', each 'ism' representing a political party or ideology. The new regime survives not on any positive contribution, but on its propaganda machinery. The 'Government Loud Speaker' occupies the central position in the political framework. The Reformed Aweri Fraternity, a modification of the old Fraternity is in fact, a parody. They manufacture 'words' which go into the talking boxes. The repeated use of 'words, words and words', signifies sound and very little else. The credentials of the new regime rest on nothing else.

Kongi's word factory is closely reminiscent of the high level research undertaken by Professors in the Grand Academy of Lagado in Laputa, a country visited by Gulliver during one of his voyages subsequent to his adventures in Lilliput and Brobdingnag. Jonathan Swift describes Gulliver's visit to that part of the Academy where 'The projectors in Speculative Learning' resided. The first Professor was in the company of forty pupils. There was a 'Frame', a particular mechanical contraption which occupied the whole room. It had odd designs in small squares. The purpose was, according to the Professor, to serve the noble cause. Its mechanical manipulation would produce words at random to be arranged later on.

Kongi is almost all the time accompanied by the Right and the Left Ears of the State. Symbolically at least, it is not Kongi who listens and gathers
information; the official Ears do that. More demanding work such as thinking and writing books in Kongi’s name is being done by the Reformed Aweri Fraternity. Decentralization can be practiced then in such cases. One person can choose the topic and select the title, another man prepares the text, and the third can write the footnotes. Kongi as tyrants do manages without any strain for his brain.

The deposed King, Oba Danlola, now in preventive detention, still remains the spiritual authority over his subjects. It is ‘authority’ with a difference. The parent-child relationship between the ruler and the people is symbolized by Danlola who is affection personified. The Harvest festival about to be celebrated brings the bone of contention to light. It has been the King’s privilege to taste the first yam of the season which will be offered to him ceremoniously amidst festivities. Kongi wants it himself, and to add to the insult, he insists on Danlola presenting it to him with his own hands.

Prince Sarumi, Danlola’s brother, explains the principle behind the ceremony of the new yam:

They complained because; The first of the new yams; Melted first in an Oba’s mouth; But the dead will witness; He drew the poison from the root.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi’s Harvest, p.66)

Thus the function of a ruler is to provide ideal conditions for life for his people even at his own risk. He sucks the poisonous element from the new yam, symbolically jwing to himself all the harmful effect the new crop might contain. This meaning of ritual eludes Kongi who is fascinated only by the ceremonial aspect.
Eldred D. Jones explains this point '... To make eating and living safe for the governed. This is the ultimate responsibility of rule. This is the raisond'etre of rule'. (Note 2, P.75.)

Kongi on the other hand represents the forces of death. The dance in which the Oba participates introduces the song with evil forebodings for the country:

Delve with the left foot; For ill-luck; with the left; Again for ill-luck; once more; With the left alone, for disaster; Is the only certainty that we know.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.69)

Kongi is compared, in a very subtle parable, to a monster child who devours its mother.

Oba Aweri sings:

Observe, when the monster child; Was born,
Opele taught us to; Abandon him beneath the buttress tree; But the mother said, oh no, A child is still a child;
The mother in us said, a child; Is still the handiwork of Olukori.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.68)

Sarumi completes the parable:

Soon the head swelled; Too big for pillow; And it swelled too big; For the mother's back; And soon the mother's head; Was nowhere to be seen; And the child's slight belly; Was strangely distended.
Kongi thrives on Psycophancy and illusions, shallow in every sense, his companions are ideally suited. They are busy building an 'image' for their leader. This involves a number of new words and phrases. They indulge in creative discussions and come up with expressions like 'youthful elders' and 'modem patriarchs', and wonder what they mean! The Fourth Aweri declares:

We might consider a scientific image. This would be a positive stamp and one very much in tune with our contemporary situation. Our pronouncements should be dominated by a positive scientficism.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.71)

But they have a doubt, what does 'positive scientificism' mean?

The Fifth Aweri clarifies:

Ah yes. Nor proverbs nor verse, only ideograms in algebraic quantums. If the square of $XQY (2bc)$ equals $QA$ into the square root of $X$, then the progressive forces must prevail over the reactionary in the span of 32 of a single generation.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.72)

Practically every institution there is named after Kongi - Kongi Refinery, Kongi Terminus, Kongi Airport, Kongi Dam, Kongi University etc. Kongi deserves a new Era in his name, added to these, the year of Kongi’s Harvest. A.H. After the Harvest. B.H.Before the Harvest etc. But Kongi wants it clearer still. He asserts:
No. K.H. is less ambiguous. The year of Kongi's Harvest. Then for the purpose of backdating B.K.H. Before Kongi's Harvest. No reason why we should conform to the habit of two initials only. You lack imagination.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.92)

Prince Daodu is one of the most important characters playing a very significant role. His uncle Oba Danlola introduces him as having:

*Lately returned from everywhere and still;*

*Trying to find his feet*

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.106)

Daodu symbolizes the hope of the future. Born a prince, Daodu is a thorough realist in his approach to life and entertains no illusions. He aligns himself, not with the unstable throne to which he is the heir, but with ever dependable, solid Mother Earth. He experiences 'every where' has stood him in good stead. He has found his feet where they belong; on the soil. It is the prince - turned - peasant who produces the giant yam and wins the competition. The earth blesses him with the maximum yield. Endowed with a fine sense of humor, he indulges in subtle sarcasm which Kongi's men fail to fathom. The Organizing Secretary compliments Daodu as the 'Prince of Slogans' because he helped him not only by writing down the slogan, 'Every Ismite - Must Do - His - Mite', but added are of his own, 'Ismite - Is - Might!'.

Daodu is the symbol of Harvest, because it is he who makes the earth yield. The sexuality attribute to him is associated with the fertility as opposed to the barrenness and starvation in Kongi's camp. The traditional King and the modern tyrant are on their way out. Daodu alone holds promises of a beautiful future. As opposed to the 'glamorized fossilism' of the Oba, and the word -
manufacturing gimmicks of Kongi, Daodu’s cooperative farm produces and promotes life.

Daodu’s message to Kongi before offering the yam is a warning to dictators:

So let him, the Jesus ofsmma, let him, who has assumed the mantle of Messiah, accept from my farming settlement this gift of soil and remember that a human life once buried cannot, like this yam, sprout anew. Let him take from the palm only its wine and not crucify lives upon it.

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi’s Harvest, p.128)

It is a message of life against death.

Segi resembles Simi in The Interpreters in several respects. She too represents fertility as symbolized by the fatal physical charm that she exudes, and her undisguised association with sex. Segi is Mother Earth. Her relationship with Daodu explains itself as the initial tie between the fertile soil and the hand that makes it yield. Her serpentine beauty instills fear in men. As in the case of Simi, Segi also has a super human aura about her which inspires awe and mystery. She is identified with Mammy Watta, the Water Spirit, as Simi also has been. Kongi’s Secretary, unnerved by her very eyes, wonders:

Isn’t she the same one of whom they warn; Do not stay by the sea; At night; Mammy Watta frolics by the sea; At night; Do not play; With the Daughter of the sea....

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi’s Harvest, p.88)
Segi plays a vital role in their efforts to defeat Kongi’s attempts to establish his regime. In fact, Segi is probably the most effective - or even the only true women character Soyinka has introduced, endowed fully with all aspects to make her a women as well as a symbol.

Daodu’s role at the climax of the play is steeped in irony, obscuring his attitude wards the solution of the political crisis. He persuaded his uncle Oba Danlola to make the ceremonial yam offering to Kongi. But the Oba is very reluctant and tries to dodge it. He is optimistic that people will demonstrate against Kongi’s regime, and will support his own conciliation. Daodu’s unexpected action leads to a dramatic climax. He seizes the Oba’s ceremonial mask and bursts the royal lead drum with it. He tries to silence not only the royal drums, but the song itself, signifying the end of Oba’s effective rule. But Daodu’S views on the ideal form of government are not clarified.

Daodu is equally concerned with defeating Kongi. His silencing the Oba’s song does not imply his support for ‘Kongism’ in Ismaland. When the plot against Kongi fails, precipitate(1 by the escape of Segi’s father from the prison and the subsequent withdrawal of amnesty, he is disappointed. Daodu’s future is precariously balanced between the risk to his own life at the hands of Kongi, and the hope of deposing Kongi and taking over the administration. The element of risk is so high that it eclipses the other possibility.

The gruesome ending of the play where Sigi offers her father’ s head on a platter to Kongi in the place of the ceremonial yam, is uncharacteristic of Soyinka’s plays. But the classicial touch affected by this action is in keeping with the thirst for blood and violence unleashed by tyranny as signified by Kongi’s attitude.

Segi’s picture of the future is not totally gloomy. The song sounds a note of hope towards the close:
Now this second coming; Is time for harvest;
This second coming; Is for pounding of yams; The mortar spills over; Goodness abundant Contentment is earth's;
Ease for the portion; Peace is triumphant

(Collected Plays 2: Kongi's Harvest, p.141)

Kongi's Harvest made a positive contribution to the African drama in general and to the Nigerian stage in particular, which was already recording spectacular development at the hands of Herbert Ogunda and Duro Ladipo. Though Soyinka's medium is English, Kongi's Harvest breathes the very spirit of the native soil.

"Kongi's Harvest is richly composite theatre, dispersed panoramically over seven different settings and mixing the raucous political satire of part - Brechtian, part - illusionist sketches and songs with the visionary poetics and ritual choreography of the festival'.

*Kongi* Harves* is subtle and searching theatre, powerful in performance, and its main strengths are its verbal wit, its satire on dictatorship, and its striking theatrical devices. It remains, however, a politically vague and ritually indecisive play. Soyinka said in a 1966 interview that it was about "Power, pomp and Ecstasy". (D.S.Izevbaye, Literature of the World in English (Routledge and Keganpaul, London, 1974) p.149.)

"Kongi's Harvest presents the conflict between the tradition and the modernity. Kongi with his passion for dictatorship in the modern style outs the traditional politics which gave the powers of ruling to the local chieftains. It is a familiar pattern of the traditional in conflict with the forces of change” (Derek Wright, Wole Soyinka Revisited, Twayne Publishers, New York, 1993, pp.65-66.)
There is always a clash between traditionalism and modernism. The play dramatizes this conflict. Though its immediate concern is with the African context, it acquires a universal tone. It is an accepted dictum that the old order has to change, yielding place to new, but the transition is not so smooth always. Most of the countries with unstable elected governments face a situation where the old order collapses, and the new one is not able to adjust to growth. Modernism can flourish only in the soil of tradition. Success of any government depends on just matching of tradition and modernism, and not on the elimination of one by the other.

Many critics have identified Kongi as Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana. Many aspects of Kongi’s personality like his habit of retiring to the seclusion of the mountains and posing as a Messiah and his hysterics, especially his gimmick of speaking in a strained emotional tone, remind the people of Nkrumah. He was the first African dictator showing totalitarian tendencies like announcing detention act, curbing of traditional authority, a systematic indoctrination of the youth, and posing as a saviour. Soyinka has made a very strong point:

In the words of Gibbs, “The play is not a political thriller, or a protest play, it is a poetic drama which seeks to penetrate the ephemeral surface to reach eternal essence... In a sense, Kongi can be seen as a Power, Donlola as Pomp, and Segi and Daodu with their love of music and poetry - as Ecstasy”.

“A non-African reader enjoys reading part of the play, the problems seem to be common for all ex-colonies, the reformed Aweri in a conclave using the vocabulary of the new regime, the travails of the new of regime and the contrast between the Reformed Aweri and the Oba’s court and the machinations of the party Secretary”. (Alan Akaraogun, Interview with Wole Soyinka, Spear (Lagos, Nigeria) (May, 1966): 18.)
"In Kongi's Harvest, man's semi-autonomous will is at the fore. Man is responsible for his actions. He achieves the result of his action by scientific calculation of the possibilities and results before hand. 'The yam' as a symbol becomes significant because of Kongi's foreknowledge of its spiritual potential. The yam is a conscious symbol drawn from convention - the idea, a ritual which must be performed by the accepted political and spiritual ruler. But Soyinka transforms the initial image and Metaphor into the metamorphosis of the idea thus investing "The yam" with "a dynamic Process" of thought and "sets ideas in motion and keeps them in motion".