

CHAPTER - IV

WOLE SOYINKA'S COMEDIES

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In this chapter we will discuss Wole Soyinka's three comedies in detail. These comedies are :

1. The Lion and The Jewel,
2. The Trials of Brother Jero and
3. Jero's Metamorphosis

4.1 THE LION AND THE JEWEL:

The Lion and The Jewel,¹ is a comedy in which Soyinka intends to compare the old and the new order in Nigerian society. He presents vividly the conflict of the new order with the old over social customs such as marriage; and the struggle between progress and tradition. It is a hilarious and light-hearted critique of cultural traditionalism and simple-minded progressiveness. It is the earliest evidence of Soyinka's tremendous virtuosity with theatre techniques, dialogue and character types.

The Lion and The Jewel belongs to the group - the 'Leeds Plays', as Soyinka wrote this play when he was at Leeds. The first version of The Lion and The Jewel was written in 1958 and first produced in 1959 together with The Swamp Dwellers. It was, however, rewritten in 1962 and published in this second version, in 1963. The premiere

performance of the play, staged by the Arts Theatre at Ibadan, was directed by Geoffrey Axworthy. The play was presented at the Royal Court Theatre in London in December, 1966, directed by Desmond O'Donovan. This production was generally very warmly received. The Times called it a 'superb comedy'.² John Russell Taylor had rather a mixed reaction to the play. Taylor considered most of the first act to be 'very tedious and repetitious' and wrote :

'The play perks up considerably in the second half, with a long sustained scene which makes it clear that Wole Soyinka does have some real dramatic talent which, if disciplined and directed aright, could make him a playwright to be reckoned with'.³

4.1.1 PLOT:

The play is a comedy. The lion of the title is Baroka, the jewel, Sidi. The setting is the village centre of Ilujinle, a clearing on the edge of the market, beside the local school building. The chief characters are Baroka, the Bale of Ilujinle, Sidi, the village belle; Lakunle, the village school master, and Sadiku, the chief of Baroka's wives. The play deals mainly with the activities of Sidi, who won fame because of her beauty but was finally humiliated because of her pride. The play is divided into three sections, Morning, Noon, and Night, and the entire action takes place within a day.

The first scene takes place in the morning on the edge of the market square outside the school building during school hours. The sound of school-children reciting their multiplication tables is heard offstage. Here we see Lakunle, a school teacher of nearly twenty-three years. He is described as :

... 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 his shiny black waistcoat. He wears blanco-white tennis shoes.(P.3)

Sidi enters, dressed in traditional fashion, with her shoulders bare, and carrying a pail of water on her head. She is '... a slim girl with plaited hair. A true village belle'(P.3). Lakunle sees Sidi through the school windows and rushes out to meet her. Lakunle talks to Sidi, trying to make her see all the glories and benefits of education and Western civilization. He takes Sidi's pail off her head, because he disapproves of the custom. He says :

I have told you not to carry loads on your head.
But you are as stubborn
As an illiterate goat. It is bad for the 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 pupil's drawings ?(P.4)

He also reprimands her for her way of dressing. When she artfully exposes her neck to best advantage, he is suddenly agitated :

And look at that ! Look, look at that !
 [Makes a general sweep in the direction of her breasts.]
 Who was it talked of shame just now ?
 How often must I tell you, Sidi, that
 A grown-up girl must cover up her ...
 Her ... shoulders ? I can see quite ... quite
 A good portion of ... that ! And so I imagine
 Can every man in the village ...(P.4)

Then, Lakunle goes on to reveal his plan by which the women in the community will be relieved of their work by the use of modern machines. He criticizes the uneducated people and doesn't hesitate to equate them with savages and barbarians. However, nobody seems to mind Lakunle. In fact, Sidi calls him 'the madman of Ilujinle'. Sidi couldn't believe in Lakunle's schemes for transforming the village into a modern city. Lakunle is in love with Sidi and wishes to marry her, but he will not pay the bride-price, which he considers a barbarous practice and which he wants to see abolished. He 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.(P.9)

However, this idea seems idiotic to Sidi who cannot think of dispensing with the bride-price; it suggests to her that Lakunle is too mean to pay it. She refuses

Lakunle's kisses as being 'strange, unhealthy mouthing'. She says :

No, don't I tell you I dislike
 This strange unhealthy mouthing you perform.
 Every time, ... Then comes this licking of my lips with
 yours.
 It's so unclean, And then,
 The sound you make - 'Pyout !'
 Are you being rude to me ?(P.9)

But Lakunle calls her an illiterate, bush girl and tells her that it is the way of civilized romance. Sidi, on the other hand, thinks that he is doing all this only because he doesn't want to pay the bride-price. The school-teacher's ideas about modernizing Ilujinle seem to Sidi to be dreams that cannot materialize.

While Lakunle and Sidi are talking with each other, they are interrupted by a crowd of girls who bring the news to Sidi that her photographs have just appeared in a Lagos picture magazine. Here we are given the first of the two pantomimes in this play - the arrival of the Lagos photographer in a car. This man is described as 'the man from the outside world'(P.11) Sidi and the other girls force Lakunle into playing the role of the photographer, to which he accepts after much hesitation and absolutely enjoys it. Together they mime the car arriving, breaking down, the photographer's getting out of the car, trying to fix it without much luck, and his first meeting with Sidi. Then the photographer is taken to the village square where he is

surrounded by the villagers. There enters Baroka, the Bale or head of the village. The villagers by now are turned into an angry mob towards the photographer. But Baroka intervenes and rescues the photographer and holds a feast in his honour. Baroka allows him to take some more photographs of Sidi and the photographer departs after much drinking and relish.

Sidi praises Lakunle for his performance in the pantomime which prompts Baroka to offer a mild praise. Sidi overshadows the Bale because her pictures appeared on the cover and the centre pages of the magazine. This all makes Sidi conscious of her beauty and she rejoices in the esteem and fame that will be hers. She says :

the precious book would bestow on me
Beauty beyond the dreams of a goddess ?
For so he said.
The book which would announce
This beauty to the world --- (P.11)

Sidi becomes the idol of Ilujinle. Then the villagers perform the dance of the lost traveller. Sidi convinces Lakunle to accompany her to see the magazine, while Baroka is left looking at Sidi's pictures in the magazine, covetously, and formulating his ideas about how to get Sidi for a wife. And here ends the first section, Morning.

When the second section, Noon opens we see Lakunle and Sidi admiring the pictures in the magazine. They meet Sadiku, an old woman, the eldest wife of Baroka. She has been sent to Sidi to try and convince her to become the bale's new

wife. This is consistent with tradition, as it is the oldest wife who acts as the go-between for bringing the new bride. But Sidi refuses such an offer from the chief whom she describes as too old and less famous than herself.

Lakunle interrupts the argument at intervals to request Sidi not to accept Baroka's proposal, calling her sweet names, 'My Ruth, My Rachel, Esther, Bathsheba'.(P.19) Meanwhile Sadiku continues to argue on Baroka's behalf. Sidi is satisfied that she has become famous in Lagos and 'beyond the seas' and considers it beneath her to marry somebody from the village. She says :

Compare my image and your lord's
An age of difference !(P.22)

At this point Lakunle tells Sidi how Baroka once used bribery to prevent the building of a rail-road track through the village. This is, however, re-enacted in the second pantomime in the play. Sadiku further extends Baroka's invitation of supper at his house, which Sidi also ridicules, remembering that he is also called Fox. She says :

Every woman who has supped with him one night,
Becomes his wife or concubine the next.(P.23)

The next scene shows Baroka in his bedroom with his current favourite wife. Sadiku returns to tell Baroka about Sidi's refusal of both of his offers, because he was too old. Baroka, in a fury, recalls some of his feats of sexual prowess. Sadiku, the old and seemingly trusted wife,

comes into soothe Baroka. At this moment, he informs Sadiku that his manhood ended near a week ago and that he had thought that Sidi might revive him. He pledges Sadiku to secrecy and the scene ends with Baroka at ease with her.

When the third and final part, Night, opens, we see Sidi standing in the village centre by the schoolroom window gazing at her pictures. At this point Sadiku appears, unveils the carved figure of the Bale and bursts into ribald laughter. She dances in celebration, rejoicing over the impotence of her husband and taking full credit for it as a victory for womanhood. She says :

So we did for you too did we ? We did for you in the end.
Oh high and mighty lion, have we really scotched you ?
A-ya-ya-ya ... we women undid you in the end.(P.30)

When Sidi hears the news of Baroka's alleged impotence, the idea occurs to her to take advantage of it and to torture the bale by offering herself to him in order to disgrace him. Sidi is very intrigued and goes off to supper with Baroka in order to 'mock the devil'. Sadiku supports her, but Lakunle tries to dissuade her, but not with much success. He says :

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, if he is not a fool ____
He is a savage thing, degenerate
He would beat a helpless woman if he could ...(P.33)

When Sidi goes, Lakunle and Sadiku argue with each other. Sadiku taunts him about his reforming ways saying it is the way of avoiding bride-price.

In the next scene we see Sidi in Baroka's palace. She tries to engage Baroka in conversation while he is busy with a wrestling match. Their talk is full of insinuations and innuendoes. The Bale dismisses the wrestler and talks to Sidi. He reveals his plan to print the stamps, which he makes with his own machine, with Sidi's image. He tells her about the old ways and how 'the old must flow into the new'. Sidi falls a victim for his wiles.

The scene is quickly transferred to the outside where Lakunle and Sadiku are waiting for several hours with no sign of Sidi's return. They both are anxious, and as they wait, a group of mummers come by acting out the Bale's impotence. The mummers depart and Sadiku forces Lakunle to give them money in return for their dancing for him. Sadiku, the old hag in her sixties, and Lakunle, the young twenty-three-years-old school teacher, begin to show a warmth and understanding in spite of their age differences and in spite of the fact that Sadiku is the most critical of Lakunle's ideas about modernizing the village.

Then Sidi enters violently, crying and throwing herself on the ground and confesses that she is no more a

virgin, and that Baroka has tricked her :

SIDI : [Lifting her head]
 Fool ! You little fools ! It was a lie.
 The frog. The cunning frog !
 He lied to you Sadiku.
 SADIKU : Sango forbid !
 Sidi : He told me ... afterwards, crowing.
 It was a trick.
 He knew Sadiku would not keep it to herself
 That I, maybe other maids hear of it
 And go to mock his plight(P.53)

However, Lakunle asks her questions to determine the rather obvious fact that she has been seduced by the Bale. At first Lakunle gets furious and threatens to kill the chief. But he is so cowardly that he changes his mind and threatens instead to take him to court. Lakunle assures her that he will still marry her, but adds that, as she is no longer a maid, there is no question of bride-price having to be paid. Hearing this Sidi rushes off mysteriously, followed by Sadiku to find out for Lakunle what Sidi now plans to do. She returns and tells Lakunle that Sidi is packing her things and preparing for what must be a marriage. Lakunle is astonished to see Sidi's instant acceptance of his offer. In fact, he was pining for Sidi for so many days. Then Lakunle and Sadiku are met by a singing group. Sidi appears gorgeously dressed to be married, complete with the escort of dancers and musicians. There is a bundle in her one hand, and in the other the famous magazine, which she hands over to Lakunle. When she reaches the square, she invites everybody

to the wedding - including Lakunle ! It is then revealed that the impending marriage ceremony is between Sidi and Baroka and that Lakunle is jilted. Lakunle beseeches her not to marry Baroka, but Sidi 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 panthers of the trees ?
 And would I choose a watered-down
 A beardless version of unripened man ?(P.57)

Still Lakunle doesnot believe the fact that she is marrying Baroka. He bars her way, but Sidi gives him a shove which makes him fall on the ground. Thus the young intellectual modern man of the village of Ilujinle is defeated by the Jewel of the village, who goes off to marry the old virile Lion of a bale. However, Lakunle doesn't seem too upset by his loss. After a little pursuasion, he joins in the festivities. The play ends with singing and dancing before the wedding and Lakunle rising to the bait of another young girl who 'flaunts her dancing buttocks' at him.

4.1.2 CHARACTERS:

There are only four characters in the play. Soyinka has presented his characters in a precise yet vivid way. It is very difficult to decide who is the hero of the play; but we can certainly say that the central character is

Sidi. Her role is very important. All the four characters are true to life. They do not seem as difficult to understand as some of Soyinka's characters in other plays. All the characters are fully developed, they are simple and no one is dominating. They are neither quite bad nor quite good; in each case there is a realistic mixture of vice and virtue.

SIDI:

Sidi is the central character in the play. She is described as 'a slim girl with plaited hair. A true village belle'.(P.3) Lakunle, the young school-teacher is very much fascinated by her beauty and wishes to marry her after the modern fashion and he is not ready to pay the bride-price. On the other hand, Sidi would marry him any day if he paid the bride-price.

Sidi doesn't believe in the ideas of Lakunle about modernizing the village. She is a simple girl, uneducated except in her own tribal traditions. She is a conservative girl. She doesn't like Lakunle's new-fangled ideas of love-making and his attempt to kiss is repulsive to her. She calls Lakunle 'a madman of Ilujinle'

Sidi is raised to a position of honour by a trick. She gives provocative postures to a photographer and when these photographs are published in a Lagos magazine, she comes to limelight. The success goes to her head and she

starts rating herself above everyone. She prides in the fact that she is not only famous in Lagos but also 'beyond the seas' It is her pictures that make Baroka feel that he would have her as his wife. John Russell Taylor says that 'it is the appearance of Sidi on a glossy magazine cover which first persuades Baroka he wants her'.⁴ She considers herself to be more famous than Baroka and instantly turns down the offer of marriage from Baroka. Sidi thrives on the thought that 'there is a deceitful message' in her 'eyes beckoning insatiate men to certain doom'.(P.22) Sidi is certainly a flirt. She has flirted with the photographer before the play opens; then with Lakunle and finally with Baroka. She is a typical village girl, very bush. Fascinated by her photographs on the cover page of a magazine, she becomes swollen-headed, arrogant and vain, rating herself above everyone. On learning that Baroka is no longer a man her malice comes out clearly when she announces to Sadiku :

I am young and brimming, he is spent.
I am the twinkle of a jewel
But he is the hind quarters of a lion!(P.22)

Although she flirts at times, she holds strictly to tradition. She is not ready to marry Lakunle only because he is unwilling to play the bride-price. Her mischievousness lands her in trouble when she decides to mock Baroka. She goes to him at his house and thereby loses her virtue. Finally when she has experienced the virile and mature love

of Baroka she contemptuously dismisses Lakunle as a 'book-nourished shrimp' and 'a watered-down beardless version of unripened man' who would 'not survive' his honeymoon.(P.57) It seems that she marries Baroka simply because of her sexual experience with him.

Sidi seems to be well versed in traditional wisdom. Her intelligence is brought out when she is in Baroka's palace. Baroka himself testifies to her wisdom when he say critically :

When the child is full of riddles, the mother
Has one water-pot less.(P.39)

Sidi could unwittingly destroy any man who completely fell in love with her. Lakunle's protection is cerebral, almost as if it were all for fun. As a result, he is not destroyed when Sidi selects the bale.

Thus Sidi is typical of certain class of society. She is a mixture of both virtues and vices. The whole play revolves round her and that is why it would not be unfair to call her the main character in the play.

LAKUNLE:

Lakunle is a school-teacher who typifies a half-educated man who has absorbed and been influenced by Western civilization so that he no longer respects the older traditions of his people. He represents the new order in

society and opposes vehemently the old as represented by the activities of Baroka. The characterisation of Lakunle serves to caricature the phoney reformers of West Africa. He would like to educate the illiterate people of Ilujinle and he promises to transform the village by introducing multifarious labour-saving devices and thereby liberating the people, particularly the women, from their daily chores. He says :

...In a year or two
 You will have machines which will do
 Your pounding, which will grind your pepper
 Without it getting in your eyes.(P.6)

Lakunle falls in love with Sidi, the village girl, and he attempts to instill in her Western ideas of marriage and love-making. He would marry Sidi because he loves her, and would make her an equal partner in life, instead of making her obey tribal marriage customs. He tells her :

I will not have you wait on me
 Till I have dined my fill
 No wife of mine, no lawful wedded life
 Shall eat the leavings off my plate____
 That is for the children.(P.9)

Lakunle is a visionary, so blinded by his idealism that he cannot see the helplessness of trying to reform the society around him. Despite his education, it is obvious that he will never break away from the village. He still enjoys many of the traditions of village life. For example, he joins in with gusto in the dance of the lost traveller.

Lakunle dislikes Baroka because he stands in the way of progress. Lakunle is not an expression of honestly held beliefs but the sham arguments of a lazy person, who doesn't wish to undertake the labours involved in cultivating land and selling his crop to earn more money in order to pay the bride-price. Through him Soyinka satirizes the inherent dishonesty of the modern African reformers, who proclaim radical ideas to serve their own ends. Even though Lakunle is critical of Baroka, he is honest enough to admit his admiration for the life led by Baroka :

Ah, I sometimes wish I led this kind of life
Such luscious bosoms make his nightly pillow
I am sure he keeps a time-table just as
I do at school.(P.25)

Thus Lakunle secretly and perhaps unconsciously lusts for Baroka's way of life. As the play progresses, it becomes clear that Lakunle is not idealist, nor a messiah of progress, but merely a selfish young man who is trying to flaunt some facile mannerisms and life styles of the West as an instrument of progress and reform. Lakunle represents a half-educated provincials who pride themselves on the little education they have, feeling too big to respect their native traditions and customs.

There is a tone of sustained satire in the characterisation of Lakunle. His monotonous volubility, his rhetorical insistence on his pet theme of progress and the

various clinches he uses to assert his love for Sidi, serve to highlight the superficiality of his personality. Lakunle is a tragi-comic character⁵. The comic element in him is seen in his scenes with Sidi, and his revolutionary ideas of transforming Ilujinle into a civilized town. However the play also builds up the tragic element in Lakunle; he makes himself an object of ridicule because of his reforming zeal and because of his failure with Sidi. He takes pride in his education and considers the villagers simpletons. His language is sometimes incomprehensible to the villagers and so they regard him the crazy fanatic whose brain has been upset by the ideas he has read in books. They call him 'the madman of Ilujinle'.

However, Lakunle is an important member of the society, being the school-master of what must be the only school in the village. Even Baroka shows him respect. Baroka calls him 'akowe' meaning one who writes, or 'letter-writer'. The akowe's job was to write letters for people in the village and reading letters they received. It was an important position of responsibility and one that is highly respected in the village.

In the end, Lakunle becomes a tragic figure when jilted by Sidi. The failure of Lakunle shows how Western civilization sometimes bows down to tribal traditions and customs. Thus Lakunle is an important character of the play.

BAROKA:

Baroka is a very complex character. He is perhaps one of the best developed 'villains' in Soyinka's drama. He is the Bale of Ilujinle, the village head who represents the old order. He is strongly reactionary and does everything to prevent the march of progress coming near the village. He bribes the surveyor with 'a wad of pound notes and Kola nuts' (P.24), thus prevailing upon him to divert the path of the rail-track away from Ilujinle. Lakunle rightly says:

Voluptuous beast ! He loves this life too well
To bear to part from it. And motor roads
And railways would just do that, forcing
Civilization at his door (P.24)

But his success can only be temporary. He cannot hold back the hands of progress for all time. He has had many wives, which is perfectly customary, and is still vigorous at the age of sixty-two. He is a selfish old man who writhes in sexual acts. He covets Sidi because of her success and fame in the photographs in the magazine and decides to have her as his new wife. He sends the marriage proposal through his eldest wife, Sadiku. But Sidi rejects his offer. Then Baroka conspires to entice Sidi by devious means. Knowing fully well the propensities of Sadiku, he informs her that he has lost his manhood. Predictably Sadiku cannot keep the secret and rejoices in revealing it to Sidi. Hearing the news of Baroka's impotence, Sidi gets carried away and decides to go to Baroka to "mock the devil."

Baroka however, is not impotent; rather he is a fox, lying in wait for his victim. When Sidi turns up at night at his house, he pretends to be surprised. He tries to impress her with his physical abilities by overpowering the wrestler with whom he is locked in the fight. Then he launches his offensive on her simple mind. He is good at speaking. He is aware of the fact that Lakunle has been brainwashing her with regard to his various vices and his attempts at obstructing progress. He retorts:

I do not hate progress, only its nature
which makes all roofs and faces look the same.(P.47)

It is revealed that Baroka is not a fool to obstruct the progress because it has its own advantages for him also. He has already decided to tax his people by selling postal stamps. He shows Sidi his new stamp making machine and announces that the stamps will bear Sidi's face. Hearing this Sidi gets more and more confused and on the other hand Baroka getting bolder proclaims that :

The old must flow into the new, Sidi,
Not blind itself or stand foolishly
Apart. A girl like you must inherit
Miracles which age along reveals.(P.49)

And this is how he becomes successful to conquer the 'Jewel of Ilujinle'. He gets her by a low trick playing on her curiosity and mischievousness.

Inspite of his mischievous nature, Baroka is very responsible and competent leader. He has helped to build the school-building and has even allowed his servants to form a trade union. He is hard working and has a good nature. He honestly loves his village and takes every care to improve it. He is quiet-hearted and relaxed. He is a competent village ruler.

SADIKU:

Sadiku is the eldest wife of Baroka. She is an old woman in her sixties. She is an ideal wife in a polygamous household. She is a crafty and mischievous old hag. She acts as an emissary of Baroka to Sidi. She has even wooed new wives for her husband and is quite taken aback at Sidi's rejection of Baroka. She cannot comprehend Sidi's independent stand in this matters. The moment Baroka reveals to Sadiku, his loss of manhood, all the suppressed resentment in her rises to the surface. She now feels strong enough to ridicule her husband. Sadiku reveals the secret of impotency of Baroka to Sidi and together they celebrate the victory of their sex over the dominating male.

Sadiku and Lakunle are always at loggerheads, because they are on different sides over Sidi. Sadiku mocks Lakunle for his love for Sidi. He is shocked at her mischief-making and threatens to put her in school. She picks up his

pocket to give money to the dancers who have come to mock Baroka's impotency. She ridicules Lakunle's ideas of transforming the whole village.

4.1.3 TREATMENT:

The Lion and the Jewel is among the most popular of Soyinka's plays. It has been produced in various parts of Africa and also presented in London, the United States and even places as far away as New Guinea. In this play Soyinka uses ribald comedy to express his protest against the conservatism of Africa's traditional past and the falsehood which colours African modernity.

Wole Soyinka intends to compare the old and the new order in Nigerian society. He presents vividly the conflict of the new order with the old order over social customs as marriage, and the struggle between progress and tradition. The new order in society is represented by the village school teacher, Lakunle, who opposes vehemently the practices of the old order as represented by Baroka, Bale of Ilujinle. Soyinka has presented this conflict very comically.

Lakunle, a village school teacher is a very comic character. He is dressed 'in an old style English suit, threadbare but not ragged, clean but not ironed....He wears twenty-three inches bottom trousers, and blanco-white tennis shoes'. All this makes his appearance comic. He wishes to

marry Sidi, the beautiful girl in the village but he is not ready to pay the bride-price. He believes in modern marriage as he says to Sidi :

Be a modern wife, look me in the eye
And give me a little kiss.(P.10)

He has wonderful plans to modernize the village. He looks a comedian because of his worn out dress and his speech which is made of cribs from the prayer book.

Baroka, the chief of the village, is the representative of the old order in society. He would not allow even a rail track to pass through Ilujinle in case his society might be influenced by modern inventions and civilization. In contrast to Lakunle, he is full of commonsense, no hypocrisy about him, his views on progress are clear :

I do not hate progress, only its nature which makes
all roofs and faces look the same.(P.47)

He understands civilization, he likes postage stamps and designs one himself and allows his servants to form a trade-union and he wins the love of Sidi, he is more sincerely lover than Lakunle.

Sidi has certain radiance about her, and although she goes to Baroka's palace out of high-spirited spite, there is something pathetic as well as comic in the ease with which she is taken in by the Bale. The rhetoric between Sidi and

Lakunle gives rise to much laughter. For instance, when Lakunle kisses her she retorts :

No, don't! I tell you I dislike
This strange unhealthy mouthing you perform..
It's so unclean, And then,
The sound you make _____ 'Pyout'. (P.10)

The dramatic presentation of Sadiku's actions makes the audience laugh. When Sadiku comes to know about Bale's impotence, she dances in rejoice. She takes pride in herself and particularly in the women because they defeated the race of the mighty 'Lion of Ilujinle'. The use of language is economical and the comic behaviour of Sadiku and Sidi in this scene are skillfully portrayed. Besides the uproarious fun there is intellectual pleasure evoked by the mixture of farce and satire, as well as pure comedy and the author's ironic wit.

Soyinka displays much wit and humour, and the audience is kept roaring with laughter. We hear Baroka reproach Lakunle in such a jovial way. He addresses Lakunle :
'Akowe Teacher Wa. Mista Lakunle,' and goes on to mimic him:

Guru morin, guru morin, ngh-hn! that is
All we get from 'alakowe'. You call at his house
Hoping he sent for beer, but all you get is
Guru morin. Will guru morin wet my throat?(P.16)

There is an abundance of proverbial and moralistic sayings, which add much force to the humour of the play.

Sadiku says : 'The hour of victory is not time for any woman to die'(P.30) Baroka says to Sidi :

....as we say
'The woman gets lost in the woods one day
And every wood deity dies the next'(P.38)

When Baroka is fascinated by the intelligence and wisdom of Sidi he says :

When the child is full of riddles, the mother
Has one water-pot the less.(P.39)

Soyinka's use of mime and dance add to the comedy of the play. In The Lion and the Jewel, Soyinka has used dance and mime very effectively. In the first scene the village girls and Lakunle stage the dance of the lost traveller, to show how the photographer came to the village. Four girls couch on the floor, miming the four wheels of a car, Lukunle acts the part of the driver; the drums supply the appropriate rhythm and sounds. In another dance the masked mummer act out the tale of Baroka's famed virility and rumored defeat. Writing about Soyinka's technique of mime and dance Gerald Moore observes :

"The originality of Soyinka's rural comedy lies in two things, 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 culture-conflict literature that the heroine must always plump for 'progress' and 'enlightenment.'"⁶

We roar with laughter in the end of the play when Lakunle proposes to marry defeated Sidi. Sidi, seduced by Baroka, is in a bitter mood. She curses Baroka and all others. Lakunle is ready to marry Sidi, but he refers to the question of bride-price and says :

But you will agree, it is fair
That we forget the bride-price totally
Since you no longer can be called a maid.(P.54)

Most critics who have attempted to deal with The Lion and the Jewel have carefully avoided dealing with the sexual and sensual implications of the play. However, there is one critic, John Russell Taylor who have tried to highlight this aspect. He says :

'The play's real core is the long scene of intrigue in which the wily old village chief, Baroka, having maneuvered Sidi into his home by putting it about in the right quarters that he is impotent; slowly but irresistably inveigles her in to his bed,so that having come to mock she remains to play'

Soyinka's comedy is at its best when he shows his characters trading sexual innuendoes, and he makes no excuse for this. Baroka is as fascinating a lecher as Brother Jero, another of Soyinka's lovable and most intriguing character.

The play has many elements of true farce. The tone of the play is airy and subtle throughout. The theme is serious but it is dealt with a flutter of a comparative

manners and highly plotted intrigues. We are enchanted by the shimmering quality of the thing and its swiftness. The themes in actuality have been those of impotence and the fear of impotence, and woman's sexual malice. But Soyinka softens his themes deliberately here and prevents that brittleness which is often found in farce, by interweaving the sexual themes with social ones.

Soyinka's description of people and situations are humorous, realistic and colourful. The scenes brought before eyes are such we can see everyday in villages. The characters are people we could meet everyday. Soyinka uses simple theatrical devices and his characters speak memorable things, and this very thing has made The Lion and the Jewel a great comedy.

After reading the play one may feel that Soyinka is against modernism; but it is not modernism which is the target of Soyinka's satire, but people like Lakunle who are the mere imitators of the Western ways of life. Soyinka tries to expose the pretense, falsehood and false values which are being upheld in Africa in the guise of modernism. Through Lakunle's character, Soyinka effectively condemns the sham values of self-seeking preachers of progress in contemporary Africa. Soyinka has used the stylistic devices of pseudo-logic, repetition and cliches in order to reveal the farcical nature of the present day styles in Africa. Soyinka's

emotions show us his distaste for the excesses of the extravagant traditional ethos and the pronouncements of the false prophets of modernity. A casual reader might feel that the author's message in this play is somewhat reactionary in nature, since the Jewel of Iluginle doesn't fall for the forces of progress and modernity as represented by Lakunle. However, as Ogunba Oyin rightly says :

'Lakunle is merely a travesty of modernism in Africa-- a negative force in spite of his manifestations of progress'⁸

The Lion and the Jewel is a straightforward play in which Soyinka has observed the classical unities; the action is confined to a single day. Though the scene changes from morning to noon and finally to night, the narrative follows a general fluidity of action and the plot is developed and enriched by a splendid display of mime, dance and drums.

There is much debate among the critics regarding Soyinka's use of language in the play. According to Wakeman, Soyinka has 'beautifully handled mixture of poetry and prose.'⁹ However Gerald Moore feels that in 'his attempt to use verse in theatre', Soyinka 'doesn't entirely master the special problem which it poses.'¹⁰ Soyinka uses varied forms to suggest glibness, personal emotion, and the wisdom of the ages. He is able to maintain a realistic quality of speech even in verse form.

The Lion and the Jewel is very tight structurally; and the action moves with great ease and smoothness. It establishes Soyinka as a dramatist with rich resources. It is perhaps the most produced play of Soyinka partly because of its light-hearted hilarity and because it is easy to perform. A comment by Susan Yankowitz will reveal this fact :

'... Soyinka's most realized play as far as dramatic effectiveness and poetic evocativeness are concerned and is most delightful in characterization',¹¹

Eldred Jones appreciates the use of flashback technique by Soyinka and commenting on the greatness of the play he says :

'The play is a harmonious blend of words, song, dance and mime. Soyinka's use of mime and dance in particular is worth some notice. Twice in the play, once to represent the visit of the photographer and again to represent Bale's bribing of the railway surveyor, mime and dance are used structurally to recall to the past events. This use of the flashback technique, more commonly associated with the cinema, gives the play the historical depth',¹²

D.S.Blair in the review of the published play states that 'without the complex construction and obvious practical difficulties of staging A Dance of the Forests, The Lion and the Jewel must be the African comedy-ballet for which the producers of indigenous African theatre have been waiting.'¹³ Gerald Moore is absolutely right when he says : 'The obvious merits of The Lion and the Jewel as a stage

comedy have led to its becoming one of the most popular of all Soyinka plays.¹⁴

4.2 THE TRIALS OF BROTHER JERO :

The Trials of Brother Jero¹⁵ is a light-hearted satirical comedy based on the activities of the phoney beach prophet, Brothers Jeroboam. It is one of Soyinka's best plays. Soyinka is a master at comedy and farce and early traces of these qualities have been seen in The Lion and the Jewel. The Trials of Brother Jero was written in the first quarter of 1960, shortly after Soyinka's return to Nigeria from London. The premiere performance of the play was produced by a student group at the Arts Theatre of the University College, Ibadan, in 1960. It is Soyinka's funniest and most light-hearted play. John Ferguson calls it a 'rollicking comedy.'¹⁶ Reviewing its performance The Nation called it 'a salty frolic of abundant humour..., a shrewd folktale in which enormous gusto is put into service of something more than a piquant exoticism.'¹⁷

4.2.1 PLOT:

The Trials of Brother Jero is a satire on the gullibility of religious believers and their complete powerlessness in the hands of a manipulative 'prophet'. There are five scenes in the play. The setting for The Trials of Brother Jero is the Bar Beach of Victory Island in Lagos. The

chief characters are Brother Jeroboam, a prophet of the title of the play, his assistant Chume and Amope, a petty trader and Chume's wife.

When the play opens we see Brother Jeroboam. He informs the audience of his background and the nature of his followers thus :

I am a prophet. A prophet by birth and by inclination. You have probably seen many of us on the streets, many with their own churches, many inland, many on the coast many leading processions, many looking for processions to lead, many curing the deaf, many raising the dead. In fact, there are eggs and there are eggs. Same thing with prophets. I was born a Prophet--(P.145)

He holds his canvas pouch in one hand and his divining rod in other and complains that the business is not good because of the advent of television. His worshippers spend more time in watching television. Next Brother Jeroboam tells that how he once used six dancing women from a neighbouring French territory to acquire for his master, the Old Prophet, the piece of beachland that he now uses as his church. Then he describes how he deceived the Old Prophet and how he cursed him. However, Jero Calls this 'a very cheap curse.' Thus the first scene deals with the introduction of Brother Jeroboam and his cheating behaviour.

Scene II takes place in the early morning in front of Brother Jero's house. We come across Amope nagging her husband Chume for she thinks Chume can do nothing right. She

goes on listing his faults and there is simply no way that he can please her. In her behaviour towards her husband, Amope is sadistic and all the time she tortures and insults Chume. She doesn't lose any opportunity to tease and nag him. In her dialogue with Chume it becomes clear that she is an ambitious woman. She is unsatisfied with Chume as far as his job of Chief Messenger is concerned. In her ambition she is unwilling to understand Chume and let him be whatever wants to be. She absolutely despises his modest means and status.

When Chume goes off dropping his wife in front of Jero's house, Brother Jero appears at the window. But as soon as he sees Amope outside the window, he quickly shuts the window. When he reappears, it is again at the window, trying unsuccessfully to sneak out. But Amope doesn't let him go anywhere and tells him that she will not go until she gets her 'one pound, eight shillings and nine pence' which he owes to her. Brother Jero tries to put her off by telling that he is doing the work of God and further tells her that he has to withdraw money from the post office, since he doesn't have cash on hand.

At this point Amope is distracted by a trader passing the carrying a basket of smoked fish on her head. Amope sees the fish and tries to bargain for a low price. But she nearly picks up a quarrel with the fisherwoman and meantime Brother Jero takes an opportunity to escape through

the window of his house. Having failed to catch Jero, Amope feebly takes out her frustration on a little drummer boy.

In scene III, we see Brother Jeroboam at his 'church' which consists of a mound on the beach with some palm leaves, a few sticks, and several bottles, from one of which hangs a rosary and a cross. Jero is very finely attired in a white flowing robe and 'a very fine velvet cape, white also.' Jero tells us that he keeps his worshipers coming by frustrating them, making sure they never get satisfaction they need. If they would get satisfaction, they will never come back to him. This is how Jero cleverly runs his business.

Jero is distracted to see a young girl passing by on her way to have a swim. He is almost unable to control himself against the temptation. However, he tries and is glad that all this happens before the arrival of his 'customers--- I mean worshipers, well, customers if you like'(P.55). When he sees the girl returning from swimming, the temptation in him is so great that he goes on his knees and says prayers to God to help him against this temptation.

While Jero is praying, he is joined by Chume unnoticed. Chume breaks out into Pidgin English asking for just about any blessing that Jero could ever have wanted. But Jero considers Chume's prayers to be primitive and uncouth.

This sequence of prayers vividly reflects the nature of the ignorance of Jero's followers and Jero's disdain for his followers.

Chume asks permission from Brother Jero to beat his wife. But Jero doesn't allow him saying that it is against God. But the real reason is that if Chume would beat his wife, he will be satisfied and after getting the satisfaction, he will not turn up to his church. And this will result in losing one of his followers. Chume is persistent in his request for permission to beat his wife and is every time dissuaded by Brother Jeroboam.

Then the other worshippers join them and the usual Jero service begins. But Jero is distracted to see the exposed limbs of a woman chasing a young boy. While the service continues Jero interrupts the little urchin to find out what offence he has committed. Jero also tries to talk to the woman, but she brushes him aside and continues to chase the boy. Brother Jero follows them in order to stop the chase and hands over the conducting of the service to Chume.

As soon as Brother Jero leaves, one of the female followers begins to 'see the Holy Ghost'(P.159) and is in a violent trance. Chume gets confused and doesn't understand what to do. He calls out Brother Jero. He then asks the Lord to forgive her and the assembled followers respond to him

saying 'Amen'. This gathers momentum and finally develops into a long, clumsy but humourous prayer by Chume. His prayers reveal the agonies of the poor and frustrated Chume. The woman responds enthusiastically to his prayers. At this point, Jero reappears 'a much altered man, his clothes torn, his face bleeding.' (P.161) Seeing the worse position of his master, Chume sympathizes with Brother Jero, telling him that he understands exactly how he feels about women. Chume, with a view to reveal his plight at the hands of his wife, Amope, tells that how she took him today morning to the man's house whom he owes to her money. Hearing this Brother Jero asks him whether his wife is a petty trader. When Chume replies positively, Brother Jero quickly makes the necessary connection and promptly grants permission to Chume to beat his wife.

Scene IV opens in front of the house of Brother Jeroboam. We see Amope still waiting to collect her money from Brother Jero. Here Chume enters violently. With the permission from Brother Jero to beat his wife, the erstwhile, henpecked, powerless and utterly timid husband now becomes the strong, threatening Chume who is only anxious to get his wife home and give her a sound beating. Amope is quite taken aback at the sudden transformation of her husband and she thinks that he has gone mad. But the determined Chume tells Amope once and for all that he will not tolerate her nonsense

any more. But Amope, the east affected by her husband's transformation, attempts to talk down to him as she used to doing. Chume, in an exasperated mood, lifts her bodily. Amope calls for the police and is left screaming.

Hearing the screams of a woman, people gather. Chume is in a frenzy and not ready to listen to anybody. Amope screams and calls Brothers Jeroboam for help. She says that she is even ready to waive off the debt of Brother Jero if only he will come and save her. When Chume hears this he understands that Jero owes money to his wife. Chume realizes that Brother Jero has tricked him and has been playing games with him. In a fit of fury, he goes off on his bicycle in search of the rouge. And Scene IV ends with the lights fading.

The final scene takes place at the beach. It is a nightfall and we see a newcomer in a rich dress practising what Soyinka calls 'undoubtedly a fire-breathing speech.' (P.167) This is done in a mime and we do not hear what he is saying. However, Brother Jero's sharp eyes quickly determine that he must be a backbencher member of the House of Representatives, who has his eyes on some ministerial position. The member, however, is contemptuous and declares prophet to be fraudulent. But he succumbs to Jero's prophecy that the country will be plunged into civil strife and that the M.P. will become the Minister of War.

At this point, Chume enters and charges the prophet as 'Adulterer! Woman-thief! Na today a go finish you'.(P.170) he is in angry mood and bent upon taking the revenge on the prophet. He is now convinced that Jero is not truly a man of God. Chume cannot understand why Jero would trick him. He suspects of an affair between his wife and Brother Jero. The thought of Brother Jero's having an affair with his wife is the most humiliating for this honest man. (Actually there was no affair between Brother Jero and Amope). This humiliation is so great for Chume that he pursues Jero brandishing a cutlass. Looking at the angry Chume approaching with a cutlass, Brother Jero escapes out of fear without the notice of the M.P. He reappears and informs the audience that he has called the police to protect him from the mad Chume. Although momentarily threatened, he soon overcomes his fear when a member of Parliament appears on the scene. Jero instigates the M.P. to arrest Chume and have him put in a straight jacket. The play ends with the M.P.falling prostrate at the feet of Brother Jeroboam calling him 'Master'.

4.2.2 CHARACTERS:

Out of the four characters in the play The Trials of Brother Jero; only three are important. They are : Brother Jeroboam, his loyal assistant Chume and Chume's wife, Amope.

The fourth is a Member of Parliament; but he appears in the end and is insignificant one.

Brother Jeroboam :

Brother Jeroboam is the protagonist in the play. He is a phoney prophet. The play mainly deals with the petty conquests and occasional distresses of Brother Jero. He is out to expand his influence and in this process improve his material prosperity.

Brother Jero is a rogue who has learnt the art of exploiting man's latent desires and weaknesses. After overthrowing his own mentor he appropriated the beach land for himself. He has no qualms of conscious about this, and in fact he takes pride in the whole affair. He says :

'...My master, the same one who brought me up in Prophetic ways staked his claim and won a grant of land... I helped him, with a campaign led by six dancing girls from the French territory, all dressed as Jehovah's witnesses. What my Old Master did not realize was that I was really helping myself'(P.145)

Brother Jero's opportunism is not merely limited to his old Master. He is quite candid in referring to his 'worshippers' as his 'customers' and his profession as 'prophet's business.' He thinks prophecy to be a lucrative 'trade', in which he wins customers from all competitors. He is vain of his personal appearance and the power he exercises on his worshipers. He glories in his ability to maintain that

power, an ability arising out of his shrewd psychological understanding of the kind of people that make up his flock. He understands that his charisma can work only on those who are yearning, dissatisfied or helpless. He maintains his hold by promises of life of greater fulfilment but he keeps his worshippers in a state of suspended animation, where there aspirations are never fully satisfied. He says :

I know they are dissatisfied because
I keep them dissatisfied.
Once they are full, they won't come again(P.153)

And that is why he doesn't let his assistant Chume the permission to beat his wife. Jero is aware that once he gives Chume this permission : 'he will become contended, and then that's another of my flock gone forever'(P.153)

Jero represents the archetype of the trickster in society. Richard Priebe points out that 'Trickster stories are extremely common throughout all of West Africa'.¹⁸ Soyinka has created 'Jero out of a relatively large tradition in which such figures play a major role'.¹⁹ Jero is a suave crook who enjoys manipulating people. He invites the audience to share his delight in his triumphs and ingenuity.

Jero is acutely aware that appearances are important in society. Therefore, even though he cannot afford to spend 'one pound, eight shillings, and nine pence'(P.150) for a velvet cape, he buys it on credit since it is necessary

'to distinguish himself more and more from the scum who degenerate the calling of the prophet. It becomes important to stand out to be distinctive'(P.153) He also decides to have 'a name that appeals to the imagination'.(P.153) He finally decides in favour of 'velvet-hearted Jeroboam' 'Immaculate Jero, Articulate Hero of Christ's crusade', since he feels that this would catch the 'imagination of the crowd'.

Jero is not a true prophet. Even a sight of a nubile young girl going to swimming distracts him and he is unable to control himself against the temptation. In Scene III, he even gives up meditation in order to chase a woman with the exposed limbs. He is a lecherous man.

Jero has total control over his flock which is prepared to do his bidding without questioning and he goes to a great lengths in taking advantage of the servility of his devotees. Jero is able to manipulate a member of the Federal House. He is determined to make him one of his flock. However, the member raises doubt in the beginning calling Jero 'a fraudulent prophet' but when Jero prophesies that the country will be put into strife and this backbencher will emerge as the Minister of War, the M.P. succumbs. Jero even instigates the M.P. to arrest Chume and thus gets himself out of the little mess because of Chume's anger towards him.

Thus Brother Jeroboam is a perfect rogue. Despite his roguery, he is an appealing character. He is a very likable man, quick-witted, shrewd, smooth and very charismatic and graceful. He doesn't mind his roguery because it is the people who fall prey to his tricks. In a review of the 1966 Hampstead production, D.A.N. Jones compares Jero with Shylock and Malvolivo. Jones says:

'His graft breeds exhilaration and his ecstatic flock seems almost justified in the infections piety of their holy rolling'²⁰

CHUME:

Chume is an assistant of Brother Jeroboam and he works as a Chief Messenger in Jero's church. Brother Jero has full faith in Chume. He is very poor and simple-minded fellow. He is constantly pestered and bullied by his wife, Amope. He strongly desires to beat his wife but holds himself back for Jeroboam says that it is against God. He constantly asks Jeroboam to grant him permission to beat his wife.

Chume is unaware of the fact that Brother Jero is his wife's debtor. When Jero comes to know that Amope is Chume's wife, he promptly gives permission to Chume to beat his wife. As a result, a sudden transformation comes over in the personality of Chume. He becomes angry and violent and tells his wife that he will not tolerate her nonsense any

more. He even lifts Amope bodily when she protests and gives her a sound beating. When Chume understands that Jero is Amope's debtor, he becomes angry towards Brother Jero. He even suspects of having an illicit relationship of Brother Jero with his wife. He gets so exasperated that he goes to kill Brother Jero taking a cutlass. But Jero escapes and manages to arrest the angry Chume with the help of the M.P. and Chume is sent to a lunatic asylum. Thus Chume is rather pathetic example of those colourless, slow and quiet human people who fall prey to mysticism and prophecy only because of their lack of education. Soyinka has presented Chume rather pathetically.

AMOPE:

Amope is Chume's wife. She is a petty trader. She desires to lead a high life but it is impossible as they are very poor. She always pesters her husband. In fact, she has made Chume, a scapegoat. She is very ambitious woman and wants her husband to become something important in life. She says : 'Am I to go to my grave as the wife of a Chief Messenger?' (P.149)

She is very persistent and determined woman. She camps before the house of Brother Jeroboam in order to collect her money from him. Brother Jero had bought on credit a velvet cape from her nearly three months ago. He owes to

Amope 'one pound, eight shilling, and nine pence'. Amope doesn't budge when Jero tries to put her off telling that he is doing the work of God. But Amope doesn't listen. She will not go until she gets paid. She is a short-tempered woman. She easily picks up a quarrel with a fisher woman. She is an important character because she has the capacity to handle and terrorize Brother Jero. It is her wit, manners and way of talking that generates much of the humour in the play.

4.2.3 TREATMENT:

The Trials of Brother Jero is a light-hearted satirical comedy based on the activities of the phoney beach prophet, Brother Jeroboam. There is an abundance of satire in the play but it is almost concealed by the predominating humour which depends on a series of undiscovered identities which threaten at any moment to become known and upset the beach prophet's house of cards. As one threat comes pouring in after another, the comedy of the play is generated.

In the beginning we can't help laughing when Brother Jero explains the audience about his trick. He keeps his worshipers dissatisfied because he says that they will never turn up to his church once they get satisfaction they desire. Brother Jero thinks prophecy to be a lucrative 'trade' and he addresses his worshipers as 'customers'. Eldred Jones rightly comments:

'Indeed much of the comedy arises from the discrepancy between what the audience knows Brother Jero to be by his own confession, and the front of holy hermit which he puts on for the benefit of his deluded gulls.'²¹

The first encounter between Chume and his wife, Amope, is full of comedy. Amope, the petty trader, always bullies and naggs at Chume. She is an ambitious woman and in her ambition, she is not ready to understand the poor Chume. The following dialogue between Amope and Chume highlights how Amope despises Chume's modest means and status:

CHUME: Is there anything else before I go?

AMOPE: You've forgotten the mat. I know it's not much, but I would like something to sleep on. There are women who sleep in beds of course, but I'm not complaining. They are just lucky with their husbands, and we can't all be lucky I suppose.

CHUME: You've got a bed at home.
(He unties the mat which is wound round the crossbar).

AMOPE: And so I'm to leave my work undone. My trade is to suffer because I have a bed at home? Thank God I am not the kind of woman who...

CHUME: I am nearly late for work.

AMOPE: I know you can't wait to get away. You only use your work as an excuse. A Chief Messenger in the Local Government Office - do you call that work? Your old school friends are now ministers, riding in long cars...

(Chume gets on his bike and flees. Amope shouts after him, craning her neck in his direction).

AMOPE: Don't forget to bring some more water when you're returning from work. (she relapses and sighs heavily). He doesn't realize it is all for his own good. He's no worse than other men, but he won't make the effort to become something in life. A Chief Messenger. Am I to go to my grave as the wife of a Chief Messenger?(P.149)

Thus this encounter produces a lot of verbal comedy and we can't help laughing when we hear to this piece of dialogue.

We get pure comedy in Amope's encounter with Brother Jero. When Jero sees Amope at his door, he nearly escapes through the window. When he reappears at the window, Amope catches him. He pleads for freedom to do the work of Christ. But Amope doesn't allow him to do so. Amope is practised both in repartee and abusive complaint and she completely demolishes the prophet's facade first with cool repartee and then with her indictment. The comedy of encounter is both visual and verbal.

AMOPE: (Without looking back.) Where do you think you're going? (Brother Jero practically flings himself back into the house.)

AMOPE: One pound, eight shillings and nine pence for three months. And he calls himself a man of God. (She puts the notebook away, unwraps the brazier and proceeds to light it preparatory to getting breakfast. The door opens another foot.)

JERO: (coughs) Sister... my dear sister in Christ...

AMOPE: I hope you slept well, Brother Jero...

JERO: Yes, thanks be to God. (Hems and coughs.) I... er... I hope you have not come to stand in the way of Christ and his work.

AMOPE: If Christ doesn't stand in the way of me and my work.

JERO: Beware of pride, sister. That was a sinful way to talk.

AMOPE: Listen you bearded debtor. You owe me one pound, eight and nine. You promised you would pay me three months ago but of course you have been too busy doing the work of God. Well, let me tell you that you are not going anywhere until you do a bit of my own work.

JERO: But the money is not in the house. I must get it from the post office before I can pay you.

AMOPE: (fanning the brazier.) You'll have to think of something else before you call me a fool.(P.150)

Brother Jero is a lecherous man. He suffer from agonies of self-control, when he sees the young girl returning from her daily swim, from the sea. Then a little later, a woman trader runs past chasing the drummer boy, her skirt hitched up for the chase exposing her limbs. The prophet cannot resist this second temptation. He pretends to stop the chase by running after the woman with exposed limbs. We are very much amused to see the prophet running after the temptation. After sometime he reappears 'a much altered man, his clothes torn and his face bleeding'. E.D. Jones comments :

'The alteration between the devout prophet lashing his flock into holy paroxysms and the woman chaser - getting for once what he deserves - is a good comedy'.²²

After this incident Chume sympathizes with Brother Jero. Chume reminds him how he exactly might be feeling about women. Chume pours out his sufferings at the hands of his wife and incidentally refers to her bullying and how she

made him wait before a debtor's house early in the morning. As soon as Brother Jero listens to this plight of Chume, he asks : 'Brother Chume, did you say that your wife went to make camp this morning at the house of a ... of someone who owes her money?' (P.161) When Chume answers positively, Brother Jero understands that Amope, who has been giving trouble to him, is Chume's wife. In order to take revenge on her, he promptly gives permission to Chume to beat his wife. This decision generates more comedy and furthers the development of the plot, because it leads to Chume's discovery of the connection between Amope and the prophet.

The second encounter between Chume and his wife is in dramatic and comic contrast to their first appearance at the beginning of the play. Here we see Chume completely transformed from a timid, hen-pecked husband to a dominating male. Having got the permission from Brother Jero, he has become strong enough to beat his wife. He handles her roughly which produces a hilarious comedy.

CHUME: Shut your big mouth !

AMOPE: (aghast.) What did you say ?

CHUME: I said shut your big mouth.

AMOPE: To me.

CHUME: Shut your big mouth before I shut it for you.
(Ties the mat round the cross-bar.) And you'd better start to watch your step from now on. My period of abstinence is over. My cross has been lifted off my shoulders by the prophet.

AMOPE: (genuinely distressed) He's mad.

CHUME: (viciously tying up the mat.) My period of trail is over.
(Practically strangling the mat.) If you so much as open your mouth now... (gives a further twist to the string)

AMOPE: God help me. He's gone mad.

CHUME: (imperiously) Get on the bike.

AMOPE: (backing away) I'm not coming with you.

CHUME: I said get on the bike !

AMOPE: Not with you. I'll find my own way home.
(Chume advances on her. Amope screams for help. Brother Jero crosses himself. Chume catches her by the arm but she escapes, runs to the side of the house and beats on the door.)

AMOPE: Help ! Open the door for God's sake. Let me in.
Let me in ... (Brother Jero grimaces.) Is anyone in ? Let me in for God's sake ! let me in or god will punish you ! (P.165)

The ludicrous action and situation in The Trails of Brother Jero often gains in effect from the element of dramatic irony arising out of the fact that Chume doesnot know where Jero really lives, and Jero doesn't know that Amope is Chume's wife. This visual comedy becomes lively enough when Chume bundles his wife bodily while she is left screaming. The comic action takes another dramatic turn when Chume comes to know about the transaction between his wife and Brother Jero. Angrily he goes to Brother Jero in order to take revenge on him. Here the audience knows the real nature of Brother Jero, otherwise an unmasking would have given some physical comedy.

The Trials of Brother Jero is also a satiric comment on the contemporary politicians of West Africa. We witness how Jero manipulates a member of the Federal House. Soyinka dramatizes the gullibility of the modern day legislators of his country. Soyinka appears to say that if people are corrupt, or stupid, then they deserve the corrupt leaders they get. This is the central point of the play. It is obvious in the title of the play. It is the Trials of Brother Jero, not of Chume or not of M.P.. Jero's intelligence is his legitimate virtue.

In The Trials of Brother Jero, Soyinka suggests that it is the greed that makes us vulnerable to the exploits of rogues like Jero. If our expectations were reasonable, we would be less likely to fall victim to such charlatans. Both Chume and M.P. are ambitious in spite of their limitations, and it is this that makes them vulnerable to Jero's intrigues. Soyinka also blames 'believers' because they give boost to charlatanism. In fact, Jero doesn't go out of his way to recruit his followers, but they come to him.

The ending of Jero gives a more serious twist to the play than one would have expected. Jero becomes a more vicious person than the merely mischievous opportunist he has

been throughout the rest of the play. Here, Eldred Jones' comment seems to be quite befitting :

'The grimness of Chume's fate must not be missed in the general atmosphere of the comedy of the M.P.'s eventual gullibility. That Chume can be treated so unjustly is a telling comment on justice. The plum position which Brother Jero dreams up for the M.P. too has a significance that may be lost in the general comedy, it is 'Minister of War'... The point is not led on with a trowel but the passage together with the comment on political influence and justice gives the end of the play and its comic satire a more acid taste. Brother Jero ends the play a more sinister figure than he began. His roguery is now allied to power. He can easily eliminate ordinary mortals like Chume, and, contrary to his disserts (but in keeping with the ways of the perverse world) he survives his day of ordeals and lives to plague his deluded countrymen further. For Brother Jero is a false prophet. His people look pathetically to him for leadership and he replies with deceit. The situation is capable of wider and more sinister applications'.²³

The prevailing mood of The Trials of Brother Jero is one of hilarity even though there are satirical implications in the play. Soyinka invites his audience to laugh in delight. But, at the same time, Soyinka focuses our attention on the fraudulence and deception that thrived in his society.

4.3 JERO'S METAMORPHOSIS:

Jero's Metamorphosis²⁴ is a sequel to The Trails of Brother Jero, which was published in 1973. Soyinka wrote this play when he was in London. After the Civil War, he left

Nigeria disgusted at the brutalised society which he saw around him and lived in London from 1971 to 1975. Jero's Metamorphosis, presents a profit-minded prophet in his new adventures. Soyinka is quite explicit in his attack on 'power profiteering'. The second Jero play is a statement that even after the war corruption remains entrenched. Jero, first met as a likable rogue in The Trial of Brother Jero is its focus. It's association with the first Jero play suggests that it is comedy. But however, much one may laugh at the wily protagonist, Jero's activities are in fact a terrible series of exploitation. In Soyinka's own words Jero's Metamorphosis deals with 'a problem in my own society, the betrayal of vocation for the attraction of power in one form or another.'²⁵

In Jero's Metamorphosis, Jero has become the leader of others who are also willing to exploit their situation at the expense of others who are pushed aside or who will soon pay for Jero's ascendancy. The new military government plans to eliminate the beach prophets and develop beach into an amusement park, centred on an amphitheatre where public execution will be held. Jero uses a compromising confidential file to gain the right not only to remain on the beach but to preside at the public executions. Through the organization he sets up, the First Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army, he gains control over his former competitors.

The play openly discusses corruption in the awarding of the government contracts. Jero's rival prophets join his movement, accepting their own exploitation both to survive and to exploit others in turn.

James Gibbs in his book Wole Soyinka has discussed this play and writing about its background he comments :

'Towards the middle of 1972, a member of military junta, Bolaji Johnson, was given the task of clearing the prophets praying churches and separatist sects from the Bar Beach. Soyinka imagined that this might be a prelude to the construction of a national execution amphitheatre with all the possibilities for making money and wielding influence which such a project entail. Using his long familiarity with demi-monde of the Bar Beach, information from Nigeria, his own ideas and his best-known stage character, Soyinka focussed his distrust of Gowon and his concern about the direction in which the country was being taken into in a second Jero play.'²⁶

The world premier of Jero's Metamorphosis took place in February 1974 at Bristol. It was directed by Glynne Wickham and mounted by the University's drama department.

Jero's Metamorphosis is a three-scene play. The main characters are Brother Jeroboam, Sister Rebecca, Ananias, Chief Executive Officer, Major Silva, Chume and other Beach Prophets, namely, Shadrach, Caleb, Isaac and Matthew.

4.3.1 PLOT:

When the play opens we see Brother Jeroboam in his new office - 'It is no longer his rent troubled shack of The Trials but 'a modest whitewashed room, quite comfortable'(P.175) Brother Jero is seen dictating a letter to Rebecca, asking all the Beach Prophets to attend the meeting that night at his house. The scene provides exposition and introduces Rebecca, previously a confidential Secretary with the Tourist Board; Ananaias, a wrestler turned prophet and a posse of Tourist Board officials in search of the missing file. The play opens with Jero's words :

'....in time of trouble it behoves us to come together, to forget old enmities and bury the hatchet in the head of common enemy.....'.(P.175)

After the dictation is over, he asks Rebecca to send the copies of his letter to each and every Beach Prophet. Jero expresses his deep gratitude for Rebecca for the secret file she has managed to bring. The file indicates to whom and for what reason, the Tourist Board of the City Council has awarded the monopolies in relation to the National Execution Amphitheatre to be built on the Bar Beach. The file indicates that the praying churches will be removed from the Bar Beach and that the Salvation Army will be given the licence to operate in the amphitheatre. Jero's plan is to weld the beach prophets into a new church, the Church of the

Apostolic Salvation Army and to blackmail the Tourist Board into awarding the 'spiritual monopoly' to it instead of the Salvation Army. Jero says to Rebecca that 'to survive, we need full-bodied tactics.' (P.177) He highly praises Rebecca and leaves the scene in order to do further preparations.

As Jero is leaving the stage, he is confronted with a Brother Prophet named Ananaias. Ananaias tells him that the City Council has taken a decision to chuck them out. However, Brother Jero pretends to be the least affected by the news and says that the God will take care of them. Jero tells Ananaias about the proposed meeting and requests him to attend the same. Ananaias wants to know the information about the subjects to be discussed in the meeting but Jero declines to disclose. Then Ananaias threatens Jero that he will expose his secret but Jero remains unaffected. Jero threatens him that he will expose his sins of robbery, thefts and further tells him that the police are searching for him for setting on fire the store of one of the trade rivals. Hearing this, Ananaias gives in and declares to support Jero's plans fully in the meeting. Ananaias demands a shilling or two from Brother Jero and tells him that he is having bad time. Jero hands him a shilling and Ananaias exits.

The scene changes and we see the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourist Board entering followed by a Clerk and a policewoman. The Chief Executive Officer expresses his

anger for having given the duty of the recovery of the missing file. The Chief Executive Officer barges into Jero's house. Rebecca is startled to see them. The Clerk introduce Rebecca to the Chief Executive Officer as Miss Denton. The Chief Executive Officer asks her why does she give up the job of confidential secretary. She replies that it is because Brother Jero showed her the path of God. The Chief Executive Officer requests her to give him back the missing file and promises that he will not put her on trial. When Rebecca declines, he gets angry and calls all the prophets on the Beach devils. He further expresses his strong determination to evict them all. Rebecca tells him that it will be against the wish of God. She prays to God to give good sense to the Chief Executive Officer. Her prayers gain momentum and Ananaias, coming out of his hiding place, joins her in the prayers. The Chief Executive Officer tries to escape; but Ananaias, with a roar of 'Hallelujah', steps out to block his way. Rebecca embraces him and, saying 'Hallelujah', knocks his glasses with her hands. The Chief Executive Officer runs away through the window followed by the Clerk and the policewoman. Rebecca is now in complete trance, "only gyrating and repeating into the kingdom of heaven'..."(P.187) Ananaias picks up the bowler hat and the umbrella and takes a piece of bread from the cupboard. He throws water on Rebecca and exits with the bucket.

In the second scene, we are re-introduced to the gullible Chief Messenger from the earlier play, Chume. During his confinement in lunatic asylum after the Trials he had become a trumpeter in a Salvation Army band. We see him playing on a trumpet. Then there enters Major Silva telling Chume that his usual teacher would not come that day and he had come to replace him instead. Hearing this, Chume is discouraged and he is unwilling to practise music lessons under the guidance of Major Silva, whose approach to music is rigid and foreign. Major Silva calls Chume 'musically illiterate', which makes Chume very angry. When Major Silva addresses Chume as Chummy, he is angry and asserts 'My name na Chume, no to Chummy.' (P.189) Then they begin a new lesson. However, Major Silva does not understand Chume's notations and intricacies of music. Chume's body catches up with the rhythm and he starts dancing aggressively as if in frenzy. Major Silva escapes somehow.

When Chume is dancing, there enters Brother Jeroboam. Chume is surprised to see Brother Jero in front of him. He threatens him, saying 'Commot here before I break your head.' (P.192) He blames Brother Jero for locking him up three months in lunatic asylum. However, Brother Jero is the least affected. Jero criticizes the White people and he blames Major Silva in order to earn the sympathy of Chume. Here Jero gives a long lecture and tells Chume that it is

because of God he is saved from the blame of murder. He also highlights the change his confinement has brought in his wife's behaviour towards him. He says :

'For three months you received tender care and treatment. Your good woman, Amope, seeing her husband in danger of losing his reason proved once again that a heart of gold beat beneath her shrewish nature.' (P.194)

Brother Jero further tells him that God appeared in his dream and has made prophecy about his ensuing promotion. As soon as Chume hears of his promotion, he begins to melt away. Brother Jero makes him praise the Lord and gradually Chume gives in. Jero requests him to come to the Bar Beach and join with the other Brother prophets. Jero treats Chume as his equal, names him as Brother Chume and Christens him as 'a holy prophet.' (P.196)

Chume Kneels to hear this. Jero even hands over his divining rod to Chume and Jero becomes successful in wooing Chume. He ensnares Chume and makes him join in his brotherhood once again.

Scene III opens at Brother Jero's headquarters. We see the prophets who have assembled at Jero's invitation. It is a fascinating collection of rogues and hypocrites. There is Ananias, Caleb, and intellectual drunkard; Isaac, quick-witted and acerbic; Matthew, lecherous and there is Shadrach, the stiff-necked leader of the twenty-thousand strong

Shadrach-Medrach-Abednego Apostolic Trinity. All of them express their anger and protests over the delay of the host, Brother Jeroboam. Sister Rebecca apologizes to all of them and hopes that Brother Jero will come soon. Meantime the assembled Brother accuse each other of theft, robbery and forgery. Matthew and Isaac come close to blows. But Sister Rebecca intervenes and silences both of them.

After sometime, Brother Jero enters with Chume and begs pardon for being late. He directs Rebecca to offer more drinks to the Brothers. Jero explains the purpose of the meeting and tells them that there is an impending danger of eviction, as the government wants to build National Public Execution Amphitheatre on the vicinities of the Bar Beach. Everyone present in the meeting opposes vehemently to this proposal. Jero hands over the confidential file to Isaac and bids him read the details. Isaac reads out :

'Memorandum of the Cabinet Office to the Board of Tourism. Proposals to turn the Bar Beach into a National Public Execution Amphitheatre'.(P.201)

In that confidential file, Brothers are described as 'riff-raff.' Everyone protests. Brother Jero tells them to find a solution before the plan comes into being. Jero reads further:

'It is proposed however, that since the purpose of public execution is for the moral edification and spiritual upliftment of the people, one

respectable religious denomination be licensed to operate on the Bar Beach. Such a body will say prayers before and after each execution, and where appropriate will administer the last rites to the condemned. They will be provided a point of vantage where they will preach to the public on the evil of crime and the morals to be drawn from the miserable end of the felons. After which their brass band shall provide religious music.'(P.202)

When the Brothers listens to this, all of them ask Brother Jero to find out a solution to the problem.

JERO: 'I have outlined certain plans of action and have even begun to pursue them. The time is short, if fact, the moment is now upon us. The Bar Beach becomes the single execution arena, the soul amphitheatre of death in the entire nation. Where at the moment we have spectators in thousands, the proposed stadium will seat hundreds of thousands. We must acquire the spiritual monopoly of such a captive congregation.'

CALEB: Hear, hear!

ISSAC: (impatiently.) Yes, but how?

JERO: We form One body. Acquire a new image. Let the actuality of power see itself reflected in that image, reflected and complemented. We shall prophesy with one voice, not as lone voices crying in the wildness, but as the united oracle of the spiritual profession. (P.203)

But Shadrach makes fun of the solution suggested by Jero. He believes that the government officials will not agree to his proposal and it is very difficult to maneuver the government. Brother Jero has thought of this also. He says :

'Suppose I tell you, Shadrach, that it has come to the ears of the rulers that a certain new-formed religious body has prophesied that a long life to

the regime? That this mysterious body has declared that the Lord is so pleased with their er..... spectacular efforts to stamp out armed robbery, with the speed of the trails, the refusal of the right to appeal, the rejection of silly legal technicalities, and the high rate of executions, that all these things are so pleasing to the Lord that he has granted eternal life to their regime?'(P.204)

Still Shadrach doesn't believe in his plan. He is proud of his twenty-thousand strong 'The Shadrach-Medrach-Abednego Apostolic Trinity'. He opposes the idea of union as suggested by Jero. But Jero doesn't budge. Brother Jero further introduces them with Prophet Chume and says that Brother Chume will help them a lot since he knew the secrets of the government. And Jero establishes the new religious body - the First Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army of the Lord.(P.205) When the question of the leadership arises Brother Jero says that the reigns of the leadership will be in the hands of whoever has the secrets of the Tourist Board and whoever can guarantee that the new body does obtain nomination from the Tourist Board'. (P.205). Thus he becomes the head or the general of the First Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army. Then he allots the hierarchy in the syndicate. Ananias becomes Sergeant-Major, Isaac is Major; Matthew prefers to be a trumpeter and Caleb is Lieutenant-Colonel. Only Shadrach refuses to join in the rank of the army. Now all of them are in their army uniform except Shadrach.

There enters the Chief Executive Officer. Jero tries to explain the role of his new CASA Army. He negotiates with the Chief Executive Officer and demands the monopoly of contracts of building beauty parlours, super markets, restaurant, cafes, amusement gadgets, gambling machines and parking facilities. He convinces the Chief Executive Officer to sign the contract awarding 'the monopoly on spirituality.' (P. 209) Shadrach protests but Jero becomes successful in getting the papers of contracts signed. Jero directs Colonel Rebecca and Colonel Chume to bring a flag of the CASA Army and there appears on his face 'amiable-charlatan grin' (P.213) and the play ends with Jero saying 'After all, it is the fashion these days to be a desk General.' (P.213)

4.3.2. CHARACTERS:

There are twelve characters in the play. But only a few of them are important. Brother Jero, no doubt, is the main character. The other characters include Sister Rebecca, Chume, Chief Executive Officer and the prophets like Ananias; the wrestler-turned prophet, Caleb; an intellectual drunkard, Isaac; quick-witted and ascerbic, Matthew; lecherous and probably a rapist and stiff-necked leader of Shadrach-Medrach-Abednego Apostolic Trinity, Shadrach.

BROTHER JEROBOAM:

Brother Jeroboam is the central character in the play, because the play chiefly deals with his activities. As the title of the play indicates, he is a changed person. He no longer lives in his rent troubled shack of The Trials, but has moved to 'a whitewashed room, quite comfortable'.(P.175)

Jero is a kind of hypnotist. He has won over a previously Private Secretary to the Tourist Board, Miss Denton, and named her as Sister Rebecca. He converts Rebecca and she has full faith in Brother Jero. Jero has deep faith in Rebecca and this is evident in the statement : 'I shall lead you to safety, you and all who put their faith in me'(P.177) Jero manages to get the confidential file of the Tourist Board through Rebecca. Through this file, he comes to know about the government's plan to build National Execution Amphitheatre at the Bar Beach. He understands that the praying churches will be removed from the Bar Beach and the Salvation Army will be given the license to operate in the amphitheatre.

In order to gain the 'monopoly of spirituality', he tries to weld the prophets in a syndicate and gives birth to the first Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army. Jero is a methodical man. He calls the meeting of the prophets and makes them aware of the impending danger. All the prophets

except Shadrach, support Jero's plan of the first church of the Apostolic Salvation Army. He emerges as a leader of the newly formed body since he knows the secrets of the Tourist Board of the City Council. He is careful enough to allot the various ranks in the army to other prophets.

Brother Jeroboam is an expert negotiator. This is revealed in the fact of his handling of the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourist Board of the City Council. He succeeds in convincing the Chief Executive Officer to grant the CASA Army 'a spiritual monopoly' on the Bar Beach. He makes the Chief Executive Officer sign the papers of contracts awarding spiritual monopoly to CASA Army and gets a due recognition to his newly formed body from the government. He blackmails the Tourist Board into awarding the 'spiritual monopoly' to his CASA Army.

Brother Jero exploits the prophets on the Bar Beach. He is well-acquainted with their weaknesses. He has the knack for converting people to his own sect. He even ensnares Chume by calling his confinement a boon for him. He tells Chume that it is only because of his confinement that his troublesome wife became good towards him. He promises Chume of promotion and makes him a new prophet. He even hands his divine rod to Chume and calls him Brother Chume. Chume leaves the Salvation Army, falling a prey to Jero's flattery.

Jero has an excellent ability to convince people and win over them to his side. Being the leader of the CASA Army, he calls himself the General of the CASA Army. Thus we find in Jeroboam a true rogue.

SISTER REBECCA:

Sister Rebecca was previously a private secretary to the Chief Executive Officer. When the play opens we see her as a faithful devotee of Brother Jero. Her real name is Miss Denton. Brother Jero is completely dependent on her. Sister Rebecca has brought a confidential file to Brother Jero which proves to be very important asset. She believes that Brother Jero has showed 'the path of God' to her(P.183). She helps Brother Jero in writing letters, sending invitations and conducting meetings. She serves drinks to the prophets assembled at Jero's headquarters for the meeting. She tries to pacify the quarrels among the prophets. She has full faith in Brother Jeroboam. She says : 'I trust you. I follow you wherever you lead me Brother Jeroboam'(P.177). She is the only female character in the play.

CHUME:

Chume is a trumpeter in the Salvation Army. After his three months' confinement in lunatic asylum, he accepted the job of a trumpeter. He lives in rented rooms. He loves his trumpet teacher Captain Winston and has full appreciation

for him. He speaks pidgin English. He doesn't like Major Silva's approach to music. When Brother Jero approaches him, he threatens to kill Brother Jero, for he thinks that it was because of Jero that he was put in the confinement. However, he is a gullible character. He falls prey to Jero's flattery. He gives in completely when Jero speaks of his due promotion. He leaves the Salvation Army to become a new prophet on the Bar Beach. He becomes colonel in the CASA Army of Brother Jeroboam.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:

Chief Executive Officer represents the Tourist Office of the government. He wears a bowler hat and suit. He becomes angry for having given the duty of searching the missing file. He is determined to recover the missing file. He wants to evict all the praying churches and their prophets in order to raise a public execution amphitheatre. He requests Sister Rebecca to give the file back to him and promises her that he will not put her on trial. In the end he succeeds in getting back the file, but only after signing the papers which gave 'a spiritual monopoly' to Jero's the First Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army. He is presented by Soyinka as a devout Christian, in addition to his being a devoted officer.

MAJOR SILVA:

As his name suggests, Silva is a Major in the Salvation Army. His accent is 'perfect RP plus a blend of Oxford.' (P.187) He tries to give lessons in music to Chume as Chume's usual teacher is not available that day. He doesn't understand anything about music. His approach to music is rather crude and rigid. It is ironical enough when he calls Chume 'musically illiterate' (P.189). He couldn't continue long with Chume and therefore, leaves instantly.

ANANAIAS:

Ananaias is one of the Brother prophets. He is very poor. He is very fat. The beach for him is just as a living and not a vocation. He was a wrestler previously, but gave up wrestling in order to become a prophet. He is alleged of having set on fire rival trader's shop. He is very poor and demands a shilling or two from Brother Jero. He despises Brother Shadrach and calls him 'fatuous old hypocrite' (P.197). He seems to be a well-read man, for he quotes 'Lay not your treasures upon earth says good book' (P.198). He becomes Sergeant-major in Jero's CASA syndicate. He supports Jero's plan whole-heartedly and admits Jero's clever nature.

SHADRACH:

Shadrach is very proud of having twenty-thousand strong congregation of the Shadrach-Medrach-Abednego Apostolic Trinity all over the country. He attends the meeting called by Jero and he is the first prophet to raise his protest over the delay of Jero. He doesn't drink. When he hears about the government's plan to evict the prophets from the beach, he raises a voice of opposition. However, he doesn't join in the CASA syndicate founded by Brother Jero. He even threatens Brother Jero to foil his plan of CASA syndicate. He asks the Chief Executive Officer not to grant 'a monopoly on spirituality' to Jero's CASA syndicate. However, his protests are neglected by all of them.

CALEB:

Caleb is an intellectual drunkard. Unlike the other prophets, he is an educated prophet. He is nifty at acting. When Jero becomes late for the meeting, he suggests for a walk-out. He tries to pacify the quarrels between Brother Matthew and Isaac. He believes that Jero is a thorough methodical man and supports Jero's plan of CASA syndicate. He takes pride in himself on being 'a bookish fellow'.(P.203). He speak's wise things. He says : 'By the cut of his tailor shall a man be known. Uniform maketh the man'.(P.206) He becomes colonel in CASA syndicate.

ISAAC:

Isaac is a minor Brother Prophet. He doesn't have ideas of his own. He seems to be a short-tempered man. When Sister Rebecca addresses him as Brother Matthew, he instantly brings to her notice that he is not Brother Matthew, but Isaac. He says : 'I know all about Brother Matthew, and that should be enough answer for anyone with a sense of shame'.(P.199) He calls Brother Matthew 'a shameless fellow' and 'a sex maniac'.(P.199) He becomes Major in the CASA syndicate.

MATTHEW:

Matthew is an insignificant Brother prophet who is a lecherous person. When he looks at the photographs of luscious scantily-clad bathers, he literally drools. He says: 'These photos reveal strayed souls in need of salvation. Must we turn away from suchlike?'(P.200) He threatens Isaac to land in the court for calling him 'a sex maniac'. Brother Matthew calls Isaac a 'Coward' and 'Drunkard, con-man. Forger'. Brother Matthew is a very timid person. He is so cowardly that he dared not open the confidential file for the fear of government trouble. He says : 'It says confidential on that paper. I don't want any government trouble'.(P.201) He prefers to become a trumpeter in Jero's CASA syndicate. He supports Brother Jero's plan without asking any questions.

Besides these characters, there is a clerk to the Tourist Board and a policewomen, who are insignificant ones.

4.3.3 TREATMENT:

Jero's Metamorphosis is like the revue sketches of the mid-sixties in which Soyinka satirizes the ailments in his society. Soyinka has called his play 'a short-gun piece'.²⁷ Jero's Metamorphosis is more substantial than many of his directly political writings. It is more subtle in nature. It embodies the 'iron fist in the velvet glove' approach.²⁸

Soyinka has presented a gallery of vivid characters who tumble over each other. There is a lot of verbal wit. It gives rise to a lot of easy laughter. In the first scene, we cannot but laugh at the appearance of the Chief Executive Officer. He wears a bowler hat and always carries an umbrella in his hand. His figure, in rumpled and dusty clothes, creates a lot fun in the play.

The encounter between Chume and Major Silva is very funny. The conversation between the two is full of verbal wit and we cannot help laughing, when we listen to Chume speaking pidgin English :

SILVA: (severely) Corporal Chummy, can you read music notation at all?

CHUME: (angrily) I no talk so? You done come with your trouble. I say I go wait for Captain Winston you say you go fit teach me. Now you come dey bother me with music notation. Na paper man dey take trumpet play abi na music?

SILVA: Can you read music or not, Brother Chummy?

CHUME: Can you play trumpet or not, Major Silva?

SILVA: Really this is too much. How can Captain Winston expect me to teach you anything when you are musically illiterate.

CHUME: So I am illiterate now? I am illiterate? You are illiterate yourself.

SILVA: What! All right let us keep our temper.

CHUME: I have not lost my temper, it is you who don't know you leave your own. You no even sabbe call my name correct and you dey call man illiterate. My name na Chume, no to Chummy.(P.189)

Thus the encounter between Chume and Major Silva is lively enough and full of humour. This whole scene leads the audience into a mood of relaxed enjoyment. Major Silva is a figure who, with his affected accent and ignorance of local musical forms, provides a lot of fun in the play. Thus as Gibbs says: Soyinka makes an elaborate fun of the patently ridiculous'.²⁹.

In the second scene we see an encounter between
Chume and Brother Jero:

CHUME: (He stands stock still.) Commot here before
I break your head.

JERO: Break my head? What good will my
broken head do you?

CHUME: I will make compensation for all de
thing I done suffer for your hand. I
dey warn you now, commot.

JERO: Suffer at my hands? You, Brother
Chume? suffer at my hands.

CHUME: You tell the police say I craze.
Because God expose you and your
cunny-cunny and I shout am for the
whole world.

JERO: Brother Chume.

CHUME: I no be your Brother, no call me
your brother De Kin' brother wey
you fit be na the brotherhood of
Cain and Abel. The brotherhood of
Jacob and Esau. Eat my meat and
tief my patrimony.

JERO: You do me great injustice, Brother
Chume.

CHUME: Na so? And de one you do me na
injustice? To lock man inside
lunatic asylum because you Wan'
cover up your Wayo. You be Wayo
man plain and simple. Wayo prophet!
(Warming up.) Look, I dey warn you,
commot here if you like your head!
(Advancing.)

JERO: You raised your hand once against
the anointed of the Lord, remember
what it cost you.

CHUME: Which anointed of the Lord? You?

H.H.Anniah Gowda regards this encounter between Chume and Brother Jero as 'a comic one' as it creates a lot of easy laughter in the play. Gowda comments :

'The three-scene play takes us through the comic scenes : they are determined 'to manifest our united spiritual essence in the very form and shape of the rulers of the land'. Jero's encounter with Chume provides a comic interest'.³⁰

There is a lot of fun in Scene III, where we meet a gallery of prophets assembled at Jero's headquarters to attend the meeting. We roar with laughter at their antics :

ISAAC: So where is this Jeroboam fellow? When is he coming to tell us why he has made us forsake our stations to wait on his lordship?

REBECCA: In a moment, Brother Matthew. (Going to fill his mug.)

ISAAC: I am not Brother Matthew.

REBECCA: I beg your pardon, Brother.

CALEB: A clear case of mistaken identity, Sister Rebecca.

ISAAC: I am not Bother Matthew, Sister, and I beg you to note that fact.

MATTHEW (nettled) : May one ask just what you have against being Brother Matthew?

ISAAC: I know all about Brother Matthew and that should be enough answer for anyone with a sense of shame.

REBECCA: Forgive my unfortunate error. Don't start a quarrel on that account.

ISAAC: And to think he has the nerve to show his face here. Some people are utterly without shame.

MATTHEW: And others are poor imitation pharisees.

CALEB: Hear hear.

ISAAC: Better an imitation Phaeriee than a sex maniac.

MATTHEW: I take exception to that !

ISAAC: Very good. Take exception.

MATTHEW: Dare repeat that and see if it doesn't land you in court for slander. Go on, we are all listening. I have witnesses. Come on I dare you.

ISAAC: I don't have to. We all know the truth. You may have been acquitted but we know the truth.

MATTHEW: Coward !

ISAAC: Fornicator.

MATTHEW: Drunkard, Con-man. Forger.

CALEB: Three to one. Foul play.

Thus, Jero's Metamorphosis has much on the surface to entertain and make us laugh. The fun arises mainly from the verbal wit and character traits. Nearly all the characters, with their antics and ways of behaviour add to the humour of the play.

Jero's Metamorphosis provides an obvious and revealing contrast with the earlier Jero play. It looks forward for the agit-prop sketches of the eighties. It is far more vicious in its attack and its vision is bleaker than the

earlier Jero play. In The Trials of Brother Jero, Jero faces some degree of opposition from Chume and his wife; but in Jero's Metamorphosis there is no challenge at all from any quarters.

Jero's Metamorphosis is a satirical play. Here Soyinka satirizes the military regime of Yacubu Gowon. After the Civil War, Nigeria was swept by a wave of armed robberies. The military regime of Gowon established tribunal to trial these robbers. After this trial, they were executed by a firing squad in the open air of the Bar Beach near Lagos. In Jero's Metamorphosis, we find an equal framework of Gowon's military regime reflected in Jero's syndicate named the first Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army. The audience is invited to despise the 'high priests' of Gowan's junta, the 'familiar brigade' with their braided jackets and blood-stained trousers. Soyinka has targeted his satire against such ruthless leaders. Soyinka is rather outspoken and he criticizes the military regime of Gowon with a lot of courage.

Richard Priebe shows us in his analysis of the earlier Jero play that the worst of Jero's behaviour has always been there. According to Priebe, Jero is a trickster who uses his verbal skills 'to exercise power and gain control over people, keeping people dissatisfied so that they feel a need for him.'³¹ He is 'extremely interested in money... But money is only a means to the power that Jero

enjoys, the manipulation of power'.³² In the second Jero play, the worst of Jero's behaviour has become a norm for him, and many more of the population.

Although the play is full of wit and funny situations, the end of the play seems to be serious. Jero becomes successful in getting the approval of the government to his CASA syndicate. He uses his full tactics and gains control over 'a spiritual monopoly'. Jero not only gets the contracts of spirituality, but he becomes a leader of all others and this gives him a chance to exploit them in turn. Kolawole Ogungbesan comments :

Jero is now powerful, and consequently more dangerous to his society, because he is allied with the military power and his sect takes on a military image. 'We shall manifest our united spiritual essence in the very form and shape of the ruler of the land. Nothing, you will agree, could be more respectable than that'. Both the body and spirit have been shackled; the task is complete. The cycle of tyranny is restored."³³

James Gibbs also tries to highlight a very sinister aspect of the roquetry of Brother Jero. He believes that Jero's Metamorphosis is a subversive and pugnacious work which underlines deep seriousness. He comments :

'A cold chill of recognition moves along the spine and hair rises on the back of the neck when Jero says : "Let the actuality of power see itself reflected in image, reflected and complemented." The crooks and charlatans, the thieves, the thugs, liars and villains dress themselves in CASA army uniforms and 'reflect and complement' Gowon and his bemedalled cronies. Transferred on the outside by smart, if slightly incongruous, uniforms, they remain as rotten as ever underneath'.³⁴

Soyinka sent copies of the script of Jero's Metamorphosis to several friends asking them to produce it. But there was little response in Nigeria. However, in 1981, the National Theatre in Lagos staged the play and it became widely famous throughout Nigeria. Jero's Metamorphosis underlines Soyinka's deep concern for the military regime of Gowon. It is truly a shot-gun piece which embodies 'an iron fist in velvet glove' approach.

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