

# The power of image in "the lion and the jewel"



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In "The Lion and the Jewel", the action is ignited by the arrival of a stranger and a magazine in which Sidi's images are published. Sidi as 'the Village Belle' gets greater media coverage than the almighty 'Bale' of Ilujinle, and her images as her representations play a significant role in her development. It seems appropriate to compare the ways in which the photographs devour Sidi to Baudrillard's idea of 'the three orders of simulacra', as it primarily deals with the relationship between the representation and the real. With a close reading of several passages that relate to the photographs of Sidi, we see how Sidi's images first represent her beauty, then threaten her self-image, and finally take hold of her whole being, each respectively occurring in the three chapters of the play, namely, 'Morning', 'Noon', and 'Night'.

Baudrillard, in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*, discusses that the relation between the real and its representation can be analyzed in three consecutive stages. He names these stages 'the three orders'. In the first order, the image requires a real to represent, in the second, the distinction between the real and the image blurs, and in the third, the image precedes and determines the real. When we apply this scheme of simulacra to the three stages of Sidi's images in the play, they fit together like pieces of a puzzle, and the play becomes all the more impressive under the light of this theory.

In the first chapter of the play, when the girls enter and deliver the news of her images being published in the magazine, Sidi asks them "Had he the precious book/That would bestow upon me/Beauty beyond the dreams of a goddess?" In this scene, Sidi readily places great emphasis on her images, but her representation is still connected to her bodily existence, and there is still Sidi the person for the beauty to be bestowed upon. She initially

perceives the image as a representation that would not survive without her, thus the representation is in the first order of simulacra. The representation for her is something empowering. She believes that her appearance in the magazine has the ability to raise her above The Lion.

In the second chapter, Sadiku brings her the message of the Bale that he 'wants (her) for a wife'. Sidi, adopting a manner of superiority, declines the offer while making sure that she insults the Bale's old age and ugliness enough. In doing so, Sidi uses the photographs to make her points about their utter differences, and the stage direction for the scene is "...Sidi runs her hand over the surface of the relevant part of the photographs, tracing the contours with her fingers." She talks about her bodily features through the images, while the body that is represented in the images is tangibly present. When she wants to point to the contrast between herself and Baroka, she states "Compare my image and your lord's". The comparison is no longer about them but their representations. This scene depicts Sidi as trying to live up to the idea that is created by her images. Her lines "See I hold them to the warm caress/Of a desire-filled sun" clearly shows us that the representation is strong enough to threaten the real, and Sidi, unconsciously comprehending this, enacts the pose in the picture to attain that power. Her approach reflects that her representation is still in the second order.

In the third chapter, we have a scene where Sidi and Baroka are without the company of others. Baroka shows a machine with which he plans to produce stamps for the village with Sidi's image on it. When he claims that there is no other stamp with a human head, Sidi gives the example of one that has a

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bronze figure, and Baroka's comment on the representation of a head of bronze is noteworthy: "A figurehead, my child, a lifeless work/Of craft, with holes for eyes, and coldness/For the warmth of life and love in youthful cheeks like yours". While he argues that a bronze has no claim to reality, with this contrast drawn between photograph and bronze, the text suggests that Baroka's comparison bases itself not on the real but on the image as the real. The bronze is a lifeless work, the image is the life. Baroka is trying to have a share in the power of the representation, as he desires to print his own image with that of Sidi's together. Having the real Sidi as a wife is nothing but a tool for his scheme. What he really wants is the power of her image. In the same scene, Baroka imagines a future for themselves (or their images) that has the stamp as the starting point. He quotes "... our first union is the making of this stamp." Their bodies do not matter anymore, they are united in the stamp with the images now taking the place of the real, and the third order of simulacra has been reached.

In the last scene of the play, we witness the final transformation of Sidi. She first encounters Sadiku and Lakunle and expresses her hate towards Baroka for tricking her into his house. Then Lakunle, upon learning that Sidi is no longer a virgin, states that he would still marry her, yet without the bride-price. Sidi gets surprised at his willing proposal; however, the astonishment does not stem from joy but disappointment. This is the point where she realizes that the corporeality of her esteemed beauty has vanished in the patriarchal community along with her virginity, and the only thing that remains is the power of the image. This time she does not enact it but becomes the image. She exits from the scene and comes back as the figure

that is going to be printed on the stamp. Sidi decides to become a wife of Baroka because they are already united with their images. The upholding marriage of Baroka and Sidi will be the continuation of the unity that has already been established with the idea of the stamp. In conclusion, Baudrillard's theory of simulacra enables us to analyze this post-colonial play in a brand-new way. While it looks as if it is about a day in a village, the play achieves to depict the journey of the representation of image from the pre-modern to the post-modern world within a microcosm community and the time span of one day.