

Leadership Debacle and Socio-Political Flux in Post Colonial Africa: A Discourse-Stylistic Analysis of Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*

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Abstract

*After many years of freedom from colonial domination, African nations are still far from socio-political and economic stability. Post colonial African nations are still battling with socio-political and economic difficulty arising from leadership ineptitude and military dictatorship. Even though democracy has gradually replaced military dictatorship in most of these nations, the success of the democratic experiments have suffered huge setback and these have negatively impacted on the lives of the average citizens. Scholarly interests in the political and economic crises in Africa have been from a wide range of fields and theoretical perspectives including language and literature. Existing works, however, have not adequately explored its representations in the rich literary resources of the continent in spite of its role in record keeping and as the conscience of the society. This is the gap which this study fills. The present study, which adopts discourse-stylistics as theoretical ground, examines leadership crisis vis-à-vis socio-political flux in selected plays of Wole Soyinka. The paper identifies and describes the features of style in relation to their discourse value and how these have helped in achieving the overall satirical import of the plays. Two of Soyinka's socio-political plays namely; *A play of Giants* and *King Baabu* were purposively selected for the study. Through artistic creativity and deployment of language as an ideological satirical tool, Soyinka presents the pitiable picture of the African socio-political system and the ridiculous image of the leadership in Africa. As revealed in their poor command of the English language, Soyinka mocks post colonial African leaders as uneducated, immoral, intellectually bankrupt and pathologically deficient despots. He paints a pitiable picture of the socio-political realities and leadership ineptitude in African nations through the use metaphor and symbolism.*

Keywords: *leadership problem, Wole Soyinka, A Play of Giants, King Baabu.*

Introduction

For quite a long time, most African states were under colonial rule; however, with the wave of political independence that started in the middle of the 20th century which climaxed in the fall of Apartheid in South Africa in the late 90's, African states can breathe an air of freedom from colonialism. Unfortunately, after many years of self-rule, when one would have expected to see African nations that are socially reliable, politically

strong and economically prosperous; the continent is being faced by leadership, socio-political, economic and security challenges that have negatively impacted on its development. Post-colonial Africa has continued to suffer under internal colonialism. Successive leadership of post-colonial African states (civilian and military), have criminally mismanaged their nation's affairs and resources. Corruption and ineffective leadership have impacted

negatively on the democratic stability and the economic development of African nations.

More worrisome is the fact that in spite of the human and natural endowment which should have placed African nations on enviable pedestal leadership ineptitude and corruption have left the continent floundering hopelessly in the midst of socio-political and economic difficulty. Post-colonial Africa is a continent where cases of abuse of human rights, political killings, man's inhumanity to man, moral decadence, lawlessness, violent crimes, sectarian and ethnic violence etc, are commonplace. Another major problem of post-colonial African nations is military dictatorship.

For quite a long time, most independent African nations were under military dictatorship. Even though Africa has not totally overcome the ills of undemocratic rule, it is gratifying to note that in recent years, forceful seizure of power through military coups has become unpopular not only in Africa but also across the globe. Events in the post-cold war era have made democracy a much more appealing option of governance. However, the success of democratic experiment in most African nations, such as Nigeria, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, etc, has been frustrated by leadership ineptitude, electoral malpractice, disregard for due process, manipulation of the constitution for personal purposes and self-perpetuation in office. [See Adejumobi, 2004; Adeola, 2007; Afegbua and Adejuwon, 2012; Ebegbulem, 2012; Al-Moghales and Hezam 2015]

Undoubtedly, the magnitude of the socio-political situation in African nations, its impact on the economy and the lives of average citizens have accounted for the interest of scholars from diverse fields. In the domain of language and literature to which this study belongs, there are a number of extant scholarly inputs. However, most works on the analysis of literary texts, especially Wole Soyinka's plays have largely concentrated on their literary features at the expense of their linguistic and discourse resources and their pragmatic import. For example, Akogbeto and Houessou (2014) focus on language and dictatorship in *A Play of*

Giants. The paper examines how Soyinka employs effective use of language to spotlight characters in a manner that helps readers to know more about their personalities and their ideological dispositions.

Adeoti (2006) examines the various mutations of post-colonial dictatorial leadership in Africa in selected plays of Wole Soyinka. Also, Al-Moghales and Hazem (2015) concentrates on issues related to antidemocratic tendencies or political manipulation by leaders who attempt to perpetuate self in power as dramatized in Soyinka's *King Baabu*. The paper examines the play as a call to protest which aligns with Soyinka recommendation as the only means to bring about a positive change and to curb the authoritative power and the dictatorial tendency of the military.

Afolayan (2017), which focuses on the crises between ideology and (social) vision in Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*, centres on the pervasive atmosphere of cruelty, violence and the bleak vision in Africa political landscape. The paper examines the centrality of ideology to texts of social engagement in the postcolonial Africa and assesses the social relevance and the ideological slants in the selected texts. The paper concludes that the texts are socially relevant but expressed some reservations on Soyinka's failure to prescribe the solution to the nagging problem of leadership in Africa. The present study, which adopts discourse-stylistics analytical approach, (Opara, 2005, cited in Yeibo, 2011, p. 197) examines leadership crisis vis-à-vis socio-political flux in Wole Soyinka's *A play of Giants* and *King Baabu*. This is with the aim of accounting for the discursive and stylistic elements engaged for caustic social and political criticism of the absurdities in African societies.

Methodology

Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* mirror African institutions and society as a typical social environment where humanity is debased and dehumanized. They are satire on the absurdities in African society and dictatorial leadership. For him, African society is a chaotic one where dreams and aspirations

of people remain unrealized. It is a continent where corruption is endemic, where moral decadence is pervasive and where political problems are perennial. As a writer, who is committed to the reconstruction of his society which is so deeply engulfed in myriads of socio-political, cultural and economic problems, Soyinka believes that the African challenges require visionary leadership to tackle them. According to him:

No, Africa doesn't need philosophers to rationalize her impregnable bunker of dehumanisation. It needs a visionary who can craft a vision of all-round progress, tap into the continent's incredible natural wealth and engage its resilient people to birth a new continent (Soyinka 1983, p. 45).

Thus, literature becomes an ideological tool for the emancipation of the society. Soyinka uses satire as a medium for both instruction and entertainment. He satirizes the absurdities of his society, thereby making political enemies of power-drunk leader. A thorough analysis of selected texts shows that Soyinka attacks the individual villain (Like King Baabu and the Giants) and the system (African society) that produces them. Soyinka selects African leaders as satiric targets and then denounced them, using satirical devices such as wit, proverbs, irony, sarcasm, etc. In *King Baabu*, and *A Play of Giants*, Soyinka uses the eponymous characters of King Baabu, and the four African leaders (the Giants) as caricatures and symbols to explore his theme of man's inhumanity to man.

A Play of Giants, is a play on power, contradictions, foolery, political intrigues and manipulations. It is a display of the height of ignorance, use of brute force, manifestation of evil, corrupt leadership, voodoo practice and flagrant abuse of power in governance. African leaders have metamorphosed into inexplicable "giants" through the use of force and violence characterized by persecution, oppression, victimisation, intimidation, propaganda and worst of all, voodoo. Kamini, Gunema, Kasco and Tuboum are notorious African dictators on special delegation to the United Nations. On the entourage of Kamini are the Chairman of the Central Bank of

Bugara, the Bugaran ambassador to the United Nations, a personal aide – Gudrum and a Scandinavian female journalist. Kamini displays a totally ignorance of simple economic principle as he orders his country's Central Bank Chairman to go about printing new Bugaran currency. The response of the Chairman that this will worsen the value of the already depreciating currency, making it more valueless than toilet paper infuriated Kamini who ordered his special task force to "take this coat-and-tie Kondo inside that toilet room there and put his head inside the bowl..." (*A Play of Giants*). In another display of brutality, Kamini subjected the Bulgarian Sculptor working on his statue to torture. Following the attempt of the sculptor to explain to Gudrum, Kamini's aide, that the statue would not be ready by the following day as requested because the statue is yet to be perfected. He explained that the statue in its form, it would only be fit for the chamber of horrors. The sculptor is so brutally tortured that he narrowly escapes death. Characteristically, Kamini lied that the sculptor had fallen from a ladder and he had taken a good care of him.

Also, *King Baabu*, a play which focuses directly on the twilight world of military tyranny in Africa, summarizes the second coming of military rule, including the preceding era. Alongside its pathetic tragic pathos is a painful satiric indignation against a despotic order presided over by a self-imposed and irredeemably corrupt ruler. According to Soyinka, Baabu is "A village idiot who harbours a masochistic and banal conception of power in the garment of a giant but his monstrosity is so striking that he alone occupies the gallery of ridicule and disgrace" (*Soyinka 1984, p. 24*). In a way, the brutal General Basha Bash, who later metamorphosis into a 'monarchical democrat' as King Baabu, is a bundle of monstrosity who typifies despotic African leaders that have dominated Africa's political landscape for most of the continent's post-independence years. As presented in the play, *King Baabu's* power is monolithic and he brooks no opposition.

It is, however, unfortunate to note that no dictatorial rule can survive without some

internal collaborators. As can be seen in the selected plays, the connivance of the educated class with the despots is evident in the activities of Batey, in *A Play of Giants*, and Tutor, in *King Baabu*. It is also evident in the composition of the SCAR (the Supreme Council for Advanced Redemption) which is the highest decision-making body and some individuals who represent civil pressure groups. These individuals are part of the corruption and overall conspiracy against the masses. Again, these despotic rulers would not have remained long in power but for the resolute interests of western powers like Britain, Belgium, France, and West Germany who sustained them in power. Thus, Soyinka accuses the capitalist West and the socialist East of prosecuting their own selfish socio-economic and political agenda by promoting unpopular regimes in Africa. Accordingly, 'all the big powers', in Tuboum's view, 'make trouble' (Soyinka 1984, p. 43). They exploit the weakness of African leaders and manipulate them to propagate political instability and perpetrate Africa's economic dependence.

A look at the objective of this study which is, to account for the discursive and stylistic elements engaged in selected texts and their pragmatic import, would reveal that it is not what a single theory can successfully achieve. Also, the data for this study are utterances of the dramatic personae from the selected texts. They are basically linguistic structures that are larger than sentences or clauses with definable communicative functions. Thus, interpreting the communicative intentions and the ideological functions in this kind of interactions can only be effectively achieved by looking at a vast range of variables (linguistic, contextual etc). It is for this reason that this study adopts the Discourse-Stylistic approach for the analysis of data.

According to Stubbs (1983, p. 1) 'discourse' is concerned with the "organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts". Brown & Yule (1983, p. 1) define discourse as 'language in use'. Discourse could be spoken or written form of language which include a long talks, discussions, sermons, etc which are purpose-

driven. The adjective 'stylistic' relates to a particular style or way of doing things. In the context of this study, it relates to the pattern or strategy in which facts are presented to achieve a specific purpose. The discourse-stylistic approach adopted for this study involves the deployment of both Discourse analysis and stylistics in the analysis of data.

Discourse analysis is concerned with the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse. It is an analysis of language use in social contexts. As an important tool of language study, discourse analysis investigates how language, meaning and society interrelate. Stylistics on the other hand involves the analysis of style; hence, scholars have discovered that it is quite difficult, somehow impossible, to define stylistics without recourse to style. Enkvist et al (1971, p. xi) defines style as "an individual and creative utilization of the resources of language which his period, his chosen dialect, his genre and his purpose within offers him". Odeunmi and Adeyemi (2006, p. vii) see it as "the identifiable recurrent pattern that characterises the work of a person, a people, a period, a profession, etc and it distinguishes it from the work of another person, people, period, or profession respectively".

Stylistics, the (linguistic) study of style (Leech and Short, 1981), is "concerned with identifying, describing and explaining whatever is striking and recurrent in the written or spoken text. It studies the peculiarities that characterise the language use of an individual, a group of people, a domain of language use etc" (Olajide 2003, p. 103). For Enkvist et al (1971, p. 27), stylistics is viewed from three perspectives. First, it can be regarded as an autonomous discipline when it draws freely and eclectically on methods from both linguistics, and literary study. It can also be seen as a sub-department of literary studies when it draws only occasionally on linguistic methods. Third, Stylistics can be viewed as a sub-department of linguistics [linguistic stylistics] when dealing with the peculiarities of literary texts, and non-literary varieties of language (or registers).

Discourse-stylistics is therefore an analytical approach that involves the use of both discourse analysis and stylistic methods in the analysis of data. As an approach to language study, discourse-stylistics is a discourse-based stylistic analysis which examines the form and function of discourses in specific social, cultural or historical contexts. The concept of discourse is believed to have originated from the fact that language operates within a pragmatic context and that it is important to consider this to effectively account for its communicative value. According to Opara, (2005), cited in Yeibo, (2011, p. 197), the discourse-stylistic approach is categorised under the functional linguistic tradition which involves identifying, describing and explaining specific stylistic features in selected text or discourse situation. Opara further explains that the model "is concerned with the analysis of communication to reveal its function, using various tools of interpretation including textual peculiarities. Such analysis enables us to appreciate style". As a model, it is descriptively adequate to interrogate our data, hence; will enable us to account for the discursal and stylistic features of selected texts.

Results and Discussion

The two plays selected for analysis in this study centre on the socio-political problems in African states. Soyinka believes that the major problem confronting African nations is systemic leadership failure. His main literary purpose in the selected texts is to ridicule the leadership while blaming them for the problems in Africa. He employs satire to castigate the leadership for their contribution to the socio-political problem in African nations. This section focuses on the discourse elements and the stylistic features deployed by the playwright to achieve his literary purpose in selected texts. Particular attention is paid to the identification and description of the features of style in relation to the discourse value and how these have helped in achieving the overall satirical import of the plays.

Poor Command of the English Language

The use of language by the playwright in the selected plays is noteworthy. Soyinka deploys language as a stylistic tool to achieve political caricature. Through this device, he presents the pitiable picture of the African socio-political system and the ridiculous image of the leadership in Africa. The first stylistic feature of language use in the plays is the poor command of the English language by the central character and the supposed symbol of African leaders in the plays, Kamini and King Baabu (Basha bash). Soyinka's employs this device to reveal the socio-cultural identity and the educational backgrounds of these dramatic personae in the plays. He uses language to uncover not only the poor educational background of the military/political gladiators in Africa, but also their poverty of ideas and the corruption in the system. Their poor command of English is juxtaposed with their intellectual bankruptcy as revealed in their poor sense of political economy. Soyinka seems to wonder why Africa parades such poor quality of leaders. He seems to wonder, and by implication, question how people like Kamini (Idi Amin) and King Baabu (Sanni Abacha) rose to the height of their career and to the exalted position of Heads of State in Africa. Here are a few extracts for consideration. Relevant poor utterances are emphasised in bold face.

Extract 1:

KAMINI: I said go back and get cracking with government mint, when I return, I want to see brand new currency notes in circulation, not hearing all this grumble of shortage of money and so on and so forth.

CHAIRMAN: But your Excellency, that is why we came to seek this loan in the first place. Now that we haven't got it, there is nothing to back the new currency with.

KAMINI: What the man talking about? You short of good currency paper at government mint?

CHAIRMAN: *I'm trying to explain. Your Excellency. Even now, at this moment our national currency is not worth its size in toilet. If we go ahead and print more, it would...*

KAMINI: *What? **What you say just now?***

CHAIRMAN: *Your Excellency?*

KAMINI: ***I say, what you talking just now about Bugara currency?***

(A Play of Giants, pp. 6-7)

(King Baabu, p.8)

Table 1 presents an analysis of some examples culled from the extracts above. They are presented against their corrected version. As can be seen in table 1, both Kamini and Basha have fundamental problem in their language use. Their language use is fraught with common errors of mastery of the English language (typical of second language situation) because they have not mastered the basic rules of the language. In spite of their status as the Heads of State, the language use of Kamini and King Baabu is replete with errors of imperfection such as tense error, omission of auxiliaries/verbs, omission of preposition etc.

Extract 2:

KAMINI: *Gudrum very good friend of African leaders. **She writing book about me with many photographs. She calling it, The Black Giant at Play. It shows Kamini very jovial family man. Big uncle to everybody in the country.***

(A Play of Giants, p. 2)

Extract 3:

BASHA: ***If I hearing you right, you say we going to die paupers. Now how that possible when this very moment we moving into all this new and sumptuous bordello, and with blood of former occupant making that special design on wallpaper, all mixed up with spatter of grey matter from his brains... Now we have his mansion, I wearing his general's stars and stripes and long service medallions on personal orders of my commander-in-chief, Field-Marshal Potipoo, and now you trying to tell me we still coming to die paupers?***

(King Baabu, p. 6)

Extract 4:

BASHA: ***You fooling yourself. My Commander-in-Chief, General Potipoo, knows that I am loyal to the death of a thousand cuts. Ask Potipoo name you one officer on whom he place absolute trust and confidence and he name Basha Bash***

The problem of poor mastery of the English language is no doubt, a direct result of the poor educational background of these leaders which Soyinka exploits as strategy to achieve political and leadership caricature in the selected texts. That the major characters in the selected plays have poor educational background is Soyinka's deliberate strategy to reveal the intellectual weakness of African leaders. The ideological slant here is that African leaders are weak intellectually because of their low level of education. Right from the beginning of the plays, the readers are not left in the dark on the level of education and the military background of King Baabu and Kamini. In *A Play of Giants*, Soyinka presents the reader with the pitiable image of a leader who could not comprehend a simple economic problem. His poor knowledge of political economy is revealed in his interaction with the Chairman of the Central bank of Bugara (extract 1).

The Use of Force, Intimidation and Award of Self with Unmerited High-sounding Titles as Cover-up Mechanisms

Closely related to poor command of the English language is the use of force and labelling of people as perceived enemies (intimidation) by these supposed representatives of African leaders, just as they award themselves high-sounding titles to cover up their inferiority complex. Soyinka

exposes the link between subversion of people's rights, abuse of power and the intellectual bankruptcy of leaders in the selected plays. He portrays Kamini as a selfish and vain glorious despot in *A Play of Giants*. For example, contrary to the directive by the Secretary General of the United Nations, that all permanent delegation should bring one work of art (representative of their culture), to be placed on a gallery at the United Nations, Kamini secures the services of a Scandinavian Sculptor to produce his full portrait in twenty-four hours. Like the Chairman of Bugara Central Bank who offered a professional advice that money should not be thrown into circulation, Kamini assaulted the Sculptor by throwing him in a toilet cell for describing the image he has produced as only fit for the "chamber of horrors" (i.e. not fit for exhibition).

Soyinka exposes a fundamental intellectual weakness that has generated inferiority complex in Kamini and King Baabu. Since they do not have the clout to command respect and obedience by their character, intelligence and achievements, the only available means to achieve these is through force and labelling people as perceived enemies.

The Use of Mediocrity, Intrigue and Lustful Greed for Power

A critical reading of selected texts shows that Soyinka deliberately creates characters to reveal the socio-political malaise in post-colonial Africa. Soyinka paints a pitiable picture of corruption of African leaders by creating characters who are morally deficient and who lack integrity. The characters represent African leaders/political class are painted as corrupt and morally bankrupt in their engagement in open display of mediocrity, intrigue and lustful greed for power. Basha, Potipoo and Kamini are examples of morally and intellectually bankrupt leaders. Bash and Potipoo engage in theft of public funds through inflation of contracts as can be seen in the fertilizer deal. Maariya engages in unguided "spraying" of money drawn illegally from Central Bank. She bribes the supposed leaders of labour and

interest groups (Rout, Dope, Rent) into supporting her husband's government. Basha abducts representatives of privately owned banks and imprisons them, because they refused to sign an open cheque to fund his "Operation Fill the Stomach" project. Kamini ordered the Chairman of Bugara Central Bank print bank notes and brutalises him for daring to question his order.

The height of moral and intellectual bankruptcy is also seen in the lives of Basha and Maariya. One does not get to see the form of intimacy and cohesion that a couple should naturally radiate in their interactions. What the reader is confronted with are cases of the use of abusive language and derogatory words to qualify each other. Jealousy and lack of trust are openly displayed in their daily interactions. For example, to Basha, his wife (Maariya) is "an early morning pestilence on a man's peace", a "she cow" (*King Baabu* 6). To Maariya, her husband is an "empty piss-pot" (*King Baabu* 5), a "goat-fucker from the winds of wilderness", a "dithering apostate", a "voracious virago" (*King Baabu* 77).

Through the utterances and actions of Maariya, the reader is led into the discovery of the intellectual weaknesses of Basha Bash. His weaknesses become exposed and magnified as she openly confronts and condemns him about his nature which she detests.

Extract 6:

*MAARIYA: I said it, he is so easily satisfied!
At least your predecessor in this mansion had brains – the fatty blobs on the wallpaper prove that. You, oh, I despair, when your head is blown open, there'll be nothing but soap, and not even the kind that foams...
(King Baabu, p. 6)*

In extract 6, for example, Maariya laments that her husband is slow and unable to think well. It is implied in her utterance in the extract that Bash Bash is unambitious (so easily satisfied); unintelligent (no brain) and have nothing to offer or empty (nothing but soap in his head).

Basha and Maariya represent the ambitious African military coup plotters who

have insatiable thirst for power. They represent the terrible and corrupt power seekers who can do anything get power and to hold on tenaciously to it.

Extract 7:

MAARIYA: There isn't much time. You have to act while everyone is eating lunch. That means now! It was me who sent you that intelligence report. ... The so called mutiny and plan to attack Abaloo barracks. I forged it...no, More accurately, I – doctored it. It was just the routine situation report. If I don't eavesdrop on your cabinet meetings and go through your papers, how would I know the right moment to push you towards your destiny?
 (King Baabu, p. 22)

Extract 8:

MAARIYA: As Chief of Army Staff you are in charge of troop movement. So? You

take – troops-your elite-troops – put – down- the- REBELLION! And of course your other duty is to ensure the safety of your Commander-in-Chief, not so? So you replace the guards – whom you will accuse of being still loyal to that deposed bastard husband of Moriya, Rajinda, and thereby you – make him – General Potipoo – a- virtual – prisoner.
 (King Baabu, p. 23)

Maariya is a crafty, ruthless and an ambitious woman who can do anything to realise her ambition. As can be seen in extract 7, she forged the intelligence report about a mutiny and plan to attack the barracks as a result of which an ongoing state meeting was summarily adjourned. Nothing exposes Basha as a weak and unintelligent soldier more than Maariya's utterance in extract 8. A civilian teaching a soldier the technique to deploy in executing the coup is abnormal.

Table 1: Examples of poor command of English

Extracts	Faulty Utterances	Types of Error	Corrected Version
1	What the man talking...	i. Omission of auxiliary verb is. ii. Substituting the demonstrative (this) with the article (the)	What is this man talking ...
1	What you say just now?	Omission of the auxiliary verb (did)	What did you say just now?
1	You short of good ...	Omission the Auxiliary (are) in interrogative sentence	Are you short of good ...
2	Gudrum very good ...	Omission of the article (a)	Gudrum is very good ...
2	She calling it	Substituting the third person singular (calls) with gerundive (calling)	She calls it
2	It shows Kamini very ...	Omission of the determiner (that) and the auxiliary verb (is)	It shows that Kamini is very ...
3	If I hearing you right	Substituting the past tense (heard) with the progressive aspect (hearing)	If I heard you right
3	Now how that possible...	Omission of modal auxiliary verb (can) and (be)	Now how can that be possible...
3	I wearing his general's...	Omission of auxiliary verb (am)	I am wearing his general's...
4	You fooling yourself	Omission of auxiliary verb (are)	You are fooling yourself

4	Ask Potipoo name you	Omission of preposition (to)	Ask Potipoo to name you
4	...he name Basha Bash	Omission of modal auxiliary verb (will)	...he will name Basha Bash

Again, to cover up his intellectual deficiency, Basha surrounds himself with personal aides (soldiers) and civilian collaborators (labour leaders) to perpetuate himself in office. Unfortunately, the activities of these aids and civilian collaborators further exposed the weakness of their principal. For example, Basha employs the services of Tutor and Tikim to help launder his image. Unfortunately, they further help in exposing his mediocrity and lustful greed for power. Similarly, in *A Play of Giants*, Kamini employs spokespersons including Gudrum (an expatriate and Kamini's mistress and personal assistant) and Prof Batey (a councillor and protocol officer in the service of the Mayor of Hyacombe) to cover up his intellectual and language deficiencies. It is however, ironical that rather than shielding these deficiencies, they further expose the weaknesses of Kamini.

The Use of Metaphor and Symbolism

A Play of Giants and *King Baabu* are not only metaphorical; they are also symbolic representations of the socio-political reality in African nations. In the first place, the plays are metaphorical representations of the socio-political realities in the Nigeria, Uganda etc. Thus, Wole Soyinka is posed to exposing to the world, the stark reality with regards to the problem of leadership that has bedevilled Africa for so long using metaphor, as discourse stylistic resource. Also, Basha Bash, Kamini, the Gunema and Tuboum are metaphorical representatives of the military junta that took over the corridor of power in African nations for quite a long time. They represent General Sani Abacha (Nigeria) Field-Marshal El-Hadji Dr. Idi Amin (Uganda), Macias Nguema (Equatorial Guinea) and Mobutu Sese Seko (Congo). These military rulers were sit-tight despots who laid siege on their countries for decades.

Again, Basha Bash, Kamini, the Gunema and Tuboum are also symbolic. They symbolise the uneducated, stupid and repulsive in their lust for power, vulgarity, loquaciousness. For instance, in *A play of Giants*, one could not see any achievement to merit the titles *Field-Marshal* (Kamini),

Benefacio (Gunema), *Emperor* (Kasco), and *General* (Barra Toboum) brandished by these self-styled leaders. In *King Baabu*, General Basha Bash, who later transformed into a civilian president, King Baabu, is a symbol of emptiness and mediocrity.

Furthermore, in order to make the satire grotesque, Wole Soyinka creates characters and assigned them symbolic names. For example, "Baabu" which means "nothing" in Hausa, reveals the emptiness, mediocrity of Basha Bash. Biibabae (Basha's son and heir apparent) which translates to "like father like son" in Yoruba, is another version of rottenness, sadism and cruelty as can be seen in his torture of the "rebel" captured by Fatasimu. The height of Wole Soyinka's symbolic representation in characterisation is seen in the way he associates some names (Potipoo, Potiplan and Potiplum) with faeces as can be seen in the first two syllables "Poti" (potty) of these names. "Potty", meaning stupid, crazy, foolish is pronounced as "poo" (a plastic chamber pot mostly used for defecation by children).

Conclusion

So far, this study has focused on the analysis of two selected plays of Wole Soyinka – *A play of Giants* and *King Baabu*. It examined the significant stylistic features that enhanced the overall communicative import of the playwright. The plays which are metaphorical and symbolic representations of the socio-political reality in African nations, satirises the absurdities of African society and dictatorial leadership. Soyinka deploys language as an ideological stylistic tool to achieve political caricature in the selected plays. He paints the pitiable picture of the African socio-political system and the ridiculous image of the leadership in Africa. As a stylistic device,

Soyinka presents the major characters (Kamini and Basha Bash) as pathologically deficient. Their poor command of the English language is a stylistic device to reveal their low educational and socio-cultural background with the attendant low intellectual capacity. Soyinka creates these

characters to reveal the socio-political malaise in post-colonial Africa and intellectual bankruptcy of African leaders. Basha, Potipoo and Kamini, Maariya are symbols of morally and intellectual bankruptcy of the ambitious African military leaders who have insatiate thirst for power and who can do anything get power and to hold on tenaciously to it. In *King Baabu*, and *A Play of Giants*, Soyinka uses the eponymous character, King Baabu, and the four African leaders (the Giants) as caricatures and symbols to explore his theme of man's inhumanity to man. Having explored the discursive and stylistic elements in selected plays, this study has provided further insight into the literary creativity, historicity and socio-political relevance of Wole Soyinka plays.

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