

POLITICAL NARRATIVE AND POLITICAL REALITY: REFLECTIONS ON WOLE SOYINKA'S *A PLAY OF GIANTS*

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Abstract

Drama like other genres of literature picks its ingredients for creative expression from reality. Reality comes in different forms depending on the sensitivity of the writer, who digs deep into real life events and gives a literary expression on the text. Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* depicts political maneuverings as political narratives and political reality on stage. It is a truism that every society, no matter how primitive or sophisticated has one form of politics or the other by which such society is governed and stratified. Put differently every society has an inevitable political structure. This paper develops directions of thoughts for reflection from the manipulations of power by African leaders. Political narrative in our context reflects a radical reconstruction of reality satirizing the political decadence in Africa. Reflections on political discourse show that the dominant roles of narratives are crucial tool for the examination of how we "story the world". This paper posits that the political narrative of simplifying complex situation stringing events into gripping and believable drama is achieved through the agency of satire, humour and emblematic symbols that underscore abuse of power amongst corrupt African leadership.

Introduction

We use stories in virtually every aspect of our everyday lives – to pass the time, convey information, to let someone know who we (or at least who we want to be), to locate ourselves in a place, family, and community. We turn to stories to both survive and to imagine, as well as for a host of instrumental purposes. Stories are part of our human inheritance. The conviction is that humans have a natural tendency to think in narrative form. Scholarship in the humanities and social sciences recognize the fact that narrative patterns are a crucial tool for the study of human thought and the examination of the ways in which we story our world will essentially contribute to the understanding of how we make meanings in our social political activities (Mishler 117). The place of narrative's important role in shaping and expressing political identity, perspective and ideology in drama cannot be over emphasized. According to Lyotard (19) the pre-eminence of the narrative form in the formulation of traditional knowledge" is another reason why scholars from different fields of study have shown interest in narrative patterns.

A study of political discourse shows that it relies basically on narrative patterns. This is due in part to the human tendency to rely on narrative as a means of understanding our world and endowing it with meaning. In the words of Hardy (1) "we dream in narratives, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, learn, hate and love by narrative". The dominant role of narratives in political discourse is equally based on the centrality of narrative in the formulation and sustenance of worldviews. Regardless of where ideas may have their start, whether in the natural or social sciences or in the humanistic disciplines, it is testimony to their compelling strength that as these ideas are exposed to ever widening areas of knowledge, the older ways of thinking give way to the new. Yet as these new ideas leave their original grounds and move into strange fields seldom do they retain

their pristine meaning. Each succeeding host discipline kneads and moulds them to its own special purposes. Be that as it may, some part of the new ideas will still retain its original sense.

Ideas inherent in narrative as an effective means of simplifying complex situations into chains of events has also contributed to making narrative popular. The essential role of narratives in political discourse is hinged on the fact that narratives aid the formulation and sustenance of worldviews. Reality often lends itself to narrative mode that leads to making good stories, gripping drama, believable (not necessarily scientific fact) historical accounts. In the words of Bruner (13), the intermingling of reality into fiction strives “to locate the experience in time and place”. In terms of the attempt to depict political reality on stage Soyinka employs paradigmatic maladies of depraved brutes for his description. So this form of political narrative yields thought and expression, which are based on the playwrights’ stringing of events together into claims that are consistent with the political logic of shaping the present from lessons learned from the past.

In drama as in other disciplines like the social sciences, political narrative is an important means of reflecting political reality because it serves as a tool for describing events and developments without presuming to present or voice a historical truth that is. The problem of “history” and “truth” as reflected by (White 39) is that more often than not it represents the view of the writer’s Whims and Caprices. This assumption takes on ideological value. Be that as it may, narrative, especially political narrative and political reality as used in this paper, is broadly regarded as political events, entities, and situations that are real and perceived as real. This therefore, removes the doubt whether what we regard as political reality is not itself constructed and processed into fictional reality. Soyinka’s *A play of Giants* as a socio-political criticism which picks its ingredients for creative expression from reality is made very clear. This is explicitly established in the introduction: “On the Heroes of our Time: some personal notes”

No serious effort is made here for hide the identities of the real life actors who have served as models for *A play of Giants*, they are none other than: President for life Macias Ngueme (late) of Equatorial Guinea, Emperor for life (ex) Jean-Baptist Bokassa of the Central African Republic: Life President Mobutu Sese Koko e.t.c, of Congo Kinshasa, and – the HERO OF HEROS EL-Haji Dr Idi-Amin og Uganda, Dsc, DSO, VC*. etc. (V)

The first part of this paper will reflect on the concept of political narrative and the second part will discuss the link between political narratives and political reality. The later segment will reflect on Soyinka’s depiction of political reality on stage. This will lead to the submission that the stock-in-trade of the brutes: “excessive” obsession for power, victimization of the masses dictatorship, oppression, suppression subjugation, marginalization and brutality are all presented through the use of satire, humour, and symbol.

Political Narrative

Political narratives emanates from narrative as coined by narratologists and literary theorists. The first compelling definition of narrative is that by Prince (4) based on the existence of a timeline “narrative is the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other. With emphasis on drama, Rimmon-Kenan’s (19) appears more relevant to our discourse, in that to qualify as narrative, a narrated sequence of events does not have to contain connections or to relate to a fixed group of

characters, although it is clear that narratives lacking these features will be only loosely cohesive and may well be perceived as “very odd”. It will be indeed regarded as very odd because any kind of political discourse must draw necessarily from political framework. It follows therefore, that political narrative is one that emerges from a formal political forum, political maneuverings, manipulations of power, political demonstrations by politicians and public officials in course of their duties. What is more, when the contents or essence of the narrative lead to conclusions that reflect political themes, such as power relations, actions or in actions even when generated outside clear official political frameworks; it still stand as political narrative.

It now appears as if political narrative expands to almost any narrative, especially when politics itself is widely defined. In this wise, it behooves us to distinguish between a formal political narrative, crafted within an official political structure and an informal political narrative that deals with themes that can qualify as “political” but appears in non political context. Wilson (398-9) offers a detail account of the concept of political discourse. This paper reflects on *A Play of Giants* in terms of formal political narratives.

Narratives and Reality

It must be acknowledged that political narratives do not just spring into being; they are created out of political actions of the political players. The basic truth that political narratives are constructed and shaped by the master crafts man does not subject it to an expression of an impeccable truth. In spite of White (39) assertion that historian (writers) reflects what they want as “emplotment”, political narrative still capture certain degree of reality. This does not mean that every political narrative should be taken as pure emplotment.

It is admitted that political reality is problematic to define, but in arts (drama) faithful depiction is not essentially the best yardstick for judgment. What is more, the business of the playwright is not with loyalty to verisimilitude. Anyway since, according to Hobbes (105) those in politics have their words and actions owned by those whom they represent they must refer to the same framework that their constituents see as the “political reality”. It follows then that even if that which we consider as political reality in the arts is deemed to be a construct, an amalgam, it does not detract or remove the perceived reality therein. Viewed from another angle, political discourse is often defined by the predominant referential function, privileging the contextual informational content of an utterance, in a given circumstance. The relationship between a given political narrative and its context becomes very vital for assessing its fidelity of reality. In this instance, coherence and consistency play important role in terms of credibility. Above all, because no creative work comes from void, a political narrative, addresses a context known to the creator and the audience, the narrative’s reliability in reflecting political reality depends on how much echo or identification can be heard or located there in.

One of the points of reflections on *A play of Giants* is that it has given a lie to scholars who hold the view that narrative is not capable of reflecting reality in a comprehensive way. In fact, Ezrahi (272-5) postulates that political narrative can hardly be expected to express flawless representation of reality. A counter to this naïve view is seen in political reality as the sometimes innocent mirror image of reality of political players. These players often create narratives that appear to be comprehensively representative of their political reality. Ricoeur (3) succinctly attributes substantial ability to narrative to reflect reality as he states that “time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative, narrative in turn, is

meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience". He states further that "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (52).

The submission from these views is that fictional narrative in some ways represents reality (life). This position is aware of those who see narrative as predilection – the human wish to endow reality with coherence and meaning imposing narrative structures on reality. In another development, White (14) states, that the deliberate attempt to empower narrative with structural organization is often to moralize. This position by White is at variance with the core of our analysis. The logic of our reflections is essentially hinged on the words of philosopher Louis Mink (60) that "stories are not lived, but told". Our position is given strength by the view of Elliot Mishler (117) that "we do not find stories; we make stories. In reflecting on Soyinka's depiction of political narrative this paper posits that he employs the agency of satire, humour and symbols to underscore abuse of power amongst corrupt African leaders held up for ridicule.

One scholar who x-rays Soyinka's works extensively is Katrak, he is of the opinion that Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* and *A play Giants* reveal that "the violence in human nature is the one constant" (164). He further buttresses his point by depicting the developmental brutality in African leadership:

"Since *Madmen and Specialists* was first performed in 1971, the political scene has grown worse in many African countries. What you would call merely signs of those times," remarked Soyinka "have become hideous realities" in many ways *A Play of Giants* reads like a Sequel of *Madmen and Specialist* In *A play of Giants* "the monsters" in power have the full authority to torture, kill brutalize on any whim or for no reason at all" (164).

For Katrak, *A Play of Giants* depicts the highest form of barbarism and cruelty by these "monsters" that are in power. He exemplifies this view from the event that takes place between Kamini and the Chairman of Bugara National Bank when he candidly tells Kamini the absurdity in printing money locally, that Bugara currency is worth as much as toilet paper. The paranoid dictator confines the chairman to a toilet where his head is put into the toilet bowl.

In all these criticisms, one fact is recurrent and that is the "abuse of power" both in the military and civilian government. *A Play of Giants* present leaders who are found in every corridor of power and in politics obsessed with power and without meaningful policies for their people and relying on brute force to push their wicked ideas through.

Synopsis of the Play

A Play of Giants is set in the Burgaran Embassy in New York, where several Africa's most ridiculous tyrants are gathered. A sculptor is immortalizing them, but they are hard to set in stone ... for one, because of their constant concern about their countries collapsing (or leadership falling into other hands) especially in their absence.

The three figures (Gunema, Kasco and Kamini) and the fourth who joins them (Toboum) are recognizable: as Soyinka explains: "No serious effort is made here to hide the identities of the real life actors who have served as models for *A Play of Giants*" (v). They are Benefacio Gunema: Macisa Nguem (Equatorial Guinea) Emperor Kasco: Jean Baptiste Boskassa (Central

African Republic), Field-Marshal Kamini: Idi Amin (Uganda) and General Barra Tubrum: Mobutu SeSe Seko (Congo/Zaire)

Kamini, the host is the central character, and *A Play of Giants* focuses in particular, on this abomination that is described by the author as “fantasia on Aminian theme” (iii).

The play reveals some Western Sycophants and apologists notably Gudrum, a Scandinavian Journalist and professor Batey as well, the Secretary General of the UN and eventually representatives of the two then Super Powers, the US and Russia. Most of the figures are caricatures; the play itself is a political satire that spares no one.

These African Leaders delusions are very amusing, revealing their corardice, and some of their power plays are also seen in Kamini’s brief presence. Soyinka does not have to invert much to paint these caricatures: this is more or less, how these men are and what they do. There is little introspection from these leaders, though Kasco does observe:

“Power comes only with the death of politics. That is why I choose to become emperor. I place myself beyond politics. At the moment of my coronation, I signal to the world that I transcend the intrigues and mundaness of politics. Now inhabit only the pure realm of power, I fear, mes amis, all three of you have chosen to remain in the territory of politics. But – is it choice? Or are you trapped? (21).

Meanwhile, the Americans and Russians are presented as cynical cold war realists, indifferent to the plight of the African people and nations, as long as their interests are served.

In conclusion, the resemblance of these dictators satirized in the play and the present African leaders is very glaring.

Satire as a Means of Social Criticism

The effort by people in power to hide their flaws of moral vacuity is akin to that of the ostrich which in an attempt to hide from his enemies buries its head while its massive body is left uncovered. This is what the playwright satirizes as political reality. Where there is bad governance, the appropriate tool for a literary explication is satire. In one of Soyinka’s few novels *The Man Died*, he says “the man dies in all who keep silent” (13). The proof of his political vision is expressed in this political satire *A Play of Giants*.

In *A Play of Giants*, he dedicates the play to Byron Kadawa who was victimized by Idi-Amin of Uganda.

“Byron Kadawa, to whom this play s dedicated is representative of the many thousands whose contribution to the nation of their birth was brutally cut shot by Idi-Amin. He led his theater troupe to the Festival of Black and African Arts (FESTAC) in Nigeria, 1977.” (viii)..

In this except, Soyinka discloses his intention not to hide Idi-Amin and other buffoons. In satirizing these characters, the playwright presents them as essentially a bunch of hollowmen, characters that feel important because of power at their disposal, but are unable to disguise their

emptiness and aridity in spite of the power they wield. Through their actions in the play, they all seem to be chanting T.S Eliot's poem "Hollowmen"

We are hollowmen
We are stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straws Alas!
Our dried voices when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass. (1628).

The playwright satirizes these characters as intellectually and morally arid, politically ignorant and culturally impotent.

The Chief Protagonist Kamini, being the representative of the consortium of despots, is depicted as a stark illiterate not only through his speech but also through his actions. Despite his claim of many titles, both deserved and undeserved, he cannot speak grammatically correct English. An instance of this is when he expresses his pride over the book being written on him by Gudrum. He says:

"Gudrum very good friend of African Leaders. She writing book about me with many photographs. She calling it The Black Giant at Play. It show Kamini very jovial family man. Big uncle to everybody in country." (2)

These sentences are grammatically incorrect. In each sentence, the intensive verb 'is' has been omitted. In the first sentence, "Gudrum very good friend of African leaders"between "Gudrum" and "very" "is a" has been omitted. So also, between "she" and "writing" and "she" and "calling" in the third sentence. The verb "show" in the fourth sentence ought to have been is the present "shows" because of the singular pronoun "it". In addition, he omits the "as a" before the "very jovial family man". There are copious displays of his incompetence in almost all his speeches. His brother despots, Kasco and Gunema also make a lot of grammatical mistakes in expressing themselves in English.

Kamini who enjoys the title of life president is also seen as intellectually hollow, who in spite of his years of reign has not fully grasped the economic and political phenomenon on his country. This becomes evident when he fails to understand the Central Bank Chairman's explanation that currency is not printed arbitrarily but need corresponding economic backing. This, leads to a merciless punishment of the chairman. Kamini, as a representative of tyrannical leaders is portrayed as a gullible character who can easily be deceived. This contrasts greatly, the intellectual disposition a leader should exhibit. Kamini is taken for a play thing by the Russian envoy. He is so gullible as to believe the Russians are his friends and that they will support him in his bid to have his statue exhibited at the UN secretariat.

He actually fails to understand the language of diplomacy which the Russians use in not only underrating him but out rightly insulting him. When the Russian envoy came to his embassy to negotiate the possibility of the exhibition of the statues, they make it clear that their own statesman and national hero Vladimir Ilyich Leun's statue would be exhibited first before

Kamini's own life-sized statues of the "four crowned heads" at that UN building. Kaminin in his gullibility accepts the gift of a "Babushka doll" which symbolizes his shallowness.

- First Russian:** (Speaking in Russian). OK,
Enough of this charade. Give him
The Babushka doll.
- Second Russian:** We have therefore withdrawn the
Babushka doll which was our original
contribution to the gallery of
international Arts and crafts and
proposed to substitute in its place a life
size statue of our beloved and revered
Ilyich.
- First Russian:** (Speaking in Russian) Tell
the overgrown child to enjoy
himself tearing of the Babushka
limbs instead of those hapless
Bugaran peasants
- Second Russian:** (Opening his briefcase and bringing out
a doll). In the confidence that you will in
turn support our proposal and as a
sourveir of yet another example of
mutual cooperation, may we have the
honour of presenting you with the
Babushka doll which was our original
Contribution to the gallery. (45-46).

Although the most insolent remarks are made in Russian, Kamini as a political figure and diplomat ought to have read in between what the Russian says especially in the presentation of the Babushka doll which he is about to accept "beaming broadly" (46) but for the timely intervention of his intellectual friend, Batey, who explains the significance of the doll to him.

The fact that Kamini is presented with the doll in the presence of his brother despots and none of them understands the full import of such gift shows them as diplomatically naïve and uneducated. The fact that Kamini is willing to accept the gift shows him as a child in the guise of a fully grown man.

Intellectual aridity like earlier pointed out pervades the life style and even speeches of Kamini. He is presented as a vain and vulgar, person who does not understand the codes of social ethics. He is so ill mannered, uncultured and abuses people in filthy words that would make any descent Blackman turn crimson with shame. While conversing with his brother despots on the issue of subversive, he says:

"...I catch any Kondo, I make him smell his mother's cunt." (2)

In another scene where he confronts the Bugaran Bank Chairman for comparing the value of Bugaran currency to that of toilet paper, Kamini exclaims:

“you saying Bugaran currency only worth shit paper? Is that what I hear you say just now?

As a punishment Kamini says:

“Today, I make you eat good Bugaran shit”. (7)

Another instance to show his lack of manner and uncouth language is his comment on the escaped manners of his entourage from the prying eye of his Task Force Special.

Kamini“... that is what results from imperialism and neo-colonialism and the culture they teach our people. Syphilitic culture mental syphilis...”(15).

Kamini is revealed as an uncultured leader who lacks courtesy. He stops so low to using vulgar terms and phrases like” ... this syphilitic bastard taking worse than imperialist propaganda to humiliate the bugaran Central Bank’s Chairman and “common makongo carver...” (30) in humiliating the Embassy Sculptor. This reveals vulgarity which is not expected of a leader at the most sensitive office in the society.

His low social ethics is further revealed, when after eating, in full glare of everyone, Kamini shows all the signs of having dined well, picking his teeth and belching from time to time. (35). Through these, the so-called “giants” have been cut down to the size of dwarfs who are lower intellectually, politically and even morally than what they portray. The Playwright succeeds in exposing them for what they are-intellectually hollow, morally arid and politically ignorant.

Gudrum a Scandinavian female journalist who is also known as kamini’s mistress helps in boosting kamini’s ego rather than correcting his excesses. She is a representative of the educated, political, friends who are verse in world of politics, aware of the abuse of power by dictators but because of self interest, praises these dictators rather than correct them through constructive and critical journalism. In the beginning of the play, she is presented as “a stout, florid and rather repulsive Nordic type... gazing in obvious admiration at Kamini.”

She joins hands with the despots in the play to condemn the activities of subversives and goes on to refer to them as:

“...ne’er-do-wells.... Effete youngsters who hang around the cafes and wine-bars and disco joints, useless to themselves and to their nation”(2).

So full of praise for the most notorious Leader in African’s history that she writes a book for him *The Black Giant at Play* which show Kamini as “very very jovial family man. Big uncle to everybody in country”(2).

This negativity becomes more pronounced when she is seen as being in support of the arbitrary use of power by these despots. In her conversation on the activity of subversives, she says:

“...A continent of the future, which Africa is, does not need their type. They would only contaminate its soul, its history”(3).

Gudrum, though not physically involved in violence but through her actions is not different from the other despots who regard human lives as insignificant. When the sculptor confides in her on the most appropriate place for the sculptor, the madame Tussaud's "Chambers of Horrors" (28), she reports this to Kamini. The next thing seen of the sculptor is that he is "swathed in bandages from head to toe. Only his arms appear uninjured. His eyes barely peep out through a mummified face" (40). This is a result of the merciless beating received from Kamini's guards.

Gugrum can thus be seen as one of the characters who add fuel to the flame of power thirst of these despots. Her stay beside Kamini as a woman is not to contribute positively to the overall morale of the characters but to further reduce the little they have by praising their excessive abuse of power. Her position as a woman is further degraded by her role as Kamini's mistress. As a mistress, her integrity as a woman is greatly diminished because since she is not legally married to Kamini, she can be seen as a mere plaything who surrenders her body to Kamini whenever the latter demands.

Humour as a Means of Social Criticism

A Play of Giants is humorous and at the same time, witty. The characters appear to be serious as they speak but they are only humorous. Their words elicit sympathetic laughter in the audience. Kamini is very humorous, so also is his constant reference to himself as Life-President, El-Haji, Kamini with a lot of titles from Universities from all over the World. Whenever he is not properly addressed, he does not hesitate to offer correction. When he is called "Mr. President" he quickly corrects the person by saying; "Dr Life President" (38).

He is also fond of transforming serious issues to lighthearted one though unconsciously. On the issue of the Russians relation with Bugara, the Russians tried to explain their unflinching support for Kamini and his government despite denying Bugara "atom bomb". Another country which they have equally denied the bomb is Cuba. Kamini says:

"...is very bad you don't give Cuba atom bomb Cuba helps us in Africa. Cuba is my friend I like Cuba. I like Fidel Castor very much. He nice man. In fact, if Fidel Castor is a woman, I will marry him, but he must first shave off his beard. Why he wear beard like that? Make him look like guerilla"(62).

He diverts from the use of atomic bomb to give a description of Castor's beard. This is ludicrous and at the same time incongruous.

Another scene that is humorous is seen in the action of Brother Despots. When Kamini put Russians, the US delegates and others under house arrest: on seeing the heavy war weapons, Kamini brandishes in order to destroy the UN building, their exhibition of fear is humourously presented. Tobourm on hearing a dull explosion "dived beneath the nearest chair..." (63) While Gunema pleads to leave the embassy premises. He says:

"...I think, if the functionario come back, then we your brothers can go. So we go now I think, yes?" (65).

So eager to leave the premises are they, that their actions evoke laughter. Leaders who create an aura of awe and fearlessness about them are suddenly afraid because of a little explosion.

The play is so replete with humour such that in every page, there is always a speech or stage directions that will make the audience laugh at the pitiable condition of these characters.

Humour is also used to present comically, the use of despotism and tyrannies which these hollow characters exhibit. Toboum's change of name from Alexander to a jaw breaking - "Barra Boum Boum Tuboum Gbazo Tse Tse Khoru diDzo" (18) lucidly is satirical and equally humorous.

Symbols as a Means of Social Criticism

Characters as symbols are used as means of social criticism. Symbols are used to satirize the characters in the play. The playwright employs emblematic symbols as a means of satirizing the so-called "Giants" in the play and exposes their moral, intellectual, political aridity. An instance of this is Kamini's attitude when going to answer the call of nature. Soyinka describes the entire process thus:

"KAMINI has taken off his jacket. He lays it very carefully over the back of his chair. He unbuckles his belt and moves towards the toilet door. KAMINI is seen lowering his trousers, then his bulk onto the toilet seat, remaining visible from the waist up through the door. (32).

This scene is symbolic. According to Hodgrart, "The Greeks used nakedness for the purpose of degradation, the phylax... show god and heroes, Zeus and Oedipus ludicrously undressed with erect phalluses. Nakedness reduces man from god-like to animal. "(118). Animals, unlike man do not have this in-born inclination to hide themselves when answering nature's call. It is only man that has such tendencies. Except for children, man generally does not expose his secret parts to the full glare of the public unlike animals. Kamini's display of his nakedness in the full glare of the public symbolizes him as an animal and also a child who is not ashamed of being seen naked.

Another symbol used to express Kamini's childishness, a child in the guise of a fully grown man, is in the presentation of the Babushka doll to him by the Russians. As earlier explained the Russians visit to his embassy to negotiate the possibility of exhibiting the statues of Kamini and his brother despots but makes it clear that exhibition of the statue of their own national hero will precede those of Kamini and his brothers. Kamini is then presented with a Babushka doll by the Russians as a mark of their solidarity to his government. Presenting Kamini with a doll merely symbolizes him as a child and it also symbolizes him as an ignorant character who does not understand the language of diplomacy. This symbol is highly satirical as it presents Kamini as physically big but intellectually, "manikin". The purpose of the doll is highlighted by the first Russian.

First Russians ".....Tell the over grown child (45).

In addition to this, the title of the book his mistress, Gudrum writes on him is also symbolic. The title, *The Black Giant at Play* symbolizes him as relishing joy from pleasures and luxuries rather than the affairs of the state; a child who is fond of playing.

The Giants in *A Play of Giants*, is used symbolically to refer to the characters who are not taller than the normal human size but because they exercise great power they are referred to as "Giants" in terms of despotism Kamini could be seen also as a symbol of a typical African leader who rather than save the people from economic, political and social impediments, heightens their

problems the more from the beginning to the end. Kamini's dictatorial tendencies are exhibited and he exercise power negatively.

Professor Batey is a symbol of hypocrisy and as a representative of the academic class, he is supposed to uphold justice and equality but he is seen promoting mediocrity, sectionalism and dictatorial rule in Africa. Form one of his speeches, professor Batey says:

“...The problems of Bugara was purely economic-as a socialist, I saw that only too clearly...”(23)

His hypocrisy is a clear reflection of the fact that some African's who are privileged to come in contact with those in power are blinded by the happenings in their own country and this singular action go a long way to cause chaos.

Honourable Major of Hyacombe is also an extension of this hypocrisy as seen in the play when he says:

“... Now we find four of you. My heart bursting. All leaders who have given us our pride of race. You who have uplifted us from the degradation of centuries of conquest, slavery and dehumanization ...” (22).

In this play, the main characters are presented as symbol of oppression but in presenting them as they really are, the playwright exposes them as being arid, ignorant and impotent politically, economically, morally and even culturally. In spite of the power they wield, they seem to be crying like the protagonist in T.S Elliot's poem “Hollowmen”

“Remember us-if at all-not as lost violent souls but only as hollowmen, the stuffed men.”

Conclusion

Our reflections demonstrate the fact that *A Play of Giants* is significant in the way the exploration of the contemporary problem of tyranny and abuse of power and the excessive crazy for materialism in the modern society are portrayed, as political reality. The play is written in the oil-boom era which plunge Nigeria into her present predicament of despotism, bribery and corruption, materialism and the abuse of power by the then established military government. The presentation of these problems in the play evokes laughter at the events in Africa as a whole.

Soyinka is a seasoned Playwright who is interested in seeing his society rid the plagues that have befallen it over the years. According to Ogude, he says that one has a strong suspicion that the tendency of the Africa Writer to act as the very bulwark of his country's moral, economic and political, health arises out of a subconscious imperative to play the role of those whom he has succeeded.

Suffice it to say that though *A Play of Giants* was written in the mid 1980s, the reality which it portrays still looms at our faces. If we submit then that the play is apocalyptic, we will not be wrong, because, Africa still lingers in the throes of bad leadership. It is expected that with many of the countries in the continent now democratized, the situation ought to have changed for

the better. It is a common thing to still find dictators who have only changed their garments but not their behaviour.

Literature nay drama actually has not failed to deal with practitioners of evil and elevate good ideals in the society. Soyinka as a committed writer and a satirist lifts up these hollow men for ridicule. *A Play of Giants* communicates his political stand and agitation against bad leadership which is entrenched, in “militocracy”. He has succeeded in exposing the evils that have pervaded African society. As a depiction of political reality, his aim is to use the medium of satire to arousing people to be aware of the negative concept, negative attitude towards an existing obnoxious situation (*In Person I*, 26).

Finally, it is lucid that the political maneuverings and manipulations of power in *A Play of Giants* depicts a political reality that reflects annuity that leadership in African leaves much to be admired. The military and civilians alike have neither been able to nurture a stable socio-political order nor have they been able to improve the people’s general well-being. Their achievement, which in Africa appears too modest, consists simply in keeping the ship of state afloat. And indeed what we can see is just the ship with no well defined direction. Why? “Too many demons in charge”

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