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# Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*: The crises between ideology and (social) vision

## Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*: The crises between ideology and (social) vision

Any valid inquiry into the meaning of any imaginative writing will lend itself to the salutary credentials of its content and form. This recourse has always created a divide that seeks on the one hand the aesthetic value of the art and on the other its functional or social values. The social themes discernible in the works of many African writers have provided the impetus for an assessment that digs up the social relevance and the ideological slants of such works. For Wole Soyinka, many critics, building on the ideas of Chinweizu, Madubuike and Jemie, have identified a gap between social responsiveness and ideology in his works. This paper, using Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*, re-examines the centrality of ideology to texts of social engagement in the postcolonial space. Within the context of the humanistic values that the playwright esteems, this essay scrutinizes the social conditions in the plays and the dramatist's "vision." The conclusion asserts the social relevance of the texts but queries the lack of absolute prescription in Soyinka's work under scrutiny. **Keywords:** Soyinka, drama, ideology, postcolonialism, social vision.

### Introduction

The relationship between art and politics has always been one of the major concerns of literary criticism. Michael Etherton (316) emphasizes this nexus when he affirms: "Indeed, if we are thinking of the whole population in a society, it does not seem possible to talk about the development of theatre and drama in that society without analysing the nature of its economic and political development". For Wole Soyinka and many African writers, the engagements with local and national spaces have occasioned responses that reveal a commitment to the resolution of national traumas which sometimes have inseparable links with external influences.

Here I am interested in Soyinka's engagement with national or continental traumas as evidenced in his satiric comedies. His satiric comedies, as exemplified in the plays to be discussed in this paper, are triggered by an impulse of nationalism that offers interpretations to the dilemmas within and outside his indigenous space. Tracing the antecedent of Soyinka's recourse to the themes of nationalism in one of his earliest plays, *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), Biodun Jeyifo (*Wole Soyinka* 120–1) notes that the play was: written and produced as part of the Nigerian independence celebration in 1960; appropriate to the historic task of forging a nation out of diverse peoples and communities that

the celebrations symbolically entailed, the central action of the play revolves around a “gathering of the tribes” at which the festivities intended to celebrate the glorious past and the hopeful future of the assembled “tribes” turns into an unanticipated encounter with evils in the past and present life of the community.

However, once removed from the euphoria and the cynicism that greeted independence, the period after the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War marked a new impetus in Soyinka’s bid to mediate on the pervading leadership crisis in Nigeria. Jeyifo (*Wole Soyinka* 89) appreciates the development, noting, “the “middle period” of the 1970s and 1980s—the post-Civil War, post-incarceration period of Soyinka’s career—saw the writing and staging of satiric comedies and social dramas considerably more ferocious and much gloomier in mood than the plays of the earlier period of Soyinka’s efflorescence as a dramatist.”

Unarguably, the decade listed by Jeyifo marked the beginning of the turbulent years for Soyinka. In Nigeria, like other African countries, negotiation for power through undemocratic means gave rise to the proliferation of military regimes and dictatorial rule. Soyinka’s interventions saw him victimized by military regimes, beginning with that of Gen. Yakubu Gowon which jailed him for fraternizing with Christopher Okigbo, one of the “rebels” on the Biafran front. Almost immediately, after being released from jail by Gowon, Soyinka hinted at a more radical approach to using art to address the nation’s problems. In an interview with John Agetua, quoted in Jeyifo’s *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism* (89), Soyinka said:

a book if necessary should be a hammer, a hand grenade which you detonate under a stagnant way of looking at the world [...] we haven’t begun actually using words to punch holes inside people [...] But let’s do our best to use words and style, when we have the opportunity, to arrest the ears of normally complacent people; we must make sure we explode something inside them which is a parallel of the sordidness which they ignore outside.

*A Play of Giants* (1984) and *King Baabu* (2002) stand in a peculiar stride because the plays seek to interrogate power relations during military eras in the sense that, the plays, in Soyinka’s words, “attempt to place this essential banality in the context of our contemporary, and yet ongoing experience, one that profits from a specific milieu and recognizable events but will—for the perspective—be seen as expanding beyond any one political space, ideology or religion” (*Interventions V* 30). This unfortunate experience not only accounts for what Soyinka summarizes as “the open sore of a continent” in his essay of the same title, but also gives an obvious impression that Soyinka, in these plays, embarks on an excursion that reveals how the self-inflicted horror of power games have precipitated the degradation of human values on the African postcolonial landscape.

It should be admitted that scholars like Kwame Anthony Appiah, Ania Loomba, Chidi Okonkwo and Ato Quayson, among others, have exposed the heterogeneity, obscurity and complexity of postcoloniality as a theory of African (world) literature. However, Oyegoke (279) harnesses the contradictions identified in these discourses when he points out that:

postcoloniality as a theory of literature and literary study would appear to be sustainable as a strategy with which to attempt to unravel some of the conceptual problems of African writing. It must be conceded though that the phrase "African writing" at this point functions mainly as a signifier with no clear-cut signified. The phrase like another, African literature, retains a seductive appeal, perhaps mystery that seems to always beckon one to a wild goose chase. The temporality and spatialization of postcoloniality in African writing makes the seductive attraction more irresistible [as] the terms seek to describe literary and intellectual activity emanating from the vast, frequently misunderstood and ill-used space named Africa.

What problematizes postcoloniality is not only the contiguity of spaces but the amorphous crises which can hardly be harnessed in a mediatory phalanx. A postcolonial reading of Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu*, therefore presents miscegenation of temporal spaces in a way that approves the complexity of the term and exposes not only the intra frictions but also the tendencies and tensions between the temporal spaces of the ex-colonies and former masters.

### **Social crises in *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu***

Soyinka engages the actions of military leaders first on the continent in *A Play of Giants*, and second in his own country, in *King Baabu*. His use of four characters or situations to satirize a perennial condition is very salutary. In *A Play of Giants*, we have Field-Marshal Kamini of the fictitious African nation of Bugara, and a coterie of African Heads of State, Benefacio Gunema, Emperor Kasco, and General Barra Toboum. These four "giants" arrive at the Bugaran embassy in the city of Hyacombe on the invitation of Kamini who is to deliver a speech at the meeting of the United Nations. The Bugaran embassy becomes a microcosm of the African continent and its relationship with the international community. These four characters connect to original spaces as they represent Field-Marshal El-Hadji Dr. Idi Amin of Uganda, Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Jean-Baptiste Bokassa of the Central African Republic, and Mobutu Sese Seko of Congo, respectively. Soyinka's dedication of *A Play of Giants* to Byron Kadawa, the leader of Uganda National Troupe to the Festival of Black and African Arts in 1977 who was murdered by the Idi Amin government, is both a sober reminder of the victimization suffered by artists all over the continent in that period and a pointer to the link of the play with a historical period.

*King Baabu* satirizes the quotidian nature of corruption in the fictive nation of

Guatu which has been under siege of four successive military governments of Generals Uzi, Rajinda, Potipoo, and Basha Bash. Like the four “giants” who represent military leaders in the four African nations in *A Play of Giants*, the four Generals in *King Baabu* also represent ex-maximum rulers in Nigeria—Generals Mohammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Sanni Abacha and Abdulsalami Abubakar. *King Baabu* mirrors a time of near anarchy in Nigeria when General Sanni Abacha’s predecessor, General Ibrahim Babangida, annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election which was widely believed to have been won by Alhaji Moshood Abiola. Along with other activists who were vocal in their criticism of the annulment of the elections, Soyinka was accused of being a mastermind of the series of bombings that rocked the nation and consequently was listed to face treason charges. Soyinka’s description of Abacha, cited in Adeoti’s essay (83), renders vividly the overall situation in his country and the orientation of the leadership at that time: “We are not dealing here with a specie of civilized villain. In Abacha’s case, there is nothing but *emptiness*. Just cruelty, sadism, power lust totally disproportionate to his intellectual capacities. He is nothing, just a superstitious and sadistic being.”

More vividly, Soyinka in an interview with Onookome Okome (363), presents the circumstances that led to the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa and other Niger Delta activists under Abacha’s regime, and how that incident became a threat to his life:

If Abacha succeeded in killing me, he probably wouldn’t have killed Ken Saro Wiwa.

Abacha and the military people around him wanted to prove a point. They wanted to send shock to Nigerians, to the world. The point they wanted to make was that they can do whatever they want and that there is nothing anyone can do about it.

In *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* Soyinka exteriorizes the image of the military through Kamini and Basha. Their vulgarity, garrulousness, and poor command of language is set side by side with their incompetence, poor sense of political economy and evil nature. The economy of Bugara lies in ruins and Kamini’s government, which is already servicing a World Bank loan, has applied for another credit which has been turned down. In the attempt to negotiate the rejected loan request the following dialogue ensues between Kamini and the Chairman of Bugara Central Bank:

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* 6–7)

Kamini has a poor sense of finance and shuts down the “Minister” of Bugara Central Bank from explaining the sense behind the need to obtain a loan. While Kamini’s poor image is developed in the context of the other failed leaders in *A Play of Giants*, the image of Basha is sometimes presented in his discussions with his wife, Maariya:

BASHA: Sheige!

MAARIYA: Sheige yourself. And don’t forget it’s early in the morning.

BASHA: Early in the morning what for?

MAARIYA: Early in the morning for you to shake out your empty piss-pot and put some solid ideas in it. Are we going to die paupers?

BASHA: Die paupers? I hear you say “die paupers” you early morning pestilence on a man’s peace? Or my hearing dislocated by all the shooting and death screaming and grenade bursting from throwing out Rajinda’s government? You telling me this pinnacle of achievement not deserve long repose of mind? Is this summer of our contentment not duly earned and richly deserved? (*King Baabu* 5)

To cover up the deficiencies of language and acumen, the maximum rulers employ spokespersons. Ironically, these spokespersons further expose their leaders’ weaknesses. In *A Play of Giants*, we have Gudrum, an expatriate lady who is also Kamini’s mistress and personal assistant, and Prof Batey, one of the councilors and protocol officer in the service of the Mayor of Hyacombe. In *King Baabu* Tutor and Tikin are Basha’s “image makers.” The attitude of Gudrum in the Sculptor episode and Prof Batey during the visitation of other diplomats to the Bugara embassy show, respectively, Kamini’s viciousness and gullibility whereas Basha’s mediocrity and lustful greed for power are seen in Tutor and Tikin’s engagement with the masses who have become impatient with Basha’s intrigues.

This connivance of the educated class with despots, seen in the activities of Batey in *A Play of Giants* and Tutor in *King Baabu*, is more grotesque in *King Baabu*. The SCAR (The Supreme Council for Advanced Redemption), is the highest decision-making body that is made up of a military clique and civil pressure groups, ROUT, RENT, and DOPE which represent labour, traditional and religious interests respectively. The literal meaning of the acronyms have no positive attachment, with “rout”, “rent” and “dope” meaning mob, shiftiness, and illicit drug respectively. The subscription to graft by these groups not only explains the “scar” that successive irresponsible governments have inflicted on the life of Guatu people, but also exposes the insensitivity of the so-called leaders of the pressure groups to the plight of the masses.

Soyinka reveals the nexus between subversion of people’s rights, abuse of power,

and lame intellect of leaders in these plays. In *A Play of Giants* member nations have been asked to make a bust to be placed on a gallery at the United Nations' building as a mark of respect for leaders. Kamini secures the services of a Scandinavian Sculptor and wants his full portrait ready in twenty-four hours! Like the Chairman of Bugara Central Bank who earlier advised against Kamini's idea of throwing more money into circulation, the Sculptor is assaulted and thrown in a toilet cell on account of his vitriolic statements against Kamini.

With the theft of public funds through over inflated contracts, as seen in the fertilizer deal between Basha and Potipoo, and Maariya's wanton and prodigal "spraying" of money drawn illegally from Central Bank, the economic woes of Guatu becomes compounded. Like Kamini, Basha's handling of his country's economic problem is not different as he abducts representatives of privately owned banks, imprisons them, because they refused to sign an open cheque to fund Basha's "Operation Fill the Stomach" project.

On account of past failed experimentations at home and the waning popularity of despotic governments in global politics, Kamini, Potipoo and Basha's governments are faced with the problem of acceptance. Potipoo, in his inaugural meeting of SCAR, exposes the distrust that greets the intrusion of military into politics:

POTIPOO: Now that the Divine Ruler has seen fit to place the reins of this nation in our hands, we must move to earn the trust of the people, and of God. The Supreme Council for Advance Redemption—note, by the way that the word Military is missing in that title for the first time in the history of coups d'etat in this nation (*King Baabu 1*)

But the grand design is to have a perpetual hold on to power. Although the propaganda of global politics is the same, the strategies are different in the home front. One of the options, as seen in *A Play of Giants*, is to make the country unsafe, force citizens on exile, silence or exterminate voices of dissent. Potipoo sets democratization and anti-graft agendas and pledges to tackle the poverty and hunger which previous governments have inflicted on the populace by floating a monstrous economic or agricultural project. The plan of Basha to convert military parade grounds to farmlands in what he called "Operation Fill the Stomach" project exposes an underlining grand design to impoverish the people through an elaborate white elephant scheme:

POTIPOO: But Basha, I mean, the next thing you'll want us to plant cassava on our parade grounds.

BASHA: Just coming to parade grounds, Commander-in-Chief, sir. Parade grounds also allocated to farmlands

POTIPOO: But General Basha, the army must hold parade. No army can do without parades.

BASHA: I already think of that, C-in-C. We use paved motor roads and highways where our boots make better noise and not raising up so much dust. We stop traffic and parade

in streets. Make me feel good to think present parade grounds blooming with corn and millet and vegetables and tomatoes and goats and cows. Problem is—parade grounds are not fertile, just like golf course. So we need more fertilizers. Tons and shiploads and cargo planes full of fertilizers. Altogether, for first stage of Operation Fill the Stomach, my ministry calculate special budget allocation of seventy-five million dollars foreign exchange. (*King Baabu* 17)

What follows this intrigue is that criminality is legalized and important state duties are abandoned. Not only these, fetishistic options substitute logic, redundant offices and white elephant pet projects (like that of the first Lady and “Better Life for Frugal Women, respectively, in *King Baabu*), are floated, assassinations, extra-judicial killings, money laundering and other international crimes are equally rampant.

The underlining agenda of the despots in these plays is to perpetuate their hold on power. To achieve this, they amass titles and fill positions with their protégés. This is seen in *King Baabu* where Potipoo’s children (Potiplum and Potiplan) and Tikim (Basha’s brother in law) are put on sensitive beats. Ironically, this seemingly convenient arrangement does not eradicate suspicion and distrust, for instance, in Basha, his transition into a monarch is to guarantee perpetuity for himself and Biiba-bae, his seven-year old son, but there is always mutual suspicion between him and Maariya. To check betrayal and for fear of losing power, voodooists and marabouts are employed and placed on government payroll. Ironically, these spiritualists also deceive their patrons. An example is seen in Kamini who despite the rituals and assurances has to contend with dissenting voices and eventually was ousted from office.

Kamini and Basha claim they are anti-imperialist and blame the West for the woes that their cluelessness and incompetence have inflicted on their nations; however, they continue to romance with the West. The democratic tenets, principles and practices, touted by the UN are ridiculed as these values are dispensed of at the convenience of the world super powers. In *A Play of Giants* the hypocrisy is exemplified by the non-concession of the Secretary General seat of the UN to Africa, the double standards on diplomatic decisions, the discrimination in the granting of loan facility, the global deceit in the fight against apartheid and selective approval in the acquisition of nuclear weapons. In the discussion between Prof Batey and 2<sup>nd</sup>RUSSIAN, one of the Russian diplomats visiting Kamini at the Bugaran embassy, we see a more startling revelation that implicates the West in the power game of many African countries:

BATEY: Isn’t this interesting? You sustain this man in power for years with the most sophisticated weaponry. You train the secret service and condone the so-called acts of repression against his own people. Yet in your heart of hearts, you despise him.

2<sup>nd</sup> RUSSIAN: Yes. A common butcher. We knew him. We had close studies of him sent regularly by our men, not just Western reports. But in any case, we did not create

him- the British did. They sustained him in power, backed by the Americans. Then they disagreed. The pupil had more than mastered the game of his masters. So we stepped in to fill the vacuum... (*A Play of Giants* 54–5)

Kamini's "strategic" hostage taking of the UN Secretary-General and the Russian and US diplomats in the wake of a coup in his homeland confirms the complicity of key officials of the United Nations as umpires of the socio-political destabilization and leadership crises that have crippled the growth of postcolonial Africa. Alluding to the killing of Patrice Lumumba in Congo, Kamini renders the interventions in a negative light:

SECRETARY-GENERAL: ...Your Excellency, the whole world knows that the United Nations never gets involved in the internal affairs of our member countries.

KAMINI: You tell that to the marines, not to Kamini! What Dag Hammarskjöld doing in Congo all that time Lumumba killed? Not making coup? How he himself get killed if not plotting all over the place and spying from aeroplane. He too Secretary-General before you not so? You all pretend you are just civil servants but you take your nose in matter which don't concern you (*A Play of Giants* 67)

The point made by Kamini to the effect that African nations must cease to depend on western nations to solve their problems is salutary but the view that the international body has outlived its usefulness may be far from correct. The same viewpoint which queries the relevance of the UN is seen in *King Baabu*. The hostage taking of Potiplan, a diplomat who represents Guatu in the UN and by extension the image of the organization, reveals Basha's derision of the UN. The seeming contradiction here is that Basha, like Kamini, is an oppressor himself, and yet he speaks with insight to the oppressive and exploitative actions of Western super powers.

There abound in these plays characters whose names are evocative of the playwright's perceptions of their nefarious representations. There is Prof Batey in *A Play of Giants*. Batey's name appears derived from "bat", a mammal whose wing-like features of a bird make in folklore the embodiment of chicanery, duplicity, lies and deceit. Prof Batey's character shows that the success of power-drunk and repressive African leaders has occurred with the connivance and cover of African intellectuals such as Batey.

The play on names continues in *King Baabu* where Basha Bash relates to Sanni Abacha. Not only this, despite the deliberate misspelling of Maariya and Fatasimu, they sufficiently point to Mariam and Hamza Al-Mustapha, Gen. Abacha's wife and Chief of Staff, respectively. The coinages also largely project the playwright's sense of disgust about the conditions reenacts. Basha Bash, taking into cognizance the lexical interpretation of "bash," shows the damaging impact of the military regime and Abacha's brutal nature. In the metamorphosis of Basha to King Baabu, with "baabu"

meaning “nothing” in Hausa, the association of Basha with emptiness, mediocrity or cluelessness becomes grotesque. Biibabae is Basha’s hope and grand design of perpetuating his family in power. His torture of the “rebel” captured by Fatasimu is not only indoctrination into savagery and sadism, but it also fits the idiom, “like father like son,” which literally translates as Biibabae in the Yoruba language. Potipoo, Potiplan and Potiplum are all coined from “Potty.” “Potty” (pronounced as “poo” in Soyinka’s local dialect), is English colloquialism for a plastic chamber pot mostly used by children. The playwright’s use of this word amplifies the pervading symbolism of filth and odoriferousness, and the fact that father and children have this common derivative is indicative of the trend that will continue in Guatu, especially as Potipoo returns to power at the end of *King Baabu*.

### **Marxism, Soyinka and the burden of mediation**

Soyinka’s ardent critics have always argued about the Marxist moorings or the failure of this in his works. For instance, in *Two Views: Ife Monographs on Literature and Criticism* (1984) Jeyifo’s Marxist reading of *The Road* in “The hidden class war in *The Road*” (1–18) outlines the metrics of class in the play to argue for its ideological leaning; but Ropo Sekoni’s “Diversionsary ideology in *The Road*” (19–39), in the same publication, provides a semiotic interpretation that contradicts Jeyifo’s understanding of ideology in the play. Jeyifo is to come to terms with the difficulty in the Marxist labeling of Soyinka’s works. In *Perspective on Wole Soyinka: Freedom and Complexity* (xii), when he points out that although Soyinka’s works respond: “to postcolonial barbarism and terror, his passionate advocacy of social justice and his tireless campaigns against human and civil rights violations and abuses [...] [his] “thought world” are often elliptical and bracing avant-gardism of his aesthetic sensibilities and ideological predilections.”

The disengagement with Marxism creates a peculiar aesthetic that shows the absence of absolute ideological slant in Soyinka’s dramaturgy. Msiska (6–7) gives expression to this when he asserts that:

those who like their ideological positions simply validated by literature will find Soyinka irritating, as his work usually attempts to provoke in a manner reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht’s. Unlike Brecht, though, whose devices of estrangement were ultimately a means to the specific ideological end of socialist political education, for Soyinka, there are no sacred cows. He is a critic committed to a rigorous, but strategic interrogation of all forms of ideology and ideological practices, including those he himself openly subscribes to.

Perhaps this coincides with Adewale Maja-Pearce’s opinion (133) about the overall relevance of Marxism in his essay, “Against ideology: Soyinka vs Hunt”:

There is something poignant about the legion of Marxist critics who invested so much intellectual and emotional capital arguing in favor of a writer’s commitment to an ideol-

ogy that proved itself so bankrupt so quickly, even if one's sympathies are necessarily tempered by the underlining claim—hardly unique to the Marxists—that art should serve the end of politics.

The position of Maja-Pearce is understandable because, though, like other ideologies Marxism seeks to dislodge existing norms, its strait logic is exposed by its premise that only focuses on diametrically antagonistic forces of, for example, the rich and the poor, white and black, the proletariats and the bourgeoisies and so on it has little answer for the multiple fractures which have now become characteristic of the political structures it seeks to launder or protect.

Soyinka, in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), admits the position that rebuffs the foisting of ideology on art in these words "Asked recently whether or not I accepted the necessity for a literary ideology, I found myself predictably examining the problem from the inside, that is, from the consciousness of the artist in the process of creating [...] My response was a social vision, yes, but not a literary ideology." (61) The distinction here is that whereas ideology "seeks to experience the world according to a ready-made blue print" (Maja-Pearce: 137–8), "a social vision is a creative concern which conceptualizes or extends actuality beyond the purely narrative, making it reveal realities beyond the immediately attainable, a concern which upsets orthodox acceptances in an effort to free society of historical or other superstitions" (Soyinka, *Myth* 66). Indeed, Soyinka's social vision is entrenched in his crave for humanistic values. In a chat with Norm R. Allen Jr. of *The Free Inquiry Magazine*, he affirmed: "Humanism for me represents taking the human entity as the centre of world perception, of social organization and indeed ethics, deciding in other words what is primarily of the greatest value for humans as opposed to some remote extraterrestrial or ideological authority. And so from that point of view, I consider myself a humanist." The frictions in the postcolonial African states mirrored in *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* agree with the playwrights' obsession that seeks improvement on the dehumanizing and debilitating social conditions; but what we have not seen is the playwright's prescription of the way out of the dilemma.

### **Confrontation without commitment in *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu***

The implication, from the foregoing, is that *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* fall into the category of Soyinka's plays which Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o describes as dealing with "confrontation without commitment" (66). The basis of "commitment" is not only seen in the social value of a work of art but also in the capacity of the artist to delineate a vision of a way out of the social malaise mirrored. In *A Play of Giants* the onslaught by the "BUGARAN EXILES FOR TOTAL LIBERATION" to evict Kamini, with the grandstanding of Kamini, creates a stalemate. The options are in the eviction from the embassy or extermination of Kamini or a forced negotiation that will reverse the

coup in Bugara and reinstate Kamini or a suicide operation that will kill Kamini, his hostages and the protesters. This will then mean the extinction of Bugara and the countries his hostages represent. The situation appears worse in *King Baabu* because no one is ready to take responsibility. Soyinka's grand lampooning of the masses' state of amnesia in the anti-climactic ending of the play portends hopelessness and confirms that "the longer the people are subjected to the brutality of power, the longer, in geometric proportion, is the process of recovery and re-humanisation" (*A Play of Giants* vii). The masses in *King Baabu* appear to have had enough of the game of deceit and seemed undaunted in the resolve to oust Basha, but their anger is neutralized by Tikim's eloquence. Sadly, as revealed by Maariya in the last statement in *King Baabu*, the return of Potipoo, notwithstanding the gruesome battle that consumed Basha and Biibabae, ensures that the vicious cycle will continue.

### Conclusion

Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and *King Baabu* are representations of postcolonial crises in Africa. The plays satirize how African nations have remained as "casualties of freedom" and the global political terrain that prop up the depraved social conditions. That the plays are not formulated around any clear ideology but only exhibit Soyinka's vision affords the playwright to extricate himself from repercussions of a failed prescription. This subjects the movement towards utopia to constant review because the audience also takes responsibility for any of the actions chosen from the multilayered options seen in the playwright's vision.

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