

## Postcolonial Governance and Social Strife: A Social Semiotic Reading of Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and Butake's *Dance of the Vampires*

Donatus Fai Tangem

Department of Arts and Archaeology Faculty of Arts University of Yaounde, Cameroon

### Abstract

Post-colonial governance has continued to be a subject of critical discourse among scholars and researchers in Africa and beyond. This is because the question of leadership in the continent has accidentally adopted, as leitmotif, the consistent violation of the basis of the social contract. This phenomenal practice has generated growing tension, wretchedness, frustration and ultimate resistance among the people who try to offset their depreciating condition in hope of a new beginning. It is against this appalling situation that the continent remains the laughing stock of the world in spite of enormous recognizable human and natural resources. The aim of this paper is to show the link between postcolonial African dramaturgy and the politics of governance. In specific terms, the paper expounds on how contemporary African playwrights represent political leadership in their various contexts and go on to show how the mismanagement of political power results in resistance and social upheavals. In the context of social realism, Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and Bole Butake's *Dance of the Vampires* are textual prototypes that portray the leadership situation in Africa in the aftermath of political independence. Using social semiotics as theoretical paradigm, this paper is foregrounded on the premise that Soyinka and Butake in their dramatic discourses convey the pitfalls of postcolonial despotic political leadership which has, as a matter of fact, ushered in a reign of self-aggrandisement, corruption, hero-worship, sycophancy and social strife.

**Keywords:** Post-colonial; Governance; Social strife (political crises).



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### 1. Introduction

Leadership and the socio-political skirmishes common across the continent of Africa, is a culmination of the incidents of poor governance. This misnomer that characterizes post-colonial governance is sustained through high-handedness on the one hand and endemic corruption on the other. As expected, this kind of atmosphere makes way for personal image building, self-protection and power abuse among African leaders who manipulate the masses to validate their essentially selfish formulations. With little or no consideration for the welfare of the citizenry, African dictators sacrifice resources, including human life, to maintain themselves in positions of power. The incidence of exploitation and utmost power abuses, show the paradox of independence for which the people made immeasurable sacrifices. As the leaders continue to seek ways of perfecting their game of despoliation, the people on their part, try to design strategies of coping with the ills, while waiting for an opportunity to dislodge the ridiculous regimes. It is these unfortunate realities that underlie the basic discourse in Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and Butake's *Dance of the Vampires*. Here, both playwrights as a matter of fact lay bare the misguided priorities set by leaders preoccupied solely by their personal survival. This paper also shows how the African leaders tamper with the concept of democracy by twisting it away from its standard bearing. In his evaluation of the democratic atmosphere in Africa, Claude Ake (2000), notes:

A cursory look at how rulers of Africa are reacting to pressures for democratization initially suggest many strategies. There is the preventive strategy in which the people in power remain steadfast in their opposition to democratization despite pressure. In this case the pressure only elicits repression or highly contrived devices for frustrating and derailing the democracy movement.

Ake's observations highlight how national sycophancy gains grounds while the masses live in penury and fear, unable to make any claims to the right of integrated democratic governance. The political scientist is right when he observes that these leaders replace government by the people, with government by consent of the people. Furthermore, instead of sovereignty of the people, the leader offers sovereignty of the law which is interpreted and used as he or she thinks fit. This disguised high handedness paves the way for the attendant ills of misery and frustration in the midst of enormous resources that serve only the privileged few. In the meantime, no one is allowed to raise a finger in objecting or questioning leadership for the anomalies. Coupled with the absurd laws in place, the masses are obliged to live in permanent fear and contentment.

With the objective of pointing out the relationship between post-colonial governance and contemporary African dramaturgy, this paper specifically shows how Soyinka and Butake dramatize political leadership in Nigeria and Cameroon, and by extension the rest of Africa. The analyses are thus foregrounded on the hypothetical premise that both dramatists use their literary enterprise to highlight the pitfalls of high-handed governance that reigns after independence struggles in Africa. In dramatizing these sad realities, Soyinka and Butake go on to represent the attendant ills of corruption, misery and frustration that orchestrate a mutiny followed by an outright revolutionary movement.

The term “post-colonial” in this study, refers to the period and the aftermath of decolonization and the acquisition of independence by African countries. Critics have described this period as one that shows the effects of colonial hangover, during which nationalist leaders betrayed the dreams of independence. The term governance is about how the ruling elite manage power and resources. Incidentally, their obsolete managerial outlooks lead to social and political upheavals, a condition by which national peace, unity and concord are ruined leading to revolutionary movements.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Our choice of Social Semiotics as theoretical framework for this paper draws from our understanding that it is as a branch of semiotics investigating human signifying practices in specific social and cultural circumstances. In the analyses of the selected plays of Soyinka and Butake under study, this choice is based on what and how social semiotics as a theoretical paradigm plays in information design, reception and interpretation. Leading proponents of this theory, (Hodge and Kress, 1988) affirm that semiotics offers a systematic, comprehensive and coherent study of communication phenomena. It stands to reason that semiotics as such cannot be studied in isolation because it depends on factors that provide the motivation, origin, destination and substance to drive it. Accordingly, social semiotics derives its existence and relevance from concrete situations and individuals who, in the phase of challenges, act against each other in the material world. Here, ideology is formed, which ideology, is manifested through behavioral patterns, policy design and false consciousness meant basically for self-projection and preservation. In the context of post-colonial political leadership, the ruling elite fashion and propound a system by which the masses tend to serve, rather than be served by the authorities. This ideology is enforced and propagated through the use of signs and symbols which speak to the superiority of the ruling elite and the helplessness of the people. Against this fact, social semiotics manifests itself as a discipline that explores the meanings generated and interpreted in the social sphere of communication intended to advance the dominant ideology of the ruling few.

In societal structures, the inequalities in the distribution of power and material resources of life are basic manifestations of who gives orders and who executes them. It is easy to understand the crucial implication that meaning and semiotic systems are shaped by relations of power. Therefore, as power shifts in society, the language, verbal or nonverbal, like other systems of socially acceptable meanings, do change as well. This invariably leads to the division of the societal structures into such categories as ruler-ruled and exploiter-exploited. The dominant group invariably designs strategies to sustain the structures of domination. These structures employ other techniques to mask the hostilities and aggressiveness which the dominated group suffers. In Soyinka’s world for example, The Task Force Special, TFS, together with the accoutrement worn by the leaders, also described as “Giants” point to greatness and also to the strategies and symbolic tools employed to send clear messages. As Hodge and Kress explain, message has directionality, a source, a goal, a social context and purpose (35). Thus, the semiotic plane within which this takes place leaves no doubts as to what is expected in terms of reaction from the addressee, the ultimate focus of the text.

The foregoing point to the importance of the theory of Social Semiotics in this discourse. As it is, the two texts under study are representative signs and symbols whose meanings are best understood only against a backdrop of the social and political contexts from which they emerge. There is thus no gainsaying the relevance of social semiotics to the understanding of the titles of the plays, character names, tenor of speeches, declarations, dialogue, costumes and the accompanying paraphernalia together with the insignias available for interpretation in the texts. The compact use of various signs and symbols in the plays are purposefully designed to achieve a definite objective. In a bid to succinctly discuss the emerging issues, this paper is divided into the following parts:

## 3. Soyinka and Butake: Textualising Governance

A cursory reading of the two texts under study reveals their preoccupation with issues of governance in the post-independence context in theme, thought and technique. From the perspective of plot, the trivial and misguided spectacle of Soyinka’s *A Play of Giants* opens at the embassy of a fictitious state of Bugara, in New York, USA. Here, the Bugaran president, Kamini, assembles with his three fellow presidents, Kasco, Gunema and later, Tuboum, in preparation for the United Nations Summit. The “three Crown heads” under the leadership of the super hero – Kamini, propose to get a sculptor carve a life size statue to be presented at the gallery of the United Nations building. It is around this preparatory phase of the Summit that Soyinka dramatizes the oddities of post-independence totalitarian governance in that part of Africa.

In his dramaturgical setting, Butake (1999), on his part, centres his story on Psaul Roi, a prototype of another misguided dictator and visionless power monger addicted to drugs and alcohol. Frustrated by the fact that in spite of being the grand monarch and Commander-in-Chief, he does not wield absolute power to do whatever he wants, Psaul Roi sets out in search of initiation into the cult of “Centre and the Cross” to obtain absolute powers. His initiation results in repeated disasters that heightens misery and frustration in the land. This brief review of the plots of both plays indicate both end on a similar note of mass revolution that witness the overthrow of the respective treacherous leaderships and the collapse of the status quo. Furthermore, while Soyinka’s coterie, led by the mystic Kamini, finds himself increasingly isolated by immediate collaborators in flight, prior to a *coupe d’état*, Butake’s phenomenal drunk and repulsive occultist, is overwhelmed by the force of General Nformi’s army. Ambe (2007) qualifies the linguistic markings and symbolisms of the plays as metaphorical and satirical renditions of actualities in contemporary society. In this regards, the two plays become a critical exploration of the post-independence leadership in Africa.

The strategies that these dramatists employ to effectively represent the bizarre personalities and their obnoxious governing systems are many. They include detail description, paradox, play within a play technic, stage directions, metaphor, exaggeration, dramatic irony and satire. However, Soyinka goes an extra mile to point out the particularly low educational level of Kamini whose lopsided use of language betrays his rather low educational level. This is to say that in the build up to state formation and self-rule, the retreating colonialist made sure to install not the most educated or competent selection, but those whom they could easily manipulate. This justifies the neo-colonial hangover that Africa is bound to face and try to offset.

The pitfalls of the resulting leadership painted above include self-glorification and self-protection, sycophancy, and civil strife. Through the agencies of the compact signs and systematic symbols with which the texts are replete, there is no gainsaying the fact that the broad scope of semiotization governed by the connotation/denotation dialectics is quite appropriate. It thus makes sense when Hodge and Kress; (8) indicate that:

By starting with the semiotic plane, with the conditions surrounding the production of the text, we wish to show that social semiotics account cannot proceed with a naive text-context dichotomy, but rather, that context has to be theorized and understood as another set of texts.

In line with the foregoing, Soyinka's dramaturgy and title define a circle of giants in a show. Among the aspects being spotlighted are dressing code, behaviours, governing ideology and voodoo. The term "giants", accordingly, presupposes reverence, opulence, deference and an aura of invincibility. As giants, these men are the exclusive stake-holders in the affairs of their respective countries, the supermen who rule through decrees and declarations that require strict obedience by the dormant and dominated masses. The author's caption "A play of Giants" equally symbolize jokes, trivial action by leaders ostensibly assembled at the United Nations headquarters for more personal reasons than the people think. Re-enforced by their peers with similar ideological convictions, the giants display their pettiness in total embarrassment of the people over whom they wield overwhelming powers and authority.

Apart from the titles, the names of the characters are equally very symbolic. In the preface to his play, Soyinka confesses that no serious effort is made to hide the identities of the real life actors who served as models for *A Play of Giants*. He goes on to explain whom the fictional characters represent historically. Accordingly, Benefacio Gunema actually represents late Equatorial Guinean president, Macias Nguema, Emperor Kasco in the play represents Emperor Jean-Baptiste Bokassa of Central Africa Republic, while General Barra Tuboum and Field-Marshal Kamini represent the life president Mobutu Seseseko, President Field-Marshal El, Haji Dr. Idi Amin of Congo Kinshasa and Uganda, respectively. By peopling his drama with well-known dictators of the African continent, Soyinka points to what extent his dramatic recapitulations should be appreciated as a historical continuum.

On his part, the character names of Butake's Psaul Roi, as Monarch as well as Commander-in-Chief, Chief Commander, reiterates the image of a mysterious leader who fully assumes control and wields immeasurable power over the legislative, executive and the judiciary. Therefore, as "Most Royal Majesty" and "Commander-in-Chief" of the military, Psaul Roi, in Butake's imagination is a prototype of the African leader who shares similar features as the heroes of Soyinka. Although Butake does not explicitly say who this leader represents historically, the leadership approach, coupled with the cumulating positions claimed, make Psaul Roi fit any African political setting. His most loyal collaborator and later Chief Protocol, Song, represents the most cherished 'griot' whose music or song of loyalty is delightful to the monarch. Butake's title, *Dance of the Vampires* equally denotes blood sucking creatures in feast. Feasting for the vampires invariably imply the spilling or drinking of blood to sustain the macabre activities in the land. The illusion and ultimately illusive convictions that the masses can never rise against him, is what erroneously urges Psaul Roi into unaccountable expenses and the sacrifice of scores of human life without remorse. The paradoxical instances in the play touch both the physical and psychological make-up of the characters.

In terms of physical appearance, Kamini in Soyinka's play is presented to be huge, while Kasco passes for a dwarfish character and deliberate parody of the big man. As hero of heroes, Kamini prevails over his peers and the masses who are made to submit to every of his desires with thankfulness. On his part, Butake's Psaul Roi declares himself the emperor around whom all state business and related action must centre. His ambition and ultimate acquisition of absolute power, ensure for him complete control over the socio-political life of the country. The unfolding of the plays actually confirms the oddities of miracle men whose legendary abuses of power leave their people in total disarray, dejection and depression. Although, their leadership style achieves for the leaders whatever they wish for, their continuous aggressive tendencies eventually become grooming grounds for the galvanization and irresistible mobilization by a people with a voracious taste for freedom, liberty and justice.

The texts therefore, operate through a tension generated with clear expectations that are somewhat hidden, but well understood by the masses for whom decrees and strict instructions are predestined. In Soyinka's text, Kamini and his colleagues have a firm grip on their respective countries and their people idolize them. In like manner, Butake's Psaul Roi wields sweeping powers to hire and fire at will. Hence his subjects as well as collaborators submit to his desires without question. In both texts, the leaders are more or less repressive machineries of absolute powers. Against such a context, as Hodge and Kress note, relevant meanings are frozen and fixed in the text itself such that the addressee is expected to decode and analyze the message by reference to the coding system available to them as users of the code (145). In another direction. Ferdinand de Saussure notes how signs function in society when he underlines three propositions asserting the material and social dimensions as essential to sensor-analysis. He indicates variously that ideology may not be divorced from the material reality of the sign, while signs may not be divorced from the concrete forms of social intercourse. Finally, de Saussure contends that communication and the (forms of communication) may not be divorced from the material basis. It is clear therefore, that, the material conditions of the parties involved, predispose them for certain mannerism and behavioral patterns. The compact and

complex signs and codes available for inferences, leave the text enhanced by the meaning gleaned from the forces at work in the various settings (Thibault, 1991).

Equally relevant are the insignias of power whose usage is made manifest through the verbal and nonverbal communication signs and varied objects on display around the leaders. Beyond words, the material conditions, like the social expectations of members of the different structures of society, speak to the available forces working either for or against the people. Where applicable, the material and concrete objects on display within a semiotic platform equally call for critical evaluation and interpretation. No surprise that in the dramatic pieces, the dressing or outfit of the protagonists, in addition to other personal and “stage” properties serve to better illuminate the various patterns and structures of power available for analyses. For example, presenting themselves in unique outfits, the “miracle men” make sure to focus on their rather eccentric garbs as sign posts of their superiority.

This is why in the stage direction, Kamini, the overall boss considers himself superior among equals. As a consequence he appears wearing a military outfit and adorns his “massive frontage” with medals that are self-donated. He wears them as ocular manifestation of his greatness and deference. His other colleagues, Kasco, though appearing “dwarfish”, his “costume” Soyinka says, “is the same down to the last medal and he enhances his appearance by wearing a cloak of imperial purple” (1). On his part, Gunema, is presented in tails of immaculate cut and his own decoration consists simply of “a red sash and blue rosette – plus a medal or two”. The third colleague, Bara Tuboum, when eventually he arrives “is dressed in a striped animal skin”, “Mao” outfit with matching fez-style hat” (18). To further project his exuberant and pompous appearance, Soyinka notes, “He sports an ornately carved ebony walking stick in a bolster; which is also made of zebra skin” (18). Beyond this rather flamboyant appearances are other auxiliary features of heroisms that they claim. This include the names, titles and qualifications that they gratify themselves with and would take offense should any collaborator exercise any oversight in addressing them. Kamini for example introduces himself as “life president; the Field Marshal El-Haji, Dr. Kamini, OSO, VCLO, PhD, D.Sc. and so on and so forth from universities all over the world” (32). By this, Kamini emphasizes his superiority and esteem that he should be accorded owing to his extraordinary qualities. The same crave for special regards is what urges Tuboum to associate himself symbolically with striped Leopard. Clearly, this totemic symbol is meant to dissuade anyone from daring the wrath of a leopard.

In similar manner, Butake’s Psaul Roi is equally represented as an extraordinary personality whose tight-fitting safari suit (white) with white shoes and helmet to match, sitting on a throne on a raised platform, (144), distinguishes him from ordinary leaders. Added to the opulence of his appearance, is the name and the awesome title that the monarch offers himself. To indicate his strong attachment to all facets of power, Psaul Roi prefers to be referred to as, “The Most Royal Majesty.” To him, this titles and their use in every public or private ceremonies is not fortuitous. He neither accepts omission nor tolerate distortion of his titles. Like Soyinka’s Kamini, Psaul Roi is very particular as to how a collaborator addresses him. Any omissions warrants serious sanctions, except when he extraordinarily grants royal pardon, most often through royal instruments that are signed, sealed and propagated throughout the national territory. To show intolerance to any omission of their titles, the leaders do not hesitate to interrupt any discussion to rectify with strict emphasis the right manner of address.

It is not an overstatement therefore, to point out that, the focus on their physical appearances and manifest concerns for the use of honorifics, divert the attention of leadership away from meaningful projects and policy formulation needed to bail the people out of the miserable conditions in which they live. Aside their respective image building, these post-colonial African dictators are specially reputed for misplaced priorities. Instances of these and fruitless engagements abound both in Soyinka’s *Giants* and in Butake’s *Dance*. Dramatizing his absurd focus and misplaced priorities, Tuboum reveals with pride: “I have begun a vigorous campaign to eliminate all foreign influences from our people. I took the lead and changed my own names. Even the names of my father’s headstones, I changed. All names on our cemeteries will be changed” (18). While the focus of Soyinka’s heroes is their collective ambition to see their effigies raised at the United Nations hall of fame, Butake’s Psaul Roi pays more attention to his drinking business that he does not even know what time of day it is. Yet, he tells his friend and collaborator, “I will get another bottle of this wonderful stuff from the royal brewery and we shall drink ourselves to sleep” (153). This setting is not too different from that of Soyinka’s environment of the giants who dedicate precious time in pleasantries about historical figures such as Napoleon, Hitler and Chaka Zulu. (11-12). These incidents all add up to show that, like Butake’s Psaul Roi, Soyinka’s Kamini pays no attention to administrative responsibilities or policy formulations to improve the lot of the people. In this light, stage directions, play titles (Which I have already analyzed) like character names, and available accessories harbor relevant information for the understanding of the powers and forces at work.

This portion of the analyses thus resonates with Elam (1980) who is apt in affirming that conspicuous rhetorical figures, highly patterned syntax, like phonetic repetition and parallelism only serve to augment the material presence of the linguistic sign on the set. Barthes (1964b) on his part is equally accurate in his evaluation when he says “real informational polyphony” and a density of signs constitute a privileged field of semiotics investigation. The key question thus is how people make signs in the context of interpersonal and institutional power relations to achieve specific purpose. The cases of Kamini and Psaul Roi as already indicated, send unmistakable signals as to how the people must behave themselves both to stay safe and to retain the offices they occupy. While waiting for an opportunity to strike and put an end to the cycle of deprivation and destruction of their lives and the land, the gullible masses momentarily take to sycophancy and pretense as a launch pad that prepares and propels them into a revolutionary crusade.

#### 4. Response to Bad Governance

The despicable leadership style of kamini and Psaul Roi as observed above, urge the people to adopt coping strategies that prepare them for resolute action. Both out of fear of reprisals and as a strategy to play safe, the people resort to sycophancy and hero-worship during which time they hail and praise their leaders whom they regard as agents of development and legendary benefactors. Stretching the limit of her Stoogery, Gadrum, a Western journalist and committed supporter writes and publishes a book that projects Kamini, “jovial family man and big uncle to everyone.” (43). Gudrum intimates that Bugarian runaway recalcitrant lot “spread the most disgusting libel against field Marshall” whom she says is reincarnation of legendary nation builders.

In very similar circumstances, the beggarly Song, a prototype of stooge, confesses to Psaul Roi that the people who gather at the market square for political nourishment must be forced to return home else they can wait forever only for the love they have for their leader. (152). Paradoxically, the same people presented by Song, the Chief of Protocol, as patient and loving, are actually enraged because of the misery and frustration caused by their repulsive leaders. But as it is to be expected from bootlickers, it is often more rewarding to tell the leaders what they want to hear than dare their wrath by reporting the hard truth that they may not want to imagine. Kamini’s contempt for any opinion contrary to his desires make his collaborators to either flee for safety or approve every rash project and ludicrous proposal he makes.

With pretentious conviction, Ambassador approves the dream project of displaying the statutes of Kamini and his peers. He explains that visitors who come to consult the delegates at the UN building cannot fail to see the commanding figure of the heroes (9). Although it is almost certain that the plan to post sculpted images of dictators at the United Nations building is inconsequential, no one dares to express such views because Kamini and co would not only give a deaf ear, but may go on to severely punish any such person for questioning the project. Even as equals, sycophancy prevails. Addressing Kamini, Gunema says, “.My friend you are not an hombre ordinario, Some people are born to power; others are cattle they need ring in their nose for us to lead” (11).

Generalised intimidation and fear that grips Soyinka’s world and which urges the people into pretence does not spare Butake’s dramatic spine. In his drama, Nformi the General confesses: “Here we think only His Most Royal Majesty because we are frightened of his royal edicts, instruments and proclamations” (166). The tools of royal edicts, instruments and proclamation are deterrents and factors that enforce submissiveness. The fear of those instruments which Psaul Roi uses whimsically, remain effective bulwarks to contrary views and ‘subversive’ activism. After all, what actually qualify as subversive action may just be an omission in addressing the monarch or hesitation to applaud or adulate him for the promises he makes. The monarch’s collaborators know just what to do to remain safe and maintain their respective position. Nformi the General explains:

There were the rewards, the royal edicts and instruments and proclamations. You lived under the illusion that the king had special concern and confidence in you. In the army we had a lot of material advantages and benefits which the rest of the people could never dream of. So whenever they gathered in the market place to listen to someone bent on opening their eyes so that they could see. The wretchedness of their lives in spite of the great wealth of the land, the army immediately saw this as a great threat to their privileges and so reacted with extreme brutality. And there were also spies. You never could tell who was spying against you and making reports to the hierarchy (168).

It is not surprising therefore, that, the military also plays as stooges to Psaul Roi whose network of spies properly ensures every single person is closely watched. Thus, fear of the unknown inevitably pushes most collaborators into high level condescension and complicity. The environment of pretence is a consequence of the culture of fear and uncertainty caused by the monarch. Even in Soyinka’s drama, Professor Batey submits to such buffoonery when he praises Kamini and co about whom he writes another book entitled, “The Black Giant at Play.” To boost Kamini’s greatness, he explains with equally pretentious conviction that the entire region will be excited to know he was able to share the same room and above all shook hands with kamini. He goes on to shed tears of flattery which kamini rejoices about.

The imposing figure of Kmini cause even the Mayor of Hyacombe, a fictive city, to equally demonstrate reverence and utmost gratitude to his dreadful guests. In his address, the Mayor opines:

My heart is bursting. All leaders who have given our pride of race, you, who have uplifted us from the degradation of centuries of conquests, slavery and dehumanisation. Your Excellencies, the city of Hyacombe will never forgive me if I fail to maximise this unique occasion. All four Excellencies must be presented with the freedom of the city. We shall make this an annual public holiday in Hyacombe (22).

The fanfare with which Kamini and his three companions are received in the city indicates the depth of fear which they generate by their mere presence. It is thus against the background of this fear that no one dares to voice an opinion that is contrary to the however ridiculous propositions they make. Even when the burden of the repulsive leadership causes other delegation members to flee, Kamini still has the support of other people who agree to help pursue the fleeing subverts through Interpol. Professor Batey once more indicates his readiness to assist in making reports to track the escapees whom he says are likely to spread “false stories” about Dr. Kamini. The professor pledges “I shall certainly lend a hand with your delegation while you are here sir. It is an honour, I gratefully accept” (25).

As expected, the culture of hypocrisy and falsehood does not last too long. The fear and intimidation enforced, also expire when the people rise and mobilize to confront the degrading conditions of their lives. This is to say, the culture of sycophancy made manifest through pretence and outright lies, only lay a foundation on which the masses mobilize to overthrow a bad system. The endemic corruption, misery and poverty coupled with the scare tactics only lasts as long as the illusion and illusive feelings of love and respect lingers on thereby permitting the democratic

liberators to swing into action that topples the system and rescue the land. This is precisely how the denouement of Kamini, Kasco, Gunema and Tuboum on the one hand, and the fate of Psaul Roi, Song and Mr Albino, on the other hand, are stage-managed victoriously. The corruption which becomes a way of life in the worlds of the plays, also turn handy as a pathway to the liberation of the people and the society. Kamini regrets the endemic problem by affirming that there is so much corruption that no one person can control, (25-26). Like a double-edged sword, the corrupt practices employed by dictators to sustain themselves in office, is also employed by the revolutionary forces to unseat the regimes. Psaul Roi learns only too late that the financial resources which he diverts and uses to pave his way to initiation, leaves the national treasury dry thereby laying a firm foundation for discontent among the military.

The resulting financial scarcity thus triggers a mutiny among the soldiers demanding pay. Song recounts to the chagrin of Psaul Roi: “The soldiers are marauding in the land spitting fire and spreading death everywhere... Looting and raping because they have not been rewarded (164). Interestingly, Mr. Albino, the neo-colonial agent that succeeds in awakening the conscience of the military to the shameless devastation, also falls out of favour with Nformi the army General. Determined to remove all forces of despoliation, the revolutionary organizer, Nformi, overturns issues and opts to liberate the land and assuage the misery of the people. Claude Ake, (47) puts it better when he opines that the people’s demand for incorporation cannot truly be achieved if they remain apolitical or submissive. Therefore, the way to assert their rights to participation is to remove at any rate or even minimize the authoritarian constraints. Similar revolutionary movement triggered by the pent up anger and frustration caused by Kamini and his peers, spares none of the shameless dictators who hitherto claim invisibility in the face of any uprisings in their respective countries.

The last of the stooges, the US delegation leader makes a baseless promise when in the heat of an attack, pledges the support of the United States to defend the sovereignty of Bugaran embassy ground (64). The purported support proves futile when even the Task Force Special, is made to retreat in the face of a crushing revolutionary assault by the Bugarian refugees determined to unseat kamini and topple the regime. Although it is uncertain if Kamini succeeds in squashing the revolution, there is reason to believe the revolution cracks and disrupts the status quo thereby laying a foundation for a new society. In like manner, Nformi, the Army General, resolves to end and effectively tear down the dictatorial regime of Psaul Roi and also halts the pillage of financial, forest and subterranean resources that the Monarch, Song and Mr. Albino, have caused in the land. In response to Psaul Roi’s plea to be killed than made to fall so low, Nformi refutes saying, “If you die, the people will not come back. They want concrete proves that you destituted yourself. I am going to give it to them” (173). While the accompanying soldiers whisk off the trio into a cage and convey to the market. Nformi declares:

These monstrosities shall be exposed to the wrath and gloomy vengeance of the people they were supposed to serve. They will spend the rest of their days counting their guilt on the faces of their victims and so measure the consequences of the macabre dance of the vampires (173).

With this, the drama of subjugation, despoliation and misery, imposed on the people by the likes of Kamini and Psaul Roi is brought to an unexpected end thereby paving a way for a new beginning and hope for a promising future in which both dramatists believe. While the two representative worlds share so much in common, there is nevertheless some discernable difference in the denouement.

While the mutiny and sudden outbreak of gun exchange in *A Play of Giants* takes place at the Bugaria Embassy, in New York, the bloodless coup masterminded by Nformi, takes place at home and in the palace of Butake’s Psaul Roi. The action plan leaves none of the front line actors indifferent to the inevitability of change as the only thing that is constant. The remarks by [Forgacs and Smith \(1985\)](#), fits well when they argue that the battle field for the creation of a new civilization is, on the other hand, absolutely mysterious, absolutely characterized by the unforeseeable and the unexpected.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper set out to examine the relationship between postcolonial dramaturgy and political leadership discourse in contemporary Africa. Using [Soyinka \(1997\) \*A Play of Giants\*](#) and [Bole Butake’s \*Dance of the Vampires\*](#), the paper argues that these plays are semiotic resources whose meanings and renditions interrogate the failures of leadership in postcolonial Africa and the end-results of such a condition. The worlds of the two plays put in evidence the overwhelming reality of the African setting where power and leadership feature binary options that are difficult to reconcile. While on the one hand, leadership is predicated essentially on action that seeks common good, power on the other hand focuses more on whatever guarantees self-protection, projection and preservation. In the short-run, power conflicts with leadership in the interplay of resource management and accountability for the common good. In the resulting conflict of interest between the masses and the power brokers, a sustained action plan is designed and undertaken to offset the ridiculous cabal in place. As expected, the irresistible force of the people’s army overwhelms the regimes and thus signal the inevitable denouement of the outmoded leadership. To their ultimate chagrin, the leaders witness the same beggarly masses swing into action that brings them down having incapacitated the odd leadership by the strong resolve of a sovereign people. Thus, after the storm of aggression, misery and accentuated poverty, the irreversible wheel of a revolutionary takeover sets in and puts an end to sustained despair, misery and frustration caused in the life of a people and on the surface of their land.

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