

2. POST-OGUNIST TEMPER AND INTERVENTIONS IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *ALAPATA APATA* (2011)

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Abstract

This article engages with Wole Soyinka's parody on the current postcolonial realities in *Alapata Apata* (2011). The article begins by isolating, at least, two major dimensions discernible in Soyinka's dramaturgy- in the nodes of cultural revalidation and social interventions- and their links with Ogun in Soyinka's plays. The paper brings these into relation with the diverse social phases and crises mirrored in Soyinka's plays and narrows down to the current post-dictatorship phase where, like other interventions, Soyinka presented an avatar of Ogun in his interrogation of leadership failure and other social malaises. The paper argues that the playwright's re-invention of Ogun is a radical departure from the avant-gardist disposition of all other Ogun avatars that preceded Alaba. The conclusion of the paper, on account of Alaba's accidental canonization, is interpreted as Soyinka's veiled chastisement of political leaders whose failures have perpetuated diverse crises in the space mirrored in the play.

Keywords: Wole Soyinka, post-Ogunist, myth, social intervention

Introduction and Background

Literary critics and scholars of Soyinka's works have firmly expressed the social responsiveness of his bardic rituals to the diverse realities of the postcolonial landscape which spans from situations in his native space and other lands. Without prejudice to the credentials of the global concerns and interpretations that have been given to his plays, not much rigorous advancement has been seen in terms of delineating his works along the lines of his mimesis of the Nigerian situation. By way of background, Bernth Lindfors (1982, p. 8) divulges the diverse motivations that have characterised the responses of authors to the Nigerian situation. In his analysis of two essays- Chinua Achebe's "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation" and Wole Soyinka's "The Writer in a Modern African State"- he showed the essentiality and burden of responding to social realities which narrows down to Achebe's

submission that:

...an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant...both Soyinka and Achebe were concerned... with the relevance of African literature to contemporary African life. They wanted to interpret their own world for the benefit of their own people. (8)

Justifiably, critics of Soyinka's plays have attempted to engage the sensibilities of his works along the lines that distil their social tempers and impulses even though some, such as Lewis Nkosi, have tried to provide a generalized perspective thus:

Soyinka's ...“plays deal with the African past, with the need to clarify and understand this past, if it is to be used as a basis for the future, an understanding which...means accepting the glorious as well as the inglorious aspects of national history. He is also concerned with the corrupting influence of power... the indissoluble link between death and destruction ...and the principle of creation and renewal... (Nkosi: 188)

The particularity with the phases under which those manifestations, in the listing of Nkosi, occur has seen other lacerations of Soyinka's plays into phases by critics. For instance, In *After the Nobel Prize: Reflections on African Literature, Governance and Development* (2006), Gbemisola Adeoti and Mabel Ekwierhoma's edited work, at least two terminologies that catalogue Soyinka's works emerged. One, which looks at Soyinka's plays before and after he won the Nobel prize in 1986 and the far-reaching implications of the award on African writers, is seen not only in the title index of the book and the initial statements by the editors titled “Introduction: African Politics and Letters after Soyinka's Nobel Prize”, but essays such as Tejumola Olaniyan's “The Heroic Generals and the Absent Soldiers: Notes on Literature, Development and Governance in Africa Since the Nobel” and Irene Salami's “Nigerian Women Playwrights: Beyond the Nobel Prize”. In Gbemisola Adeoti's essay, “Post- at Aminian Fantasia: Despots, Democrats and Other Mutations in Soyinka's Recent Drama”, we have a second dimension, which in aggregating the playwright's concern for politics and power negotiation in the African space slants Soyinka's plays into “Aminian” and “Post- Aminian” phases.

In his attempt at connecting the many arteries in Soyinka's plays with social relevance, Biodun Jeyifo (2004: 41-82), paralleling the works of Soyinka with the discovery of Fanon in his popular book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1966), identifies it with three stages of decolonization, viz: the first stage of, imitation where literatures produced are derived and fashioned out in the style of colonial masters, the second stage, of somewhat fanatical extremism, which antagonized the “colonial master's” ideals

and the final stage which brought about the production of 'combative literature'. Jeyifo theorized these three stages in Soyinka's writings, thus: the anti-negritude phase of the late 60's and early 70's. This period, the most combative for the playwright, was when he squared in on issues of cosmopolitanism and subjects related to race and cultural beliefs. Jeyifo identifies with this period some of Soyinka's early essays like "Towards a True Theatre", "From a Common Back Cloth", "And after Narcissist"? "The Writer in a Modern African State" and "The Fourth Stage". The second phase is the neo-negritude phase of the late 70's and the early 80's. Jeyifo says that though Soyinka also focuses on race issues in this phase, Soyinka restricts himself to the African nation. Finally, the third phase is where we have neo-cosmopolitan themes. Jeyifo says that this has to do with the playwright's discourse on issues of other lands or global interest.

There is no doubt that these abstractions have their own merits on account of their emphasis on the universal relevance of Soyinka's works, however, these have not truly reflected Soyinka's diverse concerns about the situations of his native country. Niyi Osundare (2019: 94), while summing up what characterizes Soyinka's mediation on national issues, revealed that:

Typically, Soyinka's interventions do not only change the trajectory of the national discourse, in many other instances, they leave an enduring mark on the intellectual, cultural and socio- political lexicon of the country. A satirist to the core, Soyinka frequently plies his trade through a devastating deployment of parody, caricature and *reductio ad absurdum*

As implied in Osundare's statement, Soyinka's sense of nationalism, which is often laced with a die-hard stance and commitment to his nation, has always been expressed even beyond his theatrical engagements. For instance, this obsession is seen in Soyinka's record in the refrain in his album, "Unlimited Liability Company":

I love my country, I no go lie

Na inside am I go live and die

I know my country, I no go lie

Na im and me go yap till I die

Therefore, a valid attempt to compartmentalize Soyinka's plays strictly along his responses to the Nigerian situation, especially in relation to his concern with the issues of politics and governance, which have become cancerous sore points in the annals of his nation, would reveal three transitional phases- Pre dictatorship, Dictatorship and Post Dictatorship phases. Importantly, at the centre of

these intervening phases is Soyinka's muse, Ogun which has remained the playwright's major tool of intervention. Soyinka renders his unalloyed allegiance to his muse, Ogun thus:

The weapons of confrontation need not be the lethal kind- we could join forces with the progressives, make a trenchant use of the pen, the stage, propagate progressive ideas, mobilize the people and expose their betrayers. The contested arena would be strewn with words, with polemics, not soaked in gore. My adopted muse would remain Ogun, but only he of the biting lyric. (50)

The fidelity of the playwright to his muse therefore continues to be seen but in *Alapata Apata*, we have a novel dimension that situates Ogun in a purely comic dispensation as against the fiery or tragic, the revolutionary or avant-gardist mythological credentials of Ogun that have been seen in Ogun avatars in plays that precede *Alapata Apata*.

Soyinka's Pre-Dictatorship Plays: From Folk Designs to Hybridized Social Milieu

Soyinka's Pre- dictatorship phase exteriorizes amorphous themes that vacillate between the African worldview and the crises of survival in the evolving Nigerian society. The assertion about the worldview is exemplified in *The Road* (1963) and *A Dance of the Forest* (1965) but in the latter the motif of the half-child hints at the question of survival of the nascent nation. *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) and *The Lion and the Jewel* (1975) also follow this thread in their concerns that address the contradictions in worldviews and the crises of transition orchestrated by colonial experience. However, Soyinka began to get more concerned with the affairs of his nation with *Kongi's Harvest* (2004) and *Madmen and Specialists* (1971). Rope Sekoni (1993: 88) distils the national relevance of *Kongi's Harvest*, in relation to the configuration of power and conflict between Kongi and Oba Danlola, thus:

Although there are differences between Kongi and Danlola in terms of external manifestations of their love for power or public acknowledgment, there is striking similarity of preoccupation with power between both of them. In aesthetic terms, the playwright attenuates the audience expectation of an internal mediation of the conflict between Kongi and Danlola by invoking images that imply the love for power and position by both characters.

Similarly, Osofisan (2001: 180) relays the national perspective of *Madmen and Specialists* when he noted that the play was meant ... "to rouse the audience to the savage atrocities of the war and the inhumanity of war leaders, perhaps with the hope of provoking a collective guilt that would lead

ultimately to the demand for cleansing and atonement”.

The last subset in the pre-dictatorship phase shows Soyinka’s satiric interpretations of the vices of religion in *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1973) and *Requiem for a Futurologist* (1985). Soyinka (2007: 12) marries the malignity of religious and political power in *Interventions V* (year?), when he said:

Today the greatest menaces that we confront- vectors of repression and mind closure- are political arrogance in the face of religious fanaticism. They are both sides of the same counterfeit coin which sometimes becomes so impressed in its manifestations that the ridge of demarcation thins inwards and vanishes together.

For emphasis, one of the two ‘vectors’ mentioned in this excerpt is ‘repression’ which co-habits with abuse of political power while ‘mind closure’ relates to religious extremism. Ostensibly, the playwright still reverts to the use of elements in his folk culture in the subsequent phases where his major preoccupation is on power relations.

Power and the Paradox of (mis) use in Soyinka’s Dictatorship and Post-Dictatorship Phases

Soyinka has always had very rough encounters with dictators in his country, the first was in 1967 when he was detained for more than two years without trial by his country’s regime for his alleged connivance with ‘rebels’ who wanted to secede from his country. The second, which understandably was the most combative, was in the Sanni Abacha years when he had to go on self-exile when the military junta in the aftermath of the aborted national election which was widely believed to have been won by Moshood Abiola. Misuse of power by the military was very popular on the African continent without exception to Nigeria. Emphasis that draws on misuse of power is gleaned from *Interventions V*:

The theme of power is one that remains all too pertinent to a continent, which having freed itself from colonial tyranny, still finds itself obliged to contend with a renewed colonization, this time from within. Inevitably, its occupants, confronted with the bane of repetition, must take time off to ponder on the entire phenomenon of power, what it is that invests the human psyche with the need to dominate others, irrespective of race, state of development or environment, and with a continuing blindness to the lessons of history (3)

The tragedy of this development also reflects Africa’s democracies where “the conduct of democratically elected leaders [which] distinctly cautions that there is a common thread that runs through political leadership mentality” in Africa. (71) Soyinka’s mimesis on the subject of reckless

misuse of power on the African continent is seen in *A Play of Giants* (1984) but he spotlights his country in *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope* (1995) and *King Baabu* (2002). Concerning the Nigerian situation, his overall assessment of the era is relayed in a conversation with Bisi Ajobade of *The News* magazine titled “Crises in Nigeria: The Way Out”, where he talks about the fluxes, clogs and liabilities of military intervention in politics and its corollaries:

I think where we got it wrong was, first of all, the coup itself, which brought in the military. I think the military was largely responsible. That was when we lost it so to speak and it's important to admit that we are all to blame. When the military took the centralised road, many of us applauded, never mind that people like to deny it today. But for us at that time, we read it as the ending of ethnic divisions. For instance, before the military took over, regionalisation had created certain dimensions of narrow factionalism, but it was simplistic to think you could obviate all those unfortunate aspects of regionalisation by a sweeping centralism. That was disastrous thinking. But we'd become sold on this mission of eradication of “tribalism”, which we didn't interpret properly. Everybody was guilty of it – politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats, technocrats, students... Everybody wanted to become an amalgam called Nigeria, a non- existent being, the “detribalised being” and that centralist agenda looked as if it was the magic road. It deepened suspicions, retarded development; it created a top- heavy bureaucracy, distancing beneficiaries of policies from those who made policies. Let us not omit the following however: the departing British laid the foundation for future fissures by deliberate strategy of distorting the power relations between North and South...

Soyinka's nation is now under a new political experience which, in this paper has been called the Post Dictatorship phase but those vices in the preceding phase remain on account of the novel dimension

to power which has to do with the redundancy of its holders. The sordid implications of this are what calls for Soyinka's attention in *Alapata Apata*.

Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* and the Polemics of Time and Space

Soyinka's *Alapata Apata* centres around Alaba, a retired butcher, who has decided to choose the boulder sequestered to him by patrimony as an abode of rest. As the play unravels, we understand that Alaba's boulder is within a town, Itira which is under the local jurisdiction of Amuletira. Alaba's recluse on the boulder, which has only lasted for three months, triggers diverse implications. For 1st Mechanic, 2nd Mechanic, 1st Farmer and 2nd Farmer the curiosity of Alaba's stay on the boulder arouses mystery whereas for Pastor, 1st Student and 2nd Student the mystification of Alaba's recluse is seen as a threat to the stability of the Christian faith and the struggle against the gross ineptitude and non-performance of government, respectively. This hostility, however, differs from the disposition of those who want to benefit from the delusional wisdom of Alaba such as 1st Okada, 2nd Okada, 3rd Okada, Mother, Daughter and Dele. Alaba's non-activity on the boulder also arouses pity from passersby such as 1st Woman and 2nd Woman who see his action to 'retire' as foolish. The crisis of interpretation of Alaba's sitting "on top of something the whole world wants" (16) also involves the Prospector, Investor, General and the Governor, Daanielebo, who in their own cases, want to personally acquire Alaba's boulder for its believed commercial potential.

The credentials of Alaba are a mixture of failure and success. After he dropped out of school, he tried becoming an Ifa priest but failed, his expedition to Lagos to seek employment, with his former friend, Daanielebo, had also failed before he returned home to join the butcher business of his parent. Alaba was very successful at this, his expertise at making assorted delicacies from meat earned him respect from customers who cut across religious and class divides. Not only this, many apprentices who were under his tutelage have since graduated and are in high quarters in diverse locations. Ironically, Alaba himself could not explain the rationale behind his decision to retire from his successful business which also came as a surprise to many of his kinsmen. However, Teacher experiments with his redundancy to "prove that, simply by doing nothing, a man can still make his mark, indelibly...[and] can achieve more through inactivity than anyone ever did in active service" (103-104). Like Soyinka did in his eponymous play, *King Baabu*, the paradox of the Teacher's philosophical experimentation objectifies redundancy and gluttony, cluelessness, and mediocrity, incapacity to ferment, incubate or generate innovative ideas. While the riddle about Alaba's recluse on the rock lingers he got involved in the error of misplacing accents on the billboard meant to commemorate his inactivity and this triggers the tension in the play.

The fluxes and contradictions in space and time in the play are laid out in three phases the primordial beginning, the period of contact through colonialism and its aftermath. For instance, from the setting of the primordial beginning, we have “Aba Alapata”, a hitherto remote settlement. Alaba’s testimony about the ancestry and ancient status of the boulder while responding to Oluwo’s query on reasons why he has appropriated the boulder to himself gives an insight:

ALABA: ...That rock, I met it

there. Nobody wanted it. Nobody quarrelled
with it. My father built his house nearby. As
a child, I used to sharpen his butcher’s knives
against its face –look, you can see the smooth
portion over there. We rested in the shadow of
the rock, or the house –that space in between,
the rock, or the house –that space in between,
always cool. Sometimes we ate there. Nobody
bothered with the rock. The women never
thought it worth their while –they prefer to dry
their cassava mash, for gari, on flat surface, not
a steep slope where the rain can wash it away.
Well, we made it our home. We dried our clothes
on its surface and we fired our catapults at the
lizards sunning themselves on it. At night we
even told stories, lying around the bottom of the
rock, over there, hanging from the slopes. This
very rock you’re looking at. The one nobody
cared about. (165- 166)

The antiquity of the boulder, in part 1 of the play is further imbued with folk actions seen in the way

Alaba performs his oral hygiene and most importantly in the mythic parallels between Alaba and Ogun, Soyinka's muse. Overtly, Alaba makes reference to Ogun when he said that "Ogun is the one who guides [his] hands when [his] knife digs into the ribs of cow, goat or sheep" (110) and that he has seen before "Bigger rocks like Olumo or Idanre" (114). Again, Alaba's Promethean and Dionysian acts and his profession as a butcher reenact the credentials of Ogun while his fatal counsels to the Lagos couple and the Okada riders, for example, coincide with Ogun's killing of his men in error. But Soyinka's folk design is diluted with vestiges of the past and the present such as we have from the old order Farmer and Trader and Mechanic, Investor, Okada rider as embodiment of the present. Their dilution also reflects in the coexistence of pedagogies in Ifa Divination and Queen Victoria schools. The gradual transformation from Part 1 of the Play to its Part 2 appears like what happened in *The Lion and the Jewel*. Just like the taking of Sidi's picture exposes her beauty to other spaces, the Teacher has taken the pictures of Alaba's commemorative sign and placed them in the glare of global media outfits.

The proximity of Queen Victoria Secondary School makes plausible general statements with regard to time and space. The school, which was once a primary school and even had Alaba as one of its pupils, is named after a foremost Queen of England in whose reign the colonial experience began. The playwright rises beyond old animosities and prejudices against colonialism to prove the vital point that agrees with the complex and hybridized nature of the global space in his metaphor of the tilted atlas and its fracturing. The collaged stricture of the past and the present is also visible in Soyinka's switches between the dictatorship eras that preceded and the post-dictatorship era that subsists. One example in Alaba's response to Teacher suffices:

ALABA: Look, if I were you –you see, I can't help it,
I feel sorry for you, for the world so, my advice
is –share the akiset –some to the left some to
the right. Like the Head of State, you remember
him? The one who created two political parties
out of his military hat –one a little to the
right, the other a little to the left. That man,
he swigiligued everything from elections to
government money. He was such a natural born
swigiliguer, they called him Maradona... (77)

Soyinka's veiled reference to "Maradona" is an apparent allusion to Diego Maradona, the Argentine football icon who is known for his sublime football dribbling skills and wizardry. Soyinka had responded to the intransigence of the dictatorship era in his country which covers the reigns of four maximum rulers, Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Sanni Abacha and Abdulsalami Abubakar in *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope* and *King Baabu*. However, like Maradona's trickery, it was Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, in 1993, that deceived the entire nation into a national election which, for no cogent reason was annulled. Prior to that, it was on December 12, 1991, during Babangida's iron fist rule, that the capital in Soyinka's nation was moved from Lagos to Abuja. This coincidence is well explored in the setting of Alaba's boulder bearing in mind that the seat of government in Abuja, Nigeria, is called "The Aso Rock Presidential Villa". This explains why in the play we find the couple who came to Alaba's boulder all the way from Lagos to seek counsel in their case of marital distress. The transformation in time and space is obvious in the remote folk status of Alaba's boulder before the erection of the first signpost which read "Aba Alapata" (a butcher's hamlet) and its consequent accidental metamorphosis into 'Apata town'. This transformation does not go down well with the local leadership which slammed Alaba with the treason charges that have to do with his appropriating the rock to himself and awarding himself a chieftaincy title:

ASIPA: QUIET!!! Will you just keep quiet man,

and listen? Do you know why... no, that will only
start him off all over again. You know why His
Royal Highness has decided to hold court right
here? Do you know why we have all undergone
the indignity of coming to this, this... dump
of a crossroads?

ALABA: You see that is already one big crime. If

I am the cause of His Majesty leaving his
Palace, then I am doomed.

OLUWO: Stop! Stop right there. This court has just

One question for you. Just where did you get
the chieftaincy title of Alapata Apata?

ALABA: The Alapata? Of

Apata? Ah-ah. Is that my crime?

ASIPA: Is what your crime? Can you think of a

more heinous crime? The Oluwo asked you–

who gave you that chieftaincy title?

ALABA: Haba,

my royal elders. It is the name I was given. The

akiset was an akisident, so I tried to make the

best of the situation. That has always been my

problem. Too much initiative

OSI: Wait. Not another word from you. You say

it was the name you were given. Who by? We all

know you. The name you were given is Alaba,

son of Alonge the Butcher. A-la-pa-ta.

Who /said you could start calling yourself the Alapa-

ta? ... You think

people won't notice the difference? This is not

London, it is Yorubaland

OLUWO: He knows the difference. He has even

been holding court.

ALABA: No, no, me hold court? I know my place. I

am not a traditional ruler. Or chief. How can I

hold court?

OTUN: You have been adjudicating cases. Disputes.

On whose authority? (163- 164)

In the end, Alaba is ordered to reverse the accent on his inscription and propitiate for his misdeeds by giving assorted meat delicacies as an offering to the court. However, while Alaba is still perplexed by his sore ordeal with the emissaries from the court and contemplating vacating the boulder, a counter instruction quashing the treason charges and ceding the boulder to him came from the same court who got wind of his 'exploits' which successfully foiled the attempts by General and Daanielebo to take possession of the boulder. Importantly, all actions in the play, begin and end on Alaba's boulder to amplify the comatose condition of Nigeria, especially with the semblance that Alaba's boulder bears with the seat of power in that country.

Soyinka's Masks, Politics and Post Dictatorship Crises in *Alapata Apata*

Soyinka has used some real events that happened to situate the play within the context of Nigerian politics in the fourth republic. For instance, reference is made to the infamous "Okija shrine" saga in the dialogue between Alaba and Daanielebo to satirize the godfather-godson relationship which is common with Nigeria's politics, cultic inductions and indoctrinations which ridicules the intelligence of politicians in Nigeria:

ALABA:...You want to be more evil
than –that your father?

DAANIELEBO: You heard me. I want to be
the greatest. I have sold my conscience, now I want
the ultimate.

ALABA: Ha, my great brother, I don't advice it. That
will be the real great grandfather of all
headaches.

DAANIELEBO: You know, you yourself, you're
beginning to give me a headache. A real
headache. Is he superhuman? He may have
taught me plenty, but I've added a few tricks of
my own. Ways and powers he knows nothing

about. I've tapped into resources beyond Okija

shrine where he graduated (139)

More intensely, however, it is Soyinka's masks that obviate his intentions in this play. After *Requiem for a Futurologist* where the character, Alaba, was a servant to the futurologist, Dr. Godspoke Igbehodan, Soyinka returns to the same mask in *Alapata Apata* where in absolute terms, he uses Alaba's actions (or inactions) on the boulder to satirise the social conditions in the country. Ordinarily, in the Yoruba culture, Alaba is the name given to the fourth child in the order twins. This coincidence strengthens the supposition that the playwright is squarely concerned with the politics of Nigeria's fourth republic. The name of Alaba's father is given as Alonge in the play. There is a common saying in Soyinka's language that goes thus: "ewu nbe l'oko 'Longe, 'Longe funrae ewu" ('Longe is a contracted form of Alonge so the saying means, 'there is danger in the form of 'Longe, Longe himself is a disaster about to happen). Soyinka uses this relationship to draw attention to the danger hovering over the country as a result of failure in leadership. Similarly, Alaba's misplacement of accent and the consequent accidental formation of the new 'Apata' town are grotesque metaphors about the accidental formation of the nation, a delicate amalgamation of diverse ethnicities unfortunately governed by accidental leaders. With Alaba's unconsciousness about the potential wealth under his boulder and his decision to remain on the boulder doing nothing, Soyinka objectifies cluelessness, poverty of ideas, betrayal of electoral promises and zero performance which have become characteristic of leadership in Nigeria. Ironically, the ritual of celebrating mediocrity and zero performance has been institutionalised.

TEACHER: Yes, zero performance. You set out

to do nothing. And you have done nothing. That's

a hundred per cent success, a claim many of

those politicians can never make –from bottom

up. You outlined your agenda, your electoral

promises as it were, and you stuck to them (35)

On a more elaborate scale, Soyinka parodies this sad condition in Alaba's preparation for the celebration of his first thirty days of doing nothing on the boulder. Like Alaba, political office holders in Nigeria [work] "assiduously, industriously, methodically and conscientiously at doing nothing", at

“thinking, producing, initiating, contemplating, enabling, formulating, rehabilitating, transforming, [and] innovating nothing” though they are “always full of sound and fury [which also] signifying nothing” (38- 40). Soyinka’s grouse is understandable because despite the morass of crises which have bedevilled the nation such as infrastructural deficit and decay, such as that of the “Rolling Steel Mills of Ajaokuta” (40), “...expressways [are] contracted out a hundred times but whose motorable mileage soonest thereafter is... nothing” (41), chronic unemployment with university graduates turning to commercial motorcycle drivers, general moral decadence and lure for cyber -crimes among youths, wasteful spending and corruption which, for example, have put pension savings of citizens in jeopardy, fraudulent activities which have dented the international image of the country, very high debt portfolio arising from philandering, proliferation of needless offices and portfolios, profligacy and prodigal wastage of nation’s wealth by leaders. As expected, the barrage of these anomalies have culminated into a summersault of fiscal policies and a failed economy. Not only these, political officeholders are more disposed towards propaganda and sloganeering of days in office with no tangible achievement to show, the rule of law has been eroded with the government using espionage acts and other oppressive checks on citizens. Teacher sums up the ordeal of the nation asserting that it has become “a basket case run by a succession of dolts and nincompoops” (43), sadly, its so-called leaders are unable to resolve the issues and have only continued to take steps that worsen the already very bad situation. The foreign interest in Alaba’s boulder, which is dramatized in the assessment visit of the Investor goes simultaneously with the failed economic policies of the government, the possibility of the Investor buying Alaba’s boulder shows that its leaders have lost all sense of morality and responsibility, they have put the country up for auction not minding the repercussion of perpetual enslavement to international monetary agencies such as the IMF.

General and Daanielebo compliment Soyinka’s exposition of the politics of the fourth republic. Though it is suggestive to think that these characters represent Gbenga Daniel and Olusegun Obasanjo. Daniel was Governor in Ogun State, South West Nigeria while Obasanjo, who is from Ogun State, was first civilian President in the fourth republic. However, what is important to the audience is the godfather-godson relationship between the two which exposes the politics of dirty intrigues and greed:

DAANIELEBO: I studied at his feet, I gave him his

dues. I prostrated myself to him. I licked his

boots. I let him scrape his boots on my head.

He insulted me in public but I still swallowed

his vomit. I was a loyal son. He taught me all

the dirty tricks I know, tricks I have improved
upon, but I've more than compensated him.
There is no living being to match his greed for
land, and I let him have all the land he wanted
in the state –still, nothing satisfied him (138)

Daanielebo's unsuccessful career as a mason foreshadows his failure in the act of governance. The playwright unwraps one of the characteristics of Nigeria's fourth republic politics which sees old and retired military officers occupying the political space, they put their anointed godsons in offices not in the interest of nationalism but patronage. But such farcical relationships soon fall apart on account of a clash in interests and greed.

General symbolises retired military men who have inundated the political space, after relinquishing military power they continue to seek relevance by trying to capture political power after their spells in government through coups. The playwright makes a vivid representation of this scenario when, through Daanielebo, he says:

DAANIELEBO: Yes, but you didn't know. He was
here this morning. The General who came to
attack your rock. Like you he pretends to be
retired but he keeps putting back his uniform
changing from military to civilian and back to
military, to monetary and bribery and chicanery
and giving me trouble. He came here looking for
something at crack of dawn (135- 6)

General, while heading for the "quarry at Alapata where some rare mineral deposits have been found" (99), adopts Gestapo tactics unbecoming of a statesman. The savage manner in which Alaba's boulder is surrounded and his terse language show his desperation just as his personal involvement in the "OPERATION LONGATROAT" smacks of greed hypocrisy, crass opportunism, misuse of power and blatant disregard for order and due process:

GENERAL: I'll make your head the target in a

moment if you don't take it out of my sight. You're
completely off target, you idiot. You've lost us
the element of surprise. Discretion. Everyone
knows the quarry at Aba Alapata, soon they
will know of the deposits of ... o, if you knew
what you've caused me –I mean –the nation you
would take your service revolver and plug a
hole in that head right now. You brought me to
this barren spot, while the real prize is melting
away before my eyes? Strike camp and get us
out of here. Get out! Head for Alapata. Secure
it! Forget quiet and secrecy now. Shoot any
interloper on sight. Burn any mining licenses or
Certificate of Occupancy anyone tries to display
and deal with the claimants with extreme and
terminal prejudice. It is that Alapata that is to
be cordoned off as military off-limits, not this
this... this *suya* dump !... (97)

In all the disappointment in the play is ingrained in the calibre of men that have occupied the political space and on the driver's seat in the corridors of power: school drop-outs or semi-literate citizens, opportunists, corrupt men seeking to make dirty gains and without any interest in transforming the nation. The vicious cycle continues anarchy, like that experienced in the dictatorship era, looms because under this dispensation we have men, like Alaba, who seem to know nothing about what to do with power. Perhaps, the most unfortunate twist in all these is that despite their feeling of distraught, the masses have been brainwashed, and mediocrity and poverty of thought have been deified, for example in the acceptance of Alaba's counsel by 1st Okada, 2nd Okada and 3rd Okada, to use clay pots in lieu of crash elements.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that *Alapata Apata* is another “tribute to Soyinka’s greatness and a testimony of [the] continuing relevance [of his] art ... to itself, its creators, and its consumers. (Osofisan: 186) It is a fact that “satire [has continued to be] one of Soyinka’s chief artistic weapons and he uses it to consistently expose the crudities and sufferings of a society in a state of transition” (Ogunba: 2). Within the post-dictatorship context where this play has been situated, the playwright paints grimmer picture of his society making it worse than his interventions in the preceding phases. His Ogun avatar, unlike those before him, becomes part of the problem in Soyinka’s ritual of dramatizing the redundancy, arrogance, ignorance and quackery of power holders in his country. The playwright speaks to the fractured foundation of his nation which is being massaged by the array of visionless leaders that have managed it since independence. It is unlikely that the collaboration between Teacher and Alaba would yield any positive impact on the new nation of Apata bearing in mind that Teacher is the architect behind Alaba’s project of achieving something by doing nothing which killed the Ogun potential in Alaba. The ‘recess’ that Soyinka has granted Ogun in this play is understandably a deserved rest from the ‘toil’ of other intervening phases. However, it remains a veiled chastisement which should revolutionize leadership thoughts and followership potential in Apata town, Soyinka’s microcosm of the Nigeria space.

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