International Journal of Innovative Language, Literature & Art Studies 11(4):126-135, Oct.-Dec., 2023
© SEAHI PUBLICATIONS, 2023 www.seahipublications.org ISSN: 2467-8511

Satirical Innuendos in Paul Ugbede's *Our Son The Minister*

[1]Edward, Egbo Imo (Ph.D) & [2]Okojaja, Simialaye Godspower

[1,2]Department of Theatre and Film Studies
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
[1]eddygoron@yahoo.co, edward.imo@uniport.edu.ng/09032517024, 08037321863
[2]simialaye.okojaja@uniport.edu.ng/08147446720, 08180158306

ABSTRACT
This paper examines the use of satire in Paul Ugbede's *Our Son The Minister* as a means to lampoon the political leadership class in Nigeria for their protracted insensitive and corrupt governance. The study is set against the backdrop that the Nigerian polity is characterized by systemic corruption that in turn, retards the socio-economic growth and development of the country. Drawing mainly from Paul Ugbede's *Our Son the Minister*, the paper x-rays the cryptic and pungent effects of satire against non-conformity of behaviour and human eccentricities especially against the ruling class. The paper interrogates the ways in which Ugbede employs humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose the vices and follies of the political elites in Nigeria. The research methodology is mainly literary as it involves textual analysis of the play with emphasis on the playwright's deployment of characterization, dialogue, and dramatic devices to in order amplify the satirical drift in the play . The findings of the study reveal that Ugbede's play extensively utilizes satire to critique the issues of corruption, greed, and the abuse of power that have plagued Nigeria's political landscape since the institutionalization of democracy. The paper concludes by underscoring the enduring relevance of satire as a powerful medium for cultural and artistic expression, particularly in the context of Nigeria's ongoing struggle for good governance and social justice. The study contributes to the scholarly understanding of the role of satire a driver of social change.
Keywords: satire, social change,

INTRODUCTION

Since the recognition of satire as a variety of comedy across the ages in theatre history, it has often been a powerful tool for social cohesion as it characteristically provides the veritable platform for marginalized voices to challenge the status quo leveraging satires ability to expose the ills in human society. Within the corpus of drama, satire has distinguished itself as a unique sub-genre of comedy that enables playwrights to grapple with the complex realities of their nation.

For centuries in the study of the arts, satire has been a vital component of literature for which serves as a checkmate for social vices ad human deviations from societal norms. Defined broadly, satire is a genre that employs humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to criticize and expose the vices and follies of individuals, institutions, and society as a whole. Its purpose is not merely to entertain, but to provoke thought and inspire change. As a sub-genre of comedy, the vision of satire is predominantly corrective. The laughter that arises from it is often incidental to the corrective vision of the satirist. Perhaps, this could account for the reason why some scholars of comedy argue that satire is an isolated genre of drama that should not be yoked with comedy.

It is for the foregoing that this paper interrogates the satirical innuendos in Paul Ugbede's *Our Son The Minister*. In an attempt to guarantee seamless comprehension of the logical flow of this paper, we have taken up the extra task of providing the structural layout of the entire paper which begins with definition of terms by way of literature review and then the synopsis of the play before delving into a thorough understanding of the play's narrative and the central themes it explores. The discussion then turns to a critical examination of the satirical elements in the play by analyzing how Ugbede employs various techniques to expose the issues of corruption, greed, and the abuse of power that have become endemic in Nigerian politics. The paper also examines the playwright's use of characterization, dialogue, and dramatic devices to amplify the satirical vision in the play.

Satire: A Definitional Statement

The term satire has attracted quote a handful of definitions and conceptual clarifications. The definitional ambiguities that are associated with satire is not unconnected with the biting and lashing ridicule which it dishes out to its objects. It cannot be over flogged that satire is a comic genre that employs humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to criticize and expose the vices and follies of individuals, institutions, and society as a whole. Its purpose is not merely to entertain, but to provoke thought and inspire change. Historically, satire can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where it was utilized as a tool for social critique. Figures such as Aristophanes in ancient Greece and Juvenal in ancient Rome demonstrated the genre's capacity to address political and social issues. Aristophanes, for instance, used comedic elements to ridicule political leaders and societal norms, showcasing the role of satire in fostering public discourse. Green notes that "Satire has always walked the fine line between comedy and critique, providing a platform for marginalized voices to challenge the status quo and incite social change" (67). This dual function of satire as both entertainment and critique has made it an enduring form of expression.

Moreover, satire serves as a form of resistance against oppressive systems and ideologies. Through mockery and parody, satirists can create a space for dissent and challenge societal norms. Vowell observes that "satire is a powerful tool for the marginalized, allowing them to reclaim agency and voice their dissent against those in power" (Vowell 89). This aspect of satire becomes especially important in authoritarian regimes, where traditional forms of dissent may be suppressed. In these contexts, satire can offer a subversive means of critique, often slipping past censorship by cloaking serious commentary in humor. Satire is a form of drama, mostly a form of comedy responsible for the lampooning and corrections of societal abnormalies. It is an instructional instrument for corrective measures in social vices with the aim of a better and sane society. As noted by Ohia, "satire has been an instrument in history used for the defense of truth. Truth in this context is the accepted moral standards inherent in the society" (36). This means that one who must satirize must frown at abnormalities and be a strong advocate and activist of the truth, readily available to defend the truth at all cost. Cuddon posits that:

> The satirist is thus a kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth of morals as well as aesthetic values. He is a man… who takes it upon himself to correct, censure, and ridicule the follies and vices of society and thus to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm. Thus satire is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger, and indignation… (qtd. in Ohia 36).

In corroboration of the above position, Elliot is of the position that:

> The satirist is a public servant fighting the good fight against vice and folly wherever he meets it, he is honest, brave, protected by the rectitude of his motives, he attacks only the wicked and then seldom or never by names; he is in short a moral man appalled by the evil he sees around him and he is forced by his conscience to write satire (qtd. in Yeseibo 22).

From the foregoing, the work of the satirist is to protest and agitate against bad leadership, uphold communal norms and order, defend the good will of the people and oppose social vices and follies. Every human society grapples with various social vices, a phenomenon that is particularly evident in Nigeria. The desire to navigate and influence societal activities has led many individuals to engage in illicit behaviors. This suggests that in their pursuit of goals, people often disregard the rules and

regulations that govern conduct. Satire plays a crucial role in politics by holding leaders accountable and fostering a harmonious relationship between them and their constituents. Without such oversight, a significant divide may develop between leaders and their followers, often linked to ineffective leadership styles exhibited by some politicians in Nigeria. Satire questions, interrogates and investigates the sociopolitical essence of a particular society and garners in the area of leadership, gender, education, economy, tradition and etc. This is why Chiedu holds that, "satire is a piece of writing in which one aspect or the other of societal ill is subjected to ridicule and laughter…" (qtd in Ohia 38). Ohia further buttresses on this testament in his assertion that;

> Satirical investigations tilt towards ridiculing human anomalies; especially the socio-political conditions that deter human development. Issues relating to poverty, insecurity, hypocrisy, corruption, bad government style amongst others will always provoke the satirist into action. As a sub-genre of satire, the aim of political satire is to ridicule issues concerning the socio-political realities in the society. This, in fact is geared towards seeking correction of socio-political anomalies (38).

The discussion above succinctly envisages the vast and potent nature of political satire, beyond lampooning and ridiculing, it is a form of agitation and protest, especially in the political terrain of a society in which the satirist chooses to attack. It showcases satire as a disruptive tool for radical change and revolutionary innovation in the crafty hands of the satirist. Satire goes as far as exposing corrupt practices and nuances embedded in political leaders in their respective political hierarchies. The effectiveness of satire often depends on its execution how humor is balanced with critique. Little wonder Hutcheon posits that "Satire thrives on the tension between laughter and seriousness. The best satirical works compel the audience to confront uncomfortable truths about their society while simultaneously engaging them through humor" (112). This interplay is crucial in political satire, where the stakes are often higher, and the target is typically those in positions of power.

Political satire has the unique ability to hold leaders accountable, challenging their actions and policies through a lens of humor that can resonate with the public. One of the most significant aspects of political satire is its ability to distill complex issues into accessible narratives. Through exaggeration and caricature, satirists can reveal the absurdities of political situations. These platforms enable audiences to engage with serious political issues in a manner that is both entertaining and thought-provoking. Ultimately, satire remains a powerful form of cultural and political commentary. It serves not only to entertain but also to challenge, provoke, and inspire. As scholars have noted, the genre's adaptability and ability to engage audiences on multiple levels underscore its significance in both literature and social discourse. In an era marked by rapid change and uncertainty, satire continues to provide a vital lens through which we can examine the absurdities of our world, encouraging critical thought and engagement with the pressing issues of our time.

Overview of Satirical Contents in Nigerian Drama

Satire has played a significant role in Nigerian drama, serving as a powerful vehicle for social critique, cultural commentary, and political discourse. From the early days of Nigerian theatre to contemporary performances, satirical content has emerged as a means to address societal issues, challenge authority, and reflect the complexities of Nigerian life. The roots of Nigerian drama can be traced back to traditional forms of storytelling, which often included elements of satire. These early narratives, conveyed through oral traditions, laid the groundwork for the modern theatrical forms that emerged in the 20th century. As Akinwumi asserts;

> The satirical elements in Nigerian drama reflect the historical struggles of the people, serving both as a form of entertainment and as a means of social critique. Through humor, playwrights draw attention to the follies and vices of their subjects, effectively engaging the audience in a dialogue about their realities (45).

The introduction of Western education and colonial influences during this period significantly shaped the development of Nigerian drama, leading to the incorporation of satirical elements as playwrights sought to critique colonial rule and its impact on Nigerian society. In the post-colonial era, Nigerian playwrights began to use satire as a means to address the socio-political challenges facing the nation. Nigerian playwrights employ various themes and techniques to convey their satirical messages. Political satire is perhaps the most prominent, as playwrights confront issues such as corruption,

governance, and the abuse of power. Social satire also plays a critical role in addressing gender roles, class disparities, and cultural norms. In her examination of social satire in Nigerian drama, Alabi informs that;

> The satirical approach taken by playwrights like Femi Osofisan and Zulu Sofola reveals deep-seated issues within Nigerian society. Their works often expose the hypocrisy of social norms and challenge the status quo. For instance, in Osofisan's 'The Chattering Wagtails of Azumah,' the characters' interactions serve to highlight the absurdity of societal expectations, encouraging audiences to question the validity of these constructs (112).

These techniques often involve the use of humor, irony, and exaggeration, making serious topics more accessible to audiences while simultaneously prompting critical reflection. The works of playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, and Femi Osofisan exemplify the use of satire in highlighting the absurdities of political corruption, social injustice, and cultural contradictions. Jeyifo notes, "The satirical elements in Nigerian drama serve not only as a critique of the political landscape but also as a reflection of the broader cultural and social dynamics that define Nigerian identity" (52). This insight underscores the multifaceted nature of satire in Nigerian drama, revealing its role as both a critical commentary on the political sphere and an exploration of cultural identity.

Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's first Nobel laureate in literature, is renowned for his satirical approach to political and social issues in his plays. His work often critiques the oppressive nature of political regimes and highlights the absurdities of Nigerian society. In his play *A Dance of the Forests*, Soyinka uses satire to expose the moral decay and hypocrisy of political leaders, capturing the disillusionment of a nation grappling with its post-colonial identity. Soyinka's use of satire is evident when he writes, "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king, but in our own case, the blind have the audacity to appoint themselves as kings, oblivious to the absurdity of their reign" (115). This statement is a profound commentary on the nature of leadership in Nigeria, where often unqualified or morally bankrupt individuals rise to power. It reflects a deep-seated irony; instead of seeking wisdom and insight, the blind, metaphorically representing ignorant leaders, self-appoint to positions of authority, creating a governance system rife with incompetence and folly. This satirical observation invites audiences to reflect critically on their leaders and the absurdities that often characterize political life. In another of his works, *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka employs humor and irony to critique the clash between tradition and modernity. The character of Baroka, the traditional ruler, embodies the satirical lens through which Soyinka examines the tensions between cultural heritage and the encroachment of Western ideals. Soyinka juxtaposes traditional values with modernity, using humor to critique the absurdities of both, as Jeyifo elucidates;

> Soyinka's use of satire is not merely for comedic effect; it serves a higher purpose of exposing the contradictions inherent in the clash of cultures. He deftly navigates the complexities of post-colonial identity, highlighting the absurdities of both colonial and indigenous practices. This dual critique allows audiences to reflect critically on their own cultural narratives and the power structures that shape them (78).

Akinwumi corroborates Jeyifo's position, thus ;

> Soyinka's masterful blending of humor with serious themes allows audiences to engage with the complexities of identity and culture. Through the character of Baroka, who is both a symbol of tradition and a cunning manipulator, Soyinka critiques the ways in which power can be wielded to uphold patriarchal structures, despite the façade of progress (60).

Through such analyses, it becomes evident that satire in Nigerian drama is intricately linked to the historical and political context in which it is created. Ogunleye further reinforces that, "Soyinka's satire reveals the contradictions within Nigerian society, as the characters navigate the complexities of tradition and modernity, often with comedic results" (78). This commentary highlights how Soyinka deftly uses humor not only to entertain but also to illuminate the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the struggle for cultural identity in a rapidly changing world. Similarly, Femi Osofisan's *Another Raft* presents a satirical examination of the political landscape in Nigeria, addressing issues such as corruption and the often absurd nature of political rhetoric, accordingly;

> In *Another Raft*, Osofisan employs absurdist humor to expose the failures of leadership in Nigeria. The characters, caught in a web of bureaucratic absurdity, reflect the frustrations of ordinary citizens who grapple with the consequences of misgovernance. Osofisan's satire is both biting and poignant, encouraging audiences to recognize the absurdity of their reality (Oredola 130).

Osofisan writes, "In a world where women are often silenced, the chattering wagtails represent the voices that refuse to be muted. Their laughter is a rebellion against the constraints placed upon them" (Osofisan 32). This statement highlights the power of satire as a means of empowerment, allowing marginalized voices to emerge and challenge societal norms. Osofisan's use of humor to portray women's resilience serves not only to entertain but also to inspire action, encouraging audiences to recognize the importance of amplifying women's voices in the struggle for equality. Additionally, Osofisan's play *Once Upon Four Robbers* employs satire to critique the socio-economic disparities that plague Nigerian society. The narrative follows a group of armed robbers who, through their actions, reveal the systemic injustices that drive individuals to desperation. As Osofisan poignantly states, "In a society where the rich steal from the poor, the act of robbery becomes a twisted form of justice" (Osofisan 87). This observation underscores the irony of a system that perpetuates inequality, revealing the complexities of morality in a fractured society. Osofisan's satirical lens prompts audiences to question the societal structures that lead to such disparities, urging them to consider the broader implications of poverty and crime.

Ola Rotimi, another prominent figure in Nigerian drama, is known for his ability to blend cultural themes with satirical commentary. His plays often explore the complexities of Nigerian identity, using satire to address issues of ethnicity, tradition, and socio-political dynamics. For instance, Rotimi's *Kurunmi* offers a satirical exploration of leadership and power dynamics within Nigerian society. The character of Kurunmi, a warrior, embodies the complexities of ambition and loyalty, illustrating how personal desires can lead to tragic consequences. It has been emphasized that, "Rotimi's satire critiques the power struggles inherent in Nigerian politics, revealing the moral ambiguities that often accompany leadership" (Jeyifo 75). This exploration of moral dilemmas in leadership invites audiences to consider the ethical implications of power and the often-contradictory nature of political ambition in Nigeria.

Satire in Nigerian drama not only serves as a form of entertainment but also as a catalyst for social change. By addressing pressing issues and challenging societal norms, satirical content encourages audiences to engage with their reality and consider their roles in shaping the future. The power of satire lies in its ability to provoke thought, inspire dialogue, and foster critical engagement with social issues. According to Ogunleye, "The satirical elements in Nigerian drama have the potential to mobilize audiences, encouraging them to reflect on their circumstances and advocate for change" (60). This mobilization is essential in a society grappling with systemic challenges, as it fosters a sense of collective responsibility and agency among individuals. By using satire to highlight societal injustices, playwrights empower audiences to recognize their power as agents of change, urging them to take action against oppression and inequality.

Synopsis of *Our Son The Minister*

Our Son The Minister is a political satire bothering on corruption, and quest to usurp political positions for self-gratification. The play revolves around Makoji, who has been nominated for a ministerial appointment in the federation. It begins with a feast arranged by Alemuna, the mother of Makoji known as Mama and the presence of other guests. The plot develops with series of pandemonium, chaos and tussle from Imaji, Makoji's bossom friend and family members as they claim rights of ownership and positions to attain in the would-be minsters reign. The family is indeed power drunk and hence, reasoning is extinct while greed and selfishness has become the order of the day. Makoji seeing these escapades from his family and foreseeing the impending doom lurking to frustrate his reign, he declines the nomination on the day of his swearing in ceremony. This creates more complications as the family is agog by his decision. They call him mad and try all they could to bring him back to "their world of sanity". Every efforts and methodologies to restore the health of the acclaimed mental health of the Minster seems futile. With wisdom, Makoji declares to accept the ways of his family just to be freed from the chair he was tied. Upon his freedom, he declares to be

alone and sent everybody to go apart from his family. He declares to stand alone and be insane in the eyes of insane people who claimed to be sane. He concludes thus, "family ties are what is stopping me from driving you all out of my house. I have your transport fares ready if you want to leave. But if you must stay, you must be ready to support me in nation building. Remember. It is no longer business as usual!" (145).

Satirical innuendos in *Our Son The Minister*

The play is preoccupied with issues of corruption, oppression and social injustice as well as the need for a revolutionary measure to curb these vices in our society. As we can see very conspicuously in the play, the family and friend of Makoji who are symbolic representations of political leaders of different sectors, manifest individually and collectively as failures to a supposed organized system of government. These people who are supposed to engross themselves in the business of supporting the would-be minister to provide basic amenities to their communities are more interested in pursuing personal gains. They contribute to the poverty of their subjects by engaging themselves in ways through which the people's sufferings will linger. In the literature review, we noted that leadership problem often arises when a leader does not conform to the needs of the led. The following analysis will attempt to examine those factors that engender bad leadership and corruption as espoused in *Our Son the Minister*.

One of the first issues tackled in the play is the idea that a leader's background has a lot to do with the shaping of his character. By leaders in this play and context, we mean the different members of Makoji's family and friends. Their background of suffering and poverty wouldn't let them to think of the good of the people rather their own selves. This is evident in the character of Mama:

> **MAMA**: …do you want to spoil my day? Ehn? Is this the reward I will get for selling my jewellery to send you to school and wearing only one wrapper throughout your university days?
>
> **MAKOJI**: All right! All right Mama! I don't want to hear that again!
>
> **MAMA**: … how I packed sawdust at Ire Akari sawmill to buy just a mudu of garri for you to take to school and how… (Ugbede 10)

The conversation above explains why these leaders today must engage in subversion and embezzlement of public funds. They see political positions as a means to recover from their loses and cover up for the years of suffering. Through the character of Mama, we see a leader ready to chart away and do whatever it takes to remain in power for enrichment and personal gratification, hence, she yells at Makoji when he reacted to the amount of money she spends on her guests:

> **MAMA**: Why are you shouting? Hey! This boy! I hope you will not be a stingy Minister o! What do you think two hundred and fifty thousand is? Two hundred and fifty million? …I am your mother and I have suffered enough. This is my time to enjoy! Leave me let me enjoy o Egbo? (8)

In this play, we find out that the people are diverse mix, and have different opinions. Most of them feel they could achieve what they want through the instrumentality of their family and friend ties. In Nigeria, there is mutual distrust and rivalry among all the federating regions. This has equally fostered a leadership that is defined essentially on ethnic, geographic and religious cleavages. The portrayal of Makoji's family members and friends as power-hungry individuals who see his potential ministerial appointment as an opportunity for personal enrichment rather than public service serves as a scathing satire of the common problem of Nigerian politicians who are more concerned with amassing wealth and influence than with serving the interests of the people. This is exemplified in Mama's demands that Makoji use his position to "enjoy" and "let her enjoy" after the sacrifices she claims to have made to send him to school. The playwright uses exaggeration and absurdity to highlight the sense of entitlement and lack of selflessness among the political elite. This is buttressed in the excerpt below:

> **ABUTU**: You cannot command me O! I am grateful you showed me the way here but that's where the gratefulness end o! Makoji is as much as my son as he is yours o! We are both his fathers!

> **AUNTY**: (laughs mockingly) BLOOOD OF JEESSSUSSSS! Scatter them! Don't let them gather! Scatter them!
> **UNCLE**: Makoji let us go…
> **MAMA**: Is the information so confidential that you can't say it in all our presence?
> **UNCLE**: Heh! Alemuna! This is none of your business! When you went in to make your evil plans with your sister, did I stop you? (Ugbede 46-47)

This conversation was part of the build up to the crux of the play. In their rivalry and quest for ownership, each according to their desire and selfish interest, begins to appoint assistants to the Minister and giving out appointments to people without proper scrutiny just based on sentiments and personal interests. The rivalry and distrust among the different family members and factions, each vying for positions and contracts, satirizes the divisive ethnic and regional politics that have plagued Nigeria's leadership. The playwright shows how these primordial loyalties and competing interests undermine the possibility of collective action for the common good, as each group seeks to maximize its own share of the spoils of power. This reflects the broader problem of mutual suspicion and lack of national unity that has hindered effective governance in Nigeria.

The scenarios portrayed in this play are sincere reflections of what plays out in the Nigerian political landscape where appointments and contracts are given to family members and close associates instead of credible individuals. Another area explicated in this play other than embezzlement is selfishness. Selfishness parades in all the characters except for Makoji who refuses to be stained by the filth and dirt of his family's selfishness. In buttressing this, the lines of Uncle on initiating a new building plan and why he gave the contract to his son is made vital to this assertion;

> **UNCLE**: All right, I gave it to my son!
> **AUNTY**: [To Mama] I warned you, didn't I? This is just the beginning!
> **UNCLE**: keep out of this! Is something wrong with what I did? It is good we keep the money in the family. Elsewhere, that is how it is done. Empower your family. Give them contracts. That way, they leave you alone to do your assignment (Ugbede 51).

In lieu of the above, Imaji also has this to say,

> **IMAJI**: I have five thousand people waiting to skin me alive if I don't pay them! My position as the personal assistance to the Minister is at stake! You see? We all have something at stake. But if we don't keep quiet and think, what we will want will slip through our fingers… that will be disastrous… we can't afford to lose… not now that we are this close
> **ALL**: God forbid! (Ugbede 67-68).

This means that the issue of corruption transcends the political terrains of the political leaders. It equally transcends the political hegemony of the leaders because with their political hegemony and tendencies they no longer do anything for the state rather they do more for their personal interests. Suffice to mention that our political elites desire public positions not because they desire to transform society for the good of the masses. Rather their desires are self-centred. Suffices to mention also that this is how the political elites in contemporary Nigeria pre-occupy themselves with kleptomaniac proclivities. This is the reason for the choice of the play under discourse. From the foregoing, Mbachaga argues that, "the theme of corruption is a dominant topic on the lips of all and sundry and from the peasant and the oppressed" (28).

It is pertinent to note that corruption has eaten deep in all the facets of human endeavour; politics, tradition, religion and even in the family that it has gone into the heads of private individuals. One sees a young man who should be kicking against this social vices being encouraged to propagate it. Ironically, despite the criticism by various scholars at various leadership epochs in Nigeria on the issue of corruption, the leaders still turn deaf ears as they continue to relish corruption at the expense of national development.

Consequently, Ugbede's *Our Son the Minister* treats the issue of a corrupt polity and leadership in not just Nigeria, but in Africa at large. The play highlights the situation in a democratic government, it

reveals that of greedy perverse people who would usurp a nation wealth once they taste a pitch of leadership position. The play also informs us that the characters from a poor background as effectively communicated by Mama who tells Makoji of how she suffered in poverty to send him to school, are prone to be easily affected by corruption when stand finally stand privileged. However, this poor background of the character motivates their corrupt actions and propels them with greed without considering the masses. Mama emphatically reiterate when she told Makoji, "I am your mother and I have suffered enough. This is my time to enjoy! Leave me let me enjoy O! Egbo?" (Ugbede 8). Mama also buttress her background as a reason why her son should not decline the ministerial appointment as she describes it as sugar, "Hei! Baba Makoji! Baba Makoji are you you sleeping? Are you watching my enemies take away sugar from my mouth? (Ugbede 64).

Obviously, the leaders in *Our Son the Minister* thrive on perverse brutality, deriving pleasure from their torture. Perhaps, the playwright intends to shock the people of Nigeria out of their mechanical complacency into action against such corrupt and insensitive leadership. This is well crafted in the line of Makoji addressing his people,

> **MAKOJI**: You, you and you! Those of you who tie me up into your fantasy, those of you, wolves and charlatans, who eat my flesh and drink my carcas, those of you who expect me to gratify your selfish minority interests to the detriment of the majority! Those of you, family, friends, well-wishers, whose parochial interests prevent you from seeing the picture! You are my enemy. (Ugbede 87)

The lust for power, greed and selfishness precipitates the theme of leadership in *Our Son the Minister,* we view a situation in *Our Son the Minister* in act four, scene one as the same people who claim to have strong religious (Christian) background collectively agreed and support fetishism in the acclaimed treatment of the minister (109-122). The family's willingness to resort to fetishism and superstition to manipulate Makoji's appointment satirizes the blending of the spiritual and political realms for selfish ends. This reflects the broader problem of the erosion of traditional values and the instrumentalization of cultural and religious practices for political gain, rather than their genuine application for the benefit of the community. *Our Son the Minister* is apt in its expositions of bad leaderships, corruption and its manifestations in Nigeria, through its character's follies, actions and decisions. Makoji gives us a vivid insight into the futility of looking for short term solutions or alien political systems to apply to our problem of corruption and leadership. The First Medium at the end of the quest is in Makoji admonishes the people thus;

> Today I stand here as a minister of the Federal Republic, and I stand here in shame. Not because I am not worthy, but because your greed and selfish interest continues to reach far beyond me and it is choking me in the process. I look at you and I see wolves, monkeys and baboons, who only want the bunch of bananas for themselves not minding whether the next person has one. I see the reason why those before me failed; because of personal interest they must gratify.... While under incarceration, I thought and thought. I asked myself, 'Makoji, how best can you serve your people?' Then the answer came in a flash... (Ugbede 138-139)

In these lines above, Ugbede gives us insight into the need for self-examination and self-discovery by our leaders. Instead of trying to locate the root of our failed leadership in the West of some systemic failure, he identifies the individual political leader as the starting point. He appears to rather places the blame and responsibility sorely on the foot of the indigenous political leaders. Ugbede concludes by suggesting some of the unique features that nurtures good leadership with the character of Makoji. It is evident that the playwright prescribe the ideal of a home grown solution to the nation's question of corruption and leadership.

The deduction from the above is that the play offers us vivid reflections of the culpability of both the ruling class and the followership in the crisis of leadership that has bugged the nation down. Makoji's final rejection of his family's demands and his resolve to "stand alone" as an "insane" person among the "insane" satirizes the difficulty of maintaining integrity and principle in the face of widespread corruption and moral decay in Nigerian politics. The playwright uses this as a commentary on the immense personal and professional costs that individuals who refuse to compromise their values must bear in a system that rewards greed and self-interest.

The playwright's use of exaggeration, hyperbole, and absurdist elements in portraying the family's bizarre behaviour satirizes the extreme and irrational nature of the political class' pursuit of power and wealth at the expense of the public good. This serves to highlight the sheer ridiculousness and lack of rationality that often characterizes the actions of Nigeria's political elite, while also drawing attention to the grave consequences of such behavior for the broader society. Overall, the play's extensive use of satire as a tool for social and political critique reflects the playwright's desire to expose the deep-seated issues of corruption, greed, ethnic divisions, and lack of selfless leadership that have plagued Nigeria's political landscape. By employing humor, irony, and exaggeration, the play challenges the audience to confront the uncomfortable truths about their society and the urgent need for reform.

CONCLUSION

Paul Ugbede's *Our Son the Minister* has demonstrated the profound impact of satire in Nigerian drama, underscoring its ability to expose the deep-seated issues of corruption, greed, and the abuse of power that have plagued the nation's political landscape. Through the playwright's skillful use of humor, irony, and exaggeration, the play offers a scathing critique of the behavior and motivations of the political elite, challenging the audience to confront the uncomfortable truths about their society. The study has highlighted the multifaceted nature of satire in Nigerian drama, revealing its capacity to not only entertain but also provoke critical thought and inspire social change. By tracing the historical roots of the genre and examining the work of prominent playwrights, the paper has illuminated the ways in which satire has evolved as a powerful tool for cultural commentary and political dissent.

Our analysis of *Our Son the Minister* has revealed the playwright's keen understanding of the complexities of Nigerian politics, as well as his ability to distill these issues into accessible narratives that resonate with the audience. The play's use of satire to address themes of corruption, nepotism, and the erosion of traditional values serves as a testament to the enduring relevance of the genre in the face of ongoing sociopolitical challenges. The paper has also highlighted the ways in which satire in Nigerian drama serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a catalyst for social change. By addressing pressing issues and challenging societal norms, satirical content encourages audiences to engage with their reality and consider their roles in shaping the future. The power of satire lies in its ability to provoke thought, inspire dialogue, and foster critical engagement with social issues.

This study has also demonstrated the vital role of satire in sharpening Nigerian drama as a tool for protest and revolution against bad governance by highlighting its capacity to hold leaders accountable, foster public discourse, and inspire collective action towards a more just and equitable society. As the nation continues to grapple with the legacies of colonialism and the persistent challenges of governance, the power of satire remains a crucial tool for artists, activists, and citizens alike in their pursuit of a better future. The analysis of *Our Son the Minister* has shown how satire can be employed to expose the absurdities and contradictions inherent in Nigeria's political system, encouraging audiences to recognize the urgent need for reform. By using humor and exaggeration to highlight the greed, selfishness, and lack of integrity that characterize the behavior of the political elite, the playwright invites the audience to reflect on their own complicity in perpetuating these societal ills.

The play's extensive use of satire as a tool for social and political critique reflects the playwright's desire to expose the deep-seated issues of corruption, greed, ethnic divisions, and lack of selfless leadership that have plagued Nigeria's political landscape. By employing humor, irony, and exaggeration, the play challenges the audience to confront the uncomfortable truths about their society and the urgent need for reform. Through this comprehensive analysis, the paper aims to contribute to the scholarly understanding of the role of satire in Nigerian drama, highlighting its significance as a tool for social and political critique. By exploring the ways in which Ugbede's play engages with the pressing issues of corruption and leadership in Nigeria, the study underscores the enduring relevance of satire as a powerful medium for cultural and artistic expression.

Works Cited

Akinwumi, Adebayo. "Satirical Perspectives in Nigerian Theatre." *Journal of African Literature*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2019, pp. 43-56.

Alabi, Amina B. "Colonial Legacy and Satire in Nigerian Drama." *African Drama: A Critical Survey*, 2nd ed., edited by O. E. Okunoye, Lagos University Press, 2021, pp. 110-130.

Green, Jonathan. *The History of Satire: From Antiquity to the Modern Age*. Routledge, 2015.
Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*. Routledge, 1985.
Jeyifo, Biodun. *The Politics of Literary Culture in Nigeria*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.
Jeyifo, Biodun. "The Political Theater of Wole Soyinka." *Nigerian Literary Perspectives*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2017, pp. 70-85.
Lotz, Amanda D. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. New York University Press, 2007.
McLuhan, Eric. *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century.* Oxford University Press, 1989.
McPherson, Mark J. *The Politics of Satire: A Study of Contemporary Media and Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
Nwankwo, Chinyere. *Gender and Society in Nigerian Literature*. African Books Collective, 2015.
Nwodo, Chinyere. "The Role of Satire in Nigerian Drama." *African Theatre Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2022, pp. 195-210.
Ogunleye, Adebayo A. *Satire and Social Commentary in Nigerian Theatre*. University of Lagos Press, 2014.
Olukotun, Ayo. *Democracy and the Politics of Governance in Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
Oredola, Temitope. "Absurdity and Governance in Femi Osofisan's Works." *African Drama and Politics*, edited by I. M. Ndibe, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 127-145.
Osofisan, Femi. *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
Richards, David A. J. *Rhetoric and Ethics in the Public Sphere: A Study of Contemporary Satire.* Cambridge University Press, 2018.
Rotimi, Ola. *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Longman, 1971.
Soyinka, Wole. *A Dance of the Forests*. Oxford University Press, 1963.
Vowell, Sarah. *Assassination Vacation*. Simon & Schuster, 2005.