



Satire as Postcolonial Critique: National Disillusionment and Rhetoric in Chuma Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija Volume 2*

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Abstract. This paper interrogates satire as a tool of postcolonial critique in Chuma Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija Volume 2*. By situating satire within African literary traditions from oral to contemporary forms, the study examines how Nwokolo employs humour, irony, and parody to expose societal dysfunctions in Nigeria. Drawing on postcolonial and rhetorical theories, the paper foregrounds satire as both a literary and socio-political weapon for addressing issues of religious hypocrisy, materialism, corruption, and national disillusionment. Through close readings of selected short stories such as "Godforaday", "Re-vision", "Tansi & Banker", and "We Have Been Paid to Kill You", the study highlights Nwokolo's strategies in depicting the contradictions of modern Nigerian society. These narratives ridicule the excesses of politicians, clergy, and everyday citizens, revealing how institutional and individual corruption intersects with social inequality. The analysis underscores satire as a corrective and purgative force, reflecting the tradition of African writers who deploy literature as a social conscience. Ultimately, Nwokolo's satirical art exemplifies how postcolonial writers interrogate failed leadership, cultural disillusionment, and moral decay, while reinforcing the enduring role of literature in shaping public discourse and national self-examination.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Satire, Rhetoric, Disillusionment, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Virtually all literary works in the three genres have a common feature, which is the ability to adapt to the three primary and oldest theories, namely, Mimetic, Pragmatic and Expressive theories. In classical times, a scholar like Plato saw art as a dangerous craft filled with deception, psychologically destabilising and immoral. He saw it as a threat to the common good.

However, contrary to Plato's opinion, his famous student, Aristotle, disagrees with Plato on the grounds that art was essentially mimesis. He maintains that art was neither dangerous nor psychologically draining but rather a reflection of human society and was beneficial and natural. Art portrays true reality and serves as a purge, which he calls "Catharsis". These views bring us to the idea of pragmatics by Horace and its impact on the audience. To Horace, art serves as a tool for instruction and a lesson to the audience through the mimicking of human life. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a shift from the focus on the audience in the creation of literary works, attention was drawn to the artist and his internal feelings, state of mind, became the major subject of his art and not the audience or reader. It became artist-oriented. This created a sudden interest in the description of the artist's craft and his expressive perspectives to interpret the artist's text. From the discourse above, there is an underpinning of the mimetic, pragmatic and expressive theories to the interpretation of literary works of art as a mimetic of reality. Still, the pragmatic effect is important as well as the psychological state of the artist during the production of texts. Nwokolo's collection of short stories embodies these three important aspects of literary criticism.

Literary texts reflect a slice of life as an imitation of reality, their utility value and the expression of the writers through tools. This also applies to literature in Africa, as most African works adhere to the dictum "Art for life's sake" and not Oscar Wilde's idea of "Art for Art's sake", which is based on the philosophical idea that sees the inherent value of art, which is devoid of any utilitarian value. In the reflection of reality in a fictional manner, these writers in their works reflect the positives and negatives in society and see themselves as the eyes of society and make expository commentaries about human strengths and foibles. This brings us to the discourse about satire and its

importance to society. Abraham and Greenbalt (1999) see satire as “the literary art diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it an attitude of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation... satire derides, that is, it uses laughter as a weapon”(p. 275). Akingbe (2014) defines satire as “the act of using humour or exaggeration to critique society” (p. 183). In the words of Adeoti, Satire is a socially sanctioned medium of expressing the communal purgative will (2000, p. 162). The satirist is often portrayed as a champion of shared social values and moral standards. This perception has led some scholars to distinguish between true satire and what they consider mere lampoon or mockery. In this framework, a lampoon is seen as a caricature that depends more on creative exaggeration than on careful critique. In contrast, satire is thought to avoid crude insults, instead achieving its impact with subtlety and precision- what the 18th century English satirist John Dryden describes as the “fitness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place” (pp. 22-23). Ngugi (1972) notes that the satire conceives the whole society as an existing sphere for criticism and that “the satirist sets himself certain standards and criticises society when and where it departs from these norms.” (p. 55). Hence, the satirist is like an overseer and evaluator of the compass of society. Reiterating the usefulness of satire in the Nigerian society, Okwechime (2024) informs that “whenever there is bad governance, the appropriate tool for a literary explication is satire” (p. 5).

Satire in Nigeria has been in existence in its oral form in the forms of mockery and ridicule using songs, mimes in performances. Satires were used to call to mind the excesses of individuals and groups in various societies. For instance, the Yoruba tribe is rich in satirical songs such as the arungbe song, Okorobo song, etiyen song and gelede songs. (Oladunke, 2024). Through performances, gesticulations, refrains, onomatopoeia, repetition, call and response, the Umuada satirical songs of the Igbo tribes are expressed. These songs thematised laziness, failure in civic responsibility, sexual immorality, pretence and hypocrisy used to ridicule and expose folly. (Emelonye & Udogu, 2021). The Udje songs of the Urhobos are another art which is rich in satirical elements.

With the emergence of literacy into Africa, through the missionary and the colonial masters, Nigerians began to adopt the language, style and orthography of the British in their literature. This was primarily due to the establishment of secondary schools and the University. The college in Ibadan was then a satellite campus of the University of London. Pre an independent

Nigerian society, it began to adopt satire in its interrogation of the colonial hegemony, as well as the consequences that ensued in the prejudicial clash between the culture of the West and the Nigerian state. (Oghajafor, 2024). The pioneer poets were Dennis Osadebay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Osadebay's collection of poems titled *Africa Sings* (1952) dwells on themes relating to the status of black Africans in colonies in Africa and the injustices in these societies. Osadebay's most famous poem, “Young Africa's Plea”, glorifies African values and beliefs, while rejecting, criticising and satirising European notions like racial prejudice. The first-generation writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Clark, Okara, and Okigbo dwelled on the portrayal of the pre-colonial era by glorifying the African continent in its pure state and the colonial era, where poets interrogated the negative effects of colonialism and moved towards decolonisation. Like the pioneer poets, their earlier works before independence dwelt on the Afrocentric temper in refuting the prejudicial European claims about the African continent. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents an Afrocentric perspective of the pre-colonial Igbo life and exposes the negativity in the coming of the British. Soyinka's “Telephone Conversation” satirises the inherent racism faced by blacks in Europe and does this through a dramatic monologue using tools of mockery and sarcasm. These Nigerian writers used satire as a significant tool to call out the excesses of the colonialists. After independence, these first-generation writers continued to use their literary works to discuss the negative effects of colonialism on the newly independent states in Africa. Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) discusses the excesses of the British and sees colonialism as a knife that severs the unity in pure, undiluted African societies. The Folk Opera coincided with the first-generation writers and was usually looked upon as a sort of popular entertainment which treated any topics from social satires, biblical stories and political events to historical tragedies. Hubert Ogunde's is the foremost among a vast number of travelling theatre companies. His theatre shows the influence of Western dramatic modes combined with the “Alarinjo theatre”. The Egungun and Gelede, masquerades and the music traditions of the different kingdoms in Yoruba land exercised a great deal of influence. Ogunde's theatre reflected the modes of the people of Western Nigeria between 1946 and 1966. Kola Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, Baba Sada, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo were popular owners of travelling theatre companies. The first-generation writers acknowledged that writing about colonialism and its negatives would wear out since most African nations had attained independence, especially Nigeria. They saw the need to shift their focus to the newly independent nation and make new strides in the

nation's development. Soyinka advises that "the African writer needs an urgent release from the fascination of the past if he has to fulfil his function as the record of mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time" (Soyinka, 1966, 138-9). Achebe (1967) shares the same idea as Soyinka, as he reveals that the African writer's burden was to "express our thoughts and feelings, even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say will be taken as evidence against our race. The problem of post-independence Africa lies with us and not Europe" (p. 13). Hence, Soyinka and Achebe portray the newly independent Nigeria as imperfect. They are ready to show the lopsidedness in its growth and development, as continuous discussions about colonialism and its harmful effects on the continent have become stale and outdated. Their suggestions call for the self-evaluation of Africa by itself and not from external forces. The novels and plays produced in the 1960s and 70s focused on the changing Nigerian society, fraught with political corruption, dictatorial leadership, oppression, and deteriorating economic status. Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) satirises the extent of corruption in the newly established civil service commission and the challenges of being a modern Nigerian. His novel, *A Man of the People* (1966) satirises the in-depth rate of corruption that bedevilled Nigeria's First Republic through Chief Nanga and its collapse as a result of a coup. Cyprian Ekwensi is another novelist whose works exposed aspects of the Nigerian society that were not admirable. His *People of the City* (1954) satirises the harsh realities of Lagos life filled with dangerous ambition, materialism, capitalism and corruption of the urban life on individuals. *Jagua Nana* (1961) also satirises the rate of prostitution in a newly independent state, which equivocally exposes the materialism of the city residents. Soyinka's plays and novels also depict ills in society. Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (1965) calls to mind the exploration of sheer disillusionment and deep frustration of young intellectuals struggling with the new socio-political realities of a newly independent African nation. *Kongi's Harvest* (1967) is a play that critiques the ambitions and character of a vicious victim, Kongi and incessant levels of corruption and abuse of power. *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) satirises religious hypocrisy and opportunism present in post-independent Nigeria. T.M. Aluko is another notable novelist whose *Chief, the Honourable Minister* (1970) satirises the calamity of political corruption resulting from a schoolmaster's appointment as minister of works in a newly independent African society.

The second generation of writers witnessed the aftermath of the civil war, successive coups leading to

political instability, anarchy, and a decline in the country's economic status. Contrary to the first-generation poets who were seen as being too concerned with explicating the African continent to the Western World, the second-generation writers were concerned with explaining Africa to Africans and exposing its pitfalls. They also introduced ideological and sociological issues that occupy central positions in their works, such as successive Nigerian governments' irresponsibility, Nigerian feminism, Marxism, Nigerian civil war, and the military dictatorship. Through the adoption of the Marxist ideology of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, the second-generation writers, moved for the creation of an egalitarian society which is devoid of oppression, dictatorships, poverty, and exploitation of the masses, who are always at the receiving end of these brutal military regimes. They also see themselves as vessels whose duties are to shatter the gigantic floors of subjugation, self-centredness built to entrap the weak in society. The most powerful strategy of the Alter-Native Tradition is the projection of the Carnavalesque spectacle, where the very common activities or performances by ordinary people, often disregarded as non-subject in poetry, acquire poetic values mainly because they dramatise more vividly the much theorised paradigm shift. (Egya, 2019). These were achieved through the use of ridicule for the oppressors and gestures that were mockery in nature. Second generation radical playwrights such as Kole Omotosho, Femi Osofisan and Niyi Osundare have used their plays to satirise the excesses of the political classes in the Nigerian society. Osundare's *The State Visit* (2002), Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel* (2003) and Omotoso's *The Curse* (1976), *The Scales* (1976), Olu Obafemi's *Night of the Myth and Beast* (1986), Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Hands that Crush Stones* (2010), Tess Onwueme's *Tell it to Women* (1992), Felicia Onyewadume's *Echoes of Hard Times* (1996) are satirical in nature. In the poetry genre, poets such as Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Odia Ofeimun, Ibiwari Ikoriko, Funso Aiyejina, Nmimmo Basse, Idris Amali have used their poems to create awareness about social injustice, marginalisation of the lower classes in society and disparities in the society. Osundare's *Village Voices* (1984), *Songs of the Market Place* (1983), Ojaide's *The Fate of Vultures* (1990), Amali's *Generals Without War* (2001), *Back Again at the Foothills of Greed* (2014) satirise the civilian and military regimes in Nigeria and through the use of warnings, impending revolutions challenge them and are resilient in tone.

The third-generation poets majorly employ the use of satire in the portrayal of societal ills, and also adopt the Marxist style of the second-generation poets. They

ridicule the oppressors through the form of pun, sarcasm. In style, they are abusive, assertive, combative, confrontational, defiant, forceful, fearless and penetrative. Some notable third generation satirists include Afam Akeh, Olu Oguibe, Charles Bodunde, Esiaba Irobi, Remi Raji, Usman Shehu, Stephen Kekeghe, Kola Eke, etc. Notable third generation dramatists have produced plays that satirise the Nigerian political class. Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* (2006), Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* (2003), Alex Omoni's *The Ugly Ones* (2011), Peter Omoko's *The Mudskippers* (2021), Austine Anigala's *Drops of Rotten Deals* (2019), Wumi Raji's *Another Life* (2013), Sam Ukala's *The Placenta of Death* (1998), Kekeghe's *Broken Edges* (2003) satirise different spheres of Nigerian society to bring about a desired change. Prose fiction is not left out in the classification as third generation prose writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jumoke Verissimo, Akwaeke Emezi, Helon Habila, etc. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* exposes the dangers of a dictatorial regime and the effects on the oppressed and helpless citizens in Nigeria. Verissimo's *A Small Silence* highlights the traumatic experiences of an activist and his return into a dilapidating and disillusioned society in need of rapid change.

From the survey of literary works in this study, there is a notable absence of the short story prose genre in the study of satire. Most literary and critical works are focused on the drama and poetry genres. This may be as a result of the technicalities involved in the production of plays and poems. Dramatic techniques and poetic devices foreground the ideas of the satire. That is not to say that prose texts are not satiric in nature. Hence, the study analyses how satire is employed in Chuma Nwokolo's collection of short stories, *How to Spell Naija Volume 2* to reflect and challenge national issues. *How to Spell Naija* informs the expectation of the reader or critic, as it presents layers of society and satirises these foibles. Four short stories have been selected to discuss the evidence of satiric elements in the Nigerian contemporary stories. Also, the study also explores Nwokolo's unique style in achieving his satiric endeavour.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the postcolonial and rhetorical theory. The choice of this theory stems from the necessity to portray the Nigerian society's metamorphosis from an independent nation, which was amalgamated in 1914 to form Nigeria, to a country which has celebrated a century in its merger. Also, in exploring Nwokolo's collection of short stories, it is pertinent to pay rapt attention to the modes of

expression and the craft the writer deploys. Most texts written in Nigeria, after independence, as earlier stated, focused on the socio-political, economic issues ranging from dictatorial leadership, civil war, deteriorating economy, poor leadership, endemic poverty and oppression. However, Nwokolo has gone beyond the stereotype and has focused on the day-to-day life experiences of Nigerians, which he documents in short stories. There is a shift from the status quo to the foibles of everyday people. The rhetoric theory accounts for the satirical elements in the texts, which are pragmatic in nature. Fidalgo (2008) points out that the Greek word "retorike" involves a relationship between the speaker 'retor' and rhetoric (public discourse, eloquence), and encompasses oratory art and its discipline. Rhetoric theory involves the study of the strategies, methods literary artists use to communicate, inform, and entertain their audiences. It involves deliberate choices in style expressions to achieve certain goals. Navarro (2011) informs that rhetoric originated around 465BC in ancient Greece. Since the late 1950s, there has been a strong revival of interest in literature as a mode of communication from author to reader, and this has led to the development of a rhetorical criticism which without departing from a primary focus on the literary work itself, undertakes to identify and analyse the elements within a poem or a prose narrative which are there primarily to effect certain responses in a reader (Abrams p. 312). Kenneth Burke's approach moves beyond traditional Aristotelian rhetoric, focusing instead on identification, symbolic action, and motives behind language use. Burke believes that "rhetorical analysis throws light on literary texts and human relations generally". He defines rhetoric as the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. He further states that literature, characters and readers identify with motives, values, and situations, creating rhetorical effects. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1995, p. 11) explain that "the idea of postcolonial literary theory emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of postcolonial writing" For Ashcroft et al., Postcolonialism presents and explores the conditions of colonised states and engages concerned notions about them. It involves studying to understand and analyse works from the former colonies of Europe. Postcolonialism involves the psychological, physical, and cultural effects of the contact between the colonisers and the colonised. It also highlights the recurrent and novel cultural issues faced in the newly formed independent colonised state. (Balogun 2014, Irobi 2008)

3. Satirical Discourse and the Nigerian Societal Condition in Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija 2*

3.1 Religious Hypocrisy, Blasphemy and Materialism in Contemporary Nigerian Society

In the short story "Godforaday", Nwokolo bestows on Godfrey the status of a god who can hear the thoughts of every living creature, ranging from humans to animals. By doing so, Nwokolo satirises the hidden deceptions in humans. In the short story, Godfrey, through his psychic abilities, discovers Dolapo's extramarital affairs with Tosin's wife as he thinks about the fact that Dolapo might find out. At the same time, Tosin hides his infidelity from his wife, as he impregnates his wife's sister. Nwokolo, in the short story, reveals the ridiculous prayer petitions of most Nigerians, as these petitions include needs and wants that could easily be provided by a stable government and companies. These needs are being brought before the Almighty God and not the government, whose duties are to provide a decent living for the citizens of Nigeria. Nwokolo also reveals the fanaticism of Nigerians in relation to religious life. He reveals: "The voices and those of several hundred souls rose from that prayer ground in the middle of that working day with such vehemence that he staggered and held on to a convenient electric pole until he mastered himself" (p. 38). The excerpt reveals the failures of the Nigerian government. It foregrounds the gross neglect of the Nigerian citizens in that the amenities which are basic in most first and second world countries with significant economies. Godfrey reveals the thoughts and petitions of more congregants in the story to reveal the social realities of most Nigerians who see religion as a way out of their societal predicament and not for the salvation of their souls. This validates Karl Marx's assertion that "religion is the opium of the masses". Nwokolo expresses these through informal, raw, humorous, distinctive intonations and repetition to mirror the desperation, materialism, and misplaced spirituality that characterise the prayers of some Nigerian Christians. These are seen in the extract below:

*Jizuzmybossisgood!
Promotehimtoheaven!
gimmehisjoblord!*

*allthe cattle
andthecars
andthehouses
onathousandhillsareyourslord!
gimmegimmegimmethemnow!
Oya
LetusreasontogetheroGod*

*whathaveIdonetoyou?
30yearsasachurchworker! thirtyhoursaweek!
&I'mstillapauper!
ifIpentthattimeatworkIknowwhatIwillbetoday!
saveyournamefromdisgraceoGod!*

*gimmemoneynowgimmemoneynow
nownownowgimmemoneynow*

*Jesus!makemerich!
I'llgiveeverythingtocharity!
TrymeandseeoGod! (pp. 40-41)*

Through the use of exaggerated petitions and conversational tone, the extract presents a critical commentary on how religious devotion is often driven by self-interest rather than genuine faith. Nwokolo's choice of language is unrefined, colloquial, and spontaneous, resembling the unfiltered thoughts or inner voices of worshippers, which Godfrey hears at all times. The congregants mimic the casual and impatient tone of people who approach prayer as a transactional dialogue with God rather than a solemn act of faith. Nwokolo is deliberate in his non-usage of punctuation and run-together words to reflect emotional urgency and thoughtlessness, thereby emphasising the raw desperation that fuels such prayers. The author employs irony and humour. The humour lies in the contrast between the sacred and the mundane. While the language is directed towards God, the content is shockingly human and self-serving. The expression,

'jesus!makemerich!i'llgiveeverythingtocharity!' is ironic and humorous. The irony here is sharp as the speaker's promise of generosity comes only after personal enrichment, revealing conditional faith. The exaggerated tone provokes laughter but also invites reflection on the hypocrisy and material obsession that have crept into modern worship.

The story also reveals the religious hypocrisy and sheer desperation of some pastors to make their ministries forward through devious and dubious means. This is seen in the General Overseer's sudden recruitment and coaching of Godfrey, a chicken decapitator to be his assistant immediately he discovers his special abilities. He sees Godfrey as a key to enlarging his church ministry. He dismisses every procedure and stage involved in becoming a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, such as the attendance of a liturgical and ministerial school, baptism, and prolonged study of the Holy Bible. Nwokolo reveals:

Godfrey's new job was double the salary and ten times the prestige of a chicken decapitator. After service, he worked with the G.O in air-conditioned offices a dozen

times more luxurious than those of the parsimonious chicken bosses. By 9pm, his own ecclesiastical robe was ready... he was the Head of Department and sole member of the prayer ministry. Godfrey's description of the sudden change in his fortune creates a certain aura of ridiculousness and disbelief (p. 45)

Another story, "Re-visit" portrays religious hypocrisy and blasphemy in the Christian clergy. The Nigerian society in the late twentieth through the twenty-first century has lost count of the number of churches, revival programmes and in some cases, unfortunate exploitation of gullible congregations. The story satirises the unchecked exploitation of Christians for miracles, prophesies and financial blessings through contributions of seeds, tithes and massive offerings. In the story, the Founding Overseer of a modern church stricken with terminal cancer and having a few days to live, confesses to his long years of unconceivable deception of the gullible congregants. He confesses: 'Remember the Night of Revelation, ' he whispered, 'when the spirit lifted me... 'it was all a lie. ' ... There was no scroll. No revelation. It was me. Every time I said "thus saith the Lord... it was a bloody lie!' I tried to die with this secret... you can't imagine...but I had this, O God, this vivid dream! (p. 109)

This revelation affects Gloria's psychological state in the form of grave shock, disbelief. She laments thus: She remembered the hotel room of the revelation... there had been no place for doubt. He had swept her up, it was the biggest thing she had ever seen, it was her life... it was all a lie? She remembered the satellite ministries. At the cost of millions of Naira, the services of the Assembly's men and women of God went out daily via radio and television for millions of homes across the world. Millions of Naira in donations poured in daily, to preach the words of the revelation.... It was all a lie? (p. 111)

In the extract above, Gloria, just like other members of the church, becomes a victim of her husband's religious deception and feels scorned for being the wife of a deceptive clergyman. She reveals: "For the rest of her natural life, and for the rest of her recorded history, people would be analysing all her recorded 'performances', deriding her hubris, condemning her hypocrisy (p. 113)

Gloria on discovering her husband's hypocrisy leads to emotional trauma, which can further result in rage, as can be seen in the story, where she suffocates him to death in anger. It further leads to an identity crisis as the revelation could lead to the shattering of oneself. It could also lead to the loss of faith, religious

disillusionment, social fallout, and public scrutiny. All these are revealed in Gloria's episode of shock and disbelief.

Another issue Nwokolo reveals in the story is the marginalisation of workers in contemporary Nigerian society. The protagonist in the story "Godfor day" reveals the level of ill-treatment and marginalisation of workers. He exposes the tedious nature of a job as a decapitator as he reveals that he decapitates over three thousand and fifty chickens and how the workers are deprived of breaks until Isa, a staff member, in a dizzy state, cuts off three fingers, which unfortunately makes its way to the house of a Scandinavian diplomat. The issue, though a serious one, Nwokolo uses humour to make the incident seem funny and ridiculous. However, this incident brings about an insignificant change in the welfare of the decapitators, as a meager tea break is approved. This marginalisation not only affects the menial workers but also the administrative staff of the company. This is seen in the retrenchment of the accountant who has now become a security guard at a church. This reveals the disposable nature of the corporate workers. This is caused by the accountant's refusal to work on Sundays as a result of his insistence on attending his church's service. Nwokolo satirises the inconsiderate and neglectful nature and attitudes of some churches toward their dedicated and devoted members. This is seen in the shabby treatment meted out on the accountant who is being offered a job as a security operative despite his huge financial contributions to the church through offerings, tithes and is being mocked at by the Church management. The accountant reveals: "So I told the pastor and he gave me a job here! 'But you are an accountant! You went to University!' 'you see?' he cried piteously, 'But he said my tithes were more than my official salary, and he didn't want an accountant who steals. You see my wahala! I am good for bringing tithes, not managing them. (p. 39).

3.2 Personal and Institutional Corruption in Nigeria

In the post-independent era, corruption in the Nigerian corporate world has risen to a worrisome level. The short story, "Tansi & Banker" depicts the irresponsible and reckless behaviour of an account of a client, Tansi. The story exposes and satires the corruption which takes place in banks. The narrator reveals:

He had taken a loan... it was back in the rash days of youth when his only asset was the friendship with an irresponsible branch manager with whom he had shared the money. Over many plates of Tansi-bought pepper soup, the manager had explained how he had classified the loan as irrecoverable and would "scus' it

off the loans register entirely in a few years. Fake luxurious life “as a fixer to the high and mighty” (p. 85).

The story’s central concern is corruption in institutions and individuals. The bank’s former manager embodies how officials exploit their positions to engage in fraud. Classifying a loan as irrecoverable is symbolic of how corruption becomes normalised within institutions. Tansi himself represents a morally bankrupt citizen who thrives on manipulation and deceit. He willingly participates in the fraudulent loan, and later, instead of facing justice, conspires in another fraud, his own fake death. The story reveals how corruption reproduces itself: the irresponsible bank manager enables Tansi’s fraud; Tansi’s deceit inspires Adole’s own complicity. Everyone becomes morally compromised, highlighting a vicious cycle of dishonesty. It also reveals the rate of get-rich-quick syndrome, where youths devise means to get rich. Tansi’s notoriety for bad loans leads him to take a drastic decision in order to evade the repayment of the loan. The emergence of a new account officer and Branch manager turns his dubious ways around. Thus:

Eventually, in the small house, Adole drafted an obituary poster with Tansi’s face on it. Sometimes before dawn, they taped it solemnly to the front door. Perhaps, within the fortnight, the bailiffs would visit and the bank would get the message to finally write off Tansi’s debt. (p. 86).

The story is a satirical and humorous portrayal of corruption, irresponsibility, and the culture of deceit that pervades some aspects of Nigerian society. Through the character of Tansi, Nwokolo exposes how individuals and institutions are entangled in moral decay, where corruption, greed, and image-consciousness often, they override integrity and accountability. Satire is used here as a literary tool to criticise social vices through exaggeration and humour. The story mocks the absurdity of corruption and desperate attempts by people to escape the consequences of their actions. The story further ridicules how Tansi and the bank manager connived to defraud a financial institution. Their behaviour reflects the widespread corruption in Nigeria’s financial sector, where officials misuse their authority for personal gain. The manager’s assurance that he would “classify the loan as irrecoverable and scrub it off the loans register” is a biting satire of institutional rot and lack of accountability.

Furthermore, the story satires the Nigerian bureaucracy and record-keeping system expose their inefficient nature. Despite the corruption and fraud, the bad loan resurfaces a decade later when a “zealous

Redundant Accounts Officer” discovers Tansi’s record. This sudden resurgence mocks how Nigerian institutions often fail to act until a scandal arises or a new officer seeks attention. Nwokolo also reveals the growing nature of social media and public image. This is seen in Tansi’s disgrace as he is “trending for the wrong reasons”, lampooning the obsession with social media validation. Nigerians’ fixation with reputation and online popularity is ridiculed in the story-people care more about what trends than the moral implications of the event. Also, the story reveals the innate nature of desperation and deception. The fake obituary and death certificate demonstrate the extreme deceit people employ to escape consequences. The humour lies in the absurd logic that death could erase debt—a darkly comic reflection on how Nigerians sometimes resort to ridiculous measures to avoid accountability. Nwokolo’s adopts several humorous elements such as irony, hyperbole, dialogue and comic relief. Humour softens the serious tone of corruption and social critique while amplifying its absurdity. The greatest irony is that Tansi, who once flaunted wealth and power, ends up disgraced and hiding in a family bungalow. His downfall is both tragic and comically inevitable. Another ironic twist is his “suicide kind of death”, a fake death that is supposed to restore peace. The storyteller uses expressions like “eye-watering fortune”, “His phone was pinging and reeling and for the first time he was trending” (p.85), heightening the humour through exaggeration, making the scandal both ridiculous and entertaining. Nwokolo has a way of using dialogue and comic relief to downplay the seriousness of the subject matter in his story. Through Adole’s casual tone with reference to Tansi’s fake death this: I am saying the shame killed you... I’m now printing a fake death certificate- strictly for the bailiffs.” (p. 87) This ridiculous confidence in a fraudulent plan exposes the Nigerian knack for improvising deceit with humour and bravado.

Another story, “We Have Been Paid to Kill You” presents a late-night phone conversation between a corrupt public officer, Dr. Pelumi, and a self-proclaimed assassin hired to kill him. Through their exchanges, the author humourously yet powerfully satirises the rottenness of the Nigerian civil service, where greed and mismanagement have led to untold suffering among ordinary citizens, particularly pensioners. Dr. Pelumi embodies systemic corruption driven by greed. His wealth—“twelve billion naira in eighteen accounts” (p. 195) symbolise how public servants exploit their offices at the expense of the masses. The assassin’s knowledge of the sixty-nine thousand pensioners who have not received their pensions ties Pelumi’s private corruption to public suffering. The humour turns dark when we realise that

pensioners actually die in queues in Nigeria. The narrative functions as both a comedy of dialogue and a serious moral allegory, showing that corruption not only destroys the nation's economy but also erodes humanity and conscience. Humour and sarcasm are the story's most striking elements. They create a light, ironic tone that exposes heavy themes like corruption and the death of conscience without turning the narrative into a moral lecture. Nwokolo employs irony and dark humour in the story. There is deep situational irony in the fact that a supposed assassin calls his victim to discuss the logistics of his murder politely. Instead of a tense or fearful exchange, both men engage in witty, sarcastic banter. The banter below explores this exchange:

I can report to the police tomorrow that somebody tried to assassinate me. That they fired into my room. And wounded me. Then I will give it to the newspapers. I can even wear bandage on my head for some weeks. That means you tried, right? So your track record is still good.
Fifty bullets...? Why not kuku make it hundred? What kind of soldier uses fifty bullets to kill a single man, and misses? That's a lie that. (p. 190).

The humour here lies in the absurdity- and assassin and his target arguing about logic, exaggeration and courtesy, as though death is a business transaction. This absurd comedy highlights the normalisation of evil and corruption in Nigerian society. Sarcasm in the story is used as social criticism, as it drives much of the dialogue. Dr. Pelumi's sarcastic remarks: "Are you trying to assassinate me with a heart attack?" (p. 187), "You can call your customer ... You can tell him, or her- or them- that you found out that... that I'm your in-law! And if you kill me your share of my burial expenses will be even more than your balance" (pp. 189-190) reveals his arrogance and moral blindness. He treats a life-and-death situation as a joke, symbolising how Nigerian elites trivialise serious national issues, such as unpaid pensions and suffering retirees. The assassin too uses sarcasm to shame Pelumi's hypocrisy: "You have a reputation as well. A very bad reputation. I am a soldier, not a thief like you" (p.191). From the extract above, the assassin's sarcasm functions as moral irony-a criminal shaming a corrupt official, showing that even those who kill for money may have a stronger conscience than public servants who steal from the poor.

The entire story is built entirely on dialogue, which serves several purposes such as characterisation, conflict, humour and moral exposure. The lack of a narrator makes the reader an eavesdropper in a moral confrontation. Through the use of dialogue, character

personalities are revealed. We see Dr. Pelumi as arrogant, defensive, manipulative, and morally numb. His offers to "retire" the assassin financially show that bribery is his natural response to any threat. Surprisingly, the assassin emerges as strangely principled, guided by conscience rather than greed. His expression: "Everybody has to work according to his conscience, and my conscience is just looking at me up and down now" (p. 192). This makes him a moral mirror reflecting the corruption of the elite. The story's tension lies entirely in their verbal exchanges. The humour and irony of a phone conversation replacing physical violence underscore how words can expose moral decay more effectively than weapons. The story possesses realistic and fast-paced speech full of interruptions, exclamations and rhetorical questions which mirror real Nigerian speech patterns. It keeps the dialogue alive and believable:

*Who paid you to kill me?
That's another mugu question.* (p. 187)

*'Wait, wait, wait! Did I call a guidance counselor by mistake?
Better focus on your life and death!* (p.188)

*'be dreaming there.'
'fifty bullets...? why not kuku make it hundred?'* (p. 190)

My phone credit is almost finished and you're still going round in circles. The solution is chewing chewing-stick and staring at you, but you are just a hypocrite. You are waiting for me to say it for you. Well, good night Dr, Holiness. I'm hanging up and this sim card is going back to the gutter where it came from. Keep yakking till your bullet comes... (p. 191)

The lively exchange captures the streetwise humour and linguistic spontaneity of Nigerian English makes the satire entertaining and authentic. Through the author's use of informal language, pidgin-inflected expressions, and local idioms to reflect Nigerian social realities, the story is accessible to ordinary readers. These conversations reveal everyday Nigerian idiom and give the dialogue cultural authenticity.

4. Conclusion

The study has demonstrated that Nwokolo's *How to Spell Naija volume 2* is more than a collection of humorous tales; it is a serious artistic project that interrogates Nigeria's socio-political and cultural contradictions. By adopting satire as a postcolonial lens, Nwokolo exposes the erosion of moral values, the corruption of public institutions, and the contradictions of religious and political authority. His

stories reveal how ordinary Nigerians internalise and sometimes perpetuate these dysfunctions, thereby reflecting a cycle of complicity. The analysis also illustrates that Nwokolo departs from earlier generations of writers by shifting focus from colonial critique to postcolonial disillusionment, drawing attention to the lived realities of Nigerians in the twenty-first century. Satire, therefore, emerges not merely as entertainment but as a rhetorical strategy that provokes reflection and challenges complacency. It dramatises the gap between national ideals and lived realities, encouraging both laughter and discomfort. In doing so, Nwokolo sustains the tradition of African literature as socially engaged art, one that insists on confronting injustice, exposing hypocrisy, and envisioning possibilities for reform. His work reinforces the view that satire remains an indispensable tool in postcolonial critique and a vital means of rethinking Nigeria's collective destiny.

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