Pun and Politics in the Stand-up Comedy of I Go Dye: A Critical Peep

By

Edward Egbo Imo PhD
Department of Theatre and Film Studies
Faculty of Humanities
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria.
eddygoron@yahoo.com, 08037321863, 09032517024.

Abstract

The study focuses on the socio-political drifts in the jokes of I Go Dye. It documents I Go Dye as one of the most creative and dexterous Nigerian comedians whose jokes, though laced with humour, embody huge socio-political commentaries aimed at chronicling and ridiculing Nigeria's chequered political history. The study establishes humour as a comic device deployed by stand-up comedians to curry immunity from society amidst travesty and ridicule of imposing political figures. The study adopts the qualitative approach to research and the literary methodology with the transcribed jokes of I Go Dye as text. The primary source for data collection is the live performance of I Go Dye in his comedy concert titled *The Game Changer* as recorded in Video Compact Disc (VCD). The major finding of this study is that humour serves as a moderating influence on jokes that would have been hitherto, injurious and offensive. The study also observes that the business of stand-up comedy transcends eliciting laughter from the audience as it serves both sensitization and corrective purposes. Through I Go Dye's jokes, we are able to appreciate the dynamics of Nigeria's political terrain while getting entertained. In this sense, therefore, I Go Dye is portrayed both as a political analyst and critic. The paper strongly recommends the inclusion of stand-up comedy into the secondary and tertiary educational curricula in Nigeria so as to make stand-up comedy an area of specialization. Consistent hosting and sponsorship of stand-up comedy workshops, competitions, etc. by governmental bodies, multinationals and corporate individuals is strongly canvassed. This would, in no small measure, arouse the interest of the teeming population of unemployed Nigerian youths towards stand-up comedy.

Keywords: Stand-up comedy, Humour, Satire, and Politics.

Introduction

Since its inception among the primitive tribes to present times, comedy has always been conceived as a lower art form. The scathing remarks of such classical scholars as Aristotle and Plato on the subject of comedy would influence later scholars who, in turn, relegated the comic art form as a second fiddle when compared to tragedy. For Aristotle, comedy

portrays man as being lower in life (degradation) while Plato takes an extremist position in his castigation of the comic form. Plato ostensibly considers comedy a rather low form of art form that should be an exclusive reserve for slaves. Regardless of the chequered history, and consequently, the shaky theoretical foundation which comedy has inherited, it stands out as a social force by which societal foibles are subjected to pillory. Through the medium of comedy, human eccentricities and unrefined emotions are brought to constant checks. The comic spirit is therefore aimed at evoking an atmosphere laced with the risible, mirth, excitement, reconciliation, marriages and sweet contentment of spirit. It suffices to state also that the laughter which comedy generates is a response as well as punishment unleashed on society for its exhibition of anti-social and deviant behavioural attitudes. Thus, the laughter which we experience in comedy is that which springs from our realization that the object of laughter has deviated from societal conventions, codes or norms.

As a unique comic mode, stand-up comedy is a generous art that combines various comic devices to drive home the comic spirit. The earlier forms of stand-up comedy dwelt largely on verbal humour, wit and sarcasm. But in recent times, stand-up comic performances transcend verbiage as they now entail mechanical rigidity (automatism), exaggerations and farcical representations. At the level of thematic thrust, the content of jokes cracked by earlier stand-up comedians thrive on such domestic issues as uncontrollable libido, body odour, kleptomania, lesbianism, homosexuality, prostitution, jealousy and treachery among others. But in recent times, the themes of politics, racism, religious cleavages, religious hypocrisy, ethnocentrism, youth restiveness, insecurity and gender disparity among others feature prominently in stand-up comedy especially as practiced in Nigeria.

Interestingly, of all the thematic concerns in present day stand-up comedy in Nigeria, the issue of politics is more recurring. The reason for this sense of ideological commitment amongst the comedians is largely as a result of the bleak political history that is attached to the Nigerian state. Since the inception of democracy in May 29, 1999, Nigeria has been confronted with one form of political chicanery or the other. Prior to the institutionalization of democracy, the military leadership in the country seems not to have succeeded in delivering the expected social welfare to the Nigerian citizenry and so the poor masses looked up to democratic governance as the panacea to their malaise. Rather than alleviate the poor living condition of the Nigerian masses, the democratic governments in Nigeria has worsened the standard of living as the masses have been subjected to perpetual fear as a result of wanton destruction of lives and properties by Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, rapid kidnappings and consistent vandalization of oil pipelines by some youths in the Niger Delta region who parade themselves as freedom

fighters, poor power supply, dilapidated road network, inadequate health care delivery and outmoded educational system among others.

It is the anomalies enumerated above that form the raw material for the political satirewhich Nigerianstand-up comics infuse in their jokes. Against this backdrop, the study will undertake a critical examination of the humorous, satirical and political dimensions in I Go Dye's stand up comedy performances as presented in one of his solo comedy shows titled *I Go Dye: The Game Changer*..

Between Humour, Wit and Smut

Our recourse to humour and wit in this paper is anchored on William Hazzlitt's thesis which he titled "Of Wit and Humor". His major concern in this essay is to establish laughter as an exclusive reserve for humans and also to argue that the best laughter is that drawn from the incongruities that characterize human existence. In the essay, Hazlitt declares that the incongruous is "the essence of the laughable" and that "man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are and what they ought to be" (qtd. in Dukore 600). Hazlitt's essay also makes conscious attempt to illuminate the satirical essence of laughter as he argues that human beings laugh at that in their fellow beings which is a serious matter to themselves because man's self-love is stronger than his sympathy. In his analogy, it is only very sensible or very honest people who laugh as freely at their own absurdities as at those of their neighbours. But in general, the contrary holds since man, by nature, "…laughs at those misfortunes in which we are spectators, not sharers" (qtd. in Dukore 604).

He goes further to identify other sources of laughter which emanate from humour and wit to include misunderstandings, keeping in comic character and the pursuit of idle gallantry and uncertain pleasure. In his analogy, misunderstanding (mal-entendus) implies when a person means one thing and another is aiming at something else. This, for him, creates laughter especially when pitched on the principle of ambiguity and contrast. He asserts also that the deep feeling of character strengthens the sense of the ludicrous and that keeping in comic character is consistency in absurdity; "…a determined and laudable attachment to the incongruous…"(605). The thrust of Hazlitt's argument in this thesis is that before we can laugh at a thing, its absurdity must at least be open and palpable to common apprehension. In a bid to distinguish between humour and wit, he defines the former as the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself while the latter is the exposing it by comparing or contrasting it with something else. For him, humour is the growth of nature and accident while wit is the product of art and fancy.

For Freud, jokes can be categorized into two broad groups namely: tendentious and non-tendentious. For him, tendentious jokes are jokes that are aimed at stimulating the hearer's reactions i.e. jokes that are aimed at lampooning societal stereotypes and eccentricities while non-tendentious jokes are designed to serve as an end in itself with little or no aim. He christens such jokes "innocent jokes" rather than "abstract jokes" as Vischer would prefer to call them (qtd.in Dukore 831).The argument which Freud proposes in his thesis is that where a joke is not tendentious, then it poses to serve two basic purposes which are hostility and obscenity. They become hostile by being aggressive, satirical and defensive or obscene as they serve expository purposes. However, in this thesis, Freud is more emphatic about expository jokes drawing his cue from what he refers to as "smut" which he defines as "...the intentional bringing into prominence of sexual facts and relations by speech." (Qtd.in Dukore 832). For Freud, smut is directed towards women and may be equated with attempts at seduction. Against this backdrop, he argues:

> …a lecture on the anatomy of the sexual organs or the physiology of procreation need not have a single point of contact with smut…smut is directed to a particular person, by whom one is sexually excited and who, on hearing it, is expected to become aware of the speaker's excitement and as a result to become sexually excited in turn (Qtd. in Dukore 832).

He also advocates for the comic of situation whereby we make other people comic by putting them in situations in which a person becomes comic as a result of human dependence on external factors, particularly on social factors, without regard to the personal characteristics of the individual concerned (835). He further identifies mimicry, caricature, parody and travesty as fresh sources of comic pleasure since they are often directed against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect. It is against this theoretical framework that the humorous and satirical jokes of I Go Dye would be examined.

Stand-up Comedy as a Social Art

The position that laughter and by extension, comedy is a social phenomenon has been prominently and consistently expressed by a handful of notable comic theorists in history. Such notable comic theorists as Bergson and Meredith note that comedy expresses a lack of adaptability to society. Bergson, for instance, argues that any individual is comic who goes his own way without troubling to get in touch with his fellow beings. The purpose of laughter is to wake him from his dream. In Bergson's analogy, three conditions are essential for the comic: the character must be unsociable, for that is enough to make him

ludicrous; the spectator must be insensible to the character's condition, for laughter is incompatible with emotion; and the character must act automatically (Bergson 12).

The major concern of stand-up comedy, especially as expressed through humour,is to occasion laughter as well as make critical comments on deviations from societal norms. Similarly, it is the business of laughter to repress any tendency on the part of the individual that attempts to separate himself from society. Stand-up comedy is basically an art form that is openly devoted to getting immediate laughs from an audience. In stand- up comedy, feedback of the audience is instant and crucial for the comedian's act. Audiences expect a stand-up comic to provide a steady stream of laughs, and a performer is always under great pressure to deliver Quirk notes that stand-up comedy is a battle between audience and performer and that from a comedian's point of view, an audience can be an intimidating and frightening beast (219). In Quirk's view, when an audience does not laugh, the act fails and the experience becomes thoroughly unpleasant, for the audience as well as the performer.

As a performance mode, stand-up comedy draws largely from issues of social concern – issues that ignite the risible not on account of tribe, religion or social status but because of our identity as members of the same human community. Harbidge recognizes the sense of bonding and social interaction which stand-up comedy occasions when he posits that:

> …the live and informal nature of the comedian's performance, as well as the venue itself, can facilitate a performer/audience relationship unlike that found in most conventional theatre:in stand-up, personalized address and candid geniality intended to strike up rapport with the audience combines with a relaxed, social environment to generate distinctly free – wheeling, organic art form (129).

The conviction behind labeling stand-up comedy a social art lies in its characteristic tendency to draw from the anomalies, inversions, deviations and repetitions of human actions. It lies in its ability to occasion a gathering of men who have come to ease off the tensions of life through intermittent outbursts of laughter as well as enjoy some form of social interaction. Adeniran asserts that the creative art, in whatever form, is a product of the artist who operates at a level higher than the ordinary mind. He conceives the creative art as a complex phenomenon capable of practical implications. As he puts it "Art represents power, a medium of influence and mode of communication." (1).Barzun reinforces Adeniran's assertion thus:

> Art is power. It influences the mind, the nerves, the feelings, the soul. It carries messages of hope, hostility, derision, and moral rebuke. It can fight material and spirited evils, and transmit the ideals of a community now living, long past, or soon to be born.Inaword, Art is deemed universally important because it helps men to live and remember (qtd. in Adeniran 21).

Barzun also notes the inherent danger in arts as a medium for the expression of man's intuitive feelings and experiences. The deduction to make out of Barzun's argument is that art commands the potency to dignify and exalt a civilization or political system just as it can weaken or destroy it. It could also precipitate a revolution or betray a struggle by the way citizens are sensitized and tuned. This is made manifest in the comedies of Aristophanes (*The Frogs, The Clouds, Lysistrata* for example) where the writer ridicules the excesses of the political class and advocates for the oratorical prowess of a moderate poet who would counsel the Athenian citizenry on how best to stop the lingering Peloponnesian War.

At the level of stand-up comedy, Zolten, in a bid to recount the history of the earliest manifestations of the vaudeville, informs that comedians had to watchwhat they said and that some vaudeville theatres even posted signs backstage of prohibited words (2).In addition to the restrictions on language, comedians completely avoided controversy. It was more about making fun of people and their differences. Interestingly, comedy, in its varieties, is beautiful to the extent that it gives license to say things you could not get away with otherwise. Zolten's account becomes apt here:

> Will Rogers, one of the first political stand-ups, was an exception during vaudeville era. Rogers would come out in cowboy clothes, doingrope tricks with a lariat as heoffered astute and cutting political commentary. He'd jokeacerbically about the politicians and policies of the day and get away with it (2).

Zolten also informs that the shared experience of radio comedy during war time enhanced a feeling of Americans pulling together. He identified Lenny Bruce as a cutting –edge comic who, before George Carlin, tested the limits of social norms. As he puts it:

> Lenny Bruce, in the fifties, was one of the first to reallypush the envelope,addressing head –on our prejudices andskewed view of things. Many people think of him as a guy whojust spouted obscenities, but he

> was much more than that. Bruce was a catalyst for what would come in the '60s, a warrior on the frontline of the free speech movement; a comedian whoused humour to provoke thought and hopefully change minds(3).

In his study of the political stand-up comedy in America, Robinson attributes the political success of the Bush family to their dexterity in generating humour through stand-up comedy. Today, most Americans, at least, acknowledge as common cultural currency, the skewering of President Bush on cable television's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, the satire of the presidency on *Saturday Night Live*, the ridicule that is the staple ingredient of monologues on *The Tonight Show* or *Late Night with David Letterman*, and the parody peppered across the World Wide Web on sites such as JibJab.com. Like Zolten, Robinson acknowledges the impressive role which Will Rogers played as a comedy icon in bringing presidential humour into the mainstream thereby initiating a popular dynamic that brought common Americans and their president into a closer and more equitable proximity. According to Robinson:

> Rogers encouraged his fellow citizens to understand the performance and reception of humour as a site of cultural exploitation, creativity,and even political resistance, however tame by modern standards.Presidents and their supporters, along with their critics and even their wives, have responded by getting in on the act, perceiving the power of such humor to define, reinforce, and otherwise affect popular opinion (3).

Drawing from Frank Rich's lamentation in 2005 over the Bush administration's manipulation of the media by punch line during the White House correspondents' dinner, Robinson recounts how two prominent former United States presidents namely Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy used humour to neutralize a potentially hostile press and, by extension, to win over a nervous or dubious public (10). Robinson observes that when comedic performance served their political interest, Roosevelt and Kennedy seized the luminal moment for themselves and worked a crowd as masterfully as a professional comedian works a room, and that while both men possessed deep wells of personal humour they drew from instinctively, they were students of the comedians as well – Roosevelt of Will Rogers and Kennedy of Mort Sahl(10). Obviously,both presidents understood humour's ability to divert or obfuscate for short-term political gain, yet they too were arbiters who prompted a more permanent shift in Americans' attitude toward the office and those who hold it. Robinson notes further that:

> …like Rogers, Sahl, and others, Roosevelt and Kennedy recognized andactively harnessed humor's potency, and their effective use ofmass media toward this end and Americans' widespread acceptance meant that future presidents would also have to master such humor (as Ronald Reagan did) or be mastered by it(as Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon discovered) (11).

Dudden corroborates Robinson's account when he informs that far from dismissing humour as trivial or distracting, Roosevelt and Kennedy employed it more seriously than any president since Abraham Lincoln (83). Dudden summarizes the importance of laughter to the American polity thus:

> If, by the time of his death in 1935, Will Rogers had provedsocial critic and former *Punch* editor Malcolm Muggeridge's observation that power is inherently laughable, then by the time Laura Bush took the stage in 2005, presidents and their handlers knew well the complementary lesson that Roosevelt and Kennedyhad taught: that laughter is inherently powerful (83).

It becomes pertinent to mention at this point that Roosevelt and Kennedy have succeeded in proving the point that presidents, too,could lead the performance of stand-up comedy. It is also worthy of note that such legendary comics as Will Rogers , Steve Martins, George Carlin, have used their craft to occasion a change in the perception of the citizenry towards their leaders. The salient point to note in this review is that comedy, in its various manifestations, will continue to be an effective political tool. The reason is simple. Politics, like humour, deals with classes and the reason that comedy deals with the general is bound up with the corrective aim of laughter: the correction must reach as great a number of persons as possible. Both politics and humour thrive on group mentality. It suffices therefore to assert that humour and politics are distinctive and yet complementary terms.

A Profile Statement on I Go Dye

Born as Francis Agoda, I Go Dye is a native of Abraka in Delta State of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. History has it that at thirteen, I Go Dye was already engaged in comic art with Delta State Television. However, his rise to prominence in the stand-up comedy industry in Nigeria can be traced way back to the mid 80swhen he graced the stage of *Nite of a Thousand Laughs* as directed and produced by Opa Williams. His scintillating performance in this veritable platform launched him out as a fire brand in the stand-up

comedy industry andalso made the Opa William's brand more sellable and interesting across major cities in Nigeria, West Africa and Europe.

I Go Dye's desire and passion for relevance in the business of stand-up comedy in Nigeria can be adjudged the major source of his breakthrough in the industry. History has it that before winning the slot to perform in *Nite of a Thousand Laughs*in the year 2000, the organizers of this apex comedy variety show-biz in Nigeria and indeed, West Africa, have had course to disqualify him from gracing the stage on four different occasions on account of incompetence. But rather than feel discouraged, I Go Dye found in this disappointment an opportunity to improve on his comic art. The fruit of his doggedness and will to succeed as a comedian has paid off in hundred folds. As at 2012, I Go Dye collected a whooping sum of $195,000:00 US Dollars from an American Company(Point Gate for a tour of the United States of America (USA) and Europe. This is obviously in a sharp contrast with the peanut of One Hundred Naira (#100:00) which he received as artist fee for his first performance way back in 1992.

At the moment, I Go Dye's comic fame transcends the shores of Nigeria and Africa at large. His verbal agility and comic swipe endears him to all classes of the society especially the political class. This is evident in his consistent appearance in top government functions in state government houses and amusement parks. His fame also spans the international audiences as he continues to engage them with his vituperative and sarcastic comic drift which he delivers in pidgin English (Warri Pidgin). He has performed and as well hosted a plethora of foreign concerts especially in The United Kingdom (UK) and The United States of America (USA. In the year 2014, I Go Dye won a contract worth thousands of pounds with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The basic term of reference for the contract is to serve as a facilitator in the pedagogy of pidgin English as a language for broadcast on the BBC radio services. Up till date, he hosts varieties of comedy concerts which include: *I Go Dye Standing*, *I Go Dye : The Game Changer*.

Performance Dynamics of I Go Dye

I Go Dye'ssense of characterization may appear quite minimal when viewed from a professional performance point of view, he employs imitation of postures, gaits, mannerisms and verbal inflections that conveniently approximate the distinctive character traits of the personae in his jokes. He uses mime to complement his jokes as well as make them appear more graphic, ludicrous and farcical. He spends quite some time in the re-enactment of his jokes. In one of his arts, he spends about four minutes mimicking women's facial distortions in the process of making-up. He often leaves mime as the last

part of his renditions and they are often done in the most comical manner so as to elicit laughter.

I Go Dye's mode of presentation is quite characteristic of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Cruelty in this sense does not mean violence but shock. He assaults his audience by practically dragging them into his performance through vituperation or inviting them on stage. His delivery is quite speedy, free flowing and aggressive. However, his jokes are quite easy to comprehend considering that he speaks predominantly Warri Pidgin English which has become popular amongst the generality of Nigerian audiences. He is consistent in characterization through the stylistic adoption of farcical gestures/mannerisms, facial contortions and tonal variations to depict situations within narratives. It is pertinent to state at this point that I Go Dye is a distinguished performer who has risen to the pinnacle of his chosen career as a stand-up comic not by "godfatherism" but by dint of hard work propelled by the will to survive. Even without any formal training in performing arts, he surely knows how to toil with the audience's emotions. A typical I Go Dye rendition is made up of congeries of spontaneous jokes which he delivers in quick succession; throwing them at the audience with calculated guess of when each of them will elicit the most thunderous laughs from members of the audience. This, indeed, is the hall mark of a seasoned stand-up comic.

Pun and Satire in I Go Dye's Jokes

I Go Dye is one of the few Nigerian comedians whose jokes serve as critical commentaries on the decay and inconsistencies in the nation's body polity. His ridicule of the political class is a recurring motif in his jokes. In one of his jokes, he satirizes Governor Adams Oshiomole's cowardice amidst his socialist disposition and verbal opposition to "godfatherism" in Nigerian politics, thus:

> I love Adams Oshiomole, na so I Love Godswill Akpabio…Sometimes when you see Governor Oshiomole dey shout say say no to godfatherism, I dey tell my friends, say yes, these are the kind of people, we need in this country, these are the people when e be say them dey get vision, plan for the youths. I say look at him (*points in Oshiomole's direction as he mimics him*) "No godfatherism". The way him dey shout "no godfatherism" I think say that man get heart. Wetin him do for Abuja shock me. Dem they do this Amnesty peace programme, I dey follow my governor Uduaghan dey discuss…I just dey follow am dey discuss. The next thing wey we just hear na "boom pooh" (*Renacts the sound of a bomb verbally*) I been see Oshoo…(*the abbreviation for Oshiomole*) whether na him start the car or na

> the car na him start himself me I nor know ooo…I just see something just do fiam! (*Renacts the zooming off of car*) Under ten minutes my governor begin call Oshiomole. Him say (*mimics Governor Uduaghan in a telephone conversation*) 'hello, na me Udu, Udu…Oshiomole dey ask am (*mimics Oshiomhole*) Udu Road? (*mimics Uduaghan's response*) E say no…na me Uduaghan, where you dey? Him dey ask Oshiomole, where you dey? Oshiomole say (mimics Oshio*mhole again*) I don reach…(*mimics Uduaghan again*) where you don reach? (*mimics Oshiomhole's response*)…Edo State. There is no place more peaceful than Edo State (*I Go Dye: TheGame Changer*, Vol. 1)

In spite of the humorous coating evident in the joke above, it contains a rich dose of biting criticism on the cowardly disposition of Governor Adams Oshiomole, the executive Governor of Edo State. First, it is incongruous for an executive governor of a state, a supposed Chief Security Officer of an entire state to be cowardly to the ridiculous extent of zooming off to Benin in a flash at the mere hearing of a bomb blast without allowing his security guards to take the necessary security steps that would guarantee his protection. The joke also lampoons Oshiomole as a paper tiger that wears the mask of a fearless leader in his crusade against the political anomaly of godfatherism but takes to his heels at the mere sound of a blast. While we relish the comic savour from the ridicule of Governor Oshiomole, the need also arises that we appreciate the joke as a critical comment on the outright security breakdown and breach in the Nigerian state such that suicide bombing and massive explosions from pipeline vandalism have become daily routine. It also exposes the trivial attention which Nigerian leaders give to security issues even when security votes in all tiers of government attract huge and unquestionable monetary figures.

In another trail of thought, I Go Dye takes us down memory lane in Nigerian political history where he recounts the past and present, military and civilian Heads of State and Presidents that have served the Nigerian nation. But rather than chronicle the political history in the fashion of a historian, he chooses the creative arts approach where he laces history with humorous ornaments in order to drive home the comic muse. He presents the joke, thus:

> For you to be a successful president in the world, B need to dey your name. I don do my research, for you to be a successful president in the world B get to dey your name. If B no dey your name either they kill you or you even die for power, I go prove am to you. Let us check America for example, America's 35thpresident,B no dey him name na him dem kill am for power, him name na John F. Kennedy. De next na him be Lindon Bill Johnson…B dey there. Another one come take over power, B dey him

name George H.W. Bush, check am B dey there. Another one come take over again B dey there, Bill Clinton, B dey there na him make dem no fit kill am. Another one come take over power again now H don comot…e come be George W. Bush, B dey there then another one come take over because him know the importance of B, he come get two B, him name na Barrack Obama. Even him vice-president get B , Joe Bidden. Make we leave America go England, the queen, the first queen B dey her name Queen Elizabeth. Even im mama name B dey there..the place wey dem even crown her to be queen B dey there…West Minister Abbey.Nigeria first Prime Minister B dey him name Abubakar Tafawa Balewa B dey there. Another person come take over power B no dey him name na him make them kill am for power him name na Johnson AguiyiIronsi e no get B for him name he die. Another one come take over Power B dey him name…the name naYakubu Gowon B dey there. Another one come take over power B no dey him name na him make dem kill am. Him name na Raman Murtala Mohammed…Another one come take over power and B no dey him name, him name naShehuShagari…Buhari just come na shout for am (*mimics Buhari*) Hey! My friend, leave there, you no get B. Him say (*mimics Shagari*) Sorry…don't touch me. Him comot o…dem come dey fear say Buhari get one B and the next man too get one B, them come look am say if Them take their two Bs take put together dem go do two tenures because the power of your B na him go determine the number of tenure wey you go do, na him Ibrahim Babangida shout for am (*mimics Babangida*) Leave there your B no strong. Na himBabangida come with four Bs Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida…him B too many…after Babangida don do two tenure finish which is eight years, when he come comot, he come let Nigeria know say he still remain two years, him come abbreviate him name to IBB. When Babangida comot, the person wey him think say go win na Bashir Tofa and him mate na Sylvester Ugo and the person wey follow Bashir Tofadey contest na MKO Abiola…Abiola know say na one B e get na him e go carry him running mate BabaganaKingibe. When dem look say if Abiola borrow B from Babagana Kingibe, if them add am together dem go do16years, dem no fit wait…this guy come take over power but B no dey him name…Ernest Shonekan no fear without B n aim Abacha just come from now where say (*mimics Abacha*) My friend, you no get B, leave. Na him e say (*mimics Shonekan*)No touch me…Abacha just take over power. Abacha get only one B, he for just take him one B do one tenure which is four years, he wan do five years, dem give am apple, he

> close him eye, e go. When Abacha die na the highest ranking officer then for take over power, him name na Jeremiah Useni and the Chief Security Officer Al-Mustapha, dem come they fear because B no dey their name. Abdulsalam Abubakar get many B with confidence he just come take over power. Because Nigeria need a democratic government dey come dey fine who dem go take and some body wey get B wey go fit cover Abdulsalam Abubakar B…dem come dey think who fit carry…all the people wey dem see all of dem get one B but dem no get experience na him dem go carry Olusegun Obasanjo…him don rule before, him get experience but Baba na very wise man, Obasanjo too wise. Him know say na only one B him get and that one B na for one tenure na him e go carry Atiku Abubakar. When Baba don use him one B finish na him he come go meet Atiku, e say (*mimics Obasanjo*) Ati! Atii!, you know say I promise Nigeria somethings wey I never do oo…abeg borrow me your B make I take do second tenure so that I go fit complete the things…na him Atiku say (*mimics Atiku*) Take!...he give am. When Baba use Atiku B finish na him he go meet am again, e say (*mimics Obasanjo*) Atitibubu…give me your last B make I take do third tenure. Na him Atiku tell am say (*mimics Atiku*) Me sef I need the B…That time wey dem dey quarrel na B dem dey drag o. When Atiku no gree give baba the B, baba for fit give power to two people wey dey close to am Peter Odili Donald Duke but both of dem no get B. Yar Adua just take over power with no B, he die. But …this is the first time we are having a president who…is from Niger Delta, this man name na Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan but my fear now be say na one B wey Jonathan get o..na him make wey him go pick Mallam Sambo. If dem put am together na him be two Bs but my own fear be say for 2015 election, Mallam Sambo go gree borrow am the B, or e go talk say e need the B too like Atiku? Make una put am together to work well …make una no quarrel o…(*Game Changer*, Vol.1)

Amidst the preponderance of pun and satire, the joke above chronicles the history of political leadership in Nigeria since independence. Firstly, the joke brings to the fore a chronicle of the leadership of the Nigerian state since independence in 1960. Through the presentation of the personae in the joke, we come to terms with the names of both past and present Nigerian heads of state and executive presidents. The chronological presentation of the leaders also makes it easier for us to have first hand understanding of Nigeria's political history. In this sense, I Go Dye is portrayed as a master historian of Nigerian politics.At another level, the joke portrays I Go Dye as a language artist who plays on

words (pun) in order to drive home the humour in his jokes. His use of the letter 'B' as a powerful letter and determinant factor in the leadership of the Nigerian nationis a clear manifestation of I Go Dye's creative and comic dexterity. It also unravels him as a creative comic who relies largely on research and power of imaginative thinking. Through the instrumentation of research, he is able to embark on a verbal montage of fifty six years of independent leadership in Nigeria.

I Go Dye's joke, as presented above, also embodies high volume of lampooning andsatire of leadership in Nigeria since independence which is characterized largely by greed, selfishness, nepotism, egoism, desperation and authoritarianism.A situation whereby leaders are chosen by the number of Bs in their names is highly laughable and absurd. It goes to show the trivial attention given to the leadership question in Nigeria since leaders are no longer chosen based on experience but on the prevalence of the letter B in one's name. The inference drawn from the joke is that leadership in Nigeria is determined by selfish interests and one's connection with those at the corridors of power. From the joke, one observes that those leaders without Bs in their names are lily-livered leaders who are not ready to take risks, hence, they give up power to the brave, desperate and daring leaders who are portrayed as leaders with many Bs in their name.Through the use of humour, mimicry, caricature, parody and travesty, I Go Dye has been able to ridicule the incessant political instability and power tussle in Nigeria, thus, corroborating Sigmund Freud's argument that "… mimicry, caricature, parody and travesty are fresh sources of comic pleasure since they are often directed against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect" (qtd. in Dukore 835) The warm reception with which such Nigerian leaders as OlusegunObasanjo, Goodluck Jonathan, Adams Oshiomole and Emmanuel Uduaganreceived the joke during its presentation at a state banquet, goes a long way to testify the effectiveness of the humorous treatment infused in the joke.

Having established the power of the letter B in the leadership of Nigeria, United States and partly, England, I Go Dye goes further to charge the then serving Executive Governor of Delta State (his own state) Chief Emmanuel Uduagan, to change his name if he desires to be the president of Nigeria.As he puts it "…wetin my governor dey wait…wetindey for Uduagan…from today, change your name from Emmanuel Uduagan to Blessing Buagan…(*I Go Dye* : *The Game Changer,* Vol.1). By making a mockery of Uduagan's name, I Go Dye has put him in a comic situation, thus, causing him to laugh at himself as well as serve as an object of laughter. The jokes understudy also draw their comic strength from the realization that the personae in them are notable and influential political figures in Nigeria. When viewed along this trail of thought, then the comic theory of degradation becomes prominent. The idea that such notable political figures as ShehuShagari and

Ernest Shonekan chickened out of the presidency because of the absence of the letter B in their names is highly degrading and consequently, ludicrous. Also degrading and comic is the fiction that such dreaded military officers as Jeremiah Useniand Al-Mustapha are denied the position of the Nigerian president just because of the absence of letter B in their names.

The spine of the laughter in I go Dye's jokes is couched on the humorous tonality with which they are delivered. It is the infusion of humour that occasions the soft landing for I Go Dye even after lampooning the cream of Nigeria's politics and leadership since after independence. Through the vehicle of humour and satire, I Go Dye has succeeded in converting what would have been hitherto, tendentious joke to non-tendentious joke.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the form and content in I Go Dye's comedy as presented in his solo comedy show titled *I Go Dye: The Game Changer*. The position of the paper is that humour is the driving force of stand-up comedy. As evident in the jokes understudy, I Go Dye uses humour to trivialize a supposed serious issue –the issue of leadership crises in Nigeria. Rather than bemoan the chequered Nigerian political history which I Go Dye captures in his jokes, one is transported to mirth land as a result of the parody and caricature which he makes of the leaders. The deduction from the paper include that stand-up comedy is a unique art form that ridicules societal follies and human eccentricities. In Nigeria, especially, stand-up comedy stands out as a veritable medium for the lampooning of deviant mannerisms and social anomalies. The jokes under study, in spite of the humorous treatment, speak volumes of the recklessness, political chicanery, favoritism, witch -hunting, political intrigues and subterfuges that characterize the Nigerian political landscape.

Against the backdrop that stand-up comedy in Nigeria is growing in leaps and bounds, against the backdrop that stand-up comedy constitutes a major source of livelihood for a generous number of Nigerian youths, against the backdrop that stand-up comedy has become an integral part of popular culture in Nigeria and beyond, the need arises that it be given both academic and economic attention. The need for governmental and non-governmental support through the floating of stand-up comedy schools, centres and studios cannot be over emphasized. The need also arises that special endowment funds be initiated by governmental agencies and corporate individuals for the training of Nigerian youths. For instance, stand-up comedy should be integrated into the curriculum of the Amnesty programme for the repentant militants in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Available statistics reveal that a reasonable number of top flight Nigerian stand-up comics

are indigenes or residents of the Niger Delta. The fast growth and development of stand-up comedy in Nigeria also call for the institutionalization of a censor's board that would oversee the content of most of the jokes so as to guide against lewd and obscene jokes. For whatever it is worth at the moment, Nigeria's stand-up comedy occupies an enviable position in Nigeria's entertainment circles. Like, its music and video film counterparts, the stand-up comedy industry in Nigeria commands huge cultural, economic, political, educational and social benefits for the Nigerian state, hence the need to nurture it to limelight.

Works Cited

Adeniran, Tunde. *The Politics of Wole Soyinka.* Ibadan: Fountain Publications, 1994.

Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic.* Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor,2008.

Dudden, Ataro. *The Assault of Laughter: A Treasury of American Political Humor*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1962.

Dukore, Bernard. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1974.

Freud, Sigmund. "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious"Dukore, Bernard. Ed.*Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*.Pp.831-836.

Harbidge, Lesley. "Audienceship and (Non).Laughter in the Stand-Up Comedy of Steve Martin".In *Journal of Comedy*.Vol.8, Issue 2, November, 2011; pp.128-143.

Hazlitt, William. "Of Wit and Humour".Dukore, Bernard. Ed.*Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1974.pp.600-609.

I Go Dye. *I Go Dye: The Game Changer*. Vol.1. Lagos: Obaino Music, 2013.

Quirk, Sophie. "Containing the Audience: The 'Room' in Stand-Up Comedy".In *Journal of Comedy*. Vol. 8, Issue 2, November, 2011; pp.219-238.

Robinson, Patrice. The Dance of the Comedians: The People, The President and the Performance of Political Stand-up Comedy in America. Ph.D Dissertation, Miami University, 2010.

Zolten, Jones. "What are the Roots of Stan-up Comedy?" Accessed September 12,2008. http://www.rps.edu/probing/standup.html