

EXPLOITATION OF HUMOUR IN KAYODE ARIYO'S "THE MISPLACED TRUST" AND "A BRIGHT NEW DAY"

ABSTRACT

The effect of humour in literature has of recent times attained a cynosure, carving out such a decent class for comedy. The knowledge of this nascent trend of development has not eluded budding creative writers who seem to be slugging it out with tragedy in literary works. Ariyo 's meticulous and intelligent exploitation of this element has not left him out of the league of those who have used it to the latter. Abinitio, a general overview of humour: surrounding concepts and theories, drawing from available literatures, is given. Thereafter, the paper attempts to x-ray closely, how the concept of humour has been exploited in drama, specifically basing it on Ariyo's duo. It then goes on to analyze the effects of the model humour in Ariyo's ' The Misplaced Trust ' and 'A Bright New Day'; after which a conclusion is drawn on the concept of humour exploitation in the works.

INTRODUCTION

Concept and Theories of Humour

Humour as an element of literature has a wide range of perception the world over. Literatures of the world have diverse ways of seeing humour. It runs through every social context. Without doubt, humour and laughter add up to the things that make one human. The attempt of trying to find out what is humour and why it is a central component of our social

34 lives has given rise to a birthing of various views about the concept. All
 35 humour is agreeably and fundamentally a communicative activity. At its
 36 most basic level, humour is an intentional or unintentional message
 37 interpreted as funny. The 7th Edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's
 38 Dictionary of Current English attests to the blunt fact that humour "is the
 39 quality in something that makes it funny or amusing."

40 The renowned French poet, Rabelais (2004), opines that «le rire
 41 est le proper de rhomme» (laughter is a human feature). Braude,
 42 1996:94 asserts that: "to be able to see humour in a situation is to add a
 43 dimension to experience; to be able to laugh is to find a way of moving
 44 away from pain." It is on this premise that humour can also be seen as
 45 that quality of action, speech or writing, which excites amusement, wit
 46 and laughter. Humour is the comic quality - fun, joy, pleasure,
 47 entertainment and what is amusing and cheerful - in a person, an
 48 experience or idea that makes one laugh. The ability to laugh for
 49 oneself and for the world is a tool to survive and to make life more
 50 tolerable. Humour in literature is divided into a couple of categories:
 51 first, the individual level - while individuals use humour
 52 (motivationally/psychologically), and second, the societal level - the
 53 function humour has within a social setting or a society (Owen Lynch,
 54 2002). There is this submission that the place humour takes in
 55 literature can be compared with the place of crisis in the society. This
 56 goes to say that humour, like crisis, has the tendency of discovering the
 57 long lasting disorders that people would feel uncomfortable in facing.

58 Within the individual category of humour research, there are three
 59 major humour theories: superiority theory, relief theory and
 60 incongruity theory (Owen Lynch, 2002, quoting Berger, 1993, Berlyne,
 61 1972, Chapman and Foot, 1976). This category of humour has the most

62 of what there is in humour literature. This is hinged on the fact that it
 63 focuses on individual motivations for the creation and interpretation of
 64 humour. The second category of humour research is the one common
 65 in a social setting. This kind of humour focuses on the functions and
 66 impact of humour in a social setting. It has a dualistic nature. Whatever
 67 it creates, it has to simultaneously create the opposite. This is what has
 68 given it a paradox of humour as posited by Owen (ibid).

69 Furthermore, medical science has also proved that laughter is a
 70 critical component of life. It boosts the endorphin level in our brains,
 71 thereby boosting morale. Laughter makes us feel better physically and
 72 mentally. That is the reason why humour in children's literature has
 73 value on various levels. Humour can bring children and children's
 74 literature together, and children's literature can bring humour to
 75 children.

76 The most important value of humour is that children can learn
 77 through humour that reading books can bring joy and fun and a love of
 78 reading induced. When a child enjoys a book, he will read it. It is on
 79 this premise that Huck, (1993) 580, asserts that: "humorous books need
 80 no justification other than that they provide pure enjoyment.' Humour
 81 therefore, heals. Children's lives are sometimes serious and dark.
 82 Humour can be an easy of escaping serious reality and then has
 83 something liberating. Humour brings distance from pain. Laughter can
 84 relieve tension, stress and aggression. Gordon, (1996) further concurs
 85 to this when he submits that humour brings emotional warmth and
 86 understanding. Humour allows the individual to cope with human
 87 frailties of self and others. Humour gives comfort.

88 Humour also helps children laugh at the world and at
 89 themselves. It shows the ups and downs of life. They can realize they

90 are not alone in their feelings. Jokes and humour, in general, play an
91 important role in knowing who we are and how we think of ourselves
92 and as a result, how we interact with others. Owen (2002) opines that:

93 A sense of humour has been an essential part
94 Of humankind and society throughout the ages.
95 Humour cannot be bracketed or seen as a unitary
96 Expression or function.

97
98 In the same vein, Chapman and Foot (1976) have maintained
99 that humour theory literature is not able to provide a general theory.
100 Yet, existing theories are still invaluable for framing our understanding
101 of humour used in and within societal and personal dialogue. As earlier
102 said, a- tripartite classification explains the reason why people use
103 humour. However, it can be argued that this 'wide use" has the
104 tendency to be the "misuse" that forsakes the complexity provided by
105 the theories without weighing their collective benefits for the
106 interpretation of individual motivations in humour. In this guise,
107 Feinberg (1978) and Morreall (1983), attempt to debunk these theories
108 entirely and their perspectives on humour motivations instead. Another
109 probable misuse includes unnecessarily expanding these theories.

110 On these premises, we will boldly posit that the place of humour
111 in individual and societal life cannot be too stressed. It remains an
112 inseparable part of human life, and will always rear its head in the
113 activities of humanity; normally prompted by one kind of amusing
114 motivation or the other. The prototype of this is what we shall
115 succinctly examine in the works of Ariyo, in which he brings to bear,
116 instances of individual and societal humour.

117

118

119 **EXPLOITATION OF HUMOUR IN THE MISPLACED TRUST**

120 The Misplaced Trust is one of Ariyo's comedies. Bola loses
 121 confidence in a very close friend, Bidemi. The whole irony of the story
 122 is brought to bear when Bola relives her days in the university with
 123 Bidemi. Bidemi's marriage hits the rock. Bola feels that
 124 accommodating the worthy old friend for just one month in the visitor's
 125 room is not too much a sacrifice. Besides, she still vividly remembers
 126 Bidemi's assistance to her in their undergraduate days at the university.
 127 But if the truth she had known, a friend in need is sometimes a pain in
 128 the neck. Bidemi, who all the while pretends to be the only succor the
 129 world over, as the marriage of her friend hits the rock, turns out to be a
 130 betrayer. Little does Bola know that the friend she so confides in with
 131 the secrets of her home is just a wolf in sheep garment. When Bola's
 132 marriage finally falls apart, it is with the supposed help of Bidemi that
 133 Ade elopes. Bola is to later find love in the arms of Mike having
 134 suffered the consequences of misplaced trust.

135 In the dramatic rendition, the playwright wields a strong
 136 expertise of sustaining humour throughout the course of his narration.
 137 He establishes the first episode in the prologue, where the major
 138 characters reveal something that triggers suspenseful images in the
 139 mind of the reader:

140

141

142 "I'm sorry I... (Stops and looks at the guests.
 143 Bola, Ade and Bidemi become transfixed.
 144 Bidemi faints. Bola and Ade still stare at each other).-
 145 Mike: Man, that's your wife, attend to her."
 146

147 It's a humorous display of irony. Little does Mike know that Ade
 148 is the supposed husband of his wife, Bola, and that Bidemi is the friend

149 who has betrayed his wife. At this stage, the mind of the reader still
150 wonders: why the fainting? Why the confusion? A lot of questions are
151 triggered with this first episode in the play.

152 The effect of the above excerpt is not just glaring in the
153 imaginary response of the characters. One is brought to seeing a funny
154 proof of the fact that no matter how wise we think we can play a fast
155 one on someone, our evil will surely find us out one day. That exactly
156 is the case with our major characters as the story unfolds.

157 Another instance is revealed in Ade's consistent collision with
158 Alhaji. Alhaji is ready to spend everything as long as it guarantees his
159 marriage to Bidemi. As he cheats on his wife, he realizes that it's not
160 funny that someone cheats on him in the same manner. No wonder, he
161 does not hide his shock as he runs into Ade, who seems to be the rival
162 he has to contend with. He appears to be unsheathing his dagger for
163 war when he asks Bidemi:

164 Alhaj i: ... Who' s that boy?

165 Bidemi: ... Jealousy! Alhaji, you're jealous.

166

167 This underscores the humorous nature of societal humour.
168 People are often irritated and made angry by that which they would
169 easily do for others. They feel like the whole world gets on their nerves
170 though they are themselves prone to doing that which they may
171 strongly stand against.

172 This is suddenly followed by a very humorous mockery of Alhaji
173 by Ade on page 18:

174 'Bola: Any way, he's Bidemi's boyfriend.

175 Ade: Hey man! You mean that old man is a boy?

176 Isn't he old enough to be my grandfather?

177 He's A sugar daddy, yeah...'

178

179 Ade seems to be wondering what must have come over
 180 Alhaji to have taken up the position of a boy friend for Bidemi
 181 when he is old enough to rather father her. He is old enough to
 182 be Ade's father as well. How men can so condescend to a level
 183 that is far below their worth is what the play of humour in this
 184 scene captures. The effect of it on us as we read is not just
 185 amusing but didactic. Subsequently, when Alhaji comes to
 186 present a gift of an Executive Benz to Bidemi, she almost trips
 187 him to the ground as she hugs him passionately:

188 'Bidemi: (excited). Alhaji, you are wonderful!
 189 (She jumps at him, hugging him but they both crash land.
 190 Bidemi gets up and gives Alhaji a hand). I'm sorry, Alhaji.
 191 Alhaji: It's all right. I just hope you don't mistakenly kill me
 192 one of these days through sheer happiness.'

193
 194 It is however rather quite unfortunate for Alhaji who thinks that
 195 Bidemi is actually in love with him. She rather loves his money more
 196 than his life and person. She often confesses this to her friend. But it
 197 seems Alhaji is intentionally blind to what everybody around may see
 198 so clearly. He jealously guards the relationship with the money he
 199 makes from the innocent blood of his only son. As much as his
 200 conscience haunts him, he keeps moving on, seemingly oblivious of
 201 what might be happening around him. This perfect exploitation of
 202 humour is no longer news in our society. Men seem to stop at nothing
 203 whatsoever when it comes to the acquisition of wealth.

204 Funnily again, men seem to forget too soon, the promises they
 205 make before they possibly become rich. Alhaji makes his wealth with
 206 great peril in alliance with his wife. While he secretly cheats on her, he
 207 knows that he can never marry Bidemi except he gets Alhaja's consent.
 208 Yet, he would have none of it. He remains adamant as he keeps aglow

209 the flame of his love affair with Bidemi. He gets to the extent of
 210 thinking that he can just bring her to Alhaja and Alhaja will cheaply
 211 succumb. His encouragement being that he and Alhaja need a son. But
 212 they cannot just have it. In Act two scene six, he presents Bidemi to
 213 Alhaja and he regrets his action as Alhaja will have none of it. True to
 214 the claims of Alhaja, it is Alhaji's money Bidemi wants to marry and
 215 not Alhaji himself.

216 "I know nothing about your philosophy, for all
 217 I care! Look, young lady, you want to marry Alhaji
 218 Who's old enough to be your father because of his money?" pg. 32
 219

220 The above quotation is Alhaja's response when Alhaji talks about
 221 getting married to Bidemi. At the peak of Sola's marital challenges, she
 222 calls the problem of her marriage to settle the problem-of her marriage.
 223 She is so ignorant of the fact that her best friend has had secret affairs
 224 with her husband to the point of completely taking him over from her.
 225 As much as she tries to understand where she must have gone wrong,
 226 the worse the whole situation becomes. She does her best possible but
 227 the love and happiness she once shared with her husband has simply
 228 attracted the trashcan of history.

229 Ironically, the friend she helps in affliction turns out to be the
 230 pain in the neck. Bidemi herself has not had it going well all the while
 231 as she wriggles out of Alhaji's life narrowly escaping death. Her dream
 232 of blissful marital life with Alhaji is a simple building of a castle in the
 233 air. In Act three scene five, Ade gets irritated by just anything Bola
 234 says or does. Her tea has even become bitter. How humorously sour
 235 love becomes when the flaming sword of infidelity melts the strong
 236 chord that ties a couple! That exactly is the situation in the case of Ade
 237 and Bola. Things fall apart and Ade is not ready to mend the broken

238 fences. The rest of the play is interplay of one kind of subtle humour or
 239 the other. To a large extent, the funny evils that men do live after they
 240 are gone. The humour exploited throughout the text evokes the
 241 suspense created at the beginning and which is sustained as the story
 242 continues to unfold. Without the humour created, the reader will not
 243 remain continuously expectant of the next scene. The humorous nature
 244 with which each scene begins and ends rings a note in the mind of the
 245 reader.

246 Nothing so simple, yet so pregnant with a lot for us to learn.
 247 People who are prone to cheating others do not wish to be paid back in
 248 the same coin. They are so suspicious of the moves of others because
 249 they don't like being treated the way they treat others. It is this that has
 250 prompted our playwright to script a play around the daily happenings
 251 of our being as a society. The playwright has actually displayed an
 252 expertise in this very short dramatic piece. He has justified his genius
 253 in the chosen genre. With this pace, we hope to hear more of Ariyo as
 254 far as humour is concerned in literature. He is a budding master of the
 255 genre.

256 **EXPLOITATION OF HUMOUR IN A BRIGHT NEW DAY**

257 A Bright New Day is a comedy knitted around the life of a
 258 university don, Dr. Olaipo of New Era University. He is a despicable
 259 and disgustingly randy lecturer who sexually harasses the female
 260 students in his department, leaving scores of victims in the wake of this
 261 exploits. In like manner, Dr. Olaipo extorts money from his students
 262 with reckless abandon. His exam scores are awarded arbitrarily on the
 263 power of the naira and sexual satisfaction. His very faithful agent is
 264 Tunde, a very notorious cultist.

265 Commenting on the literary piece, Adewumi, (2005) observes
 266 that the drama piece is so unique that it will evoke the sympathy of the
 267 readers in view of the ugly situations most females undergraduates face
 268 in our universities. The choice of diction brings to bear, images of the
 269 moral decadence in our society and the hydra-headed godfatherism in
 270 our tertiary institutions as it propagates the war against extortion as
 271 well as cultism and other vices pervading the corridors of our
 272 institutions of learning.

273 The astounding confidence of Dr. Olaipo leads him to the door
 274 steps of Lola, a female student, and one poor Fala, a male student.
 275 These form a very thick skin but he is bent on penetrating at whatever
 276 cost. The two students yet remain uncompromising. Firmly captured in
 277 the web of failure in his 4-unit course, the duo run for help from pillar
 278 to post, all to no avail. No one seems capable of stopping the enigmatic
 279 lecturer in his promiscuous expeditions as he is highly connected to the
 280 powers that be.

281 As the story unfolds, a bright new day dawns with the
 282 appointment of a new head of department who assumes his position
 283 with the zeal of sanitizing the Department having heard of the kind of
 284 rot that pervades the department. Dr. Adejare, the new head of
 285 department succeeds in his attempt and the rot in the like of Dr. Olaipo
 286 looses their firm grip of misdemeanor.

287 The whole exploration of humour begins in the characterization
 288 of Dr. Olaipo:

289 *"(Lizzy, a female student, enters. Dr. Olaipo watches*
 290 *the beautiful girl, with keen admiration. Her hair is let loose*
 291 *while her make-up of many colours is glistening.*
 292 *Her spaghetti blouse and mini-skirt expose body rather*
 293 *dangerously. She walks majestically in her own world as*

294 *her dark goggles shine. Everywhere is quiet except for the*
 295 *sound of the soles of her shoes. She eventually finds a*
 296 *place to stand. He clears his throat). As I was saying,*
 297 *you can browse a *bakassi on the internet. "*
 298

299 The whole digression to Lizzy, one of his victims, changes the
 300 course of events in the lecture. The students responded hilariously to
 301 the new trend taken by their very randy lecture. The personality of the
 302 lecturer in question is thus revealed to the reader. It becomes glaring
 303 that in Dr. Olaipo will be a sex maniac. That indeed is him as we later
 304 learn how any beautiful thing in skirt sets his sexual desire in motion.
 305 He takes the day and does things just as he pleases. He harasses his
 306 female students sexually. Tunde extols his sexual prowess which
 307 seems to make him feel very powerful and invincible:

308 "Tunde: Oga, you deserve the Guinness Book of records'
 309 award for being the best youth fucker of the year!
 310 *(They laugh)*

311 I'm proud of you, Sir.

312 Dr. Olaipo: These girls are mostly like chickens.

313 When you want to catch them, they run away. All you need do is
 314 procure enough grains which you generously throw to them.

315 They walk themselves straight into your basket eating and then you
 316 close the lid." *(They laugh)*
 317

318 He never sees the possibility of being caught in the act of being
 319 disciplined by anybody. Tunde remains the errand boy who as well
 320 follows the footsteps of his grand master with harassment of female
 321 students and threats to those who may want to prove stubborn for one
 322 reason or the other:

323 "Tunde: Anyway, because of you guys, I'll consider a ransom."

324 The above quotation on page 33 is after a brush Lola had with
 325 Tunde. Lola insists on keeping her integrity as usual. She refuses to
 326 condescend to the level of a whore as Tunde wants with her. As a

327 result, he has to be compensated with money before he forgives her for
 328 treating him like "rags". He weilds so much on campus since the
 329 powers that be seem to be on his side. At the end of Act Four Scene
 330 Two, Dr Olaipo's overture to Lola is sternly rejected. She resists him
 331 with the whole of her strength. She holds her head high in spite of the
 332 impending consequence of not playing the game according to his rules.
 333 Unfortunately for Dr. Olaipo's victims, the arbiter of their case seems
 334 to be at the beck and call of their assailant. Dr Dara, the Head of
 335 Department concludes that the reporters of the evil of Dr. Olaipo are
 336 just being blasphemous.

337 Dr. Dara: You heard me well. Well... He's the alpha and omega of his
 338 course. His word is final. You recalcitrant students! (Pauses). If you go
 339 and see him and mend fences, there is something one can still do. But
 340 if you allow this period of grace to pass you by, then you have
 341 yourselves to blame."
 342

343 For Dr. Dara, Dr. Olaipo is an upright and erudite scholar who
 344 should not be taught the etiquette of a civilized being. How funny, that
 345 the very culprit of the ills and rot in the education of the university is
 346 the one who goes cot free. The appointment of Dr. Adejare in Act Five
 347 begins the new trend of things where the perpetrators of evil are not
 348 allowed to go Scot free. He ensures that everyone receives the reward
 349 of their deeds whether good or bad. It is with this new wave of
 350 leadership that the likes of Dr. Olaipo and his cohorts will regret their
 351 action.

352

353

354 "You are either here as a purposeful student,
 355 aiming at excellence, or you're flushed out of the system.
 356 You are free to report to me any case of extortion by any lecturer
 357 or sexual harassment..."

358
 359 That is about the best of the speech the students have heard in
 360 recent times. Dr. Adejare has hit the nail on the head. The glory of the
 361 likes of Dr. Olaipo has come to an abrupt final end just in the blink of
 362 an eye. It is just like an answered prayer for the students. They are bent
 363 on seeing the new change that the new leadership of the department
 364 envisages. JSfo wonder, the speech is received with thunderous
 365 applause from the excited students.

366 The humour truly begins to unfold as the likes of Lizzy; the most
 367 cooperative victim of Dr. Olaipo, no longer holds her head high in
 368 pride (pg. 43). Dr Adejare does not have time for the games. The erring
 369 students are in for it. Subsequently, the proudly promiscuous Lizzy is
 370 caught in an examination malpractice.

371 *Lizzy: I...I*
 372 *(Dr. Adejare removes the cap from her head. A piece*
 373 *of paper falls off from it. The invigilator quickly picks*
 374 *it up and gives it to Dr. Adejare who reads through it silently... "*
 375

376 She is made to realize that one cannot always get away with evil.
 377 One can clearly imagine the satisfaction on the faces of other students
 378 as the scene unfolds. Very humorous and thought provoking. How
 379 great are the mighty fallen! The same ordeal comes to Tunde, the
 380 fearlessly self avowed cultist.

381

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385 *"Dr. Adejare: Will you get up?*
 386 *(As Tunde is getting up, he quickly takes the piece of*
 387 *paper on his seat and attempts to swallow it. In the*

388 *struggle that follows, he is soon overpowered by the duo of invigilator*
 389 *and Dr. Adejare. The paper is successfully retrieved from him).*
 390 *(To Tunde) the lord of the dark world, the secret world terror!*
 391 But soon secret things shall be made public for it's bright new day.
 392 Both of you, consider yourselves expelled
 393 from this university..."

394 The fearless Dr. Adejare is sanitizing the system and the bad
 395 eggs in it are being taken away slowly. It is in the hike of the humorous
 396 repercussion of the unchecked ills in the department that the Almighty
 397 Dr. Olaipo is caught. It is so funny enough that he cannot even smell a
 398 rat as he realizes before his own downfall that his boys are in trouble.

399 When Lola comes calling he concludes that he has finally got
 400 what he all the while waited for:

401 "Lola: you'll enjoy me much today that you'll
 402 never forget me, sir. *(He nods)*. But please, I must
 403 go to the ladies before the action starts."
 404

405 Little does he know that he is in for it and that his end has finally
 406 come. While at the brink of getting sexual satisfaction from Lola at the
 407 classic Hotel, the worst embarrassment of his life comes knocking:

408 "Lola: (Shouts). Yes, action time! *(Suddenly, the door flips open. A*
 409 *horde of cameramen from different media houses flood the room with*
 410 *different kinds of cameras, recording the scene. Print, radio, television*
 411 *reporters follow them. Out of the shock, Dr. Olaipo's hands seem to*
 412 *have been magnetized by Lola's shoulders. Enter Leye, leading two*
 413 *other detectives who bear guns. Following them are Dr. Adejare,*
 414 *Mama and Fala).*

415 He is intercepted by an unexpected visit of a horde of
 416 cameramen, policemen, alongside Dr. Adejare, Mama and Fala.
 417 Glaringly, he couldn't contend the shock. Ninety-nine days for the
 418 thief, one day for the owner, it goes without saying. The disgrace that
 419 follows the arrest is a stigma Dr Olaipo will live with for life. He has
 420

421 simply got it wrongly and he is going to pay dearly for it. Not just with
 422 his personality but with his pocket. The style of humor as presented by
 423 Ariyo in A Bright New Day attracts the commendation of all. The
 424 intended effect on the victim is fully achieved. He leaves us with so
 425 much to think about as he drops his pen. No matter how highly
 426 connected you are, you cannot always get away with evil.

427

428 CONCLUSION

429 Throughout the analysis of Kayode Ariyo's duo, our attempt has
 430 been to present the manner in which the playwright has exploited
 431 humour as a concept in literature to drive home his point. He has
 432 established in clear terms, the didacticism embedded in it alongside the
 433 fun and amusement it excites in the reader. It is a careful ploy into
 434 addressing important matters that bother on our being as human beings
 435 and how this can achieve the entertaining objective of literature.

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