

HUMOUR IN KENYAN PROSE

BY

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university

Obeduro,

Obed Oroko Machogu

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors

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DEDICATION

JAMES MACHOGU OROKO

GRACE NYABOKE

I append your names on this page, my dear parents, so that though you should one day Sink to oblivion with no one to remember you there will be testimony that you once were and longed to walk in the university corridors. It was your desire to have the best education but your parents were too poor. Therefore you endeavored to give me what you missed and I gladly give it back to you- it is yours and thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to examine the technique that Kenyan fiction writers use in creating humour. In order to accomplish this objective, Times Beyond by Omondi Mak'Oloo, How To Be a Kenyan by Wahome Mutahi and Without Kiinua Mgongo by David Maillu have been chosen as primary texts. The decision to make them the key texts emanates from the manner in which they elicit humour in the reader in the entirety of their pages. We proceed from the premise that behind all humour is some level of incongruity either in a statement, feelings, situations and actions, assessments and contexts. We endeavour to examine how the different categories of humour have been tailored to bring an overall witty effect in these texts

The research is guided by the tenets of New Criticism, which in part emphasises the appreciation of the technique and form of art and the mastery of the artist in a literary work. We benefit from this theory in demonstrating how the architecture of these texts enhances the hilarity of the readers.

Largely therefore we interrogate the technique that the authors of these texts have employed to make them stand out as sustainably witty. In our analysis of the three texts, we note the various incongruities that these authors capitalise on for comic effects. For example in Times Beyond we underscore the incongruities that underlie the use of hyperbole and irony in the realization of humour in this text. Apart from this, we

demonstrate how Wahome Mutahi draws from the oddities in the habits and mannerisms of Kenyans to evoke humour in How To Be a Kenyan

We wind up by explicating the various categories of humour in David Maillu's Without Kiinua Mgongo.

An observation that is worth making is with regard to the way that this research brings into sharp focus the scarcity of humour as a stylistic technique in Kenyan prose. If writers will pick up the challenge that this study has presented and consequently churn more humorous works is something we cannot tell. However it is our desire that they rise up to this challenge

INTRODUCTION

Kenyans laugh a lot. The validity of this statement lies in the enormous interest with which Kenyans have received the attempts by various artists in the different spheres of our society to elicit humour and add zest to an otherwise frustrated populace caught up in an endless struggle to come out of the miasma of hopelessness occasioned by the poor economy. Efforts in the electronic media have seen the proliferation of programs such as “Reddykyulass”, “Trukalass”, “Vioja Mahakamani”, “Vituko” just to mention but a few. The print media has had its share in newspaper articles such as “Whispers” by Wahome Mutahi, and “Man Talk” by Oyunga pala.

Despite being referred to as a working nation, Kenyans still find time to pay attention to their humourists. Indeed, scenes of people gathered around an entertainer are common to come by in most urban centres. It is of interest to note that these humourists have succeeded in pulling large crowds to listen to them even when their humour is satirically intended on the same crowds. In the process, therefore, these humourists have not only managed to carve a living out of their art but they have also served as educators to society.

The interest of this study is to carry an analysis of the tools at the disposal of a humourist and demonstrate how some specific writers have appropriated them in their works to come up with sustainably witty texts

Authors such as Wahome Mutahi, Omondi Mak'Oloo and David Maillu feature prominently in our minds as some of the artists who have greatly exploited humour in some of their works. Through them, the common picture prevalent in Kenyan fiction as a serious affair that cannot afford time for laughter while dealing with the equally "serious themes" is brought under challenge.

Out of the three authors that we shall study in this research, Mutahi is perhaps the only one who has been most acknowledged owing to his regular "Whispers" column in the Sunday Nation. However, this study now offers an opportunity to unearth the skills that the authors of Times Beyond, How To Be a Kenyan and Without Kiinua Mgongo have employed to come up with rib-cracking texts. We intend to carry an analysis of these three works in a bid to meet the objective we have identified

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Literary critics tend to look down upon humourists as not serious. The lack of any literary treatise on the place of humour in Kenyan prose attests to this fact. Indeed, although writers such as Wahome Mutahi, Omondi Mak'Oloo and David Maillu have caught the eye of some critics who have proceeded to carry newspaper and other reviews of their works, it is evident that their skill at humour has not been adequately attended to. Generally speaking, there is the lack of in-depth research to unravel the techniques employed by these Kenyan writers in the creation of humour. This, as a matter of fact, is the chief goal of this study.

While we pay homage to the critics who have preceded us in carrying critical appraisals of the Kenyan writers that we shall examine in this study, we note with concern the little attention they have paid to the manner in which these writers have embellished their works with humour. By this study, we intend to investigate the techniques that these authors have put in place so as to realize humour in some of their texts.

JUSTIFICATION:

This study is relevant due to the following reasons: firstly, there is lack of a systematic and critical research to investigate how humour has been realized as a stylistic technique in Kenyan prose. Newspaper acknowledgements made concerning humour as manifested in some works do not suffice to account for this peculiar skill. This study, therefore, intends to break new academic ground by carrying out a full-length explication of the technique of humour in Kenyan prose.

On the other hand, the lack of scholarly treatises on humour coupled with the apparent short supply of works written humorously in Kenyan prose is a clear testimony to the poor regard that writers and critics have accorded this stylistic technique. We are inspired to show through this study that it takes a lot of skill to come up with a text that is witty in all its pages. Besides this, the validity of this study also springs from our desire to stem the lopsided attitude shown to humourists by critics through demonstrating that humour, too, is a subject worth of critical attention.

The choice of Wahome Mutahi's How To Be a Kenyan, David Maillu's Without Kiinua Mgongo and Omondi Mak'Oloo's Times Beyond as primary texts has been arrived at because these texts stand out from the rest as the ones in which humour is sustainably brought out. Put differently, these works, unlike the others, do not give the reader the opportunity to stop laughing until the very last page has been read.

OBJECTIVES:

- (1). To examine how humour is realised in these texts
- (2). To assess humour in Kenyan prose

HYPOTHESES:

- (1). Humour is the result of many kinds of incongruous statements, feelings, situations and actions, assessments and contexts
- (2) It takes a skilled writer to come up with a sustainably witty text

Theoretical Framework

This study will employ new criticism as a critical approach in the analysis of literary texts. Under this theory, the close reading of a text is greatly emphasized. This calls for the analysis of "the texture of the text, how it is constructed and how it functions" (Ryan 1)

According to Fish, under new criticism:

The reader discovers meaning internally within the work through the experience of its organic unity. As its constituted parts juxtapose with or support one another, the literary work's unique architecture shapes its unifying theme(s). Describing the unique architecture or form of the literary work and analyzing the forces that makes its parts work together – this is how the new critic understands and analyses the meaning of literature (1).

In the same spirit of Fish's position regarding the role of the reader who is guided by this theory, we shall endeavor to demonstrate how different techniques have been juxtaposed or how they support one another towards the sustainable realisation of humour in these texts.

New criticism as an approach to literature was developed by a group of American critics. The New critics wanted to avoid impressionistic criticism. Thus they attempted to systematise the study of literature to develop an approach, which was centered on the rigorous study of the text itself. Indeed as they argue, every text is autonomous. History, biography, sociology, psychology, author's intention and reader's private experience are all irrelevant.

Our study will be fully guided by these tenets and we shall treat the texts under investigation in this research as autotelic artifacts that are complete within themselves.

On The other hand, Warren Hedges' views are very helpful to us. According to what he says, " the critics job is to help us appreciate the technique and form of art and the mastery

of the artist” (1). As a follow up to these views we shall explicate the technique of humour in the three primary texts and assess the acumen of the authors in creating humour.

It should be noted that the new critics do not treat style and content as disparate entities that are not complementary. In this respect, we share the view of Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs who front the view that we should not make a distinction between style and content. For them, we should “consider style as the placement of words in the service of content. The way a thing is said, in other words, cannot be separated from the thing itself” (266). In our study, the techniques that the authors have put in place so as to realize humour in these texts will be elucidated. Although we fully appreciate the sentiments above, we shall confine ourselves to the way humour has been realised in these texts for the sake of staying focused.

As Edgar and Henry further argue, style is individualistic, deliberate and adaptable. Style according to them refers to “the right words at the right time and in the right circumstances.” (266). It is with these sentiments in mind that we go out to inquire into the acumen at humour among some writers, namely: Omondi Mak’Oloo, Wahome Mutahi and David Mailu.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an absence of in-depth and systematic research into humour in Kenyan prose. Despite some critics having, for example, argued that Wahome Mutahi is Kenya’s leading humourist, there is clearly an absence of a critical study to unearth his acumen in this peculiar stylistic quality. Their views cannot therefore be taken seriously as they are not

backed by solid evidence. Critics in general have not paid adequate attention to how different writers have appropriated humour in their works.

If one takes a close look at Kenyan writers who can be deemed as humourous, he will notice that they haven't been well attended to by critics. Examples in hand include Wahome Mutahi and Omondi Mak' Oloo whose penmanship at humour has been hailed in newspaper and other reviews. What is clear however is that these reviews offer no in-depth insight into the actual contribution of these writers to Kenyan literature in the area of humour. In this literature review, we endeavor to authenticate the position we have taken above by looking at what has been done or said concerning humour in Kenyan prose.

In his M.A Thesis "The uses of Satire in Fiction: An Analysis of Wahome Mutahi's Three Days on the Cross and The Jail Bugs" Chris Wasike's principle objective in the study is "to investigate the use of Satire in Mutahi's Novels and particularly to evaluate the satirical techniques used in his two texts – The jail Bugs and Three Days on the Cross and how this relates to the themes, characters and style of narration "(1). He appreciates Mutahi's use of humour as one of the devices that helps in achieving satire in these texts. In this study we acknowledge that satire borrows its weapons from humour but we pay attention to the techniques that have been put in place to realize humour in the first place.

Our study notes that Wasike's thesis does not investigate how humour is built in these texts since it is not one of his objectives. We would wish however to underscore the fact that his thesis is a boon to this study since we share the view he advances concerning the role of

humour in the realisation of Satire. His study will be referred to and will serve to fortify the arguments that we will advance in this research.

Henry Indangasi considers Without Kiinua Mgongo as Maillu's most daring stylistic composition. In his opinion, the text is a gripping story of man's inhumanity to man and he says that Maillu's style allows for humour. He notes that the book is most likely Maillu's most compelling satire on the rich and influential people of Kenya (157). His perceptive analysis of the abundance of humour in this text is the springboard upon which we shall endeavour to explicate the manner in which it has been brought out in the text

Evan Mwangi on his part observes about Maillu's experimentation with linguistic hybridity in Without Kiinua Mgongo. He notes the code-switching strategy that the author puts in place through the use of a mixture of Standard English and local versions of the language (19). Mwangi's thesis does not enjoy the scope to explicate the aesthetic benefits of this strategy. This study will take the cue from Mwangi's position to explore the effects of the code-switching technique in the realization of humour in the text.

Another critic, Hashimoto Masumi, in her M.A thesis, "Wole Soyinka's Satire in the Interpreters" investigates how effectively the author employs satire to depict and condemn human follies and vices. In one of the paragraphs, she notes that:

To mask itself, satire employs various elements. The essential elements are comedy, humour, wit, sarcasm and irony. It is through the use of these

elements that satire is able to ridicule and condemn foolish or wicked characters (13)

While the major concern in her thesis is to demonstrate how Soyinka has used satire to ridicule human wickedness, she has not accounted for how the various elements that satire is embellished with are individually realized. In our case, we would wish to point out the centrality of humour by demonstrating how it is realized in the first place.

Masumi's argument regarding the centrality of humour in the realization of satire in Wole Soyinka's, The Interpreters borders on our position with regard to the use of humour in Kenyan prose. Humour is nevertheless not the main subject of her research. This study seeks to focus on the technique that the authors use to achieve humour in the three texts under study.

Chris Wanjala in an essay titled "Destruction of the Old Homestead, Themes of Cultural Alienation Relation to intellectual life" in For Home and Freedom casually treats the humour that serves as the vehicle through which Okot P'Bitek hits out at Ocol, the Makerere graduate who is at war with his illiterate wife, Lawino. Commenting about the language that Lawino uses to attack his alienated husband, he says that:

The author gives her the lashing tongue to defend her traditional image. She may be fighting a losing battle... but she clothes her attack in such powerful language that she makes a strong case for the harmony that exists in the Acoli traditional culture (72)

The language that Wanjala is hereby making reference to is quite humorous but he does not account for the artistry that P'Bitek employs to bring it forth. Our study differs from Wanjala's because we focus on Kenyan prose. However we buy the idea that writers employ language to attack the vices that bedevil their societies. Consequently, we intend to investigate how the texts under scrutiny in this study have laced their language with humour.

Along the same line of Okot P'Bitek's poetry, Elizabeth Ongwen, in her M.A Thesis "Satire in Okot P' Bitek's Poetry": A critical Analysis of Song of Lawino, Song of Okol, Song of Prisoner and Song of Malaya notes the humorous picture of Clementina that Okot presents.

As She points out:

Tina's face has been eaten up by some medicine to the extent that it has disappeared and it is red and raw. She (Lawino) then compares Clementina's body to the unsynchronized skin of the hyena, or like one who has been burnt by lightning. These exaggerated descriptions are humorous especially when Clementina's face is described as raw and tender (6)

Ongwen's views as expressed above portray a critic who is conversant with the central role that humour has played in helping Okot realize the satire he intends. She does not carry out an exploration into the manner in which the humour is realized in the first place since this is not her objective. We have observed that her research is more thematically inclined towards explaining the various vices satirized in these texts. Consequently, our study differs from hers at two levels: Firstly, we shall focus on Kenyan prose and not Okot's works. On the other hand we shall pay close attention to humour as a stylistic technique.

As we had earlier mentioned, some newspaper reviews have acknowledged the instrumental role humour plays in Kenyan literature. We have also noted that these reviews have largely touched on Wahome Mutahi to the exclusion of other writers whom we deem humourous. For example, John Kariuki in an article entitled “Celebration of the Arts and Music in Dirge for Whispers” bemoans the poor treatment accorded to artists while they live. He says that Kenya is “a dead artist’s society that only recognizes entertainers when they die” (10). He considers the death of Wahome Mutahi as the loss of a playwright, novelist and humour writer.

While Kariuki’s views are shared in this study, we find them shallow and devoid of the in depth analysis that we intend to subject How to be a Kenya in a bid to unearth Mutahi’s skill at humour.

In an article in the Daily Nation by Mburu Mwangi, President Mwai Kibaki pays tribute to Wahome’s art with these words:

In his writings and engagements with society, Wahome also contributed significantly in the enlargement of the democratic space in the country by championing and propagating democratic ideals. It is a measure of Wahome’s creativity that each Sunday, Kenyans looked forward to reading his humour column, “Whispers”. It is a column that Kenyans will sadly miss (3)

In the same article, the Nation media group chairman, Wilfred Kiboro, says that “Wahome gave life and laughter to our Newspapers and brought light into our lives” (3). This study

fully agrees with the sentiments expressed above and seeks to make a follow-up of these views by incisively studying Mutahi's technique of humour.

A reviewer by the name Yusuf K. Dawood in his "Tribute to whispers" has this to say:

Wahome added a unique cultural dimension to our national life. Not only did he work for the Sunday Nation but he also entertained the whole nation every Sunday by placing a "mocking" mirror in front of it. He therefore deserves more than a passing tribute (11).

This study agrees with Dawood's views regarding Mutahi's acumen at humour. Our research however goes further than this to unravel the technique of humour in Kenyan prose in general. We examine the skills that the authors have put in place to bring forth humour in the texts that we have identified.

On their part, Stephen Mburu and Peter Kimani in an article: "Whispers: A column that charmed all from the lowly to top scholars" quote Professor Micere Mugo as saying that:

With an incredible subtle sense of humour, razor-sharp wit and biting satire, Wahome Mutahi's creative output traversed all genres of literature –drama, poetry and fiction. His artistic and journalistic pieces played a very important role in interrogating political dictatorship, corruption, tribalism, elitism, wealth grabbing and many other neo-colonial ills (5).

Mugo's views vividly represent one of the writers under investigation in this study. Her observations however fall short of the critical and in depth approach we will take in this study to unravel the place of humour in Kenyan prose. We shall pay absolute attention to how humour is generated in the texts that we have identified.

From the foregoing it is clear that no in-depth research has been conducted insofar as humour as a stylistic device in Kenyan prose is concerned. This study attempts to address this knowledge gap

METHODOLOGY

We will employ library-based research in this study. We will also undertake a close reading and critical analysis of Times Beyond by Omondi Mak'oolo, How to be a Kenyan by Wahome Mutahi and Without Kiinua Mgongo by David Maillu as the primary texts. Besides this, we will do an extensive reading of other texts, which include more works by the same authors and some more by other writers and texts on literary criticism. It is our hope that these will serve to illuminate the study.

While the bulk of our research will emanate from library sources we will also make reference to the Internet, which will come in handy in providing additional information during the study.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

In order to obtain a focused and comprehensive analysis, this study will limit itself to prose. If we shall make reference to other writers whom we consider humourous in the area of drama, it will be purely with the sole intention of corroborating evidence in the primary texts.

CHAPTER BREAK DOWN

This study goes out to examine the place of humour in Kenyan prose. We investigate the genius involved in creating humour in the texts that come under our attention in this research.

In the first chapter we shall discuss humour as a stylistic device. An analysis of its nature and functions will be made. We will pay attention to the modalities that some Kenyan writers have put in place so as to bring forth humour in their works. We will draw our examples from the texts by those writers who have made a subtle attempt at embellishing their works with humour but have not used it in a sustainable manner as a preferred stylistic choice.

The second chapter discusses the technique that Omondi Mak'Oloo has employed to make Times beyond a sustainably witty text. We also investigate the suitability of using Waweru

as a vehicle for humour in the text. We wind up by explicating the reasons why the setting of the text is a gold mine for humour.

The third chapter explores the technique of humour in Mutahi's How To Be a Kenyan. We discuss the contribution of the various oddities in the Kenyan mannerisms to the humour in the text. We also explore the place of language in the humour realized.

Chapter four focuses on David Maillu's Without Kiinua Mgongo. Besides the hybridity of the language in the text, we analyse the text for the other categories of humour present.

In the conclusion we carry a summary of the fore gone arguments and make a succinct account of what the study has yielded in as far as humour in Kenyan prose is concerned. We shall make a case for the technique of creating humour by basing our argument on the findings from the works under study in this research

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF HUMOUR

Humour has been defined variously by a number of scholars. To begin with Walter Blair is of the view that “the humour of a people is their institutions, laws, customs, manners, habits, characters, convictions – their scenery whether of the sea, the city or the hills – expressed in the language of the ludicrous” (3). The language that he refers to is that which distorts our perceptions thereby creating incongruities in the things and issues that we deal with on a day to day basis. The language of humour, as Warren Shibles argues, highlights mistakes. The mistake pointed to must however not be bad or harmful if laughter and good bodily feeling is to be achieved (1) It is important to point out that, as Shibles observes, humour is produced by the appraisal that there is a harmless mistake (1). By way of example, if a character steps on a banana peel and falls down, there is humour elicited because this is a mistake. However if the same person ends up breaking his leg, then it ceases being humorous since the mistake has become harmful.

This study considers humour to emanate from incongruities. This is the reason why we do not share Ronald Knox’s view that humour is restricted to the human domain. As he argues, “humour is restricted to the domain of man and his activities considered in circumstances so incongruous as to detract from their human dignity” (33). His assertion that “only man has dignity and only he can be funny” (53) is not true, as humour cannot be entirely pegged on human dignity or its loss. One for example pauses to wonder if there can be no laughter

elicited to see a marauding goat sporting a short inscribed with the word “untouchable” moving around a busy banana market stall. Knox’s position restricts humour to the loss of values hence making it a tool for satire. This study shall benefit from his views but we shall go a step further to demonstrate that humour serves many other purposes.

On his part, Freud says that humour “springs from a defense mechanism against a threatening outside world.” As he further observes, “the defense mechanism accounts for the reversal that takes place in humour – the transformation of displeasure into pleasure” (Goldsmith 45).

Freud’s views are helpful in the treatment of psychologically disturbed patients. This is because if people who usually respond to humour fail to respond, they are possibly worried, distracted or upset. On the other hand a person who almost never responds to humour is possibly psychologically disturbed. Psychiatrists therefore test for the presence of emotional problems in their patients by conducting a test to determine how much humour a person will allow. Equally, a sense of humour is an important factor in judging whether or not psychiatric patients are well adjusted enough to leave hospital.

In our current study, Freud’s views have a twofold implication. First, his views define the role of humour in a fictional work in serving as a defense mechanism through which readers cope with the tension in a work of art. Seen this way, humour provides an avenue through which readers channel out their problems / tensions in the text in a healthy and emotional manner instead of resigning to self-pity or denial. As Freud points out, “since depression

involved inhibited aggressiveness, humour helps to appropriate aggressiveness in a positive manner” (Goldsmith 47). In this light, humour in a literary text provides the readers with the necessary break from the aggressive events taking place so as to temporarily vent out built-up emotions.

The second implication that Freud’s views have in understanding humour is his position on the role of humour in providing an avenue for the reversal of issues / phenomena. Humour as he points out transforms displeasure into pleasure. Shibles chooses to refer to this transformation as acceptance (a mandatory requirement if laughter is to be achieved). As he argues, humour comes out once we stop taking things seriously. He says that “With humour we ignore the hunt, give up our goals, disregard consequences, and let illogic prevail. It lets us escape. It allows us to transcend the oppression of reality, reason and rules” (4).

Shibles’ views above suggest that humour is about being light-hearted. A humorous writer laughs at life and accepts that the mistakes of life are undeniable and certain. The humorous attitude, according to Shibles, is the “incontestable acceptance of life as it is with all its mistakes” (4). This therefore explains the reason why a humorist will not spare including in the list of his themes those topics that other people regard as sacred (e.g. sex) as long as he sees mistakes in them. For him all reality must be accepted as it is and laughed at. Humour helps a writer tackle those subjects we fear we cannot change for instance bad governance, thereby helping us accept our mistakes.

We can still further pursue this idea of the place of acceptance in humour by noting that “seriousness and anger are based on rejection. However, humour is based on acceptance” (Shibles 4). Indeed, when appreciating humour, we are in a way saying “it is a mistake but it is okay.”

David Worcester has also alluded to the importance of acceptance in the realisation of humour. As he argues, anger is the most repellent of emotions. He gives an analogy where a person who has found himself caught up in an emotionally charged situation can resort to humour as a technique to deal with such a predicament. This is how he puts it:

It is acute discomfort to be present where a man has fallen into a furious passion. If you are in such a situation, and the object of your acquaintance’s rage has no connection with you, you will experience an instinctive craving to escape into humour, to turn the painful situation into a ludicrous one. This is done by withdrawing all sympathy from the blusterer and by taking a more relativistic view of him as a lobster – faced baboon in a fit. (118)

Without accepting a serious situation one cannot achieve humour but will instead be worked up and might soon find oneself equally enraged by that situation. When David Worcester talks about the idea of “withdrawing all sympathy from the blusterer’, he is alluding to the important role that distancing plays in the creation of humour. As we shall explain a few paragraphs ahead, distancing oneself from a mistake is a mandatory undertaking if a person is to achieve laughter.

Humour does not work if one is too serious or does not accept it. Humour, according to Shibles, delimits the boundary lines of our fears, seriousness, and non- acceptance. It helps us get an insight into people's lives for as he argues, "What one laughs at tells us what one is, and what one is not, serious about" (3).

Some people regard sex and religion as taboo topics for humour. Such people find it quite offensive if anyone should try to create humour out of these subjects. Others such as government may reject "loaded humour" which is critical of them. This shows that these people are fearful about these objects.

Our study will not be guided by what subjects people deem as worth of humour or as taboo topics averse to humour. We shall subject all forms of humour to literary criticism when and, as they shall arise in the literary texts under scrutiny in this research. We shall not consider some subjects as being too sacred for humour if they present themselves for our scrutiny in these texts.

Goldsmith argues that the major component of humour lies in:

The expression of a subjective state of mind that relates to a painful situation and to a threatening external object in its own particular way ... the nature of the external object is in this case threatening and dangerous, negative, fearsome, but the reaction of the humourist is the opposite of what could be expected. Instead of reacting with

anxiety, he elaborates, linguistically an intrapsychic solution that benefits him and nobody else. Yet a witness can benefit too and derive some pleasure from the humourist effort, if it is compatible with the cultural and ideological affinities of those who listen. (49)

On his part, Shibles says that for one to laugh at a joke one must be able to distance oneself from the subjective matter and from everyday values and prejudices (5). As readers, if we accept that something is a mistake and we distance ourselves, we will achieve humour or aesthetic appreciation of that thing. If we however refuse to distance ourselves from a mistake, because we are fearful, the result will be anger. Let us give an illustration. Suppose a goalkeeper gets hold of a football and starts running away from the field and out of the stadium, two reactions can be expected: the tired players and the fans will abandon themselves into prolonged laughter, but the referee will be mad with rage. The fans and the players achieve humour because they tolerate the mistake and do not mind it. On the contrary, the referee refuses to distance himself from the mistake hence his failure to laugh.

Lest we be mistaken to suggest that all mistakes must produce laughter, we wish to point out that some mistakes produce negative emotions. A writer can however make us laugh at such deviations acceptably by means of satire, to oppose and criticize the unjust or society's imperfections. This therefore means that one does not have to be indifferent to the mistakes in society so as to be a humorist. We share Shibles' views that a humorist must distance himself from the mistakes but not be indifferent to them. Indeed as he puts it, "humour is not indifference but alertness to behavior and events" (5).

A distinction needs to be made between humour and wit. Even though there is humour elicited out of wit, it is important to note that wit comes out through the play of words. Therefore we cannot think a witty thought without thinking in words. Humour on its part can be wordless as these are thoughts that are not necessarily expressed in words that elicit laughter (Knox 53).

Knox disagrees with the notion that all humour originates in indecency or obscenity, as the psychoanalysts would want to imply. While arguing that the obscene is an illegitimate effect of humour, he says that “there is nothing incongruous in the existence of sex and other animal functions; the incongruity lies merely in the fact of mentioning them.” He continues to observe that “it is not human dignity that is infringed in such cases, but a human convention of secrecy” (54).

Our study finds fault with the arguments by the psychoanalysts and Knox regarding the place of obscenity and indecency in the generation of humour. While we disagree with the notion that all humour springs from some element of the obscene and indecency, we do not view them in this research as illegitimate subjects of humour. We will argue that underlying all indecency and obscenity is a mistake

We share the view that humour has no boundaries and a writer enjoys what Shibles christens as “humour license” (1). Consequently, we feel that a writer ought not to be condemned because of the manner in which he exploits his “license” to draw from the “wells” of

obscurity and indecency, so as to bring forth humour; his work should be judged for its aesthetic effectiveness regardless of the source of that humour.

Humour need not to be directed at somebody else. Unlike satire, the object of humour can be its own author. In Ronald Knox's words, "the author who laughs at himself, unless, the self is a deliberately assumed one, is not writing satire" (59). In such a case, the author makes himself a laughing stock to his readers who laugh at his many exploits. There is therefore, clearly, a difference between satire and humour in as far as the author is concerned. This position can be further validated by the fact that in satire, unlike humour, the writer always leaves it to be assumed that he, himself is immune from all the follies and the vices which he attacks. The question we need to address now is whether laughter is the criterion of humour. Shibles vehemently argues that it is wrong to say that laughter is synonymous with humour. As he points out:

Humour need not involve laughter and laughter need not involve humour. Actors may laugh. It's a matter of adjusting one's mouth in a certain way. Pilots laugh when cities are being bombed. This is not a sign of humour... sales people, waiters and perhaps most people are trained to smile and laugh for social purposes, not because there is humour present. On the other hand something may be seen as humorous yet induce no smile or laughter. Laughter and smiling are not necessary criteria for the presence of humour. The appraisal that there is something like an acceptable mistake is essential for the presence of humour. (5)

Indeed it is true that we can fake laughter so as to appear as though we are having fun. For example there is nothing humorous when we present our curriculum vitae to our prospective employers with our faces radiant with a smile. What we are merely doing at such an instance is to hypocritically present ourselves as being charming so as to catch the eye of the employer. No tolerable mistake has occurred to qualify for humour.

Although it is correct to say that humour refers to anything that is funny and that provokes laughter, as we have observed above, laughter isn't the criterion of humour. As a matter of fact, if we laugh at cruelty, then being in a state of happiness is not the single yardstick to determine humour.

Goldsmith has observed that a sense of humour is a gift not available to everybody (45). Indeed one must have a talent in humour and be well versed with the techniques involved in its creation if he is to be a good humorist.

There are a number of uses that humour can be put into in a literary text and it is to them that this study now turns attention.

To begin with, humour can manifest itself through different ways and serve different purposes. It can be aggressive and derisive, it can deal with nonsense or the incongruous, it can be sympathetic and understanding and it can symbolize release from tension and freedom from care. Humour can manifest itself as a satirist's weapon. Henry Bergson argues

that “laughter causes fear in the person who is its object and has the psychological effect of punishment” (Goldsmith 23). It is his opinion that if we have to laugh, then our sensitivity has to be silent at least for a moment, and that we do not identify with the target. He further points as follows:

Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed. By laughter, society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it, it would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness. (23)

Bergson’s views regarding the role of humour as a corrective are in line with the belief of this study. Nevertheless we find his perception of humour too restricting. He fails to acknowledge the other roles that humour plays, for example, in the release of tension in a work of art. Our study will benefit from Bergson’s view but we hold that there are many other uses for which humour has been utilized in our primary texts.

Another scholar whose perception concerning the use of humour will benefit this study is Ronald A. Knox. In an article, “On Humour and Satire,” he sees humour as “a fresh window of the soul through which we see the familiar world of our experience although distorted thereby turning all our earnest fellow mortals into figures of fun” (52). Our study agrees with this definition but is not of the view that humour is chiefly a tool used for satirical purposes as he suggests. His arguments hold that humour must have vendetta. He says the following:

Humour without satire, is strictly speaking a perversion on, the misuse of a sense. Laughter is a deadly explosive which was meant to be wrapped in the cartridge of satire, and so, aimed unerringly at its appointed target, deal its salutary wounds; humour without satire is a flash in the pan; it may be pretty to look at, but it is, in truth a waste of ammunition. (62)

Our study wishes to take up from Ronald's views to move further ahead to demonstrate that humour, apart from being the vitriol in a satirist's pen, has indeed many other roles to play. We hope to benefit from the sentiments expressed by Ronald in bolstering the arguments of this research.

The humour of satire can also be referred to as "a serious joke". This is a joke that involves humour and gives new knowledge or insight at the same time. It is correct to observe that satire borrows its weapons from the humorist (Knox 53). In a way therefore, humour becomes the parent while satire is its child. The laughter which satire provokes has malice in it and as readers we would want to disassociate ourselves from the victim. Satire is therefore a channel into which humour can be diverted. This is however not to imply that humour cannot stand on its own (pure humour).

Arthur Pollard makes a point concerning the way satire can be embellished with comedy and irony. While arguing that satire can be realized through wit, ridicule, irony, sarcasm, cynicism, the sardonic and invective, he points out that there can be a difference between the

satiric and the comic. He holds that although we have satiric comedy, there is comedy that is not satiric. This kind of comedy, as he says, "is kindly; it makes fun but accepts, it criticizes but appreciates; it laughs but also laughs with its butt" (5).

In line with Pollard's sentiments above, this study takes cognizance of the fact that not all humour is satirical. Some kind of humour is just light and merely meant to amuse with no satire intended. We recognise this kind of humour, for example, in its entertaining value and its use in lessening the tension in a fictional work.

Before we look at the various techniques for creating humour, we would like to give a brief outline of some of the other uses that humour can be put to. Among many other uses, humour in a literary text can be used for aesthetic enjoyment and as a coping strategy. It can also be used for the creation of rapport among characters, easing the tension in a text, and in helping a character gain acceptance in a group. It can also help in revealing the personality of a character and for survival in high stress situations. Humour is also a useful device in tackling taboo topics and it can help reduce or avoid defensiveness. On the other hand, it is an acceptable way to criticize and it can help one say anything as long as it is said positively. We wish to hasten to add that this list is not exhaustive. We however hope that the few uses that we have enumerated serve to show the usefulness of the stylistic device that humour is.

There are numerous techniques that a writer can use to create humour in a text. One of these ways is by giving human qualities of understanding circumstances to animals or inanimate things. This is what D. H. Lawrence does jocularly in "The Man Who Died". The peasant's

cock in this story is elevated to near human status of being able to consciously answer back in calculated outbursts against the distant crowing of other cocks. This is done by the cock as though in a bid to reaffirm his presence and dominance in the peasant's compound. However, more mirthful in the story is the cock's tenacious and randy appetite for the three "shabby hens" (1358). Despite his being tied by the farmer using a cord round his shank and fastened to the post, the cock makes good out of his penned circumstances and moves on with life unperturbed. Here is what D.H Lawrence humorously says concerning the behaviour of the cock:

The young cock, freed, marched with a prancing stride of indignation away from the humans, came to the end of his string, gave a tug and a hitch of his tied leg, fell over for a moment, scuffled frantically on the unclean earthen floor, to the horror of the shabby hens, then with a sickening lurch, regained feet, and stood to think.... He no longer pranced and ruffled and forged his feathers. He walked within the limits of his tether somberly. Still he gobbled up the best bits of food. Still, sometimes, he saved an extra-best bit for his favorite hen of the moment. Still he pranced with quivering, rocking fierceness upon such of his harem as he came nonchalantly within range, and gave off the invisible. (1358)

D. H. Lawrence in this story exaggerates the intelligence of an animal and makes the cock possess the intelligence akin to a human being. It is this kind of incongruity that provokes humour in this story.

A writer can also create humour by giving surprise or unexpected solutions on how a problem should be approached. The simplicity or irrationality of the solution provided is inconsistent with what we think, as readers, should happen. Instead of being embittered by the solution advanced we choose as readers to laugh.

An example of a surprise solution that borders on absurdity is the one provided by Dusman Gonzaga in Meja Mwangi's The Cockroach Dance when he comes across idle throngs on his way home. The confusion occasioned by these throngs is a chagrin to Dusman who then proceeds to write letters to the editors of the daily papers giving his solution that, in his view, will rid the city of this human sore.

One of the solutions he advances is that these idlers be given jobs, or be used by the army as dummies for target practice. When this letter fails to be published he writes another one.

This is what he says concerning its contents:

The letter advised the powers that be to collect the whole miserable lot, cram them into trucks and take them as far north as possible, into the remote semi-desert and dump them there. By the time they trekked back into the cities, they would have decided what they wanted to do with their lives. (58)

Another unexpected or surprise solution is provided to Dusman Gonzaga who goes to the Meters superintendent seeking a transfer from working as a parking Meter reader to a water

Meter reader. After much discussion with the superintendent whose head is apparently throbbing from a mixture of a hangover and concentration he is taken aback by the solution that the superintendent gives him. As readers we laugh at the glee with which the superintendent announces that he will make Dusman the head reader. He declares to Dusman as though with a sudden revelation: "I have good news for you," with his voice charged with new life, he drops the "good news": "I will make you the head reader" (53). Since as readers we are aware that this "promotion" will serve Dusman no good, we laugh at this surprise solution accorded to Dusman's long and nagging problem.

Meja Mwangi has in this same scene also used successfully the technique of the constant and unnecessary repetition of a statement or exclamation as a skill in the generation of humour. The Meter superintendent is a thoroughly inefficient person with a hard chair in his office purposely put there to provide discomfort to the complainants, thereby discouraging them from overstaying. As he ironically says, "It fills my heart with pleasant joy when I see the complaints office jammed with customers... When I finally solve their problems it is just another testimony of my competence" (47).

The irony of his competence is humorously brought out when the superintendent unnecessarily repeats the line "now let us get this straight" six times as he tries to "solve" Dusman's complaint. Since as readers we are aware that his is an inefficient office, we laugh at his pretense to solve Dusman's problem by posing as one who is very keen on the records and would not want to muddle them with some unclear detail from Dusman hence his constant refrain: "now let us get this straight for the record."

Nicknaming is another strategy of creating humour. Under this technique, a writer ascribes false names to characters, events, places etc. that help the reader to form mental pictures of what he is talking about. By way of example, Wahome Mutahi in Jail Bugs has used a wide range of false names to narrate the experiences of Albert Kweyu in prison. For Kweyu, a prison officer who twitches his moustache as he talks earns himself the name “Walrus Moustache” and because the same officer’s voice is hoarse as he speaks, Albert Kweyu chooses to refer to him as The Concrete Mixer. Mutahi also refers to this prison as “*wakora wengi* prison” to suggest the character of the inmates who sit within its walls. The wardens are also not spared nicknaming by prisoners. Indeed, one of the corporals who is known for taking away money brought for the prisoners by their relatives is referred to as “corporal *Tumbo*”. The few examples provided above suffice to show how Mutahi has prevalently employed this skill to generate humour in this text.

In this same text, the author has used hyperbole as yet another technique for creating humour. A hyperbole is an exaggeration that makes use primarily of an obvious over – or understatement of such things as size, numbers, proportions, facts, feelings, deeds, experiences and so on. This is what Albert Kweyu says of Walrus Moustache.

Now sure that we had been put in our position, the man with the dancing moustache let his concrete mixer voice go to work.... He paused for an agonizing half a minute or so during which time, his moustache did a bit of

rumba and then finally a waltz. Having occupied his upper lip with such an artistic pastime, the officer then made more use of the mouth. (4)

The facts exaggerated above include the man's voice box, which is likened to a concrete mixer. This is an allusion to his hoarse voice. The movement of his moustache is exaggerated to appear as though it is at first doing a rumba (a popular fast dance originally from Cuba) and then a waltz (a rather slow formal dance for a man and a woman). It is this exaggeration that accounts for the humour achieved out of this description.

Slapstick humour is "the form of humour that depends for its effect on fast, boisterous, and zany physical activity and horse play...often accompanied by broad obvious rowdy verbal humour" (Kappas 1). Simple jokes that are in their content purposeless fall under this category. A slapstick scene includes someone being hit in the face by, for example, an egg. Rough and noisy behaviour that is foolish in an amusing or absurd way falls under the category of slapstick.

Another way through which a writer can create humour is by capitalizing on the foolishness of his characters and exposing their weaknesses. The writer in such a case has no hostile intentions or has no intentions to arouse hostile feelings in his readers. This is the type of humour that is classified under the category of human predicaments. According to Katherine H. Kappas:

This classification features Situations in which a character appears foolish or bested, includes the humour of superiority and degradation, which is based on self aggrandizement or release of hostility through the discomfiture, failure, or misfortune of others, and comic predicaments, which is based on an attitude of sympathetic acceptance of human predicament and can be seen in situations which either oneself or someone else appears foolish or bested by life for the moment. (1)

Sam Kahiga in "The Caddie Boys" has capitalized on the drunkenness of Kigotho to laugh at illiteracy. Although drunkenness as a misnomer can be used as a source of humour among the characters, Kahiga uses it as a catalyst for exposing Kigotho's inability to comprehend artificial insemination. Kigotho in his drunken stupor curses the veterinary boys for, in his view, having killed his cow. According to Kigotho's testimony he is dissuaded by people from hiring a bull to service his cow that is on heat and is instead told to call the veterinary boy to artificially inseminate it. As it however turns out, his cow dies two days later and he attributes this to the act of one of the veterinary officers who inseminated it. This is how he puts it:

The veterinary boy had a long arm, almost as long as mine. He came behind Njiru (the cow) and shoved the hand into her behind while we held it. A whole arm disappeared into my cow's rectum... when a cow is on heat she

wants a bull, not a boy from the veterinary department pushing an arm into her. Cows are like women, you know. (73)

It is clear from Kigotho's statements above that he is uninformed in as far as the efficacy of artificial insemination is concerned. Although an unfortunate predicament has befallen him by the death of his best cow, Njiru, Kahiga uses his foolishness, with no malice intended, to laugh at the manner in which Kigotho foolishly attributes the death of his cow to the veterinary officers.

The other type or category of humour can be referred to as either toilet or gutter humour. This category encompasses crude jokes such as bodily functions gone askew, farting, smacking bottoms etc. Mr. Kigotho is a very obscene man and one cannot help laugh at the kind of dirty jokes that he cracks. For example, when one of the women in the bar challenges him that the cause of the death of his cow must have been different, he retorts: "We are talking about my cow Njiru." He then adds, "what if I shoved my arm up your... would you survive?" (73). This is a statement that draws the reaction of Ngoima who observes loudly that Johana (the old man) must be getting drunk. Johana swiftly draws from his dirty arsenal and bursts out in response: "Getting drunk? ... Of course I'm getting drunk, tapeworm.... What's the matter with you? Why don't you shut you upper hole?" (74).

Ridicule is another technique through which humour can be created. Katherine H.Kappas says that it involves primarily:

The teasing and mockery of others or oneself, can be seen expressed, for example, in the mockery of adults, their world and its customs and institutions, etc. Negative ridicule finds its source in feelings of self-aggrandizement or the release of hostility through the mockery of others. Playful ridicule, on the other hand, is based on the sympathetic acceptance of human foibles and satire is primarily a sophisticated artistic form of humour arising from both types of ridicule. (1)

Let us give an illustration to show how ridicule can enhance humour in a text. The lady he wants to sell a policy to ridicules the insurance man in the story "The Insurance Man" by Sam Kahiga. Since the insurance man decides to attend the funeral of one of the clients that he had insured, he finds it an opportune moment to sell a life policy to one of the mourners. He tells the mourners about how human life is so delicate and why one should insure it. He gives her the example of the deceased for whom he had sold a life policy. He then tells her that his (the deceased's) act of insuring himself while he was alive was tantamount to "looking ahead" (175). However, to his consternation, the lady's feeling of self-aggrandizement earns him the rebuff: "I have seen insurance agents who follow people into toilets. You are the first I have seen who scours among the dead. You are shockingly tenacious" (176).

The lady's statement above is a clear mockery of the noble job done by the insurance man in insuring people while they are alive, thereby safeguarding them from the unexpected. This is a clear case of ridicule borne out of being in a more advantaged position in society. As it is indeed to emerge later, the lady in this saga is a young twenty six year old millionaire who

cannot understand how a thirty-one year old can go “scouring among the grave- yards” hunting for peanuts where he should instead be “laying flowers” (181). It is the language and analogy the lady uses to rubbish the insurance man’s job that draws our laughter. We however do not laugh at his misfortunes.

Here now is a brief outline of the other techniques that can be used by a writer to create humour. The first technique that we want to identify is “the absurd”. This can be defined as that which obviously lacks reason, which is foolish and ridiculous in its lack of good sense.

It includes:

Nonsense, the nonsensical use of logic and language; the preposterous, arising from the incongruity of reality and fantasy; and whimsy, a fanciful or fantastic device, object or creation especially in writing, art or decoration.

(Kappas 1)

We would also like to identify defiance as another incongruity that breeds humour. This is the release of hostility or aggression through rebellion. It includes the violation of conventions, the perpetration of situations socially unacceptable to adults or the government, the expression of forbidden ideas and generally the violation of authority. It is important to point out that in order for this defiance to beget humour, it must be within acceptable limits

Other ways of creating humour are through: mistaken identity, pretending to be what we are not, making false statements, taking the wrong meaning of a word or sentence which has several meanings, mimicking or imitating someone (impersonation), false analogy, hypocrisy, illusion, saying irrelevant things, being especially honest when it is not expected, asserting what is obvious, trying being irrational, a drunkard mumbling words, using broken or unconventional English, a character's indulgence in some trivial activity while imagining that he is indulging in a momentous cause, and through the use of similes and metaphors. There are still more ways of generating humour and they include: the use of irony, sycophancy, two ignorant people arguing over a subject that none of them understands anything about, mischief, rigidity of a character to embrace change, sinking (relating the valuable to the valueless), the ludicrous description of the physical features of a place, person and so on, self-praise that is misplaced or inconsistent with a character's actions and mannerisms, situation humour (unlikely events with a humorous twist) and so on.

We would like to point out that the list of situations or ways of creating humour noted above is in exhaustive. We however hope that the few examples supplied suffice to indicate the multifaceted nature of humour. Its also important to note that we have drawn examples from those works that have not demonstrated a sustained use of humour in Kenyan prose to illustrate the techniques that we have identified in the preceding paragraphs. If other ways arise in the primary texts, which we will study we will not hesitate to analyze them.

CONCLUSION TWO

In this chapter, we have attempted a definition of humour, its functions, and how it can be created. Among many other things, we have said that humour arises out of harmless mistakes or incongruities. We have also noted the fact that laughter emanates from every comical situation but it is not the sole criterion for humour. The functions of humour are several and we have singled out its role as a tool for aesthetic enjoyment as one of them. In the area of its creation, we have drawn examples from various works to show that there are many techniques at the disposal of a humourist. In general, this chapter has laid the foundation upon which we shall judge the texts under scrutiny in our study for their artistry in the area of humour. We now move in the next chapter to explore the techniques that Omondi Mak'ooloo has put in place to make Times Beyond a humorous text.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TECHNIQUE OF HUMOUR IN TIMES BEYOND

Edgar v. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs view style as the way writers assemble words to tell the story, develop the argument, dramatize the play or compose the poem. They further hold the view that style is individualistic and may refer to the right words at the right time and in the right circumstances (266). These views have implications in our study since they shed light into the possible reasons why some writers are more apt at humour than others.

Evidently, humour needs some skill in its creation and not all writers have the ability to weave a sustainably witty story in the manner that Omondi Mak' Oloo does in Times beyond. For that matter, it is our endeavour in this chapter to unravel the techniques that the author has put in place so as to make this text such a riveting work of art.

There are many ways through which humour has been created in Times Beyond for example there are those methods that the author has used to directly reveal his attitude or feelings concerning the issues or happenings in the text. These techniques and modes of presentation directly create or reveal the humorous intentions that the author has for his readers given the manner in which he manipulates the language or issues so as to make them look strange, glamorous and so on. The methods we have in mind under this category include hyperbole, similes, metaphors and irony. One thing that is common about the last three methods above is that there is a way in which they bolster the humour they bring out by borrowing from

hyperbole. We will indeed demonstrate that for similes and metaphors to come out jocularly, they must carry some level of exaggeration in the things they want to establish a relationship. Irony however can benefit from hyperbole although it can stand apart independently. Our concern now is to demonstrate how each of these four techniques contributes to humour in the text. We shall also discuss the many other ways through which humour is realized in this story.

Let us now begin by pointing out that hyperbole is the most prevalent skill in Times Beyond that the author has made recourse to in making this text very humorous. With well over thirty hyperboles used, we shall sample a few to illustrate this position.

The first exaggeration we wish to point out is Waweru's suggestion to Erika that she buys an electric saw to deal with Hungarian Bread (12). This is obviously a dishonest portrayal of the texture of the bread. Indeed, Waweru's success to finally cut this bread and proceed to butter it without the use of the suggested saw exposes this exaggeration. On the other hand, it is an exaggeration for Waweru to say that "the treasurer nodded vigorously, almost dislodging his head from the neck," (92) to describe the action of the secretary while agreeing with the chairman of the USA for claiming that members have not updated their contributions.

Separately, it is quite amusing the manner in which Waweru blows up the feeling of getting to an orgasm when he is engaged in an illicit sexual encounter with Zsuzsa. This is how he puts it:

We overtook a soviet solyut on its way to circle earth and nearly collided with a capsule I couldn't immediately identify, badly startling the astronauts working inside. They stared mouth agape, and we zoomed past. Afraid that we might suffocate due to lack of oxygen, we decided to return to earth. We re-entered the atmosphere at a relatively reduced speed and landed with a bone-rattling thud. She collapsed panting on my chest, momentarily at a loss of words. (132)

We laugh at this blatant lie because we read the joke behind this outright exaggeration about what Waweru feels like in the build up to his highest point of sexual pleasure.

Elsewhere, there is hyperbole in the remarks Waweru makes in sport regarding Erika's dressing table and they induce laughter in us. Notice what he says regarding Eri's room: "Next to it (the writing table) was Eri's dressing table, groaning under the weight of enough cosmetics to sink an aircraft carrier" (9). There is personification in this statement. The table is given human qualities of being able to complain about the weight it has to carry. While we joyfully read this exaggeration, we wonder at the amount of cosmetics it takes to beautify oneself.

A final example of hyperbole that yields humour in Times Beyond that we would wish to point out is Waweru's words concerning Andra's uncle:

I must have hit a chord, for he cocked his head to one side in consideration. I could almost hear the cogwheels clash as his mind raced, debating on whether to go or close. Greed for more money versus commonsense. (233)

The words above are in reference to Andras Uncle's deep reflection following Waweru's suggestion that they close shop after making a huge and unexpected sale of the watermelons. It is Waweru's view that since they have managed to do a two-day's work in a half a day, they should wind up and come back the following day. However, Waweru's ideas are incongruous with what goes on in a capitalistic mind like Andra's uncle as shown above. It is an exaggeration to talk of almost hearing the cogwheels of a thinking mind and this produces a comic effect on the readers.

We would now also wish to note the immense contribution that similes have made towards making Times Beyond a humorous text. Similes are expressions, which describe one thing by directly comparing it with another, using the words 'as' or 'like'. In order for these comparisons to be sublime, Omondi Mak'Oloo has made them carry some level of exaggeration. It will be interesting to note the manner in which similes have helped heighten the tickling effect of Waweru's obscene sexual escapades.

By way of example, we note the act of kissing between Waweru and Zsuzsa. As he put it: "she explored my mouth, flicking her tongue hither and thither like a viper trying to locate its prey" (73). This simile, for example, relies on exaggeration for the comic effect that it succeeds to elicit in us. Elsewhere, this is what Waweru says in an exaggerated manner of

his feeling after his sexual orgy with Zsuzsa and Ilonka: “hours later I crawled to the cocktail cabinet to get us some drinks I was like a survivor from a shipwreck in the high seas” (139).

There are other similes that do not have such obscene connotations and we want to point to one of them, since they are also humorous. An example is when Waweru approaches a lady in a pub so as to request her for a dance but she lambastes him with the words: “piss off nigger” (146). For Waweru, these words are shot at him like sour tasting quinine making red hot anger shoot like an electric shock through his veins (146). While we acknowledge the large number of other humorous similes in this text that we have not alluded to, we hope that the few examples we have given suffice to show their contribution to the jocularity of this text.

Just like similes, metaphors have a direct value in the creation of humour in this text. By definition, metaphors are expressions, which mean or describe one thing or idea, using words usually used of something else with an attempt to portray a similarity in their qualities without the use of the words ‘as’ or ‘like’. A metaphor leaves more to the imagination. It is a short cut to the meaning and by setting two unlike things side by side; it makes us see the likeness between them. Because of such comparisons and associations, familiar objects become strange and glamorous. In order for the similarity created to be comical just like in the case of similes, it has to be exaggerated as to end up being ludicrous. Take for example “Black Terror” (179) and “Black Thunder”. These are Waweru’s christened stage names as

he prepares to fight Horvath Janos. The thunderous applause and chants that welcome him to the fighting ring coupled with these obvious exaggerations at his fighting acumen is a source of hilarity for the readers. Despite the racial undercurrents beneath these names, the hyperbole they draw is quite apparent. It is hard to imagine the similarity between thunder and blackness. An attempt, therefore, at forcing such a similarity is at best ludicrous and fills us with elation especially if we ignore the racial connotations of these names.

There are a wide range of metaphors in Times Beyond that are humorous although they may be said to carry some level of obscenity. Matters pertaining to sex are for majority of people taboo topics which can only be discussed in whispers. When such bedroom matters are brought and discussed alfresco it only takes a slight twist out of their natural or original condition to have the audience break into laughter. This is especially the case if someone uses metaphors to try and relate these sensitive matters to other phenomenon. We will only sample a few illustrations from the text as a way of explanation.

The first example that we want to note is Omondi Mak'Oloo's success at drawing a parallel between illicit sex and a stolen fruit. This comparison is allusory as it evokes memories of the biblical fruit in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve disobeyingly partook of. Sample out what Waweru says regarding his illicit ordeal with Zsuzsa while Erica and Kovacs are only a stone's throwaway:

The stolen fruit must be eaten quickly lest you are caught holding it in your hand... sweeter is the stolen fruit. You eat it heartily knowing you might not

get another one. Sweeter is the stolen fruit simply because it is stolen.

Sweeter is the stolen fruit because you want to believe it is sweeter. (17)

The success of this metaphor in tickling us rests in its attempt to relate two “sacrosanct” topics – sex and religion.

Still in the area of the use of metaphors in matters of sexuality, it is amusing to discover the name given by members of the USA to female newcomers. Following the disproportionate ratio of the number of black boys to girls in Hungary, the arrival of a female student at the start of an academic year is treated with jubilation among the black male folk. This to them is a “relief supply” (70). With this new entry, the “bulls” (70) are said to outdo each other to win this novel arrival. There are cases, however, where these new girls turn down the bulls’ advances and instead take to Hungarian men. A case in hand is Amina who, after holding out for as long as nearly a year, finally falls to what Waweru refers to as “a fairly unknown billy goat in the form of a white Hungarian” (70). Our understanding of the noble nature of giving relief supplies especially to the destitute is ridiculed, albeit tolerably, by this kind of comparison. We laugh at this kind of joke following the trivialization evident in this metaphor. Equally, it is comical for the male members of the USA to refer to themselves as bulls while belittling their white male hosts as billy goats. The irony of this metaphor is also amusing because one cannot help wonder why Amina refuses to settle for a bull if indeed the USA men are bulls in the true masculine sense of the word, but instead opts for a simple billy goat.

Let us end the discussion of the role of metaphors in the creation of humour in this text by briefly pointing out two other examples in the text. We want to note Gyula Basci's reference of the male phallus as "a wink" (17) and Waweru's option to constantly refer to the same as junior. These examples provided are but a few of the many other hilarious metaphors that run across the text.

The use of irony has had an immense contribution to humour in Times Beyond. Irony as a literary style easily succeeds to arouse humour owing to the intentional manner in which it employs contrasts. Although it can exist independently, we wish to note that just like similes and metaphors it can carry certain exaggerations. Let us now assess its contribution to humour in this text. By way of example, we want to point out the United States of Africa as the epitome of all irony in this text. The pompous nature of this title that is meant to stand for an organization that brings together all African students in Hungary in a bid to help solve their problems is glaringly ironical. One is for example tickled by the obvious disunity that looms in this organization that shamelessly claims to be united. The manner in which Amina's case is handled is clear testimony to the tottering nature of this body. Despite being one of the only few members with their contribution records up to date, she is almost considered an illegitimate beneficiary of the organization's benevolence kitty due to her liaison with a "billy goat" by the name Andras. On the other hand, it is pitifully amusing the pain that the chairman has to go through to make the members observe some order in the meeting. What is supposed to be an orderly affair turns out to be a circus. Notice for example, the chairman's word to the gathering after hoisting himself on to a table to enable everyone to see him. He begins by saying: "Ladies and gentlemen of the United States of

Africa, I think you all can see me now". However the crowd responds saying: "that's obvious" (89)

The last example in the myriad of other ironies in the text that we want to cite is the case of Waweru as he rides on a tram on his way to the boxing club. A white man refuses to sit next to him on account of his colour. As he chooses to vacate his seat and stands peering over his paper at Waweru in a tightly packed tram, we laugh at this absurdity. Ironically a pregnant woman takes the forsaken seat, an act she may not do when not pregnant. Consequently, we ask ourselves: "does a black man become pure and worth sitting with when one is pregnant only for him to turn impure once the pregnancy is over?" This irony is both amusing and absurd. This scene exposes the dubious nature of the reasons that sustain racism among the Hungarians.

The other category of humour in this text can be grouped under surprise. It exploits the occurrence of the unexpected, which has a humorous twist. Mistaken identity falls under this class of humour because the events that usually accompany this error are surprisingly hilarious. An example of this kind of humour is witnessed through Waweru's telephone calls. We laugh when he shouts: "White skin" (13) while making a call thinking that he is speaking to Joszi only to realize that the recipient is Joszi's father. The humble disposition that Waweru assumes once he discovers his mistake is quite comical. Equally, it is mirthful when he springs to answer the phone thinking it is Erika calling him only to realize that it is his coach, Gyula Basci. We laugh when he shouts: "gorgeous" (15) to the caller only to hear the voice of a man on the other head. Upon making this mistake, he confesses these words:

“I wouldn’t be surprised if I was to be accused of being a homosexual on account of me having mistaken Gyula Basci for Erica” (16).

As if prophetically, the issue of homosexuality sets the stage for more surprise humour that is to later on emerge. This takes place in a dance floor when Waweru in his bid to find a girl to dance with approaches someone thinking it is a lady. It is however to his consternation when he finds himself cajoling a man to dance with him thinking it is a lady he is talking to. This is how he puts it:

I bent and whispered into her ear in as sweet words as I could whether she cared for a dance with me. I put on a charming smile to help speed things up when she turned around to look at me. Well, this one didn’t turn; she whirled and my smile vanished instantly. I had made a mistake. It was a he, not a she.

He had a beard bushier than Karl Marx’s. I nearly bit off my tongue. (145)

It is clear from the example above that we laugh because of the surprise occurrence brought about by mistaken identity.

A third example of surprise humour that we would like to allude to is the sudden discovery by Waweru that the boxer he is massaging is gay. This follows the direction from Gyula Basci that he helps loosen up a lightweight boxer by applying liniment all over his body as a way of readying him for an impending bout. As it however turns out, Waweru’s works on the boxer evoke sexual feelings in him (the boxer). Consequently upon being aroused he

begins to purr and asks Waweru a question on whether there are gays in Kenya. Waweru is awakened to a start when he realizes what the boxer has in mind. This sudden intuition bolts Waweru to his feet prompting the boxer who is lying on his stomach to turn on his back thereby displaying, according to Waweru “a hard on as a donkey could have envied” (194). This sudden occurrence is quite comical. It is also important to note that the author has also used hyperbole to further heighten the fun emanating from this event.

We would wish at this point to underscore the contribution made by mispronunciations, Hungarian names, flattery and jokes in bad taste towards the enhancement of humour in this text. These four techniques can be categorized under verbal humour. This is because they differ from the other forms in being a verbal rather than a situational form of humour.

For a beginning let us look at the contribution of mispronunciation to humour in this text. Abacha comes foremost as the character whose pidgin accent is most elating. Instead of saying: “They are still discussing politics,” he says: “dey still speak speak politics” (48). “She spent a half of last night waiting for you”(48) is pronounced by him as “alf o’ las’ night waiting for you at de’ ‘ostel!” On another occasion when he is informing Waweru about an impending USA meeting, he says: “dere go be a USA meeting, at de’ eadquarters nex’ weeken!” (69). His constant refrain: “O” comes with a lot of comic effect. Consider for example his warning to Waweru not to disregard Omoro’s acumen at dodging the custom officials while carrying his black market business. This is how he puts it: “Don go play wid ‘im – o, Omoro dego be known by every custom official at all border check points.” (69)

There are other characters with pronunciation anomalies. It is evident in the text that many Hungarian characters are, for example, at pains to correctly pronounce Waweru's name and consequently refer to him as Vaveru. Equally, their command of the English language is not very good and hence they end up with very interesting pronunciation errors. For example, Erika asks Waweru: "you know sumsing?" (6) Instead of saying: "You know something?"

Hungarian names also fall under the category of verbal humour in this text and Omondi Mak'Oloo cashes in on them to great comic effect. For example, one of the places that Waweru announces to Erika where there will be a Congo night is the: "Nemzetkozi Elo'ke'szito' Inte'zet" (5). This name induces pleasant feelings in us especially considering the easier to pronounce English words that we know can suitably replace such Hungarian words. Here now is a list of other names of places that we read with feelings of hilarity: "Keleti Pa'lyaunvar (21), Ujpalota (82), Szechenyi Furdo (97), Egyetemi Preszo (114) Moszkater (143)." It is quite interesting to learn that Erika lives in "Tompautca" (79), a place with a name that sounds like a familiar vulgar Kiswahili name that we know. Hungarian names for beer are also funny. Names such as "Kobonyai villagos", "Palinka" and "Tokai" are not as throat wetting, as we would have expected them to be.

Flattery comes in for yet another skill that has helped create humour in this text. It rests on insincere praise for someone for the sake of gaining some advantage. We laugh especially when the person so flattered buys the lie unsuspectingly. By way of example, it is funny how Waweru, who is thinking about Erika flatters Zsuzsa to believe that he is thinking about her. Once she gets him absent minded, she tells him: "A penny for your thoughts" (59).

Waweru is startled from his reverie about Erika and he flatters her (Zsuzsa) with these words:

- Zsuzsa:** A penny for your thoughts.
- Waweru:** (Startled) so you noticed. I was thinking how much different you are from –
- Zsuzsa:** From who?
- Waweru:** (Almost saying Erica but...)I mean other girls. Most are boring chatterboxes. With You I don't feel the urgent need to make a conversation.(57)

Closely related to flattery is pretense. This is the other skill that we would want to elucidate for its role in the creation of humour in this text. It is funny when a character feigns ignorance or pretends to be what he is not especially when the same character is aware that we know he is lying. Consider for example Waweru's behaviour once Erika gets him red-handed ogling another woman. This is the conversation that the two carry out :

- Erika:** Nice girl, hmm?
- Waweru:** (Feigning ignorance) Who?
- Erika:** Come off it. You think I didn't see you ogling her?
- Waweru:** (With an innocent face) I don't even know

what you are talking about. (102)

Elsewhere, it is a rib-cracking experience to see how Waweru struggles in vain to put a brave face once he is caught having an illicit sexual encounter with Zsuzsa. Upon being ordered to open the door, he motions Zsuzsa to dress quickly and bolts the door easing it wide enough to fit his shoulders. He then thunders: "What is it?" (109). It is quite comical when a short while after this brave show, his legs (as he says) turn into jelly (109). We laugh at this short-lived pretended act of sheer bravado.

The last technique in the category of what we have called verbal humour is jokes in bad taste. Consider for example Kovac's words to Waweru when he finally finds him on a dance floor after looking for him, as he claims, for a long while in the dim lights. He tells Waweru: "It's so dark in here I can only see your teeth" (76). To these words, Kovacs and Eri break into laughter for what to Waweru appears as a private joke. What he however fails to reckon from Kovac's statement is that they are poking fun at his skin colour. This kind of joke, therefore, though funny, has a racial undercurrent, which can put one off if one pays keen attention to it. This joke is similar to the one made to Waweru by the light weighter to whom he gives a massage following the instructions to do so by Gyula Basci. As the boxer tells him: "my skin, man: it might peel off. It's not as thick as yours" (193). This joke, though funny, has the same racial undercurrents as the one earlier highlighted. The same case applies to the words of the mother who says: "that's a nigger uncle" (1) in response to her child's, question regarding what type of uncle Waweru is. One common thing about these kind of jokes is that they belittle the other person.

The next major humour ingredient in Times Beyond that we want to discuss is mischief. Waweru can sometimes be so playful as to squat on a dance floor to look at people's legs (59). In his wicked playfulness he fancies placing his hand on Zsuzsa's thigh as they ride on the back seat with Erika and Kovacs sitted in front as they head for Tompa Utca (60). Waweru's playful mannerisms are unpredictable. Not everyone save for a person with Waweru's personality can manage what he does to a brunette staring at him beside a swimming pool. While fully aware that Erica might notice, Waweru is not deterred from making passes at her. This is what he says concerning the brunette:

I winked and she dropped her eyes. She didn't know, poor girl, that I was an old fox in the game. I let her examine her well-manicured finger nails as long as she wanted but when she cautiously raised her eyes, mine were waiting. I winked again. (101)

Mischief reads like Waweru's second name. One cannot turn a few pages before one is amused by the way he carries himself. For example, his insistence to help towel Erica (5) and his suggestion to fetch and carry her to bed instead of switching on the light is mischievously dishonest. As readers we are aware of what he is really up to. Notice the tickling playful dialogue between Waweru and Erica below.

Erika to Waweru: I love you

Waweru: "uh"

Erika: Don't you?

Waweru: Love myself? I sure do.

Erika: Silly, not you, me.

Waweru: I do.

Erika: Say it properly.

Waweru: I love you Erika. (6)

Needless to say, Waweru is most playful with the members of the opposite sex. This, coupled with his insatiable sexual libido, is a sure recipe for great amusement for the readers.

Comotions are very good breeding grounds for creating humour and Times Beyond has aptly used them as a technique towards this direction. The commotion occasioned in Waweru's dream about his journey to the desert with Abacha is very intriguing. Their decision, in the dream, to ignorantly enter into the mosque with their shoes on precipitates what becomes a very comical experience in which the two are chased by enraged Arabs wielding knives and daggers. This melee precipitates a lot of fun not just due to the way things happen so fast but rather by the vast imagery and techniques put in place to narrate it. Besides finding funny the way Waweru belittles the worshipers in the mosque as worshipping with "asses pointing skywards" (41) we are elated by the way Abacha and Waweru bolt out of the mosque and run for dear life. As Waweru says: "I for one practically flew over the sand" (42). This hyperbole aptly brings out the humour occasioned by this commotion.

A second commotion that we want to take cognizance of for its contribution to the humour in the text is the fight that erupts between Waweru and the Arabs in a restaurant. It is quite hilarious to see a Waweru who shudders while in the ring now fighting several Arabs using what he refers to as “free style” (31). This is a style that disregards all the fighting conventions as advocated by Gyula Basci. As Waweru says, he digs his finger into the eyes of one of the Arabs who then bellows till “he could be heard in Baghdad” (32). Notice this blatant exaggeration and its comic effect on the readers. This is what Waweru says in relation to another Arab he floors: “I grabbed a handful of his jet black hair and yanked him to his feet, and then threw him with all my might. He flew through the air and crash-landed several tables away, taking a couple of chairs with him” (30).

The USA meeting as earlier noted is a circus in which a conglomeration of characters and ideas meet with each unsuccessfully clamoring to capture the attention of all the others but in vain. This precipitates a melee that exposes the irony of the title by which this organization is christened. This is perhaps one of those scenes in the text that are most comical.

There is a category of humour that is conspicuously prevalent in Times Beyond and one cannot fail to notice it. We would wish to refer to it as dirty or gutter humour. This kind of humour comes out in Waweru’s sexual orgies with Zsuzsa, Ilonka, Margit, and to a lesser degree, Erika. It is incongruous to discuss them in the open as Waweru does since it contravenes the human convention of secrecy on sexual matters. The sexual imagery and the

lurid descriptions in this text regarding Waweru's sexual exploits with especially Zsuzsa and Ilonka nevertheless leave the reader thrilled. This is especially the case for the readers who do not regard sex as a taboo topic. Because of the conspicuous nature of this type of humour as manifested in the text, we shall not belabour this point any further than this.

Mockery is the next technique of creating humour used in Times Beyond and we want to explain its manifestation. We want, for example, to note Kovac's belittling question to Waweru regarding the role of the USA. He asks him: "what do you do in the USA? Trying to solve some of Africa's pressing problems?" (77). As readers we laugh at this question because we are able to discern the fact that Kovacs is making fun of the potential of this organization. His question sarcastically makes this body seem completely useless.

Mockery is also manifested in Abacha's words to Waweru on the dance floor. When Waweru approaches two "ladies" for a dance only to be shocked that the first is a man and the next rebuffs him, Abacha is so exhilarated by Waweru's ill fortune to a point of choking on his drink. In his false sense of sympathy he says to Waweru: "why don't you try dancing on your own? It's so difficult after the first few steps and it can be fun" (146). This statement is a mockery to a man who only a while ago entered the dance hall with the intention of dancing with a girl so as to have a feel of white breasts pressing his chest (145). Abacha mocks Waweru further by demonstrating to him how to woo a girl to the dance floor. Once he succeeds to convince one, she melts into his arms and he proceeds to wink slyly over the lady's shoulder at the lonely Waweru as if to say "that's how you do it brother" (147).

The next humour category in Times Beyond can be said to fall under the class of human predicaments. This features situations in which characters are made to, for example, appear foolish or ignorant. The author has cashed in on the fact that most Hungarians do not go beyond their borders to expose the folly of some of the beliefs they hold concerning Africa. We laugh, for example, at the ignorance that informs Kovacs question: “is it true that you get clothes only when you arrive at the airport?” (57). Zsuzsa’s question is equally founded on grave ignorance. Her inquiry into whether houses in Africa are made of bent sticks and leaves (62) can only leave one mirthful at this kind of ignorance. The absurdity of these beliefs and questions helps heighten the humour they precipitate. This therefore adds another angle to the manner in which OMondi Mak’Oloo has interwoven ignorance and absurdity to make Times Beyond a humorous text.

A sense of hilarity in this text has also been realized through a feeling of superiority as demonstrated in male chauvinism. The naivety of the beliefs held by some of the males in the text is indeed entertaining. Consider for example the unwritten rule among the males of the USA to the effect that “boys could move with white girls if they wished, while the girls should only take black boys for boyfriends” (70). Nothing but selfish gluttony can be adduced as reason for such a racist and egocentric rule. Equally, Abacha’s views regarding Erika’s decision to throw out the amorous Waweru are chauvinistic. Though Waweru is on the wrong, it is Abacha’s view that Erika has no right to jilt him because, as he says, “since our fo’foders we’ve always ‘ad several women at a time” (115). This is indeed a jocular observation given the fact that it is founded on egoism and on outdated beliefs.

There is normally humour realised out of the grotesque description of events, persons, issues, and so on. This text has greatly capitalized on this technique in adding to the gaiety

of the story. As we have observed in the preceding pages, the venue and meeting of the USA members is one of the greatest sources of humour in this text. Omondi Mak'Oloo's acumen at the description of how the meeting is conducted is one of the main reasons behind the hilarity we derive from the meeting. Let us however be more categorical and draw an example from a comic description that Waweru makes about himself as he stands before a mirror combing his hair. This is what he says of his image:

My nose was flat and wide, almost as wide as my mouth. My lips were thick; the lower one hung, showing pink. My teeth were milk white. I never missed an opportunity to show them off. My pupils were dark brown, almost black. The white was slightly red and got blood shot when I was drunk or sleepy.

(11)

It is clear from the example above that Waweru's intention is not to give us a mirror image of himself. He is just out to tickle us by the funny picture he makes of himself.

Omondi Mak'Oloo has also used an anecdote as a way of increasing the hilarity of this novel. There is a funny story that Waweru narrates about how his mom outwitted him in his sugar pinching stratagems when he was young. As he says, he improves on his sugar pinching techniques through time and succeeds to outsmart the watchful eyes of his mother. However, luck is not on his side when on one occasion he forgets to wipe traces of the sugar from his lips and cheeks (219). Although on that day he denies having undertaken his sugar pinching errands, a mirror posted before him by his mother is the final stroke that breaks the camel's back. His tricks are laid bare before his very eyes and he has to hide in a vast coffee farm. This story perhaps provides us with the earliest evidence of Waweru's mischievous

mannerism while still a young boy. It is this same trait when he is now an adult that endears him as a humorous character in Times Beyond.

Conventionally, the name junior is used to refer to a younger person, a person of low or lower rank, one's son, or to distinguish two men in the same family who have exactly the same name. However, in this text Waweru chooses to refer to the male phallus as junior. This technique of naming has been used to create humour in the text. It is funny to hear of this reference by Waweru that totally contravenes our understanding of this word. Indeed, this reference comes out quite vividly in Waweru's sexual orgies with Zsuzsa and Ilonka.

As we had pointed out in the previous chapter, slapstick humour depends on rather violent fast action and simple jokes. It also relies for its effect on zany physical activity and horseplay. There are scenes in this text that render themselves for this kind of humour. By way of example, we would want to point to Waweru's mischievous conduct while lying in Erika's bed together with Kovacs and Zsuzsa. When he wakes up in the morning to see Zsuzsa stir in her sleep, a sign that she is waking up, he quickly ducks his head under the cover and watches her through a small opening. When she however raises herself on an elbow and looks around with a where-the-hell-am-I expression, Waweru does something rib-cracking. This is how he puts it: "I waited till her half sleepy eyes were on my covered head, then moved. I flung the cover aside, bared my teeth, closed my eyes and snarled at her" (83). This comical action by Waweru is enough to send Zsuzsa jumping out of bed and releasing an ear splitting scream.

There is another slapstick scene of a similar nature in this text. This is seen as the boxers spend the night at a camp out on the compound outside the gym in readiness for an

impending tournament. Waweru fails to find sleep due to the disturbance from a snoring lightweight boxer sleeping beside him. In order to stop him from snoring, he scoops a handful of snow shoves it into his mouth. He then quickly ducks under the cover as the boxer sits up spitting out the snow and coughing heavily. As Waweru says, the boxer's eyes: "roved about the sleeping figures, trying to spot the culprit but apparently all were asleep and so was I, of course; snoring even louder than he had been" (186).

The last scene we would like to allude to where there is plenty of slapstick humour is in the USA meeting and we will give one example to illustrate this. Following the announcement by the chairman that Amina had procured a "successful abortion" (90), there is pandemonium as everyone seeks to know who this Amina is, when she procured the abortion, the legality of her action and so on . One of the members, out of his desire to cause amusement for the rest shoots up and shouts: "What are you people pretending to be so surprised about an abortion for? I can mention at least ten women in this room who have had an abortion and I was responsible" (90). A chorus of voices challenges him to name them. As the entire hall quietyens and there is dead silence in anticipation of his list, it is quite entertaining as he backs down only to hide behind a chair.

Finally there is a category of humour we would like to single out in its heavy reliance on the oddities in behaviours and mannerisms for the gaiety in the text. Some of the misnomers in the characters that Omondi Mak ' Oloo cashes in on to make this story interesting include violence, drunkenness, treachery, hypocrisy, gluttony and so on. In a sum, the strangeness of these habits are a big source of laughter around which this story revolves.

Besides the different types of humour that we have discussed in the previous paragraphs we would wish to note that the choice of Waweru as the vehicle for humour in this text is a technique by the author. We will carry an analysis of the inbuilt qualities of Waweru that makes the author prefer him as a bridge for the humour in the novel. In a sense, the question we are asking as we venture to carry the analysis is: "What is it in Waweru's character that predisposes him to humour?" Or we could put it differently this way: "What characteristics are best suited for a character in a humorous work?" In answer to this question we will look at Waweru's personality traits, his sense of irony and his sense of humour.

Writers on humour are very careful about the characters they choose in their works. This is because characters are the eyes and mind through who we perceive the events in the story. We can argue that humour in Times Beyond would have most likely flopped if Omondi Mak Oloo chose, for example, only dull personalities as his main characters in the novel.

As evident in the story, Waweru's personality components that reveal his emotional and psychological attributes are a boon to much of the hilarity that emanates from reading this novel. This is why we can say that it is these attributes in him that easily make him a vehicle for humour. We will now discuss some of the traits that he exhibits as a character in order to show why he is a very suitable choice for a humorous work.

Waweru's naivety is one of the fundamental traits that endear him to humour. He comes out as a character with hardly any experience of living in a communist and racist society such as Hungary. This experience in a land where the people's sense of morality is a skewed and

physical life seems to take centre stage in all they do easily lures him to attempt an exploration into Hungarian life. Apart from his innocence, which makes him take a very entertaining plunge into this narrowly racist society, the reader also benefits from the honest account of his ordeal. By this we mean that his newness in this society makes him narrate his escapades with the candidness of a child. The account about his experiences are more trustworthy than those we could get from a seasoned resident of this region who, out of routine, will easily gloss over the small details that Waweru's novel eye detects. His newness may also be partly adduced as reason for his decision to be forthright in the language that he uses to narrate his experiences.

Talking about Waweru's language one can argue that he, as it were, prefers to call a spade by its very name. This is the other facet in his personality that brings him out as a very entertaining character. In a nutshell we can say that Omondi Mak' Oloo has tapped on waweru's innocence to give the reader a vivid and humorous account of the experience of living in racist Hungary. This would have however been hampered if he used a dishonest protagonist or one whose modesty would bar him from indulging in Hungarian lifestyle in the manner that Waweru does.

It is a fact that waweru's naivety and honesty will amount no humour for the reader if he were not bubbly. He comes out as a person full of life and high spirits. This makes him very charming and adventurously ready to mingle and learn from his environment. He traverses the Hungarian terrain going from one dance floor to the next. He is to be found swimming in heated baths, relating in the saunas and training in boxing clubs. His lascivious personality

makes him chase after Hungarian women in an unrestricted manner. As a matter of fact his randy nature explains his side show relationships with Margit and Zsuzsa. He comes out for example as a person capable of ogling another woman even in Erika's presence. Indeed a large amount of the humour in this text emanates from the humorous situations created by his sexual experiments. By way of example, his curiosity to discover what it takes to be sexually involved with two women at a go is a source of great hilarity for the reader.

Apart from the fact that he is outgoing, Waweru comes out as a vehicle for humour in this text because of the fact that he is audacious. This implies that he is daring often to a degree that can be considered foolish. A case in hand is the dangerous risk that he boldly takes to involve himself in an illicit sexual affair with Zsuzsa in room 43 while fully aware that Erika is around. Elsewhere, he comes out as brave enough to attempt to fight many Arabs he meets in a bar when he knows well enough that he is no match for their number. Besides, we know him as a weak boxer. It is therefore amusing to think of the foolishness that makes him brave enough to dare fight such a large group of people. In general we can say that people who have the kind of impulsive attitude that we witness in Waweru are the best suited for humour. This in part explains why Omondi MakOloo has made him his central character in Times Beyond.

While we acknowledge the immense contribution that waweru's adventurous personality makes in creating humour in this text, we wish to note that it is his immodesty that, to a large extent, makes these escapades come out interestingly. The language he uses to narrate some of his experiences though frank is dirty. He is uninhibited in explaining some of his wicked

experiments with Hungarian women. Apart from this, he prefers to come out vulgar rather than use euphemisms to explain himself out. This is to a large degree the reason behind the gaiety that proceeds from this story. We can therefore deduce that humour exists in what we can christen as the gutter sidelines of society and writers of humour prefer those characters who can go there and candidly narrate their experiences without mincing their words. Waweru is such a character and his role in the sublimity of this story cannot be downplayed.

Waweru is also a rogue owing to the way he likes flirting with women. He is not serious about anything and is simply fun loving. These are some of the traits that predispose him to potentially humorous situations. Coupled with this is his gregarious nature that makes him like the companionship of others thereby making it possible to find him in commotions, which are also very good breeding grounds for humour.

We would like to wind up this list of waweru's personality components by pointing out to his sentimental characteristics. Despite finding himself in a narrowly racist society he handles the situations he comes across quite casually. His tender feeling for the people or issues he encounters is in most cases not based on reason or practical judgments. Due to this, he becomes a person quite easy to get along with. It is with this kind of attitude that he easily fits into the Hungarian mainstream and becomes the eyes and ears through which the reader gets a taste of this society. Coupled with the other traits that we have already outlined above, the readers are treated to a story that comes out quite hilariously especially given the fact that we read it from waweru's perspective.

Waweru also fits the bill as a suitable vehicle for humour in this text due to his sense of irony. By definition, irony takes various forms. Firstly it implies an expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning. It can also be looked at as the incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs. A third way to define irony is that it carries a discrepancy between appearance and reality. David Bergman and Daniel Mark Epstein view it as a complex phenomenon, which usually involves “a word, phrase, situation or condition that comes to mean the opposite of what was intended” (51). On their part, Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs consider irony as “a mode of indirection, means of establishing an assertion by the emphasis on a discrepancy or opposite” (65a).

When we say that Waweru has a sense of irony, we connote the manner in which he carries himself that contravenes our expectations. By this we also have in mind the various ambiguities that also define how he conducts himself as a character. We would want to say that the way he handles the situations and conditions he finds himself in leaves the reader surprised and elated too. His sense of irony comes out in the way he perceives situations circumstances and the actions he takes that are often contrary to our expectations. The validity of the views we are advancing above can be authenticated by textual evidence.

To begin with, let us register the way he handles serious situations so casually as to make them look ordinary and comical. Despite being in a racist society, we are for example amused at his surprise reaction to the underserved tirades of abuses hurled at him. Contrary

to our expectations, he creates a funny scene by taking such abuses in his stride. Here is what he says about how he reacts when abused by a lorry driver:

A lorry full of coal came down the road and slowed down when it reached the bus stop. A dirty face poked out of the drivers cab and hurled abuses at me on account of my colour. I retaliated accordingly. I also riddled them with a chain of abuses to their surprise and dismay (18).

As a matter of fact, his reaction to this incident is not just surprising to the driver but even to we as readers. He elicits laughter in us because whereas we expect him to recoil and be overwhelmed with shame, he makes the drivers abuses look nothing compared to the string of abuses that he unleashes in retaliation. It is also equally amusing that he relishes in his action and seems to draw pride out of his ability to deflate the driver with his much more corrosive abuses.

One more example of his sense of irony that makes him react to situations surprisingly and contrary to our expectations hence rendering him as a suitable vehicle for humour will suffice. We have in mind his confrontation with Arabs in a bar who try to dissuade Erika from him. By using gifts of money, they tell her: "me pay good...nigger no money... American dollar I give ... you get cash nigger poor man! (30). As readers, we would have expected that Waweru, given his poor performance at the ring, would find an amicable way of walking away with Erika so as to avoid a confrontation with this large number of Arabs. However this is not to be. Given his impulsive nature, he chooses to take them head on and a very humorous scene unfolds as Waweru tries to outdo them. When he is later outwitted,

and screams: “Eeriikaa... Help! Heelp!!” (32), we are lost in mirth especially when we come to think of the folly that made him imagine he could single handedly handle many people in the first place.

In a sum, the examples we have supplied above show how unpredictable Waweru is. He is such a slippery character that it becomes very difficult to predict his reactions to situations and circumstances. This unpredictability makes him an ironical character due to the discrepancies that always exist between the readers’ expectations of him and the reality of his personality. Indeed it is this kind of incongruity in his character that is partly responsible for the humour in the text.

The manner in which Waweru perceives the situations he finds himself in, present him as a character with a sense of humour. This is the other reason why the author has settled on him as his vehicle for the mirth in the text. He is presented as a person who is able to see the funny side of things no matter how bad they are. Consequently, he goes through life cheerfully.

A sense of humour is a state of mind (a mood) and a good-humoured person is normally sentimental, vivacious and sociable. As we had earlier pointed out, Waweru possesses these three character traits. Consequently, he is hardly bogged down by circumstances since he always makes positive judgments about them. As a result, the actions he takes in the face of some sad situations come out as being incongruous with our expectations. Indeed, Waweru’s sense of humour enables him realize that there is a funny angle to any bad circumstance.

It is correct to argue that Waweru could not have fitted the bill as the pivotal point around which the humour in the text is brought out had he been a person out of humour. Being moody would not have endeared him well to the other characters in the story. Consequently, it could not have been possible for the readers to access the physical life of Hungary's heated baths, bating clubs, bars and so on had he been a reserved person since he would have stayed away from such places. We can argue that his intense involvement with these very humorous domains of Hungarian life is in a way catapulted by his personality.

Waweru's humorous attitude is a boon to the hilarity of this story because we see events unfold through his point of view. Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs have noted the centrality of the point of view in any story by saying that the speaking voice in any story is very important because the liveliness of such a story heavily relies on the speaker (196). In a bid for an author to make his story interesting, he has to be very careful of the personality who tells the story as his attitudes are likely to filter into the story. Waweru tells his story independently and therefore the events come out firsthand. The reconstructions he makes from his experiences are directly influenced by his attitude, prejudices and judgments. He is therefore, in a nutshell, the means by which Omondi Mak'Oloo creates the story about living in Hungary.

Given this background, we can argue that Waweru's sense of humour directly impacts on the quality of the story since we get it through his perspective. Consequently, we can credit him for much of the humour that emanates in this text.

Let us wind up this chapter by discussing the contribution that the setting of this story makes towards the humour in the novel. Setting is the literally location in which a work is based and is very important in the overall meaning or impact that the work will have on the reader.

Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacobs view it as:

The natural, manufactured and cultural environment in which authors make their characters live and move, including all the things and all the knowledge they use in their lives (241)

Viewed this way, we can argue that the Hungarian environment is a goldmine for humour especially when one comes to think of the unique way of life and mannerism of these people. In the story, they are depicted as leading an uninhibited immoral life style. This kind of environment offers a perfect opportunity for a young man such as Waweru to fully indulge his explorative personality. Given that he is an adventurous character, Waweru leads us interestingly through the heated baths, bating clubs, and dance halls of Budapest. His love for women is fully indulged in this society where women have, for example, the audacity to ungrudgingly share a man.

One other thing that makes this region a rich setting for humour is the ignorance of its people. Omondi Mak'Oloo capitalizes on their naivety on issues concerning other people outside their country to poke a lot of fun out of them. They are depicted as people who hardly travel out of their country and therefore know little or nothing about, for example, Africa. This is why they can be heard asking questions such as: "is it true that you get

clothes only when you get to the airport?" (57). The girls on their part, out of in-exposure, find a black man such a strange phenomenon that they are ready for sexual intimacy with him at the slightest provocation. As a matter of fact, a reasonably big chunk of this story is a humorous account of Waweru's sexual ordeals or flirtations with these eager-to-discover white women

It is important to note that the black man does not just elicit curiosity in only the white girls since it is evident in the story that his presence stirs several amusing reactions from different kinds of people. For some, especially those with a false sense of superiority, he is such a dirty Nigger not worth sitting with yet for others, we can call them the moderates, such as Gyula Basci he is a precious commodity to use in advertising his boxing club. Andra's uncle on his part looks at the economic capital he can make out of having blacks as his salesmen. It is amusing that out of Andras uncle's experiment, Hungarians become spendthrifts because they can not just come into terms with the spectacle of a black man selling water melons. At the end of the day, the excitement that the black man elicits among the Hungarians largely portrays their foolish in-exposure and it is no wonder that the author has relied on this setting for the liveliness of the story.

One thing that clearly emerges in this story is that the author builds on the oddities of the life style of the Hungarians for the humour in the text. He delves into the misnomers that are the hallmark of their society. Interestingly, he has an adventurous and bubbly protagonist who readily acts as a vehicle through which the readers are led into these potentially humorous corners of Budapest. We can also say that the enthusiasm and vibrancy of this people is to a

degree also responsible for the liveliness of this text. By this we have in mind, for example, some of their practices such as over drinking and fighting in bars. Equally, their love for sports such as boxing makes them a very interesting lot and some of these traits have humorous ramifications in the text.

Conclusively we would like to make the following observations concerning the skill of humour in Times Beyond. Firstly, we have demonstrated that there are several categories of humour that the author has weaved this text with. A few of the examples that we have given include hyperbole, irony, absurdity, dirty humour, mischief and so on. Besides this, we have examined the manner in which Waweru's personality traits endear him as the most suitable vehicle through which the humour in the text is brought out. We have wound off by explaining the advantages that the setting of the novel avails to the humour realized. We would however wish to acknowledge that we have not been as exhaustive as possible in as far as giving all relevant examples manifested in the text to illustrate the various techniques we have identified. However, we have done our best to exemplify each technique and hope that the illustrations provided suffice to light the path for any researcher who may be interested to dig for more examples in the text.

Finally, we commend Omondi Mak'Oloo for the superb manner in which he has drawn from an avalanche of technique to make this text a sustainably humorous work. This rare and remarkable fete of ingenuity at humour needs to be greatly commended. In the next chapter, we look at How To Be a Kenyan by Wahome Mutahi so as to explicate the skill of humour in this text.

CHAPTER THREE

HUMOUR IN WAHOME MUTAHI'S HOW TO BE A KENYAN

This text uses humour to enable the readers to see the double face that defines any community of people in the world and of which Kenya is not exempt . Those who laugh as they read it accept the fact that though they are Kenyans, there are things about them that they cannot change but must accept as they are. By laughing at our shortcomings and faults we circumvent feeling stigmatized since we accept ourselves for who we truly are. If we accept the humour in this text, we will be acknowledging the fact that we cannot achieve a uniformity of behavior in a whole society and consequently, we shouldn't feel ashamed about those in our midst who fail to hit the mark.

Those who see the kind of humour in this text as being tantamount to washing dirty linen in public fail to acknowledge the fact that behaviour is divergent. Their seriousness about these issues denies them the chance to escape from the pains of living with these mannerisms in their midst.

In order to laugh as we read this text we must accept that humanity is imperfect the world over and we too have our share as evident in How to Be a Kenyan . We must look at our values as brought out in this text with an element of neutrality. In order to do this, we must distance ourselves from the everyday perceptions and prejudices which, for example, hold that Kenyans are the cream of the East African region. Humour in this text enables us to

accept what we cannot change about ourselves and, also criticize the unjust or imperfections in our midst.

The title of this text is both sarcastic and ironical. It is sarcastic given the way in which Wahome subtly pillories the different mannerisms that run across the book. On the other hand, the irony in the title arises from the deceptive invitation it makes on the reader who upon turning the pages of the text finds nothing positive worth emulating and worth working towards. It is a fact that the mannerisms, beliefs and actions in the text are repugnant and humorous that it becomes ironical to call upon the reader to embrace them if he desires to fit into the Kenyan mainstream society. As we shall indeed demonstrate in this study, the text has greatly relied on irony as a technique for humour.

Our major task in this chapter is to unravel the skill behind the humorous nature of this text. We shall look at the techniques that make How to be a Kenyan a sustainably witty work. It is prudent at this early stage to note that Wahome has made great recourse to the ludicrous nature of some of the Kenyan mannerisms, attitudes and actions as a spring-board upon which much of the mirth in the text is drawn. Besides demonstrating how he has done that, we shall elucidate how the text has appropriated language for humour.

Wahome Mutahi in the preface to the revised edition of this text argues for the peculiarity of the Kenyan people. The hilarity of the habits and actions that define Kenyans as presented in the text draws from the multifaceted nature of these attributes. Kenyans come out as an amusing lot because, according to the author, the habits and actions that they exhibit are

exclusively theirs and cannot be traced anywhere else in the globe. It is now our undertaking to evaluate the humorous nature of these habits as presented by Wahome Mutahi and show how language use has contributed to the humour in the text.

To begin with, the Kenyan aversion for anything local comes out comically in “Is it imported?” The adoration for anything Western is so deeply engraved in the Kenyan psyche. Aping accounts for the humour realized in this anecdote. By way of example, Mr. Hall’s Cook considers anything good as being “Mzungu” (1). According to the story Kenyans still look up to the West for guidance in all they do and say. Such expressions as: “he keeps time as a Mzungu” (1) bespeak of the colonial hangover. The young are humorously portrayed as people who consider anything imported as good. The irony of these “imports” is that the label and the shirt are most likely Kenyan made by manufacturers who seek to woo their customers by cheating that their products are foreign. Wahome uses a laughable absurdity whereby one travels to London to buy a suit made in Kenya and is available in Nairobi at twice its local price to heighten the gaiety of this anecdote. Using a metaphor, Wahome humorously refers to foreign obtained wives as “imports” (3).

The author also discusses another amusing element of the Kenyan people who believe that anything European or expatriate owned is good and worth buying without making recourse to second thought. It is generally clear that humour in “is it imported” arises from the ignorance that informs the aping of Western culture and values that characterize the Kenyan people. At the end of the day, the witty effect of this story largely rests on the irony that

Wahome succeeds to draw concerning a people whose sense of pride in their nationality has been so eroded as to consider anything local bad and anything foreign noble.

Wahome Mutahi has drawn from the Kenyan people's speaking habits to add zest to this text as evident in "flied lice" whereby the destructive influence of mother tongue to English speakers is presented. Direct translation pervades the English speakers and he says that Kenyans "think in their mother tongue and then put the thoughts in English as they speak" (5). An example is when someone erroneously says: "just you wait; you will see," when he or she wants to imply that: "I will teach you a lesson" (5). This is a clear case of direct translation, which arises from the Kiswahili statement that says: "wewe ngoja utaona".

Besides the many amusing errors of direct translation that Wahome identifies, understating also forms the hallmark of the Kenyan speech mannerisms. The delight of understatement is in the effect of verbal irony – we expect the writer to say something extreme, and he surprises us by saying something subtle. Here are a few of the understatements that Wahome humorously identifies. By way of example, it is amusing to figure out why Kenyans will choose to describe a man of property as one "who owns a few things here and there" (6). Equally, it is funny to imagine why a man who has a kilo of roast meat will invite his friend for lunch with the words: "I have something small on fire so please come and have a piece" (6).

Mutahi also draws from the difficulty posed in the pronunciation of some English syllables by people from certain speech communities in making this piece exhilarating. For example,

the absence of “L” among the people from central Kenya makes some of them request for “fied lice” for lunch. Others wrongly say that: “naturally I Ngo home when I chund be washing football” (7) by inappropriately sneaking “Ns” and “Ms” into their conversations. Using a simile he humorously captures the mannerisms of the sheng speaking youth. This is evident in what Wahome says about his son who sports “shoes that look like stilts and walks as if his heels are on fire” (8).

The mushrooming of harambees is the next issue that comes with many amusing ironies. Kenyans are depicted as having the propensity to moot all manner of reasons to have people fete them with gifts. The ironical idea behind the birthday and wedding anniversaries, as Wahome says, “ is all in the spirit of harambees or self-help, which, in this case means helping yourself to the generosity of friends” (10). Wahome humorously exposes the flattery that the guest of honor is normally showered with. Here is an example of a song sang to Wahome when officiating a harambee for a public project in his rural village

W.M, the son of a great woman, who had gone to school, read all the books that there are to be read, got a job and has now come to bring development to his people (13).

Besides succeeding to expose the connivance to extort money from people through the abused spirit of harambee, he manages to humorously satirize this practice.

Humour in “Hallo, hallo ...” has been realized by the way the author uses ridicule, absurdity, and personification among other techniques. He exposes the foolishness of some

people's behaviors through their habits of hurling stones at telephone booths, ripping off the telephone sets and tearing off directories. The funny absurdity of these behaviors rests in the fact that people fail to acknowledge that it is the Kenya posts and telecommunications that is to blame and not those booths.

A telephone booth that is not working is conspicuously known due to the lack of a queue outside and Wahome humorously personifies this by saying that such a booth is suffering from an affliction (17). He ironically depicts the telephone in Kenya as an instrument of torture rather than communication. This is indeed the element that is most amusing. Consider for example a person who overstays inside a telephone booth in the guise of making a call yet does not know how to operate it and is not aware that it is dead in the first place. This kind of ignorance is a torture to those outside in the queue patiently waiting for their turn. It is also a torture given the practice that some people engage in once their turn comes, totally oblivious of the many other people in the queue. It is by analyzing such practices that the readers succeed to be elated.

The fun in "How to get lost" emanates out of the thrilling juxtaposition of the direction-giving strategies between the Londoners and Kenyans. The brief manner of doing so among the British is contrasted with the graphic description of the same among the Kenyans. By way of example, giving directions by simply saying; "go three blocks up the street and then turn left" (22) is portrayed as being confusing to a Kenyan who would instead prefer directions that read like a story. The irrelevancies in the instructions given by Kenyans on how to find one's direction add humour in this story. Consider for example someone who

says: "Drive on and on and if you look carefully, you will see a small path on your right. Pretend that you have not seen it and just go on (24)"

It is clear from above that Wahome exposes the poor command of the English language, which partly contributes, to this anomaly. By exposing this deficiency in the mastery of the English language that is squarely responsible for such weird constructions as: "what you do is first of all take this road on which we are standing and head towards that way" (23), this story succeeds in coming out quite comically.

Separately, "some tea for the boss" is a satirical exposé of the rot of corruption in Kenya where ironically a messenger wields more power than his boss in the eye of the public owing to his middleman role. This show of authority is humorously captured through a play of words. As Wahome puts it, the messenger's "powers of appointment and disappointment" (26) rest on the fact that he makes the final verdict on who can and who can not see the boss. The euphemisms "tea" and "something small" are understatements that the author uses to hilariously present the Kenyan words for a bribe. Humour in this story has also been achieved through the deceit among government officials who have the tenacity to locate a "lost" file once bribed. Wahome metaphorically refers to these "lost" files as "unidentified flying objects".

Hyperbole and sarcasm too have a role to play in the hilarity of this story. The statement: "God works in mysterious and devious ways" (27) is sarcastic as it pours scorn on the workers who, out of the blue, offer to give a hand to locate a file that has been declared lost

and claim that they can find it once bribed. . We can say that with a light touch, Wahome manages to satirize the culture of corruption that now pervades the Kenyan public offices.

In order to be a Kenyan, according to this text, one has also got to ironically develop a strong aversion for queues as depicted in “line up and be counted”. The oddity of the people’s reaction to queues is a source of amusement. Kenyans are depicted to join queues anyhow only to bolt out when they realize that they are in the wrong line. Scrambling and jumping queues is a better option as Wahome argues.

It is clear that Wahome relies on absurdity and irony as skills of humour in this anecdote. For example he humorously portrays the absurd habit among Kenyans to stand in a queue waiting for a Matatu only to break and sprint for space once it shows up. Irony is also evident in the queue voting system where the shortest lines are often declared the longest (33). He concludes by saying that Kenyans can never make good queues.

The hard economic times can be adduced to explain the mushrooming of what Wahome refers to as “fifty’s” (34). This is a word for rooms in establishments that claim to offer the service of boarding, lodging, bar and restaurants. Much of the entertainment in reading “Toa Mashiti” draws from the capitalistic mentality that pervades the Kenyan psyche. The irony of these motels, inns and taverns as they have been christened humorously comes out by the substandard kind of facilities offered. It is for example amusing to notice the ingenuity behind the putting of the same pair of slippers in the same room or slicing off of one of them to forestall any attempt to carry them away by the lodgers.

Allusion has also contributed to the hilarity of this sketch. "Romeo" (38) is the hero in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet but Wahome uses this name in reference to a randy man who tries to dissuade a woman into the room at the wee hours of the night for sex in order to make up for the beer and quarter chicken that he had bought for her. The text ends with a knock on the door amidst the accompanying words: "Toa Mashiti" (38) which is translated to mean: "Take out the bed sheets". The words not only climax a turbulent night but are used by Wahome to hilariously present the folly of trying to capture some good night rest in the Kenyan lodging houses.

The next sketch entitled "A piece of leather" trivializes the game of soccer. Humour comes out through the use of allusion, flattery, ridicule and sarcasm. He ridicules soccer with these words:

"I cannot understand how 22 men can spend 90 minutes on the pitch sweating it out all in the pursuit of an inflated piece of leather. (39)"

He draws a sublime allusion between football and religion by saying that he is normally filled with the Holy Spirit when his team wins but he is possessed by the devil if it loses. Through this he manages to capture the fundamentalism that distinguishes a fanatic from a fan.

Mutahi comically captures the flattery that fans use as survival techniques once they find themselves in a wrong football camp. As he jocularly advises, an AFC Leopards fan that

gets caught up by Gor Mahia supporters should hail the achievements of his rivals by not referring to them as Gor Mahia but as “the mighty Gor” (41). We laugh at his sarcastic recommendation that a good fan should never accept that his team has lost but should instead “blame the referee and as usual mete out instant punishment by rushing onto the pitch to punch him” (41).

At the end of the day, the author has been able to laughingly castigate the misguided fanaticism with which Kenyans view soccer. The simile about the professor who carries himself about in the lecture halls and on the campus as a fossil (42) but throws all academic etiquette to the air by changing into another personality when it comes to supporting his football team captures with gaiety the mad following that football commands in Kenya.

The next story entitled “the truth and nothing but the truth” builds mainly on irony for its comic effect. As Wahome says: Kenya is a land of “true” rumours and of fertile imaginations. It is a land where, despite the arrival of the satellite, the bush telegraph sometimes works more efficiently than the mass media. (47).By metaphorically likening rumours to a bush telegraph he intends to depict the clandestine manner in which this information travels from one “rumor mill” (44) to the next. The modifications that attend the proliferation of these rumours is metaphorically said to be done by what he jocularly refers to as “rumor cogs” (45). A sense of fun is also realized from the chauvinistic manner in which men try to distance themselves from this vice. As Wahome says, men draw a distinction between rumours and gossip. According to what they say, “rumours are about serious matters such as politics on public figures while gossip is what women talk about

when they are drawing water” (47). This hypocrisy on the part of men also accounts for the gaiety that the author succeeds to elicit in this story.

Another oddity that makes Kenyans a laughable lot as portrayed in “street diagnosis” is their tendency for speculation, which is often occasioned by idleness. Their curiosity explains the reason behind the throngs of crowds that one finds gathered all over the streets. The author uses paradox to bring out humour especially when one comes to think of a people gathered around a person who has fainted and seem to do nothing about it but instead engage in speculation about the possible causes of his condition. On their part, pickpockets deem a person who has fainted a” good ground for harvesting wallets and purses” (49). The replacement of the word “pick pocket” for “harvesting” is comical as it helps to portray the ease with which the bewildered crowd is dispossessed of their belongings in this melee.

The next irregularity in the Kenyan mannerisms that the text is humorously built on is the strong belief in superstitions. According to this essay, Kenyans believe every death to be occasioned by an evil eye of a jealous neighbour. As a result, they fall prey to the deceptions of modern day witch doctors who camouflage themselves to look urban by operating from relatively comfortable hotel rooms. The folly and the susceptibility of Kenyans to be tricked by prescriptions of these witch doctors is the principle source of mirth in “Death by remote control”. Wahome attests to falling prey to one of these charlatans whom he approaches to obtain a charm that can help him control his finances. His story has a humorous twist owing to the manner in which he is duped by being given a white powder wrapped in a newspaper (56) to serve as a buttress against inflation.

There is also humour in the sketch “Roast and Mboilo” which is a Kiswahili title that Wahome has used to refer to the carnivorous culture that has become “ a national pastime that appetisingly engages the time of middle income earners “(57) in Kenya. He employs mockery to tickle the reader by suggesting that the Maasai prowess at hunting and killing lions arises from their meat and blood diet. Further to this, he makes a mockery of their pass-time habit of resting one leg on the knee while, as he says, partaking of a bun and drinking coca cola. By doing this, he succeeds in hilariously painting a picture of the transformation that has become of this community.

The vociferous meat eating habits that prompts people to make meat orders for lunch on phone, coupled with the mischief of the butchers that makes them throw small pieces of stale meat so as to make the weight is quite amusing. As Wahome also says “fire” is the word used to refer to the charges related to boiling and roasting of meat. This word is a direct translation from Kiswahili in meaning and connotation. We wish to note it for the intentional manner in which it has been used to heighten elation among the readers.

In “A necklace for all sizes”, Wahome uses a metaphor to refer to the innate nature of Kenyans to mete instant punishment to street “offenders” under the guise of justice by laying a tyre around the neck and setting it ablaze. Humour has been partly built by the juxtaposition he makes of the biblical story about the trial of Jesus before Pilate and what Kenyans refer to as mob justice. By making reference to “the street penal code” (61), he manages to paint a humorous picture of an almost institutionalized street system of justice.

This is however not the case as this hyperbole seeks to jocularly depict the kangaroo nature in which “Justice” is dispensed in the streets.

One of the sad predicaments that usually befall an unfortunate street “convict” is that he has the option of running for his life or wait to face his demise. The first option as Wahome exaggerates is only open to Olympic sprinters, stuntmen or accomplished street thugs (62).

This hyperbole does not only succeed in tickling us but depicts the sad reality of the volatile nature of the Kenyan streets.

Closely related to street “justice” is the Kenyan judicial system that is also reeling in rot as evident in “Guilty your honour”. The vulnerability of Kenyans to find themselves arrested for flimsy reasons by the corrupt and inept police force is jokingly addressed. Playful language serves to add spice to this essay. This is what Wahome says concerning a convict who finds himself before a magistrate and the charges being read against him contradict the reason behind his arrest: “You rub your ear lobes to find out whether you still have ears when the charge is read. You find that they are still there and as you do, the magistrate is gazing at you waiting for your plea. (66)”

This essay is a satire on the judicial system. It is ironical that the established and legal judicial system is no better than the “Justice” available on the streets. This irony comes out vividly and quite humorously.

The flattery that underlines the eulogies of the death of a person is cause for laughter in “A matter of life and death”. Verbal irony marks the kind words that the mourners pronounce concerning a dead thief. Here is what they say: “Our dear departed brother has been called by the lord because he likes good people to be close to him in heaven. (69)”

One thing that is clear from essay is that even funerals have their funny angle that one can laugh about. A case in hand, that the author cashes in for high comic effect are the rewards that accrue from being the loudest mourner. Such mourners are depicted to abandon themselves to shedding a river of crocodile tears so as to catch the eyes of the food servers.

One other thing that Wahome has used to build up the humour in this essay is his observation on the deliberate and careful manner in which obituaries are worded. As he says, the obituary is carefully written to show that people of substance will miss the dead person. Such people are cleverly given preference in the first lines while the untitled appear at the end of the advert. Here is an example of the wording of an obituary that he provides: “The late Mr. Dead was a cousin to Dr. Alive, managing director, Death Industries, Yvonne of Sussex University.... The late Mr. Dead was also the brother to Tom, Mark and Harry. (72).”

The anecdote on “Till dowry do us join” humorously handles the sensitive issue of dowry as manifested in Kenyan weddings. The commercialization of this institution is depicted to have eroded the noble role that dowry played in the past. It is no longer a token of appreciation but an opportunity for the enrichment of the in-laws. The reference of a half-ton

pickup as a “four-wheelbarrow” or as “a tray to help an old man fend for his cattle.” (75) Is tickling due to the understatement that these words carry. Indeed we are amused because, while we expect him to say something extreme, he surprises us by saying something subtle. Understatement is also comically evident in the manner in which the bride’s father declares that “I have a small gift for this couple” only to end up donating a house to the bride and groom. Equally, the mother’s decision to give “something small” to help the bride not to “let her husband to go hungry” (75) is an understatement for a fridge “big enough to hold a cow” (75).

Wahome Mutahi has also made this anecdote funny by relying on the gimmickry that underlies all pre-wedding parties. Such trickery includes having a bevy of beauties at the door to hoodwink visitors into giving money by disconcertingly planting carnations on their lapels and then swiftly accompanying this act with a disarming smile and a stretched hand demanding money.

On the other hand hilarity in this anecdote comes about when one comes to think of the desecration that the marriage institution has come under given, for example, the treachery that makes a lady walk down the aisle donning a bridal gown while fully aware that she is carrying a nine-month pregnancy (76). Clearly Wahome has built on such misnomers to heighten the mirth of this story.

Elsewhere Kenyans are depicted as commodities in a market stall where the label is more important than the labelled. Wahome’s consciousness about this fact comes out in “A rose

by another name” where he discusses cosmetic titles that people have upholstered themselves with. He brings humour in this essay by drawing a parallel between the use of titles in the colonial and present days. This is how he humorously begins: “In the colonial days, the white man in charge of rat eradication was known as a rodent officer. When the job was Africanized, the holder of the office became a rat catcher. (77)”

Through this background information, he sets the stage to discuss how “Kenyans like titles and how titles lose and gain value” (77). He carries a humorous analysis of the titles that people have mooted to cover up for their ineptitude. Examples that he gives include an ordinary carpenter who chooses to christen himself as “ Joe furniture works,” an educated herbalist who reckons he can win more clients by having his business go by the name “Professor Bahati Mbaya,” a teller in a bank who considers calling himself “ a banker” is more accurate and so on. In general, Wahome achieves sublimity in this essay by exposing the deceptive façade that Kenyans paint themselves with through the use of exaggerated titles. By sampling out some of these false titles, the reader is amused by their artificiality.

The other oddity that Wahome addresses for its contribution in making Kenyans a unique and interesting lot is empty rhetoric, which is the hallmark of political speeches in Kenya. In “political talk” he mockingly explores some of the common expressions made about and by politicians. The amusement derived from some of these statements accrues from their over use that has through time rendered them clichés. By way of example, the absurdity of the commonly used statement that says “the president warned the enemies of development “(79) is comically brought out through the way he personifies the word “development”. According

to him, this statement seems to portray development as a living organism that can be way laid and killed using daggers. An example of another cliché that has lost currency due to its overuse is the one, which says that “the government will leave no stone unturned until the culprits have been brought to book” (79). Wahome, with gaiety, mocks the over use of this statement by wondering whether the government is made up of masons and printers.

The irony of some of the proclamations that politicians make is glaringly brought out when he talks of a politician who claims that he joined politics due to the irresistible call by the people to stand for elections (80). We laugh at the irony of this statement because the same politician has to borrow money to bribe the same votes from who he claims to have come under pressure. In general therefore, by exposing the hollowness of political rhetoric, the author manages to make us laugh at the politicians know- it –all attitude that falsely makes them think that they can all the time cheat the electorate with impunity.

Let us now look at aping which is the subject of the anecdote entitled: “Born in Kenya and made in America”. “Soul brother Wahomey” (82) as the author chooses to refer to himself jocularly epitomizes the spirit of Americanization that has gripped the youth. He succeeds to elate the readers in this story by exploring some of the Europeanized names that the youths have adopted in preference to their Kenyan ones. Examples of such names are: “Jane Jack, Maggie Blackie, Brother Rast Hefty”(83) and so on. Just as Okot p’Bitek lambastes Clementine in Song of Lawino, Wahome makes this anecdote hilarious through the mockery he makes of these turn coats. As he says, they prefer sporting wigs that sit on their heads like

“a misplaced bird nest” (83). He ridicules their futile attempt to fashion their accents along the American or Caribbean dialects.

Irony is also a tool for the humour in this story. We read with gaiety the Kenyan obsession for the suit over and above their traditional costumes. The irony of this obsession is brought out in these words: “those who can afford expensive suits step in them on national days.... In their speeches later, they talk about the importance of preserving African culture as they finger their silk ties (84). In general, by caricaturing the way people ape Western values, Wahome manages to make the story witty.

It is interesting to note that irony is again the most prevalent technique that Wahome employs to bring out humour in “No warnings please, we are Kenyans.” As evident, it is ironical that Kenyans take warnings to mean the direct opposite of what they proclaim. For example, a sign reading: “no dumping please” is an invitation for people to trash their waste there. As the author jocularly observes, the sign “don’t feed the animals” (86) raises the curiosity as to why they shouldn’t be fed. Equally it is an amusing irony that a sign with the words: “no hooting” is more seldom taken to mean, “hoot to find out what it will happen” (87).

Humour in this essay is also achieved through the juxtaposition that Wahome draws between the warnings that Kenyans hearken to and those they don’t. It is for example ironical that one can take a sign that reads: “don’t run in the bar” (87) more seriously than the red traffic pedestrian lights. What complicates the situation further is when one comes to think of a

community like the Maasai who regard carrying a club as part of their traditional heritage. To members of such a community, a sign like “no weapons in the bar” (88) is irrelevant as it is tantamount to asking them to disregard their culture. This paradox is the other weapon in Wahome’s arsenal that he capitalizes on to heighten humour in this essay.

The next misnomer that the text addresses is in the area of religion. The author exposes the hypocrisy that underlies religious practices in Kenya. By using Onyango who doubles as a mechanic and a church leader as a microcosm, he shows the chameleonic nature of most religious people in Kenya. As he says, Onyango is capable of transforming himself from a man who shouts: “hey you bastard” to his spanner boys to one who says: “my brethren in Christ” to the congregation. It is a laughable irony that Onyango is a failure as a mechanic yet he expects to “repair” the souls of his followers. Besides the use of this kind of irony, Wahome humorously employs hyperbole to portray Onyango’s sudden metamorphosis. This is how he puts it:

But come Sunday and the Bishop of Canterbury does not step out in the kind of splendor that Onyango does. The pope does not inspire much awe as that greasy mechanic when the faithful appear at his garage.(89)

He concomitantly employs simile and allusion to add to the zest of this piece by likening the faithful of the Roho African church of Saved Souls (RACCOS) to the pictures of the maggi (the people who went to see the child Jesus in Bethlehem). It is amusing to note how Onyango changes his angry disposition and assumes a radiant face upon noting the arrival of his followers. Wahome jocularly captures this transformation through an allusion to the

effect that: "Saul must have undergone that kind of transformation which turned him into Paul on his way to Damascus" (90). Allusion is also used to refer to the jostling for church positions, which he humorously considers to be a kin to a Cain- rising –against- Abel ordeal (92). Besides this, the playful language that Wahome uses to portray the mode of worship by the followers of Onyango does add to the entertainment realized in this story.

It is also interesting to note that he makes a circus of what transpires in Jeevanjee gardens in the name of soul winning. With gaiety he exaggerates that Jesus would find himself a novice at soul winning if he came back and tried to make himself heard in this gardens. Humour is also brought out by the description he makes of those trying to proselytize. This is how he describes one of such people:

At one corner of the park is a man who looks dressed for crooning in a cabaret show. He has groomed side burns and his hair sits on his head as if he just took it from the hairdresser and placed it there. He dons a well-cut woolen suit in the heat of January (93).

The theatrics that accompany the preaching in this place have been humorously presented. The public confessions made by the faithful appear like washing dirty linen in public. Indeed it is an amusing experience when one of the preachers confesses that he met Jesus in a nightclub and all the women on that day were his (93). By presenting the other issues under discussion in this commotion besides preaching, the author manages to heighten the elation of this piece. For example one of the men by the name Chege challenges his audience to be medically tested to prove if they are not suffering from afflictions passed on to them by

women (95). Such prattle is the stuff for humour and Wahome has used it to add sport to this essay.

In “moving violations”, an account of the nightmare that is in the Kenyan public road transport system is given. Humour in this exposé emanates out of the way the Kenyan drivers have inverted the ethics that govern road use and instead glory in those ills that make road use a menace. Wahome humorously personifies the vehicles that traverse the Kenyan roads referring to them as violations that unconsciously or consciously move around with the aim of causing interminable loss of life and limb (96). He jocularly shows the state of these “violations” using a simile. As he says these cars have tires that are as smooth as the tongue of a snake (96).

To a large degree Wahome builds on the oddities of the Kenyan traffic such as senseless honking, unnecessary flashing of vehicle lights, disregard of traffic lights, the chagrin for speed control and so on to weave a humorous analysis of the drama of using Kenyan roads. The mischief of the rogue drivers who circumvent the police dragnet by flashing their lights and stretching their hands to warn oncoming vehicles also comes out quite comically. He also with sport highlights the reaction of a speeding driver just warned about the presence of police around the corner. This is what he says about such a driver once warned: “That driver will automatically slow down, put on the face of a bishop until he passes the police radar then resume speeding as if in a motoring race.” (100) The casual manner in which drivers regard road use rules is also elating. They are depicted as being ignorant of the fact that drunkenness leads to accidents. At the end of the day, the author squarely places the blame

for the mess in the Kenyan transport system on the recklessness of the Kenyan drivers and their appalling road habits and attitudes. Their steely determination to sustain the rot in the road system and the fact that they cherish the rotten status quo is source of amusement for the reader.

The issue of the mushrooming of placards and the deception that more often underlies what they proclaim has been addressed in "signs of the times". The lack of correlation between what such titles announce and the reality on the ground is comical. Among many other examples is a case of a placard that reads: "Mr. Onyango and sons Garage East Africa Ltd" (104), yet Mr. Onyango solely owns the garage and is not in joint business or ownership with his sons. The irony of these banners and the exaggeration in the messages that some of them carry bring laughter in this expose'. The placard in Onyango's Garage, for example, exaggerates that it has wings all over East Africa and publicizes the proprietor as an expert in Japanese models. Ironically, this is just Onyango's gimmick to hoodwink potential clients and Wahome with gaiety exposes his true skills as being a mechanic whose only expertise is in pulling out spark plugs and polishing them (106).

There are other signs, which are humorous due to the irony underlying their pronouncements. Such examples include "Thika International Cafe" (107) which, despite not being known beyond a bus stop in Thika where drivers stop to cool off, claims to offer an international menu. He also draws from miss-spellings that are the hallmark of these placards to heighten humour. For example, the menu in Thika international hotel falsely boasts to offer "sausages and chips." It is amusing that there is a placard for a bookshop that

claims to sell stationary (108). Equally, he shows the daring attitude of the Kenyan passengers to ignore such critical signs as “Don’t stand on the door” (108). We laugh at the folly that makes Kenyans prefer to ride on a moving bus while hanging even when the bus is half empty.

In “from NGO to MONGO”, the author largely relies on irony as a technique of creating humour. With a lot of entertainment, he exposes the corruption behind the proliferation of Non Governmental Organizations in Kenya. We will briefly elucidate each of these ironies so as to depict how they have been humorously presented. To begin with, it is ironical that NGO’s glory in being conceived out of “enormous” problems. It is amusing how a small problem like some girls not going to school is pompously blown up by the NGO’ so as to be about: “ the girl- child being marginalized by socio-psychological problems endangered by a patriarchal system” (11). These grandiloquent words capture the greed and dishonesty behind their formation. The readers are therefore elated by the juxtaposition that the author makes between the nature of the real problem and the NGO’s manipulation of the nature of the same problem..

The solutions, just like the problems, are also not spared the pompous and funny wording. As the author says, instead of saying that “the NGO will try many solutions to the problem and that people of all sets will benefit from the problem”, NGO’s choose to state that the solution to the problem will “embrace a holistic approach to the problem which will lead to a gender-based poverty alleviation” (111). This pompous language makes us laugh because of the way it attempts to cover up the demeaned roles that some of the NGO’s play.

Apart from this, we also manage to laugh because of the way Wahome portrays the folly and readiness of the donors to part with their money following the empty statements which for example claim that an NGO is “resource – based” and will undertake “sustainable initiatives” which have “a local contribution and component” (113). We are finally elated out of the way he coins words to come up with acronyms such as SAGETHI, which he says means: “save the girl in long”. MONGO is his acronym for a new NGO, which in full stands for My Own NGO (113) and whose owner will become “an NGI or a Non- Governmental Individual leading an NGF or a Non Government Family” (113).

Next, let us look at “The city of strangers” which is an anecdote on the artificiality of life in Nairobi city. In the story, the inhabitants of Nairobi do not ironically regard it as home but choose to view themselves as sojourners. The story largely builds on irony and mockery to be humorous. The paradox of being in one’s country and still carrying oneself as a stranger is laughably brought out in this anecdote.

In this story, humour is also realized through the mockery that the author makes on the lifestyle of Nairobians. Their sense of rootless ness and loss of identity comes out for example through their blind admiration for Hare Krishna over and above their traditional religions. They are depicted as people who have lost a sense of pride in their country. An example is a person who goes around donning a T-shirt bearing the words “save Lake Ontario” (119) while oblivious of the garbage threatening to consume Nairobi. There is humour through the juxtaposition that Wahome creates between foreigners from Europe and

what he refers to as Kenyan strangers. As is evident in the story, both feel alienated. It is however more to the “Kenyan strangers” (117) that he pours the vitriol in his pen to castigate their poor sense of nationalism.

The author’s use of description is a source of delight in this story. Consider for example what he says of a female prostitute moving along the streets of Nairobi in one of those cold nights.

As she passes by the lamppost, the cake of rouge on her face, the walk that says “take me or leave me”, accentuated by a yoyo-like swaying of the hips, jeans that clamp her buttocks like a vice and the clap clap of her shoes, say she is out on business (120).

By using hyperbole, he humorously captures the prostitutes’ high sense of alertness of the approaching police. As he says, “Her eyes can see in the dark and her ears hear the footsteps of death” (121).

“Fixed price” is the title for the essay regarding the issue of bargaining in shopping stores. Through mockery, humour is made possible on the readers. Wahome depicts Kenyans as people who disregard price notices and pay no heed, insisting on getting a cheaper price for any commodity. By devaluation, a buyer pours scorn on the value of a commodity by for example saying: “This is imitation silk made in Korea. This is not genuine silk I can tell the genuine one when I see it. (123).”

The essay is also witty through the way the author makes a mockery of the vulnerability of tourists to be duped into buying counterfeit goods by hawkers. As he says: "Since you are a tourist expected to be carrying loads of money and very little substance in your head, the hawker will burn the edges of the plastic bracelet, push it to your nose and swear that is the smell of elephant hair that is waffling. (124)."

This kind of ignorance is further responsible for the gaiety in this essay especially when one comes to think of a tourist who mistakes the testicles of a bull for a buffalo that is giving birth.

Elsewhere the kleptomaniac tendency of Kenyans is responsible for the manner in which grills of all kinds have emerged as a safety precaution to protect property. By painting a very grave picture of this stealing problem, Wahome makes us laugh at the simplicity of putting items such as tissue paper behind a metal grill. He presents Kenyans as a lot that is under the illusion that they are free whereas the real truth is that their lives are caged. For example, he says that they live behind bars in their homes as a precaution against burglary. While we sympathize with this unfortunate situation, it is the measures that Kenyans have put in place to guard against theft that the author cashes in on to make us laugh. Among other examples that he gives is that of barmen and women who have been reduced to virtual prisoners behind bar counters to shield themselves from irate and drunk customers who may sometimes also double as thieves.

The voter's attitude during the election season is humorously captured in "stand up and be counted" using a metaphor. This is the way Wahome puts it: "It is the voter who understands

that the voting season is a short season of good will to hit the iron when it is hot who becomes the early bird that catches the worm” (130). This metaphor aptly summarizes the attitude of voters towards the election candidates. This is the main theme of this short sketch. The insincerity of the votes during this period is hilariously presented in this story. An example is in a voter who decides to don several T-shirts bearing the labels of the various candidates interested in a parliamentary seat. Such a voter is depicted to display the T-shirt that is appropriate for the candidate he meets only to remove it and change into another once a different candidate comes on sight.

Besides the shrewdness of the voters that makes them easily dupe the candidates with the false praises they heap on them, this sketch comes out quite comically out of the way Wahome exposes the foolishness of the candidates to believe these lies. We not only laugh at the irony that majority of the voters who swear allegiance to these candidates and extort handouts from them are not registered voters but we are also tickled by the cunning games and deception that defines this electioneering season.

“Of Beepers, flashers and vibrators” is Wahome’s observation on the use of mobile phones in Kenya. This story draws its gaiety from the queer mannerism that some mobile users have such as showing off their hand sets for people to notice, leaving their phones on in meetings and flashing other users in the expectation of being called back. Others, on the other hand, are depicted as carrying handsets that can only receive but not make calls because they never have call time credit. There are also those, especially women, who embarrass themselves when they receive a call by trying to retrieve it from their handbags. In the process of doing

this, as Wahome says, several things spill out of those bags such as “a beauty kit, napkins, handkerchiefs and note books” (136).

Finally in this collection, we shall examine an essay entitled “up and down”. To begin with, the author has used irony to hilariously present the inconvenience of using lifts in Kenya. As he says in the first paragraph, “the lift is supposed to be a conveyance up and down but it is often a conveyance of irritation and amusement” (137). Using this ironical statement as a springboard, he proceeds to give an exposé of the pain that using lifts in Kenya involves. He cashes in on some of the most amusing lift using habits to heighten the gaiety of the readers. Such examples include the propensity to scrimmage for space in a lift instead of making a queue, the lack of courtesy that makes some people press a lift’s button so as to make its doors remain open while they converse thereby inconveniencing other users and so on. Indeed, these are some of the strange traits that the author relies on to bolster the comic effect of this essay.

We would like to observe by way of conclusion that we have in this chapter made an attempt to explicate the skills behind the humour in How To Be a Kenyan. Besides the other techniques that we have highlighted, it has emerged that irony stands out as one of the most prevalent means through which much of the humour in this text is realized. We would also wish to underscore the immense contribution that the various oddities have made in making this a rib-cracking work. At the end of the day, this text has emerged as sustainably witty and our study wishes to commend the rare gift of ingenuity at humour as displayed by

Wahome Mutahi. In our next and last chapter, we shall carry a similar analysis of Without Kiinua Mgongo so as to unravel the various categories of humour in this text.

CHAPTER FOUR

CATEGORIES OF HUMOUR IN WITHOUT KIINUA MGONGO

Without Kiinua Mgongo by David Maillu is an extremely humorous text. In order for the work to be witty, the author has drawn from a number of techniques among which comic and dramatic irony come out as the most predominant.

We shall begin by examining how comic irony contributes to the humour in this text. Comic irony occurs when the reader or character expects one thing to happen, but instead something entirely different occurs. Comic irony therefore brings out a discrepancy between the expected result and the actual results. This deliberate contrast between what might be expected and what actually happens is a deliberate literary style that Maillu has employed in this text to make it hilarious. Our first task is to demonstrate how he has done this through the events that unfold in this work.

The story in this text revolves around the family of Mr. and Mrs. Mbuta. Mr. Mbuta is a very rich man. He is both a government executive and runs several "Magendo" businesses. His well-upholstered and expensively dressing wife is the mother of four: three sons and one daughter. The earliest evidence of irony appears in the incongruity that Maillu establishes between the riches of the Mbutas and the family lifestyle. Upon being introduced to their rich status, the reader expects to encounter a well-organised and happy family. However, this is not to be for as Maillu says, the Mbutas are a problematic family. Notice what he says about them:

Hao akina Mbutas nao walikuwa watu difficult Sana. Family ya kupenda fujo. An excitable emotionally very expensive family kuishi with.... If ni pride, matusi, arrogance, ulevi – waachie – waachie mali yao hiyo akina mbuta (2).

The reader is also greeted with the surprise revelation that Mbuta, despite his riches, has many other problems apart from the ones we have mentioned above. He is depicted as a very frail man because of too many worries and he suffers from sleeplessness and hypertension. The irony of Mr. Mbuta's state is aptly put in Maillu's words to the effect that: "mwili wake ukawa huambatani na fame yake ya jina na utajiri" (3).

There is still more humour in the incongruity between what we expect as readers of the Mbuta's family and what we actually get to learn about them. Being a rich man, one would expect that his four children are well educated and well placed in society. However, we discover that one of the sons is a rapist, the other is a reckless driver who has at one time knocked down a pedestrian and run away from the police dragnet, and the third is "one of the worst alcoholics Kenya had ever produced" (5). Apart from this, he is also described as a bang smoker, a drug addict and an extremely lazy boy who spends most of his time sleeping. Mbuta's daughter on her part is a source of mirth for the reader given the amusing revelation that Maillu makes reading him. This is how he describes her:

Hao akina Mbutas nao walikuwa watu difficult Sana. Family ya kupenda fujo. An excitable emotionally very expensive family kuishi with.... If ni pride, matusi, arrogance, ulevi – waachie – waachie mali yao hiyo akina mbuta (2).

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Yeye alikuwa quarrelsome, erratic; highly-strung kama babaye, tena belligerent kama mwili wote ulikuwa kidonda she didn't want anyone to touch. An ugly girl, only that pesa za babaye zikamfanya aonekane hajambo kidogo (4).

Besides the humour realised out of the discrepancy between our expectations of the Mbuta's and the reality in the family, comic irony in the text also comes out with regard to the other characters. Let us begin by looking at Mwangangi.

The story in this text begins with Maillu foregrounding the achievements of Mwangangi as a cook in the Mbuta family. This is what he says in part:

Kwa ten good years, Mwangangi alikuwa mpishi wao akina Mr. and Mrs. Mbuta. Na kwa miaka hiyo ten kamili, Mwangangi aliiserve family hiyo excellently. Mpishi expert zaidi, usimchezee Mwangangi. Tena, for that time, Mwangangi alikuwa almost kama a member ya the Mbutas (1)

Besides his exploits at the kitchen, he is portrayed as a peacemaker in the family. As Maillu says,; "ulimi wake ulitak bitterness out of everybody so easily" (6). His light-hearted disposition is depicted as a boon in endearing him to his nervous, worrisome and irritable boss. His soberness in approaching issues is given as the reason for his admiration by all the troublesome and quarrelsome members of this family.

With this kind of introduction, we are deceived as readers to think that he is the central character around whom the story in the text is going to revolve. This is however not to be

since he is dropped by Maillu as the point of focus and his little known son, Nzuki is picked as a vehicle through whom the readers are to be surprised with yet more unexpected humorous happenings.

Mwangangi ceases to be the central point of focus in the story through a very humorous twist of events that shatters his rising star. According to what Mr. Mbuta says, Mwangangi's son is responsible for Katherine's pregnancy. Consequently, he terminates his services and sends him packing. His final words to the effect that: "God why did you give me such a son... Ni sin ya aina gani mungu nikai commit ili nii-lose kazi nzuri kama hiyo" (18) leaves the reader convinced that Mwangangi's career is over and the reader therefore waits with bated breath to know of the tumultuous times that lie ahead in his exploits. As we have however already pointed, this is to a large extent, not to be since the focus shifts to Nzuki.

Comic irony contributes to a lot of amusement for the readers owing to the unexpected happenings that colour the life of Nzuki and Katherine. We are for example tickled by the surprise revelation that Katherine's pregnancy is the result of a shameful liaison with Mr. Mbuta's cousin. This man is quite despicable and it is funny how Maillu describes him:

Naye mtu hopeless kabisa; shetani kwa ulevi, who had never kept a wife; not to mention one of his wives he had bruised maskini akaaga dunia in hospital where she had been rushed for treatment (19).

It is elating to know the reason why Katherine decides to pick on Nzuki as a victim. As Maillu says, she settles on him for fear of her three boyfriends that are sophisticated and able

to fight back if such allegations were leveled on them. What at the beginning appears as Nzuki's ill fate however turns out to be a blessing in disguise owing to the fortunes that this victimization presents in his life. Although he is hard pressed to prove his innocence, he and the readers have no idea of the opportunities that lie ahead as a direct result of this sad incident.

Our expectations about the fate of Nzuki under the arms of the police are that he will be jailed once he admits guilt. It is however amusing to see Mr. Mbuta embrace him and offer to give him Katherine as wife following his admission of guilt. While as readers we are as surprised as Nzuki by this sudden change of events, it is however Katherine's reaction to her father's news about the impending marriage to Nzuki that is most elating. What at the beginning appears to her as a perfect plan of concealing the true identity of her child's father humorously turns out to be a fiasco. She has now got to choose between marrying Nzuki or suffer the embarrassment of revealing that her pregnancy is the work of Mr Mbuta's cousin. Since she reckons that the latter option is more horrible than the first, she has no option but to accept Nzuki for a husband. Notice how she reacts to the news that Nzuki is on his way to being her husband:

Mr. Mbuta: your friend said he's ready to marry you. Any Problem?

Katherine: (Shocked) that boy? What has he and what is he father?

Mr. Mbuta: We didn't know him in this manner mpaka ukamleta wewe
mwenyewe

Katherine: This is an insult father.

Mr. Mbuta: Insult? (45)

Comic irony is the technique of humour that Maillu has employed to present to us a Nzuki who, after the humiliation of being blackmailed and consequently rejected by his father is now Mr. Mbuta's most close friend. We are amused by his offer to educate Nzuki through high school. He takes him like one of his sons and indeed declares to him that "you're better than my sons" (62). He is now Mr. Mbuta's right hand man when it comes to going around checking on the progress of his business. This is something that provokes the ire of Mr. Mbuta's sons who now see Nzuki as a threat to their right to inherit their father's property. Against all our expectations we are excited in the way Nzuki's victim hood lands Mwangangi in a much better position than he would have been prior to Katherine's allegations. Indeed, Mr. Mbuta builds him a good home in the countryside and buys him a very big shamba in Utooni (63). The sudden transformation in Katherine's mannerisms can be attributed to the hard lesson she learns from life. Ironically, Mr. Mbuta, who believes that it is because of Nzuki that Katherine has become a well-behaved woman, pours all credit on him. Maillu's final words regarding Nzuki's fate aptly capture the irony that is the hallmark of this story. This is what he says:

Yet one thing Nzuki hajawahi kuelewa. Whether it had been God's design that Katherine should have picked on him, ama ilikuwa accident tupu tu. Hence the

police torture had become the greatest mystery as it had become the greatest turning point in his life (75).

In the preceding paragraphs we have argued that comic Irony is a central pillar for the humorous effect of this text. As we have demonstrated, episode after episode Maillu has kept the readers wrongly guessing about the possible fate of the characters only to surprise them with new revelations that are extremely incongruous with their expectations. Through this discrepancy between expectation and outcome, he has managed to unleash one humorous surprise after another thereby making this an extremely witty story.

A second deliberate technique that Maillu has relied on to make this text humorous as we had alluded to at the beginning is dramatic irony. This is a situation where the audience/readers perceive something that a character/s in the literature does not know. It is indeed very clear in this story that as readers we are aware that Katherine's pregnancy is not the work of Nzuki. However, Mr. Mbuta and Mwangangi are convinced beyond doubt that he is to blame. This ignorance concerning the truth is the principle reason behind the manner in which Mbuta abandons himself in educating Nzuki with the hope of making him marry his daughter. As readers, we are elated by this ignorance. Equally, the silent conspiracy that goes on between Nzuki and Katherine and how they eventually connive not to forever reveal the true father of Dalia (Katherine's child) is only known to we as readers. It is laughable that Mr. Mbuta is quite oblivious of the trickery that his daughter and Nzuki have played on him. Consequently, as readers we laugh at the irony of his words to Nzuki to the effect that:

“A child who is not yours biologically anaweza akawa more rewarding to you than one who is yours biologically. That’s why I get more love from you than from my own children wanao ni-take for granted (74).”

These words are obviously made against the backdrop of Mr. Mbuta’s ignorance concerning the real identity of the father to Katherine's child. We are aware that he cannot stand by these same words should he discover the truth and this is why this story is quite interesting.

Mwangangi on his part as we have already said is ignorant about the final conspiracy between Katherine and his son Nzuki to forever conceal the truth. For Katherine, the truth must never be known because of the embarrassment she is likely to suffer once it is discovered that she had a sexual encounter with Mr. Mbuta’s cousin. Nzuki on his part risks losing all the benefits that his victim hood has availed him and his father. This is why he now cherishes living a lie that he had at one time wished to die so as not to be associated with it. As readers we are aware of all these things yet Mwangangi ignorantly thinks that it is his son’s honesty about his illicit liaison with Katherine that has led to his unexpected good fortune. It is furthermore ironical and hypocritical that Mwangangi should now cherish the union between Nzuki and Katherine when in the first place he had disowned him calling him “a little dog” (14). Indeed, these are the humorous contradictions that dramatic irony presents in a text such as this and Maillu has aptly used this technique to create a hilarious puzzle that only the readers are able to unlock.

The place of dirty/gutter humour cannot be overlooked in our analysis of the types of humour in this text. By way of example we would wish to single out the words of Mr. Mbuta's servants regarding Katherine's behaviour. Notice how they react to the news that Katherine is pregnant:

Huyu msichana shetani kabisa... Malaya..... Nipe two things – punda na Katherine.

Tell me to choose one of them, mie nita-choose punda (37).

On the other hand, they regard Nzuki as a hero and this is what they say about his action:

“Nzuki mwanaume kamili... alimwingia ndani, ndani kabisa, akataga humo – mwanaume huyo usimchezee (37).”

Despite laughing at these statements, we mark them for the dirty references they make. This is the reason why we classify such kind of jokes as gutter humour.

Elsewhere, we read about Nzuki's tribulations upon being sent away by this father. His worries torment him making him spend long moments contemplating about his fate. It is in one of such occasions that Maillu says:

Nzuki alisit on the ground, miguu yake akiwa ameipart, halafu ana-starehe huko katikati kama kwamba anajiangalia boro iliyodaiwa ati ilimpregnate Katherine (49).

This kind of statement despite reflecting vividly the torment that Nzuki is going through elicits humour owing to the impressive manner in which it describes his action.

Nevertheless, we will classify it under dirty humour due to the sexual connotations that it bears.

The last example in this category of humour that we want to adduce from the text is in what Maillu says about the action of the servants when Nzuki and Katherine spend the night together on the same bed. This is how he puts it:

Nao wafanyikazi watu bure sana. Mwenye kui-make bed yake Katherine, si Mwangangi, akawa anatafuta clues kwenye masheet. On several times when Nzuki had spent the night there, the servant would create sensational stories za vile bed yake Katherine na Nzuki ilikuwa chafu (67).

Verbal abuses/mockery also account for the hilarity that emanates from reading this story. It is apparent that Maillu cashes in on these diatribes to colour this text with humour. We will sample a few examples to illustrate this point. Consider for example Mr. Mbuta's statement that says: "monkeys in my home!" (13) in reference to Mwangangi and his son Nzuki whom he blames for Katherine's pregnancy. Mr. Mbuta also reports Nzuki's crime to the police and demands for his arrest saying: "Nungunungu hiyo has destroyed my daughter and he is trying to run away from the responsibility" (23). As readers we feel tickled by this kind of mockery that Mr. Mbuta makes on Nzuki especially given the fact that he is later on to love Nzuki so dearly as to deem him better than any of his own sons.

The last example of this category of humour that we would like to point to is the policemen's words to Nzuki as they try to extort information from him concerning his role

in Katherine's pregnancy. Though abusive, they come with a lot of humour. This is what the policemen tell Nzuki when he (Nzuki) requests to be killed quickly so that he is spared the agony of being tortured slowly yet he is innocent: "No I don't want to kill you quickly. I want to do slowly and surely – punda wewe... watu kama nyinyi should be destroyed! What have you – nothing – makende tu. (27)."

Besides mockery, description also accounts for the fun we derive out of reading about Mr. Mbuta's family. Maillu creates a comical picture out of the playful manner in which he describes Mr. Mbuta's wife. He says as follows:

Lakini what Bwana Mbuta had lost in weight, alicompensatiwa na bibiye, Hilda. Hilda extravagantly fleshy, alikuwa mnene, mwili wote ma-curve matupu... mwenye silaha matiti na behind kubwa. Hivi iwe akikuangukia, you're finished.... Ngozi yake ember yang'ara; kwani mali ilimkwaruza na kumsugua vyema sana. A woman of ma-necklaces na ma-earrings ya kila aina na gharama (4).

Besides Hilda, her children pass out as figures of fun out of the description that Maillu gives them. The daughter is described as "an ugly girl... mwenye macho makubwa and along neck that had earned her jina la Giraffe in school" (4). Mr. Mbuta on his part comes out humorously as a man whose frail body makes him shudder at the prospects of meeting Hilda chest to chest in a fight whenever they have a quarrel.

An example of another person whose description on his physical features comes out quite jocularly is Mwangangi. Here is what Maillu says about him:

Mwangangi, being a Mkamba, mwana wa Kulatya, was in his forties. Mtu shortish, large chested labda because of pondering chakula kizuri. Kwani commander wa jikoni huji-do atakavyo. Mwangangi alikuwa mweupe; mwenye macho sharp sharp (2).

The place of hyperbole in the creation of humour in this text is quite central and we shall give examples to illustrate this position. Firstly, Maillu says that the Mbuta's are quite revered by the servants. Consequently, when their Mercedes Benz horn blares out impatiently at the gate, the servants "would fly" (7) to open the gate for them. This statement is obviously exaggerated to emphasise the sense of awe that the servants have towards their boss, which makes them to move with haste to open the gate once the Mbuta's come home. Their fear is not unfounded given the manner in which Mrs. Mbuta harasses her servants. The story holds that Hilda "alipendelea kutoboka huku na huko akiwa command ama kuwa-abuse wafanyikazi" (4). A similar incident occurs when Mbuta comes home annoyed upon learning that Nzuki is responsible for Katherine's pregnancy. After Mwangangi has flung the gate open, he proceeds to hurriedly park the car. Maillu then says that: "Mbuta akajimwaga nje mara moja na kumfuata Mwangangi jikoni even without closing the car behind him" (10). This statement is exaggerated to convey the deep sense of disgust in Mr. Mbuta. His reaction to the news of the impregnation of his daughter is so swift and is humorously captured by this hyperbole.

Here now is a final example of how hyperbole has contributed to humour in this text. Mbuta uses his riches to buy the services of the police. In return, the police fear him and handle him

with utmost care. Concerning the powers availed to him through his financial status Maillu humorously exaggerates that: “Powers zake bwana Mbuta zilikuwa kubwa kabisa. Akinguruma, pesa zinawaangukia maskini polisi mpaka zinaanza kuwaumiza. (23).”

The statement above conveys not just the corruptible nature of the police but also the arrogance of Mr. Mbuta, which has been occasioned by his ability to easily buy justice. As a matter of fact, the title of this book alludes to the helpless nature of the less endowed in society. Nzuki being an example of these group of people is forced to admit guilt to a crime he has not done, as he has no money to enable him buy his freedom from the police.

Flattery too has a contribution to make towards the gaiety in this story. It is interesting to read how Mwangangi gives false complements to Mr. Mbuta by telling him that: “Bwana Mbuta u mwenye akili sana” (8). This kind of false praise is also the reason behind the admiration that Katherine has for him. When it comes to Tom, Mwangangi cheats him by saying that: “Girls wanakupenda sana” (8). Through flattery, he succeeds to endear himself close to the family and everyone ends up loving him. As readers, we are elated by this shrewdness in Mwangangi that enables him cope with everyone in this highly volatile family.

Last but not least, we want to point out that the language in which this text is written easily renders itself, for humour. The hybridity of the language comes out quite playfully and Maillu has tapped from its resources to add zest to this text. The sheng language is to a great extent responsible for the witty exaggerations that run across the text. By way of example,

Mbuta's hounds are described as: "yale mabeast" (14). The word "beast" is an accurate way of describing Mbuta's dogs but the addition of the prefix "ma" makes this description quite impressive as it gives undue emphasis on the size and number of these dogs. Elsewhere, after Nzuki has been disowned by his father, his uncle consoles him by telling him not to give up. Muli is of the opinion that Mwangangi is justified to be annoyed with Nzuki owing to the rampant cases of what he refers to as: "Mapregnancies ya kila siku" (47). Once again this is a clear case where the Kiswahili prefix "ma" introduces the kind of emphasis that humorously exaggerates the word "pregnancy" both in size and number.

Through out the text, Maillu switches from English to Kiswahili and vice versa thereby making the language in which this story is written quite interesting. Consider for example his statement that "Mbuta aliibia serikali kama mwenda wazimu, given to the devils of theft" (3). The Kiswahili bit of this statement avails a simile while the English section is a metaphor. The statement puts Mbuta's propensity at corruption at the same level with that of a man gone mad for money. The metaphor on the other hand establishes a humorous relationship between Mbuta's activities and those of the supposed devils of theft. This association is glamorous as it leaves more to the imagination because of the way unlike things have been set side by side with the aim of making us see the likeness between them. This kind of defamiliarisation is important in setting our imaginative minds into motion and in this case, the result is quite exhilarating.

One thing that we have to note is that this text has sustainably and symbiotically used an interplay of the English and Kiswahili language from the first page to the very last. Indeed,

the story begins with the words: “Kwa ten good years” (1) and ends with the line “Akamchange Katherine completely akawa mwanamke mwenye roho safi kabisa, then mke faithful kamili” (75). It is therefore clear that even without the other categories of humour that we have already identified, this kind of language suffices to make this story sustainably funny. However, the other categories are not to be disregarded as they are the icing on the cake to this witty story.

By way of conclusion, we would like to note that this book leaves no doubt concerning the acumen of Maillu in creating humour. Like in the preceding texts, we have demonstrated the skills that this author has put in place to make Without Kiinua Mgongo a rib-cracking work in all its pages. Despite carrying an impelling story on the plight of a young boy who is blackmailed by a rich girl merely because of his poor status, we hail the way in which Maillu has succeeded in light heartedly dealing with such a sensitive issue.

CONCLUSION

This study went out to examine the techniques that Kenyan prose writers use in creating humour. In order to achieve this objective we settled for Times Beyond by Omondi Mak'oolo, How To Be a Kenyan by Wahome Mutahi and Without Kiinua Mgongo by David Maillu as the primary texts. The decision to single out these texts was arrived at owing to the manner in which they have been written, which makes them stand out as being sustainably witty.

We wish to note the central role that new criticism as a literary theory has played as a theoretical tool in facilitating this study. Since we set out to examine how humour is realized in this texts, the tenets of this theory, which in part advocate for the appreciation of the technique and form of art and the mastery of the artist in a literary work came in handy in enabling us meet our key objective. Besides this, the tenets of this theory also guided us in our endeavour to demonstrate how architecture of these texts contributed to the hilarity that readers derive from them. In general we advance scholarship in the area of style in humour as manifested in Kenyan prose and own up to the fact that there is still room for more studies in the related areas.

As a matter of fact this is a pioneering research into the study of humour in Kenyan prose.

We have observed that critics have largely ignored to investigate humour as a stylistic technique among the Kenyan writers. Instead of carrying a thorough research on this area,

scholars have only offered short commentaries and shallow newspaper acknowledgments that do not, by any means, reflect the genius involved in writing a sustainably short story.

We would like to give a few brief observations concerning what research has achieved to gather. As we had stated, we ventured to test the hypothesis that humour is the result of many incongruous kinds of statements, feelings, situations and actions, assessments and contexts. We have been able to establish that this assumption is valid basing on our findings in the three key texts around which this story revolved.

In the analysis of Times Beyond we have demonstrated that humour thrives in the discrepancies that some stylistic devices such as hyperbole and metaphor avail. Equally we have underscored the comic effect that emanates out of the incongruity realized through devices such as irony and surprise.

Through this text, it has emerged that humorous writers are usually keen on the characters they choose through whom the events in their works are perceived. We have said that the speaking voice in any story is very important because the liveliness of such a story heavily relies on the speaker. This is because, as we have noted, the reconstructions he makes from his experiences have a direct bearing on the meaning the reader derives from the text. We could otherwise put it this way: a dull character/s makes a dull story but a bubbly personality is a boon to the hilarity of a text. It is in the light of the observations that we have made above that we have concluded that the choice of Waweru as a vehicle for humour in Times

Beyond is a deliberate technique that Omondi Mak'Oloo has used to make this a tickling novel.

One other thing that *Times Beyond* has availed concerns the choice of setting by a humourist in a text. Clearly the Hungarian setting upon which this novel is based is a gold mine for humour and we have elucidated why. We can therefore deduce that there are settings that are potentially humorous and it takes a good humourist to make fun out of them in the manner that Omondi Mak'Oloo has done

This study has also demonstrated that oddities in people's mannerisms and habits make good recipes for humor. This has clearly emerged by observing the techniques that Wahome Mutahi uses to make how to be a Kenyan interesting. We have equally noted that the humorous juxtapositions, ironies, allusions and so on of the language in these anecdotes have a role to play in the sublimity of this text.

Another observation we have made is that David Maillu on his part largely relies on the incongruities availed by comic and dramatic irony to make Without Kiinua Mgongo a funny story. This is not to mention the other myriad of techniques such as hyperbole, mockery, and description that he has humorously exploited in this story.

In a nutshell, this study has proved that humour is a very rich domain for scholarly research. We recommend more systematic studies in the related areas so as to fill up the many other

gaps that are yet to be addressed in as far as the employment of humour in Kenyan literature is concerned.

Perhaps, the short supply of humorous texts in Kenyan literature could be explained by the poor attention that critics have accorded the already existing works. It is our hope that this research has set a precedent upon which more systematic and in-depth studies in the area of humour will emerge. Besides this, we hope that if this happens humour writers will be more emboldened to churn more works into the Kenyan bookshelves.

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