

HUMOUR IN CHUKWUEMEKA IKE'S TOADS FOR SUPPER

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Abstract

Chukwuemeka Ike as a fictional writer displays a mature sense of skilfulness in providing comfort for incommensurable and turbulent situations through the use of humour in writing. This paper is an attempt at a philosophical exposé on the sense of humour in Chukwuemeka Ike's maiden novel, Toads for Supper. Ike's novel bears out Charles Nnolim's Latin aphorism ridentem dicere verum, meaning, I tell the truth laughing. Thus, humour, which some philosophers regard variously as illogical, nonsensical and lack of seriousness, can be understood differently from another perspective which tries to make 'sense' of the 'nonsense' and forces a 'new logic' unto the 'illogical', through its soothing effects. In Toads for Supper, the use of humour helps to communicate hard facts in its diluted form, enlivening serious situations with comic relief. There may be various explanations to why humans laugh. Ike's work here sets the stage for answers to questions about the scandal of humour; that is, the fact that the many theories of humour have not yet ascertained what really makes humour amusing, what makes things funny and what makes people laugh. The hope (or lack of it) to get to this point of awareness has been dismissed as a mere philosophers' dream, a kind of philosophical gelotology.

Keywords: Humour, Fiction, Literature, Philosophy, Gelotology.

Introduction

Chukwuemeka Ike has covered so many themes in his fictional and nonfictional works that it has become very difficult for critics to judge him without any fear of contradictions. Onuekwusi (2016) and Achebe (2015) for instance separately hold that Chukwuemeka Ike cannot be easily stereotyped since most of his novels have escaped *a fortiori* classifications of literary critics and cannot be pigeon-holed into theories and frameworks. Yet, some writers (Ugbabe, 2015; Wadinga, 2015; Encarnacion, 2015; etc) have distinguished his works as satirical and full of skilful comic depictions of life, hope and despair in West Africa. His novels are instruments for investigating serious social phenomena like examination malpractice, tribalism, war, marriage, politics, culture, school life (primary, secondary and tertiary campus life), conflicts, reconciliations, relationships, etc. His novels' themes range from a focus on the Nigerian primary school child in *The Potter's Wheel* (1976), through life in the secondary school in *The Bottled Leopard* (1985), to university campus life in *Toads for Supper* (1965) and its sequel coming 42 years later in *Toads for Ever* (2007), then, social life in *The Naked Gods* (1970), and part of modern day life in *The Chicken Chasers* (1980). This paper centres on humour through the binoculars of Chukwuemeka Ike's maiden novel *Toads for Supper* (1965) which, perhaps may not be the most humorous of his novels, is shown to contain enough humour to abstract a high quality philosophy of humour from the veteran novelist and administrator. This work intends to do a kind of philosophical gelotology using the *Toads for Supper* as a reference point. Gelotology (derived from the Greek γέλως gelos meaning "laughter" and λογος logos meaning study) is simply the study of laughter.

The word *humour* (which was not restricted to laughter, fun, amusement or the comical) has had somewhat a bad reputation in the history of philosophy literature prior to the 18th century (Morreall, 2020). It was not until the Enlightenment that humour assumed its current sense of funniness, and distinguishing between the sense in which humour involves "laughing at" somebody

(that is, ridicule) and another sense of “laughing with” somebody (that is, cheerfulness) (Morreall, 2020; Martin, 2007; Morreall, 2008). Humour, in one sense, has been associated with the ancient Hippocratic classification of body fluids which correspondingly yield to four personality types (Birch, 2019). The dominance of any of these four types of fluids – including *blood*, *yellowbile*, *phlegm* (mucus) and *black bile* – is said to give humans some unique temperamental characteristics corresponding respectively to the following personality types – sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. According to Elom and Elom (2020) the sanguine is light hearted, optimistic, happy, hopeful and accommodating; while the choleric is irritable, angry but passionate and strong with active imagination; the phlegmatic is rather cold, calm, slow or sluggish and indifferent; and, the melancholic is bad tempered, dejected, sad, depressed, pessimistic, deplorable and self-involved. Humour in this sense is a mixture of the four kinds of fluid in the body whose balance is believed to determine the emotional and physical state of a human being.

Humour more recently has become associated with the quality of being funny. Hornby (1995) refers to humour as the quality of being amusing or comic, the ability to appreciate things, situations or people that are comic, and the ability to be amused. In this sense, to be amused means that which causes somebody to laugh or smile. The major part of this paper focuses on humour as amusement. What about it? An attempt on why a human should laugh and particularly why laughter occurs while reading *Toads for Supper* is the main thrust of this investigation.

Phenomenology of humour (laughter)

Laughter is a unique auditory expression of a pleasant physical experience (joy, mirth, happiness, or relief) which involves the contractions of the human diaphragm and some other parts of the respiratory system resulting as a response to some internal or external stimuli, elicited by either being tickled, incredible thoughts and actions or listening to humorous stories (Wikipedia). It sometimes occurs by perceived negative emotional states like embarrassment, surprise, or confusion. A phenomenological description of laughter in Morreall (2009: 2) is interesting to note:

Something happens or someone says a few words, and our eyebrows and cheeks go up, as the muscles around our eyes tighten. The corners of our mouths curl upward, baring our upper teeth. Our diaphragms move up and down in spasms, expelling air from our lungs and making staccato vocal sounds. If the laughter is intense, it takes over our whole bodies. We bend over and hold our stomachs. Our eyes tear. If we had been drinking something, it dribbles out our noses. We may wet our pants. Almost every part of our bodies is involved, but none with any apparent purpose. We are out of control in a way unmatched by any other state short of neurological disease. And – funniest of all – the whole experience is exquisitely pleasurable!

What a description! The summary of the whole thing is that humour is an experience that is “exquisitely pleasurable”. We all may value humour in our daily lives at least for the pleasure it offers, but the extent of negative assessment that often greets humour is what may be baffling. These negativities are not unprecedented at least for the fact that humour is not usually characterized as a rational activity. We can see why somewhere in his text Morreall (2009) insists that laughing obviously seems to be the funniest of all the things that human beings can do and experience, yet, laughter is not only biologically odd, but it is also elicited by ‘anomalous’ activities. Logical events are not often described as anomalous because of their all time rational and epistemic consistency, regularity and coherency. Here again humour is seen as something elicited by ‘anomalous’ activities.

Jones (2006) has argued that the subject matter of the study of humour is a mental state which he called finding funny, the content of this state is based on some laughter theories like the incongruity thesis and the gratification or relief thesis couched in his uniting theory of humour. Psychologists and psychiatrists recommend that their patients keep a sense of humour, thus recommending humour as therapeutic, a consequence of the relief theory of humour.

Jauregui (1998) observes that people sparingly write on humour and the subject of laughter is often taken for granted even though most human beings laugh every single day of their lives. Despite the long historical excursus on humour discourse and the ever growing empirical studies on humour research in recent times, Jauregui submits that “many of the most basic questions remain unanswered, including the most basic question of all: what does it take for something to be ‘funny’?” (Jauregui, 1998, p. 20). It does not really matter the form or shade humour appears, whether it be satire, sarcasm and sardonicism, or causticness, irony, parody, or invective, lampoon, caricature, burlesque, travesty, charade, farce, or paradox, the kind of humour intended to be given attention in this paper is that which is connected with amusement and laughter. This paper submits that one’s perspective apparently determines whether the amusement of humour is costly or less, entertaining or detestable, abusive or cordial, and so on.

Nonsensicality and illogicality of humour

Consider for instance the question of whether a paradox makes sense or not. Your answer depends on your pragmatic understanding of the paradox. Inquiring what a paradox is shows that a paradox often gets smeared at least with a contradiction, and sometimes, a meaningful contradiction. Meaningful in the sense that an aspect of the paradox makes sense while at the same time, looking at it from a different context, it does not. Pragmatism has forced some kind of context dependent considerations in matters that have been hitherto traditionally considered solely from ontologico-epistemic dimensions which often claim non-context dependence. What makes sense and nonsense, of course, depends on the context from which one approaches any issue. Pragmatists, for instance, would rather argue that an ontologico-epistemic consideration is itself a context, which paradoxically seems to contradict the sense of non-context of ontology and epistemology (Eke, 2016). So, everything seems perspectival. Let me start by noting at least one context where sense is subsumed under nonsense. Funny enough, since the word *sense* is contained in the word *nonsense*, then one can say there is ‘*sense*’ in every ‘*nonsense*’, at least scrabble players would find this relationship important. Also using the same logic we can find the word ‘*logic*’ in the word ‘*illogical*’. When considering subjects bordering on humour we may find other exemplification of finding ‘sense’ in what has been generally accepted as ‘nonsense’. Apart from the Wittgensteinian understanding of the ‘nonsensical’ as that which is not found in physical experience or that which our senses cannot fully grasp (that is, the metaphysical or the transcendent), ordinarily nonsense could mean that which does not make sense, or simply lack of sense. What do we mean by all these? Let us consider the three senses of nonsense. That which is not found within the senses is nonsense. That which does not make sense is nonsense. That which is not reasonable is nonsense. Without going into deeper semantics of the meaning of nonsense, we may paradoxically notice that there is ‘sense’ in *nonsense*. This apparent semantic concern bears on some metaphysical underpinnings. We could decipher some sort of relationship of similarity instead of distinction between sense and nonsense on the one hand and logic and *illogical* on the other. Humour is that metaphysical link between sense and nonsense, and between logic and the illogical.

Between Seriousness and Humour

The conceptualisation of “light-hearted humour and sombre seriousness” (in Achebe’s parlance) may enunciate a deep contrast. A general feeling is that whatever has humour in it lacks seriousness. This may not necessarily be true. In the contrary, there are examples of literary works which portray something as serious as death sometimes in humorous contexts. Take for instance; when a villain dies in laughable circumstances, it enunciates humour when it occurs in some weird circumstances. At some other times humour aims at achieving amusement by lightening the burdens of a heavy heart. It is in this kind of situation we are condemned to see sense in nonsense within the humour discourses of Ike’s *Toads for Supper*. Ike, like Bohr (1963), seems to understand that a healthy balance between seriousness and humour plays a big role in a good literary work. That is why Ike employs a combination of the duo in a complementary manner to win acceptance by his readers.

Why Humour is Amusing

Is there a logic that once it is displayed laughter follows? We are yet to find out. However, humour may be described in various ways that may seem to portray its character as sensible nonsense and illogical logic, yet, these descriptions are at best anecdotal and allegorical. We may be handicapped when we attempt to descriptively designate humour from the point of view of its cause(s), since there are diverse contexts of humour. We can yield to the gentle force of humour, and point out instances that people laugh, but to understand what makes people laugh or what makes things funny, is a herculean task. Potter(2011) sees humour as that which soothes the nerves of men hit by difficult times. It is among the welcome diversionary measures during hard times that simultaneously contrast and blend with cultivated music, concerts, dances, plays, and parades generally perceived as uplifting and morally beneficial. The humorous, like the hot water that simultaneously softens potatoes and hardens eggs, affects various individuals differently. What makes things funny and what makes humans laugh become pragmatic and context based. The following reasoning seems to follow. It may not be situations that cause amusement but something different. To know what that is seems slippery. Whether or not we can know laughter inducing factor is a subject for the curious philosopher. If it proves intractable then we get the taste of the pudding in the eating. Let us begin by looking at the leading theories of humour.

Theories of Humour/Laughter

Some philosophers like Mikkal Borch-Jacobson support the view that the experience of laughter is never objective no more than it is subjective, and that there is no theory of laughter, since there is only an experience which obviously cannot take place unless we ourselves burst out in laughter, and thus become laughter itself. (Borch-Jacobsen, 1985: 742). For centuries many thinkers have analysed and depicted the nature of humour, from its treatment as a phenomenon, to “its philosophical, psychological and physiological nature, its aesthetic value, its relation to truth, ethical standards, customs and norms, its use in literature, its dependency on the society and culture.” The prevailing theories of humour that pervade the philosophical world include the Ridicule Theory (Aristotle, Bain), Superiority Theory (Stendhal, Propp, Stern), the Relief Theory (Freud, 1905) and the Incongruity Theory (Hegel, Schopenhauer). The Superiority Theory suggests that our laughter expresses feelings of superiority over other people or over a former state of ourselves. It sees the feelings of superiority as the cause of laughter. Amusement here is analysed as an “attentive demolition” of a person or something connected with a person. Laughter in this

sense devalues its object in the subject's eyes. This is a case of laughter as mockery or ridicule where in the ridicule theory of Aristotle is subsumable. Surely it does not explain all there is about laughter and humour.

The Relief Theory of humour suggests that laughter or humour is a homeostatic mechanism by which psychological tension is reduced by releasing animal spirits that have built up pressure inside the nerves. It claims the cause of laughter is this release of tension caused by one's fears. That is what makes one laugh. Psychologists welcome this theory as it serves a relief purpose in their therapeutic science. The cause of laughter is thus placed on the release of built up nervous energy.

The Incongruity Theory projects the perception of something incongruous as the cause of laughter. The last of these three theories seem to be most acceptable as the best theory of humour due to its comprehensiveness in explaining different episodes of humour. It will be nice to point out that the Incongruity thesis, despite its widespread accounting for more cases of laughter, does not seem to account for laughter (humour) in infants. Do infants laugh? If our answer is yes, then there is a big question about the Incongruity Theory. Reasonability or rationality plays a role for the Incongruity Theory to be acceptable. Yet, the same rationality is only potential in infants and not actual. So laughter in infants cannot be explained by the Incongruity Theory given the fact that children below one year old cannot be said to be rational in the proper sense of the word. What makes infants laugh could not have been a notice of illogicality or lack of correspondence with perception. We must then seek for another theory that may explain a wider spectrum of laughter incidents.

Our author of interest, Chukwuemeka Ike, whether or not, he is aware of these theories has succeeded in putting laughter on the faces of his readers, even as they peruse through the painful story of love, desire and despair in *Toads for Supper*. He uses aspects of humour to elicit laughter and thus reduce the painful effect of the pathetic story of a bright university undergraduate whose psychological makeup and received belief system conflict with his desire to marry a girl of another ethnicity. Let us catch a glimpse of Ike's philosophy of humour in literary practice.

Chukwuemeka Ike on Humour

In an interview with Sumaila Umaisha, which was published in the *New Nigerian*, *Sentinel Poetry* and *The London Magazine*, Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike propounded a philosophy of humour as he explained why he adopted the style of humour. "There was a general feeling that humour is necessary to succeed in life. Even to convince your partner in an argument, humour can help to liven the situation and make things go well." This statement is central and summarises Ike's understanding of the function of humour. Ike's submission is not different from what most of us would say were we asked to speak on humour. He makes it clear that in any fiction the most acceptable form of providing solution to identified problems may not just come through the seriousness of didactic literature but also through a simultaneous inclusion of the humorous element which consequently ameliorates the seemingly staid situation. Humour in Ike sometimes serves a suspense function whereby the comic creates a puzzle that keeps the reader uncertain about what next might likely occur. Ike's sense of humour, according to him, is inspired by the simplicity of humble environment: "Well, I think that came from life in the village; life at home... Some literary scholars don't like the style. They feel whatever has humour in it is not serious. But I don't share that view."

Humour in Ike's Toads for Supper

Just as we have earlier said, different things elicit humour. There is no specific method for creating humour. The capacity at which one thing elicits humour may be different in various individuals depending on the situation. It is important at this juncture to understand that Ike saw literature as a mirror of the society at the beginning of his career as a novelist and literary writer. His maiden novel did not attempt to criticise the society the much he strove to represent and picture the image of the society in which he lived.

The title of the novel for our consideration, *Toads for Supper*, is itself humorous for those who understand the significance of the public image of a toad in a culture that despises toads as meat. Some African cultures (Igbo, for instance) loathe some animals (toads, millipede, shrew, etc.). Igbo aphorisms like *ugo mara mma n'eri awọ* (*beautiful eagle that eats toad*) and *onye n'eri awọ rikwee nke buru ebu, akpọọ ya nwa ori awọ ọ za* (*whoever must eat toad has to eat a fat one so that when he is called toad-eater he will answer*) carry with them some contemptibility in the eating of toads, much like those ugly sentiments associated with encountering millipede and shrew. The former is like asking 'why should the most beautiful bird in Igbo worldview eat such a despicable meat as toad?' The adage is often used in the context where someone who is reputable indulges in disgraceful acts. Or, a situation analogical to the one just described. In the latter, often used to mean that whatever one does (good or bad, and most often bad) correspondingly identifies and gives that one a name. As is evident from the author himself, "in Igbo society a toad is a loathsome creature. Any child who eats a toad kills his appetite for meat. In *Toads for Supper*, an Igbo/Yoruba wedlock was equivalent to a meal of despicable toads." (Ike, 2013). And, so a meal of toads ought to enunciate this despicability. That is the expectation. But there is a violation of this expectation in the title, *Toads for Supper*. Ordinarily one would laugh at the meaning of the title. Could it be true that one man's meat is another's poison? The comical in *Toads for Supper* is context dependent and portrays some pragmatic concern. Just like the author put it: "what to the Yoruba, might be a loathsome toad might be considered a choice dish among the Ibo," (TFS Ch. 22:161).

Several expressions of Ike in *Toads for Super* produce wonderful comic effects. The narrator describes the scenario where Aduke Olowu (the girl that has won a soft spot in the heart of Amadi) takes no notice of Amadi as she comes out of a meeting and walks past him, "deeply engaged in a conversation" with a male undergraduate, described as "her escort, who beamed as if he had won first prize in the Government Lotteries," (TFS Ch. 1:13). Seen from the context that Amadi has waited impatiently for that meeting to end, and "was composing his opening sentence" with which to approach Aduke, and probably try the "uphill task" of winning "a girl's love all by himself," it is amusing to see Amadi completely disarmed by the disappointing appearance of Aduke's male companion, whom the narrator has described, sympathetic enough with Amadi, as exhaling some poise of winning a lottery. With the background knowledge of the environment in which the novel was cast, the reader is left with no option than to intermittently burst into laughter at the underlying meaning of the actions of the characters of Ike's *Toads for Supper*.

Ike's description of the contortion of Chima's face at an encounter with Aduke presents the situation in a somewhat coarse humour:

In spite of his friendship with Amadi, Chima had not shown much kindness or courtesy to Aduke... He was determined not to show any recognition of the friendship between Amadi and Aduke. Rather than smile at Aduke any time his eyes met hers, which was extremely

rare, he tightened the expression on his face, as if he was having a painful time at the water closet,” (TFS Ch. 14:105).

This shows the ease with which Ike creates humour through literary expressions. The punch line is the imagination in the expression on Chima’s face, like one passing through “a painful time at the water closet.” The hard job of constipation is contrasted with Amadi’s effort (perhaps fuelled by the tribal divide between Yoruba and Ibo) at showing Aduke his disapproval of Amadi’s relationship with her.

The most trying moment in Amadi’s life was his father’s death. Yet, Ike employed humour to present a tragic situation. Imagine how Amadi’s tears were capable of washing away the dusty clothes of his mother.

The sight of his father putting up a last struggle for life returned to him frequently, like an unwanted reflection in a mirror. The tears he shed the day his father had died would have been enough to wash away the thick coat of dust on his mother’s clothes as she flung herself again and again on the ground, moaning for the husband who was oblivious of her grief. (TFS ch. 25:181)

This trauma was understandable because his father’s “was the first death in his family, his first direct encounter with death.” Amadi may be unwilling to accept the conclusion that his actions and inactions may have been the remote and immediate cause of his father’s death. Ike presents this situation in a mixed humour where Amadi queries himself: “Could it be that I am responsible for Papa’s death? ... I don’t see any link between marrying Sweetie and developing a serious cough,” (TFS 25:180). This rationalisation following his self-interrogation is a violation of the expectation of the reader and one only laughs at his innocent exoneration. Meanwhile humour resulted from the suspense and its resolution. Does it not seem childish at this time to exonerate himself? The reader might have expected that he should have accepted responsibility, which he did not.

He made a promise to his dying father to marry Nwakaego, the girl who was betrothed to him at her birth by his parents. He had received his father’s final blessings only on the condition that he promised to marry Nwakaego, a promise his mother persuaded him, against his will, to make in order to save the dying man. “Yes, sir. I promise.” Amadi’s response gladdened his father’s heart and the *husband of yam* died happily. He died happily but left Amadi sad and confused, not only due to the loss of his father but to the fact that he had given an engagement ring to Aduke. Now, with the intention to save his father’s life he has promised to marry Nwakaego. His father died despite his promise. Amadi became unwilling to keep the promise. “Remember, young man, the promise to marry Nwakaego is now a promise to the dead!” Amadi’s inner voice torments him, but Amadi would respond with an argument, “Yes, it may be a promise to the dead, but it was made at a time when I was mentally unbalanced. I was driven to it in an attempt to save Papa’s life. Papa died in spite of the promise. Why then should I be bound by it?” Amadi was fully aware of a strong belief in Ezinkwo that “to break a promise to the dead was to invite trouble from the land of the spirits.” But he was equally aware of the trending saying that there is no such connection between the living and the dead, expressed in a rhetorical question Amadi asks, “has it not been said that dead men do not bite?” Despite all these arguments and counter arguments within his troubled mind, in order to justify his intention to do things he was convinced in, he condescends to do his father’s bidding. He had promised to marry Aduke and had broken the protocol of embarking on the journey to his would be in-laws place without his parents’ counsel. Now, he is faced with real challenges of breaking this promise. Amadi is now convinced to call off the proposal to marry Aduke on the grounds that he had made a supposed irrevocable promise to the dead. How would he do that?

Arriving on campus, he did not actually know how to break the “Nsugbe coconut” so Amadi employs the method of rehearsing what he would tell Aduke concerning the situation following his father’s death, and Ike again presents this serious situation in a humorous parlance, as “the door opened and Aduke walked in.” Surprised and confused Amadi displays a kind of reaction that credits Ike as an intelligent and creative fictional author who describes what suddenly follows in the most amusing way.

Amadi’s face passed through a series of rapid metamorphoses. The first was of a man angry at an intruder invading his thoughts; then the expression changed to that of a man receiving a surprise visit from a friend most welcome at any other time than the present; then the face of conscience; a stricken boy caught with his fingers deep in the soup pot; and finally to the face of the embarrassed man who realises that he is not being sufficiently nice and warm to his guest. (TFS, 25:184).

The story teller once again at this moment conveys humour even in serious matters. Thus humour can express something serious, even though not in such a serious manner as to cause heart break. Despite all the rehearsals, Amadi cannot present the whole story to Aduke who visits him. He resorts to the use of faceless letter writing. He wittily seeks to ask Aduke to advise him on the matters on ground. He presents somewhat a euphemistic version of his story while exposing all relevant facts in a letter. He underlines the likely hazards on their way to getting married. Both Amadi and the reader are in suspense of what follows. Aduke is rushed to Abeokuta Mental Hospital shortly after reading the missive from Amadi.

The creativity of Chukwuemeka Ike comes to mind once again in this situation, which ordinarily should have been a very serious one, and indeed it is, as he presents it with a tinge of literary humour. First, think of Amadi’s choice to write a letter to Aduke even though both of them are meant to see in class that same day; “before setting off for lectures the following morning, he [Amadi] read through every word of the long letter and nodded his head with satisfaction. It could not have been better written... He sealed the envelope and handed it to the Hall messenger” to deliver to Oliaku Hall between eleven O’clock and midday. This kind of humour finds justification of the Superiority Theory. His actions may make some people laugh since it seemed childish, and unexpected of an intelligent undergraduate. Amadi becomes quite apprehensive, knowing full well that Aduke would not receive this information very easily. What he did not know is what her actual reactions would be. He displays more immaturity, fear, and uncertainty as he rings Oliaku Hall telephone and the illiterate Hall porter picks it. Completely unaware that the one on the telephone was the author of the letter, the porter reveals the unfortunate case of Aduke’s mental retardation caused by a letter from her “boy friend – dat “kobokobo” boy dem call Mr. Chukwuka. Me I no know wetin ‘e write for dis letter. After Miss Olowu [Aduke] read am ‘e begin do as if ‘e mad. Dem don carry am go Abeokuta Mental Hospital.” What a blow! It is funny to find that the same person derided is the one receiving the information. It was devastating to Amadi Chukwuka, but the reader who has been following the story is greeted with laughter at this point.

Here the Incongruity Theory seems both to be justified and defied. Justified in a sense, because it is actually the unexpected that produced the humour. It was defied in another sense, because the unexpected also produced a pitiable situation, showing that it is not always laughter that follows the unexpected outcome. The laughter elicited by the incongruous situation is also accompanied by a feeling of pity. Here again, seriousness and humour apparently intermarry, showing that seriousness and humour are not mutually exclusive. If seriousness which represents in some parlance what makes sense and therefore the logical, is reduced to humour, that which is taken to be unserious, and therefore nonsensical and illogical, then there seems to be a no boundary thesis between what is serious and

unserious, between sense and nonsense, and between logic and illogicality. This can only happen in a humorous situation whereby the boundary walls collapse.

While the Relief Theory may find a place in this episode, since a fictional work such as *Toads for Supper* uses humour to relieve the suspense stress on the reader, to welcome such dry conclusion that hurt the genuine love already built around Amadi and Aduke, can send someone to a mental hospital. The ingenuity of Ike to carve in an episode which would be explained by the three known theories of humour shows the extent of his meticulousness and attention to details. Since no one theory explains perfectly the reason for laughter in this episode, the situation where all these theories find a room proposes further that *Toads for Supper* seems to suggest a new theory of laughter (a combination theory of humour), where an episode is explainable using a combination technique of more than two known theories.

Conclusion

We have exposed few episodes of laughter in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Toads for Supper*. Since none of the theories of laughter has given adequate explanation or the universal reason for laughter, then what makes humour amusing, what makes things funny and what makes people laugh are so slippery to be contained within a confined operation of a single theory. Just as peoples differ, and individuals are different, what elicits laughter in them differ. A situation that created much fun for some group of people might be boring to some other groups or individuals. The philosophers' dream to get a universal theory of humour that accounts for all known situations of laughter is like hoping against hope. We have been able to buttress the fact that achievement of literary humour does not have any streamlined method but seems to require some creative insight which is not subject to any particular laid down scientific rules. That is why in the near future when artificial intelligence and robotics rape the world of the human, scientific and intelligent operations which hitherto were done solely by humans, would be abandoned for manmade smart devices, and the relevance of actors, designers, artists, creative writers, musicians, and anything creative (not easily done by computers) would become the order of the day.

Chukwuemeka Ike's creation and philosophy of humour do not make room for any dichotomy between the serious and unserious in the quest for the humorous. Thus this paper has attempted a no boundary thesis between what is designated as serious moods in literary works and unserious ones, since the very serious mood that communicates hard facts may engender very funny humour if understood from a different context. If what is supposedly serious and perhaps 'non-humorous' elicits humour, then the traditional designation of what is considered humorous with regard to mood of the literary work ought to be revised.

Meanwhile, a standard literary work is often a combination of seriousness and humour creatively intertwined so as to create at some point some comic relief. People do not want to laugh all through a novel, for instance, and such a novel (where people laugh all the way) has not been written. If any of such works appears in the bookstand, then rest assured, there will be lack of readers' patronage since at some point it would become uninteresting to read. A good blend of well-timed humour and seriousness produces the suspense and patronage required for any work to win universal acceptance. As Achebe (2015) rightly observes, Ike has always achieved "brilliant observation, light-hearted humour and sombre seriousness. And that combination of light touch and serious purpose is the hallmark of his entire oeuvre. He explores our human condition in terms we can all understand and in images that will endure." More African scholars are encouraged to discuss more themes in the works of indigenous African authors.

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