

Grotesque and Mirthless Humour in “Midnight Hotel” and Morning
Yet on Judgement Day”

Lanre Bamidele
Department of Theatre Arts
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper intends to examine theories of humour in which the comic and the tragic meet through the style and structure of a text. It therefore defines the grotesque along this line and expands our interpretation of Osofisan’s satiric pieces in *Midnight Hotel* within the ambit of unnatural disordered universe he creates to arouse laughter. This is in contrast to the kind of humour that is mirthless in *Morning yet on Judgement Day* because the issues in discussion range from the serious and the tragic about the socio-political environment in which the play weaves up the plot. In other words, our reception of each of this play depends on the language and style of the plays to elicit either of the reactions: the grotesque in terms of the comic and mirthless humour in term of the tragic which are so illustrated in each of the play. The paper concludes that whatever our reaction to each of these plays both are good texts that intend to liberate us through humour from any frustration about the environment in which the texts are situated.

Introduction

Studies in jocular art and literature reveal that the theory of humour covers such areas as wit, mirth and the comic. While psychologists say that creating humour is an engagement to which some people are temperamentally disposed, sociologists and even some literary theorists have found that humour as a concept is culture-bound (Mercier 1962; Norris 1964).

In this discussion I shall attempt an analysis of the grotesque in *Midnight Hotel* to show how the jokes and amusing incidents in the text elicit exaggerated mirth through incongruities of ideas and situations. I shall discuss the grotesque structure and struggle of the play as it evokes laughter contrary to *discussion* of the term grotesque as fertility and life (Mercier, 1962:48) I shall also be discussing the mirthless humour in *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* especially the cheerlessness and tragic import of the theme dramatized within a comic style and diction. A common denominator in the works of Osofisan and Ekwuazi as humorists is that both have perfected the art of punning so well that even in normal conversations the impact of their jokes are not often felt until the punch line is delivered. The impression about the grotesques and the mirthless humour in these two texts are better appreciated during a performance than in a classroom discussion in a dramatic literature session. This is so because the songs, jokes and inverted borrowings of style and diction in both plays arouse these feelings perfectly well in the audience while in the theatre. *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* has not seen as many performances as *Midnight Hotel*. The reason for the latter being constantly performed on Nigerian stage may be due to the explosive laughter it arouses in the audience. As for *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* it is cheerless in its depiction of the despair and frustrations of the youths who are largely the University undergraduates as its target audience.

The Ideas of the Plays

The title of each of the plays seems to set out the differences in tone and style of humour. *Midnight Hotel* as a title has an obvious ring of comic humour. In this title attention is drawn to different sources of humour and to the various goings-on in the hotel such as the activities of prostitutes in a place full of drunken bores, to the uses of language to explore sexual and social obscenities. The puns in the title are spiced with music-hall patter and it is not surprising that the play is full of false social values. In *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* there is the destruction of idealism and dreams as people seek for the possibilities of a better world. Readers and audiences are primed for a time when the characters' thirst for justice may be at once stimulated and frustrated in a setting, an 'artificial' absurd microcosm, where God is subjected to questioning or queries. The performance mode of each of the plays points to this interpretation as the Nigerian setting of the plays reveals. That of *Midnight Hotel* is obviously comic while that of *Morning Yet on Judgement*

Day is surreptitiously comic. This observation is evident from the way the two plays have been produced and performed on the Nigerian stage.

The idea underpinning the two plays as well as their performance mode require caution in the way they have been yoked together as humorous texts: one is grotesque which signifies the comic, and the other mirthless which signifies the tragic. What they have in common, though in varying modes and degrees of intensity, is the premise that humour is a source of information and perhaps providing also, the solutions to everyday fears and concerns. The plays signify a direct relationship between value and justice on the one hand and social action on the other. The plays could well be described as "satirical grotesque" which is an offspring of the comic and the serious; mirthless humour. In this sense, connotes an ironic laughter rather than an abiding sense of gloom. As satirical grotesque the ambiguity between the grotesque and the mirthless in this analysis would thus have been resolved, and confined strictly to the social situation or the social environment of the plays' settings.

Both plays point toward the possibility of a better world as humorous pieces if humour, is indeed the searchlight for the keenest moral and intellectual analysis and is used very often as an instrument of possible change. This is the extent to which we may stretch the plays' common ethical function and/or ideological concept of humour. Their method is widely different even as 'satirical grotesque' of ridiculing social values, politics and policy, illusions and ineptitude. The craftsmanship of a man of the theatre in Femi Osofisan's *Midnight Hotel*, without the super imposition of a director's touch, exceeds the "managed dialectics" or rhetorical drama of Hyginus Ekwuazi in *Morning Yet on Judgement Day*. In *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* nothing by way of action develops through the characters but instead it is an idea or argument which requires the director's touch. For instance, *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* is built on how Marxist cants and illusions in young minds could produce ironic laughter, whereas the distortion of social values in "a house of sin" which the hotel represents produces grotesque action. *Midnight Hotel* conforms to the definition that grotesque is, essentially a marriage of malicious irony and low comedy as the play is attended by a pervasive distortion and levelling of values to a common standard (States, 1971:75) as the "sampling idea" in *Midnight Hotel* reveals.

Grotesque Humour in Midnight Hotel

Bert O. States' definition of the grotesque above would launch us into the content of *Midnight Hotel* while my own definition of grotesque as an

impression coming from the burlesque would lead us to the style of presentation. In a discussion of the craft of burlesque, Elizabeth More sees it as an umbrella term to cover farce, humour and parody. "Burlesque as a Style", she says, "is generally, a capricious distortion of an old or contemporary serious play or myth and by virtue of its very nature must retain its vitality through contrast, novelties and extrinsic allurements' (More, 1962:55). This style is copiously noticed in the *Midnight Series* (a group of plays that include *Midnight Hotel*. In the album of the 'Midnight Blackout' and 'Fiddlers on a Midnight Lark', Femi Osofisan burlesques contemporary ballads, poetry and song. It is usual, as her himself admits, to see some of his other plays in the style of burlesque of traditional myth and legend, fairy tale and history of the past and contemporary drama of our times (Femi Osofisan, 1992:36).

If burlesque as a style is to achieve its purpose of amusement, actions are thus exaggerated to the point of incredibility, characters and situations are overblown to the extent that people may begin to doubt the possibility of such extremity in life. The primary force of distortion, as in burlesque and satire, always produces the impression of the grotesque in comic and humorous texts. In other words the idea that the grotesque in terms of structure visually models disorder, mutation, impish perversity (Mervil, 1976:306) and it represents the image of our disorientation in a strange world. This would provide a good starting point for a discussion of the grotesque structure in *Midnight Hotel*. A short list of the incredible situations in the play reveals:

- (a) A lady parliamentarian who succumbs to giving her body to a would-be contractor to sample her since most of her men colleagues in government would not award contracts to any woman without having sampled them. The 'song in praise of sampling the goods' is distorted and its real market operation and context is turned to one of sexual perversion.
- (b) A father who thinks that, in order to be rich, he should live and plant himself and his four daughters in a hotel in the city where it is 'possible to exchange sexual gratification for quick money.
- (c) A wife and her husband who inadvertently check into a hotel at different times as they play hide-and-seek games with each other while a friend of their family who is also a Pastor has an illicit affairs with the wife in one room and drinks wine with the husband in the next room.

These situations are aberrations in themselves. On the stage they do arouse fun and amusement. Femi Osofisan delights in drawing these farcical situations with a view to ridiculing what is likened to the prototype "Nigerian house of Sin". The hotel provides large opportunities

to discuss these 'humorous' perversions in the Nigerian body-politic. There is an undertone of the grotesque in Awero's (the Woman Parliamentarian) playing a role not typical of women in the day-to-day social life. The original idea of "sampling" becomes quite a grotesque and humorous one when the order is reversed. The laughter aroused by this kind of role reversal, the transgression of social boundaries, the incongruity between fact and fiction, between reality and make-believe (Adinoyi-Ojo, 1996:134) appropriates the concept of humour to the social corrective level since it is assumed to be used as criticism of the follies of mankind in the text.

In this regard two reasons could be adduced for the use of the sampling situation as a humorous idea, whether reversed or not. For one reason it might have been used to express a disapproval of this social form of action. In other words, Femi Osofisan speaks out his mind in his disdain for greed, corruption of all kinds, for unethical behaviour and moral depravity in the search for material gratification. "Sampling", in whatever form before a contract or a job is offered or before any favour is done is used as humour, giving information that though this is associated with the Nigerian character it needs to be repudiated.

The second reason is like the first one: to enable audiences to see themselves', to offer society up for lampooning and ridicule and for people to laugh at the inanities in people's behaviour as they bid to out-do each other in a climate of institutionalized corruption in high and low places. The audience would return to their homes, after a time in the theatre, pleased, refreshed and charitable, believing that laughter is a needed antidote for the treatment of social worries. The need to portray in grotesque and hilarious humour our social history seems to be a demand of the public taste in the perversion of codes of sexual morality as in situations a, b and c above, which typify" the crisis of values affecting a culture in rapid and violent transition (Foot, 1991:7). These disturbing unethical actions are *laughable even to the elites in the society*. But this laughter for laughter sake is not the intention of the playwright. To him *Midnight Hotel* like some of his other plays is intended to expose and to discuss the rampant corruption in Nigerian Public life (Osofisan, 1998:80). Observations at the different performances sponsored by Governments have shown that neither government officials nor the elites seem to be amenable to the serious issues the play exposes for ridicule.

Another issues that provides humour is the fantasy world of honorary titles and chieftaincy titles that have assumed a grotesque (comic) proportion in Nigeria now. In *Midnight Hotel Jimoh* the hotel cleaner, is awarded a chieftaincy title of ASIWAJU Atunbedise. Jimoh like many of his ilk relishes this title very much but the joke is on Atunbedise. Asiwaju Atunbedise becomes the leader of those who prepare beds. In Asiwaju Atunbedise of Ifetedo in the play, Osofisan humours people like Jimoh as he ridicules the penchant for acquisition of titles amongst Nigerians and laments the debts that such titles cost people during installations. One is alarmed at the general tendency in Nigeria today, even in hamlets and villages, of the omnipresent allure of chasing after chieftaincy titles. I do not think that the playwright abhors this phenomenon but he would want to show the grotesque nature and the absurd craze in accepting or lobbying for such titles which are at least, not useful to the society other than for assuaging the psychological complex in some individuals. It has become a common fashion for comic plays in Nigerian to create the titles of chiefs, professors, and engineers for even messengers and workshop apprentices in order to humour those how carry such titles, perhaps not to debase the titles, but to endear and glamorize these titles for title lovers. This is a part example of the crisis of values affecting a culture in rapid and violent transition.

Midnight Hotel provides us with a lot of examples of verbal humour. In verbal humour two disparate strings of thought are tied together by an acoustic knot (Koestler, 1975:101). For instance Several statement by Alalise require an understanding of the relation between institutionalized meanings and linguistically deep structures. Alalise, the Headmaster becomes a vehicle/tool for Osofisan's linguistic humour and we can cite example of his statements. There are no fewer than twenty-seven instances in the play when Alalise reversed the original statements for the purpose of making a joke and drawing out some truth. Some of these are:

- There is no art to know the mind's construction from the frown.
- Noise does not kill a tree that grows in the market place
- The quality of mercy, say our elders, is not sustained

- A beggar has no shoes as they say
- Nothing ventured, nothing great
- A piece of meat, they say, is never kept successfully under the custody of teeth.
- It is ignorance that makes the rat engage the cat in a duel
- Happiness is a perfume, you must pour it first on yourself for others to appreciate.
- The drum that beats loud is always empty inside
- The way to paradise, says the proverb, is like the narrow hole of a ballot-box.

The interpretations that can be given to these reversed jokes have a grotesque underpinning in the context of a text in which the playwright turns to the right while the audience/the reader, might follow the order to march to the left. Our response in this way may reveal the truth in the idea that any deviations from the linguistic order of our daily speech, may bring about comic effect of one soldier marching to the right, while the rest of the platoon follows the order to march to the left (Zijdeveld, 1983: 10).

The Nigerian sense of humour is easily realized through songs and comic verses. There is humour in songs. There is humour in the epic mode when some homely, trivial content is introduced into its rendition as these are infallible comic devices. Humour in song or music comes through the ironic mode of expression in the forms of witty or merry comments. Thus the songs in *Midnight Hotel* could be witty or whimsical and could serve as comic stimulus to explosive laughter about some of the unflattering situations and conventions that the playwright exposes about Nigeria. A few examples could be cited here and witticism can be observed at its most grotesque manifestations. Some of these are "Songs of the Lost Deposit", "Fairlyland Songs", "Song of Faraway Land", and most especially, the "Welcome to Midnight Hotel songs".

Midnight Hotel is adapted from George Feydeau's *L'hotel du Libre echange* (*Hotel of Free Exchange*). Osofisan has used the technique of comic opera to produce a bitter-sweet play that induces laughter and at the same time carries with it an acerbic message. His use of songs is not due to the fact that he is such a skylark always interested in mellifluous tunes but he uses the songs as comments on the main actions of the play as well as on the state of the Nigerian society. In *Midnight Hotel* as well as in

Who's Afraid of Solarin? Every incident/event, situation and character is grotesquely caricatured in Nigerian mannerisms (Awodiya, 1995:34).

Mirthless Amusement and *Morning Yet on Judgement Day*

Humour is supposed to be mirthful, merry and comic but according to its blurb *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* is a play "in the form of modern tragedy" which is neither extremely grisly nor extremely funny but a play which in its dramatic form as text and in performance, is nothing more than social anger channelled "into the mould of laughter". Right from the start, the text offers rapidly rich comic gestures of the Pinteresque or Beckettian mode but we soon see that the issue for discussion is serious.

Morning Yet on Judgement Day is a good example of meta-plays both in form (comic) and in content (serious but not that macabre). The play articulates the views of angry young men in Nigerian society. These young men are angry against religion, which to them, is a soul-deadening engagement. They are angry against a system that provides education without providing jobs. They are angry against a system that multiplies its educational institutions without a plan for an industrial base to absorb graduates from these institutions. They are angry against a political decision that believes in zoning key government appointments, a system that puts on quota all major and minor offices of government without regard to excellence, merit and eligibility. They are angry against a social policy where nepotism or the granting of sexual favours constitutes the ground for rendering any help to any person.

It is these frustrations with policies and polity that form the basis of the anger of the young men. The issue is a serious one which is treated in a comic style. The effect of it is that the readers/audience will laugh so that they may not cry. The issue discussed has a basic tragic idea but it is dramatized with a comic flair. One could attribute this technique of Hyginus Ekwuazi to his personal disposition towards creating humour. As for his style there is a deliberate distortion of borrowings from sources quite close to the reader to the extent that the perversity of the puns becomes humorous, even when their distinctions may border on blasphemy. At the end of reading or watching the play, *Morning Yet on Judgement Day*, the question could be asked on what is worth laughing at in the fate of young men who have become vestiges of a wasted generation? What's worth laughing about in young men who are preoccupied with finding their lost youth in gambling, smoking and drinking? In the way that Ekwuazi has presented the issue in a comic tone he seems to have re-defined comedy as a genre that could be

mirthless. The total experience of the play moves towards the dark comedy. The characters in the play are like the meta-fictional characters in modern drama (Schuleter, 1977) who are puzzled over their inability to detect an intelligent pattern in life and suffer the consequent anguish of a futile search for meaning.

The play opens with a situation in which a character, Jerry, lives in a world of illusions, hopes and dreams. He has put his money on a lottery and he is therefore dreaming of how to live big, should he win. The lottery ticket becomes a property to be jealously guarded because it is the open sesame to his paradise. Anytime Jerry is not thinking of the lottery ticket, he indulges in drink to kill boredom and to shore up hope and suppress frustration. Anytime he is in search of the ticket he could go to the most unthinkable places to search for it such as in "the mound of the Tampax tampon pads in dustbins".

A reminiscence of all the characters' life in the past as university undergraduates showed only traces of a mis-spent time. It showed a crazy time for idle speculations on idealism and revolutionary rhetoric. It showed a mindless sojourn in a beehive of foolish carnivals and a systematic mis-education of the mind in cant and rhetoric. When the characters recall all these, the memories are brought back with the gusto of a fun-maker. But the essence of the humour in this calls for a wry smile rather than explosive laughter because it shows the discrepancy between the idea of a university education and the reality of it; it shows the sense of wisdom or the lack of it in the proliferation of educational institutions in Nigeria along same old pattern and objective. The result is that, for a system that produces in large numbers graduates who are unemployed, the reader may not be surprised that, like Atagna (a character in the play), most of these youths would channel their energies into a new-found born-again evangelism (as is the vogue now in Nigeria), while characters like Okilo and Jerry would find solace in alcohol.

There are two ways in which the humour in the play could be identified and appreciated. The first is through the style in its beautifully written dialogue and diction, and its dramaturgical balance of the pun and the tragic trope. The other is through a devotion to the theatrics of the stage in play-acting, spectacle and distractions as in Movement 1 & II. The three Movements of the play have the disposition to be humorous and to be mirthless. In at least two instances in Movement I of the play, the stage directions give indications of a mirthless laugh as reactions to dialogue and diction.

Reading through the play one could well recount the pleasure derived from many jokes in the text. Many of these are twists and distortions from sources grafted into the dialogue from Lenin, from Shakespeare (Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar), from The Bible, and possibly from Wemer and Lotte Plez's God is No More and the deliberate twist or Parody of the U.N. Declaration on "The Rights of the Child". For instance, there is a stimulating and intellectually challenging joke on "being born out of luck" as against "being born out of wedlock".

Jerry: Have you ever had the feeling you were born out of luck and for no fault of yours?

Marry: Me? Born out of luck? You don't by any chance mean wedlock, do you?

Jerry: I mean l-u-c-k Born out of luck

Two things may be implied here; that Mary is born at the wrong time or that she is born out of wedlock which connotes that everything about her birth and life are of joint and unplanned. One waits eagerly for a resolution to the joke, as Jerry builds this up to the punch line as in:

You were born out of luck. No doubt about that. When independence came you were too young, much too young to benefit from it. And then came the war, the civil war, with all the opportunities in the army and the civil service but where were you, old son? On the wrong side of the fence. The return to civil rule, all those campaigns, all those elections: what opportunities did they not brio& with them? But as a Youth Corps man I could only vote not be voted for, or help in the electioneering campaigns. Again on the wrong side at the right time (*Morning Yet on Judgement Day*, p, 20-21).

In the same breath the reader needs to recount the racy recital of the inversion or the reversion of the U.N. Declaration of the Child (U.N. Declaration concerning the Rights of the Child) as jokes which are expressive of the social situation in which they occur. It is in the style ~ a juggler of ideas and words as in:

- The right to adequate malnutrition, hate and indifference
- The right to a useless education
- The right to no opportunity for play and recreation
- The right to a meaningless name and useless nationality

- The right to calculated contempt if handicapped
- The right to be brought up in a spirit of disorder and universal disharmony.

In the words of Mary it is a very bitter truth from a very embittered applicant (*Morning Yet on Judgement Day*, p. 30).

In this reversed idea of the U.N. Declaration Jerry becomes a tool in which Ekwuazi sees humour as a vehicle for resistance (Berger, 1989:20) (a) resistance on the part of the youth to a purposeless policy for their welfare, (b) resistance to a situation of constant perversion of social justice (c) resistance to a system that will make them lose faith in themselves. While this parody is amusing and arouses laughers, it poses a question as to whether the humour is directed to a society without a conscience.

In *Morning Yet on Judgement Day*, as it has been observed earlier out nothing by way of action really develops; instead, it is an argument that develops. And this is usual where there is the assembly of the unemployed and applicants. No action develops but an argument as to whether or not there is a God who doles out equal justice, equal opportunities, luck and chance. The argument usually develops from the blasphemous to the humorous, as in the contrast between Jerry and Atagna in their views on whether or not God is dead; as to whether or not the teachings of Karl Marx or that of Jesus Christ is revolutionary. The argument for and against these ideas is a consequence of despair and illusion harboured by each party. Jerry's appearance before an interview panel is just in reminiscences. His behaviours at the interview and the panellists' reaction to his demand for pity and concern are a consequence of the farce which the idea of an interview has become. Jerry's attempt to take advantage of Atagna's surviving an accident becomes an opportunity to institute a court action against a hospital in the hope that if he won the court case he could become rich. This is a general consequence of an opportunistic principle of many to make a fortune out of another man's misfortune. To all these ideas the characters find the actions of an all-knowing God contestable and thus demand that a new redistribution of luck; chance and opportunity be instituted on judgement day.

These ideas develop in Ekwuazi's mind into a script that has basic comic antics or gestures which good actors could employ for the purpose of arousing amusement. For instance, the acting out the university days and the Disciplinary Committee's decision on one of the lecturers who

was accused of malpractice was played out in the form of a kangaroo court characterized by nepotism and ethnic stereotyping that can be enjoyed more on the stage than in reading. Each of the professors on the committee spoke the English language with an accent that exposes their ethnic back-ground. The acting out of Jerry's experience before the interview panel is done as if a cartoonist were to draw the caricature of people in an interview panel as they ask questions that do not reflect their knowledge of protocols or interests in the issues at stake. They are rather concerned with factors that are totally irrelevant to the case such as sex, religion, ethnicity, and cultic/mafia attachment. Atagna's new-found rhetoric's of "Jesus saves!", "Jesus lives!", "Jesus loves!", "Jesus reigns!" were relayed in juxtaposition to his former lifestyle that was once soaked in the teachings of Marx, Mao Tse-t'ung (Mao Ze-dong), Che (Ernesto) Guevara and other revolutionary teachers.

Morning Yet on Judgement Day requires a director's touch in creating relevant lyrics that will bring out the humour in performance since none is built into the text, unlike in *Midnight Hotel*. The director as a creative artist is allowed in this regard to use' Songs and melody that could bring humorous effect to such a play because there is humour in music (Muller 1979:188-191). For instance, in the performance of the Royal Roots Production of *Morning Yet on Judgement Day* sometime in 1990, there were church tunes or church songs that Okilo and Jerry put in the most incongruous senses in the play. One of such tunes is the song, "On the way to Calvary". While the tune employed is a Church tune, the words were reversed to "On the way to beer parlour". Several church hymns or choruses were reworked and re-framed or borrowed for humorous effects, as many of Moses Olaiya's melodies are always re-framed for ironic effect, especially in his farcical play, *Omo Oloku*. The same may be said for Akinwumi Isola's *Abe Aabo*.

Conclusion

From the analysis and interpretation of the two texts discussed here it is deduced that two types of humour could be noticed, one grotesque and the other mirthless. Both of them urge us to take the study of humour seriously from four fronts.

1. That psychodynamic concept of humour tolerates amusement and laughter as intimately connected and that as human being we need humour to liberate us from the frustrations and suffering of everyday living. That the grotesque, as irony may be a realistic reaction to the world around us when

all fears are banished and we live in a strange world where we laugh so that we may not cry.

2. That the theory of humour accommodates some features of tragedy and the cynical tone of a satiric piece which could turn the humour to a mirthless amusement.
3. That social theory regards humour as an important social indicator of historical development and social change and that it is a style that deliberately sets out to maintain stable ethical and moral principle.
4. That the grotesque in art and literature should be studied as an ingenious commentary on the creative process of the author/artist.

From the content of both plays these various fronts are present. The purpose of the humorist is to enable us enjoy a good outing in the theatre or enjoy a literature text in reading. But behind the jokes, fun and bursting dialogue the humorist's concern is that the humour should act as a weapon for correction of socially unacceptable manners and situations. In the two plays considered here the result could be regarded as "Satirical grotesque" and "over-serious ridicule" of Nigeria. In Nigerian plays, reader are brought or may be brought to the level of defining serious laughter about the Nigerian situation, whether the humour is created with the hilarity of Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala) or the ironical laughter typical of a fun maker like Femi Osofisan or Hyginus Ekwuazi.

Works Cited

Adinoyi-Ojo, Onukaba (1996), "Midnight Hotel and its Carnavalesque World" in *Femi Osofisan: Interpretive Essays 1*. Muyiwa Awodiya (ed.), CBAC Lagos, p. 134.

Akinwumi, Isola (1983), *Abe Aabo*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Onibonje Press and Books Industries (Nig) Ltd.

Awodiya, Muyiwa (1995), *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Perspective*. Kraft Books Ltd., Ibadan.

Berger, Arthur A (1989), Review of *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control* Edited by C. Power and George E.C. Paton in *Journal of Communication* Vol. 39, No.4, p. 20.

Foot, Hugh (1991), "The Psychology of Humour and Laughter" in *Psychology and Social Issues*, Raymond Cochrane and Douglas Camoll (Ed.), London: The Falmer Press, p. 7

Koestler, Arthur: "why we laugh" *Dialogue* vol. 8 Nos. 3/4, 1975, p. 101.

Mercier's, V (1962), "Macabre and Grotesque Humour in Irish Tradition" in *The Irish Comic Tradition*, Oxford, pp. 48ff

Merrill, Reed B (1976), "The Grotesque as structure: Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife" *Criticism* Vol. XVIII No.4, 305-307

Mores, Elizabeth A (1982), "Henry James Byron and the Craft of Burlesque" in *Theatre Survey* Vol. XXIII, No.1, p. 55.

Muller, Hugh M (1979), "Humour in Music" in *Introduction to Music*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, pp. 188-191.

Osofisan, Femi (1992), *Playing Dangerously* an Inaugural Lecture at the University of Ibadan July 31, pages 36-41 of the lecture as published by Ibadan University Press are particularly relevant. Osofisan, Femi: "Reflections on Theatre practice in Contemporary Nigeria" *African Affairs* 97, p.86.

Schlueter, June (1998), *Metafictional Characters in Modern Drama* Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, Chapter 3

States, Bert O (1971), *Irony and Drama: A Poetic*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1971, p. 75.

Grotesque and Mirthless Humour in "Midnight Hotel" and Morning Yet on Judgement Day"

Zijderve1d, Anton C (1983), "The Sociology of Humour and Laughter", *Current Sociology*, Vol. 31 No. 3, November

*** All references to the two texts are from

(a) Femi Osofisan, *Midnight Hotel*, Evans Brothers, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1985.

(b) Hyginus Ekwuazi, *Morning Yet on Judgement Day*, Evans Brothers, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1987