Humour as an Effective Literary Device in Amu Djoleto’s *The Strange Man*

Asika, Ikechukwu Emmanuel  
Department of English  
Anambra State University, Igbariam  
Email: asikaiikechukwu@yahoo.com  
Phone number: +2348038679214  
&  
Eboh-Nzekwue Roselyn  
General Studies Department  
Federal College of Education, Asaba  
roseylnzukwue@gmail.com  
+2348037722375

Abstract

Literature is an avenue through which writers satirize and try to change their various societies for the betterment of mankind. It has become a formidable agent of change and reformation, a mirror with which our lives are reflected and corrections made all geared towards a harmonized and beautiful future. Techniques on the other hand, are tools which writers harness to project and pass the message of their works in any chosen dimension and style across to their readers. Humour is one of such techniques manipulated by writers to achieve varying effective purposes in their literary works. Humour entails the quality of a story, action or performance to elicit amusement and laughter. The use of humour has become an effective device which several writers manipulate to achieve a desired aim of writing. Humour which is often in the form of laughter is weaved in between stories by some writers, making their stories comical and ridiculous in one aspect but yet serious with vital and crucial subject matter on the other. The use of humour has become an important technique and style of writing worthy of serious discourse. This paper examined the use of humour as an effective literary device in Amu Djoleto’s *The Strange Man*. The study discovered that humour was part of the ingredients harnessed by the writer to tell his story in peculiar ways and achieve a desired pattern of structure and plot of the story. How the writer harnessed and manipulated the device of humour in shaping the story and how it played a vital role as a crucial technique that made the novel appealing, interesting and entertaining is the crux of the study.

**Keywords:** Humour, Device, Technique, Style, Fiction, Literature, Phenomenon,

Introduction
Literature as a mirror reflects society and writers and literary artists from time immemorial and in different climes around the globe reflect their societies in their literary works. In this regard, literature has continued to fulfill its own unique function in nation development. No society exists without its literature and no literature functions in isolation of its society. Ngugi wa Thiong’o in recognition of this fact expresses thus:

Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum. It is given impetus, shape, direction, and even area of concern by social, political, economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations. (16)

Thus, literature exists in society and is given its shape, direction, concern and thematic expositions by the socio-political, economic as well as religious situations in society. This is what Ngugi wa Thiong’o rightly maintains and literature ought to at all times reflect the actions, activities and situations of men and women in society in their quest to understand their world better and make more meaningful assessment. As Charles Nnolim posits:

Literature as art deploys language embellished with pleasurable accessories, to paraphrase Aristotle … and it is around the embellished use of language that the creative energy of the story deploys itself. And to invest the story with meaning, there must be some truth about life, something to chew over, some theme, some moral, some philosophy of life, and some metaphor of life that tugs at the edges of a symbol. As in all art, literature is useful, for as art, it is not a waste of time (3).

This places emphasis on literature as capable of carrying to the outside world, the truth about human existence which will in turn engineer a concrete and noticeable change in society. Literature does this by employing language which paints out the writer’s mind and points at the problems of society which the writer hopes through his writings to solve for a better society.

**Humour and Literature: A Brief Critical Survey**

The term humour derives from the humoural medicine of the ancient Greeks which taught that the balance of fluids in human body, known as humours, control human health and emotion. Humour is one of the distinct elements of literature. In the same vein, the phenomenon of humour is widely used in literature. It is applicable to all the genres of literature, in the sense that it can be used in drama as in comedy and even in
the novel. Humour is not a genre of literature, rather it is a substance which evokes laughter and fulfils certain functions in literature. It is a technique that helps literary writers to achieve certain literary effects. It has been present in different cultures and civilizations. Clearly, humour is a point of view in which the events of the world could be viewed in a funny way yet without masking the expression of the truth inherent in them. Things seen through the prism of humour seem different from things seen through the prism of seriousness. According to Iwuchukwu “humor is the feature of events presented in ways likely to induce laughter in various ways.” (5) Therefore, humor is the tendency of a particular cognitive experience to provide laughter and provide amusement.

Rowan Atkinson explains in his lecture in the documentary “funny business” that an object or person can become funny in three different ways; they are: by behaving in an unusual way, by being in an unusual place by being wrong size.” Also the “Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology” defines humor as “quality of action or speech which excites amusement (222).

Humor is the only way people can express their inconveniences. According to Raj Kishor Singh:

Humour means the quality of being funny. It refers to an ability to perceive and express a sense of the clever or amusing thing. Humour consists principally in the recognition of incongruities or peculiarities present in situation or character. It is used to illustrate some fundamental absurdity in human nature or conduct, and generally thought of as a kindly trait: a genial and mellow type of human quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech with the ability to express humour or amuse other people. (65)

In the views of William Coles:

Humor, in the main, is something that pleases us, a characteristic alone that can help writers improve the quality of their literary fictional stories…. For practicality, humor can be thought of as a spectrum; on one spectrum end is buffoonery, ridicule, slip-on-a-banana-peel sort of humor — primarily visual or auditory — and on the other end is humor based on ideas — often incongruous, new awareness, comparisons, mutually understood and agreed upon disparities. Irony resides in this more intellectual end of the spectrum, arguably the most useful humor concept for writers of literary fiction. Whatever we might identify as humor is always dependent on numerous inciting conditions and receptive states that are constantly changing. (1)

The critic went on to aver thus:
A dominant characteristic of humor is surprise, which is entwined in expectations and misdirection. Closely related are comparisons — a source of extensive academic literary analysis — that create incongruities and disparity from norms, and that are pleasurable. And timing is an encompassing and essential element. All this not only improves quality of story, but can improve memorable style characteristics too. Overall, for the writer, humor is a rich resource. There is always something new. Humor continuously changes as life progresses, and although any serious dissection of humor for better comprehension is immediately outdated, new humor elements constantly increase resources for a writer… (1)

According to Preisendans the worse events are given over to laughter because presenting misfortunes and evil deeds mobilize the comic. Everything can be brightened up with the help of comedy, as we have found out from our experience as well as from the theory. Jeni Mawtar quoting Alvin Schwartz, says thus:

Humour is a slippery subject’ and after researching the area, I’d have to agree. What makes one person laugh is quite different to another. What a person finds funny is influenced by many things: the historical period in which we live, cultural and social experiences, age, gender and their own unique personality… ‘Our personality, our mood, our particular hang-ups, all influence our response to humour, and the older we become and the more hung about with quirky beliefs or inhibitions or prejudices, the more individual our response… ‘Humour is the Cinderella in the world of children’s literature. Volumes are devoted to fantasy, to folklore and myth, even – belatedly – to poetry, but humour is lucky to rate even an occasional chapter or article …’ (277).

Humorous literature makes the reader laugh, the work may cause amusement as with comedy or absurdity. People of ages respond to humor. The majority of people are able to experience humor, i.e. to be amused, to laugh or smile at something funny and thus they are considered to have a sense of humor. The hypothetical person lacking a sense of humor would likely find the behaviour induced by humor to be inexplicably strange or even irrational. Though ultimately decided by personal taste, the extent to which an individual will find something humorous depends on a host of variables, including geographical locale, culture, and maturity, level of education, intelligence and context.

Most textbooks often discuss comedy in place of humour and humor generally is been regarded as comedy but study has shown that there is a thin line between them. Barnet Sylvan William Burto and William D. Cain opine that:

Comedy often shows the absurdity of ideals, the miser puritan, the health faddist and so on, are people of ideals, but their ideals are suffocating, the miser, for
example, treats everything in terms of money; the miser ideal caused him or her to renounce much of abundance and joy of life. He or she is in love but unwilling to support a spouse; or he or she has taken an aspirin tablet. If a thief accords the miser with your money or your life”, the miser will prefer to give up life and that is what in fact the miser has been doing all the while (1270).

The above is a typical example of the kind of characters that Amu Djoletop portrayed in *The Strange Man* among other novels where writers adopted humor as a technique to unveil the various messages and thematic issue in his work. Humour comprises two components, wit, mirth and laughter. Wit is the cognitive experience, mirth the emotional experience. Laughter often is equated with humor, but there are many instances of laughter (tickling, nervousness, etc) that clearly have little to do with humor. Similarly, there are many instances of humor that do not result in laughter (due to the mood of the appreciator, the social context etc) humor is a quality of perception that enables us to experience joy when faced with adversity. Clearly humor is a point of view in the world which can be a vital expression of the truths in the world and its extensiveness. Things seen through the prism of humor seem different from things seen through the prism of seriousness.

Many African writers incorporate humour in their literary works which scholars have studied in various researches. Chinua Achebe is an example of one of such writers. Research has shown that humour occupied a vital position in his novel, *Things Fall Apart*. According to Asika Ikechukwu:

> Humour is another technique employed by Achebe as a vital technique in the course of telling his story. The novel, *Things Fall Apart* is a tragedy and many incidents in the novel are tragic. The killing of twins which is part of the Igbo imperfect past is part of the tragic scenes recorded in the novel. We constantly hear the cries of these babies left to die in the evil forest as a result of ignorance and barbaric culture. Again, is the idea of dumping people with strange diseases in the evil forest because of the belief that they are cursed by the gods. These are people that would have received adequate medical treatment in our modern time and be well. Another is the marginalization and the Osu. Then, comes the killing of Ezeudu’s son and other tragic events in the novel. The greatest of these incidents is the killing Ikemefuna, as a result of a bizarre and barbaric culture…. (148)

The critic concludes thus:
But in all these tragic scenes cited in the novel, Achebe still found time to include so many humorous events and experiences which added a degree of comic relief to a reader. In the midst of the serious story told in \textit{Things Fall Apart}, Humour is one of the techniques employed by the writer to ease the tension in a reader and achieve a desired effect. A writer who combines humour effectively in a tragic story wins the appeal of the reader (148).

The first and most memorable instance of humour in the novel, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, is the story about a wealthy man who set before his guest a mound of foo-foo so high that they could not see one another. It took them till evening when the mound went down to recognize themselves and exchange greetings. The writer creates thus:

\begin{quote}
\ldots\text{The story was always told of a wealthy man who set before his guest an mound of foo-foo so high that those who sat on one side could not see what was happening on the others and it was not until late in the evening that one of them saw for the first time his in-law who had arrived during the course of the meal and had fallen to on the opposite side. It was only then that they exchanged greetings and shook hands over what was left of the food (29).}
\end{quote}

It is indeed comic and interesting on how a mound of foo-foo could be so huge to cover people from seeing one another eating on the same dish with him. One would wonder the soup pot where their hands went into at intervals to scoop soup. But the exaggeration was timely and needed in other to collaborate Achebe’s argument that the feast of the New Yam in Umuofia was about the best time of the year and no matter what one does, there will always be left over in his house for people always cook too much food in celebration that they could finish in one day.

Another episode that was humorous was Okonkwo’s praise of Obierika’s son, Maduka and his gallantry even as a child, which he compared to the foolishness and feminine nature of his own son Nwoye. Maduka had won honour in the wrestling area and Okonkwo praised him and ridiculed his son in these words:

\begin{quote}
‘He will do great things, Okonkwo said. ‘If I had a son like him I should be happy. I am worried about Nwoye, A bowl of pounded yams can throw him in a wrestling match… his two younger brothers are more promising. But I can tell you, Obierika, that my children do not resemble me. Where are the young suckers that will grow when the old banana tree dies? (52)
\end{quote}

The humour is in Okonkwo’s description of his son’s weakness to the exaggerated level that he could be thrown by a bowl of pounded yams. Again in his denials of his sons who he obviously gave birth to because he was afraid that they were not as valiant and brave as him. It was the same valiant nature and bravely that
destroyed and ruined him in the end. Another use of humour is in the mockery of a man called Dimaragana, who would not lend his knife for cutting of dog-meat because it was a taboo to do so rather the man will volunteer to use his teeth and cut the meat. The writer explains thus:

... Here we say he cannot climb the tall tree but he can tap the short ones standing on the ground. It is like Dimaragana, who would not lend his knife for cutting up dog meat because the dog was taboo to him, but offered his teeth (55).

This humour was created to mock the ozo titled men and their tradition that an ozo title holder cannot climb a palm tree. It is also a mockery of so many other unrefined and archaic traditions and cultures of the Igbo people that replete our time past which led to many deaths and tragic scenarios. Other examples abound in the novel.

From the foregoing, it is glaring that the use of humour has become an effective device which several writers manipulate to achieve a desired aim of writing. Humour which is often in the form of laughter is weaved in between stories by some writers, making their stories comical and ridiculous in one aspect but serious with vital and crucial subject matter on the other. Writers tell their stories from different points of view and perspectives and whatever view point a writer adopts in the end becomes his own style of writing, which will form the bedrock of criticism for the particular work of art. The use of humour has become an important technique and style of writing worthy of serious discourse. Humour has a way of appealing to the reader and helping to sink deep the message of the work into the depth of the reader’s mind. We often realize even in a tragic and serious story that writers still find time to recreate humorous ideas and events that have a way of easing the pains and seriousness which the particular work has already elicited. This could be in the form of jokes, funny actions and in most cases humour serves as an embellished satirical tool with which a writer hopes to point at the other sides of life which he obviously mocks and criticizes.

Humour, in other words has become an effective tool manipulated by some writers to lighten the mood of their stories and at the same time make a lasting and permanent impression of the thematic issues in the work. Humour satirizes, entertains, delights but above all, achieves the desired comic relief needed for smooth reading and assimilation of the message of any given work of art. Thus, an effective manipulation of this technique could increase the beauty and touch of excellence in any given work of art.

**Humour in Amu Djoleto’s The strange Man**

The novel, *The Strange Man* is a portrait of the early post-colonial Ghana, through which Amu Djoleto captures a society in transition, a society struggling and striving to measure up with several colonial legacies
and the slow but steady pace of the modern day civilization. The novel, which is a true representation of human actions in their daily struggle to survive against all odds, could be viewed from different dimensions. The novel is a story of growing from childhood innocence and youthful exuberance to adulthood; a life of maturity and experience. The novel captures young Mensa, his brother and friends among other characters growing up with their child-like minds and dreams but in the end they were forced to face the shocking realities of life as adults, as some of them watched their tall dreams and ambitions going down and there was nothing they could do about it. The novel is a depiction of man and his constant struggle to survive in his alien world and strange environment, thus the title “the strange man.” According to Asika Ikechukwu:

Amu Djoleto displayed his existentialist view of life, his ideas of the meaninglessness and nothingness of life. Existentialist philosophers believe that life is without meaning, form and order, rather it is a journey from nothing to nothingness, a journey of loneliness, misery, pains, disappointment and darkness. This philosophy is well lived out in Amu Djolte’s The Strange Man. The title ‘the strange man’ itself, one can argue, is symbolic of ‘the Strange World’ in which we live today. Man is Strange, and finds himself in a strange environment. He is strange in his own way and to his own path which he must embrace and follow to a journey of misery, loneliness and pain as existentialist writers believe. In the character we have studied we see how they lived out this existential view of life as they journeyed from nothing to the pit-hole of nothingness (17).

But irrespective of the seriousness of the message and ideas in the novel, the writer still finds ample time to recreate jokes and humorous events which in no small way project the beauty of his artistic creation. One can argue that it is on these humorous and comic ideas that the beauty of the novel lies. The writer recreated many funny events and episodes which often times are highly satirical. Humour became the backbone in achieving the desired plot of the novel. Irrespective of the seriousness and heavy import of the message of the novel, the tragic events of the story were made lighter and funny with several comic episodes presented below. The writer provided the readers much comic relief to aid their reading and distract them a while, and in the end elicited laughter that would help the reader come to terms with the tragic events of the story. The first instance of a hilarious scene was during the beginning on the novel. The novel began with the death of Tete, Mensa’s younger brother. He was described as an unscrupulous and dishonest business man, but nevertheless, he was a good man who had his own unique visions and ideas about how his world would work for him. He had gone on to acquire wealth and fortune that could help him give his children the best. He was prosperous at the beginning and was at the verge of achieving his tall and ambitious dreams when everything
crashed, leaving Tete a frustrated and a lonely man, a state he dwelt in until his unfortunate death. Irrespective of this tragedy, this scene was recreated during his burial, a discussion between Obeng, Tawia, Ofori, Okai and few other men who were engrossed in deep gossip while the burial was going on. The dialogue went thus:

… Akoto said: ‘I think Tete drank too much. This is the result! Obeng disagree: ‘I don’t think it was drinking really. I think he ate too much good food. ‘Tawia added rather blandly: ‘on top of the two he was a little too fond of women. He spent too much of his body on them. I’ve a theory that when you combine the three in excess, you’ve fast digging your grave.’ (5)

Ofori, aware of the implication of such indicting statement even on him, countered thus but with no effort to save Tete’s personality:

… I don’t believe such theories, I enjoy all three to the maximum and I am fit very fit indeed. I’ll quit at eight-five, no sooner, no later… anyhow, I’m not surprised Tete is gone. He was an unscrupulous, impossible storekeeper. I wonder if people do sell in heaven but if he has his way, he’s probably trying to sell trumpets to the angels by now at a smart profit. Do you know that when he ordered an orange for our chapel, he had a clear profit of twenty pounds? He got it through a discount he arranged and yet every church member, particularly the women, thought he was simply marvelous because of his enthusiasm; but he was a determined schemer, particularly in this kind of cheating, and got away with it, I’ sorry he’s dead, but strictly, I don’t think he should be allowed in heaven. I’m not so sure I’ll get there myself, anyway (6).

The men had continued to poke jokes on themselves and the character of Tete whose burial service was on. Such a situation was not right for full grown men who ought to be mourning the dead. An elderly man had tried to caution them but he received a dose of what he obviously may never have anticipated. The man cautioned them thus:

… ‘You people must behave like grown-ups. You’ve come to a funeral and instead of looking solemn and helping with the singing, you stand around chatting and laughing…’ ‘you away; Ofori snapped, indignant.’it will be too bad if people get to know you are happy that Tete is dead,’ The elder said with a grin.
way, whoever made you elder of the church? You’ve been carrying on with a choir girl, haven’t you? Akoto asked aggressively. ‘God heavens! I can sue you for this! The elder said in a voice of feigned anger, though he was upset by the unexpected revelation, at this time. ‘Oh no, Akoto said defiantly, ‘you can’t sue me. Your wife would get to know; you’d drag our church in the mud and the minister would ask for the case to be settled out of court! Now if you’re a man, try!’ (11)

The man went on thus:

‘The trouble with our church nowadays is people of your type, once a man is an official of the church, isn’t he ever do relax?’
‘Do you mean relax with a young girl, who is about to be confirmed?’ Akoto asked. The other burst out laughing and the elder quickly left, not wanting to be identified with these irresponsible men (11).

This was a joke in a burial, though funny, it had a lot of revealing insights about the true nature of the deceased, Tete and the elder of the church which ironically might present a greater number of the so-called church elders and their behind doors activities with women and church money. Another instance of the use of humour was the castration of the he-goat which led to its death eventually. Mensa and his friend hated the he-goat for some of the reasons outlined below:

… First, it worried too much the nanny-goat both during the day and in the night and gave he no rest. This they considered unreasonable. Secondly, the he-goat would spend all feeding time asking the nanny-goat to oblige; then it was dark and the boys went round to drive in the goat, it would be far away in the bush searching a bite before turning in. If the boy came home without it they would be in trouble… third the he-goat smelt too much. Whenever the boys were in the church, worshipping God, it would only foul the air they breathed but also make unpleasant noises at the nanny-goat and distract their attention from the almighty… fourth, the he-goat always led the gang of marauding goats to the farms near the village. If those goats ruined the crops, it was the boys who were held responsible (17).
The boys armed with these reasons had gone on to plan an attack on the he-goat. They had caught it and dealt with it thus:

Then Mensa took form his pocket a sharp knife. He quickly prised open the scrotum of the he-goat and removed one of the testes. The operation was short, swift but inexpert to the blood squirted fat and straight from the cut. The boys were totally taken back and without being aware of what they did next, let go to the he-goat had to leave the farm but this time slowly because it was now no more what it used to be (21).

This is sad but funny indeed as they castrated the he-goat. Their deed was only discovered by the bellman, Ata Qurash who was described as a terror to the children and a gossip of the highest order. He had turned gossip to money earning venture. He would go from house to house, breaking news and receiving gifts in return. When the he-goat was discovered dead later in the evening, the bell man had gone to break the news to Mensa’s father but instead of gifts he received the worst insult and revelation of his life that was to mark a turning point in his life.

Mensa’s mother finished him thus:

… Were you handed over to the police when you deserted the army when you were going to see real war in east Africa’ Mensa’s mother asked, very satisfied with the force and accuracy of her high-powered missile… the bell man realized that if he did not take his time, the boy’s mother would humiliate him to the amusement of those around. He was more interested in amusing people than in being the object of amusement… he was sad. Indeed, apart from trying, to soft-pedal, the woman had referred to a story in his life which people as a rule never spoke about. He thought everybody had either forgotten it or thought it did not matter. Now it had been mentioned at the wrong place (38)

The above scene is quite humorous and comic. The bell man in his bid to defend himself landed on more problems as Mensa’s mother told him about his impotence which has prevented any woman from living with him. The bell man had taken the matter to the church council and during the trial; he defended the accusation that he ran away from the army thus:
You would know? I had to see the army doctor because the pain in my ear was unbearable. Besides, the man said if I snored again, he would give me another water treatment. I wasn’t particularly scared though. The real reason was that I had farm here. I also had my mother to look after. Naturally, I had to come by ordinary transport to see to both. Didn’t it run always!’
Why then did you have to run away into the bush behind the cemetery when some policemen came to this village soon after your arrival here! You see I’ve no short memory!’Because I wanted to inspect an animal trap’ (52)

The bell man had gone on to defend himself thereby evoking more laughter and making caricature of himself. In his bid to prove that he could stay with a woman, he had gone on to marry another wife but the woman later left him when she could not conceive and his last attempt to live with a woman shattered him. Though he later pardoned Mensa’s mother and lent her money to complete Mensa’s school fees, he died a lonely man. Another comic instance worthy of note is the episode between Mensa and Torto. It happened while Mensa was in school. The boy unknowingly had said a lot of bad things about the head teacher, Mensa’s uncle and his wife and was later to realize that he was talking to the wrong person as the author writes:

… Mensa was quite for such me. He was thinking. He broke the silence and said:
‘The head teacher is my uncle, and his wife is my aunty. You’ve been saying wicked things about them. I’ll report you to them!
‘Come on have some plantain! It’s very good!’ Mensa accepted the plantain and ate it with relish. After Mensa had finished eating the lot, Torko said: Now I’m sure you won” report, will you?
‘of course, I will’
‘here, have some more plantain!’ Mensa accepted it and ate it … (106).

Torto had gone on to bribe Mensa with plantain until he began to cry. They later became friends. Another comic episode was when Mensa and the other boys he lives with in Mr. Lomo’s house had stolen some fishes from the fisherman in the river and came home with them. The teacher had congratulated them on their fishing prowess and the boys waited for a delicious meal that evening. To their dismay, Mr. Lomo cooked two pots of stew, one with fishes and the other with some rotten meats. The boys could not bear the heart
break and so they unanimously agreed to tell their uncle the truth about the fishes. Since he hated stealing with passion, he would obviously stop eating the fishes the moment he realized that they were stolen. They had sent Antawi who confessed their crime to their master. To their disappointment, the teacher replied:

Ah! My dear boy, that’s not stealing at all. It’s the practice at the beach. Any other thieving is forbidden and honest confession welcome. I’m thoroughly enjoying your fish it’s not a stole item. You may go and tell you friends they need not worry! (129)

That was how the boys slept with sadness as they were beaten to their own game. Other instances of humorous scenes abound.

There was the scene where the bell man was taken to hunt late in the night by his friend, a hunter as a result of the bell man’s continual boasts about his exploits in hunting business. The man had led him into the thick forest at the middle of the night and just the mere cry of a wild pig almost sent him to an untimely grave as he ran all around the forest, climbing trees and calling his ancestors to come to his rescue. He did not mention God’s name which portrayed his hypocritical nature. Another was Odot’s struggle to stop the man. The stone missed the man and landed at someone’s window. His entire attempt to stop the marriage failed and the marriage was later successful. Another was the daughter of Mensa’s teacher who was so generous to the boys when it comes to sleeping with them. Once, a senior boy had taken her to the bush to make love to her only to meet Mensa and his friends who were hiding away in the same hideout eating their meal. The girl had let the crippled senior boy and disappeared. In anger, the boy had threatened fire and brimstone on Mensa and his friends who were still new to the school. The girl’s father was also notorious with people’s wives and the boys could only revenge with his daughter. This was a feat Mensa accomplished, the author captures this thus:

One thing Mensa and another boy unwittingly succeeded in doing was to have his daughter as he had other women. They had groped their way blindly to it and had what they wanted but the girl felt pregnant. She was sure Mensa was to blame. Mensa was not sure whether he was but felt strongly that it could have been him anyway. Yet nobody asked him any questions and after three months the girl was
seriously ill, and when she recovered she no longer had to look forward to having a baby… (198)

The father had aborted the baby to avoid any scandal. These are part of the humorous events weaved into the novel to ease the tension of a reader on a novel that exemplifies an absurd and existential view of human life. The humor in the novel serves as an effective tool and technique harnessed by the writer to achieve his desired plot, strengthen his characters and brings them closer to life. Through the use of humour, the writer reinforced some of his major themes, and recreates a world that one could only understand as an alien environment and laugh many things off.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, we maintain that humour is an effective tool and a literary technique through which writers manipulate and strengthen the plot of their stories. Humour provides a backbone for telling a good story. Irrespective of the kind of literature a writer seeks to write, the introduction of humour as a device serves as a vehicle to aid the reader and to unveil some hidden parts of a character’s life as well as the story itself. A writer who successfully blends humour with serious actions succeeds in giving his work a spice of beauty and touch of excellence. As the humour delights and evokes laughter, so does the serious import of the story permeates into a reader where it would stay perhaps and instil the desired changes and reformation that obviously might have triggered a writer to tell his story. We have clearly demonstrated this with the study of the novel of one of the Ghanaian writers, Amu Djoleto. In Amu Djoleto’s *The Strange Man*, we witnessed how the writer incorporated many humorous incidence and actions to aid his readers and how these humorous situations provide a gateway for unveiling characters and unfolding some hidden textual meanings in a work of art. Irrespective of the serious message of the novel, the use of humour left much to be remembered and enjoyed as we are coarsed to make fun of man in his sheer struggle to survive and make sense of a world that is rather alien and frustrating to him. Humour, therefore is a veritable way to telling of a good story for we all can endure reproach but we cannot endure being laughed at. A writer who manipulates and blends this effectively wins the heart of his readers and demands their collective action for remedy.
Works Cited


