



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF FILM AND THEATRE ARTS STUDIES

DISSERTATION TOPIC

TECHNIQUE AND STYLE IN AFRICAN AND CONTEMPORARY COMEDY: CASE STUDY OF PARAFFIN; MUCHATO AND ZINO EPISODES, MR BEAN; ONE WEDDING AND A FUNERAL, AND THE EXAMINATION EPISODES, AND OSUOFIA IN LONDON PART 1 FILM.

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II

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Tendai and Virginia. H Manhanga who paid for my studies and who always believe in my abilities to earn a degree in Film and Theatre Arts.

III

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IV

ABSTRACT

This research interrogates the styles and techniques in comedy. It carries with it a comparative analysis between African and Contemporary comedy, through the case study of PARAFFIN; MUCHATO and ZINO EPISODES, MR BEAN; ONE WEDDING AND A FUNERAL and THE EXMINATION EPISODES , and lastly, OSUOFIA IN LONDON PART 1. The research further identifies techniques used in the African comedy together with their effects on the potrayal of characterisation, themes and issues.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

1.1

Research Aims.....	8
--------------------	---

1.2

Research Objectives.....	8
--------------------------	---

1.3

Research Question	8
-------------------------	---

1.4

Justification of the study	8
----------------------------------	---

1.5 Background of the study

1.5.1 History of Western Comedy	9
---------------------------------------	---

1.5.2

History of African Comedy.....	10
--------------------------------	----

1.5.3

History of Zimbabwean Comedy.....	11
-----------------------------------	----

1.6

Methodology	12
-------------------	----

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review.....	13
------------------------	----

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction.....	18
-----------------------	----

3.2

Research Method	18
-----------------------	----

3.3

Justification of using Qualitative Research Approach	18
--	----

VI

3.3.1

Justification of using Case Study 18

3.3.2

Justification of using Content Analysis..... 23

CHAPTER 4

Findings

4.1

Scriptwriting in Comedy 24

4.2

Characterisation in Comedy 25

4.3

Costume and Make-up in Comedy.....26

4.4

Setting in Comedy..... 28

4.5

Acting Techniques in Comedy 28

4.6

Themes in Comedy29

4.7

Camera Angles in Comedy32

4.8

Lighting Techniques in Comedy 33

4.9

Sound and Music in Comedy 33

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings..... 35

5.2

Areas of Further Study 38

Reference List..... 39

CHAPTER 1

TECHNIQUE AND STYLE IN AFRICAN AND CONTEMPORARY COMEDY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.

1.1 RESEARCH AIMS

- To interrogate technique and style in comedy.

1:2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify techniques used in African comedy.
- To evaluate the effects of identified techniques in portraying themes and issues
- To evaluate the effect of the techniques on characterisation.

1:3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the techniques used in African comedy?
- What are the effects of the techniques used on the depiction of themes?
- What are the effects on the techniques on characterisation?

1:4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Comedy is the most popular genre in Zimbabwe performing in arts influencing film, drama, dance, music and stand up comedy. Therefore, research on Zimbabwean comedy will enhance the quality of both Zimbabwean comedy and other genres in Zimbabwe.

1:5 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

1:5:1 History of Western Comedy

Around 335 BCE, Aristotle, in his work *Poetics*, states that comedy originated in phallic songs or processions and that, it began with improvisation. The progress of comedy passed unnoticed because it was not taken seriously. From 425 BCE, Aristophanes who is known as the 'Father of Comedy' and the 'Prince of Ancient Comedy', wrote 40 comedies, 11 of which survive. Aristotle also taught that comedy was generally positive for society since it brings forth happiness which is his final goal in any activity. It is in this case where Aristophanes (1996), states that comedy did not need to involve sexual humour. Instead, Aristotle divided comedy into three categories or sub-genres namely farce, romantic comedy and satire.

Dave Martin (2009) dates comedy back to the era of silent film in 1895 where it began to be shown in television programmes. Between 1895-1930 silent film comedy relied heavily on slapstick and burlesque humour. Burlesque is theatrical entertainment which includes comical sketches and parodies aimed at an adult audience due to the explicit scenes which included stripteases. Unlike burlesque, slapstick includes very energetic comical conventions like chases, collisions, and very often practical jokes. Comedy was taken to a new level with the addition of dialogue due to advanced technology. Verbal humour was now in the essence and slapstick/physical was used less and less. Verbal humour consisted of onscreen puns, innuendos, parodies etc. In the early 1960s the comedy became darker, and very serious in films; this included social commentary and spoofs. The silent era was also a pioneering one from a technical point of view that is three-point lighting, the close-up, long shot, panning and continuity editing. These comedies featured live music, had color or used film tinting, had acting techniques where they emphasized body language and facial expression.

Trav (2013) traces the art of slapstick comedy from its pre-cinema origins in the ancient

pantomime through its silent movie heyday in the teens and twenties, then on to talkies, television and internet. He also gives a keen critical appreciation for laugh-makers through the ages, from classical clowns like Joseph Grimaldi to comedy kings like Mark Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton and Rowan Atkinson, to more recent figures, from Red Skelton, Sid Caesar and Ernie Kovacs to Adam Sandler, Jim Carrey and Steve Carell all the way down to the teenagers on You. Tube whose backyard brings us full slapstick's beginnings.

In the 20th Century, radio and television broadened the access of comedians to the general public. Hollywood attracted many international talents like the British comics Peter Sellers, Dudley Moore and Sacha Baron Cohen, Canadian comics Dan Aykrod, Jim Carrey and Mike Myers, and the Australian comedian Paul Hogan. There are other centres of creative comic activities for instance the cinema of Hong Kong, Bollywood, and French farce. An influential force in the world of comedies has been the American television. American series like M.A.S.H, Seinfeld and The Simpsons, they achieved a massive number of followers in the world. British television comedy also remains influential, with quintessential works including Fawlty Towers, Monty Python, Dad's Army, Blackadder, and the Office. Rusten (2014) stated that the successive playwright developed more elaborate plots, treated mythological social, or political themes, and composed lyrics of great beauty.

1.5,2 History of African Comedy

According to Samyn (2013), African comedy emerged at the pass of colonial era in the early 20th Century. Before then African cinema was exclusively in the hands of Western filmmakers. African cinema comprises of North Africa which for example has the cinema of Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia. In West Africa, there is the cinema of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. In Central Africa, there is the cinema of Angola and Cameroon. In East Africa, there is the cinema of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Tanzania. Lastly ,in Southern Africa there is Namibia, South Africa, Botswana and Madagascar. In the French colonies Africans were prohibited by the 1934

Laval Decree from making films of their own. Portuguese colonies came to independence with no film production facilities at all. Cinema of Egypt is one of the oldest in the world. In 1935 the MISR film studio in Cairo began producing mostly formulaic comedies and musicals.

Writing on Nigeria, Izuu Nwanko (2015) states that Africans took off African comedy from practises of the West. The establishment of Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in 1959 made some comedians popular especially in Yoruba speaking areas for example Baba Sala, and thus came the birth of comedy on Nigerian comedy. The early in-road made by Baba Sala into television necessitated the emergence of comedy soap operas on Nigerian national television in the 1980s. The first comedy actors to hit the bar in 2003 in the first popular films were Nkem Owoh in 'Osuofia In London', Osita IHEME and Chinedu Ikedieze in '2 Rats' and 'Aki naUkwa', Ijeoma Angel Boniface, Okey Billy Boniface, Camilla Mberekpe, Okechukwu Obioha, Francis Odega and Chinwe Owoh all in 'Baby Police'.

1.5.3 History of Zimbabwean Comedy

As been said before by Samyn (2013), that African comedy emerged after the colonial era in the early 20th Century, so is Zimbabwe. According to Hungwe (1992), Zimbabwe's colonial power over the period 1890-79 originated with film making in Zimbabwe. It is after the Liberation War which gave Zimbabwe freedom to produce their own films and dramas in any genre of their choice to erase the mentality imposed by the whites' films which were part of the propaganda initiatives to their colonies. Of all the genres in Zimbabwe's productions, not much is said about comedy, but they took it to be one of the tools they use to express their freedom with humour.

The first dramas to be produced in Zimbabwe in the 1980s and 1990s are still the best comedies of all times, compared to the contemporary ones. These early comedies died and never resurrected. Examples are 'Mukadota Family' by Safirio Madzikatire; 'Timi naBhonzo' by Charles Mbanje and Chipo Tsuma; 'Paraffin' by Phillip Mushangwe. Then followed by 'Gringo' by Lazarus Boora. The death of these comedy dramas led to the birth of 'Kapfupi' in 2010 by Fred Manjalima.

However, comedy films seems to be the genre of the day in most of Zimbabwe's dramas, short films and soap opera. These are the likes of 'Salon', 'Special Class', 'Tete nemuroora'; to mention a few.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research

- Content Analysis of Textual Materials
- Case Study: Mr Bean (One Wedding and a Funeral EPISODE)

(The Examination EPISODE)

:Osuofia In London (PART 1)

: Paraffin (Muchato EPISODE)

(Zino EPISODE)

CHAPTER 2

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

If humour is absent, then it's not comedy, says Marszalek (2016). She goes on to mention how humour is the wider narrative world of comedy. Miyamoto (2019), comedies have plots that are often light-hearted and are written solely to make audiences laugh. They exaggerate the situation, language, action, relationships and characters with the purpose of amusement, humour and laughter. Making people laugh firstly requires the knowledge of the targeted audiences. Then it makes it easier to apply the necessary verbal humour to the intended viewers, be it jokes, language and dialogue. Martin (2009) states that the verbal humour consists of onscreen puns, innuendos and parodies. Adding on, Marszalek (2016) states that amusing language addresses the complexity of the creation and experience of humour in the comedy world. According to Cook and Bernick (1999), commentators consider gags, jokes and funny moments as fundamentals to all forms of comedy, creating the humour and laughter.

On that part Western comedy beats it, unlike African and Zimbabwean comedy which concentrate too much on dialogue at the expense of cinematic narration which then becomes a bore.

“Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be”, Hazlitt (1819). Thus, the intention of comedy is to evoke change in everything. Hazlitt (1819) goes on to mention the intention of comedy as to hold a mirror up to society to reflect its follies and vices in the result that they be mended. Bergson (1956) also illustrates the issue of comedy bringing in change as he states how laughter is intended to bring the comic character back into conformity with his society, in the attention due to life. All in all, comedy satirizes a given circumstance and therefore promotes change. It's unlikely that most African and Zimbabwean comedy's intention is not change, but rather laughter especially in making themselves be the comedy.

According to Karnick and Jenkins (2013), Hollywood 's approach has been a curious account of the impact of sound upon film comedy. Silent comedy is a comedy of 'personalities' and sound comedy is a 'literary' comedy centring around characters' relationships. According to Cohen and Brandy (2009) sound is objective and subjective, real and imaginary, physical and mental.

With most Western comedy the background music and sound plays a major role in evoking the humorous atmosphere; the exaggeration of sound on conventions like collisions and fights, live music and that of the background audiences spice up the mood of the audience for amusement. African comedy now adopts some of these techniques used by the Westerns, and they are slowly getting there. Apart from that Nigeria's use of timbre gives a unique sense of humour, which is excellent and in it's own exemplary of 'Osuofia in London'. Zimbabwean comedy too usually uses its own local dancehall music which is unique in its own and at times entertaining.

Eitzen (1997) states, the principal functions of editing, camera work, and mise-en-scene are to make the protagonists' embarrassing situation clear to the viewers and to depict the actions of characters in a way that seems to flow logically. He goes on to say that classical comedy uses stylistic techniques like expressionist lighting and elements borrowed from other entertainment like song and dance. Expressionist lighting is the use of lighting to illustrate different emotions and moods. Brandy and Cohen (2009) mention the basic figures of the semiotics of the cinema montage, camera movements, scale of the shots, relationships between the image and speech, sequences and other units found in both big and small films. The camera itself can add to the comedic experience, says Mcfee . He further mentions that snappy editing, sight gags, physical comedy, and funny dialogue are clearly important for landing jokes, but moving the camera can be just as useful . Mcfee gives out ways to move the camera for comedic effect which include:

- The Push In – this camera angle creates an intimate environment and it can literally get viewers closer to the action. It is not a zoom.
- The Pull Out – it is the opposite of push in. It gives an overall context to the scene and usually lets viewers know that what we're seeing right now isn't the whole picture.

- The Wait For It – this is where the camera is typically sitting still , allowing a joke to transpire over more time or with sudden change. Lots of times, we expect it to happen based on the camera’s lingering, like when a character goes offscreen but we know they were supposed to go the other way , or they come back to interact with that scene some more.
- The Comparison Shot – it relies on similar or nearly identical shots being shown at different points in the video or film, with their direct comparison creating the comedy.
- The Quick Zoom – it is like Push In, but keeps the camera stationary and uses a zoom instead. It creates a higher energy level and an immediacy that you don’t get with a slow movement. It is often used in western, kung fu movies, or action films. The payoff in comedy is that the quick zoom is used on funny characters and or their faces insignificant objects or to underwhelming results of funny dialogue.

Unlike Western comedy, African and Zimbabwean comedy do not necessarily use the above mentioned comedic camera techniques, editing and lighting because of lack of technical expertism and the knowledge of course. Lack of specialisation hinders most productions in Africa and Zimbabwe inclusive of comedy. Multi-tasking has lowered the film industry of Africa as a whole, for instance the camera operator is the editor and again is the sound operator. Its not like in Africa there are no experts in camera work, editing and lighting, they are there, but because of low-budget productions they are unaffordable to pay.

Ken Miyamoto (2019) talks of styles of comedy screenwriters can master. These include:

- Anecdotal Comedies – this is comedy which usually refers to personal comic stories that are true or partly exaggerated, for example **Paraffin** by Phillip Mushangwe and **Mr Bean** by Rowan Atkinson.
- Fish Out Of Water Comedies – this is where you take a character out of their usual surroundings and throw them into places that are unusual to them, and hilarity ensues. (The comedy is driven by the conflicts the character faces as they adapt to the new, unfamiliar, and uncomfortable surroundings.) It’s about finding the perfect world to collide, for example **Ousuofia In London** by Nkem Owoh.

- Dry Comedies – these are referred to as deadpan comedies that showcase humour that is delivered in an impassive, expressionless, matter-of-fact fashion. These type of comedies are directed to audiences that are looking for a more sophisticated branch of humour that doesn't rely on hijinks, jokes and physical humour. It requires a particular type of audience that is ready and willing to pay more attention and be more patient with the cinematic story's pacing.
- Black Comedies – are those that humour in otherwise disturbing subjects like death, violence, crime and war.
- Blended Genres – these contain a mixture of genres like romantic comedy, action comedy or even comedy that is blended with fantasy, science fiction, and crime genres as well.
- Slapstick Comedies – these are physical humour, easy laughs from comical conventions like chases, collisions and very often practical jokes.
- Sex Comedies – this type of comedy focus on sex, in terms of story situations and character goals. It's about the hilarious adventures the characters go on before, during and after sex that matters.

Notably western comedy comprises of all the above mentioned styles in their screenwriting. African and Zimbabwean comedy mainly focus on anecdotal and slapstick comedies. Western screenwriters research thoroughly before they write unlike African and Zimbabwean comedy whose main source is improvisation. Lack of comedic creative imagination reigns among the African comedy especially Zimbabwe, hence screen writing is not all it takes for comedy.

For Ogunleye (2003), language, setting, characterisation, costume and cultural element in film making makes the plot more understandable. He highlights how Nigeria combine language, setting and cultural elements in most of their productions bringing out the traditional and local sense, which is unique in its own. The use of their own pidgin English, rural set up and the African names of their characters, is also applied in their comedy like Osuofia in 'Osuofia In London', 'Aki naUkwa'. Thompson (2013) gives her own view that, unlike Ghana and Nigeria, Zimbabwe did not attempt to integrate film into their cultural policy because of use of english rather than shona and ndebele. She then mentions that

Zimbabwean television is indeed more foreign because of more imported programming than local content.

Most of the African film comedy productions embrace their culture through their traditional costume. Western comedies use their own language even in naming their characters like 'Mr Bean', and apply their day to day life revealing their own cultural identity, by so doing their productions accommodate both the locals and foreigners. Most of Zimbabwean comedy is in their native language, but at times do not reveal our real day to day life and at times over exaggerating it. The problem with Zimbabwe comedy is that they believe that giving their characters crazy names like 'Paraffin', 'Gringo' , 'Kapfupi', 'Vharazipi' is humorous where in this case they will be confirming that they are indeed barbaric before they act as such. In terms of costume and make up Western comedians usually dress appropriately, their comedy lies in the actions, body movement, facial expressions, gestures and speech rather than in their appearance.

Comedy tradition in Zimbabwe has a colonial legacy as the colonial system promoted inexpensive sub-genres of comedy which had negative socio-political implication on black people as they were portrayed as unintelligent, irresponsible people with no sense of proportion.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives an account of the research process. It provides with information of the methods I used to undertake this research as well as justification for the use of these methods. The research interrogates techniques and style in comedy.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research method or strategy is determined by the nature of the research questions and the subject being investigated, Denzin and Lincoln (2005). In this case I chose a qualitative research approach to give a comparative analysis of comedy between Africa and Contemporary. The use of textual content analysis and case study of the films, Mr Bean, Osuofia In London and Paraffin gives out the full explanation of the techniques and styles of comedy.

3.3 JUSTIFICATION OF USING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROCH

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research is described as a multifaceted research method involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to subject matter.

3.3.1 JUSTIFICATION OF USING CASE STUDY

The case study comprises of Mr Bean, a Western film using episodes from, One Wedding and a Funeral; and The examination, then from the African movies there is Osuofia In London Part 1 and for Zimbabwean films, there is Paraffin a drama, using episodes from Zino and Muchato. I chose these films because they bring out the essence of comedy together with the effects of these techniques on characterisation and themes.

3.3.1.1 Mr Bean movie series (1990-1995)

Mr Bean is an anecdotal style of a comedy which usually refers to personal comic stories that are true or partly exaggerated. Most of his comedy emerges from day to day activities but done comically with absurdity. Mr Bean's humour largely comes from his way of solving problems he faces, the solutions are at times absurd. Mr Bean's acting techniques emphasize body language and facial expressions. The character Mr Bean was played by Rowan Atkinson, in 1990-1995 for the Mr Bean series. In Mr Bean; One Wedding and a Funeral episode at 00:47, Bean notices that at the wedding he is the only one without a flower in his jacket front pocket and he plugs a piece from the flowers on decoration destroying the décor all together. Mr Bean is a slapstick type of comedy which has physical humor like chases, collisions and very often practical jokes.

On the same episode, at the wedding at 04:39 Bean is found waving and making funny gestures on camera during the wedding recording. At 02:19 where the alarm which Bean had brought as a present for the bride and the groom rings disrupting the ceremony, worse still it was wrapped. The lighting technique in the film is a Three-point lighting which is colourful and effectively evokes a happy mood, friendly and a colourful atmosphere which makes it easier to evoke humor. However, lighting links the character and the surroundings. The priest asks the weds to repeat after him as they give their vows and Bean is found repeating him, "I Daniel take you Kate..", when those next to him shut him up at 03:48.

In the same episode, One Wedding and a Funeral, at 04:03 Bean comically gestures and makes facial expressions as the groom says his vows, "to love and to hold, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us apart...". At 08:00, Mr Bean is at a funeral and the way Bean describes the dead man with the use of gestures, facial expressions and body language, to somebody next to him highlights the use of visual imagery. He described the man as a drunkard, heavy smoker and a violent person. Bean at 09:44 copies what a relative of the deceased did to his fellow relatives by kissing a woman and hugging a man as a way of consoling which he assumed everyone at the funeral was supposed to do. A lot of humour arouses at 09:58 as Mr Bean pose in for a selfie with the coffin. At 13:28 one of the camera techniques stated by McAfee, that is The Quick Zoom is

used at Bean's shocked look as he realizes that he has attended the wrong funeral. The effect of that technique stands to create a higher energy level and an immediacy that you don't get with a slow movement yielding a humorous image. There is also the use of euphemism at 14:22, where Bean happily arrives at the right funeral. He points at the coffin happily and relieved "that's him" as if he is seeing a celebrity which is contrary to the function which is saddening.

Physical humour is also portrayed in the episode of Mr Bean, The Examination. The scene at 01:23 evokes laughter at the way Bean locks his car with a padlock, and throws the keys at the back seat. At 07:22 the way he slides his body like a moving machine to copy the student next to him, was hilarious and the scene was simply a use of hyperbole, no one can move that way. Mr Bean uses facial expressions and gestures mostly to evoke laughter, for example the look on his face and how he panics, at 10:05 after the realization that he was answering the wrong paper when there is only 2 minutes left for the end of the exam. On the same episode as Bean is at the beach, at 12:23 he strategically removes his pants so that the man at the beach won't notice him removing them, only to realize after the struggle that the man was blind. On the same episode on Mr Bean, The Examination; Bean opens his eyes so widely so that he won't fall asleep in church, at 20:30. At 22:32 there is the use of slapstick where Bean stands twice in the church assuming the whole church would stand for the hymn, then when he sits the congregation stands. Bean comically mumbles along the hymn, but sings loudly and confidently at the chorus of the hymn where he knows, at 22:52.

3.3.1.2 OSUOFIA IN LONDON 1 (2003)

Osuofia In London Part 1 is an African film in Nigeria released in 2003. From Miyamoto (2019) list of styles of comedy, it is clear that this film is an example of Fish Out of Water Comedy where the character is taken out of their usual surroundings and placed in an unusual environment they are not used to. The character Osuofia was played by Nkem Owoh. In this case Osuofia a village man travels to London to claim the inheritance of his late rich brother Donatus in London. This is where most of the humor derives from as he tries to adapt and fit in the new surroundings. This film mainly centers on verbal humour even though they comically use certain facial impressions and body language. At 02:45 there is the use of

physical humour and exaggeration where Osuofia is being lifted by his four daughter so that he reaches the level he sees suitable to shoot an antelope for meat, which he missed. At 06:40 Osuofia and his wife argues, and there is the use of similes where Osuofia refers to his wife's waist as a bale of cloth unlike the time when she wasn't married to her she was slim like electric wire.

Another example of Osuofia's use of verbal humour, is at 09:09 where the men of the village threatened to report Osuofia to the chief for not paying taxes and his response was, "...why do you want to report to Igwe. Report to God instead, Igwe is too small." Osuofia comically uses facial impressions and gestures as he had a conversation with his family before he leaves for London at 24:14 where each of his daughter states what they want their father to bring them from London, the first daughter states that she wants cock shoe and a long European wig, the other make-ups, the other mini-skirt and the other English books. At 27:01 Osuofia comically tells his wife how he fears his daughters would go wild to the extend of even opening their legs for a monkey, with the exception of Nkechi who is intelligent and likes school. Osuofia's costume at 28:43 portrays him as a barbaric black man evoking laughter at the same time. At 43:00, Osuofia's facial expression seeing a white couple kissing in public is hilarious because in the African culture its a sacred thing to do publicly.

The fact that at 51:02 Osuofia is arrested in London for catching a pigeon is on its way funny comparing it to the African culture, its like a waste of time and unreasonable. At 1:00:25, Osuofia refers to the breakfast prepared by the chef as 'holy communion' because of its small quantity comparing to the kind of breakfast we Africans usually have. To Osuofia at 1:05:50 it wasn't appropriate for a black man to act the ways of the whites where he laughs at Ben Okafor saying, "Look at a fellow black man speaking funny." It is funny and saddening at the same time how blacks wants to be white and despising their fellow blacks, this is highlighted by Ben Okafor as he refers to Osuofia as a stubborn goat at 1:08:26 and at 1:08:40 where he says, "When I get annoyed I lose my British accent."

3.3.1.3 PARAFFIN (1995)

The Paraffin series is an anecdotal type of comedy which comically tackles societal issues. Most of Paraffin's comedy emerges from verbal humour and at times facial expressions and body language. The character Paraffin was played by Phillip Mushangwe. An issue brought about in the episode Muchato is the sweet and sour side of weddings. In Parrafin, Muchato episode, the use of visual imagery is applied where Paraffin comically refers to his son's ex-wife as a betrayer to Nduna, his son saying 'aka, ikaka kekumutorera imba nekumubhadharisa maintainance', at 02:11. The theme of the presentation of women is highlighted as the ones who opt or forces on to have a wedding for their personal gain. The presentation of women is also shown as betrayers and unfaithful to their spouses. At 02:35 Paraffin uses repetition, gestures and facial impressions as his other son asks for a chance to wed as Paraffin refuses because of what happened to Nduna... "chance yekuti vanhu vagoita experiment nevana vangu."

This episode highlights a theme of marriage where African parents consider bridal price as important than having a wedding. The above mentioned theme is comically portrayed at 10:12, where Paraffin tells his son that he will wed when he has grandkids. At 16:21 Stembeni's father describes his wife, Mai Stembeni as a controlling woman to the extent that every animal and insect respects her when he says, "...kana mapete epamba pano ane discipline, akakuona anokwira mudenga." on the same note there is the use of a hyperbole. It is hilarious how Paraffin tells his wife how he wishes there were BCG injections for adults for his sons who seem to be insane to him all because they want to wed, at 22:05. At 22:50 Paraffin and his wife quarrel over Kambion's health where he wants them to have Herpatitis B injection meant for kids to his grown up sons. Paraffin and his wife's quarrel raises a theme of conflict where Paraffin blames his wife for not taking their sons to the clinic to have Herpatitis B injections.

In Paraffin, Zino Part 1 episode there is the portrayal of human rights towards the patients and everyone in general. An emphasis of body language and facial expression is comically portrayed at 01:17 where Paraffin signals to his wife to give him money to add for her

medication for the toothache since his wasn't enough, taking it from her braa where she keeps her money. This episode reveals the unkind treatment which the nurses give to the patients, thereby portraying the theme of hypocrisy as they appear good but in reality they aren't. This is shown at 04:25 where the nurse gets annoyed by Paraffin who answers on behalf of his wife since she couldn't speak because of the toothache. Paraffin's response towards the nurse when she asked how long his wife has been having the toothache was somehow humorous accompanied with gestures and funny facial expressions, "two days and no sleep at night."

In Paraffin, Zino Part 2, there is verbal comedy when Paraffin was talking to the dentist in English at 01:05 to 01:24, describing his problem though he is not learned, "My wife has a pain tooth and I want you to remove,... I know the nurse and the security told you not to remove the tooth because they hate me!" At 04:22, the nurse angrily ask Paraffin, "Asi muneni baba imi?" and Paraffin's response was "Ndinewe, ndinewe ndokuziva...". This kind of response is humorous at some point. Nurses in this case were being portrayed as uncaring and unfeeling to the patient, whereas they are supposed to be caring and feeling for it is part of their job there comes the issue of human rights towards the patients.

3.3.2 JUSTIFICATION OF USING CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL MATERIALS

In this case I used downloads from online sources in form of articles, journals and books where I got access to from the computer lab. I also used hard copy books from the library. These textual materials enhanced my research since they had detailed information of the styles and techniques of comedy, in Western, African and Zimbabwean films. They too provide with definitions of each and every word useful in the comedic world art.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to interrogate the styles and techniques in comedy. In this case a comparative analysis is drawn between the African and Contemporary comedy. These styles and techniques are highlighted through plots, setting, props, characterisation, color, lighting, music and background sounds, scriptwriting, costume and make-up, themes, camera angles, acting and editing. This is explained through the case study of Mr Bean's episodes One Wedding and a Funeral, and The Examination; Osuofia In London; and Paraffin's episodes Muchato and Zino. There is also an addition of textual content from downloads from online sources and hard copy books from the library.

4.1 SCRIPTWRITING IN COMEDY

There are different types of scriptwriting styles a comedy screenwriter can master. According to Miyamoto (2019), comedies have plots that are often light-heartedened and are written to make the audiences laugh. The styles of comedy writing he mentioned include anecdotal comedies which refers to personal comic stories acted upon, a great example is that of Mr Bean, a Western comedy series and Paraffin, a Zimbabwean drama series. Another style of comedy is Fish Out Of Water comedies which takes a character out of their usual surroundings and placed in an unusual place to them for instance Osuofia In London, an African movie. Other styles include, Blended Genres like romantic comedy and action comedy, Dry Comedies, Slapstick Comedies which carries physical humour, easy laughs usually highlighted in Jim Carrey's films. Knowing what kind of comedy one wants to write gives room to the screen writer on what kind of comedy is expected. In Zimbabwe I've noted that a few screenwriters take note of the comedy writing styles which results in a mixture of comedy, hence end up losing targeted audience and the story line. In Mr Bean the comedy targets everyone basing on the style of the comedy written. Osuofio In London's

comedy and Paraffin targets older children from the age of twelve upwards because most of its comedy centres on verbal humour unlike cinematic actions that Mr Bean usually do.

It is in this case where the screenwriter writes his / her comedy with an intention towards the audiences. Bergson (1956) states that the purpose of comedy is laughter. He goes on to say that laughter is intended to bring the comic character back into conformity with his society in the attention due to life. In other words he meant comedy's intention is to bring change. Looking at Paraffin in Muchato episode, its intention was to evoke laughter at the same time bringing out the beauty and bad side of having weddings in Zimbabwe. In Paraffin, Zino episode, the episode comically brings out the services in the health care operations in clinics. The African film Osuofia In London, comically aims at comparing the African and Western culture, with a message of how one should embrace their own culture. In Mr Bean, the main intention is to make the audience laugh at the same time bringing solutions on certain problems. For instance in Mr Bean, One Wedding and A Funeral episode, Mr Bean managed to solve his problem having no flowers in front pocket of his suite jacket by plucking one from the flowers on decoration for the event. Another solution brought up by Mr Bean in The Examination episode are the strategies and tricks he did in order to copy another student, which actually worked even though he wrote the wrong exam.

4.2 CHARACTERISATION

Most of the Africans when it comes to the comedy in art, be it films, music, plays, stand-up comedies or even literature, they portray themselves as the comedy rather than producing comedy. It is in this case where they make fun of themselves other than creating fun. This then is marked by their characterisation where the character already appears absurd in appearance like their posture, height and complexion. In contemporary films the actors are normal, wait until they speak or act that's when the comedy strikes, for instance in Mr Bean's series, who would have imagined his absurdity hidden in that decent and formally dressed man. To a larger degree, it was the colonialists who influenced the Africans to think that they were inferior and dull to such an extent that the Africans convinced themselves they were shown by the way they interpret comedy in their own way. Okiremuete

(2004.p216) explains that not only do colonialist films deny Africans their individual identities and social values, as in almost every other aspect of the unequal Afro-European relationship, Africans are made victims of European psychic projections and fantasies. He goes on to say that Africans are cinematically represented as sexual perverts, cannibals, sadists, depots, idlers, indolent, gutless, timid, superstitious and **barbarous**.

4:3 COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

I've noted that with Africans, costume and make-up define their characters more especially in comedy. It is in this case where the characters dress in oddly, funny or crazy style. Of example is Paraffin who dresses in a good suite but with a funny wool hat as if he is crazy , then in Osuofia in London; Osuofia dresses in a suite but with a wool hat and socks on top of his trousers which made him look like a fool. This is unlike of Western comedy where in Mr Bean, Bean is formally and decently dressed making him look elegant and normal. In my own view comedy is not always supposed to be interpreted with costume and make-up, this is one of the technique the African comedy need to adapt. Nelmes (2007), costume is connected to characterisation which is the status and personality of the character for example Mr Bean and Paraffin wearing the same clothes frequently.



(a) *Fig 4:3:1 Paraffin from PARAFFIN SERIES' costume*



(b) Fig 4:3:2 Osuofia in OSUOFIA IN LONDON's costume



(c) Fig 4:3:3 Mr Bean in MR BEAN SERIES' costume

4:4 SETTING IN COMEDY

Setting is where the action takes place be it indoor or outdoor. They make the film understandable. In *Osuofia In London*, it is clear that Osuofia is from the village with its rural setting where it becomes it evokes an atmosphere of humour when he has to go to London, a city different from his usual surroundings, then it justifies why London is a mystery to him. *Mr Bean and Paraffin* shows personal comic stories which centres on change in the society thats why the film's setting is within the neighbourhood.

4:5 ACTING TECHNIQUES

The difference between the comedy in Africa and that of the Contemporary is that the African comedy centres mostly on verbal humour unlike the Contemporary comedy which centres more on cinematic humour. This means that Africans say the comedyor that they

focus on dialogues more and the Western comedy act the comedy. One of the disadvantages I've realised towards the notion of centering the comedy on saying it is that it accommodates a small number of audiences usually the adults since the youngsters are lured in by actions, then cinematic humour accommodates almost everyone and makes the plot understandable. At times saying it is a bore rather than watching it. An emphasis on body language and facial expressions are part of the acting techniques useful and important in the comedy world. African comedy acting techniques inclusively of Zimbabwe lack knowledge and training on voice, movement and posture which brings in the reason why the comedy isn't progressing. That is why our comedy is contrary to the Western's because actors are trained and taught how to give a performance levels of realism.

4:6 THEMES

In as much as the intention of comedy is humour, it also carries with it important issues that are satirized to bring change in the society or circumstances. Throughout the case study of Mr Bean, Osuofia In London and Paraffin I've gathered up a number of themes that are highlighted behind the comedy. These are Western education, African communism, religion, marriage, presentation of men, love and conflicts. I've noted that some of these themes occur both in African and Contemporary comedies studied above. They are further explained below:

4:6:1 Religion

This theme of religion is highlighted in the three films Paraffin Muchato episode, Mr Bean One Wedding and a Funeral episode together with The Examination episode and Osuofia in London Part 1. In Mr Bean, on The Examination episode at 16:00 the fact that Bean enters into the church to attend a service with other congregates, hymn singing with the melody of a keyboard and preaching illustrates the Western religion. The fact that at the wedding Bean attends a wedding on the episode One Wedding and a Funeral at 05:15, wedding ceremony done in the church, the presence of a priest and praying highlights the issue of religion practised by the Westerns that is Roman Catholic. However, Paraffin and Osuofia in London portray the African religion as the use of oracles and charms. This is shown in Paraffin on Muchato episode, at 18:50 where Stembeni's mother influences her daughter to go to witch

doctors that they may be given charms to have a successful wedding. Osuofia magically hits a white policeman in London with an oracle given to him by his father, meant to protect him when the police officer harrases him. This is highlighted on Osuofia in London Part 1 at 00:52:36.

4:6:2 Western Education

The issue of western education is of concern since its been portrayed in both the Contemporary and African comedy. Western education is considered to be civil, but the way I see it, it has affected most Africans in a negative way. This is highlighted in Osuofia in London, at 01:05:33 where Ben Okafor is an educated black Nigerian man, ‘Principal Equity Chambers’ Partner whose colonised by this western education where he sees himself as a white man in a black man skin proved by his British accent and the way he acts. However, this western education leaves a black man suffering from identity crisis, at 01:08:29 Ben Okafor mentions that when he gets angry he loses his British accent, instead speaks their pegeon English and I further quote, ‘ My cultivated, natural, English accent’, at 01:08:45. In Paraffin, Muchato episode at 01:01 denotes the fact that because one is educated they then want a wedding which is a disadvantage to the man when the couple divorce because there will be equal share of property together with paying maintainance.

Again on the Muchato episode on 16:54, Stembeni’s father brags of his daughter graduating in University and ought to get full bridal price simply because she has earned western education. At 02:14 in The Examination episode, an issue of western education is raised as Bean goes to write a Trigonometry exam reflecting his source of intelligence.

4:6:3 Marriage

Behind the studied comedies above there is an issue of marriage highlighted. In the episode Mr Bean, One Wedding and a Funeral at 00:03 where Bean attends a Daniel and Kate’s wedding which is a ceremony of tying a knot to marriage. On the same episode at 00:18 marriage is described by the Priest who was the marriage officer, I quote, “Marriage is a way of life, made holy by God and blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage is a sign of unity...”.The film Osuofia in London raises an issue of inter-racial

marriage at 01:19:39, where Osuofia wants to marry his brother's fiancée Samantha, a white woman. Paraffin in Muchato episode at 03:25 he refuses to let his son Kambion to have a wedding because paying a bridal price is marriage itself not weddings.

4:6:4 Conflicts

Every storyline carries a theme of conflict, simply to say there is no story built up without conflict. In Muchato, the conflict centres on wedding at 15:02 where Stembeni's father rebukes his wife for supporting the issue of wedding rather than him getting his full bride price. Bean causes havoc at the wedding to an extent where the groom accidentally punches the priest and the bride, at 05:50 in One Wedding and a Funeral. Osuofia quarrels with the village elders who had consulted him for not paying levies and chase them out with a gun, at 08:35 in Osuofia In London.

4:6:5 African Communism

African communism is a theme that shows how the Africans believe in sharing and being together as one. This theme is applicable to the African comedy inclusively of Zimbabwe. In Paraffin, Muchato episode the reason for paying bride price or lobola is simply to bring together two different families therefore creating a bond of relations. At 00:28:42 in Osuofia In London, African communism is shown when everyone in the village gathers excitedly around Osuofia to see him off to London. The fact that Osuofia promises to help his fellow villagers when he returns at 00:32:19, he promises to complete houses to those who are struggling to build houses, and he promises Madam Hemehe that when he returns she will no longer be selling palm wine but liquor.

4:6:6 Presentation of men

From the case study above men are presented as selfish. This is highlighted by Osuofia at 00:09:34 where he hides his food from a visitor because he didn't want to share his food. Again Osuofia's selfishness is portrayed at 01:19:39 as he wants to marry a white woman for prestige and community attention not considering his wife's feelings. Paraffin is portrayed as selfish in Muchato because he forcefully made decisions for his son, not to wed without considering his son's opinion of wanting to wed. Men are also presented as intelligent, looking at Paraffin in Zino where he comically manages to reveal how health government

workers indulge into corruption and scaring them along the way as he threatens to report them. Bean is portrayed as intelligent because of the solutions he exposes which are crazy but actually works, this is highlighted by the tricks he did in the examination room only to copy the student next to him, in The Examination episode. One Wedding and a Funeral episode expose Bean's intelligence at 00:51 where he plucks out a flower from the decor to put on him to match what the others were putting on. The tricks on how to remove trousers without normally removing it and without anyone noticing, was an element of intelligence on Bean's part on the episode The Examination at 11:08. It was intelligence that motivated Osuofia to refuse to sign the papers assumed to be his inheritance, the use of proverb by him in refusing to sign is an indicate of wisdom, "What's a bird's business with a toothbrush when it doesn't have teeth?"

4:7 CAMERA ANGLES IN COMEDY

McAfee stated some comedic camera techniques that filmmakers should be aware of.

These include:

4:7:1 The Push (Way too far) In

This technique brings the audience more closer and intimate to the action as the camera makes its way to the object to be presented, using the actual movement of the camera. this technique is highlighted at 13:28 on One Wedding and a Funeral episode, where Bean realises that he has attended the wrong funeral.

4:7:2 The Pull Out

This technique is the opposite of Push In as the camera moves out of its way giving a bigger of what the audience is seeing. In Osuofia in London there is the use of a slight Pull as Osuofia together with the other village elders is at the Igwe's place, for dispute settlement of his denial to pay levies or taxes.

4:7:3 The Wait For It

In this case the camera stands still , allowing a joke to pitch in. This is when the character goes off screen and something humorous would take place. At 13:29, in One Wedding and a Funeral episode the camera stands still as it pauses on tombstones, meanwhile Bean comically passes through hurriedly towards his car.

4:7:4 Quick Zoom

This camera technique is more like The Pull and The Push, but what differentiate it from them is that this technique keeps the camera stationery and uses either a zoom in or zoom out. This type of technique is highlighted in the episode One Wedding and a Funeral, at 13:25 where a quick zoom in on the men carrying a coffin to the funeral Bean is supposed to attend to.

4:7:5 The Camera Bump

It is in this case that the camera interacts with the subject for the joke. This technique is used as Osuofia is about to enter the limousine at the airport, at 35:38, where the camera moves closer to him in a bumpy motion.

However, from the above mentioned camera techniques Zimbabwe does not take note of them. I assume there is no camera creativity in Zimbabwe comedies probably because of lack of knowledge. Thompson (2013) mentions that Zimbabwe is unlike Ghana and Nigeria who put effort in uplifting and upgrading their film industry. According to Ogunleye (2003) video technology in Africa has proved to be exceptionally suitable for low-budget productions requiring minimum technical expertise. Most of Zimbabwean comedy comprises of long shots, panning, close-ups and established shot which lacks creativity until now where they vary their camera angles.

4:8 LIGHTING TECHNIQUES IN COMEDY

Nelmes (2007) illustrates how lighting has strong impact in cinema's visual design as it creates emotions, hence giving acting meaning. He further states that comedy has three-point lighting as comedy should be brightly lit with low contrasts to evoke the mood of

gaiety and it makes the audience comfortable. Both the Contemporary and the African comedy are brightly lit. Even though Zimbabwe lacks proper lighting equipment it really puts very much effort to use the natural light to comprehend with the kind of lighting they have and it comes out better, bright and colourful. Looking at the film Paraffin and the time it was produced, it has good lighting where Mr Bean has the best lighting because of the availability of the lighting equipment together with expertism.

4:9 SOUND AND MUSIC IN COMEDY

Brandy and Cohen (2009) states that sound is objective and subjective, real and imaginary, physical and mental. It is in this case where music and sound expose the cultural element where the African play their own kind of music that is the flute, timbre or drums showing its African culture. In Osuofia In London, all the scenes with Osuofia in the village the African drum beat echoes in the background which is unique and all the scenes of him in London, modern sound is of course the background sound. In Paraffin it has remained with its natural sound with no edits of music or background sound, thus excellent in its own way. Mr Bean is full of its Western and modern music and background sound that is fun and a little bit fast to create a humorous atmosphere as the comedy strikes. Again in this series, Mr Bean there are additional sounds of the live cheering and laughing crowd, which lure audience in the humour. However, the sound in the African comedy is fair even though it has the distraction of wind and other unnecessary sounds, but the Western sound is excellent with no sound distractions because of proper sound equipment.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to interrogate technique and style in comedy. This is where techniques used in both the Contemporary and African comedy were identified as well as giving a comparative analysis. However, an evaluation of the effects of these techniques is given on the part of African comedy in portraying characterisation, themes and issues.

5:1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- What are the techniques used in African Comedy?

Inasmuch as there are many techniques used in comedy, Africa uses few of them. For music and sound technique, Africa has its unique sounds that echoes in the background be it the African drum beat, flute and timbre. These sounds gives a picture of the originality of the African culture. In the film OSUOFIA IN LONDON at 02:45, the melodious drum beat sound plays along the background as Osuofia is in the bush with his daughters hunting. Whenever there are Osuofia's scenes in the village, African music plays along. Well, with the Zimbabwean series, PARAFFIN is different because it uses its natural sound that is the real atmosphere with no sound and music edits, which was perfect in its own way. When it comes to the sound technicals in Africa we still haven't reached that level that the Westerns have reached because of lack of proper sound equipment and expertism. This is why most of African films have echoes and distractions like the wind blows sounds recorded together with the vocals becomes noise in the ear of the audience.

When it comes to camera angles techniques, Africa is far much behind since it doesn't apply much of these. Apart from the comedy camera angles for instance, The Pull Out, The Push In, The Camera Bump and The Quick Zoom, Africa opts for those normal shots the likes of panning, long shots, established shots and close-ups used in many genres. At least in

OSUOFIA IN LONDON, there is the use of The Camera Bump technique, at 35:38 where the camera moves closer to Osuofia in a bumpy motion on his way to enter the limousine. Again in the same film, at 11:45 , The Pull Out camera technique is used to show the village elders and the Chief settling disputes in the case that Osuofia had refused to pay levies.

Another technique used in African comedy is lighting. As mentioned earlier by Nelmes (2007) that lighting is important in the cinema visual design as it creates emotions. That is where it was mentioned that comedy movies use a three key lighting to give a brighter and colourful picture. However, in the case of the African comedy because of the lack of proper they use natural light that is the sunlight to comprehend with the camera light, though it comes out nicely, but not always. Times have changed now, some African comedies now contribute of the three key lighting with low contrasts bringing in the brightness that a comedy movie needs.

Lastly, the acting technique is also used in Africa. It is in this case that the actors are supposed to express emotions that are interpreted by the body language, facial expressions and voice. In Africa there is talent in acting but is never nurtured. Most of African comedy focuses more on verbal humour other than a cinematic humour which the vast number of audiences opt for. However, in OSUOFIO IN LONDON the director nailed it to bring out the best acting, PARAFFIN too isn't despicable. What lacks in the African comedy is knowledge, training and passion.

- What are the effects on the techniques on characterisation?

Firstly acting techniques effectively helps in terms of characterisation. This is where there will be an emphasis on body language, facial expressions and voice. It is clear to classify Osuofia as a comedic character because of his voice, its projection, the tone and language he uses has verbal humour in it. This is of example at 27:01 where Osuofia tells his wife how he fears the way their daughters think as foolish, eyes coming to the back of the head, such that they can even open their legs for a monkey. In this case the voice of an actor can decide

whether the character is going to be the bad guy or the good guy, meaning to say acting techniques have got an impact on characterisation.

The sound and music techniques also have an impact when it comes to characterisation. Some background sound can give an anticipation of what the character is about to do or if the character is doing something bad, it then sends a signal to the audience what type of a person the character is. For instance, the background sound of beating drums when Osuofia was chasing away the men who wanted to collect levy from him reveals how carefree and bold Osuofia is. It is always the fact that when the sound suddenly turns mute or silent then something important is about to be said or happen.

Lighting gives a better impression of brighter things to come for the character on board. This is because of the kind of lighting used it creates a comfortable and happy impression for the character. Even if the characters satirizes societal issues the bright lighting then provides a charitable attitude at the same time highlighting the need for change in a comic frame. It will be acceptable to the intended audiences. In PARAFFIN, ZINO he highlights the bad attitude of health workers to the patients, hence the need to know their right in a comic manner but instead its a point to take note that patients needs to know their rights.

- What are the effects of techniques on the depiction of themes?

These techniques have their own effects on the depiction of themes. This is highlighted with the sound and music technique. The theme of African Communism is better accompanied by the African drum beating and timbre sound which cements the fact that Africans are proud of themselves and are united, hence they love their black identity so the use of their very own use of African music melody. This is highlighted in OSUOFIA IN LONDON where the whole village gathered happily for Osuofia's farewell to London, at 00:28:42. The theme of African communism is also highlighted through the lighting technique. The fact that when it comes to lighting, the Africans usually use natural light from the sun with camera

light further proves how transparency the African unity and identity is exposed. The use of the camera angles, the pull out technique gives a bigger picture of the whole cinematic view that Africans are united.

The theme of religion can also be shown through the sound and music technique. The fact that a horrific sound echoes in the background when Osuofia uses the oracle to hit the white policeman, expose the African Traditional Religion which is uncomfortable, hence the scary sound, at 00:52:36.

5:2 AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

For further study, The Comedy in Zimbabwe Art Industry, would be a viable turn on.

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