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Humour in Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist*

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Humour in Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts in English**

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Yagya Prasad Sigdel has completed this thesis “Humour in Anne Tyler’s *The Accidental Tourist*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from March 2011 to November 2011. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva-voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Humour in Anne Tyler’s *The Accidental Tourist*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Yagya Prasad Sigdel, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Anne Tyler creates humorous characters to reflect the historical context of American society of the 1980s such as homicide and divorce. The attitude of divorce in the characters, their behaviors, their unusual conversation, personification of dog and communication problems enforce the author's motif to produce laughter. Even in the tragic ongoing behaviour of the characters, Tyler seems successful to arouse humour, thereby causing comic reaction in the audience.

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I. Introduction

The main aim of Anne Tyler's novel *The Accidental Tourist* is to arouse laughter in the readers by creating comic situations through her characters. The attitude that allows human to make jokes and find things comic is called humour or whimsical manner. Anne Tyler attempts to comment on the manners as well as the perception of the 1980s American contemporary society in her novel with a better use of humour. To fulfill her purpose, she reflects on the historical context of American society of the 1980s such as homicide and divorce; she has used humour to explore them. Though her motif seems to make her readers laugh but the primary motif is to correct the society. As her every characters are humorous throughout the novel, she becomes successful to meet her goal.

The Accidental Tourist focuses on the complexities of family relationships. In the story, middle-aged travel writer Macon Leary finds him alone and miserable after his son is murdered and his wife leaves him, Macon cuts himself off from the rest of the world. As a result, he realizes that he is in danger of becoming "a dried up kernel of a man that nothing real penetrates"(1). During the course of the novel, however, Macon confronts his suffering and carves out a new life for himself with the help of an energetic and eccentric young woman and her son. Tyler's intermingling of comedy and tragedy results in a bittersweet tale of loss and recovery.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to look the novel from the point view of humour and its associates like irony, satire and so on. Humour cannot be discussed without it associates. Along with humour, satire seems in the novel to be the purpose to expose the domestic and social life of American society of 1980s. Humour seems to be the tool to comment on the absurdities of the American society and culture. The main purpose of the study is reading humour in the novel. The other elements

associated with humour just help this writing explain events and situations in the text. She has shown the American society and culture in a humorous way by focusing on the increasing rate of divorce and homicide. According to the United State Bureau of the Census, the teenage homicide rate soared 169 percent between 1984 and 1993. Studies conducted on this increase conclude that the crack cocaine epidemic and easy access to firearms were to blame. These sobering statistics helped to create an atmosphere of fear in the 1980s, when crime became a major concern for American public, Tyler, focus this fear of crime through her character Macon, who at the beginning of the novel, is grieving the loss of his son, Ethan. As Ethan was eating lunch at a fast food restaurant, a teenager entered and randomly executed Ethan. After the murder of Ethan, as a result, Macon was given divorce by his wife Sarah Leary because he has not been a comfort to her since the death of their son Ethan and he withdrew from the world he feared.

In the 1980s, the divorced rate of adults increased in the American society. The primary cause was the divorce laws, first adopted in California in 1969 the percentage of divorced American over eighteen years of age climbed from 3 percent to 9 percent. As a result a new term emerged in the American history “the dysfunctional family.” Dysfunctional family means breakdown of relationships between family members. Dysfunction in a family results from serious crisis such as divorce, sexual abuse, alcoholism or infidelity. Unexpected events like the death of a family member or loss of a job can trigger a family crisis. As a result, members often assign blame, fail to communicate with each other, experience excessive anger and shut themselves off from the rest of the family as Macon and Sarah.

The high divorce rate and incidents of dysfunction redefined the American family in the 1980s. As the traditional family unit broke down, new families emerged

and more flexible definition was created. Families now could consist of two parents and their children, a couple who decided to have no children, a single parent and his or her children, a parent and stepparent and their children, or grandparents and their grandchildren. Children and their foster parents were also considered to be a family unit.

In *The Accidental Tourist*, Tyler reflects the changing configurations of the American family as she chronicles the demise of several such traditional families. Yet she also invents some nontraditional ones as a result. Tyler focuses the narrative in this novel more on Macon's struggles with family life rather than where the family resides. However, she does situate the novel in its historical moment. Through her characterization of Macon, Tyler reflects the paranoia over increasing crime rates in the 1980s, when the novel was written and published. The novel also illustrates the decades growing concern with dysfunctional family and its causes and effects. Finally, Tyler explores changing female characters in the novel are involved or want to involve in a marital or family relationship. After all, the Leary man experience failed marriages, they recreates the family of their childhood when they move back in with Rose. Macon and Muriel reconstruct a family after both of their marriage end in divorce with the help of dog called Edward. Edward is the most funniest and memorable character of the novel. The main causes to meet at the Meow Bow where Muriel works was the dog, Edward. Due to his erratic behavior to Rose, Macon has to hire Muriel to train him. Finally, Edward helps Macon to keep relationships with Muriel and her son, Alexander. Thus, Tyler's study of the dynamics of family relationships serves as an apt reflection of the cultural climate of America in the 1980s.

Tyler's characters are ordinary people which reflects the ordinary life of that time and most of the characters suffers from the family relationships which ends in divorce and we feel pity for them who suffers from dysfunctional family. She takes the raw materials of ordinary life and gives the form of novel when we come across the novel we find ourselves suffering but not in reality. In her novel, there is a good combination of humour and pathos which touches our heart. Not only human characters are humorous but animal too is humorous such as Macon's dog Edward is humorous and the most loveable dog within memory. Thus, her novel is the mixture of comedy and tragedy. In *The Accidental Tourist* the story is full of sorrow such as connection and disconnection and homicide but it contains comic scenes- one involving a dog, a cat and a clothes dryer, another thanks giving turkey, yet another a Christmas dinner- that explode with joy.

At the end of the novel, Macon faces painful choices whether to choose his wife Sarah or his new girlfriend Muriel. But he chooses his new girl friend rather than his ex-wife Sarah. He has been giving new connections with himself and with others.

The central theme of Tyler's fiction is how people affect each other, how the lives of other alters our own. As her previous novels, *The Accidental Tourist* is filled with connections and disconnections, with the exaltation and heartbreaking that people bring to each other, she knows that it is true people need each other, it is equally true "that people could, in fact, be used up-could use each other up, could be of no further help to each other and may be even do harm to each other" (Yardley 113). The novel is filled as well with the knowledge that life leaves no one unscarred, that to live is to accept one's scars and make the best of them and to accept as well the scars that other people bear.

Thus, Tyler has planted her fiction in the hard soil of the world we all know; *The Accidental Tourist* cuts so close to the bone that it leaves one aching with pleasure and pain.

Joseph C. Voelker focuses on family relationships in Tyler's novels. He finds the characters in *The Accidental Tourist*, to be in a utopian emotional state, where they experience:

sickness for home (longing, nostalgia) but also sickness of it (the need to escape from the invasiveness of family) and sickness from it (the psychic wounds that human beings inevitably carry as a result of having had to grow up as children in families). (16)

Anne Tyler's fiction is compared to John Updike's because both writers treat domestic theme. They center their narratives on family, focusing on the household, the quotidian and the requirements of the inner circle. In John Updike's *Rabbit Series* (1960-1990) we see the recurrent image of the biological outsider, the missing member who cannot be let in because she does not hold full membership, only the fragile claim, if she close to make it, of illegitimate child, half sister, stepdaughter. Similarly, in her fiction too we see splitting off from marital relationships of a family of origin.

In the essay "Still Just Writing", Anne Tyler comments on her unusual characters: "People have always seemed funny and strange to me" (12). In a letter to dated November 24, 1991, she clarifies what she means in describing people that way: "I think of 'funny and strange' as wonderful traits, which always make me feel hopeful when I spot them"(12). Some reviewers have faulted Tyler, however, for exaggerating her characters to bizarre or eccentric proportions. For example, in Edward-Ethan's dog, when Sarah leaves Macon, it is the Edward who helps to keep

the relationship with Muriel and Macon mother Alicia Leary, a giddy young war widow, when she remarried, she sent her children to live with their grandparents in Baltimore and saw them rarely after that. However, other critics, Robert Towers, Joseph Mathewson, Wallace Stegner and Alice Hall Petry specifically, have compared her characterization to that of Charles Dickens. Wallace Stegner writes that Tyler's characters, "constitute of a Dickensian gallery of oddballs, innocents, obsessive, erratic, incompetents and plain Joes and Janes, all see the world a little skewed, but their author sees them with such precision and presents them with such amusement and lack of malice that they come off the page as exhilaratingly human" (14). Tyler herself has responded to such criticism by saying, "I write about those off beats characters and that blend of laughter and tears because in my experience, that's what real life consists of" (Petry, *Understanding* 6).

Tyler has a way of portraying ordinary life ordinary people at their best and worst. She shows people with basic human faults, struggling to endure in a sometimes unfair, sometimes insane world attempting to work out the problems in relationships and communication. Her novels transcend the ordinary plots and characters found in so many popular writers' works and in her humour we see more than comic situations designed merely to make us laugh. Tyler's humour accomplishes what George Meredith specifies as the goal of true comedy: it awakens "thoughtful laughter", forcing us to take a closer look at ourselves and our relationships with others (47).

Tyler's own description of her writing as a "blend of laughter and tears" seems especially appropriate as tragedy and comedy are indisputably linked in her stories. She also comments in her letter: "I can't think of any tragic situation in real life that hasn't shown a glimmer comedy too" (12). The American literary imagination has from its earliest days been at least as much comic in nature as tragic". Several critics

have recognized the significance of the juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy in Tyler's work, yet another similarity to Dickens: Peter S. Prescott describes *The Accidental Tourist* as a "delicate balance of comedy and pathos" (117); Jonathan Yardley comments that the same novel "leaves one aching with pleasure and pain" (122); and Benjamin DeMott compliments Tyler's "mastery of grave as well as comic tones" (114).

Certainly, human relationships hold the potential for both comedy and tragedy and Tyler often places her readers on that thin line between two. As Regina Barreca points out in her book on women's strategic use of humour, "often women's humour deals with those subjects traditionally reserved for tragedy: life and death, love and hate, connection and abandonment" (31). Rubin remarks that "it is remarkable how comparatively little attention has been paid to American humour and to the comic imagination in general, by those who have chronicled and interpreted American literature" (4). This is certainly true of Tyler's canon. Although Tyler's humour has been praised briefly in reviews and essays on her work, its full significance has been virtually ignored. In the introduction to his book of essays, *The Fiction of Anne Tyler*, Stephens remarks: Tyler's comic sensibility and the important roles humour and irony play in her fiction... have only begun to be investigated critically: the sources of her humour and its thematic and strutting functions in her work clearly merit fuller attention" (xi). Alice Hall Petry concurs in the introduction to her book of essays, commenting that "an astute appreciation of Tyler's subtle, ironic humour... too often is lacking in commentaries on her work" (*Critical Essays* 8).

To understand fully many of Tyler's ideas, it is necessary to examine how and why she uses humour. Humour is especially a key in analyzing one of major themes: missed connections. The idea of "connecting" is crucial to Tyler's canon and one that

is potentially either tragic or comic. In commenting on the similarity of Tyler to another Southern writer, Carson McCullers, Petry explains, “Tyler seems receptive to McCullers’ dictum that we must learn to ‘connect’ with one another, that love is one of the few defenses we have against a world that seems antagonistic. It is communication that makes us human, that sets us apart from other living creatures. It is towards a strong sense of both selfhood and freedom” (*Understanding* 12).

Communication that brings people together and ironically and tragically, it is what often drives people apart. Very often Tyler uses humour to illustrate the lack of communication that is the source of much of this tragedy/comedy in her novels and in modern society. Tyler herself comments “[M]is-communication is one of the situations that most often lets characters say something funny” (Letter12), forcing us to laugh at our clumsy attempts to connect with each other. Since much of human communication is verbal, words themselves- mis-spoken, misunderstood and mis-analyzed form the basis for a great deal of the humour of miscommunication.

Petry says that Tyler’s first two novels are “implied commentaries on the lack of thought or feeling underlying what generally, passes for communication” (36). This description, in fact, fits her entire canon. Lack of communication in relationships is a common yet grim problem, but Tyler provokes our laughter at this human failing. Tyler, however, claims that such humour is unplanned in her work rather than a consciously developed theme:

I never plan humour in my writing (and would be suspicious of any I did plan). What usually happens is, I get a patch of dialogue rolling to the point where the characters seem to take over, and then one of them will say something that catches me completely by surprise and makes me smile. (Letter14)

If George Meredith is right that “the test of true comedy is that it shall awaken thoughtful laughter,” surely Anne Tyler is a truly comic novelist who opens our eyes to the tragic yet comic truth of our persistent but unsuccessful attempts to communicate with each other (102). Regina Barreca writes that “laughing together is as close as you can get to a hug without touching,” so perhaps even if words fail, laughter can provide the needed connection (105).

II. Humour in *The Accidental Tourist*

Humour means to arouse laughter or to create comic situations. The origin of the word 'humour' is Latin, which is used for "liquid", "fluid" or "moisture".

In early western physiology, one of the four fluids of the body that were thought to determine a person's temperament and features, when the four humorous (fluids) of the body (yellow bile, black bile, blood and phlegm) were improper proportion. When one fluid exceeded its normal amount, then disproportion occurred. These four fluids are to remain in balance otherwise the normal temperature of a person happens to be misbalanced.

It was believed that the individuals in whom this disproportion occurred would be in a choleric humour if yellow bile were predominant. There would be melancholy humour if blood was predominated and phlegmatic humour if phlegm was predominant. Whatever humour is predominated the lack of balance indicated a deviation from normal, an excess that requires correction.

As far back as Plato and Aristotle, they took laughter as a proper corrective of excessive. When we laugh, there arises an excessive of one element. The object of humour is to create laughter to satirize the event or situation. Humour is an artistic device to correct one's excessiveness and to ridicule upon an incident and situation. The person who possessed an excess of any humour became humorist.

The New Encyclopedia of Britannica defines humour as "the only form of communication in which a stimulus on a high level of complexity produces a stereotyped predictable response on the psychological reflex level" (20: 682). It means the response can be used as an indicator for the presence of the illusive quality that is called humour. The study of humour provides clues for the study of creativity in general.

Satire is activated through humour. In humour, both the creation of the subtle joke and his secretive act of perceiving the joke involves the delightful mental movement of a sudden leap from one plane or associative context to another.

An example of a masochist is taken for the humorous state. A masochist is a person who likes a cold shower in the morning so he takes a hot one. It is a twisted matter. One does not believe that the masochist takes his hot shower as a punishment: he only pretends to be believed.

There is a bewildering variety of moods involved indifferent forms of humour including mixed or contradictory feelings. In the subtler types of humour, the aggressive tendency may be so faint that only careful analysis will detect it, like the presence of salt in a well-prepared dish.

In Aristotle's view, laughter was intimately related to ugliness and debasement. Cicero held that the province of the ridiculous lay in a certain baseness and deformity. Rene Descartes believes that laughter was a manifestation of joy mixed with surprise or hatred or both. In Francis Bacon's list of what causes laughter, the first place is given to deformity. One of the most frequently quoted utterances on the subject is this definition in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). "The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others or with our own formerly" (*New Encyclopedia*, 20: 683).

How the humour came into use in western literature is a wide range of research, it goes back to the time of Plato and Aristotle in Greek Literature. In Greek tragedy, the humorous characters were presented in plays, and later in Shakespearian comedy there appeared as successfully as in the Greek stages.

The attitude that allows human to make jokes and find things comic is called “humour” or a “whimsical manner” (141). Kant calls the whimsical manner “the talent enabling us to put ourselves at will into a certain disposition, in which everything is judged in a way quite different from the usual one even vice versa. Freud also writes that with humour, “one spares oneself the affects to which the situation would naturally give rise and overrides with a jest the possibility of such an emotional display” (141).

In both definition, humour is characterized as a talent or ability that enables a human being to interpret the world in a manner different from what otherwise might be expected. A person with a humourous manner sees the world differently from those who do not possess such a manner, and is able to find pleasure where others find only pain and displeasure.

The humorist is uniquely capable of extracting pleasure from a painful world by interpreting circumstances in a different manner from the way most people would naturally interpret them. In doing so, such an individual may appear comic and bring amusement to himself and others. A perfect examples of humour in this novel is that when the son of Macon, Ethan is murdered in the restaurant. Macon and Sarah divorced which is humorous to the reader but tragic to the characters.

Much of the theorists agree that the emotions discharged in laughter always contain an element of aggressiveness. Laughter provides relief from tension. It also satirizes the situation considered to be opposite from the reality. Sigmund Freud involves Spencer’s theory of humour into his own with special emphasis on the release of repressed emotions in laughing (684). In the mind of man, a vast amount of stored emotions exists, that are derived from various, often unconscious, sources; repressed sadism, fear and boredom. These are released by the help of humour.

Humour is a task as delicate as analyzing the composition of a perfume with its multiple ingredients, some of which are never consciously perceived while others would make one wince. People are literally poisoned by their adrenal humourous; it takes time to talk a person out of a mood, fear and anger show physical aftereffects long after their causes have been removed.

The purpose of humour is to laugh at people to rectify their faults. Laughter is not acquired skill but a natural gift. But there are other outlets such as competitive sports or social criticisms which are acquired skills. There are different types of humour 1) Unconscious humour 2) Situational humour 3) Verbal humour 4) Tragic humour.

Unconscious humour is that type of humour which deceives no one; the essence of humour is to be conscious, instinct with purpose, even if the development of the hint brings out more than the speaker was clearly aware of when he spoke. Louis Cazaminan says, "To endow a person with unconscious humour is simply a polite manner of saying that he conspicuously lacks a sense of it" (14).

When Macon was in New York, Charles phoned him from Macon's home and he was surprised to hear the phone ring.

"Macon!" Charles said, unusually animated.

"Charles, I'm up on top of this building and a sort of . . . silly thing has happened. Listen: You've got to get me out of here."

"YOM out! What are you talking about? You've got to get me out !"

"Pardon?"

"I'm shut in the pantry; your dog has me cornered. "Oh. Well, I'm sorry, but . . . Charles, it's like some kind of illness. I don't think I can manage the elevator and I doubt I could manage a stairway either and--"

“Macon, do you hear that barking? That’s Edward. Edward has me treed, I tell you, and you have to come home this instant.”

“But I’m in New York! I’m up on top of his building and I can’t get down!”

“Every time I opened the door he comes roaring over and I slam the door and he attacks it, he must have clawed halfway through it by now.” (60)

Situational humour is a humour in which the part and the whole change roles, and attention becomes focused on a detail torn out of the functional context on which its meaning depended. The corsets type of humour is the practical joke: pulling away the chair from under the dignitary’s lowered bottom. Renaissance princes collected dwarfs and hunchbacks for their merriment. It obviously required a certain amount of imagination and empathy to recognize in a midget a fellow human who thought different in appearance, thinks and feels much as one does. In children, this projective faculty is still rudimentary. They tend to mock people with a stammer or a limp and laugh at the foreigner with an odd pronunciation. Similar attitudes are shown by societies to any form of appearance or behavior that deviates from their norms: the stranger is not really human: he only pretends to be like us. Both Cicero and Francis Bacon regard deformity as the most frequent cause of laughter.

Verbal humour is a tool for dissecting and analyzing any specimen of humour. The procedure is to determine the nature of the two (or more) frames of reference whose collision gives rise to the conflict effect to discover the type of rules of the game or rules of the games that govern each. In the more sophisticated joke, the logic is implied and hidden and the moment it is states is explicit form, the joke is dead.

Such verbal humour falls into various categories, each of which serves a specific purpose in extending the theme of miscommunication. Although these categories overlap in some instances, it will be easier to analyze them by separating them as clearly as possible. These categories include: 1. Linguistic errors that characters make either consciously or subconsciously 2. The psychological shift or attempting to divert attention away from the real issues 3. Inadequate words in communication and 4. Non-traditional means of communication.

Linguistic Error according to Freud, is “when people joke, they are in a position to conceal not only what they have to say but also the fact that they have something-forbidden- to say” (126). Perhaps the humour, however unintentional it may seem, sends a message- of defiance, anger, frustration, jealousy. Another type of linguistic error is the malapropism which means unintended violation of standard diction or grammar, which mistakenly uses a word in place of another that it resembles; the effect is usually comic i.e. airplane instead of aero plane. Freud tells us that words “use a plastic material with which one can do all kinds of things” (37). Whether motives are subconscious or conscious is not as important as the effect words produce. Linguistic errors may confuse characters and readers alike, eliciting their laughter and pity, but significantly this confusion is a “bewilderment succeeded by illumination” (Freud 9).

The Psychological Shift is another kind of verbal humour develops when characters make incongruous remarks or respond inappropriately to other’s remarks in order to shift attention away from sensitive issues, usually intending to avoid awkward, rude or unpleasant conversation.

Inadequate words is another category of miscommunication includes meaningless or inadequate words uttered because any communication, even inane, is

more satisfactory than none at all. This effect is mainly accomplished through Tyler's near perfect creation of dialogue. In all her novels, Tyler uses conversations to convey the inadequacy of words to express feelings. Joseph C. Voelker explains that her dialogue is "musically rendered, inconclusive and comic in its apparent insufficiency as a mode of human communication [. . .]. More is heard in the words themselves" (37).

Voelker terms her particular style "pointillist", referring to the practice in art of applying small strokes or dots of paint to a surface so that, "from a distance, they blend together to create an image" (12). In short, individual words may seem unimportant, but when viewed from a literary distance, they mean much more. Volker further clarifies: "Several words or phrases, always at the beginning of sentences that never get spoken, form the actual dots of Tyler's pointillism. Characters say "Oh," "Well," "Oh, now and then stop. The consequence, is anxious, even rueful comedy" (38).

Macon's agent, Julian, in *The Accidental Tourist*, for example, continually makes valiant efforts to get know Macon's family, while Macon makes every effort to keep him distant. In one of his first encounters with one brother, Charles, Julian politely inquires about Charles's job:

Julian said, "What do you do for a living, Charles?"

"I make bottle caps."

"Bottle caps! Is that a fact?"

"Oh, well, it's no big thing," Charles said. "I mean it's not half as exciting as it sounds, really." (122-23)

The final remark shows the Charles's inanity. Exaggerated interest and false enthusiasm from Julian have left Charles in an uncomfortable position, and he feels pushed into uttering ridiculous words in response to Julian's obsequious comments.

Julian doggedly pursues his relationship with the Learys, whose name aptly fits their "leeriness" in accepting any outsiders into their tight family unit (238).

While Julian visits Macon and Muriel, Muriel tries to write country and western song lyrics for a contest, and Julian again does his best to connect by helping her find a line to replace "When we shared every pain"(244). As Macon forces him out the door, Julian tenaciously contributes, "When our lives were more sane," "When we used to raise Cain," "When I hadn't met Jane," "When she didn't know Wayne," "When she wasn't inane," "When we guzzled champagne," and "When we stuffed on chow-mien"(248-250). In addition to creating a very funny scene, Tyler dramatizes our frantic and futile efforts to use words to express our need for one another. We see that by accepting one of Julian's ridiculous lines, Muriel would be accepting Julian himself, and that is the true goal: a significant connection to another human being. Tyler even makes her characters communicate with problem. Communication problems haunt the Leary family in *The Accidental Tourist* too. Ironically, the Leary brothers and their sister are most indignant about the decline of the English language: "[H]ow sloppy everyday speech had become... [How] words are getting devalued" (124)? The Learys seem sure that if people would only clean up their usage, there would be no communication problems- as if words were the only thing to consider.

It is Macon who is most obsessed with policing proper usage, often at the expense of alienating those around him. He consistently ignores the message, focusing on the words: when Sarah tells him she has been dating a physician, he remarks, "Why not just call him a doctor" (131); when she comments that Rose has

been “[c]ruising hardware stores like other people cruise boutiques,” he corrects her with “As other people cruise boutiques”(131); when she remarks that she is sending him a letter through her attorney, he says, “I guess you mean a lawyer”(136); he corrects Muriel when she says, “My specialty is dogs that bite” by saying “Webster prefers specialty” (40); and he corrects Julian, who says “momentarily” instead of “any moment” (81). It is not surprising that “communicate” is Macon’s “least favorite word” (131), considering how little he understands about the complexity of the process. In each of the conversations quoted above, Macon is afforded the opportunity to exchange feelings and insights with another character, yet he refuses such possibilities by focusing on words. Even when the words are grammatically correct, Macon cannot communicate effectively. After telling a neighbor he is staying at his family’s home until his broken leg is healed, Macon has difficulty in maintaining an ordinary conversation:

“We didn’t see no ambulance though or nothing.”

Well, I called my sister.

Sister’s a doctor?

Just to come to take me to the emergency room.

When Brenda broke her hip on the missing step,”

Garner said, “She called an ambulance.

Well, I called my sister.

Brenda called the ambulance.

They seemed to be struck”. (70)

They are stuck, and neither character is skilled enough to break the cycle of their circuitous conversation. Instead of communicating effectively, they take part in an

absurd dialogue that makes Tyler's point clear: most of us lack effective communication skills, using words which inadequately express how we feel.

Non-traditional Communication is a verbal communication in which Tyler's characters often turn to non-traditional forms of communication, refusing to use words at all. The Leary family also engages in such refusal.

Tyler's characters often turn to non-traditional forms of communication, refusing to use words at all. For example, The Leary family engages in such refusals. Rather than deal with an unpleasant telephone confrontation, they simply refuse to answer the phone, thereby avoiding communication completely (84). Their own conversations are often forced and uncomfortable until they adopt the same simple method Muriel uses to train Edward the dog- clucking: "By supertime, a cluck was part of the family language. Charles clucked over Rose's pork chops. Porter clucked when Macon dealt him a good hand of cards"(100). The tragedy of their situation is alleviated only by its humourous absurdity. Having cut themselves off from the world by living together in their family house, not answering the phone, and only emerging from their cocoon when absolutely necessary; the Learys short circuit their only means of communication-words-by replacing them with mere sounds. Thus, even their communication with one another becomes minimal.

Max Eastman, remarks, "humour is not a pun but a punitive expedition" (95). Most puns strikes one as atrocious, perhaps because they represent the most primitive form of humour: two disparate strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot. But the very primitiveness of such association based on pure sound may account for the pun's immense popularity with children.

The list of jokes and witticism classified according to the nature of the frames of reference whose collision creates the comic effect is quite a long and equally

boring. The list could be extended indefinitely. The frames may even be defended by such abstract concepts as time and weather: the absentminded professor who tries to read the temperature from his watch or tell the time from the thermometer. Such events or acts are comic in the same way as a game of table-tennis played with a soccer ball or a game of rugby played with a table-tennis ball.

Satire comes under the verbal humour. Satire is a verbal caricature that shows a deliberately distorted image of a person, institution or society. The traditional method of the caricaturist is to exaggerate to those features he considers to be characteristic of his victim's personality and to simplify by leaving out everything that is not relevant for his purpose. The satirist uses the same technique and the features of society he selects for magnification are of course, those of which he disapproves. The result is juxtaposition in the reader's reflection of his habitual image of the world in which he moves. He is made to recognize familiar features in the absurd, and absurdity in the familiar. Without this double vision the satire would be humorless. If the human yahoos were really such- evil smelling monsters as Gulliver's Houyhnm hosts claim, then Jonathan Swifts' *Gulliver's Travels* would not be a satire but the statement of a deplorable truth. Straight invective is not satire; satire must delicately overshoot its mark.

Tragic Humour is that type of humour which is placed in the highest kind which depends for its pathetic or savage force on its context in tragedy. Stephen Petter writes, "We think of *Hamlet*, the fool in *Lear*, Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, or of splendidly reasonable speeches of Mr. Eliot's Knights after the murder of Becket (121). This tragic humour strikes the reader powerfully. In the novel *The Accidental Tourist*, Ethan's murdered at the starting of the novel is a tragic humour because at results in the divorce of main characters Macon and Sarah.

The another tragic humour is that at the end of the novel while Macon was on his business trip to Paris on the plane, Macon discovers Muriel was also on the same plane. When he asks why she is following him, she tells him that he needs her. When Macon injures his back and Sarah flies to Paris to take care of him. Sarah said:

“After I’ve finished the trips, if your back is better, maybe we could do a little sightseeing on our own. Take some time for ourselves, since we’re here. Visit a few museums and such.”

“Fine,” he said.

“Have a second honeymoon, sort of.”

“Wonderful”. (130)

They enjoyed in the hotel. Sarah was pouring two glasses of cloudy brown liquid. “Apple cider,” she told him. “I figured you shouldn’t drink wine with those pills.”

“Oh. Right,” he said.

She passed him a glass. “A toast to our second honeymoon,” she said:

“Our second honeymoon,” he echoed.

“Twenty-one more years together.”

“Twenty-one!” he said. It sounded like such a lot.

“Or would you say twenty.”

“No, it’s twenty-one, all right. We were married in nineteen-”

“I mean because we skipped this past year.”

“Oh,” he said. “No, it would still be twenty-one.”

“You think so?”

“I consider last year just another stage in our marriage,” he said. “Don’t worry: It’s twenty-one”. (130)

After Sarah discovers Muriel was staying in the same hotel, she and Macon discuss their relationship.

Macon wonders whether he could learn to do things differently, and whether he could learn to make his own decisions. He decides to leave Sarah and go back to Muriel:

Sarah said, "Macon?"

"Sarah. I 'm glad you're awake," he said.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm packing to leave."

She sat up. Her face was creased down one side.

"But what about your back?" she asked. "And I've got all those appointments! And we were going to take a second honeymoon!"

(131)

On the way to the airport, he sees Muriel trying to hail a cap and he tells his cabdriver to stop and pick her up.

Tyler does not grant Macon happiness until he eventually leaves the familiar enclave of his siblings, firmly resists the temptation to return to Sarah, and chooses a life of continuously questioned assumptions with tough-minded and imaginative Muriel Pritchett whom he comes to love because, as he yearns to explain to his disapproving brother Charles, "She looks out hospital windows and imagines how the Martians would see us".

Ironically, then, it is Muriel's radical otherness that eventually sustains Macon. To be biogenetically related in Tyler's work is often simply to be with an extension of one's self. For Macon, Muriel's very non-Learyness (that is, her non-leeriness) turns out to be her most liberating quality.

Yet Tyler does not allow Macon's fate to rest clearly with Muriel either.

Despite the always deceptive simplicity of her prose; her vision, here as elsewhere-- is complex. When, in Paris, Macon finally chooses Muriel over Sarah, Tyler couches his decision his in quite tentative terms. After breaking the news:

He put his arm around [Sarah] painfully, and after a pause she let her head rest against his shoulder. It struck him that even this moment was just another stage in their marriage. There would probably be still other stages in their thirtieth year, fortieth year- forever, no matter what separate paths they chose to travel. Such semi-closure is typical of Tyler's work. Her characters are engaged in a constant vacillation between letting go and taking in, letting go and taking in. Though Updike may also depict his characters in states of vacillation, his novels firmly reinstate biological and marital ties. (64-65)

Tyler, by contrast, resoundingly resists plot constructions and resolutions that unquestioningly privilege the nuclear form. She hastens to enlighten or to chasten those characters who insist on policing family borders, and she regularly disillusion those who romanticize family relationships. Many of her characters find their own biogenetic, nuclear families so lacking that they adopted replacements. But no family configuration in Tyler's world, whether surrogate or biogenetic, can with stand for long her most insidious threat to family security, exclusivity. For Tyler, the most fertile ground for renewal lies just across the border.

Tyler, though she seems to show romantic family relationship within or among her characters, in fact, has reflected the tragedy that emerged from the fate and ultimate suffering her characters have to face. However, the tragedy within the characters turns to be comic for the readers. So Tyler is very successful in her ultimate

goal that is to arouse laughter even in the painful situations of her characters. In fact, she has produced laughter by satirizing her own characters.

Earlier theories of humour, treated humour as an isolated phenomenon, without attempting to throw light on the intimate connections between the comic and tragic, between laughter and crime, between artistic inspiration, comic inventiveness, and scientific discovery. Yet these three domains of creativity form a continuum with no sharp boundaries between wit and ingenuity, between discovery and art.

It has been said that scientific discovery consists in seeing as analogy where nobody has been done before. When in the Song of Solomon, Solomon compared the Shulamite's neck to a tower of Ivory, he saw as analogy that nobody has seen before. When we compared the heart of a fish to a mechanical pump, it is as a caricaturist draws a nose like a cucumber.

All the logical patters of humour can enter the service of art. The confrontation between diverse codes of behavior may yield in comedy, tragedy or new psychological insights. Humour provides one of the eternal themes of literature. The effect of humour in the modern world is not so much lesser. The influence of mass media and the crisis of values affect culture with rapid and violent transition. The mass media tends towards the commercialized manufacture of laughter by popular comedians and gags, sick jokes, sadism and sex.

There are many theories of humour, laughter and comic. It seems difficult to comprise one with another and no one include all aspects of humour. All want to overlap to one another to some extent. In a general sense, all theories of humour could be divided into two classes: those that find all humour and laughter innocent harmless, and joyful.

We can more appropriately divide the theories into three main humorous theoretical traditions: i) The Incongruity Tradition ii) The Superiority Tradition iii)The Release Tradition.

The Incongruity tradition for Kant , “laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing” (199). Many jokes set up the mind to follow a particular path, but the outcome suddenly makes us realize that we have followed completely the wrong path: the one we have followed turns out to lead nowhere: or at least not to the same place as the punch line of the joke. If understood in this way, Kant can be seen as having given birth to the kind of incongruity theory more explicitly outlined by Schopenhauer. The core of Schopenhauer’s formulation is that “In every case, laughter results from nothing but the suddenly perceived incongruity between a concept and the real object that had been thought through it in some relation; and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity” (59).

Some recent writers in this tradition have argued that what is amusing is not the perception of an incongruity itself, but rather the resolution of that incongruity: amusement results from fitting what appears to be an anomaly in some conceptual schema.

Humour theorists have used the word “incongruity” to describe a very wide range of humorous phenomena:

1. Logical impossibility (“Lincoln was a great Kentuckian. He was born in a log cabin, which he built with his own hands.”).
2. Ambiguity (including double entendres and the literal interpretations of figures of speech , such as Steven Wright’s “I woke up one morning and my girlfriend asked me if I slept good. I said , ‘No, I made a few mistakes.’”).

3. Irrelevance (Woody Allen: “How is it possible to find meaning in a finite world given my waist and shirt size?”).
4. General “inappropriateness”: “the linking of disparates ... the collision of different mental spheres ... the obtrusion into one context of what belongs in another” (Monro, 235).
5. Many examples of humour can be subsumed under one or other of these headings , yet there remains doubts as to whether all of the above may be said to be genuinely interchangeable with the term “incongruity.” Just as we cannot explain all humour in terms of incongruity resolution , neither can we do so in terms of incongruity without stretching the meaning of the term so far that it ceases to be very informative.

Perhaps the most important objection to incongruity theories is that , even if, in any given example of humour, it is possible to identify an element of incongruity, it is not necessarily this incongruity itself that causes amusement. Putting all the emphasis on incongruity leaves mysterious why one joke will be rated as much funnier than a structurally identical joke on a different topic. Moreover, the incongruity theorist must explain why some incongruities are perceived as funny while others are not, and why a particular incongruity will amuse some but not others. To focus exclusively on incongruity is to stress form or structure at the expense of content or context: we need also to consider factors such as the subject matter, the context within which humour is set, and the attitude of the hearer or reader, as well as the structure of jokes and the cognitive side of humour on which the incongruity tradition concentrates. This has led some to reject the incongruity tradition, and others to suggest the incongruity is a necessary but not sufficient condition.

When Macon decided to hire Muriel to train Edward, the funniest dog who love to sleep in bed . While going to vet Macon talked to him (Edward) in what he hoped was as un-alarming tone. “Hot, isn’t it, Edward, you want air conditioner on” (9)?

When Muriel invited Macon for a dinner, he wrote a letter of inconvenience to come for a dinner and decide to drop a letter in the Muriel’s home. Then he took the letter from his pocket and bent down:

“I’ve got a double-barreled shotgun,” Muriel said from inside the house, “and I’m aiming it exactly where your head is.”

He straightened sharply. His heart started pounding . (Her voice in sounded level and accurate- like her shotgun, he imagined.) He said, “It’s Macon.”

“Macon?”(74)

It is very irrelevance that she was his girlfriend but he was afraid while she was saying that she was aiming a double-barreled shotgun on his head.

When Macon was in New York, Charles phoned him from Macon’s home and he was surprised to hear the phone ring.

“Macon!” Charles said, unusually animated.

“Charles, I’m up on top of this building and a sort of . . . silly thing has happened. Listen: You’ve got to get me out of here.”

“YOM out! What are you talking about? You’ve got to get me out !”

“Pardon?”

“I’m shut in the pantry; your dog has me cornered.”

“Oh. Well, I’m sorry, but . . . Charles, it’s like some kind of illness. I don’t think I can manage the elevator and I doubt I could manage a stairway either and-“

“Macon, do you hear that barking? That’s Edward. Edward has me treed, I tell you, and you have to come home this instant.”

“But I’m in New York! I’m up on top of his building and I can’t get down!”

“Every time I opened the door he comes roaring over and I slam the door and he attacks it, he must have clawed halfway through it by now.” (60)

It is very inappropriate when Charles was shut in the pantry, Macon was in New York which was not possible to come to rescue him at that moment. It is very humorous that the dog was of his own brother Macon.

The superiority tradition for Hobbes, “laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly” (46). We laugh when we realize we are, or perceive ourselves as being superior in some way to the object of our laughter.

Another philosopher who should be mentioned is Henri Bergson. For Bergson, laughter’s function is to act as a social corrective. The key element in the comic are mechanism and inelasticity: what is funny is “something mechanical encrusted on the living” (84). Each member of society must pay constant attention to his social surroundings, and those who fail to do so thereby demonstrate unsociability, a kind of inelasticity, which renders them comical. Since nobody likes being thought of as comical; and laughed at, having this experience, or seeing a comic character treated

thus, therefore coerces the individual, by humiliation, into acting as a social being, as society demands.

It is difficult to see why, on Bergson's view, an individual should value a sense of humour as strongly as we do: from the individual's point of view, all that can be said in favour of laughter, on Bergson's account, is that it allows society to pursue "a utilitarian aim of general improvement" (Bergson, 73). Both Hobbes and Bergson tend to overlook the attitude of childlike playfulness that is so important to the enjoyment of much humour based on nonsense and absurdity, for instance. Also, superiority theorists have great difficulty in adequately explaining the phenomenon of laughing at oneself. Hobbes claims that the self at whom we laugh is a former self to whom we are now superior. But this explanation ignores the fact that it is perfectly possible to find one's current self genuinely amusing.

Macon filled out the form while the woman knelt to unbuckle Edward's collar. Edward licked her cheekbone; he must have thought she was just being friendly. So when Macon had finished, he didn't say good-bye. He left the form on the counter and walked out very quickly, keeping a hand in his pocket to silence his keys.

There is one funny conversation between Macon and Sarah, when Macon broke his leg went to stay with his sister Rose.

"Look," she said. "I know this is hard for you. It's hard for both of us . . . but we really didn't have much left, don't you see? Look who you turned to when you broke your leg: your sister Rose! You didn't even let me know, and you do have my telephone number." "If I'd turned to you instead," he said, "would you have come?" "Well . . . but at least you could have asked . . . But no, you called on your family. You're closer to them than you ever were to me." (51)

Here, Sarah wants to show her superiority showing her kindness to him, as she had already divorced with him and wants to be close with him once again at the critical condition of Macon.

The release tradition's central idea is that laughter provides a release of tension: nervous or psychical energy built up in the nervous system can be discharged through laughter. Freud divides jokes into two main categories: "innocent" and "tendentious," the latter being subdivided into "hostile" and "obscene" jokes. The pleasure attainable from innocent jokes comes from their "technique" alone, whereas tendentious jokes have "purpose"- such as aggressiveness or "exposure"- as well as technique. Civilization forces us to repress both our aggressive and our sexual desires. Tendentious jokes allows us to enjoy these pleasures by circumventing the obstacles that stands in the way of the hostile or lustful instinct. Such obstacles are of two kinds: external and internal. A tendentious joke either saves us from having to create the inhibition necessary for self-restraint, or allows an already existing inner obstacle to be overcome and the inhibition filled. This works as follows: the technique of the joke provides a small amount of pleasure, the "fore-pleasure," which acts as an "incentive bonus" by means of which the suppressed purpose gains sufficient strength to overcome the inhibition and allows the enjoyment of the much greater amount of pleasure which can be released from the purpose (Freud , 188). Since in creating an inhibition we expend psychical energy. Freud claims, it is plausible to conclude that the yield of pleasure derived from a tendentious joke corresponds to the psychical expenditure that is saved and the psychical energy saved can be discharged in laughter.

The central idea of laughter's serving as a release of tension is a plausible one in much humour; the very phrase "comic relief" lends some support to such a view,

and it does seem reasonable to say that we operate under a number of constraints and the laughter can act as a “safety valve.” Freud says that those who expend most psychological energy in repressing their sexual and hostile urges will laugh most at humour which affords relief from these inhibitions. Yet experimental research has suggested the opposite: that it is those who readily express sexual and aggressive feelings who laugh most at sexual and aggressive humour.

When the novel starts, Macon and his wife were returning from the beach, Sarah told him “Macon, I want divorce.” Macon braked and glanced over at her. “What?” he said. The car swerved. He had to face forward again. “What did I say?” he asked. “What did it mean” (2)?

“I just can’t live with you anymore.” Sarah said. Macon went on watching the road, but his nose seemed sharper and whiter, as if the skin of his face had been pulled tight. He cleared his throat. He said, “Honey. Listen. It’s been a hard year. We’ve had a hard time. People who lose a child often feel this way; everybody says so; everybody says it’s a terrible strain on a marriage”. “I’d like to find a place of my own as soon as we get back.” Sarah told him (2).

When he returns, Macon admits he “couldn’t think of any period bleaker than in his life.” He feels just as alienated at home as he does while travelling. Since contact with other people depresses him, he shuts himself up in his house, sometimes never changing out of his bathrobe. Organizing the house provides him with his only pleasure, because “it gave him the sense of warding off a danger” (3). Reduced to wearing sweat suits everyday and eating popcorn he cooks in his bedroom, Macon approaches his breaking point. He recognizes that he is in danger of “turning into one of those pathetic creatures you see on the loose from time to time- unwashed,

unshaven, and shapeless, talking themselves, and padding along in their institutional grab”(3). Alarmed at the thought, he tries to return to a more normal routine.

Macon is in tension as his wife leaves him as he could not comfort her. He feels alone in the home as he feels while travelling. He finds himself in a pathetic condition eating popcorns which he cooks in the bedroom.

Irony is one of the major associates of humour. The origin of irony goes back to Greek comedy. In Greek comedy some characters who are less intelligent, in pretension, would say one thing and meaning the opposite. There is no intention to deceive or cheat but to gain special artistic effort. There may be similarities between irony and satire but all ironies are not satire. However, satires are often stable ironies. Irony, unlike satire does not work in the interest of stability. The ironist does not pretend to cure such as a universal or to solve its mysteries. It is satires that solves. Irony is a remark which means the opposite of what it says. Dramatic irony is a remark whose significance is perceived by the audience but not by the actors on the stage. Irony can be classified under these heading:

- i) Verbal irony,
- ii) Structural irony,
- iii) Dramatic irony,
- iv) Cosmic irony, and
- v) Romantic irony.

It is more humorous that Macon’s mother Alicia a “giddy young war widow” who always seemed to have a boyfriend was remarried. This means that Tyler wants to show the historical context of American society of 1980s, increasing divorce rate in a satirical manner. Rose’s answered for the question ‘what kind of place is that? – “it

is the Calvert Arms- a single building. Everybody is single” (46) is ironical as well as humorous.

‘Wit’ has been variously defined and explained by various writers in various times. In the restoration age, much was made of wit and it was considered as the saying of fine sparkling things which startles and amuse. It was a clever use of language which surprised by its novelty, and amused by its cleverness. The thought did not matter, it was the way of putting things for examples, expressing or the dexterous use of language which was all important. The wit of a poet was to be seen in his ingenious use of words rather than in the content of his poetry. Alexander Pope expressed this very view in his famous couplet. “True wit is nature to advantage dressed what it was thought, but never so well expressed” (17). The thought may be common place but if the poet is really witty, he would express it ingeniously as it had never been expressed before and so will surprise as well as delight by his ingenuity.

However, Joseph Addison did not accept such a superficial concept of wit. In his famous essay “On Wit” he distinguishes between true and false wit. True wit is merely a dexterous use of language and is seen in the use of paradox, puns, oxymoron and hundred other forms of word- play and word- jugglery. In such word- play the delight and surprise arise from the mind’s perception of contrast or incongruity in the words and the phrases and sentences. In True Wit, on the other hand, the contrast is deeper and more fundamental. It is agreed that wit is the faculty of assembling together of ideas and uniting them with those that are dissimilar and discordant.

The term ‘conceit’ is derived from Italian “*concetto*” and used it by English poets/ writers in sixteen and seventeen centuries. Conceit can be defined as an excessive use of over-elaborated similes or metaphors, drawn from the most far-fetched, remote and unfamiliar sources. According to A.K. Sinha, Dr. Johnson defines

a conceit as a perception of “occult resemblance in things apparently unlike” (71). Poets have always seen (perceived) similarity between dissimilar objects and used simile and metaphors to convey their perception of that similarity. The peculiarity of metaphysic lies in the fact that, they use figures of speech excessively, their figures are elaborated to the farthest limit, and their images are logical and intellectual rather than sensual or emotional.

A ‘satire’, generally speaking, is an attack on foolish or wicked behavior by making fun of it often by using sarcasm and parody. The word ‘satire’ comes from the Latin word ‘*Satura*’ which means primarily ‘full’ and then comes to mean ‘a mixture of full of different things’. According to Gilbert Highet, the essence of the original name was variety in a certain down-to-earth naturalness or coarseness or unsophisticated heartiness (241).

Satire has usually been justified as a corrective of human vices and follies. Satires are the jokes about serious things. Satirist, like ironist, says one thing and means another. Wayne C. Booth introduces the term “Stable irony” by which he means that once a reconstruction of meaning has been made, the reader is not then invented to undermine it with further demolitions and reconstructions. But irony, to D.C. Muecke, is:

A way of writing designed to leave open the question of what the literal meaning might signify; there is a perpetual deferment of significant. The old definition of irony-saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary – is superseded; irony is saying something in a way that activates not one but an endless series of subversive interpretations. (31)

Satirists present one thing of situation under the grab of another which may appear ridiculous at surface. The combination of jest and earnest is a permanent mask of satirical writing- the central method of device.

A satirist, though he jokes and makes reader laugh, tries to reveal human vice and folly, which (to him) is truth. Satirists declare that their truth is what people do want to hear. While tracing the history of satire back to the ancient time, we find, there prevail two main conceptions of its purpose: one is not to cure but to wound, to punish, to destroy and the other is to warn and cure. The first type of satirists believes that the rascality is triumphant in the world, and is pessimistic. These misanthropic satirists look at life and find it, not tragic, not comic but ridiculously contemptible and nauseatingly hateful. Gilbert Highet draws the distinctions between pessimistic and optimistic satirists and their writings preserves:

The misanthropic satirist believes it (evil) is rooted in man's nature and the structure of society. Nothing can eliminate or cure it. Man, or the particular gang of miserable manikins who are under his scrutiny, deserves only scorn and hatred.... The satirist is close to the tragedian.
(235)

Though there is a close connection between ironies and satires, all ironies are not satires. However satires are often stable ironies. Irony, as dictionaries tell us, is saying one thing and meaning the opposite. For its clarification quoting Wayne C. Booth, we have:

Irony is usually seen as something that undermines certainties, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of affirmation. It is thus a subject that arouses passions. (Preface: ix)

'Farce' is a type of comedy designated to provoke the audience to simple, hearty laughter- "belly laughs", in the parlance of the theatre. To do so it commonly employs high exaggerated or caricatures types of characters, puts them into improbable and ludicrous situations and makes up sexual mix-ups, broad verbal humour and horseplay. Farce was a component in the comic episodes in the medieval miracle plays such as the Wakefield Plays, Noah and the Second Sepherd's Play. In the English drama, farce is usually an episode in a more complex form of comedy. In this types of play characters are presented, exaggerated in a ludicrous situations in the course of an improbable plot, but effects are activated not by broad humour and bustling action, but the brilliance and wit of dialogue.

Tyler presents dogs as significant characters that could be taken as humorous. The personification of dog in the novel is one of that reinforces inherent motif of the writer to arouse humour:

Everybody always asks me, 'what is your dog like?' Muriel said. 'I bet he's a model of good behavior,' they tell me. But you want to hear something funny? I don't own a dog. In fact, the one time I had one around, he ran off. That was Norman's dog, Spook, my ex-husband's. First night we were married, Spook ran off to Norman's mum. I think he hated me. (40)

Here the dog's hate towards a human and human's realization for it is satirical.

There is a one good example of satire in this novel. While Macon was teaching Alexander, the son of Muriel but he didn't ever know how to subtract:

"Well, he's only in second grade," Muriel said.

"I think he ought to switch to a private school."

“Private schools cost money.”

“So? I’ll pay.”

She stopped flipping the bacon and looked over at him. “What are you saying you’ll be around for all ten years?”

“Urn . . .”

“I can’t just put him in a school and take him out again with every passing whim of yours.”

He was silent.

“Just tell me this much,” she said. “Do you picture us getting married sometimes? I mean when your divorce comes through?”

He said, “Oh, well, marriage, Muriel . . .”

“You don’t, do you. You don’t know what you want. One minute you like me and the next you don’t. One minute you’re ashamed to be seen with me and the next you think I’m the best thing that ever happened to you.”

He stared at her. He had never guessed that she read him so clearly.

“You think you can just drift along like this, day by day, no plans,” she said. “Maybe tomorrow you’ll be here, maybe you won’t. Maybe you’ll just go on back to Sarah. (104)

This is very comical and satirical to the American society that divorce is very common to everyone. However, when Macon and Muriel attended Rose’s wedding to Julian, he sees Sarah, which rekindles his feelings to her. Macon leaves Muriel and Alexander and moves back to Sarah.

“Macon, I think that after a certain age people just don’t have a choice,” Sarah said. “You’re who I’m with. It’s too late for me to change. I’ve used up too much of my life now.” (115)

Sarah had divorced him to comfort herself but at last she regrets with Macon which is humorous and ironic too.

The most interesting thing is that her most of the novels are based on the city called Baltimore and in her most of the novels we find Thanksgiving turkey. Thanksgiving turkey means killing turkey in the name of Lord, to please the Lord but funny thing is that she had never even killed a chicken before. Thus, this novel is very humorous which arouse laughter in the readers though the characters are in the tragic.

III. Conclusion

Anne Tyler's novel *The Accidental Tourist* arouses laughter in the readers by creating her characters in funny situations. She has exposed the historical context of the America of 1980s such as homicide and divorce in a humorous way. The historical reality is satirized to make the audiences laugh. It also ridicules certain aspects of American social and domestic life.

She deals with the complexities of the family relationships. These complexities within or among the characters are the sources of laughter in the novel. The main character of the novel Macon Leary is alone after his son's murdered and divorces him. Along with him all the Leary family is divorced such as Charles, Porter and their mother Alicia, a widow remarried. Not only them but Muriel Pritchett got divorce from her husband. The contemporary then American society had fully practiced divorce which the writer wants to focus on. This means that Tyler wants to satirize the American society by the means of humour.

The funniest character is the dog, Edward who joins the relationship between Macon and Muriel. Edward is the most interesting dog who traps Charles in the house and asking help with Macon who was in New York. This is one of the most humorous pieces in the novel.

Anne Tyler focuses on the comedy as well as tragedy in the novel. Within the comedy of the characters as well as situations, there lies tragedy in the play. However, the tragic situation that the characters go through brings comic reaction in the audiences. Here, comedy means characters are eccentric and extraordinary and often say something funny forcing us to laugh. Tyler uses humour to show the lack of communication that is the source of tragedy as well as comedy. Miscommunication is the main cause of humour in the novel. They speak meaningless and inadequate

words. *The Accidental Tourist* is filled with connections and disconnections, with the exaltation and heartbreaking.

In her novel, we find ordinary life and ordinary people. She focuses on the human faults, human relationships and communication resulting errors in the society and laughter in the audiences. Her novel makes us laugh forcing us to take a closer look at ourselves and our relationships with others and blend of laughter and tears which seems especially appropriate as in tragedy and comedy.

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