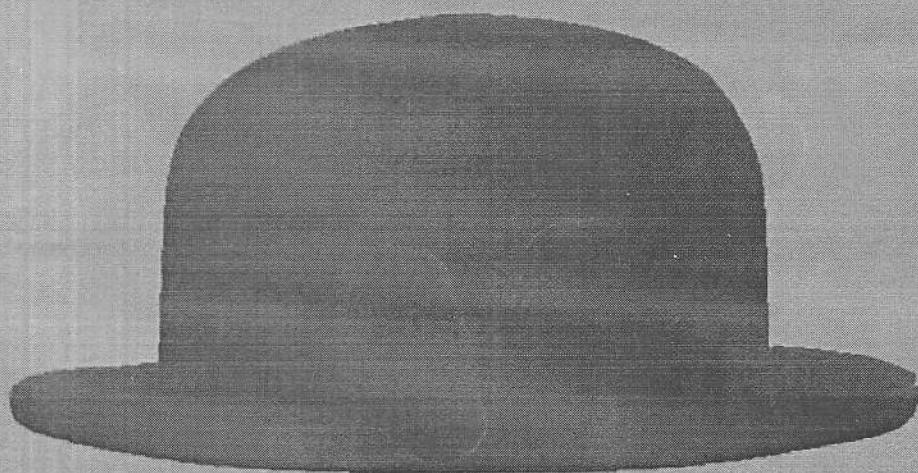




Humour

Texts, Contexts



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Tracing Humour in Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*

NAJILA T.Y.

Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* is a totally enjoyable and subversive account of *The Odyssey*. The story retold from Penelope's fantastical chronotope with Atwood's characteristic dry humour carnivalizes the Greek classic. Carnivalization works out a "new mode of interrelationship between individuals, counter posed to all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of non-carnival life" (Bloom 34). It questions hegemony of empire, ridicules those in power and delights in reversal. Now, in the carnivalized version of Odysseus' life presented in *The Penelopiad*, we are hit by the incongruence of our expectations and the image portrayed. The resultant surprise emanates humour that may be explained using the incongruity theory of humour. *The Penelopiad* exudes humour by introducing a familiar hero thereby setting up expectations and then delivering something "that gives a twist". Through this paper, I intend to trace the working out of humour in the novel, applying Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of carnival and the incongruity theory of humour.

The mechanics of humour is a subject that has been pondered over since the time of Plato and Aristotle itself; but studies in the field are few and far between. A number of

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