



Indecent Exposure

Tom Sharpe

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A blazing satire of South African apartheid, *Indecent Exposure* is Tom Sharpe's brilliant follow-up to his *Riotous Assembly*. Once again the setting is Piemburg, the deceptively peaceful looking capital of Zululand, where Kommandant van Heerden, Konstabel Els, and Lieutenant Verkamp continue to terrorize true Englishmen and even truer Zulus in their relentless search for a perfect South Africa.

Indecent Exposure Details

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Author : Tom Sharpe

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From Reader Review Indecent Exposure for online ebook

Mr. Jason Bourne says

Hilarious... worthy of film making ... ingenious !

Andrew says

This book is the sequel to Riotous Assembly and really keeps up the scathing and farcical attacks on the Apartheid regime. It is Tom Sharpe at what I think his most cutting, as through the jokes and ridiculous situations you can see his views on such a deplorable system and the society that acted as if it was totally acceptable.

There is really no way to describe the storyline - apart from my golden rule that I don't give away the plot or that there are no doubt far better reviewers than myself out there - the situations the various characters find themselves in is totally impossible to describe (while keeping any sense of reality), yet when you read the story they make perfect sense, for me this is a style that the likes of Douglas Adams made famous but is not the sole exponent of, this is vintage Sharpe.

Okay the world has moved on, Apartheid in its public form no longer exists (although we all know it hides behind other names and other faces now) in fact the Africa depicted in these books has now been consigned to the history books, yet still it is a fun read while reminding you of a much important message.

Marinechinaski says

Le tengo que dar las cinco estrellas porque no me reía tanto con un libro desde "La conjura de los necios". Salvando las distancias con el libro de Toole, cuyo humor negro es mucho más fino e irónico, Sharpe logra meterte en una aventura dignísima de las mejores historias de humor absurdo y alocado que puedes echarte a la cara. Con ese ambiente de comedia negra y un refinado humor inglés, las risas están más que aseguradas con esta obra, que si peca de algo es de políticamente incorrecta, y ahí es donde reside buena parte de su grandiosidad. Cada personaje es una parodia en sí mismo, cada situación más absurda que la anterior y el ingenio de este hombre para hilar acontecimientos que te conducen a un éxtasis de carcajadas es sencillamente magnífico. Recomendabilísimo para todo aquel que sepa apreciar el buen humor corrosivo, descarnado, descarado y sin tapujos, con situaciones que rozan lo insultante y una despreocupación a la hora de quitar hierro a temas de lo más controvertidos que puede herir a los más sensibles pero se siente como un soplo de aire fresco si eres amante de lo indecente.

James Manders says

I read Wilt a couple of years ago so I already knew that I liked Tom Sharpe's writing.

I often find that I notice simplistic writing styles more with books written in the 3rd person, but Indecent Exposure never feels simplistic, it is well crafted throughout and is a joy to read from start to finish.

It's hilarious too, events escalate to incredible and unbelievable extremes, then seemingly continue to escalate even further, all from a few bad decisions from characters placed in a position of power and authority whose ambition and self belief massively outweigh their knowledge and abilities.

I like the way the characters and their opinions are presented, quite horrific things are said, often as quite throwaway comments which pass by completely without question, often quite racist things which is obviously quite deep seeded in the culture and so the opinions are seemingly just accepted by the characters as a kind of twisted truth.

Tom Sharpe never stops to point out that these people are wrong or that you should think a certain thing while reading it, he just presents it as it is and allows you to make your own judgements, in that way it reminds me of the film 'This is England', in that I imagine that a racist could quite well read this book and miss the point of it entirely.

Chris says

This novel is what you get when you combine racism, police and electro-shock therapy in South Africa.

Gopal says

Black Humor. That term is redefined by this Tom Sharpe novel. Set in apartheid SA, the quest for perfect White SA by Lt. Verkamp, the bumbling Kommandent van Hardeen's dream to be treated as true blueblood British & the maniacal Dr. vom Bliemstein's passion for turning any ordinary situation into a psychiatrist lesson leaves the reader in splits.

Tom Sharpe managed to keep in splits while simultaneously shaking my head and asking myself can this really happen? Sometimes a bit over the top, the basic understanding a person must have before reading this book is to keep common sense out of the door.

Rip-roaring comedy.

Alan Smith says

This is an amazingly funny book, satirising the *apartheid* regime of the old South Africa, ultra-rightist authoritarian politics, faddish scientific reconditioning (*a la* "Clockwork Orange") and snobbery in general. Very few books have made me laugh out loud when reading it alone, and this one managed it.

However, my recommendation comes with a very important *caveat*. Much of the humour comes from the snobbishly pro-British lead character's attempts to ingratiate himself into a group that are obsessed with the work of the British "clubland" author Dornford Yates. Readers not familiar with Yates' novels will miss many of the otherwise hilarious jokes, and even, probably, the main point of the story. And since Yates is hardly in the mega best-seller class these days, (and wasn't even at the time this was written) one does wonder why Sharpe decided to tie this literary millstone round his own neck when penning this.

On the other hand, if the names Jonah Mansell, Boy and Berry Pleydell, Daphne, Adele, and "White Ladies, in the county of Hampshire" are familiar to you, get your hands on this one without delay.

Senthil says

Comedy is somwhar wry. There maybe some satire.

Wasn't as funny as I expected. More a story like book with some hidden satire. Probably people in those parts will get it

Monica says

The cops from Riotous Assembly are back, and in fine form. Kommandant Van Eerden thinks he now has a British heart (he doesn't, the transplant surgery re-implanted his own heart) and goes off to spend two weeks in the country with the Dornford Yates Club, a group of British eccentrics given to potent cocktails, cross dressing and reenacting scenes from the works of The Master.

This leaves the rabidly racist (better dead than a black in your bed), rabidly anti-communist (better dead than Red) Lieutenant Verkamp in charge. Verkamp has a network of a dozen agents out spying on each other and blowing things up to provide evidence of a Communist conspiracy. Exploding ostriches play a prominent role. And he has a sex crazed female psychiatrist assisting him in using electroshock aversion therapy on a couple of hundred Konstabels stop them from wanting to rape black women. And the loathsome Konstabel ELs rises from the dead.

It's hugely politically incorrect, savagely funny and the last of their adventures, alas.

Erik says

This hilarious depiction of the stupidity and brutality of the old South African Police is one of the funniest books I have read in quite a while. It will certainly never be picked as the assigned book for Afrikaaner Pride Week (and the Enlish don't come out so great either), but it is one of those laugh-out-loud funny books that you should think twice before reading it in public, lest the folks around you think that you are a bit touched.

Nils Geylen says

Interesting recent discovery. Somewhere between Benny Hill and Evelyn Waugh, Sharpe might not be the greatest novelist but he is an amazing comedian and satirist. Sure, the humor leans towards the coarse and vulgar at times, but this fits the small-minded yet egomaniac characters in the book perfectly. Their sheer backwardness and ignorant nationalist white-supremacist thinking can't work anywhere else than in a society where stupid rules.

Glenn Russell says

Farcical and preposterous - Monty Python slapstick, anyone? Recall the year 1973 as the heyday of John Cleese, Terry Gilliam and the Pythons. There must have been something in the air or water back then since *Indecent Exposure*, British author Tom Sharpe's second novel set in South Africa featuring a Pythonesque send-up of the country's police force, published in the same year.

The book's two main characters (and they are characters, you can be sure of that!) are the top ranking police officers from Piemburg, small South African capital city of Zululand: chief of police Kommandant van Heerden, a puffed up buffoon who fantasizes he's a proper English gentleman and Luitenant Verkamp, a sadistic, power-hungry nitwit. So as not to spoil a reader's experience of the bends and curves in Tom Sharpe's well-constructed plot, in the spirit of "and now for something completely different," I'll shift to the following batch of scenes and themes:

SKEWERING CONSERVATIVE BRITISH AUTHOR

Kommandant is a white South African, an Afrikaner or what some term a Boer. But he dearly wishes to be an English Gentleman. To this end, the Kommandant reads the stories of Dornford Yates and, when in the privacy of his home, practices British upper class phrases and ways of speaking. It is well to note Dornford Yates was a British author of a series of humorous romances about the English upper classes with their grand houses and powerful motor cars. These *Berry* books serve as something of an elegy for a bygone upper-class way of life. Throughout *Indecent Exposure*, Dornford Yates with his nostalgic eye for the "good old days" is a prime target for Tom Sharpe's serious lampooning.

BUGGER BUGS

Luitenant Verkamp attempts to catch the Kommandant engaged in seedy sexual practices or compromising, subversive conversations. And for a very specific purpose: to get the chief of police fired so he can take over as top man. To this end, Verkamp sends a crew out to plant bugs throughout the Kommandant's house. One of the more hilarious bits in the book. He might as well have sent Laurel and Hardy and The Three Stooges. There's all sorts of misfires and catastrophes but the Luitenant and his men do have a bug planted successfully in the bedroom and listen in as Kommandant practices his English upper class phrases by repeating them over and over. Headphones in place, Verkamp figures his Kommandant is either going crazy or has turned religious and is repeating a mantra. I read this section repeatedly, howling with laughter each time. Tom Sharpe's comic writing is such fun.

CLOCKWORK ORANGE REDUX

Luitenant Verkamp swings into action yet again when left in charge while Kommandant goes on vacation. This time it's a new technique for correcting bad behavior: a combination of drugs and electric shock therapy while showing the patient slides. The problem: most members of the all-white police force are lowering themselves by having sex (raping) black women. Verkamp subjects over one hundred police officers to continuous torture complete with slides of black nudity. Of course, torture is anything but humorous but Tom Sharpe's comedy comes through at various points, for example: Verkamp's henchmen driving their patty wagon into the black district to round up good looking girls to be photographed naked. Among the unanticipated results: a number of dead and wounded leading to a race riot. Damn, Verkamp reflects, don't those black people realize what we're doing is for their own good? Did I mention the Luitenant was a nitwit?

Perhaps I should have used stronger language.

ANTI-MARXIST MADNESS

Will Luitenant Verkamp smoke out all those dirty Communist terrorists just waiting for their opportunity to overthrow the government? You bet he will. Now that he's in command he can set aside conventional restraints that have always held him back; he goes on the attack: a personal blitzkrieg involving imprisoning and interrogating dozens of city leaders, including the mayor and a bank president. He also organizes an undercover network to contrive citywide explosions to finally catch those scheming Commies. In keeping with Tom Sharpe's over the top aesthetic, the fallout of the Luitenant's maneuvering results in, among other ludicrous mishaps, exploding ostriches. Yes, that's right - ostriches blowing up bridges and other vital city works. The details are the stuff of Monty Python. Why, oh why wasn't *Indecent Exposure* made into a film? Where's Terry Gilliam when you need him most?

INTELLECTUAL TURN

Meanwhile, oblivious to the chaos in Piemburg, Kommandant van Heerden is off on vacation. He meets up with an instructor of English literature at his lodging. Ah, someone in the novel with some brains! The ensuing conversations between van Heerden and Mr Mulpurgo are priceless. At one point the scholar makes a fau pas and asks if the Kommandant is as black as the newspapers represent him. In reply, the Kommandant yells: "I'm as white as the next man. And if I hear anyone say any different I'll rip the balls off the swine. Do you hear me? I'll castrate the bugger. Don't let me hear you saying such a thing again." I strongly suspect those lines are not found in Dornford Yates. So much for refinement in our would-be English gentleman.

TRUE BLUE BRITISH

The Kommandant's choice of vacation spot revolves around his invitation to the estate of Rolls-Royce driving Mrs. Heathcote-Kirkoon, a genuine British upper-class lady. She also invites him to dinner at none other than at the Dornford Yates Club. Initially, her husband, a Colonel Heathcote-Kilkoon, objects: "Don't you realize it's Berry Night? We can't have some damned stranger sitting in on the Club dinner." Objection overruled. As it transpires, one of the wildest dinners imaginable. As is the fox hunt the following day. Here's a snatch of action: "In the next few moments Kommandant van Heerden began to think that she must be right. What the great English lady was doing to him must be some result of brain damage. As she stood above him and unbuckled her skirt he knew he was seeing things. I'd better just lie still until it passes over, he thought and shut his eyes."

POTPOURRI

Psychiatrist Dr. von Blimenstein shows up at the apartment of Luitenant Verkamp wearing a red dress leaving nothing to the imagination (She's the buxom beauty at the bottom right in the above illustration); Mrs. Heathcote-Kirkoon wears her top hat at all times while horseback riding and other forms of riding (she's also in the above illustration - the lady with the black hat. You can't miss her); likewise Kommandant van Heerden and his horse set a record for jumping over walls; last but hardly least, the explosion pictured above is the grade finale, such a fitting climax for Mr. Sharpe's outrageous novel. Sound appealing? If so, you found your author and book.

English satirical novelist, Tom Sharpe, 1928-2013

"I am going fox hunting like a real Englishman, he thought as he dug his heels in a second time. It was the last coherent thought he had for some time. With a demonic lurch the great black horse shot out of the yard and into the garden. As the Kommandant desperately clung to his seat it was apparent that wherever he was

going it wasn't hunting." - Tom Sharpe, *Indecent Exposure*

Jay Daze says

As a satiric take-down of racist white society in apartheid South Africa this is a top rate book, but time is merciless and the book is greatly eroded by homophobia and rape jokes.

At one time is probably was the height of yuks to have white policemen raping black women turned into flaming gays through shock treatment, but it falls with a resounding thud today. A french lesbian is buggered by an almost mythical creature of chaos and if not turned straight, is almost whistful about the experience. Another female character is raped by cabby, and seems to think it is what she has coming.

Gah! Unfortunately I can see this is totally acceptable for 1971, but almost ruins the book for me, probably does ruin it totally for others. So either I am being too sensitive or not sensitive enough. I always find books written from around the 50s to the 80s particularly hard to forgive what is of their times, precisely because it is (relatively) close to our own (I was born in the late 60s).

If this book was written in the 19th century I'd be far more forgiving or at least able to accept it as a different time. If it was written in the last 20 years I'd have thrown it across the room.

All this obscures a book that I would compare to someone like Terry Pratchett on his top game. But Sharpe is writing against something far more evil and complicated and fraught. In the 70s I'm not sure how many people were writing so bitingly funny and entertainly against apartheid. The book should be read for that while castigated for its appalling gender and sexual politics.

Eric says

Wet your pants funny! Its been to long since we have been able to make fun of apartheid.

Bill Lindsay says

Very funny follow up to Riotous Assembly. Totally not PC

Maurice A. says

Talk about "black humor" (or not) this book is truly funny. It would not have been funny when it was first published and apartheid existed in South Africa, but I found it hilarious.

After reading the efforts of the Lt. to bug his bosses house, I was literally laughing out loud. That sequence was one of the best I have read in some time and it set the pattern for the rest of the book.

I recommend it to folks who can enjoy great writing without taking the subject matter seriously.

Nick says

Exploding ostriches!!! Amazing

Tijl Vandersteene says

Voor velen zijn de boeken van Tom Sharpe minderwaardig vanwege de soms aangebrachte humor. Het is inderdaad niet altijd even hoogstaand, hihi. Het is wel altijd grappig, van smalend tot hilarisch. En Sharpe steekt altijd de draak met schijnheiligeheid, racisme, machtsmisbruik, fanatisme etc. In Indecent Exposure loopt alles lekker uit de hand als een Zuid-Afrikaanse politiecommissaris er alles aan doet om bij de Engelse stiff upper lip elite, ook maar een stelletje bekrompen onmensen die Afrikaners primitief vinden, aanvaardt te worden en tijdelijk zijn macht overdraagt aan een commissaris (luitenant Verkamp, haha) die voor niets terugschrikt om indruk te maken op zijn chefs. Via electroshocks wil hij alle agenten een afkeer van zwarte vrouwen bezorgen en via een netwerk van infiltranten wil hij denkbeeldige communistische terroristen arresteren, beide plannen hebben op spectaculaire wijze een tegengesteld effect. Pure ontspanning is dit, sitcom doorspekt met taalgrapjes (o.a. omdat de Afrikaners de Engelse uitdrukkingen niet altijd helemaal begrijpen) en alles in een vlot, witty Engels.

Als extra heb ik dankzij dit boek ontdekt dat de voetbalterm 'spionkop', de staantribunes achter de goals, overgewaaid is van Engeland, waar het eerst in die betekenis gebruikt werd. Opmerkelijk vind ik dat.

Jana says

Hilarious. Satire re the South African police that is full of innuendos that had me laughing harder than I have in a long time. This is his followup to Riotous Assembly. I look forward to reading that book in the future.

Carye Yanko says

This is really good satire. And the story construction is excellent.
