INCONGRUITY AND RESOLUTION OF HUMOROUS NARRATIVES—LINGUISTIC HUMOR THEORY AND THE MEDIEVAL BAWDRY OF RABELAIS, BOCCACCIO, AND CHAUCER

by

Christian F. Hempelmann

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the

English

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

June 2000

Incongruity and Resolution of Humorous Narratives—
Linguistic Humor Theory and the Medieval Bawdry of Rabelais, Boccaccio, and Chaucer

Christian F. Hempelmann

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand this thesis will be housed at the Circulation Desk of the University Library and will be available for public access. I also authorize the University of other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.
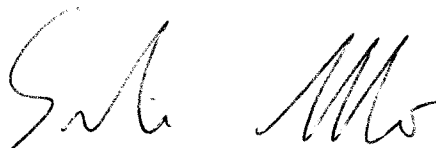
Signature:

_____   _____
Christian F. Hempelmann, Student   June 2000

Approvals:

_____   _____
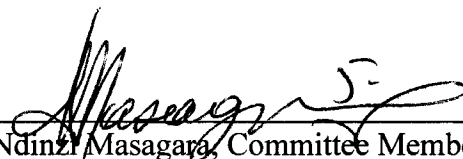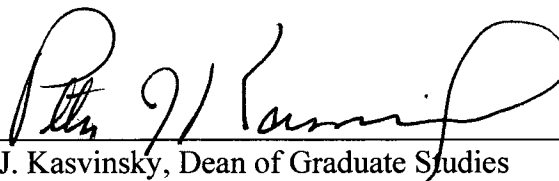Salvatore Attardo, Thesis Advisor   June 2000

_____   _____
Steven Brown, Committee Member   June 2000

_____   _____
Ndinzi Masagara, Committee Member   June 2000

_____   _____
Peter J. Kasvinsky, Dean of Graduate Studies   June 2000

Abstract

This thesis expands and deepens linguistic theory as well as applies the resulting concepts

empirically. The first sections outline linguistic humor theory in general, and Raskin's

Semantic Script Theory (SSTH, 1985) as well as the General Theory of Verbal Humor

(GTVH, Attardo and Raskin 1991) in particular. The following theoretical sections

redefine the GTVH's concept of logical mechanism—as most intricately connected to

both the textual-narrative and the cognitive aspects of textual humor—in terms of set

theory and expand the arsenal of the GTVH's tools to make it applicable to humorous

narratives. The focus here lies on the distinction between humor in the plot and humor of

the plot of longer humorous narratives that are structurally similar to jokes. The

reformulation of the concepts of shadow opposition and core opposition will then be the

center of the application of the resulting expanded theory to selected narratives by

Rabelais, Boccaccio, and Chaucer.

Acknowledgements

This thesis documents two years of my work in linguistic humor theory at Youngstown State University, where Salvatore Attardo had invited me after my studies in Germany were finished in 1998. In sometimes close collaboration with him and many others the material for the following chapters was gathered, researched, analyzed, and discussed.

Initially, my studies focused on the concept of logical mechanism, work on which went through many stages, before it reached the state documented here in chapter 5. The close collaboration with Salvatore Attardo on this topic becomes clear in the fact that we are currently preparing our efforts on this topic, including several concepts not included here, for publication (Hempelmann and Attardo 2000). Chapter 6 grew out of a seminar with Salvatore Attardo on humor theory and narratology in spring 1999, and my summary of Wenzel's (1989) work and discussions in our humor research group, which included Michele Sala and Cynthia Vigliotti.

This second focal point in my studies, narrative aspects of linguistic humor theory, found application in chapter 7. Section (7.1) is the final outcome of my struggle with Rabelais, which started in a research method class with Rebecca Barnhouse in winter 1999. Rabelais, together with travel funds made generously available by the Office of Graduate Studies and the Provost USE funds of Youngstown State University, took me to the 1999 International Humor Conference of the International Society for Humor Studies in Oakland, California, where I presented an earlier version of this section. Another class of Rebecca Barnhouse, on the *Canterbury Tales*, made it possible for me to further sharpen and apply linguistic tools to humorous narratives and research the

material that forms the backbone of section (7.3). Independent studies on Boccaccio lead to the rounding off of the empirical testing in section (7.2).

I am most grateful to all those who helped me in the work that lead to this thesis and particularly indebted to the following: First of all, Salvatore Attardo, head of my thesis committee, who supported me in more than just academic issues and always pushed me on further. Michele Sala, with whom I had the luck to share the fate of being a newcomer to the United States. He helped me in particular with Italian and French details in my work on sections (7.1) and (7.2). Steven Brown, member of my thesis committee, who directs the TESOL program which was the second focus of my studies at YSU and was always ready to discuss matters linguistic and non-linguistic, as well as to help the lost immigrant with shelter, food, and beverage. Ndinzi Masagara, member of my thesis committee, who was very helpful during the final stages of this thesis project. Rebecca Barnhouse, who doesn't like graphs, but despite that still likes to work with those who use them. Miriam Klein, not least for her assistance with the bibliography. Everybody else at the English Department of Youngstown State University, and also the School of Graduate Studies and Maag Library, as well as the College of Arts and Sciences.

It remains to be stressed that all opinions on specific matters of the expansions and elaboration discussed here, especially where they will be found lacking, as well as all faults and shortcomings lie within the responsibility of the humble author.

Für Claudi, für den nicht genug Spaß übrig blieb
und der nicht älter wurde als ich heute bin (1959-1988)

Table of Contents

1.   Introduction

Humor is a central part of all cultures, languages, idiolects, and most registers of speech. And not only is humor a pervasive phenomenon fulfilling a vital role in all human communication, it also forms a quantitatively relevant part of it. This centrality of humor, both as a means and as an end of human interchange, is widely accepted.

Surprisingly, humor is still considered to be a marginal field of academic research, although it can serve all related disciplines in two central ways: Humor phenomena can be the material for linguistic, psychological, anthropological, ethnological, etc. theories, while humor theories, on the other hand, can provide insights also into other phenomena of linguistic, psychological, sociological, literary, etc. interest. Morreall summarizes this importance in the prediction that "to understand our laughter is to go a long way toward understanding our humanity" (1983: x).

Humor is as universal as language, so it is no wonder that humor research must be—and indeed is—as complex as the academic fields and their many theoretical schools that take an interest in it. Humor is not exclusively the object of the humanities, but it lies at the border to the natural sciences. Humor studies shares this theoretical view with linguistics, the subdisciplines of which indicate this diversity in methods and objects.

Within the different branches and schools of humor research there is a confusing lack of uniformity in the terminologies used to describe humor phenomena. This is partly caused by the differing roots of the related word fields in Germanic and Romance languages (cf. G *Witz* vs. E *wit*, or E *humour* vs. L *umor* 'fluid') and the differing degrees of etymology involved in the argument. The terminology used here has been simplified to conform to the view adopted by current Anglo-American humor research

(even without an extensive definitional process) that there is a *de facto* agreement to use *humor* as the umbrella-term for all phenomena related to the comic, wit, laughter, and humor (in its narrow sense) (cf. Ruch 1996: 242f).

As mentioned above, the approach here is both linguistic and literary. It applies linguistic tools to the study of literature to the benefit of both fields: The linguistic tools are elaborated for application beyond the limited field of empirical application that facilitates this, and at the same time the understanding of a number of works of literature is expanded. Due to this focus, some fields of general humor theory are treated rather marginally. This is not because they are considered to be of less importance, but because they cannot directly contribute to *linguistic* humor theory applied to literary works. These fields include, for example, the physiology of laughter and its therapeutical benefits (cf. e.g. Darwin 1872: 198-221; Fry 1963; Fry and Savin 1988; Frank and Ekman 1993; Robinson 1983), the development of humor appreciation in children, and across the centuries of mankind, (cf. e.g. Shultz 1976, Miller 1983), cross-cultural approaches (cf. e.g. Ruch and Forabosco 1996, Hausman 1995, Unger 1995, Alexander 1997: 159-193) or sense of humor studies (cf. the work of Ruch and Ruch et al.; a survey of recent research in Ruch 1996, and *Humor* 9-3/4 1996, Ziv 1984). These aspects will be dealt with only in passing in the following chapters. Further surveys of previous research on humor and detailed analyses of some outstanding representatives can be found in sections (2.1) and (2.2).

I will introduce the field of humor research in general in chapter 2, before I proceed to the discussion of the particular linguistic humor theory applied and developed here. The core of this theory is the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) developed

by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin (1991) (chapter 4). The GTVH is based on Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) (chapter 3).[1] As this thesis ventures on the development of *linguistic* humor theory in two ways, in chapter 5, I will discuss the notion of *logical mechanism* and furnish a new approach to its explanation. Then I will tie my discussion into a recent development to expand the scope of existing theories to *humorous narratives* beyond the joke (chapter 6). The focus here will lie in the distinction between humor *in* the plot of narratives and humor *of* the plot of narratives structurally similar to jokes. The third part will then furnish empirical evidence to the preceding theoretical discussion beyond isolated examples. I will analyze three narratives from the 13th and 16th centuries,[2] partly in terms of their logical mechanism, but centrally with respect to the distribution of humor in and of the plot (chapter 7).

The problem in the first chapters will be to present previous research and simultaneously apply criticism that stems from the GTVH. This means to foreshadow certain elements of the GTVH that can be illustrated in detail only later. Therefore the central element of the GTVH, the concept of *knowledge resources* informing the joke and identifiable in the joke text alone, will have to be summarized separately from their context in the first chapters (cf. section (2.2)).

---

[1] Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are partly based on Hempelmann (1998).
[2] The use of "medieval" in the title is thus somewhat misleading. Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is a work of the renaissance, but —as section (7.1) will show—at its core lies the humor of medieval popular culture.

2.   Humor Theory

2.1   Why We Laugh

Although the question why we laugh is—strictly speaking—beyond the scope of this paper it needs to be addressed to introduce the academic field of humor research on a sufficiently broad and in-depth basis. This chapter will survey humor research in general, presenting previous works in the frame of the three large classes into which humor research has traditionally been grouped (e.g. Raskin 1985: 31-41). These classes reflect three general foci humor research has taken: social-behavioral and emotional (superiority), cognitive-perceptual (incongruity), and psychoanalytical (release). There are, of course, many more approaches to humor that cannot as easily be subsumed under one of these groups. This heterogeneity of humor research indicates the complexity of the subject matter. But this variety can also be considered the surface of a cluster of many terminologies for the same basic concept (cf. Wenzel 1989: 19).

The number of humor scholars is not as minuscule as one would suggest in view of the neglected status of the field. Interest in humor became systematic as early as the classic antiquity. The distinguished group of humor theorists includes the names of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero. More recent approaches of importance have been written by Beattie (1776) and Kant (1790). The last one hundred years have seen the continuing development of interest in humor research, including the growing interest of the psychoanalytical discipline by the turn of the century, above all the work by Freud (1905). The seventies and eighties of the twentieth century were the heyday of humor research in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and also linguistics, including the founding of the specialist quarterly HUMOR in 1988.

A short and informative survey of earlier humor research has been carried out by Keith-Spiegel (1972). She divides the various approaches into eight groups with the following central foci: Biology, Instinct and Evolution; Superiority; Incongruity; Surprise; Ambivalence; Release and Relief; Configuration; and Psychoanalysis.

A very comprehensive summary of the literature on humor including more recent research from monographs to bonmots, can be found in Attardo 1994: 14-58. Attardo also uses the accepted tripartite division of humor approaches: incongruity, hostility, and release. The field of humor research will be presented here along the lines of this division.

Raskin relates the three groups to the three traditionally accepted components of communication: "the **incongruity** -based theories make a statement about the **stimulus**; the **superiority** theories characterize the relations or attitudes between the **speaker** and the **hearer**; and the **release/relief** theories comment on the feelings and psychology of the **hearer** only" (1985: 40). This division accounts for the fact that each theory has adopted a certain view on the problem and consequently highlighted a certain feature of humor. Therefore they are partial and not necessarily contradicting each other (cf. McGhee 1979: 9, Raskin 1985: 30). An certain approaches must be assigned to more than one of these three theories. Kant, for example, focuses on the incongruity aspect, but release of psychic energy as well surprise are also important elements in his account for humor.

2.1.1 Superiority

This group of theories, also known as hostility, aggression, derision, disparagement, or disposition theories, can be traced back as far as Plato and Aristotle. Plato focuses on envy as the central element of the comic (cf. *Republic*. V, 452; *Philebus*, 48f).

> For Aristotle the comedy is
>
> > an imitation of men worse than average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others. (*De arte poetica*, quoted after Raskin 1985: 36)

Another frequently quoted proponent of this kind of humor theory, especially for the English-speaking world, is Hobbes:

> The passion of 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: for men laugh at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonour. (1650: 46, cf. also Hobbes 1651: 46)

The feeling of superiority over others as the central element of humor can be found in nearly all works on humor including contemporary research (for surveys see Morreall 1983: 4-14; Raskin 1985: 36-38; Vogel 1989: 5-17; Attardo 1994: 49-50).

The superiority theories often include evolutionary elements, trying to show how primitive man's attempt to challenge the enemy (cf. Ludovici 1933: 62f) or his "roar of triumph in an ancient jungle duel" (Rapp 1951: 21) developed into the rather civilized laughter of today. We laugh about someone else's mishaps or stupidity, deriving pleasure from the feeling of superiority over the other. This pleasure might be increased when it is only minor mishaps, not really painful ones, and therefore is not based on cruelty (cf. Rapp 1951: 35).

Another catalyst for humor is our affiliation to one (ethnic) group, while the target is perceived to belong to another group (cf. La Fave 1976). Ironically, this is one of the weakest points of the hostility theory of humor, because "there will be far more instances of ethnic conflicts and hostility which lack attached jokes than posses them" (Davies 1991: 422).

Another important point against the feeling of superiority as the central element of humor is the fact that there is a large group of jokes that do not feature anything to laugh *at*: innocent jokes without targets, not even self-derision, that still will elicit laughter; absurdities, and grotesques, like the 1950s elephant jokes (see section (5.1.1.1)) or most of what Monty Python present in their torrent-of-consciousness sketches. Morreall summarizes this major fault of the superiority group of theories: "there are cases of both humorous and nonhumorous laughter that do not involve feelings of superiority" (1983: 14).

2.1.2 Incongruity

Also called surprise, contrast, or configurational, this group of theories that focus on the cognitive aspect of incongruity—and possibly its resolution—as the central element of humor is by far the largest. To this group belong most prominently the works of Beattie (1776), in its core also that of Bergson (1899), and Koestler (1964). Closest to linguistic concepts is Koestler's theory of bisociation (see below).

Incongruity theories will be discussed in more detail as they are the backbone of much of contemporary research in the field and because they "are conceptionally closer to linguistic theories of structuralist descent because they are essentialist" (Attardo 1994:

49). But it should be repeated that incongruity theories are not in principle incompatible with hostility and release theories.[3]

Incongruity theories account centrally for the cognitive aspect of humor (cf. Suls 1983), not the interpersonal (social, contextual) or psychological aspect. In general, they are based on the concept of two different ideas (meanings, frames, scripts, concepts, tropes, etc.) which are in a constellation of mismatch (opposition, oppositeness, conflict, contrast, contradiction, etc.).

According to Beattie,

> laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them. (1776: 602)

He also realized that incongruity does not necessarily lead to the experience of funniness, but may also evoke "some other emotion of greater authority [...] [which can] bear down this ludicrous emotion" (1776: 682), as he states in the summary of his essay on laughter and ludicrous composition.

Kant's treatise on humor is often quoted as an early representative of incongruity-based theories. Although the first sentence given here is mostly omitted (e.g. Raskin 1985: 31, Attardo 1994: 48) it is the most direct connection of Kant to incongruity theories:

> Es muß in allem, was ein lebhaftes, erschütterndes Lachen erregen soll, etwas Widersinniges sein [...]. Das Lachen ist ein Affekt aus der plötzlichen

---

[3] Although it departs from a discussion of incongruity-based approaches and resembles them in the format of its main hypothesis the GTVH—as also the SSTH—elaborately works out a neutral stand to the three major groups (cf. Raskin 1985: 40f, 131f; Attardo 1994: 332).

Verwandlung einer gespannten Erwartung in nichts.[4] (1790: 225)

In the wake of Kant, Schopenhauer wrote:

> Das LACHEN entsteht jedesmal aus nichts anderem, als aus der plötzlich wahrgenommenen Inkongruenz zwischen einem Begriff und den realen Objekten, die durch ihn, in irgend einer Beziehung, gedacht worden waren, und es ist selbst eben nur der Ausdruck dieser Inkongruenz. Sie tritt oft dadurch hervor, daß zwei oder mehrere reale Objekte durch EINEN Begriff gedacht und seine Identität auf sie übertragen wird;[5] (1859: 102)

Here it is not the *nothing* that the incongruity is resolved to, but the something we do not expect.

Bergson reduces the incongruity to one instance, namely the incongruity between the living and a mechanical automaton imposed on it, "something mechanical encrusted in the living" (1899: 84, quoted in Raskin 1985: 34).

Koestler's defines his influential cognitive concept of bisociation as follows: Bisociation is "the perceiving of a situation or idea in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference" (1964: 35). Its close relation to the concept of script opposition[6] will become clear later. It is also compatible to the isotopy-disjunction model of Greimas, which is discussed and developed at length by Attardo (1994: 60-107) and will be introduced below in connection with the discussion of the joke text (cf. chapter 2.2.2).

Another incongruity-based approach to humor is to treat it as play or metacommunication, i.e. in linguistic terms *non-bona-fide communication*, triggered by a

---

[4] In everything that is intended to arouse a lively and devastating laughter there must be something contradictory [...]. Laughter is an affection arising from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing.
[5] The cause of LAUGHTER in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity. It often emerges when two or more real objects are though through ONE term and its identity is transferred to them.
[6] Originally termed "oppositeness" in Raskin (1985) the concept appears as "opposition" in Attardo and Raskin (1991).

logical paradox (cf. e.g. Mindess 1971, Fry 1963). These approaches have a strong psychological bias and also contain the element of *release*. Incongruity in this context holds for the contrast between the real situation and the simulation in the joke.

Pepicello and Weisberg note that "not all verbal humor seems to contain incongruity the resolution of which will lead to humor, but often the resolution is part of the presentation." (1983: 81). Vogel sees the main problem of incongruity-based theories in their conceived incompatibility with, or denial of, hostility as the constituting element of certain forms of humor (1989: 12). Such exclusive concepts, as advocated already by Beattie, are not taken up here: "though every incongruous combination is not ludicrous, every ludicrous combination is incongruous" (1776: 605).

The further discussion of linguistic incongruity-resolution will take place in the frame of the SSTH (see chapter 3).

2.1.3 Release

When "humor depends on a fixed background of conventional beliefs, attitudes, behaviour" (Monro 1951: 241f) and this background is considered to put constraints on the individual, the contrast to or neutralization of this background through humor may relieve the mind.

Certain elements of the mind are considered more basic and stronger in emotional energy than others. These are the sexual and aggressive forces, and "since sex and viciousness comprise the two major streams of impulse we normally try to control, it should come as no surprise that they fuel our gustiest laughter" (Mindess 1971: 59). This is the core of the release or relief theories.

These centrally psychological approaches have their most prominent

representative in the psychoanalyst Freud, whose work on jokes deserves an in-depth

discussion in the next section because of its determining influence on humor research in

this century.

2.1.4 Freud

The importance of *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (Freud 1905) lies not

so much in the fact that it serves as the theoretical foundation for contemporary humor

research in all disciplines, but that scholars from all fields feel the need to relate their

work directly to processes in the mind. Freud's psychoanalytical work on humor forms

the basis of psychological humor research.

Freud distinguishes two broad classes of humor: abstract and tendentious humor

(cf. 1905: 104ff). He classifies the tendentious form as the earlier in the developmental

history of the human capacity of the comic (1905: 116). The tendentious humor, as a

phenomenon in obscene jokes, is a development from the *Zote* ('dirty joke') as an attempt

of seduction; thereby its tendency is identified (for another distinction involving a

concept of tendentious humor see Nilsen 1988).

On this basis, Freud identifies three forms of tendentious humor: the baring-

obscene ("entblößend-obszön"), the aggressive or hostile, and the cynical (1905: 129).

The common denominator of all tendentious forms of humor is their function, namely to

enable the satisfaction of suppressed desire, the suppressing force being the society or its

internalized norms (1905: 119). This concept is the core of the release-based theories of

humor.

Abstract (*harmlos* 'innocent') humor, in contrast to tendentious humor, is characterized by free motivation, which cannot as easily be analyzed in terms of the release-based theory. Its psycho-economic benefit lies rather in its general ability to protect the nonsensical against the all-too-sensible (1905: 146), to shield the free, playful thought against internal or external criticism.

Apart from the abstract-tendentious distinction other elements relevant for linguistic humor research can be found in Freud, including his typology of joking techniques which structures the first part of his work on jokes. He also identifies one technique of the joke that coincides with the concept of partially overlapping script conflict (cf. section (3.3)): *Doppelsinn* ('double meaning') in the forms of *proper name* vs. *name for a thing*, *metaphorical* vs. *literal meaning*, double meaning proper, i.e. double entendre or puns, ambiguity, and double meaning with allusion (1905: 52f). The unification, i.e. the overlap of the two meanings in a *tertium comparationis*, is then identified as producing the humorous effect.

A concept corresponding to the notion of a non-bona-fide mode of communication (cf. section (3.2.2)) can also be traced back to Freud. He identifies the importance of the switching between both modes, not explicitly referring to modes of communication, but implicitly presupposing them: The deviation from a chosen train of thought, thus combining the diversity of the mind, is always easier than to hold on to a thought (cf. 1905: 142f). This concept has to be seen in the context of 'saving psychic energy' as the central motivation for a joke (cf. 1905: 249).

The factors and predispositions for the humorous pleasure, Raskin refers to repeatedly (e.g. 1985: 12), will also be summarized here as found in Freud (cf. 1905: 231ff):

1. The most favourable condition for the production of comic pleasure is a generally cheerful mood in which one is inclined to laugh and

2. when one expects the comic, is attuned to comic pleasure.

3. Unfavourable conditions arise from the kind of mental activity with which a particular person is occupied at the moment, especially if

4. the attention is focussed precisely on the comparison from which the comic may emerge

5. The comic is greatly interfered with if the situation from which it ought to develop gives rise at the same time to a release of strong affect, but

6. the pleasure can be encouraged by any other pleasurable accompanying circumstance.

2.2   The Joke

This section introduces the narrowed down scope from humor in general to verbal humor and jokes in particular. Jokes as prototypical instances of verbal humor or textual humor are the material for most linguistic humor theory. But in chapter 5, I will join recent ventures on expanding linguistic humor theory to humorous narratives.

It must be noted that other authors quoted here use *verbal* in contrast to *referential* (e.g. Attardo 1994, Nilsen 1988). Verbal humor in this paper refers to all forms of text-oriented humor, both written and spoken, i.e. humor in which language is necessarily involved, in contrast to purely visual (cartoon without words), tactile (tickling), situational, etc. forms of humor. But verbal humor, often also called *linguistic humor*, in the sense of "lexicogrammatical aspects" of humor (Alexander 1997) is too narrow as a

target field for the linguist: "My problem with the category of linguistic humor is the strong implication, if not an explicit statement by its proponents, that linguistics is no good for any other kind of humor" (Raskin 1987: 444).

The internal structure of jokes as conceived by the GTVH—and the SSTH incorporated in it—is the main focus of these two theories which form the basis of this approach. Previous research on jokes is surveyed in this chapter. But to understand the position this author takes on the linguistic conceptualization of jokes the central elements of the GTVH have to be summarized already here: In the frame of the GTVH the joke is understood as informed by Knowledge Resources (KRs). These are: Language (LA), the surface structure of the joke; Narrative Strategy (NS), the narrative genre of the joke; Target (TA), a feature—above all—of tendentious jokes; Situation (SI), the props of the joke; Logical Mechanism (LM), the faulty local logic of the joke; and Script Opposition (SO), the oppositeness constellation of two central interpretations of the joke text.

2.2.1 Context of the Joke

It is one of the central tenets of theorists in all fields of research related to humor that "humor is a social phenomenon" (cf. Raskin, 1985: 59-98). Also Vogel, in her rather broad semiogenetic study, assumes that humor as a phenomenon can be understood only by viewing the social dimension, which involves three roles: the joketeller, the hearer, and the butt (target) of the joke. (cf. 1989: 59ff). As Goldstein (1990: 39) observed, to understand what humor is and how it works seems to be a matter of taking into account what J. L. Austin called "the total speech act in the total speech situation" (Austin 1975: 148). Other theorists attribute the same weight to the joke act and its context: "a theory of humor, like a theory of the person, must always be an interpersonal one in which both the

historical and momentary social field is as important as the focal "comic" event itself."
(Pollio 1983: 217; for a more exhaustive survey see e.g. Apte 1985: 29-148; a summary
in Raskin 1985: 17-19; Attardo 1994: 293-330). But the central part of this joke act is the
joke text itself.

Of course, it cannot be denied that the presentation techniques of the verbal
material of a joke and the mental state of the participants are essential factors eliciting the
funniness inherent in the joke text itself: "A joke told by a skilled narrator is enjoyed
most, while the same joke told clumsily may fall flat." (Apte 1985: 199). Context factors
(which are most often conceptualized as social or psychological) are very important for
the felicity of a joke, but serve only to enhance and elicit the funniness that is already
entailed in the joke text itself. Because laughter can be generated in a solitary individual,
"it seems doubtful that its prime significance is a social one" (Berlyne 1972: 51).

The context of a joke, as part of Austin's total speech situation, can be split into
its co-text, the accompanying verbal material and the con-text, all other factors of its non-
linguistic environment (cf. Attardo 1994: 295). Context, standing for both co- and con-
text, is assumed to be of second-rate importance for the joke. It is not part of the joke, or
joking act, but only enhancing or reducing the effect of the joke itself.

> From the linguist's point of view, the "use" of humor by the speaker either for
> social criticism, or for the release of taboo instincts, is irrelevant, because it does
> not affect the "rules" on which a humorous text is built [...]. (Attardo 1990: 443)

The interdependency of all language phenomena with elements that are
traditionally assigned to the field of pragmatics are taken care of by the structure of the
linguistic theories employed. But "a linguistic theory of humor cannot account for non-
linguistic phenomena" (Raskin 1985: 46). It has to relate its findings to them, or when

necessary bring them in accordance with them, but the semantic theories employed here are "non-committal with regard to the psychological and sociological theories of humor" (Attardo 1990: 443).

2.2.2 The Joke Text

Attardo and Chabanne (1992) analyzed jokes as a type of well-formed, self-contained text sharing common features apart from the obvious variation in narrative structures. They identify jokes as micro-narratives with an idealized trifold structure reduced to the most economical form: An introduction, "setting the background against which and in reason of which the punch line appears incongruous" (Attardo and Chabanne 1992: 169), a subsequent dialogue, and the closing punch line.

The punch line has already been identified as a defining element of the joke, and the classic technique to identify a joke's punch line is based on the assumption that it has to occur exclusively in joke-final position (cf. Attardo et al. 1994):

> There is an easy procedure for locating the boundary between build-up and punch. Starting at the end, one finds the shortest terminal sequence, the replacement of which by suitably chosen other words will transform the joke into a nonjoke. (Hockett 1977: 259)

Its possibly multiple structure has already been described above (cf. Hetzron 1991). In connection with the surprise aspect of humor, the tendency toward brevity in jokes, especially their punch lines, has to be mentioned. If not the whole joke, then at least the punch line prefers dialogue format (cf. Oring 1989: 359).

The most comprehensive account for the structure of the joke text, focussing on the linear organization (of the text and its processing), is the Isotopy-Disjunction-Model (IDM) as developed by Attardo (for a summary see Attardo 1994: 60-107). Inspired

mainly by Greimas (1966), Attardo worked out the original concept of isotopies in jokes, the disjunctor and the position of joke elements. A brief summary can be found in the corpus-based study of the organization of the joke text by Attardo et al. (1994: 27f):

The IDM is a text-processing model which is based on the idea that, in a joke, an otherwise "normal" linear processing of the text is disrupted by an "anomalous" element that is peculiar to a joke text. This element is the disjunctor, usually called punch line. It creates the sudden passage from one isotopy (script, reading of the text) to the other. This process is called disambiguation.

The position of this disjunctor is hypothesized (and also empirically verified for 92% of 2,000 jokes examined; cf. Attardo et al. 1994: 40)) as joke-final, indicating its rhematic function. Only five types of verbal material are found in post-punch line position: repetitions of the disjunctor, identification of the speaker who utters the punch line in the joke, explanations of the punch line, adverbials in certain languages, and other punch lines in multiple punch jokes (Attardo et al. 1994: 41). Example (1) is an joke with multiple punch lines and post-punch material ("The sermon was over").

(1)   One day Mrs. Jones went to have a talk with the minister at her church. "Reverend," she said, "I have a problem—my husband keeps falling asleep during your sermons. It's very embarrassing. What should I do?" "I have an idea," said the minister. "Take this hatpin with you. I'll be able to tell when Mr. Jones is sleeping, and I will motion to you at specific times. When I motion, you give him a good poke in the leg with he pin." In church the following Sunday, Mr. Jones dozed off. Noticing this, the preacher put his plan to work. "... And who made the ultimate sacrifice for you?" he said, nodding to Mrs. Jones. "Jesus!" cried Mr. Jones as his wife jabbed him in the leg with the hatpin. "Yes, you are right, Mr. Jones," said the minister. Soon, Mr. Jones nodded off again. Again, the minister noticed. "Who is your redeemer?" he asked the congregation, motioning towards Mrs. Jones. "God!" cried out Mr. Jones as he was stuck again with the hatpin. "Right again, Mr. Jones," said the minister, smiling and continuing his sermon. Before long, Mr. Jones dozed off again. However, this time the minister didn't notice. As he picked up the tempo of his sermon, he made a few motions that Mrs. Jones mistook as signals to wake her husband again. She was just sticking her

husband with the hatpin again when the minister asked, "... And what did Eve say to Adam after she bore him his 99th son?" Mr. Jones shrieked, "You stick that goddamned thing in me one more time and I'll break it off and shove it up your ass!!!!" The sermon was over.

More probably, the post-punch "The sermon was over." is just bad joke-telling. To assign a rhematic function to the disjunctor is problematic, insofar as the disambiguated isotopy is generally taken as implicit and the punch just as the tool to make the implicature indirectly explicit (cf. Fry 1963: 152).

In verbal (linguistic, poetic) jokes (in contrast to referential jokes) an additional necessary element is identified, namely a lexicalized connector which "can be given two distinct readings" (Attardo et al. 1994: 28). The disjunctor causes the passage from one reading to the other after triggering the backtracking of the connector. Thus the connector cannot follow the disjunctor, but must either precede it or (in fewer cases) be identical with it (cf. Attardo et al. 1994: 47f). Closer inspection of the joke text is reserved for the discussion of the GTVH in chapter 4.

3. The Semantic Script Theory of Humor

3.1 Introduction

Some general observations on humor, verbal humor, jokes, and the linguistic interest in these topics had to precede and introduce this chapter to narrow down the scope. A certain degree of redundancy in both the theoretical discussion and the establishment of the object of research will be detected by the reader. This is due to the format of the presentation of the SSTH and GTVH as developed by their authors and the fact that the SSTH and its theoretical foundation is to be understood as the precursor of the GTVH and the format of its theory.

Raskin's semantic theory must be seen in connection with his overall interest in frame/script semantics (cf. Raskin 1981). The earliest mention of the SSTH is to be found in Raskin (1979). The main source for a discussion of its elaborate structure and elements is Raskin (1985), where he identifies one of the major flaws of many of the previous, often essayist, works on humor as follows:

> The only problem with many [...] applications was that there was no **linguistic problem** they were actually solving. [...] The legitimate applications are [...] **problem-oriented** [...]. The ill-advised applications are basically **method-oriented**. [...] It follows then that if linguistics is to be applied to humor, i.e. linguistics is the source field and the study of humor the target field [...] then the problems, questions and needs should come from humor [...]. (Raskin 1985: 52f)

To do justice to this problem he set up a theory, well-founded in linguistics, to show what is semantically necessary and sufficient for a text to be felicitous as a joke, i.e. to be perceived as funny. This script-based semantic theory consists of two components, the lexicon and combinatorial rules. This two-fold format of Raskin's theory follows the Generative Grammar as devised by Chomsky (1965). There Chomsky claims the existence of innate universals, that are specified, when learning a language: transformational rules, and substantive universals (cf. Chomsky 1965: 29ff). That is, of course, not to say that 'generative' refers to the psychogenesis of language, no more than does the SSTH to the psychogenesis of a joke. The way in which the lexicon of the script-based semantic theory accounts for the meaning of a sentence is rather "compatible with the view that meaning is use" (Raskin 1985: 79). This corresponds to Raskin's preliminary statement that the investigation of meaning must always consider the context, which contributes to the specification of the inherent meaning of a sentence (ibid.). One of the central efforts for the construction of scripts is to incorporate as much context into them as possible, without making them too vague as a concept.

In addition to the operations of his earlier concept of semantic recursion, Raskin introduces the following requirements for a theory, in order to enable the combinatorial rules to produce different interpretations "for an ambiguous sentence, no interpretation for an anomalous sentence, and identical interpretations for paraphrases" (Raskin 1985: 79):

1. detect and mark sources of ambiguity
2. disambiguate such a sentence in its context
3. detect and mark sources of anomaly
4. produce interpretations of deviant sentences
5. produce associations
6. ask for more information if the interpretation requires it
7. detect and interpret (potential) implicatures
8. discover presuppositions
9. characterize the possible world that is the setting for the contents of the sentence.

All these operations have to function on the background that they have to produce "a description of the ideal speaker-hearer's intrinsic competence" (Chomsky 1965: 4).

The approach of what Raskin calls "autonomous semantics" (1985: 66), related to Chomsky's (et al.) Standard Theory, draws a line between semantic performance studied by pragmatics and semantic competence studied by semantics proper. The approach of "non-autonomous semantics," on the other hand, related to Chomsky's (et al.) later Revised Extended Standard Theory emphasizes the interdependence of both fields and their foundation on the same principles.

Raskin's theory, though it "recognizes the existence of the boundary between our knowledge of language and our knowledge of the world," still tries to "account for the meaning of every sentence in every context" (1985: 67). Employing Chomsky, Raskin poses as the primary goal of a semantic theory the ability "to model the semantic

competence of the native speaker" (1985: 59), that is for Chomsky the feature of "grammaticalness"[7] (e.g.1965: 75ff).

For Raskin, it is the humor competence of the idealized native speaker that accounts for the funniness of a given text. This holds regardless of the scope a humor theory may take, namely to incorporate a context of whatever theoretical extension into its design or to consider only the joke text. The advantage of the SSTH in this context is exactly to include elements of the linguistically accessible context in the format of his scripts.

Fodor and Katz based their theory on the features of ambiguity, semantic normalcy and paraphrase (1964). As Raskin calls it "the first semantic theory in [his] defined sense of linguistic theory" (1985: 60), he clearly states the dependence of his approach on that theory, namely the following four semantic abilities: 1. determine the number of readings, and 2. the contents of the reading for a sentence, 3. detect anomalies and 4. perceive paraphrase relations (cf. ibid.). Raskin adds, that this theory, originally designed to study sentences in isolation, should be used, including the obvious context (cf. Grice 1975), which might be part of a powerful lexicon that also incorporates encyclopedic knowledge, namely the proposed script-based lexicon. Obvious context must be seen as neutral context with regards to the psychological and social disposition of the participants of the humor act.

For the justification of his theory Raskin relies on the notions of descriptive and explanatory adequacy as postulated by Chomsky. In the methodological preliminaries to his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* Chomsky defines:

---

[7] The term appears in Raskin—like in most recent authors—as "grammaticality" (e.g. 1985: 48, 50) and will therefore

A grammar [...] is descriptively adequate to the extent that it correctly describes the intrinsic competence of the idealized native speaker, also accounting for ambiguity, that is not conscious to the speaker. Thus, on the external level of descriptive adequacy the grammar is justified to the extent that it describes its object, namely the linguistic intuition of the native speaker, on grounds of correspondence to linguistic fact. (1965: 24ff)

Chomsky adds that when "a linguistic theory succeeds in selecting a descriptively adequate grammar on the basis of primary linguistic data, we can say that it meets the condition of explanatory adequacy" (ibid.). To the evaluation procedures Chomsky explains that "general assumptions about the nature of language should be formulated from which particular features [...] can de deduced" (1965: 46). This deductive approach towards explanatory adequacy aims mainly at the concept of language universals, but helps to clarify the empirical nature and tendency towards generalization of both Chomsky's and Raskin's semantic theories.

One should, of course, not fail to notice, that apart from evaluation procedures, Chomsky prefers the "fairly productive" rationalist approach, as "the general features of language structure reflect, not so much one's experience, but rather the general character of one's capacity to acquire knowledge" (1965: 59).

The mechanism to justify the format and contents of scripts is to show that deviant sentences occur if one element of his theory is not taken into account (cf. Raskin 1985: 94). Thus, "the inclusion of an element of semantic information in a script is considered justified if there exists a sentence such that it contradicts this element of the script and is deviant for this reason alone" (1985: 95). This addresses the resolution problem, namely the possibility to define scripts from non-scripts. The finiteness problem, the solution of which clearly goes beyond the scope of Chomsky's claim (cf.

---

be preferred over the original "grammaticalness" to avoid confusion.

1965: 19) is regarded by Raskin in three aspects: The world is infinite, so no theory based on scripts incorporating the world can be finite, i.e. can be a theory at all. But: 1. certain otherwise not satisfactorily solvable problems (e.g. ambiguity) can be solved by the script theory; 2. in the study of languages for special purposes scripts can incorporate the whole world and 3. scripts can be discovered in "comparing the interpretation of a sentence on the basis of an 'ordinary' lexicon and the semantic/pragmatic meaning actually perceived by the speaker" (Raskin 1985: 98).

3.2   Elements of Contextual Semantics

The central development towards Raskin's semantic theory is the expansion of the lexicon through elements other than the constituents of a sentence and their combination which were originally defined as extralexical. But he also employs elements outside the, otherwise very comprehensive, concept of lexicon in his script approach.

Raskin introduces the concept of semantic recursion to account for the role that the preceding co-text plays: "(i) the degree of understanding of the previous discourse (if any) [and] (ii) the quantity of pertinent information the hearer possesses" (1985: 71). This quantitatively variable function is performed through different operations: 1. semantic recursion triggers: defining all non-self-sufficient elements of the sentence, i.e. relating outside information to the sentence; 2. relating the sentence to the already interpreted sentence(s) of the discourse and 3. relating it to the pertinent information not contained in the previous discourse (cf. Raskin 1985: 71).

Normally, at least some of the recursion triggers introduced in 1. occur in a sentence and, apart from "non-indexical" sentences containing no such trigger, sentences are considered to be interpretable only through these recursion triggers. Raskin discerns

two kinds (cf. 1985: 72ff): *grammatical triggers*, e.g. pronouns and other, usually called deictic (cf. Levinson 1983: 54ff), elements, providing the simplest form of recursion triggers; and *lexical triggers*, being more complex and eliciting additional information through their lexical meaning.

Other repositories of extralexical information, such as the concepts introduced as conversational postulates, Grice's implicature, or Searle's indirect speech acts, are included by Raskin in the format of his semantic theory, namely the second component beside the exhausting concept of lexicon: the combinatorial rules (cf. Section (3.2.2)).

3.2.1 Script-Based Lexicon

Earlier script-based approaches had a different focus than Raskin's survey and differ significantly from Raskin's use of the term 'script' in format and design as well as in content. Yet, Schank and Abelson's work in cognitive science (1977), combining the fields of artificial intelligence and psychology, has an impact on the notion of script, as discussed here, and has therefore to be examined more closely. Raskin himself detects that "controlling the degree of understanding of a computer system using scripts is, in fact, hardly distinguishable from the problem of script justification as it has been dealt with here" (1985: 96).

The focus of Schank and Abelson's approach coincides with that of Raskin and the one used here in that it intends to investigate the nature and application of knowledge that is "representable verbally" (Schank and Abelson 1977: 5). To this purpose a script is considered to include and combine much more information than most other concepts.

The investigation of artificial intelligence (as the investigation of natural intelligence) must be interdisciplinary. Scripts can serve to bridge the traditionally

postulated gap between semantics and pragmatics, just as Schank and Abelson aim to fit

knowledge of (not defined) multi-faceted format into their concept of script, paying no

special attention to the difference of form or content of the embodied data (Schank and

Abelson 1977: 4); this partial unification of form and content, linguistic and selected

'extra-linguistic' information (co-text and con-text), being the most central advantage of

script-based approaches, serves to produce programs that enable a computer to

'understand.'

This advantage of scripts—as well as Fillmore's frames (cf. Fillmore 1985)—is

also acknowledged by Lakoff who considers them to be in accordance with his main

thesis, namely, "that we organize our knowledge by means of structures called idealized

cognitive models (ICMs)" (1987: 68). He quotes Schank and Abelson's scripts in the

format put forth in 1977 as an example of conceptually productive and theoretically

adequate ICMs, for which prototypicality also holds.

Individual and collective knowledge are distinguished by Schank and Abelson,

and special respect is paid to common sense and expressions of belief systems like

religions (1977: 4). In terms of psychic representation, scripts are considered entities for

the organization of episodic memory, built around actual experiences (Schank and

Abelson 1977: 18), thus, specific rather than general knowledge is the concern of Schank

and Abelson. They consider a script to "form the basis [...] to the representation of certain

complex nouns" that do not have to be mentioned explicitly. The format in which a script

is symbolized in Schank and Abelson (1977: 45f) is similarly structured as Raskin's

representation and appears correspondingly simplified; Different notions of domain and

internal structure can be distinguished:

(2)   RESTAURANT
       Track: Coffee Shop
       Props: Tables, Menu, Food, Check, Money
       Roles: Customer (S), Waiter, Cook, Cashier, Owner (O)
       Entry Cond.:   S is hungry, S has money
       Results: S has less money, O has more money, S is not hungry

The scene structure of the RESTAURANT script is left out in example (2), as it remains

unintelligible without the—otherwise not relevant—notion of Conceptual Dependency

(cf. Schank and Abelson 1977: 14ff).

Scripts are triggered by different kinds of "script headers" (Schank and Abelson

1977: 47ff). If only this kind of pointer to the script is mentally available it is called a

"fleeting script." If it is triggered at least twice, it is "instantiated" (ibid.): the whole script

is available and the necessary slots are filled, either with given or with inferred material.

The three forms of header comprise: 1. Precondition Header, which triggers the script

through mention of an entry condition ('S is hungry'); 2. Instrumental Header, which

triggers a script, that otherwise only serves as background for another script; 3. Locale

Header, which triggers the script through mention of the venue at which the scene of the

script takes place (Schank and Abelson 1977: 49f). These mechanisms are considered

relevant for the accuracy of a semantic script theory.

Certain forms of interference, distractions and especially interactions of scripts

that point at possible humorous effects are regarded in Schank and Abelson (1977: 51ff),

partly corresponding to the concept of two opposite, overlapping scripts found in Raskin:

A 'script in abeyance' is a script instantiated, when another script has been fully triggered

but not completed before. Two active scripts can compete for incoming information as to

which of them this information belongs, and whose slots may be filled by it. A case

where humorous script-conflict in Raskin's sense can occur, is when the incoming

information can be filled into both competing scripts, resulting in "scriptal ambiguity" (Schank and Abelson 1977: 59). One such case, where two simultaneous, different personal scripts compete, is discussed explicitly in connection with humor (ibid.). And this case is a clearly more complex form of overlapping script-oppositeness than the instances discussed in Raskin, pointing at the proposed flexibility of his theory.

Corresponding to Schank and Abelson, Raskin distinguishes common-sense scripts from individual scripts. In Raskin's theory, a script "simplistically, represents a domain of the continuous graph" made up by all scripts of a language, while the graph consists of "lexical nodes and semantic links between them" (Raskin 1985: 81). The nodes carry the lexical entries, thus providing the access to the scripts as the entries are the triggers. A script is a certain domain of this graph with a certain range and including several lexical entries and the links between them. These semantic links provide the extra-lexical, quasi-encyclopedic aspect of the script-based lexicon. Every word can then be "characterized by a limited domain of the continuous semantic graph" (Raskin 1985: 84).

Two further important features of a script are the distance and the emphasis of the nodes (Raskin 1985: 82). The distance between two or more entries quantitatively represents the strength of connection between them and the availability of these entries for the memory, once the script is instantiated. Proximity in this connection also means the necessity for lexically empty, but semantically linked nodes to be filled as a slot of the script. The status of certain nodes with respect to others, qualitatively evaluates the connection between them with respect to the meaning that is in question.

Further investigation into Raskin's relatively complex notion of a script, as explained above, does not seem appropriate here. Also Raskin explains that "for the purposes of the analysis of humor here, the evoked domain can be limited to the word-itself node and to one 'circle' of surrounding nodes" (Raskin 1985: 84). He evidently employs a greatly simplified, streamlined and discretized format of script characterized by few essential links as exemplified by the DOCTOR script below. It is quoted here in full for purposes of transparency in view of the scarcity of illuminating examples cited so far:

(3)   DOCTOR
        Subject: [+Human] [+Adult]
        Activity: > Study medicine
                = Receive patients:
                        patient comes or doctor visits
                        doctor listens to complaints
                        doctor examines patient
                = Cure disease:
                        doctor diagnoses disease
                        doctor prescribes treatment
                = (Take patient's money)
        Place: > Medical School
                = Hospital or doctor's office
        Time: > Many years
                = Every day and immediately
        Condition: Physical Contact
        (Raskin 1985: 85)

3.2.2 Combinatorial Rules

The function of this second element of Raskin's semantic theory is "to combine the scripts evoked by the words of the sentence into one [if unambiguous] or more [if ambiguous] compatible combinations" (Raskin 1985: 86), that determine the semantic interpretation. The words 'colorful ball,' for example, can be taken to evoke two scripts each—1a: color, 1b: gay, 2a: round object, 2b: assembly—combining into $2^2 = 4$ possible

combinations. The combinatorial rules then filter out two combinations which are compatible: 'round object with color' and 'gay assembly'. Before this semantic operation takes place, the rules will check for syntactically inappropriate scripts and rule them out.

The first stage of operation then is to determine the mode of communication, that is bona-fide vs. non-bona-fide. In the bona-fide mode the combinatorial rules will not aim to come up with all possible ambiguities, but disambiguate a sentence to exactly one meaning using one combination of the unmarked scripts and ruling out all potential marked combinations.

At the second stage the rules check whether the evoked scripts "involve any conditions on their use and if so, whether these conditions are satisfied" (Raskin 1985: 89). According to the results of this operation, the scripts will be marked again, presuppositions and inferences generated and stored. Finally, the semantic interpretation produced in this way is compared to 'world information' (thereby potentially disambiguating sentences if the rules failed to do it so far) and then added to the information already stored. In non-bona-fide communication the combinatorial rules will "modify their format with regard to the operations described above and also assume additional responsibilities" (Raskin 1985: 92).

3.3 Main Hypothesis of the SSTH

The compatibility with two scripts, called overlap, is proposed as the necessary condition and the opposition of these scripts as the sufficient condition for a text to be funny. This corresponds to the observation within the incongruity-resolution theories, that incongruity is a necessary feature of humor, but its resolution (for jokes in the punch line) is the sufficient element (see above, cf. also Attardo 1997). Raskin puts it this way:

(4)   **A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if[f] both of the [following] conditions are satisfied:**
(i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts
(ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite (1985: 99)

Three different forms of overlap are considered essential: partial overlap, as found, in Raskin's example below; full overlap, which occurs very seldom as one script is usually more apt for incoming new information; and truly partial overlap. The latter form holds for the greater number of cases of script overlap. What is typical here is that once two scripts are evoked, some parts of the text remain completely incompatible with one of them (Raskin 1985: 106).

Script oppositeness is a matter of situational, contextual, or local antonyms. Oppositeness can therefore be defined and detected by the combinatorial rules in the semantic links, or rather 'anti-links.' The most likely kind of link constituting oppositeness is the binary category "real vs. unreal" (Raskin 1985: 113). The lexical entry x in the center of the domain that is evoked as one script is semantically linked to an entry non-x or y of (often also trigger for) the opposite script. This basic opposition can be actual vs. non-actual situation, or normal vs. abnormal state of affairs, or possible vs. impossible situation. This two-fold hierarchy of real/unreal opposition on the highest level and actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal, and possible/impossible oppositions as instantiations of the real/unreal level, is supplemented by a third level of most concrete pairs of opposition. Typical pairs of opposite scripts as described on this level are for example (Raskin 1985: 107): doctor vs. lover; sex vs. impotence; wise vs. foolish. This tripartite hierarchy of script oppositeness from abstract concept and type of instantiation to concrete instance also holds for the other KRs that will be elaborated in the next section.

The oppositeness of scripts is a matter of degree and can be represented as having a certain distance on the continuous graph introduced above. Clear negations are relatively closely linked, cases of accidental polysemy or homonymy, on the other hand, are more distant (cf. Raskin 1985: 113). Not all forms of opposition are funny. Table (1) shows the relations of overlap and opposition for scripts (cf. Attardo 1994: 204).

scripts	opposed	non-opposed
overlapping	humor	metaphor, allegory, figurative, mythical, allusive, obscure
non-overlapping	conflict (possibly tragic)	plain narrative

Table (1): constellations of script opposition

Raskin examines triggers that provide a means to detect the switch from one script to another, taking for granted that the first script must be instantiated. This semantic script-switch trigger corresponds to the punch line of the joke and is often verbalized in, or as, the punch line itself. He identifies two sorts of semantic script-switch triggers that can be found in simple jokes: ambiguity or contradiction; hence his emphasis on the disambiguating capacity for a semantic theory. As joke-telling is a form of non-bona-fide communication, ambiguity need not be reduced to one unmarked interpretation only, but other interpretations (scripts) evoked by the ambiguity may be instantiated. The resulting conflict is not so much a blocking barrier, but the sufficient oppositeness for a text to be funny.

Raskin distinguishes regular ambiguity, e.g. 'gentleman' as 'man' vs. 'man of quality' and figurative ambiguity, e.g. 'innocence' as 'justice' vs. 'chastity,' often reinforced by an auxiliary trigger; syntactic ambiguity, e.g. 'with' heading a prepositional phrase either containing an agent 'hand' or an instrument 'spoon' (see section (5.3.4.5)),

and situational ambiguity, where incoming information both triggers the new script and continues the original one. Quasi-ambiguity can be found in knock-knock jokes, like

(5)   Knock Knock. Who's there? Cantaloupe. Cantaloupe who? Can't elope
        tonight—Dad's got the car. (from Pepicello and Weisberg 1983: 67)

based "on purely phonetical and not semantical relations" (Raskin 1985: 116).

A second, more complicated type of trigger is the contradiction trigger, which creates the same effect, "namely, a second interpretation retroactively imposed on the whole text preceding the trigger as well as on the text following it" (ibid.). Often the second script has been prepared for and can thus be identified more easily, as the auxiliary trigger is detected *a posteriori*, which is considered an important enhancer for the comical effect.

3.4   Conclusion: Analysis of a Sample Joke

Although the concept and mechanisms of the script-based humor theory have been outlined, the analysis of a sample joke Raskin provides will be looked into briefly. This way, the theory can be examined in operation. The following components of the script-based analysis are used:

(i)   A continuous lexical graph with domains corresponding to the lexical
        entries [...]
(ii)   Combinatorial rules combining those domains (scripts) into one or more
        larger scripts compatible with the text
(iii)   A system for marking certain scripts as opposite
(Raskin 1985: 118)

The search strategy built into the combinatorial rules is given as follows: After having detected that a text cannot be interpreted in the bona-fide mode of communication, the non-bona-fide mode is adopted, and the rules "start looking for a

competing script analysis of the entire text or part thereof in view of the Main

Hypothesis" (Raskin 1985: 125):

(iv)   Go back to the text and, beginning from the end, look for another script or node evoked by more than one word [...]

(v)   Check the compatibility of the discovered additional common script with at least a part of the text [...]

(vi)   Go to the oppositeness instructions and check the suitability of one of them for the obtained pair of scripts, i.e. the one compatible with the first interpretation of the text and the script discovered in (ii) [...]

(vii)   Recognize the analyzed text as a joke characterized by the opposition of the type determined in (vi) between the two obtained scripts

[the case of failure of this strategy is omitted here]

The analysis of the joke

(6)   "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No", the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in."

along these lines will then render the following result:

(7)   Text: Joke, Script 1: MEDICAL, Script 2: ADULTERY, Type of oppositeness: Actual/Non-actual, Sex-related
(cf. Raskin 1985: 127)

4. The General Theory of Verbal Humor

4.1 Introduction

After his rather exhaustive work on the Semantic Script Theory of Humor Raskin also co-

authored the article that expands the SSTH into the General Theory of Verbal Humor[8]

(GTVH) (Attardo and Raskin 1991). Aiming at a general theory it is the revised blend of

Raskin's SSTH (Raskin 1985) and Attardo's five-level joke representation model

(Attardo 1989). This also indicates that its author agrees with Attardo that the SSTH is

well worth further revision and elaboration: "there is little contention that the SSTH is the

most powerful epistemologically and promising theory available in the field of linguistic-based humor research" (Attardo 1994: 207). The major deficiency of the SSTH must be seen in its restriction to one—even if the most important—aspect of jokes in particular and humor in general.

While the SSTH is expressly aimed at humor in general, the GTVH already in its title restricts itself to verbal[9] humor. "Whereas the SSTH was a "semantic" theory of humor, the GTVH is a linguistic theory "at large," that is, it includes other areas of linguistics as well, including, most notably, textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity, and pragmatics" (Attardo 1994: 222). Thus, according to Attardo, the GTVH is meant to account for "the semantic aspect of humor as well as all its other linguistic (and certain non-linguistic) features" (1994: 229). This broadening is achieved through the introduction of Knowledge Resources (KR) and the focus on joke similarity which, on the other hand, burdens new restrictions on the theory.

The GTVH is developed in the 1991 article of Attardo and Raskin and was later empirically applied to perceived joke similarity (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin: 1993). Six KRs informing the joke are hypothesized as well as a hierarchy among them, from deepest, most abstract, to closest to the surface text of the joke. The center of the 1991 article is the theoretical and metatheoretical evaluation of the proposed theory including its relation to former theories of humor in general and verbal humor as a subject of linguistic research in particular, as well as research in various related academic disciplines.

---

[8] Interestingly, the GTVH has met less attention within humor research since its inception in 1991 than the SSTH, reference to which can be found in virtually all Anglo-American linguistic and non-linguistic works on humor to this day.

Starting from an in-depth presentation of the six KRs, the theoretical foundation of the GTVH will also be repeated here. The reformulation of the hierarchy of the KRs, discussed in a more recent article by Ruch, Attardo and Raskin (1993), will be given special attention as this hierarchy is by far the most essential feature of the GTVH, yet also worthiest of discussion. Another important source for the evaluation of the GTVH is the sixth chapter of Attardo's exhaustive overview *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994: 195-227) which deals exclusively with the SSTH and its revisions, presenting the GTVH as the main advance from Raskin's original theory. The last publication intended as an elaboration on the SSTH/GTVH is Attardo (1997). Here Attardo focuses on the close relation to cognitive theories by working out the parallel mechanisms of a proposed setup-incongruity-resolution model (SIR) to the (partially modified) notions of script overlap-script opposition-logical mechanism of the GTVH. Further expansions in the frame of this theory departs significantly from it. These include the recent work on humorous narratives (see chapters 6 and 7, and Attardo (1998), Attardo (2000), Sala (2000)), as well as chapter 5 here, which in turn is firmly embedded into the GTVH.

The GTVH "postulates a hierarchical model of joke representation consisting of six levels and an indexed taxonomy of joke variance and invariance" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 293f). The dependency of perceived joke similarity, i.e. low variance between an anchor joke and a variant of it, is tested in the analysis of seven sample jokes which are considered related variants. The relation between these jokes can be characterized by six parameters of variance which are the basis of the KRs. The KRs represent the levels of

---

[9] As mentioned above, in this context *verbal* is not meant in contrast to *referential*, but to *non-verbal*.

the hierarchy postulated by the GTVH. These six KRs, namely script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language are thus put forward.

4.2   Knowledge Resources

To enlighten this discussion of the GTVH with an example the seven jokes employed by Attardo and Raskin to develop their hierarchy of Knowledge Resources are given as part of the text (cf. 1991: 295):

(8)   How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.

(9)   The number of Poles it takes to screw in a light bulb? Five. One holds the bulb and four turn the table.

(10)   It takes five Poles to screw in a light bulb: one to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.

(11)   How many Irishmen does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.

(12)   How many Poles does it take to wash a car? Two. One to hold the sponge and one to move the car back and forth.

(13)   How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to look for the right screwdriver.

(14)   How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five. One to take his shoes off, get on the table, and screw in the light bulb, and four to wave the air deodorants to kill his foot odor.

These jokes are obviously more or less similar in that they share certain features, but also differ from each other in characteristic ways. Taking the well-worn joke (8) as the anchor the variance in comparison to the six other, partly made-up, jokes can be summarized as follows: (8) and (9) are only different ways of telling the same joke; (10) is a statement instead of a riddle; (11) substitutes *Irishmen* for *Poles*; (12) is about washing a car in an absurd fashion instead of screwing in a light bulb; and (13) does not employ the American stupidity cliché about Poles, but the uncleanliness stereotype. The

perceived similarity of the jokes is postulated as low between (8)-(10) and high between (8) and (11)-(13) (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 297).

Six parameters of joke difference are identified in the analysis of the seven jokes (and, vice versa, the seven jokes—one as anchor and six variants—were chosen to illustrate these six parameters):

4.2.1 Language (LA)

Joke (9) can be considered a paraphrase of joke (8). The concept of paraphrase is based on idealized equivalence of meaning, which cannot be achieved by any two texts with even the slightest difference, only in a supposed deep structure. Nevertheless a very high degree of similarity between two jokes can be considered a paraphrase when the competence of native speakers leads them to this conclusion. Attardo and Raskin identify as a good empirical criterion for the detection of a paraphrase relation between jokes this well-known phenomenon (1991: 298): When hearing a joke one considers it to be known although one has heard it in a different wording, and, for example, either interrupts the teller or experiences the joke as not funny. Although this criterion is valid for all parameters of joke difference, similarity is perceived more often, when variance exists only in the wording or phrasing of a joke.

According to Attardo and Raskin "all choices at the phonetic, phonologic, morphophonemic, morphologic, lexic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels of language" (1991: 298) belong to the parameter LA.

It is the surface structure of the joke that is characterized by LA. This KR is also responsible for the wording and placement of the punch line. But as the punch line is the center of a joke, all other parameters work toward it as well.

4.2.2 Narrative Strategy (NS)

This parameter refers to "the genre, or rather microgenre as it were of the joke" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 300). As regards the NS, joke (10) differs from joke (8) in that it is an expository instead of a (pseudo-)riddle. The conscious nonredundancy, i.e. the deliberate violation of Gricean maxims by leaving certain slots unfilled and information implicit, is also to be seen part of a NS. It needs to be mentioned here that the subgenres of jokes are not unidimensionally definable according to their NS only.

4.2.3 Target (TA)

Not all jokes necessarily need a target; it is an optional feature. But there are subgenres of jokes that can be defined through their targets, e.g. ethnic and political jokes. Targets are mostly groups, or individuals representing groups, that are associated with a fictional, stereotyped cliché. Joke (11) differs from joke (8) in that it targets *Irishmen* instead of *Poles*. For further discussion see section (2.1.4) on Freud's distinction between tendentious and non-tendentious humor.

4.2.4 Situation (SI)

The situation of a joke is what the joke is about, the props it contains, namely changing a light bulb in joke (8) in contrast to washing a car in joke (13). This parameter is very closely related and dependent on the following two, LM and SO, so that further discussion of their nature and hierarchy is already part of the first article on the GTVH (Attardo and Raskin 1991) as well as later discussions (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993) and will therefore be examined more closely later in this chapter.

4.2.5 Logical Mechanism (LM)

Most jokes employ a faulty logic in their plot. This "local logic" (Ziv 1984) often accounts for the incongruity and describes the constellation of the scripts. Therefore it is related closely to the actual/non-actual script opposition described by Raskin (see section (3.3)).

Six of the seven sample jokes employ the well-documented figure-ground reversal, or trajector-landmark reversal (cf. Langacker 1987: 231-43). In these jokes the ground is the static environment including the table and the figure is the light bulb which should be screwed in by turning it in its socket. Turning the static environment instead of the light bulb reverses figure and ground. Joke (13) differs from the others in that not figure-ground reversal is employed, but false analogy based on punning (*screw in*, *screwdriver*).

For further discussion of this KR see chapter 5, which is devoted exclusively to its elaboration.

4.2.6 Script Opposition (SO)

The GTVH incorporates the main hypothesis of the SSTH in a slightly different format, but only under this parameter. Script *opposition* is obviously identical to what Raskin (1985) referred to as script *oppositeness*. A script is reduced for the GTVH to "an interpretation of the text of a joke" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 308). This is an elegantly streamlined version of the rather complex notion which Raskin (1985) originally proposed, which itself was a simplification of earlier concepts of script (see section (3.2.1)). In order not to lose the theoretical foundation the more complex version of scripts with its implications on the incorporation of encyclopedic knowledge into the

lexicon must be kept in mind. Another difference to the original SSTH is the explicit ordering of script opposition in three levels, which the SSTH has implicitly postulated itself (cf. section (3.3)): The most abstract level of opposition is real vs. unreal, which may take on three different forms: actual vs. nonactual, normal vs. abnormal, and possible vs. impossible. These three oppositions, for their part, can be manifested in several oppositions as, for example, good vs. bad, sex vs. chastity, life vs. death. This lowest level in itself contains hierarchies, in which good vs. bad is higher and includes clever/dumb, life/death, etc.

A script opposition can be described in concrete terms as dumb/nondumb for jokes (8) - (12) and as clean/dirty for joke (13). All these oppositions are of the good/bad type, and normal/abnormal on the more abstract level.

The main hypothesis, namely the compatibility of the joke text with two overlapping opposite scripts, and the structure of the two elements of the SSTH, namely the combinatorial rules and the script-based lexicon, have been discussed exhaustively above (section (3.3)).

For these KRs the contrasting types of instances we have met in the discussion of jokes (8) to (14) can be listed:

SO:	real/unreal	as normal/abnormal	as dumb/nondumb	vs.
	real/unreal	as normal/abnormal	as clean/dirty	
LM:	figure-ground reversal			vs.
	false analogy			
SI:	light bulb changing			vs.
	car washing			
TA:	Poles			vs.
	Irishmen			

NS: (pseudo-)riddle   vs.
             expository

Accordingly, the GTVH representation of these jokes, highlighting the deviating KRs for

jokes (9) to (14) with italics, are:

(8)   {dumb/nondumb, figure-ground reversal, light bulb changing, Poles, (pseudo-) riddling, LA}

(9)   {dumb/nondumb, figure-ground reversal, light bulb changing, Poles, (pseudo-) riddling, *LA*}

(10) {dumb/nondumb, figure-ground reversal, light bulb changing, Poles, *expository*, LA}

(11) {dumb/nondumb, figure-ground reversal, light bulb changing, *Irishmen*, (pseudo-) riddling, LA}

(12) {dumb/nondumb, figure-ground reversal, *car washing*, Poles, (pseudo-) riddling, LA}

(13) {dumb/nondumb, *false analogy*, light bulb changing, Poles, (pseudo-) riddling, LA}

(14) {*clean/dirty*, figure-ground reversal, light bulb changing, Poles, (pseudo-) riddling, LA}

4.3   Hierarchy of the Knowledge Resources

The discussion of the KR parameters will make clear, that neither their boundaries are

fixed nor is their overall number. But for the focus of the GTVH the verbal material

employed in humor production and its influence on the perceived funniness of jokes must

be theoretically structured, regardless of "the enormous variability of situations and

performance-related factors" (Hofstadter and Gabora 1989: 437f). This entails necessarily

the simplification of the real joke situation in terms of the KRs and the exclusion of the

contextual joke presentation techniques which will be discussed by this linguistic approach only in the way in which they are coded as part of the joke text.

Attardo's five-level joke representation model organizes the levels—from most abstract to most concrete—as follows (cf. Attardo and Raskin 1991: 310):

5	Basic	Script opposition (dumb/nondumb) and logical mechanism (figure-ground)
4	Template	Juxtaposing: (dumb/nondumb and figure-ground reversal)
3	Target + Sit.	Selected: (Poles + light bulb changing)
2	Language	Selected: words, syntax, sentence line-up, etc.
1	Surface	Result: text (of joke (8))

The brackets indicate the slot-fillers and choices that are made in joke (8).

Somewhat clumsily mainstream linguistics is identified with generative Chomskyan approaches, when it is claimed that

> the ordering of the levels is intuitively clear for a linguist because it follows the meaning-to-sound scheme of underlying representations of the sentence, dominant in contemporary linguistic theory (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 311)

The generative aspect of the hierarchy—putting most abstract, deepest levels on top, transformation rules and resources lower, and the surface joke lowest—is not to be misunderstood as an account for the actual process by which a joker produces a joke. The close relation of the discussed theories to the Generative Approaches has been discussed in detail in section (3.1).

The problems of this tentative ordering of the levels are tackled by applying two logical operations: "The Roseanne Barr rule, or the wider you are, the higher up you go" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 315) and "The Donald Trump rule, or stop the flow?—Down

you go!" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 317). The criterion for the abstract hierarchical

ordering of the KRs is the influence they have on each other. As Wenzel observes:

> Wie die Pointierung letztlich vom Zusammenspiel aller Schichten und
> Dimensionen des jeweiligen Textes beeinflußt wird, so beeinflußt sie ihrerseits
> auch dessen kognitives Potential: Die der Pointierung dienenden Strukturen
> können mit den verschiedensten thematisch-symbolischen Oppositionen und
> Kongruenzen befrachtet werden [...].[10] (1989: 154)

This mutual influence can be conceived in a two-fold way: to limit the choice within

other KRs; and to determine other KRs by way of uniquely determining the choice within

them.

The first principle, the "Roseanne Barr rule," leads to a KR-X which limits the

choice made within another KR-Y to be positioned higher than the latter. The application

of this principle would ideally lead to a free-flow funnel with the hierarchy of the KRs

being represented by the narrowing diameter from inlet to outlet. This works, of course,

only when the KRs are conceptionally comparable. That this is not so, namely that some

KRs are rather operational (LM) while others are content-oriented (TA) in nature, renders

the hierarchy idealized, yet not theoretically invalid. The Roseanne Barr rule by itself

works for the postulated hierarchy as long as the influencing quality is conceived as a

one-way matter. But the elements of the joke are interrelated very intricately, and so must

be KRs. Even a streamlined analysis of their ordering must account for the mutual

relations among the KRs.

For the reverse determination the second principle, called "Donald Trump rule,"

avoids constrictions in the funnel: If somewhere before the outlet the diameter is smaller

---

[10] Just as the punch line is ultimately influenced by the interaction of all layers and dimensions of a given text, it influences in turn the cognitive potential of the text. The structures that serve the punch line can be loaded with various thematic-symbolic oppositions and congruencies.

than at the outlet, the flow is determined already there, regardless of whether somewhere below the funnel it widens again. Thus "if KR-Y rigidly determines KR-X, then KR-Y should follow and not precede KR-X" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 316).

To clarify the determining and limiting moments among the KRs in order to postulate a hierarchy along the lines of these two principles the binary relations (KR-X to KR-Y) among the KRs have to be analyzed: A final choice on the LA level already uniquely determines the choice of all other resources. A given text of a joke does not allow for any variation without having to be changed itself. Therefore, the second principle puts LA lowest in the hierarchy.

Problematic are the relations between SO and LM, and SO and SI. They have no such rigid influence on each other as to be perceived as strictly determining or delimiting. Attardo and Raskin propose that these KRs should "be treated mutually independent" (1991: 318).

The choice of a TA, on the other hand, is limited by SO, at least for ethnic jokes like the ones employed here. A certain stereotyped cliché is attributed to certain groups and can neither be transferred arbitrarily nor established by a joke. The problems with this relation are, firstly, that targets occur also outside of ethnic jokes and, secondly, that they are optional. Jokes with TAs are tendentious jokes. Their tendency is beyond and conceptionally above the framework of the GTVH. It thus determines the script which in turn determines the target. In jokes without target a hierarchy among the two KRs cannot and need not be established.

The other binary relations among the KRs are considered straightforward and may be seen from table (2), which gives only the significant asymmetrical relations leaving out the symmetrical ones, which would not influence a hierarchy:

	SO	LM	SI	TA	NS	LA
SO				C	S	S
LM					S	S
SI					S	S
TA	D				S	C
NS	I	I	I	I		C
LA	D	D	D	D	D	

Table (2): binary relations among the KRs[11]

Another very important dimension of the hierarchy discussed is the content/tool dichotomy: It could be argued that "SO, TA and SI are content-oriented, while LM, NS, and LA are the lists of tools which are used to express the content" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 320). Joke (8) can be said to be about dumbness (SO), Poles (TA), and light bulb changing (SI) rather than certain language choices (LA), riddling (NS), and employing figure-ground reversal (LM). It remains unclear whether all tool KRs have to be considered lower in the hierarchy. Attardo and Raskin propose that the function of the tools to serve the content could be considered in different degrees, namely to understand "LM as the tool for SO only, while NS and LA will remain the tools for all" (1991: 324), thus accounting for the LMs high position—just beneath SO—in the hierarchy.

This dichotomy nevertheless shows that the KRs are not fully compatible. The special role of the tool-oriented KRs (SO, TA, SI) remains to be discussed: The tool KRs could all be merged into SO, but this would bring about the danger of a constriction in the

---

[11] Letters mark the relation of the KR in the line of that in the column: I=independent, S=stylistic preference, C=constraint, D=determine (from Attardo and Raskin 1991: 320). The hierarchy resulting from the binary relations would still not be strictly linear, having SO and LM, as well as TA and SI, on the same levels (cf. Attardo and Raskin 1991: 320).

funnel, which is what restricted the original SSTH. The reason to split up Raskin's

concept of SO into SI, LM, and SO lies in the hypothesized hierarchy of the different

KRs and within the three tool KRs as well as the observation that "two components [SO

and LM] seemed to be independent from and freely combinable with each other"

(Attardo and Raskin: 310). But that they are more closely related to each other can be

seen not only from the attempted revision of the hierarchy, but also from the deviation in

expected order of similarity (as predicted by the ordering of the KRs) and the rated

degree of similarity for SI, LM and SO (cf. Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993). The

revision of the ordering proposes a T-model (see b) in table (3), putting SI, LM and SO

together on one level, or a Y-model (see c) in table (3) putting only SO and SI on the

highest level (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993: 133).

a)	SO	b)		c)	
	↓				
	LM				SI—SO
	↓				↓
	SI		SI—LM—SO		LM
	↓		↓		↓
	TA		TA		TA
	↓		↓		↓
	NS		NS		NS
	↓		↓		↓
	LA		LA		LA

Table (3): hierarchies of the KRs
a) the linear hierarchy, b) the T-model, c) the Y-model

This Y-model is, again, close to the original design of Attardo's multiple level analysis of

jokes of 1989: "A script opposition and a logical mechanism are combined to form a

"joke schema" or "template," a slot-and-filler structure" (Attardo 1989: 438). Lower

levels are instantiation (SI and TA), linearization (NS), and realization (LA).What speaks

against the omission of the distinction between the three tool-oriented KRs is the perceived difference in similarity between them, despite the fact that this similarity was not linear as expected.

4.4   Joke Similarity

The final ordering of the KRs is supported by the concept of similarity. Jokes (9)-(14) are considered to be of varying similarity to joke (8), with (9) the least different and (14) the most different.

The two-fold method proposed to determine the hierarchy would first have to "establish that the degrees of similarity among jokes (2)-(7) [labeled here (9)-(14)] are all lower than the degrees of similarity of each of the jokes (2)-(7) [(9)-(14)] to joke (1) [(8)]" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 321f). This would indirectly confirm the validity of the KRs, i.e. their number and their content, because each of the jokes (9)-(14) differs from the others in two KRs, while they all differ from joke (8) in only one KR. Therefore, less similarity between jokes that differ in more than one KR should be expected.

Secondly, it would be necessary to establish an order of the jokes so that the proximity of each joke in this order "corresponds to the degree of similarity of that joke to joke (1) [(8)]" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 323). This order was intuitively assumed to be the one used here and by Attardo and Raskin in 1991, namely (8)-(14). But it was verified empirically—yet also cast doubt on—by Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin (1993).

The resulting hierarchy of the KRs corresponding to the degree in which the jokes (9)-(14) differ from the anchor joke (8) would be only valid on the basis of the assumption "that the less difference is caused by a different choice within a KR, the less deeply, or lower, the KR resides within the theoretical model" (Attardo and Raskin 1991:

323). To put it more simply: the less a joke is similar to joke (8), the less determining is

the KR in which it differs from joke (8).[12] Discussing the "weak psychological intuitions"

(1991: 324) that form the basis of the ordering of the KRs Attardo and Raskin put

forward the linearly hierarchical joke representation model (see a) in table (3)), which is

nevertheless compatible with the other motivations for the ordering discussed, namely the

binary relations of the KRs, the content/tool dichotomy, and the original five-level joke

representation model (cf. Attardo and Raskin 1991: 325).

The strongest support for the postulated hierarchy is the experimental testing of

the assumption that degree of perceived joke similarity corresponds to position of the KR

in which jokes differ. Two hypotheses were put forward by Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin:

> First, the subjects will perceive some jokes as more similar and other jokes as less
> similar to one another; second, if the GTVH is correct, subjects will perceive a
> linear increase of similarity between pairs of jokes selected along the KR
> hierarchy. (1993: 127)

These hypotheses were tested on 534 individuals, using three sets of seven jokes. These

included the original dumbness, light bulb changing, Polish, riddling joke (8) and its six

one-KR-variants (9)-(14). One of the other sets was a comparable dumbness, hair-dyeing,

blonde, riddling joke with its six versions manipulated to deviate from the anchor joke in

only one KR each. The third set was a quite different actual/non-actual, garden path,

road-crossing, (chicken), riddling joke and six variants.

Subjects were presented with the three sets in varying orders and mixed with

other jokes. They had to evaluate nine pairs at a time for their perceived similarity on an

absolute five-point scale. The results of the similarity experiment are in remarkable

---

[12] This plausible, yet arguable, assumption provided the basis of an earlier approach of this author, namely that the
more general, abstract, determining a KR is, the more it is responsible for the inter-subjectively perceived funniness of

accordance with the hypotheses. The expected linear decrease of perceived similarity was attested by the subjects. Minor deviations from the expected result are found especially for the chicken joke. This might be significant as the chicken joke is not an ethnic joke like the other two. There is no stereotyped, negative SO for a possible TA *chicken*. The *chicken* is not a target in the discussed sense as also Attardo notes (1994: 224). It rather is part of the SI of the joke. This could also be considered to indicate that the GTVH might be modeled too closely on the ethnic joke example it was developed with and should rather be called a GTEH (General Theory of Ethnic Humor) instead.

The most significant deviation from the expected result is that according to the subjects' rating a variation in "LM makes a comparison joke less different from the anchor than a variation in SI" (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993: 132). This result may account for the fact "that the ordering of the KRs in the GTVH is incorrect and that the lack of consistency in the differentiation between SI, LM, and SO is a sign that the hierarchy should be redesigned" (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993: 133). The problem between these three KRs underlines their centrality to the joke, as also Raskin's (1985) focus on the SO along with LM seems to indicate.

Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin suggest to alter the hierarchy into SO, SI, LM, TA, NS, LA or simply leave out LM for the time being as it is "the least explored of all KRs" (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993: 133). Instead of doing the latter, I will, on the contrary, investigate the nature of the LM further in chapter 5.

---

a joke (cf. Hempelmann 1998).

4.5   Conclusion

Apart from the theoretical foundation of the theory a central effort of Attardo and Raskin was to work toward an integration in which the "GTVH incorporates, subsumes, and revises both SSTH and the five-level model" (1991: 329). The result of this discussion is the proposed GTVH, which consists of a joke-representation model and an ensuing hierarchy of the elements, namely the KRs, that represent the joke (Ruch, Attardo, and Raskin 1993: 126).

(15)   Joke: {LA, SI, NS, TA, SO, LM}

For the validity of this theory "it is to be hoped that the different KRs represent accurately enough the various components of the joke. Distinguishing the components is analysis, and analysis is the basis of all theory" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 328).

Another important aspect for the theory to be rational is that it "is fully falsifiable as any reasonable hypothesis/theory should be" (ibid.), a scholarly standard set by Popper (1972). This point may be important in the sense of accepted academic concepts, yet even Attardo considers it "a sound, if slightly old-fashioned procedure" (1994: 205) as proving or disproving a theory in academic discourse is a more complex matter than just proposing a hypothesis that can empirically be tested for its validity. Quantum physics proves that the way we put a question determines the answer (cf. Heisenberg 1955). A theory may not have been falsified up to the present, yet be of weak descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative power and yield only marginal insight into the problems it discusses.

The focus of the five-level model are {SO, LM} variants, whereas the SSTH by nature privileges {SO} invariants. This is not accidental as joke variance as well as degree of funniness are rather related to the higher levels of the GTVH. Also Attardo and

Raskin reckon that "the higher-level invariants [...] will turn out to be much more useful for generalizations on humor research than some accidental assortment of lower-level arguments" (1991: 329). This assumption will be addressed by the elaboration of the high-level KR LM in chapter 5.

Like the incongruity-based approaches to which it bears affinity, but in contrast to disparagement/release-based theories, the "GTVH is a general and essentialist theory of verbal humor in the sense that it addresses the "what" question, that is, "what is humor" (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 330). Its main advantage over—and difference from—previous incongruity theories is that it is much more explicit, linguistically sound and falsifiable, and has an elaborate and verified structure that can serve for further testing and application. After trying to clarify possible resolution mechanisms of the LM, the GTVH will here be expanded and applied to humorous narratives longer than jokes in chapters 6 and 7, respectively.

5.   Logical Mechanism: Modeling Incongruities and their Resolution

5.1   Introduction

Despite its early successes in the description and analysis of jokes as well as other forms of humorous text, the GTVH still requires discussion and expansion in basic respects. The hierarchy of KRs was verified empirically through the application to joke similarity (cf. sections (4.3) and (4.4)), although the LM did not fare entirely as predicted. Since then several publications have deepened the theoretical basis of the GTVH (e.g. Attardo 1997), expanded its scope to humorous texts longer than jokes (Chlopicki 1987, Attardo

1998), and applied it to other domains, e.g., cartoons (Paolillo 1998) or non-Western cultures (Al-Khatib 1999).

The rationale for this chapter is the assumption that we need to describe LMs much more formally in order to get a better grasp on this hencetoforth elusive, but crucial, aspect of the GTVH. I will attempt to do so using well-known, highly formalized tools of set theory, hoping that the use of these tools will lead us to a formal model. However, I should immediately point out that, at least presently, not all logical mechanisms can be described in terms of sets. Further discussion of LMs is currently done in terms of posets and graphs (Hempelmann and Attardo (2000)), but even these expansions will not cover all possible "faulty logics" of jokes. In fact, not even all the mechanisms used in the SSTH can be modeled using mathematical theory, at least presently. So, right at the offset, I must acknowledge that this is a partial application of set theory to humor research. However, I feel that, regardless of its partial aspect, it is a valuable one, for the reason pointed out above, not to mention that so little has been written on LMs.

I will begin by reviewing the literature on LMs in more detail than has been done in section (4.2).

5.1.1 The Logical Mechanism

Most jokes employ a masking or justification (Aubouin 1948) of the incongruity, a "sense in nonsense" (Freud 1905), a faulty or "local logic" (Ziv 1984) in their plot, functioning only on account of a "willing suspension of disbelief" (Attardo and Raskin 1991). A related idea is the notion of *ur-joke*, developed by Hofstadter (see Hofstadter and Gabora 1989) in relation to his work on analogy and humor. The ur-joke is defined as

an "abstract skeleton shared by many different jokes" (Hofstadter and Gabora 1989: 430).

Example of ur-jokes are the "role-reversal" (431), "almost" situations, and self-undermining ("Thank God, I'm an atheist," 433). As noted at the time, ur-jokes and logical mechanisms are very similar notions (Hofstadter and Gabora 1989: 418, 438).

Oring (1992: 10) notes that, beyond incongruity there needs to be a "joke technique" among which he singles out for analysis "vacuous reversal" exemplified by the joke:

(16)   Q: Explain to me the difference between communism and capitalism.
        A: Capitalism is man's exploitation of his fellow man.
        Q: And what is communism? A: Just the opposite!

The incongruity—SO in terms of the GTVH—of a joke and particularly its resolution through the LM are the focus of this chapter. Among the KRs introduced in section (4.2), the LM is the most debated, and most abstract descriptor.

The connector between the two scripts, i.e. the element that accounts for their overlap, is seldom an actual part of the joke text, as is the case in puns. In the case of figure-ground reversal, for example, the relation is more intricate, but it is still possible to reduce it to an abstract pattern that may hold for more than just one joke or joke type as will be shown below.

I will attempt to show that it is not necessarily a single lexical item that is (inferentially) available, but that there exists a relation (a mapping function) between items of the overlapping opposite scripts. The distinction between

- existing connectors in the text,

- inferentially available connectors, and

- mapping functions,

is a central element of the model of the GTVH proposed here.

5.1.1.1 Partial and Complete Resolution

The parallelism drawn between LMs and resolution of the incongruity is a momentous one. It leads to the inevitable conclusion that LMs are therefore optional KRs, just like TA.

A proponent of a theory that requires resolution for humor appreciation is Suls (1972). His structural model focuses on the cognitive aspects of humor appreciation. Like the script-based approach used here, his model is implicitly based on schematic organization of information in "perceptual-cognitive *sets*" (1972: 89; my emphasis, CFH), and he stresses the "importance of schema production for the decoding of sentences" (1972: 85).

Briefly broaching on the importance of unexpectedness, Suls sees two necessary stages in the processing of the information that creates humor: "humor derives from experiencing a sudden incongruity which is then made congruous" (1972: 82). First, the perception of an *incongruity* between the information in the punch line and the information previously presented in the set-up of the joke; second, the *resolution* of this incongruity through some problem-solving process, a cognitive rule, or reconciliation "to reduce the difference" (1972: 90), a faulty "heuristic" (1972: 83) to facilitate a logical passage for the punch line to emerge from the set-up.

In the early version of his model, Suls insisted that "the perceiver must proceed through these two stages to find a joke funny" (1972: 82), but conceded that "the explanation one recipient generates to reconcile the incongruent parts may not be the same as that used by another" (1972: 83n). Yet, on the level of abstraction we operate in this approach, we rather describe the static device enabling the resolution than the individual dynamic process.

While Suls still claims in 1983 that "humor results when the incongruity is resolved" (42), he is less adamant about the necessity of resolution for the perception of funniness. Now, he claims "*most* humor, particularly of verbal form, has an incongruity-resolution structure" (1983: 47; emphasis in original) and "some humorous experiences are the result of mere incongruity" (1983: 48). But he suggests a distinction between laughter as a response not only to humor, but also to tickling and fear, and humor as a type of stimulus, involving resolution: "incongruity produces laughter, but not necessarily humor" (1983: 48).

While Suls still considers resolution a necessary element of humor, and that when he or she is faced with a joke "lacking a resolution, the respondent does not "get" the joke" (1983: 42), he sees the possibility for non-resolved incongruities in rare peculiar types of jokes to be humorous. However, this raises another interesting problem, namely "partial resolution." Rothbart (1976), Rothbart and Pien (1977),[13] point out that resolutions may be complete or partial. As an example of complete resolution, Rothbart (1976: 41) gives the following example

(17)   Teacher: 'Use the word "fascinate" in a sentence.'
        Child: 'There are ten buttons on my coat , but I can only fasten eight.'

where "fasten eight" and "fascinate" are homophones. As an example of partial resolution, she quotes

(18)   Why did the elephant sit on the marshmallow?
        Because he did not want to fall in the hot chocolate.

and points out that "an elephant adrift on a marshmallow [...] must challenge surely any knowledge of elephants and hot chocolate we may possess" (ibid.).

---

[13] See also McGhee's (1979: 60) "fantasy assimilation."

To preempt the suggestion that I am now allowing partial KRs, one need only recall the extensive discussion of LMs in Attardo and Raskin (1991) where it is made clear that resolution should not be interpreted as dissolution, or in other words, that this is a *local* logic, a willing suspension of disbelief. Thus, for the purposes of the LM, any resolution, partial or complete, counts as a LM.

It may be interesting to investigate whether an increased level of resolution is reflected in higher appreciation by speakers, and, more in general, if the degree of resolution is somehow connected to other factors in the joke (for example, to the degree of incongruity). Another interesting, if speculative, hypothesis is that in fact, even so-called complete resolutions would in fact be partial (consider the fact that even for homophones there must be a deliberate circumvention of the disambiguation mechanisms of language).[14]

5.1.2   Previous Work

5.1.2.1 Attardo and Raskin: There are LMs

As is known, the concept of LM was introduced in Attardo and Raskin (1991; see section (4.2) above). LMs can range from straightforward juxtaposition as in

(19)   Gobi Desert Canoe Club (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 307)

to more complex errors in reasoning, such as false analogies, Garden-Path phenomena as in

---

[14] This opens the Pandora's box of intentionality in humor. We will not attempt to address this issue in this context (but see 7.3.2).

(20)   Madonna does not have it, the Pope has it but doesn't use it, Bush has it short, and Gorbachev long. What is it? Answer: a last name. (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 305f);[15]

figure-ground reversals, as in the more-than-notorious light-bulb jokes discussed in

section (4.2):

(21)   How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five, one to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on. (Freedman and Hofman 1980, quoted in Attardo and Raskin 1991: 295);

and faulty reasoning by itself (cf. Attardo and Raskin 1991: 305)

(22)   In the temple at Cracow the Great Rabbi N. was sitting and praying with his disciples. Suddenly he uttered a cry, and, in reply to his disciples' anxious enquiries, exclaimed: "At this very moment the Great Rabbi L. has died in Lemberg." The community put on mourning for the dead man. In the course of the next few days people arriving from Lemberg were asked how the Rabbi had died and what had been wrong with him; but they knew nothing about it, and had left him in the best of health. At last it was established with certainty that the Rabbi L. in Lemberg had not died at the moment at which the Rabbi N. had observed his death by telepathy, since he was still alive. A stranger took the opportunity of jeering at one of the Cracow Rabbi's disciples about this occurrence. "Your Rabbi made a great fool of himself that time, when he saw the Rabbi L. die in Lemberg. The man's alive to this day." "That makes no difference," replied the disciple. "Whatever you may say, the [telepathic vision] from Cracow to Lemberg was a magnificent one." (Freud 1905, quoted in Attardo and Raskin 1991: 304).

The next mechanism discussed in Attardo and Raskin (1991) is chiasmus.

(23)   What's the difference between a Mexican American Princess and a Jewish American Princess? The Mexican American Princess has fake jewelry and real orgasms. (randomjoke)

The joke in example (23) represents an instance of multiple LM and is analyzed as

employing false analogy and garden path.

(24)   The Rabbi of Chelm goes to Pinsk. The Rabbi of Pinsk, does not want to receive him [...] and sends out his beadle to him as a proper match. The beadle wants to prove his intellectual worth and offers a puzzle for the Rabbi of Chelm to solve. He says: "He is my father's son, but he is not my brother. Who is he?" The Rabbi cannot answer. The beadle says: "It is myself." The Rabbi is impressed. He goes

---

[15] A recent addition to this joke is "Kenny G. has the shortest."

home. The people of Chelm ask him: "What did you learn in Pinsk?" The Rabbi says: "I have learned a smart puzzle for you. Here it is: He is my father's son, but he is not my brother. Who is he?" The good Chelmites cannot find the answer. The Rabbi offers triumphantly: "The beadle of Pinsk." (from Hetzron 1991: 71f).

5.1.2.2 Paolillo: The LMs of cartoons

Paolillo's discussion of Gary Larson's *Far Side* cartoons (1998) is an important

application of the GTVH that elaborated on the LM KR. He reduces the KR description

of the cartoons to SO, LM and TA, as SI and LA (where relevant) are usually part of one

of the scripts (where these are fully described) and NS is not a resource which allows for

variation in the direct depiction of single-frame cartoons. Relevant here is the set of LMs

Paolillo reduced to thirteen different forms (1998: 270f):

1. differential potency mappings:[16] elements of one script are mapped onto those of another with either greater or lesser agentive potency

2. similar potency substitutions: elements of one script are replaced with elements of another script with similar agentive potency

3. consequence: a situation representing a consequence of some event is represented, leaving a prior series of events to be inferred

4. implied consequence:[17] a situation is represented that has an incipient consequence, which is left to be inferred

5. juxtaposition: two scripts are presented simultaneously in the same situation

6. sequence: a temporal ordering is imposed on the two scripts

7. mediating script: a third script is invoked to mediate the two main scripts into opposition

8. obvious error: a participant in the situation fails to recognize or acknowledge something exceedingly obvious or saliently presented

9. exaggeration: an element of a script is rendered unusually salient by exaggerating its size or other characteristics

---

[16] Paolillo's use of "mapping" should not be confused with the use of this term in connection with set theory.

[17] It is indeed not the consequence that is the LM, but the way it is implied, for example, as the natural outcome or logical consequence of a condition. In the following anti-Mussolini joke from Raskin (1985: 225), the LM is not the implied consequence that he will die soon, but the false analogy in the assumption that the letter with which a name begins classifies also according to when death will occur.

(25)   Two well-known Italians died in 1837 [sic]: Marconi, the inventor of wireless telegraphy, and Musco, a famous Italian actor. "Thank God," said the Italians, "it's the turn of the 'M's at last."

10. exchange of roles: participants in a script are exchanged with respect to their normative roles in that script

11. mirrored roles: two scripts invoking similar roles are juxtaposed so that the two scripts are a mirror image of each other

12. negation:[18] a script is negated

13. recursion of roles: two scripts invoke similar roles and a participant in an agentive role in one fills a patient role in the other.

The most frequent of these are: 1. differential-potency mapping (of elements of one script onto those of another, most prominently human onto animal and vice versa), 2. substitution (one element for another), and 5. juxtaposition (of two simultaneously presented scripts). The three most frequent LMs account for 467 of the 800 cartoons analyzed.

There are patterns among the LMs as Paolillo analyzes them. A number of them involve temporal sequencing. He identifies 7., 8., and 9. as such, but I would add 3., 4., and 6. This prominence of temporal structure seems to reflect the structure of single-frame cartoon humor like the Larson cartoons involved here. They present a snapshot of a mini-narrative that often shows the outcome or consequence of the incongruity presented. Paolillo's example of 3. consequence illustrates this (1998: 264):

(26)   The living room of an apartment in a high-rise apartment building: [...] The window is shattered, with a large gaping hole. Pock marks on the floor lead up to the window from a long, open, empty cardboard box labeled "Pogo Stick."

The second type of LMs Paolillo discusses involve manipulations in roles of the scripts: 1., 2., 10., 11., and 13. A good example for this is (Paolillo 1998: 287):

(27)   A surfer on the beach runs directly toward the surf, bearing his surf-board over his head; a sea monster runs directly out of the surf bearing a wagon over his head. A look of alarmed surprise crosses the surfer's face.

---

[18] As we will show below, this is also not an apt word.

The interaction of elements of one set into the other, as described for 1., 2., 11., and 13. is parallel to our discussion of mapping functions here. The fact that Paolillo found mainly roles of characters involved in this reflects Larson's predilection for this kind of humor, especially where the human-animal reversal is involved. When we generalize away from the "roles" concept we arrive at mapping functions between the two script-sets again. This holds for 1., 2., and 13., while 11. represents Paolillo's analysis of Larson's use of chiasmus, i.e., two functions that intersect each other. We will return to this pattern below (see section (5.4.1)).

Paolillo's 5. juxtaposition category is also effortlessly generalizable in terms of mapping functions between sets. It is simply the consecutive triggering of two scripts, their presence and juxtaposition forcing a parallelism onto them (see section (5.3.4.4)). His example from Larson is:

(28)   A climber scales upward along the very steep side of a mountain top effortfully bearing a pack and a banner [...]. On the other side of the mountain, a stocking-capped child pulls a sled to the top while another speeds down the slope on a sled.

The last category described by Paolillo is 12. negation. His example (1998: 287) shows that he is merely describing an opposition. There is no *one* negation of a script, but there are binary complements as in *man* vs. *woman* and gradable antonyms as in *hot* vs. *cold*, and these constitute oppositions in the sense of the SSTH. What *negation* describes here is simply the SO GOOD vs. BAD.

(29)   A hunched, balding man enters a store whose window-sign reads "Unnatural Foods."

The LM of this joke is rather the false analogy of *health* relates to *Natural Foods store* as *sickness* relates to *Unnatural Foods store*. The analogy is faulty, because *health* is GOOD, desirable, so people buy products that supposedly make them healthy, while

sickness is not desirable, and no one would buy products that make them sick. The GOOD vs. BAD opposition is condensed into "unnatural" vs. (analogically implied) "natural" opposition. This is the LM here, not the GOOD vs. BAD SO which Paolillo's negation seems to describe.

A significant difference between Paolillo's corpus of Gary Larson cartoons and verbal jokes can be found in the very problem Paolillo addressed with his paper: Namely, that for the cartoons, many instances of nonsense humor, i.e., instances without resolution and consequently without LM, had to be accounted for (although his aim was to show that these instances are a minority).[19]

It should be noted that this diversity of LMs across different forms of humorous signs make clear that an exhaustive enumeration of all LMs will be impossible, as an enumeration of all SOs is similarly impossible. This is why Raskin (1985) introduced the three abstract SOs possible/impossible, actual/non-actual, and normal/abnormal, to which all actual SOs may be reduced. I will return to this fact.

5.2   Scripts as Sets[20]

As anticipated I will conceptualize the two opposite, overlapping scripts in terms of sets. There are antecedents to our approach: Paulos (1980: 61) does so, albeit only for one pun and without a semantic definition of the underlying script-as-set concept.[21] In another instance, the explanation of SO was visualized with the help of schemas inspired by set theory (Hofstadter and Gabora 1989: 421). The main difference between these instances

---

[19] For a critique of Paolillo's article, which does not address the aspect we are focusing on, see Ruch (1999).
[20] Sections (5.2) through (5.4) will appear in Hempelmann and Attardo (2000).
[21] To be fair, that was not at all Paulos' point, so this is no critique of his approach.

and my approach is that I attempt to ground the entire baggage of two KRs of the GTVH

(SO and LM) in set theory.

In this section, I introduce a deliberate oversimplification[22] by defining scripts (in

their technical linguistic meaning, see Raskin 1985) as sets of slot-filler pairs. Actually,

we could define sets of pairs, and provide a completely set-theoretical description of the

above assumption, but this seems unnecessary, in this context. Let us consider a small

example, such as the following script-like structure:

```
(script-name x
    (slot1 filler1)
    (slot2 filler2)
    (slot3  (subslot1 filler3)
            (subslot2 filler4)
            (subslot3 filler5))
    (slot4 filler6))
```

I propose to see script-x as a set { (slot1 filler1), (slot2 filler2), (slot3 (subslot1 filler3),

(subslot2 filler4), (subslot3 filler5)), (slot4 filler6) } composed of four pairs, one of which

(slot3) has as its filler a set of three pairs (subslots 1 through 3).

It goes without saying that scripts are ordered (at least, in some of their models),

i.e., that there is a difference between having slot1, say, occur before or after slot2. In

fact, scripts have complex hierarchical structures, here glossed over by the "subslot"

label, which would soon become cumbersome in set-theoretic terms.[23] This is why I

clearly called my presenting scripts in terms of sets an oversimplification. However, I

---

[22] Let me state clearly that:
- scripts are *not* sets;
- scripts cannot be fully represented as sets;
- scripts are not equivalent to sets.

However, sets can be used to illustrate some aspects of scripts avoiding psychologizing and metaphorical terminology
[23] Although by no means impossible: we need only stipulate that our sets may have sets as their members. The filler of slot3 is then a set, with three members, which happen to be pairs $subslot_n$-$filler_n$.

believe that for our present purposes no harm comes from this simplification. When ordering becomes crucial I will deal with the issue again (see section (5.4)).

5.2.1 What is in a script?

Scripts contain several types of information (not to mention that there are different kinds of scripts). Here we are concerned only with semantic scripts, so I will safely ignore phonological, morphological, syntactic, and collocational information, and focus instead on the different types of semantic information. Typically, a semantic script will have a lexematic handle, along the lines of our script-name. It should be noted that the handle is not necessary, as one may have a script for a non-lexicalized concept.[24]

Otherwise the script consists of slot-filler pairs that represent links within the semantic network, between the semantic roles indicated by the slot names and the scripts that may appear as fillers for that slot. Thus an hypothetical script kiss may be represented as

```
(kiss
      (agent human)
      (patient concrete)
      (instrument lips)
   ...)
```

which exemplifies the handle (kiss), and three slots, the semantic roles *agent, patient*, and *instrument*, with their fillers *human, concrete* and *lips* respectively.

Note that scripts may be seen as abstract elements in the more-or-less Platonic lexicon, or as concretely instantiated in an utterance (in context). Thus for example, *Mary kissed the frog* would yield an instantiated sentential script:

```
(kiss
    (agent Mary)
    (patient frog)
    (instrument lips)
    ...)
```

Note that the instrument slot is filled by default; in a different situation (e.g., *Mary*

smashed the window with a toaster) the instrument slot would be filled from context.

When sentential scripts are built (from instantiated lexical scripts) some scripts

are activated even in the absence of the occurrence of their lexical handle in the text.

These have been called (Attardo 1996) inferential scripts. Thus, suppose that the

following sentential script gets built:

```
(
    (agent Mary)
    (patient frog)
    (instrument lips)
    (goal  (event1 change-of-state
                   (patient frog)
                   (outcome state1
                           (patient frog)
                           (state be-prince))))
    ...)
```

in which we are told that Mary did something with her lips to a frog with the purpose

turning it into a prince (we simplify the notation) we inferentially activate the handle slot

and fill it with *kiss* (and not, say *fellate*, or *nip*, or *hold*). Lest the facetious nature of the

example lead us astray, let us note that inferential activation of semantic objects is well

known in the literature as "bridging" or "accommodation" (cf. Attardo 1996: 88 for

references).

Summing up, I have distinguished between three types of scripts:

---

[24] The opposition between these non-lexicalized scripts is the background of Adams and Lloyd (1990), in which they devise lexematic handles for such scripts as, for example, "**Grimbister** [...] Large body of cars on a highway all traveling at exactly the speed limit because one of them is a police car" (1990: 45).

1. lexical scripts, abstract, reside in the lexicon,

2. sentential scripts, more concrete, built up from instantiated scripts in context; and

3. inferential scripts, activated by context, without the occurrence of their lexematic handle.

However, it should be emphasized that whatever the origin (lexical, inferential, or sentential) of the scripts and its elements they are all treated as sets and the slot-filler pairs as elements of the sets. For simplicity I will refer, from now on, to the slot-filler pairs merely by their filler.

Before we look at examples, let us look at the main elements of this explication of the GTVH as they will appear in the Venn diagrams which are the main descriptive tool used here:
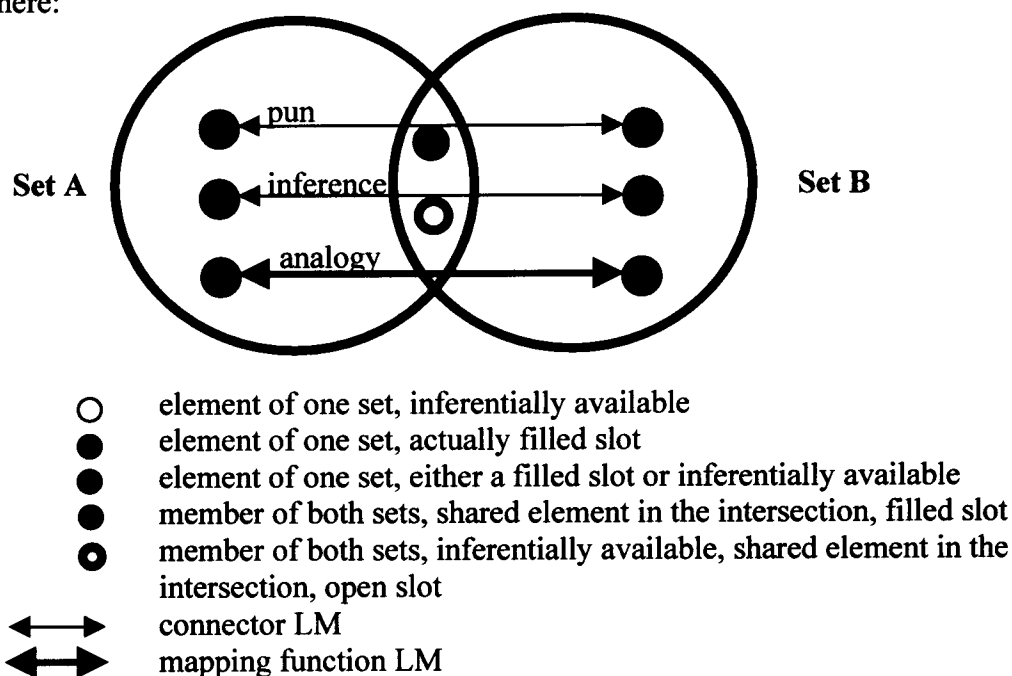

Figure 1: Graphic tools for the set-theoretical expansion of the GTVH

5.2.2 SSTH and Set Theory

Luckily it appears fairly simple to represent some of the tenets of the SSTH in set-theoretic terms.

5.2.2.1 Script Overlap

We can represent the script overlap condition of the SSTH as the intersection (proper subset) of two sets/scripts. Thus, in the canonical "doctor's wife" joke (Raskin 1985; see section (3.4)) the two scripts doctor and lover are our two sets D and L, which overlap/intersect in one of the subslots for activity "visit at home."
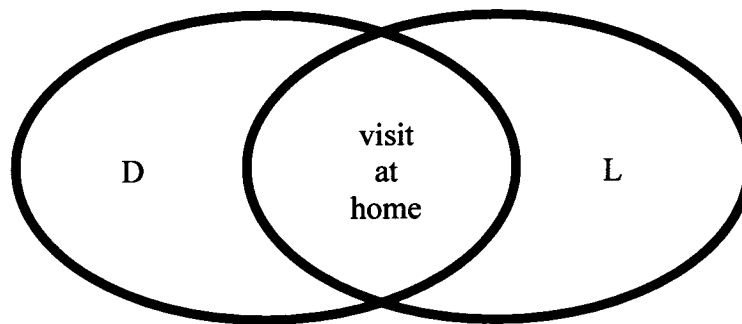

Figure 2: Venn diagram of overlapping scripts. $D \cap L$

It should be noted that any two scripts (considered as sets) will trivially overlap, since they share slots' names. This is true, but a simple stipulation that overlap must include slot-filler pairs will take care of that problem.

5.2.2.2 Script Opposition

It would be tempting to assume that the non-intersecting part of the two sets (i.e., the complementary subsets of the intersection subset) correspond to the script opposition. This would be however in error, as Attardo (1997: 399-400) argued at length.

In order to handle the concept of opposition we need to further specify a different

aspect of the hierarchic organization of scripts, namely the degree of centrality of the

various elements of a script. This has been achieved in cognitive linguistics with the

concept of figure/trajector and ground/landmark. A trajector is a the part of an utterance

that is foregrounded and described as existing, doing something, being changed, etc. on

the background of another part of an utterance, the landmark. Fillmore illustrates

perspective change for a non-humorous example that does not involve clear natural

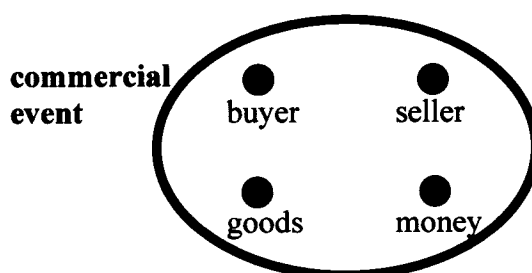figure-ground preference (1977: 104ff). In the BUY script we have the following slots:

Figure 3: Commercial Event

Word choice for the commercial event can foreground these elements differently:

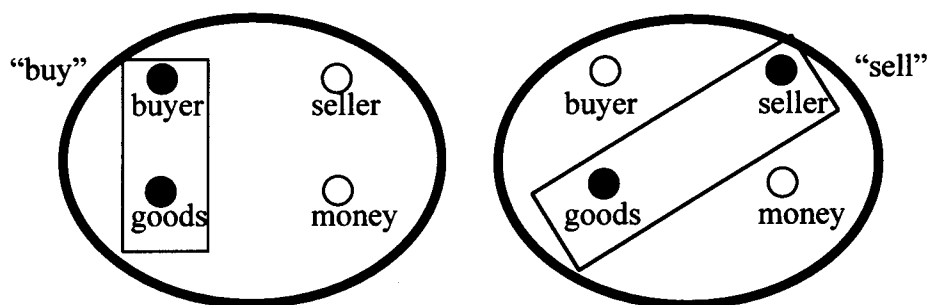Figure 4: The different foregrounds of buy and sell.

Attardo (1997: 400) hinted at the possibility of handling the complex issue of

script oppositeness along the lines of a semantic axis or field. Scripts come with a default,

unmarked foregrounded subset of elements (cf. Langacker 1991: 226ff). I further

stipulate that the foregrounded part of the script is a proper subset of the script. Cognitive

linguistics deals with the unmarked foregrounding or coding of elements as figure/landmark along the following criteria: cognitively an element of a script is a more normal figure/trajector when it is closed, an uninterrupted whole, smaller, and more easily moved around than another element, which is likely to be the ground/landmark (cf. Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 158f).

As we know, contextual pressure may alter this default, consider the following example:

(30)   That's not a thief! He's just a boy.

where the foregrounded element switches from "adult **who steals**" to "**adult** who steals."
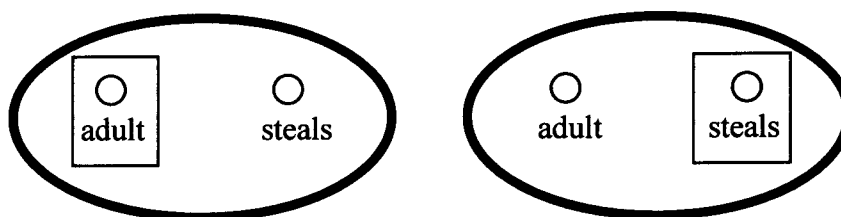
Figure 5: Foregrounds of "thief" in unmarked context (left) and in example (30) (right).

We are now in the position to provide a set-theoretic definition of script opposition: two overlapping scripts are opposed when within the complementary sets of the intersection we can locate a subset such that the member(s) of the subset belonging to one of the sets are the negation of the member(s) of the subset belonging to the other set. A visual aid will no doubt clarify the definition, cf. figure (6). A and B are the two sets; AB = A ∩ B; C and D are the subsets of A and B that are opposed. Note that no member of AB is in C or D. So, if A is the script for doctor and B is the script for lover, then AB

is the visiting and the whispering (part of both scripts), C is "no-sex" and D is "sex" (unmarked in lover, contextually brought to the foreground in doctor).[25]
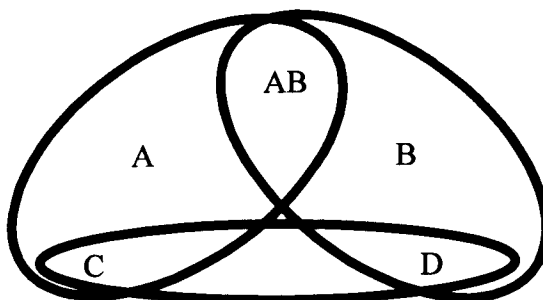

Figure 6: Script opposition in set-theoretic terms

Note that what I have done here is merely recasting the concept of opposition in set-theoretic terms. I claim no additional insight in the semantic nature of opposition.

5.2.3 Logical Mechanisms

I now turn to modeling, using set theory, the concept of Logical Mechanism (LM), from the GTVH. Once more, this is not a new definition, but merely a recasting in terms of a well known model.

5.2.3.1 Multiple LMs

First, we must distinguish between the possible presence of multiple distinct LMs and mere enhancing factors of a LM. It should be noted that nothing in the original formulation of the KRs prevents an incongruity from having more than one resolution or more than one logical path to one or many resolutions. On the contrary, since multiple SOs are admitted, it follows that each incongruous SO could be resolved. Therefore it follows that, in principle, each joke might have multiple incongruities each of which

---

[25] It is possible that the subsets that constitute the oppositeness usually give us good names for the handles, as in the example "sex" and "non-sex." Whether this is a general property of jokes is too early to say.

could be multiply resolved. Needless to say, and this is why the present paragraph is couched in the conditional, most jokes have barely one resolution, let alone multiple ones. Thus it seems difficult to be able to provide examples of multiply resolved incongruities. An homemade example follows:

(31)   Q: Why did the elephant paint its toenails red?
        A: To climb in a cherry tree to hide from a mouse.

in which there are two incongruities: 1) the elephant climbing the cherry tree and 2) it painting its toenails red, which are both playfully resolved: 1) to hide from the mouse, and 2) to be camouflaged by the red color.

Multiple resolutions should not be confused with the possibility of there being different levels of abstraction for each given LM. We turn to this issue next.

5.2.3.2 Multiple Levels of Abstraction

Perhaps some confusion has been caused by the fact, tacitly assumed in the scant literature on LMs (cf. section (5.1.2)), that there are different level of abstraction for LMs, just as there are for SOs.

Consider the canonical lightbulb joke (8) above. At a maximally abstract level, the LM can be described as a *figure-ground reversal*; at a very concrete level it can be described as *illogical and wasteful way of changing a lightbulb*.[26] There are then an indefinite number of levels of abstraction between these two. For example, most of the LMs listed in Attardo (1998) are very concrete, while the LMs listed in Paolillo (1998) are fairly abstract.

---

[26] Note how *per se* a figure-ground reversal is not an error, cf. the Necker cube.

5.2.3.3 Set Theoretic Definition of LM

At a very abstract level there exists only one LM: a mapping function between a proper

subset of a set A and a proper subset of a set B, such that $A \cap B \neq 0$ (i.e., the sets overlap)

and $A \cap B \neq A \cup B$ (i.e., the proper subsets are not identical to their intersection, or to put

it differently, their complementary sets are not empty (see fig. 6). We will indicate this

function as M. Thus, if $A = \{ a,b, c, ..., n \}$ and $B = \{ 1, ..., n \}$ we will have M(AB) =

$\{\{a, 1\}, \{b, 2\}, \{c, 3\}, ..., \{n, n\}\}$.

5.3   Analyses of LMs

5.3.1   Pun-like joke with explicit connector

(32)   Q: What do Winnie-the-Pooh and John-the-Baptist have in common.
        A: The middle name.

The punch line points at the shared "the" by relabelling it a middle name. There is

an intersection between the sets of names and the set of articles, based on the feature
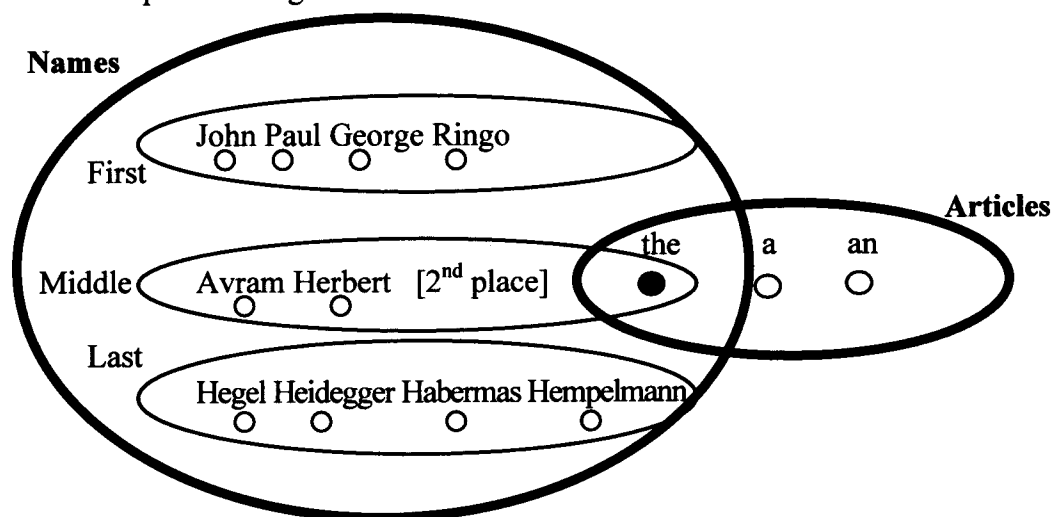
"occurs in second place" along the lines of

Figure 7: Intersection of the sets "names" and "articles" (cf. example (32))

5.3.2 Pun

One member intersection: filled slot connector

Let us start with an example: The pun in the following joke is *shit* as either

defecate or be angry: A(excrement) = {constipation, defecate}, B (non-excrement) = {be

angry}. The mapping function is the pun M{shit(AB)} = {(defecate, be angry)}:

(33)   Two nuns walk into a liquor store and one asked the clerk for the biggest bottle of
        Irish whiskey he had. The clerk replied, "Heck no sister, you're nuns and aren't
        supposed to drink that stuff!" The nun said, "Well my son it is not for us you see,
        it is for Mother Teresa," then the nun whispers, "She has the constipations." The
        clerk said, "Oh, in that case, it's on the house. Here's the biggest jug we have."
        The nuns thank him, bless him, and leave. A few hours later, as the clerk is
        leaving, he sees the same two sisters in the parking lot, rolling around and
        drinking the Irish whiskey. Appalled he goes over to them and says, "You ladies
        lied to me! You told me it was for Mother Teresa for her constipations!" One of
        the nuns takes another swig, looks up at him and says, "You wanna know
        something buddy? She sure will shit when she sees us!" (randomjoke).
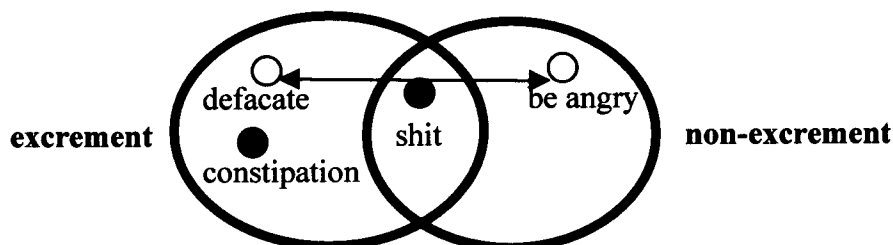
Figure 8: Representation of example (33)

To operate on a meaningful level of abstraction, we will subsume under the label

pun, one word-two meaning relations, but also all forms of paronymy and homonymy (a

specific instance of paronymy) on all levels of linguistic analysis (e.g. morphological,

syntactical, lexical).

The concept of pun is closely related to the static element of LM in NS/LA. A

generalized formal analysis of pun makes the paralogical reasoning involved clear: For

all a and b, it holds that a is b and a is not b. The local logic of puns functions on the basis

of (a surely false) Cratylism, i.e. a proportion analyzed metalinguistically along the lines

of this syllogism: if meaning motivates sound, and sound is identical (similar), then meaning must be identical (similar) (cf. Attardo 1994: 149ff).

It should also be noted that it makes no difference, whether the pun is in the setup (i.e. the second script revealed in punch) or whether the punch itself is the pun (i.e. second script revealed through the punning element itself). The former can be seen in the following example (34), where "looks" means the appearance of a person with regard to health and beauty, where the beauty reading is foregrounded through the punch line. The latter can be found in example (33), where both scripts (constipation and drinking) are present and united in the punning punch "shit" meaning "to have bowel movements" and "to be angry."

(34) A doctor, as he came away from a lady's bedside, said to her husband with a shake of his head: "I don't like her looks." "I've not liked her looks for a long time," the husband hastens to agree. (Freud 1905: 53)
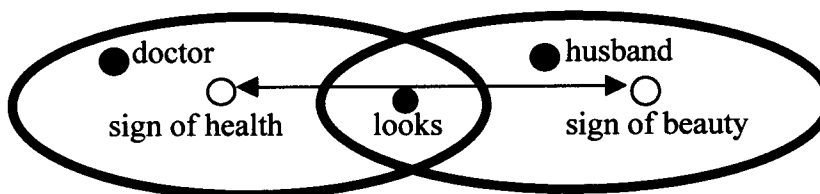

Figure 9: Representation of example (34)

Let us turn to another example:

(35) Q: What's the Jewish holiday where you get oral sex all day?
A: Chanukah Lewinsky. (informant Therese Gondel, 1999)
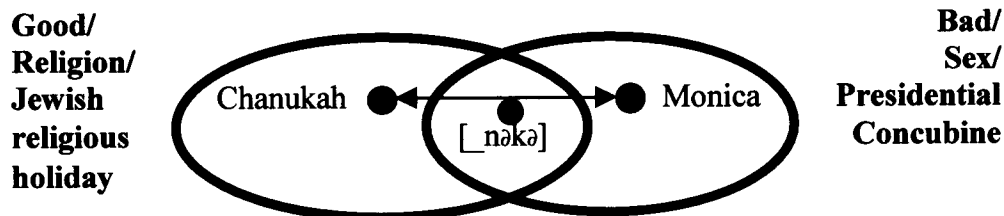
Figure 10: Representation of example (35)

For puns the set conceptualization does not get us much beyond saying there is (partial) overlap in one lexical item. The overlap is partial as the lexical items "Chanukah" and "Monica" do not completely overlap, i.e. are not the same member in the intersection of the two sets, but themselves two sets of (phonetic) members that intersect or overlap fully as in the puns of the following joke: light and dark.

(36)   Recently the first draft of the Book of Genesis was discovered. It begins: "In the beginning the world was without form, and void. And God said, 'Let there be light.' And God separated the light from the dark. And did two loads of laundry." (CyberCheeze)
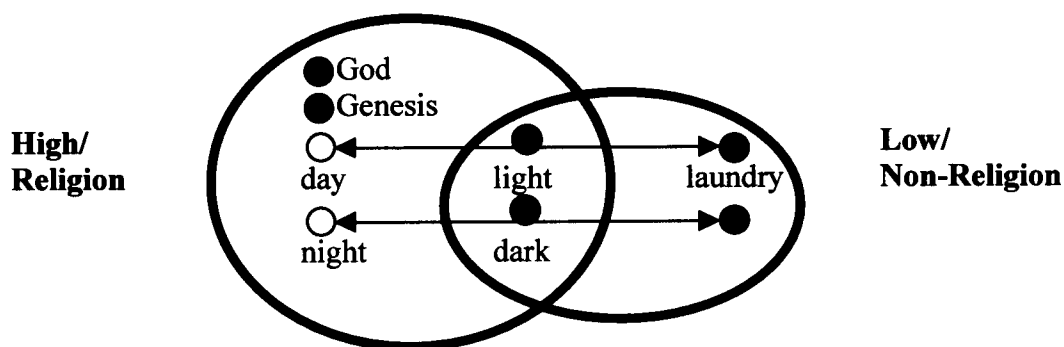
Figure 11: Representation of example (36)

5.3.3   One member intersection: open (or light) slot

If only one element is concerned, the connection between two sets is established when this element is in the intersection and omitted in the text, i.e. not part of the actual members in the joke text. This open slot, often a semantically light placeholder like *it, do, come*, is either central/salient, thus inferentially filled with a default slot-filler (*penis*),[27] and the punch line reveals a different one than that which was assumed (last name), as in example (37), where it reveals a prerequisite to understanding.

---

[27] The humor of this statement had to be pointed out to me by Salvatore Attardo.

(37)   (=20) Madonna does not have it, the Pope has it but doesn't use it, Bush has it short, and Gorbachev long. What is it?
Answer: a last name. (Attardo and Raskin 1991: 305f).
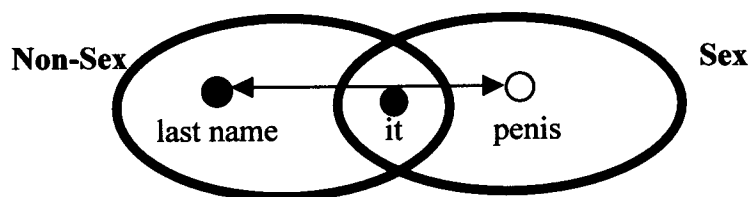
Figure 12: Representation of example (37)

The open slot can also be not central/salient and thus not filled inferentially and is

revealed as being central in the punch (lecherous nuns) as a necessary prerequisite as in

example (38):

(38)   A nun is attacked and raped by twelve bandits in the desert. When they are done with her and flee the nun stands up and says, "That was nice. Enough and sinless." (Raskin 1985: 167)

This joke exemplifies one of the many problems of analyzing humorous texts,

namely the length of the inferential paths followed. *Prima facie* we have a situation (a

nun is raped by 12 bandits) and a statement by the nun, after the fact: the statement boils

down to three predicates, all referring anaphorically to the rape (or better, metonymically

to the sex): that it was nice, it was enough, and it was sinless. That a rape may be nice is

incongruous, since rape includes an "against patient's will" stipulation. That the sex

might have been enough, given the premise that she was raped by 12 bandits, is true, but

pragmatically incongruous, as the scalar implicature is inappropriate (rape is always too

much sex). Finally, also because of the stipulation that rape is done against the will of the

victim, the sinless attribute is congruous. Thus we are faced with two incongruities.

How may we go about constructing an inferential path to resolve the

incongruities? The problem that makes the inferential path very complicated here is that

she was obviously consenting, otherwise it would not have been "nice" to be raped. Thus

the description of the event as "rape" is inappropriate. Assuming now that the nun was in fact consenting, the first two predicates are congruous: the sex was nice, it was enough (here a small inferential path is opened, to the effect that since nuns do not get any sex they must have a voracious appetite for it, hence that 12 men would be considered on the low end of the scale in the scalar implicature). However, the third predicate is now incongruous (if the nun was consenting, she was not sinless).

The LM of this joke lies in the described dilemma of "nice" rape, or, in other words, in the fact that "nice" is a member of both sets, lies in their intersection. Note how "nice" follows form both "sinless" and from "enough."
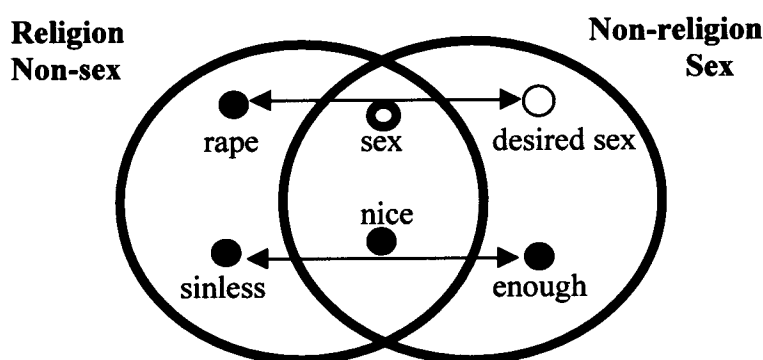
Figure 13: Representation of example (38); note the parallelism of the two mapping arrows.

In other words, we end up with two mapping functions that map "sinless" and "enough" via "nice" and "rape" and the inferentially arrived at node "desired" sex. via "sex:" A = {rape, sinless}, B = {desired sex, enough}, M1 = {sex(AB)} = {(rape, desired sex)}, M2 = {nice(AB)} = {(sinless, enough)}.

5.3.4 Multiple Elements Functions

If several elements of the two sets are concerned, then there are a number of interactions of LMs that work between them. These can create analogous relations between them,

which then bridge the opposition by creating a further element in the intersection of the two sets, which can either be part of the text, i.e. filled-slot members, as in a pun, or can be inferentially activated through the constellation, like the tertium comparationis of an analogy.

5.3.4.1 False Analogy

Let us turn to the first example of false analogy:

(39)   A married man goes to confessional and tells the priest, "I had an affair with a woman—almost." The priest says, "What do you mean, 'almost'?" The man says, "Well, we got undressed and rubbed together, but then I stopped." The priest replies, "Rubbing together is the same as putting it in. You're not to go near that woman again. Now, say five Hail Marys and put $50 in the poor box." The man leaves confessional, goes over and says his prayers, then walks over to the poor box. He pauses for a moment and then starts to leave. The priest, who was watching him, quickly runs over to him and says, "I saw that. You didn't put any money in the poor box!" The man replied, "Well, Father, I rubbed up against it and you said it was the same as putting it in!" (randomjoke)
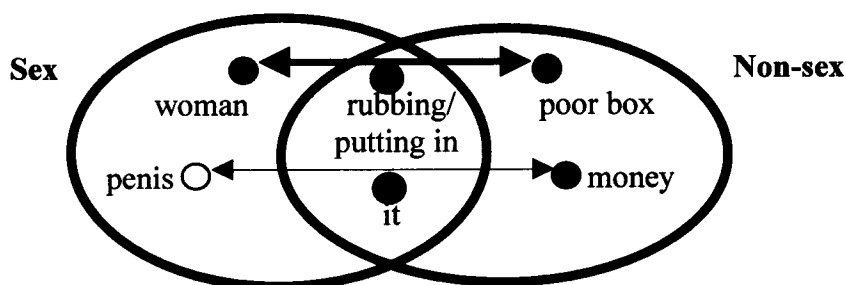
Figure 14: Representation of example (39)

False analogy can be analyzed as: a and b (and possibly other elements) are alike in respect to x (whereas they are not in all respects, or x does not exist, or x is not what is implied in the setup). In the example, if rubbing the penis against a woman is full adultery as if putting it in, then analogically rubbing money against the poor box is fulfilled atonement as if the money had been put in. There is also an indirect pun with it for either penis or money involved. It is tempting, but explanatorily unsuccessful, to

subsume all LMs under analogy, because of the faulty analogical structure of jokes, with two overlapping scripts being opposed.

5.3.4.2 Supplanting

Supplanting can be summarized as: a is (like) b (whereas a is actually not b). The mutual supplanting of concepts needn't be restricted to overlap in one word (pun), but can be achieved inferentially like in example (40): Success unites military and business in that they are alike in the way you achieve success in both domains.

(40)   Itzig had been declared fit for service in the artillery. He was clearly an intelligent lad, but intractable and without any interest in the service. One of his superior officers, who was friendlily disposed to him, took him on one side and said to him: "Itzig, you're no use to us. I'll give you a piece of advice: buy yourself a cannon and make yourself independent!" (Freud 1905: 17f)
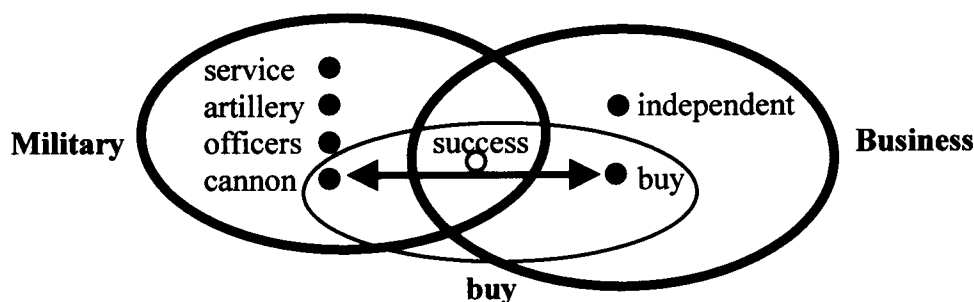
Figure 15: Representation of example (40)

Here we have a third set BUY with the slot for something to be bought that bridges the overlap.

5.3.4.3 Proportion

Proportion can be summarized as: a relates to b as c relates to d (a : b :: c : d). These analogy relations can be achieved through different mapping functions, e.g. puns, or other analogies. Often, the proportion is in the setup, and the punch line reveals that it is faulty or non-existent.

(41)   A wife is like an umbrella. Sooner or later one takes a cab. (Freud 1905: 93)
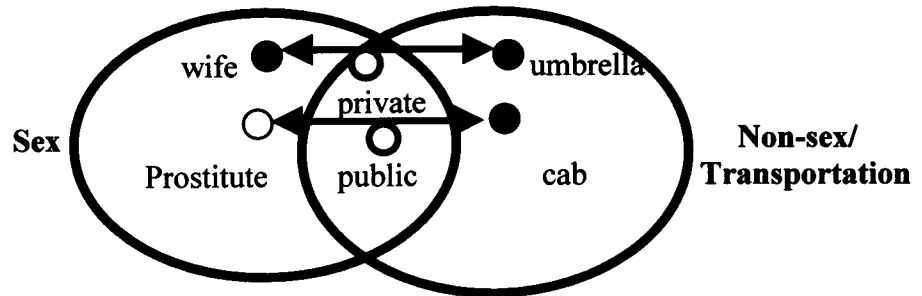
Figure 16: Representation of example (41)

In example (41), the relation works twice along the following lines: The SO is

sex/non-sex, and the two mapping functions in which it works are analogies in terms of

"private" and "public:" The wife is the private form of sex as the umbrella is the private

form of sheltering during transportation, while the prostitute is the public form of sex as

the cab is the public form of sheltering during transportation. Note the enhancing factor

(allusion) in which slots are filled (wife, cab, umbrella) and which are not (*prostitute*:

A(sex) = {wife, *prostitute*, ...}, B(transportation) = {umbrella, cab}, M1 = {private(AB)}

= {(wife, umbrella)}, M2 = {public(AB)} = {(*prostitute*, cab)}

wife	:	umbrella	::		:	cab
a	:	b	::	c	:	d

Table 4: Relations in example (41)

5.3.4.4 Juxtaposition

Straightforward juxtaposition

It consists in the direct linear succession of a and b

(42) = (19)   Gobi Desert Canoe Club

The text itself, as it bluntly triggers the two scripts, is the only connection between the two. It forces an inferential connection onto "canoes" and "desert" in the same way the connector of a coordination does, as the next section describes.

Inverted juxtaposition (chiasmus)

(43)   (=23) What's the difference between a Mexican American Princess and a Jewish American Princess? The Mexican American Princess has fake jewelry and real orgasms.

This LM is closely related to false proportion (see above) in that they both share two analogies. But where they are parallel in false proportion (A is to B as C is to D), they cross each other in the chiasmus (A is to B as D is to C).[28] When it is reflected on the surface LA level in connection with puns, it has been called it "paragrammatic reversal" (Milner 1972). This reversal refers only to the static text elements. Set theory by itself is not able to account for linear ordering. I return to these issues in section (5.4).

What we can observe here is the interaction of four sets (two groups of two), four members, and two functions:

The sets are:

```
A(ethnicity) = {JAP, MAP}        with the subsets
     JAP={a, c}, MAP={b, d}
B(value) = {sex, property}       with the subsets
     sex={a, d}, property={b, c}
```

the chiastically overlapping LM mapping functions are

```
M1 = {real(AB)} = {(JAP[jewelry], MAP[orgasm])}  = {c, d}
M2 = {fake(AB)} = {(JAP[orgasm],  MAP[jewelry])}  = {a, b}
```

The members are:

```
a: fake JAP Sex
b: fake MAP Property
```

---

[28] Or, more abstractly: **abab** vs. **abba**. Note that **baba** and **baab** respectively are also possible, if less common, configurations.

```
c:  real  JAP  Property
d:  real  MAP  Sex
```

We have three dimensions of interaction of the single elements, namely

membership in an ethnicity set and a value set and one of member the set of mapping

functions of the chiastic LM. This produces a double SO: JAP: MAP and sex: property on

the background of the main SO constituted by the subsets real (good):fake (bad) which is

at the same time the mapping function of the LM. For purposes of easier

understandability it seems better to put these relations into a grid rather then a Venn

diagram.

	Sex	Property
JAP	fake	real
MAP	real	fake

Table 5: Relations in example (43)

A possible enhancing factor in the LA of the joke might be seen in the overlap of

"Jew" and "jewelry." Note also that it is clear that both JAPs and MAPs are the targets of

this joke.

5.3.4.5 Coordination

Coordination refers to the conjoining of two or more conjuncts through a connector.

(44)   the Pope or the president

In the coordinate structure (44), the connector is *or* and the two conjuncts are *the Pope*

and *the president*. Other common connectors are *and, but, either - or, not - but*, etc.

Semantic Homogeneousness and Analogical Force

The mere coordination of two conjuncts in a sentence can enable the mapping of

elements from one script triggered by the first conjunct onto those of another script

triggered by the other conjunct. The analogical force of the coordination parallelizes the

two conjuncts along any kind of shared property. This has been described in detail by Lang (1984).

At the outset of Lang's investigation he poses this question: "What are the mechanisms which determine the semantic interpretation of coordinate conjoined structures ... ?" (1984: 17). This central question is contained in the specific problem that we address in this section, namely how mere coordination of conjuncts constitutes a LM that maps parts of one script onto parts of another, opposed, script. This mapping is facilitated by what Lang calls the "same-type-hypothesis," under which the hearer assumes that conjuncts are of the same type when they are used syntactically homogeneous, as in coordination.

Adapting one of Raskin's examples (1985: 86, see section (3.2.2)), coordination disambiguates as follows. The sentence in example (45) can, among other things, mean *a gay assembly* as well as *a round object with many colors*. In example (46), the coordination of *colorful* and *well inflated* disambiguates *colorful* into *with many colors*, because *well inflated* could not be coordinated with *gay*.[29] Consequently the meaning of *ball* in example (46) is disambiguated into *round object*. The opposite happens in example (47), where *ball* is disambiguated to mean *assembly*.

(45)   the ball was colorful

(46)   the ball was colorful and well inflated

(47)   the ball was colorful and well attended

(48)   *the ball was well inflated and well attended

Common Integrator

---

[29] But note the—admittedly slight—humor potential that even this harmless example possesses, when thinking of an inflated assembly of dancers.

It is obvious from example (48) that well-formed homogeneousness of syntactic coordination necessarily includes semantic criteria. Lang quotes examples that are syntactically forced into homogeneousness through coordination, but are semantically opposed, resulting in a forced semantic homogeneousness. He defines this parallelization effect as follows: "coordinate conjoining imposes upon a given coordinate structure the constraint of parellelising the interpretations of its conjuncts" (1984: 51), and "interpretations" makes the semantic nature of the parallelization clear.

The following example is a joke among Jewish immigrants to Palestine in 1938.

(49)   Kommen Sie aus Deutschland oder aus Überzeugung?[30]

Here the coordination through the connector *oder* (or) forces a parallel interpretation onto the conjuncts *Deutschland* (Germany) and *Überzeugung* (conviction), which are not compatible, but belong to opposite scripts that contain compatible elements, some of which are made inferentially available through the LM (*italics*): A = {Germany, *necessity* }, B = {conviction, *non-anti-Semitic country*}. The mapping function is the coordination: M{coordination(AB)} = {(Germany, *non-anti-Semitic country*), (*necessity*, conviction)} which possesses an integration power.

According to Lang a common integrator (CI) is the power that underlies the coordination of which the conjuncts are understood as instances. Thus, coordination has not only a conceptional and relational meaning, but an operational one, namely the operation of parallelization on the conjuncts along the lines of the CI. The CI works on parts of the conjunct meanings that are relatable and elicits their semantic relation.

---

[30] Do you come from Germany or out of conviction?

To understand the parallelization effect, it is important to differentiate the conjunct meanings into common [or compatible, that is in our sense, overlapping] and distinctive [in the case of jokes, opposite] components. That this operation is best illustrated in terms of set-theoretic metaphor is clear to Lang, too:

> In the simplest case this can be achieved by set-theoretical operations on the sets of semantic features [here: script slots/fillers] associated with the conjuncts. The first portion is then definable by the *intersection* of the sets of features assigned to the conjuncts, while the other portions are definable by the union minus the intersection [that is, the complement] (1984: 72; my italics, C.F.H.).

I propose that this operational meaning of coordination works as a LM, that is, a mapping function, in the case of semantically opposed conjuncts, that are members of the two scripts of a joke. It creates the overlap that is one necessary condition for the funniness of the text through analogical force. We can define that

(50)   when incompatible conjuncts are coordinated, the coordination functions as the LM of a joke, when the incompatibility is an SO in the sense of the SSTH.

In example (49) above we have the conflict between two possible common integrators: 1. to come from a country of origin, *Deutschland* (Germany), and 2. to come out of a certain motivation, *Überzeugung* (conviction of the Zionist cause). As no possible country of origin can be mapped onto part of the script triggered by *conviction*, whereas a motivation can be mapped onto part of the script triggered by *Germany*, namely the *necessity* to come because of the persecution of Jews there, *motivation* is the parallelizing CI or LM in this example. It maps *conviction* onto *necessity*.

Further Examples

Lang includes more examples of this in his analysis (1984: 35f), and since it is an East-German publication he picks examples that nicely expose xenophobic and oppressive tendencies of nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism:

(51)   I haven't got an opinion. I've got a tavern. (Brecht, *Schweyk*)

(52)   They suffer from the three worst ailments of mankind: they are sick, they are old, and they are Jews. (inscription for a Hebrew Home for the Aged, suggested by Heine)

(53)   No entry for dogs and Chinese! (sign board at a park entrance in a European settlement in pre-war Shanghai)

(54)   Défense de cracher ou de parler breton! [Do not spit or speak Breton!] (sign board in schools and offices in 19th century Britanny)

In these examples the parallelizing effect of the coordination exerts an analogical force toward compatible interpretation onto otherwise opposite scripts: In example (51), *tavern* is the opposite of *opinion* in that as the owner of a tavern you cannot afford to lose customers when uttering your opinion which they might not like. In example (52), being a Jew is the same as having an ailment. In example (53), being Chinese is the same as being a dog, that is, they are not more than animals. In example (54), speaking Breton is an oral activity as despicable as public spitting.

Syllepsis

The parallelizing effect of seemingly unrelated conjuncts is well-known in the special instance of syllepsis, a type of zeugma, in terms of classical rhetorics (cf. Section (7.3.2)). In syllepsis, a single word governs a coordinate structure of two or more conjuncts and must be understood differently with respect to each of these conjuncts.

(55)   She ate pizza with her friends and anchovies and fork and knife.

In example (55), the preposition *with* governs the coordinate structure *her friends and anchovies and fork and knife*, consisting of the three conjuncts *her friends*, *anchovies*, and *fork and knife*. With respect to each of these conjuncts, *with* is used differently, namely in the sense of accompaniment (*with her friends*), specification (*with anchovies*), and instrument (*with fork and knife*), respectively. It is funny, because the parallelization

effect forces the understanding of *all* conjuncts in terms of either accompaniment, that is,

She ate her pizza while sitting next to her friends and next to some anchovies and next to a fork and a knife, who were all sharing the pizza with her, or in terms of specification, that is, *a pizza topped with her friends and topped with anchovies and topped with knife and fork*, or in terms of instrument, that is, *cutting the pizza by way of moving her friends back and forth on it, and then moving some anchovies back and forth on it, and then moving a knife back and forth on it, and then moving the cut slice into her mouth using her friends as a shovel, and then using some anchovies as a shovel, and then using a fork as a shovel*. Again, the LM here is created through the coordination of the prepositional complements of *with* through the connector *and*, which exerts the analogical force of the common integrator.

Dilemma through Coordination

In the last chapter of his book Lang attempts an analysis of a more complex Jewish joke with a contradicting dilemma in the underlying coordination.

(56)   *Two Jewish exiles, circa 1938:*
         Aaron: God in Heaven, what's new?
         Moses: Bad news is what's new.
         Aaron: What's the bad news then?
         Moses: They say Hitler's dead!
         Aaron: God in Heaven, that news isn't bad!
         Moses: No, but they say it's not true!

Here the conditions for the use of *but* are not adhered to: The conjunct-meanings of *but* may not include each other and may not exclude each other, but must be compatible and independent. In the example the conjuncts *Hitler's dead* and *it's not true* do exclude each other and are not compatible. This is a case of a multiple LM, namely a logical dilemma that is created through contradiction in the underlying coordination.

5.4   Desiderata

5.4.1   Figure-Ground Reversal: Perspectives on Ordered Sets

This mechanism can be described as: a happens on the background of b, while b is actually or normally the background of a. In the infamous light-bulb changing joke (example (8)), the ground is the static environment including the table and the figure is the light bulb which should be screwed in by turning it into its socket. In the example, instead of the foregrounded figure, the light bulb, the static ground, the table and the person standing on it, is turned (cf. Attardo and Raskin 1991: 303). The opposed scripts are situated through this, in that the clever, normal way to change the light bulb is turning the figure (light bulb), whereas the reverse, abnormal, dumb way to change it is turning the ground (table, person holding the light-bulb). To account for this we would need the ordering of set members along a foreground-background axis. This is tantamount to being able to assign centrality to elements of a script.

This has been achieved in cognitive linguistics with the concept of figure/trajector and ground/landmark. A trajector is a the part of an utterance that is foregrounded and described as existing, doing something, being changed, etc. on the background of another part of an utterance, the landmark as illustrated in section (5.2.2.2).

As mentioned above, we need to take into account another concept from cognitive linguistics, the natural foregrounding or unmarked coding (cf. Langacker 1991: 226ff) of elements as figure/landmark along the following criteria (cf. Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 158f). An element of a script is a more *normal* figure/trajector when it is closed, an uninterrupted whole, smaller, more easily moved around than another element, which is likely to be the ground/landmark.

For our examples (57), (58), and (59) this means that "light bulb" and "foreskin" are normal candidates for figures, whereas "table"/"world" and "man" are abnormal candidates. The punch line reveals this abnormal perspective on the script. The overlap in these figure-ground reversal jokes is the identity of the scripts, not an overlap between two, and the oppositeness, the normal and abnormal perspective on the foregrounding in the script. The LM is the perspective shift that makes the figure the ground and vice versa.

▲ trajector/figure
■ landmark/ground

With the help of these concepts we can now sketch an analysis of example (57). The two circles are the two perspectives on the foregrounding relations in the scripts. Strictly speaking, these *are* two different scripts, ordered in different ways. (note that in classic set theory they are the same, see below). The overlap is the identity of set members:

(57)   (= 8) How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb?
        Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.
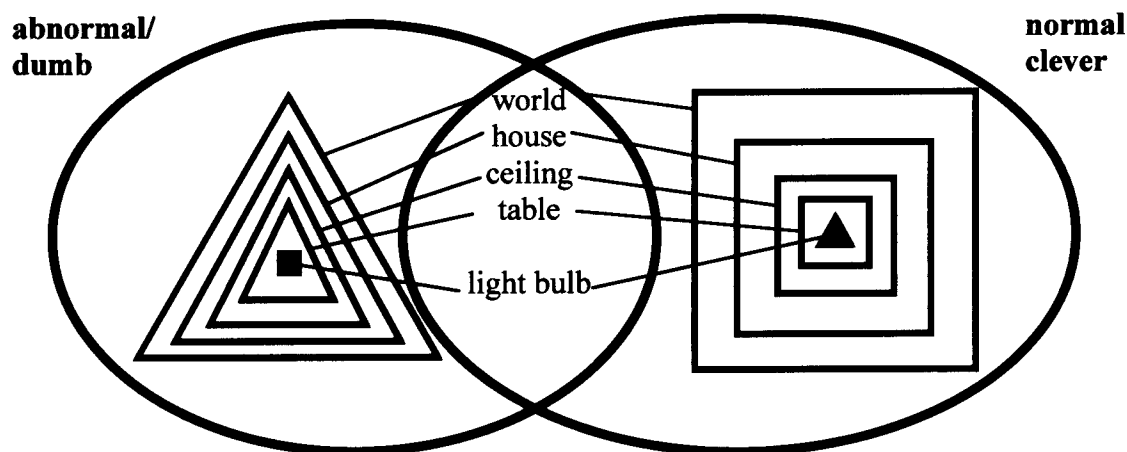
Figure 17: Figure and ground reversal

On the left, in the abnormal/dumb set, we have the light bulb as static landmark and different layers of now dynamic trajectors that can be moved around it in the faulty world of joke logic, from the table in (58) to the whole world as in the following joke:

(58) How many sorority girls does it take to screw in a light bulb?
One. She holds on to it and the world revolves around her.
(Raskin and Attardo 1994: 47)

On the right, in the normal/clever perspective on the ordering of the set, we have the light bulb as the movable trajector, and everything from the socket to the whole world as static background. Against this landmark-background the light bulb is turned in according to normal logic.

Another example the analysis of which necessarily requires a module to handle spatial metaphor as a criterion for the ordering of sets is the following figure-ground reversal joke. The boxes—in parallel to Fillmore's commercial event analysis above—indicate the foregrounded figure-ground relationship:

(59) What's the useless piece of skin at the end of the penis called?
A man.
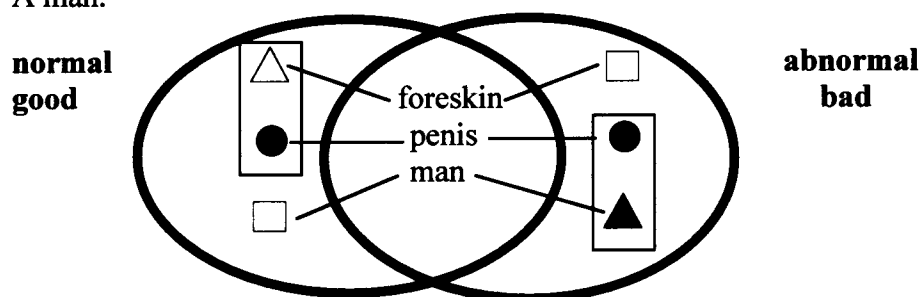
Figure 18: Relations in example (59)

The normal perception of a human male is that (the foreskin is attached to) the penis is attached to the man. While in the abnormal perception of the script , the man is attached to the penis (is attached to the foreskin (?)). Note that this example involves a fixed axis, "penis," around which the figure-ground reversal revolves. We will briefly came back to the ordering of scripts in the outlook.

5.4.2   Metanarrativity

5.4.2.1 False Priming (Garden Path)

This type of joke can also be taken to be a special instance of falsified assumption,

namely the H's assumption that the text is a joke at all. The example also employs false

analogy to create the false assumption:

(60)   Kommt ein Mann um die Ecke, ist der Bus weg.[31]
       (German early 1980s)

A lengthy variant of *falsified assumption* that has the additional peculiarity that

the very assumption that the text is a joke is falsified when the punch line does not offer a

second script Jokes of this type came up especially in the early 1980s, reviving a genre of

short non-sequiturs as in example (60), as well as long stories that were set up as jokes

("Have you heard this one?"), but failed to deliver a punch line, just like the original

shaggy-dog story (cf. Wenzel 1989).

5.4.2.2 Intertextuality

This LM works only on the background of another joke or established joke a cycle ("oh,

it's just another light bulb joke"), the structure of which it imitates, and finally violates in

the punch line. One of the scripts is the established joke genre. In example (61) the punch

line mixes the levels of narration, when the answer is the supposedly typical feminist

laconic remark "that's not funny," implying lack of humor. The joke is no longer just

about feminists as TA, but the Q-A NS is answered by a feminist. The SO here is good

(funny) vs. bad (unfunny) overlapping in the NS.

---

[31] A man comes around the corner and the bus is gone.

(61)   How many feminists does it take to screw in a light bulb?
         That's not funny.

Example (62) also plays with the levels of narration. The set up is that of a classic

joke with tripartite NS involving three different members of clergy combined with that of

"guy comes into a bar" jokes. The punch line reveals that one of the characters, namely

the bartender is no longer only an actor in the joke, but aware that he might be one. The

distinction between the narrative levels is broken, they overlap. The SO could therefore

be between the two levels of narration overlapping in the bartender:

(62)   A priest, a minister, and a rabbi come into a bar.
         The bartender asks: What is this? A joke? (randomjoke)

5.5   Conclusion

As mentioned above, I am aware that there are LMs I have not even addressed. These are

not yet analyzable in terms of set theory as it has been incorporated into the GTVH here.

An example is *ex falso sequitur quodlibet*. In joke (63) the pool table cannot get onto the

tree. So by stating the obvious you defeat the presupposition that it must be something

that can be on a tree that can then fall down from it and kill you.

(63)   What is green and fuzzy and kills you when it falls from a tree?
         A pool table. (informant: Isaiah Mackler 1999)

Another problem is that scripts are not only lexical nodes, but also the

connections between them, therefore the set metaphor in its current form is not sufficient

to explain all logical mechanisms. Sets have members, but are not ordered. The following

sets are identical: {1, 2} = {2, 1}. On the basis of a script-based lexicon, the ordering of

its elements in the lexicon itself and in a text are very crucial. For an elaboration of the

set theory metaphor it will be necessary to account for the difference between the sets

{fly, soup} and {soup, fly} as was necessary for the figure-ground reversal LM.

I am sure there are many other faulty inferential paths I have not even mentioned.

Yet, the proposed approach of using a set theory metaphor already analyzes a significant

number of LM constellations. Ordering the sets, most prominently by concepts already

described in cognitive linguistics, will yield an even more descriptively adequate theory

of the local logic of jokes (cf. Hempelmann and Attardo (2000)).

6.   Longer Humorous Narratives

6.1   Introduction

This chapter will introduce a number of theoretical concepts that provide us with tools to

deal with humorous texts that exceed the limited length of jokes (see section (2.2)). The

guiding backbone of the discussion will be Wenzel's (1989) approach to narratives that

have a structure analogous to jokes. The resulting theory will be founded in the GTVH as

expanded by Attardo (1996, 1998, 2000) and Sala (2000).

6.2   Structure of Jokes and Short Stories

6.2.1   Simple Form

Wenzel starts from the assumption "daß gerade die Analyse von Strukturen des Witzes

besondere Einsichten in den 'Witz' von künstlerischen Strukturen schlechthin vermitteln

kann"[32] (1989: 60). This rationale picks up the chiasmus of the title of Wenzel's work

---

[32] that it is precisely the analysis of the structure of the joke ("Witz") that can give us particular insight into the the 'wit' ("Witz") of artistic structures at large

(structure of "Witz," "Witz" of structure), which hinges on the two meanings of "Witz" in German as either wit or joke. In other words, the complex form of narratives—he discusses in particular science fiction short stories—often resembles that of simple verbal jokes.

Wenzel's rationale is inspired by Jolles' (1930) concept of the "simple form:"

> so könnte es einer mit dem neuen, gattungsübergreifenden Konzept der Einfachen Formen arbeitenden Literaturwissenschaft gelingen, auch noch zahlreiche weitere komplexe Formen der Literatur auf bestimmte einfache strukturale Grundmuster zurückzuführen."[33] (1989: 273)

And he tries to relate the complex form of the short story with a punch line back to the simple form of the joke, or possibly a simple form that underlies both of them. This simple form is bipartite in structure, both in jokes as well as in short stories that are characterized by this "generelle Zweiteilung aller pointierten Texte"[34] (1989: 265). The two parts are *exposition* and *punch line*.

6.2.2   Exposition and Punch line

Wenzel's concepts of the two parts of the simple form, can roughly be translated into the terms used in the SSTH/GTVH as table 6 shows.

Obviously, Wenzel does not simply condense the three elements of the traditional[35] structuralist tripartite division (set-up, incongruity, resolution) into two. Despite the suggestions of the table above, there is no clear-cut translation of the terms as he uses them into the three-stage model. Roughly, the exposition corresponds to the set-

---

[33] Thus, for literary study that works with a new concept of simple forms that transgresses genres, it could be possible to relate back many further complex forms of literature to certain simple structural patterns.
[34] overall bipartite structure of all texts with a punch line/point ("Pointe")
[35] Classic sources for the "minimal narrative" are, for example, Barthes (1966), Brémond (1966), and Greimas (1966). See also the section on humor *of* the plot (6.6.2) and the sample analyses in chapter 7.

up, the punch line to the resolution, while the incongruity resides between the two, but

becomes apparent in the punch line.

exposition	punch line	symmetry	asymmetry
		(syntactic parallelism)	(semantic difference)
		(consociation)	(dissociation)
script one	script two	overlap	opposition
		LM	SO

Table 6: Terminology of Wenzel and GTVH

To delimit the two parts it is helpful to look at how they are related to each other

in Wenzel's terms of parallelism and asymmetry (overlap and opposition).

6.2.3 Syntactic Symmetry and Semantic Asymmetry

Wenzel sees the relation between exposition and punch line in terms of a large number of

shared elements on the surface, and a crucial difference in the underlying meanings of the

two. The terms he uses are "zeichensyntaktischer Parallelismus"[36] and

"zeichensemantische Asymmetrie"[37]:

> Das Verhältnis zwischen Hauptteil und pointiertem Schluß einer Kurzgeschichte
> beruht also—wie das Verhältnis zwischen Witzexposition und Witzpointe—stets
> auf einer elementaren, als Raster des Verständnisses dienenden, Symmetrie und
> einer darin eingelagerten, zeichensemantisch relevant werdenden Asymmetrie."[38]
> (1989: 55)

What Wenzel means by symmetry seems to fall together with our concept of

script overlap on a very low, namely the language level. His well-known example for the

"syntactic symmetry," taken from Freud (1905), shows us overlap on the

phonemic/graphemic level in a pun (cf. Wenzel 1989: 22f, 54, 266):

---

[36] parallelism of the syntax of the sign
[37] asymmetry of the semantics of the sign

(64)   Traduttore - Traditore [translator - traitor]

In Wenzel's terms this very simple example consists of the exposition "Traduttore" and

the punch line "Traditore." The parallelism consists in the identity of eight phonemes in

both parts of the joke. This identity exerts the power of the LM to account for or create

the overlap (see chapter 5). Thus, what Wenzel does is to identify the two parts of

humorous texts with the two scripts involved. This corresponds to the notion of

"Bezugsrahmenwechsel," that is, the exposition introduces one frame and the punch line

breaks it or creates a new frame (see section (6.3.2)).

The "semantic asymmetry," on the other hand, lies in the opposition of the

meanings of the two elements, namely "translator" and "traitor."

6.3   Frames of Reference (*Bezugsrahmen*)

6.3.1   Shift of Meaning (*Sinnverschiebung*)

Wenzel relate his concept "frame of reference" to the psychological schema or frame

theory, and also its adaptations into cognitive science, computer linguistics and narrative

theory (1989: 34ff). It seems safe to identify it with our concept of script.

According to Wenzel, the exposition, creates one frame of reference, while the

punch line, brings a shift to another one, other features of the text structure being of

secondary importance: "Die radikale Sinnverschiebung, die eine gute Pointe mit sich

bringt, wird immer nur dadurch ermöglicht, daß es eine große Zahl von Konstanten gibt,

---

[38] The relation between the main part and the punch ending of a short story is always based—just like that of the exposition and punch line of a joke—on an elementary symmetry that functions as the pattern for understanding and an embedded asymmetry that emerges on the semantic level.

die Exposition und Pointe schlüssig miteinander verbinden"[39] (1989: 265). The "invariant elements" that are shared by both the exposition and punch line account for the syntactic symmetry as described in section (6.2.3).

6.3.2 Breaking and Creating a Frame of Reference

The main aim of this part of Wenzel's study is to show how the shift of meaning comes about through the *breaking* and *creation* of frames of reference: When there are two overlapping opposite scripts, or frames of reference that are successively presented in a linear text, there are two constellations that they can take. That is why "der Schwerpunkt einer Pointe je nach ihrer Konstruktion das eine Mal mehr auf der Nichterfüllung einer zuvor aufgebauten Erwartung, das andere Mal mehr auf der Herstellung eines neuen, unvermuteten Zusammenhangs beruhen kann"[40] (1989: 41).

These processes work along two axes, in relation to the text's syntagmatic linear presentation and the scripts' paradigmatic relation to each other. While on the syntagmatic level the textual instantiations of one script follow one another in the text, on the paradigmatic level, their overlapping opposition can occur as follows: The first script is instantiated through (possibly multiple) reference in the text. The second script, and with it the incongruity, can either be given only at the very end in the punch line (new frame of reference is created, Wenzel 1989: 40) or the punch line ultimately switches to one of two scripts which have been competing since both are instantiated (frame of reference is broken, Wenzel 1989: 33). In the first case the focus lies on the non-

---

[39] The radical shift of sense that brings about the punch line is always and only brought about by the fact that there is a large number of invariant elements that combine the set-up and punch line coherently

[40] depending on its structure, the emphasis of a punch line can, on the one hand, lie more on the failure of compliance to a previously set-up expectation, on the other hand, more on the creation of a new, unexpected context

fulfillment of a formerly created expectation (cf. Wenzel 1989: 43). In the second case the focus is rather on the production of a new, unexpected context (ibid.) whereas previously the incoming information was compatible with a number of unspecified scripts (cf. Section (3.2)).

In both cases, textual elements that have been safely understood as part of one script have indeed been in the overlap to another script. This latter script is made available in the punch line and introduced as the valid reading as to were the information, which can now be understood as pertaining to both scripts, belongs. The difference lies in the highlighting of the first script as having been a wrong assumption into which to incorporate the incoming information of the joke in breaking the frame of reference, in contrast to the highlighting of the second script as an unexpected connection in which to understand the (previously disparate) information.

A confusing overlap between these two explanations lies in the fact that for breaking a frame of reference in the punch line it had to be established first, and that establishing a frame of reference in the punch line usually includes the breaking of a formerly established one. It seems as both mechanisms are at work in any case of frameshift, only the emphasis being distributed differently.

6.4   Sample Analyses

Let us look at three of Wenzel's sample analyses of science fiction short stories: In the first story, "Texas Week" by Albert Hernhuter, a narrator describes the visit of a psychiatrist to an obviously neurotic man.

(65)   After watching Western movies for a week, a mentally disturbed man believes to be guarding a mountain pass from the cattle thief "Dirty Dan." To show the illusionary character of his world and against the advice of his patient, the

psychiatrist steps over the edge of the imaginary cliff and—plunges to his death. The neurotic man (and the narrator) finally see Dirty Dan approaching the pass.

This is an example with focus on the *breaking* of the frame of reference and the structure of the short story mirrors in its structure that of the prototypical joke: The REAL script with a neurotic man is opposed to the UNREAL script with the Western hero. The overlap is created by the poor psychiatrist turning into a victim of what turns out to be the real illusion, namely that he is talking to a man in his garden. The resolution remains partial, the Western world is not fully taking over, although the author tries very hard. Not only does the narrator switch fully to the Western frame, but post-punch material, unlikely to occur in jokes, also perpetuates the frame by letting "Dirty Dan" actually ride up the pass. Wenzel sees this as a good example of a short story working with the simple form of the joke (cf. 1989: 164f).

Another example with focus on *breaking* the frame of reference is "Project Hush" by William Tenn, in which the first person narrator describes the following cold war inspired story:

(66)   A U.S. Army unit establishes a secret base on the moon, just to discover that they have been only second to another power. A returning reconnaissance patrol reports who has established the earlier base in the punch line: "The other dome is owned and operated by the Navy. The goddam United States Navy!"

According to Wenzel, the exposition does not so much serve to establish and consolidate one frame to switch to another in the punch line, but to direct the suspense through focusing on the question of the identity of the other moon base. He sees this as an

interessantes Bindeglied zwischen den einfachen Formen der Pointierung, die uns im Witz begegnet sind, und komplexen Rätsel-Lösungsstrukturen, wie wir sie aus dem Detektivroman kennen, wo sich das strukturelle Schwergewicht schließlich

ganz von der Pointe weg und auf die Exposition hin verlagert hat.[41] (1989: 173)

Here the simple structure of the joke is rendered in more complex form. This is because the length of text requires the guiding of suspense (see section (6.5.1)).

An interesting short story is Fredric Brown's "The Weapon," which Wenzel discusses as an instance of *creation* of a frame of reference with implication[42] in the punch line.

(67)   A scientist working on a miraculously powerful weapon is visited by a stranger who tries to convince him to discontinue his work as mankind were not mature enough for such a weapon. The stranger, who pays a lot of attention to the scientist's retarded son, is not successful and leaves mentioning that he left a present for the child. The scientist salvages the 'present' from his son thinking that "only a madman would give a loaded revolver to an idiot."

The analogy that the LM of the punch line creates—between son/revolver and mankind/wonder weapon—is of the same type frequently found in jokes, or as Wenzel rephrases the main hypothesis of the SSTH, it "nutzt somit den uns aus der Witzanalyse vertrauten Effekt der Verbindung konkurrierender Bezugssysteme"[43] (1989: 192) through analogy.

These examples seem to confirm the general correspondence of the structure of jokes and the structure of humorous short stories. But we see two problems arising here that require further discussion. The first is addressed by Wenzel, namely the difference in text length between jokes and short stories or, even more so, novels (see section (6.5.1)). The second, more crucial one that actually encompasses the first one, is just glossed over

---

[41] interesting link between the simple forms we encountered in the joke and complex riddle-solving structures as we know them from detective stories, where ultimately the structural weight has shifted completely from the punch line away to the exposition.

[42] Note that implication itself is not an LM, but enabled through the LM (see section (5.1.2.2)).

[43] uses the effect, familiar from joke analysis, of the connection of competing frames of reference

by Wenzel: The difference between humor in the plot of the narrative and humor just "seasoned" into an otherwise non-humorous plot (see section (6.6)).

6.5 Differences between Jokes and Humorous Narratives

6.5.1 Text Length

One difference between jokes and longer narratives with a punch line simply lies in the fact that the latter present more language material. This difference is also the key to Chlopicki's (1987) application of the SSTH to humorous short stories. Given the larger number of SOs he found in short stories, Chlopicki introduced the concept of "shadow opposition" for SOs that hold for the entire text, in contrast to individual embedded SOs. This distinction again points at the difference between humor *of* the plot vs. humor *in* the plot discussed in section (6.6).

Like Wenzel,[44] Chlopicki assumes that longer texts can in general be reduced to summaries of the plot. Thus the difference in text length seems to be less significant, as those narratives can easily be condensed into summaries with smaller amounts of language material that jokes rarely surpass. This has worked in the case of the summaries of the short stories analyzed by Wenzel (cf. examples (64)-(66)).

But Wenzel also sees the main difference that is brought about through the length of short stories, namely that it creates the necessity to direct the development of suspense:

> Wir haben nun in unseren bisherigen Ausführungen den der Pointe vorgeschalteten Textteil, die Exposition, der Einfachheit halber immer als einen statischen, monolithischen Block betrachtet. Diese Sichtweise der Exposition ist aber im Grunde nur bei sehr kurzen, relativ simplen Witzen berechtigt. Für alle längeren pointierten Textformen gilt hingegen, daß der der Pointe vorgelagerte Textteil die Pointe bereits durch eine bestimmte Fokussteuerung—oder anders

---

[44] And others (see section (7.2.4)).

ausgedrückt: durch bestimmte Techniken der Spannungslenkung—vorbereitet"[45] (1989: 66).

Wenzel analyzes the control of suspense development in the exposition in terms of Barthes' concept of hermeneutical code (1989: 67ff; cf. Barthes (1970)) and other narrative theories. The large variety of possible techniques to guide the focus leads into the inductive part of Wenzel's work with its large number of case studies, three of which have been outlined above. His emphasis on the controlling of suspense *towards* the final punch line of the short stories clearly shows again that Wenzel is deals with humor *of* the plot of the narratives, and not humorous instances *in* the plot. A key concept that will be introduced below is that of an additional strand, which is directly related to the necessity of structuring longer narratives, possibly by means different from the *core opposition* of their plot (see section (6.6.2)).

6.6   Humor of the Plot vs. Humor in the Plot

In relation to the transferability of his approach to novels, Wenzel cautions:

> Relativ unproblematisch ist es, eine Serie von lokal begrenzten Pointen in eine Langform—wie zum Beispiel einen Gesellschaftsroman oder ein Gesellschaftslustspiel [...]—einzubauen. [...] Problematisch ist dagegen der Versuch, einen Text von Romanlänge in einer das gesamte Textverständnis revolutionierenden Schlußpointe gipfeln zu lassen, weil die dem Ende vorausgehenden Erzählabschnitte bei einem Text von dieser Länge zwangsläufig ein so großes Eigengewicht entwickeln, daß sich der Leser durch ihre nachträgliche Umwertung betrogen fühlen muß.[46] (1989: 264)

---

[45] For simplicity's sake we have so far treated the text segment that precedes the punch line as a static, monolithic block. This view of the exposition is only merited for very short, relatively simple jokes. For all longer forms of pointed narratives, the segment that preceded the punch line prepares this punch line by way of guiding the focus-or, to put it differently, through certain techniques of controlling the suspense development.

[46] It is relatively unproblematic to build a series of locally restricted punch lines into a long narrative, for example, a social novel or comedy [...]. [...] On the other hand, the attempt to let a narrative of the length of a novel culminate in a final punch line that revolutionizes the understanding of the whole text is problematic. In a text of this lenght, the narrative segments that precede the end develop such a weight that the reader must necessarily feel cheated when the whole text has to be reevaluated afterwards.

While Wenzel does not consider the culmination in a final punch line a problem for short stories of the type he analyzes, he ominously predicts a problem for longer narratives. Yet this culmination is exactly what happens not only in "Texas Week" but also in longer narratives, for example, in Poe's *(The system of) Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether* (cf. Attardo 2000). This seems to indicate to us that the iconicity that Wenzel sees between jokes and short stories with a punch line with respect to their structure also holds for longer narratives. The key issue is whether the narrative has a humorous plot or just humorous instances in a plot that does not resemble the simple form of the joke.

This important distinction within the class of humorous narratives is that between

1. narratives that have a humorous plot (*humor of the plot*)

2. narratives that contain instances of humor (*humor in the plot*).

When we assume the term "plot" to be synonymous with Wenzel's "structure," his failure to address in depth this crucial issue in the study of longer humorous narratives requires further discussion (see section (6.7)).

From the previous discussion, organized around Wenzel's approach, it should have become clear that I side with the position that sees the two basic forms of humorous narratives—humorous plots that are structurally analogous to jokes and structurally non-humorous plots that contain instances of humor—as the essential and essentially different types of humorous narratives.[47]

---

[47] Attardo (2000) makes a finer distinction and adds further types, which are marginal for my discussion here. He distinguishes
1. serious plots
- without jab lines (not funny)
- with jab lines
2. humorous plots

6.6.1 Tools to Handle Humor *in* the Plot

On the basis of the GTVH, a narrative component is provided to handle the combination

of small texts into the long humorous narrative (Attardo 1998, 2000). The central

elements of this component for the discussion here are a distinction of *micro-* and

macronarratives, levels of narratives in which these relate to each other, *jab* and *punch*

lines, and most prominently *strands* and *stacks*.

Micronarratives consist of one action or event, a macronarrative is any

combination of micronarratives, which might be embedded in different levels in the

macronarrative, a number of which in turn might constitute a macronarrative on a higher

level. An event, or action, is the most minimal micronarrative, the description of a

dynamic passage from one state to another (Todorov 1969: 256, Chatman 1978: 44). A

static state is either an equilibrium, i.e. there is no need to change it, or disequilibrium,

i.e. there is the need—expressed in the narrative—to change it.

A *strand* is sequence of *jab* or *punch lines* that are formally or thematically linked

(cf. Attardo 1998: 236). *Stacks* are strands of *strands*, or *macrostrands*. Let me illustrate

this with an example. In a given chapter in the *Gargantua* Frère Jean repeatedly cracks

religion/food-SO jokes. This constitutes a *strand*. We find these strands of jokes across a

number of chapters and we have a *stack*.

- ending on a punch line
- having a humorous central opposition
- using metanarrative disruption
- using coincidence
- [using] hyperdetermined humor
- using diffuse disjunction

In terms of this taxonomy, my discussion—based on Wenzel—has focussed on 1.b as *humor in the plot* (cf. section (7.1) and (7.2)), and 2.a and 2.b as *humor of the plot* (cf. section (7.2) and (7.3)).

Significant patterns of strands are *combs* and *bridges*, a subcategorization introduced by Attardo and Vigliotti (1999). *Combs* are constituted by the recurrence of *jabs* across a limited stretch of text, while bridges span *jabs* or *combs* of *jabs* that are relatively distant from another. I reserve a more detailed discussion for the analysis of the sample corpus below.

6.6.2 Tools to Handle Humor *of* the Plot

I has to be repeated that I do not include all forms of humor *of* the plot in my discussion, but only a specific form, namely that which is structurally similar to jokes. This type of humor *of* the plot can be found in shorter humorous narratives, like the short stories Wenzel discusses, or the fabliaux novelle of Boccaccio analyzed in section (7.2) and the fabliaux tale's of Chaucer, like the *Shipman's Tale* of section (7.3).

The basic assumption is that these humorous narratives with humor of the plot are essentially extended jokes, so that we can analyze them largely with the same tools as the GTVH—introduced in chapter 4 and expanded in chapter 5—provides them. The extended text length poses a number of detail problems. These are questions that are currently addressed elsewhere—Attardo (2000) and Sala (2000)—and have been discussed earlier: Attardo (1996: 98-99, 1998), Chlopicki (1987), Palmer (1987). Most relevant for the sample analysis here is the notion of *core opposition*, namely the SO between two scripts in the core narrative—in contrast to Chlopicki's *shadow opposition* created through strands of jabs with similar SO.

The distinction between surface narrative and core narrative—under varying terms—has been the rationale for much structuralist analysis including that of Propp (1928), Brémond (1966), Greimas (1966), and Todorov (1969). The main assumption is

that it is possible to paraphrase or extract the plot of a tale containing all essential elements of its structure. As any linguist would tell us, there is no such thing as a paraphrase that is identical to its source, unless their surface structure is completely identical also (cf. section (4.2.1)).

Yet, based on the hypothesis that humor *of* the plot is structurally similar to humor of jokes, it would be desirable to devise an extraction matrix that provides us with a condensed paraphrase containing the "essential" features of any plot. The daring task of devising such a matrix starts with Propp (1928), whose analysis has inspired many applications to other narrative genres.[48] I will return to this topic, and especially Todorov's (1969, 1977) and Pearcy's (1977) contribution in my sample analysis of the fabliaux novelle of the *Decameron* below (see section (7.2)). But where other sources use the two terms *core opposition* and *shadow opposition* interchangeably, I would like to make a major defining distinction here between these two types of "deep structure" opposition, reflecting the distinction between humor *of* the plot and humor *in* the plot as outlined above.

- *shadow opposition* created through repetitive humorous jabs in the plot of any narrative

- *core opposition* of the humorous plot of narratives that are structurally similar to jokes

In the sample analyses in chapter 7, I will try to show that the shadow opposition in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* is perpetuated by the stacks reflecting grotesque "systems of images" which do not contribute to the narrative development. It is unrelated to the

---

[48] Relevant here is, for example, Schenck's analysis of fabliaux (1987).

central narrative complication, but informs the motifs of the narrative. The core

opposition of the sexual fabliaux in the *Decamerone*, on the other hand, is related to the

central narrative complication, and, if left out in a summary renders it non-humorous. In

section (7.2) we will see that an additional strand of SIs of most of Boccaccio's fabliaux

novelle contains the legitimate/illegitimate sex opposition, whereas the core opposition is

the dumb/clever SO underlying what is traditionally called the "trickery" or "deception"

motif of the narratives. While the first motivates the procession of the narrative events,

the latter is the central incongruity furnishing the SO necessary for the final humor. In the

Shipman's Tale shadow and core opposition coincide creating a dense structure

intricately developing the inseparable humor *of* the plot and *in* the plot (see section

(7.3.)).

6.7 The Metaphorical Nature of Wenzel's Approach

The question that the quote in the previous section raises affects his whole approach,

before Wenzel even turns to the empirical part of his study. Although he claims validity

of the approach to see the parallelism in structure between jokes and short stories on the

basis of its "Nützlichkeit als Metapher"[49] (1989: 70), his approach does not appear as

convincing any more, as the title seemed to imply, namely that there was a structural

relationship. Thus, given the two basic types of humorous narratives, what constitutes a

structural relationship between jokes and longer humorous narrative, beyond a

metaphorical resemblance?

Wenzel cautions that the parallelism of the short narrative joke and some of the

longer short stories is not a genetic relation, but a structural one. From Wenzel's analyses

it becomes clear that the superficial resemblance is striking, only the slots of this

structure are filled by different types of elements:

> Für die Pointe einer Kurzgeschichte gilt nämlich wie für die zuvor behandelten
> Witze, daß sie erst dann gelungen wirkt, wenn sie den neuen, die plötzliche
> Lösung verkörpernden Sinnzusammenhang unter Beibehaltung möglichst vieler
> der bislang in die Geschichte eingeführten Elemente herzustellen vermag—nur
> daß die beizubehaltenden Elemente [...] hier in der Regel nicht mehr in
> Buchstaben und Wörtern, sondern in Personen, Ereignissen und
> Handlungselementen bestehen.[50] (1989: 54)

So, as Wenzel repeats here, the microstructure, the simple bipartite form of the

joke with exposition and punch line, is the same as the macrostructure of short stories

with a punch line. But some pages later he cautions even more, when he says that the

parallelism he observes between jokes and short stories with a punch line is possibly only

an apparent relationship:

> Es fragt sich nämlich ob die von Barthes [...] postulierte Analogie von Satz- und
> Erzähltextstruktur tatsächlich als eine objektiv gegebene, unmittelbar kausale
> Verwandtschaft aufgefaßt werden darf oder nicht vielmehr lediglich Ausfluß der
> Tatsache ist, daß dem menschlichen Denken nur ein begrenztes Potential
> struktureller Muster zur Erfassung und Verarbeitung von Textbeziehungen zur
> Verfügung steht, so daß die Analogie von Satz- und Erzähltextstruktur genau
> genommen nur eine Scheinverwandtschaft darstellt[51] (70 n8).

It remains unclear how the structure of a sentence and a narrative can be

analogous. Assuming such a relation, seems to go much further than just using a

metaphorical approach. A sentence is rarely a narrative, even if we reduce the definition

---

[49] usefulness as a metaphor

[50] Because for the punch line of the short story the same observations hold as for the jokes treated above. That is, that they are successful when they create the new frame that embodies the solution while at the same time maintaining as many of the earlier introduced elements of the story as possible. The main difference is that these elements are no longer letters and words, but characters, events, and elements of the plot.

[51] It remains open whether the analogy between sentence structure and narrative structure postulated by Barthes is indeed to be understood as given objectively and as an immediate causal relationship; or whether it is rather just an effect from the fact that human cognition has only a limited potential for the recognition and processing of textual relations. This would mean that the analogy of sentence structure and narrative structure is just an apparent relation.

of the latter here to "a text with an exposition and a punch line." Yet, without clarification of the concepts, this remains an unfalsifiable hypothesis.

Nevertheless, to see a relation between a short narrative, like a joke, and longer narratives, like short stories or even novels, is warranted by Wenzel's approach. He seems to overshoot when he leaves claims unsupported and relies on Barthes oversimplified identification of narratives and sentences on the grounds that the sentence is an organism that is infinite in its extension, but can be reduced to the diad of subject and predicate, and to tell a story is to ask a question (subject) the predication of which (answer) is delayed (cf. Barthes 1970: 79f).

The central question in this context remains open, namely, what would constitute a structural relationship between narratives. The assumption that such a relationship can be established on the basis they can be reformulated into the same paraphrase (cf. 6.5.1) does not work for puns, and any form of translation of humorous text affects its funniness (cf. Laurian (1992) and issue 34.1 (1989) of *META Journal des Traducteurs*). It seems that we can only operate with clearly delimited types of plot humor.

This chapter does not end in a summary, as the concepts discussed here will be applied in the sections of the next chapter.

7.   Sample Analyses

7.0   Introduction

The first part of this thesis had a clearly theoretical focus. In this second part with three sample analyses, I will understand the individual works analyzed as manifestations of the abstractions as discussed in the previous chapters. But these analyses of Rabelais,

Boccaccio, and Chaucer will also be carried further. They are intended not only to illustrate the applicability of the theories outlined above, but the humorous narratives will be scrutinized to gain insight into the understanding of the literary works themselves.

The corpus of samples spans four centuries of European literature. Starting in France in the early 16th century, I will work my way back, first to the Italy of the middle of the14[th] century, before I conclude in late 14th century England. Section (7.1) will analyze Rabelais's use of humorous strands *in* the plot of an episode of *Gargantua et Pantagruel*. Section (7.2) will look at Boccaccio's use of humor *of* the plot in selected fabliaux novelle from the *Decameron*, and finally section (7.3) will illustrate the combined use both types of types of humorous narrative in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*.

7.1 "... bren pur ce chapitre!"—
Humor *in* the Plot as the Key to Bakhtin's Grotesque "Systems of Images" in Rabelais's *Gargantua et Pantagruel*

7.1.1 Introduction

The key to this section is the assumption that the grotesque "systems of images" which Bakhtin sees as uniting the multiple threads of Rabelais's *Gargantua et Pantagruel* are instances of humor, and can as such be usefully analyzed with a semantic humor theory, such as the General Theory of Verbal Humor (chapter 4). The framework for this structural and distributional analysis of the constituent incongruities, or script oppositions, is the version of the GTVH that is expanded for the analysis of humorous narratives (chapter 6 and Attardo 1998, 2000). The types of script oppositions (SO), as the most important content-oriented knowledge resource (cf. section (4.3)), will illustrate the central humorous "systems of images" like the grotesque body and how they are

encoded in the text of Rabelais's work. Several recurring SOs, like religion/sex, religion/drinking, and religion/excrement, can be identified. They show patterns of repetition that mark topical focuses and connections in the seemingly fragmented, nonsensical, inconsistent text. By identifying these humorous instances in the narrative and analyzing their distribution I will arrive at clusters and embracing patterns, and patterns of patterns that constitute "shadow oppositions" (cf. section (6.6.1)). This will clarify what kinds of SOs form one of the humorous "systems of images" that Rabelais used, how he used them, and what the effects on the overall text are.

In my analysis I will focus on the character of Frère Jean in the *Gargantua* book, as his role unites a number of the characteristic elements of the whole work. The recurring topics in the oppositions of the humor that Frère Jean uses are closely connected to the grotesque concept of the body, which in turn serves to contrast the communal, open, folk culture to its elitist, official counterpart. In particular, religion is contrasted with excrement, and most prominently food and sexuality, blasphemy, laziness and disobedience. Blood is turned into wine and bread into cake: Bakhtin's revolution of the carnival.

7.1.2 Critical Heritage

Before Bakhtin's groundbreaking analysis of Rabelais's work, two larger traditions of interpretation, methods of generating metatext on the basis of varying ranges of context (cf. Kinser 1990), can be distinguished. The first and generally earlier one is characterized by its focus on the surface text of *Gargantua et Pantagruel* and a general lack of understanding. Proponents of this school of analysis are either restricted through their lack of historical and biographical information (for examples see Bakhtin 1965:

60ff, Rieke 1992: 21), or consciously restrict themselves to the interpretation of the text alone (e.g. Parkin 1993) augmented by the suggested interpretations of other scholars. Their reading of *Gargantua et Pantagruel* is guided by this flattening of the text and leads to their astonishment and confusion. For on the basis of the text alone, it has been practically impossible, since the 17th ct., to see anything but "nonsense," meaningless enumeration, unsettling inconsistencies, unnecessary explicitness in sexual matters, childish delight in excrement, or unresolved madness cast into far too many words.

The other school of reading *Gargantua et Pantagruel* can be characterized by sketching the work of one of its most prominent exponents, Screech (e.g. 1979). The context for his reading does not go much beyond the situatedness of Rabelais' work with respect to its author's biography and selected historical events of the time when it was written. This leads Screech to see the whole text in terms of a political metaphor as satire, attacking the medieval religious, scholastic, and feudal official culture in the wake of the rebirth of classical culture.

Both ways of reading *Gargantua et Pantagruel* can inform one another. Had the ones puzzled by the text's complexity seen—as Bakhtin has—the background of the grotesque laughter in oral humorous folk culture, and had the ones trying to fit the text into the tight corset of political satire understood — as Bakhtin has — the revolution of the unofficial against the official culture that is systematically encoded in the text, their structural and historic contributions could have helped towards a fuller reading of Rabelais. But to arrive at an explanatorily significant analysis it is necessary to step away from the text by abstracting from it — as Bakhtin has. It is, on the other hand, also

necessary to look at it very closely to back up the findings by detailed scrutiny of its structure and contents.

The two extremes of pre-Bakhtinian Rabelais perception can also be summarized as "confusing fragmentation" and "confusing unity," both focussing on the wrong warrant for a uniform interpretation. Some scholars, like Bowen, see several texts, and even "authors" in *Gargantua et Pantagruel*: the medical treatise, the encoded political debate, the scholastic farce, and the comment on rhetoric written by "the comic orator," "the comic humanist," "the comic lawyer," "the comic doctor."[52] And multiple influences can clearly be distinguished in Rabelais's work, as is characteristic for Renaissance literature at large. Accordingly, Kinser summarizes three major strands in the motifs, or "systems/complex of images" as Bakhtin calls them:[53]

1. nonliterate folk and popular culture

2. literate non-Christian science and literature of antiquity (Lucian, Virgil, etc.)

3. literate Christian worldview of medieval times (Kinser 1990: 254).

We might add to these the literary manifestations of popular culture as, for example, in Folengo and Budé (cf. Bowen 1995). Through these manifestations of oral traditions the nonliterate folk and popular culture has informed Rabelais's text, or the peculiar Renaissance reception of the literature of the antiquity as separate strands. And this popular culture survives in a unique way through Rabelais's documentation of it in the humorous strands that form the "systems of images."

---

[52] These are the chapter headings of Bowen (1998); it should, however, be noted that Bowen also considers humor as the key to a unified understanding of Rabelais

[53] For example, 1965: 258, 330, 386, 408, 436, alas, without further methodological analysis.

7.1.3 Bakhtin

Bakhtin placed his analysis in opposition to those described above: "The present-day analysis of laughter explains it either as purely negative satire [...] or else as gay, fanciful, recreational drollery deprived of philosophic content" (1965: 12). His claim is supported by an insightful theory and will be put to a thorough test on the text itself.

He correctly saw that these elements were united by Rabelais under the umbrella of the nonliterate folk and popular culture. This is what makes Rabelais unique: Not that he has used the various strands, which are common for "syncretist" Renaissance literature, but that he has unified them formally with the system of images that Bakhtin calls "grotesque realism." And to show that these systems are manifest in the shadow opposition SOs of the *humorous* instances is the aim of this section.

Thus, the unity that Bakhtin finds in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* is not a forced one, as it is in the words of the text. His genre analysis rediscovers the humorous complex of carnivalistic reversal and its motifs of medieval (and earlier) folk traditions. But his significant contribution to the understanding of humorous folk culture in the Middle Ages and Renaissance and its manifestation in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* needs to be complemented with a formal analysis of Rabelais's work on the basis of humor theory. As Kinser criticizes, "the evidence [Bakhtin] cites in support of his view is nearly all literate and highly discontinuous" (1990: 253), rather then systematically related to the text of *Gargantua et Pantagruel* itself.

For the purpose of this paper it must suffice here to sketch the basic elements of Bakhtin's analysis. Anything else would amount to a summary of the dense and often unnecessarily obscure *Rabelais and his World*. The five central "systems of images" Bakhtin analyzes under these headings are:

1. the language of the marketplace, billingsgate

2. the popular-festive forms, especially in relation to their carnival background

3. banquet imagery

4. the grotesque image of the body,

5. images of the material bodily lower stratum, its orifices

I have limited the scope of this paper to the manifestations of these "systems of images" in one episode, which features most prominently the character of Frère Jean, and shows preference for banquet imagery in contrast to religion and images of the material bodily lower stratum, with a focus on the contrast to religion.

Another point that will be clarified here is the conceptual fuzziness of Bakhtin's most central tool, the "systems of images" that constitutes grotesque realism. Here, I will suggest that the "grotesque realism" as it was cast into literature by Rabelais employs structures identical to other forms of verbal humor, which have been successfully analyzed by linguistic humor theory. Through this amendment I will support Bakhtin's central claim that "one logic pervaded all these elements which in our eyes appear so different" (1965: 61) with falsifiable, detailed analysis.

7.1.4   Theory

Let me briefly repeat the central elements of the theory outlined in the previous chapters, as they pertain to the analysis here. That *Gargantua et Pantagruel* is a humorous text is the assumption for this application of the expanded GTVH. In addition, I suspect that the very necessity of a punch line (or jab lines) for longer texts to be humorous leads to their preference for a cellular structure. The shorter texts, or micronarratives (or at least a sufficient number of them), of which the longer macronarrative is built are then

structurally identical to jokes and would as such be analyzable in terms of the original GTVH. Yet, not all jokes are such segments or micronarratives, as, for example, the incongruity involved can be between the very levels of the narrative themselves or a text that lies outside of the one at hand.[54]

The notorious cellular structure of *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, evident from the short chapters, which in themselves are often enclosed episodes (cf. La Charité 1978), shows that it consists of a number of micronarratives. It will, on the other hand, become clear in the analysis of the humorous contents of these episodic micronarratives that these shorter texts share several lines of thought, and that these "systems of images" are the very ones that Bakhtin has identified as those of the carnivalistic folk culture.

To briefly recapitulate: The main assumption underlying the GTVH is that regardless of its context and contents all humorous texts display two central features: an incongruity between concepts (SO), and either the resolution of this incongruity (LM) to varying degrees, or—more rarely—the very lack of the possibility of resolution as in nonsense. The contents of the incongruous concepts involved and the particular logical mechanism enabling their resolution present a central key to the understanding of any humorous text. This has been implicitly acknowledged when categorizations of these texts have relied on criteria that can be attributed to these two central elements.

It will be shown here, on the example of the second book in the order of publication, *Gargantua*, that when the incongruous motifs and their constellations are scrutinized, a number of systematically recurring patterns ("systems of images," here *shadow oppositions* of "stacks" and "strands") will emerge and support a structurally

---

[54] For example, intertextual jokes (see section (5.4.2.2)) like the topos violations of the kind the instances of

consistent, explanatorily adequate and theoretically viable access to a reading of Rabelais that will turn out to provide important support for Bakhtin's analysis.

7.1.5 Tools

The apparatus of tools employed for the analysis of the Gargantua book is taken from Attardo (1998: 233-241; 2000) and has been introduced above in section (6.6.1). The central concepts are *jab, stack, strand, comb* and *bridge*, and Chlopicki's (1987) *shadow opposition.*

7.1.6 Main Hypothesis

The "systems of images" that according to Bakhtin constitute the structural framework of Rabelais's *Gargantua et Pantagruel* can be identified as the shadow oppositions of strands and stacks of humorous jabs, and most illuminatingly described by the contents of their script oppositions. The emphasis lies on "humorous," as that feature is what distinguishes this analysis from previous surveys which tried to identify complexes of images in general, and usually worked outside of theoretical frameworks and deduced their analysis from instinct—and mostly very successfully so—rather than from hard data.

To prove this hypothesis I chose to analyze text involving the character of Frère Jean in the Gargantua book. The monk is introduced at a key moments in the plot, the defense of the vineyard of the Abbey of Seuilly (ch. 27), and is a central figure in the Picrocholine War (ch. 39-45) and the setting up of the Abbey of Thélème upon the Gargantuans' victory (ch. 52-58). The section that involves the friar is enclosed enough

---

enumeration in Rabelais represent.

to form a narrative unit, as will be discussed below, and short enough to be analyzed to the necessary depth. I restrict myself here to the episode (on episodic structure in Rabelais see La Charité 1978, and below) in chapters 39-45, in which Frère Jean is most vocal and active, and add chapter 27 in which he was introduced as it foreshadows the "systems of images" embodied in the character of the monk. These systems are assumed to recur in all following chapters in which Frère Jean is featured, as a check against the other books of *Gargantua et Pantagruel* has confirmed.[55]

It might seem that I am testing for a parameter which itself was the criterion for the selection of the corpus that I am testing. Namely, it might look as if I am looking for the "system of images" that involves religion in chapters the feature the religious character Frère Jean. Quite on the contrary, the rationale here is that the choice of text on the basis of the involvement of the monk serves to narrow the scope in order to find any *humorous* instances and show how they structure the part of the narrative in which they occur. This involves also the identification of motifs, but the claim here is not that they are the only or the most prominent types of humor in the text at large.

7.1.7   Sample Analysis

This first part of the analysis will be purely quantitative and based on the frequency of the SOs of the jabs with respect to chapter division and SO types, i.e. shadow oppositions. Already at first glance a limited number of clear patterns emerge. Only 6 of the total of 139 jab lines in the 795 lines analyzed cannot be subsumed under the 7 central SOs that

---

[55] I, ch. 27, 39-45, 52, 58; III, ch.15, 20-21, 26-28; IV, ch. 8-9, 11, 16, 19-25, 27, 29, 32-33, 37, 39-40, 48-50, 53-54, 56, 64-67; (V, ch. 1, 6, 8, 12-16, 27, 30, 34, 43, 47) In-depth analysis beyond chapter 45 of book I is beyond my scope at this early stage.

were found to be constituent. These are listed under G. "other." The most prominent SOs

are listed in the following table:

	Lines	Jabs	Script Oppositions								J/line
Chapter			*A*	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	
27	163	44	23				6	1	11	3	0.270
39	118	33		4	6	4	1		17	1	0.280
40	90	13		3	3		2	2	3		0.144
41	69	11		1			5	3	2		0.159
42	74	9		2					7		0.122
43	94	4	1						2	1	0.043
44	82	20	15		1				2	2	0.244
45	105	5		3					2		0.048
sum	795	139	39	13	10	4	14	6	46	7	*aver.:*
%		100	28.06	9.35	7.19	2.88	10.07	4.32	33.09	5.04	0.175

Table 7: frequency of jabs in relation to SO types, chapters, and chapter length:
A. violence/medicine, B. non-sex/sex, C. non-excrement/excrement, D. non-food/food, E. non-drink/drink, F. observance/laziness, G. religion/blasphemy, H. other

In the following sections I will introduce the central strands by listing their

instances from the text, before I will generalize towards the larger patterns of the shadow

oppositions and their significance for the "systems of images."

7.1.7.1 A. violence/medicine (death/life)

A = {violence}, B = {medicine}, M(AB) = { (beat, brain), (crack, forearm), ... }

The violence/medicine SO is featured very prominently at the beginning of the episode in

two combs of jabs (ch. 27: 91-102: "Es uns escarbouillozt la cervelle, ... débezilloit les

fauciles ...faisoyt voler la teste en pièces par la commissure lambdoïde"[56] and 112-118:

"il leurs transperçoyt la poictrine ... parmi les couillons persoyt le boiau cullier."[57]) as

well as at the end of the episode in another two combs (ch. 44: 12-17: "luy coupant

---

[56] He beat out the brains, ... and cracked the fore-arms ... knocked his head into pieces along the lambdoidal suture. [The translations are from the English edition translated by Cohen (1955).]

entièrement les venes jugulaires et artères spagitides ... entreouvrit la mouelle spinale entre la seconde et tierce vertèbre"[58] and 37-43: "Lors d'un coup luy tranchit la teste, ... et demoura la craine pendent sus les espaules à la peau du péricrane pare derrière, en forme d'un bonnet doctoral ..."[59]). In both places the combs of jabs perpetuate the SO in scenes where the monk mutilates his enemies while their wounds are described overspecifically in medical detail. Apart from the four combs only one other instance of violence/medicine jabs was found in the middle of the episode (ch. 43: 39 "Adoncq le moyne avec son baston de croix luy donna entre col et collet sus l'os acromion ..."[60]). An interesting distributional feature is the bridge from one end of the episode to the other that these combs create. This bridge serves to establish the episodic nature has been assumed for the analysis here.

A neat parallelism supports this bridging of the episode through the violence/medicine humor: Rabelais uses the same pun at the end of the very first comb and at the beginning of the very last comb, creating an overall chiastic structure of the episode that is also supported by the bridges the other jabs build (see below): "'Frère Jean, je me rend! — Il t'est (disoyt-il) bien force; mais ensemble tu rendras l'âme à tous les diables."[61] (ch. 27: 106 see asterisk in the graph in appendix 9.1); "... mon bon petit Seigneur le Priour, je me rends à vous! — Et je te rends (dist le moyne) à tous les diables."[62] (ch. 44: 34, see asterisk in appendix (9.1)).

---

[57] running him through the chest ... struck on the ballocks and pierced their bum-gut

[58] entirely severing the jugular veins and sphagitid arteries ... laid open his spinal marrow between the second and third vertebrae

[59] Then at one blow he sliced his head, ... So his cranium remained hanging on his sholders by the skin of his pericranium, falling backwards like a doctor's cap

[60] Whereupon the monk gave him such a fierce thwack with the staff of his cross between the neck and the shoulders, on the acromion bone

[61] 'Friar John, I surrender!' ... 'You can't help it. But you'll surrender your soul to all the devils as well.

[62] '... my noble Prior, I surrender to you!' 'And I surrender you to all the devils,' said the monk.

On a higher level of abstraction the SO of violence/medicine humorously represents the grotesque death/life contrast as embodied in the images of the material bodily lower stratum: "everything descends into the earth and the bodily grave in order to die and to be reborn" (Bakhtin 1965: 435). The friar's enemies are killed, but the slaughter is described with the minute medical "detail, exactness, actuality" (Bakhtin 1965: 436) of someone who sees the carnivalistic "death-renewal-fertility" (Bakhtin 1965: 327).

7.1.7.2 B. non-sex/sex (religion, chastity/sex)

A = {non-sex}, B = {sex}, M(AB) = { (chastity, stiff john-thomas), ... }

As for the other oppositions that involve religion, a central mechanism employed by Rabelais is the parody of biblical quotes (cf. e.g. Bakhtin 1965: 86, Screech 1979: 151, 183). All Latin quotes in the following SOs represent examples of this.

One of these, the second most frequent type of SO in the episode, religion/sex, is more evenly distributed across its first half. Having five jab instances in the first chapter after the introduction, it occurs another five times until ch. 42 and finally three times in the last chapter of the episode. The instances in the text are: ch. 39: 16 "couillon,"[63] 41 "De tous poissons, fors que la tanche, prenez l'aesle de la perdrys ou la cuisse d'une nonnain."[64] (punning on the saying "Pren le dos et laisse la panche"), 43 "... on meurt la caiche roidde?"[65] 68 "braguette,"[66] 86 "*radix*;" ch. 40: 39 monks "molestent tout leur voisinage à force de trinqueballer leurs cloches;"[67] 85 their noses are so small because of

---

[63] ballocky boy
[64] Of every fish except the tench—take the wing of a partridge or a nun's thigh.
[65] die with a stiff john-thomas
[66] codpiece
[67] disturb their whole neighborhood with the clanking of their bells

the "tétins moletz"[68] of their wet nurses, so 88 *"Ad formam nasi cognoscitur"* (cf. Bakhtin 86f; this answers the second question raised in the chapter's title: "pourquoy les ungs ont le nez plus grand que les aultres"); ch. 41: 65 "un gros braquemart;"[69] ch. 42: 21 "couvrit toutes les chiennes du pays,"[70] 23 *"de frigidis et maleficiatis;"* ch. 45: 68 the monks "biscotent voz femmes,"[71] like 75 "un bon ourvrier mect indifférentement toutes pièces en œuvre,"[72] 78 "l'ombre du clochier d'une abbaye est féconde."[73] These instances of jabs convey the common medieval humorous image of the lecherous monk, which in turn is one of the images that constitute the system.

7.1.7.4 C. non-excrement/excrement (religion, purity/excrement)

A = {non-excrement}, B = {excrement}, M(AB) = { (purity, fart), (purity, turd), ... }

Subsumable under the general gluttony theme, but clearly distinct in terms of its humor, the religion/excrement jabs form the third-longest strand. The instances of this SO in the episode are: ch. 39: 29 "Bren (dist Gymnaste), bren pur vostre chapitre!"[74] a comb in lines 63-68, which partly overlaps (as it does in the human body) with the sex image "pource que l'eau décourt tout du long ... c'est un lieu umbrageux, obscur et ténébreux, auquel jamais le soleil ne luist; ... qu'il est continuellement esventé des vents du trou de bize, de chemise, et, d'abondant, de la braguette,"[75]; ch. 40: 14 "... qu'ilz mangent la merde du monde,"[76] 25 "Ce qu'il faict est tout conchier et dégaster,"[77] 65 "bon vin

---

[68] soft breasts
[69] stout short-sword
[70] covered all the bitches in the country
[71] having a fine fling at your wives (literally: "biscuiting them")
[72] a good workman finds a use for all timber alike
[73] shadow of an abbey-steeple is fruitful
[74] 'A turd!' said Gymnaste. 'A turd for your chapter. ...'
[75] waters runs all down it ... it is shady, obscure, and dark, it is continually fanned by winds from the northern hole, the smock, and also the codpiece
[76] they eat the world's excrement

nouveau voy vous la composeur de petz;"[78] ch. 44: 24 "Monsieur le Postériour, ... vous aurez sus vos postères."[79]

The excrement image is part of the focus on the material bodily lower stratum system and as such to be found throughout *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, e.g. in the description of the youth of Gargantua and, very prominently, the arsewipe episode in ch. 13. The focus on the orifices as the fecund and devouring exits and entrances of the grotesque body is central to Bakhtin's analysis: "urine (as well as dung) is gay mater, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter" (335). Through its humorous structure this strand thus serves as a key to the grotesque body complex of images in the analyzed episode.

7.1.7.5 D. non-food/food (moderation/gluttony)

A = {non-food}, B = {food}, M(AB) = { (moderation, feasting), ... }

Another complex of interaction of world and body through its orifices is encoded in the humorous SOs involving food. As such not an overt local antonyms to religion, the examples illustrate their peculiar humorous nature: ch. 39: 53 "les gammares et escrivices que l'on cardinalize à la cuyte"[80] and a comb in lines 83-86 that overlaps with instances of sex and drink opposition "Nous ne mangerons guères d'oysons ceste année ... Ha, mon amy, baille do ce cochon... Diavol! il n'y a plus de moust: *germinavit radix*

---

[77] all that he does is to beshit and ruin everything
[78] With good fresh wine they'll set you farting. (literally: "makes you a composer of farts")
[79] 'My lord Posterior' ... 'you're going to catch it on your posterior.'
[80] lobsters and crayfish, which are cardinalized in the cooking

Jesse."[81] In relation to Bakhtin's analysis, the banquet "system of images" is encoded here, in both the oppositions to food and drinking.

7.1.7.6 E. non-drink/drink (abstinence/boozing)

A = {non-drink}, B = {drink}, M(AB) = { (breviary, wine), ... }

Closely related to the religion/food opposition and rare in the analyzed episode are instances of jabs that work with the opposition of religion and the consumption of alcohol, most prominently wine. The wine and drinking motif abounds in Rabelais's work. It is especially important for the Picrocholine war, the cause of which is a dispute of vintners and baker, which represent the two tokens of the Eucharist, and even more elaborately important for the scene of the defense of the Abbey where Frère Jean turns the enemies' blood into the wine of the next harvest (ch. 27), thus reversing the Eucharist miracle into a banquet.

In the episode analyzed here the use of this SO is found in a comb in ch. 27: 53-58 "Que fera cest hyvrogne icy? ... le service du vin, ... boyre, ... le bon vin;"[82] and shortly after 66 "nous facions bien serrer et faire le vin,"[83] and 68 "Escoutey, Messieurs, vous aultres qui aymez le vin;"[84] and in an instance each in ch. 39: 85 "il n'y a plus de moust"[85] (a pun on *mou - moût*), one in ch. 40: 63 "à boyre çza,"[86] and five more jabs in ch. 41: 22 "commençons maintenant noz matines par boyre,"[87] 30 "il n'y a plus de vioulx

---

[81] we shan't eat many goslings this year. ... Ho, my friend, pass me some of that pig. ... Diabolo! There's no more grape-juice: *germinavit radix Jesse.*

[82] 'What does this drunkard want' ... wine service ... drink of the best

[83] we might press and make the wine properly

[84] So listen to me, all you who love wine;

[85] There's no more grape-juice

[86] Drink!

[87] Let's begin our Matins now with a drink

hyvrognes qu'il n'y a de vioulx médicins!"[88] (arguably the SO here is

medicine/intoxicant, but as this is uttered by the monk, I prefer to see an embracing

religion/drink opposition), 37 "Mon bréviaire" (which is a flask in the shape of a

breviary) as the monk's "purge," 50 *"brevis oratio penetrat celos, longa potatio evacuat*

cyphos," 56 *"venite apotemus."*

7.1.7.7 F. observance/laziness (religious)

A = {observance}, B = {laziness}, M(AB) = { (pray, sleep), ... }

The opposition of religious observance and laziness is used humorously only three times

in the episode. In ch. 40 it occurs twice in the wake of one of the chapters central themes

"pourquoi les moynes sont refuyz du monde"[89] (first part of the chapter's title): inter alia

for their laziness; and thrice in ch. 41, where it is used to show the laziness of Frère Jean

in particular: ch. 40: 41 "une messe, unes matines, unes vespres bien sonnéez sont à demy

dictes,"[90] 62 "Jamais je ne suis oisif."[91] uttered by the monk after an enumeration of very

idle activities; ch. 41: 8 "Je ne dors jamais bien à mon aise, sinon quand je suis au sermon

ou quand je prie Dieu,"[92] 45 asked according to what rites he recites the hours "A

l'usaige (dist le moyne) de Fécan,"[93] the abbey of Fécamp, where a short version of the

breviary was created. This SO, as well as the next, underline Rabelais's depiction of

monks as sluggards and gluttons (cf. Bakhtin 1965: 300) and do not directly inform the

grotesque "system of images."

---

[88] more old drunkards than old physicians
[89] Why monks are shunned by the world
[90] A Mass, a Matins, or a Vespers well rung is half sung.
[91] I'm never idle.
[92] I never sleep really comfortably, except when I am at a sermon, or at my prayers.
[93] according to the rite of When-and where (literally: "the rite of Fécan")

7.1.7.8 G. religion/blasphemy

A = {religion}, B = {blasphemy}, M(AB) = { (monk, swearing), ... }

One jab line that is very central has not been added to the graph, as it is so ubiquitous that its incorporation would have rendered it illegible: Frère Jean is constantly swearing, so much so that it is even topicalized in Ponocrates' question in ch. 39 "Comment? ... vous jurez, Frère Jean?"[94] (110-11) and used in a whole episode of mistaken devilish identity in ch. 43.

The other characters swear abundantly, too, but for Frère Jean this is especially incongruous as he is a monk. The two overt markers for his swearing are the reference to God ("Dieu"), devoid of religious meaning, (27 instances: ch. 27: 44, 48, 50, 60, 69, 71; ch. 39: 27, 32, 36, 37, 54, 70, 78, 96, 113, 114; ch. 40: 46, 50, 66; ch. 41: 9; ch. 42: 6, 15, 20, 62; ch. 44: 27; ch. 45: 68, 75) and—slightly less frequently and nearly as blasphemous as using the Lord's name in vain—the Devil or devils ("diable(s)," "Diavol!") (19 instances: ch. 27: 47, 50, 64, 72, 108; ch. 39: 16 (this is not spoken by the monk but addressed to him), 72, 85, 88, 107, 111, 112; ch. 41: 29; ch. 42: 14, 16, 41; ch. 43: 27, 29; ch. 44: 36).

The religion/blasphemy SO that runs through the episode in these jabs is a central part of the humorous "system of images" that the monk incarnates. The nonofficial "marketplace" speech of the medieval cleric illustrates the grotesque realism that Rabelais has used to subject religion to its grotesque rebirth. "Everything that was absorbed by that speech was to submit to the degrading and renewing power of the

---

[94] What, do you swear, Friar John?

mighty lower stratum" (Bakhtin 1965: 87). Here two systems of images interact in the humorous jabs: billingsgate and bodily lower stratum.

7.1.7.9 H. other

Apart from the significantly patterned SOs there are a number of singular jabs that underline the general humorous character of the episode, but do not directly support the complex of motifs discussed here: ch. 27: 106 "rend ... rendras" (give up/give life up), 160 the ironic *go as directly to paradise* as "droict comme une faucille et comme est le chemin de Faye"[95]; ch. 39: 45 foxes eat only red meat (not white) as "qu'ilz n'ont poinct de cuisiniers à les cuyre,"[96] 118 Frère Jean's swearing is a "cicéroniane" rhetorical figure; ch. 43: 2 Triped was "destripé;" ch. 44: 30 he makes him a cardinal by giving him a "chapeau rouge" by beating; 29 "rends" (cf. ch.. 27: 106).

7.1.7.10 Summary

In summary, I see the following general "systems of images" carried by and united through the humorous contrast (mostly to religion) in the patterned strands of jab lines *in* the plot of the narrative: The grotesque image of the body with its focus on the material bodily lower stratum (religion/sex, religion/excrement, religion/food, religion/drink, religion/[violence/medicine]), billingsgate (religion/blasphemy, religion/excrement), banquet imagery (religion/food, religion/drinking).

---

[95] as straight as a sickle or the road to Faye
[96] they have no cooks to cook it

7.1.8 Graph

The second part of the analysis will focus on the distribution of the jabs on a more visual level. In the graph reproduced in appendix (9.1), the dashes stand for the individual lines of the text to represent its linear structure. The number of every tenth line is given unless it contains a jab line. These jabs are represented by "J"s that replace the dash or number of the line that contains them. As it is possible to have multiple jabs in one line, multiple "J"s can replace the dash of a line. The start of new chapters is indicated by a fat vertical line followed by the chapter number. The important part of the graph is the different types of lines dropping vertically from the jab lines, which are connected to indicate the strands that the jabs form.

Allowing the forced inclusion of ch. 27 into the proposed episode, thereby ignoring a gap of 11 chapters (a fifth of the whole book), I see the following distribution of jabs, across the section depicted in the graph: We have a bathtub placement with a high jab frequency at the beginning ([ch. 27 and] ch. 39) and at the end (ch. 44), carried strongly by the stack of religion/[violence/medicine] combs (see above). This indicates that ch. 45 is rather epilogic for the episode's funniness. As the graph neatly shows, the middle chapters (42 and 43) of the episode, are nearly humor-free. Apart from the violence/medicine combs that bridge the whole episode two other strands are present not only locally, but recur throughout the text sample: religion/sex jabs that feature prominently at the beginning and then recur in ch. 45; the religion/excrement SO-type that is frequent in the earlier chapters, even shows a comb near ch. 39: 60, and then bridges the episode through recurrence in ch. 44.

For the other strands I see a clear clustering in ch. 39 and 40: Religion/food is used only in ch. 30 in a comb (84-86) that is foreshadowed by two jabs (49, 53).

Similarly, the religion/drink opposition is prominent in a comb in ch. 27: 53-68 and recurs in a more stretched comb in ch. 41: 23, 30, 37, 50, 56. These two strands, especially in their adjacent distribution, humorously emphasize the banquet imagery in the Frère Jean episode. Hand in glove, or rather strand in strand, with the drinking motif, goes the bridging of ch. 40 and 41 through the thematically linked opposition of (religious) observance/laziness (ch. 27: 143, ch. 40: 42, 62 and 41: 7, 13, 45).

This narrative analysis of the jab distribution in the episode can be summarized in two main observations: There is a neat bridging of the episode through a stack of combs, and there is a clear imbalance of jabs being clustered in ch. 39 and 40. These observations support the idea that the chapters form an episode that introduces the monk as the token for a grotesque depiction of lower clergy along the following lines. First, he is shown in humorous violence, which also concludes this episode that introduces the character. In the main part the other humorous strands are clustered around the beginning. The latter part, with a now well-introduced "system of images," can go on to present the plot of the larger episode of the Picrocholine War. Later in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* Rabelais can then come back to the character of the monk and build on the established "system of images" through jabs that possibly form stacks with the strands used in this initial entrance episode of Frère Jean.

7.1.9 Conclusion

I hope his section was successful in showing that the central concept for Bakhtin's interpretation of Rabelais's *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, the "system of images," can be analyzed in terms of shadow oppositions found in the strands of specific SOs *in* the plot of the narrative. The hypothesis that humor is the central structure that unites the

seemingly fragmentary elements Rabelais uses in his work has been verified. The key

motifs in the episode at hand were identified and analyzed as shadow oppositions with

the help of the semantic and narrative elements of humor the GTVH: violence/medicine,

non-sex/sex, non-excrement/excrement, non-food/food, non-drink/drink,

observance/laziness, religion/blasphemy. These strands of SOs were not only found to

textually support Bakhtin's subtextual analysis by way of showing its tokens in the text of

an episode of *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, but also the significance for the distribution of

the humor for the narrative structure of the episode at hand, as well as Rabelais's work at

large.

This result of this analysis can well be embedded into Bakhtin's overall concept

of "grotesque realism," which also helps to understand the justification of the use of

humor in its general structural form (in contrast to, for example, parody, nonsense, or

satire) to unite the dangerous motifs Rabelais used. Humor is not least an affiliative

device (cf. Hallet and Derks 1998) that carries the aggressive carnivalistic reversal into

literature, like a Trojan horse, that will ultimately succeed to defeat the official medieval

culture through the revolution of laughter.

7.2 Così trattava Cristo chi gli poneva le corna sopra ʼl cappello[97]— Are Boccaccio's Sexual Fabliaux Just Extended Dirty Jokes?

7.2.1 Introduction

This section aims to apply and develop the concept of humor *of* the plot of shorter

humorous narratives, as outlined in section (6.6.2). And in search of short stories to fulfill

the criteria of a humorous plot similar to that of jokes—with possibly no or few

additional humorous instances in the text—the novelle of the *Decameron* seem indeed a

good place to start. As outlined in section (7.2.3), the fabliaux tales represent a

formalized genre that promises prototypical examples. And Cottino-Jones implicitly

recognizes several of the fabliaux in the *Decameron* as similar to jokes, when she

identifies what seems to be *core oppositions* in the sense used here: love-hate (emotion),

intelligence-stupidity (understanding) communicativeness-secrecy (communication), and

authority-impotence (power), the first three being the most common (1977: 155).[98]

The *Decameron* is already an established hunting ground for structuralist criticism

(for example, Todorov 1969). A chief methodological assumption has been that

summaries provide a condensed, version of the narrative that should reproduce in

shortened paraphrase the essence of the plot humor or be the "complete minimal plot"

(Todorov 1969: 256) of the narrative. Here I will test in how far the rubrics that precede

the novelle are such summaries, and in how far they aren't. This rationale seems

especially warranted in the case of the *Decameron*, where the rubrics have been written

by Boccaccio himself. With respect to the rubrics failing to have all necessary elements,

D'Andrea (1973-75)[99] cautions that the rubrics not always consistently summarize the

important structural features of the novelle, but omit essential information and it will be

revealing to see what essential information is omitted.

---

[97] thus did Christ entreat whoso set horns to his cap ("moral" of III, 1)

[98] She calls them "modalities" through which characters interact, so are they rather central narrative complications?
Among the comic novelle she distinguishes three types:
situational comedy (successful handling of intelligence and communication opposition through characters);
comedy of language (central conflict is resolved through words rather than actions); and comedy of character (develops
out of studid character's misunderstanding). But these categories are not mutually exclusive and only loosely based on
the SOs she introduced, so not useful for my approach here.

[99] adapted in Terrizzi (2000)

Some differences between the original French fabliaux and Boccaccio's novelle are obvious. First, the latter are written in prose. Second, they are much longer, on average 2,221 words[100] in contrast to the 250 words of the French fabliaux, the shortest having 745, the longest 5,816 words. Third, they are more specific in terms of setting. Not only are all characters named, but also is the setting not "a certain town," but Napoli, Siena, Milano, Arezzo, or one of many oth er specified cities. The rubrics, on the other hand, are much shorter than the French fabliaux; on average they number about 43 words, the shortest having 22, the longest 86. Thus, much rather do the rubrics conform to the length standards of jokes than the novelle themselves.

7.2.2 Fabliaux

To analyze Boccaccio's fabliaux, we must first look at the genre they are based on. Most discussions of the original Old French fabliaux as they emerge in the 13th century start from Bédier's classic—yet not particularly useful—definition: "contes à rire en vers"[101] (1964: 30). Togeby highlights its weakest points in terms of descriptive adequacy when he criticizes it as being mostly noncontrastive because there are *serious* fabliaux, as well as *prose* ones, and proposes instead "nouvelle de niveau bas du XIIIe siècle" (1974: 8). The criterion that both these definitions share is brevity, implied by both "contes" and "nouvelle," and the fabliaux in Nykrog's (1957) canon have an average length of about 250 words (Cooke 1978: 17). But in addition Togeby stresses the low style ("niveau bas") in the description of what Muscatine calls "a world that is seen realistically, and they speak of that world with a colloquial, everyday voice" (1986: 55), which often

---

[100] See appendix (9.2.2) for the exact figures of the 29 novelle analyzed.
[101] verse tales meant for laughter

involves scatological imagery. Togeby also situates the genre in terms of time ("XIIIe

siècle") and place, by putting his definition in French.

Further features that have traditionally been ascribed to this narrative genre are

sexual content presented with a "male orientation; the attention to sex organs, especially

the penis; sexual aggressiveness; the absence of "strong personal relationship"; and the

use of taboo words (Muscatine 1986: 107). Cooke emphasizes the "narrowness of the

characters, who invariably are no more than two dimensional and stereotyped" (1978:

24); conventional types, with stock names or plainly nameless. As mentioned above, the

setting is usually small, like "a certain town." All these features point in the direction that

Muscatine summarizes by remarking that "Some of them are no more than extended

'dirty jokes' " (1986: 2).

We could take further broad attempts at definition into account,[102] but as many

genres that of fabliaux has not clear cut boundaries, but can best be understood in terms

of prototypicality: Let me start with a working definition: the prototypical fabliaux is a

short narrative similar to a joke, features a sexual situation (SI), and a humorous clever-

dumb core opposition (SO).

7.2.3 The Fabliaux Plot

Strangely, Muscatine is surprised by the "extent to which plot in the fabliau is [...]

neglected." (1986: 49). Schenck, on the other hand, sees it as the defining characteristic

of the fabliaux and extracts nine Proppian functions common to sixty of the sixty-six

original Old French samples she analyzes (1987: 40): arrival, departure, interrogation,

communication, deception, misdeed, recognition, retaliation, resolution. These are *events*

(see section (6.6.1)) that seem—in contrast to Muscatine's assertion—to point at the importance of narrative development of the plot.

Their plot, and as we will see its similarity to that of jokes, can indeed yield the most specific definition of fabliaux. And when Cooke analyses the "comic climax" as the "unifying characteristic of the fabliaux" (1978: 109), his definition suggests that they belong to the special kind of humorous narrative I focus on here, namely those that are structurally similar to jokes. He also sees that "the description of the punch line could stand verbatim for the climax of fabliaux" (1978: 159; cf. chapter 6).

Thus when Muscatine calls them "dirty jokes," (see above) he points out the highly stylized and short plot of the fabliaux, featuring a sexual situation. Starting from this observation, the question I will try to answer by way of analyzing Boccaccio's sexual fabliaux in terms of longer humorous narratives similar to jokes is exactly what elements they share with sexual jokes and what elements makes them specific.

7.2.4 Main Hypothesis

The hypothesis I will follow in this sample analysis is then this: When the rubric of a humorous novella reproduces the plot humor of the complete novella, it contains the essential elements to identify this humor *of* the plot.[103] Conversely, if the rubric fails to reproduce the plot humor of the novella it paraphrases, it should be possible to identify the missing element. Examining those missing elements should then help us to identify the necessary and sufficient elements of humor *of* the plot.

---

[102] For example, Cooke (1978: 11-22), Schenck (1987: 1-17), Eichmann (1992: v-viii).

[103] Note that the rubric can be funny without reproducing the same SO as the novella. For example, V, 10 operates with the SO normal/possible (hetero-/homosexual), which the rubric does not mention, yet the adultery SI contains the normal/possible (legitimate/illegitimate) opposition. It humorously resolved, when the husband discovers the adultery. This point will be discussed in connection with additional oppositions in the conclusion of this section.

This assumption is not totally new. Togeby claims that "the humor of the fabliaux can be caught from hearing a simple résumé of the action" (1974: 13). This worked for the SF short stories Wenzel analyzes (cf. section (6.4) above) and Todorov makes it the starting point for his structuralist analysis of the *Decameron* in terms of a narrative grammar, or syntax, when he claims that to study the structure of a narrative's plot, we must first present this plot in the form of a summary, in which each distinct action of the story has a corresponding proposition (cf. Todorov 1969).

But embedding it into the theoretical framework used here, makes it a fertile starting point for the analysis of plot humor, as well as shedding new light onto the peculiar nature of the fabliaux in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

7.2.5   Analysis of the Rubrics

To arrive at a comparable set of narratives, I applied the following criteria in my selection. The rubric must mention sex, and must be funny or point to potential funniness of the summarized tale. In the latter case I reread the complete novella to make sure it contained a humorous core opposition. Using these criteria, I have selected the following twenty-nine fabliaux-type novelle: III 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10; IV 2; V 10; VI 7; VII 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; VIII 1, 2, 4, 8, 10; IX 1, 2, 5, 6. In terms of the themes of the *Decameron*, day III, the reign of Neifile: "Stories about those who attained difficult goals or who have recovered something previously lost," day VII, the reign of Dioneo: "stories about tricks played by wives on their husbands," and day VIII, the reign of Lauretta: "stories about tricks played by both men and women on each other," provide the most—but not all—fabliaux novelle.

There is interesting overlap in material with the other sample analyses that needs to be noted. First, the two narratives of the type "Lover's Gift Regained," VIII 1, 2, are analogues to Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*. This will be of minor relevance in section (7.3). Second, nine of the twenty-nine narratives feature the medieval topos of "unchaste clergy," very common after celibacy was introduced (cf. Richards 1994: 118): III, 1, 4, 8, 10; IV, 2; VII, 3, 5; VIII, 2, 4. We encountered this motif both in Frére Jean of the episode from the *Gargantua* analyzed in section (7.1), as well as encounter it again in Daun John of the *Shipman's Tale* (cf. section (7.3)).

It also needs to be noted that in this section I am neglecting humor in the plot, despite the fact that there are many instances in the selected novelle. For example the "pene arrecto" of the "ghost" in VII,1 or this pun in III, 1,

(68)   io vi lavorrò sì l'orto, che mai non vi fu così lavorato[104] (234, 15)
        [till = work + have sex]
        [hortyard = garden + nuns]

or the following chiastic false analogy:

(69)   io ho inteso che un gallo basta assai bene a dieci galline, ma che dieci uomini
        possono male o con fatica una femina sodisfare[105] (237, 14-16)

The columns of table 8 represent the following elements of my analysis: the day and number of the novella; whether the rubric reproduces the funniness of the novella, the core opposition, the narrative opposition/secondary opposition(s) of the NS or SI of the narrative development, if different from the core opposition; the triggers for the scripts that are in the rubric, if any; the missing triggers, if any. Note that appendix (9.2.1) gives the full text of the rubrics and the literal translation by Payne, as well as the

---

[104] I will till your hortyard as it was never tilled yet
[105] I have heard say that one cock sufficeth unto half a score hens, but that half a score men can ill or hardly satisfy one woman.

earliest, but less literal translation by Florio. As Payne's translation is very close to the Italian, I quote him for convenience in table 8. Note that Florio often (but not always; cf. Wright 1953: 146) based his translation on Salviati's edition, who has several times altered the text in his translation, not only to describe sexual acts more euphemistically,[106] but also to eliminate reference to ecclesiastics committing sexual or otherwise unbecoming deeds (cf. Wright 1953: 129). This changes the plot substantially and leads to discrepancies between the rubrics of Payne and Florio.[107]

nov.	funny	core SO	NS/SI [secondary SOs]	triggers, [secondary]	missing element (KR)
III, 1 †[108]	no	normal/possible punishment/reward	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (unchaste) actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	"convent" (illegitimate) "lie with" (sex) ["feigneth" (deception)]	punch line: see title of this section
III, 2	yes	normal/possible clever/dumb punishment/escape	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["lieth with" (sex)] ["wife" (adulterous)] "escapeth" (clever)	—
III, 3	no	actual/non-actual sex/non-sex (religion) pimping /confession		"pleasure" (sex) ["confession" (religion)]	LM: explication of "means:" friar thinks to avert adultery the danger of which was confessed to him but is bringing it about ["married" (illegitimate)]
III, 4[109] †	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (penance/diversion)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["merry life" (sex)] ["wife" (illegitimate)]	LM: explanation of "certain" penance as a means of diverting the husbands attention
III, 6	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"thinking to be" (deception) ["wife" (adultery)]	—
III, 7	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"murdering" (deception) ["mistress" (adultery)] ["enjoyeth" (sex)]	—
III, 8 †	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous and unchaste)	"given to believe" (deception) ["enjoyeth" (sex)] ["wife" (adultery)] ["abbot" (celibacy)]	—
III, 10 †	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (unchaste)	["hermit," "monk" (celibacy)]	LM (pun): explication that "devil" disguisingly (deception) means *penis* and "hell" *vagina*

---

[106] This also affects the rubrics, for example, III, 1 ("lie with" vs. "had familiar conversation"), III, 8 ("enjoyeth his wife" vs. "enamored of his Wife")

[107] For example, in III, 4 ("Fra Puccio" vs. Puccio the alchemist; "become beatified" vs. "become rich"), IV, 2 ("angel Gabriel" vs. "God Cupid"),

[108] Symbol denotes unchaste clergy involved.

[109] final punch line: "thou hast put Fra puccio upon performing a penance, whereby we have gotten Paradise"

IV, 2 †	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (unchaste and adulterous)	"giveth to believe," "guise," "recognized" (deception) ["Fra" (celibacy)] ["lieth with" (sex)]	— [SI: enhancing adultery motive is not explicated[110]]
V, 10	no	normal/possible hetero-/homoerotic sex	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["wife" (adultery)] ["keep company" (sex)]	second script: "his own lewd ends" not explicated as homosexual intercourse, i.e., them having a threesome[111]
VI, 7	no	actual/non-actual mutual love expressed in marital sexual desire/sexual desire as a measurable commodity	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["husband," "lover" (adultery)]	LM: explication of the "prompt and pleasant answer", namely that women did not make the law and that she has always satisfied her husband
VII, 1	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"giveth him to believe" (deception)	NS (adultery): the phantom is indeed the untimely arrival of the wife's lover
VII, 2	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["lover" (adultery)] ["husband" (adultery)]	final punch line: the lover "causeth the husband to scrape it out," to make love to the wife again
VII, 3 †	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous and unchaste)	["lieth with" (adultery)] ["husband" (adultery)]	—
VII, 4	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"feigneth" (deception)	— [SI: the adultery script]
VII, 5 †	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous and unchaste)	"by the roof" (deception) ["husband" (adultery)] ["priest" (celibacy)] ["lie with" (adultery)]	—
VII, 6	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["lover," "husband" (adultery)]	LM:[112] connection between Lamberuccio's whinger and husband escorting Leonetto
VII, 7	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	["husband" (adultery)] ["lie with" (sex)]	LM:[113] the deceiving role reversal of husband waiting in his wife's cloth to beat up lover being beaten up by lover, who pretends to punish unfaithful wife
VII, 8	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"putteth another woman…" (deception) ["lover" (adultery)]	—
VII, 9	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"maketh believe" (deception) "wife" (adultery)	LM: adulterous lovers make the husband believe whoever is in the peach tree sees falsely
VIII, 1	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex	"he gave them to her" (deception)	—

[110] "donna" does not imply [+married]: Dante's Donna Beatrice, for example, isn't.

[111] In V, 10, the homosexuality is only alluded to even in the narrative itself: "on the following morning the youth was escorted back to the public place, not altogether certain which he had the more been that night, wife or husband."

[112] Interestingly, Florio explains the necessary details more closely here ("made an excuse sufficient for Lionello to her husband").

[113] See previous note ("disguised like her selfe").

		(deception)	(adulterous)	["lie with" (sex)] ["wife" (adultery)]	
VIII, 2 †	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous and unchaste)	"demanding in return" (deception) ["lieth with" (adultery)] ["priest" (celibacy)]	—
VIII, 4	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (unchaste)	"thinking to lie with" (deception) ["rector" (celibacy)]	—
VIII, 8	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous)	"shut up in chest" (deception) ["lieth with" (sex)] ["wife of other" (adultery)]	—
VIII 10	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (better deception/deception)		"artfully despoileth" (deception) "making believe" (better deception)	—
IX, 1	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)		"adroitly" (deception)	LM: deception ("on such wise"): one lover carries other, both not aware of their and other's actual role
IX, 2	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (secrecy/discovery)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (unchaste)	"thinking to" (secrecy) "acquitted" (discovery) ["abess," "nuns" [(celibacy)] ["in bed with lover" (sex)] ["abed with her" (sex)]	—
IX, 5	yes	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible desired/undesired sex (adulterous)	"talisman" (deception) "love with wench" (sex) "his wife" (adultery)	—
IX, 6	no	actual/non-actual clever/dumb (deception)	normal/possible legitimate/illegitimate sex (adulterous and seduction of minor)	"lie with daughter" (sex, seduction of minor) "wife ... with the other" (sex, adultery) "unwittingly," "thinking to" (deception)	LM: "certain words" explaining how wife made it look like dream (and finally even believes it herself), resolution overall too complex to be condensed

Table 8: The humor of selected rubrics of the *Decameron*

It has to be noted that not always were the rubrics completely free of humour,

when I marked "no" in the second column, but their humor was different from the core

opposition of the novella. The fact that the rubric can be humorous in a different way

than the novella shows that there can be an additional opposition in the NS or SI that is

different from the core opposition. This is the major difference, related to the necessity of

the direction of suspense (cf. section (6.5)), between these longer humorous narratives

and "dirty jokes."

7.2.6   Conclusion

Although the sexual fabliaux novelle are very similar to "dirty jokes" the KR of

NS features an additional complication that the much shorter text of a joke does not

require. There can be an additional opposition that motivates the narrative development,

but is not necessarily identical to the core opposition of the plot that is humorously

opposed and possibly resolved in a final punch line. There exists a strand in the majority

of novelle that is concerned with the narrative development, is illegitimate sex, mostly in

the form of adultery, often with additional unchaste opposition. The central strand of

these novelle is clever/dumb (actual/non-actual), surfacing as the duping deception, most

often of husbands, who do not realize that they are cuckolded, often also the reversing

outwitting of the seemingly clever character through the seemingly dumb one.

The only exceptions in the sample corpus have the same strand, namely adultery,

and also actual/non-actual core oppositions, but of different patterns: the core opposition

of III, 3 is that of confession and pimping; V, 10 is a joke on hetero-/homoerotic sex; and

VI, 7 features an opposition of concepts sex, similar to that of the *Shipman's Tale*,

namely in sexual desire as expression of mutual love vs. measurable, legally regulated

commodity.

The thirteen non-humorous rubrics of the novelle mostly lost their humor through

the omission of the LM: nine don't have them:[114] III, 3, 4, 10, VI, 7, VII, 6, 7, 9, IX, 1, 6.

Two each lack one of the scripts of the central opposition, and consequently the

opposition at large, (V, 10; VII, 1) or the punch line altogether (III, 1; VII, 2). This points

to their structural similarity to jokes. If they are summarized relating all the KR elements

---

[114] Only seven in Foglio's translation, see notes on VII, 6 and VII, 7.

related to jokes, the summary succeeds in capturing the humor of their plot, even if it omits the additional opposition of the NS. But this does not happen, because when there is an additional strand (mostly adultery), the rubrics include it. What they rather omit is the LM, the SO (core opposition), or the punch line altogether. And it seems that this is a conscious decision, so as to not spoil the joke. Had Boccaccio included this information in the summaries that precede them, he would have given away his novelle to the reader or listener, before they had even read or heard them. This, of course, raises the unanswerable question why the author did not omit a crucial last bit of information in all rubrics of humorous novelle.

In sum, the novelle are definitely more than just dirty jokes, but not much, as the translatability of many of their plots into the summaries of the rubrics shows, even if these rubrics, for various reasons, do not always contain all necessary elements to give them the same humor the underlying novella has.

7.3 The *Shipman's Tale's* Tail— A Pun *in* the Narrative or the Pun *of* the Narrative

7.3.1 Introduction
In this section I will further investigate the concept that certain humorous short stories have the same structure as jokes (see chapter (6) and section (7.2)) in the example of Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*. Apart from some clarifications and insights into the Tale, the merit of this study lies in the combined application of these theories to a text of some distance from the samples either theory has been applied to so far, as well as in elaboration on the theory itself.

What catches the attention of all scholars about the *Shipman's Tale* is its abundance of puns as well as the prominence of a certain pun towards the end of the tale. To the best of my knowledge, the first to note the specific puns around "taille" (VII 416) and "taillynge" (VII 434) is Koch (1913-14), considering the latter to play on *sexual intercourse* and *storytelling* (see section (7.3.5.1)). Baum's summary reflects the canonical interpretation of these puns:

> **tail—tale** Tatlock saw a coarse pun near the end of *ShipT*, but withheld details. The wife promises to repay her husband, and *if so be I faille ... score it upon my taille* (B 1605 f.). The Shipman concludes
>> Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
>> Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende.
> This triple pun includes tail in the four-letter sense; as also in A 3878 and D 466. Robinson explains *taillynge* as 'dealing by tally, on credit,' but adds discreetly: "In view of the likelihood that the *Shipman's Tale* was composed for the *Wife of Bath* the passage should doubtless be interpreted in the light of *WBProl*.III, 130, 153, etc.)." (1956: 245)

Both instances are puns on the same idea,[115] namely that the sexual exchange between the merchant's wife, her husband, and the monk, are not governed by love, but by the attempt on the part of several parties to maximize gain and minimize loss, and that this is analogous to the motivation in financial exchanges in the emerging capitalistic culture of the Middle Ages, as exemplified by the merchant's complex *cambio reale* described in the Tale.[116] Chaucer's denouncement of the commercialization of human relations is also the core of Jones's criticism of the traditional image of the Knight in the *Canterbury Tales*. He sees in the Knight a representative of the mercenary class that

---

[115] But see section 3.2.5.
[116] The foreign exchange of the merchant is not in analogy, with respect to the cheating/trickery, with the monk's deal in which the lover regains his gift, as Levy (1966-67) and Joseph (1983: 350) argue: "the wife's offer of her body to the merchant in lieu of the hundred franks she had gotten from him through a mediatory procedure that parallels his own transaction with the merchant of Bruges and the Lombards." It is merely a standard, if complex, business exchange typical for the complicated financial market of the late Middle Ages, which has to operate despite the church's ban of

replaced "true" knighthood based on feudal loyalty, or later the indenture system: this reduction of a social relationship to a callous money relationship seemed particularly significant to many of Chaucer's contemporaries, because they saw the same happening throughout society" (1985: 12). These words apply just as well to the redefinition of the sexual relationship in terms of money as the *Shipman's Tale* depicts it.

But the final revelation of the monk's trickery of the merchant and his wife, and the wife's trickery of her husband, in the pun on "taill(e)/ynge" reveals not only the underlying opposition of the financial vs. sexual core opposition (see section (6.6.2), but provides the withheld information to understand the many individual instances of puns on the same theme that precede it and create a shadow opposition (see 6.6.1). It is thus also the punch line of the tale itself, not only a prominent pun in the tale. And this structural prominence is more than expressing "with apical concision the chief ironic point of the *Shipman's Tale*: the commercialization of the marriage relationship" (Silverman 1953: 329).

Another strand (see section (6.6.1)) of puns possibly revolves around the double meaning of "cosyn(age)" as relation in terms of *kinship* vs. *trickery*. I will argue that this indeed is a complex of puns that constitutes a motif of the tale, but not the core opposition of the humorous plot itself.

In sum, we have both, punning throughout the story on the theme money=sex, as well as a plot punch line that works along the same lines. And given that the closest analogues we find to this fabliaux of the type "Lover's Gift Regained"—most notably

---

usury, as Cahn (1980) argues in his highly interesting *Introduction to Medieval Finance*. On the sexual view of usury as money procreated through seed money, see Hahn (1986: 242f).

Bocaccio, *Decamerone*, VIII, 1 or 2[117]—are markedly different in plot, we can safely

ascribe this iconicity of plot humor and humor in the plot to Chaucer.[118]

To argue for the prominence of the overlapping shadow and core opposition of

sex and money in the *Shipman's Tale* as a humorous short story, the rest of this section

will have a closer look at the tale itself. The tools applied have been outlined above,

mostly in chapter 5 and 6. They includes the concepts of *script opposition, logical*

mechanism, pun, pun in classical and medieval rhetoric, strand, humor of the plot and

core opposition, humor in the plot and *shadow opposition.*

7.3.2 Chaucer's Puns

The concept of pun has been discussed at length in connection with the concept of LM in

section (5.3.2). To repeat, let us illustrate the concept of pun with an example from the

Canterbury Tales: The following instance, identified by Baum (1956: 231), is *ars* as

either "art" or "arse," and in terms of the definition above, it conflates the two domains of

excrement and non-excrement onto each other as follows: Because the word "ars" can

denote both the concepts *arse* and *art* it creates an overlap between these contrary

domains:

(70) In ars-metrike shal ther no man fynde,
      Biforn this day, of swich a question. (SumT III 2222-23)

The script opposition of this pun[119] is that of high/low as non-excrement/ excrement,

referring both to the script triggered by the farting into the friar's hand searching at the

---

[117] For more analogues to the *Shipman's Tale* and a comparison to Bocaccio's version see Spargo (1930).
[118] See Scattergood who considers the Tale more than just a typical fabliaux, but a Tale full of rich characters and "Chaucer's most highly developed attempt at defining the nature of the bourgeois mercantile ethos" (1977: 212). This coincides with Nicholson's main point, who argues that "typical[ly] of Chaucer, the opposition is finally left unresolved," (1978: 593) which sets his version apart from the standard fabliaux structure (see also 7.2)
[119] This pun is an instance of *significatio* below.

arse of Thomas, and the arithmetical problem of the division of the fart among the dozen members of the friar's convent.

In addition, to the discussion of puns in connection with their logical mechanism, it seems necessary have a brief look at medieval rhetoric and what it has to say about what today is called puns. Although the question whether puns like that in the example discussed above, are intentional or not is actually of secondary nature for their funniness,[120] it will help us determine to what degree the author himself could have been aware of his punning.

Chaucer was familiar with Godefroi de Vinsauf's treatise on rhetoric, *Poetria Nova* (PN), as his parody (NPT B2 4537-43, VII 3347-3353) of the lamentation on the death of King Richard and his use of Godefroi's rules in VII 3355-73 show. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (Ad Her.), the doctrine of which reappears in the *Poetria Nova* includes the following figures of word-play, which recur in the work of de Vinsauf and can consecutively be assumed to be known to Chaucer (cf. Kökeritz 1954: 940).

1. *traductio*:[121]   same sign, used twice (*Ad Her.* IV. xiv. 20-21, *PN* 1104-8)

2. *adnominatio*:   slightly different sign, used twice (*Ad Her.* IV. xx. 29, *PN* 1140-44)

3. *significatio*:   same sign, used once (*Ad Her.* IV. liii. 67, *PN* 1550-53)

---

[120] It should be noted that humor is independent of intentionality, both intended and/or perceived is funny. For the discussed puns it can be assumed that—because of their importance for the tale—they were intended.

[121] A special form of *traductio*, the *rime riche*, occurs in Chaucer's translations from the French, but he also introduces his own rich rhymes. Ideally, a rime riche uses the same sign not only twice, but also in rhyming, ususally endrhyming, position. The same sign can be identical in phonemic terms, but in less ideal form also just phonemically similar. Rime riche, like the other figures, need not necessarily have a punning, that is, humorous, intent, but can be purely rhetorical ornament, style-marker.

The purest form of the rich rime is then the connection of two phonologically identical forms that stem from different words and have different meaning. This form, exemplified below, is not always fulfilled by Chaucer (cf. Kaluza 1893: 66)

So that I have my lady in myne armes.

For though so be that Mars is god of armes, (KnT I 2247-48)

[armes = arms (limbs + weapons)]

Medieval rhetoricians—as well as modern-day linguists (cf. Lagerquist 1980,

Sobkowiak 1991, Attardo 1994: 108-173)—put emphasis on the distinction between

homophonic (and possibly homographic) puns that feature the same sign once, or twice,

or with two meanings, and paronomasic puns, or "imperfect puns" that feature two

slightly different signs, or one sign that triggers a slightly different one.

The following table should illustrate the difference:

A. heteronymy / *paronomasia*		[horological instrument vs. male genitalia]
1. single sign	(pure)	"your clock is very big"
2. double sign	*adnominatio*	"his clock was bigger than his cock"
B. homonymy		[domesticated bird vs. male genitalia]
1. single sign	*significatio / syllepsis*	"the farmer has a big cock"
2. double sign	*traductio / antanaclasis*	"the cock has a big cock"

Table 9: Heteronymous and homonymous puns

It should be clear, why signification is considered to be the prototypical, "pure" type of

pun: By using only one sign, it refers to two opposed meanings that share this sign

completely.

Since before Caxton's introduction of the printing press we find no large-scale

systematization of spellings in late Middle English, orthography lent itself to the molding

hand of the inventive scribe and homophony was even more important as a criterion for

potential puns than today. When a certain spelling indicated phonetic differences it could

even be changed to some degree to function properly, for example, for end rhymes:

reaume, reawme, reame, realme, rewne ("realm").

For the same reason it does not seem promising to pursue the idea of clearly

delimiting Chaucer's puns in terms of the medieval categories: The distinction between

adnominatio and *traductio* is so much at the mercy of the Middle English author (or

scribe) as he or she can turn an *adnominatio* into a *traductio* at his or her will. The same goes for the distinction between pure heteronymous puns and *significatio*. This is not to say, of course, that pronunciation—and accordingly spelling—was so free that "anything went:" The beautiful *adnominatio* with "frankes" and "flankes" in VII 201-02 (see appendix), for example, could not have become a *traductio* (except for an audience consisting of native speakers of a language in which the distinction between the liquids [r] and [l] is not phonemic, say, for example, Japanese).

7.3.3 Humor in the Plot and Humor of the Plot

This section will briefly reiterate the discussion of one basic types of humorous narratives, namely those that have a humorous plot resembling that of jokes, and contrast it to those that contain humorous instances in an otherwise serious plot (see section (6.6.1)). These two types are obviously not mutually exclusive categories, the *Shipman's Tale*—as I argue here—falling into both categories, nor are they the only types of humorous narratives.

Let me, again, briefly repeat the following tools, proposed by Attardo (1998: 233-241). At the lowest level a humorous narrative contains a *jab* or *punch line*, the former being a *punch line* that is not necessarily text final and can thus be an integral part of the plot. The non-final puns throughout the *Shipman's Tale* are such jabs. A *strand* is sequence of *jab* or *punch lines* that are formally or thematically linked, like the puns in the Tale that share the opposition non-sex/sex (money) (see section (7.3.5.1)). Other tools, like the ordering of strands of jabs, including the non-punning ones, into stacks. These stacks, by nature of sharing the same opposition, create a shadow opposition informing the whole tale (cf. Chlopicki 1987, section (6.6.1)). The main hypothesis here

is that the shadow opposition of the jab-puns in the tale share the incongruity of the core opposition (see section (6.6.2)) of the humor of the plot.

Based on the assumption that the Tales of the Canterbury Tales conform to various degrees the pattern of short stories (see section (7.3.6.3)), and that this holds very much for the Tales of the fabliaux type, the distinction between humor of the plot and humor in the plot as introduced in section (6.6) will form one of the bases of this investigation of the humorous structure of the *Shipman's Tale*. And in contrast to other Tales, this fabliaux is indeed coherently centered around the plot of the narrative about the merchant, his wife, and the monk. It has neither explicit moralistic, allegorical, or parodistic digressions by its narrator,[122] nor is it interrupted by a character at the higher level of the pilgrim-narrator-characters. There is no prologue to it, only two lines by the Shipman conclude it, and in the epilogue the host just briefly comments on it, before introducing the following Prioress's Tale.

Nearly more an exception than the rule, the *Shipman's Tale* is a short story—self-contained narrative, complete in itself, context-free—of the fabliaux type that offers itself to an approach aiming to explain humorous narratives.

These examples seem to confirm the general correspondence of the structure of jokes and the structure of humorous short stories as discussed in chapter 6.

---

[122] Despite the—by now nearly canonical—claim that this narrator originally was the Wife of Bath, Sullivan (1961) argues that the feminine pronoun in the beginning passage, lines 12 to 19, is not necessarily an indicator that the tale was intended for a female narrator, but can also be just an instance of free indirect discourse. Sullivan also sees another possibility, namely that those lines at the beginning of the tale are actually said by the merchant's wife to the monk later in the tale. They have then been misplaced, possibly by a patching scribe who was faced with a mutilated copy after Chaucer's death. This scribe's version then became ancestor to the known manuscripts. I think that this assumption should be considered a victim of Occam's razor.
Another possibility is argued for by Chapman (1962), namely that lines 12 to 19 show a wife's viewpoint in contrast to a husband's viewpoint in the previous lines and, since the CT were most likely to be read aloud, the male reader was supposed to mimic a female voice while reading these lines.

Like Wenzel, Chlopicki assumes that longer texts can in general be reduced to summaries of the plot. Thus the difference in text length seems to be less significant, as those narratives can easily be condensed into summaries with smaller amounts of language material that jokes rarely surpass. This has worked in the case of the summaries of the three short stories analyzed by Wenzel (cf. section (6.4)) and works for summaries of the *Shipman's Tale*, like Joseph's (1983: 346) or Benson's (in Benson 1987: 15f).[123]

As introduced above, Wenzel sees the main difference that is brought about through the length of short stories, namely that it creates the necessity to direct the development of suspense: A prominent technique for guiding of the suspense development in longer texts is the tactical withholding of information, which also holds for the *Shipman's Tale*, where only the final resolution of the "taill(e)/ynge" pun reveals the circle of cheating in terms of sex/money that is going on between, merchant, wife, and monk.

7.3.4 The *Shipman's Tale's* Puns

As mentioned above, the most prominent system of puns in the *Shipman's Tale* revolves around the script opposition of sex/non-sex (money), as Joseph summarizes:

> While several of Chaucer's fabliaux rely heavily upon punning, none do so with the patterned persistency of the *Shipman's Tale*. As the abundant commentary has shown, almost every passage of dialogue achieves part of its humorous effect through a system of *double entendre* that conflates the imagery of commercial and sexual exchange (1983: 349).

Another possible system uses the opposition of kinship/trickery in "cosyn(age)." There are a few other puns that do not form part of either system, and possibly some more in

---

[123] This is not no claim that all humorous narratives can be summarized without losing their humor, but only humorous narratives with humorous plots. Narratives that have humor in the plot, for example multiple embedded jokes, can

either of the three categories that have not yet been detected. But let us first focus on the

two prominent strands of puns.

The following table gives an overview of the literature that has expressly, or even

exclusively, focussed on the two puns a) "taill(e)/ynge," b) "cosyn(age)" in the

Shipman's Tale[124]:

Koch	(1913)	a) "taillynge" (sexual intercourse + financial prolongement) in parallel to "taille"
Tatlock	(1916)	a) "coarse bluntness near the end", probably "taille"
Jones	(1937)	a) "taille" (tally + pudendum), "taillynge" (? + sexual intercourse)
Caldwell	(1940)	a) "taillynge" is rather innuendo, quoting Robinson, Jones, Koch, Tatlock
Silverman	(1953)	a) "taillynge" and "tail" (money + sex), quoting Robinson
Baum	(1956)	a) "tail" and "taillynge" (sex + finance + trickery), quoting Tatlock, Robinson, Jones, Caldwell
Robinson	(1957)	a) "taille" (tally + pudendum) in view of the Wife of Bath's use of it (WBT, III 466)
Richardson	(1965) (1970)	a) "taillynge" (fabliaux [sex + trickery] + finance) as the core of the tale and in contrast to Christian doctrine against both, quoting Robinson, Silverman, Jones, Caldwell, Kökeritz, b) "cosynage" (kinship by birth + by method of gain) monk and merchant
Fisher	(1965)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage" (kinship + trickery) as the pun of the tale
Levy	(1966)	a) generally: a number of puns on sex + money
Ross	(1972)	a) "taille" (intercourse + finance), quoting Baum, but also (arse) as in RvT (I 4164) and MLT (II 111)
Abraham	(1976)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage" (mistress + trickery) as the pun of the tale and a gloss on the trickery in the narrator of the tale, quoting Richardson, Fisher
Schneider	(1977)	a) "taillynge", (paying back in sexual ways, i.e., financial + sexual); only implicit
Nicholson	(1978)	a) "taille" (and "taillynge") as two types of bargaining (tally and pudendum), quoting Silverman and Levy
Cooke	(1978)	a) "taille" and "taillynge" as a pun on a value system that equates money and sex, quoting, Lawrence, Jones, Caldwell, Richardson
Pearcy	(1979)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage", quoting Fisher and Abraham
Joseph	(1983)	a) "taillynge" (commercial + sexual exchange + tale telling), "taille" (tally + pudendum) b) "cosynage" (kinship + trickery; questionable), quoting Silverman, Richardson, Jones, Caldwell, Ross, Fisher
Hahn	(1986)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage" are beyond doubt a pun on (brotherhood + cozenage), quoting Nicholson, Levy, and Joseph
Koch	(1913)	a) "taillynge" (sexual intercourse + financial prolongement) in parallel to "taille"
Tatlock	(1916)	a) "coarse bluntness near the end," probably "taille"
Jones	(1937)	a) "taille" (tally + pudendum), "taillynge" (? + sexual intercourse)
Caldwell	(1940)	a) "taillynge" is rather innuendo, quoting Robinson, Jones, Koch, Tatlock
Silverman	(1953)	a) "taillynge" and "tail" (money + sex), quoting Robinson

obviously not condensed substantially without losing the humor of the disregarded instances of humor.

[124] Richardson (1965) sees yet another opposition at the core of the *Shipman's Tale*. She sees the motifs of sex and trickery as part of the fabliaux opposed to the financial aspect in the "philosophy of money" of the merchant. But these only form one side of a juxtaposition against Christian standards which condemns the true. While this is possible moral layer in all fabliaux, I understand it to be the implicit basis of the criticism of the human tragicomedy as the *Shipman's Tale* depicts it, but not the explicit core of this Tale. Of course, Chaucer wouldn't approve of the multiply condemnable dealings of the monk and the wife. But his focus is on the very nature of their dealings and how precisely they are unvirtuous in a humorously parallel nature, and not so much their general nature as vices.

Baum	(1956)	a) "tail" and "taillynge" (sex + finance + trickery), quoting Tatlock, Robinson, Jones, Caldwell
Robinson	(1957)	a) "taille" (tally + pudendum) in view of the Wife of Bath's use of it (WBT, III 466)
Richardson	(1965)	a) "taillynge" (fabliaux [sex + trickery] + finance) as the core of the tale and in contrast to Christian doctrine against both, quoting Robinson, Silverman, Jones, Caldwell, Kökeritz, b) "cosynage" (kinship by birth + by method of gain) monk and merchant
Fisher	(1965)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage" (kinship + trickery) as the pun of the tale
Levy	(1966)	a) generally: a number of puns on sex + money
Ross	(1972)	a) "taille" (intercourse + finance), quoting Baum, but also (arse) as in RvT (I 4164) and MLT (II 111)
Abraham	(1976)	a) "cosyn" and "cosynage" (mistress + trickery) as the pun of the tale and a gloss on the trickery in the narrator of the tale, quoting Richardson, Fisher
Schneider	(1977)	a) "taillynge," (paying back in sexual ways, i.e., financial + sexual); only implicit
Nicholson	(1978)	a) "taille" (and "taillynge") as two types of bargaining (tally and pudendum), quoting Silverman and Levy
Pearcy	(1979)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage," quoting Fisher and Abraham
Joseph	(1983)	a) "taillynge" (commercial + sexual exchange + tale telling), "taille" (tally + pudendum) b) "cosynage" (kinship + trickery; questionable), quoting Silverman, Richardson, Jones, Caldwell, Ross, Fisher
Hahn	(1986)	b) "cosyn" and "cosynage" are beyond doubt a pun on (brotherhood + cozenage), quoting Nicholson, Levy, and Joseph

Table 10: "taill(e)/ynge" and "cosyn(age)"

7.3.5 Puns in the Tale

In connection with strands of puns in the tale, suffice it here to refer to the appendix

listing the puns as this author has found them in the Tale or literature on the Tale. For

simplicity's sake, I have identified three groups of puns:

1. puns with the opposition sex/money

2. puns with the opposition kinship/trickery

3. puns with other oppositions

I will focus on each of the first two larger groups—sex/money and "cosyn(age)"—in the

following two separate sections.

7.3.5.1 Puns with the Opposition Sex/Non-sex (Money)

In terms of the formalism developed in chapter 5, the LM underlying these puns looks as

follows: A = {sex}, B = {money}, M{pun(AB)} = {(sexual concept, financial concept)}.

The significance and abundant use of this pattern has been discussed at large throughout this section. Suffice it to refer to the appendix that lists all instances this author has identified are found in previous treatments of the topic, and to note the likelihood for any ambiguity to be resolved in a sexual way because of the taboo character of sexuality and the resulting complex of semantically empty euphemisms: "it," "come," "do it," "know" (in the Biblical sense). Instances in the *Shipman's Tale* that involve sex, but not necessarily the opposition to non-sex as money are the "pleye" puns listed in the third section of the appendix (9.3).

Another amalgamation of money and sex not mentioned so far is that the merchant's prowess obviously depends on his financial success: While the wife complains to the monk about her negligence in the beginning (VII 115-16), and the merchant flees the marital bed early in the morning to ponder business matters in his counting house (VII 75-88), after the successful deal he is quite insatiable (VII 375-76). For all the other non-punning parallelizations throughout the Tale, I refer to Silverman (1953), Richardson (1965), Schneider (1977), Abraham (1976-77), and Joseph (1983).

7.3.5.2 Puns with the Opposition Kinship/Non-kinship (Trickery): "Cosyn(age)"

Fisher (1965) argues for the possibility to see "cosyn" and "cosynage" as puns on *cousin* vs. *cozen* in the sense of cheating. While the OED documents no occurrence of the meaning *trickery* before the 16th century, other sources do.[125] In her opinion, the Tale "begs for a pun, as the cousin-wife and the cousin-monk cozen the husband in the name of "cosynage" itself" (1965: 169) and Scattergood observes that "sworn "bretherhede" (1232 [VII 42]) usually ends in treachery and disaster for one or all of those involved,"

pointing to Palamon and Arcite (KnT), the Devil and the summoner (FrT), and the three

rioters (PardT).

Fisher argues by way of precedent in French fabliaux,[126] and from that source sees

not only the possibility for a pun with deception and specifically *cuckoldry* for

"cosynage," but also a pun on *courtesan* or *harlot* for "cosyn," yet she fails to note that

the wife is never addressed as "cosyn" in the Tale. The monk switches to "nece," once his

relationship with the wife has become close.[127] The use of "nece" in the same

environment and for the same purpose as "cosyn" seems to indicate that "cosyn"—like

"nece"—must be understood only in terms of *electoral kinship* or *sworn brotherhood* too,

as there is no possibility for the additional *courtesan* meaning to "nece."[128] Thus, we can

safely exclude this additional meaning of "cosyn," and I propose that its use and that of

"nece" perpetuate the generic reading of "cosynage" in the sense of electoral kinship vs.

false, treacherous brother-/sisterhood. The abstract formalism for LMs would illustrate

these puns as follows: A = {kinship}, B = {trickery}, M("cosyn(age)"AB) = { (cousin,

dupe), (cousin, concubine), ... }.

Although Fisher doesn't claim to have proven it, she considers Chaucer's intent

possible. And given the fact that unintended, but perceived puns are as funny as intended

and unperceived puns are unfunny, we can safely assume that at least from the 16th

century on the English audience understood Chaucer to be playing on the first tow of the

three meanings Fisher identifies: "the familiar and affectionate meaning of "friend"

---

[125] She quotes Kurath and Kuhn 1952ff with an instance for the year 1453.

[126] Pearcy argues even more cautiously by way of an example in a French poem published in 1575 that "it is not inconceivable, though certainly beyond proof, that we have here the last faint echo in French literature of the fabliau form which *The Shipman's Tale* was taken" (1979: 71).

[127] (in lines VII 100, 106, 125, and 363, see appendix)

(which is ironic in any event); that of "dupe" or "cuockold" [sic] or "cheated husband;" and that of "mistress" or "prostitute." (1965: 170).

Let us finally look at the resolution pattern of the instances this pun: Script one (kinship) remains dominant up to B 1338-44 (cf. Abraham 1976.7: 323ff), where the shift of frame occurs toward the other script (deception). But "the two meanings remain distinct; there was no real choice between them because neither is absorbed into the other" (Baum 1957: 227). Abraham also stresses the partial nature of the resolution in this pun (1976-7: 321).

7.3.6   "Taill(e)/ynge" as the Pun of the Tale

7.3.6.1 Or "Cosyn(age)" as the Pun of the Tale?

Since I have argued for the likelihood of the jabs on "cosyn(age)" as a strand, the question arises whether it is also the core opposition, as Abraham seems to argue who sees this complex of puns evolving around "cosyn" and cosynage" with the two meanings *kinship* and *trickery* to be of the highest importance for the understanding of the tale: "*Cosyn* and *cosynage* functioning at once to describe the activities, and simultaneously, as puns, to alter and expand one's perception of the activities, define both meaning *and structure* of the tale" (1976-7: 320). So they are not at the core of the structure, but they only comment on it. And Abraham correctly sees that "the structure of the tale *is* the structure of a pun" (1976-7: 327), but this pun is the one most prominently embodied in "taill(e)/ynge," not the one in "cosyn(age)," as I will show in section (7.3.6.1). But, as proposed above, the potential pun in "cosyn(age)" can be understood as a gloss on the

---

[128] The only negative connotation to "nece" that the OED lists is that of an illegitimate daughter of an ecclesiastic,

faultiness and deceptiveness of the core analogy between sex and money: So even if we accept that "cosyn" can have been a pun as early as Chaucer writing the *Shipman's Tale*, this repetition of the pun does not constitute a "macropun" as the punch line is a) drawn out and not at all a punch; and, more importantly, b) not even close to being text-final.

It is rather the pun on "taille" that is both pointed and text-final that embodies the punch line of the plot humor in the Tale. And Abraham has to admit the structural preference that Chaucer gave to the sex pun:

> Chaucer could have used the pun on *taillynge* ("God us sende/ Taillynge ynough unto oure lyves ende. Amen" [1623-24]), in its senses of story-telling, accounting, and intercourse, as the key word in the *Shipman's Tale*. Certainly its position in the final line implies Chaucer's awareness of its significant irony. ... But *cosyn* and *cosynage* tell not merely what is happening *in* the tale, they reflect what Chaucer as an artist is doing *with* the tale. (Abraham 1976-7: 326)

So, while it is true that some diffuse sense of deception in involved in logical mechanism of the double meaning necessary for humor, the specific type of incongruity that Chaucer used in the *Shipman's Tale* is identical to the incongruity in the "taill(e)/ynge" pun. And this sexual/financial incongruity is the only one that is indeed inherent of the Tale as a humorous narrative that is structurally identical to a joke, and it is resolved in the final punch line that the use of the "taill(e)/ynge" pun at the end of the tale represents.

7.3.6.2 What is the Final Pun of the Shipman's Tale?

For the Tale to have structural similarity to a joke, the first condition would be that it has a final jabline, that is, a punch line, which is not only the last funny line, but also the resolution of the main incongruity (core opposition) of the Tale.

---

which would not make sense here.

To discuss whether the final punch line of the Tale is the punch line of the tale, we must first determine what the final pun of the *Shipman's Tale* is. This question is easy to solve for jokes, which usually have only one punch line that is indeed final to the text. According to a study of 2000 jokes (cf. Attardo et al. 1994), post-punch line material is highly unlikely. Accordingly our search should start at the very end of the Tale (cf. Hockett 1973).

This would lead us first to "taillynge" (VII 434), and going backwards, the next candidate within the tale is "paye" (VII 424), then possibly "pleye" (VII 422), and "array" (VII 418), and finally "taille" (VII 416).

Here I argue for "taille" to be the final pun in the *Shipman's Tale*, as well as the pun of the Tale. Let us first look at the puns after line 416. "Taillynge" (VII 434) is already the Shipman talking in the epilogue. The narrative of the Tale ends two lines before that (VII 432) and it is therefore not a possible candidate. I understand "array" (VII 418), "pleye" (VII 422), and "paye" (VII 424), as constituting multiple punch lines,[129] and as such just variations that play off the "taille" (VII 416), which I propose to be the pun that is both the final as well as the core punch line of the humorous plot of the *Shipman's Tale*. It furnishes us with the required information to understand that not only did the wife dupe her husband and the monk duped both of them, but that in the end the wife resolves it as crudely as the sexual helter-skelter of a fabliaux can be resolved, namely only through false analogy, which doesn't totally dissolve the incongruities, but enables a sufficient resolution for the humorous effect.

---

[129] Note that multiple punch lines can be left out, without damaging the first punch line of the series or rendering the story unresolved (cf. Attardo et. al. 1994: 43), like in the following example:

In addition, in section (7.3.6.5) will argue for both "taille" and "taillynge" to be basically puns on the same opposition sex/money.

7.3.6.3 Structure of the Tale

For the *Shipman's Tale* to be a humorous narrative that has a humorous plot, its structure should be tripartite, as we should expect for a narrative that is in structure identical to a joke. The three parts are setup, incongruity, and resolution.[130] And indeed, Cooper has already identified three parts as follows: "In the first, the wife asks the monk for a hundred francs an he arranges to borrow it off her husband; the second section summarizes the consummation of the affair; and the matter of the repayment occupies the third." (1996: 280).

But in terms of set-up, incongruity, and resolution, the parts of the tripartite division must be seen as distributed slightly differently: firstly, the introduction from VII 1-372 is the set-up. Its first part (VII 1-52) introduces the characters. The one side of the incongruity is presented in the section from VII 53-306, where three types of business are set-up: the foreign exchange of the merchant, the "business" of his wife with the monk, and also the business of the merchant and the monk, all three are brought underway. The wife's business with the monk is carried out between VII 307 and 324, the merchant's foreign exchange between VII 325 and 372. Secondly, the incongruous overlap between wife's deal with the monk and the merchant's deal with the monk is described in VII 373-

---

Maybe it's time we started calling states by their ecological names. Because of roadside litter, we'll call it Messychusetts. [the joke could end here, CFH] Because of air pollution, we'll call it Phew Jersey. And because of what's happened to the Hudson River, we'll call it New Yuuccck!

[130] Wenzel (1989, see above) would unite setup and incongruity into *exposition*, and call the resolution *punch line*.

410. Thirdly, the final resolution is the punch in VII 416, which is carried down to the end, where the Shipman repeats it in VII 434.

The early transitions are clearly marked: From setup, to the creation of the incongruity:

(71)   Na moore of this as now, for it suffiseth. (VII 52)

From the creation of the incongruity to the final part that brings the multiple resolution, when all the debts are repaid, starting from the merchant's loan to the other merchants, then the monk's loan to the merchant, which is paid through the wife:

(72)   And forth he rydeth hoom to his abbeye,
        Or where hym list; namoore of hym I seye. (VII 323-24)

7.3.6.4 Multiple Business Exchanges: The False Analogy of the Pun

To understand the complex of puns on sex/money culminating in "taill(e)/ynge," it is necessary to have a closer look at the actual "deals" in the Tale.

From the point of view of the wife the initial debt situation is that the merchant owes her both money and sex (VII 116-17). She borrows money from the monk, which he borrows from the merchant. The wife pays the monk in sexual favors. This creates a debt on her part to the merchant which is quitted through the merchant's initial sexual debt to her. This debt is doubly paid, though: When the merchant demands the money back from the monk, the monk correctly says, that he gave it to the wife, when at the same time he slept with the wife, nixing thereby the sexual "minus" she had in her account. So he did the merchant a favor! Nonetheless, in the merchant's view the

financial dept of the monk to the merchant remains. So the main source of capital,[131] the wife's sexual hunger, is activated again to also quit that debt, which has been transferred onto her through the adultery aspect of her deal with the monk.

This complex dealing, which I haven't even explored to the fullest yet,[132] makes clear that the exchange of money and sex aren't fully analogous. Namely, while for financial exchange there is an exact corresponding debt owed for every loan, which can be public and independent of viewpoint, in sex the debt is always mutual, often only implicit, usually private, and dependent on viewpoint, and, cannot be passed on from debtor to creditor. As the false analogy of money and sex is the LM of the joke of tale, this very faultiness of the analogy is its logical mechanism of the core opposition of the tale: sexual debt, in contrast to financial debt, is not transferable.[133]

We have already seen, how this false analogy is indeed, structurally, the faultiness of the pun of the tale, as well as at the core of a strand of puns in the tale. The other strand on kinship/trickery turns out to be a merely a potential gloss on the faultiness of the of the LM of the real core opposition: The overlap of the sex-money opposition is faulty and works only in terms of cheating and trickery, which could be the other meaning if "cosynage." It is no true analogy.

---

[131] It remains unclear, how "the rapid circulation of money and language leads to an intersystemic surplus value in both," as Joseph (1983: 344, see also 350) argues, especially since he asserts that the wife fulfills rather the role of a mediatory, like those of her husband's *cambio reale*. The main point is that the equation of the sexual and financial deals is faultily analogous in that it is not transferrable, not that sex can create surplus.

[132] For further interpretations of the mutual debts, see, for example, Silverman (1953: 332-33), Richardson (1965: 304-06), Levy (1966-67), Scattergood (1977: 215-20), Schneider (1977).

[133] Schneider also sees a false analogy in terms of real prosperity equalling happy marriage (as in the FranT), while only false prosperity lies in a purely sexual relationship (1977: 203).

7.3.6.5 "Taille" vs. "Taillynge"

A last question to be addressed is whether it is indeed only the same script opposition of sex/non-sex (money) in "taille" that also works "taillynge" or whether there might be a different or additional opposition in the latter, reading it as meaning *storytelling*.

Koch first noted the sexual double entendre in "taillynge" and pushed the previous standard translation "telling tales" into the background, when he doubted that the meaning of VII 434 is "Der liebe Gott soll den pilgern erzählungen bis an ihr lebensende senden ..."[134] (1913-14: 385). His claim that it is rather to be understood that "Der erzähler ... spricht also zum schluß den wunsch aus, es möge solches "kerben", dh. der eheliche genuß, allen bis zu ihrem seligen ende vergönnt sein."[135] (ibid.) thus became the standard reading. Also, Robinson notes that the substitution of "talyng" (telling tales) for "taillyng" in certain manuscripts is a later scribal change and does not reflect Chaucerian intention (1957: 733f).

But, given that it is the rule rather than the exception that jokes can have multiple incongruities, I find Joseph's argument most convincing in this context. Given that the previous line triggers the script of "tale" explicitly[136] (VII 433), "taillynge" constitutes a triple pun on sexual exchange ("tail"), financial exchange ("tally"), as well as a secondary pun on telling "tales" (1983: 350). Yet, this does not diminish the primary opposition of sex/non-sex.

---

[134] The dear Lord shall send the pilgrims stories until the end of their lives ...
[135] At the end the narrator ... expresses his wish, such tallying, i.e. the marital consumption, may be granted to everyone until their blessed end
[136] This could also have motivated the scribal change from "taillyng" to "talyng."

7.3.7 Conclusion

It is a prominent strand in the literary comment on Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale* that the key to it lies in understanding that "commerce is juxtaposed with sex and the respective debts become humorously and ironically equated" (Abraham 1976-7: 320) and that "this identification of sex with money informs the entire tale in a meaningful way." (Silverman 1953: 331). In the *Shipman's Tale* the main shadow opposition shares its SO with the core opposition revealed in the final punch line.

Apart from a reevaluation of the two most prominent puns in the tale, "taill(e)/ynge" and "cosyn/age," the merit of this section is that it showed that also in strictly structural terms this equation can be attested. It is both the script opposition of a strand of puns in the tale, as well as the pun of the tale in the word "taille" (VII 416).

8. Conclusion

The goal of the theoretical discussions and studies united in this thesis has been two-fold. On the one hand, I attempted to elaborate linguistic theory (sections 5 and 6), while, on the other hand, I applied the theory to literature, more specifically, humorous narratives, both to evaluate the usefulness of the expansion, as well as to gain a better understanding of the literary works it was applied to (section 7).

The theoretical innovations include new insights into the logical mechanism (section 5) as an element of both jokes and longer humorous narratives. The important structural distinction between humor *in* and *of* the plot of those longer narratives has been investigated more closely, leading—inter alia—to the distinction between *shadow* and *core* opposition.

The study of literature has been enriched by new tools from the field of linguistics, and these tools have helped to uncover the structural basis of the "systems of images" that Bakhtin saw perpetuating the medieval humor of Rabelais. At the same time we saw how the shadow oppositions of these systems of images have been anticipated by Bakhtin proposing them. We saw that the elements of the core opposition of Boccaccio's sexual fabliaux is not always reproduced in the corresponding rubrics. Again, this finding has an impact both ways: It provides us with a tentative evaluation of the relative importance of elements of the core opposition and outside of the core opposition. At the same time it helps us understand why certain elements were left out of the rubrics. The pun of the *Shipman's Tale*, more exactly its opposition and logical mechanism, was found to work on both the level of core and shadow opposition, thus confirming the descriptive and explanatory relevance of the concepts for the intricate web of humor as Chaucer wove it into the narrative.

Obviously, this discussion by no means exhausts the complexity or variety of the vast topic of humor that, so far, still largely resists systematic and revealing *linguistic* description. We are far from the end of our task, only having reduced certain logical and narrative mechanisms to formulas valid for humor in general and humorous narratives in particular. Yet, this is no small feat. We understand that many logical mechanisms arise from a cognitive pattern for the resolution of the incongruity, the process being analogous to connectors or mapping functions between semantic scripts, understood as sets. Yet, this concept will have to be furnished with further tools, before it can handle sufficient amounts of data. The narrative tools presented here are just a small section of those

necessary to describe *all* types of humorous narratives, and much further work, some already under way, will have to be carried out.

So, regarding humor in the plot and humor of the plot of narratives structurally similar to jokes, as well as logical mechanisms, in themselves, their kinds, and their parts, how they differ, and what some mechanisms of them creating humor or not are, and regarding questions raised and their solutions, this account will have to suffice.

9. Appendix

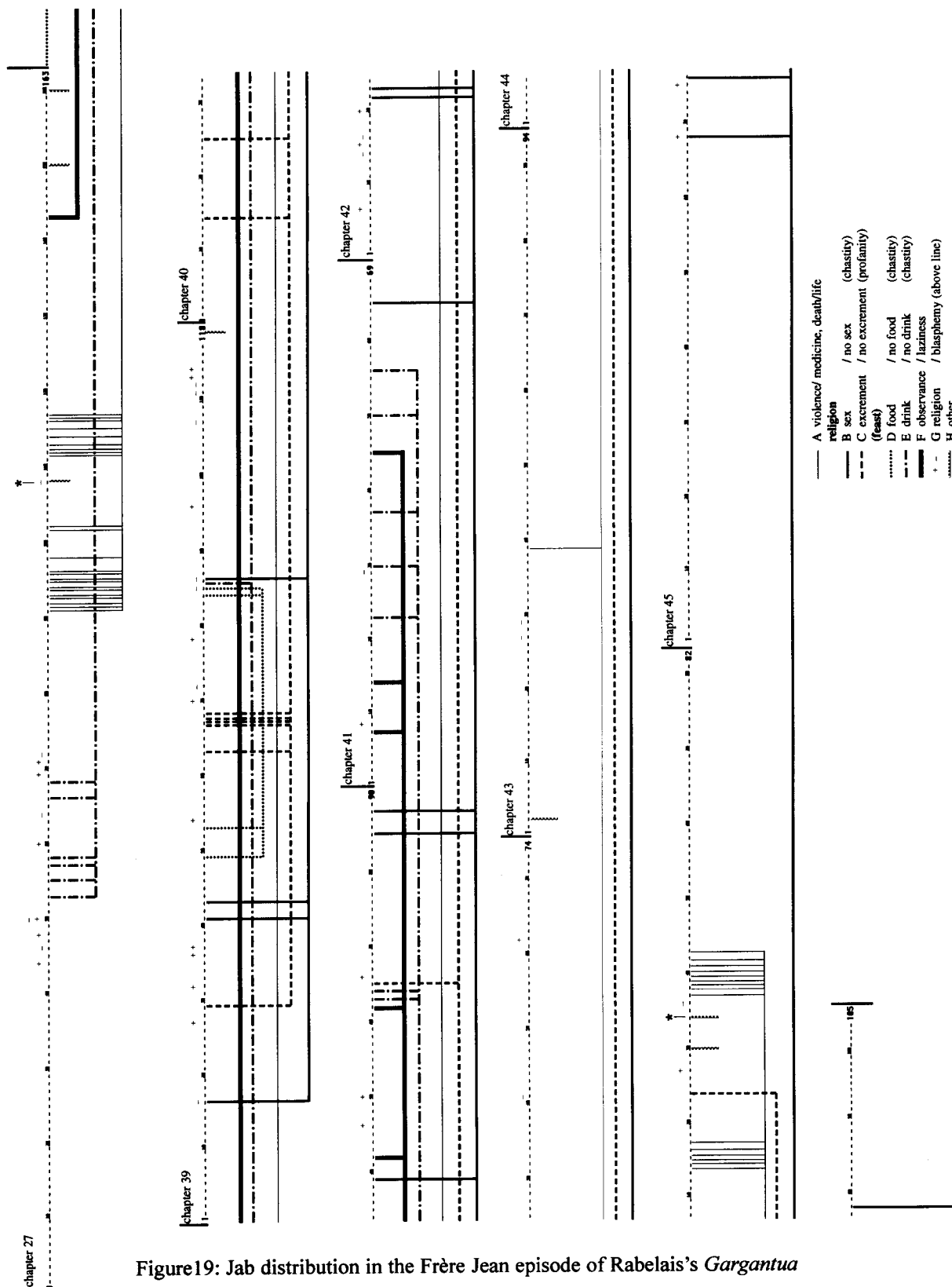## 9.1 Jab Distribution in the Frère Jean Episode of Rabelais's *Gargantua*

Figure19: Jab distribution in the Frère Jean episode of Rabelais's *Gargantua*

9.2   Rubrics of Boccaccio's *Decameron*

III, 1

Masetto da Lamporecchio si fa mutolo e diviene ortolano di uno monistero di donne, le quali tutte concorrono a giacersi con lui.
Payne
Masetto of Lamporeccio feigneth himself dumb and becometh garedener to a convent of women, who all flock to lie with him.
Foglio
Massetto di Lamporechio, by counterfetting himselfe to be dumbe, became a Gardiner in a Monastery of Nunnes, where he had familiar conversation with them all.

III, 2

Un pallafrenier giace con la moglie d'Agilulf re, di che Agilulf tacitamente s'accorge; truovalo e tondelo; il tonduto tutti gli altri tonde, e così campa della mala ventura.
Payne
A horsekeeper lieth with the wife of King Agilulf, who, becoming aware thereof, without word said, findeth him out and polleth him; but the polled man polleth all his fellows on like wise and so escapeth ill hap.
Florio
A querry of the Stable, belonging to Agilulffo, King of the Lombardes, found the meanes of accesse to the Queenes bed, without any knowledge or consent in her. This being secretly discovered by the King, and the party known, he gave him a marke, by shearing the haire of his head. Whereupon, he that was so shorne, sheared likewise the heads of all his fellowes in the lodging, and so escaped the punishment intended towards him.

III, 3

Sotto spezie di confessione e di purissima conscienza una donna innamorata d'un giovane induce un solenne frate, senza avvedersene egli, a dar modo che 'l piacer di lei avesse intero effetto.
Payne
Under colour of confession and of exceeding niceness of conscience, a lady, being enamoured of a young man, bringeth a grave friar, without his misdoubting him thereof, to afford a means of giving entire effect to her pleasure.
Florio
Under colour of Confession, and of a most pure conscience, a faire yong Gentlewoman, being amourously affected to an honest man, induced a devoute and solemne religious Friar, to advise her in the meanes (without his suspition or perceiving) how to enjoy the benefit of her friend, and bring her desires to their full effect.

III, 4

Don Felice insegna a frate Puccio come egli diverrà beato faccendo una sua penitenzia; la quale frate Puccio fa, e don Felice in questo mezzo con la moglie del frate si dà buon tempo.
Payne
Dom Felice teacheth Fra Puccio how he may become beatified by performing a certain penance of his fashion, which the other doth, and Dom Felice meanwhile leadeth a merry life of it with the good man's wife.
Florio
A yong Scholler, named Felice, enstructed Puccio di Rinieri, how to become rich in a very short time. While Puccio made experience of the instructions taught him; Felice obtained the favour of his Daughter.

III, 6

Ricciardo Minutolo ama la moglie di Filippello Sighinolfo, la quale sentendo gelosa, col mostrare Filippello il dì seguente con la moglie di lui dovere essere ad un bagno, fa che ella vi va, e credendosi col marito essere stata, si truova che con Ricciardo è dimorata
Payne
Ricciardo Minutolo, being enamoured of the wife of Filippello Fighinolfi and knowing her jealousy of her husband, contriveth, by representing that Filippello was on the ensuing day to be with his own wife in a bagnio, to bring her to the latter place, where, thinking to be with her husband, she findeth that she hath abidden with Ricciardo.
Florio
Ricciardo Minutolo fell in love with the wife of Philippello Fighinolfi, and knowing her to be very jealous of her Husband, gave her to understand, that hee was greatly enamoured of his Wife, and had appointed to meete her privately in a Bathing house, on the next day following: where shee hoping to take him tardie with his close compacted Mistresse, found her selfe to be deceived by the said Ricciardo.

III, 7

Tedaldo, turbato con una sua donna, si parte di Firenze; tornavi in forma di peregrino dopo alcun tempo; parla con la donna e falla del suo error conoscente, e libera il ma ito di lei da morte, che lui gli era provato che aveva ucciso, e co'fratelli il pacefica; e poi saviamente colla sua donna si gode.
Payne
Tedaldo Elisei, having fallen out with his mistress, departeth Florence and returning thither, after awhile, in a pilgrim's favour, speaketh with the lady and maketh her cognisant of her error; after which he delivereth her husband, who had been convicted of murdering him, from death and reconciling him with his brethren, thenceforthward discreetly enjoyeth himself with his mistress.

Florio
Theobaldo Elisei, having received an unkinde repulse by his beloved, departed from Florence, and returning thither (a long while after) in the habite of a Pilgrime; he spake with her, and made his wrongs knowne unto her. He delivered her Father from the danger of death, because it was proved, that he had slaine Theobaldo: he made peace with his brethren, and in the end, wisely enjoyed his hearts desire.

III, 8

Ferondo, mangiata certa polvere, è sotterrato per morto; e dall'abate, che la moglie di lui si gode, tratto della sepoltura, è messo in prigione e fattogli credere che egli è in purgatoro; e poi risuscitato, per suo nutrica un figliuolo dello abate nella moglie di lui generato
Payne
Ferondo, having swallowed a certain powder, is entombed for dead and being taken forth of the sepulchre by the abbot, who enjoyeth his wife the while, is put in prison and given to believe that he is in purgatory; after which, being raised up again, he reareth for his own a child begotten of the abbot on his wife.
Florio
Ferando, by drinking a certaine kinde of powder, was buried dead. And by the Abbot, who was enamored of his Wife, was taken out of his Grave, and put into a darke prison, where they made him beleeve, that hee was in Purgatorie. Afterward, when time came that hee should be, raised to life againe; he was made to keepe a childe which the Abbot had got by his Wife.

III, 10

Alibech diviene romita, a cui Rustico monaco insegna rimettere il diavolo in inferno; poi, quindi tolta, diventa moglie di Neerbale.
Payne
Alibech, turning hermit, is taught by Rustico, a monk, to put the devil in hell, and being after brought away thence, becometh Neerbale his wife.
Florio
Alibech turns hermit, and a monk, Rustico, teaches her to put the Devil in Hell. Afterwards she is brought home, and married to Neerbale.

IV, 2

Frate Alberto dà a vedere ad una donna che l'Agnolo Gabriello è di lei innamorato, in forma del quale più volte si giace con lei; poi, per paura de'parenti di lei della casa gittatosi, in casa d'uno povero uomo ricovera, il quale in forma d'uomo salvatico il dì seguente nella piazza il mena, dove, riconosciuto, è da' suoi frati preso e incarcerato.
Payne
Fra Alberto giveth a lady to believe that the angel Gabriel is enamoured of her and in his shape lieth with her sundry times; after which, for fear of her kinsmen, he casteth himself forth of her window into the canal and taketh refuge in the house of a poor man, who on the morrow carrieth him, in the guise of a wild man of the woods, to the Piazza, where, being recognized, he is taken by his brethren and put in prison.
Florio
Fryar Albert made a young Venetian Gentlewoman beleeve, that God Cupid was falne in love with her, and he resorted oftentimes unto her, in the disguise of the same God. Afterward, being frighted by the Gentlewomans kindred and friends, he cast himselfe out of her Chamber window, and was bidden in a poore mans House; on the day following, in the shape of a wilde or savage man, he was brought upon the Rialto of Saint Marke, and being there publikely knowne by the Brethren of his Order, he was committed to Prison.

V, 10

Pietro di Vinciolo va a cenare altrove; la donna sua si fa venire un garzone; torna Pietro; ella il nasconde sotto una cesta da polli; Pietro dice essere stato trovato in casa d'Ercolano, con cui cenava, un giovane messovi dalla moglie; la donna biasima la moglie d'Ercolano; uno asino per isciagura pon piede in su le dita di colui che era sotto la cesta; egli grida; Pietro corre là, vedelo cognosce lo 'nganno della moglie con la quale ultimamente rimane in concordia per la sua tristezza.
Payne
Pietro di Vinciolo goeth to sup abroad, whereupon his wife letteth fetch her a youth to keep her company, and her husband returning, unlooked for, she hideth her gallant under a hen-coop. Pietro telleth her how there had been found in the house of one Arcolano, with whom he was to have supped, a young man brought in by his wife, and she blameth the latter. Presently, an ass, by mischance, setteth foot on the fingers of him who is under the coop and he roareth out, whereupon Pietro runneth thither and espying him, discovereth his wife's unfaith, but ultimately cometh to an accord with her for his own lewd ends.
Florio
Pedro di Vinciolo went to sup at a friends house in the City. His wife (in the meane while) had a young man whom shee loved, at supper with Pedro returning home on a sodaine, the young man was hidden under a Coope for Hens. Pedro in excuse of his so soone comming home, declareth, how in the house of Herculano (with whom he should have supt) a friend of his Wives was found, which was the reason of the Suppers breaking off. Pedroes Wife reproving the error of Herculanoes wife, an Asse (by chance) treads on the yong mans fingers that lay hidden under the Hen-coope. Upon his crying out Pedro steppeth thither, sees him, knowes him, and findeth the fallacy of his wife; with whom (neverthelesse) he groweth to agreement, in regard of some imperfections in himselfe.

VI, 7

Madonna Filippa dal marito con un suo amante trovata, chiamata in giudicio, con una pronta e piacevol risposta sé libera e fa lo statuto modificare.
Payne
Madam Filippa, being found by her husband with a lover of hers and brought to justice, delivereth herself with a prompt and pleasant answer and causeth modify the statute.

Florio
Madam Philippa, being accused by her Husband Rinaldo de Pugliese, because he tooke her in Adulterie, with a yong Gentleman named Lazarino de Guazzagliotri: caused her to bee cited before the Judge. From whom she delivered her selfe, by a sodaine, witty, and pleasant answer, and moderated a severe strict Statute, formerly made against women.

VII, 1

Gianni Lotteringhi ode di notte toccar l'uscio suo; desta la moglie, ed ella gli fa accredere che egli è la fantasima; vanno ad incantare con una orazione, e il picchiar si rimane.

Payne
Gianni Lotteringhi heareth knock at his door by night and awakeneth his wife, who giveth him to believe that it is a phantom; whereupon they go to exorcise it with a certain orison and the knocking ceaseth.

Florio
John of Lorraine heard one knocke at his doore in the night time, whereuppon he awaked his Wife Monna Tessa. She made him beleeve, that it was a Spirit which knocked at the doore, and so they arose, going both together to conjure the Spirit with a prayer; and afterwardes, they heard no more knocking.

VII, 2

Peronella mette un suo amante in un doglio, tornando il marito a casa; il quale avendo il marito venduto, ella dice che venduto l'ha ad uno che dentro v'è a vedere se saldo gli pare. Il quale saltatone fuori, il fa radere al marito, e poi portarselo a casa sua.

Payne
Peronella hideth a lover of hers in a vat, upon her husband's unlooked for return, and hearing from the latter that he hath sold the vat, avouchteth herself to have sold it to one who is presently therewithin, to see if it be sound; whereupon the gallant, jumping out of the vat, causeth the husband scrape it ot for him and after carry it home to his house.

Florio
Peronella hid a yong man her friend and Lover, under a great brewing Fat, upon the sodaine returning home of her Husband; who told her, that hee had solde the saide Fat and brought him that bought it, to cary it away. Peronella replyed, that shee had formerly solde it unto another, who was now underneath it, to see whether it were whole and sound, or no. Whereupon, he being come forth from under it; she caused her Husband to make it neate and cleane, and so the last buyer carried it away.

VII, 3

Frate Rinaldo si giace colla comare; truovalo il marito in camera con lei, e fannogli credere che egli incantava i vermini al figlioccio.

Payne
Fra Rinaldo lieth with his gossip and being found of her husband closeted with her in her chamber, they give him to believe that he was in act to conjure worms from his godson.

Florio
Friar Reynard, falling in love with a Gentlewoman, Wife to a man of good account; found the meanes to become her Gossip. Afterward, he being conferring closely with her in her Chamber, and her Husband coming sodainly thither: she made him beleeve, that he came thither for no other end; but to cure his God-sonne by a charme, of a dangerous disease which he had by Wormes.

VII, 4

Tofano chiude una notte fuor di casa la moglie, la quale, non potendo per prieghi rientrare, fa vista di gittarsi in un pozzo e gittavi una gran pietra. Tofano esce di casa e corre là, ed ella in casa le n'entra e serra lui di fuori, e sgridandolo il vitupera.

Payne
Tofano one night shutteth his wife out of doors, who, availing not to re-enter by dint of entreaties, feigneth to cast herself into a well and casteth therein a great stone. Tofano cometh forth of the house and runneth thither, whereupon she slippeth in and locking him out, bawleth reproaches at him from the window.

Florio
Tofano in the night season, did locke his wife out of his house, and shee not prevailing to get entrance againe, by all the entreaties she could possiblie use: made him beleeve that she had throwne her selfe into a Well, by casting a great stone into the same Well. Tofano hearing the fall of the stone into the Well, and being perswaded that it was his Wife indeed; came forth of his house, and ran to the Welles side. In the meane while, his wife gotte into the house, made fast the doore against her Husband, and gave him many reproachfull speeches.

VII, 5

Un geloso in forma di prete confessa la moglie, al quale ella dà a vedere che ama un prete che viene a lei ogni notte; di che mentre che il geloso nascostamente prende guardia all'uscio, la donna per lo tetto si fa venire un suo amante, e con lui si dimora.

Payne
A jealous husband, in the guise of a priest, confesseth his wife, who giveth him to believe that she loveth a priest, who cometh to her every night; and whilst the husband secretly keepeth watch at the door for the latter, the lady bringeth in a lover of hers by the roof and lieth with him.

Florio
A jealous man, clouded with the habite of a Priest, became the Confessour to his owne Wife; who made him beleeve, that she was deepely in love with a Priest, which came every night, and lay with her. By meanes of which confession, while her jealous Husband watched the doore of his house; to surprize the Priest when he came: she that never meant to do amisse, had the company of a secret Friend, who came over the toppe of the house to visite her, while her foolish Husband kept the doore.

VII, 6

Madonna Isabella con Leonetto standosi, amata da un messer Lambertuccio, è da lui visitata; e tornando il marito di lei, messer Lambertuccio con un coltello in mano fuor di casa ne manda, e il marito di lei poi Leonetto accompagna.

Payne

Madam Isabella, being in company with Leonetto her lover, is visited by one Messer Lambertuccio, of whom she is beloved; her husband returning, [unexpected,] she sendeth Lambertuccio forth of the house, whinger in hand, and the husband after excorteth Leonetto home.

Florio

Madame Isabella, delighting in the company of her affected Friend, named Lionello, and she being likewise beloved by Signior Lambertuccio: At the same time as shee had entertained Lionello, shee was also visited by Lambertuccio. Her Husband returning home in the very instant; shee caused Lambertuccio to run forth with a drawne sword in his hand, and (by that meanes) made an excuse sufficient for Lionello to her husband.

VII, 7

Lodovico discuopre a madonna Beatrice l'amore il quale egli le porta; la qual manda Egano suo marito in un giardino in forma di sé, e con Lodovico si giace; il quale poi levatosi, va e bastona Egano nel giardino.

Payne

Lodovico discovereth to Madam Beatrice the love he beareth her, whereupon she sendeth Egano her husband into the garden, in her own favour, and lieth meanwhile with Lodovico, who, presently arising, goeth and cudgelleth Egano in the garden.

Florio

Lodovico discovered to his Mistresse Madame Beatrix, how amorously he was affected to her. She cunningly sent Egano her Husband into his garden, in all respects disguised like her selfe, while (friendly) Lodovico conferred with her in the meane while. Afterward, Lodovico pretending a lascivious allurement of his Mistresse, thereby to wrong his honest Master, insted of her, beateth Egano soundly in the Garden.

VII, 8

Un diviene geloso della moglie, ed ella, legandosi uno spago al dito la notte, sente il suo amante venire a lei. Il marito se n'accorge, e mentre seguita l'amante, la donna mette in luogo di sé nel letto un'altra femina, la quale il marito batte e tagliale le trecce, e poi va per li fratelli di lei, li quali, trovando ciò non esser vero, gli dicono villania.

Payne

A man waxeth jealous of his wife, who bindeth a piece of packthread to her great tow anights, so she may have notice of her lover's coming. One night her husband becometh aware of this device and what while he pursueth the lover, the lady putteth another woman to bed in her room. This latter the husband beateth and cutteth off her hair, then fetcheth his wife's brothers, who, finding his story [seemingly] untrue, give him hard words.

Florio

Arriguccio Berlinghieri, became immeasurably jelous of his Wife Simonida, who fastened a thred about her great toe, for to serve as a small, when her amorous friend should come to visite her. Arriguccio findeth the fallacie, and while he pursueth the amorous friend, shee causeth her Maide to lye in her bed against his returne: whom he beateth extreamly, cutting away the lockes of her haire (thinking he had doone all this violence to his wife Simonida:) and afterward fetcheth her Mother and Brethren, to shame her before them, and so be rid of her. But they finding all his speeches to be utterly false; and reputing him to bee a drunken jealous foole; all the blame and disgrace falleth on himselfe.

VII, 9

Lidia moglie di Nicostrato ama Pirro, il quale, acciò che credere il possa, le chiede tre cose, le quali ella gli fa tutte; e oltre a questo in presenza di Nicostrato si sollazza con lui, e a Nicostrato fa credere che non sia vero quello che ha veduto.

Payne

Lydia, wife of Nicostratus, loveth Pyrrhus, who, so he may believe it, requireth of her threee things, all which she doth. Moreover, she solaceth herself with him in the presence of Nicostratus and maketh the latter believe that that which he hath seen is not real.

Florio

Lydia, a Lady of great beauty, birth, and honor, being Wife to Nicostratus, Governour of Argos, falling in love with a Gentleman, named Pyrrhus; was requested by him (as a true testimony of her unfeigned affection) to performe three severall actions of her selfe. She did accomplish them all, and imbraced and kissed Pyrrhus in the presence of Nicostratus; by perswading him, that whatsoever he saw, was meerely false.

VIII, 1

Gulfardo prende da Guasparruolo denari in prestanza, e con la moglie di lui accordato di dover giacer con lei per quegli, sì gliele dà, e poi in presenzia di lei a Guasparruolo dice che a lei gli diede, ed ella dice che è il vero.

Payne

Gulfardo borroweth of Guasparruolo certain monies, for which he hath agreed with his wife that he shall lie with her, and accordingly giveth them to her; then, in her peresence, he telleth Guasparruolo that he gave them to her, and she confesseth it to be true.

Florio

Gulfardo made a match or wager, with the Wife of Gasparuolo, for the obtaining of her amorous favour, in regard of a summe of money first to be given her. The money hee borrowed of her Husband, and gave it in payment to her, as in case of discharging him from her Husbands debt. After his returne home from Geneway, hee told him in the presence of his wife, how he had payde the whole summe to her, with charge of delivering it to her Husband, which she confessed to be true, albeit greatly against her will.

VIII, 2

Il Prete da Varlungo si giace con monna Belcolore; lasciale pegno un suo tabarro; e accattato da lei un mortaio, il rimanda e fa domandare il tabarro lasciato per ricordanza; rendelo proverbiando la buona donna.

Payne

The Parish Priest of Varlungo lieth with Mistress Belcolore and leaveth her a cloak of his in pledge; then, borrowing a mortar of her, he sendeth it back to her, demanding in return the cloak left by way of token, which the good woman grudgingly giveth him back.

Florio

A lustie youthfull Priest of Varlungo, fell in love with a pretty woman, named Monna Belcolore. To compasse his amorous desire, hee lefte his Cloake (as a pledge of further payment) with her. By a subtile sleight afterward, he made meanes to borrow a Morter of her, which when hee sent home againe in the presence of her Husband; he demaunded to have his Cloake sent him, as having left it in pawne for the Morter. To pacifie her Husband, offended that shee did not lend the Priest the Morter without a pawne: she sent him backe his Cloake againe, albeit greatly against her will.

VIII, 4

Il proposto di Fiesole ama una donna vedova; non è amato da lei, e credendosi giacer con lei, giace con una sua fante, e i fratelli della donna vel fanno trovare al vescovo suo.

Payne

The rector of Fiesole loveth a widow lady, but is not loved by her and thinking to lie with her, lieth with a serving-wench of hers, whilst the lady's brothers cause the bishop find fim in this case.

Florio

The Provost belonging to the Cathedrall Church of Fiesola, fell in love with a Gentlewoman, being a widdow, and named Piccarda, who hated him as much as he loved her. He imagining, that he lay with her: by the Gentlewomans Bretheren, and the Byshop under whom he served, was taken in bed with her Mayde, an ugly, foule, deformed Slut.

VIII, 8

Due usano insieme; l'uno con la moglie dell'altro si giace; l'altro, avvedutosene, fa con la sua moglie che l'uno è serrato in una cassa, sopra la quale, standovi l'un dentro, l'altro con la moglie dell'un si giace.

Payne

Two men consorting together, one lieth with the wife of his comrade, who, becoming aware thereof, doth with her on such wise that the other is shut up in a chest, upon which he lieth with his wife, he being inside the while.

Florio

Two neere dwelling Neighbours, the one beeing named Spineloccio Tavena, and the other Zeppa di Mino, frequenting each others company daily. together; Spinelloccio Cuckolded his Friend and Neighbour. Which happening to the knowledge of Zeppa, he prevailed so well with the Wife of Spinelloccio, that he being lockt up in a Chest, he revenged his wrong at that instant, so that neyther of them complained of his misfortune.

VIII, 10

Una ciciliana maestrevolmente toglie ad un mercatante ciò che in Palermo ha portato; il quale, sembiante faccendo d'esservi tornato con molta più mercatantia che prima, da lei accattati denari, le lascia acqua e capecchio.

Payne

A certain woman of Sicily artfully despoileth a merchant of that which he had brought to Palermo; but he, making believe to have returned thither with much greater plenty of merchandise than before, borroweth money of her and leaveth her water and tow in payment.

Florio

A Cicilian Courtezane, named Madame Biancafiore, by her craftie wit and policie, deceived a young Merchant, called Salabetto, of all the money he had taken for his Wares at Palermo. Afterward, he making shew of comming hither againe, with farre richer Merchandises then hee brought before: made the meanes to borrow a great summe of Money of her, leaving her so base a pawne, as well requited her for her former cozenage.

IX, 1

Madonna Francesca, amata da uno Rinuccio e da uno Alessandro, e niuno amandone, col fare entrare l'un per morto in una sepoltura, e l'altro quello trarne per morto, non potendo essi venire al fine imposto, cautamente se gli leva da dosso.

Payne

Madam Francesca, being courted of one Rinuccio Palermini and one Alessandro Chiarmontesi and loving neither the one nor the other, adroitly riddeth herself of both by causing one enter for dead into a sepulchere and the other bring him forth thereof for dead, on such wise that they cannot avail to accomplish the condition imposed.

Florio

Madame Francesca, a Widdow of Pistoya, being affected by two Florentine Gentlemen, the one named Rinuccio Palermini, and the other Alessandro Chiarmontesi, and she bearing no good will to eyther of them; ingeniously freed her selfe from both their importunate suites. One of them she caused to lye as dead in a grave, and the other to fetch him from thence: so neither of them accomplishing what they were enjoyned, fayled of obtaining his hoped expectation.

IX, 2

Levasi una badessa in fretta e al buio per trovare una sua monaca, a lei accusata, col suo amante nel letto; ed essendo con lei un prete, credendosi il saltero de'veli aver posto in capo, le brache del prete vi si pose; le quali vedendo l'accusata e fattalane accorgere, fu diliberata, ed ebbe agio di starsi col suo amante.

Payne

An abbess, arising in haste and in the dark to find one of her nuns, who had been denounced to her, in bed with her lover and thinking to cover her head with her coif, donneth instead thereof the breeeches of a priest who is abed with her; the which the accused nun observing and making her aware thereof, she is acquitted and hath leisure to be with her lover.

Florio

Madame Usimbalda, Lady Abbesse of a Monastery of Nuns in Lombardie, arising hastily in the night time without a Candle, to take one of her Daughter Nunnes in bed with a yong Gentleman, whereof she was enviously accused, by certaine of her other Sisters: The Abbesse her selfe (being at the same time in bed with a Priest) imagining to have put on her head her plaited vayle, put on the Priests breeches. Which when the poore Nunne perceyved; by causing the Abbesse to see her owne error, she got her selfe to be absolved, and had the freer liberty afterward, to be more familiar with her frend, then formerly she had bin.

IX, 5

Calandrino s'innamora d'una giovane, al quale Bruno fa un brieve, col quale come egli la tocca, ella va con lui, e dalla moglie trovato, ha gravissima e noiosa quistione.

Payne

Calandrino falleth in love with a wench and Bruno writeth him a talisman, wherewith when he toucheth her, she goeth with him; and his wife finding them together, there betideth him grievous trouble and annoy.

Florio

Calandrino became extraordinarily enamoured of a young Damosell, named Nicholetta. Bruno prepared a Charme or writing for him, avouching constantly to him, that so soone as he touched the Damosell therewith, she should follow him whithersoever hee would have her. She being gone to an appointed place with him, hee was found there by his wife, and dealt withall according to his deserving.

IX, 6

Due giovani albergano con uno, de'quali l'uno si va a giacere con la figliuola, e la moglie di lui disavvedutamente si giace con l'altro. Quegli che era con la figliuola, si corica col padre di lei e dicegli ogni cosa, credendosi dire al compagno. Fanno romore insieme. La donna, ravvedutasi, entra nel letto della figliuola, e quindi con certe parole ogni cosa pacefica.

Payne

Two young gentlemen lodge the night with an inn-keeper, whereof one goeth to lie with the host's daughter, whilst his wife unwittingly coucheth with the other; after which he who lay with the girl getteth him to bed with her father and telleth him all, thinking to bespeak his comrade. Therewithal they come to words, but the wife, perceiving her mistake, entereth her daughter's bed and hence with certain words appeaseth everything.

Florio

Two yong Gentlemen, the one named Panuccio, and the other Adriano, lodged one night in a poore Inne, where one of them went to bed to the Hostes Daughter, and the other (by mistaking his way in the darke) to the Hostes Wife. He which lay with the daughter, happened afterward to the Hostes bed and told him what he had done, as thinking he spake to his own companyon. Discontentment growing betweene them, the Mother perceiving her errour, went to bed to her daughter, and with discreete language, made a generall pacification.

9.3 Length of Selected Novelle and Rubrics of the *Decameron*

The following table shows the following data:[137] day and number of novella; number of words of the original version of the novella,[138] number of words in the original rubric, ratio of words in novella to words in rubric.

nov.	novella	rubric	ratio
III, 1	2176	22	98.909
III, 2	1722	28	61.500
III, 3	3256	31	105.032
III, 4	1761	34	51.794
III, 6	2950	46	64.130
III, 7	5816	57	102.035
III, 8	3295	47	70.106
III, 10	1716	20	85.800
IV, 2	3323	61	54.475
V, 10	2863	86	33.291
VI, 7	831	25	33.240
VII, 1	1455	32	45.469
VII, 2	1358	50	27.160
VII, 3	1797	23	78.130
VII, 4	1394	50	27.880
VII, 5	2562	51	50.235
VII, 6	1190	40	29.750
VII, 7	2096	39	53.744
VII, 8	2664	67	39.761
VII, 9	3644	48	75.917
VIII, 1	745	45	16.556
VIII, 2	1782	35	50.914
VIII, 4	1766	34	51.941
VIII, 8	1436	37	38.811
VIII, 10	3914	34	115.118
XI, 1	1839	41	44.854
XI, 2	861	59	14.593
XI, 5	2618	29	90.276
XI, 6	1590	63	25.238
Average	2221	42.6	52.204

Table 11: Length of selected novelle and rubrics of the *Decameron*

[137] I am indebted to the Department of Italian Studies of Brown University for making available an online version of the *Decameron*, available at http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/, which made obtaining these statistical data much easier than actual counting would have been. I copied the Italian text of the novelle into my word processor and had it count the relevant selections for me.
[138] Not counting the introductory paragraph(s) the narrating character has precede his or her novella. These are considered to be at narrative level n-1. Usually the narrative of the novella start clearly discernibly with the presentation of the setup in terms of setting or characters: "There was in town X...", or "There was a certain person X...."

9.4   Puns in the *Shipman's Tale*[139]

a)   puns on the opposition sex/money
"taill(e)/ynge"
- I am youre wyf; score it upon my taille (VII 416)
  [taille = tally (tap) + pudendum]
- Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
  Taillynge ynough unto our lyves ende. (VII 433-4)
  [taillynge = paying debts + sexual intercourse (+ storytelling?)]

other
- Free was daun John, and manly of dispence (VII 42)
  [manly = virile + generous] (possibly also "namely", which would make the pun impossible, cf.
  Donaldson 1974: 106-07, quoted in Scattergood 1977: 230n56)
- he is noght worth at al
  In no degree the value of a flye. (VII 170-71)
  [value = niggardlyness + sexual inadequacy] (Cooper 1996: 282)
- For at a certeyn day I wol yow paye,
  And doon to yow what plesance and service
  That I may doon, right as yow list devise. (VII 190-92)
  [paye = financially + sexually]
  [plesance/service = ditto]
- For I [monk] wol brynge yow [wife] an hundred frankes.
  And with that word he caughte hire by the flankes, (VII 201-02)
  (a rather nice example of *adnominatio*)
- Upon this queynte world t'avyse me;
  For everemoore we moote stonde in drede
  Of hap and fortune in oure chapmanhede. (VII 236-38)
  [queynte = complex + sexual] (The merchant about business in general. Noone has commented on this
  one yet.)
  [chapmanhede = business (financial + sexual?)]
- Thou hast ynough, in every maner wise,
  That to a thrifty houshold may suffise.
  Thee lakketh noon array ne no vitaille;
  Of silver in thy purs shaltow nat faille." (VII 245-48)
  (Merchant to wife upon leaving. Note that "thrifty" doesn't mean *miserly*, but German "triftig", i.e.
  suitable.
  [ynough = financial + sexual (which she obviously hasn't)]
  [purs = purse + vagina (according to OED any recepticle and orifice, but escpecially *scrotum*?)]
- For certein beestes that I moste beye, (VII 272)
  For yet to-nyght thise beestes moot I beye. (VII 278)
  [beest = animal + woman (wife)]
  [beye/peye = pay (for commodity + sex)] (Monk to merchant.)
- My [merchant] gold is youres [monk], whan that it yow leste,
  And nat oonly my gold, but my chaffare (VII 283-84)
  [chaffare = goods (including his wife?)]
- But o thyng is, ye knowe it wel ynogh
  Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plogh. (VII 287-88)

---

[139] Especially in view of the impossibility to decide on the intentionality of humor without the (also dubious)
declaration of it from the part of the author, and the problematicity of semantic developments that leave us unclear
about all possible denotations—and even more unclear about the connotations—of words in the 14th century, this list
lays no claim to exhaustiveness.

[plogh = plough (agricultural + financial + sexual instrument)] (Cooper 1996: 281, Richardson 1965: 308)

- Bul goldlees for to be, it is no game
  Paye it agayn whan it lith in youre ese; (VII 290-91)
  [ese = ease (temporally + sexually?)]
- And this acord parfourned was in dede.
  In myrthe al nyght a bisy lyf they lede (VII 317-18)
  [acord = deal (financial + sexual)]
  [bisy lyf = literal + sexual]
- But nathelees, I took unto oure dame,
  Youre wyf, at hom, the same gold ageyn
  Upon youre bench; (VII 356-58)
  [oure = the merchant's + the monks]
  [bench = counter + anatomical (? Richardson 1970: 111)]
- As helpe me God, he is noght worth at al
  If any dettour hath in myn [merchant] absence
  Ypayed thee [wife], lest thurgh thy necligence (VII 397-98)
  [dettour = debt (financial + sexual)]
  [ypayed = pay (financial + sexual)]
- That he [monk] hadde yeve it me [wife] bycause of yow [merchant],
  To doon therwith myn honour and my prow, (VII 407-408)
  [prow = profit (financial + sexual)]
- Ye [merchant] han mo slakkere dettours than am I [wife]! (VII 413)
  [dettour = debt (financial + sexual)]
- Ye shal my joly body have to wedde
  By God, I wol nat paye yow but abedde! (VII 423-24)
  [wedde = sexual union + guarantee for loan (Cooper 1996: 282)]
  [pay = sexual and financial (both open here)]
- But, by thy [wife] lyf, ne be namoore so large.
  Keep bet thy good, this yeve I [merchant] thee in charge. (VII 430-31)
  [large = freegiving (financially + sexually)]
  [good = financial + sexual]

b)   puns on the opposition kinship/trickery:
"cosyn(age)" [cosynage = kinship + trickery (+ courtesan?)]
- The monk hym [merchant] claymeth as for cosynage (VII 36)
- Oure [merchant (and wife)] deere cosyn [monk], ful of curteisye? (VII 69)
- O deere cosyn myn, daun John, she [wife] sayde, (VII 98)
- Nay, cosyn [monk] myn, it stant nat so with me [wife]; (VII 114)
- Ne shal I [wife] nevere, for to goon to helle,
  Biwreye a word of thyng that ye me telle,
  Nat for no cosynage ne alliance (VII 137-39)
  (This, again seems to speak for trickery??)
- With my [wife] housbonde, al be he youre [monk] cosyn. (VII 147)
- He [merchant] is na moore cosyn unto me [monk]
  Than is this leef that hangeth on the tree! (VII 149-50)
- He [monk] seyde hym [merchant] thus: Cosyn, it standeth so, (VII 257)
- I [monk] prey yow [merchant], cosyn, wisely that ye ryde. (VII 260)
- Farewel, cosyn; God shilde yow fro care! (VII 264)
  (Monk to merchant at farewell. Chaucer really overuses it in this section, but it may be just positive face, as the monk is about to ask the merchant the favor of lending him the hundred franks. Fisher (1965: 168) notes that Chaucer is "using and deliberately overusing cosyn with mocking irony.")
- Answerde and seyde, O cosyn myn, daun John, (VII 282)
- That ye han maad a manere straungenesse
  Bitwixen me [merchant] and my cosyn daun John. (VII 386-87)

- That he [monk] hadde yeve it [the hundred franks] me [wife] bycause of yow,
  To doon therwith myn honour and my prow,
  For cosynage, and eek for beele cheere (VII 408-9)

"nece"
- Nece [wife], quod he [monk], it oghte ynough suffise (VII 100)
- But deere nece, why be ye so pale? (VII 106)
- And [monk] seyde, Allas, my nece [wife], God forbede, (VII 125)
- Grete wel oure[merchant] dame, myn [monk] owene nece sweete, (VII 363)
  (This speaks against "cosynage" as *trickery*.)

c) puns with other oppositions
"pleye" [pleye = play (have fun + have sex)]
- That he [daun John] sholde come to Seint-Denys to pleye
  With hym [the merchant] and with his wyf a day or tweye, (VII 59-60)
- In al the reawme of France is ther no wyf
  That lasse lust hath to that sory pley. (VII 116-17)
- Namoore, quod she, by God, ye have ynough!
  And wantownly agayn with hym she pleyde, (VII 380-81)
- As be nat wrooth, but lat us laughe and pleye.
  Ye shal my joly body have to wedde; (VII 422-23)

other
- Gooth now, and beeth as trewe as I shal be. (VII 207)
  (Monk to wife after they arranged their deal. Now, how is "true" to be taken?)
- Quod she, what, sire, how longe wol ye faste? (VII 215)
  (Wife to merchant, does she mean "fast" in *cullinary* and *sexual* sense?)
- ...litel kanstow devyne
  The straunge bisynesse that we have (VII 224-25)
  (while she can very well beat the merchant in this field of expertise)

Bibliography

Abraham, David. "Cosyn and Cosynage: Pun and Structure in *Shipman's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 11.4 (1976-7): 319-327.

"Ad C. Herennium. De Ratione Dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)." Vol. 3 of *Cicero in Twenty Eight Volumes*.Trans. by Harry Caplan. 28 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981.

Adams, Douglas and John Lloyd. *The Deeper Meaning of Liff. A Dictionary of Things that there aren't any Words for Yet.* London: Pan Books, 1990.

Alexander, Richard J. *Aspects of Verbal Humour in English.* Tübingen: Narr, 1997.

Al-Khatib, Mahmoud A. "Joke-telling in Jordanian Society: A Sociolinguistic Perspective." *Humor* 12.3 (1999): 261-288.

D'Andrea, Antonio. "Le Rubriche del Decameron." *Yearbook of Italian Studies.* 1973-1975: 41-67.

Apte, Mahadev. *Humor and Laughter: An Anthropological Approach.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985.

_____. "Disciplinary Boundaries in Humorology: An Anthropologist's Ruminations." *Humor* 1.1 (1988): 5-25.

Aristotle. *De Arte Poetica.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968.

Attardo, Salvatore. "Trends in European Humor Research: Toward a Text Model." *Humor* 1.4 (1988): 349-369.

_____. "A Multiple-level Analysis of Jokes." Contributed section in Hofstadter, Douglas and Liane Gabora. "Synopsis of the Workshop on Humor and Cognition." *Humor* 2.4 (1989): 417-440. 438-438.

_____. Rev. of "Humor: A Semiogenetic Approach" by Susan C. Vogel. *Humor* 3.3 (1990): 440-445.

_____. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994.

_____. "Humor Theory Beyond Jokes: The Treatment of Humorous Texts at Large." *Automatic Interpretation and Generation of Verbal Humor: IWCH '96*. Eds. Joris Hulstijn and Anton Nijholt. Enschede: University of Twente, 1996. 87-101.

_____. "The Semantic Foundations of Cognitive Theories of Humor." *Humor* 10.4 (1997): 395-420.

_____. "The Analysis of Humorous Narratives." *Humor* 11.3 (1998): 231-260.

_____. *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000.

Attardo, Salvatore and Donalee Hughes, Paul Baltes, and Marnie Jo Petray. "The Linear Organization of Jokes: Analysis of Two Thousand Texts." *Humor* 7.1 (1994): 27-54.

Attardo, Salvatore and Charles Chabanne. "Jokes as a Text Type." *Humor* 5.1 (1992): 165-176.

Attardo, Salvatore and Victor Raskin. "Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model." *Humor* 4.3 (1991): 293-347.

Attardo, Salvatore and Cynthia Vigliotti. "Humor as Subversion in Anne Sexton's *Transformations*." Unpublished essay, 1999.

Aubouin, Elie. *Technique et Psychologie du Comique*. Marseilles: OFEP, 1848.

Austin, John L. *How to do Things with Words*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. H. Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1965.

Barthes, Roland. "Introduction à l'analyse structurale de récits." *Communications* 8

(1966): 1-27.

_____. *S/Z*. Paris: Seuil, 1970.

Baum, Paull F. "Chaucer's Puns." *PMLA* 71 (1956): 225-46.

_____. "Chaucer's Puns: A Supplementary List." *PMLA* 73 (1958): 167-70.

Beattie, James. "An Essay on Laughter, and Ludicruous Composition." *Essays*. 1776.

Hildesheim: Olms, 1975.

Bédier, Joseph. *Les Fabliaux*. 6th ed. Paris: Champion, 1964.

Benson, Larry D., ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Berger, Sidney E. "Sex in the Literature of the Middle Ages: *The Fabliaux*." *Sexual*

Practices and the Medieval Church. Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage, eds.

Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982. 162-75.

Bergson, Henri. "Le rire. Essai sur la signification du comique." *Revue de Paris*. Feb. 1,

Feb. 15, March 1 1899.

_____. "Laughter, an Essay on the Meaning of the Comic." Ed. Wylie Sypher. *Comedy*.

Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956. 59-190.

Berlyne, Daniel E. "Humor and Its Kin." *The Psychology of Humor*. Eds. Jeffrey H.

Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee. 2 vols. New York: Academic Press, 1972. 43-60.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. 2 vols. Milan: Garzanti, 1974.

_____. *The Decameron*. Trans. John Payne. New York: Walter J. Black, n.d.

Bowen, Barbara. "Rabelais's Unreadable Books." *Renaissance Quarterly* 48.4 (1995):

742-755.

_____. *Enter Rabelais, Laughing*. Vanderbilt: Vanderbilt UP, 1998.

Branca, Vittore. *Boccaccio. The Man and His Works.* Trans. Richard Monges. New York: NY UP, 1976.

Brémond, Claude. "La logique des possibles narratifs." *Communications* 8 (1966): 60-76.

Cahn, Kenneth S. "Chaucer's Merchants and the Foreign Exchange: An Introduction to Medieval Finance." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 2 (1980): 81-119.

Caldwell, Robert. "Chaucer's *Taillynge Ynough, Canterbury Tales,* B^2 1624." *MLN* 55 (1940): 262-65.

Chapman, Antony J. and Hugh C. Foot, eds. *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications.* London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976.

Chapman, Robert L. "The *Shipman's Tale* Was Meant for the Shipman." *MLN* 71 (1962): 14-32.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film.* Ithaca, London: Cornell U P, 1978.

Chlopicki, Wladyslaw. *An Application of the Script Theory of Semantics to the Analysis of Selected Polish Humorous Short Stories.* Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Purdue University, 1987.

Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax.* Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965.

Clark, Carol. *The Vulgar Rabelais.* Glasgow: Pressgang, 1983.

Cooke, Thomas D. *The Old French and Chaucerian Fabliaux. A Study of Their Comic Climax.* Columbia & London: U of Missouri P, 1978.

Cooper, Helen. "The Shipman's Tale." in *The Canterbury Tales.* Oxford: OUP, 1996: 278-286.

Cottino-Jones, Marga. "Comic Modalities in the *Decameron.*" *Versions of Medieval*

    Comedy. Ed. Paul G. Ruggiers. Norman: U of Oregon Press, 1977. 151-171.

CyberCheeze. <http://www.cybercheeze.com>.

Darwin, Charles. *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.* 1872. New York:

    AMS Press, 1972.

Davies, Christie. "Ethnic Humor, Hostility, and Aggression: A Reply to Elliott Oring."

    Humor 4.3-4 (1991): 415-422.

Eichmann, Raymond. Introduction. *Fabliaux: Fair and Foul.* By Eichmann. Trans. John

    DuVal. Binghampton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992. i-xxxii.

Fillmore, Charles. "Topics in Lexical Semantics." *Current Issues in Linguistic Theory.*

    Ed. Roger W. Cole. Bloomington, IN: Indiana U P, 1977. 76-138.

_____. "Frames and the Semantics of Understanding." *Quaderni di Semantica* 6.2

    (1985): 222-253.

Fisher, Ruth M. " 'Cosyn' and 'Cosynage': Complicated Punning in Chaucer's

    Shipman's Tale." *N&Q* 12 (1965): 168-70.

Fodor, Jerry A. and Jerrold J. Katz, eds. 1964. *The Structure of Language: Readings in*

    the Philosophy of Language. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Frank, Mark G. and Paul Ekman. "Not All Smiles are Created Equal: The Differences

    Between Enjoyment and Nonenjoyment Smiles." *Humor* 6.1 (1993): 9-26.

Freud, Sigmund. *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten.* Leipzig, Vienna:

    Dueticke, 1905. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992

_____. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.

Fry, William F., Jr. *Sweet Madness.* Palo Alto: Pacific Books,1963.

Fry, William F., Jr. and William M. Savin. "Mirthful Laughter and Blood Pressure."
Humor 1.4 (1988): 49-62.

Gallo, Ernest. *The* Poetria Nova *and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine.* Paris:
Mouton, 1971.

Goldstein, Jeffrey H. and Paul E. McGhee, eds. *The Psychology of Humor.* 2 vols. New
York: Academic Press, 1972.

Goldstein, Laurence. "The Linguistic Interest of Verbal Humor." *Humor* 3.1 (1990): 37-52.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. *Sémantique Structurale.* Paris: Larousse, 1966.

_____. *Structural Semantics.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

Grice, H. Paul. "Logic and Conversation." *Syntax and Semantics.* Eds. Peter Cole and
Jerry L. Morgan. 3 vols. New York: Academic Press, 1975. 41-58.

Hahn, Thomas. "Money, Sexuality, Wordplay, and Context in the *Shipman's Tale.*"
Chaucer in the Eighties. Eds. Julian N. Wasserman and Robert J. Blanch.
Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986. 235-249.

Hallett, Ronald A. and Peter Derks. "Humor Theory and Rabelais." *Humor* 11.2 (1998):
135-160.

Hausman, Frank-Rutger. "Differente Lachkulturen? — Rabelais und Fischart." *Differente
Lachkulturen? Fremde Komik und ihre Übersetzung. Forum Modernes Theater
Band 18.* Eds. Thorsten Unger et al. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1995.

Heisenberg, Werner. *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik.* Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1955.

Hempelmann, Christian F. *Linguistic Approaches to Humor: The General Theory of
Verbal Humor (GTVH) in Performance.* Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Universität
Hannover, 1998.

Hempelmann, Christian F. and Salvatore Attardo. "Modeling Incongruities and Their Resolution." Unpublished essay, 2000.

Hetzron, Robert. "On the Structure of Punchlines." *Humor* 4.1 (1991): 61-108.

Hobbes, Thomas. "Human Nature." 1650. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*. Ed. Sir William Molesworth. Oxford: Bowman. Vol. 4. London: John Bohn, 1840. 1-76; Allen: Scientia, 1966.

_____. "Of Man." 1651. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*. Ed. Sir William Molesworth. Oxford: Bowman. Vol. 3. London: John Bohn, 1840. 1-84; Allen: Scientia, 1966.

Hockett, Charles F. "Jokes." *Studies in Linguistics in Honor of George L. Trager*. Ed. M.E. Smith. The Hague: Mouton, 1973. 153-178.

_____. *The View from Language: Selected Essays, 1948-1974*. Athens: University of of Georgia Press, 1977.

Hofstadter, Douglas and Liane Gabora. "Synopsis of the Workshop on Humor and Cognition." *Humor* 2.4 (1989): 417-440.

Jolles, André. *Einfache Formen*. Darmstadt: n.p., 1930.

Jones, Claude. "Chaucer's *Taillynge Ynough*." *MLN* 52 (1937): 570.

Jones, Terry. *Chaucer's Knight. The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary*. London, New York: Methuen, 1985.

Joseph, Gerhard. "Chaucer's Coinage: Foreign Exchange and the Puns of the *Shipman's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 17.4 (1983): 341-357.

Kaluza, Max. *Chaucer und der Rosenroman*. Berlin: n.p., 1893.

Kant, Immanuel. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. 1790. Hamburg: Meiner, 1974.

Keith-Spiegel, Patricia. "Early Conceptions of Humor: Varieties and Issues." *The Psychology of Humor*. Eds. Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee. 2 vols. New York: Academic Press, 1972. 3-39.

Kinser, Samuel. *Rabelais's Carnival. Text, Context, Metatext*. Berkeley: California UP, 1990.

Koch, J. "Textkritische Bermerkungen zu Chaucers *Canterbury Tales*." *Englische Studien* 47 (1913-14): 338-414.

Kökeritz, Helge. "Rhetorical Word-play in Chaucer." *PMLA* 69 (1954): 937-52.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Act of Creation*. London: Hutchinson, 1964.

Kurath, Hans and Sherman M. Kuhn. Eds. *Middle English Dictionary*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press; London: G. Cumberledge, Oxford University Press, 1952ff.

La Charité, Raymond. "Chapter Division and Narrative Structure in Rabelais's Pantagruel." *French Forum* 3 (1978): 263-271.

La Fave, Lawrence. "Ethnic Humor: From Paradoxes Towards Principles." *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications*. Eds. Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot. London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976. 237-260.

Lagerquist, Linnea M. "Linguistic Evidence from Paronomasia." *Papers from the Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society* 16 (1980): 185-191.

Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987.

Lang, Ewald. *Semantik der koordinativen Verknüpfung*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1977.

_____. *The Semantics of Coordination*. Transl. John Pheby. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1984.

Langacker, Ronald W. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar. Vol 1. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, CA: SUP, 1987.

_____. *Concept, Image, and Symbol. The Cognitive Basis of Grammar*. Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991.

Laurian, A.-M. "Possible/Impossible Translation of Jokes." *Humor* 5.1/2 (1992): 111-128.

Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Levy, Bernard S. "The Quaint World of *The Shipman's Tale*." *Studies in Short Fiction* 4 (1966-67): 112-118.

Ludovici, Anthony M. *The Secret of Laughter*. New York: Viking, 1933.

Marino, Matthew. Rev. of "Linguistic Theories of Humor." By Salvatore Attardo. *Humor* 8.4 (1995): 407-414.

McGhee, Paul E. *Humor: Its Origin and Development*. San Francisco: Freeman, 1979.

McGhee, Paul E. and Jeffrey H. Goldstein, eds. *Handbook of Humor Research*. 2 vols. New York: Springer, 1983.

Miller, H. K. "Some Relations between Humor and Religion in Eighteenth Century Britain." *Thalia: Studies in Literary Humor* 1 (1983): 48-59.

Milner, G. B. "Homo Ridens: Towards a Semiotic Theory of Humour and Laughter." *Semiotica* 5 (1972): 1-30.

Mindess, Harvey. *Laughter and Liberation*. Los Angeles: Nash, 1971.

Monro, D. H. *Argument of Laughter*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1951.

Morreall, John. *Taking Laughter Seriously*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1983.

Muscatine, Charles. *The Old French Fabliaux*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

Nicholson, Peter. "*The Shipman's Tale* and the Fabliaux." *ELH* 45 (1978): 583-596.

Nilsen, Don L.F. "The Importance of Tendency: An Extension of Freud's Concept of Tendentious Humor." *Humor* 1.4 (1988): 335-347.

Nykrog, Per. *Les Fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médievale.* Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957.

Oring, Elliott. "Between Jokes and Tales: On the Nature of Punch Lines." *Humor* 2.4 (1989): 349-364.

_____. *Jokes and their Relations.* Lexington, KY: UP of KY, 1992.

Palmer, Jerry. *The Logic of the Absurd.* London: British Film Institute, 1987.

Paolillo, John C. "Gary Larson's Far Side: Nonsense? Nonsense!" *Humor* 11.3 (1998):.261-290.

Parkin, John. *Interpreting Rabelais: An Open Text Reading of an Open Text.* Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1993.

Paulos, John Allen. *Mathematics and Humor.* Chicago, London: U of Chicago Press, 1980.

Pearcy, Roy J. "Investigations into the Principles of Fabliau Structure." *Versions of Medieval Comedy.* Ed. Paul G. Ruggiers. Norman: U of O Press, 1977. 67-100.

_____. "Punning on 'Cosyn' and 'Cosynage' in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale.*" *American Notes and Queries* (1979): 70-71.

Pepicello, William J. and Robert W. Weisberg. "Linguistics and Humor." *The Psychology of Humor.* Eds. Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee. Rev. ed. New York: Academic Press, 1983. 59-83.

Plato. *Philebus.* Trans. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

Pollio, Howard R. "Notes toward a Field Theory of Humor." *The Psychology of Humor*. Eds. Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee. Rev. ed. New York: Academic Press, 1983. 213-230.

Popper, Karl. *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.

Rabelais, François. *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Trans. J.M Cohen. London: Penguin, 1955.

_____. *Œvres complètes*. Eds. Jacques Boulenger and Louis Scheler. Paris: Gallimard, 1955.

Rapp, Albert. *The Origins of Wit and Humor*. New York: Dutton, 1951.

Raskin, Victor. "Semantic Mechanisms of Humor." *The Study of Humor*. Eds. H. Mindess and J. Turek. Los Angeles: Antioch University West, 1979. 89-90.

_____. "Script-based Lexicon." *Quaderni di Semantica* 2.1 (1981): 25-34.

_____. *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985.

_____. "The Interdisciplinary Field of Humor Research." *Semiotica* 66.4 (1987): 441-449.

Richards, Jeffrey. *Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Richardson, Janette. "The Façade of Bawdry: Image Patterns in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*." *ELH* 32 (1965): 303-13.

_____. "The Shipman's Tale." *Blameth Nat Me. A Study of Imagery in Chaucer's Fabliaux*. The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1979. 100-122.

Rieke, Alison. *The Senses of Nonsense*. Iowa City: U of I P, 1992.

Robinson, E.N. Ed. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.

Robinson, Vera M. "Humor and Health." *The Psychology of Humor*. Eds. Jeffrey H.

Goldstein and Paul E.McGhee. Rev. ed. New York: Academic Press, 1983. 109-

128.

Ross, Thomas W. "Tayl." *Chaucer's Bawdy*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972. 218-20.

Rothbart, Mary K. "Incongruity, Problem-Solving and Laughter." *Humour and Laughter.*

Theory, Research and Applications. Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot. Eds.

London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976. pp¿.

Rothbart, Mary K. and Diana Pien. "Elephants and Marshmallows: A Theoretical

Synthesis of Incongruity-Resolution and Arousal Theories of Humour." *It's a*

Funny Thing, Humour. Eds. Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot. Oxford:

Pergamon, 1977. 37-40.

Ruch, Willibald. "Measurement Approaches to the Sense of Humor: Introduction and

Overview." *Humor* 9.3-4 (1996): 239-250.

_____. "The Sense of Nonsense Lies in the Nonsense of Sense. Comment on Paolillo's

(1998) "Gary Larson's *Far Side:* Nonsense? Nonsense!" " *Humor* 12.1 (1999): 71-

93.

Ruch, Willibald, Salvatore Attardo, and Victor Raskin. "Toward an Empirical Verification of

the General Theory of Verbal Humor." *Humor* 6.2 (1993): 123-136.

Ruch Willibald and Giovannantonio Forabosco. "A Cross-Cultural Study of Humor

Appreciation: Italy and Germany." *Humor* 9.1 (1996): 1-18.

Sala, Michele. *Humor, Nonsense, and Absurd. The Linguistic Analysis of Non-Serious*

Narratives. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Youngstown State University, 2000.

Scattergood, V.J. "The Originality of the *Shipman's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 11.3 (1977): 211-231.

Schank, Roger C. and Robert P. Abelson. *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding.* London: John Wiley and Sons, 1977.

Schenck, Mary Jane Stearns. *The Fabliaux: Tales of Wit and Deception.* Amsterdam: John Adams, 1987.

Schneider, Paul Stephen. " 'Taillynge Ynough': The Function of Money in the *Shipman's Tale*." *Chaucer Review* 11.3 (1977): 201-09.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung: Erster Band.* 1859. Zurich: Haffmans, 1988.

Screech, Michael Andrew. *Rabelais.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979.

Shultz, Thomas R. "A Cognitive-Developmental Analysis of Humour." *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications.* Eds. Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot. London: John Wiley & Sons, 1976. 11-36.

Silverman, Albert H. "Sex and Money in Chaucer's *Shipman's Tale*." *Philological Quarterly* 32 (1953): 329-36.

Sobkowiak, Wlodzimierz. *Metaphonology of the English Paronomasic Pun.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991.

Spargo, John Webster. *Chaucer's* Shipman's Tale: *The Lover's Gift Regained.* 1930. n.p.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1971.

Sullivan, Hazel. "A Chaucerian Puzzle." *A Chaucerian Puzzle and other Medieval Essays.* Eds. Natalie Grime Lawrence and Jack A. Reynolds. Coral Gables: U of Miami P, 1961. 1-46.

Suls, Jerry M. "A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: An

    Information-Processing Analysis." *The Psychology of Humor*. Eds. Paul E.

    McGhee and Jeffrey H. Goldstein. New York and London: Academic, 1972. 81-

    100.

_____. "Cognitive Processes in Humor Appreciation." *Handbook of Humor Research*.

    Eds. Paul E. McGhee and Jeffrey H. Goldstein. Rev. ed. New York: Academic

    Press, 1983. 39-57.

Tatlock, Horst. "Puns in Chaucer." *Flügel Memorial Volume*. Stanford: Stanford UP,

    1916. 228-32.

Terrizzi, Anthony. "The Rubrics of the Decameron." 30 Mar. 2000

    <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/literature/narratology/

    rubrics.html>.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Grammaire du Décaméron*. Paris: Mouton, 1969.

_____. "Structural Analysis of Narrative." *Giovanni Boccaccio: The Decameron*. Eds.

    Mark Musa and Peter E. Bondanella. New York: Norton, 1977: 250-258.

Togeby, Knud. "The Nature of the Fabliaux." *The Humor of the Fabliaux. A Collection of

    Critical Essays*. Eds.Thomas D. Cooke. and Benjamin L. Honeycutt. Columbia:

    University of Missouri Press, 1974. 7-13.

Unger, Thorsten. "Differente Lachkulturen?—Eine Einleitung." *Differente Lachkulturen?

    Fremde Komik und ihre Übersetzung*. Eds. Thorsten Unger et al. Forum

    Modernes Theater Band 18. Tübingen: Narr, 1995. 9-31.

Ungerer, Friedrich and Hans-Jörg Schmid. *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*.

    London, New York: Longman, 1996.

Vogel, Susan C. *Humor: A Semiogenetic Approach*. Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1989.

Wenzel, Peter. Von der Struktur des Witzes zum Witz der Struktur: Studien zur Technik

der Pointierung. Heidelberg: Winter, 1989.

Wright, Herbert, G. *The First English Translation of the* Decameron. *1620.* Lund: Bloms,

1953.

Ziv, Avner. *Personality and Sense of Humor*. New York: Springer, 1984.