

UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA

DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA MODERNA



TESIS DOCTORAL

**TRANSLATION OF THE SENSE OF HUMOR:
LITERARY LIMITATIONS**

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Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1998

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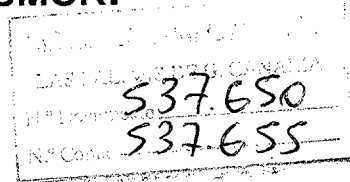
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UNIVERSIDAD DE LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA



DOCTORADO EN TRADUCCIÓN E INTERPRETACIÓN
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LITERARY LIMITATIONS**



Tesis Doctoral presentada por: D^a Margaret Hart
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Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, a 1 de julio de 1998

This thesis is dedicated to the beloved memory of my father, from whom I inherited my sense of humour and my mother, from whom I inherited my laugh with which to celebrate the same.

It is also for Sergio, Marta and Sara who have needed their sense of humour more than ever during the 'delivery' of this document.

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PREFACE

By way of introduction to this piece of research on translation and humor, we would like to clarify certain issues with respect to methodology.

First and foremost is the decision made to present the main corpus of the work in Spanish. This seemed logical since the work was to be presented in a Spanish University, the University of las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and since very little work actually exists on the subject of humor, and less on translation and humor, the idea was that it might perhaps spur other researchers on to further analysis of the field. Since almost all the existing literature on both subjects is in English, we decided that it would be useful to translate the quotes in order to allow full access to all such Spanish people as were interested in the subject but possessed no knowledge of the other language. The idea was that they should be able to read a coherent totality in Spanish.

In the second place, there was also a conscious decision made to use certain expressions instead of others which are probably more common and more formal in register, thus, more usual in an analysis of these characteristics.

However, words such as “violation”, “transgression” and “deviation” are too negatively loaded, in our opinion, for them to be used for something as lithe, creative and mirthful as humor. Hence the use of “skipping the norms” and “shifting frames”. The use of the American spelling of humor has also been used throughout (apart from in quotes and book references) since the major magazine on the subject is called HUMOR and it seems to us to be a fitting tribute to all the scholarly work which has been produced in this magnificent publication.

In the third place, the thesis is also written in English. This is partly because it is being presented for the European Ph.D. and, thus, will be read by people who do not have easy access to Spanish and, more honestly, because it was much easier for the author. However, we decided that, as Neubert (1989) says, and we quote again in this analysis:

Theory without practice is empty. Practice without theory is blind. When mediation is effected something theoretically founded is practically carried out.

We have experienced the difficulties of shifting linguistic, cultural and social frames, and still do so. Humor, in our opinion, is a vital element towards full integration of the person in any society. The person learning a foreign language does not fully express important facets of her/his personality until such time as s/he learns how to express her/his individual sense of humor. In unfamiliar (or defamiliarised) territory, we take some time to find our bearings.

The capacity for sharing humor promotes social bonding. Therefore, it seems to us that the study of humor is of vital importance, not only from its linguistic perspective, but more importantly as a life skill which affects all areas, political, social and cultural, of our existence and the truly distinguishing (and distinguished) mark of Humankind.

SHIFTING THE FRAME AND SKIPPING THE NORMS

Say what one will of the inadequacy of translation, it remains one of the most important and valuable concerns in the whole of world affairs. (GOETHE, 1827)¹

Translation and Interpreting, the two facets of transferring information from one language into another, became of enormous importance in our modern world as of the II World War and the Nuremberg trials. The end of the Cold War did not herald the end of these activities but rather catapulted them even further into the forefront of activities designed at creating a united world.

The Computer Age and the opening up of new communication highways have placed still greater emphasis on the need to break down barriers between different cultures and to establish greater harmonisation. However, the giant steps towards the *Global Village* foreseen by Marshall McLuhan have created, in their wake, the rebirth of minority languages, in an attempt to safeguard cultural roots and differences in the face of the ever growing threat of standardisation.

We want to create a United Europe as an advance towards a United World, but we do not speak the same language: in other words, we have different visions of how that united world should be. For understanding to exist between any two participants in a communication process, there needs to be a common context, a common framework within which the communication is set for this to be effective,

¹ Cited in STEINER, G. (1975) *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. London: Oxford University Press.

even when there is no shift in language, for the person on the receiving end to “get the message” as it was intended by the speaker.

We are constantly translating and interpreting when we are engaged in communication. Not only do we confront frameworks of values and pre-established norms when we work between languages but also, on an everyday level, we are permanently confronting a series of frameworks. Our social reality, as expressed through our language, says Huizinga² is based on dualities: good/evil, business/pleasure, reality/fiction, truth/lies. We know how to define “good” because we know how to define the contrary, “evil”.

However, Huizinga goes on to remark, there would not appear to be any precisely defined antonym for *play* in any of our modern or ancient languages, at least in a commonly used noun form. This leads him to the contention that play forms an intrinsic part of culture and is not a mere facet or aspect which can be added or subtracted at will. The fact that play and, by extension, humor do not possess a contrary referential framework by contrast with which definition of the contents and rules of the same would be reached immediately, poses a problem when trying to transfer these “contents” from one language to another.

The problem is compounded by the fact that not only do we organise our interpretation and experience of the world through language which is our macro-framework but also through a series of referential frameworks, which Halliday calls *registers*³. The different peoples of our future global village express themselves in different ways at the macro- and micro-linguistic levels. As Fillmore says, we all actively apply:

Cognitive and interactional frames in terms of which the language user interprets his environment, formulates his own messages, understands the

² HUIZINGA, J. (1955): *Homo Ludens*. Boston, USA: The Beacon Press.

³ HALLIDAY, M.A.K. (1978): *Language as Social Semiotic*. G.B.: Edward Arnold; pp. 31-35

messages of others and accumulates or creates an internal model of his own world.⁴

So, is mutual understanding really possible or do we have to bow to the theories of Whorf and Malinowski?

Humor has been described as “social glue”. Mordillo⁵ is quoted as having written that after God created the world, he made Man and Woman. Then, to keep the whole thing from collapsing, he invented humor. Humor is seen as a cohesive element in Society and social relations, as a facilitator of communication between people of different types. As such, then, humor is a vital element toward the harmonisation and unity necessary in the global village. However, Walter Nash, in his book *The Language of Humour*⁶ says that we share our humour with those who share our History and our way of interpreting reality. For humour to be effective, the listener or reader, ie. the audience has to bring to the event a whole common baggage of extra-linguistic knowledge together with a shared treasure of pragmatic experience.

This pragmatic phenomenon which is called *co-presence*⁷ rather than *community* by Neubert and Shreve makes the translation of humor particularly complicated, since we must ensure that the translated text activates the key elements of the original text, for these to fit well into the new language framework, and to produce the same effect or *skopos* as was intended by the original communication. The closer the fit between languages and cultures, the easier this will be.

⁴ FILLMORE, C.J. (1976): “Frame Semantics and The Nature of Language” In *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 280; pp. 20-31.

⁵ MORDILLO, G. in *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (Germany), as quoted in KOLLER, M.R. (1988): *Humor and Society: Explorations in the Sociology of Humor*. Houston, Texas: Cape and Gown Press.

⁶ NASH, W. (1985): *The Language of Humour*. New York: Longman.

⁷ NEUBERT, A. & SHREVE, G. (1992): *Translation as Text*, Ohio: The Kent State University Press. The authors distinguish between presumptions of mutual knowledge based on: (i) immediate copresence; (ii) prior physical copresence, which involves the ability to recall; (iii) potential physical copresence, where things are imagined as projected on the basis of our experience and (iv) linguistic copresence based on the precondition of the axiom of understandibility, ie, the recallability of items and their reference from previous linguistic experience.

As if all this were not complicated enough, we should bear in mind that there is no clearcut rule as to what the key elements are and how humor works. In fact, most humor works by skipping the norms and moving outside the frame, by substituting normal, everyday logic by what Ziv⁸ defines as *local logic*. Humor recreates, and is a recreation, in language and the association of words with things. Nida and Taber⁹, comment that everything that can be said in one language can be expressed in another unless form is an essential part of the meaning. This is the case in humor.

Humor consists in frustrating expectations, disobeying the rules of relevance, association and congruence. It is defunctionalisation of language. It skips Grice's Maxims. It steps outside the framework of pre-established rules of cooperation to establish a new and specific form of communicative connivance. It floats and gambols around at the level of meta-language and metaphor. As such, then can it be translated? Or perhaps what is more important, is it really worth trying? Roland Diot in an article called *Humor for Intellectuals* says:

When it comes to translating humor, the operation proves to be as desperate as that of translating poetry. Humor, like other types of discourse, is based on the communication circuit: the transference of codes, and the interpretation of signs, some of which are linguistic, others nonlinguistic, and still others metalinguistic. While the denotations can roughly be translated into a different language, the connotations cannot. They resist the process of exportation and perish in the shipping.¹⁰

Cohen¹¹ says that jokes and metaphor, among other things, help to create links between people via mutual understanding and the feeling of a common vision of life. Mutual understanding requires for communication to be effective and efficient. Any

⁸ ZIV, A. (1984): *Personality and Sense of Humor*. New York: Springer.

⁹ NIDA, E.A. & TABER, C. (1969): *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: Brill.

¹⁰ DIOT, R. (1989): "Humor for Intellectuals". In LAURIAN, A.M. and NILSEN, D. (eds.): *Humour et Traduction*. Special edition of META, 34; p. 1.

¹¹ COHEN, T. (1979): "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy". In SACKS, S. (ed.): *On Metaphor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

process of effective communication consists in a chain of the type proposed by Shannon and Weaver in 1949¹² for telecommunications technology. There is a source of information followed by a receiver through which the signal emitted is transformed into a message which can be interpreted by the audience. A common pre-established code or system of inferred probabilities must exist for the audience to receive the message as it was originally intended. The speaker or writer establishes a message which s/he presents in an acceptable manner for the audience, be it listener or reader, to understand the intention behind the same, through a series of inferential processes. The key link in the communication chain in both translation and humor (and above all translation of humor, where we refer to translation as the written transference of information) is the audience.

Every act of communication, as we said before, is an act of interpretation, if the text is oral and accompanied by manifest contextual and paralinguistic cues or translation, if the text is written and the contextualisation is totally implicit or inferred. Each listener or reader brings to the process of interpretation or translation (re-enactment/re-creation) his/her own specific social, historical and cultural script, framed within the native language, which will allow him/her certain residual freedom when re-creating the message via various processes of association.

The mutual understanding alluded to by Cohen can only be achieved via a series of implicit shared presuppositions of contextualisation without which the humorous message will not be caught. These are framed within the culture and shared by creator and re-creator. As Umberto Eco comments in his essay *The Comic and the Rule*:

If I write the phrase “no more”, you who interpret it according to the English language code will read it in the sense that seems most obvious to you; but I assure you that, read by an Italian, the same words would mean “not blackberries”, or else “No, I prefer blackberries”; and further, if instead of a botanical frame of reference, my Italian reader used a legal one, he would take

¹² Used by Jakobson (1960) in “Linguistics and Poetics” in SEBEEK, T. (ed.): *Style in Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press and again by LYONS, J. (1977): *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

the words to mean “No, respites”, or, in an erotic frame of reference, as a reply: “No, brunettes” to the question “Do gentlemen prefer blondes?”¹³

It would seem clear, therefore, that we must share a similar system of pragmatic frameworks for us to be able to recognise, or to sense intuitively, that the other participant in the communicative process is stepping outside the frame with humorous intentions.

In direct face to face communication, the humorous intention implicit in the message may be communicated via a series of paralinguistic features which clearly establish that the context is *non bona fide* and yet not a lie. In written text, however, it is much more difficult for the implicit joking intention to be signalled, above all in parody or irony where we are talking about the other side of the coin of a foreign currency with which we are not familiar. Pascal says that there is no greater source of humor than the disproportionate disparity between what we expected to see or hear and what we really see or hear¹⁴. If we do not share the same referential framework with respect to expectations, incongruency will not be perceived and neither will the humorous intent.

In this thesis, it is intended to give a brief historical revisionist overview of humor studies given that this is not an established field of studies as yet in Spain and, therefore, there is little literature on the subject. Another chapter will be devoted to theories of translation and how they have evolved within the history of this field of study.

It is no sheer chance that both fields of studies have attracted the attention of many outstanding scholars in many and varied fields ranging from Philosophy through to Psychology and Computational Linguistics. It is no sheer chance either that they have developed along similar lines, following the same phases. We shall then apply a

¹³ Eco, U. (1986): “The Comic and The Rule”. In *Travels in Hyperreality*. New York: Harcourt Brace; p. 140.

¹⁴ Quoted in LUDOVICI, A. (1933): *The Secret of Laughter*. New York: Viking Press.

semiotic/pragmatic translational approach to humorous texts, in the main part, jokes divided into three categories to the effects of this study, ie. Universal, Cultural and Linguistic humor to see to what extent, if and how they skip Grice's Maxims or Norms¹⁵ and, via de-routeing of one of the seven elements of textuality, as defined by De Beaugrande and Dressler¹⁶, infer their humorous purpose to the audience.

We analyse the sense of humor, in other words, its functions and we analyse the sense of the text, within the framework of relevance as defined by Sperber and Wilson¹⁷. We examine how the textual element of *informativity* is deliberately deficient in quantity and quality, thereby placing the onus on the search for relevance in the communication fairly and squarely on the audience. We also attempt to locate the markers which indicate to the audience that humorous intention is imminent, thereby allowing them to shift to the *non bona fide* mode of cooperative communication and to look for relevance where apparently it is absent. The importance of implication to the correct interpretation of humorous intent together with the emphasis on brevity and the need for quick recovery of the humorous sense of the communication for this to be effective are also studied.

We aim to review the most significant theories in the area of linguistics of humor, as exemplified in the joke, first and foremost basing our work on the seminal script-theory of Victor Raskin¹⁸ and to revise the same for application to translation of longer narrative forms where situationality often obviates satisfactory translation from the perspective of pragmatic equivalence. Finally, we aim to analyse the incidence of humor in the mass media and translation in the Info-tech era of mass consumption and transnational marketing and publicity in our "global village".

¹⁵ GRICE, H.P. (1975): "Logic and Conversation". In COLE and MORGAN (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.

¹⁶ BEAUGRANDE, R. DE and DRESSLER, W. (1981): *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. New York: Longman.

¹⁷ SPERBER, D. & WILSON, D. (1986): *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

¹⁸ RASKIN, V. (1985): *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

The fact that humor steps outside the pre-established frame, skips the rules and changes the script, above all when the humor is based on meta-linguistics, complicates the process of translation and, at times, renders effective communication of the original sense impossible.

Such we shall attempt to prove empirically via the Spanish author Ramón J. Sender's novel *La Tesis de Nancy*, written when he worked as a Professor in an American University. Sender was obviously proficient in English. Nevertheless, he wrote this work in Spanish and never translated it. The humor of the work hinges on that decision. Mention will also be made to a contemporary Spanish novel *La Sombra del Águila*, by Arturo Pérez Reverte¹⁹.

This novel is used to show how often register alone is sufficient to produce humor and, thus, the importance of communication of the *illocutionary* value of the text. Since the study is designed to look at difficulties encountered in both directions, and in all senses, there will be reference made also to contemporary British comic literary works by David Lodge and Tom Sharpe.

Lawrence Mitz, like all the academics who write on the subject of humor, comments in his prologue to the study of humor in the United States:

It has become conventional to begin scholarly studies of humor with two standard disclaimers: an apology is offered for the fact that the study of humor is not, of itself, funny, and attention is directed to the apparent irony that though humor is itself trivial and superficial, the study of it is necessarily significant and complex.²⁰

Although gradually less common, most of the works on translation theory begin with a similar *caveat*, that translation is a multilateral and multilevel phenomenon and not as simple as it would seem. Schulte, comments of the matter:

¹⁹ PÉREZ REVERTE, A. (1993): *La Sombra del Águila*. Madrid: Alfaguara.

²⁰ MINTZ, L.E. (ed.) (1988): *Humor in America*. USA: Greenwood Press.

Translators do not engage in the mere transplantation of words; ... their interpretive acts deal with the exploration of situations that are constituted by an intense interaction of linguistic, psychological, anthropological and cultural phenomena.²¹

Humor and joking relationships are an essential aspect of social interaction and bear a functional relationship to cultural values. We shall see that conflict and control are two important aspects of any Society and, in the first chapter, that humor is often used as a conflict weapon in that it “*may conceal and allow expression of aggression without the consequences of overt behaviour*”²². In the second chapter, we analyse the use of translation as a weapon used to ensure social control and a shield allowing the translator to mask his/her disconformity with the powers-that-be.

To a very large extent, it is also true to say that humor is determined by the societies in which it is found, and as the society changes, the humor of the society changes as well. Roy Francis says:

We are born into a world which says some things are funny and some are not. That the topics of humor can change over time does not alter the general point of the cultural control of humor. This control can be subtle: that which is accepted as a proper topic for joking in one situation can be taboo in another. As culture is adaptive, its rules on joking also change. What was permissive humor at one time can be rejected at another.²³

Vilen Komissarov makes a somewhat similar comment with respect to translation when he says:

We should ... also take into account that a language community can in any given stage of its history have strictly defined views on the goal and function of translation and on the “right” way to translate. It is well known that

²¹ SCHULTE, R. (1987): “Translation Theory: A Challenge for the Future”. In *Translation Review*, 23; pp. 1-2.

²² STEPHENSON, R.M. (1951): “Conflict and Control Functions of Humor”. En *American Journal of Sociology*, 56; pp. 569-74.

²³ FRANCIS, R.G. (1988): “Some Sociology of Humor: The Joke”. En *International Social Science Review*, 63:4; pp. 158-64.

different periods in the history of translation have been dominated by different demands. At one time, translation had to be literal; at another time they had to improve on their originals; at yet another time they had to be free renderings of originals that were considered untranslatable anyway.²⁴

The implications of humor for translation are thus posed as specific problems of inter-cultural and interlinguistic relevance. Both humor and translation are seen as mediating processes of communication, of transferring meaning seen from another perspective, of enormous relevance.

We have opted, throughout this thesis, to define the humorous *non bona fide* mode of communication or connivance, as skipping Grice's Norms or Maxims rather than as a violation of the same as is generally preferred in the literature, as of Eco²⁵. This is for purely playful and lexical reasons. Huizinga (1955:8), establishes freedom and stepping outside everyday life as fundamental characteristics of play:

Play is not "ordinary" or "real" life. It is rather a stepping out of "real" life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own. Every child knows perfectly well that he is "only pretending", or that it was "only for fun".

In a careful etymological study of the concept of play as expressed in various different languages, Huizinga (1955:37) likewise establishes that the idea of "*swift and breezy movement*" lies at the stem of each of the lexemes used to denote play. Therefore, we prefer in humor to skip the rules, to step outside daily life as in the Carnival, so well-loved in these Islands, and to change the script as in the (transnational) Pepsi ad!

²⁴ KOMISSAROV, V. (1993): "Norms in Translation". In ZLATEVA, P. (ed.) (1993): *Translation as Social Action*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

²⁵ ECO, U. (1984): *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

I

THE SOCIO-HISTORIC FRAMEWORK OF HUMOR

The learned and philosophic have given laughter their most serious consideration, and as they pore over the spritely and elusive thing, testing it with the dry and colourless terms of science and philosophy, the tables are frequently turned on them and the Ariel which they are anatomizing so absorbedly shakes himself free, straps them upon the operating table and sets about anatomizing them in turn, and the earnest analysts of laughter become themselves laughable.²⁶

It is generally considered that Aristotle was the founder of humour studies. Ever since he declared that *homo sapiens* was the only creature to possess a sense of humour, a fact later corroborated by the zoologists, this fact has engaged the curiosity of a great many intellects who have endeavoured to define what a sense of humour is all about and, therefore, why Humankind should have been given this differentiating trait.

As far back as the 1st Century, Quintilian²⁷ was already complaining that there was no definitive theory with respect to laughter although many had attempted to define the same. It would be a gross exaggeration, indeed, to say that we have advanced little since the times of the Classics, aside of a slight to all the later studies on the subject which have appeared.

²⁶ ARMSTRONG, M. (1928): *Laughing*. London: Jarrolds.

²⁷ QUINTILIAN: "Institutes of the Orator". In MONACO, G. (ed.) (1967): *Introduction and Notes to Il Capitolo de Risu*. Palermo: Palumbo.

However, we still have no universal theory with respect to humour perhaps, as Huizinga (1955:13) says, because it forms such an inextricable part of our culture that it is impossible to dissect into its component parts and study it as a phenomenon apart from, and outside of, its context. Can the meaning and the value of laughter only be interpreted within the different systems of the various cultures, as Russell²⁸ said, or is there some universal underlying link, some semiotic mechanism or universal psychological sign which would allow us to plot out a general theory of humour? Is all humour characteristic of its times or is there some sign which allows us to identify over the ages when some communication is being made with a witty end in sight?

1.1) THE THREE THEORIES

1.1.1) THE THEORY OF SUPERIORITY

The existing literature on the Psychology and Sociology of Humor and, more recently, the contributions made towards the study of the linguistic and semantic mechanisms of humor, all coincide in offering three basic theories with respect to the sources of laughter and congeniality:

- 1) Theory of *superiority*.
- 2) Theory of *relief*, above all, *release from the imposed norm* (in other words, an agreeable surprise).
- 3) Theory of *perceived incongruity*.

Both Aristotle²⁹ and Plato³⁰, the latter generally accepted as the first theorist

²⁸ RUSSELL, W.M.S. (1991): "A Funny Thing Happened ... Humour in Greek and Roman Life, Literature and the Theatre". In BENNET, G. (ed.): *Spoken in Jest*. Sheffield: Academic Press.

²⁹ ARISTOTLE: "Nicomachean Ethics", IV; p. 8. In BARNES, J. (ed.) (1984): *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (Bollingen Series).

³⁰ PLATO: "Republic", III; p. 388. In HAMILTON, E. and HUNTINGTON, C. (eds.) (1961): *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. New York: Pantheon.

of humor³¹, came to the conclusion that laughter (normally as the result of finding something humorous) was the mere externalisation of a feeling of superiority with respect to some other person who was seen as less virtuous, intelligent or fortunate than the person amused.

Hobbes too was to contemplate humor under the same light as can be seen in his statement that laughter is the materialisation of:

A sudden glory arising from some conception of eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly.³²

(We have underlined the word “sudden” from the beginning in order to emphasise the relationship sine qua non between the unexpected and sudden realisation of the humorous and the production of laughter, which is perhaps one of the principal characteristics of mirth, ie. Brevity is the soul of wit).

In all of these theories, the dividing line between laughter as a manifestation of self-complacency and as the externalisation of some subversive feeling of aggressivity or aggression of the norm is an extremely fine, and undefined, one.

The ethnologist Konrad Lorenz³³ views laughter as a controlled form of aggression. The Inuits used, and still use, laughter in order to cool down potentially explosive situations. An “insult” fight is held between the two parties involved in order to avoid them coming to physical blows with one another, with the party producing greater ribaldry at his opponent's expense being declared the winner (note how close the words “ribaldry” and “rivalry” are in English)³⁴.

³¹ PIDDINGTON, R. (1933): *The Psychology of Laughter: A Study in Social Adaptation*. London: Figurehead.

³² HOBBS, TH. (1839): “Leviathan”. In MOLESWORTH (ed.): *English Works (vol. III)*. London: Bohn.

³³ LORENZ, K. (1966, in translation): *On Aggression* (translated WILSON, M.). New York Harcourt, Brace & World.

³⁴ STEFANSSON, V. (1913): *My Life with the Eskimo*. New York: Macmillan.

The roots of this socio-ethnic practice of oral aggression or mockery instead of physical aggression are, again, to be found in the Classics. In this case, it is in the work of Cicero's, *De Oratore*, where through his spokesman, Caius Julio Strabo, we are offered one of the soundest analyses of humor, above all irony, which exist. To the effects of this thesis, the part which is most fascinating in this diatribe on humor is the part which deals with jokes (*facetiae*) which are classified according to whether they are provoked by "an object of humor" (*re*) or should they be funny because of "how what is said is framed" (*dicto*), in other words, linguistic humor, something we shall return to later.

In an extensive taxonomy of humor which has scarcely been enlarged upon since, Cicero offers as examples of verbal or linguistic humor to be used as powerful arms in debating and winning over the public, the categories of allegory, metaphor and irony (*ex inversione verborum*). Another important point that is made, above all with respect to the subject of this thesis, is that should humor resist translation, it is an unequivocal sign that such is based on the dependence on the linguistic sign³⁵.

Nam quod quibuscumque verbis dixeris facetum tamen est, re continetur, quod mutatis verbis salem amittit, in verbis habet leporem omnem (LXII) ... quoniam mutatis verbis non possunt retinere eandem venustatem, non in re sed in verbis posita ducantur (LXIV).

When something is said in another way and is still funny, the humor resides in the object itself. If the statement is no longer funny when said some other way, this means that the humor depends upon the words used ... humor which is no longer humorous once it is reorganised or the words modified, depends upon "how" things were said and not upon "what" was said in itself.

The "translation test" also appears in a fragment from Alexander, a Greek rhetorician of the late 1st century A.D., translated in Einarson³⁶.

Huizinga (1955:66), also makes reference to the socio-ethnic practice of the "*joute de jactance*" (boasting joust) when he talks about the common ancient practice

³⁵ CICERO: *De Oratore* (II: LVIII -LXII).

³⁶ As quoted from ATTARDO, S. (1994): *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 29.

in pre-Islamic Arabia, the *mu'aqara*. This was also known under the other name of *munafara* (defeat) or *mufakhara* (boasting)³⁷ and was used to describe the situation where two different parties fought with words: "*conviciis et dictis satyricis certavit cum aliquo*". Remains of this tradition are also to be found in the ancient Germanic and Nordic literature where verbal battles, known as *mannjafnadr* or the comparison between two men, figure largely in one of the verses of *Harbardslojad*³⁸, where a competition of this type is held between Thor and Odin.

We can observe how little we have progressed since the Classics with respect to our conceptualisation of humor when we analyse, in the recent work of Richard Stephenson (1951:572), the taxonomy of the various kinds of humor used to avoid open conflict: irony, satire, sarcasm and caricature or parody. Humor, therefore, is related to aggression although "*sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me*" ie. the *dicto* hits the bull's eye but averts greater, physical damage or aggression.

This veiled aggression is also mentioned in the work of Ludovici where a slight modification of the Hobbesian theory is offered. Here, laughter is explained in evolutionary terms as the expression of the greater adaptation of one person as opposed to another in a certain situation or context. Ludovici³⁹ maintains that as the human race evolves, less and less importance is attached to physical prowess and more and more to ingenuity and intelligence or even personal enrichment. Children go through the same process, maintains Ludovici: first, they mock physical defects in others and later they "refine" their darts and aim them at mental or cultural defects.

Rapp⁴⁰ agrees with Ludovici in signalling laughter as the triumphant shout of glee at the end of a primitive battle. However, he goes on to add that, possibly, laughter was also an oral sign for the other members of the group to relax from their

³⁷ FREYTAG, G.W. (1830): *Lexicon Arabico-latinum*. Halle.

³⁸ *Edda i*, Thule ii, Num. 9.

³⁹ LUDOVICI, A. (1933): *The Secret of Laughter*. New York: Viking Press; pp. 62-69.

⁴⁰ RAPP, A. (1951): *The Origins of Wit and Humor*. New York: E.P. Dutton.

tension since the potential danger had been averted, as has also been purported by the psychologist Donald Hayworth⁴¹.

No matter what the theory or the modification of the same, we can always see a duel, a duality, a comparison (favourable towards the person experimenting the humor) between two opposed, and often antagonistic, poles. We can see here how the theory of superiority filters through into the field of the second theory, of the expression of relief after tension due to a favourable outcome (as opposed to a potentially unfavourable or dangerous one).

Bergson, in his seminal work *Le Rire. Essai sur la Signification du Comique*⁴², echoes the theory of Hobbes in that he sees the *raison d'être* of humor as a social corrective. He observes that humor is often used by one social group, known as the *in-group* to ridicule some other group which has been excluded for whatever reason, that is, the *out-group* with the intention of humiliating them and, through doing so, to make them change their ways.

Gustave Dupreel⁴³ describes "*the laughter of inclusion and the laughter of exclusion*" and illustrates his theory with cases where self-inflicted humor by the *in-group* functions by way of control and cohesion allowing them to present a united front against the attack of the other group, whilst offering other examples of humor used as an arm against the *out-group*. This concept of *in-groups* and *out-groups* is intimately linked in to stereotypes and, thus, to universally shared values, what here we could describe as the sum and substance, the object or *re* of so-called *Universal humor*.

⁴¹ HAYWORTH, D. (1928): "The Social Origin and Function of Laughter". In *Psychological Review*, 35; p. 370.

⁴² BERGSON, H. (1901): *Le Rire. Essai sur la Signification du Comique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (ed. 203, 1964).

⁴³ DUPREEL, G. (1928): "Le Problème Sociologique du Rire". In *Revue Philosophique* (Année 53); pp. 214-248.

I.1.1.1) UNIVERSAL HUMOR

In this type of humor (*re*), the humorous intention is signalled via shared values or prejudices with respect to figures of fun, in other words, universal stereotypes. Jokes referring to mothers-in-law, drunks and lunatic asylums exist in all the various different cultures and are representative of the theory of superiority and social correction via humor.

Ethnic humor, in all of its various shapes and sizes, variants and sub-variants, as described so magnificently by Christie Davies⁴⁴, Victor Raskin⁴⁵ and Avner Ziv⁴⁶, draws upon this encyclopaedic reserve of shared knowledge with respect to the mythified characteristics of each social group, and is exemplary of the superiority made manifest by the *in-group*, normally at a national level.

The group which is the target of the humor (the *out-group*) varies according to the ethnic group of the smug tauntor (the *in-group*) although, as we have seen before, there are times when the group directs the humor at themselves in order to avoid greater attacks from without. Thus we have it that, in every country, there is a group which is identified for its lack of intelligence, be it native intelligence or social skills whereas, in other cases, there co-exists a group which is known for its stinginess (in the case of Spain, or the Iberian Peninsula, it is the people of Lepe, *los leperos*, who are considered to be thick and the Catalonians who are tight with their money; in the Canary Islands, it is the people of the island of La Gomera, *los gomeros*, who are considered to be somewhat dim; in the United Kingdom, the Irish are reckoned to be lacking in intelligence whilst the Scots figure, almost monumentally, at a world level, as stingy.) An example of auto-parody in order to avoid further attacks from outsiders, thus, as a defence mechanism is Russian humor (above all, the variant of Russian Jewish humor⁴⁷).

⁴⁴ DAVIES, CH. (1991): *Ethnic Humor around the World: A Comparative Analysis*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

⁴⁵ RASKIN, V. (1985): *Op. Cit.*

⁴⁶ ZIV, A. (ed.) (1988): *National Styles of Humor*. US: Greenwood Publishing Group.

⁴⁷ The best examples of this type of humor are to be found in Draitser's articles, above all in DRAITSER, E. (1978): *Forbidden Laughter: Soviet Underground Jokes*. Los Angeles: Almanac.

In short, we can say that the theory of humor wherein the latter is seen as a manifestation of superiority of one group over another, such as was described by Hobbes, or as a corrective social mechanism, as it was defined by Bergson, is something which is well rooted in every culture and traspases the boundaries between one language and another. One has only to recognise the coordinates of the stereotype (that is, to recognise that the Polish, the Belgian, the people of Newfoundland etc., share the characteristic of being of little brain according to the opinion of the majority population in the country, ie. the USA, France and Canada, in this case) and to transfer them through space for them to fit the same existing referential frame in the other culture.

1.1.2.) THE THEORY OF HUMOR AS RELIEF FROM ANTICIPATED TENSION

The second predominant theory with respect to laughter and humor was first mentioned in an essay of Shaftesbury's⁴⁸ although its main exponent was, eventually, to be Freud⁴⁹.

This theory maintains that it is humor which frees Humankind from its psychological yoke and from imposed tension. Humor allows people to go against the norm, to skip the rules. Schopenhauer⁵⁰ was to describe humor as a safety valve which allowed people to escape the crushing power of Dame Reason, a facet which is perfectly compatible with the theory of incongruence, as we shall later prove.

This type of humor allows people to break with the taboos and to touch upon forbidden subjects. It is most common in countries which are suffering the repression of an autocratic society or who are encased in rigid social systems which leave little

⁴⁸ LORD SHAFTESBURY (1711): *The Freedom of Wit and Humour*, 1st Part, Section Four of *Characteristicks* (1727). London.

⁴⁹ FREUD, S. (translated by STRACHEY, J.) (1976): *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. London: Penguin Books.

⁵⁰ SCHOPENHAUER, A. (translated by HALDANE, R.B. and KEMP, J.) (1964): *The World as Will and Idea*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

or no margin for self-expression and expressiveness. The nervous tension produced by the repression is freed in the shape of humor and laughter. As such, the language of humour does not greatly differ from the language of other repressed emotions such as anger or tears e.g. an angry outburst, she burst out in tears, he burst out laughing.

Spencer, in his essay *On the Physiology of Laughter*⁵¹, explains how the constant and continual repression of emotions produces an accumulation of nervous energy. This accumulation produces muscular reactions. Once the limit of accumulation of nervous energy allowed by our muscles has been reached (and, therefore, the limit of accumulation of repressed emotions) there is a need for the body to release the tension in the shape of action. If we are subjected to an overdose of fright, we run and hide. We can only control situations of anger up to a certain limit. Once this has been surpassed, we will become aggressive, either in words or in actions. Likewise, a person who is subjugated to a repressive force which stifles all creativity, will give vent to his/her frustrations in the form of humor or laughter.

This type of humor overlaps the defensive humor of the *out-group* in the superiority theory, as we have already pointed out. Humor of this type, however, is much more intense since, when taken to its limits, it allows for the survival of a minority group in cases of severe repression by allowing them to carve out a strong identity which is resistant to attack.

The theory of relief from tension differs from the theory of humor as a manifestation of superiority or as a veiled weapon, in that it is not attached to universal stereotypes which are readily recognisable, in that their coordinates lie within a shared reserve of encyclopaedic knowledge or Universal Truths, but rather requires specific spatial, socio-cultural and temporal know-how on the part of the audience for them to be able to identify the humorous intention⁵². As such, it requires

⁵¹ SPENCER, H. (ed.) (1911): *On the Physiology of Laughter*. In *Essays on Education etc.* London: J.M. Dent.

⁵² BURNS, T. (1953): "Friends, Enemies and the Polite Fiction". In *American Sociological Review*, 18; pp. 645-662.

a *co-presence* such as is defined by Neubert and Shreve (1992:56), both to create this type of humor, the “in-joke” *non plus ultra* (the person who produces the humorous comment must be ensured that he is in the company of people with convictions similar to his own and that, therefore, the humor will produce “bonding” and cohesion) and to enjoy it (first, the intent to humor has to be identified, apart from the fact that the audience must feel sufficiently relaxed and secure to externalise their recognition in the form of laughter). Mutual knowledge and indirect linguistic co-presence are vital to the process of text comprehension, interpretation and translation.

The theory of humor as a manifestation of the freedom from conventions and the rebellion of the creative spirit in times of repression differs from the theory of humor as perceived incongruity, the third of the dominant theories in the literature, in that the humor is produced by way of contrast with the tense or serious situation in which it is produced and not merely as an end in itself, as occurs with the contrived and more conscious humor of perceived incongruity, a celebration of the creative spirit *per se*. Freud noted that, overwhelmingly, the humorous posture was a means by which we make our confrontation of the most threatening thoughts palatable, apparently safe, or comfortable.

In his views on jokes, Freud observed quite correctly that a jocular form may express (without external or internal reservations) meanings which cannot be expressed in a serious manner⁵³. Humor originates, according to Freud, when the existing possibility of experiencing painful emotions involving mental energy is discharged in a pleasant way. The satisfaction or relief felt, in Freud's theory is the result of the “saving of expenditure in feeling”⁵⁴.

The Danish psychologist Harold Höffding (1911) underlines the psychological element already identified by both Spencer and Freud when he explains that the comical effect takes place when we have been taken in, deceived or kept in anxious

⁵³ FREUD, S. (1976): *Op. Cit.*

⁵⁴ FREUD, S. (1963): “Humor”. In *Character and Culture*. New York; pp. 263-269.

expectation for a while and suddenly all that either disappears into nothingness or turns into its opposite⁵⁵. The Relief theory hinges on the joy experienced by a mature person on seeing him/herself freed “*from the chains of our perceptual, conventional, logical, linguistic and moral systems*”⁵⁶. In this case, the humor depends explicitly upon a complete understanding of the backcloth upon which the events are portrayed together with specific familiarity with the coordinates of the conventions, beliefs and attitudes and a firm grasp of what represents correct and adequate behaviour in the given context. Humor turns this situation completely on its head by making something totally inappropriate enter onto the stage of action⁵⁷. No matter how deep-rooted and universal the psychology of humor may be:

Clearly most of its manifestations are culture-bound -connected to realities of time and place. Humour as a cultural and historical phenomenon is not merely a matter of content; such elements as form, style, structure and convention reveal values, beliefs and concerns.⁵⁸

It also demands of the audience:

A modicum of mental orderliness, the awareness of various complexes of ideas and their links to one another, and the (at least partial) acceptance of certain values [which] is necessary to an appreciation of humour.⁵⁹

1.1.2.1) CULTURAL HUMOR

Therefore, the co-participants with their shared knowledge with respect to predominant conventions or what could be called, their *co-presence* are absolutely essential elements for humor of this type to be produced. Such is the case of some of

⁵⁵ HOFFDING, H. (1911): *Psychologia*. Warsaw; p. 456.

⁵⁶ MINDESS, H. (1971): *Laughter and Liberation*. Los Angeles: Nash.

⁵⁷ MONRO, D.H. (1951): *Argument of Laughter*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

⁵⁸ MINTZ, L.E. (1977): “American Humour and the Spirit of the Times”. In CHAPMAN and FOOT (eds.): *Humor and Laughter: Theory Research and Applications*. London: Wiley.

⁵⁹ PAULOS, J.A. (1980): *Mathematics and Humor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

the greatest adventures in English literature, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, or the political satire of such barbed pens as Jonathan Swift's in *Gulliver's Travels* or George Orwell's in *Animal Farm*.

Quintilian offers a magnificent definition of irony⁶⁰ and suggests that such can be achieved via the tone of voice or *pronuntiatio*, the development of the character or *persona* or when the subject of the discourse or *rei natura* is completely at odds with what is being described (see Mark Anthony's famous speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as an oft-quoted example of the same).

In that it is a sophisticated form of humor, children do not tend to understand it⁶¹. Thus, the works of Swift, Lewis Carroll and Orwell are all the more satirical and ironical since all three are presented in the shape of children's tales and, therefore, are directed at an audience which is, ostensibly, not sufficiently sophisticated to understand the caustic message.

Wayne Booth, in his seminal work on irony states that this type of humor:

Is deliberately created by human beings to be heard, read or understood with some precision by other human beings.⁶²

Whether the satire is tragic in nature (such as is the case of Shakespeare's *King Lear*), epic or comic, it must fulfil three requisites: it must provoke humor, whilst attacking and criticising⁶³.

Berelson and Steiner state in their scientific research on human behaviour that:

⁶⁰ Quoted in MONSON, D. A. (1988): "Andreas Capellanus and the Problem of Irony". In *Speculum*, 63:3; pp. 539-572.

⁶¹ WINNER, E. (1988): *The Point of Words: Children's Understanding of Metaphor and Irony*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁶² BOOTH, W.C. (1974): *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁶³ PETRO, P. (1982): *Modern Satire: Four Studies*. Berlin: Mouton.

Highly creative people are more likely than others to view authority as conventional rather than absolute; to make fewer black-and-white distinctions; to have a less dogmatic and more relativistic view of life; to show more independence of judgment and less conventionality and conformity, both intellectual and social; to be more willing to entertain and sometimes express their own "irrational" impulses; to place greater value on humor and in fact to have a better sense of humor; in short, to be somewhat freer and less rigidly controlled.⁶⁴

In its most extreme form, humor as a relief from tension and a freeing from the yoke of repression of Dame Reason is expressed in the shape of Gallows Humor, which is differentiated from Tragedy by James Thurber⁶⁵ in that there is some distance implied, be it in Time, in space or in psychological implication or involvement (*Tragedy + Time = Comedy*).

Roger Simon says the same thing in a different way by noting that people joke about the truly horrible as a way of isolating themselves from tragedy: "*By joking about it, we make it unreal*"⁶⁶.

Defying McCarthy censorship and the surface decency it enforced, the Lenny Bruces and Mort Sahl's gleefully mentioned the unmentionable -the drug abuse, sexual perversion, bigotry, and gratuitous violence of respectable folks. With newspapers and recent history as their sources, they joked about H-bomb fallout, neo-Nazism, failed Russian-American détente, Vatican corruption, and political self-interest.⁶⁷

This was to be the type of humor adopted by a whole generation of American novelists such as Vonnegut, Kesey and Heller. Gallows humor and humor of the

⁶⁴ BERELSON, B. and STEINER, G.A. (1964): *Human Behaviour. An Inventory of Scientific Findings*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

⁶⁵ Quoted in NILSEN, D.L.F. (1993): *Humor Scholarship: A Research Bibliography*, Westport, USA: Greenwood Press; p. 78.

⁶⁶ Quoted in ORING, E. (1987): "Jokes and the Discourse on Disaster". In *Journal of American Folklore*, 100; pp. 276-286.

⁶⁷ COHEN, S.B. (1978): *Comic Relief*. University of Illinois Press.

Absurd, its milder variant, represent the attempt to:

Express the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.⁶⁸

This kind of humor could best be described as “Cultural Humor” in the respect that culture can be defined⁶⁹ as a kind of speech embodying messages coded in various forms and requiring decoding.

As Foucault⁷⁰ pointed out, the individual does not so much construct material culture or language, but is rather constructed through them. Therefore, each individual act of cultural production and use has to be regarded as a contextualised social act involving the relocation of signs along axes defining the relationship between signs and other signs which reach out beyond themselves and towards others being amplified or subdued in specific contexts. These reference points which signal the direction in which the audience should react, then, must be recognised in order for this kind of humor to be twigged.

1.1.3) THE THEORY OF HUMOR AS PERCEIVED INCONGRUITY

The theory of perceived incongruity goes one step further along the road of deeply rooted cultural skills and the mapping of our world vision according to clearly specific coordinates relating to our gender, race, experience and the historical period in which we live. It takes us out of the emotional or affective side of humor to the cognitive aspect of the same.

⁶⁸ WINSTON, M. (1972): “Humour Noir and Black Humour”. In LEVIN, H. (ed.): *Veins of Humor*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

⁶⁹ TILLEY, C. (1989): “Interpreting Material Culture”. In HODDER, I. (ed.): *The Meanings of Things (Material Culture and Symbolic Expression)*. London: Harper Collins.

⁷⁰ FOUCAULT, M. (1974): *The Order of Things*. London: Tavistock.

Humor in the superiority theory is mainly affective, clearly setting the boundaries between the *in-* and the *out-groups* and establishing that both speaker and audience belong to the *in-group*, and in the theory of freedom or release from tension or repression, it is mainly an emotional response to an adverse situation, designed at bonding people together (“in”-jokes).

Humor produced as the result of perceived incongruity, the third theory, is an intellectual reaction to something which is unexpected, illogical and inappropriate. As explained by Quintilian, in his analysis of the work of Cicero on this respect:

*Tertium est genus, ut idem dicit, in decipiendis expectationibus, dictis aliter accipiendis*⁷¹

The third kind is, as he [Cicero] says, in the thwarting of expectations, taking differently the things said.⁷²

This type of humor is usually a conscious intellectual exercise on the part of the person producing the same. The basic idea behind the incongruity theory is quite simple. We live in an orderly world where we expect certain patterns to events, and we laugh when these expectations are not fulfilled. Pascal said:

Nothing produces laughter more than a surprising disproportion between that which one expects and that which one sees.

The first author to allude to the theory of perceived incongruity was Aristotle in his work, *Rhetoric*. Herein, he indicated to the reader that the best way to produce laughter in an audience was to prepare them to expect one thing and then to “hit” or “punch” them with something totally unexpected⁷³. By way of example, he quoted a phrase from an anonymous comedy: “*And as he walked, beneath his feet were - chilblains*”. Kant and Schopenhauer were to reincide on the subject in the eighteenth

⁷¹ MONACO, G. (ed) (1967): *Op. Cit.* VI; pp. 3-24.

⁷² As translated in ATTARDO, S. (1994): *Op. Cit.*; p. 32.

⁷³ ARISTOTLE: *Rhetoric*, III; p. 2.

and nineteenth century. Kant, indeed, falls between two stools in that his theory can be included either under the Relief or the Incongruity theory. Kant said:

In everything that is to excite a lively convulsive laugh, there must be something absurd (in which the Understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing.⁷⁴

Amongst the examples offered by Kant to illustrate his theory is the tale of an heir to a fortune who wanted to organise a fastuous burial for his dead benefactor. In order to ensure the requisite degree of mourning, he paid the other relatives to weep. However, he found that, paradoxically, the more money he gave them, the less sad they were.

Schopenhauer's version of incongruity is much more complete. He indicates that what we get in the punch line is not *nothing*, but rather something we did not expect, which does not fit in the "expected" or "normal" way, the way to which we are accustomed. What causes humor and laughter in Schopenhauer's opinion is the pleasurable mismatch between conceptual understanding and perception. William Hazlitt described "wit", for such he deemed it, thereby implying the conscious intellectual input as:

An arbitrary juxtaposition of dissonant ideas, for some lively purpose of assimilation or contrast, generally of both.⁷⁵

Most adult humor is based on incongruity of this type. What is of vital importance here is to notice that a thing or event is not incongruous in itself but only as a result of a set of judgemental values and relative to someone's conceptual framework. Incongruity is a step outside the frame of the world picture or vision which each person possesses of how things should be. As Quintilian again comments:

⁷⁴ KANT, E. (translated by BERNARD, J.H.) (1982): *Kritik of Judgment*. Londres: Macmillan; p. 223.

⁷⁵ HAZLITT, W. (1920): *On Wit and Humour in Lectures on the English Comic Writers (Lecture 1)*. London: Oxford University Press.

Et Hercule omnis salse dicendi ratio in eo est, ut aliter quam est rectum verumque dicatur: quod fit totum fingendis aut nostris aut alienis persuasionibus aut dicendo quod fieri non potest.⁷⁶

And, by Hercules, all the meaning of making jokes is in this, that it is said differently than what is right and true: which is all done by pretending either our or someone's beliefs, or by saying what cannot be.⁷⁷

This is the reason why adults from different cultures often fail to appreciate each other's humor because they do not share the same picture of the world and, therefore, do not find the same things incongruous. Wittgenstein said with respect to language games, which feature largely in adult humour of an incongruous nature, that to share a language game is to share a way of life. To share humor based on incongruity, which very often pivots on linguistic games, above all polysemy and ambiguity or *double entendre*, we need to share a form of life with the person producing the same.

What a person finds incongruous depends upon what they find congruous (a word very rarely used in any language merely because it is considered to be the natural state of things: we have normal, abnormal, coherent, incoherent but congruous is usually replaced by coherent) and the latter is based on conceptual patterns which have been accumulated as a result of experience. As Walter Nash (1985:9) says succinctly:

Humour is not for babes, Martians, or congenital idiots. We share our humour with those who have shared our history and who understand our way of interpreting experience. There is a fund of common knowledge and recollection, upon which all jokes draw with instantaneous effect.

The ethnocentric particularity of incongruency is neatly illustrated in a story told by Margaret Mead⁷⁸:

⁷⁶ MONACO, G. (ed.) (1967): *Op. Cit.*, VI:3; p. 89.

⁷⁷ As translated in ATTARDO, S. (1994): *Op. Cit.*; p. 32.

⁷⁸ As quoted in LEVINE, J. (ed.) (1969): *Motivation in Humor*. New Yor: Atherton Press.

A Plains Indian places food on a new grave when a white man, looking on, remarks:

- "Do you expect the dead man to come up and eat the food?"

The Indian responds:

- "As soon as your dead come up to smell the flowers you place on their graves".

The temporal, historical implications have also been milked to the full by humorists the world over, in situations such as Walter Raleigh's presentations of the "treasures" brought back to Elizabeth's court from far-off lands- the humble spud (the potato) and the cigarette (tobacco). ("You do what? You roll it up in paper, put it in your mouth and set fire to it?").

1.2) THE SENSE OF HUMOR

Communication of intended meaning through language works on the bases of inferences, inferences which are drawn rapidly and intuitively using two main sources as models:

- 1) The actual language used.
- 2) Our knowledge of the world including our expectations about what people would normally say in such circumstances.

The "simultaneity of perception of two contradictory things"⁷⁹, the sudden awareness of "disparates being linked", of a playful shattering of our orderly system of mental compartmentalism by dualities, is the disruption to our frames of thinking produced by the incongruity of humor.

Moreover, for this to occur there must be some indication that we are indulging in play, some meta-communication which assures the audience that this is

⁷⁹ AUBOUIN, E. (1948): *Technique y Psychologie du Comique*. Marseilles: OFEP.

not a lie, a fantasy or madness but an intent to provoke amusement. For the audience to arrive at these conclusions and to negotiate the humorous meaning rapidly, a whole series of complicated pragmatic elements have to come into play such as extra-lexical information, implicature, recognition of allusion, conversational postulates, inference rules and presuppositions: in other words, a whole complex structure of super-imposed frameworks shared with the speaker must be processed.

The Co-operative Principle for *bona-fide* communication as established by Grice⁸⁰ is based on four maxims:

- 1) *Quantity*: Give exactly as much information as is required.
- 2) *Quality*: Say only what you believe to be true.
- 3) *Manner*: Be succinct.
- 4) *Relation*: Be relevant.

The humor of perceived incongruity, which could be considered to be the most sophisticated form of humor, does not involve a violation of these principles since this would produce a lie. Play is a cooperative activity and, as such, it requires that the intention to engage in the same must be clearly signalled to, and recognised by the other participant usually through some subtle ambiguity trigger. This interaction is dictated by the rules of the psychologies of the two participants and the Society in which they live.

The scripts which they have at their disposal are determined by their individual experiences and especially their shared experience, what Karttunen and Peters define as "*common ground*" or "*common set of presumptions*"⁸¹. Should there be no

⁸⁰ GRICE, H.P. (1975): "Logic and Conversation". In COLE and MORGAN (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics. Vol 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.

⁸¹ KARTTUNEN, L. and STANLEY, P. (1979): "Conventional Implicature". In CHOON-KYU, O. and DINEEN, D.A. (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. II: Presupposition*. New York: Academic Press; pp. 1-56.

common ground or scripts in common, this will affect their mode-switching mechanisms and will possibly short-circuit any attempt at humor.

According to Apter and Smith⁸², all human activity is either goal-oriented or non-goal-oriented (ie “telic” or “para-telic”). If the mind-set is para-telic, a different set of expectations is applied to any phenomenon observed. The normal laws of rationality and purpose cease to apply and are replaced by playfulness, thereby erradicating any possible threat presented by an incongruous synergy or duality. A real/apparent synergy perceived by someone not in a para-telic state will only cause embarrassment, not humor⁸³. Apter suggests then that it is the para-telic state of mind on the part of the audience which is responsible for the definition and distinction between a pleasant and unpleasant incongruity, if such, the incongruity, that is, has been correctly perceived⁸⁴. In other words, the pragmatic dimension is always important.

Inasfar as we consider all human communication as based on correct interpretation of meaning as negotiated between, at least, two people, requiring multiple factors such as recall of previous experience or *co-presence*, mutual knowledge with respect to norms and conventions, besides certain shared history which will allow for the appropriate inferences to be made in the established context, the parameters of which will have been clearly charted: Can humor, then, which skips the norms, steps outside the frames and deliberately changes the script in order to achieve its purpose ie. intellectual stimulation providing satisfaction in the form of laughter: Can it be translated?

⁸² APTER, M.J. and SMITH, J. (1977): “The Theory of Humorous Reversals”. In CHAPMAN, A.J. and FOOT, H.C. (eds.): *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*. New York: Pergamon.

⁸³ APTER, M.J. (1982): *The Experience of Motivation*. London: Academic Press; p. 189.

⁸⁴ APTER, M.J. (1982): “Metaphor as Synergy”. In MIAL, D.S. (ed.): *Metaphor: Problems and Perspectives*. Brighton: Harvester; p. 67.

II

THE SOCIO-HISTORIC FRAMEWORK OF TRANSLATION

II.1) THE "OTHER" PERSPECTIVE

Las lenguas nos separan e incomunican no porque sean, en cuanto lenguas, distintas, sino porque proceden de cuadros mentales diferentes, de sistemas intelectuales dispares, y de filosofías divergentes. No sólo hablamos en una lengua determinada sino que pensamos deslizándonos intelectualmente por carriles preestablecidos a los cuales nos adscribe nuestro destino verbal.⁸⁵

Languages separate us and make it impossible for us to communicate not because they are different languages but because they are structured around different mental pictures, disparate intellectual systems, and divergent philosophies. Not only do we speak in a specific language but also we travel intellectually along pre-established tracks laid down for us towards our different verbal destinations. (translation: MARGARET HART, 1998)

The existing literature on the theory, practice and the history of Translation is immense although perhaps the greatest bulk has been produced in the 20th century when, once again, Interpreting rather than Translation became essential for the world to try and achieve peace, and to come together after the horror of the 2nd World War to a common understanding that such atrocities should never occur again in the history of Humankind.

⁸⁵ ORTEGA Y GASSET, J. (1951): "Misericordia y Esplendor de la Traducción". In *Obras Completas*. Madrid: Revista de Occidente; p. 447.

As has most often been the case since, it was Interpreting rather than the act of written Translation which projected the profession into the spotlight. Although little literature has actually been devoted to Interpreting and interpreters *per se* (probably due to the low esteem in which they were held for long, apart from the emphasis on “doing” in interpretation as opposed to “theorising about doing” in translation)⁸⁶, many of the mainstream discussions in the field of the theory and practice of translation have had to do with elements considered essential to the efficient functioning of interpreting (faithfulness: for Consecutive Court Interpreting; intercultural communication and equivalence: for Community interpreting and functional or *skopos*-orientated communication: in Simultaneous Interpreting).

Mediation has served to break down the barriers between cultures and to forge unity where there was once discordance, to attempt to bring together disparate cognitive environments and to allow them to recognise and perceive their differences, their “otherness” and, in so doing, re-affirm themselves. As Steiner says (1975:56):

In short: languages have been, throughout human history, zones of silence to other men and razor-edges of division.

and interpreting has been a way of mediating these “silences” and smoothing the “sharp and dangerous edges” of division. In this, it resembles humor in that it is designed to let the participants in an inter-lingual communication see the intention of the speaker “in another light” or “from another angle” thereby avoiding further conflict. As William H. Martineau comments:

Humor is intended to initiate social interaction and to keep the machinery of interaction operating freely and smoothly. On the other hand, but not mutually exclusive from the former, humor may serve as an abrasive. Rather than oiling the workings of social interaction, it constitutes a measure of sand.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ DELISLE, J. and WOODWORTH, D. (eds.) (1995): “Interpreters and the Making of History”. In *Translators through History*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

⁸⁷ MARTINEAU, W.H.: “A Model of the Social Functions of Humor”. In GOLDSTEIN and MCGHEE (eds.) (1972): *Op. Cit.*; pp. 101-125.

All simultaneous interpreters are painfully aware of the problems of translating humor, above all, the opening comments of the speaker, designed to relax the audience and set the whole event smoothly in motion. Most get round it by commenting that the speaker has made a joke and asking the audience to laugh at the appropriate point.

Translation, in the literature, is the name generally ascribed to the written facet of the profession whereas interpreting is either subsumed under the heading of translation ("simultaneous translation") or is applied to the oral facet of inter-lingual, inter-cultural communication. Translation is the permanent written version which transforms the Past into Present, whereas interpreting is less temporally encrusted. All communication, be it intra-language or inter-lingual, demands interpretation. All language is both public and private. It has both community (external) and personal (internal) reference points.

No two human beings share an identical associative context in that this is made up of the totality of an individual existence, not only the sum of personal memory and experience but also the reservoir of the particular subconscious. All speech forms and notations, therefore, entail a latent element of individual specificity (with Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* as the extreme example) and thus must we read "between the lines" in a text, just as we must infer with respect to oral communication. As Montaigne says: "*Nous ne faisons que nous entregloser*"⁸⁸.

Be that as it may, however, it would appear that since the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of the printing-press ("coincidentally", William Caxton was a translator) with the possibility of transmitting messages to the masses via written texts, "translation" (rather than "mediation" or inter-cultural communication) is the term which has been applied to this inter-lingual communicative activity and thus has managed to capture all the intellectual attention, with all the inherent dangers of talk of "transfer", transcript, de-coding and en-coding. The question of taxonomy

⁸⁸ Quoted in CULLER, J. (1981): *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; p. 100.

is important in this burgeoning social science in that, as occurs in the case of humor, the only great progress we have seemed to make since the Classics is to invent many and varied different names for the same phenomena. As Theodore Savory comments:

The truth is that there are no universally accepted principles of translation, because the only people who are qualified to formulate them have never agreed among themselves, but have so often and for so long contradicted each other that they have bequeathed to us a volume of confused thought which must be hard to parallel in other fields of literature.⁸⁹

From the times of Cicero and his *Libellus de optimo genere oratorum* (46 B.C.), wherein he voices the famous precept of not translating *verbum pro verbo* (as was recommended later by St. Jérôme for the mysteries of the Bible) but rather *sed sensum exprimere de sensu*, ie. where the focus is on the empirical, pragmatic process: Through the philosophical period which was marked by Tytler's *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, published in 1792, and enriched by contributions from scholars such as Goethe, Schopenhauer, Benjamin and Ortega y Gasset where the very principle of "meaning" was explored, together with research into the nature of "understanding" oral and written speech: To the heralding of the age of Machine translation and cognitive studies, where translation is looked upon as a multi-disciplinary field, a synapse between psychology, anthropology, sociology, ethno-, socio-, psycho- and text linguistics, the focus has shifted little from "literal", "literary" and "functional" although the labels have varied widely.

As occurs with humor, the definitions are not cut and dried, but rather overlap. Newmark⁹⁰, offers a long list of related "labels", together with his own duality distinction of Semantic/Communicative translation, which have been applied to the process and product over the years, to which we must add the theory of *skopos* largely emblazoned by the German School of Reiss, Vermeer and Nord: Equivalent Effect Principle (Koller, 1972), Equivalent Response Principle (Rieu, 1953), Dynamic

⁸⁹ SAVORY, TH. (1968): *The Art of Translation*. London: J. Cape.

⁹⁰ NEWMARK, P. (1991): *About Translation*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters Ltd.; p. 13.

Equivalence/Formal Equivalence (Nida, 1964), Effect-centred Text Translating (Reiss, 1968), Cultural Translation/Linguistic Translation (Catford, 1965), Ethnographic Translation/Linguistic Translation (Mounin, 1963), Direct Procedures/Indirect Procedures (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958), Overt Translation/Covert Translation (House, 1977), Prospective Translation/Retrospective Translation (Postgate, 1922), Illusionistic Translation/anti-Illusionistic Translation (Venuti, 1991), Exporting the TL reader/Importing the SL author (Morgan, 1956), Naturalisation/Alienation (Schleiermacher, 1798) and Primary/Secondary Translation (Toury, 1980). Again, we are working with a system of dualities (or rather dichotomies) which allow us to contrast one approach against the other, although one is usually considered to be exclusive of, and irreconcilable with, the other.

Another seemingly irreconcilable opposition in Translation Studies, up until now, has been between “theoretical” and “historical” approaches to translation. Theories have not been built up one upon the other but rather one theory has been refuted to be replaced by another. We share the opinion voiced by Dirk Delabattista⁹¹ that the two are in fact complementary and that a permanent interface should be established between them. This, in fact, represents no more than an echo of what Lucien Goldmann was to say in his paper on *Genetic Structuralism in the Sociology of Literature*, that any attempt:

To understand cultural creation divorced from the overall life of the Society of the times is as futile as to try to take a word out of the context of the sentence or a sentence out of the discourse frame in which it is inserted, not temporarily, in order to study the same, but permanently.⁹²

⁹¹ DELABATISTA, D. (1991): “A False Opposition in Translation Studies: Theoretical versus/historical Approaches”. In *Target*, 3:2; pp. 137-152. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

⁹² As quoted in BARTHES, R. et al. (translated into the Spanish by DE LA IGLESIA, R.) (1969): *Literatura y Sociedad*. Barcelona: Ediciones Martínez Roca.

II.2) CONTROLLING THE “OTHER”

II.2.1) FORMAL EQUIVALENCE

We know that no communication is produced in a vacuum and, as such, an important aspect to bear in mind, when considering translation as an inter-lingual communicative activity, is the aspect of commissioned work. In this sense, and in many others, we can fully expect, then, that a theory of translation relates to the historical reality of translation at the time⁹³.

Almost all of the early translations or, to be more precise, transcripts were religious in nature and took place after colonisation had occurred, or a foreign culture had taken over control of a country, before the times of the Industrial Revolution. As such, translations strove for *formal equivalence* in that they were commissioned by, and directed at a minority group who held the control.

If the first works to be translated were religious, and not originally into the vernacular but in Latin, then, following the precept of religious scripts (Scriptures) in that in the case of mysteries the text should be translated *verbum pro verbo*, it is logical that the “faithful” (even the name indicates the same in English) or “literal” formal equivalence should have been preferred.

Early translations of religious texts reflected the awe with which translators approached not just the content, but also the letter of their originals. Even now some Bible translators consider a certain degree of incomprehensibility acceptable in view of its effect on the believer. (KOMISSAROV, 1993:73)

Thus, the Bible, in the first translations from the Hebrew or Greek into Latin, as a text with an Authoritative dominant contextual focus (and the word, “authoritative” with its deliberate ambiguity speaks for itself in the sense of “control”), were transcribed as “faithfully” or “literally” (*verbum pro verbo*) as possible, with the emphasis on the author of the communicative process ie. in the last instance, on God

⁹³ SHEN, D. (1989): “Literalism: NON Formal-equivalence”. In *Babel*, 35:4; pp. 219-35.

(“In the beginning was the Word”). Translations were divided over many translators, on the basis of the legend, re-told by Philo of Alexandria wherein the *Septuagint* (the Hebrew Bible) was commissioned to seventy-two different scholars of distinction who, although physically separated, produced identical translations, proof that they were divinely inspired.

Collective translation was a way for institutional guidance and control to influence the translational process.⁹⁴

This was the type of approach adopted originally in the translation of the Bible (before the vernacular versions) in historical conditions where Culture was for the chosen few, and was a possession designed to maintain themselves in such a position. It is logical that, under such conditions, the translators should opt for a “faithful” rendering (the word itself indicates the root of their preoccupation: “faith”) via *formal equivalence* and *literal* translation.

English, in medieval England was not a developed language, since many of the social functions of language in the community could be performed only in Latin or in French ... A language that is “developed”, being used in all the functions that language serves in the society, tends to have a higher status, while an undeveloped language is accorded to a much lower standing, even by those who speak it as their mother tongue.⁹⁵

The Other was considered to be inferior or, at least, someone who had to be shown the objectively correct route to follow by those in control, their superiors. This type of transcription of divine insights into reality, which was promoted in the early “translation” of the Bible, led to the Classical belief, which is central to the Western world-vision, that:

There is a correct categorisation of things in the world, independent of human perception or cognition -what we might call a God's eye-view.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ As cited in DELISLE, J. and WOODSWORTH, J. (eds.) (1995): *Op. Cit.*; pp. 158-187.

⁹⁵ HALLIDAY, M.A.K. (1978): *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. UK: Edward Arnold; pp. 194-204.

⁹⁶ LAKOFF, G. (1987): *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The cultural importance of Bible translation cannot be over-emphasized in the history of the Western world. It eventually bestowed legitimacy on vernacular languages, allowing them to stabilise whilst the re-interpretation and updating of its meaning has been central to Western philosophy and, thus, social history.

Jerome, the “Christian Cicero” as he was to be called by Erasmus, completed his translation and revision of the Bible from Hebrew into Latin, with copious notes and commentaries, in the late Fourth century. His work was rejected by Augustine, the Bishop of Numidia, in that it moved away from the Greek translation of the Septuagint. Augustine said:

I do not wish your translation from the Hebrew to be read in the churches, for fear of upsetting the flock of Christ with a great scandal, by publishing something new, something seemingly contrary to the authority of the Septuagint, which version their ears are accustomed to hear.⁹⁷

When Tyndale translated the Bible into a language the English spoke, in a clear and creative way, when English was still struggling for supremacy over French or Latin as the national form of expression, he was burnt at the stake as a heretic for his pains. When the internal political and religious battles of England were resolved, and language was no longer used as a weapon against the people, was when came the first commissioned work of translation and the role of mediation changed from domination to education and unification through language. Perhaps the most famous commission, in this sense, is the official translation of the Bible as ordered by James VI of Scotland and the I of England.

When a country re-affirmed its independence and strove for national unity through a language revival, translation aimed at *communicative equivalence*, in that there was an attempt to transpose ideas from an alien culture into the vernacular.

⁹⁷ AUGUSTINE, SAINT (Bishop of Hippo) (translated Sister Wilfred Parsons) (1951-56): *Letters*. New York: Fathers of the Church.

This is the case of Alfred the Great (849-99) in England who saw translation as a means towards rescuing the English language and creating a sense of national unity.

Then I remembered how the law was first found in the Hebrew language, and afterwards when the Greeks learned it, they translated it all into their own language, and all the other books as well. And afterwards in the same way the Romans, when they had learned them, they translated them, all into their own language through learned interpreters ... Therefore, it seems better to me ... that we also should translate certain books which are most necessary for all men to know, into the language that we can all understand.⁹⁸

It is interesting to note the coincidence between translation and humor, in its variant of the superiority theory, at this juncture. Humor, we have seen, was used by an *in-group* to manifest its superiority over another (usually) ethnic group or by the group itself in order to bolster its forces in the face of adversity. Could translation have been used by the early colonisers to do the same? Faced with a language and a culture which they could not understand, did they attempt to show their superiority by imposing their language and their culture through translation on the people conquered? And, after regaining power, was translation into the vernacular seen as a way of fostering national cohesion in times of adversity, (*survival humor*) as it was by Alfred the Great? Possibly there is scope for further study on how ethnic humor and translation evolved in countries which were colonised instead of colonisers.

II.3) CONTRASTING WITH THE "OTHER"

II.3.1) DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE

The contribution of translators to the promotion of knowledge, combined with their achievements in the fields of religion and literature, can also enable a culture to discover itself ... The popularization achieved by translators coincided with the rise of vernacular languages, which they also helped legitimize, and with a certain democratization of education.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Quoted in SWANTON, M. (ed.) (1975): *Anglo-Saxon Prose*. London: Dent.

⁹⁹ Quoted from SALAMA-CARR, M., et al.: "The Dissemination of Knowledge". In DELISLE, J.

The move from transcription of religious works into Latin or French for a minority audience to commissioned works produced in the vernacular caused the translators to run up against the obstacle of different structures and frames of cultural values. Through their recognition of the Other and the Other Reality, vital to their rôle as mediators, they often changed the perspectives of their own communities and, to that extent, changed "the words of the tribes"¹⁰⁰. As Halliday puts it:

The speaker can see through and around the settings of his semantic system; but he is aware that, in doing so, he is seeing reality in a new light, like Alice in Looking-glass House.¹⁰¹

Further down the road of the history, the translation of the Koran, for example, caused the Europeans to question religious exclusivity in general and Christianity, in particular and thereby triggered off a process of reflection, re-assessment and re-definition which allowed, in some cases, for greater pluralism and tolerance (*social corrective*).

The logical obstacles of stretching one framework of values to encompass another which was totally alien in concept to the former led the translators to look for solutions to the lack of *formal equivalence* through *dynamic* or *communicative equivalence*. Two solutions were available:

- 1) Either to import words from the foreign culture into the target culture (with the relevant explanations).
- 2) To look for approximate equivalents in the target culture which might express, to some extent, the foreign culture phenomena.

The Canadian literary translator Philip Stratford describes the translator as a smuggler:

& WOODSWORTH, J. (1995): *Op. Cit.*; p. 124.

¹⁰⁰ MALLARMÉ, S. (1877): "Le Tombeau de Edgar Poe". In *Poésies*. Paris: Gallimard (1945).

¹⁰¹ HALLIDAY, M.A.K. (1985): *An Introduction to Functional Linguistics*. London: Edward Arnold; p. 333.

He is by necessity a man of divided allegiances, neither flesh nor fowl, a lonely, shadowy creature, mistrusted by everyone. And probably envied a little in a covert way, too, for, more positively, he stands for freedom, risk, excitement and adventure. An aura of envy has always hung over the smuggler, and a lot of this is also due the translator.¹⁰²

Translation, as a transmission of cultural values, is usually commissioned by the Society whose values are being transmitted and, as such, could be seen as something akin to propaganda.

However, in cases where censorship has been imposed, such as in Fascist Italy or the former Soviet Union, translation often represented an economic necessity, a creative opportunity for authors whose ideology was considered suspect and even a form of indirect subversive political activity. The circulation of certain aesthetic values and options through translation, even among a minority audience such as was the literary public in Fascist Italy, had undoubtable immediate and long-term effects.

Pavese saw translation as a means of providing a vital service for Italian readers, because it showed them that literature was not necessarily restricted to what fascism wanted it to be ... The myth of America as a land embodying a harsh class struggle and at the same time Utopian principles, posed a direct challenge to the fascist view of the world.¹⁰³

For translation to work as subversion and for the translator to act as a free agent, or smuggler, there must be a public for the goods that are being peddled. This is similar to the need for an *informed* audience in the case of humor as the liberation from the imposed norm (censorship) and of the extreme variant of the same, the so-called *survival* humor.

We have seen how in times of political and social repression, translation has served as a "safety valve" for the intellectuals to continue propagating their

¹⁰² STRATFORD, P. (1978): "Translation as Creation". In BESSAL, D. and JACKEL, D. (eds.): *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books.

¹⁰³ As quoted in LEFEVERE, A., et al.: "The Reins of Power". In DELISLE, J. & WOODSWORTH, J. (eds.) (1995): *Op. Cit.*; pp. 130-53.

"subversive" ideas under the guise of "others". Yan Fu, a Chinese translator, was of such significance in choosing works to translate which would make his compatriots aware of the threat to the nation caused by the original Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895) sealing China's defeat by Japan, that his translations were re-printed in 1931, when China was again under threat and in 1981-82 when China began to open up its frontiers¹⁰⁴.

The cross-fertilization and bonding produced by translation was more often than not the result of arduous negotiation of embedded cultural discourse frames, with the translator coming to the reality of the need for communicative equivalence and of what Benjamin Lee Whorf was to describe later in the following way:

We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.¹⁰⁵

A call was made for researchers to delve deeper into the Sociology of Translation - what was translated when and why - in the *Transferte Necesses Est* Conference in Budapest in 1996-.

Since every act of communication is governed by the social co-ordinates in which it was produced, it would seem logical that the theory of translation be related to the historical circumstances and, more so, if we take the theory of *skopos* to its logical conclusions.

Human interaction (and as its subcategory: translation) is determined by its purpose (*skopos*), and therefore it is a function of its purpose - $IA (Trl) = f (Sc)$ The purpose can be described as a function of the recipient: $Sc = f (R)$.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ In GAMBIER, Y., et al.: "The Transmission of Cultural Values". In DELISLE, J. and WOODSWORTH, J. (eds.) (1995): *Op. Cit.*; pp. 190-225.

¹⁰⁵ WHORF, B.L. (1956): *Language, Thought and Reality*. London: Wiley and Sons.

¹⁰⁶ VERMEER, H.J. (1983): "Aufsätze zur Translationstheorie. Heidelberg". As quoted and translated by NORD, CH. (1991): *Text Analysis in Translation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi; p. 24.

II.4) PERSUADING THE “OTHER”

II.4.1) FUNCTIONAL/RECEPTIVE EQUIVALENCE

In the Info-tech era, the third Revolution of our times after the Agricultural and the Industrial, in this post-Modernist, post-Fordist world where even the concept of time has been changed (“virtual” or “real”), where frontiers no longer exist (Internet can cross them all) and where travel has become so standardised that access to other cultures at a superficial, or more profound level, can be achieved with relative ease, depending merely upon consumer power. Information is produced and consumed rapidly in a scenario dominated by the mass media¹⁰⁷.

Life styles are deeply affected by the messages conveyed through mass media. But as McLuhan observed, the media is also the message itself, and humanity has had to adapt to its presence ... Media make and break careers. They also call for rethinking how, as Shakespeare put it, “all the world is a stage” and people make entrances and exits. (KOLLER, 1988:71)

It is logical, therefore, that translation has taken on a new rôle. It may be functional, “fast-food” machine translation, a means to an end, above all when that end is exporting technology. It may be negotiation at the highest possible diplomatic level (UN, EU, EP). It may be in the job of publicity and propaganda or politics, often putting a gloss on harsh realities in a world where multi-ethnic mixes are commonplace in most of the countries in the world. “*The Medium is the Message*” as Malcom McLuhan says¹⁰⁸. The *functional* aspect of translation is of such importance nowadays that often language is reduced to symbols (such as the computer orders) to overcome the cultural obstacles of meaning transfer.

Such is the nature of our world in the age of Info-tech that almost all of our communication is Vocative and *perlocutionary*, in other words, geared towards inspiring confidence and getting ourselves a job, selling ourselves through clever publicity, directing our marketing at a clearly defined group. It is hardly a surprise,

¹⁰⁷ McLUHAN, M. (1964): *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

¹⁰⁸ McLUHAN, M. (1997): *The Medium is the Message*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

then, that the main focus in translation methodology over the last few years has been the *skopos* theory of Vermeer's.

What the *skopos* states is that one must translate, consciously and consistently, in accordance with some principle respecting the target text. The theory does not state what the principle is: this must be decided separately in each specific case. ... The *skopos* theory merely states that the translator should be aware that *some* goal exists, and that any given goal is only one among many possible ones. (How many goals are actually realizable is another matter). We might assume that in at least some cases the number of realizable goals is one only.¹⁰⁹

The times demand that people be more flexible and that they adapt to the changing social and work scenarios. The theory of the *skopos* even goes so far as to allow for *adaptation* of the original text for this to be adequate to the needs and ends prescribed by the initiator for the TT.

No podemos pretender ni exigir la equivalencia de la traducción; el valor del texto final se distingue por su adecuación, es decir, por la elección apropiada de los signos lingüísticos en el plano sintáctico, semántico y pragmático, con respecto a las diferentes características del círculo de lectores al que se dirige.¹¹⁰

We should not presuppose or demand equivalence of a translation; the value of the final text is its adequacy, that is, the appropriate choice of linguistic signs at the correct semantic, syntactic and pragmatic levels, with respect to the various characteristics of the circle of readers at whom it is directed. (translation: MARGARET HART, 1998)

With processes of unification and re-organisation taking place in all parts of the world, language has undergone its own reorganisation with national languages being re-born, revived and, almost re-created with all of the entailing problems for translation: competence, empowerment and linguistic identity, to mention only a few.

¹⁰⁹ VERMEER, H.J. (1989): "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action". In Chesterman, A. (ed.): *Readings in Translation Theory*. Oy Finn Lectura Ab.; pp. 182-3.

¹¹⁰ REISS, K. & VERMEER, H.J. (1991): *Fundamentos para una Teoría Funcional de la Traducción*. Translated into Spanish by GARCÍA REINA, S. and MARTÍN DE LEÓN, C. (1996): Madrid: Akal.

The need to resuscitate semi-moribund languages is produced by the urge to differentiate one culture from another in a "global village" of ever-greater standardisation, where everyone wears Levis or Nikes, drinks Coca-Cola and eats Big Macs while working with Microsoft on their PC. It is the perceived need to personalise language in an era where everything can be arranged from the 'cocoon' of your home, such as occurred in the film "The Network", without any need to interact directly with anyone but working through an anonymous, largely standardised interface.

This desire to personalise through the resuscitation of language makes people more aware of the possibilities of the same and produces great periods of inventiveness, where language is re-created and re-explored in all of its rich nuances of meaning and play. Language is enjoyed for language's sake. Translation, necessarily, follows tune and establishes a functional model through re-creation.

The humor of perceived incongruity which triggers on word-play is also a celebration of the difference of language and the possibilities offered by the plasticity of the same. Does this celebration of language as social semiotic and of *difference* (or *différance* to use Derrida's term¹¹¹), remit us necessarily to the conclusion that any extremely creative use of the resource of language will be untranslatable, especially if such steps outside the frame and the ordered vision of reality of the source language in question? Can we look for ever more creative ways to connect Whorf's different "thought worlds" which allow us to deal with elements which are outside habitual use? Can we categorize, by frames, elements which are outside the same? Can the functional content of our translation produce relevant *receptive equivalence* between the audience of the original and the translated version? Can the *skopos* theory of translation, or the *dynamic equivalence* or any theory, indeed, be applied successfully to the humor produced by the effect of perceived incongruity, to texts which say less in their surface signifiers than they actually mean? Can this function, where meaning exceeds and moves outside the "frame" of the signifier be reproduced, to the same effect, i.e. humor in another language?

¹¹¹ DERRIDA, J. (1968): "Différance". Translated by Alan Bass in ADAMS and SEARLE (1986): *Critical Theory since 1965*. USA: Florida State University Press.

The demand for fidelity, however, is subordinate to the skopos rule, for, if the skopos demands a change of function, the required standard will no longer be intertextual coherence with the source text, but adequacy or appropriateness with regard to the skopos. (REISS & VERMEER, 1984:139)¹¹²

When the sense lies outside the conceptual framework, can the effect be reproduced in another language? What guidelines or norms should we apply in order to evaluate whether the translation is adequate to the target function? As Sapir says:

The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached¹¹³.

II.5) THE SENSE IN TEXT AND TEXT TRANSLATION

Text is meaning and meaning is choice, an ongoing current of selections each in its paradigmatic environment of what *might have* been meant (but was not). It is the paradigmatic environment ... that must provide the basis of the description, if the text is to be related to higher orders of meaning, whether social, literary or of some other semiotic universe. (HALLIDAY, 1978:137)

A text has various *superficial* linguistic structures relating to the grammatical, lexical and phonological structures. However, under the surface linguistic structure lies a whole *deep* layer of meaning which constitutes the *sense* of the text, the sense in which it is to be translated. This sense is encased in a whole macro-structure or prototype of text with its corresponding norms with respect to discourse and organisation. *Formal equivalence* is where the translator respects the syntactic-semantic level and gives priority to the author's intention: that is, it is form-centred rather than content focused with the emphasis fairly and squarely on the author of the text, constituting a *surface equivalence*.

¹¹² Quoted in NORD, CH. (1991): *Op. Cit.*

¹¹³ As cited in MANDELBAUM, D. (ed.) (1949): *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality by Edward Sapir*. Los Angeles: Berkeley.

However, we are reminded by Beekman and Callow that:

In every text that one may want to translate, there will be information which is *implicit*; that is, it is not stated in an *explicit* form in the text itself. Some information, or meaning, is left *implicit* because of the structure of the source language; some because it has already been included elsewhere in the text, and some because of shared information in the communication system. However, the *implicit* information is part of the meaning which is to be communicated by the translation, because it is part of the meaning intended to be understood by the original writer.¹¹⁴

The interpretation of a text is always conditioned by its relevance for the audience. Therefore, it depends upon context. If the audience brings to the text a whole series of cultural hypotheses which are differently charted from the cultural presuppositions on which the text and the implicature are based, then there is a serious risk of misconceptions being formed with respect to the message or sense to be inferred. Lvóvskaya comments on this subject:

Siendo el sentido una categoría comunicativa y subjetiva, no depende de las no coincidencias entre dos lenguas, sino de la mentalidad, concepción del mundo, costumbres, valores, así como de la misma realidad en la que se mueve el individuo, en fin, de los múltiples factores que forman el polisistema cultural y la idiosincrasia de todos y cada uno de sus representantes.¹¹⁵

Since sense is a communicative and subjective category, it does not depend upon the coincidences between two languages but rather on the mentality, world vision, customs, values and the very reality of the environment in which the individual moves: in short, all the various factors which make up the cultural polysystem and which shape the idiosyncrasy of each and every one of its representatives. (translation: MARGARET HART, 1998)

The sense of the text must be adequate to the function and situation. The translated text has to achieve communicative equivalence via respect for semantic, textual and *situational* requirements.

¹¹⁴ BEEKMAN, J. & CALLOW, J. (1974): *Translating the Word of God*. Michigan: Zondervan, Grand Rapids; p. 38.

¹¹⁵ LVÓVSKAYA, Z. (1997): *Problemas Actuales de la Traducción*. Granada: Granada Lingüística y Método Ediciones.

The translated version must possess *functional equivalence* together with *equivalence of relevance* for the audience. It should reflect the cognitive frame of the new audience and their text prototypes. The translated text, according to Neubert & Shreve (1992:127) should be “*socially efficient, situationally effective and communicatively appropriate*”.

Sperber and Wilson (1986:46) say that:

Human cognition is relevance-oriented, and that as a result, someone who knows an individual's cognitive environment can infer which assumptions he is likely to entertain.

Translation is a communicative act. What the translator is attempting to communicate is the latent meaning of the text in a way which is contextually relevant for the new audience. In other words, the translated version of the text should bring together the required contextual effects for such to allow the audience adequately to catch the sense without any enormous and unnecessary processing effort. Gutt, explains the whole process in the following way:

If we ask how the translation should be expressed, the answer is: it should be expressed in such a manner that it yields the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort. Hence considerations of relevance constrain both the intended interpretation of the translation and the way it is expressed, and since consistency with the principle of relevance is always context-dependent, these constraints, too, are context-determined.¹¹⁶

Non-verbal communication can never be explicit. Communication obtains via semantic representations, through “*blueprints for propositions*”¹¹⁷. The target audience constructs the sense using these blueprints for propositions, the semantic representations, framed within their context or *cognitive environment*. We could say

¹¹⁶ GUTT, E. (1991): *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; p. 102.

¹¹⁷ BLAKEMORE, D. (1987): *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

that the translator is not only translating words but associative structures framed in texts. Sperber and Wilson (1986:43) explain the communicative process in the following way:

Communication requires some degree of co-ordination between communicator and audience on the choice of code and a context. The notion of mutual knowledge is used to explain how this co-ordination can be achieved ... Co-ordination problems are avoided, or considerably reduced, in dancing, by leaving the responsibility to one partner who leads, while the other has merely to follow. We assume that the same goes for communication. It is left to the communicator to make correct assumptions about the codes and contextual information that the audience will have accessible and be likely to use in the comprehension process.

Sense, therefore, is negotiated between the two interlocuters, the translator and the new reader of the text in this case. As Todorov comments:

A text is only a picnic where the author brings the words and the readers, the sense.¹¹⁸

This communicative relationship between participants in humor, together with the constituent elements of textual communicative coordination designed at producing a translation which satisfies all the requirements for equivalence of relevance form the bases for the analysis in the following chapter.

¹¹⁸ TODOROV, T. (1987): "Viaggio nella critica americana". In *Lettera*, 4. Quoted by ECO, U. (1992): *Interpretación y Sobreinterpretación*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

III

THE COMMUNICATIVE FRAMES IN HUMOR

III.1) LANGUAGE AS SOCIAL SEMIOTIC

Human beings somehow manage to communicate in situations where a great deal can be assumed about what is manifest to others, a lot can be assumed about what is mutually manifest to themselves and others, but nothing can be assumed to be truly mutually known or assumed. (SPERBER and WILSON, 1986:45)

In the previous chapter, we saw how people manage to communicate the intended sense of their exchanges via “blueprints for propositions”, in other words, semantic representations which are framed within their cognitive environment. There is coordination between two partners in the communication “dance”. One, the originator directs the movements and the other follows suit. Both work actively towards the reconstruction and felicitous achievement of the act in which they are involved. Gumperz underlines this fact when he comments:

Communication is a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of two or more individuals. Mere talk to produce sentences, no matter how well formed or elegant the outcome, does not by itself constitute communication.¹¹⁹

However, just as there are some dances which require greater initiative and independence on the part of the follower (and not the initiator), so there are acts of

¹¹⁹ GUMPERZ, J. (1982): *Discourse Strategies: Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



communication which are equally more demanding on the receiver than others. The waltz is a standard and classic ballroom dance which we all execute with a great deal of ease and which requires no great talent either on the part of the person leading or on the part of the person led. However, a tango is quite another matter. "*It takes two to tango*" means that this dance requires of total compenetration between the partners.

The different humorous acts of communication establish different relationships between the initiator/author and the receiver/audience. This relationship is signalled via a series of markers or linguistic signs, what Neubert and Shreve (1992:97) designate as *propositional anchors*¹²⁰.

III.1.1) SCRIPTS AND SCENARIOS

We have seen that any one text is the result of a process of selection. Text represents choice. It represents "what is meant" as chosen from a whole range of meaning. Interpreted in the context of situation, it is a particular system or sub-system of semantics which is commonly associated with a particular type of situation or social context. These are commonly referred to as *scripts*¹²¹.

SCRIPTS are stabilized plans called up very frequently to specify the roles of participants and their expected actions. ... Scripts thus differ from plans by having a pre-established routine.¹²²

A child learning his "mother tongue" is learning how to mean. First, he grasps language at the "ideational" (Halliday, 1978:121) or "representational" level. Then, as the process of socialisation continues, the child learns to interact with others and

¹²⁰ On this respect, the authors say: "Underlying an utterance is a proposition and underlying a text is an arrangement of propositions. It is this underlying global arrangement that the translator will reproduce in the target text ... The implication is that ideational structure is conceived first, and then resources are chosen to express it. The conclusion for translation is that the ideational structure has to be understood by the translator before target language resources can be chosen to recreate it".

¹²¹ SCHANK, R.C. & ABELSON, R.P. (1977): *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

¹²² BEAUGRANDE, R. DE & DRESSLER, W. (1981): *Op. Cit.*; p. 91.

how to use “interpersonal” language in order to control or influence the behaviour of other people.

He learns the “scripts” which are used in order to negotiate, to affect other people's behaviour. The child soon develops a “proto-language” wherein he learns to distinguish between functions (means to ends), in other words, plans and goals, and uses (situationally correct and socially acceptable scripts) of language, that is the correct scenarios wherein to stage the communication.

We all attempt to communicate our meaning as efficiently and effectively as we can. This we can achieve only if we work with a fairly stable stock of semiotic prototypes which, in some way, frame the dynamic possibilities of language and restrain it from moving too far beyond the signifier. Neubert and Shreve (1992:48) comment on this point that:

In text comprehension, the receiver builds a model of what the linguistic signs are supposed to mean. The distinction, simply put, is one of meaning first (production) and meaning last (understanding). It is not a distinction between active sender and passive receiver; both are active participants in the textual process.

III.1.2) SIGNS AND THE SIGNIFIED

Language, that is the “blueprints for propositions” which we made allusion to previously, is at the hub of all social processes and is extremely efficient at codifying social categories. Edward Sapir comments:

Concept does not attain to individual and independent life until it has found a distinctive linguistic embodiment ... As soon as the word is at hand, we instinctively feel with something of a sigh of relief, that the concept is ours for the handling. Not until we own the symbol do we feel that we hold the key to the immediate knowledge or understanding of the concept.¹²³

Words and language, in general, help us to remember ideas and, perhaps more importantly, to store data and normalise it in systems or in conceptual frameworks.

¹²³ As cited in MANDELBAUM, D. (ed.) (1949): *Op. Cit.*

We organise our reality by categories, or what we consider to be areas of “truth” to which we attach labels and relegate instances. These categories are understood in the Wittgenstein sense of “family resemblances” in that the elements will relate to one another without all members having any properties in common that define the category.

In our organisation of texts and speech acts, we do the same ie. we organise by processes of systems and, although in many ways we still forge ahead, we permanently remit to the Classics, in our categorisation of “prototypes” or “frames” for texts. These texts do not belong to any one given family but bear an overriding resemblance or dominant contextual focus which allows us to categorise them within a given prototype family.

III.1.3) PROTOTYPES

Prototypes account for all the features of textuality: intentionality, acceptability, situationality, informativity, coherence, cohesion, and intertextuality. Identifying the linguistic mechanisms that can be used to integrate these seven textual features in target texts is the translator's main task ... this superstructure details the who, what, when, where, and how of textual communication.¹²⁴

In this case, we remit through the voice of Bühler with respect to the functional terms of the superstructure of communication theory¹²⁵, as remodelled on the Aristotelian *Rhetorica*. Although themselves modified since, above all by the Prague School and by translation theorists such as Hartmann¹²⁶ and Reiss¹²⁷ with some of the original names changed, the categories are none the less valid as such and represent one of the few gold-standard values which continue to appear in work after

¹²⁴ VAN DIJK, T.A. (1980): *Macrostructures. An interdisciplinary Study of Global Structures in Discourse, Interaction and Cognition*. Hillsdale, N.J. : Erlbaum.

¹²⁵ BÜHLER, K. (1934/65): *Sprachtheorie*. Stuttgart: G. Fischer.

¹²⁶ HARTMANN, R.R.K. (1980): *Contrastive Textology*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag.

¹²⁷ REISS, K. (1976): *Texttyp und Übersetzungsmethode. Der operative Text*. Kronberg: Scriptor.

work on translation theory, practice and inter-cultural communication.

Thus the old rhetorical division deliberative-forensic-epideictic can be re-interpreted in the functional terms of communication theory as hearer-oriented “operative”, speaker-oriented “expressive”, and reality-oriented “representational”, which some literary structuralists have equated with “conative-persuasive”, “emotive-poetic” and “referential-technical” (cf. Hawkes).¹²⁸

The original categories of Vocative, Expressive, and Informative functions of communication (to maintain the order given in the above quote) as coined by Bühler and as explained by Newmark¹²⁹ still seem to be the clearest and most complete in terms of our argument, although we would add the category of Authoritative texts (in the sense of Divine Authority) in order to deal with the Bible itself, and its early translations.

This, to a great extent, explains the dichotomy between literal and literary translation which we have suffered up until present times. The idea of the text as an “objective truth”, as a “faithful representation of reality” is at the basis of the *informative* text prototype although, logically, there is critical overlap with the *expressive* function of the act of communication (above all, in the Bible).

Within the construct of Halliday with respect to language as “social semiotic”, the Informative type of text works at the *ideational* level of the semantic component, the representational value of the lexicon. In other words:

The component through which the language encodes the cultural experience, and the speaker encodes his own individual experience as a member of the culture. It expresses the phenomena of the environment: the things ... of the world and of our own consciousness, including the phenomenon of language itself; and also the “metaphenomena”, the things that are already encoded as facts and as reports. (HALLIDAY, 1978:182)

¹²⁸ HAWKES, T. (1977): *Structuralism and Semiotics*. London: Methuen.

¹²⁹ NEWMARK, P. (1981): *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

III.2) THE THREE ACTS OF REALITY

III.2.1) THE LOCUTIONARY ASPECT. "OBJECTIVE" REALITY

In the prototype of the informative text, the dominant contextual focus, to quote Werlich¹³⁰, is on language as *doing*, as *what is going on*, the *locutionary* aspect of the Speech Act, to quote Austin¹³¹.

The "metaphenomena" to which Halliday makes mention include stereotypes and common associative structures, mutual knowledge acquired by community co-members through linguistic co-presence. Barthes says of stereotypes that

The stereotype is the word repeated without any magic, any enthusiasm, as though it were natural ... Nietzsche has observed that "truth" is only the solidification of old metaphors. So in this regard the stereotype is the present path of "truth".¹³²

The type of context in which stereotypes are produced is a mutual cognitive environment built up around mutually manifest factual assumptions. Bach and Harnish comment on this point:

Our empirical thinking in general is rife with generalizations and inference principles that we are not conscious of when we use them, if we are conscious of them at all ... Whatever these processes are, whatever activates them, whatever principles or strategies are involved, they work, and work well.¹³³

The "economical" value of stereotypes as familiar frameworks of reference, immediately and uncritically perceived by the audience lead us to classify this type of category as forming part of the "objective reality" and as the stock element for humor

¹³⁰ WERLICH, E. (1976): *A Text Grammar of English*. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer; p. 19.

¹³¹ AUSTIN, J.L. (1962): *How To Do Things with Words*. UK: Oxford University Press.

¹³² BARTHES, R. (1975) (translated from the French by MILLER, R.) (1990): *The Pleasure of the Text*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; p. 42.

¹³³ BACH, K. & HARNISH, R. (1979): *Linguistic. Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press.

designed to be universal in that there is total stabilisation and familiarisation with the concept. Neubert and Shreve (1992:59) indicate that:

This organisation of experience may be referred to as “framing”, and the knowledge structures themselves as “frames”.

The conventional, albeit illusory, solidity of the concepts carried by ideational language stabilises what Fowler calls a person's “discriminating grid”¹³⁴ which enables him/her to experience the world as an ordered context. As such, these texts normally prove fairly accessible to translation.

III.2.1.1) THREE TYPES OF COMMUNICATIVE COORDINATION BETWEEN PLAYING PARTNERS. UNIVERSAL HUMOR (IN-GROUPS / OUT-GROUPS)

We have attempted to show that mutual world knowledge exists in the case of so-called Universal humor with respect to the subject matter (*re*) which is the target of the mirth.

La Fave¹³⁵, seems to have found support for the claim that the more effectively humor enhances a “positive reference group” and disparages a “negative reference group”, in other words, the Theory of Superiority, the more effective it is. Here, the speaker and the listener share the necessary context and condition of neither belonging to the *out-group*, for the play to be entered into and for normal analytical judgements to be suspended momentarily (only on extremely rare occasions, is the speaker a member of the *out-group* and the purpose of the humor in such circumstances is to bolster morale or as a defence mechanism in the face of attack¹³⁶).

¹³⁴ FOWLER, R. (1986): *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹³⁵ LA FAVE, L. (1972): “Humor Judgments as a Function of Reference Groups and Identification Classes”. In GOLDSTEIN and MCGHEE (eds.): *The Psychology of Humor*. New York-London: Academic Press.

¹³⁶ LaFave (1961) demonstrated that the concept of “reference group” could be an effective predictor of humor reactions. He found that among four experimental groups (Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Southern Baptists, and Agnostics):

Bergson's concept of humor as a "social corrective" is applicable in that it clearly delimits the stock of stereotyped *out-group* characters upon which the speaker may draw: drunks, lunatics, the clumsy, the stingy and mother-in-laws. The internal cues required then to negotiate humorous meaning are easily triggered whilst the threshold of world knowledge and previous experience is relatively low and thus allows for the listener to "shift" momentarily from telic into para-telic mode with ease. Thus, the humorous intent is negotiated easily and succinctly, given the shared world knowledge, or community of ideas, available to the participants. Katharina Reiss¹³⁷ comments with respect to this type of text:

Here the *topic* itself is in the foreground of the communicative intention and determines the choice of verbalization. In the interest of merely transmitting information, the dominant form of language here is functional language. The text is structured primarily on the semantic-syntactic level.¹³⁸

III.2.2) THE ILLOCUTIONARY ACT. "SUBJECTIVE" REALITY

In Expressive prototype texts, the emphasis of the communicative process is, somewhat indirectly, on the audience and the need to communicate new information to the same. The ideal style to be adopted in this type of text is "equivalent effect".

This was the type of translation used when texts were translated into the vernacular in order to educate the people and to democratise culture. There is a tentative move made to reach out beyond the familiar and conventional limitations of the frame, in an attempt to explain, as cautiously as possible, the reality of the "Other". Here, the emphasis is on the *interpersonal* semantic component and the *tenor*

"Jokes tend to be judged as funny by Ss whose reference (identification) group is esteemed, and whose outgroup is disparaged, and to be judged unfunny by Ss whose reference group is disparaged and whose outgroup is esteemed". (Unpublished doctoral dissertation: University of Oklahoma).

Quoted in MARTINEAU, W.H. (1972): "A Model of the Social Functions of Humor". In GOLDSTEIN and MCGHEE (eds.): *Op. Cit.*; p. 110.

¹³⁷ REISS, K. (1976): "Text types, translation types and translation assessment". In CHESTERMAN, A. (ed.) (1989): *Readings in Translation Theory*. Finland: Loimaan, Kirjapaino Oy; p. 108.

¹³⁸ LOTMANN, J. (1972): *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Munich: Piper.

of the social context (Halliday, 1978:183). Language is seen as action, as *performing*, in its *illocutionary* aspect¹³⁹. It invites responses. It follows a relevant plan towards a clearly-shaped goal or proposition. Reiss (1976:109) comments on this aspect:

Here the sender is in the foreground. The author of the text creates his topics himself; he alone, following only his own creative will, decides on the means of verbalization. He consciously exploits the expressive and associative possibilities of the language in order to communicate his thoughts in an artistic, creative way. The text is doubly structured: first on the syntactic-semantic level, and second on the level of artistic organisation.

The interpersonal aspect makes it essential that there is a close match between author intent and receiver intent for the communicative goal to be achieved. Intentionality and relevance values must be shared by the sender and receiver for the new information to be processed correctly. Neubert and Shreve (1992:73) indicate that:

Intentionality is associated with acceptability. The author's original goals in writing the text cannot be achieved if the reader cannot figure out what the text is supposed to do ... The receiver must be able to determine what kind of text the sender intended to send, and what was to be achieved by sending it.

This bears a strong resemblance to what Jerry Palmer says with respect to humor and comprehension of the same.

What is suggested by these brief -and speculative- comments about the reception of humour is that the preconditions of its success include a very tight fit between the culture out of which a joke is produced and the culture of the receiver; this tight fit produces something like a common "frame of mind", in which the stock of information held by participants has at least sufficient in common and, crucially, the participants are agreed on the emotional significance of the events.¹⁴⁰

The audience critically contrasts the new information with what they already "objectively" know with respect to their reality. This type of humor is designed to

¹³⁹ cf. AUSTIN, J.L. (1962): *Op. Cit.*

¹⁴⁰ PALMER, J. (1994): *Taking Humour Seriously*. Londres: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

make people see things in a new light, to influence the attitudes and behaviour of others. This basic principle of linguistic defamiliarization is well described by Tomashevsky:

The old and habitual must be spoken of as if it were new and unusual.
One must speak of the ordinary as if it were unfamiliar.¹⁴¹

This is a type of text which makes its impact by deliberate linguistic techniques which disturb relationships between signs and their meanings, such as was used by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*.

The text is totally successful on a communicative level when both author and audience share *inferential* frameworks and, as such, the cultural match and mutual cognitive context must very largely coincide. This being the case, the inter-cultural translation methodology required makes recourse to compensation and explanation such as cannot be deployed in the translation of humor, as we shall later demonstrate.

III.2.2.1) CULTURAL HUMOR: THE "INSIDER" AUDIENCE

Every aspect of our existence, from the most trivial to the most profound, is molded by group expectations. It should come as no surprise, then, that the sight of a comic ignoring conventions excites us ... because it provides us, vicariously, a moment of freedom from the prison of our adjustments.¹⁴²

The "relief from tension of the imposed norm" theory of humor centres on the listener part of the communicative interaction. The focus is totally psychological and is designed, in its most extreme cases, at "bonding" of the *in-group* through humor, against an adverse situation ie survival value. As Clark says:

Humour liberates us from practical and even theoretical concerns and lets

¹⁴¹ LEMON, L.T. and REIS, M.J (trans.) (1965): *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

¹⁴² MINDESS, H. (1971): *Op. Cit.*; p. 31

us look at the world from a higher, less entangled perspective, as a kind of aesthetic field.¹⁴³

The author who intends to ridicule the phenomena he is criticising adopts a manner of their presentation which lessens the impact of those features which might evoke fear or compassion. For this reason, Freud observed that humor can be used to express some meaning which cannot be expressed in a serious manner.

This phenomenon is only comical by virtue of its social significance and the subtleness with which it is presented ie. the contrast it presents with the reality as it stands for people who are fully aware of that reality. Borev, the Russian aesthetician, attempts to provide a fully sufficient definition of the comical, in this sense.

In reality, the comical is a socially relevant incongruity ... which, from the point of view of aesthetic ideals, reflects an objective level of the development of reality which deserves to be criticized on emotional grounds (explaining, jocose, ridicule, satirical exposure, etc.) The comical in art is a means to uncover the contradictions of reality and as such is an aesthetic form of critique.¹⁴⁴

This type of humor demands of connivance on the part of the listener. As such it is framed in a much more subtle way and the threshold of knowledge required to decipher the humorous intention or inference is much higher and further restricted than occurs in humor pertaining to the Superiority Theory.

Parody is a form of subtle contrastive humor (of a much lighter form) but requires of intertextual knowledge on the part of the audience which is almost totally unavailable to the non-native speaker, in that s/he shares no *co-presence* with the speaker/source of the humor. The inferential process is greater and, as such, the listener is required to draw more informativity from what is unsaid, or how what is

¹⁴³ CLARK, M. (1987): "Humour, Language and the Structure of Thought". In *British Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 23:3; p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ BOREV, Y. (1957): "O Komicheskom"; p. 118. As quoted in DZIEMIDOK, B. (1993): *The Comical*. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

said is said in order to process correctly the information and enter into the game of initiated laughter.

This type of humor, then, requires more collaboration, more information-processing and a less passive attitude on the part of the audience in that they often have to fill in the blanks of knowledge to get the humor which is not always explicit but rather implicit. The connotations go far beyond the mere text itself, separating “the sheep from the goats” among the audience and, therefore, producing greater intra-group cohesion and bonding as a result. To cite Dr. James Jones:

Humour is no joke in Trinidad, because if you cannot appreciate it, you do not belong.¹⁴⁵

III.2.3) THE PERLOCUTIONARY ASPECT. “EFFECTIVE” REALITY

In Vocative texts (known as Operative texts in Reiss' taxonomy), the emphasis of the communicative process is fairly and squarely on the audience, a small identifiable group, the cognitive coordinates of which are known down to the minimum detail, who must re-create, in collaboration with the translator, the original meaning. Reiss (1976:109) says with respect to this type of text:

Here the form of verbalization is mainly determined by the (addressed) receiver of the text, by virtue of his being addressable, open to verbal influence on his behaviour. The text is doubly, or even triply structured: on the semantic-syntactic level, (in some circumstances, but not necessarily, on the level of artistic organisation) and on the level of persuasion.

The “Other” is something which we can discover and re-create: the “Other” is implicit for the audience to discover and to share in the satisfaction of the perceived discovery. The semantic component, according to Halliday (1978:183), is *textual* or operational, and the component of the social context which is dominant is the *mode*, or how meanings are exchanged.

¹⁴⁵ JONES, J.M. and LIVERPOOL, H.V. (1976): “Calypso Humor in Trinidad”. In CHAPMAN, A. and FOOT, H. (1976): *Humor and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications*. London: Wiley, pp. 259-287.

If we are focusing on language, this last category of "mode" refers to what part the language is playing in the situation under consideration ... It expresses the relation of language to its environment, including both the verbal environment -what has been said or written before- and the nonverbal, situational environment.

This is language as *achieving of effect* or the *perlocutionary* function of the Speech Act, according to Austin (cf. 1962):

Illocutionary acts are conventional acts: perlocutionary acts are *not* conventional... conventional acts may be made use of in order to bring off the perlocutionary act.

Vocative texts aim at directly achieving a goal. They play the communication game to the full, using all the resources, above all, intertextuality. They use certain linguistic markers or triggers in an "acceptable" and accepted distribution, what we could call characteristic scripts, in order to set up receptive expectations with regard to the type of text to be communicated, the scenario, and then use a disjunctive to re-write them. As Shlovsky says:

Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.¹⁴⁶

The inference here is on the audience to work, via intertextuality, implicature and semantic markers or triggers towards the aspired goal. As such, the threshold of knowledge required, but not made manifest, is enormous. The task of translation is extremely complicated, since what is *not said* in this type of texts is almost more important than what *is said*.

¹⁴⁶SHKLOVSKY, V. (1917/1994): "Art as Technique". In Davis and Schleifer (eds.): *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, New York: Longman. 52-63.

III.2.3.1) LINGUISTIC HUMOR: PLAYING PARTNERS

The humor produced by perceived incongruity focuses the onus for communication of humorous intent even more squarely on the audience, and affords them the pleasant satisfaction produced by any successful intellectual exercise when this intent is suddenly recognised. However, much of the humor of perceived incongruity has to do with form and not with denotative meaning at all.

This theory of humor has to do with a *cognitive* exercise rather than with *conative* or *affective* aspects, the latter two of which were grouped by Eysenck under the general heading of *orectic* (involving feeling)¹⁴⁷. As can be seen from the literature, the “thinking-based” theories are most likely to be found in the incongruity or Gestalt camps. Keith-Spiegel comments:

Thus, humor based on reconciling the possible with the impossible (Shaw, 1960), recognising the unusual and unexpected (Wallis, 1922), matching true and pretended values leading to a revelation of the counterfeit (Mones, 1939), or playfully realizing the multiplicity of coincidence and meaning (Scherrer, 1948) all involve mental operations.¹⁴⁸

Who better, then, than a mathematician, Paulos (1980:24) to explain how the humor of perceived incongruity achieves its aim?

Since the two incongruous interpretations both satisfy the same statement or story, there is some point to the incongruity as well ... To get (i.e. understand) a joke, either situational or canned, one must ascend, so to speak, to the metalevel at which both interpretations, the familiar and the incongruous, can be imagined or compared (or, if there is only one interpretation, at which its oddness can be appreciated).

The action of perceived incongruity has also been called “*the bi-sociative*”

¹⁴⁷ EYSENCK, H.J. (1942): “The Appreciation of Humor: An Experimental and Theoretical Study”. In *British Journal of Psychology*, 32; pp. 259-309.

¹⁴⁸ KEITH-SPIEGEL, P. (1992): “Early Conceptions of Humor: Varieties and Issues”. In GOLDSTEIN and MCGHEE (eds.): *Op. Cit.*; pp.4-39.

click” by Koestler¹⁴⁹. If the two associations are unavailable to the target audience and, thus, the local logic cannot be applied, the humor will not be communicated: in other words, the act of communication will have failed.

Chomsky and Searle both emphasize the importance of common “*unspecified assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and conventions*”¹⁵⁰ and “*mutually shared background information of the hearer and speaker, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences*”¹⁵¹ for communication to be negotiated successfully. The threshold of knowledge required in order to perceive the humorous intent is extremely high, requiring of the audience that they share a “*mutual cognitive environment*”¹⁵² with the speaker.

Humor of perceived incongruity which takes meaning further than the sign can go, and uses form as an integral element in the production of the “bi-sociative click” by stepping outside the framework of conventions, cannot travel the distance required to transfer felicitously into another language. As Nida and Taber point out:

Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message.¹⁵³

Neubert, comments upon this aspect of form, which he elevates to the level of social macro-structure citing Van Dijk (1977,1981), when he says:

Texts are seen as explicit models of the world and our ways of coping with it. Whereas sentences may be interesting objects in themselves, texts transcend sentences as *forms* of thinking and therefore limited objects of

¹⁴⁹ KOESTLER, A. (1964): *The Act of Creation*. New York: MacMillan .

¹⁵⁰ CHOMSKY, N. (1975): *Reflections on Language*. New York: Pantheon; p. 30.

¹⁵¹ SEARLE, J.R. (1975): “Indirect Speech Acts”. In COLE and MORGAN (eds.): *Syntax and Semantics. Vol. III: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press; pp. 59-82.

¹⁵² SPERBER, D. & WILSON, D. (1986): *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. UK: Blackwell; pp. 43-46.

¹⁵³ NIDA, E. and TABER, CH. (1969): *The Theory and Practice of Translating*. Leiden: Brill; p. 4.

inquiry. They obviously represent both formal and content structures functioning as diagnostic corollaries as well as indispensable components of our social existence.¹⁵⁴

Can there be incompatibility of relevant forms between languages? Can pragmatic equivalence always be achieved? Are there norms of usage towards functional textual equivalence, such as are defined by Wilss which could even be applied in the case of humorous texts?

The communicative effect of the translation ... lies in the TL realization of quite specific performance norms; these norms are basically intralingual, and hence also interlingually conventionalized to some extent, and they must be correlatable.¹⁵⁵

Or must we accept what Attardo (1994:95) says when comparing referential humor (locutionary) to linguistic humor (perlocutionary)?

The former can be translated interlinguistically and intersemiotically (Jakobson, 1961), while the translation of the latter is either impossible or must rely on unsystematic correspondences between the codes, or on unsophisticated recreations of the same kind of meaning/sound correlation.

When we are dealing with a vocative or operative-type text, with a double or triple structure, and the dominant contextual focus on the perlocutionary, psychological and persuasive aspects of the text, is it possible to achieve equivalence of receptive relevance when linguistic and structural ambiguity are forefronted in order to communicate the humorous meaning?

In short, what we have attempted to do in this chapter is to offer an analysis of the pragmatic rôle played by text linguistics in our various text types, considering pragmatics as a series of communicative plans and objectives. We have reviewed the

¹⁵⁴ NEUBERT, A. (1981): "Translation, Interpreting and Text Linguistics". In CHESTERMAN, A. (ed.) (1989): *Readings in Translation Theory*. Finland: Loimaan Kirjapaino Oy.

¹⁵⁵ WILSS, W. (1974): "Probleme und Perspektiven der Übersetzungskritik". In *IRAL*, 12; pp. 23-41.

attitudes and intentions of the initiator or producer of the communicative act (*intentionality*) and the corresponding attitudes and expectations of the audience (*acceptability*), within the communicative context (*situationality*), using as always the definitions of De Beaugrande and Dressler (cf. 1981) on this respect.

We have seen how the socio-historic context of the profession of translating (*situationality*) led to translation being considered, in various different social periods, as faithful transcription or "literal" equivalence of a surface text for a minority audience (who were also the initiators of the translation), with the emphasis on the word itself and on the referential, *locutionary* value of the communicative act and language¹⁵⁶. This period was followed by a vernacularisation of texts (*situationality*) which produced a perceived need to explain a series of cultural "realities and truth-values" outside those conventionally held by the audience. The focus was squarely centred on *coherence*, *intentionality* (based to a great extent on inference) and, again, *acceptability*¹⁵⁷.

W.A.Woods comments with regard to communication in general that:

Human communication relies in a critical way on an ability of the receiver to deduce a much more precise understanding of the intended meaning of an utterance than is conveyed by the words alone and the syntactic structure in

¹⁵⁶ Thus leading to the type of error produced in the Bible: And again I say unto to you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The "eye of a needle" refers to the classic shape of the gateways to the walled cities. A loaded camel could only enter the city if it did so on its knees thus allowing for itself and its cargo to enter. The analogy is clear in this case, if the information is not taken literally. Literally, it means that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

¹⁵⁷ Gutt (1991) refers to this problem when he quotes Wendland's work (1987): *The Cultural Factor in Bible Translation: a Study of Communicating the Word of God in a Central African Cultural Context*. London: United Bible Societies. Wendland comments of the misinterpretations of the book of Ruth: "The time-reference here is important since in a Tonga socio-cultural setting it would immediately arouse the suspicions of the people whose village Naomi was entering. A person does not usually move during the period extending from after the fields have been planted until after the harvest has been completed. One's crops means one's life, and therefore it must have been some serious offence which drove Naomi away from her former home at such a time. Perhaps it had been that she was guilty of practising witchcraft - after all, were not all her men now dead?" (p.171)

which they are incorporated.¹⁵⁸

This process ends with the semiotic context *par excellence* which is the *situationality* offered by wordplay and metalinguistics where the focus is mainly on *intentionality* and *intertextuality*. Roger Fowler (1986:73) comments of these types of contexts that:

Signs become palpable, ... extra discourse structure inviting *interpretation*. The significance is additional to the propositional meaning, and often at odds with the latter.

The relationship between the playing partners in the humor communication game change according to which pragmatic prototype is being employed from the *in group*, *out group* relationship predominant in the humor pertaining to the theory of superiority (the *cohesion* offered by folk-truths), through the connivance of the partners in the relief from tension humor (*coherence and intentionality*) to the paratelic metalinguistic predisposition of the playing partners in humor of perceived incongruity, colluding to find relevance where apparently there is none (*intentionality and intertextuality*).

The thresholds of shared knowledge required in order to comprehend the intended meaning in each of the different communication situations was reviewed. This ranged from low threshold (in the case of Universal humor of a mainly *locutionary* type broadly categorised under the Theory of Superiority) to extremely high (in the case of metalinguistics and *perlocutionary* dominant text types broadly to be grouped under the Theory of Perceived Incongruity).

Communication requires *cooperation* (Grice's Maxims) and we saw how the audience seeks relevance and meaning in any speech act, either at the linguistic or the metalinguistic level. *Acceptability* is tied into the textual elements of *cohesion, coherence and informativity* but also depends crucially on the targeted audience and

¹⁵⁸ WOODS, W.A. (1981): "Procedural Semantic as a Theory of Meaning". In JOSHI, A.; WEBBER, B. and SAG, I. (eds.): *Elements of Discourse Understanding*. London: Cambridge University Press.

their capacity for inference ie, on the “for whom” of the translation commitment.

The subject matter or answer to the “what?” question links in directly to the textual elements of *cohesion* and *informativity*, thus giving shape to the *locutionary* aspect of the speech act. The question of style and register, the answer to the “how?” question, ties in directly to *coherence* and *acceptability*, thus giving shape to the *illocutionary* aspect of the speech act and the proposed objective or the answer to the “why?” question of the commitment is directly linked to *intentionality* and represents the *perlocutionary* aspect of the speech act. *Situationality* and *intertextuality*, which are crucial characteristics of all texts but, even more so, of metalinguistic humorous communications, are critically predetermined culturally. Barthes underlines this point when he says:

It is the social structure that generates the semiotic tensions and the rhetorical styles and genres that express them.¹⁵⁹

We will now go on to analyse how a text is structured and what are the characteristics of a humorous text, pertaining to the three different categories of humor. We shall analyse how text linguistics function differently within the frameworks and scripts of humor, with first examples relating to joke texts. Then we shall attempt to define the “sense” of humorous communication and if there is any sense in trying to translate linguistic humor or, for that matter, humor which, as is usual, is based critically on implicature for its relevance to be understood.

¹⁵⁹ BARTHES, R. (1970): “L'Ancienne Rhétorique”. In *Communications*, 16.

IV

THE TEXT AS SOCIAL SEMIOTIC

In its most general significance a text is a sociological event, a semiotic encounter through which the meanings that constitute the social system are *exchanged*. The individual member is, by virtue of his membership, a “meaner”, one who means. By his acts of meaning, and those of other individual meaners, the social reality is created, maintained in good order, and continuously shaped and modified. (HALLIDAY, 1978:139)

The work of pragmatists, philosophers of language and psycholinguists over more than three decades has shown that verbal communication involves both coding and inferential processes. Aristotle claimed that:

Spoken sounds are symbols of affection in the soul which are themselves “likenesses of actual things”.¹⁶⁰

As occurs with many other areas of knowledge, the idea of encoding thoughts in sounds is so firmly entrenched in the Western culture that it is difficult to see it any longer as a hypothesis, but rather as a fact. However, all comprehension is not merely decoding of a linguistic signal. According to Todorov¹⁶¹, as far back as Augustine, the study of grammar, logic, rhetoric and hermeneutics was carried out within the unifying framework of a theory of signs.

¹⁶⁰ ARISTOTLE (translated ACKRILL, J.L.) (1963): *De Interpretatione*, 43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁶¹ TODOROV, T. (1977): *Théories du Symbole*. Paris: Seuil.

All communication is based on the exchange of propositions, intentions and assumptions, of meaning. We direct our listeners towards the meaning we wish to communicate using various mechanisms and tools, some of which are linguistic, others metalinguistic and, still others, paralinguistic. Sperber and Wilson (1986:18) comment on this point:

Within the framework of the code model, mutual knowledge is a necessity. If the only way to communicate a message is by encoding and decoding it, and if inference plays a rôle in verbal communication, then the context in which an utterance is understood must be strictly limited to mutual knowledge; otherwise inference cannot function as an effective aspect of decoding.

IV.1) RELEVANCE

Information processing involves effort and will only be carried out if there is some prospect of reward ie. if what has been said is considered in some way to be relevant, to have *truth-value*.

This is the basis of Grice's *Co-operative Principle*, which must be established for meaningful communication to take place. We have already underlined the importance of interaction between sender and receiver and how such interaction varies according to the degree of defamiliarisation which exists with respect to mutual cognitive environments.

When working at the referential, ideational level (Informative texts or descriptions of the world "as it is"), there would appear to be a stock of *factual assumptions*¹⁶² shared by interlocutors in their belief systems¹⁶³, to a greater or lesser degree of confidence, which allows for spontaneous non-demonstrative inference processes to begin to run. Raskin (1985:63) comments to this effect:

In other words, every sentence is perceived by the hearer already in some context. If the context is not given explicitly, by the adjacent discourse or

¹⁶² SPERBER, D. & WILSON, D. (1986): *Op. Cit.*; p. 74.

¹⁶³ JACKENDOFF, R. (1981): "On Katz's Autonomous Semantics". In *Language*, vol. 57:2; pp. 425-35.

extralinguistic situation, the hearer supplies it from his previous experience. If the hearer is unable to do that, he is very unlikely to comprehend the sentence at all or at least fully.

IV.2) "TRUTH" VALUES AND STEREOTYPES

The more recurrently information is processed or the more we become habituated to a representation of reality, the more *truth-value* it will have for us and the more accessible it will become. It will become more and more stereotyped. Thus, according to our folk logic, where we categorise reality and concepts via oppositeness (Good/Bad etc.), mothers are viewed as enshrining all the positive values whereas mothers-in-law are not, drunks and lunatics who deviate from the norm are considered to be socially inferior whereas various ethnic groups, for socio-historical reasons are seen to be thick, stingy, smallminded, bigoted or oversexed, depending upon the complex borne by the in-group poking fun at them.

A humorous text of the Universal type, based on these folk categorizations and generalizations held as truth-values, usually works either by forefronting the theme (the drunk, the mother-in-law) considered to be the inference for humorous intent, or sets up the concept oppositeness script via the famous triad structure (the Englishman, the Scot and the Irishman; the Catholic priest, the Protestant Minister and the Jewish Rabbi).

Stereotypes require minimum information processing, working as full propositional forms, with the mutual cognitive context consisting in universal stock figures of fun, on the "content" referential function of language and on "objective reality". They represent *trivial* implicature (Sperber & Wilson, 1986:106) which means that they are not analysed but accepted automatically at face value as being truths. We, as the in-group, together with the speaker, observe the follies of the out-group.

A Hindu, a Jew, and a Pole are stuck in the country when their car breaks down. They come to a farm and ask to stay the night. "I have a cabin with room for two", says the farmer. "And the third can sleep in the barn". The Hindu volunteers, but five minutes later he knocks at the cabin door and says,

"I can't stay in the barn. There's a cow in there and that's against my religion". So the Jew agrees to sleep in the barn, but five minutes later there's a knock at the door and the Jew says, "I can't stay in the barn. There's a pig in there and that's against my religion". So the Pole agrees to sleep in the barn, but five minutes later, there's a knock at the door, and there stand the cow and the pig.¹⁶⁴

IV.3) COHESION THROUGH EXPOSITION

There is repetition of a narrative situation, with the functional sentences (working along the traditional lines of theme/rheme) moving us logically through the various events or scenes in the narrative, the background script, towards the ultimate goal, which is the script switch at the end to something illogical, bordering on the farcical. This is the most manifest type of humor production. It is situational comedy.

Freud¹⁶⁵ discussed the child's compulsion to repeat, and our pleasure at repetition in general, as well as identifying a repetition of this kind as a standard joke technique.

It is a necessary condition for generating the comic that we should be obliged, *simultaneously or in rapid succession*, to apply to one and the same act of ideation two different ideational methods, between which the "comparison" is then made and the comic difference emerges. Differences in expenditure of this kind arise between what belongs to someone else and to oneself, between what is usual and what has been changed, between what is expected and what happens.¹⁶⁶

This type of *thematization by triads* to produce humor is usually staged in a much more conscious way, and therefore, in a longer and slower version than other types of humor. This is to be explained because it is laying down the markers in a much more manifest way to prepare for the shift in security and logic produced by the punch line. However, stereotypes can be used with their *economical* value of relating

¹⁶⁴ As quoted in NORRICK, N., et al. (1993): "Repetition in Jokes and Joking". In *Humor*, vol. 6; p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ FREUD, S. (1950): *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: Norton.

¹⁶⁶ FREUD, S. (1960): *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. New York: Norton; p. 300.

directly and accessibly to *shared factual assumptions* in order to produce laughter in a brief, expository manner, usually of the *false riddle* type. The riddle is false in that no response is expected of the audience. Through the framing of the rhetorical question, it is presumed that they will form a series of expectations with respect to the answer that the original speaker will also furnish.

- ¿Por qué los leperos han puesto una iglesia al lado del aeropuerto?
- Para confirmar los vuelos.

- *Do you know why the Irish always put a church next to the airport?*
- *To confirm the flights.*

- ¿Por qué los leperos ponen un cubito de hielo encima de la televisión?
- Para congelar la imagen.¹⁶⁷

- *Why do the Irish put an ice-cube on top of the TV?*
- *To freeze the frame.* (translation: MARGARET HART, 1998)

IV.4) SOCIAL COHESION

As has already been shown, these are examples of relatively unsophisticated humor. They are probably aimed at social cohesion and, as such, do not touch upon any subject which could be considered to be disrespectful or repugnant. They are, within the limits of the stereotype, politically correct.

Translation of this type of straightforward, representational, referential expository text, where there is only *situation monitoring* and not *situation management*¹⁶⁸ is totally functional with only the referential nominals, the *propositional anchors* as they are called by Neubert and Shreve (1992:97), both in the background narrative and the forefronted out-group, having to be re-charted in order to communicate the humorous meaning. Britton comments with respect to this technique:

¹⁶⁷ Taken from *El Gran Libro del Chiste Español Moderno* (1992). Barcelona: Editorial de Vecchi.

¹⁶⁸ BEAUGRANDE, R. DE & DRESSLER, W. (1981): *Op. Cit.*; p. 163.

If I describe what has happened to me in order to get my hearer to do something for me, or even to change his opinion about me, then I remain a participant in my own affairs and invite him to become one. If, on the other hand, I merely want to interest him, so that he ... appreciates with me the intricate pattern of events, then not only do I invite him to be a spectator, but I am myself a spectator of my own experience.¹⁶⁹

The meaning is explicit: this is “objective reality” as we have observed it together. The aim of the text is to produce social cohesion in the in-group against the out-group and, as such, is a manifestation of superiority whilst also, backhandedly, a call for Bergsonian “social corrective”.

The aim of the translator will be to present a cohesive text for the target audience. The audience can be considered to share the same manifest “world-view” as the speaker. They can also be considered to share the same “frame” for the humor since genetic psychology has shown how the ability to recognise and memorise the semantic and structural patterns of jokes is a capacity which has to be learned in Society and is not innate¹⁷⁰.

Since this is a first-level “ideational” joke, it will be considered that the “frame” for humor is also mutually manifest and explicit. Thus, the translation style can be fairly literal whenever other considerations such as word-play or cultural innuendoes are not included in order to compound the humor (and confound the foreign receiver!).

- ¿Saben por qué los gomeros llevan un kilo de estiércol en la cabeza?
- Porque para ver Canal + hay que estar abonados.

- Un gomero a otro: ¡Hombre! Te vi la otra noche en la tele, en “El Precio Justo” y ganaste. Pero no pareces muy contento. ¿Cuál fue el premio?

¹⁶⁹ BRITTON, J. (1963): “Literature”. In BRITTON, J. (ed.): *The Arts and Current Tendencies in Education*. London: Evans; pp. 34-61.

¹⁷⁰ LEFORT, B. (1987): “Des problèmes pour rire. A propos de quelques approches cognitivistes de l'humour et de la drôlerie”. In *Bulletin de Psychologie*, 40:378; pp. 183-195.

- Pues, ya ves, un viaje a Túnez
- Chacho, ¡qué suerte!, pero ¿por qué esa cara?
- Pues, seguro que no me caben en la nevera.¹⁷¹

IV.5) COHERENCE THROUGH TENOR

IV.5.1) THE TEXT BEHIND THE MASK

The semiotic components of the situation (field, tenor and mode) are systematically related to the functional components of the semantics (ideational, interpersonal and textual): *field* to the *ideational* component, representing the “content” function of language, the speaker as observer; *tenor* to the *interpersonal* component, representing the “participation” function of language, the speaker as intruder; and *mode* to the *textual* component, representing the “relevance” function of language, without which the other two do not become actualized. (HALLIDAY, 1978:123)

Humorous texts, where the effect is achieved via pleasant relief from expected tension, or as the result of creative freedom from an oppressive imposition which, when taken to its extreme, could represent survival humor, work at the level of close connivance and complicity between speaker and receiver. Meaning is *negotiated* at an interpersonal level since it is not made implicit in the content (ie. the ideational level).

This demands of the speakers that they give more clues as to what the implicit meaning of their text is, probably through *tone* or *tenor* and that the process of retrieval of relevance will demand of the audience that they carry out a series of analytic deductions. This obviously requires a much higher level of *communicative competence* on both parts. The humor challenges surface appearances, allowing for a possible mutual re-framing and subjective emotional understanding of the text.

¹⁷¹ Not translated for obvious reasons. “Abonado” in Spanish has the double meaning of “subscription” or “subscribed to” and “fertilised”. The native of La Gomera is walking around with a kilo of dung on his head because in order to see (the equivalent of) Sky TV he has to have a subscription (be fertilised). The second joke is even more local, not even appreciated by native Spanish mainlanders but restricted to the Canary Islands themselves. There is a play on homophony. “Viaje a Túnez” (a trip to Tunisia) and “un viaje atunes” (a lorryload of tuna fish). The native of La Gomera wins the former but understands the latter, leading to his comment that he does not think they will fit into his fridge.

Thomas Kane define this type of satirical humor, in the following way:

The source's use of humor serves as a rather safe way of self-disclosing taboo interests of values and to probe the values, the intentions, and/or motives of others is a decommitment tactic allowing the source to disassociate himself from responsibility for performing a prior action; is a face saving device that helps preserve a person's identity after an embarrassing incident; is an unmasking tactic that reveals the hypocrisy and pretensions of persons, groups, institutions and nations; provide a basis for forming positive and long-standing relationships with others; and allow for safe practice of ingratiation of powerful others.¹⁷²

Humor is used as a "tiny revolution", to shift our ways of seeing things by robbing the taken-for-granted reality of its seriousness and, often, of its dignity.

The tone or *illocutionary* force of what is being said, how it is expressed implies that we should look below the surface appearance to find the real meaning or direction. Stallybrass and White comment on this point:

In the context of carnival laughter is not an isolated reaction to an isolated (comic) event, but an entire context of perception. That is to say, on such an occasion participants see the world around them in a different light, which indicates to them the presence of a logic other than the one which regulates the official order of the Church and the polity ... in carnival everything is upside-down: what is valued is the low, the self-indulgent, the grotesque, good-fellowship for its own sake.¹⁷³

This is representative of an *expressive* text where the emphasis is not on *what* is said but *how* it is said. It is language at an *interpersonal* level, language as relevant participation and, thus, requires the whole cultural context to be available to the audience for them to "unmask" the latent reality under the manifest surface presentation, to infer the implicit subjective relevance of the statement, to "reframe" the utterance.

¹⁷² KANE, TH.; SULS, J. and TEDESCHI, J. (1977): "Humor as a Tool of Social Interaction". In CHAPMAN, A.J. and FOOT, H.C. Foot (eds.): *It's a Funny Thing, Humour*. Oxford: Pergamon Press; pp. 127-138.

¹⁷³ STALLYBRASS, P. and WHITE, A. (1986): *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London: Methuen. As quoted in PALMER, J. (1994): *Op. Cit.*; p. 50.

What is of greatest relevance to this type of humor is what is happening outside the frame, the *connotations* of the text. Therefore, it requires that both speaker and audience share the *mutual cognitive context* of culture and of historical memory: *co-presence* as opposed to community.

The connotative signified is literally an index: it points but it does not tell ... it is both the temptation to name and the impotence to name.¹⁷⁴

The *scenario* is set up as in the comic *agon* and, through irony or satire, the speaker comically attacks a dominant antagonist. The greater the potential conflict, probably the greater the comic veil or the more cryptic the style will be. This cryptic nature of humor is most evident in political humor, ranging from simple jokes and cartoons to the most complex satire. It is said that Hitler was so wary of the danger of humor to the Third Reich that he had special "joke courts" set up and that Goerhing instructed the Academy of German Law to take legal action should a joke be made at the Fuehrer, the State or the whole Nazi *Weltanschauung's* expense. Politics involves power, and opposition to it, or confrontation with it, often requires deception or masquerade. Politics is also deeply encrusted in the cultural context thus requiring greater powers of implicature by drawing on background knowledge, the subtler the irony.

IV.6) SUBJECTIVE SOCIAL COHERENCE

The overt comic meaning baits the hook for an audience. They respond with amusement, but in repeating the humor or thinking about it, they may discover covert meanings.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ BARTHES, R. (translated MILLER, R.) (1974): *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang.

¹⁷⁵ SCHUTZ, CH. (1995): "Cryptic Humor: the Subversive Message of Political Jokes". In *Humor*, vol. 8; p. 1. The author here offers an example of the case in point i.e. the need for shared background knowledge for the inferred irony or satire to be picked up. He "fills in" the background knowledge himself when he says: "You all have heard the story of the TV evangelist, Jimmy Bakker, who was caught in a sex scandal". It was reported that his wife, Tammy Bakker, subsequently wrote an article for Re-Penthouse Magazine, "How To Better Lay People".

Humor of this type is positing “zero tension” in the Freudian system. It is presenting the text as the “other side of the coin”, the duality, the Dr.Jekyll to the Mr.Hyde. In this sense, it is also a liberation from social mores and taboos because it upturns and reverses what is supposed to be unperturbable: the rational order of things. How it does this is through clear *situation management*. It must strike a balance between efficiency and effectiveness which, besides, will be appropriate to the situation and to the participants' roles. Gutt (1991:96) comments on this respect:

Whether a text is acceptable may depend not on the “correctness” of its “reference” to the “real world”, but rather on its *believability* and *relevance* to the *participants' outlook* regarding the situation.

This is second-order interpretation, ie. the thought of the speaker is as important, if not more so, than the utterance itself for the meaning to be retrieved correctly.

The *performative* aspect of language, in other words, its illocutionary force markers are what allow us to reach the relevant inference. In speaking, this may be tone of voice. In writing, this is register or tenor. Gutt (1991:82) comments on this matter:

Typically language allows for “skewing” between “surface” and “deep” structure: for example, there can be “skewing” between the grammatical form of a language and its illocutionary force, a typical case in point being “rhetorical questions” ... Thus a mother who is angry with her son for not having emptied the garbage might say, “When are you going to empty the garbage?” ... the semantic illocutionary force is one of *command* but the grammatical form is that of a *question*.

Irony leads us immediately up the garden-path but, if resolved quickly, via momentary processing difficulties, will offer tremendous rewards. The emphasis on speed, brevity, efficiency and effectiveness are of the essence in humor which depends for its effect on the *surprise* element, as in pleasant surprise. Implicature, in other words, reading between the lines, is the quickest possible way to achieve efficient humorous effect when saying one thing and meaning something else.

This is a matter of *stylistic markers* which indicate how, momentarily, we are moving away from our *familiar co-operative* mode of interaction based on quantity of information, quality of the same, relevance and lack of ambiguity, coincident with our shared knowledge, assumptions and belief systems with respect to *truth-values*, to a defamiliarized form of interactive participation based on filling in the gaps in the information, making the apparently irrelevant, relevant and resolving the surface ambiguity by *contrasting and/or associating the same with the shared background knowledge, assumptions and belief systems*. The implicature (Sperber & Wilson, 1986:106) is *analytic*.

IV.7) ACCEPTABILITY THROUGH FELICITY ACTS

Whenever the hearer experiences difficulties at the receiving end in perceiving some text as true and relevant, in *bona-fide* communication he always gives the speaker the benefit of the doubt first, groping for some less obvious interpretations which will save the text by rendering it nevertheless true and relevant. (RASKIN, 1985:101)

We always attempt, then, to make the act of communication a *felicity act*, ie. something which is situationally and contextually (or co-textually) relevant and coherent. Just as the person who sees their serious, formal boss dressed and acting as a clown in the Carnivals re-assesses their opinion of him, and “sees” him anew or “re-views” him in a changed light, so this new style given to the familiar pattern of communicative interaction is designed to make us see the old and the conventional in a changed light, with another emotive meaning.

The implicature is that both facets co-exist, ie. that our boss is at one and the same time *overtly* serious but has *covertly* or *latent* entertaining and frivolous potential. The style in which language is dressed, then, is the important factor to be hinged upon by the translator (with all the implications of Contrastive Stylistics and Linguistics involved¹⁷⁶), which is the *script* which will be changed and which will be

¹⁷⁶ For an excellent discussion of the same, see Hatim, Basil (1997), “The Translation of Irony: A Discourse Perspective” in his work *Communication across Cultures: Translation Theory and Contrastive Text Linguistics*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

out of consonance with the character and the *scenario*. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986:241):

Genuine irony is echoic, and is primarily designed to ridicule the opinion echoed.

IV.8) INFORMATIVITY

The most frequent complication in a political joke is an allusion to a particular event, slogan, mannerism, trait etc. For this reason, some political humor tends to be accessible only to the contemporaries living in a certain country and often in a certain region or city -all the others are likely not to have internalized the script(s) to which the allusion is made, and the joke will be lost on them. (RASKIN, 1985:222)

In inter-cultural mediation, *compensation* is one of the resources most deployed in order to overcome gaps in cultural knowledge or background context required for full understanding of meaning. However, compensation usually requires an upgrade in *quantity* which in humor is not possible. Should it not consist in an upgrade in *quantity*, another mechanism which can be compensated is *quality* by making explicit what is implicit. However, as pointed out by Jerry Palmer:

If I fail to understand a philosophical argument, it can be explained, and the belatedness of my understanding will not reduce its effectiveness, but a joke explained is a joke ruined, and therefore the reception of a joke is not purely cognitive, as we have seen. The role of pleasure in joke reception, which is especially visible in joke failure, focuses our attention upon the judgment of quality implicit in this act.¹⁷⁷

A *mutual cognitive cultural context* is, thus, essential for the person to recognise script reversal which normally consists in a momentary, but total, reversal of Grice's maxims, ie. the focus is on *how* what is said tallies with the situational and represented reality.

¹⁷⁷ PALMER, J. (1994): *Taking Humour Seriously*. Londres: Routledge & Kegan Paul; p. 174.

The goal is to make us see reified objective reality in a different, latent light. The degree to which this can be achieved in translation depends upon the degree to which the script or schemata are language specific. In English, irony is usually expressed via understatement and the cryptic. Hatim comments on this point:

In context, the speaker can leave so much unsaid, yet express the attitude in question. But what is unsaid by no means leaves the utterance incomplete; on the contrary, the utterance will be “pregnant” with meaning as a result.¹⁷⁸

When meaning, understood in the sense of direction to be given to our understanding, depends heavily upon the implicit, such as is the case in this type of humor, and on efficient and effective communication of the same, then effective translation will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, when mutual cognitive cultural context is not shared. We consider effective translation to be translation where the humorous meaning is perceived. As Johnson says:

[shared knowledge] is necessary for the perception of the joke, the referential content of the joke itself, and the process by which the joke is constructed around its object *by the joker for its audience* around a *given social context* ... To define a joke is to define the society in which the joke occurs.¹⁷⁹

Examples of this type of humor are the following. The referential content of the first is largely accessible and presents no problems for translation whereas the second can only provoke humour among insiders with privileged contextual information. It can be translated but would produce no humor when aimed at any target audience without the necessary contextual knowledge.

The basis of the social democracy was created when God made Eve and told Adam, “And now choose yourself a wife”. (East German, 1950s)

¹⁷⁸ HATIM, B. (1997): *Communication Across Cultures*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press; p. 196.

¹⁷⁹ As quoted in DENEIRE, M. (1995): “Humor in Foreign Language Teaching”. In *Humor*, vol. 8; p. 3.

- Hallo, may I speak to Abram Rabinowitz, please?.
- No.
- Is he on vacation then?.
- No.
- On a business trip?.
- No.
- You don't mean to say he is in big trouble?.
- No.
- And he did not die either?.
- No.
- Did I then understand you correctly?.
- Yes, you did. (Soviet, 1971)¹⁸⁰

IV.9) SITUATIONALITY

For humor of this type to be perceived, we also saw that, as in other types of humor, it had to be situationally correct and inoffensive. Matter of offence is *interpersonal*, above all in these Politically Correct days, (eg. "*she chased him round and round the Church until she caught him by the organ*" might be considered offensive if the audience were radical feminists). Thus, the nature of the occasion and the various features of the relationships between the parties may be counter productive to the humorous effect, especially when we are working through double mediation or negotiation in the case of the translation.

Therefore, the humor of this type of joke depends, first, upon the structure of the same, considered as representation of the world external to the humor; second, upon the relationship between the joke-teller and the others participating in the humorous event and their shared attitudes (or unshared attitudes) towards the butt of the humor, together with the nature of the occasion upon which the attempt at humor is made.

What we could broadly label as Cultural humor, due to the need for a mutual cognitive cultural context, is designed at bonding, at zero tension and if this effect is not achieved through translation, then the translation can be considered to be possible,

¹⁸⁰ Taken from RASKIN, V. (1985): *Op. Cit.*

but ineffective and not functionally equivalent, thus, undesirable (see all the Lady Di jokes¹⁸¹ and the following:

Q: What does NASA stand for?

A: Need Another Seven Astronauts).¹⁸²

Without the possibility of filling in required background information for the speaker to tally what they are hearing with humorous intention, the humor will fail and, thus, the translation can be considered to be a failed communicative event, ie. the meaning was not conveyed. With the extralinguistic information available, the moment of the humorous event may be incorrect and the circumstances (if the audience is British or American) may not be propitious, thereby creating tension and obviating the humorous outcome.

IV.10) MODE

IV.10.1) INTENTIONALITY THROUGH AMBIGUITY

The communicative competence which is required, above all, of the audience in the humor of perceived incongruity, is abstraction, moving outside the familiar frame of language completely to investigate the creative possibilities of the same, at a meta-linguistic level.

It requires total familiarity with the language and total security, since the defamiliarization, in order to be successful, must necessarily be transient, requiring a secondary application of critical consciousness in order to establish relevance.

¹⁸¹ One example which uses specific cultural references marking it as designed for a Spanish audience is the following: What was the brandmark of Lady Di's coffin? *Forlady* (a well-known manufacturer of wooden kitchen units in Spain). Another example which uses metalinguistics and only works in Spanish is: What is the last thing that the chauffeur said to Lady Di's fiancé? *Dodi, fallé* (Dodi, I've made a mistake). There is homophony in Spanish with the name of the boyfriend, Dodi Al Fayed.

¹⁸² NILSEN, A., et al. (1987): "Humor for Developing Skills". In *Et Cetera*, 44:1; pp. 63-76.

This is language being used at the *mode* level, to use Halliday's terminology (1978:123), the *perlocutionary* component or the "why" for the "what" (ideational or locutionary) and the "how" (interpersonal or illocutionary). The *intentionality* of this text type is purely functional, (or rather de-functional) to amuse through defamiliarisation, by de-functionalisation of language, by bringing together two incongruous, co-existent scripts normally through a disjunctive, or script-switch trigger, situated immediately before the *rheme* or punch-line which will allow for relevance and incongruity to be perceived by the audience once they have eliminated their original formulaic interpretation and rewound to the pivot word. Long and Graesser comment on language use in this context:

Defunctionalized language is language that is not used for transmission of information (its principal function), but for playful (ludic) purposes.¹⁸³

This is humor at the highest cognitive level and demanding the greatest effort on the part of the audience (and, thus, proffering the greatest reward) in establishing relevance and meaning.

Such humor demands flexibility of language, openness and a non-serious use of reason, as opposed to a suspension of the same. The mutual cognitive context of speaker and audience is language, knowledge of language frames (or form) and logic itself. A few examples of this type of humorous logic are the following:

A stale pretzel is better than nothing.
Nothing is better than God.
Therefore, a stale pretzel is better than God.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ LONG, D.L. and GRAESSER, A.C. (1988): "Wit and Humor in Discourse Processing". In *Discourse Processes*, 11; pp. 35-60.

¹⁸⁴ MORREAL, J. (1983): *Op. Cit.* Again either of these two "false" logic examples can be translated. The referential "pretzel" which is usually considered to be one of the least attractive elements of German gastronomy (salted, glazed biscuits) can be substituted by whatever element of the native's cuisine is considered equally unpalatable and, even more so when stale. The Irish Bull, in that it is a form peculiar only to the Irish, becomes pure nonsense without the aclaratory reference of origin and no longer funny.

(Irish Bull) Single misfortunes never come alone, and the greatest of all possible misfortunes is generally followed by a much greater.¹⁸⁵

This is the maximum expression of *condensation*, such as expressed by Todorov (1977:320):

There is condensation each time that only one signifier takes us to the knowledge of more than one meaning; or more simply: *each time that meaning exceeds the signifier*.

This is highly conscious, creative use of language and, when understood, reflects positively on both speaker (who is respected for his wit or ingenuity) and on the audience (for their cognitive powers in resolving the incongruity, and disambiguating the ambiguous). This type of humor requires for *synthetic* implicature (Sperber & Wilson, 1986:106) to be applied if the meaning is to be correctly culled.

A synthetic implication is necessarily based on two distinct elementary assumptions, and deriving it is not just a matter of having these assumptions somewhere in memory: they have to be brought together in the small working memory of the deductive device. Once again, there is no guarantee that they will ever be brought together again, and their synthetic implication may well be lost for ever if not computed on the spot.

There has to be a very close cognitive, psychological and linguistic fit between speaker and audience for effective “bi-sociation” to occur and for “local logic” to be applied. Jerry M. Suls describes the process in the following way:

In the first stage, the perceiver finds his/her expectations about the text disconfirmed by the ending of the joke ... In other words, the recipient encounters an incongruity -the punch line. In the second stage, the perceiver engages in a form of problem solving to find a cognitive rule which makes the punch line follow from the main part of the joke and reconciles the

¹⁸⁵ As quoted in NILSEN, D.L.F. (1997): “The Religion of Humor in Irish Literature”. In *HUMOR*, vol. 10; p. 4.

incongruous parts.¹⁸⁶

This is children's play with language, as described by Freud, but with adult reasoning. However, it is no child's play to translate. The following examples (untranslated) are just a few of the many short, punchy jokes based on wordplay.

Q: Did you hear about the butcher who backed into his meat-grinder?
He got a little behind in his work.

This coffee tastes like mud.
That's funny. It was ground only yesterday.

Patient: This ointment makes my arm smart!
Doctor: Why not rub some on your head?

Why did the man hit his hand with the hammer?
He wanted to see something swell.

What is the best way to prevent diseases caused by biting insects?
Don't bite the insects.

First Cannibal: Am I late for chow?
Second Cannibal: Yes, everybody's eaten.¹⁸⁷

IV.11) RELEVANCE THROUGH AMBIGUITY

Situations of structural ambiguity are used to the full in humor and advertising, two types of texts which are designed to catch and hold our attention to the maximum for a minimum time.

When a person is trying to communicate meaning, he/she usually strives to avoid possible ambiguity, ie. difficulty in immediately perceiving what they are attempting to communicate. If ambiguity is used, in any of its shapes and forms, be it a *double entendre*, a polysemous word or a structure leading to two possible scripts

¹⁸⁶ SULS, J.M. (1972): "A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: An Information-Processing Analysis". In GOLDSTEIN & MCGHEE (eds.): *The Psychology of Humor. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*. New York: Academic Press; pp. 81-100.

¹⁸⁷ As quoted in OAKS, D.D. (1994): "Creating Structural Ambiguities in Humor: Getting English Grammar to Cooperate". In *Humor*, vol. 7; p. 4.

instead of one, we have used it to some effect. The effect is usually to amuse and, certainly, to stimulate.

If the speaker makes the joke intentionally, he is inviting the audience to move into the para-telic cooperative mode. The speaker is signalling that what is coming has a humorous meaning and is designing the material deliberately so his audience will be amused. The speaker is using the metalinguistic function of speech, form, to mark a discourse as extraordinary and to signal that a special kind of interpretation is called for. Stephen Tyler says:

By attending to its form, we are told, as if in so many words, "This is poetry, this is a riddle, this is nursery rhyme - this is language at play, interpret it accordingly".¹⁸⁸

As such, the speaker will not choose this type of humor for someone without the communicative competence to appreciate the humor and, thus, to feel intellectually satisfied and appreciative when the incongruity is perceived. This is an intellectual game, like chess and affords no amusement when the two sides are not evenly pitched.

Gershon Legman tells the story of an Englishman who is about to return home from America and wants a typical American joke he can tell in England. He is given the following riddle: A girl is standing on a street corner and three men go by, one on a horse, one on a bicycle, and one on foot. One of the men knows the girl. Which one? "I give up", says the Englishman: "Which one?" The horse-manure!

When the Englishman returned home to England he tried his best to remember all of the details of the joke, and the following resulted:

"A young lady is standing at an intersection -this is in America, you know- and three gentlemen pass by: an equestrian, a pedestrian and a velocipedist. One of them is acquainted with the young lady. Now which one?" We give up, Reggie. Which? Well, I don't know how that American chap did it, but the answer is "horseshit!".¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ TYLER, S.A. (1978): *The Said and the Unsaid: Mind, Meaning and Culture*. London: Academic Press.

¹⁸⁹ As quoted in NILSEN, D.L.F. (1989): "Better than the Original: Humorous Translations that Succeed". In: *Meta*, XXXIV; p. 1.

All utterances with humorous meaning based on ambiguity follow a linear development designed to lull us into a false sense of security with respect to the expectations of the objective. They are coherently developed in a certain direction until the disjunctive sets them off on a separate track. They are not de-railed, merely re-directed to continue holding our attention.

George Bush has a short one. Gorbachev has a longer one. The Pope has it, but does not use it. Madonna does not have it. What is it? A last name.

The first thing which strikes a stranger in New York is a big car.¹⁹⁰

It has frequently been noted that humor, above all of this type, has a self-reflexive quality which implies its own self-consciousness¹⁹¹.

Definition of a hangover: The wrath of grapes (lexical syntagmatic reversal).
La definición de una resaca: la Ira de las Uvas.

Girls who do not repulse men's advances are often girls who advance men's pulses (chiasmic morphological reversal).

Las chicas que no repulsan a los hombres acelerados a menudo son chicas que aceleran el pulso de los hombres

Diplomacy: The noble duty of lying for one's country (phonological paradigmatic reversal).¹⁹²

IV.12) INTERTEXTUALITY

The element of *intertextuality* as a frame for incongruity is extremely high in this type of joke as can be seen from the examples above (The Grapes of Wrath and

¹⁹⁰ As quoted in ATTARDO, S. (1994): *Op. Cit.* Again, the first joke is translatable although it loses the force of the repetition of one which leads the audience automatically to consider anatomical details. The second, paradoxically, loses the "impact" of the polysemy of "strike" as in "hit" or "attract the attention".

¹⁹¹ NOGUEZ, D. (1969): "Structure du Langage Humoristique". In *Revue d'Esthétique*, 1; pp. 37-54.

¹⁹² MILNER, G.B. (1972): "Homo Ridens. Toward a Semiotic Theory of Humor and Laughter". In *Semiotica*, 5; pp. 1-30. Again, the examples are translatable, and translate maintaining their original humor with the exception of the third, "Die for Queen and country" which is a totally British conception of patriotism and, therefore, difficult to extrapolate and re-create in any other language.

“dying for Queen and country”).

Obviously, again, this demands for mutual cultural cognitive context and co-presence. There may be no other solution to the problem but to establish what Zabalbeascoa, following Koller¹⁹³, calls *equivalence priorities*. A translation, like any other text, is a choice between possible options. There should be a hierarchy of values established, according to Koller, once the intention and the translational relevance of the original text has been defined.

In the case of the example cited by Zabalbeascoa, which is particularly felicitous, the relevance consists in producing a comic effect through a one-liner, triggered by the nickname and for the punch-sequence to be resolved with the very last word, to form the name of a famous and classic literary work. This whole definition should suggest the relationship of the character with the girl he dates. In this case, the fact that the translation is between English and Catalan (the series *Yes, Minister* has not been shown on Spanish, as in Castilian, TV) is also felicitous in that a near-equivalent title of a work exists in the Catalan literary tradition as a frame, (when such is difficult to find among Spanish classics), although the result is less easily accessible and certainly more lewd, in other words, less subtle than the original and, thus, somewhat less effective. The fact, also, that the translation depends heavily on the written transcription when destined, as the original, to function as script for the (in this case, dubbed) soundtrack also detracts somewhat from the proposed translation solution.

However, this represents one of the extremely rare attempts to face the problem of translation of word-play in humor with a possible solution and the enumeration of equivalences by priorities is an important move forward, at least in the

¹⁹³ KOLLER, W. (1979): “Equivalence in Translation Theory”. In CHESTERTON, A. (ed.) (1989): *Op. Cit.*; pp. 99-104. Koller establishes a *hierarchy of equivalence requirements* which is drawn up once the translator has carried out a *translationally relevant text analysis*. This is the logic applied by Zabalbeascoa.

case of allusive frames¹⁹⁴ though in the cases of polysemy we have quoted, they may only lead us further up a dead-end street.

ST: They call him "Pilgrim" because every time he takes her out he makes a little progress.

TT: Li diuen "Tirantlo" perquè quan es lliga una noia sempre dona en el Blanch.

(Gloss: They call him "Tirantlo" because whenever he chats up a girl he always makes his mark).¹⁹⁵

IV.13) THE FUNCTION OF HUMOR

The importance of humor, like any other self-conscious exercise permitted by our intelligence, is how we use it.

Humor for humor's sake, with no ulterior motive, calls for imagination and creativity, is a pleasurable experience and, as John Morreall (1983:117) says, "*is a good indicator of the intimacy of the group*". It may even be a celebration of shared knowledge and, for that matter, sense of humor.

It is most certainly used to an enormous extent in the media, above all in headlines of newspaper articles and in ads, both of which know, directly and in detail, the audience they are targeting, which is always national. The few attempts at pan-national ads have led to notable disasters (the Nova and the Pajero¹⁹⁶ were two cars which did not sell well because of the unfortunate connotations of their names in

¹⁹⁴ However, see in the same edition of *The Translator*: DELABATISTA, D. (ed.) Wordplay & Translation, the article by LEPPHALME, R. (1996): "Caught in the Frame: A Target-Culture Viewpoint on Allusive Wordplay"; pp. 199-218. The author carried out an experiment with word-play based on allusive frames and found that, in most cases, the allusive frame was not recognised and, therefore, the whole point was missed.

¹⁹⁵ As quoted in ZABALBEASCOA, P. (1996): "Translating Jokes for Dubbed Comedies". In *The Translator*, vol. 2:2. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.

¹⁹⁶ "Nova" when reduced to its component parts, ie. "no va" means that the car does not work and "paja" in mainland Spanish means masturbation, but in the colloquial form of the word, therefore converting the car into a "masturbator". LA Spanish does not use this expression which is the reason for the name (many of these cars were manufactured in Latin America).

Spain, which finally led to these being changed, whereas the ad for the telephone company, "Say sí, sí, sí to JPT"¹⁹⁷ did not have the desired effect in France or French-speaking countries). Don Nilsen gives further examples of the same kind of back-firing effects in other ads:

Not only different cultures and metaphors, but different languages as well can cause humorous effects. Feng-ti Chen tells about her friend from Mainland China who would not buy many of the famous brands of cars because of their names ... As the friend stated, "Being a Chinese, I certainly know that these names sound ridiculous or improper in phonetic transcriptions": "Benz" (ben si) means "stupid enough to die"; Chrysler (kuai si le) means "near to die"; "Honda" (hung ta) means "Bomb him!"; "Toyota" (to yo ta) means "Towed by someone else!"; "Nissan" (ni sang) means "You are dead"; "Datsun" (ta sang) means "he is dead"; and "Subaru" (si ba lu) means "Damn the Communists!"¹⁹⁸

IV.14) CAN EQUIVALENCE OF RELEVANCE AND AMBIGUITY BE STAGED TOGETHER?

Nobody, it would appear, is ever prepared to admit outright to the impossibility of translating, relevantly and effectively from a pragmatic perspective, this type of joke. Anne-Marie Laurian says variously: "*Humor based on phonetics seems to be the most difficult to translate*"¹⁹⁹, and offers the example (which she does not translate, thus proving the "apparent" difficulty):

- I nearly ran over a pedestrian a few minutes ago - and, I think he was from Miami.
- How did you know that?
- Well, when he reached the sidewalk, I heard him say something about the sun and the beach.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Translated into French, phonetically, the acronym JPT means "It was me who farted" giving rise, therefore, to certain hilarity.

¹⁹⁸ CHEN, F. (1987): "Satire with Humor: A Chopsuey". In NILSEN, D. (ed.) (1993): *Humor Scholarship: A Research Bibliography*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

¹⁹⁹ LAURIAN, A.M. (1992): "Possible/impossible Translation of Jokes". In *HUMOR*, vol. 5; pp. 1-2.

²⁰⁰ TRUE, H. (1981): *Funny Bone*, American Humor Guild. The play on words is, evidently, with "son of a bitch".

After suggesting that the readers send proposed solutions, she goes on to offer another joke based on polysemy.

Just got back from Vegas. Went there for a change and a rest. The slot machines got the change and the crap tables got the rest. (TRUE, 1981)

On this occasion she says: "*It is now up to the reader to build a joke of two main sentences in which two words with double meanings contrast*". This is, to say the least, a relaxed attitude towards "skopos" and relevance, in general. Presumably, situationality and acceptability are another two of the considerations which are not being borne in mind in this slightly *laissez-faire* attitude.

The point that begs asking in the translation of humor of the third type, of perceived incongruity, which demands working from the effect (the shared enjoyment of perception of the incongruity) back to the text, instead of vice-versa, in other words, moving from the end to the means instead of the other way round, is whether, in part or wholly, this humor is not a celebration of the ingenuity allowed by the uniqueness of a language, and is perceived thanks to a shared world knowledge, a shared view of incongruity together with immense flexibility within the language structure.

The meaning and the function of the humor of perceived incongruity are one and the same thing. The communication is that we are on the same wavelength and can enjoy this word-play or metalinguistic game. It is much the same as the meaning of metaphor in poetry. Likeminded people, in the broadest sense of the word "likeminded", will enjoy the creative use of language. Others will not. If this is, indeed, the case, then the enjoyment stems from this "untranslatability" of the experience of perceived incongruity. There is no "sense" in translation.

The following chapter explores how this "translates" in real experience in the work of Tom Sharpe, David Lodge, Arturo Pérez-Reverte and Ramón J. Sender.

V

LITERARY LIMITATIONS

Theory without practice is empty. Practice without theory is blind. When mediation is effected something theoretically founded is practically carried out.²⁰¹

We have attempted up until this juncture to show that there are three types of humor, all three of which are particularly characteristic of given times and circumstances. We have also shown that there are three types of translation methodology proposed (to varying degrees and under various different names):

- * *Literal or formal equivalence*: Most associated with what can be considered to be “objective” reality, with Universal truths and, thus, with texts with a dominant contextual *Informative* focus as in the stereotypes linked to so-called “humor of superiority” or humor as a Bergsonian “social corrective”
- * *Literary or dynamic equivalence*: Most associated with *subjectively biased texts*, therefore, with texts with a dominant contextual *Expressive* focus, such as is to be found in the scripts of humor as “pleasant relief from tension”, humor as “creative freedom” and “survival humor”.

²⁰¹ NEUBERT, A. (1989): “Translation as Mediation”. In KÖLMEL, R. and PAYNE, J. (eds.): *Babel: The Cultural and Linguistic Barriers Between Nations*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

- * *Skopos*: The end to the means which, at times, depending on the initiator's needs, may end up being an *adaptation* or functional re-creation for *Vocative* or *Operative* dominant contextual focus texts such as we may broadly consider the humor of perceived incongruity.

Para nuestra teoría como teoría global de la traslación, resulta decisivo el que *toda* traslación (traducción e interpretación), independientemente de su función (cf. las categorías de texto en Reiss, 1971 y 1976) y del tipo de texto, se considere como una oferta informativa en una lengua y cultura final ... sobre una oferta informativa en una lengua y cultura de partida ... El traductor (o el cliente por medio del traductor y de acuerdo con él; o, de un modo más general, el *translatum*) ofrece una información sobre el texto de partida, que a su vez se considera como una oferta informativa.²⁰²

*To the effects of our theory as a global theory of translation, it is decisive that each and every act of translation (be it translation or interpreting) and independent of its function (cf. the text categories as defined by Reiss in 1971 and 1976) and text-type, is to be considered as information proffered in the target language and culture ... on the basis of information offered in a source language and culture ... The translator (or the client via the translator and always in agreement with the same; or, to put it in a more general frame, the *translatum*) offers information taken from the source text, which is considered to be offered information.*
(translation: MARGARET HART, 1998)

We have also shown the broad categorisation of text types as defined by Bühler, using the “family type” resemblances of dominant contextual focus Wittgenstein-style, given that no text is going to be an identical twin of a previously encountered example of the same text type, but will share certain features in common with the prototype. Werlich comments on this account that:

Texts distinctively correlate with the contextual factors in a communication system. They conventionally focus the addressee's attention only on specific factors and circumstances from the whole set of factors. Accordingly texts can be grouped together and generally classified on the basis of their dominant contextual focus.²⁰³

²⁰² REISS, K. & VERMEER, H.J. (1996) (translated GARCÍA REINA, S. and MARTÍN DE LEÓN, C.): *Fundamentos para Una Teoría Funcional de la Traducción*. Madrid: Ediciones Akal.

²⁰³ WERLICH, E. (1976): *A text Grammar of English*. Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer; p. 19.

We have also attempted to outline the varying relation between speaker and audience according to the degree, and type, of implicature required in order to confer relevance and meaning on the communicative utterance.

Thus, *situationality* and *acceptability* have been seen to be decisive factors in shaping whether the humor is recognised or not, together with *intertextuality*, all of which could be said to form part of a general concept which Neubert and Shreve have called *co-presence*. The higher the threshold of implied background knowledge, both of language in situation and language frames, the more difficult the translation of humor will become until, when metalinguistics and form, above all, polysemy enter on the scene, it eventually becomes impossible to translate in a relevantly, and thus pragmatically, equivalent way.

V.1) DISTANCING

Distancing is seen to be an important factor in the presentation and success of humor. It will be difficult to decide whether laughter at an ethnic joke about Blacks is sanctioned, for example, if the person telling the joke is black and not a stand-up comedian. It will be highly difficult to raise a laugh through irony and satire or parody, if your audience is totally made up of the targets of your darts. And it is difficult, indeed, to laugh at the mistakes in which you yourself have incurred as the result, for example, of an imperfect grasp on a language (however, as was pointed out before, when we reminisce with old friends, the events we often laugh hardest at were not at all funny to us when they were occurring - see the Thurber quote). All these situations are *face threatening*²⁰⁴ and as such are no-go zones for humor.

Mom was also perplexed by *Inglés* but could laugh it off easier than pissed-off Pop. "Why do Americans name their kids after animals?" she asked me about my fourth-grade classmate Doug Williams. "No, Ma, *se llama* [he's called] DOUG, not DOG!"²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ BROWN, P. and LEVINSON, S. (1987): *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁰⁵ LÓPEZ, L. (1994): "Generation Mex". In LIU, E. (ed.): *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation*. New York: Norton.

V.2) SCRIPTS, FRAMES AND SCENARIOS

A joke is direct. There is a “face-to-face” situation. A comedy play is at one remove from the audience, in that the actors are playing rôles and speaking *scripts* which have been written for them by someone else. In a novel, the author also puts his words into the mouths of others and, in parody and satire, he goes one step further by disclaiming responsibility for the *scripts*, since such are the only possible utterances in the *scenario* or *frame* proposed.

Although the effect, in a novel, or play is not as immediate and brief as it is necessarily in a joke, we find that the same “speaker”-audience relation exists, depending upon the dominant contextual type of humor, and that the same conditions are maintained for its success, ie. lack of tension and pre-disposition towards the paratelic state which may, in fact, be easier to *stage-manage* in longer narrative than in one-liners.

V.3) NORMS

From all the literature with respect to the history and anthropology of humor, it can be seen that humorous events are seen as a transgression of the norm, allowed in certain well-defined situations which differ according to the culture. Thus, the Kaguru, according to Radcliffe-Brown²⁰⁶ “*think it witty to throw excrement at certain cousins*” and Luguru joking partners will even lie down in the grave, demanding payment before allowing the funeral to proceed whilst making sexual advances towards the women mourners. This behaviour is considered to be normal within joking relations and would not be tolerated under any other circumstance. Jerry Palmer (1994:24) comments of these joking relationships:

Clearly, also, such behaviour would not be tolerated in modern Western society, regardless of setting and regardless of whether the intention was humorous or not: the level of transgression acceptable in tribal societies' joking relationships is clearly -insofar as these examples are typical- far beyond what is acceptable in the industrial world.

²⁰⁶ RADCLIFFE-BROWN, J. (1952): “On Joking Relationships and A Further Note on Joking Relationships”. In *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London: Cohen and West.

However, this level of transgression (or skipping) of the norm via semi-aggressive, scatological or sexually-based humor is considered to be the most basic type universally. That such almost always occurs in moments of tribulation, such as a funeral, is a proof of the therapeutic, philosophical “survival” aspect of humor, not only limited to primitive tribe societies.

The difference between an Irish wake and an Irish wedding is one less drunk.²⁰⁷

V.4) FARCE

V.4.1) SITUATIONAL HUMOR

This could be classified as farcical laughter. Farce is the most visual type of humor, almost slapstick, usually involving clowns. It corresponds to the first language of children (*ideational*) and also to their first form of humor: derision at physical and mental abnormalities and the misfortunes of others.

It ranges from cartoon cavalcade humor to humor aroused as the result of certain stereotyped scripts with respect to the ridiculous aspects of everyday life, such as are exemplified in classic narrative in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, where the events of the various tales are seen in the light of the narrator's profession (The Miller's Tale and so on) or Rabelais' prose, and in modern media with TV programmes such as *Candid Camera* or *You've Been Framed*.

Whatever the event, we have a *script* which we can immediately call to mind, after mention of key words or observation of typical actions, which allow us to call upon a store of information with “*predictive powers that are often used in understanding*” (Shank & Abelson, 1977:15). Thus, if our attention is focused on a

²⁰⁷ As quoted in SAPER, B. (1995): “Joking in the Context of Political Correctness”. In *HUMOR*, vol. 8; p. 1. Mouton de Gruyter. Once again, there is no difficulty in translating though a certain amount of information with respect to the drinking habits of the Irish, in themselves fairly notorious and accessible, and their funeral rites, is necessary in order to catch the full humorous intent and not to consider what is said to be in bad taste.

banana skin, we expect a series of events to follow. Tweety Pie's famous phrase "*I tawt I taw a puddy tat*" conjures up a whole series of images as does Bugs Bunny's famous "*What's up, Doc?*" The character of Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther films is a permanent marker for imminent catastrophes of a farcical humorous nature. "*All the world is a stage*" as Shakespeare said, and we smugly observe the extravagances, lewd behaviour and weaknesses or stupidities of others paraded on the scenario, as spectators, in a "them and us" situation.

V.5) THE FOOL

V.5.1) SATIRE

Of a different type, less visual and infinitely more sophisticated, is the humor of the Fool, exemplified in the characters going under the same name in Shakespeare's various plays and in the French *sotties*. Swain remarks of the latter:

The range of ideas connected with the concept of folly gave [the *sotties*], in its personification, a peculiarly supple instrument both for entertainment and for satire. The *sottie* found its fullest use in providing a vehicle for criticism.²⁰⁸

The fool is very rarely foolish. In *King Lear*, the most perspicacious character is the so-called Fool. Here, all the rôles and scripts are turned upside-down. It is like the Carnival which, as Bakhtin²⁰⁹ said, is a show that has neither stage nor division between the actors and the spectators, unlike religious ceremonies. Dolitsky, comments with respect to Carnival:

During the carnival, the world is turned topsy-turvy, and the hidden side of human nature is disclosed and allowed to manifest itself. During the carnival, all the laws, prohibitions, and limitations that ordinarily define a society are abolished.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ SWAIN, B. (1932): *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. New York: Columbia University Press.

²⁰⁹ BAKHTIN, M. (1970): *Problèmes de la Poétique de Dostoïevski*. Lausanne: Age d'Homme.

²¹⁰ DOLITSKY, M. (1992): "Aspects of the Unsaid in Humor". In *HUMOR*, vol. 1; p. 2.

The name of the communication game is "pertinence". The name of the humor game where creative freedom is allowed, in that conventional rôles are abandoned together with normative scripts, is communication via "impertinence". The fool (ie. the voice of unreason) has the rôle of speaking the unspeakable and the traditional liberty, afforded his lack of reason and, thus, credibility, to attack various aspects of the social order. However, the audience, in complicity and connivance with the fool, knows like him:

That it's under normal circumstances that the world is upside down, and therefore to set it arse-upon-head is putting it back the right way up.²¹¹

This is the voice of satire, parody and irony. It is not *what* is said that is important, it is *how*. It plays upon ambiguity, with inference "speaking louder than words" through words that are "out of keeping" with the situation, via allusions to other frames and scripts, through false etymologies (*Interpretatio nominis*) and irony (*ex inversione verborum*), with the last two definitions coming directly again from Cicero's taxonomy of verbal humor (*de dicto*), the type he said resisted translation.

The audience is in on the act with the speaker. It is an "us" against them situation. Wayne Booth indicates with respect to irony:

Quintilian went about as far as anybody until recently, when he said that irony "is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery [assuming a speaker, not a writer], the character of the speaker or the nature of the subject. For if any of these three is out of keeping with the words, it at once becomes clear that the intention of the speaker is other than what he actually says".²¹²

Satire and irony are conscious methods of making people aware of the duplicity of Life, of the need to look at the latent reality below the mask and of persuading them that superficial appearances are not the true representation of reality.

²¹¹ FAIVRE, B. (1988): "La Piété et la Fête and La Profession de Comédie". In DE JOMORON, J. (ed.): *Le Théâtre en France, 1. Du Moyen Age à 1789*. Paris: Colin.

²¹² BOOTH, W.C. (1974): *A Rhetoric of Irony*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

It is not, however, an *either/or* proposition in humor. It is rather a means of providing comfort and bonding through recognition of “like-mindedness”, of another hidden reality in contrast to the manifestly oppressive reality.

First mention was made to both satire and irony as tools for persuasion in Aristotle and Cicero when talking about rhetorical devices and topics, thus placing the emphasis on the *spoken, persuasive* aspect of the same and the need for *careful mapping of the propositions* allowing for the *interpretation* of the *ironical inferences* conveyed in the *tenor* or *timbre* of the voice. In narrative, it is “language out-of-joint” which makes us aware of the intention of the author.

Parody is even more self-conscious in its humorous intention, since it refers explicitly to *intertextuality*, to a previous aesthetic frame in order to create the contrast between the literary representation of reality, and the literary representation of the literary representation. It is reality at a “double remove” ie. It allows for even greater security on the part of the person criticizing the state of the world (who can hide under the imitation of another author) whilst transforming that “reality” into an aesthetic object.

V.6) LANGUAGE PLAY

V.6.1) LINGUISTIC HUMOR

Purely linguistic humor may be based on ambiguity and semantic deviation. In such cases, words and utterances can be interpreted in more than one way. The humorist transgresses the rule of conversational co-operation by leading the listener toward the “wrong” interpretation ... In both linguistically and pragmatically based jokes, the humor resides in the perceived but unstated gap between the expectations of the rule-following audience and the rule-breaking speaker.²¹³

Linguistic humor is based on letting us see the incongruity of Life and the disparity, or the tenuous relation, between the word and the world and, therefore, the

²¹³ DOLITSKY, M. (1992): *Op. Cit.*

futility of trying to establish objective truths and absolute values. It defamiliarizes us with language. It converts language into an element of fun.

This is what occurs in the Spanglish offerings of second generation American (or Puertorican) Spanish where the sentence is structured in Spanish but can only be understood through back-translation and reference to English:

“Papá está salido. Está deliberando las groserías”.
(Dad's out delivering the groceries)

“Mamá no está salida. Está vacunando las carpetas”.
(Mum's not out. She's vacuuming the carpet.)

In humor, of this type, the fun derives from playing with language and form itself, and from the shared joy of the intellectual effort and satisfaction afforded. Relating to this humor provided by cognitive insight, is the laughter produced when an action fails and the incongruity results from the fact that the people involved do not even notice (ie. lack of cognitive insight on the part of the interlocuters but cognitive insight on the part of the spectator/reader). Morreall (1983:67) offers us the following as an example:

A good example is the joke about the two Englishmen riding on a noisy train.
The first says, “I say, is this Wembley?”
The other responds, “No, Thursday”.
To which the first says, “I am too”.
These two have completely misunderstood each other, but no matter - they *thought* they were communicating.

This is humor as a purely aesthetic experience. It is *not* language directed at communication of information and meaning. It is the fun version, the not so completely *bona fide* version, directed at communication of the sense, as in “sense” of humor.

Raskin (1985:103) proposes a *cooperative principle for the non bona-fide communication mode of joke-telling*, based on Grice's Maxims, with the maxim of

quantity as giving exactly as much information as necessary for the joke, the maxim of *quality* as saying only what is compatible with the world of the joke, the maxim of *relation* as saying only what is relevant to the joke and *manner*, as telling the joke efficiently. In accordance with the principle, the audience does not expect the speaker either to tell him the objective truth or to convey any relevant new information. He goes on to say:

Joke telling is a cooperative enterprise while lying is not and, as a result, the latter is considered by the hearer only after the joke-telling option has been explored and rejected. (RASKIN, 1985:104)

Humorous communication, however, does convey information and meaning, but not of the traditional type: it conveys sense, as in "sense of humor".

Even names which "occupy an exceptional position with regard to the language system because of their minimal integration into it"²¹⁴, may be used to maximum effect, in a defamiliarised way in humor, as a method of characterisation.

Roland Barthes (1970), in his analysis of Balzac's *Sarrasine* defines the name as functioning like a magnetic field attracting and directing other features which constitute the character. According to Giovanni Palmieri²¹⁵, a literary proper name can be defined as a condensed narrative programme wherein are sown the seeds of the subsequent development of the storyline (see *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Oliver Twist* and *Candide*).

The meaningful name somehow contrasts two meanings. On the one hand, as a proper noun the name pretends to be semantically empty by definition (apart from having a purely referential, indexical function). On the other hand, it acquires a specific semantic substance as a comment on the

²¹⁴ HERMANS, TH. (1988): "On Translating Proper Names" (with reference to *De Witte* and *Max Havelaar*) in WINTLE, M. (ed.): *Modern Dutch Studies. Essays in Honour of Peter King*. London & Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press; pp. 11-24.

²¹⁵ PALMIERI, G. (1994): "Tutti i nomi di Zeno". In *Strumenti Critici*, 9:3; pp. 441-464.

character's personality. In other words, the playful ambiguity hinges on the name's ambivalent status as a proper noun and/or as a common noun.²¹⁶

V.7) TOM SHARPE

V.7.1) DOMINANT SITUATIONAL HUMOR FOCUS

This is a fact which is greatly exploited by Tom Sharpe in his novels, above all, the series which go under the name of the main character, *Wilt*²¹⁷.

There is not much superficially subtle in the farcical works of Sharpe which probably explains his riotous success in Spain, despite the fact that much of his humor is totally untranslatable, from the perspective of relevant equivalence, consisting as it does in word-play and specific cultural allusion, as, indeed, has also been proved in the Spanish versions. There is probably enough of the bawdy, farcical element in all of the work, nevertheless, for it to amuse only at the most basic and unsophisticated level.

However, his choice of character names and, indeed, many of the techniques used by the author, show that, underneath the surface stereotype ribaldry of plastic dolls, dildos, cuckolded and dominated husbands, underdogs, sexual taboos, rubber fetishes and a whole lot more of the stock elements of "blue" humor, there is a serious comic jibe being made at Society, in general, in the Wilt series, and at the apartheid and hypocrisy of the bigotry of British society in South Africa, in particular, in *Riotous Assembly* and *Indecent Exposure*.

The main character of the Wilt series, Henry Wilt is married to the ineffable and incombustible, Eva, the primitive woman (it must be noted that the name is Eva not Eve, which would be the usual form in English, thus remitting us, perhaps, to

²¹⁶ MANINI, L. (1996): "Meaningful Literary Names: Their Forms and Functions and Their Translation". In *The Translator*, vol. 2:2.

²¹⁷ *Wilt* (1976). *The Wilt Alternative* (1979). *Wilt on High* (1984).

Hitler's mistress, Eva Braun).

Wilt, a man of little ambition who is resigned to his lot in life, is employed as an assistant lecturer at the Fenland College of Arts and Technology and, when we are introduced to him for the first time in the trilogy, is working in the Liberal Studies Department, teaching classes of Gasfitters, Plasterers, Bricklayers and Plumbers what is euphemistically called "Exposure to Culture", something which he has been doing for the previous ten years.

If Gasfitters could go through life wholly impervious to the emotional significance of the interpersonal relationships portrayed in *Sons and Lovers*, and coarsely amused by D.H. Lawrence's profound insight into the sexual nature of existence, Eva Wilt was incapable of such detachment. She hurled herself into cultural activities and self-improvement with an enthusiasm that tormented Wilt. Worse still, her notion of culture varied from week to week, sometimes embracing Barbara Cartland and Anya Seaton, sometimes Ouspensky, sometimes Kenneth Clark, but more often the instructor at the Pottery Class on Tuesdays or the lecturer on Transcendental Meditation on Thursdays, so that Wilt never knew what he was coming home to except a hastily cooked supper, some forcibly expressed opinions about his lack of ambition, and a half-baked intellectual eclecticism that left him disoriented.²¹⁸

Si los aprendices de instaladores de gas podían pasar por la vida totalmente impermeables al sentido emotivo de las relaciones interpersonales que se refleja en Hijos y Amantes, y divertirse groseramente con la indagación profunda de D.H. Lawrence en el carácter sexual de la existencia, Eva Wilt era incapaz de tal distanciamiento. Ella se lanzaba a las actividades culturales y al cultivo y mejora de su personalidad con un entusiasmo que atormentaba a Wilt. Peor aún, la idea que Eva tenía de la Cultura variaba de una semana a otra, incluyendo a veces a Bárbara Cartland y a Anya Seaton, a veces o Ouspensky (sic), a veces a Kenneth Clark, pero más a menudo al instructor de la clase de cerámica de los martes o al profesor de meditación transcendental de los jueves, de modo que Wilt nunca sabía qué podía esperarle en casa, aparte de una cena preparada precipitadamente, algunos comentarios vigorosamente expuestos sobre su falta de ambición y un insulso eclecticismo intelectual que le

²¹⁸ SHARPE, T. (1976): *Wilt*. London: Pan Books; p. 8.

*dejaba desorientado.*²¹⁹

The cultural references and the chasm which divides Barbara Cartland (a writer of paperback romances of dubious literary value), and Anya Seaton (the author of the novel *Black Beauty*, the first novel to be read by all young British girls together with Louise M. Allcott's *Little Women*) from Kenneth Clark and Ouspensky, are clearly marked for the native English-speaking reader but not so for the Spanish readership who lack the necessary *co-presence*.

The structure of the sentence and the co-text (not the context)²²⁰, however, mark the contrast to a certain extent thereby allowing a surface understanding of the erratic personality of Eva, described by a fellow colleague of Wilt's as the prototype of primitive Womanhood. "Let me put it this way", said Mr. Morris, "had Shakespeare written the play as Mrs Wilt interpreted it, Othello would have been the one to be strangled" ("*Digámoslo de este modo*", dijo el Señor Morris, "*Si Shakespeare hubiera escrito la obra tal como la interpretó la señora Wilt, el estrangulado habría sido Oteló*").

Eva falls in with a trendy couple of Americans: he is Gaskill, called "G" (a reference to the novel by John Berger), a biochemist with a plastic fetish, working on bio-degradability and regressively blocked in his childhood, a trendy middle-aged pseudo-intellectual. She is a sexual counsellor (in other words, a prostitute) who decides to cash in on a good thing when Gaskill is deferred to her by his psychiatrist for treatment.

Old Ma Pringsheim didn't (*take to me*). She huffed and she puffed and she blew but this little piggy stayed right where the bank was. G and me went back to California and G graduated in plastic and we've been bio-degradable ever since.

²¹⁹ Translated as *Wilt* by ÁLVAREZ FLÓREZ, J.M. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama.

²²⁰ Here we distinguish between the two terms following the definitions of Halliday (1978) and Petöfi (1973).

- I'm glad Henry isn't like that", said Eva. "I couldn't live with a man who was queer.
- G's not queer, honey. Like I said he's a plastic freak.
- If that's not queer I don't know what is", said Eva. (p. 130)

La buena mamá Pringsheim no. Bufó y resopló, pero Sally se agarró a la pasta y no la soltó. G y yo nos volvimos a California y G se licenció en plásticos y desde entonces somos biodegradables.

- *Me alegro de que Henry no sea así", dijo Eva. "No podría vivir con un hombre raro.*
- *G no es raro, querida. Como te dije es sólo un loco del plástico.*
- *Si eso no es raro que venga Dios y lo vea", dijo Eva. (p.146)*

Here, the script activated by "she huffed and she puffed" is the tale of the Three Little Pigs. This trigger is manifest for the English speaking audience thus linking in cleverly with the reference to "piggy ... bank" which the reader will piece together thus collaborating in the reconstruction of the humor. This is lost in the Spanish version. The fact that this prosaic level of thinking of Sally's is not clearly communicated here, detracts from the illocutionary impact of her subsequent interventions, where she moves with the same ease from Sartre, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard to the Three Little Pigs and other infantile forms of expression.

Eva elopes with these two after Wilt has been left in disgrace by Sally Pringsheim, since he refused her pass at him in a party, trapped in an inflatable plastic doll by a compromising piece of his anatomy. This incident causes Eva to flee to "find herself" with her new friends.

- Other people are hell", said Sally. "That's Sartre and he should know. You do what you want is good and no moral kickback. Like G says, rats are the paradigm. You think rats go around thinking what's good for other people?
- Well no, I don't suppose they do", said Eva.
- Right. Rats aren't ethical. No way. They just do. They don't get screwed up thinking.
- Do you think rats can think?", asked Eva now thoroughly engaged in the problems of rodent psychology.
- Of course they can't. Rats just are. No *Schadenfreude* with rats.
- What's *Schadenfreude*?
- Second cousin to *Weltschmerz*", said Sally stubbing her cigar out in the ashtray. "So we can all do what we want whenever we want to. That's

the message. It's only people like G who've got the know bug who get balled up.

- No bug?"", said Eva.
- They've got to know how everything works. Scientists. Lawrence was right. It's all head and no body with G.
- Henry's a bit like that", said Eva. "He's always reading or talking about books. I've told him he doesn't know what the real world is like. (p. 96)

- *Los demás son el infierno", dijo Sally. "Eso dijo Sartre y él debía saberlo. Hacer lo que quieres es bueno y no hay que plantearse más rollos morales. Como dice G, el paradigma son las ratas. ¿Crees tú que las ratas andan preguntándose lo que es bueno para los demás?*
- *Pues no, no creo que lo hagan", dijo Eva.*
- *Justamente. Las ratas no son morales. En ningún sentido. Actúan y se acabó. No se torturan pensando.*
- *¿Tú crees que las ratas pueden pensar?", preguntó Eva completamente absorbida ya por la sicología de los roedores y sus problemas.*
- *Por supuesto que no. Las ratas sólo son. Con las ratas no hay Schadenfreude.*
- *¿Qué es Schadenfreude?*
- *Primo segundo de Weltschmerz", dijo Sally apagando el puro en el cenicero. "Así que podemos hacer todo lo que queramos. Ese es el mensaje. Sólo es la gente como G la que tiene qué saber qué coño es lo que pasa exactamente y cómo funcionan las cosas.*
- *¿Qué quieres decir?", dijo Eva.*
- *Que tienen que saber como funciona todo. Los científicos. Lawrence tenía razón. G es toda cabeza y sin cuerpo.*
- *Henry es un poco así", dijo Eva. "Siempre está leyendo o hablando de libros. Ya le he dicho yo que no sabe cómo es el mundo real. (p. 109)*

This pseudo-intellectual talk with references to Sartre, Freud and Schopenhauer, coming from erstwhile sexual surrogate, Sally, is ironic enough but all the more so, since Eva makes it manifestly clear from her answers that the whole non-versation goes completely over her head while she relentlessly pursues her own prosaic line of thought. This must be rendered in exactly the same tenor for the irony to shine through: the hippy pseudo-intellectual rag-bag of ideas and jargon of Sally as opposed to the "spade's a spade" of Eva, the primitive woman.

The phonetic ambiguity of the word "know" alone causes immense problems for the translator, to such an extent that he opts to miss it out. For all their crudity, the

“cultural” allusions very implicitly framed in the following graffiti found scrawled on the Pringsheims' bathroom walls after they flee, are nonetheless, “association frames”, lewd parodies of the originals which again present an insurmountable obstacle to the translator. In fact, the first does not appear to have been recognised²²¹ and the second is omitted in the translation:

Where Wilt fagged and Eva ran who was then the male chauvinist pig?

Si Wilt quedo hecho una braga y Eva quiso más tomate ¿quién fue el cerdo machista? (p. 23. Spanish version)

Where the B sucks there suck I underneath a Dutch cap nice and dry
(Wilt; p. 109) (Omitted in Spanish version)

Humor of perceived incongruity (perceived by the reader) is always present in Sharpe's work: characters talking at cross-purposes for cultural reasons, working on different agendas, be they intra- or inter-cultural, like Morreall's example of the two men on the train.

The reader is afforded the pleasure of “eavesdropping” on the failed exchange of “meaning” and, therefore, of feeling intellectually superior. As Mason says, with regard to films and TV plays in general, using Bell's²²² distinction of participants and non-participants in discourse:

The *addressee* is someone whose presence is ratified by the speaker and who is being directly addressed; the *auditor* is not being directly addressed but is a ratified participant in (receiver of) the communication; the *overhearer* is not a ratified participant but his or her presence is known to co-communicants: finally, the *eavesdropper* is an overhearer whose presence is not known to co-communicants. Within this framework, we can say that the cinema audience constitute eavesdroppers on the screen dialogue which exists

²²¹ When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? (Hampole Religious Pieces, Ms. 79 (c. 1340) cited in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* and “Where the bee sucks, there suck I” (Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare).

²²² BELL, A. (1984): “Language Style as Audience Design”. In *Language in Society*, 13; pp. 143-204.

within a fictional world.²²³

The author affords us the “distance” required for us to be able to laugh at the misfortunes of others, whilst building up the narrative coherently (the Inspector is tired of asking Wilt, in his opinion, a dangerous lunatic who has murdered his wife, what he has done with the body and his motivation for the crime whereas Wilt, who has not killed Eva, is exhausted by a line of cross-examination to which he can see no point. Wilt, eventually, decides to be obtuse in order to lend some excitement to a dull and depressing situation). We are aware that Wilt has not killed his wife and, therefore, possess privileged information (insider information) which the Inspector does not (we feel superior).

- Interesting word “rehearsal”, he said. “It comes from the old French, *rehercer*, meaning...
- To hell with where it comes from”, said the Inspector. “I want to know where it ends up.
- Sounds a bit like a funeral too when you come to think of it”, said Wilt, continuing his campaign of semantic attrition.
- Inspector Flint hurled himself into the trap.
- Funeral? Whose funeral?
- Anyone's”, said Wilt blithely. “Hearse, rehearse. You could say that's what happens when you exhume a body. You rehearse it though I don't suppose you fellows use hearses.
- For God's sake”, shouted the Inspector. “Can't you ever stick to the point? You said you were rehearsing something and I want to know what that something was.
- An idea, a mere idea”, said Wilt. “One of those ephemera of mental fancy that flit like butterflies across the summer landscape of the mind blown by the breezes of association that come like sudden showers ... I rather like that.
- I don't”, said the Inspector looking at him bitterly. “What I want to know is what you were rehearsing. That's what I'd like to know.
- I've told you. An idea.
- What sort of idea?
- Just an idea”, said Wilt. “A mere....
- So help me God, Wilt”, shouted the Inspector. “If you start on these fucking butterflies again I'll break the unbroken habit of a lifetime and

²²³ MASON, I. (1989): “Speaker Meaning and Reader Meaning: Preserving Coherence in Screen Translating”. In *Babel: The Cultural and Linguistic Barriers between Nations*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

wring your bloody neck. (pp. 136-137)

- *Una palabra interesante. <Ensayo>”, dijo. “Viene de ...*
- *No me importa de donde venga”, cortó el inspector. “No me importa el origen, lo que quiero conocer es el fin.*
- *Parece un poco fúnebre eso de fin, si se pone uno a pensarlo”, dijo Wilt prosiguiendo con la campaña de desgaste semántico.*
- El Inspector Flint cayó de inmediato en la trampa.*
- *¿Fúnebre? ¿Qué es lo que le parece fúnebre?*
- *Lo que ha dicho usted”, dijo Wilt tranquilo. “Lo del fin.*
- *Por amor de Dios”, gritó el Inspector. “¿Es que no es capaz de seguir el hilo de la conversación? ¿Por qué tiene que desviarse continuamente? Me decía que estaba ensayando algo y quiero saber de qué se trataba.*
- *Una idea, una simple idea”, dijo Wilt. “Uno de esos vuelos efímeros de la imaginación que cruzan como mariposas el paisaje estival de la mente empujados por las brisas de la asociación que caen como súbitos chaparrones .. Vaya, eso me gusta mucho.*
- *A mí no”, dijo el Inspector mirándole furioso. “Lo que yo quiero saber es lo que usted estaba ensayando. Eso es lo que a mí me gustaría saber.*
- *Ya se lo he dicho. Una idea.*
- *¿Qué clase de idea?*
- *Sólo una idea”, dijo Wilt. “Una simple...*
- *Dios nos asista, Wilt”, gritó el Inspector. “Si empieza otra vez con las malditas mariposas, le juro que romperé el hábito inquebrantable de toda la vida y le retuerzo el cuello. (p. 155)*

The linking of ideas and the homonymy of the word “hearse”, as in funeral cortège, and “rehearse”, as in “try out” or “practise” is short of impossible to reproduce in Spanish. The fact that the word is forefronted and that the whole of the conversation pivots on the same, makes the difficulty of greater importance to the translation of this part of the novel. Any attempt to find a parallel equivalent will be contrived therefore robbing the dialogue of its surprise twists and turns.

The solution given by the Spanish translator waxes certainly much less lyrical than the original and gives a less clear idea of how much Wilt, the underdog, is gaining intellectual control over the situation. Nevertheless, it does represent a solution, even though it is in no way as ingenious as the original. Wilt uses metalinguistics to confuse the Inspector who, like Eva, takes everything said at face-value. This gives a clearer profile of the main character who is an underdog due to circumstances and to the people who surround him, but not because he is lacking in wit.

There is enough of the stereotype in this novel for the comic to be transposed presumably to any language where it is not considered to be downright offensive. After all, the humor is hardly subtle. The story, at this juncture of the novel, is that Wilt is being held for questioning for the presumed assassination of his wife, Eva, when he has, in fact, buried an inflatable plastic doll, wearing her clothes, under various feet of cement, in a symbolic act of rebellion. The real Eva is to be found, characteristically, nude albeit for an ivy leaf, in the Waterswick Vicarage with the Reverend Froude while her American friends, stranded offshore on their boat, blow up condoms as an SOS signal. This is not exactly subtle and has all the visual elements of farce required to amuse in the simplest, and most basic way. However, it is the dialogue which gives more subtlety and satire to the novel, showing Sharpe in a more Rabelaisian light. The following example of the cross-examination by the psychiatrist is a case in point.

- Dr. Pittman, this is your province not mine but in my opinion man is capable of reasoning but not of acting within wholly rational limits. Man is an animal, a developed animal, though come to think of it all animals are developed if we are to believe Darwin. Let's just say man is a domesticated animal with elements of wildness about him...
- And what sort of animal are you, Mr. Wilt?", said Dr. Pittman. "A domesticated animal or a wild one?"
- Here we go again. These splendidly simple dual categories that seem to obsess the modern mind. Either/Or Kierkegaard as that bitch Sally Pringsheim would say. No, I am not wholly domesticated. Ask my wife. She'll express an opinion on the matter.
- In what respect are you undomesticated?
- I fart in bed, Dr. Pittman. I like to fart in bed. It is the trumpet call of the anthropoid ape in me asserting its territorial imperative in the only way possible. (p. 157)

- *Doctor Pittman, ésa es su especialidad, no la mía; aunque, en mi opinión, el hombre es capaz de razonar pero no de actuar dentro de límites absolutamente racionales. El hombre es un animal, un animal desarrollado, aunque puestos a pensarlo, todos los animales están desarrollados, si hemos de creer a Darwin. Digamos que el hombre es un animal domesticado, con elementos de salvajismo ...*
- *¿Y qué clase de animal es usted, señor Wilt?", preguntó el doctor. "¿Un animal domesticado o un animal salvaje?*
- *Volvemos otra vez a lo mismo. Esas categorías maravillosamente simples*

que parecen obsesionar a la mentalidad moderna. O esto o lo otro. No, no estoy totalmente domesticado. Pregunte a mi mujer. Ella le dará un opinión sobre el asunto.

- *¿En qué sentido no está domesticado?*
- *Tiro pedos en la cama, doctor Pittman. Me gusta tirar pedos en la cama. Es el toque de trompeta del mono antropoide que hay en mí que afirma su imperativo territorial de la única forma posible. (p. 178)*

The reader does not expect the man who is talking of the relative merits and demerits of the theories of Darwin and Kierkegaard (although again the reference to the philosopher is omitted in the Spanish version) to be talking about scatological basics in the next breath. It is precisely these elements of finesse which are lost in translation.

The sensation of intellectual superiority (shared by Wilt and the reader) is lost as the translator, faced with the problems of the *macro-situation* (the scene as it has been elaborated up until then, often with the express purpose of allowing for the conversation) compounded with the word-play and the implicit *intertextuality*, cannot cope, and control over the whole effect ends up being impossible to transpose. There can also be no doubt about it: the names in English convey a great deal about the characters, marking them often as humorous or figures-of-fun whereas, without translation, they say very little to the Spanish audiences. Wilt, the underdog, wins out in the end.

For the very first time in his life Wilt knew himself to be free ... The race was not to the swift after all, it was to the indefatigably inconsequential and life was random, anarchic and chaotic. Rules were made to be broken and the man with the grasshopper mind was one step ahead of all the others. (p. 211)

Por primerísima vez en su vida, Wilt sabía que era libre ... La carrera no la ganaba, después de todo, el más rápido, sino el más infatigablemente incoherente. La vida era azar, anarquía y caos. Las normas estaban hechas para quebrantarlas y el que tenía mentalidad de saltamontes se hallaba un salto por delante de todos los demás. (p. 240)

The South African series by Tom Sharpe (he was deported from South Africa)

also uses names to effect. Colonel Heathcote-Kilcoon, in *Indecent Exposure*²²⁴, is far from neutral. Here, the police chief, a Boer, Kommandant van Heerden is obsessed with things British. South Africa, being a bilingual country, with Aafrikans and English as the two official languages, it shares the problems encountered by any bilingual community and perhaps more so in this case since the two languages are Germanic, thus allowing for many near similarities and near differences between them. Pieter de Bruyn comments that:

Of course humorous mistakes are often the result. Evidently all translation mistakes are actually mistakes of meaning, because it is always language-in-use, or interpreted language. Many such mistakes are notorious in South Africa and have become the object of jokes.²²⁵

Sharpe takes advantage of the fact that the two official languages are used in all walks of life and that this tradition of humor as the result of misunderstanding actually exists, not by using mistakes based on near similarities or near differences, since to use the two languages would require an insider knowledge on the part of the "eavesdropper", the audience. However, the Kommandant's passion for English and all things English, and his slight and tenuous grasp of the language itself present the trigger for the laughter here.

- This man Brooke is an English poet?

Mr. Mulpurgo said he was.

- He died in the First World War", he explained and the Kommandant said he was sorry to hear it. "The thing is", continued the English lecturer, "that I believe that while it's possible to interpret the poem quite simply as an allegory of the human condition, *la condition humaine*, if you understand me, it has also a deeper relevance in terms of the psycho-alchemical process of transformation as discovered by Jung".

The Kommandant nodded. He didn't understand a word that Mr. Mulpurgo was saying but he felt privileged to hear it all the same. (p. 89)

- ¿Y ese Brooke es un poeta inglés?

El señor Mulpurgo dijo que sí.

²²⁴ SHARPE, T. (1973): *Indecent Exposure*. London: Pan Books. Translated by PÉREZ, A. and ÁLVAREZ FLOREZ, J.M. as *Exhibición Impúdica*. Barcelona: Anagrama.

²²⁵ DE BRUYN, P. (1989): "My Grandfather the Hunter: A Humorous Translation from Afrikaans to English". In *Meta*, XXXIV; p. 1

- *Murió en la Primera Guerra Mundial”, le explicó, y el Kommandant dijo que lo lamentaba. “La cuestión es”, dijo el profesor de inglés, “que creo que aunque sea posible interpretar el poema bastante llanamente como una alegoría de la condición humana, la condition humaine, supongo que me entiende, también tiene un sentido más profundo desde el punto de vista del proceso psicoalquímico de transformación que descubrió Jung”.*

El Kommandant asintió. No entendía ni una palabra de cuanto le decía el señor Mulpurgo pero de todos modos consideraba un privilegio oírlo (p. 99)

The fact that the Kommandant is anything but cunning or intelligent, for that matter, is the source of almost the laughter. That, of course, together with ostriches being fed gelatine in French letters, and the police being administered electric shock therapy in order to forego sexual indulgence with the native women, homosexual policemen and transvestite lesbians: in short, a whole stock again of highly visual humor mechanisms. Time after time again, however, language play appears, together with mutual lack of inter-cultural knowledge, to confound the translator. That such cannot be explained without losing the effect is evidenced by the results of the translator's notes. That such cannot be translated is evidenced by the translation.

- By the way Daphne sent a message”, said the Major, “wants to know if you'll come out with the hunt tomorrow”.
- The Kommandant dragged his thoughts away from the problem of Els and the transvestite lesbian and tried to think about the hunt.
- I'd love to”, he said, “but I'd have to borrow a gun.
- Of course it's only a drag hunt”, continued the Major before it dawned on him that the Kommandant shot foxes. “A similar dreadful misunderstanding existed in the Kommandant's mind.
- Drag hunt?”, he said looking at the major with some disgust.
- Gun?”, said Major Bloxham with equal revulsion. (p. 149)

- *Ah, por cierto, Daphne le envía un recado”, dijo el mayor. “Quiere saber si irá con el grupo de cazadores mañana”.*
- El Kommandant procuró dejar de lado el asunto de Els y la lesbiana travestida, e intentó pensar en la cacería.*

- *Me gustaría”, dijo. “Pero tendría que pedir una escopeta.*
- *Naturalmente, sólo es una cacería de rastreo”, siguió diciendo el mayor antes de deducir por lo de la escopeta que el Kommandant sin duda mataba zorros a tiros. Un malentendido similar existía por parte del Kommandant.**
- *¿Cacería de rastreo?”, dijo mirando con disgusto al mayor.*
- *¿Escopeta?”, dijo el mayor Bloxham con similar revulsión. (p. 166)*

- * Drag-hunt: cacería con perros adiestrados que siguen un rastro. Durante toda la conversación, escenas siguientes, y hasta el final del libro, existe un equívoco entre los personajes: el Mayor habla de la inminente caza de rastreo (en la que utilizan a Fox (Zorro), el sirviente, como zorro y que es para ellos una especie de ritual de juego y representación), y el Kommandant parece entender que cazarán “vestidos de mujer, travestidos” (*in drags, sic*); el equívoco da lugar a esta especie de “monólogos paralelos” (más que diálogos) que el autor maneja en toda la obra.
- * *Drag-hunt: fox hunt with trained dogs who follow a trail. Throughout this conversation, the following scenes and on to the end of the book, this misunderstanding persists: the Major talks about the imminent drag-hunt (where they are to use Fox, the servant, as the fox in this type of ritual, play or representation) and the Kommandant seems to understand that they are going to hunt dressed as women or transvestites, ie. in drag; this misunderstanding gives rise to this type of 'parallel monologue' (rather than dialogue) which the author uses throughout the work. (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)*

There can be few things more typically English, with the exception of cricket, than the fox-hunt. The pragmatic equivalence is, therefore, difficult to achieve because of the specific cultural allusions and the humor created as the result of Heerden's lack of knowledge to this respect. The footnote (translator's note) which is offered when “the misunderstanding” is mentioned hardly solves the matter.

The humor is lost together with the meaning over the next few chapters where another series of misunderstandings, this time to do with the double meaning of Underground (lost in Spanish since the translator, obviously worn out, decides to translate for “Metro”, in other words, the Tube, thus losing the polysemic possibilities which he admits to in another Translator's note) lead us up to the final blow, totally missed by the translator and for which a solution, in fact, also exists in Spanish.

- You even dress the same side”, continued Mrs. Heathcote-Kilcoon with a professional eye.
The Kommandant looked around the room curiously.
- Which side do you dress?”, he asked and was amazed at the laughter his remark produced.
- Naughty man”, said Mrs. Heathcote Kilcoon finally, and much to the Kommandant's surprise kissed him lightly on the cheek. (p. 158)
- *Incluso se viste del mismo lado”, siguió diciendo la señora Heathcote Kilcoon, con ojo de experta.*

El Kommandant miró por la habitación con curiosidad.

- *En qué lado se viste usted”, preguntó, y le sorprendió la carcajada que provocó su pregunta.*
- *Qué piropo”, dijo al fin la señora Heathcote Kilcoon y, para gran sorpresa del Kommandant, le besó levemente en la mejilla. (p. 177)*

The translator uses the obvious “Incluso se *viste* del mismo lado”, instead of the verb “*calzarse*” (which is also used for “wear” or “dress” but with shoes, although it is in fact the correct word for “dress” as Mrs Heathcote Kilcoon uses it, in Spanish).

The last part of the translation is a mystery for the Spanish reader with no knowledge of English (and thus, no possibility of back-translation). The humor is largely provided again by our having insider knowledge to something that one of the characters does not (the cultural references) and being allowed to do a kind of *voyeurism*, observing how much havoc can arise from misunderstandings. We are distanced from the “scene” and are superior, intelligent observers.

V.7.2) THE TEXT BEHIND THE TEXT

The criticism of the racist apartheid in South Africa is treated humorously although the resulting message is, nonetheless, clear.

Verkramp, a particularly Fascist type official, decides that the men are to receive aversion therapy ie. electric shock therapy in order to avoid them communing with the native women. Here, we have an instance of a character giving the lie to his personality through his speech (although, in doing so, he lives up to his “name”).

- Men”, said Verkramp as they stood in the corridor, “today you are about to take part in an experiment which may alter the course of history. As you know, we Whites in South Africa are threatened by millions of blacks and if we are to survive and maintain our purity of race as God intended we must learn not only to fight with guns and bullets but we must fight a moral battle too. We must cleanse our hearts and minds of impure thoughts. That is what the course of treatment is all about”. (p. 81)
- *Muchachos”, les dijo Verkramp, “van a participar en un experimento que puede alterar el curso de la historia. Como saben ustedes, nosotros,*

los blancos de Sudáfrica, estamos amenazados por millones de negros; y si hemos de sobrevivir y conservar la pureza de nuestra raza como Dios manda, no sólo hemos de aprender a luchar con armas y con balas, sino que hemos de librar también una batalla moral. Hemos de limpiar nuestra mente y nuestro corazón de pensamientos impuros. Y ésa es precisamente la finalidad de este tratamiento". (p. 91)

This speech by Verkramp is totally out of character with his usual form of expressing himself (much cruder). Verkramp is a Boer and totally obsessed with sex. He is the most radical, if not fascist character in the whole of the novel with views on the blacks which are almost as strong as Heathcote-Kilcoon's. The situation is particularly tense. Black women have been mistreated, raped and had their photographs taken in order to provide stimuli for the electric shock therapy. The relief to the tension which has been cleverly built up in the fiction (but existed in fact) is afforded in various ways.

- Where the hell did you get these slides?", he demanded. The sergeant looked up brightly.
- They're my holiday shots from last summer. We went to the game reserve". He changed the slide and a herd of zebra appeared on the wall. The patient jerked with them too.
- You're supposed to be showing slides of naked black women", Verkramp yelled, "Not fucking animals in the game reserve!"

The Sergeant was unabashed.

- I just thought they'd make a change", he explained, "and besides it's the first time I've had the chance to show them. We haven't got a slide projector at home".

On the bed the patient was screaming that he couldn't stand any more.

- No more hippos, please", he moaned. "Dear God, no more hippos. I swear I'll never touch another hippo again.
- See what you've been and done", said Verkramp, frantically to the Sergeant. "Do you realize what you've done? You've conditioned him to loathe animals. He won't be able to take his kids to the zoo without becoming a nervous wreck.
- Oh dear", said the Sergeant, "I am sorry. He'll have to give up fishing too in that case. (p. 85)

- ¿De dónde coño ha sacado usted esas diapositivas?", exigió. El sargento alzó la vista resplandeciente.
 - Las hice el verano pasado durante mis vacaciones. Fuimos a la reserva de animales".
- Cambió la diapositiva. En la pared apareció un rebaño de cebras. El*

paciente tuvo convulsiones también con las cebras.

- *Tenían que estar pasando diapositivas de negras desnudas”, gritó Verkramp. “No de esos malditos animales de la reserva”.*

El sargento no se amilanó.

- *Bueno, me parecía que no estaría mal variar un poco”, explicó. “Y además, es la primera vez que tengo ocasión de pasarlas. En casa no tenemos proyector”.*

El paciente gritaba desde la cama que no podía soportarlo más.

- *Por favor, no, más hipopótamos no”, gimoteaba. “Dios mío, más hipopótamos no. Juro que no tocaré un hipopótamo en mi vida.*
- *Mire lo que ha conseguido usted”, dijo Verkramp furioso al sargento. “¿Se da cuenta de lo que ha hecho? Le ha condicionado para que odie a los animales. No podrá volver a ir con sus chicos al zoo sin que le dé un ataque de nervios.*
- *¡Santo cielo!”, dijo el sargento. “¡Cuánto lo siento! Entonces tendrá que renunciar también a la pesca.*

Tenor represents an important part of the meaning to be extracted in these parts of the novel. If nothing else, it is difficult to see how a character can, in one and the same breath, use the colloquial form “*¿De dónde coño..?*” together with the respectful “Usted” form, above all when we bear in mind that Verkramp is talking to a lower rank officer.

These irregularities in the tone of the text and scripts within the macro-script of the farse make it more difficult for the reader to establish a clearcut characterisation and to locate the triggers of humorous intent.

V.8) DAVID LODGE

V.8.1) THE MASTER OF PARODY

David Lodge is a radically different kind of novelist from Tom Sharpe, although like him, he offers us two possible interpretations of his more mature novels: the superficial reading of the narrative or the more critical analytical interpretation. His early novels did not reveal a clearly consolidated comic style, owing to the fact that they appeared to be rather obsessed with contraception, family planning and Catholicism, subjects which he, as would any writer, found difficult to deal with comically.

His series dealing with University life (most directly linked are *Small World* and *Changing Places* although *Nice Work* also participates in the same University atmosphere, but with a change of focus and main characters) are more structured and self-conscious, more contrived in their humor than the raucous, and often ridiculous, Carnival cavalcade of revelry served up by Tom Sharpe. They allow for two readings, however. The first is the "comedy of errors" and the second, is the parody and the satirical jibes poked at various schools of thought, such as the Structuralists, Deconstructivism and others predominant in the Postmodern literary criticism field.

In *Small World*²²⁶, the old subjects reappear: there is wife swapping, the typical American professor (typical from the British perspective), Morris Zapp and the typical British Professor (with no need for qualifications), Philip Swallow. Morris Zapp's first paper, (after his first structured, and structuralist, Saussurian conversation with Persse McGarrigle, the Irish innocent), already sorts the "men from the boys" in terms of the proposed readership to his novel, or rather, romance. Anybody who is not sufficiently daunted by the cosy chat over lunch of Angelica and Persse:

Different languages divide the world up differently. For instance, this mutton we're eating. In French there's only one word for "sheep" and "mutton" -*mouton*-. So you can't say "dead as mutton" in French, you'd be saying "dead as a sheep", which would be absurd. (p. 23)

Las diferentes lenguas dividen al mundo de diferente manera. Por ejemplo, esta carne que estamos comiendo. En francés sólo hay una palabra -mouton- para indicar el cordero, esté muerto o vivo el animal. Por lo tanto, no se puede decir en francés dead as mutton como en inglés, ya que equivaldría decir muerto como un cordero, lo cual sería absurdo. (p. 43)

which gives rise to the fourth footnote in twenty pages of text of the Spanish translation (the first describes the definition of the romance according to Hawthorne who is quoted at the beginning of the work, the second, the peculiarities of the *limerick*, the third, the allusion made to a verse by Yeats) will probably not resist, however, Zapp's Barthesian "Textuality as Striptease" (an evident allusion to Barthes'

²²⁶ LODGE, D. (1984): *Small World. An Academic Romance*. London: Secker & Warburg. Translated by RIAMBUA SAURÍ, E. as *El Mundo es un Pañuelo*. Barcelona: Ediciones Versal.

essay *The Pleasure of the Text*).

To read is to surrender oneself to an endless displacement of curiosity and desire from one sentence to another, from one action to another, from one level of the text to another. The text unveils itself before us, but never allows itself to be possessed; and instead of striving to possess it we should take pleasure in its teasing. (p. 27)

Leer equivale a rendirse a un interminable desplazamiento de curiosidad y deseo de una frase a otra, de una acción a otra, de un nivel del texto a otro. El texto se desvela ante nosotros, pero nunca se deja poseer, y en vez de pugnar por poseerlo deberíamos complacernos en su provocación.
(p. 48)

The in-jokes and allusions follow thick and fast as, perhaps, we would expect of a great literary critic who has decided to write a novel (or romance) about literary critics and literature professors. We could hardly have expected anything else of an author who begins his work with a cautionary note via a quote from James Joyce: "Hush! Caution! Echoland!"

The text, as he so rightly warns us, moves us from one level to another through a maze of intertextuality and stock figures: the beautiful Italian Professor, Fulvia Morgana, the drunk Irish doctor, Milo O'Shea, the Irish niece who has lost her virtue and who, not surprisingly, is called Bernadette, the two McGarrigles, Peter and Persse and the twins, Lily and Angelica Pabst²²⁷, the daughters of Arthur Kingfisher, together with many others.

It is as stock comedy as any Oscar Wilde play or, in fact, the original Comedy of Errors and, again, despite the obvious input of intellectualism by the author, may be read and enjoyed at a fairly basic farcical level. Only recently, they were described

²²⁷ Walter Redfern (1996) writes in *HUMOR*, 9:2, in his article "Puns: Second Thoughts", in itself, a difficult article to translate (as the Spanish version of this thesis will show), the following with respect to Tournier, also parodied in Lodge's novel: "The French novelist Michel Tournier has written obsessively on twins and, to that end, exploits large-scale wordplay. Homophones, it can be argued, are fully or partly identical, acoustic or graphic, twins: two bodies, or two meanings, in one". (p. 194)

in a newspaper as “chirpy campus romps”²²⁸.

However, it is no “chirpy romp” for the translator. When Lodge describes the Japanese Akira Sakazaki's attempts to translate Ronald Frobisher's great novel of the working-classes, *Could Try Harder* (translated, as mystically as titles usually are in Spanish, as *Conviene Intentarlo*, thereby losing the sardonic overtones) into Japanese, he is, in fact, describing the frustration of his Spanish translator. We presume that Frobisher is depicted as representative of the literary Generation of The Angry Young Man.

If the Japanese Sakazaki (another redolent proper name) encounters problems with the translation, and he is a specialist in English Language and Literature, it is a fair bet that the Spanish translator who, likewise, is an expert, will encounter double the difficulties in rendering the doubts of the Japanese as to the *double entendre*, whilst rendering the word-play in such a way that the audience (and, indeed, the translator himself) can enjoy the fun.

In this sport (*golf*), Akira sees an allegory of the elations and frustrations of his work as translator. Language is the net that holds thought trapped within a particular culture. But if one could only strike the ball with sufficient force, with perfect timing, it would perhaps break through the netting, continue on its course, never fall to earth, but go into orbit around the world. (p. 141)

David Lodge, in his work *Language of Fiction*²²⁹, voices his own feelings with respect to the work of translation, which he makes apparent, moreover, through the characterisation of Akira. Lodge says of the author/reader relationship in a translated novel:

The reader makes a “contract” with a translated novel which is different from the one he makes in his own language. He approaches it with a

²²⁸ DURRANT, S.: “An Oral Exam with the Prof”. Published in *The Guardian* (Saturday February 21st, 1998).

²²⁹ LODGE, D. (1966): *Language of Fiction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 20.

recognition of cultural differences which obstruct communication; he expects to feel insecure in the verbal world of a translated novel, just as he expects to feel insecure in a foreign country in whose language he is not fluent.

We have seen that in order for humor to be successful, there must be a feeling of security. If not, the communication of humorous meaning will fail. Akira fails to pick up the humor implicit in Frobisher's work, and the Spanish translator manifests his incapacity to communicate the perceived humorous intention via yet another translator's note.

A semejanza de Akira Sakazaki, también el traductor al castellano pasa sus momentos de apuro. En este caso, para no alterar en absoluto la intención del autor, ha juzgado conveniente dejar intactas las tres locuciones inglesas que tanto desconciertan, y no sin razón, al traductor japonés. <Jam-butt> es una especie de tartaleta casera, en realidad una rebanada de pan con mantequilla y mermelada. <Y-fronts> son calzoncillos tipo slip provistos de bragueta. Por último, llegamos al <sweet fanny adams> que es donde radica la chispa humorística en el original y que, traducido literalmente, significa "dulce culo". El hecho de llamar a esta parte de la anatomía humana <fanny adams> confunde al buen Akira Sakazaki y le mueve a preguntar quién es tan dulce señorita.

Like Akira Sakazaki, the Spanish translator has also found it no mean feat to try and translate this part. Here, to allow for the author's original intentions to be conveyed unsullied, the translator has decided to leave the words which caused the Japanese translator headaches, and quite rightly so, in their original English form. What <jam butt> really is, in fact, is a type of home-made bun (sic) made by spreading butter and jam on a slice of bread. <Y-fronts> are 'underpants with flies (sic). Last, we have <sweet fanny adams> which is what sparks off the humor in the original and which, when translated literally, means "sweet ass" (sic). The fact that this part of the human anatomy is given the name "fanny adams" is what confuses our friend Akira Sakazaki and makes him ask after the identity of the sweet lady.
(translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

We have also already noted the *cliqueish* atmosphere pervading Lodge's academic works. We can relate to Sharpe's *Wilt* and his terrible ordeal of having to teach English literature to Gasfitters and the poetically named Meat One, but how much can we relate to a series of lecturers who are permanently talking about "literature as invagination" and Romance as "a multiple orgasm". Brian Connery says:

Because the reader must re-enact the virtuosity of Lodge's performance in order to "get" the parody, congratulations and admiration for the author necessarily spill over onto the reader, and into self-congratulation and admiration.²³⁰

Part of the satisfaction of reading a novel by David Lodge consists, then, in recognition of one's own (and the author's) intelligence. There is connivance, a kindred feeling generated by superiority of intelligence. That, in this case, the English reader feels superior to the Japanese Akira is not without its significance.

Akira finds the page he is looking for, and lays the book open on the table. He touchtypes:
p. 107, 3 down. "Bugger me, but I feel like some faggots tonight".
Does Ernie mean that he feels a sudden desire for homosexual intercourse? If so, why does he mention this to his wife? (p. 105)

*Akira encuentra la página que busca y deja el libro abierto sobre la mesa.
Teclea:
p.107, línea 3: "Que me den por el saco, pero esta noche me apetecen unos cuantos faggots".
¿Quiere decir Ernie que experimenta un súbito deseo de contacto homosexual? Si es así ¿por qué lo menciona delante de su mujer? (p. 140)*

The author has already prepared the reader on the other side of the Atlantic to ensure they understand correctly the word "faggot"²³¹ since Morris Zapp, on the way to the airport, passes a sign which says *Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight* which, as Morris knows "*from his previous sojourn in the region is ... an allusion to a local delicacy based on offal*". The weary translator of the Spanish version again makes recourse to the Translator's Note wherein he explains:

De nuevo no parece haber más remedio que echar mano a la socorrida nota del traductor para aclarar este juego de palabras. *Faggot* es una especie

²³⁰ CONNERRY, B. (1990): "Inside Jokes: Familiarity and Contempt in Academic Satire". In BEVAN, D. (ed.): *University Fiction*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

²³¹ "Fag" in the lexicon of the old boys from Public Schools means "lackey" who did everything for his master, "everything" being understood in the broadest possible sense in the boarding school context. "Fag" in its original sense in English means "cigarette" and "faggot" is battered black pudding. However, "faggot" in American English is used only with the connotation of "homosexual".

de morcilla o albóndiga de buen tamaño, un plato popular en el norte de Inglaterra y que es elaborado con despojos, pero significa también homosexual. La frase del anuncio que lee el profesor Zapp dice en realidad: "Deléitese esta noche con *faggots*", refiriéndose desde luego a la especialidad culinaria local.

It would again seem that there is nothing for it but to make use of the handy translator's note to clear up this word-play. Faggot is a type of black pudding or large sized meatball, a popular dish in the North of England, made out of offal: however, it also means homosexual. The ad reads literally "Have a Fling with Faggots Tonight" referring, of course, to the local gastronomical speciality. (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

The degree of sophistication of the humorous satisfaction afforded by Lodge's work is far superior to that of Tom Sharpe's. There is a certain smug complacency in being able to be one of the "insiders" who understands the (not always) veiled criticism of Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Deconstructivism, and the academic world, in general. However, to be able to share that complacency, the reader must belong to a very small and closed circle of intellectuals.

The Japanese translation of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* (as revealed by the Japanese translator of Sir Philip Sidney, another 'in-joke'²³²) is, *The Flower in the Mirror and the Moon on the Water*, and represents almost the last in a long line of self conscious allusions, so much so that it is almost like reading a literary textbook on the Romance.

"It is a set phrase", Akira explains. "It means that which can be seen but cannot be grasped". (p. 295)

"Es una frase hecha", explica Akira. "Significa aquello que puede ser visto pero no puede ser aprehendido". (p. 369)

This is, perhaps, as good a comment as any with respect to the translation of a work as complex as Lodge's *Small World*, (in Spanish, *El Mundo es Un Pañuelo*

²³² Shakespeare is reputed to have "stolen" many of his ideas and even monologues from Sir Philip Sidney.

and in Japanese *Narrow World*). The intention to amuse can be seen, in the translation, but cannot be grasped.

V.9) NO THEORY WITHOUT PRACTICE

The choice of the texts chosen to highlight the difficulties of translating word-play - in our opinion, the impossibility of the same, if pragmatic and contextual relevance equivalence are to be maintained, are, by no means, an attempt to demean the translator and the quality of the rest of the translation, in general.

We are merely attempting to show that, given the structure of narrative and the importance of situational dialogue to the same, this word-play cannot be substitute for some other word-play which would be feasible in the Target Language, nor can the lack of knowledge with respect to the *double entendre* be resolved via a translator's note without completely destroying the humorous effect. These linguistic tricks are predetermined according to the script of the narrative and the script of the language (and culture) in which the novel is written. They are also predetermined by the tempo of the narrative and the speed with which the retrieval of humorous intention must be made in order for it to be successful.

These are translators whose work, on the contrary, we admire and respect for having attempted what no theorist has done so far, which is to prove that when Cicero said that verbal humor dies in translation, he knew what he was saying. Attardo (1994:28) reminds us of the sage words of the classic authors when he comments:

The criterion of resistance to translation seems to be the only empirical technique able to ascertain whether the humorous effect depends upon the linguistic sign. It is clear that if the humorous effect resists paraphrase (endolingustic translation) or translation (interlinguistic translation) or even intersemiotic translation (for instance, representation with a drawing), it depends only on the semantic content of the text. On the other hand, if the text cannot be modified and still remain humorous, the humorous effect depends on the form of the text.

V.10) ARTURO PÉREZ REVERTE

V.10.1) THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTER

This is the case of the two Spanish texts which we are also to consider from the same perspective. The first is *La Sombra del Águila* by Arturo Pérez-Reverte which, given the fact that Pérez Reverte is one of the contemporary authors in Spain whose novels are immediately transformed into film versions, (he is originally a reporter and, thus, produces extremely graphic detail), may yet be translated into English, although we sincerely doubt it. It is a Spanish novel written for a Spanish audience to enjoy. Few authors of any other nationality could put the following utterance into the mouth of the exiled Napoleon, reminiscing about his prowesses, (as reported by a Spanish soldier) and get away with it, maintaining intact the humorous effect.

En España metimos bien la gamba, Bertrand. Cometí el error de darles a esos fulanos lo único que les devuelve su dignidad y su orgullo: un enemigo contra el que unirse, una guerra salvaje, un objeto para desahogar su indignación y su rabia. En Rusia me venció el invierno, pero quien me venció en España fueron aquellos campesinos bajitos y morenos que nos escupían la cara mientras los fusilábamos. Aquellos hijoputas me llevaron al huerto a base de bien, se lo aseguro. España es un país con muy mala leche. (p. 112)

It was in Spain that we really made a balls-up of it, Bertrand. I made the mistake of giving these buggers the only thing that restores their self-respect and pride in themselves: an enemy against whom to unite, a savage war, some way to let loose all that pent-up indignation and anger. It was Winter that did for me in Russia but, in Spain, it was these rugged little peasants who spat at us as we shot them dead. These bastards really did for us, I can tell you. Spain is a bloody-minded country. (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

The story of how the 326th Division of the French Army under Napoleon, affectionately called *El Petit Cabrón* throughout, tried to surrender to the Russian army and became, totally unwittingly, war heroes on the way, is told by one of the soldiers themselves, with a turn of phrase which can only be described as “rough”.

The tenor is approximately what you would expect from the Glaswegian

heroes of *Train-Spotting*, another notably untranslatable book (from the point of view of pragmatic equivalence) which has, nevertheless, been translated into Spanish, and with catastrophic results. The sarcasm is totally characteristic of this villager from Villaviciosa.

- La progresión se ve entorpecida, Sire".
Aquello era un descarado eufemismo. Era igual que, supongamos, decir: "Luis XVI se cortó al afeitarse, Sire". O "el príncipe Fernando de España es un hombre de honestidad discutible, Sire". (p. 15)

- *There would seem to be little progress, Sire*".
Talk about understatement of the year. It was like saying, for example, "Luis XVI cut himself shaving, Sire". Or "Prince Ferdinand of Spain would seem to have a dubious reputation for honesty, Sire". (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

It is doubtful whether audiences of different nationalities would not take offence (therefore, forecluding possible humor) to Wellington being described as a "sargento chusquero con mucha potra" (*a jumped-up sergeant with the sun shining out of his arse*); Fouché being called "un trepa y una pelota" (*an ambitious arse-licker*); Talleyrand "una rata de cloaca" (*a gutter rat*) and Metternich "un perfecto gilipollas" (*a total wanker*). Murat does not come off too well in the ranks of description, which is hardly surprising considering the fame he held among the Spanish.

Murat no era exactamente lo que entendemos por un tipo modesto. En cuanto a erudición, nunca había ido más allá de deletrear, no sin esfuerzo, el *Manual Táctico de Caballería* del ejército francés, que tampoco era precisamente la *Crítica de la razón pura* de don Emmanuel Kant. "El arma básica de la caballería -empezaba el manual- se divide en dos: caballo y jinete..." y así durante doscientas cincuenta páginas. Respecto a lo del "llegué y vi", Murat se lo había apropiado de un libro de estampas de sus hijos, algo que un general griego, o tal vez fuera romano, había dicho frente a las murallas de Troya cuando aquella zorra dejó a su marido para escaparse con un tal Virgilio, después de meterse dentro de un caballo de madera. O viceversa. Murat estaba muy orgulloso de haber retenido esa frase, que con la de "Y sin embargo, se mueve", de aquél famoso *condottiero* florentino, el general Leonardo Da Vinci, inventó el cañón, consituían la cumbre de sus conocimientos sobre literatura castrense y de la otra.

Murat wasn't exactly what you would call modest. As far as his education was concerned, he had had great difficulty in crawling his way tortuously through the French Army's Manual of Cavalry Tactics -hardly what you would call Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. There are two basic

parts to the cavalry: the horse and the rider... That was how it began and it didn't improve any over the next two hundred and fifty pages. As far as the "I came, I saw" quote was concerned, Murat had picked that up from one of his children's sticker albums. It was something that a Greek, or was it Roman, general had said at the walls of Troy when that bitch left her husband to run off with a so-called Virgil after getting into a wooden horse. Or viceversa. Murat was almost as proud of this quote as of "Eppure si muove", first uttered by that famous gondola condottiero in Florence, General Leonardo Da Vinci, who had invented the cannon. That was the sum and substance of his knowledge of literature, be it military or other.
(translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

The difficulty of translation here is striking the right note in the tenor, or register, of the dialect, something similar to what the Japanese translator was faced with in his translation of Frobisher's work in Lodge's *Small World*. As Nida says:

Translating involves much more than finding corresponding words between two languages. In fact, the words are only minor elements in the total discourse. In many respects, the tone of a passage (that is, the style of the language) carries far more impact, and often even much more meaning, than the words themselves.²³³

The examples given are of parts which are humorous because of what is said and, again, only humorous when they do not cause offence and do not, thus, alienate the audience. The rest of the novel is difficult to translate, and humorous, because of *how* what is said, is expressed. Considering that we are talking about a subject matter which consists in a group of prisoners-of-war released from the concentration camp only to be obliged to join forces with the enemy troops and fight against the Russians, suffering no end of privations on the way, only the tone can provoke humor. An example of this is given below, without translation, for obvious reasons.

Y encima va y hace frases, el tío, llegó y vio, dice, menudo enchufe tiene ese cabrón. Me pregunto qué le habrá visto el Ilustre para darle tanto cuartelillo. A lo mejor es que, guapo y con ese culo tan ceñido ... Usted ya me entiende, Lafleur, aunque no creo yo que el Ilustre navegue a vela y vapor a estas alturas: me fijé en la dama rusa que le mamporreó usted anoche en el vivac, sí, aquella de las tetas grandes que disfrazó de oficial de coraceros para

²³³ NIDA, E. (1996): *The Sociolinguistics of Interlingual Communication*. Brussels: Editions du Hazard.

meterla de matute en su tienda. Muy bueno lo de la coraza, Lafleur, je, je. Muy logrado. (p. 113)²³⁴

V.11) RAMÓN J. SENDER

V.11.1) PLAYING WITH LINGUISTICS

The second Spanish text to be used as an example offers humor which functions again, like much of Sharpe's work, on word-play and non-versations at cross purposes to one another.

La Tesis de Nancy by Ramón J. Sender²³⁵, which describes a young American girl's love affair with a gipsy, Curro, among many other adventures in Andalusia, Spain, whilst ostensibly collecting information for her thesis, has never been translated, not even by the author himself. This is due to the fact that the novel works, and the humor also, as a result of intricate interweaving of situation, stereotype and word-play.

To attempt to translate the novel would mean finding an equivalent of the stereotype of the American female student in Spain in the early Sixties, and bringing this foreign female equivalent in contact with a stereotype of the same characteristics as the gipsy, Curro.

This humor is targeted at a Spanish audience, in that it allows for the Spanish, personified moreover in the gipsy, Curro, to feel superior to the Pennsylvanian American, Nancy. If translation were to be carried out, the action would necessarily take place in a scenario with the same clearly defined characteristics as Andalusia and, above all, Seville.

²³⁴ This part is not translated due to the enormous difficulties of establishing a tone equivalently gross in English without such being totally offensive.

²³⁵ SENDER, R.J. (1969): *La Tesis de Nancy*. Madrid: Editorial Magisterio Español.

En aquella tertulia aprendí que las pocas mujeres que salen solas de noche todas son estudiantes. Eso está bien; quiero decir que me gusta que sean ellas quienes dan la norma de independencia. Son señoritas (según decían) que hacen la carrera. (p. 117)

In the course of the after-dinner conversation, I learnt that the few women who are out and about alone at night are workers on night-shift. That's what I like to hear: I mean, women showing how independent they can be. These are young ladies (so they say) "on the job". (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

The polysemy of the word "carrera" in Spanish, meaning at one and the same time, and depending upon context, "degree studies" or "working as a prostitute" when used in the expression "hacer la carrera", with the difference only residing in the use of the indefinite or definite article, means that it is impossible to translate the text into English with an equivalent degree of ambiguity and, thus, to establish the ingenuity of Nancy. Nancy professes to know a great deal with respect to the mores and culture of Spain and the Spanish language but, in fact, reveals in her letter that she understands on a surface and literal level. In order to transmit the humor in English, what is implicit in Spanish must be made explicit, thereby doing away with the "surprise" element.

Porque Curro es el pariente universal. Tiene primos en todas partes. Allí donde llegamos, siempre encuentra alguna persona de quien dice que es un primo. Al cabo de tantos siglos de endogamia, en Andalucía todo el mundo es pariente, supongo. (p. 140)

This second text triggers on the polysemy of the word "primo" in Spanish meaning originally "male cousin" but also, and more usually, "idiot". The word-play is permanent in this novel, as is to be expected, given the situation. Although in some places, solutions can be given to offer an equally humorous rendering, these are scarce and do not coincide with polysemy eg. the confusion between "golfería" and "golf", two separate and unrelated, though similar words, could possibly be solved by "playing around" and "playing a round" in the following text.

- ¿Y llamas deporte a la golfería?
- Pues claro, hombre; al menos en mi país.

- Entonces ..., ¿quieres casarte conmigo y dedicarte a eso?
- ¿Por qué no? Pero yo no he dicho que quiero casarme. Lo has dicho tú, lo que es diferente. Si nos casamos, desde luego yo necesitaré mis horas libres un par de veces a la semana. Desde pequeña sentía atracción por la golfería. (p. 137)

- *You mean to say you call "playing around" a sport?*
- *Well, yes, where I come from, we do.*
- *You mean to say, you want to marry me and play around?*
- *Why not? Anyway, it's you who wants to marry me, not the other way round. If we get married, of course I'll need time for myself, two or three times a week. I've always wanted to play a round, ever since I was a baby.* (translation MARGARET HART, 1998).

Attardo (1994:29) makes a very pertinent comment with respect to translation of humor that:

The issue is not that of practical feasibility of the translation or the ability of the translators. The rendering of puns in another language is a functional translation wherein the original text is deformed to achieve the desired effect in the target language, or is the result of accidental asystematic congruencies between the two languages. It remains that literal, non-functional translation of puns between unrelated languages is theoretically impossible. The impossibility derives from the fact that puns associate, for instance, two signifiers (the sounds or characters used to represent a word) that are identical or similar and two signifieds (the meaning of a word) that are different. Because the relation between the signified and the signifiers is arbitrary, every language articulates it differently.

The proof of the pudding is, they say, in the eating and the fact of the matter is that, both theoretically and empirically, "two into one don't go", above all, when the effect of the text is humorous, and translation cannot be effected via compensation, or when word-play is contextually relevant to the plot and characterisation. It cannot be explained in humorous texts, given the brevity of the lapse in time between communication and recovery of the intended meaning, vital to the success of the same. As Mason (1989:19) says:

When brevity is required, it is the transfer of illocutionary force which is often the barrier to successful retrieval of intended meaning.

The fact is compounded in narrative texts where verbal humor is generally embedded in the dialogue and, as such, is not to be re-created or re-devised since the situation or the scenario does not allow it. A functional re-creation, such as is proposed by Anne-Marie Laurian (1992:111) when she says:

In order to achieve a humorous effect in the target language, it is often necessary to change the reality that the text refers to in the original language.

is totally out of the question in a full-blown narrative context, such as the ones we have already described. It also gives the lie to Vermeer and Reiss's proposed global theory of translation through the *skopos*, in that the proposed function of the author is to amuse, and to amuse via word-play and culturally specific allusions. Lvóvskaya (1997:79) seems to us to make an important point when she asks what is the "prospective function" which operates the translation process as postulated in Vermeer's *skopos* theory.

¿De qué función se trata: de la función dominante del texto, de su subestructura funcional o de la función social que el TM va a desempeñar en la cultura meta?

What function are we talking about? The dominant function of the text? The functional sub-structure? Or the social function which the TT is designed to play in the target culture? (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

If the social function consists in acknowledgement of empathy between persons via correct retrieval of meaning in complicated games of word-play and ambiguity, the functional substructure is designed to provoke laughter or, at least, mirth at the specific point in the narrative where it was originally located, and the dominant function of the text is humorous. This humor is produced, via the interpersonal element of the dialogue, in Sender's novel, and the incongruity between the reality as perceived by Nancy and the "true" picture. Such adaptation, as proposed by Laurian and the *skopos* school, for adaptation it is, does not appear to us to be acceptable. The type of text which has a dominant contextual focus, which is Operative or Vocative, is focused on a specific public with clearly defined coordinates of humor.

We also find it difficult to accept the only weakness in what we consider to be an excellent study on allusive wordplay, already referred to in this thesis, by Ritva Leppihalme (1996:215).

Wordplay, fascinating as it is, is only one of many features which all add up to a coherent whole and allow readers to share in the creative process.

It is difficult to see how we could apply this thesis to the following text in *La Tesis de Nancy*:

- ¿Vale el vale?
 - Sí", dijo Curro. "Pero no vino el vino".
- Mistress Dawson repetía: <Vale el vale. Vino el vino.> Parecían consignas secretas en clave. En aquel momento dos contertulios estaban hablando animadamente y uno se lamentaba de tener que ir cada día a casa del dentista, donde pasaba grandes molestias. El otro le preguntaba cómo se las arreglaba para comer y el de los dientes respondía agriamente:
- ¿Cómo como? Como como como.
- Bajó la voz Mrs. Dawson para preguntarme qué idioma hablaba aquel hombre que repetía la misma palabra cinco veces en diferentes tonos, como los chinos. Curro dijo que hablaba portugués <del otro lado de la mar>. Y añadió:
- Eze tiene una tía mulata en Riojaneiro. ¿No ha oído mentar esa tierra? Er que la descubrió era de la Rioja y de ahí er nombre. La tía es la que suelta la mosca para que er niño estudie en la Universidad de Sevilla ...
- Otro de la tertulia me dijo que la mosca es de una especie un poco rara, que se cría en Cataluña y que se llama *pastizara vulgaris*. En Andalucía no usan esa mosca, sino otra que llaman <guita>. *Guita tartesa*.

The word-play based on the homonym, "¿Vale el vale?" and "Vino el vino" can be translated, as can any text, but not respecting the form which here is being forefronted in order to produce mirth²³⁶. However, it would be tedious, to say the least, to try to explain succinctly and naturally, the allusions to the wine-growing region of Rioja, used erroneously as the source of the name, Río de Janeiro in Brazil (*Rioja - Rio(de) Janeiro*), "la mosca" (literally, the "fly") used as a synonym of

²³⁶ We suggest "Is the chit shit?" "No, but the spirit's been spirited", with all of the accompanying problems of manifest irregularity in register between the two. In the sentence, "¿Cómo como? Como como como", we suggest the following version, "How I chow? I chow how I chow". The illocutionary force is diluted due to the need for the pronoun in English where it was not required in Spanish.

“guita”, that is, “money” or “pasta” (“bread” or “dough”) together with the cultural reference to the Catalans and their famed devotion to saving money without totally losing sight of the intention of the author. And the intention of the author is to produce an accumulation of laughter and mirth due to metalinguistics requiring elaborate cultural and linguistic knowledge which is completely outwith the reach of either Mrs Dawson or Nancy.

The word-play is contextually relevant, vital to the functional sub-structure of this episode and to the macro-structure of the plot and characterisation as developed up until this point in the novel by the author.

Leppihalme (1996:215) herself has admitted that the problem of translating allusive wordplay (which is not totally the case of the example given above, but only of the last part) is a cultural problem and “sometimes a nearly insurmountable one” and may not work, “short of complete rewriting” using to her purpose a quote of Gutt’s²³⁷ to the effect that communication “*crucially involves determining what one can communicate to a particular audience given their particular background knowledge*”. Despite the fact, however, in this excellent article, that she appears to be hesitant in saying that some things may be untranslatable, she eventually takes courage (although she contradicts the same later) by saying:

We must also accept that some texts are so grounded in the source culture that they are unlikely to have a life in another. And indeed, as far as I have been able to establish, no Finnish translation of Tweedie (1983) has been published.²³⁸

Leppihalme here is referring to the work of Jill Tweedie, *Letters from a Faint-Hearted Feminist*²³⁹ which she admits to having found outrageously funny in the original, which is probably the reason why she offered extracts of the book as an

²³⁷ GUTT, E.A. (1990): “A Theoretical Account of Translation - Without a Translation Theory”. In *Target* 2:2; pp. 135-164.

²³⁸ LEPPihalme, R. (1996): *Op. Cit.*; p. 215.

²³⁹ TWEEDIE, J. (1983): *Letters from a Faint-Hearted Feminist*. London: Picador/Pan Books.

exercise for advanced students and professional translators. The following text proved to defeat all but one whose translation was still funny but much less so.

Due to hitherto undetected EEC apricot mountain, baby has runs ie. baby sits, I run. Result: this postcard written under low cloud formed by fall-out from nappies incinerating in *some foreign field that is forever England*.

(With yet another reference to Rupert Brooke's poetry, as in Sharpe's *Indecent Exposure*, a fact which is not surprising since it is accessible to the wider public, given that the poet is on the English Literature curriculum in all Secondary Schools).

We have seen, from the examples of the texts given, that the prototypes offered of humor function in the same way as the prototypes of non-contextually dominant humorous texts. No one text is purely Informative, Expressive or Vocative. Nor is any given humorous text purely farcical, visual, situational humor based on stereotypes, nor is it purely satirical nor, for that matter, pure word-play (unless we were to talk of phonetic "nonsense" humor, such as Ormond de Kay's *N'Heures Souris Rames*).

The humor, moreover, is created through carefully stage-managed characterisation and script, within an ordinary narrative framework, paced to give the reader time to recover stability before the next "surprise". However, we have also seen that situational, highly visual humor is considered to be more easily accessible to a wider audience, culturally allusive satire and parody less so, and verbal humor, even less. We would even go so far as to say that situational humor probably requires a feeling of Community, satire and parody require a narrower, more sophisticated co-presence and word-play requires the total sophistication of co-linguistic frames.

VI

FOREFRONTING EQUIVALENCE OF CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE

All life therefore comes back to the question of our speech, the medium through which we communicate with each other; for all life comes back to the question of our relations with one another.²⁴⁰

Translation and humor are here examined from their historical and sociological perspectives, in the context of the situation and the intention of both forms of providing mediation and facilitating social cohesion.

Just as there is no universally applicable theory of translation, since communication is used to different effects and purposes, so there is no universal principle of humor. It is interesting to note that both translation and humor can be used as arms to avoid conflict and to exert control. They can also be used to promote and facilitate greater understanding, in that both allow us to see reality in a new light. It is indeed fascinating to note how translation and humor have developed along parallel lines in History, responding similarly to different historical moments. Humor is the other way of looking at reality. Translation is the Other's way of looking at reality.

²⁴⁰ JAMES, H.: "The Question of Our Speech", as quoted in RICHARDS, I.A. (1936): *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. New York: Oxford University Press.

VI.1) THE CO-TEXT

We have also examined the development of language skills in the human being. Language of a first order helps us to monitor and to report on situations in an expository way, informing others and ourselves “objectively” and conventionally at an *ideational* level, basing such information on a series of “objective folk truths” ie. shared community assumptions with respect to reality. Language is thus used to order and categorise the world around us, the *what* or the sum and substance of our context. Ian Richards (1936:11) comments on this respect:

And with words which have constant conditions the common sense view that they have fixed proper meanings, which should be learned and observed, is justified. But these words are fewer than we suppose. Most words, as they pass from context to context, change their meanings; and in many different ways. It is their duty and their service to us to do so.

The immediate propositional sense of such referential language is literal. It is designed to avoid ambiguity, to be “objective”, to designate. Language with *locutionary* force describes the common-day scripts on which our normal life is based, using the familiar associations between sign and signified. This is necessarily a stable relationship, allowing for people to come to logical and experiential conclusions as to which stereotyped frame or language sequence is associated to which recurrent common situation. Thus, we have certain schemas, scripts and frames which Brown and Yule refer to as:

Metaphors for the description of how knowledge of the world is organized in human memory and also how it is activated in the process of discourse understanding.²⁴¹

VI.1.1) FORMAL EQUIVALENCE

These Memory Organization Packets (or MOPs)²⁴² are triggered off by some familiar propositional anchor, normally in the case of Universal humor by some

²⁴¹ BROWN, G. and YULE, G. (1983): *Discourse Analysis*. Harlow: Longman.

²⁴² BELL, R.T. (1991): *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London: Longman; p. 250.

stereotyped topic: some coordinate which allows us to predict humorous intent and thus to adopt the non *bona-fide* cooperative mode. In other words, we are working at the purely *ideational* level, where translation could adopt the *dominant formal equivalence* approach.

We are dealing with full propositional functional sentences, and where there is very little inference which is not made manifest by topic or “objective reality”. This can be said also of situational humor where the appeal is highly visual and the “truth values” easily accessible as learned folk “truths” shared by many different communities. The audience act as “observers” of the conventional comic scenario, which, nevertheless, continues to include some necessary element of surprise, a scenario with which they feel familiar and secure. The humor is produced by *what* is said and *what* happens. We witness other people's follies or mishaps, with a predisposition towards being entertained.

We have seen that this is the type of textual element which is forefronted in humorous texts representative of humor viewed from the perspective of the theory of superiority or in the Bergsonian sense of “social corrective”. It is the most accessible level of humor, which we could broadly label Universal.

The same stereotypes (drunks, innocents, mothers-in-law, underdogs) are used from one nation to another, with only the referential “label” varying. The *formal equivalence* is already present and, thus, the act of translation consists in re-mapping denotated meaning, since the connotations already exist, embedded in the folk culture of the host language and the target audience. It is the co-text²⁴³ which the translator has to work upon. Neubert & Shreve (1992:72) comment that:

Intentionality and relevance are a sender-receiver (translator-receiver) pairing. Before a translation is begun, a translator must be aware of what makes the text relevant to the audience.

²⁴³ PETŐFI, J. (1973): “Semantics, Pragmatics, Text-Theory”. In *Working Papers*. University of Urbino: Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e di Linguistica.

This forefronting of *theme* or *content* places the emphasis, in the text analysis, on the *cohesive* element, the thematic element, which in this case is the “trigger” for the para-telic state. There must be sensitivity towards the target culture in order to ensure that the right tone or tenor will be struck in the humorous intent through the stereotyped *scenario* or *script*. As Emil Draitser says:

“Knock, knock jokes”, popular in America seem to be a perfect setting for humor, since the situation already has built-in suspense. “Who’s there?” is as inviting to surprise as “around the corner” type cartoons. I’ve found very few Russian jokes with this setting, perhaps because the situation bears too painful a memory for Russian people, reminding them of the years of Stalin’s terror with its mass arrests, usually conducted in the middle of the night.²⁴⁴

The Universal type of humor, in that it uses accessible stereotypes, understood to all nations, would appear to have as its over-riding *intention* or *sense*, the desire to produce community and control through shared values. Marvin Koller comments that:

If there is consensus or agreement that something is funny and persons can share the humor, then there is recognition or evidence of strong social bonding. Both the initiator of humor and the receiver of humor are signalling that they are members of the same group and can live together in accord or harmony.²⁴⁵

This is relatively “safe” humor which can be used to positive social effect although its roots may have lain, and to a certain extent still lie, in “Superiority” humor, in signalling “in-groups” and “out-groups”, and maintaining the status quo.

After the Race Relations Act of 1976, where jokes based on different racial characteristics were considered to be an infraction, Jasper Carrot, the comedian, said:

²⁴⁴ DRAITSER, E. (1989): “Comparative Analysis of Russian and American Humor”. In *META*, XXXIV; p. 1.

²⁴⁵ KOLLER, M. (1988): *Humor and Society: Explorations in the Sociology of Humor*. Houston, Texas: Cape & Grown Press.

Instead of the Englishman being stiff upper-lipped, the Scotsman being mean, the Welshman singing all the time and the Irishman being ignorant, we are having to change emphasis a bit. The Scotsman, for example, has to be a diligent, well-dressed Highlander who is generous to a fault. The Welshman will probably be a socially aware, anti-nuclear environmentalist and the Irishman will be well-educated and an expert on the works of Aristophanes. If anyone is mean, stupid, tone-deaf and ignorant, I'm afraid it's going to have to be the Englishman. The big question for comics is whether the Englishman, Scotsman etc., joke is going to survive the new age of moral awareness.²⁴⁶

Even in this era of obsession with what is “politically correct”, stereotypes and stock characters are still used to great effect in this way, in humorous narrative, in order to broaden the appeal, thus making the work accessible to a larger number of people. The more grotesque the character description, and the easier it slots into one of the standard humorous stereotypes, the more identifiable the humor will be. This is the case in the various texts used to illustrate the difficulties of translating humor.

We found that the more situational the humor, the more universal the appeal, hence the popularity of farce and clowns. We also found that the more situational the humor, the easier it is to translate, in that the referential coordinates exist in the other language frames and the threshold of world knowledge required to capture the meaning is minimum besides forming part of everyone's conceptual framework. The speaker and the audience share a *mutual cognitive context* which is “*objective reality*”.

Two Irishmen were stranded on an iceberg. One said to the other:
- <Oh, look Paddy! We're saved! Here comes the Titanic!>.²⁴⁷

Dos gomeros se encuentran abandonados en un iceberg. Uno dice al otro:
- *Ya acabaron nuestros problemas. Nos van a salvar. ¡Mira por donde!*
Aquí viene el Titánic.

²⁴⁶ Quoted in LEEDS, CH. (1989): *English Humour*. Translated as *El Inglés a Través del Humor*. Spain: Larousse Planeta.

²⁴⁷ From LEEDS, CH. (1989): *Op. Cit.*

VI.1.2) TV SITCOMS

TV sitcoms play on this conventional familiar type of humor. There is even usually a stock opening shot or familiar scenario which automatically triggers recognition with the comedy and, thus, expectations of what will occur. Larry Mintz (1988:5) explains that each episode starts out normal and ends up normal, with a period of moderate tension sandwiched between the beginning and the end.

All sitcoms also have an “innocent”, a Charlie Chaplin “Little Tramp” figure. These are:

Naive, simple, ingenuous, unsophisticated, natural, unaffected, guileless, and artless; they exhibit few traces of formal education, speak their minds frankly and openly, and understand what is said to them solely on the literal level. They exist in a fictional world populated by others who seem normal (if a bit exaggerated at times).²⁴⁸

The innocent is equated to the child who understands language at its literal level, language of the first order. This can also be said of the sitcoms in Britain. *Fawlty Towers*, one of the most popular series ever, achieved much of its humorous effect through Manuel, the Spanish waiter, whose grasp of English was very slight. This type of characteristic development, above all in a media element as popular as the sitcom, is a reflection of a “collective conscious”, the features which we share in common and which can be used to produce social cohesion and community.

Although, as the Race Relations Act pointed out, they signify an infraction of a norm, it is a commonly held assumption that such humor has “no serious foundations”, is not designed to give offence and does not project beyond the social situation where it is used.

Did you hear the one about the Irishman who went water-skiing and then spent the whole holiday looking for a sloping lake?

²⁴⁸ EISEMAN, J. and SPANGHEHL, S. (1987): “American Innocence: The Role of the Innocent in Television Situation Comedy Series”. In *WHIMSY*, 6; pp. 326-328.

¿Saben el del gomero que fue a practicar esquí acuático y se pasó todo el tiempo buscando un lago con pendiente?

A Scotsman committed a mortal sin. Immediately, he heard a loud thunder and saw lighting and an authoritative voice told him from the heavens that he was to be punished. "Choose your death!", the voice ordered. "What do you prefer to die from?". "Old age", said the Scotsman quickly.

Un escocés comete un pecado mortal. En esto que oye un trueno tremendo y ve caer un relámpago. Una voz del cielo le dice que le ha llegado la hora del castigo. "Elija como quiere morir", dice la voz. "De viejo", responde el escocés.

Since this type of humor, moreover, works with the referential, surface value and logical structure of language, normally translation is not greatly complicated unless one of the other levels of humor (linguistic or cultural) co-exists with it. The scripts and the frames are recognisable in any language and culture, representing one of the areas of social control exerted by ideational language.

VI.2) THE CONTEXT

Language of a second order helps us to interact with others, to persuade them and to negotiate with them. Once the child knows how to control the "things" in his world, he passes on to the next stage, which is to control or influence the actions of others. This is not neutral use of language but *conative*.

This is language interpreted in context, language as organisation by experience and need. Sperber & Wilson (1986:11) say:

Utterances are used not only to convey thoughts but to reveal the speaker's attitude to, or relation to, the thought expressed; in other words, they express "propositional attitudes", perform "speech-acts", or carry "illocutionary force".

Language is used here as a means to an end, to manage any given situation or context along the correct lines towards the achievement of the intended goal. It may

masquerade under the guise of mere *exposition* or *monitoring* but, when viewed in context, its managing or persuasive *inference* becomes clear. However, to be interpreted correctly and for inferences to be deduced, there must be shared cultural and contextual assumptions, a *mutual cultural context*.

The real text upon which language designed at *situation management* is based, is possibly left unsaid or unwritten, somewhere out of focus. The spoken or written text then is framed on a background of a broader unspoken and unwritten cultural context, the knowledge of which is basic, to see the actual version in perspective. Ian Richards comments:

Bricks, for all practical purposes, hardly mind what other things they are put with. Meanings mind intensely -more indeed than any other sort of things. It is the peculiarity of meanings that they do so mind their company-; that is in part what we mean by calling them meanings! In themselves they are nothing -figments, abstractions, unreal things that we invent, if you like- but we invent them for a purpose.²⁴⁹

The *intention* or *sense* of such text can only be perceived with respect to its *relevance* or *coherence* in the given circumstances. It is the art of saying one thing and meaning another. This may take the form of an indirect request, framed as a mere exposition, such as "It's hot in here" designed to make the audience open the window or door. In its extreme form, it may totally misrepresent, carefully framing positive values and sequencing them in such a way that they mean the complete opposite of what is their surface value. This is evident forefronting of *how* things are said ie. of *illocutionary* force.

Piemburg is deceptive. Nothing about it is entirely what it seems to be ... Sleepy Hollow they call it, and an American visitor is reported to have looked at Piemburg and said "Half the size of New York Cemetery and twice as dead".²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ RICHARDS, I.A. (1936): *The Philosophy of Rethoric*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁵⁰ SHARPE, T. (1971): *Riotous Assembly*. London: Pan Books.

This second order of language, the *interactional* level with meaning given emotional charge, corresponds, in humor, to irony and satire, to humor as creative freedom from the imposed norm, as relief from perceived tension which, as we have already shown, in its most extreme form, may represent “survival humor”: saying one thing and meaning another.

This “counter-coding” of language, or even “meta-coding” in irony, requires that the audience be familiar with the inferred suppositions for the latent meaning or intention to be picked up, and also that they feel secure, contextually, in expressing their amusement. Walter Nash (1985:152) comments on this point:

It is always possible for irony to fail transactionally, because the recipient is ignorant of, or does not acknowledge, the suppositions underlying the message. There is also a risk of failure in fine irony, when the ironist so hones and reduces the features of countercoding that the recipient is at times led to wonder whether the message is, after all, seriously intended and formulated.

However, the most important concomitant of the ironic utterance is the existence of acknowledged facts and accepted attitudes that provide a kind of “truth condition” for what is proposed. This type of humor is designed at social bonding, above all, in times of adversity. It requires for identification between the speaker and the audience, of perceived like-mindedness.

A citizen is reading a motoring magazine in a Prague café. Another man sits down next to him and notices that the reader is studying the pictures of a Rolls-Royce and a Russian Moskvitch car. “I wonder which of them you'd like to have”, says the newcomer. The man looks up and replies “The Moskvitch, of course”. “Come, come, you obviously know nothing about cars!”. “Oh yes”, says the reader. “I know a lot about cars. But I know nothing about you”.²⁵¹

VI.2.1) DYNAMIC PRAGMATIC EQUIVALENCE

The contrast between what the person says and what the person means can only be seen in the broader context, through inference and background knowledge.

²⁵¹ LARSEN, E. (1980): *Wit as a Weapon: The Political Joke in History*. London: Frederick Muller.

For the translator, then, the difficulty exists in what is left unsaid (the *meta-script*) and the invisibility of the back-drop, the cultural context.

In translation, when meaning is not manifest and the target audience's specific cultural knowledge cannot be taken for granted, *compensation* or explanation is used. Effort is made to achieve *dynamic equivalence* of intention and effect. The *illocutionary force* must be conveyed for this type of text not to be read at *face value* ie. literally and, thus, misunderstood.

The translator must be particularly sensitive to the *situationality* of the original text, the socio-cultural context for which it was produced, and assess the differences with respect to the situation in which the mediated text is to be activated and, thus, the additional information which is required for correct negotiation of sense. Too much or too little detail will affect the process of *correct script evocation* to the same extent as degree of comprehensibility: Should the effort to find relevance be too great, the audience simply abandons the effort. There will be no co-operation because the text is not *acceptable*.

Neubert and Shreve (1992:92), comment with respect to coherence:

Coherence is the property that texts take on when they have an underlying (and consistent) propositional structure.

It is particularly important in this type of humor that the humorous intention, which is implicit, be perceived. The more serious the critical intent, the more implicit and cryptic will be the speech act. Should the underlying ideational structure of the text not be clear ie. the general frame in which the text is centred, and against which it has been produced, is unknown or unclear, the negotiation of *inferred meaning* will be impossible. The same authors (1992:100) go on to say:

The conclusion for translation is that ideational structure has to be understood by the translator before target language resources can be chosen to recreate it.

The focus is centred very clearly on shared knowledge of a much different type than was to be observed in texts forefronting referential themes and stereotypes, or world knowledge. This knowledge centres on cultural conventions and what is *relevant* in any given context.

The translator must gauge correctly the degree of implicature which can be left for the target audience to fill in without any effort, what will be an *acceptable* framework which will allow them to reconstruct the latent meaning. The conventional frame will probably be *expository*, superficially neutral but the *tenor* will give the lie to the seemingly “objective” report, causing the audience to look for the counter script or the *meta-script* which will explain the apparent discrepancy. It is *subjective* management of the author of *tenor*, of the means of expression which triggers the recognition of satire and irony.

In order for satire or irony to be effective, the structure of the discourse must be coherently and progressively marked or stage managed, by linguistic features such as hyperbole and repetition, which trigger textual knowledge frames. The first frame to be triggered will be “objective report” but expository style does not use hyperbole nor, for that matter, repetition, unless required.

The irony should be carefully structured, for it to work up cumulatively to a crescendo, at which point, the tension is released. The audience is partially defamiliarised from reality via a situation which is illogical, both in the structured scenario of the narrative and in the macro-situation (the narrative frame). The script and actions of the observed actor are totally out of character. Then, when the satire is recognised, the balance or the familiar picture swings into perspective again.

- The trouble with you, Sergeant”, Verkramp said as they went down for the third time, “is that you don't understand psychology. If you want people to do things for you, you mustn't frighten them. That's particularly true with blacks. You must use persuasion”. He stopped outside a cell door. The Sergeant unlocked it and the large black girl was pitched inside. Verkramp stepped over her body and looked at the women cringing against the wall.
- Now then, there's no need to be frightened”, he told them. “Which one of you girls would like to come upstairs and see some pictures? They are pretty pictures”. There was no great rush of volunteers. Verkramp tried

again.

- No one is going to hurt you. You needn't be afraid".
- There was still no response apart from a moan from the girl on the floor. Verkramp's sickly smile faded.
- Grab the bitch", he yelled at the konstabels and the next moment a thin black girl was being hustled upstairs.
 - You see what I mean about psychology", Luitenant Verkramp said to the Sergeant as they followed her up.²⁵²

- *Lo que le pasa a usted sargento", le dijo Verkramp cuando bajaban por tercera vez, "es que no sabe lo que es la psicología. Si quiere que la gente haga algo por usted, no puede asustarles. Y especialmente en el caso de los negros. Hay que utilizar la persuasión". Se pararon a la puerta de la celda. El sargento abrió y echaron dentro a la chica negra grande. Verkramp pasó entonces sobre su cuerpo y miró a las otras mujeres que estaban encogidas contra la pared.*

- *Vamos, vamos, no tenéis por qué asustaros", les dijo. "¿Cuál de vosotras quiere acompañarme arriba a ver unas fotos? Son muy bonitas". No se produjo ninguna avalancha de voluntarias y Verkramp probó otra vez. "Nadie os va a hacer daño. No tenéis nada que temer".*

Como única respuesta se oyó el gemido de la chica del suelo. La lánguida sonrisa de Verkramp desapareció.

- *Agarren a esa zorra", gritó a los policías, y pronto éstos hacían subir las escaleras a empujones a una chica negra menudita.*
- *¿Se da usted cuenta de lo que quiero decir con lo de que hay que tener psicología?", preguntó el Luitenant al sargento Breitenbach mientras subían detrás de la chica. El sargento aún tenía sus reservas. (p. 97)*

Meta-scripts and meta-frames are difficult to deal with, in that they depend for their sense and understanding on the unseen and the unwritten. True irony, as we saw in Sperber and Wilson (1986:240) is "echoic", ie. it refers us to something which is not present either.

This artistic form allows the author certain room to manoeuvre, to express a committed "decommitment", but it does not afford the translator the same freedom. For this type of humor to function as such, some information must be left unsaid and unexplained. This means that compensation is not a resource for the translator.

²⁵² SHARPE, T. (1973): *Indecent Exposure*. London: Pan Books.

Paradoxically, the “double remove” of satire and irony, which afford the author a weapon hidden behind a shield, a reality hidden behind another, may complicate the successful mediation of intended meaning and, more importantly, inference for the translator, leaving him bereft of any arms. The audience will then be left with a choice, when relevance and expectations do not meet: to interpret the vehicle literally, to interpret the tenor alone (since it is not in consonance), or to abandon the effort of finding a relevant interpretation. This problem may be compounded if the text is not modern. The forefronting of *coherence* and *situationality* (understood in the sense of the necessary *mutual cultural context*), in other words, of *effectivity*, and the devaluation of *informativity* (*efficiency*) place extra responsibility on the audience to participate in the reconstruction process. Laurence Sterne describes the process in the following way:

Writing, when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all; -so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all: The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.²⁵³

VI.2.2) SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CRITICISM

In that the reconstruction of the satirical text requires greater intellectual effort, irony and satire as humorous forms have always been considered to be more sophisticated.

This is the humor of *Spitting Image* and *Paridor Nacional*²⁵⁴ (in other words, *Taking the National Mickey*, now replaced by *España va bien*). Since this humor

²⁵³ STERNE, L. (1759): *The Diary of Tristram Shandy*. London: Penguin; p. 2

²⁵⁴ Here we have a clear case of mediated restrictions on humor. “Parir” means to give birth to “dar a luz”, but also to “poner a parir” meaning to criticise viciously. The “Parador Nacional” is a typical hotel, built in Spain under the Franco régime and then mainly used by the rich and the political classes (as such) for hunting. The programme was staged in one of these hotels. However, the translator has to opt for the idea which condenses the basic philosophy of the programme ie. parody of the political rulers, but loses an important cultural marker or anchor en route.

works on connivance, complicity and like-mindedness, with a common cultural context, it is also the kind of humor (together with parody) most used by pairs of stand-up comedians, where the emphasis is on quick wittedness, freshness and accessibility of the inferred conventional scripts, how things are presented and ambiguity or *double entendre* (two different interpretations).

To say one thing whilst meaning another is not *illogical* use of language. Quite the contrary - it is a *face-saving* device which we use constantly although we may not be totally aware of so doing. When used consciously and skilfully, the effects can be vitriolic. Mark Twain said:

For your race in its poverty, has unquestionably one really effective weapon (laughter). Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution - these can lift at a considerable humbug- push it a little, weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter, nothing can stand.²⁵⁵

VI.3) THE TEXTUAL LINGUISTIC FRAME

The third order of language, mode, is the functional use of language. This is the language of advertising, and newspaper headlines: language used to effect. It is language used to defamiliarise, language as metaphor designed to arrest the attention and make us see the old in a different light. This type of language is used to arrest the attention in headlines and in ads, the "hot" mass media, as they are defined by McLuhan²⁵⁶.

²⁵⁵ NEIDER, CH. (ed.) (1983): *The Complete Stories of Mark Twain*. New York: Bantam.

²⁵⁶ MCLUHAN, M. (1964): *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill. McLuhan distinguishes between the "hot" and "cold" mass media, in the following way. "Hot" media offer so much information that the people cannot absorb or assimilate it all. "Cold" media, on the other hand, offer scarce information and so the receiver has to fill in the gaps in the same via implicature and conjecture based on previous knowledge, social context and experience. Verbal communication, face on, is a "cold" media since people are reacting to a clearly defined context and modify their responses and reactions according to the circumstances. Written text requires a more complex process of comprehension. It is a "hot" media since the author and the reader probably do not know each other and the communication is not direct but displaced in time and space. Therefore, the modifications with respect to the expectations of the text and the responses to the same occur at a slower pace or simply do not occur at all, depending upon the degree of spatial-temporal and cultural knowledge held by the reader.

This is the language of humor caused by perceived incongruity, when two totally disparate interpretations or scripts are triggered from one disjunctive, usually a polysemic word. On this point, Ian Richards (1936:126) says:

As the two things put together are more remote, the tension created is, of course, greater. That tension is the spring of the bow, the source of the energy of the shot, but we ought not to mistake the strength of the bow for the excellence of the shooting; or the strain for the aim. And bafflement is an experience of which we soon tire, and rightly. But, as we know, what seems an "impracticable definition", can at once turn into an easy and powerful adjustment if the right hint comes from the rest of the discourse.

This is humor for humor's sake, language play for the fun of it. Word systems are polysemic and thus enable "*multiple and varied readings of a text*"²⁵⁷. As soon as a choice is offered between two or more interpretations for a given cohesive element, the relation is no longer language independent. This is non-canonical use of language.

Humor of perceived incongruity is provoked by homonymy, polysemy, homophony, homography and lexicological contamination, such as Spanglish, to name only a few of the metalinguistic tricks it gets up to. It is playing with language, recreation. As Claudio says of Hamlet: "*Methinks there is a method in his madness*".

- Do you know the prostitute's daughter? No. Well, she's streets ahead of her mother.
- She was only a fishmonger's daughter but she lay on the slab and said "Fillet".
- The man who crossed a truss with a polo mint and got a Nutcracker suite.
- The man who crossed a Gordon Highlander with a mousetrap and got a squeaky jockstrap.²⁵⁸

This is restricting the audience circle as far as it can go. To such an extent is language play only shared with people who are natives, that the wordplay framed in

²⁵⁷ APHEK, E. and TOBIN, Y. (1983): "The Means is the Message: On the Intranslatability of a Hebrew Text" In *META*, 28:1; pp. 57-69.

²⁵⁸ CHIARO, D. (1992): *The Language of Jokes. Analysing Verbal Play*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

sub-languages (such as Glaswegian English or Australian English) cannot be understood by anyone outside the area, without a certain degree of breaking in and tuition. This is also the case of the Canary brand of humor which is totally incomprehensible to the mainlander Spanish.

¿Cómo le dice un Canario a otro: ¡Cuidado! Que tienes la llave en la mano y me vas a rayar toda la pintura del coche por el lado del conductor?
- ¡Chaacho, chacho, chacho, chacho, chacho!

This use of language is a celebration of difference and sameness, at one and the same time, incongruous in itself. The total polysemic possibilities of the lexical and semantic scripts of any one language are only available to the native speakers.

Language play for the sake of it is a regression to the relaxation of childhood where repetition of single scatological terms causes unsaid hilarity. It is a recognition of *mutual cognitive context* which is beneficial for both parties in the communication. It reveals kindred spirit and affinity in that we are tuned into one another's wavelengths. The translation requires reference to all the possible scripts of any one language for the audience to be able to perceive the incongruity. Neubert and Shreve (1992:110) indicate that:

Translation is in jeopardy whenever words mean too much more than what they say. Allusions are typical examples of polysemic structures with more than one cohesive role.

What is more, the greater the incongruity and the more unpredictable it is, the more humor will be derived from the intellectual resolution of the same. As Holt and Willard-Holt say:

If the audience does not have a common ground, be that jargon, slang, gender, ethnic background, vocational interests etc., upon which to relate they will probably not find or recognize the intended humor.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ HOLT, D.G. and WILLARD-HOLT, C. (1995) : "An Exploration of the Relationship Between Humor and Giftedness in Students". In *HUMOR*, 8; p. 3. Walter de Gruyter.

VI.3.1) EQUIVALENCE OF CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE

When a stand-alone occasion, which is rarely the case even with jokes, there may be possibility of substitution by word-play in the other language should the situation allow for this not to appear forced. However, as Neubert and Shreve (1992:85) say:

Situationality is the central issue in translatability. If a translation is to succeed, there must be a situation which requires it. There must be a *translation need*. Many academic examples of so-called “untranslatability” are actually examples of texts for which a receptive situation does not exist.

Forefronting polysemy, homonymy and intentional ambiguity (*double entendre*) is skipping the norms of the communication system, in that it is making the relevance of the statement deliberately difficult and, moreover, no information is being given. Forefronting of these recourses, of metalinguistics, produces imbalance between the signified and the signifier. It shows that language is no more than a system of signs (cf. Delabatista, 1986:1) that can be twisted and turned at will.

This is defamiliarisation of our familiar “objective reality” where everything has a name which has been designated to it. The intratextual linguistic function constitutes the communicative function of the text. Word-play and intended ambiguity become the vehicle, the meaning and the end of the text. Rosa Rabadán indicates that “*éste es el desafío imposible del traductor: no hay modo de traducir la “materialidad lingüística”*”²⁶⁰ (“this is the impossible challenge faced by the translator: there is no way of translating linguistic materiality”).

VI.4) SITUATIONAL HUMOR IN NARRATIVE

It must be noted that in longer narrative forms, very rarely does Universal humor occur in its most traditional sense. It is used to establish stereotyped characters, to indicate humorous intention through the description of the same, and even to provoke humor through their names (the propositional anchors for the

²⁶⁰ RABADÁN, R. (1991): *Equivalencia y Traducción. Problemática de la Equivalencia Traslémica Inglés-Español*. Universidad de León.

characters) as in the case of Heathcote-Kilcoon, Wilt and Verkramp.

Situational humor is also used to set the stage for the more sophisticated humor, almost exclusively presented in dialogue form (or first-person narrative and monologues if it is irony or satire) ie. from a subjective slant, thus permitting, at one and the same time, identification and humor due to distance from the observed fiction.

The triad sequence, as in jokes, is used but in a more subtle way. An example of this can be seen in Sharpe's work, *The Wilt Alternative*²⁶¹, the second novel in a series of three (again working on the triad system). Wilt, first, suffers a misencounter, whilst drunk, with a rosebush, causing him to damage a particularly fragile part of his anatomy. The problem is compounded when, second, his wife tries to help him out of the predicament caused by his having covered the offending wound with an elastoplast, whilst he was still under the influence of drink. As a result of this, third, he has to go to Emergencies in the hospital and be treated for severe laceration with a whole series of misunderstandings, confusion, and embarrassing situations on the way.

The sequential triad is also repeated on the subjective level, as various characters comment upon the predicament. First, we have the wife, Eva's comments:

Ten minutes later, still wearing his jacket but without trousers and pants, Wilt was in the bathroom soaking his manhood in a toothmug filled with warm water and Dettol when Eva came in.

- Have you any idea what time it is? It's...

She stopped and stared in horror at the toothmug.

- Three o'clock", said Wilt trying to steer the conversation back to less controversial matters, but Eva's interest in the time had vanished.

- What on earth are you doing with that thing?", she gasped. Wilt looked down at the toothmug.

- Well, now that you come to mention it, and despite all circum... circumstantial evidence to the contrary, I am not ... well, actually I am trying to disinfect myself. You see.

- Disinfect yourself?

- Yes ... well", said Wilt conscious that there was an element of ambiguity

²⁶¹ SHARPE, T. (1979): *The Wilt Alternative*. London: Pan Books.

about the explanation. "The thing is ...

- In my toothmug", shouted Eva. "You stand there with your thingamajig in my toothmug and admit you're disinfecting yourself? And who was the woman, or didn't you bother to ask her name?"
 - It wasn't a woman. It was...
 - Don't tell me. I don't want to know. Mavis was right about you. She said you didn't just walk home. She said you spent your evenings with another woman.
 - It wasn't another woman. It was ...
 - Don't lie to me. To think that after all these years of married life you have to resort to whores and prostitutes ...
 - It wasn't a whore in that sense", said Wilt. "I suppose you could say hips and haws but it's spelt differently and ...
 - That's right, try to wriggle out of it ...
 - I'm not wriggling out of anything. I got caught in a rosebush ...
 - Is that what they call themselves nowadays? Rosebushes?"
- Eva stopped and stared at Wilt with fresh horror.
- As far as I know they've always called themselves rosebushes", said Wilt, unaware that Eva's suspicions had hit a new low. "I don't see what else you can call them.
 - Gays? Faggots? How about them for a start? (pp. 56-57)

Diez minutos más tarde, todavía con la chaqueta puesta pero sin pantalones ni calzoncillos, Wilt estaba en el cuarto de baño remojando su virilidad en un vaso para enjuagarse la boca lleno de desinfectante y agua caliente cuando entró Eva.

- ¿Tienes idea de la hora que es? Son ...

Se detuvo y miró el vaso con horror.

- Las tres en punto", dijo Wilt tratando de conducir la conversación hacia temas menos polémicos; pero el interés de Eva por la hora había desaparecido.

- ¿Qué demonios estás haciendo con eso?", jadeó. Wilt bajó la vista hacia el vaso.

- Bien, ya que lo mencionas y a pesar de todas las evidencias circunstanciales en mi contra, no estoy ... Bueno, estoy tratando de desinfectarme, sabes ...

- Desinfectarte?

- Sí... bueno", dijo Wilt consciente de que habría ciertos aspectos ambiguos en la explicación. "El caso es ...

- En mi vaso", gritó Eva. "¿Estás ahí con la berenjena metida en mi vaso y admites que te estás desinfectando? ¿Y quién era la mujer, o no te has molestado en preguntarle el nombre?

- No ha sido una mujer, ha sido ...

- No me mientas. Pensar que después de todos estos años de vida de casados tienes que recurrir a prostitutas y rameraas ...

- No era una enramada. Supongo que tú le encontrarías flores y semillas,

- *Eso es, ahora cambia de tema ...*
- *No estoy cambiando de tema. Me quedé enganchado en un rosal ...*
- *¿Así es como se hacen llamar ahora? "¿Rosales?"*
Eva calló y se quedó mirando a Wilt con renovado horror.
- *Por lo que yo sé siempre se han llamado "rosales", dijo Wilt sin percatarse de que las sospechas de Eva habían tomado otro rumbo. "No veo de qué otro modo se les podría llamar.*
- *¿Gays? ¿Maricas? ¿Qué te parece para empezar?*²⁶²

The dialogue is also built up around a triad: Eva first suspects that her husband is seeing another woman, then decides that it must have been a prostitute and then thinks that it must have been a homosexual (the "alternative" script of "pansy" has to be inferred). The second commentary on the situation is given indirectly by the quads, Wilt's daughters.

- Your father wasn't very well last night, darling, he heard her say. He had the collywobbles in his tummy that's all and when he gets like that he says things ... Yes, I know mumsy said things too, Hennypenny, I was ... What did you say, Samantha? ... I said that?... Well he can't have had it in the toothmug because tummies won't go in a thing like that ... Tummies, darling ... You can't get collywobbles anywhere else ... Where did you learn that word, Samantha? ... No, he didn't and if you go to playgroup and tell Miss Oates that Daddy had his ... (p. 59)
- *Vuestro padre no estaba muy bien ayer noche, cariño, le oyó decir. Tenía cólicos en la tripita y eso es todo, y cuando le pasa eso dice cosas.... Si, ya sé, mamá también dice cosas, cielito. Yo estaba ... ¿Qué has dicho, Samantha? ... ¿Yo dije eso? ... Bueno, no puede ser que él tuviera eso en el vaso porque las tripitas no caben en sitios tan pequeños ... Tripitas, querida... No se puede tener cólico en ningún otro sitio ... ¿Dónde aprendiste esa palabra, Samantha?... No él no hizo eso, y si vas a la guardería y le dices a Miss Oates que tu padre puso la ... (p.70)*

The third comment comes from the staff at the hospital.

- Just a mild disinfectant and freezer . I'll spray it on first and you won't feel the little prick.
- Won't I? Well let me tell you that I want to feel it. If I'd wanted anything

²⁶² Traducido como *Las Tribulaciones de Wilt* por DE MORA, M. (1988): Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama.

- else I'd have let Nature take its course and I wouldn't be here now. And what's she doing with that razor?
- Sterilizing it. We've got to shave you.
 - Have you just? I've heard that one before, and while we're on the subject of sterilizing I'd like to hear your views on vasectomy.
 - I'm pretty neutral on the subject", said the doctor.
 - Well, I'm not", snarled Wilt from the corner. "In fact I am distinctly biased not to say prejudiced. What are you laughing about?". The muscular sister was smiling. "You're not some damned women's libber, are you?
 - I'm a working woman", said the Sister, "and my politics are my own affair. They don't enter into the matter.
 - And I'm a working man and I want to remain that way and politics do enter into the matter. I've heard what they get up to in India and if I walk out of here with a transistor, no balls and jabbering like an incipient mezzo-soprano I warn you I shall return with a meat cleaver and you'll both learn what social genetics are all about. (pp. 74-77)
-
- *Solo es un desinfectante inofensivo y anestésico. Le rociaré con esto primero y no notará el pinchazo.*
 - *¿No lo notará? Bien, pues permítame decirle que quiero notarlo. Si hubiese querido otra cosa hubiera dejado que la naturaleza siguiera su curso y no estaría aquí ahora. ¿Y qué está haciendo ella con esa navaja de afeitar?*
 - *La está esterilizando, tenemos que afeitarle.*
 - *¿Tienen que hacerlo? Ya he oído eso antes, y ya que estamos con el tema de la esterilización, me gustaría saber su opinión sobre la vasectomía.*
 - *Soy completamente neutral en ese tema", dijo el doctor.*
 - *Bueno, pues yo no", ladró Wilt desde el rincón. "En realidad, tengo una opinión muy clara, por no decir prejuicios. ¿De qué se ríe?". La musculosa hermana sonreía. "No será usted de estas malditas feministas, ¿verdad?"²⁶³*
 - *Soy una mujer que trabaja", dijo la hermana, "y mis opiniones políticas son cosa mía. No entran en este asunto.*
 - *Y yo soy un hombre que trabaja y quiero seguir siéndolo, y la política sí entra en este asunto. Ya sé a lo que han llegado en la India, y si salgo de aquí con un transistor, sin pelotas y parloteando como un mezzosoprano incipiente, les advierto que volveré con un cuchillo de carnicero y van a saber ustedes dos de qué va eso de la genética social. (p. 89)*

Although the translation does not manage to conjure up the alternative script

²⁶³ "Sister" in English means "nurse". "Hermana" in Spanish, is a nun who is often to be found working in Spanish hospitals. To treat a nun with such disrespect besides asking her if she is a feminist is, to say the least, illogical and does little to enhance us to the figure of Wilt.

of “pansy” in the first part of the sequence, nor by any means capture the disgusting baby-talk of Eva in the second, which gives a clear impression of the age (hence supposed innocence) of the daughters and thus contrasts with the evident lack of innocence of the questions: and although the word-play on the polsemy of “prick” (a vital part of the male anatomy apart from an injection) and “working” (sexually operative apart from engaged in active employment) is not achieved in the third, the humor is translated effectively in that the situational evidence is such, that the detail of word-play and tenor is a bonus but not essential to the communication of intention and meaning, thus, in these cases confirming what Leppihalme said earlier.

The triggers to humor are in the situations themselves and, therefore, the work of the translator consists in communicating the situations with the same degree of visual clarity as they were described in the original. It is particularly notable that there are no footnotes in this translation due to the absolute priority given to situational comedy.

VI.5) SATIRE. THE META-SCRIPT

The humor of satire and irony is carefully modulated over the whole of the work with no major crescendo before the resolution, but rather a gradual accumulation of contrasting detail, coherent in itself but incoherent in the circumstances, which lead us to infer the script behind the script.

As already mentioned throughout this thesis, it is the tone or *tenor* which is all important in inferring the *meta-script*, the reality behind the mask. In *Nice Work* by David Lodge²⁶⁴, introduced by the quote from Benjamin Disraeli with respect to Britain: “*Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets...*”.

²⁶⁴ LODGE, D. (1988): *Nice Work*. London: Penguin Books. Translated by RIAMBAU SAURÍ, E. as *¡Buen Trabajo!*. Barcelona: Ediciones Versal.

The contrast between Vic Wilcox, the manager of a foundry and Robyn Penrose, the University lecturer who has to work as his “shadow”, begins with their names and ends with the subjects and tone of the “dialogue” between them. Again, the situation alone lends itself to exploitation of the humor but the dialogue communicates the true parody that Lodge intends to participate to the reader.

- If smoking Silk Cut is a form of aggravated rape, as you try to make out, how come women smoke “em too?”
 - Many women are masochistic by temperament”, said Robyn. “They’ve learned what’s expected of them in a patriarchal society.
 - Ha!”, Wilcox exclaimed tossing back his head. “I might have known you’d have some daft answer.
 - I don’t know why you’re so worked up”, said Robyn. “It’s not as if you smoke Silk Cut yourself.
 - No, I smoke Marlboros. Funnily enough, I smoke them because I like the taste.
 - They’re the ones that have the lone cowboy ads, aren’t they?
 - I suppose that makes me a repressed homosexual, does it?
 - No, it’s a very straightforward metonymic message.
 - Meto... what?
 - Metonymic. One of the fundamental tools of semiotics is the distinction between metaphor and metonymy. D’you want me to explain it to you?
 - It’ll pass the time”, he said.
 - Metaphor is a figure of speech based on similarity, whereas metonymy is based on contiguity. In metaphor you substitute something *like* the thing you mean for the thing itself, whereas in metonymy you substitute some attribute or cause or effect for the thing itself.
 - I don’t understand a word you’re saying.
 - Well, take one of your moulds. The bottom bit is called the drag because it’s dragged across the floor and the top bit is called the cope because it covers the bottom bit.
 - I told *you* that.
 - Yes, I know. What you didn’t tell me was that “drag” is a metonymy and “cope” is a metaphor”.
- Vic grunted. “What difference does it make?
- It’s just a question of understanding how language works. I thought you were interested in how things work.
 - I don’t see what it’s got to do with cigarettes.
 - In the case of the Silk Cut poster, the picture signifies the female body metaphorically: the slit in the silk is *like* a vagina”.
- Vic flinched at the word.
- So you say.
 - All holes, hollow spaces, fissures and folds represent the female genitals.
 - Prove it.

- Freud proved it, by his successful analysis of dreams”, said Robyn. “But the Marlboro ads don't use any metaphors. That's probably why you smoke them, actually.
 - What d'you mean?”, he asked suspiciously.
 - You don't have any sympathy with the metaphorical way of looking at things. A cigarette is a cigarette as far as you are concerned.
 - Right.
 - The Marlboro ad doesn't disturb that naïve faith in the stability of the signified. (pp. 220-223)

 - *Si fumar Silk Cut es una forma de violación con agravantes, como usted trata de demostrar, ¿cómo es que también los fuman las mujeres?*
 - *Muchas mujeres son masoquistas por temperamento”, dijo Robyn. “Han aprendido lo que se espera de ellas en la sociedad patriarcal.*
 - *¡Ja!*”, exclamó Wilcox echando atrás la cabeza. *“Hubiera tenido que pensar que tendría a punto una respuesta complicada.*
 - *No sé por qué se siente tan afectado”, dijo Robyn. “Al fin y al cabo, usted no fuma Silk Cut.*
 - *No, yo fumo Marlboro. Y curiosamente los fumo porque me agrada su sabor.*
 - *¿No son los del anuncio con el cowboy solitario?*
 - *Supongo que eso va a convertirme en un homosexual reprimido ¿no es así?*
 - *No, es un mensaje metonímico muy directo.*
 - *¿Meto... qué?*
 - *Metonímico. Una de las herramientas fundamentales de la semiótica es la distinción entre metáfora y metonimia. ¿Quiere que se lo explique?*
 - *Ayudará a matar el tiempo”, contestó él.*
 - *Metáfora es una figura del lenguaje basada en la similaridad en tanto que la metonimia se basa en la contigüidad. En la metáfora se sustituye una cosa por algo semejante a ella, en tanto que en la metonimia se sustituye la cosa por algún atributo, causa o efecto de la misma.*
 - *No entiendo una palabra de lo que está diciendo.*
 - *Tome uno de sus moldes. La parte inferior se llama <drag> porque es arrastrada por el suelo, y la superior se llama <cope> porque cubre la parte inferior.*
 - *Esto se lo expliqué yo.*
 - *Ya lo sé. Pero lo que usted no me dijo es que <drag> es una metonimia y <cope> es una metáfora.*
 - *Y ¿qué diferencia supone esto?”, gruñó Vic.*
 - *Es tan solo cuestión de comprender cómo funciona el lenguaje. Yo creía que le interesaba saber cómo funcionan las cosas.*
 - *No veo que esto tenga nada que ver con los cigarillos.*
 - *En el caso del anuncio de Silk Cut, la imagen significa metafóricamente el cuerpo femenino: la hendidura en la seda es como una vagina...”*
- Vic pestañeó al oír la palabra.

- *Esto lo dice usted.*
- *Todos los agujeros, espacios huecos, fisuras y pliegues representan los genitales femeninos.*
- *Demuéstrelo.*
- *Freud lo demostró con su afortunado análisis de los sueños”, dijo Robyn. Pero los anuncios de Marlboro no utilizan ninguna metáfora. En realidad, es probable que usted los fume por esto.*
- *¿Qué quiere decir?”, inquirió él con suspicacia.*
- *No simpatiza en absoluto con la visión metafórica de las cosas. Para usted, un cigarillo es un cigarillo.*
- *Cierto.*
- *El anuncio de Marlboro no turba esa fe en la estabilidad del significado.*
(p. 216)

This is no ordinary dialogue, to say the least. The two main characters are working along two opposed scripts, neither of which, it eventually proves is to provide a solution for the future. The translator must establish the correct register for the “two opposed” nations, in order for the irony and the parody to shine through. It must communicate pragmatic factors such as the following, outlined by Schmidt:

The global socio-cultural setting in the speech community, the participants to the communication with all the premises and presuppositions influencing them, a communicative situation functioning as a “frame”, the texts uttered and the verbal, factual and relatable (con-)texts.²⁶⁵

It is particularly relevant to contrast the social registers of the two main characters, Robyn and Vic. We use the definition of register offered by Halliday:

A register is a cluster of associated features having a greater-than-random ... tendency to co-occur; and like a dialect, it can be identified at any delicacy of focus.²⁶⁶

This is particularly the case where both characters begin to be influenced, in

²⁶⁵ SCHMIDT, S.J. (1973): *Text Theorie*. Munich: Fink.

²⁶⁶ HALLIDAY, M.A.K. (1988): “On the Language of Physical Science”. In GHADESSY (ed.): *Registers of Written English*. London: Pinter.

their speech patterns, by one another.

- Doesn't it worry you that ninety-nine point nine per cent of the population couldn't give a monkey's?
- A what?," said Charles.
- A monkey's. It means you don't care a bit.
- It means you don't give a monkey's fuck.
- Does it?," said Robyn with a snigger. "I thought it was a monkey's nut. I should have known: "fuck" is much more poetic in Jakobson's terms -the repetition of the "k" as well as the first vowel in "monkey"...? (p. 217)

- ¿No te preocupa que al noventa y nueve coma nueve por ciento de la población no le importa un pepino?
- Un qué?," dijo Charles.
- Un pepino. O sea que no le importan nada.
- Quieres decir que no le importan un huevo.
- ¿Es así?," preguntó Robyn con una risita. "Yo decía <pepino> pero <huevo> es mucho más poético según Jakobson, con su primer diptongo... (p. 210)²⁶⁷

The self-conscious truth to be learnt from *Nice Work* is that academia, who work at the level of theory and metaphor, and the "real practical people", who work at the level of ideational truth, have a great deal to learn the one from the other. Just in case we do not catch the drift, the author gives us another clue to how the meaning is intended.

The story is told. I think I now see the judicious reader putting on his spectacles to look for the moral. It would be an insult to his sagacity to offer directions. I only say, God speed him in the quest!

(Charlotte Brontë: *Shirley* quoted on p. 319 of *Nice Work*)

²⁶⁷ This is not the most fortunate of translations by this translator. Both this quote, the case of the "monkey's fuck" which is translated totally inadequately as, more or less "couldn't give a fig", "un pepino", which would hardly make anybody sit up and take notice besides not lending itself to the following remark referring to Jakobson, truncated before it causes further problems, and the quote with reference to Charlotte Brontë where the author wishes the best of British luck to the reader, "God speed him in the quest!" and the translator offers the stilted version of "¡Que Dios le acelere en esta búsqueda!", leave a great deal to be desired. It is difficult to see how the Spanish expression could be made to sound as crude as "a monkey's" unless the expression "que le suda" (a vital part of the anatomy sweating) were used since "me importa un huevo" (meaning to be important) can only be used in the positive form.

La historia ya está narrada. Creo ver ahora al juicioso lector poniéndose las gafas para buscar la moraleja. Sería un insulto a su sagacidad ofrecer direcciones. Sólo pido que Dios le acelere en esta búsqueda. (p. 312)

Had David Lodge presented this type of information in any other context apart from a humorous novel, the result would have been extremely tedious. The fact that one extreme, Robyn Penrose, a female intellectual and lecturer is played off against the other, Vic Wilcox, the industrial manager whose *"idea of pleasure on a Saturday night was to sit in front of the telly, with a bottle of Scotch conveniently to hand, watching 'Match of the Day', and discussing the finer points of the game with his younger son"*, allows the reader to come to the conclusion that neither one nor the other. Again, the translator has a fine situational structure on which to base the comic version in the target language. However, without the correct tenor struck for the two characters, a great deal will be lost (as occurs) including, most importantly, the interest of the new audience. Tenor is forefronted and if the differences are not made, the contextual relevance of much of the dialogue will not be clear. Halliday (1978:162) again clarifies the matter with the following definition:

A register can be defined as the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type.

Dialogue will be considered to be an over-expenditure of effort and irrelevant to the meaning and, as such, the total message will be diminished. This, in part, is due to the author's desire to spell things out for the reader, to over-inform (such as in the case of the metaphor and the metonym) producing manifest saturation and thus lack of co-operation (Maximum of Quantity is exceeded).

There is very little work done on prototypes of register which largely are grouped according to whether they are dictated by *thematic* or *ideational* concerns (ie. scientific register, sports commentary), the *interpersonal* relationship (ie. motherese -as demonstrated in the case of Eva Wilt- slang, dialect) or *social function* (as in the case of *Nice Work*: academia and working class). Attardo (1994:240) comments:

By adopting a polythetic theory of register, one can account for the simultaneous presence in the system of registers of a language of several unrelated criteria for register identification, such as subject matter, social function of the utterance, or interpersonal relationship among the speakers; moreover, the lack of a unique common denominator allows for the perceived connections of register theory with such disparate fields as stylistics, the theory of sublanguages, dialectology etc., since each of these fields puts a different emphasis on one or another of the possible parameters of register definition.

The correct adoption of register allows for associative meanings to be triggered and, thus, for the correct inferences to be reached in scripts where a large part of the meaning is implicit. It confers *connotations* upon a designated text. Correct and acceptable choice of register for the target audience is, thus, of the essence in an effective translation of this type of humor.

VI.6) HUMOR FOR HUMOR'S SAKE. METALINGUISTICS

However, we have seen that by far and away the most popular way of producing humor in a text, even in the sitcom, is by producing incongruous situations, observed only by the audience, due to the fact that two characters, involved in a scenario together, are working along two completely opposed scripts as the result of a polysemic trigger.

The humor is produced in the narrative through clever characterisation. The characters almost invariably profess to understand a great deal more than they actually do with respect to some culture or language (the native reader's). It is then made manifest that such is not the case, allowing the reader to feel superior and to revel in the subsequent misunderstandings caused by the revelation of some weakness (usually taking language literally) in the character exposed.

Estaba helada yo, escuchando. Curro no se casaría conmigo porque cuando me conoció no tenía yo mi flor. ¡Quién podría imaginar en los Estados Unidos una cosa así!. Corté un clavel de una maceta que tenía al lado y me lo puse en el pelo. Desde aquella revelación tartesa oída por una ventanuco yo siempre llevo una flor en el pelo ... Cuando me conoció Curro estaba yo sin mi flor, es decir, que no llevaba la flor de las mocitas andaluzas en el pelo. Te

aseguro que si pongo este incidente en la tesis, aunque lo desarrolle con el genio de Aristóteles, no me creará nadie en los Estados Unidos. (p. 243)²⁶⁸

Well, you can imagine, you could have knocked me over with a feather. So Curro refused to marry me because when he first met me, I didn't have my flower²⁶⁹. Who would ever have thought of a thing like that back home! I immediately picked a carnation and put it in my hair. As of then, I have always worn a flower in my hair ... When Curro met me, I didn't have my flower, that is, I wasn't wearing the flower that all the Andalusian girls wear behind their ears. I tell you this, if I were to put this detail in my thesis, even should I develop upon the theme with the skill and the genius of Aristotle, there's no way anyone back home in the States would believe me. (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

This reminds us to Aristotle's definition of the pun and the humor resulting from the same when "literal reading" is given to "a metaphorical statement". It also reminds us of Plato's doctrine with respect to the object of laughter as being human folly. John Morreal (1983:22) reminds us:

What makes a person laughable, according to Plato, is self-ignorance. The laughable person is the one who thinks of himself as wealthier, better looking, more virtuous, or wiser than he really is.

The resultant incongruity can be viewed by the privileged reader of the narrative who holds the key to the script triggered off by the polysemic meaning of "flor" (virginity, in this case). The whole situation -the American female student, the male Andalusian gypsy, the language causing the misunderstandings- must necessarily change in the translation if the humor produced is to be maintained. The whole *scenario* and *script* would have to be re-created which, we contend, is implausible and unfeasible.

²⁶⁸ SENDER, R.J. (1969): *Op. Cit.*

²⁶⁹ To say "deflower", or rather, to use the verb instead of the noun "flower" leaves no doubt as to why Curro does not want to marry Nancy and, thus, would make here reaction illogical. Deflower, besides, is too sophisticated a register for either of the two characters, but more particularly for Curro to use. The euphemism "not to have her flower" in Spanish is much less explicit than the English equivalent. The "implicit" nature of the comment is precisely what causes Nancy to misunderstand and to take what is said literally thereby creating the humor.

In short, there would appear to be *scripts* and *frames*, normally of the type which make strong cultural allusions or depend heavily on intertextuality and complete flexibility within the language system, which are designed only for home consumption. As Neubert and Shreve (1992:84) say:

Many L¹ texts are highly directed: they refer to localized situation - specific knowledge. Why should this knowledge be transmitted to L² users when they have no need, desire for, or interest in that knowledge? ... The purpose influences the way the translation is carried out. The situationality of the translation is never the same as the situationality of the source text. Situationality is an attribute of the text in its receiver orientation.

We can, quite reasonably, expect that no American audience would find much fun at having a young American girl mocked due to her lack of knowledge or lack of morals, especially by a gipsy. The translator, thus, has no acceptable framework, no triggers to be used, which will allow for the effective and contextually equivalent translation of word-play, and very rarely will translation be effective in such cases as register, ambiguity and word-play are forefronted.

When meta-linguistics are forefronted, and ever more sophisticated techniques of our language knowledge are deployed together with greater implicature, ie. more emphasis on the unwritten and the unsaid, the script behind the script, the translator is playing a losing communication game. Intended ambiguity is an area of true lack of equivalence, where it is impossible to transport the mechanisms of forefronted accumulated semantics relevantly into the TT. As Catford comments:

Translation fails -or untranslatability occurs- when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the TL text.²⁷⁰

At the dawning of a new century, there are few subjects which can be of greater importance in our lives than mass media. Audience response is a vital factor

²⁷⁰ CATFORD, J.C. (1965): *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; p. 94.

in the media nowadays, dictating which products are maintained and which are taken off the market.

We have attempted to show how, in humor, it is also the audience which dictates what is possible and what is not. Humor, in all of its multiple variants, produces some degree of defamiliarisation. We know that all Polish, Irish and natives of la Gomera are not idiots just as we know that all the other stock stereotypes are not what they are generalised to be. However, we accept this partial defamiliarisation with reality. We apply *trivial* logic. We know that Tom, the cat cannot possibly survive all the terrible things which occur to him when pursuing Jerry but we accept the “local logic” which allows this to happen. We know that nobody really speaks like Robyn Penrose and that if they do, they do not speak that way to people like Vic Wilcox. However, we accept this defamiliarisation of reality whilst the true story, implicit in the script, is spelt out for us via register and tenor. We agree to play the game. It is our contention that in humor, the emphasis on the translator is to place him/herself in the role of receiver much more than in the role of producer.

This coincides, in part, with the *skopos* theory in that function, promoting cohesion (or control) and avoiding conflict via laughter, is everything in the humorous text. However, a serious discrepancy exists in that no matter how much the initiator may intend to produce humorous effect in the receiver audience, when word play, intertextuality, the other “implicit” script and language based incongruity are the main triggers for humor in the original, and are forefronted, contextually relevant elements, such will be impossible, in the original frame, in the target version. No translation of *La Tesis de Nancy* exists. If it had done, it would have been written by Ramón J. Sender himself.

The fact that he framed his novel as he did speaks legions in itself. He wanted the Spaniards, for once, to feel superior to the Americans. A translation, in this case, would be based on a different intention, since to allow the Americans to see how the Spaniards made fun of them would hardly seem to be an adequate framework for proposed arousal of humor (following the *in group*, *out group* findings of La Fave).

Intended ambiguity is used as a comic resource, above all, in the theatre. Molière, Shakespeare and several Spanish comic playwrights, such as Muñoz Seca (*La Venganza de Don Mendo*) are paradigmatic examples of its use. The stage managing and re-enactment of the script allows the “implicit” to be made “explicit” through the gestures, pauses and intonation of the actors, and the jibes they direct at the audience. Humorous narrative has to communicate this ambiguity of sense through stereotyped characterisation and “loaded” names, the interpersonal dialogue and register and via the scenario and the situation. Only then will we see the sense of humor. As Rosa Rabadán (1991:168) comments:

Ante este hecho, fácilmente constatable, no es de extrañar que las obras literarias menos traducidas (en el supuesto de que lo hayan sido) sean las de carácter humorístico. Según nuestros datos, hasta la fecha no hay ninguna traducción española de la famosa obra de Mikes (1946) *How To Be An Alien*, como tampoco existen versiones de las producciones de Spike MILLIGAN o Ben TRAVERS, y lo mismo sucede en la otra dirección: la traducción de obras cómicas españolas al inglés raya en la inexistencia.

Given this fact, which is easily corroborated, it is hardly surprising that the literary works which are least translated (imagining that there are any which have been) are humorous. According to our data, there has been no Spanish translation of Mikes (1946) famous work, How To Be An Alien nor for that matter have Spike MILLIGAN or Ben TRAVERS seen Spanish versions. And the same thing happens in reverse: the translation of Spanish comic works into English is little short of non-existent. (translation MARGARET HART, 1998)

VII

CONCLUSIONS

The communication of humorous intention and, therefore, the translation of the sense of humor will be more or less feasible according to which type of humor is being proposed. We have attempted to show that there may be different dominant translational foci depending upon the implicit relationship between the playing partners in the communication game.

When the narrative humor consists in lining up a series of universally shared stereotypes which belong to the stock of characters and situations which we know of as *folk truths*, which require only *trivial* logic to process; or when the humor is based on highly visual situations, it is broadly sufficient to use a mainly *dominant formal equivalence* in order to maintain the humorous effect for the target audience. The *propositional anchors* are redistributed according to the new cultural requirements in order for the humorous message to be communicated as freshly and as forcefully as it was in the original. The characters of the fool, the innocent, the simpleton or of the foreigner who understands everything at a literal level are all part of the stock which we expect to find in humorous works and which we slot into the corresponding universal frame with a minimum of effort. The underdog, Wilt, is a familiar character in all different cultures. There is no need to negotiate the sense of humor. The corresponding frames exist already in the other culture and only the labels have to be changed to conform to the new linguistic and cultural circumstances. The *co-text*, then, is modified in order to produce a certain *formal equivalence*. The *informativity* of this type of humorous text is maximum. The linguistic signs function more or less on a literal, objective and surface level with their original and unambiguous *valeur*,

such as was defined by Ferdinand de Saussure.²⁷¹

It is quite another scenario when the narrative humor consists in implying, via satire, a meta-content outside the frame of the exposition as such. Negotiation of the sense of humor is vital in such cases for the humorous intention to be caught. The meta-script is usually activated via the tenor or register, the semiotic aspects of the language which reflect a whole series of socio-cultural realities, such as age, status, level of intelligence and birthplace and which are highly complex to translate from one linguistic framework to another at a purely surface, lexical level.

My definition of an intellectual is someone who can listen to the *William Tell Overture* without thinking of the Lone Ranger.²⁷²

We saw already that, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986:260), true satire is an 'echo', an imperfect and less informative repetition of a reality with which we are already familiarised. The audience must possess specific previous knowledge in order to understand the implicit sense of the communication. In translation of satirical humor, the success or failure of the humorous intent pivots on the audience whose previous knowledge allows them to process and perceive rapidly the contrast between what is being *said* and what is *meant*. The 'surprise' element which is vital for the humorous intent to be successful makes it impossible for explanation to be given via compensation which is the resource to which translator usually make recourse when specific cultural knowledge, perhaps inaccessible to the target audience, is required for them to be able to fully comprehend the communication. The *script* contains unknown elements and the *framework* of the narrative is not the scenario which has been depicted for us but rather some other different scenario, whose presence, however, is culturally and implicitly latent.

We have seen that when there is forefronting of the *illocutionary* force of the

²⁷¹ DE SAUSSURE, Ferdinand (1916): *Course in General Linguistics* (trad. Wade Baskin), New York: Philosophical Library.

²⁷² CONNOLLY, Billy (1982): *Gullible's Travels*, London, Pavilion Books Limited.

text, according to Reiss (1976:109) the dominant translational focus is *literary* with the objective of establishing *dynamic pragmatic equivalence*. It is the *register* that functions as the propositional anchor of the humorous intention. The author confers contextual continuity on the humorous narrative by allowing the readers to establish clear mental representations of the characters sketched, the objects described and the events recounted. Nash (1985: 170) comments on this point that:

A narrator may frame his recital consistently in overstatement; or he may regularly underplay, thereby constructing a different kind of humorous frame and encouraging in his audience a different set of suppositions and anticipations. Counterstatement, as a recurrent device, has the effect of constantly shifting or unsettling the frame, disturbing perspective till the audience is not quite sure how to respond to a narrative ... The uncertainty is essential to the humorous mischief of Saki; it is the comic mask through which he teases his readers.

Satire is always presented under the façade of objective exposition of reality. However, it constitutes a carefully elaborated and designed *stage*, stagemanaged subjectively by the author who guides the audience towards the implicit humorous meaning, the reality behind the mask, the sense behind the signifier. The linguistic signs do not represent the whole truth. They have to be combined with the tenor or register for them to acquire the implicit humorous sense which, itself, lies outside the narrative frame. Communication here is based essentially on implicit values. What is left **unsaid** is of as great significance and weighting as what is actually **said**. There is an alternative reading of the literal text as it is structured (as in the case of *Gulliver's Travels* or *Animal Farm*) which is the *meta-script* which conveys the humorous meaning.

His baptismal register spoke of him pessimistically as John Henry, but he had left that behind with other maladies of infancy, and his friends knew him under the front-name of Adrian. His mother lived in Bethnal Green, which was not altogether his fault; one can discourage too much history in one's family, but one cannot always prevent geography. And, after all, the Bethnal Green habit has this virtue - that it is seldom transmitted to the next generation.²⁷³

²⁷³ MUNRO, H.H. (Saki) (1981) : *The Best of Saki* (ed. Tom Sharpe), London: Picador.

We consider that these two types of humor, the Universal and the cultural, can be translated in a contextually effective manner adequate to the narrative frame. Obviously, the translation is much easier in the former case than in the latter and there is a need for greater negotiation by the author and implication on the part of the audience in the case of the less informative of the two types of humorous texts ie. the communication based to a greater extent on implicature: satire.

However, humor based on meta-linguistics, on wordplay and syntactic-lexical ambiguity, where it is the linguistic sign which triggers the ambiguity, the relevance of which produces the humorous effect involved in the humor of perceived incongruity is a challenge which is infinitely more difficult for the translator to solve. The linguistic sign, in this context, is emptied of its *valeur* as different from all other signs. For Ferdinand de Saussure, the value of the linguistic sign is inherently negative: it is one thing because it is not another. To introduce ambiguity into a text by forefronting the polysemous possibilities of semantics would normally constitute a failure in communication. Yet, here it does not. The perception of incongruity implies that the reader/listener rewinds to the ambiguous trigger, the linguistic sign, which in its original meaning does not make sense and bestows upon it a new meaning, a new twist, which will take the communication down the humorous track. This communication does not have an *informative* value as such, but rather informs the reader/listener of the intention to amuse. The humor of perceived incongruity skips the information rules and shifts the cooperative frame of communication towards the more flexible humorous *bona fide* mode. In humor, the perception of the incongruity must, necessarily, be sudden and surprising for this to produce the laughter which is the external expression of the satisfaction produced by the cognitive exercise of looking for relevance where at first there appeared to be none. Within the narrative frame, the moment is prepared with great care and worked up to a climax, which is the punchline or humorous trigger. Timing is of the essence in humor. As Attardo says, however:

Any comedian will tell you that, in humor, timing is everything. But just as St. Augustine said, once you try to define timing, you no longer know what

it is.²⁷⁴

When meta-linguistics designed at producing humor as the result of perceived incongruity are introduced into the narrative frame, they are introduced at precisely the right time. The scenario is built up for the final curtain. Therefore, within the narrative frame, it is not always contextually possible to aim at the *skopos* effect of adapting the script to fit the circumstances of the transfer to the new linguistic stage. Nor, for that matter, can the punchline or the humorous trigger be transferred to another stage of the script. If we do apply the theory of *skopos* to humor based on meta-linguistics and asymmetries between languages, at best what we will be doing is perpetrating a contextually inappropriate *adaptation*. The translational methodology which should be applied to such parts of the humorous narrative which rely on meta-linguistic games is *equivalence of contextual relevance*. When the humor is based on imperfect use or knowledge of a foreign language or culture, or on the ambiguous nature of language in itself, such as is the case in *La Tesis de Nancy* by Ramón J. Sender (Nancy and Mrs. Dawson), *Indecent Exposure* by Tom Sharpe (Kommandant Von Heerden) and in *Small World* by David Lodge (Akira Sakazaki), the humor is actually produced by people skipping the norms and shifting the frames, albeit inadvertently. The effective humorous translation of such forefronted and deliberate ambiguity, based on the incompatibility of language and cultural frames, would seem to us to be, more often than not, totally impossible.

Walter Redfern²⁷⁵ draws our attention to an interesting fact in a recent article of his published in the HUMOR magazine. It is interesting and, perhaps, fitting as an end to this analysis of translation and humor.

Transductio was an old term for the pun, no doubt because in wordplay we switch tracks and change perspectives (we *traduce*, in more senses than one). Translation, in fact, forces you to cope with puns, but it also entails having

²⁷⁴ ATTARDO, Salvatore (1997) : The Semantic Foundations of Cognitive Theories of Humor. In *HUMOR* 10-4, New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

²⁷⁵ REDFERN, W. (1996): "Puns: Second Thoughts". In *HUMOR*, vol. 9; p. 2. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

a punning mind²⁷⁶, open to quick and numerous associations of ideas.

That linguistic humor has proved to be a “problematic” phenomenon for translation as far back as Cicero or even before (for who truly knows whether the original text of the Bible was exent of humor or that the translators found it impossible to translate -the degree of allegory present would seem to indicate that humor may indeed have been latent), and that we have found no practical contextually relevant solution for it in our present theories of translation, is a fact which we must finally acknowledge. Joseph Addison commented, in the style of Cicero:

The only way to try a Piece of Wit is to translate it into a different language, if it bears the test you may pronounce it true; but if it vanishes in the Experiment, you may conclude it to have been a Pun. In short, one may say of a Punn as the Country-Man described his Nightingale, that it was *vox et praeterea nihil*, a Sound and nothing but a Sound.²⁷⁷

That some texts are designed to celebrate national identity and difference through characteristic sense of humor and creative use of language, thus resulting broadly untranslatable, may be a reality which we are forced to face, and ever more so in the future, with the resurgence and celebration of national identities and minority languages.

The translation of humor is not so much a matter of identification and empathy with the author, but rather empathy with the target audience and sensitivity towards *acceptability*, a crucial factor in the cooperative process required for effective communication, in another.

When language and sense of humor, the two distinguishing factors which shape our world view and make us different from others, come together, the attempt to translate, maintaining the “sense” (the intention) in humor is, in our opinion, often

²⁷⁶ Play on words itself: “cunning mind” and “punning mind”.

²⁷⁷ ADDISON, J. [1711] (1965): *The Spectator*, vol. 1; p. 61. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

senseless. Stepping outside the frame is a risky business, but a calculated risk when you know who your partner is and you are on the same wavelength: stepping outside two is double trouble. With no script to follow and acting on the wrong *scenario*, the translator may be forgiven for losing his/her/the sense of humor.

We feel that it is apt to finish by echoing Gideon Toury's words²⁷⁸ Toury says that when a translational phenomenon does not fit the frame of the theory, it is the theory which must adapt and not the problematic phenomenon. We intend to continue to research the empirical possibilities of relevant translation of linguistic humor and hope that others will be encouraged to join us in the effort. The aim of this thesis was to arouse interest and enthusiasm for this fascinating and intriguing aspect of human communication among students and researchers. Should we have achieved this, we will consider that the effort involved in analysing and trying not to lose (our) the sense of humor will have been truly worthwhile.

²⁷⁸ TOURY, G. (1980): *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. Tel Aviv: Itamar Even-Zohar & Gideon Toury.

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