

Exploring Verse and Jokes

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Grice's Cooperation Principle

«Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs,
by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.»

→ Grice's Maxims:

- **Quantity**: trying to be as informative as one possibly can, and giving as much information as is needed, and no more.
- **Quality**: trying to be truthful, not giving information that is false or that is not supported by evidence.
- **Relation**: trying to be relevant, to say things that are pertinent to the discussion.
- **Manner**: trying to be as clear, as brief, and as orderly as one can in what one says, and avoiding obscurity and ambiguity.

Verse & Humour

- Departure from *bona fide* communication
- Language's shortcomings
- Layering of meanings
- Familiar/monotonous backdrop
- Highly controlled material

c'était au temps où notre espèce
ne se voilait pas encore ~~la face~~
fesse

*That was back before our kind
In the sand burried its ~~head~~
behind*

R. Queneau, « Evolution », *L'Instant fatal*, 1946.

CYRANO.	Embrasse-moi!	- <i>In my arms!</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Monsieur?	- <i>Sir?</i>
CYRANO.	Brave!	- <i>Brave you!</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Ah çà ! mais !...	- <i>Well, now!...</i>
CYRANO.	Très brave. Je préfère.	- <i>Very brave, rather.</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Me direz-vous ?...	- <i>May I ask?...</i>
CYRANO.	Embrasse-moi. Je suis son frère.	- <i>In my arms. I am her brother.</i>
CHRISTIAN.	De qui ?	- <i>Whose?</i>
CYRANO.	Mais d'elle !	- <i>Well hers!</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Hein ?...	- <i>Eh?</i>
CYRANO.	Mais de Roxane !	- <i>Well Roxane's!</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Ciel !	- <i>Dear!</i>
	Vous, son frère ?	<i>You, her brother?</i>
CYRANO.	Ou tout comme : un cousin fraternel.	- <i>Or close enough: a brotherly cousin.</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Elle vous a ?...	- <i>And she?...</i>
CYRANO.	Tout dit !	- <i>Told me!</i>
CHRISTIAN.	M'aime-t-elle ?	- <i>Loves me?</i>
CYRANO.	Peut-être.	- <i>She might.</i>
CHRISTIAN.	Comme je suis heureux, Monsieur, de vous connaître !	- <i>It's quite a pleasure to meet you, Sir!</i>

Vous avez mal placé la fente de ces miches

Au milieu la césure, entre les hémistiches

You've wrongly placed the slit

between those buns

The caesura goes in the middle,

between the hemistichs

E. Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, 1897

Ils crient s'il sait voler qu'on l'appelle voleur

Les anges voltigent autour du joli voltigeur

They cry he can fly (voler)

That he's called a thief (voleur)

Angels flutter (voltigent)

Circling the pretty pilot (voltigeur)

G. Apollinaire, *Alcools*, 1913.

Project

“Mining the Comic Verse (Le Rire des vers)”

<https://slw-comicverse.dslw.unibas.ch>



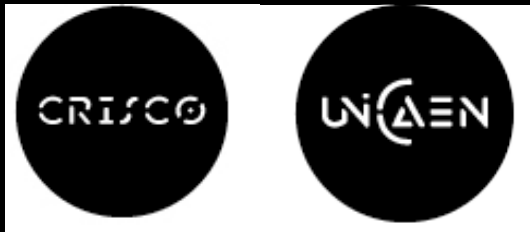
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SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



Team of 5 at the University of Basel's French Department.

COLLABORATIONS



Centre de Recherches Inter-langues sur la
Signification en Contexte



Analyse et Traitement Informatique
de la Langue Française

Objectives

- Most used versification forms alongside humour?
- Other contexts favouring similar forms?
- Mutual influences of humour and verse?

Team

Anne-Sophie Bories
Group Leader



Petr Plecháč
Programmer



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Assistant



Lara Nugues
PhD candidate



Nils Couturier
Postdoc



Corpora

Vaudeville

1830-1835

Lara Nugues

Song

19th, 20th C.

Nils Couturier

Poetry

19th, 20th, 21st C.

Anne-Sophie Bories

METHODS



Distant Reading

- Digital corpus
- Annotations of humour and versification
- Database
- Data analysis and visualisation

Close Reading

- Text interpretations
- Styles and canons

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Annotating Humour?

Theories of Humour

- Superiority (Plato, Aristotle, sociologists)
- Release (18th C inheritance of humourism, Freud, Veatch)
- Incongruity and incongruity-resolution (Schopenhauer, Kant, Bergson)
 - Victor Raskin's script-opposition theories

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Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo

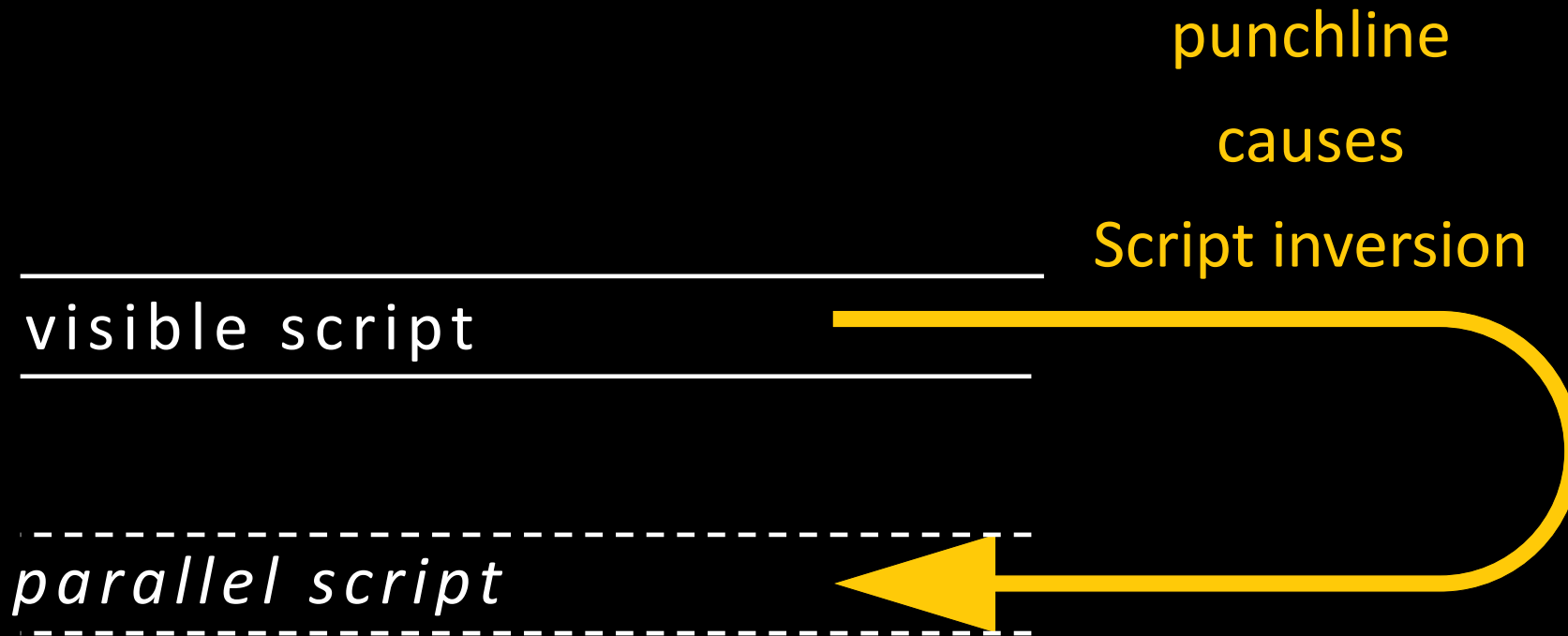
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SSTH

(Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor)

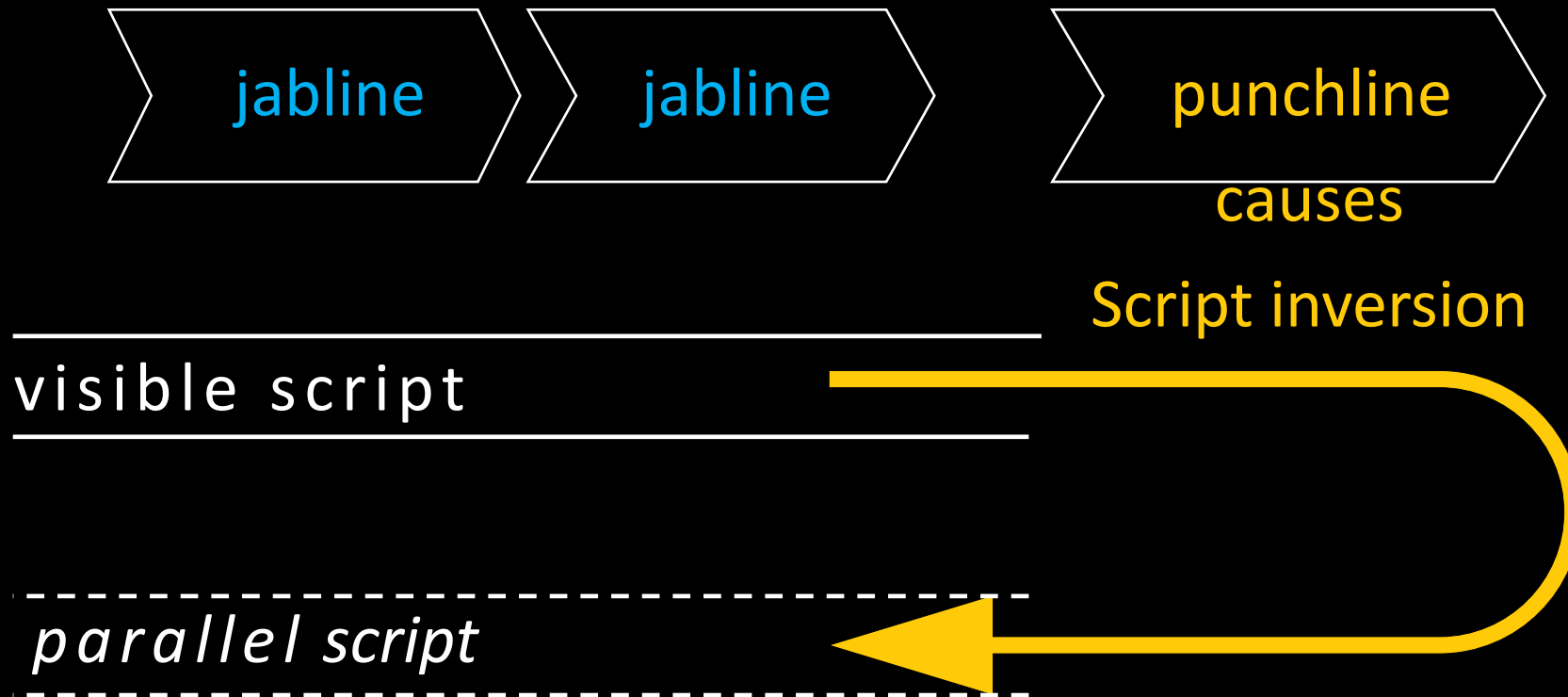


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GTVH

(General Theory of Verbal Humour)



Lamartine, *Méditations poétiques* (1820):

Un seul être vous manque et tout est dépeuplé

Rousset, *Si t'es gai, ris donc* (1963):

Un seul **hêtre** vous manque et tout est **des peupliers**

jabline

punchline



GTVH

(General Theory of Verbal Humour)

Six Knowledge Resources (KR):

- SO: script opposition
- LM: Logical mechanism
- SI: situation
- TA: target (if any)
- NS: narrative strategy
- LA: language

GTVH

(General Theory of Verbal Humour)

LA: language

NS: narrative strategy

TA: target (if any)

SI: situation

LM: Logical mechanism

SO: script opposition

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

The number of Polacks needed to screw in a light bulb? Five — one holds the bulb and four turn the table. (LA)

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

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

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

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

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

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OSTH and GTVH

«The Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor (OSTH) does not introduce any novelty in terms of humor processing, but provides a foundation for processing the text of a joke in a more consistent manner.» (Rayz 2020)

→ Based on the use of semantic ontologies

The DOCTOR/LOVER joke

“Is the doctor at home?” the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. “No,” the doctor’s young and pretty wife whispered in reply. “Come right in.”

The DOCTOR/LOVER joke *seen through* OSTH

“Is the doctor at home?
young and pretty wife whisp

per. “No,” the doctor’s

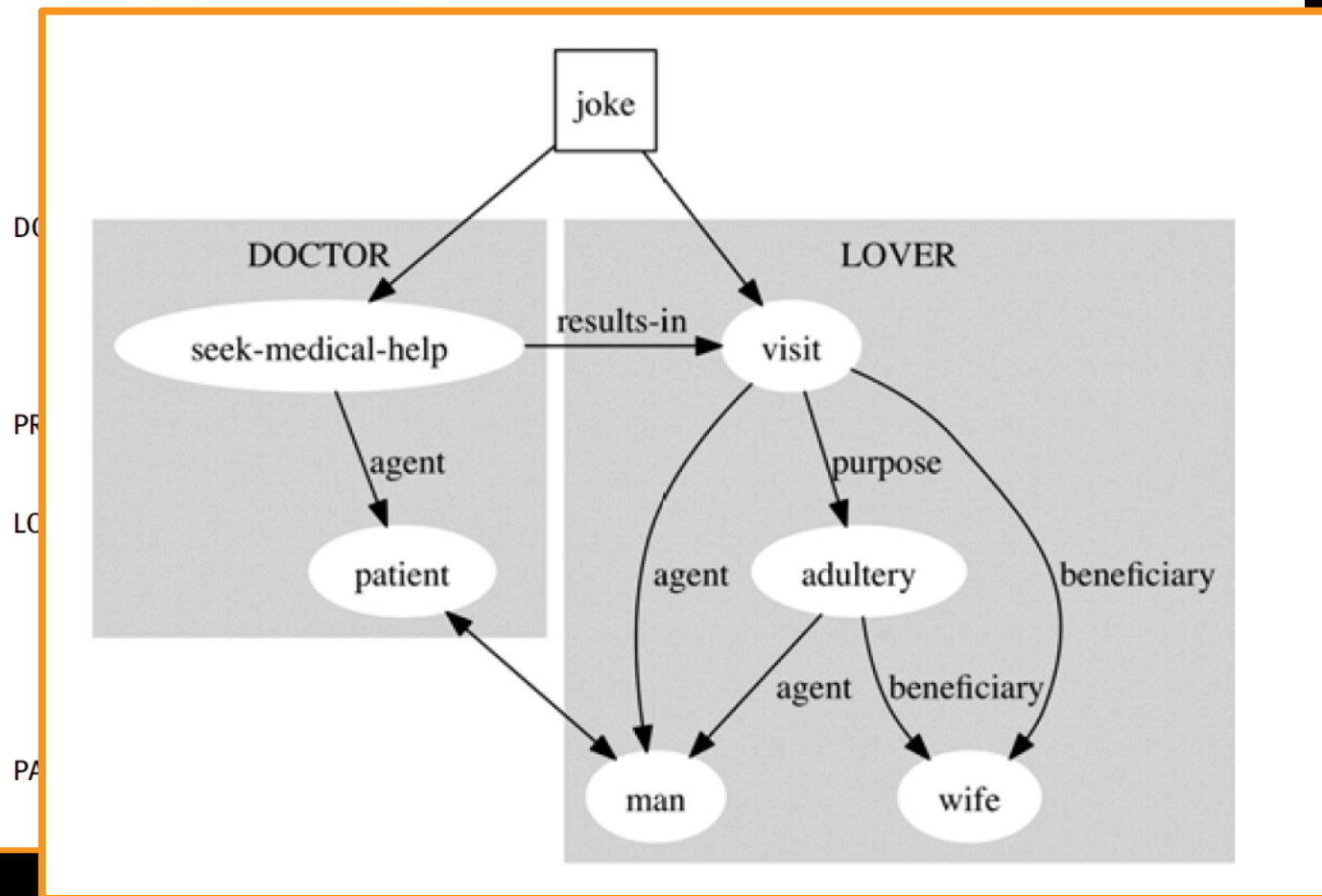
DOCTOR_MD IS-A PROFESSIONAL-OCCUPATION
AGENT-OF-ROLE-IN DEFAULT DIAGNOSE-ILLNESS
AGENT-OF-ROLE-IN DEFAULT TREAT-ILLNESS
LOCATION DEFAULT MEDICAL-INSTITUTION
SEM BUILDING
RELAXABLE-TO PHYSICAL-LOCATION
PAST-AGENT-OF-ROLE-IN SEM RECEIVE-DIPLOMA
TOPIC DEFAULT MEDICINE
DOCTOR_PHD IS-A PROFESSIONAL-OCCUPATION
...
PAST-AGENT-ROLE-IN SEM RECEIVE-DIPLOMA
TOPIC DEFAULT PHILOSOPHY
PROFESSIONAL-OCCUPATION IS-A SOCIAL-ROLE
PAST-AGENT-ROLE-IN SEM RECEIVE-DIPLOMA
LOVER IS-A SOCIAL-ROLE
EXPERIENCER-OF-ROLE-IN DEFAULT MAKE-LOVE
CARDINALITY > 1
LOCATION SEM PHYSICAL-LOCATION
SECRECY VALUE HIGH
PATIENT IS-A SOCIAL-ROLE
BENEFICIARY-OF-ROLE-IN TREAT-ILLNESS

The DOCTOR/LOVER joke **seen through OSTH**

DOCTOR_MD IS-A PROFESSIONAL-OCCUPATION

AGENT-OF-ROLE-IN-DEFAULT-DIAGNOSE-ILLNESS

“Is the doctor at home?” the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. “No,” the doctor’s young and pretty wife whispered in reply. “Come right in.”



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Annotating humour

- Knowledge Resources:
 - Script Opposition – abstract
 - Script Opposition – concrete
 - Logical Mechanism
 - Situation
 - (Target, if any)
 - Narrative Strategy
 - Language
- Jablines, if any
- Punchline

GTVH

(General Theory of Verbal Humour)

List of known LMs (one of many lists and taxonomies)

role-reversals
vacuous reversal
garden-path
almost situations
inferring consequences
coincidence
proportion
exaggeration
meta-humor

role exchanges
juxtaposition
figure-ground reversal
analogy
reas. from false prem.
parallelism
ignoring the obvious
field restriction
vicious circle

potency mappings
chiasmus
faulty reasoning
self-undermining
missing link
implicit parall.
false analogy
cratylism
referential ambiguity

(Attardo, *Humorous Texts: A semantic and pragmatic analysis*)

GTVH

(General Theory of Verbal Humour)

Levels of abstraction for Script Oppositions:

Highly abstract: actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal; possible/impossible

Moderately abstract: good/bad; life/death; sex/non-sex; money/no-money; high/low stature.

Concrete: hand/spoon; face/fesse; doctor/lover; etc.

(Attardo 1997)

Our website:

<https://slw-comicverse.dslw.unibas.ch>