

Garden Paths, Red Lights and Crossroads: On Finding Our Way to Understanding the Cognitive Mechanisms Underlying Jokes

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Abstract. The primary objective of this paper is to postulate a tripartite division of jokes according to three major incongruity-resolution mechanisms underlying their incremental development, and to review the existing models of joke interpretation in the light of the joke categories advanced here. Most of these well-entrenched frameworks, as will be shown, fail to capture all the three mechanisms of jokes.

In the garden-path mechanism, the incongruous punchline evokes a concealed sense of the preceding text, bringing to light its initially covert ambiguity. The hearer cancels the first effortlessly made (default/salient) interpretation in order to prioritise another, compatible with the import of the punchline. Secondly, the red-light joke ends with a surprising punchline which neither proves the set-up ambiguous nor invalidates any earlier inferences but brings unexpectedly incongruous piece of information, which is then rendered congruent with the first part of the text. Thirdly, the distinguishing feature of the crossroads category is that it is already the set-up that includes the focal incongruity, entailing incomprehensible premises which surpass absurdity typical of many jokes. Consequently, the hearer cannot successfully complete the comprehension process of the set-up until the punchline (frequently also incongruous) is introduced, after which any incongruity is resolved.

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2011: The Sesquicentennial of the Birth of America's Top Hebrew Humorist The Sweat of the (Low) Brow: New York Immigrant Life in Gerson Rosenzweig's Satire. Facets of his Talmudic Parody *Tractate America*.

Ephraim Nissan *

Abstract. Gerson Rosenzweig's is far less visible in Jewish American literary studies, as well as in Hebrew literary studies, than he would deserve to be. This is because he wrote his parodic prose — an apex of Hebrew-language humoristic literature — in early rabbinic Hebrew with Aramaic admixtures. Appreciating its quite considerable merits requires of readers the ability to make sense of his dense intertextuality, through familiarity with the traditional Jewish canon of early rabbinic writings. Such familiarity was widespread in his days (even among less affluent Jews, immigrants who in the Old Country were schooled mostly in religious matters) but is not available for the great majority of potential readers at present, nor has it been in the second half of the 20th century. This article provides an analysis in depth of most of Chapter 3 of Rosenzweig's masterpiece, *Tractate America*. That chapter is concerned with employee relations and labour strife, as well as with the work of women, and child labour. Rosenzweig's is artistically quite successful at treating this subject, clearly on the mind of his original readership among the Jewish immigrant community in New York City, by camouflaging it as a parody styled as early rabbinic literature. That parody would deserve the notice of that compartment of literary studies that is specifically concerned with the literatures of ethnic Americans. Arguably however it is especially in humour studies that Rosenzweig's *opus* deserves close scrutiny.

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Extreme fear of being laughed at: Components of Gelotophobia*

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Abstract. The present study investigated individuals with slight, marked and extreme fear of being laughed at (gelotophobia) (Ruch and Proyer 2008a). Altogether 640 individuals filled in the GELOPH<15> (Ruch and Proyer 2008b) online and 228 filled in a paper and pencil version. In both samples principal components analyses of the 15 items were computed for subgroups of individuals exceeding the cut-off point for slight gelotophobia (i.e., 2.5). All solutions between one and five factors were examined but a three-factor-solution seemed most preferable. These positively correlated components were interpreted as coping with derision (by control, withdrawal, internalizing), disproportionate negative responses to being laughed at, and paranoid sensitivity to anticipated ridicule. The latter two are seen specific to gelotophobia while the former might be shared with social anxiety in general. In the hierarchical factor analysis the more unspecific coping factor did split up further into three factors of control, withdrawal, and internalizing, while the two gelotophobia-specific factors stayed stable between the three- and five-factor solutions. These three factors yielded different correlational patterns. Coping with ridicule was higher among females and among the older while there were no differences for the other two factors. Furthermore, people reporting having been bullied were higher in defensive coping with ridicule and had stronger disproportionate negative responses to being laughed at than those who were not bullied. Results are discussed within a framework for future studies of individuals with higher levels of this fear. In particular, the computation of subscales is recommended when the focus lies on the extreme scorers.

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A Tentative Evaluation of the Spread of Humour Studies Among Journals in Other Domains

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Abstract. There exist bibliographies from the 1990s of humour studies, in book form or posted online. What this essay attempts to do is to consider a large sample of the bibliography of the domain, and assess the spread among a vast range of journals from several disciplines. Being a sample, our own bibliography is not exhaustive, but it nevertheless contains much material that had not come to the attention of earlier bibliographers. It is up to date to 2011, and it is limited to publications in journals only. Moreover, such publications are excluded that appeared in any of the journals specialised solely in humour studies. The distillation in the form of a list of journals organised chronologically is interesting. It shows that humour studies are a big domain, and one that is far-flung; it also suggests that mutual visibility in this discipline is limited. Articles about humour turn out in surprising outlets, such as a journal of children dentistry, or a journal in the history of pharmaceuticals, or *Fertility and Sterility*, or *Public Administration Review*, or a journal of parliamentary history, or a law journal. This essay is a discursive, qualitative, sampling probe into the sea wide literature of the sector, rather than

quantitative study as would be expected in bibliometrics. Arguably the present format subserves the goal of conveying a good idea of the size and variety of the domain.

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