Chapter 1

Survey of the Literature

1.1 Introduction

The goal of this introductory chapter is to provide a survey of the field of humor research from the point of view of linguistics. It begins with a short discussion of the necessity and criteria for the survey. The survey itself is divided into two parts: 1) a chronologically organized overview of the classical theories (Greek and Latin) and their tradition up until the Renaissance; and 2) the modern theories of humor. With the latter section, the organization becomes theory oriented rather than chronological. The chapter surveys the three major types of theories of humor as well as some influential thinkers who deserve individual attention.

1.1.1 Why Have a Survey?

Beyond the tradition of beginning a scientific discussion of a topic by reviewing the literature, there are some topic-specific reasons to do so in the case of humor research. These issues are of some relevance in the interdisciplinary perspective of humor research, but a reader uninterested in these may safely resume reading in section 1.2.

There are some facts about research on humor that would discourage one from writing such a survey. To begin with, the usefulness of this particular survey might be questioned since reviews and syntheses of the literature on humor are available. The most authoritative is commonly held to be Piddington's (1933: 152-221) who lists and reviews 49 authors. The broadest

review is probably Bergler's (1956) who touches upon about 80 authors, although in a rather imprecise and questionable way. Milner (1972) depends on Piddington (1933) but adds several authors who published after 1933. A particularly helpful review is that of Keith-Spiegel (1972), which is probably the best known one, having appeared in the canonical Goldstein and McGhee (1972). McGhee (1979), Raskin (1985), and Morreall (1987) also provide reviews of the field. Nevertheless, none of these reviews of the literature exhibits a specifically linguistic perspective, i.e., attention to those aspects of a theory that are likely to be directly applicable to a linguistic analysis of humor. Raskin's survey comes the closest to this goal, but it was deliberately limited in scope (Raskin, p.c.).

Another problem facing a survey is that the body of literature concerning humor is so large that it is not pragmatically possible for any single scholar to cover it in its entirety. Goldstein and McGhee (1972) quote about 400 works concerning humor published between 1900 and 1971, but remarkably, their bibliography only covers the Anglo-Saxon world. Chapman and Foot (1977) include a bibliography of more than 30 pages. Davies' (1990) bibliography is longer than 50 pages (but also includes sources of examples). In its first four years of existence (1988-91), the journal *HUMOR* published 85 articles and reviewed 70 books, all of which had humor as their major topic. One could multiply the examples of the proliferation and variety of published research on humor.

To complicate matters further, contributions to humor research are widely diversified and range over a variety of disciplines, including (but not limited to) psychology, anthropology, sociology, literature, medicine, philosophy, philology, mathematics, education, semiotics, and linguistics. It is widely recognized that humor research is an interdisciplinary field and that its central problems are better understood if one takes into account diverse contributions that come from a variety of fields and subfields.

Therefore, it seems logical to cover some segments of the bibliography from different vantage points, of which linguistics is one, in order to provide the necessary specificity and manageability. It also should be kept in mind that the field of humor research is interdisciplinary brings up methodological issues related to the cross-disciplinary borrowing of methodologies and of criteria for evaluation of theories and proposals. It is important that the practitioners of other disciplines be aware that each discipline has its own

set of methodological requirements.[1]

Raskin (1985: 51-53) addresses the same issue, albeit from a different point of view, i.e., the application of linguistic theory to the problem of humor, thus setting the issue in terms of "applied linguistics." His point is that the problems to be solved should come from the field of humor, whereas the methodologies (and the evaluations) should come from the respective disciplines—in the present case, linguistics.

From another side of the issue, it appears very clear that the field of linguistic research on humor is plagued by repetition of acquired results by researchers unaware of previous research, and by the fact that often a scholar will make one contribution to the field, but will not follow up on his/her idea(s). This leads to duplication of effort, both on the part of those who repeat observations that have already been made and by those who have to read redundant texts. A representative survey may help to cure this particular ill.

A further reason for this endeavor is that some of the relevant material is not readily available in English, and in some cases is not available in any language other than, say, the original Latin.

1.1.2   Introduction for Linguists

Little of what follows in this first chapter is directly relevant to linguistics. One may then question the utility of having a survey at all. There are at least three reasons:

- if the problems to be solved by the linguistics of humor are to come from the field of humor research, only a survey of the literature may provide the necessary background for discussion;

- it is important to position the linguistic theories of humor in the broader context of the general theories of humor. For instance, the isotopy disjunction model (ch. 2), the structuralist analyses of puns (ch. 3), and even the semantic theory of humor proposed by Raskin (ch. 6) can

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[1]This claim can be taken either from a positivist point of view, as the requirement that a theory meet some given standards that vary among the disciplines, or from a "postmodern" stand as the rhetorical manipulation of cultural shibboleths. Be that as it may, a discipline must maintain its identity, especially when engaging in an interdisciplinary endeavor.

be seen as instances of the so-called "incongruity theories." To what extent this is correct (not really), and how enlightening (not very) it is to view them in this light cannot be decided unless one is familiar with the general background of humor research;

- however small the amount of linguistically relevant research to be gathered in the survey of Western thought about humor may be it is not irrelevant, as the survey itself will show.

1.1.3   The Criteria of the Survey

Since this book is oriented primarily towards linguistic theories of humor, and secondarily towards the kinds of materials that might be useful from the perspective of linguistic research on humor, some remarkable exclusions have been necessary. For example, Pirandello's (1908) book on humor will not be made the object of detailed analysis because it bears little interest from a linguistic perspective. Needless to say, such exclusions are not value judgements. The importance of Pirandello's essay for the understanding of his career and of the theories of humor developed in the first quarter of the century puts him on par with Freud and Bergson, as the already considerable amount of critical literature suggests (see Asor Rosa (1982), Borsellino (1982), Cappello (1982), Dombroski (1982), Geerts (1982), Schulz-Buschhaus (1982), Caserta (1983), Guglielmino (1986), Roić (1988), De Marchi (1988), and references therein.)

1.1.4   The Survey

The order of works presented will be almost strictly chronological, and the subject will be subdivided into periods. The purpose of the review is not to provide original solutions to the problems, but rather to show how some questions concerning humor have evolved and how the answers have changed. The review is not, and should not be construed as, a history of humorous literature, or even of the theoretical thinking on humor (although it may provide some hints as to how the latter task could be performed).

Instead, some moments in the development of the critical discussion on humor through Western history will be discussed in the hope that the consideration of different positions will yield a coherent image of the development of

the issues in humor research. An interesting conclusion of the survey is that there are some strands of research that keep resurfacing in the scholarly literature. These ideas seem to be fairly independent of the authors' historical and cultural environment, and their "fashionability" shows little apparent motivation. These strands are often overlooked in scholarly surveys, and some effort will be put into highlighting some of them.

1.2   The Greeks

Analysis of the Greek texts is rendered problematic by several issues. Often classical scholars disagree as to what exactly the original text was, let alone its meaning. In what follows, an attempt will be made to ignore the philological debate as much as possible. The goal of this text is not a philological one, nor is it intended as a history of Greek humorous literature, but rather as a presentation of some important phases of the development of the theories of humor in ancient Greece.[2]

1.2.1   Plato

The literature is unanimous in considering Plato (427-347 BC) as the first theorist of humor (see Piddington (1933: 152); Morreall (1987: 10)). According to Plato, humor is "a mixed feeling of the soul" (Piddington 1933: 152), i.e., a mixture of pleasure and pain. The following passage from the *Philebus* gives an idea of Plato's position. Socrates is speaking:

> ...Our argument declares that when we laugh at the ridiculous qualities of our friends, we mix pleasure with pain, since we mix it with envy; for we have agreed all along that envy is a pain of the soul, and that laughter is pleasure, yet these two arise at the same time on such occasions. (Philebus 50A)

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[2]The critical edition of the text which is followed is always indicated in the bibliography, and the editor's work is relied on to establish the text. Passages will be quoted in the English translation, along with the original, wherever the passage warrants enough interest. Quotations in the original texts have been referenced with the traditional methods in use in the field (for instance by Book and Chapter). If a translation is indicated in the bibliography it means that the English text quoted comes from the translation. The translations have been modified to make them more literal without explicit mention, whenever this author felt the necessity to do so.

In the *Philebus* Plato presents his theory of the "good," which is found in a "mixture" and in a condemnation of excesses. The passages that concern humor (48c/50a) are taken from a review of various emotions like anger, pity, etc. Plato puts humor in the field of the "ridiculous." Whoever does not follow the Delphic Oracle's admonition "Know thyself," or in other words, lacks self-knowledge, is defined as ridiculous. Without doubt, the ridiculous is seen by Plato as belonging to the category of $\pi o \nu \eta \rho \acute{\iota} \alpha$ (perversion, evil). Not surprisingly, Plato will list excessive laughter as one of the things to be avoided in his republic, because it is seen as an "overwhelming" of the soul. (*Republic* 388e $\mu \epsilon \tau \alpha \beta o \lambda \acute{\eta}$).

Keith-Spiegel (1972) notes that Plato's is the prototype of the ambivalence theory (i.e., theories that maintain that humor arises from the perception of two contrasting feelings). It is also the archetype of the aggression theories, with its mention of "envy" and its observation (a few lines before) that the ridiculous can happen to two categories of men, the strong and the feeble. Whereas the feeble cannot avenge themselves for jests, and are thus ridiculous, the strong, who can avenge themselves, are not ridiculous, but hateful. These observations, not lacking in wisdom, albeit "too fixed on the ungracious element in laughter" (Gregory 1923: 332), offer little interest from the perspective of linguistic analysis, but need to be addressed because of their historical relevance.

1.2.2   Aristotle

Aristotle's (384-322 BC) main text on comedy in the *Poetics* has been lost[3] (see below for a discussion). The extant passage on comedy is worth quoting in full:

> As for Comedy, it is (as has been observed) an imitation of men worse than average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind of the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly. The Ridiculous is something wrong ($\overset{c}{\alpha}\mu\acute{\alpha}\rho\tau\epsilon\mu\acute{\alpha}\ \ \tau\iota$) and a deformity not productive of pain ($\dot{\alpha}\nu\acute{\omega}\delta\upsilon\nu o\nu$) or harm ($o\dot{\upsilon}\ \ \varphi\vartheta\alpha\rho\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$); the mask, for instance,

[3]The best discussion of Aristotle's theory of humor is without challenge Plebe's (1952: 7-30).

that excites laughter, is something ugly and distorted without causing pain. (*De Poetica* 1449a)

Aristotle's definition is (with Plato's) the archetype of the superiority theories (see below). In Aristotle's definitions, it is possible to note the influence of Plato's theory which envisages humor as a part of the "ugly" and in the "emphasis on the innocuousness of the laughably innocuous" (Gregory 1923: 333). Lanza (1987b) notes that Aristotle's definition is a definition of humor (the ridiculous) rather than comedy. Lanza also points out the parallel between Aristotle's definition of humor and the third part of the "story" ($\mu\tilde{\upsilon}\vartheta o\varsigma$), the $\pi\acute{\alpha}\vartheta o\varsigma$, or "violent act" which is precisely defined as $\varphi\vartheta\alpha\rho\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$, i.e. harmful.

The differences between Aristotle's and Plato's theory are interesting as well. Aristotle "recognizes the aesthetic principle in laughter" (Piddington 1933: 153). In addition, his attitude towards laughter is much more positive. Aristotle condemns only the excesses of laughter (*Nichomachean Ethics* IV 8 1128a), whereas Plato's condemnation is much more absolute. Moreover, Aristotle disagrees with Plato's claim that humor is an "overwhelming" of the soul. Aristotle sees it as a "stimulation" (Plebe 1952: 15-16) of the soul, which puts the listener in a mood of good will.

Aristotle also considers the practical use of humor in the *Rhetoric*. According to Aristotle, joking must serve the argumentation of the orator. The speaker must be careful to avoid inappropriate jokes, however. Irony is appropriate for the speaker, and buffoonery ($\beta\omega\mu o\lambda o\chi\acute{\iota}\alpha$) should be avoided. (*rhetorica* III 18, 1419b).

In a little quoted passage, in the same book of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle sketches the first analysis of the mechanisms of humor, anticipating, as Morreall (1987: 14) notes, the theories of incongruity. While discussing liveliness and surprise in metaphors, Aristotle comments on several witticisms ($\dot{\alpha}\sigma\tau\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\alpha$), puns, and on unexpected occurrence of words, and concludes: "the speaker says something unexpected, the truth of which is recognized." (III, 11 1412b). It is also extremely tempting to see in a passage like the following an anticipation of the theories of the "resolution" of the incongruity (see Suls (1983), or Aubouin's (1948) "justification" (see 4.0.1) or Ziv's (1984) "local logic" (see 4.0.2): "In all these jokes, whether a word is used in a second sense or metaphorically, the joke is good if it fits the facts." (III, 11 1412b).

Whether or not these passages anticipate modern developments is, after all, unimportant, when one assesses Aristotle's influence.

The importance of Aristotle's influence on the theory of humor cannot be exaggerated. For one thing, Aristotle is responsible for the "comedy/tragedy" opposition (albeit the division of poetry in serious and humorous is to be found already in Plato (Plebe 1952: 14)) and the corresponding "comic/tragic," which will be challenged only much later (Volkelt (1905), quoted in Propp (1976); Chateau (1950); Baudin (ed.) 1985). When humor is defined in pragmatic terms as a text with a given perlocutionary effect, it appears that the opposite of humor is not the tragic, but the "serious" or the "un-funny." The opposition "comic/tragic" appears then to be historically determined and linked to the analytical categories of the Greek thinkers who introduced it.

Because Aristotle and Plato were implicitly describing humorous practices as they were in the Greece of the 5th/4th century BC, much of the theoretical elaborations of the classical Greek thinkers on humor matches the extant anthropological observations on humor in that era. A detailed description of humor in Sparta is provided by David (1989) and several comedies and fragments of comedies, jokes, etc. are mentioned by writers to provide enough evidence for the accuracy of the picture drawn by Plato and Aristotle: most of Greek humor consists in what today would be rather crude slapstick, obscenity and profanity, insults, and puns.

The opposition between comedy and tragedy has been the background of a large part of the theorizing about humor within the paradigm of aesthetics until its 20th century turn towards poetics (Russian formalism, structuralism, etc.). For instance, in a bibliography on the tragic in German aesthetics (Cometa 1990), one finds 19 entries dealing with the opposition between comedy and tragedy.

Aristotle's discussion of puns is made in passing during a discussion of metaphors. The "literal reading of a metaphorical statement" will be one of the techniques commonly listed when thinkers try to categorize humor in a pre-scientific way (e.g., Bergson (1901: 88); Elgozy (1979: 99-106); on taxonomies of puns, see ch. 3). More importantly, Aristotle's theory, and especially his partitioning of the subject matter and the correlation of comedy and humor, was the paradigm upon which any theory of humor was to be evaluated for the next twenty centuries—that is well into the 17th century.

The influence of Aristotelian theory (or of what was taken to be Aristotelian theory) on those authors who deal with comedy and humor will be one of the major concerns of the rest of this chapter.

1.2.3   The Peripatetic and Hellenistic Tradition

Theophrastus

Theophrastus' (ca 373 - ca 287 BC) contribution to the theory of humor is a major one, for his name is linked with the introduction of the "comic of character" ($\tilde{\eta}\vartheta o\varsigma$) which has been one of the mainstays of dramatic theory. A thorough exposition of Theophrastus' thought is to be found in Plebe (1952: 31-48); see also Janko (1984: 48-52). Theophrastus was the author of two lost treatises on humor and comedy (Plebe 1952: 31) so his views on humor have reached us through quotations and fragments, mostly of his *Moral Characters*. The "characters theory" is a literary analysis of characters, such as the boasting warrior, the drunk, etc., that are common in comedy. Each character is identified with some behavior or weakness, and comedy is seen as the use of these characters.

Of clear Aristotelian inspiration (he was the successor of Aristotle in the Lyceum), Theophrastus is original in several points—for instance, in his claim that comedy is fictional, i.e. not connected to "verisimilitude" (Plebe 1952: 35-38), whereas Aristotle had maintained that comedy had to be realistic. For the same reasons for which the characters theory is important in literary studies, it bears little relevance from a linguistic point of view, since it does not deal with the linguistic aspects of humor. Theophrastus' contribution to the theory of humor has had little recognition and little significant mention of his ideas has been found in the "humor research" literature (with the all-important exclusion of the Elizabethan theory of humors).

The Pseudo-Longinus *On the Sublime*

As is to be expected, the Hellenistic transmission of classical thought on humor involves, some elements of reelaboration of Plato's and Aristotle's theories. An example is the famous treatise on the sublime ($\Pi\varepsilon\rho\iota\ \overset{c}{\upsilon}\psi o\upsilon\varsigma$) attributed to Longinus (Arieti 1985), which claims that there is a form of comic sublime. The author (ca. 1st cent. AD) subscribes to the Aristotelian

view of the comic, which is classed as a "passion" ($\pi\acute{\alpha}\vartheta o\varsigma$) but which, however, belongs to the pleasant, and thus is not tragic. The comic sublime is seen as a parallel of the "serious" sublime. The author notes that "hyperboles are not addressed only toward what is greater but also toward what is lesser" (*The Sublime*, XXXVIII 6; Arieti 1985: 191-192n). This idea will be found later in Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* VIII, 6, 67).

The Problem of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*

The so-called *Tractatus Coislinianus* is a short Greek text to be found in a manuscript containing mostly introductions to the comedies of Aristophanes. Its name comes from the fact that the manuscript belongs to the Coislin collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Common agreement dates the manuscript to the tenth century A.D. (Plebe (1952: 115-125); Janko (1984: 4-18) reproduces four pages of the manuscript).

The importance of this short text lies in the belief that it is a summary of Aristotle's thought on comedy. Because the second book of the *Poetics* was lost, a controversy has arisen concerning its relationship to the *Tractatus Coislinianus*. Simplifying a little, three positions are to be found: 1) those who claim that there was never a second book of the *Poetics* or that we know nothing, or close to nothing, about it (e.g., Lanza 1987a/b); 2) those who claim that the *Tractatus Coislinianus* is a "summary" of the lost book (e.g., Cooper 1923; Janko 1984), and hence can be used to reconstruct fully Aristotle's views on comedy, and 3) those who take a middle stand and use only some of the materials in the *Tractatus* to reconstruct Aristotle's thought (e.g., Plebe 1952).[4]

The reliability of the *Tractatus Coislinianus* as a source of Aristotle's thought (see Janko 1984: 42-90); (Lanza 1987b)) will not be addressed here. For the present purposes it is important only to note that a number of classifications of humor mechanisms (possibly related, or similar to the *Tractatus*) circulated between Aristotle's death and the writing of Cicero's *De Oratore*, either because they came directly from Aristotle or because they were Peripatetic elaborations on Aristotle's thought. Whether or not the ideas were really Aristotle's, nothing prevents researchers from thinking that Cicero

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[4]The success of Umberto Eco's fictional work *The Name of the Rose*, whose plot revolves precisely around the missing second book, has done little to clarify the situation, as have those readers who confuse Eco's fictional work and his scientific one.

(who claims to have seen several treatises on comedy) might have been influenced by these, as there are numerous correspondences between the *Tractatus* and Cicero's text (see below).

The text of the *Tractatus Coislinianus* has been published by Cooper (1922), Janko (1984), Lanza (1987a) and is thus readily available. From the present perspective, the most interesting parts are the divisions of the types of humor. The relevant passage opens with "Laughter arises from the words (ἀπό τῆς λεξεῶσ) and from the facts" (ἀπό τῶ πραγματόν). Janko (1984: 25) translates these as "speech" and "actions"; these categories can be labelled "verbal" and "referential," respectively. Cicero's division (see below 1.3.1 is mirrored in the *Tractatus*'s division (but see Plebe (1952: 25n)). Plebe claims that Aristotle's original division was not bipartite[5] but tripartite, and that Aristotle analyzed laughter as coming from a) puns, b) unexpected events, and c) "contrast between the development of the elocution and the facts" (Plebe 1952: 26). Plebe's claim is substantiated by a passage by Hermogenes (a Greek rhetorician, see Spengel's *Rhetores Graeci* (1853-56 I, 215, 440-42)).

In the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, verbal humor is subdivided into:

"homonyms

synonyms

repetition

paronyms

> by addition

> by subtraction

diminutives (ὑποκόρισμα)

deformations by the voice, and similar

figures of speech (σχῆμα λῆξεως)" (Janko 1984: 70, Lanza 1987: 233).

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[5]Aristotle deals only with two kinds of jokes, puns and unexpected occurrences of words.

Janko (1987: 44-45) presents a slightly different sectioning, based on his reconstruction, which uses a different text, see Janko (1987: 162-167). "Referential" humor is subdivided into:

> "similarity (to the better or to the worse)
>
> deception
>
> the impossible
>
> the possible and inconsequential
>
> the unexpected
>
> from vulgar dancing
>
> when one of those who can, leaving aside more important things, chooses those of lesser value [6]
>
> when discourse is not connected and incoherent."

Both Plebe (1952: 27) and Janko (1984: 35n) note that there are similarities between the text of the *Tractatus* and Cicero's treatment of the topic (see below). Thus it seems likely that there might have been some influence, however indirect, of the source of the *Tractatus* on Cicero. This claim is reasonable and does not necessarily involve a decision on the authenticity of the Aristotelian attribution of the *Tractatus*.

1.2.4   The Treatises on Comedy and the Scholiasts

Along with the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, one finds several other minor treatises "on comedy" which have been prefaced by the scholiasts to the comedies of Aristophanes. These have been published by Dübner (1883) and others. The most important among these short texts is one by John Tzetzes (1110 - 1185?). (With Tzetzes, however, we have already reached the Middle Ages (see Cooper 1923: 97-98).) Plebe (1952) has a discussion of the chronology of the various fragments. Janko (1985) uses Tzetzes to reconstruct Aristotle.

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[6]Lanza (1987: 233); cf. Janko (1984: 70): "From choosing the worst when one has power to choose the best."

Unfortunately, several Greek treatises on comedy have been lost. Cicero claims to have studied several of these, none of which have been preserved. In other cases, authors mention treatises on comedy that are not extant. For example, Quintilian mentions a treatise by Domitius Martius. Cataudella (1970: 19) lists several lost treatises by Hellenistic authors, such as Demetrius Falerus, Dion of Prusa, a rhetorician Tiberius, Herodianus and others. Mention of most of these can be found in Spengel's (1853-56) *Rhetores Graeci.* Janko (1984: 46) mentions treatises by Lycophron (*On comedies*) and Eratostenes (*On the old comedies*).

1.3   The Latins

This section deals with the Latin discussions of humor. Becuase the Greek influence on Rome was so great, the Latins were greatly influenced by Greek thinkers in matters of humor theory. No attempt will be made, however, to discuss the breadth of the influence of Greece on Roman comedy or humor. Instead, as in the previous section, the section reviews the theoretical positions of some major Latin authors. Particular emphasis has been put on Cicero and Quintilian, with a briefer section on Horace.

1.3.1   Cicero

Cicero (106-43 BC) deals with the problem of humor in the *De Oratore* (II LVIII-LXII). The general purpose of Cicero's dialogue is to instruct public speakers. In it, Caius Giulius Strabo, one of the characters in the dialogue, delivers a long speech on humor. For the present purpose, it can be assumed that the character is Cicero's mouthpiece.

In the dialogue Cicero deals with five humor-related topics: 1) what humor is, 2) where it comes from, 3) if it is fitting for the orator to use humor, 4) to what extent it is fitting, and 5) what the genres of humor are. The first issue is dismissed by Strabo on the grounds that it does not belong to his topic. Strabo confesses his ignorance on the subject, which he claims to be common, and claims that for further explanations one should refer to Democritus. Democritus was believed to be always laughing at human folly, and hence to be an expert on laughter.

On the second issue Cicero follows Aristotle: "Turpitudinem et deformitate quadam continetur" (LVIII, 236. /It [humor] is contained in some kind of baseness and deformity/). The third and fourth issues are not particularly interesting from a linguistic perspective, since Cicero limits his contribution to precepts of "rhetorical opportunity." Cicero advises against using humor in particularly pathetic or morally odious trials. This might be linked to issues of humor "neutralization" in the presence of strong emotions (see Bergson and Freud, below).

The fifth point is the most interesting one from a linguistic perspective. Cicero introduces the distinction between verbal and referential humor (involving the phonemic/graphemic representation of the humorous element and not doing so, respectively). In Cicero's terminology jokes (*facetiae*) can be "about what is said" (*dicto*) or about "the thing" (*re*). (LIX, 240; 248). This distinction has been tacitly used by a vast majority of humor researchers. Among those who use the distinction with a different terminology are Morin (1966: 181) "referential vs semantic," (Eco 1983) "situational play vs play on words," Guiraud (1976) "bon mots vs puns," Hockett (1973) "prosaic vs poetic." The distinction is also used by Freud (1905), Piddington (1933), Milner (1972), Todorov (1976), Pepicello and Green (1983), and many others. A full discussion of this issue will be found in ch. 2-3. The utility of the distinction has been discussed in Raskin (1987), who uses "linguistic humor" to refer to *de dicto* humor. The latter's position will be examined in Ch. 6.

Cicero's further elaborates his taxonomy by stipulating that referential humor (*in re*) includes anecdotes (*fabella*) and caricature (*imitatio*). Verbal humor includes ambiguity (*ambigua*), paronomasia (*parvam verbi immutationem* LXIII, 256), false etymologies (*interpretatio nominis*), proverbs, literal interpretation of figurative expressions (*ad verbum non ad sententiam rem accipere*), allegory, metaphors, and antiphrasis or irony (*ex inversione verborum*).

Cicero's taxonomy of humor reminds one of the *Tractatus Coislinianus.* The distinction between referential and verbal humor is the same, as are some of the further subdivisions. Because Cicero mentions several Greek treatises on comedy, the Greek influence comes as no surprise. If the *Tractatus Coislinianus* is really the summary of the second book of the *Poetics*, it would be easy to imagine that there is a continuous link between Aristotle's thought and Cicero's, i.e. that the treatises contained roughly the same material covered by the *Tractatus.* If not, the *Tractatus* could well be posterior to the *De*

Oratore, and so no claim could be made as to the contents of the treatises, and hence on Cicero's originality.

Whether inspired by Aristotelian thought or by a Hellenistic systematization, the taxonomy presented by Cicero is the first attempt at a taxonomy of humor from a linguistic viewpoint. If we compare the taxonomy to contemporary taxonomies (see ch. 3), it is amazing how little progress has been made. It is even more amazing that so few of the authors who introduced taxonomies of humor seem to be aware that the distinction verbal/referential was introduced two millennia before; furthermore, Cicero is completely original in proposing a surprisingly modern empirical test for the verbal/referential opposition. The clarity of the passage warrants its quoting in full:

> Nam quod quibuscumque verbis dixeris facetum tamen est, re continetur, quod mutatis verbis salem amittit, in verbis habet leporem omnem. (LXII, 252) (...) quoniam mutatis verbis non possunt retinere eandem venustatem, non in re sed in verbis posita ducantur. (LXIV, 258)
> /What, said in whatever words, is nevertheless funny, it is contained in the thing, what loses its saltiness if the words are changed, has all the funniness in the words. (...) because after changing the words they cannot retain the same funniness, should be considered to rely not in the thing but in the words./

Thus, according to Cicero, translation permits a clear cut determination of a humorous text to one of the two categories. The criterion of resistance to translation seems to be the only empirical technique able to ascertain whether the humorous effect depends on the form of the linguistic sign (see ch. 3). It is clear that if the humorous effect resists paraphrase (endolinguistic 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. It should be noted that "form" does not pertain exclusively to the phonological/phonetic representation but also to the shape of the characters in pictograms or ideograms, etc. For instance, Chinese speakers enjoy puns based on the shape of the characters (Alleton 1970: 63-64).

Cicero's criterion is not without its flaws (see Attardo et al. 1991 and 1994 for a review of some of the problems encountered in applying it practi-

cally). As many translators and linguists interested in the theory of translation know, it is often possible to translate puns from one language to another (see Laurian and Nilsen (1989), Laurian (1992) and references therein). Actually a good translator may be able to find similarities in the two linguistic systems that will allow the rendering of the pun in another language with a minimum of distortion. The issue is not that of the 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. These issues will be developed further in ch. 3 and 4.

Cicero's originality should not be overemphasized, because it probably derives from the fact that the chapter on humor in the *De Oratore* is one of the few extended treatises on comedy that have survived. If several treatises on humor had been preserved, Cicero's would probably appear quite commonplace; for example, the distinction between figures of speech and of thought was common in the Greek and Roman rhetorical tradition, and the translation test also appears in a fragment from Alexander, a Greek rhetorician of the late 1st century AD, translated in Einarson (1945: 81-83).

1.3.2 Quintilian

Quintilian's (ca 35 - ca 100 AD) treatise on humor has the breadth of a separate text, although it is included as the third section of the sixth book in the *Institutio Oratoria*. Actually, both Quintilian and Cicero's texts on humor have been published separately in book form by Monaco (1967).

It should be noted that in Quintilian, as well as in Cicero, the issue of humor is not addressed independently, but in relation to its instrumental use in the art of oratory. This accounts for the importance of the issue of the appropriateness of humor, already found in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. Quintilian' s utilitarian attitude also sees humor as something with which one

can "relax" the mind:

> Animum ab intentione rerum frequenter avertit et aliquando etiam
> reficit et a satietate vel a fatigatione renovat (VI-3-1)
> /Frequently it [laughter] diverts the soul from the attention to
> matters and from time to time it also restores and renews from
> satiety or fatigue./

Quintilian, conforming to an established tradition, recommends avoiding exaggeration, and applying rules of "correctness" (for instance, to avoid jokes in a pathetic case). From this point of view, the traditional condemnation of humor seems to apply to the excessive use of humor rather than to humor itself. According to certain passages in Quintilian's text, Cicero himself did not shy away from joking in the Forum, and often in his private life. Cicero himself, in fact, was reproached for his excessive use of humor.

Quintilian presents some rather pessimistic remarks to the effect that humor has not been "explained" even though many have tried. On a less pessimistic note, and striking a very modern chord, Quintilian stresses the fact that laughter (*risus*) has a psychological as well as a physical source (tickling, *corporis tactu* VI-3-7). More specifically Quintilian points out the polygenesis of humor, which does not reduce laughter to the physical symptom of a psychical event (humor), but recognizes the broader scope of the physical phenomenon.

> Praeterea non una ratione moveri solet: neque enim acute tantum
> ac venuste, sed stulte, iracunde, timide dicta ac facta ridentur,
> ideoque anceps eius rei ratio est, quod a derisu non procul abest
> risus. (VI-3-7) /Moreover it [laughter] does not come from only
> one reason: in effect one not only laughs about pointed or amusing
> sayings or facts, but also about stupid, angry, timid [facts or
> sayings]; and because of this very fact the reason of this is double,
> because laughter is not far from derision/.

Quintilian connects the difficulty of providing a unique explanation for humor to its relationship, already emphasized by Cicero, with derision, thus restating the aggressive and negative characterization of humor in rather strong terms.

Quintilian accepts Cicero's division of referential versus verbal humor (*facto aliquo dictove* (VI-3-7)), but he also proposes six different kinds of humor, independently of the referential/ verbal opposition: *urbanitas, venustum, salsum, facetum, jocus, dicacitas*. Piddington (1933: 115) notes that "a precis of his account of the differences between the meanings of these words would be of little value since Latin authors are extremely lax in their use of the various terms." Moreover, little depends on this division. To give an idea of the differences in meaning in the six terms, let us note that *urbanitas* corresponds more or less to Aristotle's ἀστεῖα since they both are derived from the root meaning "urban, civilized." *Venustum* is closer to our "beautiful," while *salsum* uses the same metaphor of the English "salty" or "spicy." *Facetum* comes from the root *fac-* (to make) and thus has the meaning of "well done" and hence "pleasing." *Jocus* is close to our "joke" in the meaning of "not serious." *Dicacitas* is connected with *dico* (to say) and thus means generally "saying."

Quintilian introduces a tripartite division of the subject of humor: the subject can deal with others, ourselves, or a "neutral" ("middle") category which involves neither of the above. With humor directed towards others, Quintilian claims, "either we censure others' activities, or we refute them, or we praise them, or we react to them or we avoid them" (*Aliena aut reprehendimus, aut refutamus, aut elevamus, aut repercutimus, aut eludimus*, VI-3-23). Quintilian's attitude towards the interpersonal use of humor does not seem to be reducible simply to any of the superiority or correction theories of humor, but rather shows a deep understanding of the diversity of the social use of humor.

Concerning humor directed towards ourselves, Quintilian notes that the same act if done out of imprudence or distraction is considered a blunder, whereas "if we fake it, it is believed funny" (*si simulamus, venusta creduntur*). This observation contains, in a nutshell, the recognition of the "playful" attitude connected with humor. From a strictly linguistic point of view, it involves the speaker's intentionality, i.e., distinguishes between involuntary humor, which is not meant to be funny, but is observed by an outside spectator who interprets it as funny or ridiculous, and intentional humor, in which a speaker says something which he/she intends to be funny and which may or may not be perceived as funny by a hearer.

Dealing with the third, neutral kind of humor, Quintilian makes a claim that anticipates almost down to the wording the "frustrated expectations"

theory (see below): "The third kind is, as he [Cicero] says , in the thwarting of expectations, taking differently the things said" (*Tertium est genus, ut idem dicit, in decipiendis expectationibus, dictis aliter accipiendis* (...)VI-3-24)). It should be noted that polysemy and ambiguity (cf. the reference to "taking things differently") are at the center of modern linguistic research on humor.

Quintilian's anticipations of linguistic thought do not end there. He notes that all tropes (figures of speech) are possible sources of humor (VI-3-66) and he mentions both *de re* and *de dicto* tropes, with references to several authors who had devised taxonomies of these (*nonnulli diviserunt species dictorum*; /several divided the kinds of jests/, VI-3-70). Quintilian also mentions irony and parody. His sources, besides Cicero, were clearly Greek, since some of his terminology remains in Greek, as is the case with "parody."

Finally, to sum up Quintilian's thought, consider this passage which again shows surprising similarities between Latin thought and modern linguistic research:

> 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. VI-3-89.
> /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 else's beliefs, or by saying what cannot be./

Compare these claims with Raskin's (1985: 127; see also ch. 6) analysis of jokes, which isolates three basic semantic oppositions: real/unreal, normal/abnormal, possible/impossible. Strictly speaking, Quintilian gets only one category "right" (possible/impossible), but clearly *right* and *true* are not very far from *real* and *normal.* This is not meant to imply that modern research lacks originality or that "all has already been said." Rather, it is interesting to seek to identify those ideas that appear over and over in a field, constituting often overlooked threads which may unite researchers whose goals and interests often vary significantly.

1.3.3   Horace

Horace (65-8 BC) left no text dealing specifically with humor; he is mentioned here only because his influence was strongly felt in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His influence was exerted through what seems to have been his last written work, the *Epistula ad Pisones*, known also as the *Ars Poetica*. This text is a digression on matters of poetic expression, with strong Aristotelian influences. The passages which have had the greatest influence on the theory of humor are those in which Horace claims the necessity of a correspondence between the subject matter and the form:

> versibus exponi tragicis res comica non vult (Ars Poetica 89)
> /a subject for comedy refuses to be handled in tragic verse/
> (Kraemer 1936: 400)

Another topic which has become associated with Horace's formulation was the idea that comedy could "educate," that is, present ideas in an accessible and pleasant way. Both of these ideas will enjoy considerable reputation in the Renaissance (see below). For more on Horace's thoughts on humor, see Plebe (1952: 76-77).

1.3.4   Donatus

The grammarian Donatus (4th century A.D.), whose fame resides in his grammatical/rhetorical treatise, also wrote commentaries on Terentius' comedies. Included in these is a small treatise titled *De Comoedia*. Donatus' sources are generally Latin, and particularly Cicero. Donatus attached particular importance to the use of humorous names, and one finds traces of this interest in Renaissance plays. Donatus is not of particular interest as an original thinker, but deserves mention because of the great influence he had on the theories of humor and comedy through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (see Herrick (1950: 65-70)).

1.3.5   The Middle Ages

From the point of view of humor theory, the Middle Ages were really the "dark ages," because there was little theorizing on humor. The only name worth mentioning is that of John Tzetzes (1110 – 1185?), who wrote a brief

(92 lines) pedagogical poem entitled *Ἰάμβοι τέχνικοι περί κωμῳδίας* (*Technical Iambs on Comedy*) which deals with comic poetry, among other things. The text and some comments are to be found in Janko (1984). Tzetzes reveals little Aristotelic influence (Cooper 1923: 97-98), and by the time he was writing, *Poetics* had nearly been forgotten.

Not so, however, by the Arabs, who appear to have been familiar throughout the Middle Ages with the text of the *Poetics* (Cooper 1923: 94-95). Averroes' paraphrase of the Arabic translation of a Syriac translation has become famous because it was translated into Hebrew and Latin (1256, by Hermannus Alemanus), and it understandably bears little similarity to the Greek original. Averroes' translation includes the definition of comedy, which thus may have been familiar to those scholars who came into contact with the *Poetics* through his translation (see Herrick 1950: 24).

Dante, writing at the beginning of the 14th century, calls his masterpiece "comedy" on the grounds of its "mixture" of styles and subject matter. We can detect a faint echo of Aristotle's warnings on appropriateness of style in relation to the characters and the events, but the most important influence at work in Dante is that of Horace. Serper (1983) notes the same Horatian influence in the authors of the *Fabliaux* as well as the idea—made popular by Isidore of Seville (ca. 570-636)—that some types of literature were meant for "fun" (*delectatio*), .

1.4   The Renaissance

The sections on Greek and Latin thinkers above confirm that some ideas were common to both the Greeks and the Latins, who mostly derived them from Greek sources. The next sections will investigate how some of these ideas were picked up by Renaissance thinkers. Because the *Poetics*, one of the most important texts defining humor, had been "lost" during the Middle Ages, it was not part of the intellectual debate of that time (notwithstanding Averroe's translation and some influences on secondary authors). The Renaissance is marked by the rediscovery of Greek originals, including the *Poetics*. In 1508, Aldus Manuntius in Venice printed the first modern edition of the Greek text of the *Poetics*, a decade after Lorenzo Valla's Latin translation, and it had a great impact on literary criticism almost immediately (see Weinberg (1961: 361-371)).

Identifying the history of the theory of humor in the Renaissance with the history of the rediscovery and interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and of the theory of humor included therein, is roughly correct because most of the definitions of humor and comedy produced during the Renaissance appear in that context; however, one should not overlook the presence of Donatus' ideas or the commentaries to the comedies of Aristophanes, which contained the treatises "On comedy" and the *Tractatus Coislinianus*. Their influence is particularly evident in some of the authors that we will consider in this section.

The main part of our attention here is devoted mainly to the Italian theorists for the reason that, chronologically at least, they were the first to take advantage of the "new" ideas introduced by Aristotle to elaborate on a new theory of humor and comedy. In no way can the following considerations be construed as an attempt to reconstruct the debate within and around Italian Renaissance Aristotelianism. The goal of the following section is merely to present some of the ideas of the classical theories of humor before the great "division" between "psychological" and "literary" theories of humor in the early 17th century.[7]

Renaissance theorists were mostly concerned with the formulation of a set of rules (the well known "unities") for the purpose of distinguishing between Medieval farce and the new "cultivated" comedy. The rediscovered classics offered a tool suitable for this endeavor. As a result, two independent concerns were combined: on one side, the historical interest in what the classics had said, and on the other, the search for a set of criteria by which to judge comedies. Often the two are indistinguishable, but this need not concern this discussion.

Several published works cover the study of humor in the Renaissance. Weinberg (1961) is a thorough coverage of the influence of the classics on Renaissance literary theory in general. The history of the influence of the *Poetics* on literary criticism related to comedy has been summarized and presented by Spingarn (1908: 101-106), Cooper (1923[1956]), and by Herrick (1930) for England and (1950) more in general. Weinberg (1953) presents a brief but enlightening overview of how the Renaissance theorists distort the classical theories. Wimsatt (1969: 18-21) contains a brief summary of

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[7]Whenever possible and practical, an effort has been made to quote direct sources. When these were difficult to access, secondary sources have been employed.

the more important theories and useful bibliographic notes (see also Radcliff-Umstead (1969: 2-10)). The reader interested in a historical overview should turn to these sources.

Table 1.1 provides a chronological overview of the eight authors examined.

Table 1.1: Italian Renaissance Treatises on Humor

Date of Publication	
1511	Vettore Fausto
1548	Robortello
1550	Maggi
1551	Muzio
1561	Scaligero
1562	Trissino
1570	Calstevetro
1572	Pino Da Cagli

1.4.1   Vettore Fausto

In 1511, Vettore Fausto (1480 - 1550) published the *De comoedia libellus* (Booklet on comedy). It is one of the first books to include references to the *Poetics*. Aristotle's equation of comedy and *turpitudo* (ugliness) and some historical information are quoted (see Weinberg (1961: 367) and Herrick (1950: 64)). Fausto also mentions the verbal/referential opposition (see Weinberg (1961: 90)).

1.4.2   Franciscus Robortellus

Robortellus (1516 - 1567) (or Robortello in the Italian version of the name) is the author of a commentary to the *Poetics* to which an essay on comedy was appended. An English translation of his *Explicatio eorum omnium quae ad Comoediae artificium pertinent* (1548) is to be found in Herrick (1950: 227-239). Robortellus' essay is a learned survey of the history of comedy, quoting all the usual sources: Aristotle (predominantly), Cicero, Quintilian, Horace,

Donatus and Aristides, the author of a *Rhetoric*, to whom Robortellus owes his emphasis on "humble style."

> Diction in comic discourse ought to be simple, easy, open, clear, familiar, and finally taken from common usage: for, as Aristides the rhetorician says, simple discourse, such as comic discourse is, does not admit lofty diction since, as has been said, it has thoughts that are simple and humble. (Robortellus 1548, in Herrick 1950: 237)

The Horacean idea of correspondence between style and subject matter is central to Robortellus' concerns: "Since comic discourse is simple (...) its thoughts ought to be humble and not at all lofty." (Robortellus 1548, in Herrick 1950: 236)

1.4.3   Madius

One of the most acclaimed Renaissance treatises on humor is Madius' (? - 1564) (Vincenzo Maggi) *De Ridiculis*, published in 1550 with his commentary to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Herrick (1950: 41) calls it "the most elaborate discussion of the risible in the sixteenth century," and Piddington (1933: 155) calls it "most interesting" from the psychological point of view.[8]

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[8]Bergler (1956: 4) erroneously attributes Cicero's "surprise" theory to Madius. Madius not only does not borrow the "surprise" theory from Cicero, but the following passage from the *De Ridiculis* clearly shows that Madius was criticizing Cicero for not mentioning it:

> Unde mirari satis non possum cur Cicero, qui de ridiculis plenius tractavit de admiratione, quae est una risus causa, ne verbum quidem fecerit, cuius tamen omnino meminisse eum oportebat, cum risus numquam sine admiratione fieri possit. (Madius 1550 in Weisberg 1970: 98-99) /Hence I cannot marvel enough why Cicero, who dealt fully with the ridiculous, about surprise, which is a cause of laughter, did not even say a word, which [surprise], however, he really should have remembered, because laughter can never arise without surprise./

Cicero does mention surprise (*admiratio*) but only in a list of types of humor (see above) and in *De Oratore* LXX, 284:

> Sed ex his omnibus nihil magis ridetur quam quod est praeter expectatione. /But of all this at nothing does one laugh more than at what is beyond expectations./

Madius' text follows Cicero's treatise very closely, commenting upon it and its examples. Herrick (1950: 41-52) follows Madius' text in detail. Madius echoes the division of humor into *de re* and *de dicto*, which has its roots in Cicero (1.3.1) and the *Tractatus Coislinianus* (1.2.3) (see Herrick 1950: 44).

His most interesting insight into humor, and also one of the departures from Cicero's commentary, is his emphasis on *admiratio*, i.e., surprise (see Herrick (1950: 44) who translates *admiratio* as "admiration" in "the old-fashioned sense of astonishment, wonder, surprise"). The following passage from the *De Ridiculis* gives a good idea of the nature of Madius' argument:

> Si turpitudo tantum esset risus causa, ea perseverante, risum quoque perseverare necesse esset. At nulla cessante turpitudinis causa, cessamus tamen a risu; ea enim turpia quae nobis familiaria sunt risum non movent. Igitur satis constat turpitudinem ipsam tantum risus causam non existere, sed admiratione quoque opus esse. (Madius 1550 in Weisberg 1970: 99) /If ugliness alone were the cause of laughter [=the thesis of Aristotle], while it continues to exist, laughter also should continue. But, without ceasing the cause of ugliness, we nevertheless cease laughing; also those things that are ugly but are familiar to us, do not cause laughter. Therefore it is clear enough that the cause of laughter does not reside only in ugliness, but it is also the work of surprise./

Another original note is given in Madius' consideration of the physiology of laughter. Madius emphasizes the fact that laughter is a reflex, and on these grounds he posits a direct relation between laughter, the heart, and the genitals, since in his conception of anatomy these two organs are the only ones not controlled by reason. Although the details of his physiology may be quaint (but see Herrick 1950: 50-52), this is most likely, the first attempt at a description of the physiology of laughter, and it anticipates the classic Darwinian treatment by three centuries. Madius also distinguishes very clearly between physiological laughter (e.g., from tickling), and psychological laughter:

> Invenitur et alius risus qui fit ex tractatione quarundam corporis partium, verbi gratia "axillarum," de quo nunc sermo non est. (Madius 1550 in Weisberg 1970: 100)/One finds also another

laughter which arises from treating some body parts, pardon my words "armpits," about which are outside the present discourse./

Even if of little direct interest for the linguistics of humor proper, Madius' emphasis on the surprise (and so incongruity) of humor is an important part of the discussion of the classical theories of humor in the Renaissance.

1.4.4   Girolamo Muzio

Girolamo Muzio (1496 - 1576) published his *Dell'arte poetica* in 1551. It is a thre-book treatise in verses and a "reduction" (Weinberg 1970: 667) of Horace's. Muzio's ideas on comedy are those of Horace as well, with particular emphasis on the *decorum* (appropriateness) of the action. Muzio was interested in the issues surrounding the appropriateness of the use of the Italian language (as opposed to Latin) and claimed that Italian is adequate for comedy ("la nova lingua (...) é intenta al riso" I, 265 in Weinberg (1970: 173)). On Muzio, see Weinberg (1961: 729-731) and Weinberg (1970: 667-668) and references therein.

1.4.5   Giulio Cesare Scaligero

Giulio Cesare Scaligero (Scaliger) (1484 - 1558) published a seven-book commentary on questions of poetics (*Poetices libri VII*) in 1561. His principal source is Aristotle, although Scaliger "does not hesitate to disagree openly with Aristotle" (Weinberg 1961: 744). In general, his attitude is that comedy has to amuse, regardless of externally imposed rules (see Herrick 1950: 86). He was a very influential critic who contributed to the transmission of the "unities," particularly to the French writers of the 17th century. On Scaliger, see Weinberg (1961: 743-750) and Baldwin (1959: 171-175); on the "unities" and Scaliger's role in their establishment, see Spingarn (1908: 94-100).

1.4.6   Trissino

Giangiorgio Trissino (1478-1550) wrote a treatise on poetics (*Poetica*) in six parts. Inspired by Horace's theory, the first four parts examine metrical and stylistic differences among genres primarily. The last two parts were published posthumously in 1562, and are the most interesting from the point

of view of humor theory because they consist of a commentary on Aristotle's
Poetics.

The sections on comedy are a passive repetition of the historical informa-
tion provided by Aristotle; however, Trissino's definition of the ridiculous is
more original. He begins by noting that:

> Il ridiculo, adunque, come dice Aristotele, é una particula del
> brutto et è un difetto et una bruttezza che non è nè mortifera
> nè dolorosa. Tullio poi e Quintiliano, che quindi per avventura
> lo tolsero, dicono che 'l luogo e la sede del ridiculo è ne la brut-
> tezza e deformitá, non bruttamente. Ma per che cagione poi
> questa bruttezza muove riso, non dicono; e quella parte di Aris-
> totele che forse lo dicea è perduta. Ora noi lo investigheremo in
> questo modo: manifesta cosa è 'l riso vien da diletto e da piacere
> che ha colui che ride, il qual piacere non puó venirgli da altro
> che dai sensi. (Trissino 1562, in Weinberg (1970: 69-70), vol II)
> /Ridicule, thus, as Aristotle says, is a part of the ugly and a de-
> fect and an ugliness which is neither lethal nor painful. Moreover,
> Tullius [Cicero] and Quintilian, who took it hence probably, say
> that the locale and place of ridicule is in ugliness and deformity,
> not in an ugly manner. But why this ugliness moves laughter
> they do not say; and that part of Aristotle which perhaps said it
> is lost. Now we will investigate it thus: it is obvious that laughter
> comes from the delight and pleasure that has the laugher, which
> pleasure can come only from the senses./

Yet, Trissino remarks, pleasure in itself does not generate laughter. When
laughter arises, the object that generates pleasure is "mixed" with "some
ugliness," such as "an ugly and distorted face, an inept movement, a silly
word, an awkward pronunciation, a rough hand, a wine of unpleasant taste,
a bad smelling rose." The humorous effect is enhanced, concludes Trissino,
if one expected them to be different "since then not only the senses but also
the hopes are lightly offended" (Trissino, 1562, in Weinberg (1970: 70); see
Herrick (1950: 41)).

Overall, Trissino's contribution to the debate on the nature of humor is
a synthesis of Cicero's views with those of Plato, with special emphasis on
the "thwarted expectations." Because of its Platonic derivation, Trissino's
definition of humor belongs largely to the realm of ethics, wherein humor

is explained by human badness ("this pleasure comes to us because man is naturally envious and malicious" (Trissino 1562 in Weinberg 1970: 71)). On Trissino's theory of humor see also Herrick (1950: 40-41).

An evaluation of Trissino's definition of humor should not be limited to the "moral" aspect of humor. After repeating Aristotle's definition of humor as coming from ugliness, Trissino gives an example: [9]

> (Il) Pievano Arlotto, il quale trovandosi in Fiorenza sopra una strada e passandogli appresso una giovane assai bella e ardita, egli disse ad un compagno che gli era seco: "Questa è una bella donna"; e la giovane ardita si volse ver lui e disse: "Io non posso giá dir cosí di voi." E il Pievano subito rispose: "Sí bene, quando voi volessi dire una bugia di me come io l'ho detta di voi." /The Pievano [a sort of priest] Arlotto was in Florence on a road and as a very beautiful and hardy young woman passed by him he said to a companion who was with him: "This is a beautiful woman"; and the young and hardy woman turned and said: "I cannot say the same of you." And the Pievano immediately answered: "Yes, indeed, if you wanted to lie about me as I lied about you."/

This joke may not seem funny to contemporary readers because of its misogynistic nature or perhaps because of differences in the organization of the text of a contemporary joke, but it is a very interesting document because Trissino gives a detailed analysis of why it is funny in his opinion:

> Quivi fingendo il Pievano bruttezza di animo in se stesso, cioè di aver detto bugia, scopre anco bruttezza nell'animo ingrato della donna che biasma chi la loda; et insieme motteggia in lei la bruttezza del corpo. (Trissino 1562 in Weinberg 1970: 74-75)
> /Here the Pievano pretending ugliness of soul in himself, i.e., of having lied, uncovers also ugliness in the ungrateful soul of the woman who blames he who praises her; and at the same time mocks the ugliness of her body./

It is clear from Trissino's discussion that "ugliness" does not mean only physical ugliness, but also any "improper" (i.e., socially unconscionable) behavior (lying, ungratefulness). It is amusing that Trissino seems oblivious of

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[9]Which is actually the 71st "facezia" of the *Facezie del Pievano Arlotto* and comes from the 271st of Poggio Bracciolini's *Liber Facetiarum* (see Di Francia 1924-25: 388).

the fact that the joke has defined the woman as beautiful, and claims that the Pievano Arlotto is making fun of her physical appearance are hardly plausible.

1.4.7   Lodovico Castelvetro

Lodovico Castelvetro (1505-1571) is another of the Renaissance commentators on the Poetics; his commentary was first published in 1570. What sets him apart is his declared intention of using his commentary for the creation of an autonomous literary theory. 1978: 375). Castelvetro begins with a close commentary of Aristotle's text, but develops a theory of humor independently.

Castelvetro lists four sources of laughter:

1. the sight of people that are dear to us;

2. deceptions of others than ourselves. This can happen because of four reasons:

   (a) ignorance of customs, madness, drunkenness

   (b) ignorance of arts or sciences, and boasting

   (c) willful misinterpretations and witty retorts

   (d) chance and intentional deceptions

3. evil and physical disgrace presented under cover

4. sex

The first category seems to have little to do with humor (and more with pleasure or surprise). The second and third offer few surprises—all these distinctions had been made already by authors of the classic period or by their commentators. The last category is quite interesting since it predates Freud by a full 330 years. Castelvetro claims that everything pertaining to "the pleasures of the flesh" is funny; however, Castelvetro continues, the genitalia or "lascivious unions" are not funny when openly presented, but rather embarrassing. They become funny when they are presented "covered" with "some veiling, through which we can pretend not to laugh at the dishonesty [improperness], but at something else" (Castelvetro in Weinberg 1970: 135).

1.4.8   Bernardo Pino

Bernardo (or Bernardino) Pino da Cagli (ca. 1530 - 1601) is the author of a letter to Sforza Oddi, the author of a comedy (*Erofilomachia*). The letter is entitled *Breve considerazione intorno al componimento de la comedia de' nostri tempi* (Brief thoughts about the composing of comedy in our times), is dated 1572, and in it Pino develops some ideas on comedy.

Pino's theory of comedy is based on Horace, but he uses Aristotle for "the limitation of the comic subject" (Weinberg 1961: 581). He also follows Aristotle and Cicero in his definition of humor as coming from the "ugly" (*brutto*). He defines *brutto* as a "lack of proportion" as Trissino had also:

> Nè per brutto si dee sempre intendere il disonesto e l'osceno, chè per sè stesse tali parole d'osceno e di disonesto hanno sempre significato di male. Ma per brutto l'ha da prendere quel che non ha le sue parti proporzionate e corrispondenti, da la quale corrispondenza nasce la bellezza, la quale non è altro che l'ordine e la proporzione delle parti. (Pino 1572 in Weinberg 1970: 635 vol II) /Neither by "ugly" one must always understand the dishonest [socially unacceptable] and obscene, because by themselves these words "obscene" and "dishonest" have always the meaning of "evil." On the contrary by "ugly" one should take what does not have its parts in proportion and corresponding (to each other), from this correspondence is born beauty, which is not anything else than the order and proportion of the parts. (see Weinberg (1961: 582))/

As examples, Pino quotes a sentence "ill accustomed to the understanding of the speaker or poorly worded" (1572 in Weinberg (1970: 636)) and the analysis of an example from the *Erofilomachia*:

> (Ella) fa dire a quel servo che egli (il servo) al maggior buio della notte, se li fussero date cinquecento bastonate le riconoscerebbe tutte ad una ad una; ridicolo veramente e legiadro in bocca d'un servo qualle ella il dipinge, per l'indebita proporzione del vedere al buio le bastonate, che sono oggetto del tatto non delli occhi, e del riconoscere con la schiena il numero d'esse, che è della virtú intellettiva o della ragione, non semplicemente della facoltá sensitiva. (Pino 1572 in Weinberg (1970: 638)) /(You) have a valet

> say that he in the thickest darkness of the night, if he were given
> five hundred blows he would recognize them all one by one; truly
> ridiculous, and beautiful in the mouth of a valet as you paint
> him, because of the undue proportion of seeing in the darkness
> the blows, which are the object of touch and not of the eyes, and
> the recognition with the back of their number, which belongs to
> the virtue of understanding or of reason, not just to the sensitive
> virtue./

From this passage, it is quite clear that Pino, as Trissino before, does not
necessarily link the idea of humor with "evil" but only with social inappro-
priateness.

1.4.9   Influences in Europe

The debate around the *Poetics* had an immediate effect outside of Italy.
The French school of the *Pléiade* was influenced by the Italian theorists
(Spingarn 1908: 171-189) as well as authors such as Nicolas Rapin (1535? -
1609?) (see Herrick 1949: 13-14), Corneille (1606 - 1684), Boileau (1636 -
1711) (Weinberg 1953: 198-200) and in the tradition of Renaissance anatomy
and physiology, Laurent Joubert's (1529-1583) *Traité du ris* (1579[1980]). In
England, Sidney (1554 - 1586) and Ben Johnson (1573 - 1637) were influenced
by the Italian Renaissance theorists. More generally, the Elizabethan theory
of comedy "was based" (Spingarn 1908: 287) on the writings of the Italian
Renaissance authors reviewed above. Spingarn (1908: 287-291) documents
the use of Trissino by Sidney and Johnson, while Baldwin (1959: 178-180)
lists references by Sidney to Aristotle, Horace and Scaliger. Herrick (1949:
12-13) notes that Sidney, Ben Johnson, Dryden (1631 - 1700), and Hobbes
(1588 - 1679) mention unexpectedness as a source of humor, and this idea
can be traced back to Cicero.

Another strand of discussion about humor in the Renaissance concerns
its appropriateness for the courtesan and its social acceptability (see Bourhis
1985b). This is of less interest from the current point of view, but is also
strongly inflenced by Cicero and the classical authors.

1.4.10   The Transition into Modern Thought

Several conclusions emerge from the foregoing discussion of the definitions and analyses of humor in the Renaissance. Aristotle, Cicero, and Horace are the three thinkers who determine the paradigm of the debate; the Renaissance theorists agreed or disagreed with them, but needed to take these works into account in any case. Despite this, the view of the Renaissance as a mere repetition of the classical theories of humor (Bergler 1956: 4; Piddington 1933: 155) is simplistic. While these author's works are deeply rooted in the Renaissance imitation of the classics, their work also contain some original thoughts, some deviations from the norms (e.g., Scaliger), and some syntheses of different points of view (such as the Platonic and Aristotelian view in Trissino).

The rediscovery of and commentary on the thoughts of Aristotle, Horace, and Cicero established a relatively homogeneous body of critical theories that enjoyed widespread distribution (Italy, France, England), had an important influence on the comic literature of these nations, and inevitably set some standards in the debate on humor that had to be taken into consideration by the authors who followed.

The Renaissance theorists examined in the previous section are the last to propose "global" theories of humor—that is, theories that try to account for all[10] the aspects of the phenomenon in an integrated holistic approach. In other words, humor is an integral part of the discussion about comedy as a literary and oratory genre in their treatment, as it was in the Classical theories and their Medieval continuations.

With the modern separation of literary and philosophical thought that began with the Enlightenment, this unity of concerns was lost. After the Renaissance begins the modern division of science in (academic) branches. The theories of humor that appeared in the next centuries were elaborated within the framework of a single discipline; they were philosophical, sociological, physiological, literary, or psychological. They may have been applied to

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[10]Or at least for what the Renaissance theorists perceived to be the relevant aspects of the phenomenon: thus, we have detailed accounts of the rhetorical and sociological approaches, historical accounts, some attempts at linguistic taxonomies, several ethical/moral issues, occasional physiological descriptions, but no psychological descriptions (unless one counts some vague anticipations of the incongruity theories) or evolutionary descriptions (the differences between children's humor and adults' humor go unnoticed).

another field, to be sure, but their inception reflected the specialized boundaries of the discipline in which they began, in compliance with the modern specialist conception of science. The interest in humor is no exception, and hence the theories that are developed after this period exist independently of the concerns of the other sciences, sometimes ignoring their results. The current interdisciplinary approach is naturally a reaction to this trend (see Introduction).

1.5   Modern Approaches to Humor Theory

Within the cultural growth of the Renaissance, one can perceive the signs of the specialization of knowledge that would lead to the separation of academic disciplines as independent autonomous bodies of knowledge and methodologies. Thus literary criticism, philosophy, physiology, physics, etc. begin to exist more or less independently.

Naturally, the Renaissance theories, as well as the classical ones that inspired them, fall short of the ideal that they themselves set; that is, they do not explain the phenomenon, but rather mix a description of the phenomena with explanatory attempts that cover some of the phenomena, yet fail to be "descriptively adequate."

So many, varied theories of humor have been presented since the Renaissance that several authors have attempted to classify them (for a review of classifications of humor see Keith-Spiegel (1972)). Precisely because of the specialization of the theories of humor and of the linguistic slant of this review, it is not necessary to review systematically all the theories in their chronological order of appearance. Linguistics as such was not an independent player on the scene until the 19th century, and then showed little, if any, interest in humor. Those thinkers who dealt with linguistic humor often only included a mention of puns (on the negative aspects of this tendency see Raskin (1987, 1991, in press)). Two exceptions are Bergson and Freud, who have shaped modern thought on humor more than anyone else and provided some insights on linguistic humor; they will be covered in separate sections.

What follows then is a brief and necessarily cursory topical treatment of some of the principal theories of humor with emphasis on those aspects that are most important from a linguistic point of view. A large number of anthologies of texts dealing with humor and humor theory is available:

Table 1.2: The Three Families of Theories

Cognitive	Social	Psychoanalytical
Incongruity	Hostility	Release
Contrast	Aggression	Sublimation
	Superiority	Liberation
	Triumph	Economy
	Derision	
	Disparagement	

Morreall's (1987) anthology-cum-essay on the philosophy of humor deserves a special mention. When such a text is available, it will be quoted instead of the primary source for the sake of simplicity. The reader will usually find there further comments and discussions.

1.5.1   Classification of Modern Theories of Humor

A commonly accepted classification divides theories of humor into three groups: incongruity theories (a.k.a. contrast) (Raskin 1985: 31-36), hostility/disparagement (a.k.a. aggression, superiority, triumph, derision) theories (Ibid.: 36-38), and release theories (a.k.a. sublimation, liberation) (Ibid.: 38-40). This classification (Table 1.2) will be adopted for the rest of the review of the literature and will be integrated with two classes of research that for various reasons pursue perspectives somewhat different than the three main theories—physiological and literary theories. The analysis of two major thinkers, Freud and Bergson, will also be dealt with separately due to their great influence "across the board," so to speak, and whom, therefore, it would have been reductive to place under just one heading (although their theories do fall under the three classes above).

Incongruity Theories

The first authors generally associated with incongruity theories of humor are Kant (1724 - 1804) (see Morreall (1987: 45-50)) and Schopenhauer (1788 -

1860) (see Morreall (1987: 51-64)), but as it has been shown, "incongruity-based" issues were already discussed in the Renaissance (e.g., Madius) and can be traced back to the earliest theories: for example, Aristotle's definition of humor as "something bad" was interpreted as meaning something unbefitting, out of place, thus not necessarily "evil" (e.g., Trissino; see 1.4.6).

Kant's famous definition of laughter reads: "Laughter is an affection arising from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (Kant *Critique of Judgement*, (1790: 177), quoted in Morreall (1987: 47)). Attention is usually drawn to the suddenness of the transformation and to the fact that the expectation is turned into nothing. Certainly, these are the roots of the modern incongruity theories of humor. It may be remarked also that Kant anticipates the "justification" of humor (see ch. 3 and references therein) when he remarks that "the jest must contain something that is capable of deceiving for a moment" (Ibid. 48).

Shopenhauer's definition of laughter mentions "incongruity" explicitly: "The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity." (Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 1819, quoted in Morreall (1987: 52)).

Since incongruity theories are based on the mismatch between two ideas in the broadest possible sense, they are the direct ancestors of "cognitive" theories, which currently seem to dominate the psychological field (see Raskin (1985: 32-33) and McGhee (1984)). A good explicit definition of incongruity is McGhee's (1979: 6-7)

> The notion of congruity and incongruity refer to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectation, and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent elements of an event is incompatible with the normal or expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous.

For discussion, see Forabosco (1992). The proposals closest to linguistic concerns are Koestler's (1964) bisociation theory (see Milner 1972; see also 5.1.1), Suls' (1972) incongruity-based two-stage information-processing model, Paulos' (1977, 1980) catastrophe-theory model, and recently Hofstadter and Gabora's (1989) cognitive model. On "cognitivist theories," see Suls (1983) and Fara and Lambruschi (1987: 45-63).

A special type of incongruity is related to the idea of "play," which is an important factor in humor theory and has numerous implications for linguistic humor theories (see Huizinga (1939), Bateson (1953, 1955)). An important proponent of the play theory was Karl Groos, a Swiss philosopher who was a major influence on Sully and Freud (see below and Simon (1985: 205)). On the connections between play and language, with an ethnographic and folkloric slant, see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1976, especially pp. 183-189) and references therein.

Incongruity theories are conceptually closer to linguistic theories of structuralist descent because they are essentialist. This higher degree of closeness has led to the frequent classification of linguistically based theories with incongruity theories. Much to the dismay of its proponent, this has happened also to the script-based semantic theory, despite its proclaimed and carefully argued neutral stand with regards to the three major groups of theories (Raskin 1985: 131-132), see Attardo and Raskin (1991) and ch. 11.

Since both incongruity theories and linguistic theories of humor are essentialist theories (as opposed to the sociological and psychological descriptivist paradigms), they share some aspects of the general outlook on the phenomena to be explained; however, it would be incorrect to claim that any linguistic theory of humor is necessarily incongruity-based (see a refutation of a recent challenge to incongruity theories in linguistic humor research in ch. 3), but, in principle, one can conceive of a non-incongruity based essentialist linguistic theory. This issue will be elaborated upon further in Attardo and Raskin (forthcoming).

Precisely because of this "essentialist" outlook, elements belonging to incongruity theories are often co-opted by other theories. In fact, the incongruity theory is not incompatible with the hostility and release theories (see, for example, Raskin (1985: 30).

The Hostility Theory

The earliest theories (Plato, Aristotle) all mention the negative element of humor, its aggressive side. The idea has had numerous proponents and a great influence on the perception of humor in our culture. Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679) formulated most forcefully the idea that laughter arises from a sense of superiority of the laugher towards some object (what is commonly referred to as the "butt of the joke"). Hobbes uses the term "sudden glory,"

which has also been used to label this position. The most influential propo-
nent of the superiority theory has been Bergson, for whom humor is a social
corrective, i.e., used by society to correct deviant behavior. Sociological ap-
proaches to humor often emphasize the aggressive (or cohesive, depending
on one's position in relation to the speaker) aspect of humor (for surveys see
Hertzler (1970) and Fine (1983)). Aggressive humor is also known as "ex-
clusive" humor; conversely, cohesive uses of humor are known as "inclusive"
humor.

A discussion of Hobbes' theory will be found in La Fave et al. (1976:
63-66). On superiority theory, see Rapp (1951), Keith-Spiegel (1972: 6-7),
Morreall (1983: 4-14), Zillmann (1983), Raskin (1985: 36-38; 1991, forthcom-
ing). Because of their emphasis on the interpersonal, social aspect of humor,
superiority/disparagement theories are of interest to the sociolinguistics of
humor, but of limited application elsewhere. Among contemporary major
researchers to follow hostility theories are La Fave (1972), Lixfeld (1978)
Gruner (1978), and Mio and Graesser (1991). An interesting attempt at
blending superiority and cognitive (incongruity) theories is Kreitler *et al.*
(1988).

Release Theories

Release theories maintain that humor "releases" tensions, psychic energy, or
that humor releases one from inhibitions, conventions and laws. The most
influential proponent of a release theory is certainly Freud (1905). For an
overview of other proponents of release theories, see Keith-Spiegel (1972:
10-13), Morreall (1983: 20-37), and Raskin (1985: 38-40).

In terms of linguistic behavior, release theories are interesting because
they account for the "liberation" from the rules of language, typical of puns
and other word-play, and also for the infractions to the principle of Cooper-
ation (Grice 1975, 1989) typical of humor at large. This aspect of linguistic
humor has been labelled "defunctionalization" (Guiraud 1976: 111-119) (see
ch. 10). Among contemporary major researchers to have proposed release
theories are Fry (1963) and Mindess (1971).

Literary Approaches

Until the Renaissance, literary criticism was intertwined with philosophical and psychological thought on humor. The emergence of literary criticism as an autonomous discipline, and the Romantic idea of the author as a genius detached literary criticism from the theory of humor. This was unfortunate since both literary criticism and humor theory could gain from attention to one another (literary criticism by being aware of advances in humor theory; humor theory by using literature to go beyond the simplest and most accessible examples). The break-up was probably inevitable, however, since the main focus of literary theories is the literary object, not the reason why a given text is funny.

Gourévitch (1975), Jardon (1988), Lewis, (1989) and Bariaud et al. (eds.) (1990) offer a good idea of some of the issues involved in the current discussion on humor in literary criticism. A short, but penetrating, characterization of the "Harvard theory of comedy," including Barber (1959), Segal (1968), and Levin (1987) is provided by Evans (1989). On literary research in America, see Nilsen (1992).

Resolutely anti-theoretical, uninterested in generalizations applicable to "humor" at large (see Lewis (1989: 3)), these authors seem to adopt a "polythetic" view of comedy and are interested in "recurring plots, characters and techniques" (Evans 1989: 309). The most quoted authors are Freud and Bergson as well as some authors who have proposed unsystematic and impressionistic views on humor which rely mostly on images (on Meredith's (1828-1909) views on humor, see Cooper (1918) and Sypher (1956); on Frye's see Gourévitch (1975: 17-19), Palmer (1984: 58-60), Jardon (1988: 216-217), and Lewis (1989: 64-65)).

Literary theories that mix psychological ideas (Freud, and often Jung) with genre theory and scattered observations (on these theories, see a review in Jardon (1988)) have had some success. The works by Bakhtin (1984) and Huizinga (1939) are also very popular and often quoted (see Ferroni 1974). The psychological and Bakhtinian traditions may not be unconnected; see Byrd (1987) who argues for an influence of Freud on Bakhtin.

Linguistics has had virtually no influence at all in this context—witness the uncomprehending quotations in Lewis (1989: 162-163) and Nelson (1990: 125-126) of Raskin's script-based theory. Jardon (1988) is one exception (see Attardo 1990b), since she is aware of the linguistic (mostly European) de-

bate on humor. Another exception is O' Neill (1987), who advocates the application of the "ludic" aspect of games (e.g. Huizinga) to literary criticism. Lately, there has been some evidence that the literary field may be opening up to humor research. For instance, Lewis (1989) considers sociological humor research in a literary context. However, it is possible that literary criticism and humor theory may not converge. Obviously, the authors have to explain what is "funny" before analyzing it, and that is why there is an overlap between the two fields, but that does necessarily imply some convergence is necessary or even desirable.

Another strand of philologically oriented literary research on humor comprises such authors as Lewicka (1974, and references therein), Garapon (1954), Bourhis (1964, 1985, 1986a/b, 1988), and many others (see the papers in Lewicka (ed.) 1981) who operate on the border between literature, the linguistic description of a language at a given moment in time, its humorous resources, and the typology of humorous genres, which often differ vastly from those current nowadays.

Among the most studied genres is the learned predecessor to today's joke, i.e. the Renaissance *facetia* codified in various collections (e.g., *Liber facetiarum* by Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), the *Detti del Piovano Arlotto*, etc.; see Sozzi (1966), Tateo (1973), Bowen (1985a, 1986a/b/c, etc.). Often these collections of jokes had been anticipated by the Greek and Roman collections of jokes (e.g., the *Philoghelos*; see Cataudella (1971: 9-34), Baldwin (1983) and references therein). Some of those short stories have lost their humor in the couple of millenia that separate us from those who enjoyed them; others such as the λόγοι συβαριτικοί (*Tales about Sybaris*) translate naturally into today's ethnic jokes (Sybaris was a town in Southern Italy whose inhabitants were considered to be dumb; cf. the Jewish jokes about Chelm).[11]

Physiological Theories

Even less related to linguistics are the physiological explanations/descriptions of humor. Their approach is somewhat different from the three main theories listed above because their focus is not on what is funny, but rather on the physiological causes and/or correlates and effects of humor.

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[11]On the subject of "fooltowns" see Esar (1952: 97-99; 1978: 295-296) and now Davies (1991a).

Decartes (1596 - 1650) was one of the first to present a physiological theory of laughter (his predecessors were Madius and Joubert, see above). According to him, laughter is caused by the blood flow, moving the lungs and the diaphragm (see Morreall (1987: 21-25)). A synopsis and critical discussion of the physiological/psychological theories of laughter by Darwin (1809 - 1882), Spencer (1820 - 1903), Bain (1818 - 1903), the founder of *Mind*, Hall (1844 - 1924), the founder of the American Psychological Association, Sully (1842 - 1923), the founder of the British Psychological Association, and others, is to be found in Simon (1985: 178-210). Simon emphasizes the early connections of these authors with the incongruity theory (mediated via Kant) and relationships with literary criticism (mediated via Meredith, see below).

On the "arousal" theories, which explain humor as a change in degrees of arousal, see McGhee (1979: 15-19; 1984: 38-39), and Berlyne (1972). Numerous scholars have maintained either that laughter is "good for the body" (on the relationship between humor and health see Robinson 1983), or that laughter is an "adaptive behavior" (McDougall 1908: 386-397; Chafe 1987), or that it is a physiological "relic" of some lost instinctual reaction (see Keith-Spiegel (1972: 5-6)). Proponents of the latter thesis often emphasize the connection between laughter, smiling, and showing teeth (e.g., Porteous (1989)). Currently, studies lean more towards the study of humor as an enabling mechanism for thought (e.g., Ziv (1984)), or on the physiological effects of humor (e.g., Cousins (1979) and numerous publications by Fry, for example, Fry (1977), and Fry and Savin (1988)).

1.5.2   Freud

In this section, Freud's contribution to the linguistics of humor will be analyzed. The analysis will begin by presenting the reasons for Freud's importance from the vantage point of linguistics and will subsequently discuss the impact that these aspects of Freud's thought have had on the field. The following should not in any way be construed as a presentation of Freud's theory of humor, let alone of Freud's thought. Technically speaking, Freud's theory would fit under the "release" theories; it is dealt with independently here for its great influence on humor research.

The major point of interest in Freud's work (Freud 1905) derives from the fact that, as Manetti notes,

for the first time in the history of the problem a large and accu-
rate attention was given to the technical phenomenological aspect
of humorous problems (in a broad sense) and to morphological
[not in the linguistic sense, SA] rules of production of humorous
expressions (Manetti 1975: 132).

Freud's work on the techniques of jokes constitutes the first chapter of
Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious. Freud's procedure consists
of analyzing several jokes with the use of mechanisms of "reduction" and
in grouping the jokes into categories according to the humorous techniques
which are used in them. "Reduction" is a form of paraphrase, see Ferroni
(1974: 57-58). The twenty different categories which are the outcome of
Freud's analysis (see Bergler (1956: 31-32), Toschi Nobiloni (1984: 11-12),
Wenzel (1989: 24-26) will not be quoted in full here because, while Freud
himself admits that the limits between the different categories are not abso-
lute, Todorov notes that

> the subdivisions (...) do not correspond to waterproof groups but
> constitute characteristics that can be identified successively, and
> that taken together, could eventually apply to one joke (Todorov
> 1977: 315).

Critical discussion of this aspect of Freud's theory has focused on the pos-
sibility of improving Freud's list of mechanisms. Freud accepts the division
of humor into verbal and referential (*de dicto* vs. *de re*). In the former,

> the technical operation [on the grounds of which the jokes are
> classified] consists of a direct intervention in the single units of
> meaning and in their relationships, in the second they consist of
> an intervention in the conceptual disposition of a sentence or a
> broader group of sentences (Ferroni 1974: 59).

Todorov discusses Freud's analysis at length. He notes that, rather than in-
troducing the referential/verbal distinction, Freud tacitly accepts it and that
after accepting it, he never discusses it explicitly. Todorov notes that trans-
lation alone allows one to determine whether a joke belongs to the verbal or
referential category. No mention is made by either author of Cicero's earlier
suggestion in the same sense. Cicero's discussion is, however, mentioned by

Toschi Nobiloni (1984: 12). The problems with Cicero's empirical translation test have been discussed above (see section 1.3.1).

Freud's twenty different mechanisms operate inside both verbal and referential humor. They can be reduced to two major mechanisms: condensation and displacement (see Manetti (1976: 132) and Ferroni (1974: 61)). Todorov's analysis reaches the conclusion that "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*" (Todorov 1970: 320). Displacement is so called "because the essential element is given by the diversion of the mental path, by the displacement of the psychic accent on a theme different from the initial one" (Freud 1905: 75) i.e., "a change in the way of considering [something]" (Freud 1905: 74).

According to Todorov, condensation and displacement correspond to the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships.

> Condensation includes all tropes, metaphor as well as metonymy, as well as other relationships of evocation of sense; displacement is not a metonymy, it is not a trope, because there isn't a substitution of sense, but the institution of a relationship between two senses which are present at the same time. (Todorov 1977: 333)

This leads Todorov to the conclusion that "the symbolic mechanism that Freud describes is not specific at all: the operations he identifies (in the case of the joke) are simply those of each linguistic symbolism, as they have been classified, in particular by the rhetorical tradition" (Todorov 1977: 345). Todorov also notes that Benveniste reaches similar conclusions while analyzing the role of language in Freud's analysis: "the unconscious uses a proper 'rhetoric' which, such as style, has its own 'figures' " (Benveniste 1966: 86). In short, Freud's analysis is not so much specific to humor, but rather serves as an analysis of the linguistic tools that express it which are not peculiar to humor (see also Todorov (1981)).

After the discussion of the techniques of humor (Freud 1905: 16-89), Freud moves on to introduce other distinctions, such as "neutral" jokes versus "tendentious" jokes and concepts such as "economy of psychical expenditure," which are familiar to all scholars in humor research. These are, however, less interesting from the linguistic perspective (but see Nilsen (1989) and Wenzel (1989) on the use of the category of "tendentious"), and they will not be pursued here. On the possibility of treating Freud's thoughts on

humor as a "collection of hypotheses" that can be handled separately, see Kline (1977: 11).

More interesting than Freud's speculations are the reactions from subsequent scholars to Freud's analysis of the techniques of jokes. Piddington (1933) only mentions the study of humor techniques. Bergler (1956) lists all the twenty categories, with examples, but does not comment upon them and does not even mention the "condensation/displacement" subdivision. Gregory (1923) does not mention the analysis of the techniques and only comments on the economy theory. So does Milner (1972), who also comments on the "ethnocentricity" of the subdivision in *Witz* (jokes), comic and humor, based on "German lexical categories." Curti (1982) provides an in-depth critical discussion of the economy theory, which he rejects.

Aubouin (1948: 213-223) ridicules the economy theory but, more importantly, he shows that Freud's theory can be proven to be equivalent to the incongruity/contrast theory. Consider the following passage by Freud:

> If, therefore, we derive unmistakable enjoyment in jokes from being transported by the use of the same or a similar word from one circle of ideas to another, remote one (...), this enjoyment is no doubt correctly to be attributed to economy in psychical expenditure. The pleasure in a joke arising from a 'short circuit' like this seems to be the greater the more alien the two circles of ideas that are brought together by the same word – the further apart they are, and thus the greater the economy which the joke's technical method provides in the train of thought. (Freud 1905: 120)

Aubouin notes that "being transported (...) from one circle of ideas to another" and being "apart" are "circumlocutions" for contrast. Freud dismisses contrast after a brief discussion as "a mean of intensifying their [=jokes] effect" (Freud 1905: 154). Freud argues that contrast might play a more important role in the comic, as opposed to jokes. The possibility of this distinction between the two subjects has been refuted by Ferroni (1974: 56). This issue is far from being purely terminological. As has been anticipated, linguistics is much closer conceptually to the so-called incongruity/contrast theories. Freud will be found to be the unacknowledged source of some of the structuralist accounts in chapter 2; therefore, it is important to acknowledge

the uninterrupted filiation of the contrast theories, down to their manifestations in linguistics. Freud's work is still very important in German linguistic research (see ch. 5) and elsewhere (see Dascal (1985) and Todorov (1981)).

Freud's thought was further developed and applied to other realms of study (such as caricature) by a number of scholars (e.g. Kris 1952). Fónagy's (1982) work on the connections between humor and metaphors combines Freudian thought and sophisticated linguistics (see Ch. 4). A detailed account of Freud's thought and a criticism of the "economy of psychic energy" theory will be found in Morreall (1983: 27-37). Accounts on Freud and his followers will be found in Grotjahn (1957: 1-32), Kline (1977), McGhee (1979: 31-35), Civita (1984: 59-86), Lixfeld (1984: 200-207), Oring (1984), Simon (1985: 211-244), Kofman (1986), Fara and Lambruschi (1987: 7-43), Weber (1987), and Neve (1988). Freud's work has been extremely influential in literary criticism and has had an impact on (non-psychoanalytic) psychological research as well. Another important aspect of Freud's thought, upon which he was heavily influenced by Groos, is the "liberation" from the contraints of mature, adult, logic that humor provides. See the "release" theories above, 1.5.1.

1.5.3 Bergson

Bergson's work on humor[12] has aged faster than Freud's. This is not due to what either author had to say about humor, but rather to their academic background. Freud was starting a new discipline, whereas Bergson was writing a treatise in aesthetics, a branch of philosophy which has undergone a serious crisis and has been subsumed in part by "philosophically-based" literary criticism (e.g. Marxist), structuralism, post-structuralism, and in general by branches of various disciplines concerned with art. Thus, whereas Freud's book has enjoyed a growing interest and still remains a classic inside and outside of psychology, interest in Bergson's text has been limited mostly to literature (see Attardo (1988, 1991b) for reviews). Humor theories based on aesthetics are still present (see Noguez (1969, 1989), Baudin (ed.) (1983, 1984, 1985, 1986), Preisenzand and Warning (eds.) (1976), etc.), but they enjoyed their heyday in France in the post-war period (see the debate on

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[12]As with Freud, Bergson's theory would fit in one of three groups above, namely in the incongruity theories, but it is dealt with individually because of its importance.

the review *Revue d'esthétique* which involved Lalo (1948), Victoroff (1948), Bayer (1948), Aubouin (1950), and others).

Bergson's theory is an incongruity-based theory (it has its prime example in the contrast between the natural and the mechanical), but this premise is exploited for a sociologically-oriented analysis (humor as a social corrective).

Bergson begins from three points: laughter is a human phenomenon, it is social, and it requires an intellectual outlook from the participants rather than an emotional one. In other words, humor does not withstand (strong) emotions. Linguistically, Bergson has little to add to observations made before him: he discriminates between referential/verbal humor very clearly (Bergson 1901: 78-79) and gives three "mechanisms" (*procédés*) valid for both referential humor and for verbal humor (repetition, inversion, interference of series). Bergson's examples come primarily from French classical comedy and from the *Vaudeville* theater. Bergson also hints at a "logic of imagination" (Bergson 1901: 32) which anticipates Aubouin's "justification" and Ziv's "local logic" (see below).

Bergson's influence on French literary theory has been undeniable. His influence extends also to Anglo-Saxon literary criticism, as well as to other traditions: see Hernandez (1983) on the influence of Bergson on Spanish literary criticism, for example, or Acevedo (1972), where Bergson is quoted, and Freud is not.

Perhaps the fact that Bergson's theory is based on the incongruity theory and thus can offer interesting insights, even from a linguistic point of view, can account for some of its influence, rather than attributing it to his fame gained outside of the field of humor. The incongruity-based theory can account for developments such as Garapon's (1954) or Tetel's work (1964) in French literature: both are strongly influenced by Bergson's views but have little interest either in the social corrective or the "mechanical" doctrines. Interest in Bergson is not dead either: see Weber (1987), Rich (1989), and Bariaud et al. (eds.) (1990) in which Bergson's work was the second most frequently quoted text, after Freud.

In fact, the mere presence of these two works in the current debate on humor is proof of their significance: consider the fact that most authors who write on humor still discuss Freud and Bergson, while nobody bothers reading the scores of books on humor published perhaps much less than 90 years ago. Unfortunately, the importance and greatness of these two works often overshadows subsequent contributions. Humor research has advanced

in the last half of the century well beyond Freud and Bergson, and it is time for scholars to become aware of this.