

Derisive Realism
Towards a Realist Foundation of Humour

D i s s e r t a t i o n
zur
Erlangung des akademischen Grades
Doktor der Philosophie
in der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

vorgelegt von

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aus

Iran

2016

**Gedruckt mit Genehmigung der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen**

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Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 03.11.2015

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Acknowledgment

I wish to express my gratitude to all those who filled me with hope and inspiration to fulfil the task of writing this dissertation. Those who through their professional and intimate help, recommendations and hints paved the way for writing in a better and more effective manner, Prof. Dr. Hotz-Davies whose ideas have always been a benevolent and encouraging source to my writing. I should thank Prof. Fabio Cleto who read the manuscript and provided me with his comments. Appreciation is also extended to the EMJD Interzones academic council who admitted and supported me to make this entire work possible. I should thank Nidesh Lawoo in John Hopkins University who read the theoretical and conceptual framework and provided me with some constructive comments in using Gabriel Tarde. Equally I should thank Professor Manfred Frank, the emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Tübingen who provided me with some useful insights and generously sent me a transcript of a relevant talk. The friends Margaret Hass (who also proofread my work patiently), and Tilahun Bejital Zellelew who played a very pivotal and practical role in writing on humour; those who helped me laugh and practice humour while writing on humour. I express my gratitude to whoever laughed with me, whoever did not think and laugh, whoever produced a vibrant laughter and overwhelmed me throughout the years of accomplishing this dissertation. The loud laughter of my friends, neighbours, acquaintances, kids in Iran, in Tübingen and Bebenhausen, in Barcelona, in via dei caniana. Laughter after laughter, different shapes, various sizes, colours, tastes, races and sizes. I take this opportunity to place on record, my sense of gratitude to my parents who encouraged me to fulfil this project.

Abstract

The dissertation, *Derisive Realism: Towards a realist foundation for Humour* addresses the obstacles as well as the possibilities of thinking of humour highlighted in the contemporary theories of humour and wit. This study aims to provide a definition of humour which embraces not only human words (as in wit and jokes) but also human deeds in its materiality. An attempt from the epistemology of humour to an ontology of humour is made which oscillates between human willing of humour to humour abducting, capturing and choosing human. The present research does not claim to have found an alternative definition for linguistic wit and jokes as offered already in Superiority Theory, Relief Theory and Incongruity Theory. Rather it demonstrates that humour itself depicts a realism for human subjects that has been eclipsed by the prevailing epidemiology of humour. It is argued that if human usage of humour, as these three theories of humour roughly demonstrate, is based on a subjective and determined act whether to relieve some suppressed energy (Relief Theory of Spencer and Freud), or to imply one's supremacy upon the other (Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes) or an inconsistency in meaning (Locke, Hutcheson, Kant), humour itself has an indifferent pre-human sense that can dispense (if not exclude) subjective and calculable gestures, it can take place contingently and treat subjects in an inevitable and ubiquitous mode. However, it is argued that despite its apparent indifference, humour provides subjects with a major criterion: either subjects open themselves to it and participate in the joy, smirk, grin served by it, or they will serve as a material for the production of humour to entertain others. Using the ideas of Leibniz, Gabriel Tarde and Gilles Deleuze and applying it to theories of humour offered by German Romantic writer Jean Paul and more modern and contemporary philosophers of

laughter and humour such as Henri Bergson and Georges Bataille a mimetic framework for such acceptance/denial of humour has been presented which, in the light of the consequent human derision makes one rethink the ethical and ontological facets of living with humour. Therefore, it does not suffice to claim (as common among postmodernists) that humour unsettles knowledge and subjectivity or belittles human presence in various grand narratives; a hypothesis that thinks of humour utterly based on human will and intention evacuated from contingency. On the contrary, derisive realism is a thought that by prioritising humour claims that humour in its contingency is implied in human condition and its relational materialism is not simply steered by the subjective intention. Humour intervenes contingently, and the subjects unprepared for it are to be derided.

Such derision is shown against the background of Bergson's emphasis on inertia inherent in laughter as well as Georges Bataille's conception of laughter as the moment of suspension. Nevertheless, for this to be defined and settled in a materialistic sense, it is required to extend the Bergsonian and Bataillan frameworks to an immanence which pictures the force of this laughter. It stresses the significance of such relation between the subjects taking part in laughter to demonstrate that rejecting humour in the hope of keeping a rigid and serious stance refers such subjects inevitably back to human humiliation. Thus what is being scrutinised and criticized in this study is the overwhelming presence of linguistic humour which leaves no room for a realist and mimetic model that regards humour in such inhuman entirety. Through Beckett's *Watt* a laughter over such linguistic laughter is presented and elaborated which is then reconciled with an affective mode of laughter in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Life, End of*. Such an affective conception of humour paves the way for a mimetics of humour which commences with the pragmatic humour of the holy fools. The holy fools as persona for a realist humour repeat their humour in order to permeate the rigid and solidified discourse of knowledge and morality. But any exclusion or absence of the holy fools makes another repetition possible which although looks witty and amusing leads to a relational derision of subjects as depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story*.

Dedicated to Humour Volunteers

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Preface

This dissertation contains five chapters which address, in different ways the plausibility of thinking of a realism in relation to humour. Humour has been conceived of as a practical and relational phenomenon that runs and flows between human beings. General as it is, humour plays a much larger, more effective and more unconscious a role in human relations than what we label wit and witticism which is the most noticeable trait of intended and conscious humour. To distinguish these two, the first chapter provides us with a background of the main theories of humour, in particular the Incongruity Theory of humour. The first chapter extends the contemporary reflections in incongruity-based approaches to humour in order to highlight their tacit links with the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of such conceptions of humour and laughter. This general overview of Incongruity Theories of humour leads this research directly to a literary work which is filled with a conscious attempt to be witty, namely Beckett's *Watt*. Chapter Two which is specified to an analysis of Wit in *Watt* paves the way towards a practical manifestation of wit in a literary work. Yet as will be shown, Beckett's attempt is a double one. He introduces us to wit and witticism but enables us to laugh at such witticism. Therefore, through Beckett's *Watt*, an affective conception of humour and laughter replaces a purely linguistic and cognitive one which is normally claimed in the contemporary Incongruity Theories of humour. Chapter Three is an elaboration of such affective-based conceptualisation of humour in *Life, End of* which does not remain in a merely linguistic mechanism of producing wit. Rather humour in this regard is an experience that enables one to transform reactive and negative affects of death and decay to active and vital forces. Chapter Four is a step towards the ethical and political facets of humour in relation to comedy. By contextualising humour in the framework of holy foolery, humour is seen as a pragmatic technique to address the moral fixations. This way, although humour is seen in a political and ethical framework, its significance is seen in a mimetic manner rather than a conscious and willed attempt to as in witticism. Chapter Five maintains the comparison of this mimetic conception of humour with the linguistic one as presented in *Super Sad True Love Story*.

Chapter One

The Conceptual Foundation of the Derisive Realism

1.1 The Question of the Research

The attempt made in this dissertation is not a general analysis aiming to define humour and laughter comprehensively and in its various aspects. Nor is the aim to use structural tools to deconstruct humour in some specifically comic works where the manifestation of humour is noticeable and traceable. The goal of this study is restricted to one specific question: how can we think *with* humour, rather than thinking *about* humour? To elaborate: what is the force of humour in relation to thought? Admittedly, this gives rise to an immediate obstacle as humour has normally been thought of as a result of human perception, language and cognition. By defining what we mean by Realism and representation, we hone in on the difference between representation and realism with regards to humour. The emphasis on realism, which covers the main part of our study, starts with the hypothesis that humour, through some historical and social shifts, has been understood as a linguistic and imaginary tool and as a result not only its production but also its utility have been limited to the scope of perception and language. As a consequence, humour as subjective as it is, leaves no ground to be analysed in itself. It goes without saying that humour makes constant sense in relation to human beings, but the idea that nature has a prominent role in the production of humour has been underrated or even neglected. The realism embedded in humour implies that humour has a natural rationality, beyond human logic, which determines its purpose among human beings. The concept of realism in this study is rooted in the Kantian thought that repudiated any analysis of noumen. In effect, Kant made a famous distinction between the realm of phenomenon and that of noumen and argued that human knowledge is unable to comprehend the noumen. The ultimate capacity of a human being, according to this account and as emphasised in Kant's *Critique of Pure*

Reason, is the consideration of phenomenon (Kant A238-9/B298). Against such (post) Kantian definition that is notoriously correlationist between thinking and being, one is able to define a realism that does not simply leave out the possibility or even the existence of noumen. However the task in this study is not commencing with a definition of realism and implementing it in our analysis of humour, but starting with humour and excavating some parameters for a realism based on humour. This means that although humour (and not only its phenomenological manifestations or human usages of it) are hardly thinkable but it can contribute a lot to thinking itself especially in relation to being. In the Kantian and post-Kantian tradition there is a tacit link that correlates being and thinking, in other words, Kantian thought and its influence in its post-Kantian derivations by privileging human beings promote a kind of (human) idealism that correlates thought with being, to the extent that, “This effacement of the noumenal continues with phenomenology, as ontology becomes explicitly linked with a reduction to the phenomenal realm” (Byrant, 4).

It should be borne in mind that such realism is far from a crude return to reality and its limitations but it resists equally the ethereal idealism that everything exists in mind or spirit where reality is taken as secondary or at least equal to the human mind. This project limits its scope to an understanding of realism in relation to humour, in the sense that although humour application finds no room except *in relation to* human subjects, language and perception, its production is not necessarily decided and determined by human will. In other words despite the fact that humour is sensible only when addressing human beings, it is not simply a production of humanity and it cannot always be hindered or terminated by human being’s decisions.

Admitting the impossibility of thinking of humour in itself has unsurprisingly resulted in thinking of humour in its manifestations in human language and perception; a claim that leaves no role for humour beyond human beings or sources external to itself. This not only motivates us to analyse humour based on its own criteria and as an entity independent of human beings, more importantly humour would be regarded as precisely the entity that functions in relation to the unknowability of human beings. Therefore the aim of this project is not to apply a ready-made framework of realism to humour, but to acknowledge humour-in-itself as a pivotal component of *naturphilosophie*, to enter the very process of thinking in order to bring up its own realism. It should be stressed, once again, that while numerous

phenomenology-inspired theories define humour in the scope of human language, imagination and perception, humour and its realism address not only our thoughts and perceptions, but also our deeds to the extent that it can deride human beings in a contingent mode.

The hypothetical difference between two kinds of humour might sound far-fetched, but this study starts off with a leading theoretical framework of humour analysis in its contemporary mode and argues that close scrutiny of this framework, general as it is, reveals that humour has been made or at least depicted more in the hands of human beings and in a representational mode, to the extent that the heavy reliance on linguistic and rhetorical tools in the analysis of humour has transformed humour to a semantic phenomenon. Such reliance on language, which has influenced not only humour reception but also its production, we argue, entails a representational conception of humour. Although one is hardly likely to find a purely linguistic analysis of humour, such a dependence on semantic and linguistic facets of humour misses the realist significance of humour, where humour independent of human beings captures and derides them. This leads the study to an emphasis beyond the role human language and imagination play in a representational model, of humour in the form of wit and witticism. There is a possibility of thinking of humour in a practical sense and in-between human subjects. What is illuminated in the first chapter of this dissertation is a limited historical and theoretical background for this shift that starts with modern scholars of humour and leads to the contemporary analysis of humour in the most dominant and well-known framework, namely incongruity theory. It will be shown that the incongruity theory of humour depends now more than ever on a formal description of humour production and reception and such formal description is very likely to eclipse the realist function of humour which is ethically and politically significant. The very cherished and inestimable function of humour as a tool to liberate and emancipate human subjects from the obstinate and opinionated forms of living and thinking can be easily hindered by a growing reliance on this linguistic and rhetorical form of humour.

Admittedly, it is absurd to think of excluding imagination from the texts and pieces known for being humorous. Nevertheless, over-emphasising linguistic and rhetorical function and construction of humour results in an implicit depreciation of humour in its realistic sense. Humour in its realism enables subjects to overstep their boundaries by reminding them of the finitude inscribed in the points of view that have constructed their identity. It enables one to perpetually redefine one's relation to others

and to the world and this supplies humour with an inherently participatory component. Even the ability to laugh at one's own follies is the direct result of participating with others and leads to the constant rejection of narcissism as implanted in subjects' lives and views. However, an imaginary conceptualization of humour seems prone to making a model of humour that functions regardless of this participatory mode; instead of emphasizing such conceivable social, collective and inter-subjective features of humour, it invests more heavily in the formal construct of humour in the shape of a cognitive recipe. Although inspired by real social, cultural, religious, sexual and other identitarian elements, humour as depicted in the majority of incongruity-based theories is the result of cognitive and linguistic invention and imagination. A realist project of humour does not suggest diminishing the role imagination plays in the construction of humour, but advocates an understanding of humour that takes place in the middle of the social domain and in relation to other subjects. Starting with the linguistic analysis of humour in some different models of incongruity theory, the aim is to illuminate what is meant by a representational view of humour. Then we will move in the same chapter and throughout our conceptual framework to the construction of a framework that helps define the realism of humour.

From a philosophical point of view and in constructing a conceptual framework for such realism, there is the seemingly strange fact that philosophers have not devoted a full-fledged and developed theory of humour and have treated humour and laughter in rather ephemeral and cursory ways, which means that this study has to resort to different philosophical frameworks in order to illuminate what a realist project of humour can claim to be. To start an analysis of such realism and its conceptual foundation, we should stress the significance of the contingency of humour. Humour, when imbued with contingency, elevates beyond a purely voluntary phenomenon, but furthermore sets itself free of a linguistic and mere cognitive conceptualisation. The emphasis on the contingency of humour leads the analysis in the current chapter to a demand for a conceptualization of humour which dispenses with the highly accentuated role of human will and intention in the production of humour. For although incongruity theories rightly recognize the role of surprise and unexpectedness as the kernel of humour, this is normally restricted to a linguistic or semantic unexpectedness and as a result its framework leaves no room for the undecided and unexpected role of humour, beyond language and representation. Therefore the framework of this study would be composed of two gestures toward humour, including one conceiving of it only

semantically and based on a semantic unexpectedness and the other striving for a realism steered by the contingency of humour. The attempt made in this study is to shed light on both acts of inviting humour and averting humour where ethical and ontological implications are taken into consideration. Starting with a critique of imaginary humour in different forms of cognitive and linguistic frameworks, the model proposed here is composed of two parts. The first part implies embracing humour, which entails revealing the wrongness of our expectations and the unveiling of our ignorance. The conception of humour here is an affirmative one which attributes an active role for humour to intervene in reality. On the other hand, the second part is a denial of such active humour in its realist sense and replacing it with linguistic or cognitive humour. This latter appreciates an imaginary and fabricated conception of humour and prioritizes it over such realism. Limiting humour to a linguistic or cognitive mode does not hinder the existence and intervention of humour; yet it has a pivotal ontological consequence. It is argued here (and more extensively in the chapters four and five) that averting active humour through linguistic and intentional forms not only entails a nihilistic gesture, but also activates a derision inherent in humour that through its contingency can befall the subjects as cessation or inertia ; the subjects that profess to the use of humour, but appropriate it only linguistically. Ontologically speaking, it is claimed that the subjects who profess to tame humour and limit it only to language and human will, can be victims of an active humour and become ridiculed. Broadly speaking and as described, in the first chapter and through the conceptual framework, the main aim of this study is introduced as a double task: on the one hand to highlight the significance of humour in its real social mode and, on the other hand, to distinguish realist humour from a purely linguistic and cognitive conception of humour.

That is why the second chapter is more of an exercise in what is defined as incongruity theory in relation to *Watt* by Samuel Beckett. This provides us with a better opportunity to see both the textual and linguistic implications of incongruity theory as well as the way a literary text reflects them. What is highlighted in chapter two is the way *Watt* renders the potentials of incongruity theory as an almost linguistic approach visible. *Watt*, as a text, does not exclude the possibility of the linguistic wit and produces it in a manner similar to the production of one-liners and jokes; *Watt* uses wit lavishly, to the extent that one can see not only the witty text, but also its very production. In a way similar to incongruity theories of humour, *Watt* sheds light on the mechanisms of humour production by using it extravagantly.

Chapter three is devoted to a closer analysis of ephemeral humour in *Life, End of*, a novel by Christine Brooke-Rose. This chapter reveals the proximity of humour in its smaller aspects.. *Life, End of*, like Beckett's *Watt*, provides one with the opportunity to see how humour functions. Nonetheless, *Life, End of* takes a more constructive path and highlights the ephemeral and transient mode of humour which approximates what we called contingency. *Life, End of* keeps producing and creating humour in the face of death, something on which we will elaborate in relation to Bataille's conception of humour. Although textual and linguistic it is, the humour in *Life, End of*, by resorting to an ephemeral openness, takes a step forward from representational humour.

Chapter four is an attempt to surpass a purely imaginative mode of humour towards a yet more realist framework. This leads us to a performative conception of humour that contains some historical and speculative elements in stand-up comedy. This chapter is an attempt to shed light on the ethical and ontological facets of realist humour. To provide this area with some historical background, the chapter analyses humour in relation to foolery. The reason for this is that foolery is an example of one of the scarce occasions in which humour is traditionally seen to transgresses a simply linguistic and rhetorical utility and becomes action-oriented. Foolery, especially holy foolery, has been a template for a realist project on humour which appreciates—against asceticism and any other possibly hypocritical system of morality—an ethics in which humour plays a significantly realist role.

Chapter five is an analysis of such realism in its societal and network-based form, something that promises to shed light on some ethical consequences of humour appreciation or rejection. Through the *Super Sad True Love Story*, a dystopian novel by Gary Shteyngart, a societal understanding of humour is analysed which illuminates the aforementioned ridicule that is the direct result of averting humour. *Super Sad True Love Story* presents a society in which the repression of humour becomes ridiculous.

1.2 The Background: The Incongruity Theory of Humour

The tragic and the ironic give way to a new value, that of humour. For if

irony is the co-extensiveness of being with the individual, or of the I with representation, humour is the co-extensiveness of sense with nonsense; humour is the art of surfaces or doubles, of nomad singularities and of an always displaced aleatory point (Deleuze, 1990, 141).

Laughter and humour are such vast and confused domains that any attempt to define and determine them may look unexpectedly hilarious; this fact that is partly due to the elusive and ephemeral character of humour. Nonetheless, different and scattered theories on humour make it somehow possible to analyse humour in a more contemporary sense. Admittedly, the focus of this study is simply one theory among three main theories of humour, namely incongruity theory, which has allegedly attracted more attention among modern scholars of humour and has marginalised, to some extent the other two main and prevailing approaches to humour, namely superiority and relief theory. Incongruity theory, places emphasis on unexpectedness as the main component of humour, whereas from a relief theory standpoint, the release of a suppressed energy through humour is the ultimate goal, for the proponents of the superiority theory what is of extreme significance is the the tacit laughter at the misfortunes of the others. Broadly speaking, Relief theory, is associated with the idea that humour is a significant way of releasing the energy that has been repressed. One prominent source of this theory is Sigmund Freud (2001). On the other hand, Superiority theory of humour has a longer history which can be traced even to Plato and Aristotle but its main theorist can be claimed to be Thomas Hobbes. This theory of humour and laughter is based on an expression of superiority on the others as the objects of laughter. But incongruity theory stress the significance of inconsistency as the pivotal source of humour and for that relies on various dimensions in the production of humour from epistemic inconsistencies to semantic and cognitive schemata.

The dominance of the incongruity model in the theorization of humour and laughter can be traced back mainly to England, where thinkers reacted against Thomas Hobbes' idea of supremacy in humour. In effect, by claiming that ||the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly|| (42). Hobbes produces a theory of humour that is based on superiority and supremacy. One can go that far to say that this framework of laughter corresponds with his conception of politics as an an affair run by some superior elites. Hobbes depicts

humans as creatures driven by their egoistic desires and selfish passions, requiring some sort of constant disciplining. One can say that the shift from Thomas Hobbes' elite model of politics to John Locke's more democratic framework as a crucial political shift has also been reflected in their conceptualisation of humour from a superiority theory to a more gentlemanly and equal model of humour; a theory which depends crucially on cognitive and linguistic facets in the production of humour. According to Michael Billig (62), Incongruity Theory of laughter and humour, by emphasizing strongly the gentlemanly code of behaviour which was appreciated by John Locke and some of his contemporaries, excluded Hobbes' theory of superiority. This attitude not only determines the view Locke takes on humour, but was also reflected and developed since then, in numerous models which have tried to explain humour through linguistic incongruity. In Hobbes' understanding humour and the passion in laughter emerge out of a sudden Glory arising from sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves by comparison with the inferiority of others, or with our own formerly (42).

Incongruity theory sees humour, beyond a superior/ inferior mode, in a linguistic and quotidian manner and introduces wit and witticism as in word plays, jokes and one-liners, instead of the emphasis in the superiority model. Wit finds its way through the ideas of James Beattie (*An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition*, 1776) and Francis Hutchinson (*Thoughts on Laughter*, 1989) and others. Ideas which to a large extent functioned as concerted attempts to neutralize the superiority implication of humour and laughter and offer new frames of laughter and humour which could fit the gentlemanly codes of behaviour. However, this view is not only morally correct, but in need of philosophical support. For this, Locke, who was already engaged in different arguments on the nature of human knowledge, judgment and perception with other philosophers such as Leibniz, makes a digression and redefines humour according to his theories of human knowledge. This move and its consequences will be discussed a bit further on, now it suffices to say that the core of difference between Locke's view and Leibniz's view of knowledge, which Locke utilises to justify more elaborately his theory of humour, depends heavily on Locke's (1700) strongly held idea that all perception can become knowledge whereas for Leibniz (1996) perception can never fully be converted to knowledge. Locke commences with such views on knowledge and redefines humour. As Michael Billig explains,

In the Book Two of Essays, Locke discusses the perceptual basis of knowledge. The mind makes judgment on account of what it perceives. It must be able to compare present impressions with past moments in order to discern whether present perceptions resemble or differ from past ones. Locke was arguing that any true judgment depends on the 'clear discerning faculty' of mind where it perceives two ideas to be the same, or different'...Appearance of similitude can be misleading, if there really are differences between two ideas. Thus careful judgment consists in 'separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude..If judgment involves carefully distinguishing between things that appear to be similar but which are actually different, then wit is based on the reverse process. It brings together ideas that are different in order to treat them as if they were similar. Accordingly, wit operates through 'the assemblages of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fantasy (62).

What is noticeable in the context of such a definition of laughter and humour as offered by John Locke and others as the precursors of a coherent conceptualization of incongruity theory is the emphasis on the cognitive process of the production of wit. This emphasis on the howness of humour eclipses to a large extent the whatness of humour and laughter. As we noticed earlier, although Hobbes' theory is also not an explanation of the whatness of humour, it defines humour and laughter in a social milieu. As Paul McDonald explains in his *Philosophy of Humour*, Hobbes's theory 'needs to be seen in the context of his general theory of life and his belief that human beings are in a ceaseless struggle for power that only ends at death; for Hobbes humour assists individuals in their fight for power' (35-36).

Incongruity theory shifts the emphasis from the power relations and social facet to the cognitive and linguistic processes of laughter and humour. Wit, as defined by the majority of incongruity theories, is mainly based on a linguistic and discursive ambiguity, inappropriateness, novelty or any deviation from the normal. While Aristotle is among the first who en passant offers a concise view of incongruity where he claims something that offers a twist is the best manner to keep an audience laughing and although figures ranging from René Descartes and Immanuel Kant to Arthur Schopenhauer and many others have contributed in one way or another to understanding humour and laughter by emphasizing the incongruous nature of humour. The incongruity theory as it exists today in its contemporary form is arguably a result of such cognitive and linguistic approaches to humour. The approaches which were

triggered in the majority of modern frameworks to preclude superiority and derision tacit in superiority model. But as John Morreall puts it in the first chapter of his *Comic Relief: Comprehensive Philosophy of Humor*:

These —Incongruity Theorists— disagreed on several details about incongruity, disappointed expectation, absurdity, discrepancy, or contradiction, such as how they are related to laughter. So we have to be careful in talking about the Incongruity Theory. Nonetheless, the name has stuck and today, as mentioned, the Incongruity Theory is the most widely accepted account of humor in philosophy and empirical psychology (12).

An analysis of the incongruity theory of laughter and humour as a theory based on elements of unexpectedness implies, first of all, that there is a prevailing mechanism in the formation of humour that this theory tries to explain and explore, a trajectory that can be followed in contemporary attempts in cognitive sciences and neuroscience. John Locke's approach in rendering humour a more gentlemanly and moderate phenomenon seems to have paved gradually the way for a more semantic and rhetorical conception of humour and places less emphasis on its function and its pragmatics. The focus on the formal facets of humour in Incongruity theories of humour is most suited to describing verbal humour. According to John Morreall, Plato and Hobbes as the precursors of the superiority theory were looking for "psychological causes of laughter and amusement", and they concluded that "it is by revealing someone's inferiority to the person laughing" (Morreall, 6-7) that laughter and its psychological causes is explicable. Morreall goes on to discuss the shift toward a more conceptual analysis:

Today, many philosophers are more concerned with conceptual analysis than with causal explanation. In studying laughter, amusement, and humor, they try to make clear the concepts of each, asking, for example, what has to be true of something in order for it to count as amusing. Seeking necessary and sufficient conditions, they try to formulate definitions that cover all examples of amusement but no examples that are not amusement. Of course, it may turn out that part of the concept of amusement is that it is a response to certain kinds of stimuli. And so conceptual analysis and psychological explanation may intertwine (7).

Therefore and with some simplification, in contemporary analysis the emphasis has shifted towards a conceptual investigation of amusement and hence the unprecedented presence of jokes and their analysis in modern philosophy. In his *Semantic Script Theory of Humour* (SSTH), Raskin makes an attempt to provide a formal framework of humour. Raskin develops his formal theory of humour, based on a

key joke which goes like this:

Is the doctor at home?‘ The patient asked in his bronchial whisper. _No,‘
the doctor’s young and pretty wife whispered in reply. _Come right in
(Raskin, 117-127).

According to Raskin, this joke is made up of two parts or scripts, one script targets the fact that the patient is unable to speak smoothly and the other implies the fact that the wife is awaiting her lover. These scripts look incongruous and yet by reading it again one might be able to realize an illicit meaning that links them. The other major theory accommodated among Incongruity Theories of humour, is Arthur Koestler’s theory of Bisociation. Bisociation, as described in his *The Act of Creation*, is founded on an analysis of projections that take place between different spheres involved in human thought and life. Koestler almost explicitly makes an analogy between humour and metaphor which, according to Arvo Krikmann, is then resonated in the ideas of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in their seminal work, *The way we think: Conceptual Blending And The Mind's Hidden Complexities*. Moving forward to the findings in neuroscience concerning humour, one major hypothesis is the one J. M. Suls introduced in his two-stage-incongruity-resolution model where incongruity is created, explored and resolved in the final stage of humour. But more recently, it is the model offered by Marta Kutas and Seana Coulson under the frame-shifting model that has drawn attention in the studies on humour in neuroscience. This idea requires more attention as it shows better the metaphoric gist of incongruity theories both in cognitive studies and neuroscience. Although Coulson and Kutas offer a model of the comprehension of jokes (rather than humour in its entirety) their model, explicitly founded on the ideas already raised by Fauconnier and Turner, claims that in order to comprehend a joke, the listener must go beyond surprise and create a new and coherent interpretation. This model which is based on Seana Coulson’s PhD thesis published in the same year, under *Semantic Leaps: Frame-Shifting and Conceptual Blending in Meaning Construction*’ promises the notion of blending in the production of jokes in her future work.

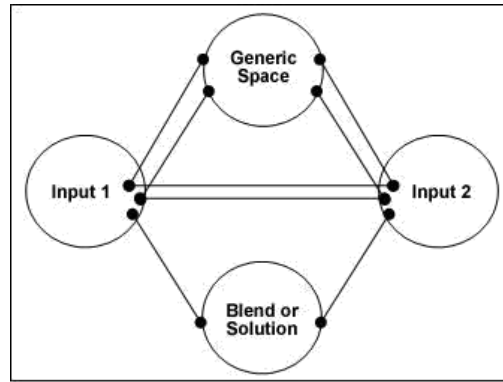


Figure 1: Fauconnier & Turner's basic diagram (2002: 46) which illustrates the central features of conceptual integration.

Although the main concern of that book is meaning in general, Coulson applies and extends frame-shifting theory to humour analysis too. The frame-shifting model can be explained further by one example Coulson uses:

Interviewer: Were Romeo and Juliet sleeping together?
 Barrymore: They certainly were in Chicago company. (31)

Coulson argues that although the interviewer's frame of reference is Shakespeare's play and characters, Barrymore's reference is the actors; the shift in frames from one to the other allows the joke to function. These models—frame-shifting in Coulson, or conceptual blending for Fauconnier and Turner, and even their precursor, namely Koestler's bisociation theory—have something in common; they all explain humour through a metaphoric mechanism. Metaphor is introduced as the very leverage on which humour functions between two unexpectedly-juxtaposed spheres. What is overlapped between two different frames forms a metaphor that plays the prominent role in yielding the humour.

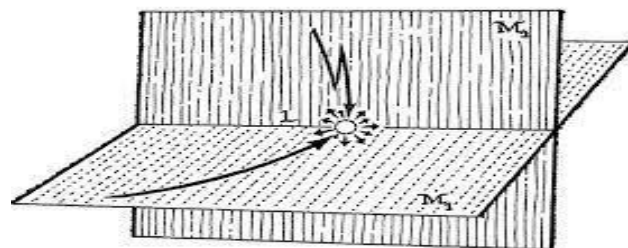


Figure 2. Diagrammatic representation of Koestler's Bisociation Theory (1964 35)

An analysis of the incongruity theory of humour reveals primarily that there is a core element of surprise and unexpectedness in the formation of humour and metaphor is in charge of bridging this unexpectedness. In effect, the unexpectedness component that arises out of the juxtaposition of unexpectedly different semantic or cognitive scripts and schemata sparks a proximity, a point of overlap which can be embodied in a metaphor.

Another implicit facet of incongruity theory is the fact that thanks to such metaphoric possibility, humour can be willed and reproduced indefinitely. In other words, by speculating on what the majority of incongruity theories present, one can notice that the source for surprise which is laid in proximity and juxtaposition of two literally different semantic spheres is rooted in imagining a metaphoric overlap. These two cognitive or semantic spheres have normally nothing much in common, yet there is a will to render these two separate scripts funny and playful. The metaphoric characteristic of wit implies an elastic trait: an improbability in meaning or a semantic obstacle is produced and then immediately lifted, at least temporarily. In the transition between its constituent domains, wit experiences a semantic block. This deforms meaning, but as soon as the meaning finds a way out, domains restore their original form. Thus, in a materialistic sense, wit faces a degree of stress, deforms and reforms elastically, and then returns to its original state. Therefore, what happens in the production of humour is that between such discrete and surprisingly different spheres of meaning which are juxtaposed, a suspension is created and (to some extent) resolved. There are numerous implications for this kind of humour production and among them what concerns us is the will to produce humour. The will that calculates, plots and produces humour out of two surprisingly different spheres of meaning in their juxtaposition. This leads our analysis to the role algorithms play in such human and intentional modes of humour production. By taking a simple definition of algorithms, one can notice that algorithms can play a prominent role in the production of humour in the framework provided by Incongruity theory.

Informally, an algorithm is any well-defined computational procedure that takes some values, or set of values as input and produces some values, or set of values, as output. An algorithm is thus a sequence of computational steps that transform the input into the output (Comen, 5).

In the next part, the role of the imagination in the production of humour on the one hand and the connection of this faculty to the incongruity theory of humour is further elaborated to see how such reliance on will and imagination as implied in the incongruity theory of humour can be contrasted to a realist project of humour which is being introduced here.

1.3 From Imagination to Realism

What is at stake here is that Incongruity Theory to a large extent invites an algorithmic conceptualization of humour and laughter which renders humour, at least tacitly, reproducible: an algorithm to create a semantic or cognitive suspension and resolve it. The explanation of incongruity theory as the dominant explanatory model of humour and its coherent explanation is not constrained to the ideas of John Locke. James Beattie, the Scottish poet, proposes in his *Essays* a link between distress and laughter, introducing it along with intensity, incongruity and sympathy. Regarding intensity,

Beattie believes that “Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which mind takes notice of them” (348). Although Beattie puts laughter in relation to other affects instead of isolating it as one single phenomenon, he identifies the element of incongruity as the prominent factor in the production of laughter. In other words, although he is aware of the affects involved in the production of laughter, Beattie prefers to translate them into some cognitive and semantic components which consequently side with the incongruity theory of laughter more than a relief theory (based on the interrelation of affects). To provide an example, Beattie takes intensity into account and claims that “the greater the number of incongruities that are blended in the same assemblage, the more the more ludicrous it will probably be” (349).

Quickness, fancifulness and surprise are among the characteristics which are implied in such a notion of wit and laughter, along with a combination of two objects which are not usually expected to be combined or a juxtaposition which strikes us through a mediator metaphor.

The modern tendency in understanding and conceptualizing humour based on

and fed by a linguistic or cognitive mechanism is extremely short of a realism immanent in humour by which humour is able to be engaged in our everyday life in the most pragmatic and materialistic way. Linguistic humour, rooted in the modern and gentlemanly code of behaviour, is more than anything an effort of the imagination which utilizes different semantic and cognitive realms in order to be entertaining. The function of metaphor implied and employed in the production of humour opens humour production to an infinite vista which allows any combination of two different schemata to interact as long as they yield a sensibly surprising common element. This already implies the role that imagination plays in such a kind of humour production. Imagination makes it possible to bring an infinite number of otherwise irrelevant and inconsistent zones to one common ground bridged by a metaphor. This entails a subject who is able to construct the links freely between various fields of meaning and who conjoins them or synthesizes them by having recourse to his faculty of imagination: a subject supplied with an absolute freedom. Furthermore in the schism of finite and infinite, such a subject is able to translate the infinite into the finite by synthesizing different finite zones infinitely. At stake is this role played by the imagination. The reason to take such a vast area as imagination into account is the aforementioned will involve in the mechanism that produces wit and the utterly human conception of humour which reduces humour to a linguistic production a result of excluding contingency of humour. It is preferable and more comprehensible to understand this link in its historical frame; we devote a quick analysis to it.

The shift from the Enlightenment to Romanticism demarcates a move from reason, which was fully appreciated in Enlightenment for figures such as Descartes and Kant to a freedom among romantic writers and philosophers. The individual reason or Cartesian *cogito* is introduced to another circle of thinkers and poets and transformed and translated into an idealism which celebrates mainly human freedom, will, and individual liberty, beyond all traditional values. Such an attempt is most evidently shown in Fichte's attempt and distinction between I and Non-I. For Fichte, in order to approximate and celebrate such liberty, one has to do away with any transcendent entity that defines this non-I. Influenced by the Cartesian attempt to appreciate the significance of *cogito*, Romantics open the vistas of individual liberty. According to Michael Allen Gillespie (83), this was the very inception of nihilism. But what does it have to do with humour? The link might be a bit oblique and even vague, but we try to illuminate some touchstones by which one can proceed. According to Gillespie, in his

comprehensive book *Nihilism Before Nietzsche*, Romantics were the pioneers of embracing nihilism willingly or unwillingly as an aftermath of the emphasis on reason which was already made in the Enlightenment:

The imagination is able to accomplish this task, according to Fichte, because it has a foot in both the finite and the infinite and wavers between them. The imagination attempts to unite them by producing a unifying image or metaphor that brings the infinite into appearance within the finite, thus allowing the finite to appear as the finite, that is, in opposition to the infinite. (WL, SW, 1:207; SK, 193) (84).

Gillespie's point is historical, but the kernel of his argument is that prior to Nietzsche and his messianic message of the death of God, nihilism was rooted in the thinking of numerous philosophers (179). Although Gillespie's standpoint is specific to analysing nihilism among such scholars, thinkers and philosophers, what is underlined is that Romanticism led to an "absolute subjectivism" (109). The relation between nihilism and humour will be further elaborated, but it suffices to say that incongruity theories of humour are attempts of simultaneous restriction and expansion: on the one hand incongruity is restricted to linguistic and cognitive incongruity, and on the other hand, this appreciates the possibility of producing humour out of any imaginable combination that observes the required incongruity. There is an infinite possibility of humour production implied in the models that emphasize the metaphoric production of humour. Both results of this view are worth analysing: the expansion of scope of humour and its approximate correlation with metaphor and the restriction of humour to a linguistic and cognitive one. The argument is that the attempts made to reduce/ expand humour in an imaginary mode deprives humour of its inherent realism, and although subjects will be able to produce humour on their own, this humour stays in an imaginary, willed and subjective gesture, bereft of contingency. Celebrating this imaginary function of humour, which means the ability to produce it based on metaphoric mechanism, eclipses the contingency of humour. While subjects are given the ability to produce imaginary humour as they will, and while humour based on human imagination and fabrication is exclusively a subjective and cognitive phenomenon, humour in itself, does not depend on the will of the subjects; it remains more existential and less linguistic, is a relational humour that even though flows between subjects eludes their choice.

By having resort to the concept of assemblages in Deleuze and Guattari it will be shown that, such exclusion of the realism in humour does not lead to its disappearance

makes it a more derisive phenomenon. Humour as an exclusive act of the imagination relies on the two steps of suspension and resolution and this entails a subject that sparks the suspension of meaning and chooses it to be resolved. While both imaginary and realist humour depend on incongruity, the former, thanks to its reliance on imagination fabricates incongruity and the latter encounters in its exposure to contingency and embraces the incongruity. This implies a significant difference between these two kinds of humour where the former is always expected to bring its already produced incongruity to a resolution while the latter does not strive to resolve it as it did not choose and produce the incongruity willingly in the first place.

In order to explicate further this difference, this research makes an attempt to depict such exclusion of realism in humour in the incongruity theories of humour embedded in the appreciation of imaginary humour. In other words, humour in its realism does not remain inactive when imaginary humour becomes possible as it depends on the choice or will of subjects. Knowing that nothing chocks the laughter of such real humour, the answer that this study offers is that not only does imaginary and linguistic humour not accounts for the role of realist humour, it actually eclipses the significance of realist humour entirely. Nevertheless, as one significant feature of realist humour is its immanence, it will be shown that realist humour is not simply a rhetoric humour but an existential and actual humour that takes place in a relational mode, a relationality that implies the interaction and participation between subjects. Thus one main aim of this study is to delineate an outline to define humour in its relational and inter-subjective mode. For such a relational manifestation of humour we need a model beyond subjects that equally serves its realism beyond an imaginary linguistic and utterly subjective act. This does not mean that we do not deal with subjective relation to humour or exclude the linguistic and rhetoric side of humour, rather it implies that the more subjective humour becomes, the less realistic will be the gesture it pertains. Therefore, either humour exists in a realistic mode between subjects who allow its permeation between them, or by emptying themselves of such realist humour, they entertain themselves with a linguistic and rhetoric humour which is driven by the imaginary mechanism tacit in metaphor.

1.4 Realist humour

Ore, vultu denique ipso toto corpore ridetur (Cicero, 251).

In Romanticism, especially German Romanticism, one can find traces of significance of humour and irony in philosophy and literature. However, as Manfred Frank emphasizes, German Romanticism is not a unified whole to be analysed and investigated and treated in the one single manner. More importantly for this study, figures in Romanticism enable us to find links to more contemporary philosophers, especially Georges Bataille's notion of laughter and its relation to knowledge. What is at stake for Romantics, and evidently for Schelling in particular, is the relation between knowledge and the Absolute. Manfred Frank argues that Schelling, in his early writings, is not determined and decisive that knowledge is able at all to take hold of the Absolute. Similar to Hölderlin, Schelling in his Identitätsphilosophie accounts for more resolution in his ideas where —Being precedes consciousness so that no understanding can exhaust the content of what is meant by Being (Frank, 56). Putting it differently and in a very simplified manner, the implication of the Romantic grasp of Being is that a kind of absolute unknowing takes the place of the absolute knowing for humans. Accordingly, and especially evident in Hölderlin, of Being we have no concept but more a sense or a feeling. Influenced by Jacobi, Romantics make a difference between Being as predicative or relational Being and existential Being and based on this difference, — the relational (or predicative) sense of Being is awakening- or disintegration of that sense of Being present in existence. Put another way, predicative Being breaks up (or divides [urteilt]) Being which is originally undivided and unified; on the other hand, the predicative relation can only be understood from relationless existence.'

This idea leads to notions among these philosophers where Being is given to —feeling' rather than thought or as Frank quotes Jacobi, —'Of our existence (Dasein), we have only a feeling, but no concept'' (64). This all helps us draw an outline of the role humour can have in relation to such (non)understanding of Being. However it should be emphasized that what is significant to this analysis is the relational sense of Being that all other things which emerge out of it have. Being cannot be grasped as a logical determination or form and this has at least two consequences. First, it is only in relation

to Being as a unity that any such conception or fixed logical determination would be made possible, and this entails the relative character of all such forms. Yet there is room for a second characteristic which is more significant to this project: if Being can be grasped fully and conceptually, it causes a relational interaction between all its relative modes of existence that emerge out of it.

Much follows as a consequence of this: if Being (qua positing) can no longer be understood as something which (as something transcendental, as category or quasi-predicate) is a determination of thought or a logical form, then it must be understood as a singular tantum - as a blessed unity, [as] Being in the true sense of the word, Hölderlin affirms in the prologue of the penultimate edition of *Hyperion* (KTA 163: 10). Being must be thought as one and as something unique, something to which all else would stand in relation, and which, due to its power, would be a being (seienden), next to others. Schelling will later speak of a transitive sense of Being to that all being (Seiende), insofar as it is, has been of absolute Being in this unique sense, that is, it would be contained within Being (Frank, 66).

Then what is the relationship between these beings living next to each other? It is in this framework that humour can be defined in a relational rationality of its own. In effect, humour in its realist mode functions between these beings and their relation with Das Seiende. However this urges a redefinition of humour in a more metaphysical sense and according to the transitivity characteristic between various relative beings and Being. Nevertheless, since absolute Being as Jacobi made clear is beyond concept, humour is introduced here as a channel that at least unveils the insufficiency of knowledge. This will be illuminated in Georges Bataille's conception of laughter and further in Bergson's concept of cessation and automatism. But in order to have a more dynamic understanding of the relation these different beings have to one another, we need to beware of the possible substantialist connotation of beings, and in order to overcome this the Deleuzoguattarian concept of assemblage is prioritised. If we grant Being with humour and laughter, this humour is only heard in relation between beings in a dynamic and materialist sense, hence the significance of assemblages. But we need to explain here the significance of assemblages in relation to humour. As we discussed earlier, the incongruity theory of humour starts with the co-existence of two (or more) semantic schemata or scripts that, by blending into one another, make humour possible. We explained further that at the core of this intermingling of two otherwise separate and even irrelevant semantic schemata sits metaphor. Metaphor is the common core implied

in various theories that render humour possible. This way, humour is more often than not depicted as a cognitive or semantic artefact unique to the human imagination. However, the claim at the heart of a realist project of humour is that humour is not simply a metaphoric discussion between two separate schemata.

Simon Critchley, in his book *On Humour* takes a crucial step out of such a semantic notion of humour by making the point that the cause for humour and laughter — ‘is the return of the physical into the metaphysical, where the pretended tragic sublimity of the human collapses into a comic ridiculousness which is perhaps even more tragic’ (Critchley, 43). Such a return of the physical reminds one of Gilles Deleuze’s emphasis on humour in his *Difference and Repetition*, as the art of surfaces. Before elaborating more on the possibility of a realism out of humour that goes beyond a purely semantic notion, it is worthwhile focusing on the significance of humour in the thought of Deleuze. To Deleuze, humour not only does not ascend, it brings height to surfaces and falls, something that brings thought from heights to the earth. Humour plays the role of the fall; fall of what flies high above the earth. This explains to some extent why Deleuze’s philosophy is one of the most proper frameworks to analyse humour, especially because of its geological attributes. A realist project of humour by having resort to such a Deleuzoguattarian approach to humour not only addresses the imaginary kernel of incongruity theory, but also reverses superiority theory of humour as one major historical theorization of laughter and humour. It will be explicated throughout this study that while superiority theory of humour implies a derisive laughter of some higher subjects at some lower others, the realism of humour, by reserving the same degree of lowness for all subjects, exempts subjects from such human laughter of superiority and yields them instead to an inhuman laughter in a relational sense and *between* them. In effect, humour and its relation to lowness or whatever is low or even banal, whatever is emptied of its height and depth, makes it closer to a philosophy that starts with earth. Claire Colebrook puts it this way:

Humour falls or collapses: ‘down’ from meaning and intentions to the singularities of life that have no order, no high and low, no before and after. Humour can reverse or pervert logic, disrupt moral categories or dissolve the body into parts without any governing intention (2004, 136).

Humour as depicted here is an art of lowness, of coming from heights to surfaces and the disruption of expectations. I aim to highlight two points in such a conception of humour. Firstly, this humour as mentioned is bound to earth and lowness, and if any

expectation is disrupted, it falls or collapses from an inflated and meaningful height to a fall. This already surpasses a purely semantic understanding of humour and implies some pragmatic facets of humour which do not limit expectations to cognitive or semantic ones (as in the Incongruity Theory).

Secondly, and what is equally significant to such realism, humour does not exist in isolation as its societal and collective nature makes it hard to think of humour in isolation befalling this or that specific entity: humour does not exist except in relation or in relationality. Such an immanent understanding of humour makes it possible to seek beyond a solely semantic or linguistic framework or a superior mode, a pragmatic framework of humour in its materialistic sense. However, it seems that irony and satire have their own criteria and their own targets where in irony the aim is to elevate to a higher point of view, and satire aims to deepen a superficial meaning, humour equally needs criteria to function. If any *raison d'être* is imagined for humour it is bringing low what pretends to height. This makes it evidently different from the *raison d'être* in irony which is based on a higher vantage point. Irony presupposes formed and fulfilled subjects, —‘a subject that must have preceded the act of speaking or narrating- a subject that can never be located in this world because he is the author of the world’ (Colebrook, 139).

If there is going to be a framework for humour and its (ir)rationality, it is neither in heights, nor in depths, but rather located on earth and its surfaces. Following the Deleuzoguattarian conception of the Earth in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we argue that earth bears humour inside, however cruel and inhuman, the earth provides a virtuality for humour that can constantly be actualized in this or that form. These flows are not as subjective and conscious; there are forces gathered together that like strata of the earth act upon each other and force an amalgamation of forces which can be thought of as what Deleuze and Guattari call assemblages. To define assemblages, it should be highlighted that one major characteristic of assemblages is that they are not the result of consciousness. It is no surprise because Deleuze "explicitly directed his reading of Nietzsche against Hegelian idealism, his true enemy is the entire tradition of philosophy that attempts to interpret life in terms of meanings produced within consciousness. Instead, all life can only be understood in terms of relations of forces expressed through bodies" (Goodchild, 29).

Therefore prior to stressing the significance of humour in such a philosophy, it

should be borne in mind that such relations between assemblages and their constructing forces are of extreme significance to such a philosophy; relations are given priority to any essential entity as constituent of subjects. It goes without saying that this entails a Deleuzoguattarian vitalism which is an attempt to restore to life its significance beyond conscious and subjective meaning. Defining life in terms of forces and starting with movement as the crucial component of life has numerous implications not only for thought but also for living beings, both philosophically and ethically. As Deleuze puts it in his *Cinema 1: The movement-image*,

If one had to define the whole, it would be defined by relation. Relation is not a property of objects, it is always external to its terms. It is also inseparable from the open, and displays a spiritual or mental existence. Relations do not belong to objects, but to the whole, on condition that this is not confused with a closed set of objects. By movement in space, the objects of a set change their respective positions. But, through relations, the whole is transformed or changes qualitatively (19).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's definition of assemblages is an attempt in their materialist orientation to dispense with any transcendent notion of organizing agents. Assemblages are bits _plugged into_ one another that function without having been attributed an essence. Assemblages as presented in *A Thousand Plateaus* do not only offer a materialist emphasis but also a vitalist notion that comes from Spinoza¹. The emphasis in Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblages is on the relationality of all beings but also that beings, by entering into new relations and assemblages, undergo change and hence are dynamic. Therefore rather than their intrinsic and essential characteristics, beings are composed of the relations they commence with one another. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of difference is founded on a notion of difference that is not subordinated to identity where by excluding substance from Spinoza's philosophy, one comes across an entirely differential universe. For Deleuze and Guattari power to act which is *puissance* (rather than *pouvoir* which is power to dominate) is the source of producing assemblages. Deleuze's philosophy of difference leads to the formation of assemblages or consistencies that are able to justify

¹ Baroch Spinoza, in his *Ethics* and through elaborating affects, introduces joy (*laetitia*), and sorrow (*tristitia*) to desire (*cupiditas*). By translating *laetitia* to joy and *cupiditas* to wretchedness, one can say that these two are forces in relation to one's power of existence or *puissance*: some affects such as hatred and bad conscience diminish one's power of living and some others develop and boost it as positive affects: hence Deleuzoguattarian reliance on the latter which mixed with Nietzsche's reading of active/ reactive forces, leads to their vitalist project. (de Spinoza, Benedict, and Edwin Curley. "The Collected Works of Spinoza Volume I." (1985).

complexities and dynamics that exist in life in its materialist sense, without taking refuge in a transcendent being. Assemblages are created constantly based on ‘relations of exteriority’ which by excluding essence imply that bits and parts can be detached from one assemblages and be attached or ‘plugged’ into another assemblages. If transcendent conceptions of life, politics and ontology yield themselves to a notion where relations are essential and based on interiority (which means necessary relations), assemblages are founded on a notion of exteriority; a fact that places emphasis on the contingency of a bit co-habiting with other parts. By eschewing the traditional sense of interiority, Deleuze and Guattari's materialism advances towards questioning subject as the formed and stable locus by assemblages. Deleuze's rejection of interiority is of significance in his *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, as he argues that,

Every point has its counterpoints: the plant and the rain, the spider and the fly. So an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relations with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior. The speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions link together to constitute a particular individual in the world (125).

Assemblages play a prominent role in this philosophy to shed light on subjectivation rather than subjects, or multiplicities rather than multiples. The significance of assemblages as one can notice is not inherent in the being of things or a fixated and static reality or essence but rather in the ways things are connected and the way such assemblages affect each other and are affected. However as any assemblage needs to preserve its connections at least for a short while, in order to exist and interact, this brings them to the point that assemblages bear territorial features, namely they are stabilized at least for a while. Nevertheless, this is not a comprehensive conception of assemblages since there are other facets within assemblages that lead them away from their current status. If assemblages are territorial, there is a deterritorialising dimension which fosters becoming in assemblages. The very focus of the latter is on relations and their becomings in a dynamism which questions any transcendent totalities. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that,

A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb —to be,|| but the fabric of the rhizome is —and, and, and...(25).

Deleuzoguattarian ‘in-between’ or intermezzo is the locus of deterritorialisation and yet it should be added that deterritorialisation eludes any attempt to be defined,

delimited and determined. The horizontal axis which contains “machinic assemblages of bodies, actions and passions” and a “collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations of bodies”(88). is exposed to the horizontal axis with territorial sides, or reterritorialised sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialisation, which carry it away. Instead of being inclined to transcendence, the between renders deterritorialisation immanently possible. Far from attempting an epistemology of this between, which would contradict the entire Deleuzoguattarian pragmatic project, one can still scrutinize this between to see how different relations, compositions and assemblages are affected and nurtured by this between. Despite the vagueness of between, this study is an attempt to place emphasis on how humour can be defined based on a relational and dynamic conception of beings which is attributed to assemblages. Thereby, realism in humour renders laughter possible in an asubjective mode and between assemblages.

Assemblages are real and are formed perpetually around us and this helps us explain how a realist conception of humour that is not limited to discursive phenomena is explainable in terms of assemblages. While incongruity theories make various attempts to define humour in terms of a metaphoric communication between semantic scripts, assemblages negotiate in an *intermezzo* as the possible candidates for humour. Assemblage, as a materialist conception of the vitalist project in Deleuze and Guattari, helps dispense with a static as well as a linguistic understanding of humour that has recourse to a fixed subject, and the emphasis inherent in assemblages is on emergent unities without underestimating the heterogeneity of components. This way, humour has a lot to do with becoming and movement; humour is an ability of perpetually laughing at the fixed positions attributed to a subject. This vitalist understanding conceives of humour in a way which is based on becoming and the molecular and ephemeral emergence of humour. But it is no less important to take into account the ontological consequences of underestimating or neglecting humour. Admittedly a Deleuzoguattarian depiction of humour targets more a political facet where humour in its very tiny, minuscule and microscopic presence is a mechanism to resist totalitarianism. The significance of humour that results in becoming cannot be understood unless its rejection and negation are sufficiently depicted. Rejecting humour as a banal and trivial feature has its own ontological consequences that will be explained.

The realism offered here argues that although this vitalist conception has a lot to

do with humour and can explain humour as the moment when one embraces another subject or another system, it does not explain fully the absence or rejection of humour. In other words, becoming can easily depict how humour, in its realism and not in the metaphoric conception, functions in assemblages and their becomings. But the negation of humour and its real consequences, both ethically and ontologically should be investigated differently and beyond the vitalist slogan of becoming. The main assumption of such realism has it that humour is inexorable for human subjects and consequently any rejection of humour only renders another laughter possible: a laughter which takes the supposed-subjects as its object of laughter. By defining an inhuman laughter that emerges out of repudiation of humour in a specific subject and its relation with others this project moves towards excavating a realism from humour-itself namely a derisive realism. If vitalist humour is founded on the constant opening to movement and dispensing with fixed positions defined for a subject, the inhuman laughter befalls those subjects who have been rejecting humour and moulds them to accessorial for its own laughter. Where vitalist humour opens new vistas of becoming and openness for a subject, inhuman laughter is the result of a cessation and halt in a subject that by avoiding humour becomes utterly comic.

In order to explain the humour abstention and the ensuing inhuman laughter immanently, we have recourse to Leibniz' understanding of knowledge and perception that was quickly mentioned in contrast to Locke's viewpoint. The way humour functions within assemblages can be stated as follows: if according to Leibniz' framework not all perception yields to knowledge, one acknowledges that whatever is fulfilled by an assemblage or a subject is not fully comprehensible and even sensible and we introduce humour as a tool which is founded on such residuals of perception that cannot be transferred to knowledge. In the absence of perpetual moments of humour, an assemblage conceals what cannot be transferred to knowledge as its defects and shortcomings and under the guise of a serious gesture. Such avoidance of humour sparks and tickles inhuman laughter where the same subject or assemblage turns out to be ridiculous. By rendering visible the commonly invisible or normally guised and hidden parts that a subject or assemblage conceals in order to maintain its serious face, inhuman laughter makes another laughter possible. Following Leibniz's framework, aside from perceptions that yield to knowledge there are *petites perceptions* (Remnant and Bennett, lxxvii) which are never fully apperceived, in the same vein, what is concealed by an assemblage in its relation to other assemblages which forms the

invisible part of assemblages is the site of petites perceptions that renders inhuman laughter possible, hence a relation between invisible facets of assemblages and humour. But to start with this and the idea of petites perceptions in Leibniz and the way we make use of it in relation to a realist project of humour and in assemblages, we need to highlight the difference between Locke's and Descartes' understanding of mind and the one offered by Leibniz. To the former, mentality and consciousness are almost the same thing, in other words there is nothing that skips consciousness, whereas for the latter awareness has degrees and for any perception, there are various petites perceptions. Such petites perceptions are not unconscious perceptions. In effect, Leibniz's text *New Essays on Human Understanding* is a response to John Locke's *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and Leibniz' attempt is to show that "there is in us an infinity of perceptions...of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own" (Leibniz, 53).

We claim that molecular humour is one main mechanism while renders these petites perceptions visible; by evading humour, such petites perceptions provoke the emergence of inhuman laughter where one becomes the victim of laughter. While Leibniz' theory is to explain monads, by reserving the differences between the two, we aim to apply this theory to assemblages and hold that humour is the function by which what is unconscious in an assemblage becomes conscious, or better to say what is implied in an assemblage becomes explicit. At the same time, the emphasis in a realist project of humour should be on the immanent mechanism where it is only in relation to other assemblages that what is implied in one assembles becomes explicit.

By relying on such conception of assemblages and their interaction such realism claims that humour is realized between assemblages or how new and emergent coming-together of different components in one assemblage. In effect, the question will be: by surpassing subjective humour that is normally willed and intended by subjects, to what extent one can look for humour in a non-subjective mode as presented between assemblages. What we look for is the conditions of a realism in humour within and between assemblages that is not limited to an imaginary conception of humour as stated in incongruity theories. By bringing humour to a non-discursive model defined through assemblages, we aim for a realism beyond mere textual and rhetorical conceptualization and in networks of relations between assemblages. Linguistic and cognitive models of humour limit humour to a metaphoric elasticity between semantic

or cognitive spheres, whereas in a realist sense, humour is seen as "the art of surfaces, the art of thinking the noises, sensations, affects and sensible singularities, from which bodies are composed, bodies that can then have relations" (Colebrook, 132).

As explained before, the metaphoric depiction of humour leans heavily on already-shaped subjects who produce and distribute humour; in contrast, a realist understanding of humour pictures humour as a phenomenon that befalls subjects or assemblages in their relations and in the midst of their dynamism. What is at stake in relation to humour is that the inability to grasp humour in its most microscopic and molecular manifestation culminates in the very ridicule of assemblages. Assemblages in their constant encountering with one another need to incorporate humour in their communication or they will be (gradually) ridiculed by inhuman laughter. Yet humour is not something that assemblages will to happen, rather it is something that an assemblage admits from the outside in its ethical relation with other assemblages.

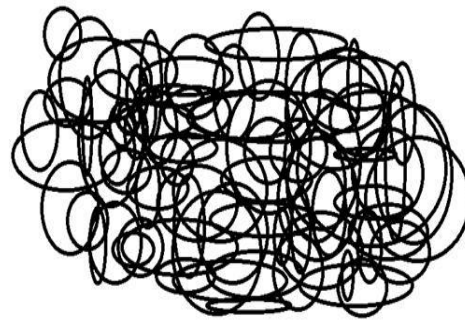


Figure 3. A hypothetical depiction of assemblages in communication on a socius. This socius looks to have been made up of lines, but it is composed of around 70 ovals.

In order to tackle the question in relation between inhuman laughter and assemblages Bergson's analysis of laughter can be invited into account, a philosopher whose vitalist philosophy was a source of influence and inspiration to Gilles Deleuze. However, what is curious is that although Deleuze relied a lot on Bergson's notions of time and movement and becoming, and although he devoted a chapter of *Logic of Sense* to humour, he did not develop any idea concerning humour and laughter based on

Bergson's book *le Rire*. Yet, Bergson is among the very few philosophers who have written specifically on laughter and humour. It is nearly impossible in the history of philosophy to find laughter and humour analysed independently mainly because humour was always supposed to be comprehended in its human mode. Although Bergson deals explicitly with laughter and humour, one can argue that he is grappling with the idea which had for a large part dominated nineteenth century thought, namely that of mechanisation.

Le rire by Bergson can be read against the background of his more common key term, namely *élan vital*, a term that was used seven years later in his *Creative Evolution* and requires some elaboration. Bergson introduced *élan vital* or vital impetus as a common impulse that explains all life, species and their creation. One can understand *élan vital* in relation to the Bergsonian understanding of unity of life. In its relation to matter, *élan vital* is constantly and perpetually producing new forms which stand against the rigidity and petrification of life. According to this interpretation, evolution and its moving principle are implied in *élan vital*; a concept that questions any determinism in the shape of a finalism of life or any mechanistic understanding of life, which were not uncommon in nineteenth century. In his *Creative Evolution*, both the mechanistic conception of life and its exclusion of dynamism and change and the teleological implications of finalism that profess that everything is pre-given are foregrounded and criticized; the idea of *élan vital* inspired Gilles Deleuze and influenced the entire trajectory of his philosophy. Both ideas of multiplicity and duration, as presented by Bergson, play significant roles in Gilles Deleuze's thought.

The implications of these two concepts are not only visible in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of machine and assemblage, but prior to that in Deleuze's idea of becoming. One can argue that Gilles Deleuze's attempt to introduce Bergsonian concepts in his philosophy was mainly limited to his interest in multiplicity which resulted in a vitalism in his thought, and this might be a good reason for Deleuze to leave out Bergson's *le Rire*, which not only propagates duration but also introduces laughter and comedy as the instances where the organic is transformed to the inorganic.

When reading *le Rire* one can have the impression that if laughter entails a mechanism of automatism, this is in effect possible only through pausing and halting the vital impulse. Therefore, not only does laughter in *le Rire* have nothing to do with the commonly acknowledged vitalism of the Bergsonian system of philosophy, in particular in his *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, quite the opposite;

laughter is introduced as the death factor in the middle of life as it brings the organic to an inorganic cessation or automatism. If Bergson insists that “we laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing” (Bergson. 1911. 53), this implies that there is a tacit rigidity attributed to laughter, a rigidity that blocks the vital impulse of an organism. In *le Rire*, the vital force underlying everything or the flux of life is analysed in relation to laughter and the comic.

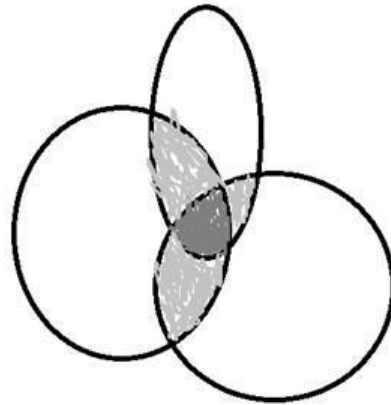


Figure 4. Three assemblages in communication and all affected by one another

There is another dimension that makes the Bergsonian analysis of laughter even more interesting, especially from a Deleuzian perspective. Bergson is again among the few scholars who has sufficiently, if not without contradiction, analysed laughter without falling into the trap of psychologism. The psychological conception of laughter, it must be emphasized, is mostly a positive view of laughter as a compensating tool for the soul. The idea has kept its essence in body-politics where laughter is a way to keep the body healthy and discard negative energies. Laughter in its psychologism is normally reclaimed in a thermodynamic model of affects in which the desired goal is balance. What makes the Bergsonian conception of laughter unique and singular is his attempt to analyse and delineate laughter in a functional manner. Bergson defines a specific utility for laughter and this makes laughter immediately a social phenomenon. Thus, one can say with some confidence that social relations play a more important role for Bergson than the psychological ones.



Figure 5. When two assemblages undergo humour, and the third which has been rejecting humour halts comically. Not only this assemblage is not able to incorporate humour in its communication with other assemblages, but also it becomes an object of laughter.

Although Bergson brings laughter and comedy to a functional front, it must be admitted that Bergson's use of machine and machinism is evidently different from Deleuze's. There is something mechanical that permeates in something living. This requires due attention since it once more results in a sharper difference from the psychologism of laughter. When Bergson explicates how laughter works, he argues that a tension is required and this tension, interestingly, is in a living organic laughter body and results in an organic moment of cessation. Life, or the organic _presents itself to us as evolution in time and complexity in space'(44); it is a flow, an ongoing flow. The main interpretation of Bergson is focused on where this mechanical force intervenes in the organic flow and stops it in a corrective way. It is something that Bergson himself emphasizes as a corrective act to modify what is anti-social. Arguably, what defines Bergson's framework is that laughter is where something living becomes mechanical; this is comic and makes us laugh: something that can hold of assemblages and their relations.

1.5 Automatism

Whatever is not cosmic is comic. (Jones, 63)

Despite the prominent role Henri Bergson plays in the compilation and configuration of Gilles Deleuze's thought, his classical book *le Rire* falls outside of Deleuze's appreciation. This becomes more remarkable when seen against the background of Gilles Deleuze's celebration of humour and laughter. Although Deleuze and Guattari have not developed many philosophical concepts concerning humour and laughter, it has not escaped their attention and even their practice of philosophy. Humour is extremely practical and contributes heavily to their immanent conception of desire which opposes the classical ironic gesture that culminates in transcendence or ascension. In his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, Michael Foucault calls the entire book an attempt or an 'Introduction to the non-fascist life' (xlii) and maintains that Deleuze and Guattari have managed to discern power through 'neutralizing the effects of it' (xliii) and this is all rendered possible through humour.

But these are the familiar traps of rhetoric; the latter work to sway the reader without his being aware of the manipulation, and ultimately win him over against his will. The traps of anti-Oedipus are those of humour: so many invitations to let oneself be put out, to take one's leave of the text and slam the door shut. The book often leads one to believe it is all fun and games, when something essential is taking place, something of extreme seriousness: the tracking down of all varieties of fascism, from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives (Deleuze and Guattari, xlii).

What is evidently accentuated in Foucault's grasp can be traced back to Deleuze's earlier works where, like in his *Logic of Sense* and the following series on 'Nonsense and Paradox', he comes to humour and devotes the nineteenth series to humour. Although Deleuze has extensively utilized and usurped Bergson's concepts including movement, *durée* and *l'élan vital*, the book *Laughter* does not play any significant role, at least in Deleuze concerning Deleuze's occupation with laughter.

What counts for Deleuze in his reading of Bergson is more a question of movement, while *le Rire* is, quite to the contrary, a work that highlights halt and cessation. Therefore, it should not come as surprise to see that this does not fit in

Deleuze's construction; more importantly, this reading of laughter might even endanger components of Deleuze's use of Bergson. Once again and in order to explicate how Bergson's framework contributes to such realism, we start with the implicit axiom in such realism of humour, either an assemblage hears laughter in its relation with other assemblages and takes part in it or it keeps avoiding humour in its relation with other assemblages to the extent of being ridiculed. Realist humour grants the Being the ability to laugh. Yet, this inhuman laughter is only heard in relation between different assemblages and their immanent disposition to one another. Inhuman laughter depends heavily on the Being as it is the only substance that keeps hold of different assemblages in the relation to one another; it is the very source of any humour in and within assemblages, _'This sole and unique substance is, as such, self-sufficient and infinite (whereby _infinite' means that it contains within it all individuals without exception; it is omnitudo realitatis)' (Frank, 67).

In this regard, and since no assemblage has full access to the absolute and is imprisoned in its relative state, humour can function to reduce and constrain knowledge that any assemblage is able to produce or claim. Being is not based on knowledge as Hölderlin insists—rather it is perceived through feeling and what is called intellectual intuition. By maintaining its transitive relation through humour, we argue that an assemblage increases its ability to interact with other assemblages, whereas by sticking to its knowledge, an assemblage is likelier to reduce its transitive ability and potentials in relation to Being. In other words, any assemblage through its proximity to such transitivity and its openness to Being is able to constantly undergo becoming through applying humour to itself. On the other hand, when an assemblage starts losing its connection to the transitivity of humour, it does nothing but expand its knowledge but remains bereft of intellectual intuition. Such knowledge leads to objectifying other assemblages and ignoring their becoming. This process of objectification is a reflective one which means once an assemblage loses its transitive ability and commences objectifying others; it is the same assemblage which becomes objectified. Although all assemblages are conditioned and limited in their production of knowledge, it is only through humour in its relation with other assemblages that an assemblage maintains a constant relation to the unconditioned which is beyond the reach of any assemblage.

In this respect, the unconditioned is the incomprehensible itself (das Unbegreifliche selbst) (for I can never grasp it in conceptual thought). But it is not therefore unknown, quite the contrary, it reveals itself as _an unmediated certainty which not only is no need of any foundations, but

also excludes all foundations (Frank, 79).

Since no assemblage functions independently, and they are all defined and diffused on one same ground, their knowledge is incommensurate with that of ground which functions independent of assemblages. In other words, once any assemblage seeks any ultimate knowledge, it will be ridiculed by the ground (*derided*)

This ultimate (or highest) knowledge can not have to seek its real ground in something else. Not only is it itself independent of something higher, but, since our knowledge proceeds from consequence to antecedens or vice versa, that which is the highest and for us the principle of all knowledge (*Erkennens*), must not be knowable (*erkennbar*) through another principle, that is to say that the principle of its being and the principle of its being-known have to coincide, be one and the same, given that it can not be known but precisely because it is itself not something different (Frank, 80).

The inhuman laughter has its own (ir)rationality and realist project on humour attributes the pivotal function of such laughter to is addressing any positing of the absolute or any attempt at rendering unconditioned what is conditioned. Unconditioning what is conditioned is already a flight from the earth than can entail different degrees of deceit or hypocrisy and it will be met with hilarity and ridicule. Humour as the art of falling and descending will bring down to the earth any conditioned state which pretends to be unconditioned yet when a subject or an assemblage rejects such humour, inhuman laughter intervenes and derides it. However, as we discussed in relation between beings and assemblages, such ridicule does not apply in a direct and transcendental mode, rather this ridicule takes places immanently between different assemblages or subjects involved and in relation to one another.

1.6 (mou) Rire

Bergson expands and elaborates his understanding of laughter in order to show that laughter, in its corrective mode takes place in the movement of being towards being a thing when we notice that _‘something mechanical encrusted upon the living‘‘ (39) The three main motifs that reveal Bergson’s concern for laughter are its _human attachment‘, _the absence of feeling‘ and its _social‘ facet. These three components, all significant in their philosophical reverberation, serve to give Bergson an understanding of laughter

and the comedy that corresponds to the dominant mechanization of the nineteenth century. Although ‘the lack of elasticity’ is the main materialist description in producing laughter, Bergson avoids to a large extent a psychologism of laughter which pre-empts its social role in human life. Instead, Bergson accentuates the affinity of laughter and the comic to what is termed automatism:

Because I now have before me a machine that works automatically. This is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic (16).

Such an emphasis helps Bergson shed light on the transformation caused by laughter that brings the living organism to an inorganic rigidity. This adamant moment in laughter is emblematic of the absence of *élan vital* where an organism is being veered from the path of life and its inherent flux. Bergson ends his treatment of laughter by gathering all three aforementioned characteristics in the corrective face of laughter. Yet, one can say that this depiction of ‘[t]his absent-mindedness in men and in events’ (87-88) is not so far from one key concepts of Bergson’s namely flux. The notion of machine in Deleuze is not one borrowed from Bergson, yet by applying Bergson’s notion of laughter to Deleuze’s assemblages new vectors arise that resonate in the relations assemblages make to one another. Bergson does not designate a machine-like role to laughter, but entrenches laughter as a machinic pole that, in Deleuzian terms, might bring any machine to a disagreeable halt.

It should be emphasized again that Deleuzoguattarian assemblages, which provide an alternative to social configurations, are more faithful to the flux concepts stressed in Bergsonian thought and have not much in common with the Bergsonian conception of laughter depicted in *le Rire*. The mosaic and transitory nature of assemblages do not fit a human laughter as Bergson describes it, yet there might be a laughter of assemblages which may allow us to see how an inhuman laughter is equally plausible. If Bergson introduces laughter as the moment when an organic entity becomes inorganic, then humour embraced by an assemblage should be distinguished from inhuman laughter which occurs in the aftermath of rejecting humour. When an assemblage is able to absorb humour and apply it to itself infinitely and in a molecular sense, it would also be able to apply it in relation to the other assemblages around it. On the other hand when a rift develops between my abilities (Spinozist *conatus*) and my obligations (morality), I can be separated from my power and instead entertained with an illusion of a height or transcendence (which as we discussed will be a target of

humour).

An assemblage perpetually observes the relation between what it bears inside and what it does outside. In effect, this highlights the crucial difference between morality and ethics concerning assemblages. While morality is the question of ‘what must I do?’ in relation to constraining rules of transcendent judgements and values, ethics contains the question of ‘what I can I do?’ (Smith, 67) which implies the perpetual and *active* relation between one’s being and its beliefs and thoughts. The immanence of ethics’ object of criticism‘‘ is anything that separates a mode of existence from its power of acting—and what separates us from our power of acting are, ultimately, the illusions of transcendence‘‘(Smith, 68).

Once humour is seen in relation to the question of ethics (and not morality), it does not question the authenticity of ethics, rather it reveals how the moral law and of representations of moral value in their extreme seriousness emerge out of an ambiguous and variable set of repressive and creative processes and humour can set them free (James, 150). Instead of taking a judgemental posture outside all actions and events and evaluating life from such a vantage point, humour descends to life and its active forces. Humour attaches itself to a multiplicity in life and reveals itself in such low multiplicity and in the very eruption which is inherent to life. Without taking refuge in reactive forces which perform moral judgement. Humour implies active forces simply because it helps actualize what is repressed, be it subject or in assemblages. The active/ reactive distinction is mainly presented in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* and is best reflected in Gilles Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and other works where becoming and the flux of life are contrasted with a rigid and substantial understanding of being closed to change. To summarize, an active force sets its aim in freeing the body and reconciling it to what it can do, rather than what it should do, whereas reactive forces are made to restrict active forces. But the process through which reactive forces function is through consciousness. Reactive forces, by producing knowledge, separate active forces from what they can do, and this way set some limits to *what a body can do*. As Deleuze puts it in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, ‘When reactive force separates active forces from what they can do, the latter also becomes reactive. Active forces become reactive‘‘ (59).

Humour, as an art of descent replete with forces that can retrieve life in its physical and banal flow, is able to reverse reactive forces by activating and realizing what consciousness has repressed in the body. Humour can dispense with the ascetic and judgemental function in reactive forces. Ethically speaking, if humour and laughter

imply the joy that an assemblage, in its becoming, produces, therefore inhuman laughter befalls an assemblage that avoids humour: inhuman laughter overwhelms and befalls an assemblage which has failed to incorporate molecular humour in its becoming; inhuman laughter is provoked by the very reluctance of assemblages to be humorous. Bergson's thesis concerning social corrective utility of laughter claims that

Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must take a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed. By laughter society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it. It would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness (92).

As one can see, Bergson's social corrective laughter in his *Le Rire* can be transformed to an ontological corrective in the realism of humour. Not unlike Bergson's definition, inhuman laughter has a corrective function, and it is bereft of sympathy or kindness, fitting perfectly with the laughter that befalls an assemblage in the form of derision and as a consequence of avoiding humour in the first place. Thus, by elevating the social corrective function of laughter implied in Bergson to an ethical or even ontological level, we argue that as a result of avoiding molecular humour in its real mode, one would be experiencing a corrective side of laughter in terms of derision. While the former laughter functions via becoming and perpetual movement, the latter form of laughter emerges in cessation and halt. This can be seen if we translate Bergsonian laughter, which has a social corrective characteristic into one of a relational humour among assemblages as the first attempt towards a derisive realism. In his *le Rire*, Bergson had already emphasized on the absence of emotion from such

‘momentary anesthesia’ (7). Inhuman laughter, not unlike the Bergsonian depiction which highlights the very transformation of an organic entity, towards being inorganic and automatic, emphasizes the non-elasticity of an assemblage as the very result of its inability to be exposed to humour. In relation between desire and humour, it should be borne in mind that although as Colebrook highlights there are human ways of bringing a body to the point of zero intensity through punishment, torture and other techniques, yet derisive realism sees this zero intensity as an immanent orientation of a body which avoids humour. However what is implied in this view is that life and death are interwoven,

A thought of the desire which is both life (as multiple degrees of difference) and death as zero intensity, where we can imagine any life form- such as thinking- being reduced to zero, and we can also think of

many points in life when this zero degree is approached (in case of torture, bodily exhaustion or cultural inanity). In addition to the clear and everyday world of positive things there is also the necessary world of zero intensities, for we could not imagine any quality unless there were the possibility of its zero intensity, the point where it would no longer make a difference to be felt (2006, 3).

When an assemblage fails in its attempt to become humorous, it comes back to itself and becomes static. This moment of automatism or rigidity which entails the loss of dynamic elasticity, brings the assemblage to *devenir* zero. The Bergsonian definition of laughter as a cessation is extremely abstract and devoid of any interaction with other assemblages, whereas in a relational model, it is not that a cessation causes laughter, but rather that an encounter with another assemblage causes cessation and laughter. Inhuman laughter as functions between assemblages can neither be encapsulated in a representational view where laughter is reduced to a psychologism and cognitivism, nor can it be depicted as an autonomous entity where nothing beyond a descriptive and vitalist conception of laughter is possible. Inhuman laughter dispenses with an inherent interiority and instead emphasizes the exteriority of relations between assemblages.

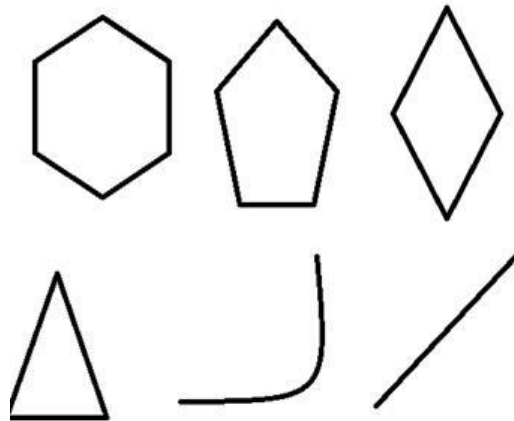


Figure 6. The way an assemblage increasingly becomes inorganic; reducing humour renders an assemblage to a line of thought: from humour to idea: the process from becoming-humorous to becoming-opinionated.

Unlike Bergson, who devoted a short book to laughter and comedy, Georges Bataille wrote here and there about laughter and his reading of laughter is, if not haphazard, quite sporadic in his various works. Georges Bataille does not simply segregate laughter from other phenomena which bear traces to transgression and excess and rather his conception of laughter is defined almost parallel to that of sovereignty which stretches knowledge to its ends. A dictionary definition of sovereignty is a state of supremacy or superiority. This implies, in a more philosophical sense, a moment when something is in a dialectical relation to another person or thing, in which one is superior and the other being inferior. Georges Bataille takes such Hegelian dialectics as occurring between two sides which are interdependent and co-existent. In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille places emphasis on the element of usefulness and maintains that being useful means being useful to somebody or something. Seen this way, ‘life beyond utility’ (1991, 198) is the realm of sovereignty. Being useful prevents us from experiencing sovereignty and leaves us in an economy of exchange based on utility. Laughter and tears for Bataille are two significant manifestations of such an encounter with sovereignty. As he puts it in *la Souveraineté*:

Communication is never the object of discursive knowledge, but is communicated from subject to subject through a sensitive emotional contact (contact sensible de l’emotion): It is communicated in laughter, tears and in the tumult of festivities (Oeuvres complètes.VIII: 287-88).

Bataille has dealt with laughter in various works in particular, *Inner Experience*, but it is in his *Unfinished System of Non-knowledge* that Bataille closely deals with laughter as a source for thought in general. In Bataille’s view, laughter is one singular possible response to death, yet ‘it is death itself that finds a voice when we laugh’ (Land. 1992, xvi). Either way, the key to understanding the significance of laughter in Bataille is his emphasis on the tacit link between laughter and death. Laughter is the moment when one becomes no-one; one is lost and has become a mouth, an organ for laughter to be uttered and heard. As Bataille puts it in his notes in the preface to *Madame Edwarda*,

What the hearty laugh screens us from, what fetches up the bawdy jest, is the identity that exists between the utmost in pleasure and the utmost in pain: the identity between being and non-being, between the living and the death-stricken being, between the knowledge which brings one before this dazzling realization and definitive, concluding darkness . . . our laughter here is absolute, going far beyond scorning ridicule of something which may perhaps be repugnant, but disgust for which digs deep under our skin ... the sight of blood, the odour of vomit, which arouse in us the dread of death, sometimes introduce us into a nauseous state -which hurts more cruelly than pain (Boting and Wilson, 225)

Still, what we seek is not so much the limits of epistemology and philosophy but rather the tacit link that joins laughter and death in Bataille's attitude. If the Bataillan notion of laughter implied in the French maxim 'le rire tue' bears some credibility then it should equally be applied to assemblages. Unless assemblages embrace humour in their relation to other assemblages, they fall victim to inhuman laughter as a moment of halt and cessation. Laughter presses on the individual assemblages and turns them to an inertia; it connects assemblages to a becoming-zero, a halt. In comparison to Bataille, Bergson is obsessed with the mechanistic conception of laughter that brings about automatism; however, there is an implicit connection between the laughter which, —puts the equilibrium of life in danger! (Bataille, 2001,114)) and the one that is connected to death in Bataille.

In his *Visions*, Georges Bataille elaborates this point in relation to sovereign laughter which 'characterizes all vacant lives as ridiculous. A kind of incandescent joy—the explosive sudden revelation of presence of being—is liberated each time a striking appearance is contrasted with its absence, with the human void. Laughter casts a glance, charged with the mortal violence of being, into the void of life' (176). This is the point where laughter empties an assemblage from its expected function and transforms it into an object of ridicule. This view, according to which humour has its own inhuman rationality defined immanently and in relation between assemblages, questions primarily the cognitive aspect of humour which will be elaborated in the next chapter. Nevertheless, such a cognitive conception of humour and laughter as bound to human will is not a very new phenomenon. The human and intentional understanding of humour, as elaborated mainly in the contemporary understanding of wit in Incongruity Theory, is utterly discursive. Michael Billig, in his *Laughter and Ridicule*, makes a comprehensive study of the role of laughter in relation to what is called incongruity theory. Nevertheless, Billig's target is a critique of humour mainly in its modern conception and in regard to names such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Addison, Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain. Billig argues that the positivist conception of humour stems from the gentlemanly understanding of wit implied in works of John Locke (Billig, 57). In his analysis, Locke's attempt is nothing but an attempt to redefine laughter in order to make it less harmful and asocial. In order to do so and bring laughter away from derision to witticism, Locke starts with a definition of

judgement and argues that any true judgment depends on the 'clear discerning faculty; of the mind where it perceives two ideas to be the same, or different' (Billig, 62). Appearance of similitude can be misleading if there really are differences between two ideas. Thus, careful judgement consists

In separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found at least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude. If judgment involves carefully distinguishing between things that appear to be similar but which are actually different, then wit is based on the reverse process. It brings together ideas that are different in order to treat them as if they were similar. Accordingly, wit operates through 'the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fantasy (Billig, 62-63).

In order to illuminate the realism inherent in the inhuman laughter, both in its positive embracing of molecular humour and its derisive side in the aftermath of rejecting humour, we need to take into account the historical trajectory that has led to the incongruity theory of laughter and humour. The crucial point implied in Incongruity theory, as we will notice, is the conscious and voluntary production of humour which is rooted mainly in John Locke and other philosophers who dispensed in their theories with the superiority theory of laughter. It will be argued that such a conscious and intentional understanding of laughter not only results in a purely discursive conception but also it leaves no room for any ethical and ontological consequence of avoiding humour. Due to its reliance on language, laughter and humour in incongruity theory are not only emptied of this asubjective dimension; it also ignored the practical and non-discursive that is realist mode of laughter. We will argue that inhuman laughter takes into account the constant denial of humour through a (ir)rationality which gradually mocks the assemblages which reject humour in molecular sense. In chapter XI 'Of Discerning and Other Operations of The Mind', John Locke makes the boldest attempt to elaborate his notion of wit and humour. It is easily noticeable that what Locke offers throughout this chapter in relation to wit is based on a sharp distinction between our ability to judge and our ability to be witty.

The difference of wit and judgment. How much the imperfection of accurately discriminating ideas one from another lies, either in the dullness or faults of the organs of sense; or want of acuteness, exercise, or attention in the understanding; or hastiness and precipitancy, natural to some tempers, I will not here examine: it suffices to take notice, that

this is one of the operations that the mind may reflect on and observe in itself. It is of that consequence to its other knowledge, that so far as this faculty is in itself dull, or not rightly made use of, for the distinguishing one thing from another,—so far our notions are confused, and our reason and judgment disturbed or misled. If in having our ideas the memory ready at hand consists quickness of parts; in this, of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to distinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists, in a great measure, the exactness of judgment, and clearness of reason, which is to be observed in one man above another. And hence perhaps may be given some reason of that common observation,—that men who have a great deal of wit, and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason (1700, 117).

In Locke's viewpoint, memory plays a prominent role and it canalizes almost all our consciousness. Locke's view on judgement seems to be rooted in the first parts of chapter XI that is called 'No Knowledge Without Discernment'. There Locke stresses the significance of distinguishing between ideas in our minds. But it is worth mentioning that this part is followed by another which is the gist of Locke's idea and is labelled 'Clearness Done Hinders Confusion'. This part reminds one of Locke's emphasis that there is nothing in us or our memories that does not come to our perception at some point and here highlights the role consciousness plays. But what does it all have to do with humour? The view that Locke defends has a simple formulation in relation to wit:

For wit lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fantasy; judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another (1700, 11).

Although the human ability to think and perceive is equally important to Leibniz, he does not agree with the way John Locke presents it in relation to judgement and the sheer discretion between faculties. As we are focusing on Leibniz, it is worthwhile noting what Leibniz finds missing in Locke's system of thought. Against Locke's emphasis on our constant conscious perception, Leibniz argues that at every single moment there are infinite petites perceptions in us which are beyond our normal perception.

Leibniz tells us that we all know that we have perceptions, that for example, I see red, I hear the sea. These are perceptions; moreover, we

should reserve a special word for them because they are conscious. It's perception endowed with consciousness, that is, perception perceived as such by an "I", we call it apperception, as a-perceiving. For, indeed, it's perception that I perceive. Leibniz tells us that consequently there really have to be unconscious perceptions that we don't perceive. These are called minute perceptions, that is, unconscious perception (Deleuze, 1980).

Leibniz's conception of petites perceptions can be contrasted to Locke's idea in relation to humour. If for Locke humour can be defined as the reverse of judgement, one can use Leibniz's idea to think that assemblages utilize petite perceptions in a gradual manner to produce humour. Locke's conception of humour seems to be the beginning of the modern understanding of humour as linguistic wit which is based on cognition, whereas realism of humour is not based on cognition and subjective decision but is more rooted in the gradual preparation of assemblages to experience humour.

Human understanding of humour renders it, as in Locke, a gentlemanly phenomenon and leaves no room for any moment of ridicule in a machinic manner, whereas inhuman laughter introduces us to an inhuman derision that occurs between assemblages or subjects. Viewing humour based on consciousness is unable to account for the social function of humour and laughter and instead renders humour a subjective decision. The inherent framework in Locke's understanding of humour and laughter that became dominant in cognitive theories of incongruity is undoubtedly based on a static conception of human subjects. Thus by doing away with a subjective understanding of humour, it seems that it is through such an inhuman gesture that assemblages in their encounter with each other keep their ethical existence, an inhuman laughter which takes becoming into account. If morality in whatever form is founded on the judgements that descend from a transcendent mode of existence, Inhuman humour is an attempt to substitute the judgement of God with a derision of assemblages in a materialistic and gradual sense. Assemblages which in their participation with other assemblages, avoid being affected accumulate residuals of petites perceptions which cannot be transformed into knowledge and this culminates in their ridicule. Such tiny perceptions are insensible parts that can be left out of the pretension of being ethical and culminate in a state of being ridiculed. According to Leibniz in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*:

It is these tiny perceptions that often determine our behavior without our thinking of them, and that deceive unsophisticated people into thinking that there is nothing at work in us that tilts us one way or another—as if

it made no difference to us, for instance, whether we turned left or right (135).

Such tiny perceptions can be ignored consciously, but they do exist, not only in an individual realm but also and more importantly in the case of humour between assemblages. Such tiny perceptions are the between components for Leibniz and they make it impossible for any state to leap to another state. Although such perceptions are well beyond our senses, they render any change in various degrees possible. In fact, Leibniz makes an important distinction between perceiving and being aware of effects to show that they are more effective than we think. In the case of humour, such tiny perceptions make it possible for an assemblage to be ridiculed without even knowing how and why. They are not transcendental and yet they normally escape our attention. Such molecular effects in the disposition of assemblages make one specific encounter possible that result in one or two or more assemblages being ridiculed. While Locke as it were sticks to the significance of memory, which brings his conception of laughter closer to that of wit and determined laughter, Leibniz's conception can be utilized more efficiently in regard to the contingency of laughter and humour.

Every impression has an effect, but the effects aren't always noticeable. When I turn one way rather than another it is often because of a series of tiny impressions that I am not aware of but which make one movement slightly harder than the other. All our casual unplanned actions result from a conjunction of tiny perceptions; and even our customs and passions, which have so much influence when we do plan and decide, come from the same source. For these behavioral tendencies come into being gradually, and so without our tiny perceptions we wouldn't have acquired these noticeable dispositions. I have already remarked that anyone who excluded these effects from moral philosophy would be copying the ill-informed people who exclude insensible corpuscles from natural science (38).

Affects come out of an ephemeral encounter and they are not yet forms of thought or things; affects are prior to any form of thought or any assemblage whatsoever. They are immanent, and soon after their ephemeral emergence they disappear and most often become virtual and hidden. In order to keep their relation with the outside, affects are virtualised and appear through different forms from time to time. Not only assemblages are produced through such an encounter as for instance between partial objects, but more importantly, the relation between them is also an integral part of affect function. I place the emphasis on the latter because the former has been sufficiently explored and investigated in Deleuzian analyses and comments.

Assemblages are constantly in participation—they encounter each other and it is impossible to think of them in isolation. By definition, they are social and keep influencing and encountering each other. It is here and in this societal function of affects that inhuman humour can be more elaborated. If affects run assemblages, it does not mean that they are fully activated; they can be kept passive for a varying degree of time and be activated and appear in relation to other assemblages. The very meaning of humour therefore can be when assemblage A in its encounter with assemblage B is able to actualize the hidden and virtual affects or be affected or be activated by them. Here we need to stress the significance of the Bergsonian conception of laughter in a more inhuman and less subject-oriented manner. The Bergsonian frame of laughter, from the start, appears to contradict any Deleuzian attempt as it has been stressed that Bergson is more into analysing comedy, but he ends up analysing laughter as well. Look at the three main characteristics of laughter for Bergson. First, comedy is necessarily human: we laugh at people or the things they do. Second, laughter is purely cerebral: being able to laugh seems to require a detached attitude, an emotional distance to the object of laughter. And third, laughter has a social function. Through these three principles, Bergson strives to depict the production of laughter. However, it should be emphasized that the Bergsonian conception of laughter is not a clear-cut and homogeneous picture. The result of a Bergsonian understanding of laughter is that laughter is a momentary halt, a cessation, a pause. This transient moment of laughter entails a moment of encounter which has caused the machine an ephemeral cessation. Thus, it is not that a cessation causes laughter, rather an encounter with another assemblage or another image of an assemblage causes a cessation in the assemblage, and one consequence of such a cessation is laughter. In effect, through coexistence of assemblages, any assemblage might be exposed to any other and this exposure can be lubricated through inhuman humour. Inhuman humour intervenes in relation between assemblages in order to install a new balance, a new disposition between assemblages. Inhuman humour through its derision stops an assemblage from its common functioning in a screeching halt. This mechanical description of laughter implies the Deleuzoguattarian framework of intermezzo. If the rhizome affirms life and arise “from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing” (Deleuze and Guattari, 25), it can be said that inhuman laughter is the tool that is implicated in the rhizome.

Assemblages conceal some affects to act better and more properly and inhuman

laughter actualizes them and ridicules them. In other words, if assemblages explicate multiplicity, humour is implicated in them and reveals itself in participation between various assemblages. Assemblages connect and plug into one another, but humour is implicated between them in a more gradual mode. Assemblages communicate very slowly and gradually following the very Leibnizian maxim in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*. Leibniz emphasizes in his debate against Locke that "nature never makes leaps (Natura non facit saltus)" (16). Implementing this maxim in our conception of humour helps see this inhuman humour that results out of the communication between assemblages in the most immanent form. Coming to an understanding of the inhuman rationale of this humour is of tremendous help in seeing rhizome and the ways it functions; the rhizome would need an index of this inhuman humour in order to dispense with an understanding of multiplicity and difference emergent solely out of elements of chance and randomness of assemblages. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that we are not looking to explore the logic behind this randomness, rather we aim to shed light on some conditions of how to treat the contingency of this randomness as humorously as possible. Humour as between assemblages in an immanent mode is able to ridicule the assemblages that hide their morality, actualizing this morality in a very gradual manner and laughing at the assemblages that should be ridiculed in one way or another. However a catalogue of the different forms of ridicule and humour that may befall assemblages are hardly feasible for this project, suffice it for now to depict the outlines of the trajectory that leads to this inhuman and realistic laughter.

Chapter Two

Dealing with Wit in *Watt*

Trying to define humour is one of the definitions of humour (Bevis, 1).

Haw! You heard that one? A beauty. Haw! Hell! Haw! So. Haw! Haw! Haw! My laugh, M- ?I beg your pardon. Like Tyler? Haw! My laugh, Mr. Watt. Yes. Of all the laughs that strictly speaking are not laughs, but modes of ululation, only three need detain us, I mean the bitter, the hollow and the mirthless. These correspond to successive, how shall I say successive...suc...successive excoriations of the understanding... (Beckett, 54).

2.1 Introduction

Needless to say, humour in modern and contemporary texts plays a crucial role, but quite often this role is so interwoven with other elements that it renders any independent analysis of humour hardly possible, a fact that seems to have led numerous scholars (Attardo 1994, Chiaro 2006, Raskin 1985, Sherzer 1985, Sala 2012) to investigate and analyse humour in a context-free fashion, as in one-liners, jokes or cartoons. This chapter is an attempt to shed light on the production of humour in *Watt*, a novel that Samuel Beckett wrote while on run in the south of France to escape the German occupation of Paris, which has made some scholars think of *Watt* as Beckett's "war novel" (Murphy, 10). *Watt*, shaped in and inspired by a tragic situation, nonetheless presents itself in a hilarious and humorous way, and moves towards tragicomedy; *hilarity* and *misery* placed in proximity makes the humour in *Watt* both amusing and irritating which will be explicated as this chapter strives to shed light on the construction of humour in *Watt*. This analysis leads us to the fact that neither hilarity nor misery can be underestimated in the construction of humour in *Watt*. Hilarity and misery are presented side by side and there is no linear mode of tracing them. Nonetheless, the relation between these two elements can be formulated in relation to a different kind of appreciation of humour in *Watt*. It will be argued that the interrelation

between misery and hilarity in *Watt* has a reciprocal effect in the development of the entire novel. In other words, not only does hilarity play a role in the presentation of misery, but also misery determines the way hilarity is constructed. This chapter focuses on the role misery plays in the production of hilarity or the tragic side of comedy, whereas the other side, namely the comic side of tragedy is elaborated and analysed in the next chapter in *Life, End of* (between anxiety and humour).

But, what is meant by the tragic side of comedy? *Watt* presents us with a laughter that has been treated from a miserable point of view; a laughter intermingled inevitably with the tragic side of the novel. Nonetheless, we argue that such presence does not lead to a repression of humour in *Watt*; rather it renders another kind of laughter possible. And what is unique to this laughter is that it exists without excluding the miseries surrounding it. In his *Watt*, Beckett describes three kinds of laughter. There is an ethical laughter, The bitter laugh laughs at that which is not good, it is the ethical laugh (Beckett, 47) then comes an intellectual laugh, ‘The hollow laugh laughs at that which is not true, it is the intellectual laugh. Not good! Not true! Well well.’ and the third kind of laughter is the one that is of extreme significance to this project as the dianoetic laugh or the *risus purus*. A laughter at the dianoetic or the discursive and intellectual process.

But the mirthless laugh is the dianoetic laugh, down the snout--Haw!--so. It is the laugh of laughs, the *risus purus*, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs--silence please--at which is unhappy (Beckett, 48).

Watt contains all three forms of laughter. However such dianoetic laughter is where this analysis focuses on. Dianoetic laughter of Beckett provides us with an example of hilarity and misery paired and juxtaposed. We analyse this pairing in relation to the linguistic model offered by incongruity theory. Following previous arguments in chapter one, the aim is to analyse a subjective and linguistic will to laugh throughout *Watt*. A laughter that is willed and intended and as explained earlier is extremely dependent on human subjects and evident in modern linguistic and cognitive models of humour and humour analysis. *Watt*, we argue, by overusing wit, reveals such linguistic and cognitive mechanisms in its dianoetic laughter. *Watt* is divided, for ease, into two different modes, the first of which is an attempt of showing how *Watt* unveils a wit and a laughter that is willed, programmed and determined and the second is the laughter at this kind of laughter. Such laughter is not limited to a shaped joyful moment

willed and intended to be inserted in the middle of the tragic to make it bearable, but is one that surfaces in the middle of the thought experiment. Therefore, as Robinson puts it, the target of such laughter is both the subject and object of laughter.

This final laugh is the greatest, the highest, the finest, the most inner and the most formal of the three. Dianoetic means relating to the thought process, particularly that of logical thought. Arsene's dianoetic laugh is, ultimately, a laugh at the human condition ("the highest joke"), a condition involving him as well as Watt. It is beyond the laughter of a man detached from the utile pursuit of meaning. It is laughter which includes as its target both subject and object. It is the laughter of a man who realizes that his own thought is an inextricable part of the process he is laughing at, the laughter of the Cretan who has just observed that all Cretans are liars (152).

By showing such mechanisms in wit production, *Watt* makes laughter at laughter possible. However, on the other hand, *Watt* also makes another attempt at producing an active humour which addresses affects, presenting an active conversion of reactive affects through humour. Arguably, separating these two modes in *Watt* is not as easy and available as our hypothesis claims; but, an attempt is made to show them through different examples from the text. The difference between these two modes of laughter is more comprehensible in an affective manner. In a simplified way, while the former kind of laughter depends on a will to be funny and witty, the latter stems from the interaction of affects. We argue that the *will to wit* is possible only through excluding other affects and reducing them to some linguistic and cognitive incongruities, whereas the latter laughter is one that emerges in the middle of affects and in an immanent mode. The will to wit is a transcendent and determined act of avoiding the tragic and aiming for the comic as an a priori. Dianoetic laughter as emerged in the middle of affects laughs at what normally makes us laugh. However it has another quality (as will be elaborated more in the next chapter and in *Life, End of*) that makes humour possible in the face of misery.

To begin, one can speak of a representational humour or laughter which depicts and implements humour in a teleological manner as something morally good (Beckett's first laughter). According to Somers-Hall, the question of representation brings us to the realm of mimetics which will be discussed later, but it suffices to say that the realist project of humour deals primarily with the representational conception of humour which codifies humour in language and a subsequent linguistic or cognitive framework. Representation implies the validity of the subject-predicate form of judgement, which

is independent of the content that fills it, and thus "creates a sharp divide between the form of thought and its subject matter" (Somers-Hall, 56). And by applying this to the scope of humour empties the very production of humour from the contingent relation between its form and its content and instead prioritizes a subject who decides and determines the very construction of humour. Such laughter is bound to a determination to be funny; a determination that, at its core, is an ameliorating laughter which implies a gradual exclusion of the tragic. The representational mode of laughter is a willed and determined effort to be rid of the miseries and tragic issues and as Beckett puts it, such laughter is more a laughter based on moral values: it is good and healthy to laugh. In order to shed more light on such representational mode of laughter, the division between two sides of humour is emphasized.

A realist project of humour takes two possibilities into account: humour construction in its interior relation and, second, such humour in relation to its exteriority and in the context in which it functions. While the former underscores the interior logic of humour production and following that focuses on linguistic, cognitive and affective manners of humour production, the latter accentuates the role such humour plays in broader social, cultural and inter-subjective modes. Needless to say, the interior/ exterior dichotomy is to a large extent an arbitrary division, but presenting the interior (linguistic, cognitive and affective) facets of humour production (mainly in this chapter and the next one) paves the way to illuminating its inter-subjective understanding in the last two chapters.

2.2 Overcoming Nihilism: The Interiority of Humour

To simplify, a representational humour offers two prominent features: its time and place can be expected. This is of extreme importance for a realist project on humour because its target is mainly affects. *Watt* to a large extent evades such spatio-temporal expectations which mimic expectations of humour in reality. This brings us to a comparison between the incongruous nature of jokes and what Beckett calls the *dianoetic* gestures of humour in *Watt*. While the former, based on will, inserts humour

into various parts of the text in the hope of infusing the comic, in the latter humour arrives so contingently that it can ridicule the willed humour. If the will to wit leaves some vacancy for humour to keep the tragic bearable and even entertaining, the latter reveals how hilarious this act can be: laughter at laughter. Yet, since the latter targets affects, more importantly, it is able to transfigure the tragic to comic by usurping and activating tragic affects. *Watt's* attempt can be seen as laughter at the representational and willed laughter which is determined to discard the miseries by any means. In relation between the aforementioned hilarity and misery which are presented side by side in *Watt*, Beckett reveals a kind of laughter which laughs at laughter. His attempt seems to be one of ridiculing laughter. But what kind of laughter is being ridiculed and how? The rest of this chapter aims to elaborate making humour ridiculous, if not miserable whereas the third chapter commences with misery and sheds more light on the activation of humour inside misery. As explained in the first chapter, humour can be thought of as a mechanism that transforms the reactive forces to the active ones. In this part, we aim to analyse this function in more detail where humour addresses affects in

Watt. The term nihilism is used in a Deleuzian way (which is already inspired by Nietzsche) to describe the situation in which the passive forces prevail. The interior analysis of humour in *Watt* draws our attention to the role humour plays in the entirety of the text and in relation to existent affects of text.

As the co-existence of humour with tragedy in *Watt* makes the dominance of such passive forces likelier, we need to take the interconnection between such affects into account. In order to deal with this internal interconnection in the text that investigates humour in its interior relation with other affects, this study commences with the relation between humour and nihilism as the ultimate dominance of passive affects. In this section, after giving a quick background on the question of nihilism, we will argue that *Watt* is a novel that, by employing the constituent elements of meaninglessness appropriates humour in order to produce and create a new and innovative gesture. In effect, *Watt* is an example of betraying nihilism or even cynicism from the inside in order to render such inconsistencies humorous rather than lamenting on the loss of meaning on the one hand or representing a will to produce humour on the other hand. *Watt* does not simply utilize a playful linguistic and rhetorical will to be witty that, at best, postpones nihilism. Back to our question regarding incongruity theory, *Watt's* attempt is not limited to a linguistic witticism and humour, but also reveals a significant affective dimension. It is here that *Watt* as a tragicomedy diverges from a linguistic or

rhetorical attempt which, by way of imagination, seeks to the meaninglessness inherent in tragedy; such an attempt hardly overcomes nihilism. Ironically speaking, the very attempt at the heart of cognitive and linguistic witticism, more than a response to nihilism, is a repetition of it. Although the linguistic role of humour in *Watt* is undeniable, *Watt* takes a further step and plays with affects. *Watt*, in its interiority, makes it equally possible to grapple with the affects and converts their constituent reactive forces to active ones. But first we need more elaboration on nihilism as a general term.

In his book, *Laughing at Nothing* (2003) John Marmysz makes a brilliant move to find some commonalities between humour and nihilism. Marmysz comprehensively analyses Russian (revolutionary) and German (philosophical) forms of nihilism in a historical and epistemological fashion. In his analysis of politics, ethology and history that contains significant figures from Heidegger to Camus and Mishima, he traces different shapes of nihilism but avoids giving a solution to this overwhelming and modern phenomenon. Marmysz, following Nietzsche, introduces humour and laughter as a mechanism against this old human anxiety that motivates one towards liveliness and a celebration of life. Formally speaking, the book seems to make a significant point: the reason why nihilism can be remedied with humour is not that, as today's psychologism or bio-politics claims humour must be added to our life agenda. The reason should be found somewhere else. Nihilism is inherently the result of inconsistencies in life in its various forms. It goes without saying that the same thing, namely inconsistency or incongruity, is the source and inspiration for humour. Humour can simply transform the inconsistencies that have resulted in anxiety to the celebration of life. Nevertheless it must be emphasized again that the practicality of humour means that it does not transform the inconsistencies of life only in a metaphorical and linguistic manner. Humour in such a gesture is the ability to deal with them in their existential mode to celebrate life and joy instead of reducing existential, social and political inconsistencies to some metaphoric and imaginary riddles. This way humour, instead of escaping the inconsistencies in life, acknowledges such inconsistencies and laughs with them. Epistemologically speaking, nihilism is based on the distance or the 'vantage point' from which one views the inconsistent world around oneself, something that is at the core of any humorous attempt in rendering such inconsistencies funny. That is why any definition of humour, at least according to such incongruities, entails the prior state of non-sense which is foregrounded by nihilism. In another interesting

attempt, Simon Critchely, in his book *Infinitely Demanding*, tries to illuminate the distinction between passive and active nihilism. Critchely attributes to passive nihilism a certain kind of distancing and therefore a kind of dismal quality in the human behavior to the extent that human can be called ‘homo sapiens, destructive species’ (277). In contrast, an active nihilist takes the same distance but, instead of looking for a mystical stillness as is the case with the passive one, seeks to intervene and introduce another possibility in a creative way. Therefore humour as an act that is founded on such a vantage point and maintains a comic gesture out of it is essentially an active one. As Keiji Nishitani in his book *Self-overcoming Nihilism* suggests, nihilism is based on a separation between the subject and object, a rift that is the very result of a person’s alienation from the world (25). In fact Nishitani’s attempt is evidently rooted in Nietzsche’s idea of overcoming nihilism by means of nihilism. Nishitani’s confrontation with nihilism is depicted in a series of lectures on the subject in 1949 which is now translated into English under the title of *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*. According to Nishitani, science develops this rift through crediting the subject as a separate and independent entity of the world and this culminates, not only psychologically but collectively, in a state of nihilism(137). It is interesting to add that unlike Marmysz who seeks the source of nihilism in inconsistencies of the world in a very formal mode, Nishitani’s view of nihilism is not neutral. Marmysz introduces nihilism and deals with it as a normal phenomenon in human history, politics and philosophy, whereas for Nishitani nihilism is the very result of an alienation that is rooted in a modern epistemology of subject-object separation. Nishitani’s solution to the existing and existential problem of nihilism is not one of eradicating it or ignoring it, but one that overcomes it in a way that is as efficient as possible. Nishitani, who is partly influenced by the ideas of Martin Heidegger and partly inspired by his Japanese Zen background, argues for ‘letting nihilism overcome itself’ in an immanent act. (xxviii). Nishitani looks for a foundational integration of what he calls creative nihilism and finitude, something that he acknowledges as ‘a horizon for important contacts with Buddhism’(125). According to Nishitani, Nietzsche is unique among western philosophers in opening the door to joy and play out of frustration of nihilism. It is, in fact quite common among western nihilists to be engaged with nihilism without being able to tackle or overcome it. Nishitani takes laughter as the prominent component in Nietzsche’s philosophy that ends in a humorous gesture.

While Nishitani’s ideas are evidently rooted in Nietzsche, there is also another

philosopher, Max Stirner, who plays an equally important role in the book. Max Stirner's work is basically made to highlight the significance of this axiom, 'Ich hab mein Sach auf Nichts gestellt' long before Nietzsche and Sartre. This axiom, according to Stirner unveils the characteristic of western ego as the autonomous ego that is grounded on nothing outside itself (33). Yet, this "nothing but himself"(149) provides an ambiguous case, since it yields two possibilities. On the one hand, one can see only nihilism and lack and, based on that, the beginnings of perpetual desire (something that leads us to Jacques Lacan), or one seeks this lack actively and creatively. In other words, nothingness is no more seen outside me, but it is something that in an active gesture, I try to merge with. Stirner chooses the latter in order to see activity and positive act out of nothingness in order to set the self free. Keiji Nishitani's in his book tries to show that Nietzsche, Heidegger and Stirner, as the main thinkers of nihilism, have one common concern, _'the fundamental integration of creative nihilism and finitude.' (172) This requires the self to experience a depth of nihilism and, after having touched this bottom or this void, then be able to realize creative nihilism. This active realization should be distinguished from what Nishitani attributes to Nietzsche's own attempt: the problem of sincerity. Nishitani believes that, according to another note in Nietzsche, the will to illusion (Wille zum Schein) takes _'what is not true and set it up as truth; and the realization of this will is the foundation from which sincerity arises''(43).

It should not be forgotten that the primary aim for Nishitani is to deal with the nihilism that had arisen in Japan, yet he is able to extend his approach to nihilism in its entirety. Nishitani, instead of dealing with nihilism in an objective manner, introduces the subjective modes where nihilism emerges and opens up to an individual. Nishitani argues that there are stages where nihilism uncovers: the first stage is where one is keeping a crack on his or her existence, something that might be evidently still constrained in a psychological frustration or extended to a more existential set of questions. In the second phase, the person, instead of asking himself about the Darkness that has overwhelmed him, and instead of looking at his injured self, goes on to ask, _'Who is this self?' _'Who am I?'

Broadly speaking, instead of looking for pathological answers and recovering from such problems through questions such as —Why did this happen to me? or —What can I do?!, one transforms these questions to what Nishitani calls 'the realization' of nihilism (43) through questions such as who am I? or why do I exist? Something that is called Great Doubt in Zen Buddhism. Nevertheless this great doubt, instead of annihilating self, evacuates it from its ground and presents itself as a

reality. According to James Heisig, Nishitani's emphasis on the word 'realization' must be understood in its double sense in English where beside a subjective connotation, there exists a 'non-subjective meaning too, an actualization of something non-subjective' (220).

It is from this second stage onward that one realizes the rapport where nihilism is yielded to nothingness. Evidently, one needs to take one step through nihilism and the realization of nihilism to come across the nothingness that embraces everything. This is the third stage where the nihility is itself nullified. It must be stressed again that nihility is not ignored or avoided or cured through embracing reality. Nihility is not annihilated and fought; rather it is elevated from a relative nihilism that overwhelms the self to an absolute nothingness that surrounds everything. This stage uncovers *śūnyatā*, the Buddhist stage where nihility is emptied out. According to Heisig, it must be borne in mind that such absolute nothingness does not spring out of the aggravation of nihility, but is rather the fruit of the negation of nihility. One can already hear the Nietzschean echoes which run through the whole project but this voice is doubled through the Buddhist affirmation of the absolute nothingness. "The most remarkable feature of Nietzsche's 'religion' may be the sound of laughter that echoes through it. He teaches that one can laugh from the ground of the soul, or rather that the soul's 'groundless ground' is laughter itself." (Nishitani, 66)

Although humour in *Watt* has a lot of linguistic and rhetorical facets, it is supported by an active affirmation of life. Such affirmation, we argue, is not laid in the cognitive construct of humour, but in the affective mechanism of the text. In other words, even if *Watt* resorts to language to produce humorous moments, it addresses the dominance of forces that Gilles Deleuze calls reactive forces. If according to Gilles Deleuze (1988, 41), and inspired by Spinoza, consciousness normally provokes sad affects replete with reactive forces, humour is a tool to transmute these affects to joyous active ones. Reactive forces in forms of bad conscience and resentment separate our body from acting on its own to affirm itself. The dominance of consciousness that belittles and degrades life hardly allows body to do what it can do. The Spinozist key phrase of Deleuze (and Guattari) that says nobody knows 'what a body can do' (41) is in effect comprehensible based on such tension between knowledge and body and the very inability and inadequacy of consciousness that sets the limits of body. Setting humour beyond a cognitive will entails a function of releasing body from the demands of consciousness which is only made possible through converting affects to something

active. Humour can act in the midst of forces that compose a body and its abilities in the form of liberating body and its potentials that are normally repressed by morality and its knowledge and plays a prominent role in the relation between different forces, especially by restoring active forces that have been reactive. In effect, this is worthwhile to add that from a Deleuzian perspective reactive forces can dominate a body, yet their triumph is nothing but making active forces in a body reactive, as Deleuze himself states:

It must not be said that active force becomes reactive because reactive forces triumph; on the contrary, they triumph because, by separating active force from what it can do, they betray it to the will of nothingness, to a becoming-reactive themselves. This is why the figures of triumph of reactive forces (ressentiment, bad conscience, and the ascetic ideal) are primarily forms of nihilism (2006 59-60).

2.3 The Incongruity Theory Once More!

Now the question regarding the significance attributed to humour is whether a purely cognitive and linguistic delineation of humour in *Watt*, which neglects the significance of affects, is able to grapple with such nihilism? What is the humour in *Watt* supposed to do? In effect, by analyzing different pieces of *Watt*, one strives to see the rapports between the language of the text and its humour mainly because the majority of incongruity theories of humour start with language. Furthermore, we come closer to see what is the target of its humour?

Until *Watt* began to invert, no longer the order of the words in the sentence together with that of the sentence in the period, but that of the letters in the word together with that of the sentences in the period. The following is an example of this manner:

Lit yad mac, ot og. Ton taw, ton tonk. Ton dob, ton trips. Ton vila, ton veda. Ton kawa, ton pelsa. Ton das, ton yag. Os devil, rof mit (Beckett, 143).

Is it possible to analyse the humour laid in this short passage of *Watt* in a purely linguistic framework? As we can see *Watt* starts with language and even very intentionally starts manipulating words to keep the reader entertained! But his attempt is so evident and intentional that spoils the whole idea of entertaining the reader with manipulated words, and rather with the very manipulating process. Reducing *Watt*'s humour to some linguistic and cognitive maneuver leaves the reactive affects as they

are. In effect and as we argue in this part, a linguistic conception of humour which neglects the significance of dealing with reactive forces is potentially nihilistic. Two reasons support this argument: first, one cannot convert affects' reactive and violent force to some creative and active forces only through a linguistic and rhetoric conception of humour. The second reason, which requires more attention, is more an ontological reason: the *will* to produce humour or to be witty at any cost and by any means eliminates the element of contingency in the production of humour and renders it a purely subjective decision.

Then he took it into his head to invert, no longer the order of the words in the sentence, nor that of the letters in the word, nor that of the sentences in the period, nor simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the letters in the word, nor simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the letters in the word, nor simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of sentence in the period, nor simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the words in the sentence and that of the sentences in the period, ho no, but, in the brief course of the same period, now that of the words in the sentence , now that of the letters in the word, now that of the sentences in the period, now simultaneously that of the words in the sentence and that of the sentences in the period, now simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the sentences in the period, now simultaneously that of the letters in the word and that of the words in the sentence and that of the sentences in the period (Beckett, 144).

Watt stretches the very production of witty language to its end and does as much as possible to unveil hilarity rather than something hilarious, the hilarity that wit strives and intends it. Watt, as we can see rather than offering a witty language presents us, in an excessive manner with the language of wit to the extent that unveiling the language of wit might disappoint the very process of entertainment. What Salisbury suggests generally about Beckett's technique of rigorous blow when the reader is going to waffle with something can be applied to his usage of witty remarks too,

Beckett suggests that if you are going to waffle on about a subject and refrain from making any significant observations, it is good manners to get it over with quickly. Although the tone is comically derisive, the language blow does not land altogether firmly, as humour gleaned from the effect of the rigorous putdown is subject to interference by the excess of critical rigour at work in this assertion (Salisbury, 55).

Humour and laughter described in incongruity theory are formed based on a moment of inconsistency which makes it similar to the contradictions and inconsistencies at the heart of nihilism. Nonetheless, the former limits inconsistency to

a semantic, cognitive and linguistic concern, whereas contradictions and inconsistencies are more ontological. This transition from meaninglessness in its ontological perspective and meaninglessness as a semantic mode is what helps us see with a better scrutiny how cognitive models of humour function. Admittedly, one should immediately make a distinction between incongruity theory in its various forms. From Aristotle to Kant and Kierkegaard, incongruity has been thought of as the principal dimension in the formation of humour. While for some, like Kierkegaard, this incongruity is more existential, for others, such as new theories of cognition and neuroscience, this is more of a logical incongruity. That said, the major difference between semantic and ontological meaninglessness would be that the former as in one-liners, jokes and other linguistic manifestations makes a momentary attempt at providing us with a non-sense composition whereas the latter sees this incongruity in a practical and existential mode; the nonsensical in jokes is based on a subjective will that tries to *mimic* a real situation and translates it into an imaginary linguistic combination. Thus far, we have delineated some correlations between humour and nihilism that can be sought in the absurdist tradition too. However, we argue that Beckett's *Watt* is not simply one step toward releasing such inconsistencies implied in nihilism in a humorous gesture. Perhaps here we need to emphasize anew the difference between a wilful act of humour which tries to produce humour by any means to escape such inconsistencies and the one that is existentially open to humour in its contingent manner.

Back to our discussion earlier on nihilism, we argue that although humour can function in order to neutralize nihilism, a linguistic humour is not more than a passive model which does not promote anything beyond a rhetoric of humour. In effect, the will to be humorous cannot oust the realism of humour opened to contingencies. In other words, the will to be humorous, when manifested and strengthened in incongruity theory in the form of wit and witticism, depends on human imagination rather than inhuman contingency; this difference is of extreme significance to any realist project of humour. The connection between contingency and imagination is a crucial one. A formal definition of contingency is that contingency is where something's existence and non-existence are both possible. In other words, when something exists contingently, it can contingently *not* exist and this opens human affairs, even against his will to contingency. Any analysis of humour has to take imagination and contingency both into account, in order to see what motivates the will behind humour. Because if the

will behind humour and its reproduction is an attempt to freely connect and imagine semantic spheres, then as we discussed in the first chapter, and in the ideas of Allen Gillespie and the tight connection between imagination and nihilism, this humour not only evades nihilism, but aggravates it. Although this does not exclude human humour, it makes a sharp difference between humour that is fed by human imagination and a contingent humour.

Although *Watt* is by definition an attempt conducted in language, yet the hilarious situations presented in *Watt* are not limited to such linguistic formulas as described in incongruity theory. Aside from having recourse to a linguistic formula of reproducing humour, *Watt* makes another attempt to uncover this formula. In other words, *Watt* itself unveils how the imagination steers the production of such linguistic witticism. Formulas of humour in the incongruity model are to a large extent algorithmic and can be translated in some different algorithms. In order to elaborate this point, we make use of some topological models in order to describe the mechanism of producing humour from a linguistic point of view. As a topological tool for this description, we utilise the knot theory in order to show the two succeeding moments of knotting and unknotting in humour which are analogous to moments of suspension and resolution in joke and wit. The following witty remarks in some one-liners might help see this,

Q: Why was six scared of seven?

A: Because seven ate nine.

Rats are underrated, just check your dictionary.

As one can notice, jokes and one-liners can be a result of producing a moment of suspension as in a non-sense linguistic combination which takes some time and patience to make sense and resolve the suspension in a moment of hilarity. This approximates the production of witty remarks and jokes very much similar to the production and resolution of riddles. Consider the following example:

Q: What single word can be a long sentence?

A: Prison

Woman: without her, man is nothing.

Woman: without her man, is nothing.

What do you want?

=A cure for
 dyslexia. ‘ =When?’
 =Own‘

Puns are bad, but poetry is verse. (Reddit.com²)

Depending on the complication of jokes which start with one-liners‘ suspension to longer jokes, one can imagine diagrams from Knot Theory that corresponds to the suspension and resolution in jokes in a manner of knotting and unknotting in knot theory. Some basic diagrams of knotting are shown below:

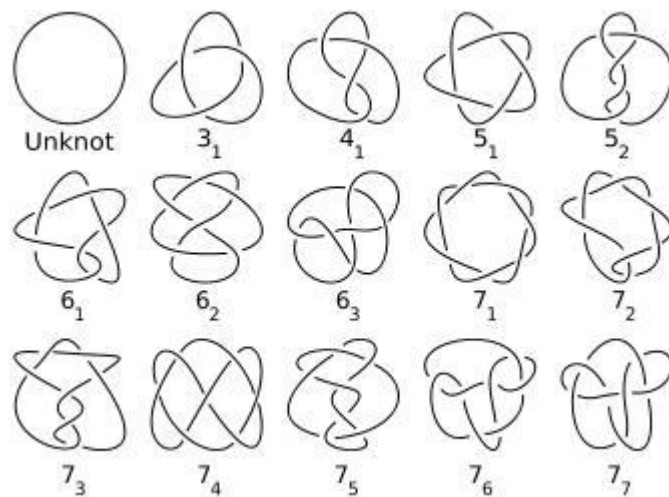


Figure 7. A Basic Knotting Diagram. SPIE. Digital Library.
 (<http://electronicimaging.spiedigitallibrary.org/article.aspx?articleid=1266263>)

Knots in this diagram differ in their varying complications and unknotting stages passed through before one is returned back to a moment of equilibrium or resolution. In this final moment, designated as —Unknotl, the circle is complete and the joke makes sense. The second illustration, which is called trefoil knot, is actually made up of one single knot. If we take Z for the number of knots in a knot, an unknot has 0+Z and a

² https://www.reddit.com/r/Jokes/comments/28q3px/why_is_six_afraid_of_seven/ Date accessed on 19.04.2015

trefoil which has only one knot is 1+Z. Accordingly, all knots can be described and catalogued in terms of their crossing number, which is the tiniest number of crossing of the knot. Without spending more time on Knot Theory, such diagrams are introduced as the algorithmic mechanisms and diagrams that any joke through its different suspensions (varying knots) and the following resolutions (the stages to arrive in an unknot). More complicated jokes in longer texts demand a higher degree of knots to be depicted while short jokes and one-liners require a simple trefoil knot to be unknotted in one single moment. Nevertheless, not all one-liners are equally easy to unknot; some one-liners require more attention and concentration and take more effort to be unknotted.

I used to think that the brain is the most important organ. Then I thought, look what is telling me that.

Q: What's the difference between your job and a dead prostitute?

A: Your job still sucks! (Jokes4us.com³)

Such a one-liner is not hard to resolve and the knot involved in its suspension does not take much energy and effort to be detected and unknotted. In effect, what brings the first part of the joke (suspension) to the second part (resolution) is rendered possible through, a metaphor which, without being necessarily explicit, can conjoin two different scopes of meaning. In this joke, the two chosen spheres are prostitution and one's job and the knot that has conjoined them is the element of suck; something that once again shows this how the link between these two spheres of meaning is made through a metaphor. Some more one-liners are listed below to see how the amount of time required to contemplate and resolve them (by laughing) varies. Here we take some examples for Jimmy Carr's comedies and one-liners. It is worthwhile taking another look at some other one-liners in a smarter level offered by the major British Comedian Jimmy Carr. Carr is known for his linguistic agility and the quick witty remarks he produces, his one-liners are more specific and innovative.

I worry about my nan. If she is alone and falls, does she make a noise?
I'm joking, she's dead.

³ Jokes4us.com Dirty One Liners, Web. Date accessed: 19.04.2015 <http://www.jokes4us.com/dirtyjokes/dirtyonelinerjokes.html>

When you eat a lot of spicy food, you can lose your taste. When I was in India last summer, I was listening to a lot of Michael Bolton.

I am not worried about the Third World War. That is the Third World's problem. (Jokes4us.com⁴).

As one can see, Carr is able enough to produce jokes using this riddle-like mechanism: by eliminating one semantic component one is supposed to fill the gap and once the gap is filled we are about to laugh. Humour in this regard is very much based on quickness of mind, and Carr is among the quickest. But what is the relevance of these jokes and one-liners to our project on realist humour? Clearly such one-liners and witty remarks cannot be excluded even from a broader understanding of humour. Humour is more inclusive and it can easily contain such linguistic manifestations in variety of different forms.

I realized I was dyslexic when I went to a Toga party dressed as a goat.

Swimming is good for you, especially if you are drowning. Not only do you get a cardiovascular workout but also you don't die.

I like to go to a Body shop and shout out really loud: 'I've already got one.'

No matter how much you give a homeless person for tea, you never get that tea.

I was walking the streets of Glasgow the other week and I saw this sign, 'This door is alarmed.' I said to myself, 'How do you think I feel.'

I have no problems with buying tampons. I am a fairly modern man. But apparently they are not a 'proper' present.

A big girl once came up to me after a show and said 'I think you're fatist'. I said 'No, you're fattest'.

I saw that show, 50 Things You Should Do Before You Die. I would have thought the obvious one was, 'shout for help.'

The American police have said they will never forget 9/11. Pretty hard too, I would think, considering it's your phone number.⁵

4 Jokes4us.com Jimmy Carr Jokes, Web. Date accessed: 21.04.2015
<http://www.jokes4us.com/peoplejokes/comedianjokes/jimmycarrjokes.html>

5 <http://www.jokes4us.com/peoplejokes/comedianjokes/jimmycarrjokes.html>
accessed: 21.04.2015

Date

Unknot is a loop without a knot, and knot theory shows the complications in numerous number of knots visible. In effect, unknot is the criterion through which one can count the number of knots involved, the knots which represent the semantic complication of jokes. Thus, what an incongruity theory of humour and laughter offers is more than anything based on a cognitive thermodynamics that takes place between a moment of suspension and one of resolution. Without focusing on more complicated knots bearing more knots, we will focus for a while on knots with one knot. While a knot by definition is a closed curve that does not intersect itself and is embedded in three dimensions, another characteristic of a knot is that it cannot be untangled to be a simple loop. If such one-liners bear simply one knot, the only difference between them is the sense. All jokes use one single knot and yet what makes them distinct is the shape of the knot which can be described in the extensity or the shape of the strings that are knotted. Otherwise and according to Knot Theory terminology, they bear the same value, which is one knot. The messier a knot is, the harder it is to unknot it and in the same manner and in a joke, the stranger the combination and the metaphor that makes the combination of two frames is, the harder is to resolve the suspension.

Incongruity theory, in its contemporary cognitive interpretations like the theories of Victor Raskin and Attardo, constrains humour production to the result of a semantic tension. Such a tension or clash between scripts or frames of meaning is, according to these theorists, mainly resolved in the last stage of humour production. Whether the tension or inconsistency is fully resolved in the final stage is less significant than the fact that the tension between the two frames of meaning is at least partially resolved. What resolves the tension is the potential similarity that these two frames have had; a similarity that makes it possible, at least partially, to produce a far-fetched and unaccustomed connection. The element of surprise is the bottom line of incongruity theories that base themselves on the semantics of humour. This example shows how such a cognitive shift which entails an element of surprise enables the listener to connect two separate spheres of meaning. I said to the Gym instructor: —Can you teach me to do the splits?! He said: —How flexible are you?! I said: —I can't make Tuesdays. This mechanism is one metaphoric manner where two potentially similar domains are likened without explicit signs. What is known as Conceptual Integration shows very well how these frames are juxtaposed and how they result in new jokes. In effect, the developments in Blending and Conceptual Integration (Coulson, 2001), as

the most recent findings in cognitive studies, backed up by experiments in neuroscience, are indebted to a large extent to Fauconnier and Turner (2008). Although Semantic Leaps is primarily, not unlike conceptual Blending Theory, an attempt to show how in the formation of new ideas humans combine their knowledge, applying frame-shifting or blending and semantic leaps to humour will ultimately render humour a semantic phenomenon that is based on a metaphoric pivot. Some studies done on wit and incongruity theory of humour approximate such humour to riddles and puzzles. In his book, *Mathematics and Humour*, John Allen Paulos explicates this fact and goes so far to claim similarities between 'the operations and structures common to humour and the formal sciences (logic, mathematics, and linguistics)' (8). Paulos' attempt is based on this intuition that '[b]oth mathematics and humour are forms of intellectual play, the emphasis in mathematics being more on the intellectual, in humour more on the play' (10). To a great degree, combinations of ideas and forms are put together and taken apart just for the fun of it. Both activities are undertaken for their own sake (Paulos, 10-11). What convinces Paulos to extend his analysis is the very existence of riddle at the core of any humorous act. It is this riddle-like feature which assimilates it to mathematics, "Riddles, trick problems, paradoxes, and 'brain teasers' seem to be a bridge between humour and mathematics- more intellectual than most jokes, lighter than mathematics"(10-11). In the second chapter of his book, Paulos launches an interesting project where he attempts to trace some axioms or some self-evident statements as in mathematics in the analysis of humour. In other words, logic plays a prominent role in the formation of humour and every humour is conceivable in relation to the axioms it takes for granted.

The formal structure of such stories or jokes is as follows. Joke-teller: "In what model are axioms 1, 2, and 3 true?" Listener: "In model M." Joke-teller: "No, in model N." The following classic burlesque joke is an example: The dirty old man leers at the innocent young virgin and says, "What goes in hard and dry and comes out soft and wet?" The girl blushes and stammers, "Well, let's see, uh ... ," to which the dirty old man replies wickedly, "chewing gum." In other words, "model N" in our formal example and "chewing gum" (more accurately the whole scenario suggested by chewing gum) in our burlesque joke play the role of an unexpected and incongruous model of the given "axioms" (24).

Putting it differently, Paulos affirms that, like mathematics, in humour we keep some principles in the background; and incongruity arises in comparison to that background. "The various interpretations and their incongruity of course depend

critically on the context, the prior experience of the person (s) involved, their values, beliefs, and so on" (27). Any inability to step out of what is offered to us on the surface and grasp what is implied makes it impossible to laugh. It is through a meta-level or stepping out of the encountered system or persistent self that one can experience humour through noticing an inconsistency with one's system or one's values. On the other hand, Paulos indicates that one cannot do away with a system in order to experience humour and laughter. A system/self is required to then be subverted through incongruity.

At the other extreme from these would-be automatons we find people whose minds are mush (in the sense of being extremely loose and unstructured). Such people are not likely to have much sense of humor either. This is so because a modicum of mental orderliness, the awareness of various complexes of ideas and their links to one another, and the (at least partial) acceptance of certain values is necessary to an appreciation of humor. With no feeling for what is correct, congruous, or natural, there can be no perception of what is incorrect, incongruous, or unnatural (27).

Through quoting Ralph Piddington, Paulos emphasises that in the absence of a system of (shared) values, one is not able to undergo an experience of inconsistency which might result in laughter. But what is then the role of this contradiction in relation to the shared values it subverts? Does this contradiction shatter the conditions put forth by the values on which it is grounded? The important thing in this regard is to depict a relation between this element of contradiction, this source of incongruity and what has been contradicted. It must be stressed here that contradiction and incongruity vary from one system of values to another. In other words, one incongruity can be ground-breaking and cause a reformation of the system, whereas some incongruities can give rise to more temporary cessations of meaning without any reformation of values in a more obtrusive manner.

The production of jokes and one-liners based on such incongruity mechanisms should be seen as an attempt to produce a nearly impossible setting in which a suspension is created and immediately resolved. This means a lot to a realist project on humour, since the context and the values presented in such witty settings are representational, namely they are either non-existent or simulacra of practical situations. What occurs in a joke does not mean to be applied in reality. Wit, which is heavily dependent on imagination, assumes an incongruous situation in a riddle-like manner and resolves it in a way that entertains us. The element of surprise which arises

following suspension offered in witty remarks and jokes is their main component. The only point to make here is that humour made based on linguistic or cognitive incongruity is to a large extent context-free and the values presented in them are decontextualised. In other words, incongruity theory of humour, based on quick imaginative abilities rather than exploring humour creates suspension in an imaginative mode. By bringing suspension to a cognitive mode, incongruity theory underestimates the contingency of such suspension and yields it to a linguistic suspension. This suspension can be made and reproduced as one can notice in a variety of different kinds of similar jokes that are fabricated according to some algorithms. One cannot argue that humour is ever empty of such algorithms, rather we argue that the algorithms in the cognitive mode are easy to repeat and reproduce, whereas the realist humour bears the elements of contingency. Beckett's *Watt* is equally replete with such algorithms and the point is not that Beckett is able to present the reader with full contingencies in the very production of humour. On the contrary, *Watt* starts not unlike jokes and even one-liners with algorithms of humour that entertain and amuse the reader; the contingent humour emanates out of such algorithmic witticism. Therefore, a realist humour which is open to inhuman contingency does not start with it; it starts with algorithmic wit but stretches it to a point beyond linguistic and cognitive humour imbuing it with contingency and sheer awe. In such tension between the necessarily funny and the contingently humorous, or between human humour and inhuman humour, between the order of wit and randomness of humour, *Watt* commences with order and the chaotic inhuman humour emerges out of such human orderly humour. Such humour does not exclude the algorithmic and linguistic humour in wordplay, puns or other metaphoric compositions; rather it unveils the limits and conditions of the latter in surpassing it in an unexpected mode. This way, such inhuman and non-subjective humour emerges in the work whether or not the author or 'the medium of humour' intends it.

In chapter three and through analysing *Life, End of* we deal with such randomness in more detail and will argue that although randomness is an integral part of such inhuman humour, it is not a sufficient criteria for a realist humour. But for the time being, we analyse some parts of *Watt* to see how a calculated humour paves the way for an unexpected mechanism in the production of humour.

To be together again, after so long, who love the sunny wind, the windy sun, in the sun, in the wind, that is perhaps something, perhaps something. For us moving so between the fences, before they diverged, there was just room. In Watt's garden, in my garden, we should have

been more at our ease. But it never occurred to me to go back into my garden with Watt, or with him to go forward into his. But it never occurred to Watt to go back with me into his garden, or with me to go forward into mine. For my garden was my garden, and Watt's garden was Watt's garden, we had no common garden any more. So we walked to and fro, neither in his garden, in the way described. So we began, after so long a time, to walk together again, and to talk, from time to time. As Watt walked, so now he talked, back to front (140).

Despite the gesture (at least in the very beginning of this passage) towards the language of riddles and jokes, *Watt's* humour is in sharp contrast to the representational mode of humour as in riddles which is founded on a semantics of humour that ends in a moment of resolution. *Watt* opens itself to a kind of indifference in the production of humour which is curious, especially in relation to the incongruity Theory of humour which describes the way to produce humour and is determined to make it. The humour in *Watt* is cruel and we argue that this cruelty of humour as tacit in *Watt* is rooted in dispensing with subjective and intended production of humour. Not only does *Watt* not produce subjective humour—it also makes subjective humour the very target of its humour. *Watt* is one good example of the exteriority of relations in the case of humour, as it makes thinking about humour and its interior logic possible *Watt* shows it once again to what extent humour is made up of exterior relations and this idea in this chapter is to be contrasted to the view that is determined to understand humour relation-free and based on a cognitive a priori. This brings humour from the representational mode of riddles to a more affective, physical and sub-representational gesture, a humour which actualizes and fulfils itself through the relation between molecular multiplicities, the relations that are offered by the dynamism of different points of view and their becomings. Folds participating in being give rise to a humour that is shaped by the unexpected encounter between relations and yet these relations are utterly asubjective which means that there is no subject in charge of the relations he undergoes and he comes across and consequently there is no subject conscious of the humour he will participate in. Subjects will not pass off, but they will take part in the formation of humour in a larger context. Yet, arguably, although this humour is produced blind to subjects and its production does not take into account the will of the subjects, its affects befall different subjects differently. The Deleuzoguattarian conception of signs is helpful here as it places emphasis on the dynamic of signs and the 'increasingly intimate' relations that in folding relations give rise to contingency.

Humour takes the similar route in its *transpiration* to subjects in a contingent manner, that is, at least for a while beyond interpretation of subjects participating in its production. By making such a process between relations of different subjects, humour produces subjects, not the other way round. Transversality, between positions of different subjects goes beyond a simple verbal communication that by reliance on cognitive abilities of subjects produces verbal humour. Even if subjects manage to produce the latter, this humour is bereft of realist elements of humour and is more an algorithmic mode of humour that pretends to act spontaneously. Watt, like any other text, is unable to depict such realization of humour in its participation between different subjects but what is argued here is that it surpasses such cognitive and subjective humour and even makes fun of this humorous gesture. This chapter takes some examples from *Watt* to analyse some various modes of humour and in the end; we argue that the cognitive conception of humour as embodied in incongruity theory is a subjective mode of humour that is far from a realist conception of humour.

Watt produces laughter and humour in its bleak manner to the extent that one is tempted to call it a comic comedy or a comedy of comedy, humour inside humour. Viewing the elements of incongruity theory of humour, one can see the same elements in *Watt*; there is the same tension between suspension of meaning and its resolution, yet the time between this tension, the lapse of overcoming suspension through a semantic resolution, is not as quick. In effect, if one-liners and numerous comedians working with them have a tendency to quickly resolve the tension in an intelligent act which is the characteristic of wit, *Watt* does not resolve this tension as quickly and this way makes this process of production of wit visible, as even the suspensions are suspended in the novel. Take, for instance the suspension in the following extract from *Watt*, a suspension that, even on its own and without any need for an ultimate resolution is hilarious.

The first is here, in his bed, or at least in his room. But the second, I mean Vincent, is not here any more, and the reason for that is this, that when I came in he went out. But the third, I mean Walter, is not here any more either, and the reason for that is this, that when Erskine came in he went out, just as Vincent went out when I came in (55).

If normal definition of wit is based on a semantic or cognitive suspension of meaning, in order to spare it for a witty resolution, *Watt* presents another tendency; a formal suspension of such semantic suspensions. As we noticed in the example just

quoted, remaining in the suspension or suspension of what is usually taken as a semantic suspension has resulted in a banal and hilarious situation. Although wit at its core bears an element of unexpectedness, Watt unveils that this unexpectedness itself is expected. Watt shows that such subjective and willful incongruity can never replace the real contingency of humour. In the rest of this part, we focus on another facet of wit in Watt that is pertinent to incongruity theories but from the point of view of velocity.

As explained in the first chapter, Michael Billig in his *Laughter and Ridicule* makes a comprehensive study of the role of laughter in relation to what is called incongruity theory. But Billig's target is more a critique of humour mainly in its modern conception which raises names such as Thomas Hobbes, Aristotle, John Locke, Joseph Addison, Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain. Billig argues that the positivist conception of humour stems from the gentlemanly understanding of wit that was implied in the work of philosophers such as John Locke (Billig 66). According to Billig, Locke in his new Framework of wit is siding with an understanding of laughter that is more than anything gentlemanly. Locke's view is an attempt to redefine laughter as less harmful and asocial than in Hobbes' theory. Locke was arguing that any true judgement depends on the "clear discerning faculty" (Billig, 62) of the mind where it perceives two ideas to be the same, or different. "Appearance of similitude can be misleading, if there really are differences between two ideas. Thus, careful judgement consists 'in separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude' (Locke, 123). If judgement involves carefully distinguishing between things that appear to be similar but which are actually different, then wit is based on the reverse process. It brings together ideas that are different in order to treat them as if they were similar. Accordingly, wit operates through "the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fantasy" (Billig, 63).

Billig launches his analysis based on the Chapter XI of Locke's book which is titled as *Of Discerning and Other Operations of The Mind*. Here Locke makes the boldest attempt to elaborate his notion of wit and consequently laughter. It is easily noticeable throughout this chapter that what Locke offers in relation to wit is based on a sharp distinction between our ability to Judge and think and our ability to be witty.

The difference of wit and judgment. How much the imperfection of accurately discriminating ideas one from another lies, either in the

dullness or faults of the organs of sense; or want of acuteness, exercise, or attention in the understanding; or hastiness and precipitancy, natural to some tempers, I will not here examine: it suffices to take notice, that this is one of the operations that the mind may reflect on and observe in itself. It is of that consequence to its other knowledge, that so far as this faculty is in itself dull, or not rightly made use of, for the distinguishing one thing from another, - so far our notions are confused, and our reason and judgment disturbed or misled. If in having our ideas in the memory ready at hand consists quickness of parts; in this, of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to distinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists, in a great measure, the exactness of judgment, and clearness of reason, which is to be observed in one man above another. And hence perhaps may be given some reason of that common observation, - that men who have a great deal of wit, and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason (97).

It seems that towards the end of his analysis and comparison of judgement and wit, Locke places emphasis on the fact that wit (in contrast to judgement) *precipitates*. In other words, if judgement stems from a meticulous precision of processing ideas, wit takes the opposite route which is not only semantically and cognitively ambiguous and unclear, but also quick and hasty. In Locke's view memory plays a prominent role and it canalizes almost all our consciousness. Locke's view on judgement seems to be rooted in the first part of Chapter XI that is called 'No Knowledge Without Discernment'. There Locke stresses the significance of distinguishing between ideas in our minds. But it is worth mentioning that this part is followed by another part which is the kernel of Locke's idea and is called 'Clearness Done Hinders Confusion'. This part reminds one of Locke's emphasis that there is nothing in us or our memories that does not come to our perception at some point and here highlight the role consciousness plays. The view that Locke defends has a simple formula in relation to wit,

For wit lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy; judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another (97).

The emphasis is placed on two relevant components, quickness and suddenness. In contrast to judgement, wit quickly and suddenly brings together two otherwise irrelevant frames. In the rest of this chapter, we focus on the element of quickness and reserve a more elaborate analysis of suddenness for the next chapter and in relation to

Watt to investigate a more contemporary framework of it, and its role in relation to a realist project of humour. *Watt* is not based on such quickness of mind in producing a mechanism in contrast to judgement. *Watt*, by lingering in such suspension and not yielding it to resolution, evidently avoids being witty according the definitions mentioned, yet this drift opens vistas for new unexpected suspension and resolutions. Consequently the expected relief or resolution does not occur easily and one is somehow forced to loosen the dichotomy between suspension and resolution. In effect, such long suspensions make one not expect so much of a relief or resolution. In fact

Watt seems to be quite aware of wit production and instead of entertaining us with the funny result, places mockery in the middle of wit production. *Watt* can be seen as an anti-cognitive book of humour which is aware of the cognitive tendency of humour. The following extract provides us with an example of a suspension that never ends. In this case, *Watt* tantalizes the reader who looks for a sharp line between suspension and resolution.

It is useless not to seek, not to want, for when you cease to seek you start to find, and when you cease to want, then life begins to ram her fish and chips down your gullet until you puke, and then the puke down your gullet until you puke the puke, and then the puked puke until you begin to like it (44).

Watt, does not resolve the suspension (common in riddle-like jokes) so quickly, instead it oscillates quickly between one suspension and another one. In effect, instead of having the suspension resolved semantically in the next sentence, it is left to another suspension. And it is precisely this way that *Watt* shows us the gist of hilarity and what is supposed to be hilarious without necessarily being funny. However, such banality is hilarious because it implicitly contains what normally makes us laugh. In effect, rather than an intentional jokes we encounter an ‘_intentional failure’ to be funny. As the extract below aims to show, repetition is a common technique for such intentional failure which replaces the expected and hilarious resolutions in *Watt*. But the question is what makes us laugh if not resolution? If a joke is funny it is through suspension and a consequent resolution of it, but where there seems to be no resolution, how can we claim humour? I argue that, by avoiding resolution, *Watt* shows another mechanism which is less cognitive and more affective in the production of humour and laughter, namely repetition. *Watt* repeats its suspension and laughs, a laughter that is not cognitively or semantically resolved but transforms the very incongruity, making the very inconsistency or suspension humorous by repeating it and producing a childlike

laughter, in the way that children repeat and laugh. There is no more suspension and resolution at work, but as Deleuze would say, there is ‘_suspensions and falls’(6). In effect, humour in Deleuze is more a somatic issue which in opposition to the ascension and higher view point inherent in irony that provides subjects with a vantage point, brings them constantly down to earth. The very descent in humour means that subjects fall to laugh, they fall to experience humour. This, as it will be discussed in the next part, makes humour less a cognitive laughter and more an affective gesture.

Personally of course I regret everything. Not a word, not a deed, not a thought, not a need, not a grief, not a joy, not a girl, not a boy, not a doubt, not a trust, not a scorn, not a lust, not a hope, not a fear, not a smile, not a tear, not a name, not a face, no time, no place, that I do not regret, exceedingly. An ordure, from beginning to end. And yet, when I sat for Fellowship, but for the boil on my bottom . . . The rest, an ordure. The Tuesday scowls, the Wednesday growls, the Thursday curses, the Friday howls, the Saturday snores, the Sunday yawns, the Monday morns, the Monday morns. The whacks, the moans, the cracks, the groans, the welts, the squeaks, the belts, the shrieks, the pricks, the prayers, the kicks, the tears, the skelps, and the yelps. And the poor old lousy old earth, my earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's father's and my mother's mother's and my father's mother's and my mother's father's and my father's mother's father's and my mother's father's mother's and my father's mother's mother's and my mother's father's' father's and my father's father's mother's and my mother's mother's father's and my father's father's father's and my mother's mother's mother's and other people's fathers' and mothers' and fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' and mothers' fathers' and fathers' mothers' fathers' and mothers' fathers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' mothers' and mothers' fathers' fathers' and fathers' fathers' mothers' and mothers' mothers' fathers' and fathers' fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' mothers'. An excrement (Beckett, 38).

2.4 Affects Converted

He who laughs last, consequently, laughs best, but only because the last shall in his turn be first. That is to say shall be the other, he who communicates laughter to us, who communicates death to us. Laughter's state of grace is only a grace period, without end, without purpose. A roar of irreconciliation (Borch-Jacobsen, 740).

Watt makes a journey to a house whose owner is Mr. Knott. There *Watt* lives like a

solitary servant. In the second section, *Watt* is much obsessed with comprehending life especially when following visiting the piano tuning Galls an anxiety overwhelms him. Section three of *Watt* offers a language which is hardly accessible. And the last section describes the journey *Watt* makes to the institute he had described before in the previous section. Needless to say, any humorous occurrence in such a context is already shocking and quite unexpected. Yet the novel, not unlike other works by Beckett, creates moments where in the midst of a dull and sombre mood, a moment of laughter is quite inevitable.

Broad-shouldered, or big-bosomed and broad-basined, would on no account, if they were in their right senses, commit themselves to this treacherous channel, but turn about, and retrace their steps, unless they wished to be impaled, at various points at once, and perhaps bleed to death, or be eaten alive by the rats, or perish from exposure, long before their cries were heard, and still longer before the rescuers appeared, running, with the scissors, the brandy and the iodine. For were their cries not heard, then their chances of rescue were small, so vast were these gardens, and so deserted, in the ordinary way (134).

Watt embraces the most trivial and banal elements on its way to humour. But it seems that all this paves the way for the key component of humour production in Beckett's work, namely repetition. In effect, *Watt* presents us with banality, but out of dealing seriously with such banality a repetition forms that forms a key component in *Watt's* humour production. For instance as the relation of *Watt* to this fishwoman shows,

The fishwoman pleased Watt greatly. Watt was not a woman's man but the fishwoman pleased him greatly. Other women would perhaps please him more, later. But of all the women who had ever pleased him up till then, not one could hold a candle to this fishwoman, in Watt's opinion. And Watt pleased the fishwoman. This was a merciful coincidence, that they pleased each other. For if the fishwoman had pleased Watt, without Watt's pleasing the fishwoman, or if Watt had pleased the fishwoman, without the fishwoman's pleasing Watt, then what would have become of Watt, or of the fishwoman? Not that the fishwoman was a man's woman, for she was not, being of an advanced age and by nature also denied those properties that attract men to women, unless it was perhaps the remains of a distinguished carriage, acquired from the habit of carrying her of fish on her hand, over long distances (119).

Even if such elements might not yield a semantic incongruity that results in a humour as in one-liners, Beckett makes use of their banality and makes us laugh through a repetition of such banal elements. Such repetition which is a very pivotal

component in the construction of humour for Beckett, in particular in *Watt*, diverges from a witty and quick appropriation of meaning and makes the serious look ridiculous through repetition of the banal elements: a shift from the humorous signified to the humorous signifier, when the serious becomes not even the content but the form of laughter.

Judge then of my astonishment when, upon approach, I found I was not mistaken. It was a hole, in the fence, a large irregular hole, caused by numberless winds, numberless rains, or by a boar, or by a bull, flying, pursuing, a wild boar, a wild bull, blind with fear, blind with rage, or who knows perhaps with carnal desire, crashing at this point, through the fence, weakened by numberless winds, numberless rains. Through this hole I passed, without hurt, or damage to my pretty uniform, and found myself looking about me, for I had not yet recovered my aplomb, in the couloir. My senses being now sharpened to ten or fifteen times their normal acuity, it was not long before I saw, in the other fence, another hole, in position opposite, and similar in shape, to that through which, some ten or fifteen minutes before, I had made my way (136-137).

Repetition replaces the resolution in the process of humour production; repetition of such trivial elements increases an intensity which helps the expansion of humour to various parts of the text:

Add to this that a bare yard separated the fences, at this point, so that the snout would be, of necessity, in contact with the second fence, before the hind-quarters were clear of the first, and consequently the space be lacking in which, after the bursting of the first hole, the fresh impetus might be developed necessary to the bursting of the second. Nor was it likely that the bull, or boar, after the bursting of the first hole, had withdrawn to a point from which, proceeding as before, he might acquire the impetus necessary to the bursting of the second hole, via the first hole. For either, after the bursting of the first hole, the animal was still blind with passion, or he was so no longer (137).

There are cases (as in the following extract), where humour is given a more leading role. If, in the previous part, *Watt* offered repetitive moments when a serious issue falls from its height, there are cases in which the text commences its logic with humour and its permeation throughout the entire text is visible. In other words, while in the former humour is in charge of descending what is high and serious, in the latter, humour is no more an attachment to the serious, but is itself the very logic of the text. This way, humour does not provide the text with balancing mechanism or even a playful disposition that nullifies the serious, but something that the serious should grasp

and digest. Although as we will argue this is not yet realist humour, as it is largely bound to discursive humour, yet it provides us with a template for realist humour,

Nor was it likely that the second hole, or better still Watt's hole (for there was nothing to show that the so-called second hole was not anterior to the so-called first hole, and the so-called first hole not posterior to the so-called second hole), had been burst, independently, at some quite different time, from Watt's side of the fence. For if the two holes had been independently burst, the one from Watt's side of Watt's fence, and the other from mine of mine, by two quite different infuriated boars, or bulls (for that the one had been burst by an infuriated boar, and the other by an infuriated bull, was unlikely), and at two quite different times, the one from Watt's side of Watt's fence, and the other from mine of mine, then their conjunction, at this point, was incomprehensible, to say the least. Nor was it likely that the two holes, the hole in Watt's fence and the hole in mine, had been burst, on the same occasion, by two infuriated bulls, or by two infuriated boars, or by one infuriated bull and one infuriated cow, or by one infuriated boar and one infuriated sow (for that they had been burst, simultaneously, the one by an infuriated bull and the other by an infuriated sow, or the one by an infuriated boar and the other by an infuriated cow, was hard to believe), charging, with hostile or libidinous intent, the one from Watt's side of Watt's fence, the other from mine of mine, and clashing, the holes once burst, at the spot where now I stood, trying to understand. For this implied the bursting of the holes, by the bulls, or by the boars, or by the bull and cow, or by the boar and sow, at exactly the same moment, and not first one, and then an instant later the other. For if first one, and then an instant later the other, then the bull, the cow, the boar, the sow, first through its fence, and thrusting with its head against the other, must have prevented, willy nilly, through this other, at this particular point, the passage of the bull, the cow, the bull, the boar, the sow, the boar, hastening to meet it, with all the fury of hate, the fury of love. Nor could I find, though I went down on my knees, and parted the wild grasses, any trace, whether of combat or of copulation. No bull then had burst these holes, nor any boar, nor any two bulls, nor any two boars, nor any two cows, nor any two sows, nor any bull and cow, nor any boar and sow, no, but the stress of weather, rains and winds without number, and suns, and snows, and frosts, and thaws, particularly severe just here (Beckett 138-139).

Such an example does not imply that *Watt* is bereft of linguistic incongruity; to the contrary, *Watt* is replete with incongruity, but such incongruities are not linearly juxtaposed and as a result one cannot tell the moment of suspension from that of resolution. Putting it in Knot Theory terminology, one cannot say that humour is empty of or beyond knots, yet the knots or algorithms embodied in the text are so interwoven their beginning and end are not transparent. Humour is not something to be added to the text, it is something that produces the text and steers it; the text is open to humour and humour swallows it. This way, we not only discard a subjective charge in our approach to humour, but also and even more importantly, one paves the way for exploring similar

manifestations of this gesture in other works where humour is even irritating. Such an irritating and cruel intervention of humour leads to a coexistence of humour with the affects which are not supposed to yield humour. In other words and in an affective conception, such humour appears among the affects which are not normally supposed to result in humour. Back to our point on representational humour and laughter, one might explain the crucial point in representational humour as the insertion of the element of surprise and unexpectedness, an element that has made a pivotal point in the construction of what is known as incongruity theory. According to this theory, the element of inconsistency or incongruity makes us laugh: incongruity, as the kernel of humour, is founded on an element of surprise. Whenever there is something incoherent and surprising we are offered the main ingredient and component to produce humour. Although incongruity theory places emphasis on the element of unexpectedness, it is in effect an expected unexpectedness; humour simply unsettles our expectations semantically without substantially transforming affects so much. One can even claim that incongruity theory of humour starts with zero affects, since nothing occurs beyond the suspension of the former meaning that is described. In other words, no affect is suspended to be transformed to other new or active affects. Incongruity theory starts with the cognitive suspension rather than affective suspension; affective suspension, however, is at the centre of the project of realist humour.

In effect, incongruity theory places emphasis on the howness of laughter and humour and one can see through these studies how humour can be made. Consequently, humour yields its core ingredient in order to be reproduced in a representational mode. The intervention of affects and in particular the affects that are not normally called for in a specific context requires more precise attention since these texts rely less on semantic and even lexical expectations and rather provide us with a momentary shift from what has drawn our attention. All this means that analysing such momentary and ephemeral emergence of laughter and humour should be seen against the background of affects running through the text. By taking the affects into account, one can see that a non-representational humour is able, above all, to break with the affects dominating a text or a situation; however, breaking with affective chains prevailing in a text does not mean that, as a consequence, the text does not equally break with the cognitive expectations.

The following is an example of Watt's manner, at this period: Day of most, night of part, Knott with now. Now till up, little seen so oh, little heard so oh. Night till morning from. Heard I this, saw I this then what. Thing quiet, dim. Ears, eyes, failing now also. Hush in, mist in, moved I so. From this it will perhaps be suspected: that the inversion affected, not the order of the sentences, but that of the words only; that the inversion was imperfect; that ellipse was frequent; that euphony was a preoccupation; that spontaneity was perhaps not absent; that there was perhaps more than a reversal of discourse; that the thought was perhaps inverted. So to every man, soon or late, comes envy of the fly, with all the long joys of summer before it (Beckett, 140).

Throughout *Watt*, one notices that humour is, if not common, quite irresistible in its place. There are moments in the novel, mainly in *Watt's* description and his monologue, when one encounters a gesture that is so excessively unexpected that laughter erupts even through some apparently 'bad jokes'. But more importantly when the laughter pushes through and comes out, one wonders how to deal with it, like excess and excrement.

So it may be instructive to linger a little on these occasions of verbose intellectual strangulation and soiling in the criticism, rather than passing over them as nothing more than indications of artistic and critical immaturity. For although these 'bad' jokes may well be indicative of a risible stylistic weakness, there is also the beginning of something self-conscious. of an awareness of what a rupturing of the 'lines of communication' might do to a text, and the growth of something intentional from this abjectly fertile comic ground (Salisbury, 55).

The shift from consciousness to affects is required in order to shed the light on the difference between representational or semantic and non-representational humour. But in order to start with affects we need to start with what Gilles Deleuze calls etiology (Stivale, 206). Deleuze's involvement with Ethics (inspired by Spinoza and Nietzsche) is to a large extent rooted in his problem with nihilism. The Spinozist attempt to attain happiness through a kind of wisdom is another name for an ethical life. Yet this wisdom and this ethics is an immanent movement that (unlike morality) does not escape from the material and social to the transcendent. While morality is in search of a beyond or a beyond being to mean its acts, ethics looks forward coming down from that beyond to the earth of bodies and see the way these bodies function. Spinoza criticizes morality's deficiencies as follows:

For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do from the

laws of Nature alone, insofar as Nature is only considered to be corporeal, and what the body can do only if it is determined by the mind. For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions – not to mention that many things are observed in the lower animals which far surpass human ingenuity, and that sleepwalkers do a great many things in their sleep which they would not dare to awake. This shows well enough that the body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its mind wonders at (155- 156).

This way, the very pivotal step for a Spinozist ethics is to take the body into consideration. And it is precisely here that Gilles Deleuze launches his project on ethics. In order to define his conception of the body, Gilles Deleuze has recourse to affects and defines affects in terms of the forces they bear. In effect, Deleuze's attempt, inspired with Nietzsche's to define body, draws him to the forces that irreducibly compose (and decompose) a body and this yields to defining the unity of body through the multiplicity of forces that shape it, where the dominant forces are called active ones and the inferior forces are reactive. All this for Deleuze, following Spinoza and Nietzsche, is a primary and crucial step to do away with the moral thought in favour of ethics where all singularities of body are being taken into consideration in a kinetic rather than a static mode of existence. This way, the very objective of an ethics is to take affect and affectivity into account by questioning what reduces one's ability to act or think and what increases this capacity. Through such cursory depiction of what Deleuze and Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus* under ethics, one might be able to see how the interrelation of affects, as singularities in one body, can result in one's servitude or one's ability to increase one's capacity to act. It becomes even more important when, through Deleuze's understanding of Spinoza, we are enabled to see how to distinguish ideas from affects. It is in this regard that Gilles Deleuze places emphasis on the representational character of ideas and contrasts it with the non-representational conception of affects. It must be emphasized and borne in mind that Deleuze is doing away with a psychologism of affects and instead tries to introduce us to an ethics; however he admits that Spinoza's conception of affect is an original one.

Ideas are modes of thought defined by their representational character. This already gives us a first point of departure for distinguishing idea and affect (*affectus*) because we call affect any mode of thought which doesn't represent anything. So what does that mean? Take at random what anybody would call affect or feeling—a hope for example, a pain, a love— this is not representational. There is an idea of the loved

thing, to be sure, there is an idea of something hoped for, but hope as such or love as such represents nothing, strictly nothing. As Deleuze states, “Every mode of thought insofar as it is non-representational will be termed affect. A volition, a will implies, in all rigor, that I will something, and what I will is an object of representation, what I will is given in an idea, but the fact of willing is not an idea, it is an affect because it is a non-representational mode of thought” (1978, 1-2). The two interwoven facets of representation can be gathered under psychological and linguistic modes. If psychologism of affects yields to a subjective and personal or even biographical understanding of forces excluded from its outside or its *umwelt*, the semiotic conception of affects, in a similar manner pushes all affects to signify in its linguistic and discursive frames as if affects were statements that are to mean something.

In order to elaborate such representational mode, and its contrast with the one in an affective mode, we make use of an understanding of signs in Lyotard which helps illuminate another facet in realist humour. In his *Libidinal Economy* and especially in his chapter on ‘The Tensor’, Jean Francois Lyotard launches an ambitious attempt against the nihilism of representation. Lyotard develops his argument focally in relation to signs and semiotics and places emphasis on the exclusion of affects from common conception of signs. What makes his point more crucial is the concept of tensor (which is not unlike the molecular in Deleuze and Guattari) and is in charge of dissimulating affects rather than producing meaning through absence and lack. A representational conception of humour, more than anything, defines and delimits humour in terms of communication either in a psychological or a semiotic manner whereas a non-representational or molecular mode of humour maintains an affective and affirmative gesture against such semantic and communicative mechanism embedded in humour production.

This way, representational humour depends to a large extent, whether in its production or its reception, on a cognitive framework of humour which has been greatly exploited by contemporary theories of incongruity or inconsistency. Such fields leave no room for an understanding of humour that escapes semantic norms. A non-representational approach takes humour as something that skips cognitive attention and does not yield fully to its semantic components. Instead, what a non-representational analysis of humour offers is looking to the affective field that a work embodies. By comparison, for a majority of representational cases of humour, an affect maintains its dominance and this affect, more often than not, is shared between

what is expected and what is unexpected. In other words, if any kind of incongruity is introduced, be it through a one-liner, a cartoon or any other medium, the dominant affect remains the same before and after the incongruity and if there is a shift it is on semantic level. That's why we argue further that incongruity in semantic and metaphoric level yields suspension that in order to function asks for resolution in a way an algorithm or a puzzle works. On the contrary, for a non-representational humour, affective challenges and the interrelations that take place in the constellation of affects is given priority. Ironically, this makes humour in such texts depend less on a riddle strategy.

The affective significance in this regard and in such works drives us to speculate on the existence of affects in literature and art. For this, we keep an eye on the Nietzschean understanding of philosophy which is more similar to "physiologist and physician". The reason Nietzsche admits such a title is his insistence on forces and even more importantly the typology of forces. Nietzsche attempts to delineate a whole, if not consistent, outline of different type of forces in order to provide a better understanding of the human psyche. Gilles Deleuze extends such a tacit typology in Nietzsche and explicates it in his different works. One major work which reveals the intersection and interrelation of forces is *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Once again, it should be emphasized that the reason why such a work is being dealt and analysed here is its significance for any understanding of the role humour can play among the crowd of affects in the human psyche. Furthermore, humour can be freed from any psychological or anthropological reduction which embraces laughter from normalized body-politics. According to Deleuze, two crucial modes of existence which Nietzsche diagnoses are resentment and bad conscience. These two are the platforms which can transform active forces to reactive ones in different scales. Nevertheless, the pivotal point is not simply a speculation on the origin of resentment and bad conscience; rather it is the possibilities of discarding these two. A realist project of humour is an answer and an extension in this regard which reveals its various traces in different texts. While reactive forces inherent in these two aforementioned modes are more inclined towards nihilism, some possibilities can be introduced in order to not only nullify such affects but importantly transmute them. Such an existence of humour seems to be more of a gesture than a general model or a defined mechanism or determination throughout the text. In order to orientate better towards what is meant here by such a gesture, it is necessary to define in what context humour has come forth. If a work is able to lean on

a kind of humour whose elements have been planted earlier, the work provides a more intense humour. It might seem to be a more stylistic and rhetoric conception, but in terms of our distinction between different kinds of humour, it is of tremendous help. In its contingent exposure, a work prepares itself for the emergence of humour. Humour arrives and directs the dominating senses towards a new direction; its divestment from the prevailing affects.

Such divestment is also reflected in Freud, however not in his Humour analysis. Freud, in his *Mourning and Melancholia*, defines in terms of detachment from the desired object, an incremental divestment of libido, a process which takes patience and is accompanied with pain. This process is a systematic movement to detach from one object and mourning is something that helps the psyche that has undergone such a pain restore its balance. Seeing humour in its affective constellation and in its contingency also involves a detachment from former dominant affects to new positive ones which construct the subject. Such a process of detachment gains its full significance in death, something that will be discussed in the next chapter. Freud has already raised this point in relation to mourning due to the loss of somebody that results in withdrawal from the current cathectic investments. In the same vein, such preparation to be a medium for such inhuman humour in order for the current dominant affects to undergo a transformation into positive affects is possible when the subject divests from his or her investments. Mourning for Freud is a mechanism that paves the way to process and understand such transformation and one can argue that humour requires such process and preparation or otherwise it would be imposed on the subject in a sudden act where he or she is a part of the humour. In the next chapters we analyse how such detachment is at the core of an inhuman humour project. The ability in humour to transubstantiate the network of affects which has constituted and positioned the subject can be refused and ignored by the subject since it can jeopardize this constituted position. Subjects, in their evasion of humour and subsequent transpositions of affects maintain the negative affects towards a cruel end. In our analysis of sovereignty and humour in the next chapter such a relation in subject would be elaborated.

In a nutshell and back to *Watt*, Beckett does more than a practice to entertain the reader. *Watt* is not a laughing novel, yet it appears quite interesting from humour and laughter point of view. In order to answer the question of why this is, we need to bear in mind that it is held mainly that laughter is a result of something unexpected, a surprise that then gets resolved. *Watt* discloses a logic, an algorithm of producing laughter. In

effect *Watt* shows us how to be happy or it provides us with a recipe of humour. The novel is replete with the moments where one is able to laugh against his will, even when he is filled with frustration, disappointment and anger. Even if, as some commentators do, we do not agree on *Watt* being a tragicomedy since the absurd is not quite correlated with tragicomedy, *Watt* is where laughter exists in its bleak nature. One is tempted to call it comedy-comedy. If not the whole novel but a majority of points made in the novel are comedy of comedy. There is something evidently important that Beckett is trying: if according to the incongruity theory, something must be suspended in order to be resolved and produce laughter, Beckett lingers this time between suspension and its resolution. Consequently the expected relief or resolution does not occur easily and one is somehow forced to loosen the dichotomy between suspension and resolution. In effect, such long suspensions make one not expect so much of a relief or resolution. In fact Beckett seems to be quite aware of what makes something entertaining and instead of entertaining us directly, entertains us with something that is supposed or expected to be entertaining. If it is still laughable or not is an open question.

But Beckett can be seen as a anti-cognitive author, novelist or playwright who knows not only our political, social and orientations, but also our cognitive expectations in laughter. He knows what makes us laugh, then makes us laugh and keeps making us laugh with the same thing, which drains the laughter sooner or later. Instead of arguing what Beckett knows and does, perhaps it is better to use Beckett as a kind of comparative horizon in relation to cognitive incongruity which, almost in a similar vein, knows what makes us laugh. The tacit anti-cognitivism of Beckett is admittedly not on the surface of the text, nevertheless the text's usage of humour. Incongruity theory could suggest that absurdity is humorous because it subverts our expectations, but it doesn't resolve the tension like a simple joke does, rather going on and on ad absurdum. The laughter produced does not necessarily come at a preprogrammed point, but rather bubbles up now and then and disappears again and therefore the consequent absurdity in general is not explained very well by incongruity theory. Incongruity theory could suggest that absurdity is humorous because it subverts our expectations, but it doesn't resolve the tension like a simple joke does, rather going on and on ad absurdum. The laughter produced does not necessarily come at a preprogrammed point, but rather bubbles up now and then and disappears again.

Thus any humour that is formed and embedded through varying degrees of suspension can be unknotted and return to its resolution or the unknot as the identity

element. Watt, as if aware of what makes us laugh, takes another direction. In fact if incongruity claims that there are at least two scenarios to produce humour where the first (background) does not fit the second (foreground) and it is through a (metaphoric) link that these two scopes are connected and hence the humour or laughter. *Watt* makes laughter or humour itself laughable and lodges it in a non-humorous (if not traumatic) body. Therefore *Watt* transcends the cognitive view on which humour is normally framed and still makes us laugh: in effect, it seems that this laughter requires an ability to laugh at oneself and one's own laughter, *über sich selbst lachen*.

The cruel hilarity of *Watt* is therefore founded not only on its cognitive inappropriateness, but rather on an affective inappropriateness, which makes another humour or a double humour possible. Furthermore, if humour, according to incongruity theory, reveals the cognitive finitude, *Watt* makes the finitude of such cognitive humour itself visible and risible. The humour that *Watt* makes possible is a sovereign humour which based on its double nature laughs at things including insufficiency of calculated cognitive humour. A sovereign laughter is deeply connected to this insufficiency and exposes any finite being to an inhuman laughter, yet it eludes instantly as no cognitive mechanism can reproduce it. What makes such sovereign laughter is the anguish that supports it as a background. It is only through admitting one's limits that such an elusive and ephemeral moment of sovereignty can emerge. In his brilliant article *Laughter of Being*, Borch-Jacobson links such limits to the anguish and pain that we experience in facing the nothingness of our limits. Sovereign laughter takes a step further and without ignoring such anguish, undergoes a moment of escape where an ethical laughter based on an 'ethics of summit' (739) takes place. Although admitting such anguish as a result of limits is a condition for such laughter, limiting oneself to this anguish nullifies such laughter too. The other side of the problem as Borch-Jacobson puts it is that Heidegger, like other similar philosophers, "was destined to remain at the stage of the anguish of Nothingness..." (743). Nevertheless such laughter of summit or as Borch-Jacobson puts it, 'ethics of summit' should not be confused with what irony fulfils. In effect, irony is similarly ascension to a summit but it has a determined subject whereas such an ethics of laughter is asubjective and inhuman, more than a subject who laughs, the being that laughs through a subject. *Watt* produces laughter of laughter or laughter at laughter which gets rid of the common (un)expectations in order to be entertaining and instead makes what is not supposed to be entertaining, entertaining.

What makes *Watt* special is comprehensible only in the level of affects, since

even if there is an incongruity applicable to various semantic spots in *Watt*, this incongruity is less a cognitive incongruity. Not that that humour in *Watt* is made up of incongruous moments but that the humour itself is incongruous in relation to the entirety of the text. Incongruity theory in its cognitive depiction misses the functionality of humour. *Watt* does not yield an easy answer to how humour functions, for the humour that leaps out of it in the majority of cases is an inappropriate unplanned humour. Therefore, if cognitive theories are in search of incongruity in semantic level,

Watt looks for incongruity in cognitive incongruity: a double incongruity. *Watt* escapes incongruity and leaves incongruity itself incongruous in numerous spots of the text. In its attempt which can be called anti-cognitive laughter, *Watt* renders some voids visible, voids that are designed to be filled 'inevitably' with humour. Humour functions in numerous cases like this: cognitive equilibrium and congruity or consistency is punctured and as a result incongruity does not function; the text renders cognitive incongruity null and void and provokes humour. By neutralizing our expectations, *Watt* escapes the logic of surprise as commonly held in the production of humour. If humour is an attempt to grapple with finitude and cope with it, *Watt* makes even this attempt humorous; it laughs at what produces laughter.

Realist humour does not add another affect such as happiness as in psychologism of laughter and humour; but directs forces involved in negative affects to a positive and constructive one. The fact that such humour transmutes dominant affects should be stressed, since a theory of humour that limits itself to a cognitive scope and disregards the significance of affects rather than a gesture to life is a temporary augmentation and extension of laughter which simply suppresses and cracks down on negative affects. This suffices for the moment to enable us to emphasize the difference between intensity of realist humour as opposed to the extensity of cognitive and subjective laughter and humour. Back to the primary question concerning representational laughter, we can add an intensive/ extensive dichotomy which can be helpful to shield humour from a momentary manifestation.

2.5 Towards the Exteriority of Humour

As we discussed one main difference between one-liners and longer humorous text is

laid in their usage of memory. A one-liner is much more intense and abstract and this makes it different from a longer text like *Watt* which has to handle the same humorous gesture throughout the text. This distinction was raised in our analysis of self-referentiality, but in this part, we aim to elaborate the pertinence of the significance of these two forms of humour to a realist project of humour. A difference that has implications for the next chapter regarding *Life, End of*. By granting a memory for the text, one can say that one-liners utilize a short-term memory in the production of humour, whereas there seems to be a long-term memory in the production of humour in longer texts. In effect, if one-liners function according to a knowledge of the world through a short-circuit of juxtaposition which has been made possible through a metaphor, longer texts in order to maintain humour apply a constant self-referentiality in their production. Such self-referentiality demands a longer memory where an already described past is equally taken into account.

Thinking of *Watt*, something has been said somewhere prior and now after a long journey of mind the novel foregrounds the earlier point and even resolve it at least to some extent. In effect, the past is not absent from the present but is implied there. Deleuze in his *Proust and the Signs* and his cinema books, makes a brilliant attempt of defining such past and its relation to the present through his virtual/ actual concepts. Based on a Bergsonian reading, the present includes both past and future and the only difference is that actual as the present moment is more real to us. When something is less real although it exists, its existence is limited to our memory and is not yet actualized. One such case can be seen in *Watt* where the character is dealing with his memories and makes an attempt to sort them out, keeps some and deletes others. Remembering memories and looking at them with some scrutiny is what makes parts of *Watt* quite humorous. It is through this access to such long memory that a realist project of humour can be defined in terms of historicity and beyond moments of ephemeral and metaphoric randomness of wit. Self-referentiality seen this way is far from the linguistic self-referentiality in post-modernism that is as a linguistic phenomenon targets itself in an attempt of loosening between words and things (Ray, 14).

Self-referentiality, in a small scale is also implied the humour based in Incongruity Theory since every resolution takes place retrospectively and in reference to a previous suspension. In effect, one reason that makes a one-liner more difficult or intelligent to grasp is that it has recourse to a past memory rather than a present available situation. However not all one-liners utilize the past, longer texts are able to

refer to something suspended in more distant past. Nonetheless, it will be discussed at the end of next chapter that a realist humour does not think of such past only in a textual mode, where something mentioned and suspended in previous pages is being resurfaced and resolved in the present. Self-referentiality, at least in its primary conception is the ability of a subject to refer back to itself. In a more formal manner and especially in logic, self-referentiality is the property that a statement refers to itself and makes statement about itself. Humour can utilize this characteristic in referring to itself through some encoding or through having recourse to some intermediary passages. Nevertheless, as the main characteristic of such humour is, its emergence in other spots are not predictable, *Watt* bears traces of self-referentiality where it refers and alludes to a point already made. Here we limit our understanding and definition of self-referentiality to a simple textual one where a text, in a sporadic and contingent manner refers to its own components. Self-referentiality and its relation to humour can be explicated better against the background of incongruity theory of humour. Incongruity theory of humour, as it were, as the most dominant theory of humour, claims, with its long tradition in philosophy, that when our expectations are suspended or extinguished it can result in humour. This theory functions perfectly when we are dealing with a one-liner or when we encounter a moment when the author is referring us to something from the real world we share. But when it comes to larger texts, the relation between suspension and resolution is not as clear and in such cases humour, to a large extent depends on the ability to have a holistic conception of the text. Nevertheless having a partial understanding of a text does not exclude understanding of humour in its entirety, but keeps it in a specific level. In shorter texts the humour produced is the result of a simple coordination, a short collocation of two or more diverse zones and this collocation turns out to be new, unexpected and entertaining, whereas in longer texts, production and reception of humour is the result of two or more ideas or facts that are not simply and so closely and evidently juxtaposed.

So all went well until Watt began to invert, no longer the order of the words in the sentence, but that of the letters in the word. This further modification Watt carried through with all his usual discretion and sense of what was acceptable to the ear, and aesthetic judgement. Nevertheless to one, such as me, desirous above all of information, the change was not a little disconcerting. The following is an example of Watt's manner, at this period: Ot bro, lap rulb, krad klub. Ot murd, wol fup, wol fup. Ot niks, sorg sam, sorg sam. Ot lems, lats lems, lats lems. Ot gnut, trat stews, trat stews (Beckett, 141).

It is in this framework, that a realist project of humour, with some reservations, defines what it means by the exteriority of humour. Granting a past for humour implies that the very process of humour production in such texts as *Watt*, depends heavily on a virtual or on a past. While the difference of such humour from the humour in one-liners is evident, there is another facet which is urgent for a realist humour. Realist humour distinguishes itself from a humour that is only a sudden and ephemeral act of laughter. For a realist humour, history is no less important than the present ephemeral moment. In effect, whatever is experienced in the past (rejection/avoidance of humour) plays a role in the present production of humour. The crucial point for a realist project on humour is that although it places the emphasis on the contingency of humour and its momentary unexpected presence, it adds that such emergence should not be reduced to an ephemeral appearance bereft of any of the historical or past responsiveness. Realist humour demands for preparatory acts to befall subjects and transmute their affects through making them a medium for humour. Subjects through their diachronic gestures open themselves to such contingency of realist humour, an act of summoning humour through the most tense and tragic moments paves the way for the emergence of humour in subjects. In the same vein, works by planting such traces of humour open themselves to a contingent and incalculable emergence of humour. This helps us take a crucial distance from such understanding of humour which limits it to a synchronic and sudden emergence.

Chapter Three

Mentally Humorous

Two believers cannot observe one another without laughing (Deleuze, 1994, 119).

Seeing laughter, hearing laughter, I participate from within in the emotion of the one who laughs. It is this emotion experienced from within which, communicating itself to me, laughs within me. What we know through participation (through communication) is what we know intimately: we immediately apprehend the laughter of the other by laughing ourselves, or his excitement by sharing the excitement (Bataille, 1986, 152-53).

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter an attempt was made to stress the significance of the affective role humour plays and we tried to make a distinction between a cognitive approach to humour and an affective one. A short attempt was made to highlight humour in its interiority, a mechanism that provides subjects with an ability to dispense with the passive forces and return these forces to active and constructive ones. The main part of this chapter is an attempt to expand this affective conception of humour. However, towards the end of this chapter, another side of humour, namely its exteriority, will be introduced. It suffices here to say that the interiority of humour as we explained partly in the previous chapter addresses humour production in relation to the self and the production of the subject. In other words, such a facet of humour is more a gesture by which a subject rids himself or herself of reactive forces as normally embodied in the negative affects. Such microscopic humour is, as we discussed, not a determined and intentional act that targets

subjects' consciousness. We will argue that such humour by being microscopic and affective requires an abrupt and ephemeral characteristic. Christine Brooke-Rose's Novel, *Life, The End of* provides us with an opportunity to see such an ephemeral manifestation of humour in the middle of a consciousness which is not only bleak and frigid but also tragic. Such molecular manifestations of humour in its ephemeral mode will be linked to its molar mode in what we label the exteriority of humour. The distinction between molecular and molar, borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, represents two equally important sides of the same phenomenon in its micro-property and macro-properties.

Temperature, for example, is a molar property of a body of water or air composed of a large population of molecules. That is temperature is simply the average result of the molecules' kinetic energy, the energy they have by virtue of their movement. Thus the distinction between the molecular and molar is similar to that between micro-properties and macro-properties (Buchanan and Thoburn, 165).

By making use of such a tentative distinction between the molecular and molar levels, a molecular significance is attributed to affects in the production of humour. This does not limit affects to some closed interiority, affects play a no less important role in the production of humour in its exterior mode. The first part of this chapter aims to delineate the affective side of humour in its ephemeral and abrupt mode in the language of *Life, End of*. *Life, End of*, like Beckett's *Watt*, is not a purely comic attempt and what makes it special to this study is the fact that its humour is located on the very microscopic level and in relation to a tragic experience. *Life, End of*, provides various flows of humour that are quite noticeable on the face of the tragedy it depicts. The main character-narrator of *Life, End of*, through her constant relation to an overwhelming experience of pain, anxiety, paralysis and death, offers epiphanies of humour, unexpected moments which at least lead one to a small laughter. Such experience of humour and laughter is shown to be based on a moment of suddenness in *Life, End of* and we argue that it should be analysed closely and in relation to consciousness. Although humour in *Life, End of* seems to have also been made up of the integration of different semantic scripts in an unexpected manner as in jokes and one-liners, a humour shaped on a more mental and cognitive level. We will see that such humour is not simply based on a linguistic playfulness. By going beyond the linguistic playfulness of wit, it will be shown that such humour is an act that defines itself less in relation to language than

in relation to the finitude of human knowledge. By hijacking humour from language and locating it beside knowledge, it can be a tool that constantly cautions one against the limits of one's knowledge. This already prepares one to deal with what we have been calling the interior significance of humour, which is definable in relation to the production of the subject.

In effect, in order to provide such an affective side in humour with a larger context which directs us to its implications in a realist project of humour, in the rest of this chapter, we highlight the relation between the interiority of humour and its social and ontological mode in its exteriority. In other words, this chapter provides us with an opportunity to see how a realist project of humour, by dispensing with the dominance of linguistic humour (if not excluding it entirely), starts with an affective notion of humour and composes an interzone between such affects in a subjective and interior layer with one in an inter-subjective mode. It will be argued that what is at stake in this relation between the interior and affective side of humour and the exterior and social side is the question of knowledge. These two facets are interwoven and while the subjective mode of humour is founded on an ephemeral moment of emancipation offered by humour to move from the realm of knowledge to that of active affects, there is another facet which seeks to define humour in relation to social assemblages which bear various degrees of knowledge. A realist humour needs not only do away with an exclusively linguistic conception of humour but also aims for a dialectical understanding of humour *between* social assemblages.

Tonny Aagaard Olesen, a scholar in humour and comedy in Kierkegaard, stresses the significance of two sides in Kierkegaard's conception of the comic (and especially humour) and defines them as passionate-dialectical sides (Olesen, 339). Olesen denies any similarity between Kierkegaard's theory of humour and the one offered by Hobbesian laughter that *_'laughs in order to assert itself'*, or a physiological-psychological model inherited from Spencer or Freud. Olesen claims that Kierkegaard's notion of laughter is as reflective as it is passionate. Such a theory dispenses with an understanding of laughter which is solely based on a *_'free play''* or an *_'immediate, arbitrary''* or *_'carnivalistic''* side that *_'lacks reflection''* (342). Olesen's focus is mainly on Kierkegaard's major *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* which deals profoundly with humour, irony and the comic.

One may call Kierkegaard's theory of the comic in Postscript an existential comic of reflection. By this, it is meant that the comic is closely related to the existence relation itself, the essence which is passionate-dialectical. The passionate [*pathetiske*] element signifies an immediacy to which the individual is subject, such that it is set in a context of suffering...The dialectical element, on the other hand, signifies the mediated reflection in its never-ending task of juxtaposing categories and seeking out contradictions. Where the first instance concerns individual's earnestness [*alvor*] and interest, the second, the esthetic-metaphysical, involves disinterested deliberation, to which the comic belongs (Olesen, 343).

Both these sides are equally significant to define and delimit what a realist project of humour demands. This passionate-dialectical conception of humour correlates with an understanding of humour which on the one hand seeks an emancipation of reactive forces in the minuscule and microscopic relations of subject and on the other hand aims for an interzone of social and even ontological roles attributed to humour where (instead of judgement of God) those subjects or assemblages which evade implementing humour inside will be dialectically derided.

3.2 Alinguistic Communication of laughter

And thus it appears that the doctrine of eternal return is conceived yet again as a simulacrum of doctrine whose very parodic characteristic gives account of hilarity as an attribute of existence sufficient unto itself, when laughter rings out from the depth of truth itself, either because truth bursts forth in the laughter of the gods, or because the gods themselves die laughing uncontrollably. When a god wanted to be the holy God, all of the other gods were seized with uncontrollable laughter, until they laughed to death (Blanchot, 181).

Life, End of as Christine Brooke-Rose's final novel, is replete with its narrator's contradictions and anxieties in her eighties. Anxieties that are at least partly, due to aging and approaching death. At the same time, its understanding of death is largely rooted in a quotidian mode that includes mental and physical decline. Therefore even the anxieties in *Life, End of* are not bereft of corporeal aspects. Friendship, independence, and all body organs are influenced heavily by such an experiment of aging and Christine Brooke-Rose who is already known for her experimentalist

works, depicts and traces every single and tiny component of such a decline. As an autobiographical work, *Life, End of* pictures such little manifestations which include the body, friends, loneliness, embarrassment, desolation and so on. Therefore the novel is filled with a variety of different affects that emerge out of any reflection and encounter with such aspects. And this already makes it hard to imagine that its humour is shaped outside of such a network of various affects. One can go that far as to say that Christine-Brooke-Rose seems to be more loyal to such affects than to the linear narration of an already formed plot in her novel. This is affirmed to some extent, where she, beyond writing, presents us with the affective side of writing. She describes the process of losing sight and this already damages her independence, yet writing remains there. Although this locates the novel in a tragic mode, there is an affective side in her writing that communicates something non-tragic. This makes the novel move between two forms of communication. On the one hand the linguistic communication of her pains and failures (from childhood, to marriage and then retirement) and on the other hand, the humour through which the latter is communicated.

An old lady is staggering round her kitchen, keeps talking to herself on a variety of different topics, from ‘the looking glass’ to the most abstract entities of her world. Different thoughts spring to her mind, like to stand requires the help of both arms. Pain has a notable presence in language that describes her intolerable physical difficulty. Walking is painful: ‘The legs now burn permanently, hot charcoal in the feet creeping up the shins.’ (2) The legs ‘flinch wince jerk shirk lapse collapse give way stagger like language when it can’t present the exact word needed, the exact spot where to put the foot’ (2). And yet there are other people to deal with. A soothing doctor who acts reluctantly to explain things. The woman has another problem, another zone in her zones of problems is that of her old friends. More than anything she is worried about her stipulations. She wants others to ignore them. They must hire a car, consider her problems in the kitchen, and thus avoid bringing an end to a thirty-year friendship? Although almost everything inside and outside is becoming increasingly inaccessible, she’d rather be alone, in her house, her rooms, among her books. She observes a lot and meditates on various things, the condition of the world, population growth, the failure of medicine for the aged, the curse of advertising. *Life, End of* is a book filled with subjective contradictions and anxieties. The character constantly addresses a stance which is not only composed of linguistic or semantic

communication. It is argued here that *Life, End of* deals with the passionate side in the production of humour and the very construction of its subject who is suffering from passive affects. Therefore, what is stake is less what the novel communicates and rather the way the novel communicates such anxieties and pains. This communication which is not necessarily reducible to a linguistic or better to say an informative one, is largely fed by a humorous attitude in the novel. If the linguistic form is a mode of communicating information which conveys pains and obsessions, *Life, End of* offers a no less significant mode of communication which more than informative is contagious and deals with affects.

Judy Little in her *The Experimental Self* argues that there is a poetic element in Brooke-Rose novels that results in a flexible and flowing state where even the characters 'do not take themselves seriously enough to despair' (125). As a result, as Little implies, the characters in Brooke-Rose novels are less obsessed with overcoming grand narratives than they are inclined to create. Little argues that there is self-subversive tendencies in her work. Georges Bataille is among the most notable writers who has stressed such communication of flows in his various works. Such communication according to Bataille not only is not reducible to the subjects who are involved in it but also it functions as a fluid, as 'a stream of electricity' (Inner Experience 94). Therefore, the flow mentioned in Bataille is way beyond a linguistic phenomenon attributed fully to subjects, it 'destroys the concept of inner experience as internal because "your life is not limited to that ungraspable inner streaming; it streams to the outside as well and opens itself incessantly to what flows out or surges forth towards it" (2014, 94). The fact that communicating the inner experience is impossible should be added with the tacit emphasis in Georges Bataille that there is another form of communication possible to him; one shaped in affects, one that implies a heterogeneous community involved in it; laughter and tears bear an element of contagion that can be called an affective contagion. But before dealing with ideas foregrounded in Bataille's, it is worth mentioning a figure whose ideas help understand such affective communication, namely Alphonso Lingis. Lingis, who is well-known for his translations of a variety of different thinkers and writers, including Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Klossowski, is a figure through whom one can also see the phenomenological link to such realism. Although his major work, *Imperative*, is not limited to laughter, it provides us with a background against which one can see how phenomenology of

his kind can grasp and grapple with such random and corporeal phenomena. But more importantly and due to his phenomenological background, he is among the few philosophers who managed to synthesize such sensations as in laughter in his conceptualization of the subject. Lingis places emphasis on the fact that not only are such sensations significant in the present and actual state of subjects, they form and shape the subjects (119). In effect, one can go so far as to claim that such sensations are the forces that are prior to the formed subjects. As he puts it in the very beginning of his *We Mortals*, “One is born with forces that one did not contrive, One lives by giving form to those forces. Forms that one picks up from others” (Lingis, 119). One can notice to what extent his understanding of subject depend on the forces that come as a result of a subjects’ interaction with others. Such plasticity in the formation of subjects is at the core of Lingis’ innovative phenomenology and it sheds a new light on our understanding of separate affects through an interactive and holistic psychology which is notably influenced from Gestalt models. In his *Imperative*, Lingis introduces in a very sporadic manner, an understanding of laughter which goes beyond a communicative mode. In other words, once again we come across a writer who prioritizes an affective conception of humour and laughter over a linguistic one.

Language is not the primary medium, then, for communication. It is not speaking to another that we cease to deal with him or her as an instrument or obstacle, and recognize his or her subjectively. It is in laughter and tears that we have the feeling of being there for others. We do not laugh alone and forever alone (Lingis, 127).

As one can notice, at least two components are attributed to such laughter, namely its non-linguistic and communicative mode as well as its social and inter-subjective dimension. But what makes Lingis significant to this study is not the direct links he makes with laughter and humour, but rather the plastic itinerary between different affects. What serves our purpose here, is to see how such framework can help us understand the humour in this novel. *Life, End of*, as we have already discussed is not a comic novel as its treatment with humour and laughter takes place in the middle of anxiety, crisis and the pain the character is undergoing. The handicapped, paralysed body of the narrator cannot move easily and is not even able to experience to laugh as smoothly.

And, the body, though it may cause laughter, has no sense of humour of its own, no small sparks of slow but planetary motion, no fleeting stars of word-play, only the mind has those (Brooke-Rose, 12).

The humour in *Life, End of* can not be analysed independently from the overwhelming anxiety that the character presents; this makes the novel more interesting as the small, microscopic sources of humour are able to resist the anxiety that such an overwhelming physical state can cause. In a way, one can say that the humour present in the entire novel not only prevents submission to such anxiety but also evidently has the power to transfigure the affects inherent in anxiety. In *We Mortals*, Lingis foregrounds the fact that anxiety can be analysed and defined in his framework of thought. This is extremely important in relation to *Life, End of*, a novel which is an amalgam of anxiety, pain and such existential concerns and random humour that come up out of sudden in the middle of them and resist them affectively. Lingis does not celebrate or romanticize anxiety and instead links it in an affective framework to an indifferent mode of life. Anxiety, according to Lingis and in affective terms, surfaces through a distance. Lingis believes that there is an inherent distance which causes anxiety and leaves one to himself. Such distance and *indifference* is at the heart of an inability to express the forces of life. Putting it differently, when the forces are not actualized and they are imprisoned in themselves, they get isolated and this causes anxiety. This has, for Lingis, certainly traces of the active and passive modes of existence offered by Spinoza. For Spinoza too, when active life is led to the realization of one's powers it results in joy. In effect, one asks oneself "what must we do in order to be affected by the maximum of joyful passions" (Deleuze, 1992, 274). It suffices here to remember that Spinoza's project in the same vein is an attempt to shift from passive affects to active ones that celebrate such joy. But what is interesting in Lingis' notion is the fact that he introduces anxiety as a result of such passivity and isolation.

What feels anxiety is then a heat, a force of life that is potential, not actualized, that clings to itself, and wills to be. When the theater of practical and social world fades off into indifference and distance, when the firm forces have contracted disconnect from the layouts and the functions and the roles, this force of life is backed up against itself, and clings to itself, and feels the cold darkness of nothingness closing in. Isolated, singled out, it feels its own singularity, a force of life assembled in this frail composition of matter, drifting into the abyss, never to be assembled again (1998, 121).

Humour does not exclude or neglect anxiety, it reorients it through transmuting its inherent passive forces to active ones. In order to elaborate this, we take a look at a passage in *Life, End of* where the character is describing various issues and framing them in the context of death.

For the first time since earlier enthusiasms followed by exams and all the rest, the mind now turns to the world, easing out of word-play and its neighbouring disciplines, philology, linguistics, linguistics, philosophy, psych-analysis. These are the ivory towers, more singularly cut off from the world than the wooden or stone towers of history politics economics sociology, however cut off these these still may be. But words we take for granted do get analysed. One book traces the complex history of democracy, that thing we ask people to die for, so that we needn't, and which we are trying to ram down the rest of the world's throat, how long it took, how recent, how false, flawed and incomplete it is. Another does the same with the word republic. I'm a republican, says a girl ambulance-driver, clearly in the context meaning democrat, or even just that she's as good as any other. As if monarchies couldn't be democratic or republics dictatorial. Yet such studies are a good sign, some people are waking up. Traditionally philosophy and its kindred disciplines merely assert, science has to prove. And re-question. The strong but rustable metal towers of science are now unsharable, except in popularised versions of astronomy physics biology paleontology and such, the most inaccessible and yet the least cut off from the world, the planet, the universe. The globe. Except when some rush ahead with something new without first finding out if it can be stopped, like sorcerer's Apprentice.

The glaucous eyes grow squinilly weary of reading all day, the body grows heavier since unable to go out and walk. And despite the passion and ease of understanding, an ease resulting from long train of intake, it all gets nevertheless forgotten. Why not, since no seminars to give no conference papers to prepare, no books to write. On way to nearby death, what is intake for? Just pleasure. Still, the merely personal unmemorability of such books create tele-temptations. Documentaries, science programmes, earth reports, political discussions. These last however sooner or later are unhearable since speakers interrupt each other relentlessly until the less loud voice is quelled, though meanwhile listeners lose all. And since each country broadcasts as few learning programmes as possible at comfortable hours, two dishes bring them on a full platter of time-zone choices.

For after all, even these learning programmes are fictions too, in a way. How? Well in the same way any presenter of anything tells a daily lie by his very presence when he says see you tomorrow. He won't but we'll see him. Or an author is shown typing, on his personal screen, the very novel that is published and being discussed on the screen that shows him. Such frequent staging sunders trust in the supposedly true programmes.

A windy-haired professor walks and and talks his way through a wood, down a street, up a rock, or barely-careless into a field, his voice saying, say, it's a battlefield. Or better, a battlefield called Waterloo, the camera careful not to include the modern pyramidal monument stair-climbed by tourists, yet cutting-room-switches to a crowd of office-workers locusting out of the tube-station called, on camera, Waterloo. Another follows the trail of a sixteenth-century conquistador gone native, from Rio Grande to Mexico by trenito or jeep, and stops to talk to locals who have just about heard, because it's legendary, of the mountain of gold he sought, but not of him. In the organised amnesia of modern schooling is such non-humorous fusion of temporal levels wise? (Brooke-Rose, 26-28).

This already goes beyond a semantic or cognitive attempt, or what is at stake is not meaning but affects and their forces. By applying Deleuze's analysis of forces, especially in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, to one of humour one can say that such humour is not the result of differential relations between signifiers, as in the structuralist view, but rather a differential relation between active and reactive forces. Therefore and as will be discussed in a minute, the relation between humour and value is at the heart of such conception of humour. In a vitalist framework, offered mainly by Deleuze and Guattari,

The whole of life must be considered in terms of actions and passions, and so is essentially composed of social relations. While these forces are transcendental conditioning factors and hence unknowable, they can be distinguished genealogically according to a typology of sense and value (Goodchild, 30).

What is at stake is how this passage shows the very transmutation of negative effects, especially those under inertia and the eminent death to those of humour. The humour for this passage presents us to at least two functions: one is more a vitalist attempt as mentioned, that brings us to the function of the new active forces of humour while the other bears an ethical function. Although such ethical function of humour will be discussed in the next chapter, it suffices to note, through this passage how humour in a very minuscule and molecular sense addresses the truth itself or what has been represented as truth. Such function which in this research, is called humoureme not only bears the former vitalist transmutation of forces, but also emerges out of any discourse which keeps professing. As we see towards the end of this passage, where the authors are represented in a way which is untrue but which pleases the spectators and Brooke-Roses' humour targets such pretension.

Back to the vitalist facet of such humour, it is interesting to see primarily how Brooke-Rose's passage provides us with a cluster of various affects, which are their own replete with negative forces. From the physical inertia to 'the complex history of democracy' and 'Documentaries, science programmes, earth reports, political discussions' (27) are common in one thing, they all transmit an 'inaccessible' life. In different parts of the novel, this inaccessibility is presented, however Brooke-Rose divides such inaccessibility to physical and mental categories where one can be defined in terms of gradual and physical death, isolation and inertia and the other emblematic of anxiety. Nevertheless, humour surfaces in an unexpected phenomenon between these various sources of reactive forces. And it is such unexpectedness which makes it more suitable and more needed in this between. If anxiety surfaces when something is backed up against itself, and excluded from its assemblage and social relations, humour retains the connections and restores the assemblage by activating the passive forces. Nevertheless, for a realist humour such anxiety is very much reminiscent of a Bergsonian state of laughter when something organic goes toward being inorganic and becoming a thing. Bergson's *Le Rire* depicts the moment when an assemblage is collapsed and ridiculed. As mentioned in the first chapter and seen against his emphasis on duration, movement and time in his other works, Bergson's picture of laughter, to a large extent, arises as the result of the absence of such plasticity or when a rigidity befalls one organism. However, this rigidity is not simply a corporeal rigidity and as we will explain in a minute, laughter can target the inherent rigidity of ideas and knowledge and even affective rigidity too. By extending the degrading function of laughter to a phenomenological realm, one notices that the relation between such laughter and value is no less important; laughter degrades values (at least for a certain moment). Here we analyse some preliminary aspects of such relation between humour, laughter and values at work.

In *Life, End of*, Even if laughter is one case among others where a non-linguistic and affective communication is formed and communicated, it unsettles a knowledge that is purely linguistic and discursive. Georges Bataille in his *Inner Experience* and his *Unfinished System of Non-Knowledge* shows that such experiences as laughter and weeping can be no less communicative than language. It should be noted that some psychological facets of these two phenomena were already present, as Bataille admits, in the writings of the American author Alfred Stern especially the one entitled *The Philosophy of Laughter and Tears*. In his analysis of laughter and tears, Stern places

emphasis on what these two experiences lead us to and the mechanism behind them. According to Stern, laughter and tears are two 'polar manifestation of psychism', two irrational experiences which are similar in the fact that they are both excessive and do not fit the common economy of the psyche which seems to have interested Georges Bataille. Alfred Stern's emphasis is on the common element of value between laughter and weeping and both such experiences are formed in relation to value judgement. 'We laugh at degraded values, or in order to degrade values, but we weep about threatened, lost, and unattainable values' (Stern, 17). However, to elaborate and differentiate them, Stern believes that tears are associated with a kind of positive value judgement as we weep where our values are threatened or they are no longer existent. On the other hand, we laugh as an expression of a negative value judgement as our values are degraded. Although Stern and Bataille's analysis of laughter and tears are helpful in order to discard a subjective and intentional conception of humour, it will be elaborated in the last chapter that, in order to develop a realist humour, one cannot remain in such a psychological explication of laughter and tears. However, by foregrounding the question of value in relation to laughing and weeping as moments when our values are threatened or degraded, we would be able to define and delineate an inhuman conception of humour that targets subjects by degrading them. By adding the element of value to a realist conceptualization of humour, we maintain a mechanism between an inhuman laughter and the very degradation of human values.

3.3 Laughing im Augenblick

History topples irrationally at the 'mid-moment'. These instances, otherwise called 'initial', or 'Critical' Moments, have the characteristic of the epiphanic mode: suddenness, momentousness and intensity. The perfection of 'the irrational glory' is meant, of course to disown Hegel's self-realization or perfection of the spirit through the ages (Tigges, 181).

As discussed earlier in the first and second chapters, the emphasis on the contingency laid at the heart of humour makes it different from a wilful act of producing laughter and wit. If a representational mode of humour makes an attempt to produce humour at any cost, this way depends on linguistic reformulations and algorithms, while a realist humour, without excluding language, places emphasis on a sudden and unexpectedly

new relation between forces that is understood better in terms of affects. However we need to elaborate such a sudden and abrupt moment and its digressions in an understanding of a realist humour.

Along the top of these crushed creatures, separated by a ridge of flatter stones for support, runs a tall line of vertical stones clinging together side by side, forerunners of defensive spikes and just as useless. One sticks out higher than others, horizontally sliced above a narrow downward ridge like a long nose, itself flanked by two hollows inclined outwards from nose to cheekbone, and below by a flowing beard. The hollows are darker at the top, eyes looking up blankly towards the brow cut off by sky like a pale Erasmus hat made of eternity, or a baseball cap worn back to front. Or maybe a Hamlet, or the sky as invisible crown of thrones. Did Christ wear a hat? (Brooke-Rose, 24).

To what extent can one think of humour in *Life, End of* as a humour beyond a simple linguistic mode? *Life, End of* seems to offer instances of humour that are defined in relation to the moment and time rather than language; an escape from the continuity of time in a discontinuous and ephemeral moment of humour. The novel produces cracks in linear time from which intense moments of humour erupt. One can see evidently how such movements from one cognitive zone to another is made possible through sudden humorous and ephemeral operations implemented in the text. Such humour may not look so hilarious and might not provoke a rush of laughter, but there is an element of mental playfulness that takes place in moving from one zone to another. This humour that is shaped in moving from one zone to another zone helps an ephemeral emergence and allows the reader to appreciate the very moment of suddenness. One can argue that while the element of surprise in one-liners is, to a large extent, a linguistic and rhetoric technique, such suddenness is more an affective communication that rises up in the midst of the linear narrative. Such suddenness or *Plötzlichkeit* has more to do with the element of time than with a linguistic unexpectedness of one-liners. To provide an example for such mechanism of humour, the following extract shows a linear description that towards the end reflects a playful comparison with unexpected entities.

But the world. The contact seems less sure, the knuckle replacing the fingernail for the orthostatic position during the measuring of blood pressure. And soon no doubt the palm of the hand. The systole falls, the diastole rises and vice versa. All this for the doctor, who glances at the month's figures and says nothing as usual. Yet the standing position is particularly hard, since the instrument always first shows E for Error or even EE, which means blowing up all over again, only to

reach E once more, like a reproach, still standing with exploding veins, then figures at last, which no one apparently needs to know, for clearly sudden death is easier than waiting nail or knuckle to wall for three minutes or more. Unless death is the same, first marking Error twice (Brooke-Rose, 24-25).

In his *Suddenness: on the Moment of Aesthetic Appearance*, Karl Heinz Bohrer tries to bring the aesthetic vigour to this experience and elaborates suddenness based on a conception of time that penetrates the present moment and provokes a sense of discontinuity. The most proper word to describe what Bohrer describes in relation to this moment of *Plötzlichkeit* can be epiphany in its sudden appearance. This suddenness is not new in the history of philosophy—such a flash or *Augenblick* has already been discussed and put forth in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. The main thing that Bohrer adds which is to some extent relevant to a realism of humour is again the problem of nihilism. Bohrer, however, approaches it in a different manner. *Plötzlichkeit*, due to its sudden nature, can destroy any continuity and make any positive paradigm its target. Bohrer's major project in *Suddenness* is to offer an understanding of suddenness which, by being indexed to history, stands safe from this nihilism of the moment that denies history and narration. The difference between the suspended moment as in the incongruity conceptualization of humour and that of aesthetic suddenness is of extreme significance to a realist project on humour.

This momentary emergence (*Augenblick*) in *Life, End of* cannot be limited to a linguistic movement towards amusing the reader, since it foregrounds cognition as well and moves between cognitive territories in the same manner Beckett did. Bohrer discusses the case of Schlegel's *Ueber die Unverstaendlichkeit*, and Kleist's *Ueber die allmaehliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden*, and places emphasis on the cognitive acts and appreciates them as events which make something become suddenly aware of itself. In both '*On Incomprehensibility*' by Schlegel, and '*On the Gradual Completion of Thoughts While Speaking*' by Kleist, what is at stake is knowledge itself and how in a tension between thoughts and feelings, a spontaneous flow is expressed which was hidden from thought and knowledge. However knowledge normally suppresses this flow and interrupts it. As a result, such an event can not be measured, not even logically, by what is already in existence (Bohrer, 1987, 10).

One way of analysing this difference that helps see these two mechanisms of suddenness and surprise in the cognitive and linguistic grasp of humour is through Bohrer's definition of suddenness against the background of fear. This fear is the fear of the unknown and the suddenness that it entails stands above a simple rhetoric intervention. In his discussion of Kleist, Bohrer reminds us of the fact that this awareness in Kleist is a direct result of a contingent consciousness or a *Kontingenzbewusstheit*, and more importantly, this *Kontingenzbewusstheit* takes place in the oscillation between *Grund* and *Abgrund*. It is once again such contingency that provides the possibility that counters nihilism of any sort. In his *Suddenness*, Bohrer maintains a more explicit argument that this moment of suddenness can not be defined simply based on an interruption of any kind and, in effect, reducing this moment of contingency to a simple interruption is itself nihilistic. To escape a negative aesthetic something else must be implied; otherwise contingency remains merely destructive. However, this moment and its obtrusive presence is more authentic than a simple appearance and combination as in a linguistic juxtaposition. According to Bohrer, this 'sudden' or 'dangerous moment' is a moment that is recurrent in numerous literary works and 'has the ability of absolutizing of the now to an appearing moment, to a poetological structure, of the epiphany' (Bohrer, 59). This pure presence can be applied to the understanding of humour in *Life, End of* that is based on an incalculable and emphatic moment of humour production. It is significant to know that *Life, end of* is able to run such humour based on its cognitive or imaginative capabilities. The novel and the narration produce an agile humorous act that runs between different cognitive zones and shapes an interzonal imaginary.

Good manners are timeless, spaceless, classless: simply the ability to imagine the other. As an intelligence officer learns to do, if efficiently backed and not corrupted, experiencing a whole war from the enemy view point (Brooke-Rose, 26).

Life, End of is an attempt, not unlike those of Beckett, to write and unwrite, to loosen what has been already written. This puts forth a mental humour that takes place in mind, an attempt at the level of cognition and *Weltschaung* is made throughout the text. Admittedly, the humour in *Life, End of* is so scattered between lines and pages that it seems hardly possible to localize it. This makes its humour a flow running under other flows, flows which, on the face of it are quite serious and even tragic. Flows of pain are mostly accompanied by an underlying flow of relief.

But where does this relief come from? Back to our primary question, what are the conditions for such a humour? What makes such mechanism possible? Given the epiphany nature of this sort of humour, one can claim that this humour is more an imaginative humour; the very function of this humour is often questioning the common sense by having resort to the imagination which is evidently more possible in a literary work. Such an imaginary humour is able to zigzag freely between all opinions, it challenges the opinions that are rooted in our most immediate knowledge of the world. There is a note on page 36 of the novel which implies this:

Nevertheless there is a delicate balance to observe. Interruptions in imitation debates on radio and television produce not just animation but unhearing of two superimposed voices, which rapidly make the programme unlistenable unwatchable swtichoffable, the way the aggressive interviewer who constantly overspeaks his guest as rapidly becomes unwatchable swtichoffable (Brooke-Rose, 40).

And how the novel shifts to another zone of knowledge which has similarities to what Koestler calls Bisociation mechanism.

Animation and warmth can mean unhearing. Is that logical? Just as the long past of the Basques is not the same as the long past of the narrow strip of land, back to Abraham, Moses, Joshua, the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Palestinians, the Hebrews, the Romans, ... (Brooke-Rose, 40).

Zigzags like this between different zones of knowledge or common sense gives rise to a humour that is so ephemeral one can not be sure if the author has prepared it in advance or it has emerged simultaneous with the depicted pain. *Life, End of*, following Beckett's style, is one prime example of tragicomic craft where anxiety, pain and its relief are presented in one same instance. And this makes it a better opportunity to see the interrelation, as we discussed, between anxiety as an accumulation of passive forces and its relief through humour. One can notice the humour of epiphany and *Kontingenzbewusstheit* in contrast to that of algorithmic humour of one-liners or wit production, embraces the ephemeral contingency that occurs to it. This is not only a generic privilege and has less to do with an epistemological mode than with an existential gesture. *Life, End of*, as an interesting example of a molecular humour, is able to present an underlying gesture together with the surface narration. Humour is not buried or hidden in the depth of the novel, but on its skin, its exact surface and the movements from here to there suffice to expose such

humorous mood. The novel zigzags and this unpredictable form, which unsettles opinions and common sense, is largely made possible through humour. Moving from one form, one idea, one conduct, one belief to another one unexpectedly is an incongruous and inconsistent movement that can not be justified except through the humorous gesture. It is very important to see this trajectory of humour in *Life, End of* in relation to the tragic, anxiety-ridden face of the book. Although this face is sporadically distributed in the entire novel, where there is this humorous movement it is meant to target a non-humorous one. In effect, this juxtaposition of serious and humorous in *Life, End of* is of extreme significance for a realist project of humour which tries to elaborate humour in its interiority.

3.4 Laughter and the Unknown

The experience of laughter teaches Bataille an important lesson: sovereign is he who knows when to lose his head. At stake is Bataille's take on Kairos and the possibility of an eventual instant...What Bataille's sovereign laughter brings forth is a joyful, erotic, passionate relation to the unknown, of thought and history, which we perceive as the impossible (Parvulescu, 85).

Die Komik setzt also Bewusstsein voraus, und sie entspringt genauer einem Widerspruch desselben zu einem eigenen Begriff oder Wesen, von dem her es sich versteht. Diesen Widerspruch bringt die Situationskomik von außen ins Spiel, während die Charakterkomik dem unangemessenen Überstieg eines Bewusstseins über sich selbst entspringt (Manfred Frank, Appendix, 15).

In his *Unfinished System of Non-knowledge*, Georges Bataille makes a difference between *savoir* and *connaitre*. He starts his discussion with what he calls the unknown. The unknown for Bataille is ‘_obviously always unforeseeable’ (2004. 133) Laughter or what makes us laugh is one significant example of non-knowledge for Bataille. Bataille admits that studying laughter is not very hard while analysing what makes us laugh is extremely inaccessible, mainly because it is hardly possible to investigate the element of surprise or ‘_intimate overturning, of suffocating surprise, that we call laughter’ (2004. 133). The real obstacle, as Bataille sees it is one of investigating what makes us laugh. What makes us laugh is not laughter, it is prior to

laughter and yet it can not be transformed to any other form such as knowledge, since if it could be transformed into knowledge, one could do that instead of laughing. Therefore, the focus of such an approach is once again _what makes laughter possible', especially when as in *Life, End of* we are analysing such minuscule and ephemeral moments that trigger a short laugh and then elude us.

For professionally based friendship with women can become quite dodgy, since women have somehow not yet fully developed the art of unrivalling friendship on their own, with or without appendage (but have men?)...Whereas a professional friendship between a woman and a married man surges quite naturally like a surfer crouching under a wave, then balancing on the wave-length with his wife as beach-witness and companion, wholly sharing and admiring, happy at the showery foam, and, if she has a profession, pleasurably listening and contributing her experience (Brooke-Rose, 33).

Laughter in pieces such as the one given above is not much a loud laughter that one can hear, rather it is a mental laughter that touches unexpected zones and this unexpectedness triggers ephemeral laughter. This laughter has more to do with a knowledge of the world that can not be fully explicated and yet in its elusive emergence amuses us; it is a movement from what we know to something that we hardly know; this laughter emanates from something partially knowable and partially unknowable. In his discussion of non-knowledge, Georges Bataille insists that knowing something is extremely different from knowing how to do it; a difference that he attributes to the one between *connaitre* and *savoir* (ibid). Bataille argues that this distinction is of significance and relevant to laughter because _'in every case when we laugh, we pass from the sphere of the known, from the anticipated sphere, to the sphere of the unknown and the unforeseeable'' (2004. 135). Such an impossibility of analysing laughter as something which contains the unforeseeable at its heart convinces Bataille to call for a philosophy of non-knowledge. German Romanticism, as mentioned earlier, is a source through which one can see the role such non-knowledge plays in order to see how it helps an inhuman project of humour. Manfred Frank insists and warns us that German Romanticism varies from one philosopher to another and yet there are similarities that we focus on. According to Frank, Schelling is not determined and decisive about knowledge being able to take hold of the Absolute but similar to Hölderlin's view, Schelling in his

Identitätsphilosophie, makes it clear that _Being precedes consciousness so that no understanding can exhaust the content of what is meant by Being.‘ (Frank, 56).

In a simplified way, it is here that a kind of absolute unknowing takes the place of absolute knowing among some German Romantics. According to such philosophers and especially evident in Hölderlin, of Being we have no concept but more a sense, a feeling. These philosophers, influenced by Jacobi, make a difference between Being as a predicative or relational Being and existential Being. According to this difference, _‘the relational (or predicative) sense of Being is a weakening - or disintegration of that sense of Being in existence. Put another way, predicative Being breaks up (or divides [ur-teilt]. Being which is originally undivided and unified; on the other hand, the predicative relation can only be understood from the relation-less existence‘‘ (Frank, 62). As explained earlier, such an experience of Being can be attained in relation to oneself, in the self-subversive mode that Brooke-Rose presents. If one’s mind avoids and rejects such an experience, one’s body is a more proper tool to experience the flows, the flows of pain and the flows of humour,

For the biggest problem, as one study of the disabled says, is not the handicap- here the growing lameness and the pounding Vasco the Harmer, constant pain, the constant falls during the constant low-grade work of the pining Ceres in the hindbrain, pining for Proserpine. The biggest problem is Other People. And the body, though it may cause laughter, has no sense of humour of its own, no small sparks of slow but planetary motion, no fleeting stars of word-play, only the mind has those. But then, what is the mind but body, the corn goddess at war with the gleaner that sweeps up for a little peace and order and doubtful cleanliness. The mind without the body couldn’t laugh nor murmur nor shriek nor have tears in the eyes. It couldn’t play, nor run, nor stumble with words, it couldn’t read (Brooke-Rose, 11-12).

One can say with some confidence that Brooke-Rose, in *Life, End of* is more inclined to an experience of betweenness, between mind and body. One single way to dispense with the heaviness of mind and knowledge is through humour. It is by humour that she is able to oscillate between body and mind. Sarah Birch argues that Brooke-Rose’s multilingualism is the very source of her success,

the prismatic effect of viewing one field of knowledge, one language, one culture through the discursive lens of another, and the idea of crossing between cultural domains (Birch, 53).

It seems that this multilingualism has provided her with a large amount of non-knowledge or intuition to produce humour. Her humour unveils the limits of knowledge and the role such knowledge plays in this regard. Humour and laughter can be seen as mechanisms attached to this absolute knowledge to trigger and appreciate surpassing the limits of knowledge by distancing from it. If according to such philosophers, *of our existence (Dasein)* we have only a feeling, but no concept' (Frank, 64), then humour is a mechanism to oscillate between this knowledge and that feeling. If any knowledge is formed in a position or a disposition towards Being, then humour runs between these positions and attaches them to Being's feeling. However taking our knowledge of the world into account which is shaped, not only through a personal point of view or a general *Weltanschauung*, but also through the molecular and momentary perceptions of the world, leads the realist project of humour to move from the interior facets of laughter to its exterior facets that, in a social mode, take place between subjects. The exterior side of humour and laughter not only aims to investigate the contagious facet of humour in its social scope, but also to analyse how humour takes place between different positions or assemblages.

Much follows as a consequence of this: If *'Being'* (qua positing) can no longer be understood as something which (as something transcendental, as category or quasi-predicate) is a determination of thought or *'logical form'* then it must be understood as a *'singular tantum'* - as *'a blessed unity, [as] Being in the true sense of the word,'* as Hölderlin affirms in the Prologue of the penultimate edition of *Hyperion* (KTA 163: 10). Being must be thought as something unique, something to which all else would stand in relation, and which, due to its power, would have a being (Seienden), next to others. Schelling will later speak of a *'transitive'* sense of Being *'so that all being (Seiende) insofar as it is, has been of absolute Being in this unique sense, that is, it would be contained within Being* (Frank, 66).

Although the emphasis in Bataille is more on laughter, we need to pursue the question in relation between humour and subjects but also between different beings, subjects and assemblages. Laughter, one can argue, is stuck in a romantic understanding in Georges Bataille's analysis, defined as a sudden and eruptive act against systems or orders of thought and knowledge. Bataille has not shown how laughter can itself, through what he calls contagion, be incorporated between beings. Putting differently, Bataille's gesture against Hegelian dialectics results in avoiding any rational and gradual path defined by humour: humour is nothing but the corporeal and emphatic moment of laughter. In relation between beings (Seienden) that live

next to each other and the Being or the sovereign, humour can play a more materialist role that can not be simply reduced to the sudden eruption of laughter. Humour, we will argue, can provide a gradual mechanism between these beings and in a participatory mode. Such humour as is beyond possession of any subject is an inhuman humour. Yet Bataille has introduced a condition for the production of such laughter which is related to knowledge. In effect inhuman humour targets primarily any being (seiende) that professes absolute knowledge. Such realism adds two more characteristics to the inhuman humour which take place in the exteriority of assemblages and between beings: it occurs gradually, and it is immanent to the participation of such beings (seienden) with each other. Therefore, although the interior facet of humour production stresses the significance of sudden and passionate laughter, an inhuman laughter goes beyond a simply sudden source in its formation. Nevertheless it should be emphasized again that these two sides (interiority and exteriority) of humour are deeply connected and interrelated. The aforementioned relation between consciousness of a subject is utterly related and determining the exterior relation with other subjects and subjects. Back to the question of

Identitätsphilosophie in Schelling, Fichte and other philosophers, consciousness and conscious subject is more a result than a generator. In effect, Schelling's philosophy, in the relation between the Absolute and all other subjects' relative knowledge and consciousness, does not terminate the role of difference between subjects but relates it to the Absolute knowledge _of which we have a feeling'. For this relation, Schelling introduces a mechanism of *transitivity* between the absolute one (monism) and many subjects (pluralism). Transitivity functions as moving from the ground or earth to whatever exists on the earth, a _'moving from the ground to towards the finite being of which it is possibility, or from the finite being itself (understood as a moment of passage towards subsequent degrees of the same relative non-being) or finally from a subject or a thought that, as *prius*, is turned to the actualization of a being-possible, which is incapable of 'filling up', in its own finitude, the infinite of that which thinks it' (Corriero and Dezi, 125).

In effect, we aim to recognize how humour plays a role in relation between the ground or the absolute and the partial consciousness every subject possesses. Schelling introduces transitivity in the relation between the universe and the multiplicity of subjects inhabiting it. Schelling's focus is more on the relative status that is inherent in knowledge and it is based on such incompleteness shared by all

beings bearing relative knowledge that realist humour moves beyond an interiority of laughter (as defined and emphasized by Bataille as an excessive moment in which subjective knowledge is unsettled and disrupted) towards an exteriority of humour between beings and multiplicities. In effect, inhuman humour is nothing but the laughter that is heard from the incompleteness of multiple beings encountering one another.

you recognise its [the earth's] true essence only in the link by which it eternally posits its unity as the multiplicity of its things and again posits this multiplicity as its unity. You also do not imagine that, apart from this infinity of things which are in it, there is another earth which is the unity of these things, rather the same which is the multiplicity is also unity, and what the unity is, is also the multiplicity, and this necessary and indissoluble One of unity and multiplicity in it is what you call its existence (...) Existence is the link of a being (Wesen) as One, with itself as a multiplicity (Schelling SW I/7, 56).

By replacing being with a more materialist and less essentialist concept of assemblage that takes constant evolution and becoming of beings into account, one would be able to say that the transitive quality of Being, in a Schellingian term, can make Being diffuse in different assemblages and by means of this transitivity of Being, different assemblages are arranged in such a way to interact and participate with one another. But rather than negating one another, assemblages, in their ultimate relation to the absolute, bear various abilities of humour or obtain different degrees of hilarity. Since it is this absolute Being as the source of inhuman humour, any assemblage is safer from ridicule by acknowledging humour in its knowledge of the absolute Being. As soon as any assemblage becomes autonomous and sticks to itself and its own difference or instead of maintaining humour in its exterior participation with other assemblages sticks to its own knowledge of the other assemblages, it is prey to inhuman humour. However as mentioned earlier this is a gradual procedure that does not need to occur quite suddenly. As Being, according to Hölderlin, is not based on knowledge, any assemblage that sticks to its knowledge would be a candidate of inhuman humour which occurs through the very transitivity of Being. Any assemblage can be a medium, a lip, a mouth, a tooth, a cheek for this laughter that instead of hearing it and enjoying laughter as a subject will be an object or an organ to shape it. Thus, we do not need to understand inhuman humour as analogous to human laughter since in inhuman humour an assemblage can be an organ to produce laughter.

Nullification of knowledge of any singular assemblage can take place in relation and in encounter with other assemblages and this paves the way to go beyond laughter to a materialist understanding of inhuman humour. The unconditioned in the absolute is the incomprehensible itself (*das Unbegreifliche selbst*) for I can never grasp it in conceptual thought. But it is not unknown, quite the contrary, it reveals itself as ‘ an unmediated certainty which not only is in no need of any foundations, but also excludes all foundations‘‘ (Schelling, 79). Furthermore, since no assemblage functions independently and are all defined and diffused on one same ground, they are not comparable to the status of the ground that is independent and needless of assemblages which exist on it. Consequently, any assemblage that seeks autonomy collapses and instead of being able to act on the ground, would be a part of ground: state of derision and humiliation, buried into earth: *humilis*. Yet this humiliation does not take place *ex nihilo*, it emanates within the *gradual* relation one assemblage has with other assemblages.

This ultimate (or highest) knowledge can not seek its regular ground in something else. Not only is it in itself independent of something higher, but, since our knowledge proceeds from consequence to antecedents and vice versa, that which is the highest and for us the principle, that is to say that the principle of all knowledge (*Erkennes*), must not be knowable (*erkennbar*) through another principle of its being and the principle of its being-known have to coincide, be one and the same, given that it can not be known but precisely because it is itself not something different (Schelling, 80).

Any attempt in positing the absolute as well as any attempt at unconditioning what is conditioned will be met with the inhuman laughter and returned to earth, a hilarity which occurs in a materialist mode, without any transcendent hand and from within the participation of assemblages. Inhuman humour functions in an objective manner since it is linked to absolute indifference. Such an absolute indifference makes no difference safe from its inhuman humour. All differences should bear a degree of humour or they will be an object of humour itself for another upcoming difference. In other words, either an assemblage embraces humour or it would freeze and function as an organ for inhuman humour. This absolute indifference (the way Schelling defines it) acts objectively in relation to assemblages and yet its humour is incommensurate to human humour since it acts and produces humour inconsiderate of subjective demands and intentions although, there are conditions to it.

Once assemblages fall into objectifying other assemblages or subjectifying their own difference through their knowledge of themselves, once difference becomes known or conscious and expected from other assemblages rather than oneself, such an assemblage is likely to be ridiculed by inhuman laughter. Since ‘The emergence of difference out of Absolute Indifference is neither a mechanistic, objective process nor a voluntaristic, subjective one’ (Groves, 30), the absolute indifference acts asubjectively⁶ and produces inhuman humour.

3.5 Towards the Humour of the Outside

Territory and Earth are two components with two zones of indiscernibilities- deterritorialisation (from territory to Earth) and reterritorialisation (from earth to territory) (Deleuze and Guattari, 86).

[...] there exists neither a subject as subject nor an object as object, but that what knows and what is known are one and the same, and consequently no more subjective than objective (Schelling, 1804, 141).

The minuscule cases of mental laughter in Christine Brooke-Rose’s novel in the face of something serious can be read a gesture towards the distribution of humour in reality. If one is able to experience such humour only in imaginative form, one reason is that we can not easily bypass the segregation of humorous/ serious in reality. Yet such molecular humour throughout this novel is an attempt to see that the humorous and the serious can co-exist without reducing one to the other. Molecular humour takes place in everyday life without being specified to a particular time or place. It does not emerge by surpassing the serious, quite the opposite it occurs in relation to the serious or even the tragic. The connection between Hegel and Bataille makes a lot of sense if one considers that, for Hegel, consciousness is the key point in relation between slave and master. For Hegel, autonomy of the slave after being enslaved can not be attained unless through consciousness. This leads him to a state where

⁶ Also Frank mentions Schelling: ' Die Ironie, resümiert Schlegel, enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöslchen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Mitteilung. Sie ist die freieste aller Lizenzen, denn durch sie setzt man sich über sich selbst weg; und doch auch die gesetzlichste, denn sie ist unbedingt notwendig.

Absolute Knowledge becomes uniquely significant. Bataille, as mentioned earlier, sticks to his idea of sovereignty instead of following the Hegelian path shaped through consciousness. Bataille seeks a state of unknowing or non-knowing in experiencing sovereignty. For Hegel, Absolute Knowledge implies a state where there is not anything in the reality or the world that is not already a part of mind; something that closes the gap between the world and the mind in its Absolute Knowledge. Bataille seems to consider some special slot for this subject here since he insists on the contingency of the knower in its relation to knowledge. There is a knowledge always in the process of attaining knowledge and this can not be eradicated from our presuppositions. In his book, *French Hegel*, Bruce Baugh quotes a view from another thinker close to Bataille in the same camp, Benjamin Fondane, where laughter, even tragic laughter is:

The sign and the key to a new universe, which follows on all sides of the mechanical universe of necessity. It is the sign of a deeper inner life, a plethora of vitality, of a strange lack of application to the real, a maladaptation to the social. This less, which from the point of view of the social...is deficiency, appears to us on the contrary, as a more, a superabundance, a presence (Fondane, 211).

Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, in his seminal article *Laughter of Being*, sheds some light on an ontological notion of laughter mainly influenced by what he attributes to Bataille as ethics of laughter or ‘ethics of summit’. There Borch-Jacobsen approaches as Bataille did, the experience of laughter in relation to finitude and stresses the significance of plausibility of laughter in face of finitude, death and anxiety. Using a sentence from Bataille, Borch-Jacobsen defines what he means by the approximation of laughter and death. According to Georges Bataille, ‘Laughter hangs in suspense, affirms nothing, alleviates nothing’ (Borch-Jacobsen, 743). While philosophers avoid such an ephemeral existence of laughter, according to Borch-Jacobsen, Bataille is among the rare philosophers who have elaborated this point; even in Heidegger, as Borch-Jacobsen argues, the relation between laughter and finitude is ‘destined to remain at the stage of anguish of Nothingness.’ (Borch-Jacobsen, 743). According to Borch-Jacobsen, sovereignty is the answer to the very enigma of laughter; it is at work in the way we deal with any experience of finitude, be it death, pain, anxiety or any other tragic state. This sovereignty in Bataille is not so far from Hegelian *Herrschaft*.

Sovereignty is thus essentially defined as unconditionality (whence moreover its frequent assimilation to autonomy) and especially as "end in itself." What is sovereign, for Bataille, is that which does not serve anything-and no purpose other than itself, that which is not a means (useful, instrumental, servile) in view of an end (Borch-Jacobsen, 745).

Borch-Jacobsen goes further and claims that the concept of sovereignty fits literally with what Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* offers:

Is it not that for the sake of which the rest [is] done? ... Since the ends appear to be many, and since we choose some of them ... for the sake of others, it is clear that not all ends are complete; but the highest [= sovereign] good appears to be something which is complete.... That which is complete without any qualifications is that which is chosen always for its own sake and never for the sake of something else. Now happiness is thought to be such an end most of all, for it is this that we choose always for its own sake and never for the sake of something else (Borch-Jacobsen, 74).

In effect, for Bataille laughter has an unsettling function in relation to knowledge and is a tool that emerges to question the totality of knowledge. We have to emphasize that Bataille did not develop any material relation between such laughter and knowledge, or rather, he kept the two economies utterly segregated and did not manage to see how they might interrelate. The same can be applied to laughter as he did not develop a theory where laughter in its sovereign sense permeates what denies it. Borch-Jacobsen's attempt also illuminates such laughter as an embodiment of sovereignty without any attempt to see the interrelation and participation between the relative and the absolute or, in Schelling's word, the transitivity of infinite and finite in an elaborate sense. Consequently, such laughter is left as an interior experience that transgresses the limits of the individual. Nidesh Lawtoo in an article tries to bring such Bataillian framework of laughter into a constructive mode of subject production. Lawtoo's attempt is to extend an intrinsic characteristic of laughter, namely its contagion to a new mode of communication which already implies the presence of the other. Following the psychologist Pierre Janet and his psychology of *Socius*, Lawtoo aims to come to a —mimetic, inter-subjective psychology which transgresses precisely this metaphysics insofar as it considers the 'other' with whom I communicate as already interior to myself, already constitutive of what I am, so intertwined with myself that metaphysical distinctions between 'self' and 'other', 'interior' and 'exterior', no longer hold- in short, already a *socius* (1987. 74).

Seen this way, Bataille's theory of communication and especially that of

laughter is less to do _the death of subject‘ and more with the _birth of a new subject‘ that is able to communicate with an already implied other inside self. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that Lawtoo’s attempt is more focused towards emitting an _affective‘ subject in such sovereign communication of laughter, a communication that gives rise to the birth of a subject in its affective mode. Lawtoo stresses the significance of a _‘model of mimetic, automatic reflexes in order to account for the general experience of contagious forms of communication‘ (2011. 75). Given that, such an attempt is admittedly a major turn in our understanding of Bataille’s conceptualization of laughter and how it can help in the production of a new model of (inter)subjective communication. Lawtoo’s attempt stays in an affective domain and hardly gives rise to a materialist conception of humour in its exteriority; however, it places an unprecedented emphasis on the element of contagion in laughter. Lawtoo, following Bataille, is not able to illuminate the significance of this contagion, especially because both constrain their projects to that of laughter. Therefore the attempt here is to analyse the importance of such participatory model of socius for a realist framework of humour. Such attempts are admittedly a major turn in our understanding of Bataille's conception of laughter and they help in the production of a new model of (inter)subjective communication, but they remain in an affective domain and are hardly able to target a (ir)rational model of humour in its exterior mode. Such models, besides all their novel and innovative facets, are still shaping themselves in reaction to the linguistic and discursive communication and hold laughter as a mode of (affective) communication that is able to undo the normalized subjectivity and presents a new mode of individuation. However it seems that these precious attempts in the mimetic and affective sides of laughter can offers a more co(s)mic model of humour to think of laughter in a more inhuman mode.

Can we not claim that this kind of laughter or this conception of laughter is, to a large extent, a reaction to the failure in the distribution of laughter or humour in its daily and quotidian manner? In effect, remaining in an affective understanding of such laughter that opens itself in a momentary relief from everyday life—something that is to be discussed in the chapter on stand-up comedy in more detail—does not necessarily mean any question concerning the significance of rethinking the distribution of humour in our life. One needs to take this affective side into account in order to be able to see laughter or humour in its vast and day-to-day mode. Nevertheless, the question is how such a thing is feasible in the face of an increasing

need to segregate between serious and humorous levels of life. By stressing the significance of such a dichotomy, we might be able to once again place emphasis on the co(s)mic aspects of such a laughter. Affective conception might be able to introduce an outline of such elusive and contagious communication in laughter, but still maintains it in an aesthetics that has nothing to do with the way laughter and humour can partake rationality.

In effect, the Bataillian attempt to provide a mimetic account of subject based on a non-discursive model of communication foregrounds the need to look for a participatory model of humour and laughter which entails the interconnection between subject and object of laughter. Although, as Lawtoo highlights rightly there are implications of this need in Janet and Bataille's usage of *Socius*, the relational dimension of laughter has been left under-exploited. Janet stresses the significance of imitation and mimesis in his psychology, whereas what is required in terms of laughter is not only a mimetic and contagious composite but more a realism of laughter that justifies not only the way its spreads between subjects but also the criteria for its possible derision. If Janet raises the issue of relationality, it is solely in the domain of relational subject based on the very act of mimesis, while relationality can take another face where laughter itself takes place in relation between subjects.

The act of mimesis, for Janet, is fundamentally a relational process that transgresses reassuring distinctions between subject and object, imitator and imitated, in favor of a back-looping effect that short-circuits a linear, causal logic. The subject's imitation of the other generates a retroactive effect whereby the other starts imitating the subject imitating the other, and so on, ad infinitum (Lawtoo, 2011, 78).

According to a reading, which is to a large extent inspired by Derrida's reading of Bataille, laughter like death and play ' is not something we do but something that happens so much against our will that we are always looking for ways to control it (Westphal, 211). According to Westphal, this brings us to an understanding of laughter in relation to Hegelian Absolute where laughter manages to awaken the soul from its slumber from dialectics to speculation or "the slumber of reason" (Westphal, 208). And he makes a gesture to approximate it to 'belly laughter' in Zen Buddhism. Communication of affects as the pillar of laughter, is analogous to a communication in humour that takes place between different *Weltanschauungen*. In other words, laughter and humour are not fully incommensurate especially when a contagious communication is highlighted. If laughter in a human affective frame is defined based

on contagion, humour can also be settled between assemblages in an inhuman and asubjective communication. In order to explicate this inhuman role of humour between assemblages, it is inevitable to illuminate how communication takes place. The next two chapters are extensions of the exterior side of such realism.

Chapter Four: The Fool inside

4.1 Introduction

The ridiculing laughter of Beckett and the mental laughter of Christine Brooke-Rose oscillate between affects, and are able to transmute the passive affects to the active ones. Nonetheless, the practical side of such laughter which was introduced as the exteriority of humour is to be elaborated. In order to tackle the role humour plays beyond a psychological mode and to address its ethical as well as political significance, one primarily should think of the plausibility of an asubjective humour which although does not exclude the subjects involved, brings with itself an event which goes beyond such subjects and their will. In other words, although humour befalls subjects, it functions beyond and prior to them. In order to investigate the significance of humour in social and exterior relations between subjects, one should reconcile two poles: the indifference of such humour to subjects as well as its materialization in relation to and between these subjects. This, it is argued here, can be fulfilled through a conceptual persona, a persona that not only unveils the way the realism of humour functions and shows its characteristics in an actual and material social mode, but also a persona for the linguistic and rhetoric modes of laughter-production. A conceptual persona, as Deleuze and Guattari define it, is an intermediary way to think.

In philosophical enunciations, we do not do something by saying it but produce movement by thinking it, through the intermediary of a conceptual persona (1994, 65).

With some due reservations and evident similarities, the fool and the buffoon have been chosen in this chapter as the typical persona that unveil two apparently

similar but ontologically different procedures in the production of laughter. In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari, through the ideas of Descartes and Nicholas of Cusa, introduce the persona of idiot as the private thinker who stands against the school man. To them, idiot is able to think for himself and he is a conceptual persona for thought or even pre-thought or what makes the thought possible.

Where does the persona of the idiot come from, and how does it appear? Is it in a Christian atmosphere, but in reaction against the "scholastic" organization of Christianity and the authoritarian organization of the church? Can traces of this persona already be found in Saint Augustine? Is Nicholas of Cusa the one who accords the idiot full status as conceptual persona? (1996, 62).

What Deleuze and Guattari point up immediately is that this Christian figure gains a new persona (and function and singularity) in Russia and transforms from the old idiot to the new idiot who doubts more and more. The new idiot becomes a reservoir for non-sense or the incomprehensible, or even for what makes thought possible. However, it seems that the attempt made by Deleuze and Guattari to define idiot in its new mode and as a persona should be seen against the background of the old idiot which will be pursued in this study under the holy foolery. Nonetheless, a point is here worthy of attention, Deleuze has already in his *Logic of Sense* made a difference between nonsense and humour. In his *Logic of Sense*, and despite the similarities between the two, Deleuze devotes the eleventh series to nonsense and the nineteenth series to humour. To him, sense is the surface effect whereas nonsense is behind it as a blind spot that not only generates sense but also can be conceived in the interpretation as well as evaluation of surface effects or senses. (1990, 70-71). On the other hand and in the nineteenth series, Deleuze introduces humour that ‘hurls us into the ground of the bodies and the groundlessness of their mixtures.’ (135). Humour can do this through different mechanisms varying from analogy, example and substitution. However one major technique in humour production is that of repetition that Deleuze analyses sufficiently and convincingly in relation to different literary and cinematic works. Yet, it seems that humour is so dependent on the element of nonsense that one is tempted to claim that humour is but a manifestation of the nonsense. Deleuze’s analysis of humour does not go beyond an interrelation between humour, nonsense and the absurd and more importantly humour does not find any embodiment except in its linguistic manifestation. That is why it should not come as a surprise to see that for Deleuze and Guattari, in their late collaboration in *What is*

Philosophy, the new idiot is defined in the realm of the non-sense free from any truth challenge.

The old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants to turn the absurd into the highest power of thought-in other words, to create. The old idiot wanted to be accountable only to reason, but the new idiot, closer to Job than to Socrates, wants account to be taken of "(every victim of History"-these are not the same concepts. The new idiot will never accept the truths of History. The old idiot wanted, by himself, to account for what was or was not comprehensible, what was or was not rational, what was lost or saved; but the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him. This is most certainly not the same persona; a mutation has taken place. And yet a slender thread links the two idiots, as if the first had to lose reason so that the second rediscovers what the other, in winning it, had lost in advance: Descartes goes mad in Russia? (1996, 62-63).

Admittedly, for Deleuze and Guattari idiot is more equipped with non-sense and this has underestimated humour of the idiot in their approach and instead highlighted his nonsense. Realism of humour by making use of foolery define this persona as a fluctuating figure between sense and the non-sense and as will be discussed in the fifth chapter that repetition as a technique in humour production will not be restricted to a linguistic one. Fools' humour is not only an evasion from the fixated codes of morality to the realm of nonsense, but also a means to unveil and challenge the hypocrisy of such codes. Although the claimed realism in humour borrows a pragmatic manifestation from the fool, some comparisons with the buffoon help us proceed more effectively especially in differentiating between the realism in humour and the cognitive-linguistic wit. In the first part of this chapter holy foolery will be investigated in the way it utilizes humour and in the second part of this chapter, such a distinction is traced in the works of two comedians, Andy Kaufman and David Letterman.

4.2 Holy Fool's Humour

Andrew Thomas, in his book *The Holy Fools: a Theological Inquiry*, analyses different facets of holy foolery in Christianity. According to him, and in the relation

between holy fools and the monastic life, the first Byzantine holy fools were themselves among critics of monastic orders and this attempt was later imported from the church to the city. As he shows, they transformed theology and holiness from the church to a more practical and actual scope, through a negative theology, takes a civil side to be applied in the urban life. Thomas argues that this was neither secular, nor religious, in particular in comparison to desert fathers and mothers who had transformed the production of norms through their master-less obedience, defeat of vain glory, and foreignness to self. Thomas maintains that the transformation of the production of ethical knowledge among early Christian ascetics- through control of passions, representations, and silence- was followed by the holy fools' apophatic babble and rejection of religious loci of knowledge production in liturgy, confession, religious community and ecclesiastical authority. As a continuation of ascetic methods of reforming the self's relation to society by brutal truth-telling, the holy fools used self-ostracising insult to follow divine truth into the periphery without legislating universal modesty and submission to group truths. One technique among them was humour and laughter, which they believed to play a prominent role in relation to knowledge and truth. As such, the holy fools exemplify the practices most idealized in early Christian asceticism- humility, suspicion of fixed orders and truths, apophatic critique of doctrine and legislation- with renewed innovation and commitment to city life. These people applied the principles and strategies of negative theology to the Christian theology and practices of holiness through aspiring to desert freedom, the practice of ignorance, and the 'no-serious self'. Therefore, laughter and humour was a corporeal tool for fools in order to target the pseudo-consistent discourse and morality that almost always conceals its cracks through hypocritical acts.

Sergey Ivanov, in his comprehensive book *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond* (2006), stresses the significance of holy foolery in eastern Christianity and other religions. More specifically, he discusses the saints in orthodox Christianity who strove to overturn the conventional manners defined as sainthood and lived in Byzantium for over a millinium. Ivanov places emphasis on the disappearance of this cultural phenomenon from modern Greek culture while he argues that such a phenomenon is still alive in Russia. Holy fools, according to Ivanov, act spontaneously and instinctively against the secular ones who no longer believe in the unity of mundane and celestial. This way, holy foolery is a mechanism used to

intervene in the familiar realm and turn it into something humorous, ridiculous and unfamiliar. According to him, Islam has also trends similar to the acts of holy fools in Christianity, especially framed in Sufism. Those who are called Malamiyah are among the leading figures of foolery whose acts are not acceptable from a normal moral point of view or Ulama (Learned men). The key point in Islamic manifestation of holy foolery is its play with moral codes, yet this play has a victim and this is the person who through his own self-humiliation makes such questioning of moral codes possible. Similar manifestations of the holy foolery in Christianity and Islam can be seen in such examples provided by Ivanov,

The thirteenth century ‘fool for God’ (muwallah) Ali al-Kurdi threw apples at the mosques in Damascus, just as Symeon had thrown nuts at the churches in Emesa (10).

Such acts are undoubtedly not so acceptable according to Islamic law and morality. But the striking similarity as Ivanov shows is very helpful to trace some key points in relation to various religions. Ivanov suggests that the major work on holy foolery in Islam is *Kashf al-Mahju‘b*, by Ali Uthman al-Hujwiri. Overall, there is a lot to analyse and investigate in different manifestations of holy foolery, but what is important to this study is the way the holy fools make use of humour, suspending religious codes in order to overturn fixated and hypocritical religious norms. However as the main interest in holy foolery in this chapter is focused on the way they make use of humour and laughter, we need to elaborate such playfulness embodied in laughter and humour among the holy fools to be able to follow its digressions and consequences for a realist project on humour.

There are numerous theological approaches that have been adopting humour and comedy in their understanding of religion. Such approaches underestimate the tragic side of religion and instead shed more light on the hidden and implied comic-humorous side in religion. However any attempt to stress the significance of laughter and humour among the religious figures misses the point that rather than presenting a humorous and funny figure, such figures can be read as victims of humour in a self-humiliating mode that trigger humour in others. Among such studies are those of John Morreall, Conrad Hyers and Harvey Cox. For instance Hyers in different works such as *The Spirituality of Comedy* (2008) and *The Comic Vision and the Christian Faith* (1981) makes an interesting attempt to reconcile humour with faith and religion. But to do this he is determined to depict a humorous picture of

Christ or even other religious figures such as Buddha. However, for a realist project on humour, what is at stake rather than an insistence to project such religious and ascetic figures as humorous is to think of them as volunteer victims of humour.

James P. Carse in his *Finite and Infinite Games* (2011) introduces two kinds of games. He makes a distinction between finite and infinite games where finite games are played based on boundaries and infinite games founded on horizons. Boundaries are rules that make one conform in order to keep playing a finite game, whereas in infinite games there are horizons that change and move as the player moves or changes. Finite games are played in order to win, whereas infinite games are played in order to continue the play. In order to win, finite games have a definite start and ending. Carse introduces sports and debates or engaging in a war as examples of finite games. On the other hand, infinite games are fuzzy in that their beginning and the end is not as definite. As soon as the game is approaching its end or a resolution, new rules are introduced to keep the game going. However, as Carse emphasizes, it should be stressed that as “The infinite player does not expect only to be amused by surprise, but to be transformed by it” (18), the fool’s vulnerability makes him the first person to be affected by the humour. In effect, one reason why hypocrisy is normally the first target of such humour is that it demands one’s transformation to what he or she claims. In other words, the target of this humour is the morality that sustains its code through its serious and non-humorous gesture. One main characteristics of this humour is its ability to unveil what has been seriously presented and display the rift between what that morality claims and what it does. Moral codes are suspended through interventions that take place mainly in daily life. Thus rather than fulfilling what he or she is supposed to do, the holy fool does something shocking to spectators. Acts of excess, more than anything, are shocking to the audience and the best manifestation of holy foolery that still has traces is the literary figure *iurodivye*.

Iurodivye which is in effect the Christian version of the Greek *Salos* which is a holy fool is a product of the Early Christian era which has been playing a prominent role in the Russian literature (Franklin, 50) . But what should be borne in mind is that one need not always understand the holy fool through his asceticism. What is more important to this study is the pragmatic suspension in foolery that causes humour. The suspension that like incongruity theory’s description causes humour, but unlike linguistic humour which makes a semantic suspension possible, holy fool’s humour is practical, a feature that makes it a very suitable model for a realist project of humour.

In effect, holy fools and iurodivye are ascetic in their appearance, nevertheless transgressive in numerous cases in their humour, foolery and joy. In order to subvert the norms which appear to be general, holy fools stick to a particular instance, a singular moment and this way empty the norm from what it professes.



Figure 8. Cecil Collins' *A Fool Dancing*. 1941. Tate. London.

It should be underlined that both the buffoon and the fool make use of humour in a practical and real sense and they overlap in countless ways, nonetheless the major difference between the two stems from their attitude to humour. In a simplified way, the buffoon's aim is evidently more comic and they employ humour more generously, whereas the humour of the fool is more tacit and implied, especially, given the fact that fools have usually been associated with a sort of asceticism that renders them holy (Efthymiadis, 348). Aside from the historical and religious connotations attributed to the fools in the broad sense of holy foolery, the way the fools make use of humour is a practical gesture in the middle of reality.

Moreover, they are not easily definable and predictable as buffoons are, they are __as inexplicable as the essence of life itself__ (73). Nonetheless, it is such ubiquitous invisibility among fools that allow them to commit an ethical task in making the invisible that is hidden by subjects visible. The buffoon and the fool share numerous qualities and characteristics, but their acts are not based on some random and haphazard attitude; rather, the goals they pursue are consistent and, as Esaulov believes, they are both sufficiently__systematic__(74). According to Ivan Esaulov,

_comedic culture' whether understood in its broad sense or in its narrow Bakhtinian sense of carnival is the one that presents the buffoon as its cultural figure. Although buffoon can appropriate a subversive gesture and makes use of humour in a functional way to mock this or that institution, he is dependent on the normally unjust social power and social relations that he mocks. Esaulov maintains that, as one can see in Bakhtin, the buffoon's role is deeply connected to the totalitarian ideas he is mocking. Nevertheless, the buffoon starts with comedy and his acts are determined to be ultimately funny and amusing. Putting it in a formal way, Esaulov places emphasis on the fact that buffoon's act is both internally and externally comic, whereas the fool's is not necessarily externally amusing and humorous.

Comedic culture is the element for buffoonery, whether it is understood broadly in the Bakhtinian sense or narrowly as with Moser. Holy foolishness is similarly part of comedic culture, although it is only 'comedic' from the external point of view (74).

Adding Bakhtin's view on foolery can help us understand that the difference between buffoonery and foolery is not as easy to discern. The same Bakhtin did not ignore the role fools play in Dostoevsky's work. In his analysis of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin attributes a crucial role to foolery in Dostoevsky's works, particularly in *Notes from Underground*. According to Bakhtin, "the introduction of parodic and polemic element into the narration" in *Notes from the Underground* is already a fool act which makes it "more multi-voiced" and "more interruption-prone". In effect, Bakhtin in his analysis of Dostoevsky introduces us to a persona in the novel, a persona that is confessing but his confession is not comprehended in the personal sense. According to Bakhtin the source of dialogisation in the novels of Dostoevsky is rooted in such movement from one attitude to another where any idea is neutralized when we are introduced to another point of view which all aims to "necessity to retain for oneself the final word." (229). This goes to the extent that one's attitude towards oneself can also be influenced by others' attitudes. Bakhtin links this to the very tendency towards holy foolery in *Notes from Underground* where the character targets his own consciousness. Admittedly, for Bakhtin this means a cynical tone because "Finalizing moments, since they are perceived by the person himself, are included in the chain of his consciousness, become transient self-definitions and lose their finalizing force" (296) But as Murav puts it, the reason for this is that Bakhtin reduces foolery in Dostoevsky's work to a formal edifice and avoids grappling with its ethical and even theological facets. Murav argues that Bakhtin's analysis "is to put theology at the service of form". Murav prefers to surpass this aesthetic view and instead of reducing them to some literary tropes, calls them "theologeme" (13).

In a major and classic study, *The Fool, His Social and Literary History*, Enid Welsford (1935) strives to distinguish fool, clown, jester and buffoon. The buffoon is the figure of entertainment and represents taking life as easily as possible. The buffoon normally avoids the serious side of life in order to entertain. It does not mean that he does not make use of serious issues to produce laughter and humour, rather it means that his attitude is not serious. According to Welsford, the "company [of buffoons] is welcome, good stories about them accumulate, and if they have little conscience and no shame they often manage to make a handsome profit out of their supposed irresponsibility" (3). Welsford, does not simply reduce the function of buffoons to one of entertainment and admits their occasional political engagement. Welsford adds that they are extremely cherished and appreciated for their quick wits.

Buffoons are ‘a quick-witted sociable race, who expressed themselves easily not only with the pen, but with their tongue’ (14). Welsford, does not make any difference between buffoon and fool more than a short remark that although both buffoon and fool belong to the margins of society, the fools are either pretended or real madmen and the buffoon is ‘an absurd ne'er-do-well' figure’ (3). The fool, on the other hand, ‘falls below the average human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight, a mainspring of comedy, which has always been one of the great recreations of mankind and particularly of civilized mankind’ (Welsford, xi). Harriet Murav also opposes the Bakhtinian understanding of foolery as a mere carnivalesque phenomenon. Murav in her outstanding book, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*, relates Dostoevsky's four novels to the Bakhtinian conception of polyphony and dialogic mind but maintains that :

The holy fool is not just a special case of the buffoon or clown, although he imitates their behaviour. Patterns of inversion and reversal are typical of the narrative structure of the lives of the holy fools, but these episodes do not bespeak the 'joyful relativity' of Bakhtin's carnival world. In the world of the holy fool we see reversal not for its own sake but in order to lead to a new finalized condition, that of conversion or salvation (10).

The personal derision and ridicule, deficiency or the ‘fall’ of the fool provides a delight. The fool forms a persona for humour, whereas wit is best represented in the will in the buffoon to have others amused. The scope of the buffoon is limited to language and rhetoric, whereas the fool enters equally the non-discursive and pragmatic side. In effect, the buffoon utilizes wit and provokes laughter quite frivolously and the significant fact in his act, as Esaulov describes, is the sadistic side of his acts. According to Esaulov, ‘the buffoon can be understood through the prism of sadism’. Although Esaulov’s analysis, as he admits, is merely psychological, the attribution of sadism to the buffoon should be analysed beyond a medical and pathological conception. Ivanov closes his book with a view that takes sainthood and foolery as almost synonymous. As he argues:

Holy foolery makes manifest an integral feature of sanctity in general, as a cultural phenomenon. As Thomas Mann noted in one of his letters: ‘You and your catholic Christianity are too often shocked by the word idiot; when applied to a saint. Yet this is the title of one saint’s vita (Heiligengeschichte), perhaps the most profound novel of a certain Byzantine psychologist (eines byzantinisches Psychologen)..If we take

‘saint’ not just to mean a pious person, but to imply something more sinister (etwas unheimlicher), then there was a fair amount, an arresting amount (eingreifend viel), of the saint in Nietzsche...[In him] all became grotesque, drunken, full of the pain of the Cross, criminal (grotesk, trunken, kreuzleidvoll, verbrecherisch)... Mann’s ‘Byzantine psychologist’ is not Leontios of Neapolis or Symeon the New Theologian, but Fedor Dostoevskii, and his ‘idiot’ is not Symeon of Emesa or Andrew the Fool, but Prince Myshkin (414).

We do not aim to investigate holy foolery in detail, rather this study limits itself to the way holy fools obtain and make use of humour as a template of a non-discursive humour in everyday life. As Ivanov cautions, holy fools vary from culture to culture and even in one same Christian culture. However, what is common to holy fools who feign foolery as in its examples throughout literature and cinema, from Pushkin to Dostoevsky to Bresson and Tarkovsky and idiocy as a technique in the Dogma 95 Movement in cinema (Birzache, 215) and so on and so forth, is their gesture towards morality. Holy fools’ world is not a moral-free context, as their function is to juxtapose coherent forms of morality to practical paradoxes in life. Such function becomes increasingly significant especially in relation to moral finitude. Holy fools, by living on the boundary of the sacred and the profane, produce elements which question totality in either secular or religious moralities. What makes fools different from ascetics with their strictly religious attitudes is the fact fools, by humiliating themselves and applying humour to themselves, decreases the rift between what they say and what they do. The implication is that the main target of foolery and its humour is hypocrisy which constantly hides the gap between saying something and doing something. This way holy fools, through their lives and actual existence between subjects, are able to reach and unveil the hidden inconsistencies; I call this function humoureme. Humoureme is the microscopic element that unsettles and tickles a subject or an assemblage that professes totality or acts utterly seriously as if there is nothing funny about it; humoureme is the very tickling of an assemblage in a microscopic level. However, it should be stressed that such tickling causes twitching movements to a subject, whereas wit in its sheer linguistic sense hardly goes beyond amusing the subjects. That is the reason why fools’ humour targets any ascending or transcending moral code that avoids being ridiculed. The fool, in this regard, emerges when the schism between serious and humorous is strict or where the serious denies any instant of humoureme. In order to elaborate such function of

humour, it is worthwhile remembering how repetition is the very core of humour production.

Among contemporary (non)artists who use this technique in their art which leave the audience in awe and amazement mainly because one does not know if what they present is serious or funny. Christoph Schlingensiefel is one artist who managed to utilise such blurred line in some of his works. For instance in his ‘Passion Impossible: 7 Day Emergency Call for Germany’ (1997), a fake police force is invented that has not only order and laws under its surveillance but also the happiness and joy of the citizens, among them are in particular the homeless and ostracised people. Such work which is known for its participatory attitude inserts humour where is not appropriate, and furthermore it does not avoid the everyday and banal situations in order to be comfortably defined in an isolated museum stage.



Figure 9. Schlingensiefel's *Passion Impossible: 7 Days of Emergency Call for Germany*. 1997

Gilles Deleuze, particularly in his *Coldness and Cruelty* (1989), has attributed masochism to humour as the art of descending, of consequences and falls. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994), from the very start, Deleuze seems to be distinguishing two modes of repetition, namely irony and humour. For Deleuze, both irony and humour function based on repetition; while the former repeats to ascend, the latter repeats in order to fall. Nonetheless, Deleuze's analysis is insufficient when it comes to another form of laughter which this study claims to be inherent in derision. By surpassing the romanticized conception of masochism present in Deleuze's analysis, the social side of such a persona can be highlighted. If there is a

repetition as the cylinder for the production of humour as the subject of laughter, the same is arguably true for a repetition that initiates derision as the object of laughter.

Any attempt to reduce the act of the fool to one of masochism does not do justice to their humour. When the fool's humour is a less determined and intended act than the determined act of the buffoon, the realist humour gives the fool a role which is neither a holy and transcendental one, nor an intended act of amusement. The fool in this framework emerges when the schism between serious and humorous is strict or when the serious keeps excluding the humorous. By adding the discursive scope of buffoon to this, the buffoon is content with the verbal or physical side of amusement and that is why while the fool starts applying humour primarily to himself in an act of self-derision, the buffoon does not start with himself for it might spoil and endanger the very determined process of amusement. For a fool the subjective side of humour, which applies to himself, and the exterior social facets of humour, which address others, are deeply connected, to the extent that one can claim that the very subjective openness to humour functions as a pre-condition for his social and inter-subjective humorous acts. The fool starts with himself since he knows better the schism between his ideas and his body; he knows his body, what his body is able to do and what his body hides. Although the fool's humour is not one to provoke laughter as an a priori decision, he is determined to insert laughter where and when it is avoided. In effect, the fool is the persona for the contingency of humour that acts upon the pretentious serious deeds. Therefore, the masochism of the fool should be seen in such a social and political domain rather than from a psychological perspective. This renders less significant the celebrated and romanticized conception of madness and foolery for a realist humour than the very act of foolery which makes the serious the very target of humour.

4.3 Fools' Auto-derision

Auto-derision as a facet of the comic occurs when the comedian is able to detach from himself and mock himself. Nevertheless, it is no surprise that there are only a minority of comedians who practice auto-derision in their comedies. One reason

might be ascribed to the inability of shifting the perspective from mocking others to that of mocking oneself. Auto-derision seems to bear an ethical facet that goes beyond a simple aesthetic or rhetoric act of self-mockery. This part focuses on such ethics of auto-derision where the subject of humour can become the very object of comedy. The significance of this analysis exists in two different layers: first, auto-derision in its ethical sense sheds light on individuation and creation of new subjectivities by means of which a subject is able to transform to a new perspective, not through annihilating its perspective but through making himself an object of humour. And second, any such act stands in opposition to humiliation of others; in other words humour and especially self-mockery is the ability to dispense, to some extent, with humiliating and degrading others and instead shifts the focus of mockery to the self.

In order to elaborate the concept and function of auto-derision, it is worthwhile considering some historical figures in this regard. For instance, Till l'Espiègle or Till Eulenspiegel is among stories that has introduced auto-derision in literature where the character is able to mock what he says and does. This concept is still used by various contemporary figures in comedy, such as Philippe Geluck, David Letterman, Woody Allen and Louis C K. Auto-derision, which has been translated as self-depreciation into English, is defined by The Free Dictionary as —undervaluing and belittling oneself and has much affinity with humility and excessive modesty.

Self-deprecation is normally and in particular a feature in psychology but here we are dealing with self-deprecating humour rather than self-depreciation as a psychological or even sociological trait. The aesthetic of auto-derision is one that makes sense in the very distance one makes from oneself, and it is a sense that can be produced only in relation to one's self. In order to shed light on the very function of auto-derision, we make a short and tentative attempt to see it in relation to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. If Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, especially in his analysis of Chinese theater, is designed to cause a hindrance to identification with the epic/ tragic character at work (Brecht, 24), auto-derision in a similar vein creates an estrangement from the comic subject towards being the object of comedy. In effect and in a more detailed manner, if *Verfremdungseffekt* is designed to hinder emotions which are involved in the construction of tragedy, one can experience such a comic *Verfremdungseffekt* in auto-derision. One becomes one's own source of humour and instead of attributing humour to something outside or finding an object of humour in others; one is transformed to the very object of humour where the linkage between the aesthetic and

ethics of auto-derision reveals itself. Auto-derision can be regarded as a movement from other to self, from mockery of others to ridicule of one's own self. It unsettles the subject as a formed and rigid entity in relation to the world and others. In the work of comedians such as Louis CK, and prior to him Andy Kaufman, one can say with some confidence that in addressing oneself as the very object of humour, two steps are discernible:

1. Finding incongruity in one's life through examining different heterogeneous facets.
2. Coping humorously with such difference with humour and laughing with such paradoxes.

Although there is not a clear-cut epistemological line between these two phases, auto-derision in its existential sense entails such two phases: highlighting difference and individual identity and the ability to laugh with such difference. In other words, such laughter does not eclipse one's difference or identity simply because laughter bereft of difference will result in a state of humiliation in the most cynical sense of the word. But humour occurs where subjects take a serious gesture towards their individual difference. In other words when subjects see nothing beyond their difference; they might tolerate another subject's difference without being affected by it or rather when they stick to their own individuality, identity and differences and close themselves to others' differences. It will be argued that maintaining such a serious gesture and such constant denial of humour culminates in an inhuman humour which can be materialized in an inter-subjective or asubjective humour. When Kierkegaard, in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1992), prefers humour to irony, it is because humour in an existential gesture enables one who has experienced inconsistency to cope with inconsistency and re-experience joy. For Kierkegaard, irony forms the boundary (confinium) between the aesthetic and ethical, while the boundary between the ethical and religious is attributed to humour. As John Lippitt in his *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (2000) argues, the reason why Kierkegaard resorts to humour and irony (to form the comic) is to launch an attack which is indirect against a thought that professes purity and elevates itself beyond human existence through its abstract and uncritical concepts. It is through laughter that this gesture comes to existence but more importantly, it is through laughing at one's thought (and difference) that one is legitimated to laugh at others'

thoughts (and differences). Nonetheless, according to Lippitt it is quite an effort to question a subject that is actually framed so much, both professionally and bureaucratically. It should be added (and this is neglected in Lippitt's analysis) that the role humour should play is not to be an ultimate index of a thought that has formed and framed a subject; rather humour should, in its microscopic interventions, participate throughout the very formation of the subject. The later a subject decides to laugh at him/herself, the more inhuman this humour is. Not only it is strenuous for a subject that has been avoiding humour for a long time to embrace it, his attempt to be open to humour might remain in a morality of humour and sense of humour which barely experiences humour beyond language.

What is extremely significant in such a conception of humour is that it can not be reduced from its ethical and existential mode to a linguistic or a cognitive domain. The incongruities inherent in life and in morality which are constantly explored by the production of difference are beyond a simple linguistic and discursive sphere and humour is the element which reveals them comically. Humour does not aim to resolve and reconcile differences in a dialectical synthesis, rather it functions by acknowledging paradoxes which a serious gesture strives to conceal. The paradoxes are inherent to life but as one can see in figures such as Kierkegaard and later in W. H. Auden (1965) humour is the command, beyond an 'optional extra' (Pyper, 9). Although linguistic and cognitive incongruity is a way of representing such existential inconsistencies, their reliance on the linguistic imagination can be an escape from bearing with real inconsistencies to unreal inconsistencies that are easy to resolve. Realist humour relies on an automatism similar to the one utilized by Robert Bresson, where instead of trained actors, he uses (what he calls) models. But if such automatism is not to be found in a rhetoric or linguistic mode of incongruity, where can one look for it? Where can one utilize such existential gestures? The main characteristic of such humour is *not* in the ability to represent incongruity linguistically as in a buffoon, but rather the very unsettling of the expectations in a pragmatic mode as a fool does. This is most evidently visible in the figure of fools, those who 'undermine the practices and knowledge that configure gender, market, and religion through playing with and making contingent divisions that seemed necessary' (Thomas, 18).



Figure 10. *Greg Tricker's The Hidden Fool*. 1993. Nailsworth, United Kingdom.

Holy fools do not make a determined attempt to be fools, yet what occurs to them and what they present is, in various ways, an opposition to common sense. Such involuntary foolery, as Birzche puts it, that represents humour is not an already rehearsed mechanism, its very involuntary mode puts forth a clash with commonly accepted codes of society. The holy fool as a persona for a realist project of humour acts out a humour that embraces and even jeopardizes his own existence, —‘They challenge involuntarily, as a result of their very existence, and in spite of their apparent weakness‘ (Birzache, 155).

The holy fools submit themselves as voluntary victims of inhuman humour and rather than humiliating others to give rise to humour, are open to be self-humiliated. The reason is, as we said, that they know that avoiding humoureme makes humour increasingly inhuman and cruel to bear. Wherever holy foolery is depreciated and excluded, and humour is transformed to a semantic and linguistic mode, it is likelier that inhuman humour humiliates subjects more and more. The holy fool is the one that constantly applies humoureme in pragmatic, day to day and real functions. Humour in the holy fool is deeply connected to an ethical agenda that instead of relying on language, applies humoureme as a medium for rendering hypocrisy and concealed

inconsistencies of serious discourses visible. Nevertheless and as it will be analysed in the next chapter, inhuman humour does not go extinct in the absence of holy fools, it only becomes harsher and more cruel. When holy fools exist, one can more easily practice humour. In his brilliant book, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, Sergey Ivanov makes a sharp distinction between a jester and the holy fool. This distinction bears significance in that the jester is doggedly *determined* to produce humour. Such determination is not very much the case in holy fools who openly apply contingent humour in the most microscopic and banal facets of life.

The jester, by contrast, bears only a superficial resemblance to the holy fool. Although both inhabit a topsy-turvy world and neither can survive without spectators, nevertheless the jester is part of the crowd whereas the holy fool is entirely alone even in the midst of the urban bustle; the jester thrives on dialogue, while the holy fool is monologic; the jester is immersed in 'festival time', or 'carnival time' whereas the holy fool is outside time; the behaviour of the jester is akin to an art form, whereas art is quite alien to the holy fool (Ivanov, 5).

The theme which is recurrent in the history of holy foolery is one of self-mistrust. This mistrust towards self is the source of inspiration for the holy fools to target themselves in different forms of self-humiliating acts. Symeon as one main pioneer in Christian history of holy foolery is known for humbling himself and humility. According to Krueger, such humility is a technique among holy fools to be excluded and be taken as outcasts. And this way, not only they violate social norms but equally they transgress the monastic rules and regulations. Symeon's gesture against monastic norms of asceticism through food consumption is such an example.

This suggests that economic humiliation is a key component of sainthood. Both Symeon the Fool and his companion John the hermit are from wealthy Syrian families. When Symeon goes to Emesa under the guise of a madman he humbles himself not merely through a shift in economic status, but especially because in behaving shamelessly he places himself decisively among the outcasts (Krueger, 70).

Such a model of auto-derision can be traced back to the middle ages, Byzantium and early Christianity and the character of *fol-en-Chris*. Holy fools with their long tradition demonstrate the ways something comic transgresses itself. For the

holy fools,, uncovering the unexpected is framed in a comic mode where people are being entertained. This way a holy fool was able to simultaneously uncover what is entertaining and what is shocking. In general, holy fools provoke these shocking effects through the way they dress, talk or behave; their appearance is so unexpected that they are called fools. Therefore and as such humour targets oneself first and foremost, the pivotal point for holy foolery is humility. According to Birzche, the holy fool is someone that has personified humility and madness which is set along meekness. This humility and meekness is rooted in various models in different religions, yet for Christianity, holy fools seem to be located mainly in words of Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 4:10, where a minimal description of fol-en-Chris is given:

Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?...For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block (chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise..if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of the world is foolish with God (1 Corinthians 1:20).

In order to extend and elaborate the ethical and ontological sphere of a realist project of humour, foolery provides us with a model to see how the very function of the humoureme is to render visible what a serious discourse hides. In effect, if the persona of the fool in a variety of different cases is able to unveil the hypocrisy of ascetics and religious men by acting foolishly, his humoureme in its ethical dimensions and in the contemporary sense of it can also target hypocrites. Nevertheless, humoureme addresses both sacred and secular moralities in its actualization; it goes beyond a linguistic framework and becomes a tool to tickle and unsettle morality in its most concrete and quotidian sense. A fool, in contrast to fixed subjects who stick to their current subjectivity and do not want to fall prey to humoureme, commences with himself.

Yet it is not always clear whether a holy fool or its contemporary embodiment in a stand-up comedian is inclined more towards irony by bringing things back to their origin, or more towards humour by descending to particular instances. But what is clear is that she or he subverts norms and normal expectations. Such a distinction between irony and humour means a lot to Deleuze, and any such philosophy that is dealing primarily with the problem of good and evil, in terms of ethics. According to Deleuze (1994), although irony and humour

share a lot, they have inherent differences when it comes to individuality or individuation.

Irony, as the art of differential ideas, is by no means unaware of singularity. On the contrary, it plays upon the entire distribution of ordinary and distinctive points. However, it is always a question of pre-individual singularities distributed within the idea. It is unaware of the individual. Humour, the art of intensive quantities, plays upon the individual and individuating factors. Humour bears witness to the play of individuals as cases of solution, in relation to the differentiations it determines, whereas irony, for its part, proceeds to the differentiations necessary within the calculation of problems or the determination of their conditions. The individual is neither a quality nor an extension. The individual is neither a qualification nor a partition, neither an organization nor a determination of species. The individual is no more an infima species than it is composed of parts. Qualitative or extensive interpretations of individual remain incapable of providing reasons why a quality ceases to be general, or why a synthesis of extensity begins here and finishes there. The determination of qualities and species presupposes individuals to be qualified, while extensive parts are relative to an individual rather than the reverse. It is not sufficient, however, to mark a difference in kind between individuation and differentiation in general. This difference in kind remains unintelligible as long as we do not accept the necessary consequences: that individuation proceeds differentiation in principle, that every differentiation presupposes a prior intense field of individuation. It is because of the action of the field of individuation that such and such differential relations and such and such distinctive points (pre-individual fields) are actualized- in other words, organized within intuition along lines differentiated in relation to other lines. As a result, they then form the quality, number, species and parts of an individual in short, its generality. Because there are individuals of different species and individuals of same species, there is a tendency to believe that individuation is a continuation of the determination of species, albeit of a different kind and proceeding by different means. In fact any confusion between two processes, any reduction of individuation to a limit or complication of differentiation, compromises the whole of the philosophy of difference. This would be to commit an error, this time in the actual, analogous to that made in confusing the virtual with the possible. Individuation does not presuppose any differentiation; it gives rise to it. Qualities and extensions, forms and matters, species and parts are not primary, they are imprisoned in individuals as though in a crystal. Moreover, the entire world may be read, as though in a crystal ball, in the moving depth of individuating differences or differences in intensity (246-247).

In *Difference and Repetition* irony is introduced as the art of ascending Or the art of heights. Although Deleuze claims that both irony and humour (be it in

Kierkegaard's Abraham and Nietzsche's Zarathustra) are based on repetition, he emphasizes that humour take another path as it is the art of descending to particular things.

If repetition is possible, it is as much opposed to moral laws as it is to natural laws. There are two known ways to overturn moral law. One is by ascending towards principle: challenging the law as secondary, derived, borrowed or 'general'; denouncing it as involving a second-hand principle which diverts an original force or usurps an original power. The other way, is to overturn the law by descending towards the consequences, to which one submits with a too-perfect attention to detail (1994, 5).

4.4 Andy Kaufman's Foolery

Stand-up comedy is a comedy that is held and performed while the comedian in standing. It is a comedy in movement, usually devoid of any specific narration to be followed in the entire show, although it might contain short narrations that turn out to be independently entertaining. But there is a special point to analyse: the distance or time slots between the moments that one is not laughing and the ones when one is laughing is relatively accelerated in comparison to the classical conception of comedy. Stand-up comedy, as it were, is based almost wholly on verbal humour and its constant production and this has been attracting millions of audiences around the globe. There are factors that this comedy offers: First, the main reliance of stand-up comedy on verbal language which, to a large extent does away with any other gestural, facial and even corporeal dimensions. And second, the comparison one can make between comedy in its traditional sense and stand-up comedy, as stand-up comedy relies less and less on a specific plot that flows through the whole work and depends more and more on one-liners or monologues.

What is famously named 'fast-paced' grouping of stories in stand-up comedy along with bits and one-liners are all what a stand-up makes use of. Stand-up comedy is more minimalist than a normal comedy and the speed on which a stand-up comedy functions varies from show to show. Yet one prominent feature in stand-up comedies is this very speed in poking fun and creating funny scripts which can encompass personal, social and political issues. This way, stand-up comedy relies on

the background knowledge it shares with the audience and creates humorous situations out of them. Linguistically speaking, any stand-up depends a lot on the topic or theme which is the common-sense and conjoins it to a new knowledge which is normally called rheme or comment. Although we do not aim to provide an exhaustive analysis of stand-up comedy, and reduce it to some specific viewpoint or component, yet the element of speed recurs in our analysis; an element which was already introduced in the introduction on wit and especially in John Locke. In effect, speed and quickness, as Limon emphasizes in stand-up comedy, has always been defined as a crucial characteristic of wit and witticism. In comparison to comedy, stand-up is where a crowd of comic situations are being described, imagined and represented whereas comedy, rather than relying fully on imagination, is an attempt to depict the setting on stage or in literature, which even invites some non-discursive elements. A search for word —wit‘ in a dictionary convinces one that this word is mainly associated with quickness, sharpness, cleverness and agility. In effect, wit seems to be a feature stand-up comedy relies heavily on. Wit and witticism can be seen in a variety of different ways but the best way to analyse it is through incongruity theory. Something is suspended and then fully or partly resolved. This is a process which can be maintained to infinity, infinity of creating, imagining and representing inconsistencies and juxtaposing them to be yielded to some full or partial resolution. Such subversion of expectations is a determined act in stand-up comedy from the very beginning; it functions as an a priori to provoke a non-sense combination. Such production of humour can be traced back to surrealism and is mainly founded on creating an unlikely and delirious situation. Here one can see how wit should be taken seriously as a mental and existential gesture which is determined to enjoy incongruities.

As mentioned earlier, the humour in a realist project can attach itself to an ethical question which oscillates between what is visible and what is hidden by a moral framework. Holy fools as the persona in charge of such a task are able to utilise humour in its most banal and everyday deeds. Holy fools in relation to religious fathers are able to introduce elements of humour unexpectedly in their very banal acts of everyday life as we called humoureme which targets a serious gestures replete with hypocrisy. The role of such humour is to render visible what is hidden under this serious gesture. In this part, we pursue such an ethical dimension of humour in a more contemporary sense. In comedy and especially stand-up comedy such moments where

one is able to mock oneself are not uncommon. But what is our criterion for distinguishing a rhetorical gesture from an existential one, especially when the result in both is the same humour? We argue that one can have resort to the element of *time* in order to make such a distinction. By extracting humour from one's memories and past experiences one might be able to undergo the experience of a cognitive humour where he or she can mock his or her old gesture, but this still keeps the present subject is less vulnerable and in a safe and protected position. Arguably, it is harder to experience humour in the present. A large part of this difficulty is due to the fact that being open to humour and its contingency does not allow one to prepare for an cognitive or linguistic humour. Although the humour that is produced and provoked by memories plays a prominent role in opening cognitive vistas to subjects, it is still not a real contingent humour in its actuality. It is scarce that the present moment is taken into account in constructing humour. The very existence of present actual humour requires a more intense immersion in the *Verfremdungseffekt*; a technique that entails taking distance from oneself and submitting oneself to the present moment as the moment of subjectivation. Kaufman is one comedian who is able to define humour in its actual moment of emergence when there is not much time lapsed between what happens to him on the stage and his comic response to that. As a result in such comedy, the comedian starts mainly with himself or herself and this leads to real auto-derision.

If the Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* is suited to take place in relation to Aristotelian catharsis, Kaufman's attempt is to implement *verfremdungseffekt* in relation to his present comic moment. Brecht's attempt to apply *verfremdungseffekt* in his theatre was meant to distract the audience from being involved in the play⁷; instead of producing an Aristotelian feeling of catharsis and emotional involvement, he inserted a critical and objective awareness. This way, once epic theater is mingled with *verfremdungseffekt*, one is able to be extracted from his or her social order which is the result of an unconscious political domination and that is symbolized in different forms. In a broad sense, one can say that *verfremdungseffekt* as used by Brecht in epic theater is a device to transcend the social and symbolic order that has overwhelmed us. Comedy seems to activate this potential through auto-derision and if in epic theater *verfremdungseffekt* is defined through disrupting illusion or eschewing

⁷ In Eisenstein's words this mob can be called 'the proletarian audience. Stanley Mitchell, introduction to Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, trans. by Anna Bostock (London: Verso, 1998)

clichés formed by emotions, one can define *verfremdungseffekt* in comedy produced through auto-derision as a moment where one disrupts the fact that he _is supposed to‘ entertain us. Therefore, *verfremdungseffekt* in epic takes place in opposition to the social order and the symbolic, while in comedy *verfremdungseffekt* occurs also as opposed to the comic imagination That amuses the audience.

Humour in Kaufman is filled with such tensions, tensions which occur in the middle of his performances. Such instances which occur beyond entertaining the audience, gives rise to an untimely laughter. Humoureme is embodied in such minuscule manifestations of laughter which are not planned and are mainly the result of the present interaction between subjects. Although one result of humoureme is questioning hypocrisy, humoureme mainly targets what professes to be serious while suppressing laughter inside. More importantly, humoureme plays a prominent role in relation to oneself, as discussed earlier in case of fools, humoureme cannot function just in an external mode and in relation to others: it obliges one to be able to laugh at oneself in the first place, or even making one the very object of humour. Kaufman’s comedy include and address his own identity in its actual, present moment and it primarily addresses himself in his performance. In his appearance on Letterman⁸, on June 24th 1980, Andy Kaufman enters the stage and starts his first act as a self-humiliating one in which his nose is running; Letterman seems to ignore this fact but finally, when his nose keeps running, offers Kaufman a tissue. On surface, one can say that such act that provokes the audience to laughter is quite empty of shame and embarrassment for Letterman and the audience. However there is an amalgamation of humour and shame that is the result of Kaufman’s act to target himself as the very object of the comedy. The way Kaufman makes fun of himself is inseparable from the way he makes fun of the others or he is simultaneously an objects as well as the subject of his comedies. This is somehow evident in his denial of the label comedian and preferred to be called a _song and dance man‘.

I am I not I a comic, I have never told a joke....The comedian's promise is that he will go out there and make you laugh I with I him....My only promise is that I will try to entertain you as best I can. I I can I manipulate people's reactions. There are different kinds of laughter. Gut laughter is where you don't have a choice, you've got to laugh. Gut laughter doesn't come from the intellect. And it's much harder for me

⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6p0sr2BejUk

to evoke now, because I'm known. They say, 'Oh wow, Andy Kaufman he's a really funny guy.' But I'm not trying to be funny. I just want to play with their heads (New York Times, _Kaufman Biography).

Back to our example of Kaufman, we should add that his humble act of self-deprecating humour has nothing to do with a moral code. Quite the opposite, one can argue that by juxtaposing humour to moral codes, Kaufman highlights a (however tiny) moment of abjection and emboldens a shame that is normally invisible (from his running nose to the way he coughs, especially knowing that he died from lung cancer!). This way, humour takes an irritating shape which questions something moral in a joyous mode. That is the reason why Andy Kaufman's humour is not as easy to grasp and his comedies can be categorized as anti-humour. However by addressing himself, he might irritate the audience and although it is easier for the audience to laugh at an absent- even imaginary other, he uses any appropriate moment to target his own acts.

I like to talk about my marriage. I met my wife several years ago when I was in New York performing every night improvisation, night club, I perform every night for free, I would get jobs elsewhere for maybe fifty dollars. ...and I met her up driving to from southern New Jersey one time she was a cocktail waitress. And we went out a few times and fell in love and got married. She kind of, she worked as a waitress while I was working for free in night clubs, (audience laugh). And we lived together, outside New York city, we had two children, their names are Mark and Lisa. And I (silence, audience laugh)..(coughing, audience laughs)...I am not, I'd rather if you don't laugh because, I am not trying to be funny right now.and shortly after that I went to California, things there started happening.⁹

The same person, Andy Kaufman, after mentioning that he is being serious, starts coughing again in a minute but this time hardly anybody in the audience starts laughing. This provides us with a humour which is more than anything an irritating laughter. The audience is not able to laugh smoothly as Kaufman breaks the boundary between the serious and funny with small pieces of humour. Such humour appears when it is not expected or rather when the audience is expected to laugh smoothly, but it is imbued in an element of shame, and the audience gets involved in it.

⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=6p0sr2BejUk

Such humour does not remain in an imaginary domain, and is fulfilled in a practical sphere which overwhelms first its subject and then the others—the humour is indifferent here to its subject and object. It suspends the moral and expected boundary between the serious and the funny and redistributes it anew, at least temporarily. A better example of such small manifestation of humour can be traced in another work by Kaufman called ‘_ Man on the Moon’, a 1999 production in a biographical form which represents different stages in Kaufman’s life from his infancy and his experience in comedy clubs and television series towards his fame and popularity in Saturday Night Live (1980), Fridays (1980- 1982) and Late Night With David Letterman (1982- 1993). In Man on the Moon, Kaufman presents an idiot character that sits beside his comedian character, where his humour noticeably addresses himself. In a more intense mode, humour can be traced in various parts of this show. The beginning of this show starts with minuscule parts on his background, but places humour in the middle of such serious and informative parts.

Hello I am Andy
And I would like to thank
you for coming to my movie.
I wish it was better, you know...
but it is so stupid.
It's terrible.
I do not even like it.
All of the most important
things in my life
are changed around and mixed up...
for dramatic purposes.
So
I decided to cut out
all of the bologna.
Now the movie is much shorter.
In fact, this is
the end of the movie.
Thank you very much.
I am not fooling. Goodbye.
Go
You're still here.
Okay!
I hope you're not upset.
I did that to get rid of those folks
who wouldn't understand me...
and don't even want to try!

Actually, the movie is really
great. It's filled with colorful
characters, like the one I just did...
and the one I'm doing now.
Our story begins...
back in Great Neck, Long Island.
This is our house.
And that's my father's old car.
That's my father.
That's my little brother,
Michael. That's my little sister,
Carol. And that's my mom
Janice?
Andy's up in his
room? Yeah.¹⁰

The fact that Kaufman throughout this monologue keeps talking about himself and his actual situation makes the boundary between the humorous and the serious blurred. In fact, this is what the holy fools do in the way they make use of humoureme. The holy fools' use of humour is not as evident as the one used by the buffoon simply because the buffoon has already segregated between the humorous and the serious and has designated his or her acts in the former. One can claim that this can even be a reason why the fool can not be well represented because he is not as visible a figure as a buffoon.

¹⁰ http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/m/man-on-the-moon-script.html

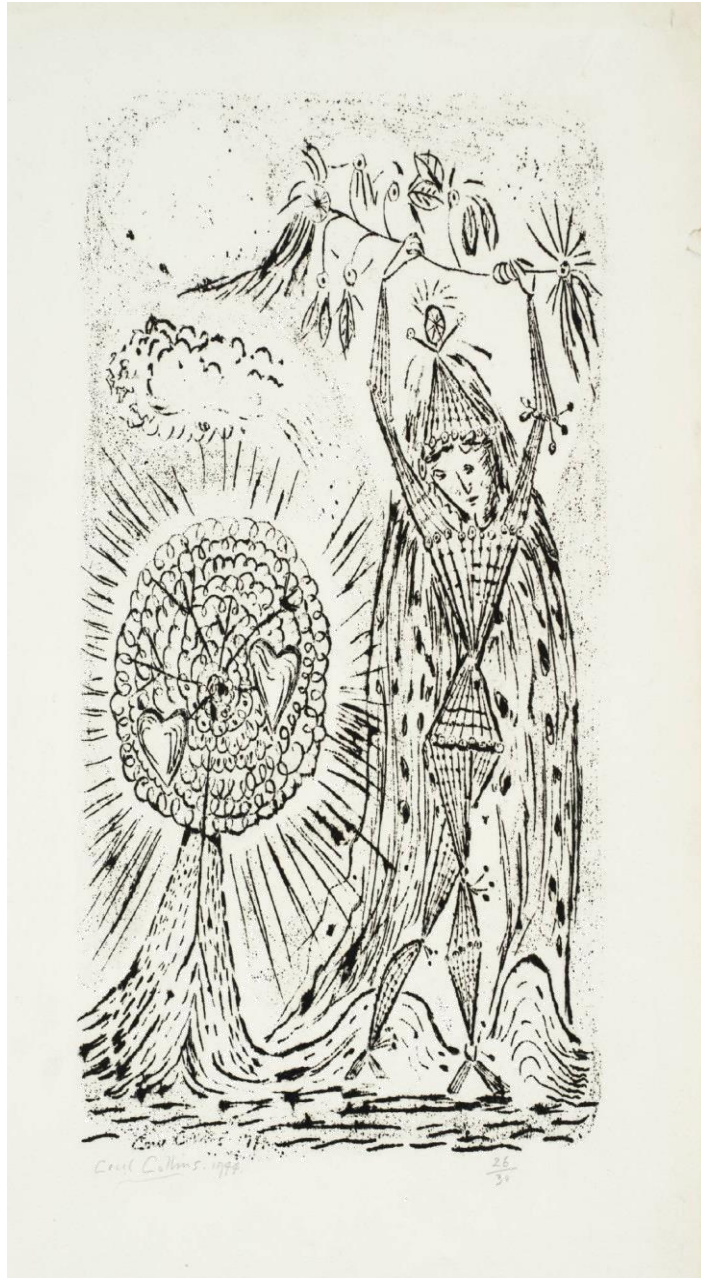


Figure 11. Cecil Collins. *The joy of the Fool*. 1944. Tate. London.

In *Holy Madness*, the German Indologist Georg Feuerstein makes a rare attempt to analyse this relation between the serious and the playful. In order to explicate the role humour plays in its real and practical sense, Feuerstein introduces three levels of play among human beings. On the first level there is ‘the unself-conscious play of the child who is completely absorbed in his or her make-believe world of toys and games’ (Feuerstein, 220). According to Feuerstein, this is for a child an attempt to escape to his or her imaginary world but it can equally play the role of a safety valve for the immature adult who ‘because of her incomplete

psychic adaption to life, is never quite at ease with the world“ (ibid). However, the second case is the adult who _tacitly or knowingly appreciates that _real‘ life itself is pliable and therefore playable‘ (220) Such person is able to observe play in the middle of human affair and participates in its illusions (221).

One can notice that Kaufman’s comic acts cannot be thought completely as the first escapist humour nor the second category of humour that Feuerstein introduces to see something palpable in the midst of reality applies to him fully. The second category is no more applicable because Kaufman does not introduce a playful attitude through which we are supposed to observe life as illusion. Kaufman’s humour is more dependent on the very present act of its production and participation with its audience. Feuerstein introduces a third kind of humour and playfulness which although is quite aware of the playfulness of life, and succumbs to the same illusion, inherent to life as others, he does not add to such an illusion. In other words, and this makes it interesting for a realist project of humour, such a subject, instead of adding up and creating illusions inside life, is vulnerable and open to (illusions of) life itself. That is why his humorous acts are quite open to the contingencies of the reality as it comes. He avoids creating _an imaginary world as does the child or adult fleeing from reality (Feuerstein, 221). One helpful distinction between an imaginary and a real condition of playfulness is described in James Carse’s book, *Finite and Infinite Games* (2011). In his elaboration between finite and infinite games Carse highlights the significance of *surprise* in finite games. According to him, in finite games which are based on boundaries, one wins by surprising others in his or her unexpected moves.

It is therefore by surprising our opponent that we are most likely to win. Surprise in finite play is the triumph of the past over the future. The Master Player who already knows what moves are to be made has a decisive advantage over the unprepared player who does not yet know what moves will be made (Carse, 17-18).

Therefore, surprise is almost threatening and deadening for different opponents and the one who is surprised is more likely to lose. This way, as Carse puts it, the players are supposed to prevent such surprise in their game. If finite games are based on the triumph of the past over the future, the realist project of humour thinks of humour as inclined towards the triumph of the future over the past.

Infinite players, on the other hand, continue their play in the expectation of being surprised. If surprise is no longer possible, all

play ceases. Surprise causes finite play to end; it is the reason for infinite play to continue. Surprise in infinite play is the triumph of the future over the past. Since infinite players do not regard the past as having an outcome, they have no way of knowing what has been begun there. With each surprise, the past reveals a new beginning in itself. Inasmuch as the future is always surprising, the past is always changing. Because finite players are trained to prevent the future from altering the past, they must hide their future moves. The unprepared opponent must be kept unprepared. Finite players must appear to be something other than what they are. Everything about their appearance must be concealing. To appear is not to appear. All the moves of a finite player must be deceptive: feints, distractions, falsifications, misdirections, mystifications. Because infinite players prepare themselves to be surprised by the future, they play in complete openness. It is not an openness as in candor, but an openness as in vulnerability. It is not a matter of exposing one's unchanging identity, the true self that has always been, but a way of exposing one's ceaseless growth, the dynamic self that has yet to be. The infinite player does not expect only to be amused by surprise, but to be transformed by it, for surprise does not alter some abstract past, but one's own personal past (Carse, 18).

What is worthy of attention is what makes one able and ready to undergo such infinite games instead of taking refuge in finite games. As Feuerstein also suggests, we argue that the openness inherent to and demanded by infinite games require a high degree of self-effacement. In effect, self-effacement enables one to embrace (humour in) reality. In Kaufman on the one hand, the subject of humour, namely Kaufman himself, is rendered its object which bears an element of self-mistrust and self-degradation and on the other hand the expected humour are disappointed, at least temporarily. This is attributed to humour which is able to emerge quite contingently in the middle of a banal acts of a serious subject. According to Feuerstein the condition for true humour is accepting fully one's physical mortality. Feuerstein quotes from James p. Carse that:

Infinite play resounds throughout with a kind of laughter. It is not a laughter at others who have come to an unexpected end, having thought they were going somewhere else. It is laughter with others with whom we have discovered that the end we thought we were coming to has unexpectedly opened. We laugh not at what has surprisingly come to be impossible for others, but over what has surprisingly come to be possible with others (Feuerstein, 32).

Feuerstein maintains that the plausibility of such humour and laughter is due to outwitting the self and its finite games. This is the way to come to a _ 'continuous

humorous recreation, or re-orientation' from ' the humourless, serious repetition of oneself' as in ordinary life'' (Feurestein, 227). In effect, Kaufman breaks the always blurred boundary between the comic and the serious (where the audience in a comedy always thinks he or she is not dealing with the serious). But it does not mean a synthesis where the serious and the comic co-exist, rather it means the unexpected emergence of the comic in the midst of the serious and the other way round. The contingent humour of Kaufman even among his rehearsed comic acts, at least in some cases, is not a decided and determined plot to entertain the audience. In his book *Stand-up Comedy in Theory*, John Limon devotes a chapter to David Letterman and tries a philosophical reading of his show as a comedian. Letterman as an intelligent figure hosting quite a variety of different intellectuals and celebrities in his show convinces Limon on a very significant point that Letterman's ability is built in his agility and sharpness as the key to his success. Limon sees Letterman's ability to produce jokes over jokes or meta-jokes as a result of 'formal intelligence with only dreck for instance' (Limon, 69). But one interesting remark Limon makes is the fact that Letterman's comedy is deeply connected to the element of speed. However John Limon connects it all with American Millerianism and juxtaposes this speed, to some extent, with 'the attempt to put two worlds in gear' as in drugs and alcohol. But the gist of his argument is the lack of physical act in production such as Letterman where language and more importantly mind plays the prominent role. It is through Kristeva and her concept of abjection that Limon tries to attribute a kind of 'comic abjection' to Letterman: 'the presence of significance without meaning seems comic in general, and like David Letterman's comedy in particular. Its symptom is verbal speed' (73).

4.5 From the Ethics of Humour to the Ontology of derision

The holy fool engages in antics not to demonstrate a joyful relativity of hierarchies, but to achieve his own and others' salvation within the established cultural hierarchy (Pratt, 115).

When fools humiliate themselves, they undergo a process of subjectification. In this process, they utilize humour to target themselves primarily and by becoming an object of laughter for other subjects, they also help them (through their similarities) to be

able to apply humour to themselves. When fools mock themselves through self-humiliation, it already means that others are avoiding it or have been unable to do it. This might be emblematic of egoism where subjects are deeply engaged with their established subjectivities, differences and moralities. In the same vein, when an assemblage is humiliated and mocked as an object of humour for other assemblages, it produces a sign for them to apply to their own assemblages. When an assemblage just uses other assemblages as an object of humour without implementing the emitted humoureme to its own assemblage, it would be used sooner or later by inhuman humour as an object of humour. There is a correlation here between solidity of an assemblage in avoiding self-humiliation and the unexpectedness of the humiliation that befalls it.

Like the closed monads of Leibniz, humility, humoureme can be applied to an assemblage from inside. This monadic characteristic of humoureme means that no monad participates in the application of humoureme and humility in one assemblage. Assemblages are closed when it comes to humoureme and they implement it themselves and on their own. However, the rationale of inhuman humour makes it possible to think of humiliation as the other side of humour, which, unlike the humoureme, takes place in participation between assemblages. The next chapter is an analysis of such humiliation according to inhuman humour in various assemblages. But here and in auto-derision, we are simply thinking of humoureme in a monadic mode.

Either an assemblage keeps its relation with other assemblages and earth or it avoids keeping its relation to earth, in which case it is doomed to descend. The latter is the very function of humoureme in its microscopic mode to keep the assemblage's ambitions in touch with earth, while the former is the very function of humiliation when an assemblage is losing its connection to earth and will have to fall down to touch the earth in order to survive further; an event that humiliates such an assemblage, it gets humiliated as it does not apply humoureme inside itself. By avoiding humoureme inside, and where an assemblage never descends (as the joy of vanity) to earth, it will be humiliated in a process where other assemblages willingly or unwillingly take part. Those assemblages that participate willingly in humiliating such an assemblage are also apt to be humiliated in upcoming stages of encounter between assemblages. An assemblage, by cutting its connection to earth (humus), will collapse to earth and becomes humiliated. But what practical role does such

self-humiliation play? There is a link between ethical and ontological facets of such humour that needs to be explicated. Limiting such auto-derision to a psychological or a masochistic attitude ignores the ethical and social role such humour plays.

If the interior side of humour was defined as an active force that does away with the negative affects, transforming and orienting them toward creative ones, the exterior side provided us with the role humour plays between subjects in their communication. These two facets and the schism between them has resulted in understanding humour as a purely psychological training or an unending hedonistic attitude in social and ethical domains. However it is high time we approach towards the cosmos which evacuates humoureme from its most banal life sides and gives humour no chance to co-exist with the serious. Such dogma which can not tolerate any humour in truth can be seen in an excessive mode in contemporary discourse of terror which evades any humour as its fundamental agenda. Although it will be discussed in relation to the dystopian wit introduced in chapter five, we commence a mythological depiction of such state of terror and destruction which shapes an approach in rejecting humour. Angra Mainyu, as the destructive spirit in Zarathurstrianism is depicted as the malignant spirit that is surrounded by destructive forces from within and yet deceives from the outside.

These two principles now mark off their respective territories of action against one another. The Holiest Spirit, who keeps to truth (asha), orders for himself life and good actions; Angra Mainyu, who keeps to untruth (drug: 'deceit'), the non-life and bad actions. All beings have to 'choose' between these two basic principles (Sweeney, 80).

This malevolent and destructive element which plays the role of God or Spēnta Mainyu's adversary and whose name (according to the Encyclopædia Iranica) out of disgust, is usually written upside down in Pahlavi texts, can be seen as the amalgamation of utter avoidance of humoureme. In effect even being written upside down is emblematic of such state of humiliation for such malignant spirit in Zarathurstrianism demonology, which is the result of rejecting or deceiving *rtá* (which is against both chaos and lie). Angra Mainyu which already in its etymology suggests an immanent relation with narrowness and suffocation has traces in words such as *anger*, and *anxiety* (Webster, 1913, 56) acts based on such an avoidance of joy in inherent in *rtá* and is determined to empty humans of this joy. Instead of undergoing such joy, however, Angra Mainyu sticks to fabricate it in a constant state of deception. Any speculation towards its name makes it clear that the reason that

Angra Mainyu is left furious is the ability of truth to crack it down and unveil itself through Angra Mainyu itself. In other words, what renders Angra Mainyu furious is that its deception can easily be made visible. Although Angra Mainyu "like many trickster and evil figures, of other creation myths- many, for instance, in Central Asia and Native North America- contributes to the creative process" (Leeming 295). its acts are concealed and hidden. And once they are revealed and unveiled, his fury increases. Yet this process of opening and revelation continues as " the conflict between Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, and his great enemy, the evil Angra Mainyu, lies at the heart of all existence" (Stookey, 177).



Figure 12. Angra Mainyu written upside down

Therefore it should be stressed that as the source of wrath and destruction (anger), *aēšōma*, or *kašm* in New Persian, it bears both interior and exterior facets of reactive forces. Yet the fact that Angra Mainyu is the god of deception and *Druj* (to lie) is highly significant. The demonological elements lead us to the social and ethical sides as there is a state in which deception becomes revealed and known or visible and this is in effect the reason for its anger and wrath. Therefore there is a pivotal element which renders deception and *Druj* visible.

He sows [...] he groans when he no longer sees the form. Light is born in the sphere: she gives it to the higher Powers. The dirt and dross flows from him to the earth. It clothes itself in all phenomena, and is reborn in many fruits. The dark Demon of Wrath is ashamed, for he was distraught and had become naked. He had not attained to the higher, and had been bereft of what he had achieved. He left the body

an empty shell and descended in shame. He covered himself in the womb of the earths, whence he had risen in brutishness (Boyce, 99).

In the Gathas, which are believed to be composed by Zarathustra, the opposite of *asha* is not a simple negation, such as is the case with Rig Veda *anrta*. The contrary ethos to *asha* is *Druj*- the deception that brings chaos to the good, ordered creations of Ahura Mazda (2.45.4). *Druj* confuses the true nature of the workings of the world, so that one is unable to make the right choices, as did the *daevas*, the unnamed *'false or erroneous gods'*, who, in confusion, made bad choices in opposition to *asha*. *Druj* is usually translated as 'the Lie' in the sense of the deception or a misrepresentation of the reality. The one who follows *Druj*- the *dregvant*-chooses evil thoughts, words and actions (Rose, 1.32.5). *Druj* as it is based on fabrication, deception and lies, it is the point for evil divinities. However more importantly, it can be unveiled through light.

Repeated in a variety of different Manichean scripts and beyond its mythic side, the ontological facet of such conflict has it that the Light uses the nature of Darkness against itself. It can help us come closer to an understanding of a realist humour which unveils deception and hypocrisy using similar techniques. Following the conception of *Druj*, the fool puts deception to shame by primarily shaming himself and even humiliating himself.

Beyond the mythic and demonological polarization, all this can be seen in an immanent mode to elaborate how inhuman humour functions. In effect, inhuman humour bears the same ability in deriding those who avoid its minuscule materialization. In fact the only result of rejecting humour, as one can see in Angra Mainyu, is a state of ontological humiliation. In such a state, where an assemblage strives to profess as serious as possible its deeds, thought and words, it is likelier to avoid humour. Although as mentioned earlier, we should stress that there is another feature that is closely related to such demonology and as the leader of demons in Angra Mainyu. In effect, Angra Mainyu deceives due to this characteristic of *āz* (greed). Angra Mainyu can provoke *āz* to produce more and more, and keep fabricating.

In a formal analysis, Donald C. Klein divides the very process of humiliation of what he calls *'dynamics of humiliation'* into three parts: humiliator/ witness/ victim. Humiliator according to him is the one that inflicts humiliation, witness is the one

who sees the disparagement and agrees with it and victim is the one that experiences humiliation as being disparaged. This can be applied to assemblages in relation to inhuman humour. When an assemblage avoids humoureme it undergoes humiliation, but this does not mean that the two other sides, namely witness and humiliator, are excluded or exempted from applying humoureme to themselves. An assemblage cannot keep being witness of humiliation or the very humiliator; especially when it is blind to the signs that emanate out of one assemblage being humiliated, this renders it the next victim of humiliation. Such inhuman ethics of humoureme will be discussed in the next chapter where it will be shown that as far as such likely humiliation is concerned, wit and wittiness cannot play the role humoureme plays which is undoing humiliation.

What a fool does is asking for humiliation before it occurs to him: in effect a fool secures himself against the humiliating tendency of such inhuman laughter by humiliating himself before he is compelled to. Fools can show, at least in a subjective and individual scope, the ability of auto-derision. Yet this should equally be seen in relation to the power that holy fools target. Having humiliated themselves, fools act as medium of inhuman laughter and inhuman laughter can make use of them to humiliate those who avoid humoureme. Thus, there is always a power reservoir angry at fools since fools by applying humoureme unexpectedly are able to unveil the ridicule at the heart of any serious gesture that has avoided humour. Far from an aesthetics of asceticism that is not uncommon among holy fools, fools in the realist sense humiliate themselves voluntarily rather than deciding to produce laughter (as in witticism), giving themselves over to becoming an object of laughter. Fools' acts certainly target hypocrisy and morality of different forms of knowledge and humoureme is among their most common techniques. This said, the significance of holy foolery in its actual contemporary form is not laid in the exclusion from society (as in desert fathers and mothers) but rather in the very utility of humour towards themselves. As a template for inhuman humour, holy foolery presents us with elements of humour in relation to self. Extending this trajectory further in a realist conception of humour highlights the deep relation between humility and humiliation. Humour towards oneself is the very pivotal point of subjectification and although it gives rise to momentary humiliation, it does not culminate in a shocking unexpected rush of humiliation from inhuman humour. This means a lot in terms of assemblages where an assemblage, by keeping humour inside, is safe from any shock of

humiliation from its encounter with other assemblages. On the other hand, simply witnessing the humiliation of other assemblages and taking pleasure (schadenfreude) can lead an assemblage to a contingent phase when it is humiliated as the next victim of inhuman laughter. Humiliation as an element in laughter was already present in ideas of Plato. From Plato to Bergson this idea of derision is noticeable. For them the human being is derided in laughter and whenever we laugh we laugh at somebody's derision. Although this idea has been given attention in Hobbes' theory of laughter, it has been underestimated as a theory of humour that's based on human degradation. Nevertheless if we think of humiliation as an integral part of human life, then not only we find a deep relation between humour and humiliation, we can also see how these two mechanisms are interrelated.

Lydia B. Amir, in her *Pride, Humiliation and Humility*, points out humour as a mechanism to diminish this inherent trait of human existence. Her innovative approach is laid in the ability to see humour beyond a simple entertaining facility and rather as an attitude to existence. By highlighting the human condition as humiliating, Amir asks if humour can play a role in this regard. Using three known theories of humour, Amir longs for humour as a mechanism to reduce the humiliating condition of human being. Amir's main attempt in her crucial paper is that the main bulk of humour theories are either too broad in thinking with humour or too narrow in its application. An example for her is the major humour theorist John Morreall who, according to Amir, oversimplifies the human condition throughout his theories of humour.

Morreall as a theoretician of humor is not alone in neglecting the potential humor of life and concentrating on humor in life - if one can express the parallel in a somewhat awkward language. Humor in life is a wonderful thing, but treated as a means to amusement, it is lowered to the level of other pleasures (Amir, 18).

Amir insists on the fact that developing a theory of humour to help the human condition should not result in ignoring the essence of human condition as frustrating, if not humiliating. Amir maintains this view and argues that:

But in my view, we should not deprive humor of its unique characteristics, by ignoring them; and we should not oversimplify the problem of human condition by assuming that if life will be more agreeable - by using humor, for instance - human condition will change for the better. If we want humor to remain an instrument of survival, we would have to adapt it to the problem that stems from

man's growing awareness of his condition. I am confident that eventually we will find a way to do so, for we are too proud to remain humiliated too long (Amir 18).

Yet she doesn't see humiliation and humour as two inherently connected mechanisms in an ontological sense. For Amir, humour is something to be inserted to human condition in order to decrease the very pain of humiliation that is inherent to life. In other words, for Amir there is an ultra-human humiliating condition on the one hand and on the other hand humour is a human mechanism in order to do away or at least decrease this pain. One can say that to Amir, humour is not an immanent entity that is utterly influential to human condition. Amir gives this impression that humiliation is the only immanent feature of human life, and humour seems to be only an external or transcendent factor. The argument here based on a participatory immanence of life is that if humiliation is at the heart of life, hubris makes its application even more painful. Humiliation maintains itself until one transforms it. Such transformation is impossible except by opening oneself to humoureme. Therefore, humoureme and humiliation in their micro and macro levels are so interdependent that they form one ontology. In other words what Amir claims is reversed; rather than acknowledging humiliation and insisting on humour to heal this existential pain, one can start with humour as a no less immanent characteristic of life, to transform, and not only reduce the very humiliation. Any assemblage can ignore humour and ascend to a hubris status that functions efficiently and productively, but once this assemblage is faced with what Bergson called cessation, it undergoes a deeper humiliation.

Izutsu in his *Sufism and Taoism* describes a Perfect Man as something beyond joy and anger and even indifferent to them.

Sometimes he is coldly relentless like autumn; sometimes he is warmly amiable like spring. Joy and anger come and go as naturally as the four seasons do in Nature. Keeping perfect harmony with all things (which endlessly go on being 'transmuted' one into another) he does not know any limit (Izutsu, 454).

Although this seems an obstacle to elaborate humour in its oriental sense, one should add that this state is rather the state of the absolute rather than a human one. Although the human can approach such state by increasing its immersion in humoureme, it is the absolute that is fully humorous. In effect, this leads us to a very

crucial facet of a materialist analysis of humour. The absolute does nothing but laugh, but the opposite affect in the absolute, namely anger should be set free from the Manichean conception where anger not only has an independent entity, but also is utterly anthropocentric. Although Izutsu attributes these two sides to that of Perfect Man, one can use it to go beyond the Manichean dichotomy of humour/ anger mentioned earlier and think of it as the very interdependence of humour and anger in its broad ontological sense. Thus, rather than analysing anger in the absolute, we need to investigate its absence of humour. Still sticking to a transcendent (absence of) humour does not satisfy a materialist conception of laughter—for that we stress the significance of understanding inhuman laughter in a corporeal mode. Like human laughter, inhuman laughter is audible, yet for this flow or air of laughter to be produced inhuman laughter utilizes various organs such as mouth or throat to produce it.

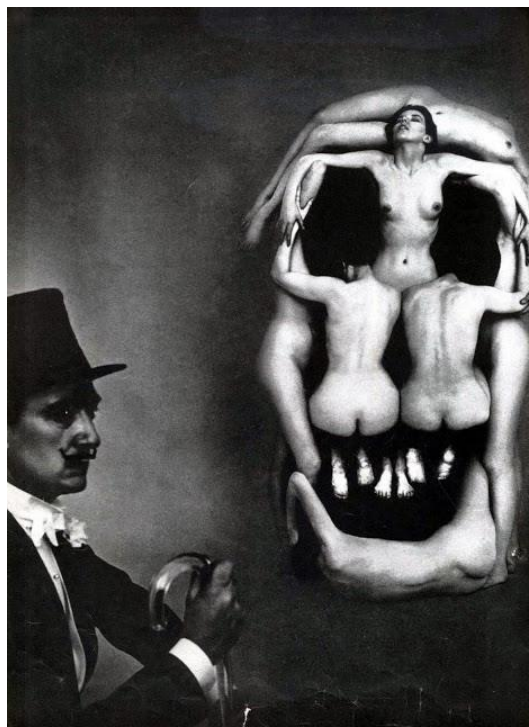


Figure 13. Salvador Dalí and Philippe Halsman's *In Voluptas Mors*. (1951)

Inhuman laughter can make use of various humans as object/ organs of its laughter. Unless one embraces mirth, he will be used for mirth, similar to what Shakespeare puts it in *Julius Caesar*:

Must I observe you? must I stand and crouch
Under your testy
humour? By the gods
You shall digest the venom of your spleen,

Though it do split you; for, from this day forth, I'll use you for my mirth, yea, for my laughter, When you are waspish (145).

All assemblages act morally, but Self-Humiliating Assemblage (SHA) actualizes its residuals and is constantly open to humiliating itself. What is this residual? It is the rift between knowledge and deed, or between visible and invisible. SHA constantly reveals this residual of ethics that is eclipsed under moral and social acts and this way humiliates itself. This has a binary function; on the one hand it causes SHA to be closer to truth and on the other hand it causes humour for other assemblages. However, if the other assemblages do not think of this humour as a sign to commence humiliating themselves, they will be humiliated unknowingly and unwantedly. Although SHA is made to cause humour for others, the same assemblage can cause fear for other assemblages as they see their inability to produce self-humiliation.

In effect, one can argue that from a moral perspective and its relation to hypocrisy as incontestable and indisputable, or the relation between different moralities that contest each other, tragicomedy is the most appropriate genre to shed light on what is morally given or said and what is immorally done; tragicomedy shows the rift between ethics and morality as a comic gesture replete with inconsistencies, or as Marx and Engels put it the contrast between _‘illusions‘ and their _‘achievements‘ (Zwart, 68).

This chapter was an attempt to introduce a more practical manifestation of realist humour in comedy which once again emboldens the difference between wit as the linguistic and discursive mode in humour production and a pragmatic humour. If in chapter three and through the application of Bohrer's idea of suddenness to Brooke-Rose we came across a kind of humour that integrates and transforms pain, this chapter was a more dramatic and pragmatic addition of the same idea where suddenness invites the moment in the very production of the humour. However by linking this idea with that of foolery, we concluded that this humour does not need to start with the serious issues, rather it imports the banal in the serious, a process which forms the production of the humoureme. This way not only the difference between wit and humour can be highlighted but more importantly the difference between irony and humour can also make a better sense. Nevertheless a realist project of humour leads to the ubiquitous functioning of the inhuman humour which forms in the very absence of the humoureme, in other words when subjects discard applying humoureme to the

serious two phenomena are feasible. First, the either wit is introduced in an utter linguistic sense to play the role of humour which results in the very substitution of foolery with the buffoonery as well as the emergence of the inhuman humour. In other words, inevitability of humour necessitates that the discarding of humour in relation to the serious culminates in the inhuman humour. In other words, the inability of activating the subjective humour in its everyday mode results in the objective laughter that emanates from the inhuman humour. Therefore, ontologically speaking, the realist project of humour claims that in the ubiquity and inevitability of humour two positions are plausible, either one is the subject of humour or one becomes an object of humour. The latter is best manifested in the acts of the fools in which they prepare and embrace humour in the heart of the serious which has the ethical side of unveiling hypocrisy. However there is the second part of being an object of laughter or being derided by the inhuman humour that will be discussed in the last chapter.

Chapter Five

Inhuman Humour

Um Ernst, nicht um spiel wird gespielt. (Paul and Hale, 307)

5.1 Introduction

In our discussion of the distinction between humour and irony in the previous chapter, we tried to make it clear that the difference between the two is, following Deleuze (1994), that humour aims to descend and fall, whereas irony is an attempt to ascend or transcend. It has been discussed throughout this dissertation that humour and laughter have usually been emptied of a materialist notion and been reduced to a linguistic one. In effect, one notices once again that by equalizing humour and jokes, the dominant incongruity theories eclipse the possible materialism and reduce humour to mind and language. One main aspect in the materialist production of humour is repetition and this chapter is an analysis of this feature in a realist project of humour. However, it should be stressed that repetition as a component of humour has normally been conceived of as a linguistic repetition that provokes laughter (Norrick, 1993). Even when scholars such as Maurice Charney say that "repetition may be the single most important mechanism in comedy" (82), this repetition is nothing more than a verbal linguistic one. Admittedly, for Freud the fact that young children like repeating words when they are learning how to speak was symptomatic of a relation between repetition and pleasure (1989. 128), yet when he came to jokes he did not fully exploit this aspect until over a decade after publishing his essay *The Uncanny* (1919). Freud, in his book *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* is drawn to an analysis of play, in particular in the sense of children's play. There Freud prioritizes repetition over pleasure in the very construction of play. Freud's attention is mainly drawn toward the pleasurable effect produced by discovering what is similar and repeating what is similar (Freud, 123). However, Freud's analysis hardly goes beyond a linguistic analysis of

jokes and the linguistic role of repetition in the very construction of jokes. In the same vein, although Deleuze's later attempts open vistas towards a more pragmatic conceptualisation of subjects and assemblages, Deleuze's analysis of humour in his *Logic of Sense* does not succeed in going beyond such a linguistic mode. However, even in that book his analysis seems to promise a psychoanalytic and unconscious analysis in the production of humour, but this analysis does not satisfy fully a materialistic conception of humour beyond language as elucidated with the help of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It is only in his later works such as *A Thousand Plateaus* where the Unconscious is set free from a linguistic horizon and humour can be seen in a more materialist sense. The aim of this chapter is to show how a realist conception of humour addresses repetition beyond a linguistic mode in a practical sense, and how the ethical and ontological consequences of such an understanding of humour can be reflected in sociopolitical dimensions. Therefore, a large bulk of the introduction to this chapter is an attempt to see if what is applied to laughter in a corporeal sense in the ideas of Georges Bataille and others are equally applicable to humour in its collectivity as well as its materialism, and how such an ontology can be defended. Such analysis draws us to the role repetition plays in the construction of humour, for as we discussed earlier, repetition is the kernel for the production of humour in a materialist sense.

Chapter four was mainly focused on the role fools play in the construction of a persona for realist humour. Fools, as we tried to show, have a specific usage of humour which makes it very different from simple linguistic wit. But are fools the only way the inhuman humour unveils itself? In analysing different aspects of inhuman humour in Gary Shteyngart's novel *Super Sad True Love Story* (2011), the main part of this chapter focuses on the absence of fools. In relation to a materialist conception of humour and in a more actual and contemporary mode, we argue that the absence of fools renders humour more inhuman. In effect, one reason for this as we will argue is that the humoureme is made less possible and less frequent in the absence and exclusion of fools and this makes the very production of humour more inhuman. Subjects and assemblages losing contact to the humoureme offered by foolery will undergo an inhuman experience of humour as will be discussed in *Super Sad True Love Story*. Fools play the intermediary role as an interzone in the very communication between the serious and the humorous and their absence or their exclusion makes such communication harder and even cruel. Furthermore, the highlighted difference between

linguistic wit and realist humour leads us to the conclusion that a world, such as the one in *Super Sad True Love Story*, which is replete with various serious subjects and assemblages depict such a materialist humour. The subjects in the novel utilise witty remarks and deeds to lubricate their communication without being less serious and as a consequence, another humour, a less subjective and an indifferent humour, namely the inhuman humour, occurs to them. In effect, a framework is offered where in a world filled with wit and witticism but bereft of any practical invitation of humour in its ethical mode, the subjects are led to an eventual and constant state of being ridiculed by an immanent but inhuman humour.

Super Sad True Love Story happens in a near future setting. The United States is at war in Venezuela, and its national debt has soared to the point that the Chinese have become a threat. Everywhere around New York, there are National Guard checkpoints, as well as riots that take place in the city's parks. People and especially youngsters know perfectly well how to text-scan for data, using some machines that make them give up their privacy. Books, on the other hand, are regarded by such young people as disgusting objects. Everybody is supplied with an *äppärät* device that is carried everywhere and can live-stream its owner's talks and thoughts, and broadcast a degree of —hotness| quotient to those around. There are other issues that equally obsess characters' minds, among them health, which leads us to the main character of the novel, Lenny. He works as a Life Lovers Outreach Coordinator for life extension. The other main character in the novel is a girl with whom Lenny is in love and furthermore who is the reason for him to want to live eternally. Eunice Park, the slim, slender and moody girl of an abusive Korean-American podiatrist from Fort Lee, N.J. Eunice is, unlike Lenny, very much a child of her time: an avid on-line consumer, a believer in images and sensations, a lifelong mistruster of words, written or spoken. Eunice is a sweet and desperate girl who keeps corresponding with a social network called GlobalTeens. People in this novel are not only connected but they are

—hyper-connected' through their progressive media and this makes it easier to see how their relations with one another works. They are people who have access to an unimaginable amount of data through various modes and media but do not know much about themselves. While Media and Credit are the most visible components of this society's consumerism, money, health and entertainment, what stands out in this society is the ridiculous world they inhabit. Such elements in an atmosphere that ranges

from American military adventurism to the "national security" measures depicted in the novel, provide the reader from the very beginning with a grotesque witticism. In effect, this entertaining and witty ambiance contributes to a situation where different subjects unveil their ridiculousness more and more. This is most evident in the melancholic and more dystopian mood of the novel towards its end where Shteyngart's prose becomes more and more serious and the characters look more and more ridiculous. Yet the crucial point concerning this novel in this study is the fact that such a state of risibility, in its dystopian sense where every subject is being humiliated as a result of their deeds, is the very result of repetition. What looks witty, funny and entertaining can turn out to be a trap to be ridiculed. It will be argued that every subject in an assemblage communicates with other subjects; for instance Lenny communicates with Eunice but the fact is that the witticism of each subject makes it difficult to be affected by another subject.

I focused on the loving animal in front of me and tried to make her love me. I spoke, extravagantly and, I hope, sincerely. Here's what I remember.

I told her I don't want to leave Rome now that I had met her. She again told me that I was a nerd, but a nerd who made her laugh. I told her I wanted to do more than make her laugh.

She told me I should be thankful for what I had. I told her she should move to New York with me.

She told me she was probably a lesbian.

I told her my work was my life, but I still had room for love. She told me love was *out of the question*.

I told her my parents were Russian immigrants who lived in New York. She told me hers were Korean immigrants who lived in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

I told her my father was a retired janitor who liked to go fishing.

She told me her father was a podiatrist who liked to punch his wife and two daughters in the face (Shteyngart, 24).

It is hardly possible that any authentic communication takes place between them simply because their knowledge of the world (which is tightly connected to their apparatus and the credit) is fixated and affects cannot be given sufficient chance to intervene and change subjects. Being closed to the outside leads to a miserable life where the characters do not laugh but provoke laughter as we laugh at them due to the very repetition of their deeds and this repetition simultaneously renders their misery inhumanly humorous.

This brings us to another main feature for the inhuman humour, namely that of the

relation between humour and truth. Witticism in *Super Sad True Love Story* leads to the extreme liquidation of assemblages:

And yet Lenny Abramov, your humble diarist, your small nonentity, will live forever. The technology is almost here. As the Life Lovers Outreach Coordinator (Grade G) of the Post-Human Services division of the Staatling-Wapachung Corporation, I will be the first to partake of it. I just have to be good and I have to believe in myself. I just have to stay off the trans fats and the hooch. I just have to drink plenty of green tea and alkalized water and submit my genome to the right people. I will need to re-grow my melting liver, replace the entire circulatory system with —smart blood,^{ll} and find someplace safe and warm (but not too warm) to while away the angry seasons and the holocausts (Shteyngart, 5).

There is a witticism which despite the vulnerability of the subjects remains in a mere linguistic sphere and does not embrace affects as the same linguistic wit makes communication of affects to one another redundant. This witticism, we argue makes the humoureme redundant and *repeats* itself towards the second part of the novel. The second part reveals the serious and cruel depth which this witticism has been suppressing. Any relation to truth is blocked and this makes an immanent derision and humiliation of such assemblages possible. Such humiliation is not emanated through a transcendental agency but rather takes place in a *relational* mode between assemblages.

One can suggest that on the opposite side of such determined liquidation in witticism, which suppresses any sort of anxiety in a playful witticism and leads to an ultimate humiliation towards the end of *Super Sad True Love Story*, stands the very discourse of terror and terrorism. The discourse of terror on the other hand suppresses any humour as it is filled with anxiety. This discourse also has cut its relation to any experience of the humoureme but not through witticism rather through a rigid epistemological gesture towards truth. If witticism loses its relation to the humoureme in order to mass-produce laughter in a linguistic sense, a terrorist blocks the humoureme as there is nothing funny in his assumed truth and his transcendent doxa should be maintained as seriously as possible. Therefore, against such a dystopian liquidation depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story*. There exists the extremely brutal solidification and suffocation of truth (the angry state in Angra Mainyu) that, far from any immanent humour is determined to humiliate other subjects. What these discourses share is at least their will: one will's liquidation of humour whereas the other is the result of willing the constant refusal of humour. In this regard, through *Super Sad True*

Love Story we analyse a liquidation of humour which culminates in a materialist humiliation of different assemblages that have been excluding humour (and replacing it with wit). We aim to show that such humiliation equally takes place quite gradually and via repetition.

Not only the ethical and ontological facets of the absence/ exclusion of humoureme of foolery in a dystopian model is significant; furthermore foolery is given here a realist and pragmatic role. While the linguistic and cognitive frameworks of humour normally attribute a two-level analysis to humour, namely that of incongruity-resolution, we attribute the function of resolution to fools but such a resolution is seen in a pragmatic mode where fools act as the mediators of humour by being the generators of the humoureme. However immediately next to such pragmatic role, there is an ethical role attributed to the fools. The Fool is the persona who is able to not only provoke laughter in face of the existential incongruities, but more importantly fools are able to make visible what is concealed between the serious moral or hypocritical zones and that of humour. Therefore, foolery obtains a resolutionary task not in language but in the middle of social relations. Yet as discussed earlier and as it will be shown in *Super Sad True Love Story*, any attempt towards excluding foolery will only result in a more inhuman intervention of humour. The liquidation of humour renders any relation to truth impossible whereas the solidification of truth renders any humour impossible. The assemblages in *Super Sad True Love Story* maintain a fluid relation where almost everything is possible: in a network of assemblages, if assemblage A causes a ridicule to assemblage B, the same assemblage A can be ridiculed by an assemblage C and so on. The absence of foolery does not eliminate humour from social relations, it only makes it more cruel as assemblages could be mocked without such an interzonic foolery.

Super Sad True Love Story represents a world bereft of foolery which makes an immanent and cruel humour between assemblages possible. Using a materialist concept of *repetition* and imitation, we argue that assemblages keep repeating themselves and keep encountering one another. Repeating one's difference without being affected by others' differences can result in getting rid of foolery and suppressing the humoureme and this can cause any assemblage that solely repeats itself or its difference to be derided in its relation to other neighbouring assemblages. It is through such repetition and such subsequent encounters that assemblages, in an immanent and

unconscious mode, reveal what they have kept inside: the serious inside turns out to be the ridiculous outside.

In effect, another form of humour is hypothesised which takes place in a materialism which is less subjective and more inter-subjective and relational. In his *Phantom of the Ego* (2013), Nidesh Lawtoo shows very well that the development of the ego is a contagious phenomenon whose roots can be traced back to Nietzsche. The way subjects are influenced by each other and the way they are connected entails an intermezzo which is largely affective. For this purpose, Lawtoo gives priority to Nietzsche rather than to Freud and argues that Nietzsche introduces us to the ego's phantom. The Ego's phantom is an unconscious process of communication that spreads contagiously from one subject to another, prior to communicating thoughts, values and knowledge that turns the ego to a phantom of the ego. Therefore, not only is the ontogenesis (the development of the child) a result of such affective communication but more importantly phylogenesis (the development of the human species) is a mimetic process that precedes language. Lawtoo attaches significance to Georges Bataille's conception of laughter as the first thing a baby learns imitating its parents or its caregivers. Bataille brings laughter to a zone where the initial communications between the newborn and parents take place and this way prioritises it over other forms of communication which are linguistic and Oedipal. Although our knowledge and thoughts gradually try to surpass this form of communication and strive for a more coherent intellectual mode of communication, laughter, in its contagious and infectious form, remains with us forever. However such mimetic forms of laughter can also direct us to yet another mechanism of laughter that is replete with scorn and derision. In the same way that children can mimic laughter and undergo its contagion, subjects can imitate such laughter, which is usually nothing more than a wit that targets others. In our framework, the inability to experience humour in its tiny manifestations (humoureme) is one requirement for the emergence of the inhuman laughter.

Humour not only communicates in this scope between subjects and assemblages, but also it is a pivotal component in the formation and creation of subjects. By reducing this interzone to a linguistic lubricant, subjects and assemblages will be devoid of affective communication that causes their becomings. *Super Sad True Love Story*, as a dystopian novel, is introduced as a sphere for such kind of humour where this mode of communication to create new subjects takes a new path, the path of

derision rather than humour. This path links the Bataillian emphasis on contagion to a Bergsonian laughter of derision where humour between subjects is replaced with a witty communication. This culminates as in *Super Sad True Love Story* in an inertia of derision which includes the *unbecoming* of subjects. Subjects by avoiding humour have access to wit as a similar but utterly linguistic phenomenon, unaware of the fact that excluding humour in its molecular sense (humoureme) gradually results in the inhuman laughter where such subjects will be humiliated and derided. Such a gradual logic of the intervention of inhuman laughter, which is borrowed from Leibniz' treatment of monads has been seen against the background of the repetition mechanism. The role attributed to repetition means that subjects and assemblages constantly repeat themselves and it is by such repetition that they gradually obtain the qualities of a victim for the humiliation of inhuman laughter. Therefore, far from a transcendent logic, inhuman laughter has utterly materialistic requirements and the main condition for it as explained earlier is the deep connection between the interior and exterior. It means that when the humoureme as an interior gesture of a subject of an assemblage can no longer function, the exterior facet namely inhuman humour takes action whereas on the other hand, any experience of the humoureme makes the emergence of the inhuman laughter less and less likely.

5.2 Ethics of the Humoureme

In a very rich study, Hub Zwart makes an attempt to elaborate a historical and conceptual trajectory of laughter (and humour) in relation to morality. In his study *Ethical Consensus and the Truth of Laughter*, Zwart delineates laughter as an act that precedes morality. Zwart argues that against the very common notion that laughter and morality exclude each other, they have a lot in common. Admittedly such a relation between morality and laughter has been maintained by different thinkers from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche and Foucault. But Zwart's point is that "morality's beginning is of a relative nature and that there is no absolute transition from _the non-moral' to _the moral." Based on this claim, Zwart argues that morality is a _world we enter' (9). Rather than being explored or invented by a subject, we are created by the moral life we

are involved in. As our moral worlds are not all in harmony with each other and there is not sufficient “consensus” between these worlds, we might be “discontent with discourse of the others” (Zwart, 9) and this is already the source of tension and conflict between different forms of morality. The significance of Zwart’s analysis lies in his conception of moral philosophy which is not one to justify different moral worlds. The established moral worlds or “platitudes”, rather than consolidation and justification, require contestation. And here laughter reveals its significance as a strategy prior to morality as morality is based on a non-controversial consensus. Gay laughter or what he calls parody is a strategy in relation to any truth-regime “which present[s] itself as indisputable and beyond contestation” (Zwart, 70). Laughter in this regard reveals the very vulnerability of such moral platitudes and more importantly the relation to truth. In effect, as Zwart emphasizes via the shift from tragic to comic in Nietzsche or the shift from the *Birth of Tragedy* to that in *Gay Science*, jest obtains an intimate relation to truth:

However, even in earlier writings, when he took science’s claim to knowledge more seriously than during his final episode, Nietzsche recognized that the buffoon had a special task as a herald of new truths. When he refers to the first volume of his *Human, All Too Human* as a fool’s book, *ein Narrenbuch*, he does not consider the fool someone who is denied access to truth. On the contrary, it is in the fool’s discourse that new truths first make their appearance. The fool is granted the privilege of uttering them for the first time. While being excluded from the old established truths, the fool’s cap allows him to introduce new unprecedented ones (Zwart, 75).

Zwart’s aim to prioritize laughter over morality is one that is immersed in the notions offered by Nietzsche, Bakhtin and other scholars of laughter, yet his analysis remains bound to a discursive approach to laughter. Nevertheless there are implications for a realist project on humour and laughter where Zwart attributes a significance to laughter in the ability to subvert different forms of morality and their “vulnerabilities”, something that has been missed in the Aristotelian view of morality that is based on “reconstructing and consolidating established morality”. Instead Zwart opts for the Socratic view of morality which is based on contestation and one that takes morality as the outcome of moral experience.

It entails a particular understanding of moral life which, rather than being indisputable or self-evident, must be considered the temporary outcome of a certain historical development, an outcome whose basic ‘platitudes’ (Rorty) are bound to find themselves exposed to laughter. Furthermore, it presupposes, instrumentalizes and reinforces certain forms of moral subjectivity, disqualifying others as primitive, unreasonable or immoral. Yet, this moral regime which managed to become established and now seems unable to recognize its own deficiencies, still finds itself accompanied by a sense of uneasiness which already points to something which is hidden or neglected, a moral truth about to reveal itself in the experience of laughter - an experience which entails a challenge to the established consensus (Zwart, 11).

Sigmund Freud in his *Der Humor* elaborates specifically the very function of humour in relation to oneself as well as in relation to others. In *Der Humor*, he does not make an attempt to delineate the psychological economy of humour (which he had already approached in his *Jokes and Its Relation to the Unconscious*), but rather focuses on a neglected aspect of humour in relation to the super-ego. Freud commences with the fact that humour is a mechanism which transforms the expected negative affects to jest or as he puts it, “There is no doubt that the essence of humour is that one spares oneself the affects to which the situation would naturally give rise and dismisses the possibility of such expressions of emotion with a jest” (2001. 4542). In other words, humour is an act that “asserts itself against the unkindness of real circumstances” (ibid), and it operates according to a mechanism that Freud emphatically distinguished from the one in jokes as jokes are run by an act to “obtain a yield of pleasure” (4543). The core of Freud’s argument lies in the attitude behind humour. If a humorist, according to Freud in his *Jokes and Its Relation to Unconscious*, acts in relation to others as an adult towards children, and this way obtains a sense of superiority, then “One asks oneself what it is that makes the humorist arrogate this role to himself ” (4543). The paradox presented by Freud is that if a person is treating oneself as a child in the experience of self-mockery, then should we admit that a part of him plays the role of the super-ego, or parents? After all, ego in the eyes of super-ego appears “tiny and all its interest trivial” (4544). Therefore, although the pleasure taken in humour is less intense than the one in jokes and the comic (*Jokes and its Relation to the Unconscious*), this ‘liberating’ and ‘elevating’ act in humour, which says “Look! Look! here is the world, which seems so dangerous! It is nothing but a game for children - just worth making a jest about!”(4545). This analysis finally brings Freud to the conclusion that

even the super-ego, as merged with the ego in a blurred sphere, renders the experience of humour possible in order to protect it from the sufferings of reality.

The Freudian conception of humour suggests that humour, more than a linguistic joke, is the capacity to deal with reality as it is. But it also implies the fact that reality as it is makes one laughable or even more precisely, reality is able to make us objects of humour. As there is seldom a way to stop reality from being painful and tragic, humour enters the scene. What Freud discusses as self-humour or self-mockery should be elaborated in relation to an understanding of reality, where according to Lydia Amir, the Aristotelian idea of humans as *homo ridens* co-exists with the other rarely studied attitude of the human as *homo risibilis* (2015, 262).

As one step toward a better definition of the inhuman laughter, we could say that the fool not only maintains the ability of *sich lächerlich machen*, but also helps to make the forms of morality protected against laughter and humour risible—hence the socio-political function of holy fool in relation to morality, including the monastic ascetics of the church fathers. However, what a holy fool does to fulfil this function is of extreme significance. In effect, a fool undergoes an experience of humour *before reality humiliates him or her*. This entails an understanding of reality as ridiculing the human. Being aware of this tacit tendency in reality, a fool makes something look hilarious before the arrival of real hilarity in it. As it goes beyond a theoretical or rhetorical representation of ridicule, the fools engage themselves in this experience of ridicule by self-humiliation. When fools humiliate themselves, they undergo a process of subjectification or of creating themselves anew. Although through creating themselves anew they are likely to become the object of laughter for other subjects (*devenir risible*), they also provide other subjects a chance to be able to humiliate themselves. When other subjects are reluctant to experience humoureme, the fools produce it through having themselves mocked. Therefore such self-humiliation already implies an urgency for other subjects who are too engaged with their established moralities, fixed and formed subjectivities to experience humour.

The German word *Mut* might be of help to explain the state of such humiliation (*Demütigung*). *Mut* that comes from *Muod* and implies the state of courage, has also connotations for anger as in *erregt sein, nach etwas trachten, auch*

zornig sein¹¹. Therefore *Demut* functions not necessarily as the state of being empty of bravery, but more importantly as an affective transition of anger to other affects. When humiliation shifts from targeting oneself to targeting others, such anger finds its way through derision. Humiliating or simply deriding others as the direct result of denying humoureme culminates in inhuman humour. Ontologically, when an assemblage just uses other assemblages as an object of humour without implementing the emitted humoureme to its own framework, the assemblage will be used sooner or later by inhuman humour as an object of humour. There is a correspondence between the adamant and intractable act of an assemblage in avoiding self-humiliation and the unexpectedness of the humiliation that befalls it. Such inhuman humour is likelier to happen in the absence of the fools in a yet more cruel mode. The world depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story* provides us with a world that shows how wit in the absence of humour culminates in derision.

DO NOT GO GENTLE
FROM THE DIARIES OF LENNY
ABRAMOV JUNE 1
Rome- New York
Dearest Diary

Today I've made a major decision: *I am never going to die.*
Others will die around me. They will be nullified. Nothing of their personality will remain. The light switch will be turned off. Their lives, their entirety, will be marked by glossy marble head-stones bearing false summations (‘her star shone brightly,’ ‘never to be forgotten,’ ‘he liked jazz’), and then these too will be lost in a coastal flood or get hacked to pieces by some genetically modified future-turkey.
Don't let them tell your life's a journey. A journey is when you end up *somewhere*. When I take the number 6 train to see my social worker, that's a journey. When I beg the pilot of this rickety united-Continental Deltamerican plane trembling its way across the Atlantic to turn around and head straight back to Rome and into Eunice Park's fickle arms, *That's* a journey (Shteyngart, 3).

The novel is made up of the diaries of Lenny Abramov and the correspondences between Abramov, Eunice and her parents or sister. This form helps to see the relation between subjects in the shape of their diaries which to some extent represent their minds. Yet it is the very repetition of themselves and their disposition to one another in a witty mode that gradually brings them to a state of derision. The novel

¹¹ <http://idiome.deacademic.com/1943/Mut>

starts with a diary of Lenny which is written on June 1, between Rome and New York.

The following is an extract of the first part from the novel and contains the post of Eunice on the website GlobalTeens.

SOMETIMES THE LIFE IS SUCK
FROM THE GLOBALTEENS ACCOUNT TO EUNICE
PARK JUNE 1
Format: Long-Form Standard English Text
GLOBAL TEENS SUPER HINT: Switch to Images today! Less
words= more fun!!!
EUNI-TARD ABROAD TO GRILLBITCH:

Hi, Precious Pony!

What's up twat? Missing your _tard? Wanna dump a little sugar on me. I am so sick of making out with girls. BTW, I saw the pictures on the Elderbird alum board with your tongue in Bryana's, um, ear. I hope you're not trying to get Gopher jealous? He's had way too many three-somes. Respect yourself, hoo-kah! So- guess what? I met the cutest guy in Rome. He is exactly my type, tall, kind of German-looking, very prep-pie, but not an asshole (Shteyngart, 27).

There are elements in such passages that make the characters expose and display their wit. The usage of words such as tard or twat as terms of affection or other derogatory terms or absurd ones such, "Respect yourself, hoo-kah" delineate this wit in a repetitive manner. The materialist justification of such humour and humiliation is of extreme significance simply because it is the lack of the humoureme that results in the ultimate communication of a witty form which results in their derision, the humoureme that is the direct result of an affective communication with the outside. The task for a materialistic understanding of such derision is what causes the first witty, funny part of the novel to be gradually so sombre and dystopian.

The novel opens itself to such cruelty in the middle of its witticism quite gradually. Therefore what is of extreme significance is this shift from the absurd and witty situations towards the cruel, dystopian and inhuman setting.

My armored personnel carrier bearing the insignia of the New York Army National Guard was parked astride a man-sized pothole at the busy intersection of Essex and Delancey, a roof-mounted. 50-caliber Browning machine gun rotating 180 degrees, back and forth, like a retarded metronome along the busy but peaceable Lower East Side streetscape. Traffic was frozen all across Delancey Street. Silent traffic, for no one dared to use a horn against the military vehicle. The street corner emptied around me until I stood alone, staring down the barrel of

a gun like an idiot. I lifted up my hands in panic and directed my feet to scam (Shteyngart, 56).

Beyond the linguistic repetition, repetition of deeds in which characters repeat constantly what they are busy with, can function as the kernel of such mechanism towards derision and humiliation, an element which already implies that what counts as a realist humour is practical and real acts rather than the rhetorical gestures towards humour. For this the contagion inherent in laughter has been readdressed as the materialist and gradual path towards such derision. This not only maintains the affective significance of humour but also reconciles it to a more political and contemporary conceptualization of ethics that targets subjects and assemblages that are constantly in touch with one another. The mimetic conceptualisation of realist humour entails the fact that subjects undergo an experience of propagating and repeating some acts or words and it makes them, unconsciously, derided in their relation to one another. Therefore by excluding the humoureme, the derision of the inhuman emerges in such inhuman humour, but it takes place only in relations one has with other assemblages around him or her. In an analogy, one can think of the way laughter is produced and heard and the way laughter uses other organs (for instance of a face and a mouth) to be produced. In the same vein, in its emission and manifestation, inhuman humour utilizes various subjects to be heard and produced. Seen this way, inhuman laughter clears its throat, tightens the cords, opens the lips and so on to produce its laughter, to burst out.

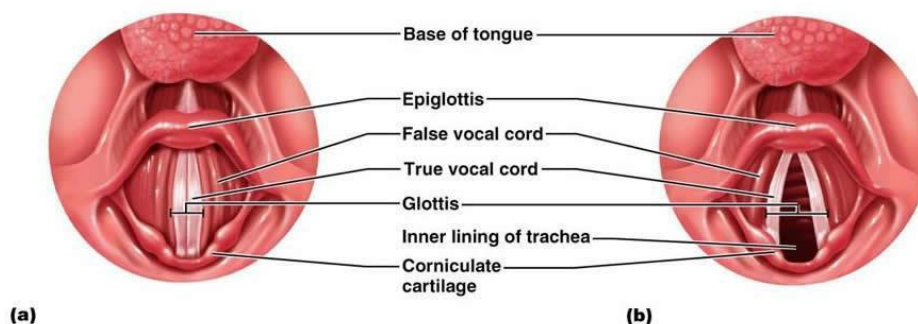


Figure 14. Organs involved in the production of Laughter.

All such organs in the very moment of laughter lose their common utility and serve the breath that is going through the vocal cords. Speaking and communicating is

more often than not impossible when all these organs are mobilized; the contraction of the muscle below the lungs (the diaphragm) to expel air in a rhythmic pattern, and the breath that moves out of the cords to be heard outside. However, this analogy is not sufficiently descriptive of inhuman humour, as for inhuman humour the organs at work to produce laughter are the assemblages that are in relation to one another, rather than some fixed organs with designated and determined roles. Any relation and communication between organs can transform an organ or an assemblage to serve the breath or the air that exits the body by losing its normal function (derision).

Gabriel Tarde in his *Laws of Imitation* (1903) introduces the concept of propagation as the kernel to his sociological studies which shows how reproduction functions in social milieus. According to his notion of mimetics, the acts of individuals are replicable and this can make such acts habitual, or transform them to practices. However, such practices are by nature social and take place in a very reciprocal realm, and as such they invite a relational notion of action to social milieu. The reason why Gabriel Tarde is significant to this study is that according to him, *propagation* is the key in understanding social phenomena while we are attributing social characteristics to humour. But this directs us first and foremost to the process in which humour is formed. The process or the production of humour in its social domain might look less important than the function of humour, but with a bit of scrutiny based on a *relational* conception of humour, we realize that the very production of humour in its social domain and in its relation between subjects as well as assemblages is as important as its function. In order to elaborate propagation, Tarde claims that,

At the moment when this novel thing, big or little as it may be, is conceived of, or determined by an individual, nothing appears to change in the social body, - just as nothing changes in the physical appearance of an organism which a harmful or a beneficent microbe has just invaded,- and the gradual changes caused by the introduction of the new element seem to follow, without visible break, upon the interior social changes into whose current they have glided (Tarde, 2).

Tarde, following Leibniz, insists on a gradual mechanism in the formation of change in different organisms. Bringing this to humour means that the realist humour claims its production to be based on a gradual propagation which is quite similar to contagion in the case of laughter. The propagation of the new element in the organism causes a regularity which _‘is not in the least apparent in social things until they are resolved into their several elements, when it is found to lie in the simplest of

them, in combinations of distinct inventions, in flashes of the genius which have been accumulated and changed into commonplace lights“ (Tarde, 3). The link that connects understanding humour in its subjective mode or its assemblage form to Tarde’s notion of social change is laid in the link that Tarde himself, inspired by M. Espinas, makes between human societies and natural organisms. In effect, Tarde aims to show that the rules and laws that cause human societies to change are not different from those that show initiatives in natural organisms and _ ‘ both animal and human societies may be explained from this point of view“ (Tarde, 4).

Repetition in the construction of humour should be pursued in a practical sense and it lends itself to humour in a gradual sense which is not as visible. By borrowing another of Tarde’s aspects introduced in his *Laws of Imitation*, we can extend the whole argument in relation to causality

But as a matter of fact, the mind does not fully understand nor clearly recognise the relation of cause and effect, except in as much as the effect resembles or repeats the cause, as for example, when a sound wave produces another sound wave, or a cell, another cell (Tarde, 6).

Tarde highlights the formation of innovation out of imitation, or as Deleuze takes it and introduces it in his own philosophy, to say that difference is the result of repetition. Tarde maintains his materialist approach and continues that if such innovation and its link to repetition is so incoherent and chaotic to us it is because we refrain from taking the trivial and minuscule parts into account, the fact that resembles Leibniz emphasis on petites perceptions. _ ‘Indeed, parts of this science exist in the petty experiences of each of us, and we have only to piece the fragments together“ (Tarde, 12). What was once an invention or an innovation forms the reality now, but this could not have been fulfilled unless by repeating this invention.

Moreover, the social forces of any real importance at any period are not composed of the necessarily feeble imitations that have radiated from recent inventions, but of the imitations of the ancient inventions, radiations which are alike more intense and more widespread because they have had the necessary time in which to spread out and become established as habits, customs or so-called physiological 'race instincts (Tarde, 19).

The target for this analysis is the imitation in the social form of humour and laughter. Bataille places emphasis on the contagious mode of laughter that unsettles knowledge and rigid consciousness at least temporarily. According to him, rational discourse speaks of _ ‘the heterogeneous elements in so symbolic and so abstract a

way that the act of envisaging them no longer even involves a simple phenomenon of practical clearing like laughter“ (2014, 425). However such clearing should be seen collectively and taken beyond a personal realm and an individual laughter. Here with Tarde we aim to see how this is applicable to humour but instead of starting with subjects who are challenged by a chaotic moment of laughter, we need to redefine humour in its own rationality, in its collective contagion. What does humour think of us? Or even better, what does humour do to us? How does humour burst upon us and how does it even deride us?

Society defined as "a collection of beings as they are in the process of imitating one another" (Tarde, 54) is the basis of definition of society by Tarde. This conception, which has for long been overshadowed by the Durkheimian analysis of society, stresses the significance of imitation in the formation of society. A mimetic conception of society such as Tarde's can introduce us to a mimetic framework of humour in its realist mode. We argue that humour plays such a mimetic role between various assemblages that exist in the same society. Imitation as the kernel of such a materialist conception of humour means repeating acts, deeds of subjects.

Considered in the abstract, an imitation is no more than a repetition, an infinite reproduction of the same. Considered in concrete terms, however, imitation becomes pluralized. Multiple flows emerge, within variable relations of composition or substitution. In this context, repetition becomes variation (Candea, 50).

Framing it in a materialist conception of humour the derision in its immanent mode arises out of repetition of what a subject does/ says in relation to the other subjects in a reciprocal inter-subjective manner or a network of relation. One can notice in Tarde that such communication between different forms functioning in a society is based on a contagion from one form to another until it overwhelms the entire organism. However, such contagious communication is unconscious and the organism as a whole is not aware of it. It is through repetition that such an organism lets such an unconscious element develop until it becomes conscious and visible.

Candea (2010) maintains that the significance of Tarde's idea of imitation is that instead of doing away with the individual side and embracing the social part, it brings them together as an inter-individual bridge. Imitation is an inter-individual relation and as such does not give us purchase on what is properly termed a social relation, since the latter should be conceived of as breaking with and external to the

individualities it connects (Candea, 44). And that is why the realist project of humour starts with the interior humoureme as the pre-individual and molecular moments of becoming and emphasises that humoureme determines the way the inhuman humour intervenes. Putting it differently and as a criterion, it is only through neglecting and understating the role that such pre-individual elements of humoureme play the inhuman humour acts out.

What we call the subject is nothing more than the place where these relations play out and come together. It is the internal milieu which opens onto an external milieu peopled with other subjects, as well as a plurality of other beings which inhabit our vital experience and determine it fundamentally as an affective experience (Candea, 49).

While it is common to start with the whole and prioritise it over the parts, Tarde defines a conception of sociology that is inter-psychological and starts with the tiny parts. However, inter-psychological does not mean ‘a sub-set of psychology; rather it aims at studying psychic phenomena which are beyond the individual and yet are not subsumed into collective representations’ (Candea, 44). This already stands against both the representative understanding of humour as well as a subjective reduction of it and leads us to see this inhuman humour as the interzone between subjects and assemblages because as Carsenti puts it, in this framework ‘beliefs and desires imitate each other, not individuals’ (Candea, 45).

For Tarde, imitation allows us to analyze a concrete social situation, however complex it may be, because it allows us to distinguish and to sort different processes of assimilation and resistance, of accumulation and substitution, of alliance and conflict between distinct imitative flows (Candea, 49).

If repetition in its subjective or linguistic form makes humour possible, inhuman humour functions in relations between subjects. Tarde, using the concept of imitation, tries to dispense with the conscious/ unconscious dichotomy of subjects which divides their actions into voluntary and involuntary ones. For Tarde, the ‘imperceptible degrees’ of any action, regardless of our consciousness of it is as significant as the voluntary ones, or a univocity in our actions. This enables us, using Tarde’s framework, to see the interrelation between the interior and exterior facets in the production of humour once more. Humoureme and its rejection are the main criteria for the inhuman humour to act upon subjects. The infinitesimal mechanism

inherent in humoureme renders such brutal derision less likely, whereas its rejection is possible only through opening oneself to it.

There is an echo here of Leibniz's theory of small perceptions: as with Leibniz, it is not the cumulative phenomenon which allows gradation to emerge as transformation, but rather the opposite analytic movement, led by infinitesimal calculus. The infinite, in other words, is implied in the finite, it is not beyond the finite as a product of aggregation. This allows Tarde to add, in a note to the passage cited above: the psychological is explained by the social, precisely because the social emerges from the psychological (Candea, 57).

Humour in terms of imitation means that any repetition of an action in a subject, which is a result of its interior inclinations results in an exterior action led by inhuman humour and in relation between subjects. It helps us move from the question of the subject of imitation to a question about what is imitated [ce qui s'imite], about the matter of the process considered from an impersonal point of view (Candea, 57). In this light, any action that a subject commits is, to a large extent, towards an accumulation of a tendency or a creation of new subject positions in relation to the other subjects. This implies that what makes a subject is not necessarily his or her resistance or consistency, rather its insistence, its ever-repeated capacity to impose itself against facts of the same order. An insistence of this type, we argue, implies a repetition that drives inhuman laughter. As one can see in *Super Sad True Love Story*, even the material life can play a role in order to make such inhuman humour lead the subjects to their unbecoming, their inertia or their derision.

Kell's apparat lit up the air around her, and she was plunged into the needs of a hundred clients. After the daily decadence of Rome, our offices looked spare. Everything bathed in soft colors and the healthy glow of natural wood, office equipment covered in Chernobyl-style sarcophagi when not in use, alpha-wave stimulators hidden behind Japanese screens, stroking our overactive brains with calming rays. Little humorous hints scattered throughout. "Just Say No to Starch." "Cheer up! Pessimism Kills." "Telomere- Extended Cells Do It Better." "NATURE HAS A LOT TO LEARN FROM US:" And, fluttering in the wind above Kelly Nardl's desk, a wanted poster showing a cartoon hippie being hacked over the head with a stalk of broccoli.. (Shteyngart, 60).

This passage is among the pieces in the novel which illustrates the role the material or the machine can play in the formation of such inhuman laughter. The absurd can emerge not only in relation between subjects but also through the relation

the subjects define with the material world. Beyond the subjective level and in relation to the assemblages, especially when as in *Super Sad True Love Story* foolery and its generous humoureme production are excluded, either an assemblage keeps its relation with other assemblages with humility or it will be compelled to descend cruelly by inhuman humour. By applying humoureme to itself, an assemblage will be secured against being humiliated by the inhuman humour. Assemblages are closed when it comes to humoureme, they apply it on their own, in their secrecy and privacy. This role can not be reduced to a linguistic will manifested in wit, because humoureme is more an ontological disposition. The following passage is an example in *Super Sad True Love Story* which shows even witty thoughts or words do not guarantee the inhuman derision.

Finally, three hours later, the birds picking up a morning tune outside, she came into the bedroom. I pretended I was asleep. She took off most of her clothes and got in bed next to me, then pressed her warm back and behind into my chest and genitals, so that I ended up spooning her warm body. She was crying. I was still pretending to be asleep. I kissed her in a way that was consistent with my being supposedly asleep. I didn't want her to hurt me anymore that night. She was wearing those panties that snap right off when you press a button on the crotch (Shteyngart, 111).

By usurping the very function of the holy fool in self-mockery in an asubjective domain, one can enlarge the view of humiliation beyond a psychological and subjective sphere. Assemblages which constantly avoid descending to earth will end in humiliation, they will be humiliated in a process where other assemblages willingly or unwillingly take part. Those assemblages that participate willingly in humiliating such an assemblage are also apt to be humiliated in upcoming stages of encounter between assemblages. An assemblage by cutting its connection to earth (humus) will collapse to earth and be humiliated.

Any assemblage bears the virtual humoureme inside, and such humoureme can either be realized to experience joy or it can be suppressed and transmitted to linguistic wit which ends in activating the inhuman laughter. Whenever the assemblage is efficient in juxtaposing its difference or its becoming with its virtual humoureme it succeeds in obtaining an ethical relation with its socius. However, as all this makes sense in an ethical view, it requires some elaboration here. The fool inside any assemblage is the component of synchronizing what an assemblage does and what it

professes: the relation between visible forms and invisible tendencies. Humoureme emerges where the contradiction between these two materializes itself, a moment of suspension or paradox between visible forms and invisible. The clash between the visible and invisible is rooted in the relation between intention and body or thought inside and its extension on body. Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), his unfinished book, puts it this way:

If there is an animation of the body; if the vision and the body are tangled up in one another; if, correlatively, the thin pellicle of the *quale*, the surface of the visible, is doubled up over its whole extension with an invisible reserve; and if finally, in our flesh as in the flesh of things, the actual, empirical, ontic visible, by a sort of folding back, invagination, or padding, exhibits a visibility, a possibility that is not the shadow of the actual but is its principle, that is not the proper contribution of a ‘_thought’ but is its condition, a style, allusive and elliptical like every style, but like every style inimitable, inalienable, an interior horizon and an exterior horizon between which the actual visible is a provisional partitioning and which, nonetheless, opens indefinitely only upon other visibles—then (the immediate and dualist distinction between the visible and the invisible, between extension and thought, being impugned, not that extension be thought or thought extension, but because they are the obverse and the reverse of one another, and the one forever behind the other) there is to be sure a question as to how the ‘_ideas of the intelligence’ are initiated over and beyond, how from the ideality of the horizon one passes to the ‘_pure’ ideality, and in particular by what miracle a created generality, a culture, a knowledge come to add to and recapture and rectify the natural generality of my body and of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 152).

Humoureme is an instance of revealing this chasm between ideality of a knowledge and the animation of body. But when humoureme does not function to conjoin what is claimed (words) and what is done (deeds), it is through repetition that different subjects will be derided in their relation to other subjects. Any absence of humoureme can get accumulated and culminate in a state of hypocrisy simply because it is humoureme that brings any subject down to ‘_earth’. The hypocrisy of any assemblage is defined when the assemblage develops a rift between intentions and deeds: *riyā’* as the Arabic word for ascetic hypocrisy is the target of foolery in the Persian poet, Hafiz. Yet more importantly, this word is made up of the root r-a-y which means visibility. The hypocrite utilises *riyā’* in order to dissimulate and pretend or even hide what he bears inside. When an assemblage fails to activate the molecular humoureme in its relation to itself, it deteriorates into a hypocritical gesture. Any

assemblage that opens itself to its humoureme can be ridiculed, whereas the assemblages that do not actualize their humoureme are doomed to be humiliated by the inhuman laughter that runs through assemblages. Acts of laughter by a subject or humoureme in an assemblage are moments of opening to humoureme and announcing the chasm or contradiction between what drives the assemblage inside and its public deeds. When an assemblage averts such molecular instances, it accumulates its virtual humoureme and ends in humiliation in its relation to other assemblages.

Riyā‘ makes it possible for one to keep a smooth stance outside while there is already a rigidity and acerbity inside which renders any humour to itself impossible. This stays in opposition with a fool whose rigid look and appearance is only a cover to his smooth inside. riyā‘ is etymologically rooted in *ra’y* which means vision or visibility; an act which is a determination to look as moral as possible, to keep morality as visible as possible. As holy fools in Islam are utterly against such an attitude, one can notice the function such a tradition can have in its contemporary form and consider what holy fools are opposing through their own self-humiliation. In this regard, there is a vast area of varied traditions from West to East where different fools play a prominent role in unveiling what is normally concealed in their morality. A fool provokes humour at the cost of risking his entirety in order to show that a morality is filled with deceit.

Holy fools long for their humiliation far before it happens to them as their acts are tinged in humour. Holy fools can show, at least in a subjective and individual scope, the potentials laid in auto-derision. Yet this should certainly be seen in relation to the power that holy fools act against. In other words, far from an aesthetics of asceticism that is not uncommon among holy fools, they humiliate themselves prior to the morality or power that surround them. The actions of the holy fools certainly target hypocrisy and morality of different forms of knowledge and humour is among their most common techniques. This said, the significance of holy foolery in its actual contemporary form is not laid in the exclusion from society (as in desert fathers and mothers) but rather in the very utility of humour towards themselves in city and in the middle of reality. As a template for realist humour, holy foolery presents us with elements of humour in relation to the self. Humour towards oneself is the very pivotal point of subjectification and although it gives rise to momentary humiliation, it does not culminate in a shocking unexpected rush of humiliation from inhuman humour.

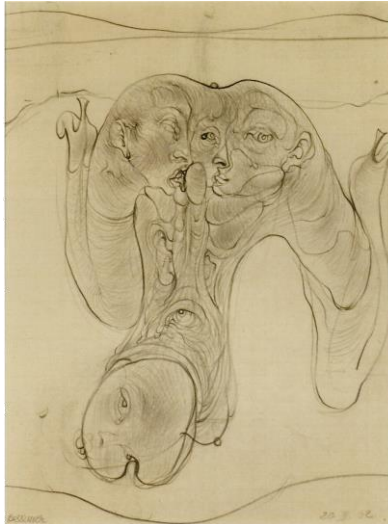


Figure 15. Hans Bellmer

This means a lot in terms of assemblages where an assemblage by keeping humour inside is safe from any shock of humiliation from its encounter with other assemblages. On the other hand, simply witnessing the humiliation of other assemblages and taking pleasure can lead an assemblage to a contingent phase when it is humiliated as a victim of inhuman humour. It does not mean that auto-derision is the inhuman humour; it simply means that auto-derision is the very strategy of embracing humiliation that leads one to be less vulnerable to inhuman humour. Therefore, what an assemblage can do at best is produce constant humoureme in order to be *prepared* for a humiliating humour that arrives. When an assemblage avoids humoureme or when an assemblage participates without being a target of humour, it is likelier to be jolted as a victim of inhuman humour. It should be emphasized that such inhuman humour reveals itself immanently and between assemblages; it is not imposed from above and this will be described in the participatory mode of humiliation in this chapter and in relation to a dystopia bereft of humoureme in *Super Sad True Love Story*.

5.3 The Deriding Assemblages

Laughing always implies a secret or unconscious...an unavowed intention to humiliate...(Bergson, 1911, 135).

The very argument based on a participatory model of humour is that although humiliation is at the heart of life, hubris makes its application even more painful. What Lydia B. Amir, in her *Pride, Humiliation and Humility* claims is keeping humour at hand in order to make humiliation more tolerable, rather what the derisive realism suggests is that by adding humour makes humiliation less probable. Any assemblage can ignore humour and ascend to a hubris status of fluent function, but once this assemblage is faced with what Bergson called cessation, it undergoes a deeper humiliation. An assemblage that humiliates itself is sooner or later excluded from participation with other assemblages. The reason for this is that a self-humiliating assemblage is more in contact with its residuals than other assemblages. All assemblages act morally, but a self-humiliating assemblage constantly actualizes its residuals in form of humoureme. What is this residual? As mentioned before, it is the rift between knowledge and deed, between visible and invisible. To explain this we have resorts to Leibniz's conceptualization of *petites perceptions* as applicable to assemblages. Leibniz argues that at every single moment, there are infinite things in us that are infinite perceptions in us and go beyond our perception, which are named *petites perceptions*. In sum, these tiny perceptions are what build complex sensations in us and they _unfold in the fullness of time.' (Leibniz, 246)

Leibniz tells us that we all know that we have perceptions, that for example, I see red, I hear the sea. These are perceptions; moreover, we should reserve a special word for them because they are conscious. It's perception endowed with consciousness, that is, perception perceived as such by an "I" , we call it apperception, as a-perceiving. For, indeed, it's perception that I perceive. Leibniz tells us that consequently there really have to be unconscious perceptions that we don't perceive. These are called minute perceptions, that is, unconscious perception (Deleuze, 1980¹²).

By tackling the common notion of perceptions as fully conscious phenomena, *petites perceptions* compose the relation our mind makes with reality without us knowing them. They are molecular instances that elude our knowledge and yet they determine our behaviour and orient or tilt us in this or that way. *Petites perceptions* are inseparable components of our being and yet they elude our attention and

¹² <http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=55&groupe=Leibniz&langue=2>

consciousness and can be accumulated in us. According to Leibniz in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*:

It is these tiny perceptions that often determine our behaviour without our thinking of them, and that deceive unsophisticated people into thinking that there is nothing at work in us that tilts us one way or another—as if it made no difference to us, for instance, whether we turned left or right (6).

Arguably, such can be the case of laughter and tears in a release model where someone sets free what has overwhelmed him. Yet the attempt here is to define it beyond a psychological and behavioural viewpoint and in terms of assemblages the humoureme is defined here as an attempt to actualize the petites perceptions collected in one assemblage. This helps us enormously to see humour and humiliation in an immanent manner. Any assemblage, by producing humoureme by itself, activates and realizes its petites perceptions in its relation to other assemblages. Leaving such petites perceptions passive and not activating them through elements of humoureme can make an assemblage a more delicious prey for inhuman laughter. In *Super Sad True Story*, we might not immediately notice the humiliation of assemblages that have been ignoring their petites perceptions but the inter-subjective derision paves the way to display how the inhuman humour can function materialistically and immanently.

The consular line for the visa section was nearly empty. Only a few of the saddest, most destitute Albanians still wanted to emigrate to the States, and that lonely number was further discouraged by a poster showing a plucky little otter in a sombrero trying to jump onto a crammed dinghy under the tagline —The Boat Is Full, Amigo (Shteyngart, 7).

Assemblages obtain such petites perceptions not in a conscious act but in relation and participation with other assemblages and these petite perceptions render a slithery and continual change in assemblages possible. Moreover, it is through these little perceptions that the apparently trivial habits construct individuality. The habits which seem to play no significant role can be accumulated gradually and give rise to a change in assemblages. Such is the way how assemblages proceed to live together and participate in their being. However what should be stressed is the way these tiny perceptions come into existence in relation to other assemblages. In effect, if Leibniz attributes pregnancy to monads as a main characteristic, assemblages can also bear such *‘laden’* or pregnant virtuality. The argument here is that assemblages are

humiliated in accordance to such potentialities that they bear. The less conscious an assemblage is of its tiny perceptions, the likelier it is to be ridiculed in relation to other assemblages. Another concept of Leibniz that helps us defend the plurality of these different subjects and their relation to Kant's philosophy especially in 'The Principle of Sufficient Reason' where everything must have a reason. The principle of causality as Leibniz introduces it implies that everything has a cause while Kant emphasizes that for everything there is a reason. Causality by maintaining a series of causes for something implies the necessary cause of something and not the sufficient reason for it. Getting rid of the principle of sufficient reason is significant to analyse the immanence of humour because this principle introduces us to a reason that holds for the thing, its relation to other things and its cause and effects. In effect, every single subject through its 'point of view' comprehends the totality of the world. All subjects are constituted by their points of view and not the other way round: perspectivism versus relativism. Here every assemblage is expressing something in the world, in its singularity. Nevertheless not everything is expressed clearly because there are infinitely small or petites perceptions or minute perceptions which are not given distinctly to conscious perception. Thus, any two assemblages have different points of view and zones of perceptions.

Self-humiliating assemblage constantly reveals this residual of ethics that is eclipsed under moral and social acts and this way produces humoureme in itself; this way it renders humour possible for other assemblages. However, as long as other assemblages do not think of this humour as a sign to commence producing humoureme in themselves, they would be humiliated unknowingly and unintentionally by inhuman laughter. In effect, assemblages can translate their inherent humoureme into tickling of other assemblages. This way, rather than deriding its own identity, it is likely that an assemblage commences tickling the other neighbouring assemblages which ultimately provokes inhuman humour based on its contagion.



Figure 16. Hans Bellmer

In his book *The Pleasures of Abandonment: Jean Paul and the Life of Humor* (2006), which is a unique attempt to introduce a lesser known figure in Romanticism, Jean Paul, to the English-speaking world, Paul Fleming claims that humour for Jean Paul has three demands. Among them there is a demand that approximates Bataille and his non-cognitive approach to humour which is stated as ‘Was wir aber ewig fordern ist...weniger die Erklarung als die Ergänzung unsers Wesens.’ According to Fleming this means humour is a tool to expand life rather than explain it. Seen this way, Jean Paul is among the pioneers of a theory of humour which takes the pleasure of humour to existence itself. According to Fleming, ‘humour is neither a strictly epistemological category nor a purely linguistic enterprise as is the case in recent exegeses of Romantic Irony’ (22). This statement is

already a maxim that we have tried to define in the realist project of humour which surpasses the linguistic and cognitive domains of wit. Humour in its real gesture is something that, instead of trying to explain being, expands being and this way 'asks less for an explanation of life (that will be lacking) and demands instead its expansion. Humour charts neither a hermeneutics of understanding nor a poetic of incomprehensibility, but rather the aesthetic attempt to expand experience itself' (Fleming, 23). In the construction of a subject, humoureme can play an essential role which is not separable from its interaction with other subjects it confronts. In effect, every subject receives a trace and gets shaped through every molecular instance of humour. To illustrate the rudiments of such a construction one can think of a topology of one specific subject *A* as is shown below. *A* as an abstracted entity bears influences on it in the form of humoureme in its encounter with various subjects and proceeds forward in its becoming. Any encounter provides this subject with a curve, a new line or a paradox while it is affected by the new humoureme.

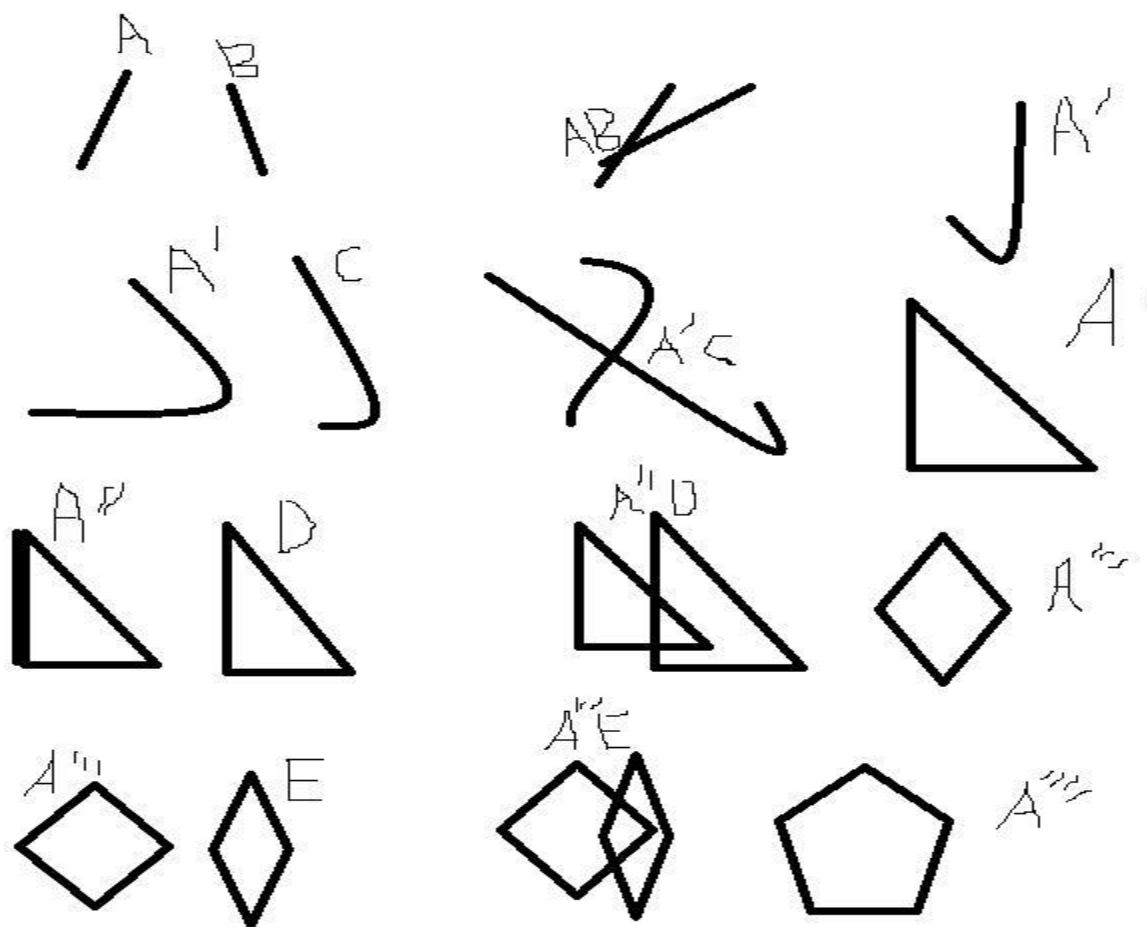


Figure17. A Hypothetical Depiction of Humoureme

As we can see through any experience of humoureme a subject obtains a new curve, is affected anew, and becomes a new subject, starting from the zero state of cessation as a line of idea bereft of humour (or knowledge bereft of humour) and continuing toward becoming multiple. Neither Fleming, nor Jean Paul, reach this systematic conception of humour since for both humour goes beyond any sort of knowledge. Yet one can claim that there is a possibility for delineating a negative system that rejects humour.

The cruelty of inhuman humour necessitates a target, an object or an addressee. Where the holy fools open themselves to inhuman humour they are aware of its virtual cruel humour and its possible derision. Such possible cruelty causes the holy fool to start self-humiliation before being derided by the inhuman humour. The holy fools, before being humiliated by inhuman humour, open themselves to self-humiliation by targeting their morality or the morality surrounding them. In this regard, the fools are pioneers in embracing the cruelty that is embodied in self-humiliation. What is left for others is the molecular stances manifested in humoureme which can be applied in any assemblage in its production of difference. Assemblages which embrace humoureme are able to experience, at least on a microscopic level, inhuman humour. Yet the rationality of inhuman humour is immanent in relation to assemblages which avoid applying humoureme to themselves. The fool's function of making what is invisible in any morality visible, is to address the hypocrisy tacit in any assemblage; assemblages which by sticking to their identity avoid humour as an unsettling and cruel instance, and consequently are not able to communicate with other assemblages' differences and replace this urge with a moral and hypocritical act of tolerating and co-existing with other assemblages: a co-existence devoid of affect and without being affected. The fools experience the joy of inhuman laughter although it is cruel enough to castigate them and unsettle their identity. Those assemblages that avoid humoureme will also be treated cruelly except that they do not enjoy the inhuman humour. Such assemblages will be an object, an organ for inhuman humour and they experience humiliation without benefiting from the joy of humour in themselves. *Super Sad True Love Story* is one example of a life bereft of foolery, a foolery which embraces inhuman humour and dismantles it to

humoureme. In such a state, inhuman humour enters in a relational mode where different assemblages are constantly being humiliated without taking a pleasure of laughing with inhuman humour.

Therefore the epistemological kernel in the realist humour is that rather than linguistic or rhetoric incongruity as the very constructive of humoureme, one needs to place emphasis on ignorance as the principal pillar of humoureme. This emboldens the participatory and active mode inherent in the construction of humoureme. Humoureme is made possible through the ignorance which befalls an assemblage in relations and encounters. Such self-ignorance, which is rooted in an existential conception of paradox and difference or real inconsistencies in relation to other assemblages, is to be distinguished from any epistemological attempt of understanding a paradox dialectically.

Jean Paul's idea of humour, which according to Hale is very similar to Schlegel's and Schiller's notion of irony, is an attempt to show that humour is in effect the "inverted sublime". In *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (1963), Paul introduces humour as the very result of confrontation of the infinite world of reason with the finitude of the subject. This *umgekehrte erhabene* or inverted sublime sparks a negative infinity; the clash between the infinity of reason and the finitude of experience causes such a negative infinity. Putting it in Deleuzian terminology, such a clash can be ascribed to the relation between desire and any specific assemblage. Thus beyond the subjective delineation of romantic humour which Paul suggests, one can speculate about such a mechanism in its inhuman mode between desire and its infinity and any assemblage. According to Peter Banki, Jean Paul's idea of the inverted sublime implies an "underlying earnestness" in humour. In other words and according to Banki, while for Kant jest is more a question of the "sensible rather than contemplative", for Jean Paul humour has an annihilating trait.

The understanding and the object-world know only finitude. In the romantic we find only the infinite contrast between the ideas (or reason) and all finitude itself. But suppose just this finitude were imputed as subjective contrast to the idea as objective contrast, and instead of the sublime as an applied infinity, now produced a finitude applied to the infinite, and thus simply infinity of contrast, that is a negative infinity. Then we should have humor or the romantic comic (2014, 88).

The holy fool's function should be seen against any authority that claims the ability of derision of others, of ridiculing others through its difference. The holy fool is part of the mechanism to humiliate any derision machine. Any authority that tries to mimic the inhuman laughter would be the very victim of it. Holy fool is the most human representation of the inhuman laughter. Though in this part we will argue that in the absence of fools, it is the very immanent relation between assemblages that renders this humiliation possible between assemblages. In other words, where there is no fool to embrace his own humiliation in order to revitalize morality, such humiliation occurs to assemblages in the relation they create to one another. This time humiliation does not unveil itself from a clear-cut source of foolery, rather it emanates from the very relation the assemblages are involved in.

Using Pierre Janet's concept of socius, we will see the mechanism by which such immanent humiliation can be traced, especially with regard to *Super Sad True Love Story*. The ego, according to Janet is not an isolated apparatus that exists outside its relation with others. There is a larval socius in the very formation of the very genesis of ego which already determines him in the midst of society. This way, socius functions as the very ally of any subject formation. It implies an inter-subjective relation between different members in a society. As Nidesh Lawtoo emphasizes,

That is, a mimetic, inter-subjective psychology which transgresses precisely this metaphysics insofar as it considers the __other“ with whom I communicate as already interior to myself, already constitutive of what I am, so intertwined with myself that metaphysical distinctions between __self“ and __other,“ __interior“ and __exterior,“ no longer hold – in short, already a socius (2011, 74).

This, we argue, not only holds for subjects but also and more importantly is the very plateau on which assemblages communicate. As mentioned earlier, what Deleuze and Guattari conceive of assemblage dispenses with the existence of any fixated ontology, instead of the normal procession from smaller to larger entities whatever exists in relation to social world is made up of complex configurations as assemblages. The prime implication of such a depiction of social world is the way it avoids any representation of social world as a range of discrete objects and entities which maintain (territorialisation) and dissipate (deterritorialisation). We argue that the role humour plays is nothing but a dissipation of a fixated disposition in assemblages which can be defined as a body that deterritorialises itself. Yet this does not provide a

sufficiently convincing outline of the manner in which assemblages that avoid humour can be figured. In an immanent mode, if assemblages experience humour on their way to becoming what they were not, those which avoid such humour not only get frozen and fixed, but they de-become, they get humiliated. Yet the mechanism for this humiliation or collapse (which recalls the Bergsonian moment of automatism) should be seen immanently and in relation to other assemblages. Yet these other assemblages have not desired and intended such humiliation, but humiliation takes place and an assemblage gets impaired and ridiculed.

5.4 The Dystopian Humour

What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging? What abstract line will you draw, and at what price, for yourself and for others? (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 203).

Humour functions by exploiting the gap between being a body and having a body, between -- let us say -- the *physical* and *metaphysical* aspects of being human. What makes us laugh, I would wager, is the return of the physical into the metaphysical, where the pretended tragic sublimity of the human collapses into a comic ridiculousness which is perhaps even more tragic (Critchely, 2011, 43).

Super Sad True Love Story represents wit and a witty society of people. Yet this wit not only cannot save them from being constantly ridiculed, but also nourishes the inhuman humour. The novel which is depicted in some series and in a diary form and raises various themes in the conversations that occur between various characters, and especially between Lenny and Eunice. Although the novel is composed of different episodes, these episodes are ranged in a process which increasingly move from a love story to a dystopian world. Lenny, a Life Lovers Outreach Coordinator for Post-Human Services of Russian and Jewish descent, who works as a salesman attracting clients to buy services to help let them live forever. Lenny who has fallen in love with twenty-four year old Eunice, who is living abroad and studying Assertiveness in university. All these provide a platform for these subjects to encounter one another and

be derided by one another without even meaning it. From the start it may look as if the novel is replete with characters and settings which can make one laugh; they are even unintentionally absurd and funny and beyond that every character utilise a witty language. Even Eunice's family, who are Korean and sometimes struggle to communicate in English, turn out to be funny and witty. Yet, by the passage of time, it is no more this funny language that surfaces in the novel. The novel does not simply offer a form of humour and maintain it throughout the novel and its various episodes. Beyond the witticism of the narrator and characters, there is a humour that runs through the entirety of novel and in relation between different characters and different series.

Beyond a transcendent irony, it is through the relation of different characters/ series/ assemblages that the humour emerges. Although characters reveal a degree of ludicrousness and hilarity, this is not the what provides the reader with the humour in the whole work. It goes without saying that the humour in the work is a compilation of such minuscule spots scattered in the novel, yet as no character means to be humorous, the only reveal their stupidity. The sovereign laughter becomes purely immanent and flows throughout the entirety of assemblages. The post-human setting depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story* is filled with undesired ludicrousness of assemblages that has been made possible only in relation to other assemblages. By shifting from a series of hierarchical sets towards a flattened model where assemblages co-exist and sit along each other peacefully, the laughter of summit as Bataille described will transform to an immanent laughter that sparks ridicule inside. This is no more a laughter formed in order to make detachment possible; this is the laughter of humiliation which is precisely the result of dispensing with a detaching laughter. There is no fool left in *Super Sad True Love Story* to help subjects/ assemblages detach from their ridiculousness and participate in laughing at themselves. The characters in the absence of foolery are sounds of laughter; they are transformed to reactive forces to render laughter possible without being part of it. However towards the end of the novel such derision becomes increasingly conscious and concrete to the characters, as if they notice their being an object of laughter.

No, this is the most glorious grave marker to a race of men ever built. When I outlive the earth and depart from its familiar womb, I will take the memory of this building with me. I will encode it with zeros and ones and broadcast it across the universe. See what primitive man has

wrought! Witness his first hankerings for immortality, his discipline, his selflessness (Shteyngart, 6).

The novel presents characters that are humiliated in relation to one another. Although the ridiculousness of one triggers laughter in another, the moment they make an attempt to hold that humour they get humiliated. In other words, the novel unveils a relation between humour and humiliation. Without falling in the depiction of humour in Jean Paul which instead of reinforcing a politics of humour, maintains a play of finitude/ infinity at the heart of humour, one can argue that the very inhuman nature of humour has a dual relationship with humour. On the one hand, any humiliation can cause humour, but when it is another person's humiliation, any attempt to maintain that humour ends in humiliating oneself. The frame Jean Paul offers is bereft of any dynamism that defines humour in between assemblages or even subjects. Fleming's introduction also suffers from the same static and aesthetic notion where there is a schism between the despicable world and lightness that humour yields.

The romanticism tacit in Jean Paul's understanding of humour eclipses the innovative and novel view of humour as a lived experience mechanism that surpasses linguistic and cognitive approaches. The realist project of humour instead of ascribing any full and total trait to life (as Fleming attributes to Jean Paul's romantic notion of life as despicable) makes an attempt to explore humour in its immanence. Such an attempt avoids attributing any common romantic trait to being as tragic or comic and instead commences with an indifferent notion of being. Yet this indifferent being constantly renders humour possible. Any assemblages can experience the clash between its finitude and infinity (as Jean Paul describes) and experience humour. Thus humour has its own rationale running and flowing between assemblages. Yet although there is no preemptive description of how humour reveals itself, one can claim in a Bergsonian sense that rigidity and automatism is where humour appears. Yet when this automatism occurs to one assemblage, it can cause humour for other assemblages. Other assemblages notice how an assemblage falls, slides and stops functioning; they notice how inhuman humour can befall an assemblage and causes laughter. Yet if any assemblage makes an attempt to maintain the way an assemblage is humiliated (or falls back to earth), the same would be applied to it. Therefore, we argue that while humiliation of assemblage A can cause humour for other assemblages, keeping it as a spectacle leads the witness of humour

to another state of humiliation. I argue that this is the chain of humiliation that depicts the constant laughter of being throughout various assemblages.

Yet these spots become increasingly inefficient as the novel unveils its dystopian side through its post-human face. It goes without saying that *Super Sad True Love Story* is a witty book, yet one can make a difference between the wit that is uttered by characters and in particular the narrator or Lenny himself and the humour that emanates from the entirety of novel. While the former is a linguistically agile trick that characters are able to produce, the latter is rather a laughter that passes through the characters/ assemblages in relation to other characters. In other words, we can distinguish two different tendencies in the novel. First, there are (mainly conscious) moments of witticism that produced by characters, and second there is the humour that characters perform without being aware of it. The former is more of an independent nature and is revealed in the middle of a dismal and critical situation and in an entertaining linguistic form, whereas the latter depends on the whole the network of the novel and takes almost all parts into account. This is the surprising ability of an immanent laughter that only the omniscient reader is able to perceive for it does not depend on one specific character, rather it is the result of interrelation between all subjects/ assemblages who are being ridiculed. The following passage is emblematic of the way laughter of subjects (at other subjects) should be distinguished from their experience of humour (towards oneself). In this text Lenny's parents who travel around and even laugh at the neighbours are being derided towards the end of the novel.

Mrs. Fine made a distasteful face. She had helped drag my parents into the American continuum, had taught them to gargle and wash out sweat stains, but their inbred Soviet Jewish conservatism had ultimately repulsed her. She had known me since I was born, back when the Abramov mishpocheh lived in Queens in a cramped garden apartment that now elicits nothing but nostalgia, but which must have been a mean and sorrowful place all the same. My father had a janitorial job out at a Long Island government laboratory, a job that kept us in Spam for the first ten years of my life. My mother celebrated my birth by being promoted from clerk/typist to secretary at the credit union where she bravely labored minus English language skills, and all of a sudden we were really on our way to becoming lower-middle-class. In those days, my parents used to drive me around in their rusted Chevrolet Malibu Classic to neighbors poorer than our own, so that we could both laugh at the ragtag brown people scurrying about in their sandals and pick up important lessons about what failure would mean in America. It was after my parents told Mrs. Fine about our little slamming forays into

Corona and the safer parts of Bed-Stuy that the rupture between her and my family truly began. I remember my parents looking up ‘cruel’ in the English-Russian dictionary, shocked that our American mama could possibly think that of us (Shteyngart, 11).

Yet the question that remains is what makes this novel a humiliation of subjects, among them witty characters. After all why should witty characters be ridiculed? Isn't the wit they produce a component of the humour we have already discussed? I think the question to this answer and the crucial difference we should make between humour and witticism is laid in the nature of society or the network of relations these subjects are entangled in. *Super Sad True Love Story* depicts a near future society, if not a world which is utterly engaged in an Information age and finance network of relations. Ironically enough, the lines that the characters are producing, the ‘map’ or the cartography as Deleuze and Guattari would put it, are not an imposition that descends from the state. In effect, although many subjects as depicted in *Super Sad True Love Story* have been able to transcend the state boundaries and have succeeded in deterritorialisation, they can be ridiculed. The reason is offered by Deleuze's *Postscript on Control Societies*. In effect, any act that transcends state boundaries is not equal to freedom, it can result in a new mode of control as pictured in *Super Sad True Love Story*. By applying this to humour, one can state that although the book is replete with wit, this whole witticism is not enough to resist humiliation. This gets more interesting when one notices that these various layers involved make a collective humour possible and participate in its production without desiring it. As folds in a Deleuzian conception, a cartography can be imagined to show that it is in the relation between assemblages that a collective humiliation takes place.

I did not have a girl waiting for me in New York, I wasn't sure I even had a job waiting for me in New York after my failures in Europe, so I really wanted to screw Fabrizia. She was the softest woman I had ever touched, the muscles stirring somewhere deep beneath her skin like phantom gears, and her breath, like her son's, was shallow and hard, so that when she —made the love (her words), it sounded like she was in danger of expiring (Shteyngart, 16).

The nonsensical repetition of the deeds, words and thoughts of the characters in the novel which are sufficiently entertaining, can be regarded as the absence of

humour or the direct result of the inability to detach from themselves or laugh at themselves. All assemblages are deeply engaged with themselves and even if there is witticism at work, it is through unavoidable repetition that such partitioned socius presents itself. Such a state in which humour is made impossible paves the path for a state of humiliation which renders nearly all assemblages involved ridiculous. *Super Sad True Love Story* offers various formal and linguistically functional paths to entertain the reader with its wit, yet what makes the reader laugh more is the cartography of humiliation different assemblages involved inflict on one another. This cartography is made possible through the relation of assemblages to one another. While the wit inherent in one-liners is determined to be entertaining, the cartography of humour in such a setting as in *Super Sad True Love Story* shows that assemblages involved are not determined to be humorous and even entertaining, yet they turn out to be ridiculed. Somber and serious assemblages, even gloomy with a tip, a sharp tip can make humour possible, the tip that connects one assemblage's point of view to another.

I told her she should move to New York with me. She told me she was probably a lesbian. I told her my work was my life, but I still had room for love. She told me love was out of the question. I told her my parents were Russian immigrants who lived in New York. She told me hers were Korean immigrants who lived in Fort Lee, New Jersey. I told her my father was a retired janitor who liked to go fishing. She told me her father was a podiatrist who liked to punch his wife and two daughters in the face (Shteyngart, 24).

None of the settings described in the *Super Sad True Love Story* such as streets replete with soldiers or the threatening invasion of China to the US, is as horrific and yet constructive in the formation of this inhuman humour as the insane and overwhelming information which has the upper hand upon all subjects. They prefer streaming information through their apparatus or their extremely smart phones. The novel is playful both in language and performances depicted, but it also reveals a constant juxtaposition between its subjects to unveil a new derision. Lenny and Eunice, for instance in being open to one another both in their diary or in their daily communications, display a playful subject but in the face of their derision they picture how vulnerable they are.

Eunhee, How are you today. I hope you do not worry yourself. It is nice you write to Sally. Little sister always look up to big sister. Me and Daddy went to church and we talk together to Reverend Cho. I make sorry to Daddy that I all the time am unconsiderate of how hard he work and that he need everything just perfect, specially soon-dubu which is his favorite! Daddy promise that if he not feel well FIRST we pray together to GOD for guide us THEN he hit. Then Reverend Cho read to us Scripture which say woman is second to man. He say man is head and woman is leg or arm. Also we pray together and specially I unclude you and Sally because you and sister are all Daddy and me have. Otherwise we never leave Korea which is now richer country than America and also not have so much political problem, but how we were to know that when we leave? Now even in Fort Lee we see tank on Center Avenue. Very scary for me, like in Korea in 1980 long time ago when there was Kwangju trouble and many people die. I hope nothing happen in Manhathan to Sally.

So because we leave for you everything behind, you now have big responsibility to Daddy and Mommy and Sister. :)

I just learn how to make happy sign. Do you like it? Haha. Make me pride of you and expect of you like before.

I love you always.

Mommy (Shteyngart, 46).

Inhuman humour is able to juxtapose what has been said far earlier to something else unexpectedly to make it humorous, as if there is memory beyond the memory of characters at work throughout the novel, a long term memory. The presence of a fool normally dispenses with the urge for having such long-term memory simply because he is constantly unveiling the hypocrisy involved in different assemblages and he does it spontaneously; hence there is no accumulation of the rift as is absorbed in this long-term memory humour. The dystopian world which arises gradually out of the witty and amusing atmosphere of the novel is emblematic of the fact that such wit cannot play the role of humoureme. But more importantly is the mechanism inherent in wit which excludes anxiety rather than re-orientating it towards a vital force.

My sadness filled the room, took over its square, simple contours, crowding out even Joshie's spontaneous rose-petal door. "I didn't mean that," Joshie said. "Not just *a lot* of life. Maybe forever. But you can't fool yourself into thinking that's a certainty."

"You will see me die someday," I said, and immediately felt bad for saying it. I tried, as I had done since childhood, to feel nonexistence. I forced coldness to run through the natural humidity of my hungry second-generation-immigrant body. I thought of my parents. We would be all dead together. Nothing would remain of our tired, broken race. My mother had brought three adjoining plots at a Long Island Jewish

cemetery. "Now we can be together forever," she had told me, and I had nearly broken down in tears at her misplaced optimism, at the notion that she would want to spend her idea of eternity- and what could her eternity possibly *comprise*?-- with her failure of a son (Shteyngart, 126).

There is a material facet to this inhuman humour: what has been said, what is known or the difference an assemblage is maintaining can be the material for such inhuman humour in relation to another knowledge or different point of view. In an abstract absolute dystopian sense, all particles of difference take part in the production of such inhuman humour and yet *Super Sad True Love Story* depicts a majority of viewpoints involved in the production of such undesired laughter. What has been appreciated long before can be located in a new apparatus and a new relation where this juxtaposition makes it look ridiculous. Yet since there is no subject in charge of this humour, the same can be applied to the new point of view that makes the old one look hilarious later after a while.

What is happening in *Super Sad True Love Story* as a post-human state where diaries of Lenny Abramov and the online posts of Eunice illustrate an oscillation between a tragic setting towards a comic one. One reason is that emotions play a less significant role and this fits the Bergsonian depiction of the comic as bereft of humour. The fact is that the assemblages are able to produce humoureme (as is shown in some instances) but it is implemented in regard to others rather than to themselves and their own difference. This accumulates virtual humour for inhuman laughter in a more abrupt manner. Putting it differently, when an assemblage which is always able to produce humoureme avoids applying it inside and takes its knowledge and difference for granted, despite its will, it becomes a victim of inhuman laughter. Instead of an active kinetic laughter where an assemblage is able to enjoy its own mockery, the sound of a dystopian laughter that is emblematic of humiliation is constantly heard.

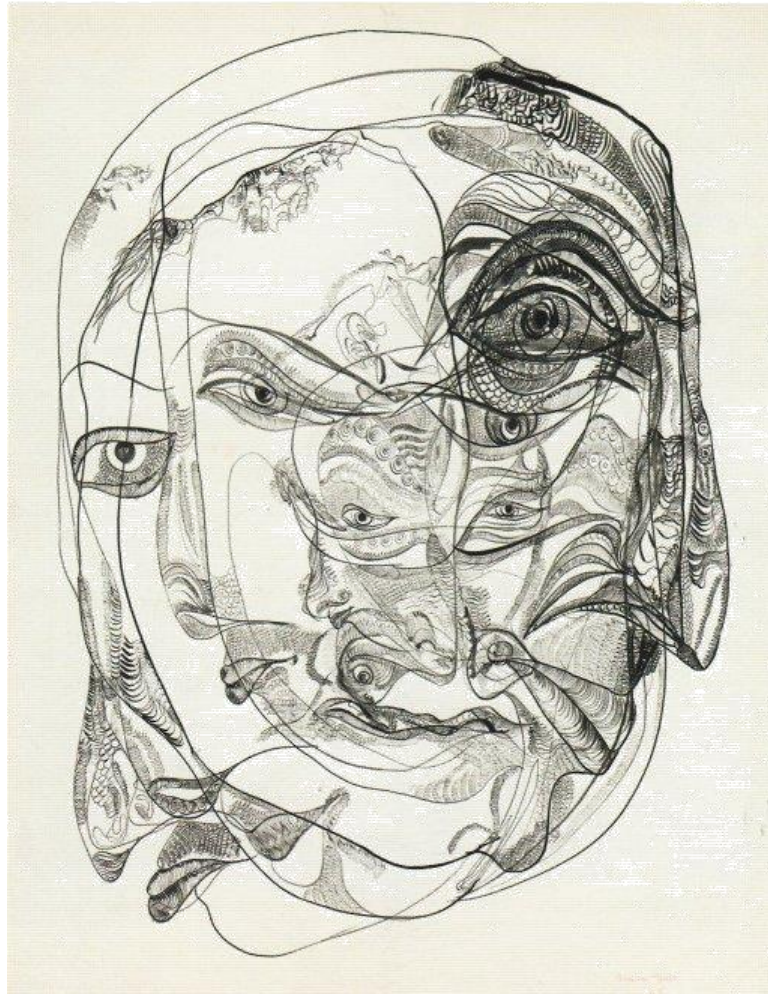


Figure 18. Unica Zürn.Untitled. 1966

When Eunice is presented as a full, autonomous subject or when Lenny is a shaped and independent creature, their encounter or their relation makes both look ridiculous. *Super Sad True Love Story* presents almost perfectly a state where nobody is able to produce humour and yet they do not manage to avoid humiliation as in their relation to other assemblages they become objects of humour, they are humiliated by one another without even desiring it. The inhuman laughter that is able to insert humour in relations and humiliate can make use of any materialistic accessories: the accessories that one can never imagine can play a role in one's humiliation. Humiliation, which plays a prominent role historically and in today's various confrontations, be it interpersonal or international, can be seen in relation to the immanent and materialistic abilities of such laughter.

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Appendix : Frank. Manfred. Transcript from his Vom Lachen. Über Komik, Witz und Ironie.

Überlegungen im Ausgang von der Frühromantik.

*Vom Lachen. Über Komik, Witz und Ironie. Überlegungen im Ausgang
von der Frühromantik*

Wird von einer Theorie der Intelligenz geurteilt, sie sei selbst intelligent, so gilt das als schmeichelhaft. Aber eine Theorie des Lächerlichen soll selbst nicht lächerlich sein – auch wenn in diesem Sammelband viel, ja alles versucht wurde, Sie durch Theorie(n) zum Lachen zu bringen. Dafür sind wir den Akteuren gewiss dankbar. Aber Hand aufs Herz: Was haben wir dadurch übers Lachen gelernt?

Eine lächerliche Theorie des Lachens scheint etwas Unangemessenes zu sein. Das geben wir ohne Weiteres zu. Womit begründen wir aber unsere spontane Zustimmung?

Offenbar fallen die Sätze einer Theorie, und zumal einer philosophischen, nicht selbst in den Skopus dessen, worüber sie sprechen. Die Theologie ist nicht (notwendig) selbst fromm, die Kriminologie (normalerweise) nicht selbst kriminell, die Unschärfe-Relation (wahrscheinlich) nicht selbst unscharf, und – obwohl das den politischen Wächtern unserer Wissenschaftspraxis nur schwer beizubringen ist – die Theorie des Neomarxismus ist *per se* nicht marxistisch. Dergleichen Verwechslungen

nennt man in meinem Fach bald ‚Kategorienfehler‘ (*category mistakes*), bald ‚Fehler durch Typensprünge‘. Bei Kategorien-Verwechslungen werden Tatsachen eines bestimmten Sachbereichs so dargestellt, als gehörten sie zu einer bestimmten logischen Kategorie, während sie in Wirklichkeit unter eine andere fallen. Denken Sie sich einen Ausländer, der nach Oxford kommt. Man zeigt ihm der Reihe nach Colleges, Bibliotheken, Sportplätze, Museen, Laboratorien und Verwaltungsgebäude. Er sagt: „Schön, jetzt weiß ich, wo ihr die Post beantwortet, Gutachten schreibt, Tierversuche durchführt, Seminare abhält und Tennis spielt – aber wo zum Teufel ist denn eigentlich die Uni?— Oder: Ein Südseeinsulaner – so einer muss es sein: sonst würde der Rassismus unserer Beispiele arbeitslos – sieht seinem ersten Fußballspiel zu. Man erklärt ihm die Funktion des Torwarts, der Stürmer, Verteidiger, des Schiedsrichters usw., und er sagt nach einer Weile: „O.k., aber da ist doch niemand, der den berühmten Mannschaftsgeist beisteuert. Ich sehe, wer angreift, wer verteidigt, wer die gelbe Karte zeigt und pfeift, aber niemanden, der den Mannschaftsgeist verbreitet.—¹³ Der Irrtum besteht in der Unfähigkeit der beiden Sprecher, gewisse Begriffe (wie „Universität— oder „Mannschaftsgeist—) richtig zu verwenden, sie nämlich nicht als Klassifikationsausdrücke, sondern als Namen zu behandeln.

Die andere Konfusionsquelle (von Russell und Whitehead aufgedeckt) sind „die Fehler durch Typensprünge—: In ihnen werden Regeln (höherer Stufe) nicht auf das, was unter sie fällt, sondern auf sich selbst angewandt, also sich selbst als ihre eigenen Prädikate zugelegt. Dadurch entstehen Paradoxe wie „Der Begriff ‚imprädikabel‘ ist prädikabel— oder „was ich hier gerade behauptete, ist gelogen—. Solchen Fehlern haftet grundsätzlich etwas Komisches an, wie – pars pro toto – aus dem Beispiel des

¹³ GILBERT RYLE, *Der Begriff des Geistes*. Stuttgart 1969, S. 13 ff., 19 ff., passim.

Sophisten Protagoras erhellt: Protagoras hat mit seinem Schüler Euathlos einen Vertrag abgeschlossen, wonach Euathlos, gewinnt er nach der Ausbildung auch nur eine einzige Streitsache, seinem Lehrer dafür bezahlen muss. Nun gewinnt er, wie abzusehen war, keine einzige und hat damit, sagt Protagoras, soeben eine gewonnen, nämlich die gegen den Lehrer selbst: Also muss er in die Tasche greifen und löhnen.¹⁴

Gewöhnlich scheuen die Philosophie die Lächerlichkeit wie die fromme Seele den Teufel. Was wäre auch komischer als ein lächerlicher Weltweiser? Über diese Grenzmöglichkeit wacht das Emblem des auf allen Vieren durch den Hof Philipps von Makedonien kriechenden Weiberhassers Aristoteles, den die schöne Hetäre Phyllis reitend mit einem Peitschlein traktiert. Und doch sind die Anekdoten-Bücher voll von Witzen über lächerliche Philosophen. Würde ich auch nur einige davon erzählen, so bräuchte ich Platz für einen weiteren Aufsatz.

Fast alle mir bekannten philosophischen Theorien des Lachens (von Cicero über Hutcheson bis Bergson) sind sich über eine Bestimmung einig: Das Lachen reagiert auf eine Unangemessenheit. Schopenhauer bestimmt sie 1819 präziser als die „plötzlich wahrgenommene Inkongruenz zwischen einem Begriff und den realen Objekten, die durch ihn, in irgend einer Beziehung, gedacht worden waren.“¹⁵ Ein

Beispiel liefert das folgende Epigramm:

Bav‘ ist der treue Hirt, von dem die Bibel sprach:
Wenn seine Heerde schläft, bleibt er allein noch wach.

¹⁴ H. DIEHLS/W. KRANZ, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Berlin/Dublin⁷ 1954, Protagoras 80 A1, A4.

¹⁵ ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. I Band, § 13 (= Werke in zehn Bänden, Zürcher Ausgabe [zit.: ZA], Zürich 1977, I, S. 96.

Hier wird unter den Begriff eines bei der schlafenden Herde wachenden Hirten der langweilige Prediger subsumiert, der nach seiner Art die Gemeinde einschläfert „und nun—, wie Schopenhauer sich ausdrückt, „ungehört allein fortbelfert— //ZA III, 111). Eine ähnlich komische Wirkung tut die Grabschrift eines Arztes: „Hier liegt er, wie ein Held in der Schlacht, und um ihn her ruht das Heer der Erschlagenen.— Die Inschrift subsumiert unter den für Helden ehrenvollen Begriff des „Ein-ganzes-Heer-geschlagen-Habens— die Leistung des Arztes, was zwar (wenigstens damals) durchaus

realistisch, aber nicht im Geiste des Lebens-Erhaltungs-Gebots der Ärztekammer ist (l. c.). – Oder wenn „Einer an ein eben getrautes Paar, dessen weibliche Hälfte ihm gefiel, die Worte der Schiller’schen Ballade— richtete: „Ich sei, erlaubt mir die Bitte, | In eurem Bunde der Dritte—, so ist die Wirkung des Lächerlichen unausbleiblich, weil unter den Begriff eines von Schiller als moralisch edel gedachten Verhältnisses das eines *menage à trois* subsumiert wird, was logisch nicht unmöglich, aber dem Comment der gutbürgerlichen Ehe eher unangemessen ist (l. c., 114 f.). Viele witzige Oxymora sind von dieser Art, so die Rede von der „freien Lohnarbeit— oder dem „zwanglosen Zwang des besseren Arguments— oder der „Autonomie der Hochschule— oder der „Freiheit von Forschung und Lehre—.

Halten wir jetzt nur die Struktur dieser Inkongruenz fest. Sie besteht – noch einmal – in der „paradoxe[n] Subsumtion eines Gegenstandes unter einen ihm übrigens heterogenen Begriff—. Mit Lachen – einer spontan und unverabredet sich einstellenden Reaktion – drücken wir aus, dass wir eine „Inkongruenz [wahrgenommen haben] zwischen einem solchen Begriff und dem durch denselben gedachten realen

Gegenstand, also zwischen dem Abstrakten und dem Anschaulichen— (l. c., 109). Die

Inkongruenz kann – wie wir eingangs sahen – auch auftreten als Effekt der Selbstanwendung eines Prädikats unter Vernachlässigung des Typensprungs (zwischen Objekt- und Meta-Ebene): dann haben wir den kompromittierenden Fall der selbst lächerlichen Lach-Theorie oder des antiken Philosophen, der die These vertrat, Lachen sei ein geselliges Phänomen. Als er von seinem Diener einmal in seinem einsamen Arbeitszimmer schallend lachend angetroffen und gefragt wurde, warum er denn lache, da er doch ganz allein sei, antwortete er: „Eben drum.—“

So hat uns die Wahrnehmung der Kluft zwischen einer Philosophie des Lachens und einer selbst lächerlichen Philosophie auf einen Gedanken geführt, bei dem wir einen Augenblick verweilen wollen. Wie viele richtige Überlegungen ist er überhaupt nicht originell, auch wenn der stark paranoische Schopenhauer ihn mit den folgenden Worten einführt:

Kants und Jean Pauls Theorien des Lächerlichen sind bekannt. Ihre Unrichtigkeit nachzuweisen halte ich für überflüssig; da Jeder, welcher gegebene Fälle des Lächerlichen auf sie zurückzuführen versucht, bei den allermeisten die Ueberzeugung von ihrer Unzulänglichkeit sofort erhalten wird (l. c., 109).

Das wollen wir doch einmal an den geschmähten Texten überprüfen. Kants berühmte Erklärung des Lachens findet sich in einer Anmerkung am Schluss der Deduktion der ästhetischen Urteile (§ 54 der „Kritik der Urteilskraft— von 1790). Den Kontext bildet eine resümierende Reflexion über den Unterschied des ästhetisch (im reflektierenden Urteil) Geschätzten vom bloß in der Empfindung Gefallenden (dem Vergnüglichen als einem dem Lebensgefühl förderlichen Affekt). Musik (nach ihrer reizenden Seite hin) sowie Scherz und Witz finden (wenigstens teilweise) ihren Ort in der Sphäre des Angenehmen und Vergnüglichen; darum glaubt Kant, von ihnen nur eine psychologisch-physiologische Erklärung (im Stile Burkes und Humes) geben zu können. Das Lachen, heißt es dort, ist „*ein Affekt—*, der entsteht „*aus der plötzlichen*

Verwandlung einer gespannten Erwartung in nichts— (l. c.). Diese Verwandlung mag für den Verstand enttäuschend sein, körperlich wird sie erlebt als eine (wie Freud es nennen wird) Energieeinsparung oder –abfuhr, die den Kopf entlastet und dem Leib zugute kommt. Kant belegt seine These mit einigen Beispielen. Ich will sie hier wiedergeben, da Schopenhauer ihre Triftigkeit so arrogant bestritten hat und weil sie dem Vorurteil vom trockenen Stubengelehrten Kant, der vielmehr von seinen Studenten und Kollegen „magister elegantissimus— genannt wurde, launig zu widersprechen helfen:

Wenn jemand erzählt: daß ein Indianer [man achte übrigens wieder auf den latenten Rassismus unserer wissenschaftlichen Beispiel-Sätze!], der an der Tafel eines Engländers in Surate eine Bouteille mit Ale öffnen und alles Bier, in Schaum verwandelt, herausdringen sah, mit vielen Ausrufungen seine große Verwunderung anzeigte, und auf die Frage des Engländers: was ist denn hier sich so sehr zu verwundern? Antwortete: Ich wundere mich auch nicht darüber, daß es herausgeht, sondern wir ihrs habt hineinkriegen können; so lachen wir, und es macht uns eine herzliche Lust: nicht, weil wir uns etwa klüger finden als diesen Unwissenden, oder sonst über etwas, was uns der Verstand hierin Wohlgefälliges bemerken ließe; sondern unsre Erwartung war gespannt, und verschwindet plötzlich in nichts. Oder wenn der Erbe eines reichen Verwandten diesem sein Leichenbegängnis recht feierlich veranstalten will, aber klagt, daß es ihm hiermit nicht recht gelingen wolle; den (sagt er): je mehr ich meinen Trauerleuten Geld gebe [,] betrübt auszusehen, desto lustiger sehen wie aus; so lachen wir laut, und der Grund liegt darin, daß eine Erwartung sich plötzlich in nichts verwandelt. Man muß wohl bemerken: daß sie sich nicht in das positive Gegenteil eines erwarteten Gegenstandes – denn das ist immer etwas, und kann oft betrüben –, sondern in nichts verwandeln müsse. Denn wenn jemand uns mit der Erzählung einer Geschichte große Erwartung erregt, und wir beim Schlusse die Unwahrheit derselben sofort einsehen, so macht es uns Missfallen; wie z. B. die von Leuten, welche vor großem Gram in einer Nacht graue Haare bekommen haben sollen. Dagegen, wenn auf eine dergleichen Erzählung zur Erwiderung, ein anderer Schalk sehr umständlich den Gram eines Kaufmanns erzählt, der, aus Indien mit allem seinem Vermögen in Waren nach Europa zurückkehrend, in einem schweren Sturm alles über Bord zu werfen genötigt wurde, und sich dermaßen grämte, daß ihm darüber in derselben Nacht die *Perücke* grau ward; so lachen wir, und es macht uns Vergnügen, weil wir hier unsern eignen Missgriff nach einem für uns übrigens gleichgültigen Gegenstande, oder vielmehr unsere verfolgte Idee, wie einen Ball, noch eine Zeitlang hin- und herschlagen, indem wir bloß gemeint sind ihn zu greifen und festzuhalten (l. c., B 226 f.).

Ich habe immer gefunden, dass Kants Definition besonders gut auf die Physiognomie des Kölner Humors passt. Ein Stück von dessen Charme besteht ja darin, dass er

hochfliegende Weltveränderungs-Wünsche auf eine unreaktionäre Weise an die Unabänderlichkeit der Wirklichkeit verweist: Die Pointe der Witze ist oft der Nachweis, dass wir die Wirklichkeit fast immer auf *die* Weise verändern, dass wir unsere Einstellung zu ihrer Veränderbarkeit verändern. So in dem Witz von Tünnes, der traurig ist, weil er „in e Botz maach“— . Schääl verschreibt ihm hellsichtig eine Analyse beim Psycho-Psycho—. Als er ihm nach drei Monaten Analyse, vor Freude von einem Bein aufs andere hüpfend, wieder begegnet, fragt er: „Bisse nu nisch mehr truurisch?— „Enee.— „Maach‘ se nisch mer in e Botz?— —Edoch!— „Ja, waröm bisse denn dann so fröhlich?— „Isch machen mer nix mer druss!— – Und da ich einmal dran bin (und selbst aus dem Rheinland komme): Ein rheinisches Ehepaar hat Besuch und erzählt den Gästen: „Kürzlich warem mer em Restorang. Da hän mer en Schwiinebroote jekresch, däe wor so fätt, dat ma ee nisch ässe kunt.— Es entsteht ein peinliches Schweigen, dann fragen die Gäste: „Jo, un wat häät ehr dann mit dem fätte Schwiinebroote jemaach‘?— – „Na, mer han e dann doch jejässe.— – Hier wird eine Erwartung hochgespannt (beide Mal durch die Behauptung der Unerträglichkeit eines Zustandes), und die Erwartung bricht mit dem Nachweis der Doch-Erträglichkeit buchstäblich in nichts zusammen.

Noch ein Witz, den mir der Kölner Karl Heinz Bohrer erzählt hat, als ich ihm von der Grundthese meines Vortrags in einem Turiner Café berichtete: Tünnes trifft Schäl, der eben von einer Safari in Afrika zurück gekommen ist. „Jou, Schäl, wiewill Löwe hässe denn jeschosse?— Antwort: „Kein.— „Wie, kein?— „Ei, för Löwe is dat vill!—

So hat denn die breite Diskussion um die Ursachen des Lachens Kants Theorie nicht im Positiven widersprochen, sondern nur in dem, was von ihr nicht erklärt wird.

Werfen wir blitzschnell einen Blick auf die Tradition: Das Lächerliche (geloion) – der Gegenstand beziehungsweise Grund des Gelächters – ist von Platon und Aristoteles als „ein Mangel oder etwas Schimpfliches— („Poetik— 1449 a 33 f.) – freilich harmloser Natur – behandelt worden. In der rhetorischen Tradition zählt es wesentlich unter strategischen Gesichtspunkten (es gilt, den Gegner dem Gelächter auszusetzen). Soviel ich weiß, gibt es erst seit dem 17. und 18. Jahrhundert so etwas wie eine Analyse des Phänomens als solchen – unabhängig von den Gefühlen, die es in uns auslöst; und von La Bruyère bis Hegel und später verständigt man sich auf dem Aspekt der „Inkongruenz— zwischen Sein und Anmaßung einer Person – womit übrigens zugleich meine Behauptung der Unoriginalität Schopenhauers erhärtet wird:

„Ein lächerliches Objekt ist ein solches, was uns die Vorstellung einer unbeträchtlichen, uninteressanten und nicht allzu gewöhnlichen Ungereimtheit darbietet— (FRIEDRICH JUSTUS RIEDEL, *Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften*,² 1774, S. 105).

„Les objets nous paro[ss]ent ridicules toutes les fois que nous apercevons dans eux de l'incongruité— [Die Dinge erscheinen uns jedesmal lächerlich, wenn wir Inkongruenz in ihnen entdecken] (ALEXANDER GERARD, *Essai sur le got.*. Paris/Dijon 1766, S. 82).

„Das Lächerliche entspringt aus einem sittlichen Kontrast, der auf eine unschädliche Weise für die Sinne in Verbindung gebracht wird— (JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE, *Die Wahlverwandschaften*, I. 2, Kap. 4).

„Lächerlich kann jeder Kontrast des Wesentlichen und seiner Erscheinung, des Zwecks und der Mittel werden, ein Widerspruch, durch den sich die Erscheinung in sich selbst aufhebt, und der Zweck in seiner Realisation sich selbst um sein Ziel bringt— (GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL, *Ästhetik*, hg. von Friedrich Bassenge, Berlin 1955, S. 52).

Solcher Einigkeit in der Phänomenbeschreibung entspricht nicht eine ebensolche in der *Erklärung* des Affekts, der sich im Lachen ausdrückt. Während viele Erklärer das Lachhafte für einen Zug der Sache selbst halten, hat zumal die mit Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) einsetzende britische Tradition (z. B. Hutcheson und J. Beattie) das Lächerliche in die Auffassungsweise des betrachtenden Subjekts verlegt. Diese

Subjektivierung, in die sich auch Kants Definition des Lachens einfügt, ist in Jean Pauls *Vorschule der Ästhetik* von 1812¹⁶ für das ganze 19. Jahrhundert folgenreich auf den Punkt gebracht worden. Da das Lächerliche nicht aus einem Mangel des Herzens, sondern des Verstandes entspringt (so schon La Bruyère), kann es geradehin „das Unverständige— (l. c.) heißen. Es weist „drei Bestandteile— auf: den „sinnlichen Kontrast—, der anschaulich wird in einer Handlung oder Situation, den „objektiven— Kontrast als „Widerspruch, worin das Bestreben und das Sein des lächerlichen Wesens mit dem sinnlich angeschaueten Verhältnis steht—; endlich den „subjektiven— Kontrast, der den objektiven allererst erzeugt, weil nichts an ihm selber lächerlich ist: erst unsere „Seele und Ansicht— tragen diesen Zug in die Sache hinein (l. c., 114 u.):

Wenn Sancho eine Nacht hindurch sich über einem seichten Graben in der Schwebelage erhielt, weil er voraussetzte, ein Abgrund gaffe unter ihm: so ist bei dieser Voraussetzung seine Anstrengung recht verständlich, und er wäre gerade erst toll, wenn er die Zerschmetterung wagte. Warum lachen wir gleichwohl? Hier kommt der Hauptpunkt: wir leihen seinem Bestreben unsere Einsicht und Ansicht und erzeugen durch einen solchen Widerspruch die unendliche Ungereimtheit [...], so daß also das Komische, wie das Erhabene, nie im Objekte wohnt, sondern im Subjekte (l. c., 110).

Vor Jean Paul hatte insbesondere Ludwig Tieck in frühen Entwürfen eines unvollendet gebliebenen „Buchs über Shakespeare—¹⁷ (Aufzeichnungen, deren Originalität in einem ungünstigen Verhältnis zu ihrer Unbekanntheit stehen) – ich sage: schon um 1794 hatte Tieck solch subjektive Einstellungs-Veränderung als einem Wesenszug menschlicher Subjektivität verständlich zu machen versucht. Es sei die innere Transzendenz des Subjekts, die alle Weltgegenstände überschreite und so einen Abstand zwischen ihnen selbst und dem aufwiege, als was sie im subjektiven Entwurf

¹⁶ JEAN PAUL, *Vorschule der Ästhetik*. I. Abteilung, IV. Programm, § 28: „Untersuchung des Lächerlichen—. In: Ders., *Werke* in zwölf Bänden. Hrsg. v. NORBERT MILLER, München 1975, Bd. 9, S. 109 ff.

¹⁷ LUDWIG TIECK, *Das Buch über Shakespeare*. Handschriftliche Aufzeichnungen von L. Tieck. Hrsg. v. HENRY LÜDEKE, Halle 1920 [zit.: BüSh].

erscheinen. Dieser Abstand zwischen Sein und Entwurf kann eins von beiden unter Umständen lächerlich erscheinen lassen.¹⁸ Jedenfalls könnte ein Wesen, das nicht in ungleichen Momenten existierte, nie in eine spannungsreiche Beziehung zu seinem Gewordensein geraten. Es könnte nicht lachen; ja ihm wäre nicht einmal die Bedeutung des Ausdrucks „lachen— beizubringen.

Tieck hat seine Überlegungen über „das Wesen des Lächerlichen— (*BüSh*, 18) beim Lesen von Shakespeare-Komödien entwickelt und mit dem (berechtigten) Überlegenheitsgefühl des (in Dingen der Theorie raffinierteren) Frühromantikers gegen eine ganze Tradition (z. B. „Hobbes—) abgesetzt. Die Tradition habe insgesamt die Erfahrung ek-statischen Selbstseins verdrängt und an die Darstellbarkeit von in sich gegründeten und gegründeten, vor Pausbäckigkeit wie ein Kinderpopo leuchtenden und von ihrer Entelechie determinierten Charakteren geglaubt: „So mußst du sein, dir kannst du nicht entfliehen—, wie der Olympier sagt. Gäbe es sie, so müsste ihnen die Zeit so äußerlich bleiben wie der aufgehenden Sonne der Uhrzeigerstand auf dem Zifferblatt. Aber etwas, das sich darin erschöpft, das zu sein, was es ist (ob Charakter oder Ding), ist nach unseren bisherigen Einsichten nicht lächerlich. Das Gelächter taucht in einer Welt von objektiven Bestimmtheiten erst durch ein solches Wesen auf, das über seine eigene Objektivität immer schon hinaus ist und darum im Abstand von sich selbst – ganz wörtlich: ek-sistiert, „aus sich heraussteht—. „Das Bewußtsey—, notiert Tiecks Freund Novalis, „ist ein Seyn außer dem Seyn im Seyn—. ¹⁹ Und er versäumt auch nicht, die „bedeutungsvolle Etymologie dieses Worts—, nämlich „ek-sistiert—, herauszustreichen: „Das Ich existirt— meint: „Es findet sich,

¹⁸ Vgl. MANFRED FRANK, *Das Problem „Zeit“ in der dt. Romantik*. 1. Aufl. München 1972, 2. Aufl. München-Paderborn-Wien 1990, S. 300 ff.

¹⁹ NOVALIS Schriften, Hrsg. v. RICHARD SAMMEL u. a. Stuttgart 1965 ff. II. Bd., S. 106, Nr. 2, Z. 4 [zit.: NS].

außer sich— (l. c., 199, Nr. 282; S. 150, Nr. 98). Nur ein Wesen, denn kompaktes Sein in ein Selbst-Verhältnis sich zersetzt, also ein Wesen, das, statt einfachhin da zu sein, nur im Abstand einer Selbstdeutung existiert, nur ein solches Wesen kann auch in die Dinge oder fremden Charaktere und die zwischen ihnen waltenden Verhältnisse den „Widerspruch— hineinbringen, der sein eigenes Sein charakterisiert. Anders gesagt: weil wir als Subjekte nicht auf *die* Weise mit uns identisch sind, wie es der Granit-Block oder dies Pult sind, darum sind wir dem Gelächter ausgesetzte Wesen. Tiecks ganzes Werk illustriert diese Grunderfahrung.

Unter den idealistischen Philosophen hat nur Schelling eine mit Tieck vergleichbare Theorie des Komischen entwickelt. In seiner „Philosophie der Kunst— von 1802 setzt er das Wesen des Komischen in „einen allgemeinen Gegensatz der Freiheit und der Nothwendigkeit—. Während in der Tragödie die Freiheit ins Subjekt falle, das dem notwendigen Gang des Schicksals erliegt, falle in der Komödie die Nothwendigkeit ins Subjekt. Natürlich kann diese „Nothwendigkeit nur eine prätendirte, angenommene seyn— – wie die des Majors Tellheim, der seinen ehrbaren Starrsinn mit Sachzwängen begründet, die nur in seinem freien Willen liegen. So entlarve sich die prätendirte Nothwendigkeit des komischen Charakters, der nun mal nicht anders könne, weil er nun mal so gefräßig oder so gutmütig oder so grausam sei, als „eine affektirte Absolutheit—, „die nun durch die Nothwendigkeit in der Gestalt der äußeren Differenz zu Schanden gemacht wird—. ²⁰ Anders gesagt: wir lachen, weil wir wissen, das Subjekte, die nicht anders handeln zu können behaupten, unglaublich sind, dass unser Herz bei allen unseren Zuständen und Dispositionen immer leer bleibt, dass nichts es ist, das uns zu diesen, statt zu jenen Taten zwingt, so wie auch nichts es ist,

²⁰ F. W. J. SCHELLINGS sämtliche Werke. Hrsg. v. K. F. A. SCHELLINGS, Stuttgart 1856-61, Bd. I/5, S. 712 f. [zit.: SW].

das uns von ihnen abhält. Dieses uns mit uns entzweiende Nichts kann uns, wie Tieck an vielen unheimlichen Beispielen gezeigt hat, in einen wahren Möglichkeitstaumel stürzen. Aber es kann uns auch unserer Lächerlichkeit überführen.²¹

Tieck redet von „Situationskomik—, wenn der Widerspruch zwischen zwei Vorhaben oder Zwecken eines Subjekts oder zwischen dessen Charakter und seiner Umgebung auftritt; von „Charakterkomik—, wenn das Subjekt mit einem seiner selbst lancierten Entwürfe in Widerspruch gerät. Die Situationskomik interessiert ihn nicht, sie bleibt ja dem Charakter äußerlich und nimmt keinen, auch nicht den ernsthaftesten, aus. (So uns hier Versammelte, die wir in der objektiv komischen Situation sind, an einer Universität zu lehren oder zu lernen, die das aus sachlichen Gründen längst nicht mehr gestattet.) Dagegen macht „der komische Charakter [...] die Situation lächerlich— (l. c., 18), indem er sein eigenes Sein von seinem Entwurf (oder „seinem moralischen Wesen—) abtrennt und die Differenz als „Mangel— aufscheinen lässt:

Ein Betrunkener an sich ist nicht lächerlich, aber er wird es, sobald ihn ein guter Freund begegnet, der sich ganz ernsthaft einen vernünftigen Rat von ihm ausbäte. Molières Geiziger ist am lächerlichsten, wenn er gern freigiebig scheinen möchte, Shakespeares Dummköpfe, wenn sie sich klug stellen. In Tiere oder leblose Wesen, sagt der Spectator, die wir belachen sollen, tragen wir erst den Verstand hinein, aber ebenso den Widerspruch mit sich selbst, oder wenigstens mit dem, womit sie ein Ganzes ausmachen (l. c., 19).

Die Komik setzt also Bewusstsein voraus, und sie entspringt genauer einem Widerspruch desselben zu seinem eigenen Begriff oder Wesen, von dem her es sich versteht. Diesen Widerspruch bringt die Situationskomik von außen ins Spiel, während die Charakterkomik dem unangemessenen Überstieg eines Bewusstseins über „sich selbst— entspringt.

²¹ Das war übrigens auch HENRI BERGSON'S Überzeugung. In „Le rire. Essais sur la signification du comique— (von 1900, Paris: PUF, 1940, S. 80) sagt er: „Ce qu'il y a de risible dans un cas comme dans l'autre, c'est une certaine raideur de mécanique là où l'on voudrait trouver la souplesse attentive et la vivante flexibilité d'une personne.—

Tiecks Überlegungen sind von einer recht originellen Beobachtung angeregt: „Fast alle komischen Charaktere Shakespeares sind etwas *phlegmatisch*— (l. c., 18). Tieck findet das „sehr natürlich— und erklärt es aus der eben gemachten Beobachtung: Wenn Komik das Ergebnis einer tätigen Selbstentzweiung ist, durch welche ein in Zukunft vorlaufender Entwurf gegen eine zurückbleibende, gleichsam träge oder substantielle Natur des Selbst absticht, so muss

der Dichter [...] eine Eigenschaft [aufsuchen], die allen seinen körperlichen Gefühlen, allen unentwickelten Charakteren gemein ist, die Seelenträgheit, ein gewisses *Phlegma*, daher diese phlegmatische Gleichmütigkeit in allen komischen Charakteren. Nimmt man dieses Phlegma hinweg, so [...] wird der Charakter entweder ein *ernsthafter* oder ein *witziger*, man kann nicht mehr über ihn *lachen* (l. c., 21).

Mit anderen Worten: die tätige Selbstentzweiung, durch welche ein Charakter sich über sich selbst „hinwegsetzt—, kann als komisch nur dann empfunden werden, wenn das Woraufhin der „Hinübersetzung— von der Trägheit der zurückbleibenden Natur als bloße Präntention desavouiert wird. So, wenn ein glühender Liebhaber sich selbst wie folgt charakterisiert: „Du weißt, ich bin ein Liebhaber, ich habe daher Langeweile, um zehn Morgen Landes damit zu besäen—.²² Wir lachen, wenn wir sehen, wie sich aus der Schwerkraft der „Seelenträgheit— (eines „mental habit—, z. B. Gefräßigkeit und Faulheit), gleichsam verflüssigt, eine aktuelle Gefühlsaufwallung (etwa Liebesglut) so aufschwingt, dass das sich „erwärmende— Gefühl nie ganz seinen phlegmatischen Bodensatz verleugnet oder seiner Schwerkraft entkommt. Dies ist z. B. bei den philanthropischen Gefühlsaufwallungen des hemmungslos egoistischen Königs in Tiecks Komödie „Der gestiefelte Kater— der Fall, dessen Sinn auf den Verzehr eines Kaninchens gerichtet ist. Als der Koch es ihm verbrannt serviert, bekommt er einen grauenhaften „Zufall— – so grauenhaft, dass er den „Don Carlos— und „Hamlet— zitiert:

²² Ludwig Tiecks nachgelassene Schriften. Hrsg. v. RUDOLF KÖPKE. Leipzig 1855, Bd. I, S. 80.

König:
Das Kaninchen ist verbrannt! –
O Heer des Himmels! Erde? – Was sonst noch?
Nenn_ ich die Hölle mit? –

Prinzessin:
Mein Vater –

König:
Wer ist das?
Durch welchen Missverstand hat dieser Fremdling
Zu Menschen sich verirrt? – Sein Aug ist trocken!

Alle erheben sich voll Besorgnis, Hanswurst läuft geschäftig hin wieder, Hinze bleibt sitzen und isst heimlich.

Gib diesen Toten mir heraus. Ich muß
Ihn wieder haben!

Prinzessin:
Hole doch einer schnell den Besänftiger.

König:
Der Koch Philipp sei das Jubelgeschrei der
Hölle, wenn ein Undankbarer verbrannt wird!²³

Von diesem „Zufall— kann den Monarchen – der bis in groteske Einzelheiten nach
Zügen Friedrich Wilhelms II. gebildet ist – nur der eigens für solche Eventualitäten
angestellte „Besänftiger— erlösen, und zwar durch Papagenos Glockenspiel.

Der Besänftiger tritt mit einem Klockenspiele auf, das er sogleich spielt.

König:
Wie ist mir? – Weinen: Ach, ich habe schon wieder meinen Zufall gehabt. – Schafft
mir den Anblick des Kaninchens aus den Augen. – *Er legt sich voll Gram mit dem
Kopf auf den Tisch und schluchzt.* (I. c., 532 f.).

An sich, bemerkt Tieck, ist die Schwerkraft des Charakters nicht komisch, sie kommt
auch dem „ernsthaften— Charakter zu. Das bloß Flüchtige der „Hinübersetzung— ist es
ebenso wenig, wenn es das Band, das es an die seelische Disposition zurückbindet,

²³ Phantasmus, Hrsg. v. MANFRED FRANK. Frankfurt a. M. 1985, S. 532.

einfach durchschneidet, wie es bei den „witzigen— Figuren, etwa der Beatrice aus *Viel Lärm um Nichts*, der Fall ist. Im Kommentar zu diesem Stück bemerkt Tieck:

Dieser Witz läßt sich leichter mit ernsthaften Begebenheiten verschmelzen, als das eigentlich Komische, denn er ist an sich schon über das Komische erhaben, und jenes Phlegma, das dem Komischen so unentbehrlich ist, steht der Verbindung im Wege: Der Witz ist an sich flüchtiger, er fesselt auch das Interesse nicht so, als die *vis comica* der Charaktere (BüSh, 298).

Witzig sind oft die Narren (etwa in Tiecks „Blaubart—); der Spaß, den ihre Reden erregen, ist mit der Ernsthaftigkeit ihres Charakters durchaus verträglich, so, wenn der arme, verkrüppelte Narr Claus witzig, aber keineswegs lächerlich, über den Wert seines von Blaubart bedrohten Lebens räsontiert:

Was ist denn also das Leben für mich? Nichts als der große Fettschweif des Indianischen Schafs, es ist mir nur zur Last: ich bin nicht fröhlicher, als wenn ich vergesse, wer ich bin, ich diene dazu, andre zum Lachen zu bringen, und zwingt mich selbst zum Lachen, ich bin eine Medizin für verdorbene Mägen, ein Verdauungsmittel, die Hunde sehn mich von der Seite an, und ich habe es noch nie dahin gebracht, daß mich einer geliebt hätte. Aus welcher Ursache, meint Ihr nun wohl, sollte ich das Leben lieben? Und was ist denn das Leben selbst? Eine beständige Furcht vor dem Tode, wenn man an ihn denkt, und ein leerer, nüchterner Rausch, wenn man ihn vergisst, denn man verschwendet dann einen Tag nach dem andern, und vergißt darüber, daß die Gegenwart so klein ist, und daß jeder Augenblick vom nächstfolgenden verschlungen wird. Jeder Mensch wünscht alt zu werden, und wünscht damit nichts anders, als mit tausend Gebrechen, mit tausend Schmerzen in Bekanntschaft zu treten. Da schleichen sie denn ohne Zähne und ohne Wünsche, mit leerem zitternden Kopfe, mit Händen und Armen, die ihnen schon längst die Dienste aufgekündigt haben, und die nur noch als abgeschmackte Zieraten von den Schultern verwelkt herunter hängen, ihrem Grabe keuchend und hustend entgegen, dem sie auf keine Weise entlaufen können. Wer würde sich die Mühe nehmen, mich zu bedienen, mich zu trösten? Nein, gnädiger Herr, lasst mich / immer frisch hängen, Ihr habt ganz Recht, das wird wohl der beste Rat sein.²⁴

Tieck hat schließlich, als dritte Möglichkeit des Komischen, die vollkommene Verdunstung der Charaktersubstanz in ihre Entwürfe vorgesehen: so, wenn, in der „Verkehrten Welt—, der eben noch in verzweifelten Lyrismen sich ergehende

²⁴ Ebd., S. 410 f.

Seelmann sein Robinson-Schicksal auf einer öden Felsklippe im weiten Meer übergangslos als Abwesenheit von Leihbibliotheken, Maskeraden und Bällen und eine zu große Entfernung vom Souffleur charakterisiert (l. c., 642). Man könnte vom komischen Vergessen sprechen. So mault der Zuschauer Müller im „Gestiefelten Kater—: „[...] der König bleibt seinem Charakter gar nicht getreu. [...] Das Ganze ist ausgemacht dummes Zeug, der Dichter vergißt immer selber, was er den Augenblick vorher gesagt hat— (l. c., 510). Das Publikum vergisst freilich nicht und reagiert auf den aller Charakter-Psychologie aufkündigenden Posten ungünstigenfalls mit Pochen und Pfeifen, günstigenfalls mit Lachen. Die Aufkündigung der Charaktere-Psychologie ist nun freilich kein Versehen, sondern Ausdruck einer Einsicht in die Freiheit der Menschenseele, die, wie Schelling schrieb, nicht eine Eigenschaft ist, die der Mensch hätte, sondern die sein Wesen selbst ist.²⁵ Ist Freiheit das Wesen des Menschen, dann ist Mensch-Sein eben das, was Tieck das Sich-über-sich-Hinwegsetzen nennt. Siegt in diesem Überstieg einer der Pole über den anderen, so ergibt sich ein komischer Kontrast. Die Unentschiedenheit, die Tiecks beste Dramen auszeichnet, ist nicht mehr rein komisch: hier ist die Freiheit als ein Sein-in-Möglichkeiten poetischer Stil geworden. In der Flüchtigkeit jeder Charakterzeichnung und Motivation spricht kaum hörbar die Einsicht mit, dass ein jeder von uns auch anders sein und anders handeln könnte. Durch diese implizite Relativierung der Endgültigkeit und Eindeutigkeit jedes Wortes, jeder Geste, jeder Kausalverknüpfung entsteht jene Tiecks Sprache eigene Heiterkeit und Schwerelosigkeit, jener „Aethergeist—, der dem Dichter die größte Freiheit über seinen Stoff sichert und den die Frühromantik „Ironie— nannte.²⁶

²⁵ F. W. J. SCHELLING, *Philosophie der Offenbarung 1841/42*, Hrsg. v. Manfred Frank. Frankfurt a. M. 1977, S. 65 ff.

²⁶ *Phantasia* (wie Anm.—. 11), 1188 im Kontext; L. Tiecks Schriften. Berlin 1828-1854, Bd. 6, S. XXVIII f.

Wie der Witz tut auch se nicht notwendig die Wirkung des Lächerlichen. Darum hat die berühmte „romantische Ironie— auch nie den Weg ins Herz der Deutschen gefunden, die den herben Kontrast und die drastische Geste bevorzugen. In der Germanistik des Dritten Reichs wurde Tiecks Ironie als „zersetzend—, als etwas „Intellektualistisches— und „Jüdisches— identifiziert,²⁷ zumal Heinrich Heine den Dichter „den wirklichen Sohn des Phöbus Apollo— genannt hat:

[...] wie sein ewig jugendlicher Vater führte er nicht bloß die Leier, sondern auch den Bogen mit dem Köcher voll klingender Pfeile. Er war trunken von Lust und kritischer Grausamkeit, wie der delphische Gott. Hatte er, gleich diesem, irgendeinen literarischen Marsyas erbärmlichst geschunden, dann griff er, mit den blutigen Fingern, wieder lustig in die goldenen Saiten seiner Leier und sang ein freudiges Minnelied.²⁸

Welche Bewandnis hat es mit dieser unbeliebten (und von Hegel über Kierkegaard bis zu Gundolf und Emil Staiger gescholtenen) Ironie? Zunächst hat sie nichts zu tun mit der gemeinen oder rhetorischen Ironie, der einfachen „Umkehrung der Sache, daß das Schlechte gut, und das Gute schlecht genannt wird, wie [bei] Swift und andere[n]—. ²⁹ Gedacht ist auch nicht an die Selbstverlachung der in ein Gedicht investierten Sentimentalität, wie in Brentanos *Godwi*, wo der Held im 18. Kapitel auf einen Teich zeigt und sagt, das sei derselbe, in den er auf Seite 143 des ersten Teils falle; oder wie in Heines Versen vom lang und bang seufzenden Fräulein am Meere, die „so sehre— vom Sonnenuntergang gerührt wird und der der Dichter zuruft: „Mein Fräulein! Sein Sie munter, / Das ist ein altes Stück; / Hier vorne geht sie unter / und kommt von hinten zurück.— In diesen Beispielen haben wir eine Position zugunsten

²⁷ JOSEF VELDTRUP, Friedrich Schlegel und die jüdische Geistigkeit—. In: *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* 52 (1938), H. 7, S. 409. Vgl. auch WALTER LINDEN, „Umwertung der deutschen Romantik—. In: *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* 47 (1933), H. 2, S. 65-91.

²⁸ HEINRICH HEINE, *Die romantische Schule*. Zweites Buch, II. Kapitel, 1. Abschn., Kritische Ausgabe. Hrsg. von HELGA WEIDMANN. Stuttgart 1976. S. 75 f.

²⁹ Ludwig Tiecks Schriften. Berlin 1828-54, Bd. 6, S. XXVII f.

einer anderen dem Gelächter preisgegeben. Die romantische Ironie ergreift dagegen beide Pole und führt so zu einer abgründigen Relativierung.

Ironie ist die Einstellung, mit der das romantische Subjekt auf die Erfahrung seiner bodenlosen Selbst-Transzendenz reagiert. Damit ist schon klar, dass in den Texten der Frühromantik mit dem Ausdruck „Subjekt— nicht mehr jenes „cogito— assoziiert werden darf, das seit Descartes und Leibniz für ein unerschütterbar gewisser Stützpunkt des Wissens gegolten hatte und bei Kant und Fichte durch überzeitliche Identität ausgezeichnet war. Im Selbstbewusstsein wird vielmehr eine elementare Widerspruchs-Erfahrung ausgetragen. Die Zweiheit der Form, durch die wir die im Gedanken des Selbst beschlossene Einheit artikulieren (in der Reflexion, also in der bewussten Rückwendung auf uns selbst, trennen wir uns ja in ein gewahrendes Subjekt und ein gewahrtes Objekt) – die Form dieser Trennung, sage ich, widerspricht der vermeinten Einheit ihres Inhalts –, ja, sie verhindert dessen Erscheinung. Soll beiden Elementar-Erfahrungen Raum gegeben werden, so muss Selbstbewusstsein vorgestellt werden als abkünftig aus einer gründenden Identität, die das Band um die beiden Pole der Einheit und des Gegensatzes schlingt, aber in Denkverhältnisse nicht mehr übersetzbar ist. Die Frühromantiker sprach vom „Seyn—.

Dieses Sein wird der Reflexion nun zu einem unausdeutbaren Rätsel, weil sie es nicht bearbeiten kann, ohne seine stets vorausgesetzte Einheit zum Verschwinden zu bringen. „Das eigentlich Widersprechende in unserem Ich—, sagt Friedrich Schlegel, „ist, daß wir uns zugleich endlich und unendlich fühlen—.³⁰ Beide, Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit, können wir nicht in Einem Bewusstsein repräsentieren. So finden wir

³⁰ Kritische Schlegel-Ausgabe. Hrsg. v. Ernst Behler u. a. München-Paderborn-Wien 1956 ff., Bd. XII, S. 334,4 [zit.: KA].

uns als Wesen, die, ohne je im Unendlichen anzukommen, dennoch nie in den Grenzen der Endlichkeit Halt finden. Was aber im Nu als Kontradiktion sich darstellt, kann in der Zeit auf verschiedene Phasen verteilt werden: Losgelöst von einer immer schon verlorenen Identität, die zur Vergangenheit geworden ist, strebt das Subjekt durch seine Entwürfe, stets vergeblich, nach deren Wiederaneignung in der Zukunft. Die drei Zeitdimensionen sind nur dreifach nuancierter Ausdruck einer wesenhaften „Unangemessenheit— unseres Wesens an unsere Wirklichkeit (vgl. KA X, 550).

Es ist wohl unübersehbar, dass wir damit dem Grundmerkmal des Lächerlichen wieder begegnet sind: eine Sache ist komisch, wenn Wesen und Wirklichkeit inkongruent sind. Dies Auseinanderklaffen ist aber jetzt verständlich gemacht nicht aus einem Zug der Sache, sondern aus der ekstatischen Verfassung des zeitlichen Selbst, das im Abstand zu sich existieren und so seine Entwürfe in einen (möglicherweise) komischen Kontrast zu seinem Sein bringen muss. Dabei kann das zeitlich-zerrissene Selbst entweder den Aspekt überwiegender Einheit oder seine Tendenz aufs Unendliche ins Licht stellen. Das erste geschieht im *Witz*, dessen punktuelleres Zünden Schlegel als Aufscheinen der absoluten Einheit im Endlichen selbst interpretiert. Die überraschenden Synthesen des witzigen Einfalls lenken gleichsam die Bindekraft des undarstellbaren Absoluten ins Endliche ab, aber eben um den Preis, die Unendlichkeit zu verlieren. Auf diesen Verlust reagiert die *Allegorie*, die das Einzelne ans Unendliche rückverweist und als misslungene Manifestation des undarstellbaren Ganzen deutet.

Allegorie und Witz sind also die blick- und Wende-Punkte der Reflexion, die nie zugleich bezogen werden können: Das Hin- und Her-Zucken des Gesichtspunktes, der

bald einigt, bald auflöst, ist das Werk der so genannten romantischen Ironie. Sie verlacht das Endliche, weil es endlich ist. Aber auch das Unendliche entgeht nicht ihrem lachenden Dementi, weil es, wie Novalis sagt, das identische Reine gar nicht gibt (NS II, 177, Z. 10/11); es ist „ein leerer Begriff [...] – eine nothwendige Fiction— (II, 179, Z. 17 ff. vgl. 269 f., Nr. 566).

Um sich selbst fasslich zu werden, muss sich das Reine eingrenzen (so entstehen die überraschenden Synthesen des Witzes); die Grenze widerspricht aber seiner wesentlichen Unendlichkeit; also muss es die selbst gesetzte Grenze immer auch wieder überschreiten, sich neu begrenzen, auch diese Grenze wieder überschreiten und so immer weiter (darin kommt die allegorische Tendenz aufs Unendliche zum Austrag). Die Ironie, resümiert Schlegel,

enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöselichen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Mitteilung. Sie ist die freieste aller Lizenzen, denn durch sie setzt man sich über sich selbst weg; und doch auch die gesetzlichste, denn sie ist unbedingt notwendig. Es ist ein sehr gutes Zeichen, wenn die harmonisch Platten gar nicht wissen, wie sie diese stete Selbstparodie zu nehmen haben, immer wieder von neuem glauben und mißglauben, bis sie schwindlicht werden, den Scherz gerade für Ernst, und den Ernst für Scherz halten (KA II, 160, Nr. 108).

Etwas von diesem Schwindel kann uns ein hintersinnig-leichtes Liedchen von Tieck vermitteln:

Mit Leiden
Und Freuden
Gleich lieblich zu spielen
Und Schmerzen
Im Scherzen
So leise zu fühlen,
Ist wen'gen beschieden.
Sie wählen zum Frieden
Das eine von beiden,
Sind nicht zu beneiden:

Ach gar zu bescheiden
Sind doch ihre Freuden
Und kaum von Leiden
Zu unterschieden.³¹

Die Freuden, näher besehen, verlieren ihr distinktives Merkmal und werden ihrem Gegenteil, den Leiden, ähnlich, für die wieder das gleiche gilt. Es gibt also durchaus Bestimmtheit und Unterschiedenheit; die werden aber poetisch so behandelt, dass sich ihre Setzung geheimnisvoll überdeterminiert durch die Aufhebung des Gesetzten: dessen Überschreitung auf das hin, was es nicht ist. Der Überstieg, der stets aufs Neue sich hinwegsetzt über jene Selbstzusammenzeichnung, die die unendliche Tätigkeit im Witz vollzieht, macht sich zur Allegorie des Unbegrenzten; er öffnet Aussichtsfluchten, „échappées de vue ins Unendliche— (KA II, 200, Nr. 220). So wird die Ironie inmitten der endlichen Welt und angesichts der offenbaren Beschränktheit unserer Ausdrucksmittel „@p°deijiq [Aufweis, Anzeige] der Unendlichkeit— (KA XVIII, 128, Nr. 76).

Dieser Ausweis ist freilich – und da unterscheidet sich die romantische Ironie von der gemeinen – mit einer bodenlosen Relativierung verbunden: Nichts Bestimmtes hält stich, und auch das Unbestimmte liefert keine gangbare Alternative. So bringen sich die beiden Pole der Relation in die Schwebe. Das ist gar nicht immer komisch, wenn auch jederzeit vertrackt. Aber die romantische Ironie *kann* auch lustig sein – so in jener Szene des *Gestiefelten Katers*, da der Hanswurst und der Hofgelehrte sich darüber streiten, ob „ein neuerlich erschienenenes Stück: der gestiefelte Kater— ein gutes Stück sei.“³² Jener verneint das entschieden, dieser behauptet es um so energischer und zieht sich endlich auf folgende These zurück: „So ist, wenn ich auch alles übrige

³¹ LUDWIG TIECK'S *Schriften* (wie Anm. 17) Bd. 10, S. 96.

³² Phantasia (wie Anm. 11), S. 546 f.

fallenlasse, das Publikum gut darin gezeichnet.— Worauf unter den (zum Stück selbst gehörenden) Zuschauern folgendes Gespräch entsteht:

Fischer:

Das Publikum? Es kommt ja kein Publikum in dem Stücke vor!

Hanswurst:

Noch besser! Also kömmt gar kein Publikum darin vor?

Müller:

Je bewahre! Wir müßten ja doch auch darum wissen.

In der Fiktion des Stücks scheitert *Der gestiefelte Kater* an der Stupidität des Publikums. Man neigt – selbst nach kurzer Bekanntschaft mit diesem Publikum – dazu, die satirische Absicht des Autors Tiecks so zu fixieren, dass man das Verhältnis umkehrt und sagt: Das gilt nur für die Fiktion des Stücks; das in der Schlusszene eigentlich Durchgefallene ist (vor dem imaginären Appellations-Gremium des wahren, erleuchteten Publikums) das Publikum im Stück, das aus Borniertheit unfähig ist, auf seine Involviertheit in die Handlung zu reflektieren. Diese Satire wird aber durchkreuzt durch die doppelte Ironie, mit der Tieck das Stück im Stück selbst ausgestattet hat. Das taugt nämlich selbst nichts, und insofern hat der Hanswurst ganz recht. Ist das aber der Fall, dann kann man – wie so oft geschehen – die Absicht Tiecks nicht darauf reduzieren, die in die Märchen der Kindheit verliebte Romantik gegen die Döflichkeit eines sich aufgeklärt dünkenden, von den einfältigsten Kindervorurteilen und Kitschvorlieben dahin gerafften Publikums auszuspielen. Beide Positionen neutralisieren einander durch die vollkommen doppelbödiges Ironie des Stücks, für dessen Grundhaltung in der Tat Solgers Rede von der überm Ganzen schwebenden, alles vernichtenden und alles überschauenden Heiterkeit ausgezeichnet

passt.³³ Kurz: *Der gestiefelte Kater* ist eine Illustration romantischer Ironie darin, dass er Position und Gegenposition zueinander in ein negatives Verhältnis bringt und eins durchs anderes sich vernichten lässt. Für ein auf den Schulkanon der Klassiker konditioniertes Publikum ist das ein Überstand – denn die ‚Aussage‘, die ‚Botschaft‘ des Stücks ist, dass in ihm das Publikum gut gezeichnet ist: dasjenige, das erbaut und moralisch aufgerüstet nach Hause gehen wollte und mit einer Handvoll Nichts abziehen muss. – Aber leichter als an solch inhaltsbezogenen Beispielen lässt sich die romantische Ironie an Stil-Zügen aufweisen: an jenem gewichtslos-anmutigen Reden, das, indem es etwas Bestimmtes sagt, durch die Flüchtigkeit seiner Geste zugleich sich wieder aufhebt und so zeigt, dass alles Endliche eigentlich haltlos ist, das heißt – bei Lichte besehen – sich selbst zerstört. Ein hoher Aufwand führt zu nichts, ja bricht in nichts zusammen.

Mit dieser Struktur zweier negativ aufeinander bezogener, miteinander unverträglicher und darum sich wechselseitig vernichtender Positionen setzen sich immer aufs Neue auch die Fragmente der Novalis und Friedrich Schlegel auseinander.

Schon ihre Form liefert ebenso viele Beispiele romantischer Ironie:

Es ist gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben. Er wird sich also entschließen müssen, beides zu verbinden (KA II, 173, Nr. 53).

Geist besteht aus durchgängigen Widersprüchen (I. c., 263, Nr. 74).

Alles geht nach Gesetzen und nichts geht nach Gesetzen (NS III, 601, Nr. 291).

Das eigentliche Philosophische System [muß] Freyheit und Unendlichkeit, oder, um es auffallend auszudrücken, Systemlosigkeit, in ein System gebracht seyn (I. c., II, 288 f., Nr. 648).

[...] das im gemeinen Leben gebräuchliche und darum durch die Erfahrung gelehrtete Prinzip, daß das Leben und überhaupt alles auf *Widersprüchen* beruhe, und durch

³³ K. W. F. SOLGES nachgelassen Schriften und Briefe. Hrsg. v. LUDWIG TIECK und FRIEDRICH VON RAUMER. Leipzig 1826, Bd. II, S. 387.

Gegensätze bestehe – (KA XII, 321).

Da die Natur und die Menschen sich so oft und so schneidend widersprechen, darf die Philosophie es vielleicht nicht vermeiden, dasselbe zu tun (I. c., II, 240, Nr. 412).

Alles widerspricht sich (I. c., XIII, 18).

Jeder Satz, jedes Buch, so sich nicht selbst widerspricht, ist unvollständig (I. c., XVIII, 83, Nr. 647).

Der Mensch ist [...] nichts Bestimmtes – Er kann und soll etwas Bestimmte und Unbestimmtes zugleich seyn (NS III, 471, Nr. 1112).

Sehnsucht, Vielschichtigkeit, Ungeborgenheit, Inkonsequenz, Widersprüchlichkeit, Verworrenheit sind die Leitmotive der Romantik. „So ist der Mensch—, ruft Theodor

in den *Phantasmus*-Gesprächen von Ludwig Tieck aus, „nichts als Inkonsequenz und

Widerspruch!—³⁴ In den von Rudolf Köpke, Tiecks Eckermann, mitgeteilten

Gesprächsäußerungen aus den letzten Lebensjahren findet sich folgende

Bemerkungen:

Einer der widerstrebendsten Gedanken ist für mich der des Zusammenhanges. Sind wir denn wirklich im Stande ihn überall zu erkennen? Ist es nicht frömmere, menschlich edler und aufrichtiger, einfach zu bekennen, daß wir ihn nicht wahrzunehmen vermögen, daß unsere Erkenntnis sich nur auf Einzelnes bezieht, und daß man sich resigniere?³⁵

Damit sind erschreckend zeitgemäße Erfahrungen formuliert. Musils „Mann ohne

Eigenschaften—macht aus ihnen ein Erzählprinzip. Seine Figuren spüren die

Indeterminiertheit ihrer Handlungen, die unzureichende Kohärenz zwischen

Lebensereignissen und die Inkonsequenz zwischen Gedanken.³⁶ Sie zittern vor der

Unbestimmtheit eines psychischen Zustands, der seine „Identität— verliert, noch

während er dauert (I. c., 4, 1129, 1198). „Ein feiner Riß—, spaltet ihren von Zweifeln

angefressenen Glauben (I. c., 6, 300) und macht ihn, der ganz und gar Glaube sein

³⁴ *Phantasmus* (wie Anm. 11), S. 81.

³⁵ LUDWIG TIECK, *Erinnerungen aus dem Leben des Dichters*. Leipzig 1855, Band 2, S. 250.

³⁶ ROBERT MUSIL, *Gesammelte Werke*. Hrsg. v. ADOLF FRISÉ. Reinbek 1978, Bd. 2, 650; 5, 1936.

will, zu einem „bloßen Glauben—, dem die „volle Überzeugung—, das letzte „Wissen— fehlt (l. c., 6, 306). Eine unstillbare Unruhe „befällt den Geist—, dem „eine letzte Überzeugung fehlt— (l. c., 6, 393). Darauf reagiert die Angst, die in entscheidenden Augenblicken oder besser: in Augenblicken der Entscheidung Musils Helden in eine Art Möglichkeitstaumel hineinreißt: beispielsweise als „panischer Schreck— vor dem „nicht-fest—-Sein der Dämme des Ich (l. c., 5, 1664), als „eine Ahnung von menschlicher Unsicherheit, vielleicht ein Bangen vor sich, vielleicht nur ein unfäßbares, sinnloses, versuchendes [...] Herbeiwünschen— (l. c., 6, 172); vielleicht ein Gefühl „dieser wehen, ungeschützten Gebrechlichkeit der innersten Menschenmöglichkeiten, die kein Wort, keine Wiederkehr festhält und in den Zusammenhang des Lebens ordnet— (l. c., 6, 190); eine „ungeheure Angst [...] vor dem Unbestimmten— (l. c., 5, 1745) und eine peinigende Beunruhigung über die Tatsache, dass, was man auch tut, „ohne einen festen Grund tut— (l. c., 4, 1025; vgl. 3, 956 f.). Wir sind „vom Gesetz der Notwendigkeit, wo jedes Ding von einem anderen abhängt, befreit—, mit der Folge, dass wir „keinen festen Halt [finden] in der Welt— (l. c., 5, 1748 f.; vgl. 1767) und an ihr buchstäblich irre werden. Denn für den Schüler Ernst Machs gilt (auch für die physische Welt, den Gegenstand der Naturwissenschaften): „Nichts ist fest. Jede Ordnung ist nicht so fest, wie sie sich gibt, ein Grundsatz ist sicher, alles ist in einer nie ruhenden Umwandlung begriffen, das Unfeste hat mehr Zukunft als das Feste— (l. c., 5, 1879). – So und nicht heiterer ist die Erfahrung, die zur ironischen Einstellung führt.

In der Tat ertappt man uns gern beim Lachen, wenn wir Zeuge werden, wie jemandem die Stütze aus der Hand geschlagen wird, wie unter ihm der Grund wankt, wie er sich fallend an einen Strohhalm klammert, den wir brechen sehen – vorausgesetzt natürlich,

das alles passiert nicht uns selbst. Um noch einmal dem Olympier die Begründung zu überlassen: „Weil im Bild man gern genießt, / Was im Leben uns verdrießt.— Die Seife, die in Dick-und-Doof-Film unweigerlich auf dem Weg liegt und zu einer ungewollten Gleitpartie führt oder sich, im Waschbecken ausgepackt und kräftig eingerieben, als ein halbes Pfund Butter herausstellt – das sind Illustrationen für unser schadenfrohes Amusement über prätendierte Sicherheiten, die sich dann als grundlos herausstellen. Das Lachen ist die Kehrseite unserer Unsicherheit und Unfestgelegtheit: es kann uns (als Wesen, die sich ständig selbst überschreiten) jederzeit alles Mögliche zustoßen. Das Lachen, welches die höhere Ironie erregt, stellt sich ein, wenn wir der Grundlosigkeit unseres Tuns innewerden und die Unverlässlichkeit unserer Erwartungen ins Auge fassen. Solcherlei Lachen antizipiert die Enttäuschung über das Ausbleiben einer Begründung und wendet sie ins Grundsätzliche. Mit Kant gesprochen: eine hochgespannte Erwartung bricht in nichts zusammen: die nämlich, unser Leben könnte einen tieferen Zweck haben. Dies jedenfalls war eine der tiefsten Überzeugungen der Tieckschen Dichtung. Im 17. Kapitel der 1797 geschriebenen *Sieben Weiber des Blaubart* findet sich folgender Dialog zwischen Peter Berner (dem Blaubart) und seinem Förderer Bernard:

Wenn Ihr es überlegt, daß im ganzen Menschenleben kein Zweck und kein Zusammenhang zu finden ist, so werdet Ihr es gern aufgeben, diese Dinge in meinem Lebenslauf hineinzubringen.

Wahrhaftig, du hast Recht, sagte Bernard, und du bist wirklich verständiger, als ich dachte.

Ich bin vielleicht klüger als Ihr, sagte Peter, ich lasse mir nur selten etwas merken.

So wäre also, sagte Bernard tiefsinnig, das ganze große Menschendasein nichts Festes und Begründetes? Es führte vielleicht zu nichts und hätte nichts zu bedeuten, Thorheit wäre es, hier historischen Zusammenhang und eine große poetische Composition zu suchen, eine *Bambocchiade* oder ein *Wouvermanns* drückten es vielleicht am richtigsten aus.³⁷

Ludoviko sagt (im *Sternbald* von 1798), man könne „seinen Zweck nicht vergessen

³⁷ LUDWIG TIECKS *Schriften* (wie Anm. 17), Bd. 9, Berlin 1828, S. 193.

[...], weil der vernünftige Mensch sich schon so einrichtet, daß er gar keinen Zweck hat. Ich muß nur lachen, wenn ich Leute so große Anstalten machen sehe, um ein Leben zu führen. Das Leben ist dahin, ehe sie mit den Vorbereitungen fertig sind.—³⁸

Aus dieser abgründigen Laune erwächst die romantische Ironie. Sie wettet darauf, dass wir auf keine Weise und durch keinen Trick zu rechtfertigenden Wesen sind, und gewinnt die Wette durch den Nachweis, dass das eigentlich hochkomisch, ja zum Totlachen ist. Und zu dieser Einsicht sollte uns der Ausgang von der Frühromantik schließlich führen.

³⁸ L. c., Band 16, Berlin 1843, S. 336,6.