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Redneck Jokes
as a
Subcultural Phenomenon

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“Procrastination is like masturbation:
it’s fun until you realize you just fucked yourself.”

(Redneck Words of Wisdom, JAMIE MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 15)

“At the bottom of Southern humor lies this fundamental truth:
that nothing is less humorous, or less Southern,
than making a genuine, good-faith effort to define and explain humor,
particularly Southern humor.”

(ROY BLOUNT JR. 1994, 21)

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0. Introduction

“**haha** *interj*, **hahaha** *interj* haha; ha, ha, ha” – that states my German-English dictionary (Pons ²2002). Not always does humor travel across the borders of language and culture as easily as this. One may well argue that shared laughter is one of the most rewarding situations in intercultural communication, but it also tends to be a beautiful beach of quicksand for the rash jokester. This paper will bring together two highly fascinating phenomena, namely US-American redneck jokes by JEFF FOXWORTHY and the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH, ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991) – a fusion carried out with scientific motivation and a closing reflection on classroom practice. The main undertaking of this paper can be summarized under the following working hypothesis:

The application of an abstract and formal linguistic theory of humor (the GTVH by ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991) to a concrete (sub-)cultural phenomenon (redneck jokes) is possible and also useful, for example it can bear fruitful insights for teachers and students preparing for intercultural communication – insights in regard to both linguistic and also cultural knowledge and awareness necessary to avoid the pitfalls pointed at above.

The procedure adhered to is a classic in four parts: we will first of all investigate into the very notion of how to define a redneck and lay out a basis of cultural knowledge necessary for the upcoming analysis of the occasionally headstrong humorous material. The second chapter – with a critical introduction to the basic concepts of the linguistic theory of humor chosen for the investigation – will provide the formal tools for the specific analysis of redneck jokes in chapter 3. The last chapter will then briefly shift in focus to the foreign language classroom and reflect upon the usefulness of our results in this regard.

In the course of this paper, I will amongst other things argue that ...

... most redneck jokes by JEFF FOXWORTHY go back to a script opposition between SOPHISTICATED and UNCULTIVATED.

... redneck humor cannot be reduced to simple instances of superiority jokes with an exposed butt (no pun intended) but – especially by drawing on the resources of Southern American English – partly creates, defines, and also glorifies the unsophisticated charm of redneck existence.

... jokes are a very motivating way of conveying implicit cultural and linguistic information in the classroom.

... the formal categories of the GTVH provide a helpful framework to raise students' awareness for humorous concepts and increase their *humor competence*.

... the general framework of the GTVH is very appropriate for this paper's undertaking, but not as coherent and polished as occasionally portrayed.

My own position in this paper is a threefold one: I am the exchange student, who – on his year in Atlanta, Georgia, the South – developed a vivid fascination for these special people (rednecks) and the joking cult evolving around them. But I am also the German student who takes a position outside of the American culture and language, maybe to explore what the native speaker may not be able to see as clearly from the inside (or rejects as utterly trivial). Barely worth mentioning that I am also a scientist and a zesty linguist.

Ornithologists can't fly and humorous research tends to be... not exactly that funny. Let's hope this thesis will be both to you: insightful and entertaining.

Prodesse et delectare.¹

1 A brief annotation to the style of this paper: the decision to use the pronoun I to refer to the author of this work is in no way less scientific than awkward reformulations in the passive voice. The occasional usage of the pronoun WE is not supposed to indicate megalomaniac tendencies on this author's side but includes the reader. It is my – not universally accepted – belief that incidental humorous comments on dry theory do not reduce the scientific value of a presentation, yet increase the pleasure in reading.

1. What (the hell) is a Redneck?

Once on a flight from Atlanta to New York, my seatmate, a weather-beaten farmer from the South, told me about a colleague of his, who “heid ai John Deere² taitoo an’ died fawlin’ off a tractor. Biggest redneck ever seen!” That was the first time I wondered what the term redneck actually might mean – an interest that would soon turn into a vivid obsession with this weird bunch of people. The main focus of this paper is a linguistic one, yet humor is a phenomenon evolving on the intersection of language (or another system of signs) and culture³. Therefore, it is the goal of this chapter to provide sufficient *cultural* background knowledge for the following *linguistic* examination of the mechanisms at work in the selected humorous examples. Apart from a scientific interest, I hope that the valued reader will be able not only to share at least some of the laughs but also to catch a spark of my fascination for the topic. Before turning to encyclopedias and dictionaries as tools of definition, I would like to present two concrete examples of redneck representation in the media, each taken from a TV series with a very good nose for hitting the core of a stereotype: *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*.

1.1 Cletus, the slack-jawed Yokel⁴ born To Love and Die in Dixie

Cletus Delroy Spuckler is the simpsonic version of a redneck and indeed a hillbilly⁵ par excellence. On his first appearance in *Bart gets an Elephant*, he is introduced by Lisa as a slack-jawed yokel (12:30). His hair and beard is messy, he has crooked teeth and is wearing a ‘wife-beater’; furthermore, his accent is an allusion to Southern drawling. Cletus is then fully introduced as a character in *22 Short Films about Springfield* in a short passage featuring banjo-music (16:14). We get to know that he once ate skunk, lost a toe, and lives in a very dirty and shabby home together with his girlfriend Brandine, who is just applying for a job as a topless dancer. Consider image [2] (“Hey, what’s goin’ on on this side?”), which is featuring the mentioned clip: already the wood-



[1] Cletus

2 a company producing agricultural machinery, see <http://www.deere.com/> [June 26, 2009]

3 Accordingly, in the GTVH, the originally purely semantic approach of the SSTH is widened up to a “linguistic theory ‘at large’” – including other areas of linguistic as well, especially pragmatics (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 222)

4 der Tölpel/Bauerntempel, dessen Mund (vor Staunen) offen steht

5 often pejorative: *Hinterwäldler*, mainly synonymous with *hick*



[2] *The Slack-Jawed Yokel* (16:28)

assembled letters suggest a certain rurality, an image which is supported by the combination with three iconic features of the redneck stereotype: a gun, missing teeth, and beer in a can (xxx is also often used to indicate self-distilled hard liquor aka *moonshine*, another ‘luxury’ commonly attributed to stereotyped redneck lifestyle). Hardly worth adding that Cletus drives a pickup-truck (*Sweets and Sour Marge*, 11:28) and that his seven children do not go to school (*Yokel Chords*).

One of his children is called ‘Incest’ (as we get to know in *Yokel Chords*, 8:09), which opens up the possibility that Brandine and Cletus might be siblings – another big issue when it comes to redneck stereotypes.

It should at least be mentioned that the Simpsons do not forget to call the presented stereotype of the dumb redneck into question at least occasionally – for example, when Cletus signs Marge’s petition in *Sweets and Sour Marge* (11:49) in perfectly artistic calligraphic letters.



[3] *Cletus and Brandine at home*



[4] *sophisticated signature*

Let us briefly turn to another TV series: *Family Guy*. In the episode *To Love and Die in Dixie* (Season 3, episode 12), the protagonist family has to leave their home in Connecticut and is relocated in the deep South. Their new home – the town of Bumblescum⁶ (population 48) – is the nightmare of every wannabe-sophisticated

6 translated to German as *Pennerabschaumstadt*

Yankee: an inbred-society of armed Confederates. In *Bumblerscum*, being Southern is equated with being a redneck of the worst kind. *Every* inhabitant has bad, crooked, or missing teeth. The smartest ‘pupil’ in school is a pig, a poster next to the blackboard proclaims Elvis as the next president. The town folks have a very increased usage of the word *y’all* and love to drink moonshine (brown bottles marked with xxxx). Common clothing includes caps (occasionally with Confederate flags on them), plaid shirts, overalls, and a gun. In an annual festivity, the Civil War is reenacted with a slight adjustment: the Confederacy wins. Apart from this brief summary of features, two small scenes are well noteworthy for further chapters:

- 1) While inspecting their new home, the kids encounter a man in the cupboard, who shows significant similarity with JEFF FOXWORTHY and shouts out: “You know you’re a redneck, when your gunrack has a gunrack on it!”, followed by Stewie’s comment: “You suck!” (6:58)
- 2) Stewie (the speaking baby with the distinct British accent) on mingling with the town folks shouts out: “Oh, I feel so deliciously white trash⁷!” (8:43)



[5] JEFF FOXWORTHY in the cupboard



[6] armed rednecks.

Having considered those two ‘appetizers’, let us now attempt a definition of the term *redneck*.

1.2 Rednecks in Encyclopedia & Dictionary

The *Random House Webster’s College Dictionary* informs us that “[a]ll the senses of [the term redneck] are usually used with disparaging intent, implying negative stereotypical traits such as ignorance and bigotry.” Two definitions are provided: “a term used to refer to an uneducated white farm laborer, esp. from the South” or “a bigot

⁷ *Weißer Abschaum* – a very pejorative term!

or reactionary, esp. from the rural working class”. This definition overlaps to a certain extent with the way J. K. CHAMBERS refers to the concept in his famous study about *Burnouts and Rednecks in Farmer City*: a “term that usually refers to conservative, prejudiced, rural white men in the American South – originally a metonym based on their sunburnt necks” (CHAMBERS 2003, 193). A somehow similar point is made by *Wikipedia*, claiming that the “most common American usage, that of the uncouth rural white Southerner, is generally believed to derive from individuals having a red neck caused by working outdoors in the sunlight over the course of their lifetime” (KENNETH ADDISON⁸ referred to on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redneck> [June 26, 2009]).⁹

Taking into account all this information, the two translations offered by <http://www.leo.org/>¹⁰ namely “der Prolet” and “weißer reaktionärer Hinterwäldler¹¹” (white reactionary hick) appear acceptable, but should be treated with caution nonetheless: the concepts may be close and possibly share some features, still a German *Prolet* (or a German *Hinterwäldler*) will still differ significantly from an American *redneck* (or an American *hick*). That is why I chose to present some concrete examples first.

The negative aftertaste of ‘white trash’ is common to all the definitions presented above. On the contrary, I have met people who proudly entitled themselves as rednecks – an observation that may not pass as a scientific observation but well suffices to raise some doubt in the general labeling of the term as ‘pejorative’. In fact, *Wikipedia* tells us that especially JEFF FOXWORTHY’S “1993 comedy album *You Might Be a Redneck If...* cajoled listeners to evaluate their own behavior in the context of stereotypical redneck behavior, and resulted in more mainstream usage of the term” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redneck> [June 27, 2009])⁹. Already in 1987, Bo Whaley’s *The Official Redneck Handbook* provided advice how to blend in with this peculiar thing, which “ain’t no fad, no passin’ fancy or a part-time thing. No, Sir! Redneckin’ is a way of life, either inherited or acquired” (BO WHALEY 1987, 143). On being asked *What, exactly, is a Redneck?* this book replies:

8 ADDISON, KENNETH N. (2009) *We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident...: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Roots of Racism and Slavery in America*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

9 The status of the *Wikipedia* online encyclopedia as a tool of reference is a controversial one; in regard to the matter in question, it may in fact be an important indicator of common perception, as well as an influence on it.

10 <http://dict.leo.org/ende?lp=ende&lang=de&searchLoc=0&cmpType=relaxed§Hdr=on&spellToler=on&chinese=both&pinyin=diacritic&search=redneck&relink=on> [June 26, 2009]

11 The German audio track of *Family Guy* translates it as “weißer Landarbeiter”.

This is a question that has cried out for an answer ever since Adam popped the first wad of Levi Garrett in his mouth and Eve cautioned him not to spit on the Astroturf.

Here, then, are the conclusions of one redneck researcher who has considered the question for more than forty years. A redneck is a mysterious sort of character who drives a four-wheel drive pickup with oversize tires on the first floor and a cab perched on the eighth, flanked by twin CB antennas, with a fish stringer hanging from the inside rear-view mirror. He's a shaggy-haired varmint who hasn't seen a barber since Sal Maglie retired from baseball, sports a beard, and wears a Cat Diesel cap, black with yellow patch. In his left shirt pocket is a barely visible pouch of Levi Garrett chewing tabacco, with an equally subdued pack of Winstons in his right. A 30.06 rifle (with scope) and a .12 gauge Remington Model 1100 shotgun, along with a reel and rod, hang in the back window above the decal of a Confederate flag that bears the reminder: "Hell No! I Ain't Forgettin!" And there are three bumper stickers: "How 'Bout Them Dawgs?!", "Get Your Heart in America or Get Your (picture of a donkey) Out!," and next to it is one with a forefinger pointed skywards that says "I Found It!"

Those are the back bumpers. On the front under the grille is a personalized tag that reads, "Joe Boy and Willie Kate." He's driving with a long-neck Bud in one hand, a large portion of Willie Kate in the other, and they listen as Waylon and Willie and the boys knock out their theme song, "Luckenbach, Texas," on the AM-FM stereo tape player.

And they're headed to ... wherever, to do ... whatever. (Bo WHALEY 1987, preface)

Taking into account this lengthy but helpful description, it appears that really not everybody considers it a bad thing to be a redneck. Let alone a dumb thing: JAIMIE MUEHLHAUSEN's *Redneck Words of Wisdom* are dedicated to "some of the smartest people around...Rednecks" and JEFF FOXWORTHY (in the Introduction to *You might be a Redneck if...*) quotes a reporter stating that he "turned 'redneck' from an insult to a term of endearment." By the way, his *own* official definition of *redneck* is rather short: "a glorious absence of sophistication. 's all it is. And it can be full-time or part-time... most of us are guilty of it. And if you're not guilty of it, you do have relatives that are" (*Blue Collar Comedy Tour: The Movie*, 54:34).

For the moment, let us accept that the term *redneck* ranges in connotations from 'proud eccentric Southerner' to 'poor and racist white trash' and postpone further discussion of this matter to the TARGET-section in chapter three.



[7] *The Official Redneck Handbook*

1.3 Redneck Rantings.

Having made quite an effort to define the term redneck and at the same time illuminate the abstract concept with a spark of life in the last chapter, this section will briefly and fragmentary pick up a few loose ends and refer the interested reader to some helpful links.

First of all, the notion of Southernness. Some people claim that there are actually rednecks all around the world (compare Canadian *Bluenecks* and Australian *Bogans*): “In other words, ‘redneck’¹² is not regional. It’s internal. You’re either a redneck or you know one” (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 9). To me, the concept is intensively intertwined with the phenomenon of Southern American English (SAE). I will therefore assume that everybody who chooses to be a redneck-at-heart (and that may possibly include this author) also needs a basic understanding of this linguistic variety, which will be further elaborated on in chapter 3.2.

Secondly, a simple but important question: are rednecks poor? Not necessarily, it seems, yet a lot of them are. Many people associate redneck-life with *trailer homes* – which does not exclude the possibility that some rednecks chose to live there without grinding poverty forcing them to do so, like JIM GOAD (author of *The Redneck Manifesto*, 1997), “who does not presently live in a trailer park but is thinking about it” (blurb).

Two ‘prominent’ features of stereotypical outer redneck appearance have been concealed so far: the beer-belly hanging out of the disadvantageously short shirt and badly fitting jeans revealing... what the vernacular calls the *plumber’s crack*. Just to warn you!

Finally, some helpful and entertaining links, just to show you it’s not all fiction:

[Rednecks of the South:] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBocef6iQps>

[Redneck Summer Games in Atlanta]: <http://summerredneckgames.com/>

[in the vernacular]: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=redneck>

[about the Beverly Hillbillies:] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPObq_EvIg8&NR=1

[some fake images:] <http://www.catsprn.com/Rednecks.htm>

[Redneck woman:] http://www.metacafe.com/watch/sy-18085946/gretchen_wilson_redneck_woman_official_music_video/

[three wolves shirt, discussion:] http://www.amazon.com/Three-Wolf-Moon-T-Shirt-Medium/dp/B000NZW3J8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1249619684&sr=8-1

12 Within the “...” of a quote, I will always change further “...” to ‘...’



[8] Only a stereotype?



*[9] The Redneck summer games in Atlanta and its 'mascot'
(in the background: mud hole jumping)*

1.4 Two Works (and the Rest is Blinkers).

“Redneck Jokes as a Subcultural Phenomenon” – that is this paper’s front-page proclaimed promise of investigation. In projects like this one, it is always a good idea to make an effort to clarify on the detailed usage of words contained in such descriptions, as has been done with the notion of *redneck* in the previous chapter and will be done with the notion of *joke* in the following one. Thus, we are left with the remaining *subcultural phenomenon* for the moment. In Germany, scarcely anybody has an idea what a redneck looks like, let alone which jokes are made about them. Totally different for the United States: JEFF FOXWORTHY according to his own (and far from modest) web page is “the largest selling comedy-recording artist in history, a multiple Grammy Award nominee and best selling author of 11 books” (<http://www.jefffoxworthy.com/bio/index.html> [July 1, 2009]). His first comedy CD *You Might Be a Redneck If...* “sold three million copies and claimed the title of the ‘largest selling comedy CD in history’” (DUNNE & DUNNE 2006, 251¹³). The *Blue Collar Comedy Tour* – an enterprise of “four established American comics who have developed comic personas based on stereotypical ideas, jokes and representations of ‘blue-collar’ or ‘redneck’ behavior and life-styles” have “taken American popular commercial culture by storm since the Tour’s inauspicious inception in 2003” (HAUHART 2008, 269). Apart from these examples, the amount of redneck humor on the electronic frontier is immense: DEREK H. ALDERMAN already reported over 26,000 Web sites referring to ‘redneck humor’ in 2005 (ALDERMAN 2006, 262); by now (July 1, 2009) we are up to 34,000 hits on www.google.com – refer to www.redneckhumor.com and <http://www.redneckwordsofwisdom.com/> for only two interesting examples.

As I hope to have illustrated, we are by far dealing with no tiny comic phenomenon somewhere on the shady outskirts of mainstream culture. Redneck jokes are highly popular, widely known, and still growing. Two consequences immediately arise from this finding: First, “Redneck Jokes as a Subcultural Phenomenon” should *not* be read as “Redneck jokes as a humorous phenomenon only common to an American subculture” but as “Redneck jokes as a highly popular phenomenon referring to an American subculture, namely rednecks.” Second, since this is rather a qualitative linguistic study than a quantitative cultural thesis, my investigation will have to restrict to two selected works from the humongous pile of humorous redneck treatises.

13 Referring to the *Country Stars* Web site www.countrystars.com/index.html?artists/jfox.html [not available anymore]

The two works selected both go back to JEFF FOXWORTHY – a man who claims to having “been called a redneck [himself] all [his] life” (FOXWORTHY 1989, Introduction). Surely, cowboy boots and an Atlantanian origin plus accent are a starting point, yet a degree from Georgia Tech and a job at IBM (cf. DUNNE & DUNNE 2006, 251) are not really in-group markers for the trailer park community. FOXWORTHY’s somehow dubious insider-claim will be further discussed in the TARGET-section of chapter 3.

To the works. *You might be a Redneck if...* (1989; “The comedy classic that’s sold over 1,000,000 copies!” as the cover tells us) is a small book containing 146 one-liners completing the by now legendary phrase “You might be a Redneck if...”, for example

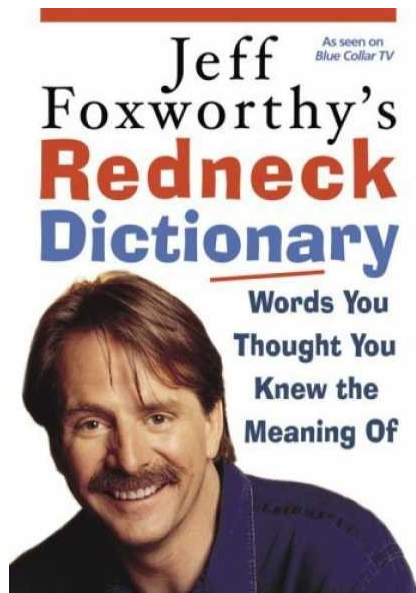
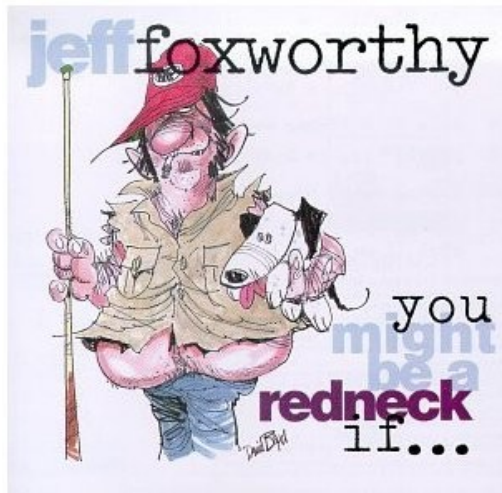
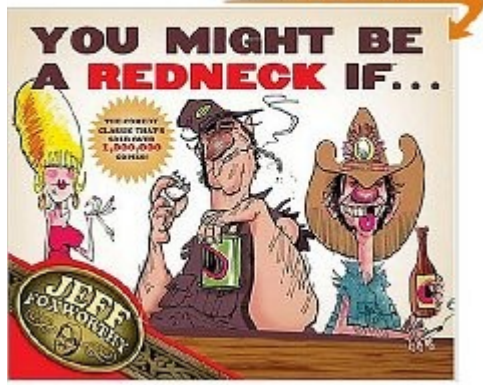
- (1) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 1)

Some of these often witty observations are accompanied by comic illustrations, which will be of minor interest to this investigation into verbalized humor. Some additional examples may be added from *Redneck Classic* (same concept, still FOXWORTHY, 1995) and the infamous audio recording *You might be a Redneck if...* (FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3 and 7). The jokes in this section mainly fall under the label *referential humor* (de re, defined later on). The second book, *Jeff Foxworthy’s Redneck Dictionary* (2005), reconsiders everyday speech in the light of Southern pronunciation, thus providing a completely new and often surprising reconsideration of our conventional language system, for instance

- (2) *European* as in “Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!” (FOXWORTHY 2005, Preface)

This second phenomenon – largely a collection of puns made possible by the special way rednecks pronounce their *Words in the South* (the title of track 2 on the audio recording, 1993) – can roughly be considered as *verbal humor* (de dicto, definition following). It also falls under the label *dialect humor*, which is “language play based on group differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, or grammar as used by speakers from different geographic areas” (NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 101).

After this necessary investigation from the perspective of cultural studies, we will now experience what might (in analogy to that very discipline in the beginning of the 20th century) be labeled the *linguistic turn* of this paper.



[10, 11, 12] The works in focus: (comic) book, audio recording, dictionary

2. Linguistic Tools of Investigation

There is a great number of diverse humor theories, but most of them are either written from different scientific perspectives or they converge at some point. Good and long books have been compiled about detailed descriptions of all these approaches and that is why I will not do it again (see ATTARDO 1994, chapter 1 and MARHENKE 2003, chapter 2 for a well-arranged overview). In the following chapter, I will (assuming a certain degree of familiarity with elementary concepts of humor theory on the reader's side) present, justify, and critically reflect upon the (linguistic) tools I chose for my purpose.

Widely accepted is the classification of humor theories into three big branches: **cognitive approaches** and their most famous representative, the *incongruity theory*, **social approaches**, such as the *superiority theory*, and **psychoanalytical approaches** as the *release theory* (cf. RASKIN 1985, 30-40 and ATTARDO 1994, 47). Basically, “incongruity theories claim that humor arises from the perception of an incongruity between a set of expectations and what is actually perceived” (ATTARDO 2008, 102). The nature of the incongruity as something disjointed and not fitting well together (cf. ROSS 1998, 7) is thereby captured well in this old but modern quote by JAMES BEATTIE, describing laughter as arising from “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 relationship from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them” (1776, 384¹⁴ quoted in ATTARDO 1997, 396). Social hostility theories essentially “claim that one finds humorous a feeling of superiority over something, of overcoming something, or aggressing a target. Release theories claim that humor ‘releases’ some form of psychic energy and/or frees the individual from some constraints” (ATTARDO 2008, 102). This paper's main tool of investigation – the **General Theory of Verbal Humor** (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991) – with its central notion of *Script Opposition* (SO) strongly alludes to a (well formalized) concept of incongruity; yet under the notion of *Target* (TA) we will also enter the realm of superiority, hostility, and aggression.

Since all the material covered in this paper can be found in the drawer with the convenient inscription ‘canned humor’ (and its obvious illocution: ‘Laugh at me! I am

14 JAMES BEATTIE (1776). *Essays*. London and Edinburgh: Dilly and Creech.

NBF¹⁵'), we are spared the highly interesting but also arduous question of how to clearly label the humorous parts for instance of a conversation as such. We are left with a certain burden of definition nonetheless – for example: What is a joke? The *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* offers the following meanings for the noun JOKE:

- 1) a short humorous anecdote with a punch line
- 2) anything said or done to provoke laughter or cause amusement
- 3) something amusing or ridiculous: *I don't see the joke in that*
- 4) an object of laughter or ridicule, esp. because of being inadequate or sham
- 5) a trifling matter: *the loss was no joke*
- 6) PRACTICAL JOKE

The first entry clearly refers to so-called *narrative jokes*, consisting of what RASKIN describes as “very short funny stories [...which] involve a ‘situation comedy’ ” (RASKIN 1985, 29). The *punch line* certainly is the most important part of a narrative joke and it leads me to another aspect which is commonly regarded as essential for the creation of humor: the element of surprise (cf. ATTARDO 1997, 397). After all, if a punch does not come as such, most people will certainly duck. Entry number two then is a much wider definition: everything that wants to be a joke is a joke; this is not about performance or perlocution but simply about illocution. This definition of joke consequently includes labels such as pun, riddle, wisecrack, etc – which then corresponds to how the term joke is to be understood in this work's title. Entry three refers to nonsense, absurdity, and unresolved incongruity; the fourth point introduces the concept of the *butt* of a joke as examined in superiority theory (the target of what SIGMUND FREUD would have called ‘tendentious jokes’). Entries five and six are of minor interest to us.

For the notion of PUN (PUNNING) *Webster's College Dictionary* offers the following entry:

- 1) the humorous use of a word or phrase so as to emphasize or suggest its different meanings or applications, or the use of words that are alike or nearly alike in sound but different in meaning; a play on words
- 2) a word or phrase used in this way

Interesting is the additionally outlined connection to the verb POUND and one of its original meanings: “*to mistreat (words)*”.

As already mentioned, puns can be classified as belonging to the label *joke*. Of course, taxonomic categories often mix: a narrative joke can include a pun (as its punchline), a

15 NBF = Non-Bona Fide. The playful mode of language opposed to Bona Fide (BF) communication, the “earnest, serious, information-conveying mode of verbal communication” (RASKIN 1985, 100) ruled by PAUL GRICE'S ‘co-operative principle’.

riddle can be based on a pun, a pun on a riddle, and so forth. Puns and their special way to twist meanings and sounds will be further explored later in this paper.

The following chapter attempts to demonstrate how the heap of terminology piled up so far can be brought together in an orderly and formal approach: the *Semantic Script Theory of Humor* (SSTH) and its revised version, the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH).

2.1 SSTH and GTVH

The SSTH was first described by VICTOR RASKIN in 1979 but gained fame in his book-length treatment of the topic published in 1985, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 1996). It was substantially revised by SALVATORE ATTARDO and VICTOR RASKIN in 1991 (“Script Theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model”) and thereby transformed into the GTVH, which is being developed ever since. In 2008, RASKIN proudly announced that “it seemed timely to warn the humor research community that linguistic imperialism is continuing unabated, and even more complex and unreadable formalisms are coming!” (RASKIN 2008, 12). In thrilled expectation of these loudmouthed words’ fulfillment, let us consider how it all began.

The SSTH is based on the claim that

A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the [following] conditions [...] are satisfied:

- 1) **The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts**
- 2) **The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite** in a special sense defined [in the chapter on Script Opposition]

The two scripts with which some text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text.

(RASKIN 1985, 99)

The GTVH then “opened the theory [the SSTH] to multidisciplinary input but left the semantic foundation the same” (RASKIN 2008, 7).¹⁶ It takes up the two central claims for script opposition and script overlap and develops them into a system of six ingenious **Knowledge Resources (KRs)**, which are hierarchically organized¹⁷, starting on top: Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), Language (LA). Presented more schematic:

SO → LM → SI → TA → NS → LA¹⁸

16 This option – multidisciplinary input for a formal linguistic theory – will prove to be very valuable for our investigation into the phenomenon of redneck jokes. A joint action of the scientific disciplines (while being aware of one’s own specific methods, approaches, and history) towards an understanding of such a multilayer phenomenon as humor is very desirable, especially since some researchers describe the relationship between sociolinguistics and humor research as dramatically as “having mutually missed the boat” (GASQUET CYRUS 2002 quoted in ATTARDO 2003, 1290) [GASQUET-CYRUS, MÉDÉRIC (2002). *The sociolinguistics of humor*. Unpublished ms.]

17 For full justification of this point see ATTARDO & RASKIN (1991) in what the authors themselves announce as a “slow, complex, and painful procedure” (1991, 294).

18 ATTARDO claims that this hierarchy of the KRs was “empirically tested and found to be fundamentally correct” by Willibald Ruch in 1993 (2008, 109) [referring to RUCH, WILLIBALD & ATTARDO, SALVATORE & RASKIN, VICTOR (1993). “Towards an empirical verification of the General Theory of Verbal Humor”. In: *HUMOR*. Issue 6-2 (1993). Berlin/ New York: Water de Gruyter, 123-136.]

Each joke can thus be understood as “a 6-tuple specifying the instantiation of each parameter [...] { LA, SI, NS, TA, SO, LM }” (ATTARDO 1994, 226), in which SO, TA, and SI directly address the content of the joke (content KRs) and LM, NS, and LA are tool KRs used to express it (cf. ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 321).

Before we now turn to a more detailed discussion of the KRs with a preceding clarification on the notion of *SCRIPT* (script names will be indicated by small caps), it should at least be briefly noted that – according to its authors – the GTVH ...

... is a formal theory and “fully falsifiable [in the sense of KARL POPPER’S critical rationalism] as any reasonable hypothesis or theory should be” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 328).

... is a “general and essentialist theory of verbal humor in the sense that it addresses the ‘what’ question, that is, ‘what is humor?’ ” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 330).

... is a theory “proposed within the framework of generative grammar” (Attardo 1994, 195), yet the authors want their theory to “stand on its own” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 340).

... is a theory of joke analysis, not a model of joke production; “contrary to a naïve expectation, the order of levels is totally devoid of any temporal value – a lower level is not a later level” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 327).

... is a theory of native speakers’ *competence* “at producing/interpreting [...] humorous texts, not a theory of their *performance* in doing so” (ATTARDO 2001, 30; my emphasis). Just like native speakers are assigned the ability to judge whether a sentence is grammatically correct in transformative generative grammar, they are assigned the title of a ‘humorous referee’ here (cf. ATTARDO 1991, 195-197). The theory assumes an *idealized* speaker/hearer “who is unaffected by racial or gender biases, undisturbed by scatological, obscene or disgusting materials, not subject to boredom, and, most importantly, who has never “heard it before,” when presented with a joke” (ATTARDO 1994, 197). To identify an object as ‘(intended) joke’ and to find it funny are, as we all know, two very different things in real life and the latter appears to be a small subset of the first.

2.1.1 What is a Script?

[W]hen we think of a car, we know most of their obvious components, such as wheels, doors, seats, windows, steering wheels, that they take fuel, that they are driven by licensed adults and senior children (except in Wyoming – don't ask!), that they are used for transportation – and sex initiation and perpetuation, preferably not at the same time, but things happen! – that they are driven on the roads, that they cost a considerable amount of money, and so on and so forth. All this information, appropriately structured and presented, constitutes the script of CAR.

(RASKIN 2008, 7; my small caps)

So far for some entertaining input concerning this chapter's leading question. As ATTARDO describes it: a "script is an organized chunk of [semantic] information about something (in the broadest sense)" (ATTARDO 1994, 199). In RASKIN's words from nine years before that:

The script is a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the world or evoked by it. The script is a cognitive structure internalized by the native speaker and it represents the native speaker's knowledge of a small part of the world. Every speaker has internalized rather a large repertoire of scripts of 'common sense' which represent his/her knowledge of certain routines, standard procedures, basic situations, etc., for instance, the knowledge of what people do in certain situations, how they do it, in what order, etc. Beyond the scripts of 'common sense' every native speaker may, and usually does, have individual scripts determined by his/her individual background and subjective experience and restricted scripts which the speaker shares with a certain group, e.g., family, neighbors, colleagues, etc., but not with the whole speech community of native speakers of the same language. (RASKIN 1985, 81)

As both ATTARDO and RASKIN point out, an immense terminological battle could be fought around this thing, which "has been called 'schema', 'frame', 'daemon'¹⁹" (RASKIN 1985, 81), but actually I do feel a little pacifistic about the issue. Therefore, I will stick to RASKIN and ATTARDO's 'unmarked' (as it is called in ATTARDO 1994, 199) usage of the term but critically reflect on the hence established coverage of the notion during this chapter.

As RASKIN points out, in a technical way, every script can be understood as a "graph with lexical nodes and semantic links between the nodes" (1985, 81). Sometimes it may be helpful to represent scripts in a simplified manner as *sets* with possible *intersections* (as done by ATTARDO, HEMPELMANN, DI MAIO in 2002). All the scripts taken together (lexical, non-lexical, etc.) can then be seen as one huge continuous graph including strong and weak links between different elements: the *semantic network* which "contains all of the information a speaker has about his/her culture" (ATTARDO 1994, 202). Consider this representation of the DOCTOR script based on RASKIN (1985, 85), obviously greatly reducing the complexity of the issue to an easily accessible format ('>' stands for 'past' /

19 I tried to conduct some research on this often quoted passage, but I could not find out whether RASKIN ironically refers to an evocation of 'satanic spirits' in the realm of linguistics or draws a connection to Unix tools.

‘=’ for ‘present’ / *indicates additions from my side, I also omitted some of the original parts):

DOCTOR	
Subject:	[+ Human] [+ Adult]
Activity:	> Study medicine = Receive patients = cure disease = (Take patient’s money)
Place:	> Medical School = Hospital or doctor’s office
Condition:	Physical contact
* Attributes:	professional, sober, sterile, smart

On the same grounds, the following can be considered a first version of a simplified REDNECK script:

REDNECK	
Subject:	[+ Human] [+ Adult] [+ default male]
Activity:	= fishing, shooting, drinking beer, chewing tobacco, driving a pickup truck, etc.
Place:	= the countryside = the South of the United States = possibly a trailer home
Attributes:	Southern accent, unsophisticated/simple/ill-bred, badly dressed, quite not an intellectual

Several insights arise from these examples. First of all, it seems that there is not a real limit to the amount of information which could possibly be gathered inside a script: a prototype in white with stethoscope and cold fingers, the grumpy Doctor House as a marginal case, fear of hypodermic syringes, maybe even the fictional village of Deekelsen... all that could probably appear in a person’s DOCTOR script.²⁰ With focus on the range of scripts, ALEXANDER BROCK points out that RASKIN’s “own analysis of scripts includes elements of thematic roles (INSTRUMENT, OBJECT), sense relations (hyponymy) and semantic features (DOCTOR: [+ Human] [+ Adult])” (2004, 357). He goes on to argue

20 Please note that some of the mentioned items would manifest only individual or restricted scripts on basis of weak connotation. Concerning this issue ATTARDO (1997, 23) notes that some parts of a script are more central, i.e. salient, than others in the ‘default’ version.

that in some cases script borders might be clearcut (e.g. by establishing them along the lines of a verb's valency), in other cases though, the examples provided by RASKIN and ATTARDO are far more complex and "there is no syntactic or word-semantic help to define the script borders" (BROCK 2004, 357). This 'getting out of hand' of script borders becomes especially clear taking into consideration that scripts are claimed to contain/evoke/include or refer to other scripts. The literature distinguishes two main subcategories (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 200):

- 1) "macroscripts", which are clusters of scripts with a chronological order – such as RESTAURANT which then includes DRIVE UP TO THE RESTAURANT, BE SEATED, ORDER FOOD, etc.
- 2) "complex scripts", which are made up of other scripts but lack the chronological order, for example WAR and its links to ARMY, ENEMY, VICTORY, DEFEAT, WEAPON, etc.

To my mind, this distinction may be helpful, yet one should be aware that macroscripts and complex scripts are not mutually exclusive. Consider the script DOCTOR'S PRACTICE: On the one hand GO TO THE DOCTOR'S PRACTICE, WAIT IN THE ANTEROOM FOR A LONG TIME, BE CALLED INTO THE EXAMINATION ROOM, WAIT IN THE EXAMINATION ROOM FOR AN EVEN LONGER TIME, BE EXAMINED, MAKE THE NEXT APPOINTMENT, GO HOME, RECEIVE THE ENORMOUS BILL constitutes a timely ordered *macroscript*, on the other hand, there is a chunk of scripts such as YOUNG AND PRETTY RECEPTIONIST, OLD AND BOSSY MATRON, WHITE LAB COATS, PULP MAGAZINES, COUGHING CHILDREN, GLASS DOORS, etc., which can be seen as constituting a not chronologically ordered *complex script*. The same could be done with WAR (DECLARATION, BATTLE, VICTORY VS. ARMY, ENEMY, TANKS) and RESTAURANT (DRIVE UP, EAT, PAY VS. WAITER, CUTLERY, FOOD) – so the distinction appears to be a question of focus rather than an inherent feature which a single script has or lacks.

Taking all of the above into account, it becomes obvious that 'our' usage of the term *script* indeed comprises a wide variety of concepts from different fields of linguistics, including the activation of lexical fields, sense relations, feature analysis, prototypes, "pre-existing knowledge structure[s] involving event sequences"²¹, knowledge about "standardized events, including [...] typical participants and subevents" (HADUMOD

21 A definition of *script* quoted from (<http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Semantics/SemanticsScripts> [July 17, 2009]). Analogous, SCHANK & ABELSON in their early usage of the term refer to structures that "describe appropriate sequences of events in a particular context [...] a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (SCHANK & ABELSON 1977, 41). GUY COOK, in adapting this view, classifies RASKIN's usage of *script* as a synonym for *schema* (cf. COOK 2000, 92).

BUSSMANN 1996, 417, *script*), and so forth.

A simple but crucial observation is the following: scripts may differ amongst cultures. Thus, the DOCTOR script in our Western sphere includes ‘is paid when patient is sick and being treated’, whereas the Chinese script for the same thing would include ‘is paid as long as one stays healthy – payment stops when patient gets sick’ (at least that is what this author was recently told). Along the same lines, RESTAURANT may in some cultures include joyful burping and slurping, in others a neat etiquette à la Knigge. In the extreme, scripts may even differ completely from culture to culture (think of MARRIAGE for instance) or one culture may have scripts for some ‘small parts of the world’ that are not even conceptualized in other cultures. Examples for the latter could possibly include REDNECK for some Germans, but obviously, people are able to acquire new scripts, just as we are able to work on already established ones: “This is in fact, what humans do: faced with a new bit of information they revise their scripts. [...] Basically, we can consider a script as an hypothesis on the semantic context of a given lexeme” (ATTARDO 2001, 6). Thus, if *redneck* is a new lexeme a person acquires, this goes along with building up such a hypothesis and work on it as new input is proceeded. Chapter 4 will investigate into the question of how far jokes can promote such a process.

A very important question has not been brought up so far: Do all (semantic) scripts have a *lexematic handle* evoking them? It seems that a lot of them have – going along with their ‘name’ (such as doctor → DOCTOR and redneck → REDNECK). But what about scripts for non lexicalized concepts²²? ATTARDO (2001, 21) introduces a very helpful distinction between three different types of scripts:

1. lexical scripts, abstract, reside in the lexicon,
2. sentential scripts, more concrete, built up from instantiated scripts in context;
and
3. inferential scripts, activated by a context, without the occurrence of their lexematic handle.

Equipped with these tools, I will now turn to a discussion of the KRs utilized by the GTVH.

22 Such as

2.2 KR #6: Script Opposition (SO)

Remember RASKIN'S two necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be humorous? First of all, it has to be (at least partly) compatible with (at least) two different scripts – the ‘overlap requirement’²³. Yet, this is not a cause of humor per se. The text also has to fulfill the ‘oppositeness requirement’ demanding the overlapping scripts to be opposed in a technical sense left to further specification. It is exactly this task, which will cause us quite a headache in this chapter.

EDWARD FINEGAN describes antonymy (deriving from the Greek root *anti* = opposite (cf. FINEGAN 1998, 195)) as a “binary relationship between terms with complementary meanings,” in other words, terms “A and B are antonyms if, when A describes a referent, B cannot describe the same referent, and vice versa” (FINEGAN 1998, 195). On an intuitive level, this seems quite reasonable at first: *one* person would not describe *one* coffee at *one* point of time as hot *and* cold; an entity is either alive *or* dead²⁴. On the contrary, *one* person could describe *one* coffee at *one* point of time as ‘not hot’ *and* ‘not cold’ simultaneously, but an entity cannot be ‘not alive’ and ‘not dead’ at once. Furthermore, when we describe a referent as a *tree*, we can hardly describe it also as a *dog* – yet, it feels inappropriate to describe *dog* and *tree* as antonyms or opposites.

The magic trick with the negation will end in smoke with the introduction of further terminology. Though Finegan does it, too, I decided to follow the distinction introduced by the British linguist JOHN LYONS (1977, 270-290) for the greater sophistication of his work. LYONS basically distinguishes between

- **Contrast:** a very general term for a not specified number of elements in a set of paradigmatically contrasting elements
- **Opposition:** dichotomous (binary) contrasts
- **Antonymy:** gradable opposites like *hot:cold*, which “usually correlate with opposite members of a continuum” (http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Semantics/Semanticssense_relations 17, 2009]). Gradable opposites can be paraphrased in a semantically equivalent way by using their counterpart: ‘My coffee is hotter than your coffee’ = ‘Your coffee is colder than my coffee.’ Since there is a continuum between the two poles hot and cold, an entity can be in the middle: neither hot nor cold.

23 ...which is treated within the KR SO, but somewhat like a stepchild. See 2.8.2.

24 It is complicated enough: let's just not talk about zombies or JUDITH BUTLER. Please.

- **Complementaries:** ungradable opposites (commonly called *binary antonyms* or *nongradable antonyms*), such as *dead:alive*. These “divide the universe of discourse (i.e. the objects of which they are predicable [...]) into two complementary subsets” (LYONS 1977, 271), whereby “the meaning of one lexeme is equivalent to the negation of the other lexeme”²⁵. Thus, a human being is either dead *or* alive, but a human being can neither be dead *and* alive nor not dead *and* not alive. In other words: the “term **complementarity** refers to an either-or relationship between the two terms of a pair of semantic opposites”²⁵.
- **Converseness:** pairs like *husband:wife*, *doctor:patient*, *above:below* which can be paraphrased in the way *If Peter is the husband of Mary, then Mary is the wife of Peter*. This manifests a reciprocal relationship: $R(x,y) = R'(y,x)$.
- **Directional Opposites** such as *up:down* and *come:go*, **Orthogonal Opposition** such as *North:East*, **Antipodal Opposition** such as *North:South* and *Black:White*.
- **Non-Binary Contrasts** such as {Monday,...,Friday}. This includes the notion of **incompatibility**, which

refers to a non-binary semantic opposition of two expressions that are semantically similar yet differ in a single semantic feature and are thus incompatible (e.g. *red-blue*). Since in most cases co-hyponyms are semantically incompatible in a given context (e.g. *tulip-rose*), the relationship between them is also referred to as incompatibility.²⁵

All of the above would – in the right context – fulfill RASKIN’s opposite requirement, yet there is more to humor than that. Namely, a special case of contrast describing the script oppositions of many jokes, which RASKIN labels ‘**local antonymy**’. According to RASKIN, local antonyms are “linguistic entities whose meanings are opposite only within a particular discourse and solely for the purpose of this discourse” (1985, 108). This definition actually suggests a concept that should have been called ‘**local opposition**’ in LYONS’ terminology, for I do not think that RASKIN intended to include only *gradable* local opposites (e.g. *tree:dog* in my humorous example below manifest what we might call ‘local complementaries’).²⁶ I will – once more – stick to RASKIN’s terminology (but with the reservations just mentioned), which now enables us to describe *tree* and *dog* as local antonyms in the (admittedly: really feeble but very suitable) joke

(3) Who has the loudest bark in the woods? – The weeping willow.

25 ([http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Semantics/Semanticssense relations](http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/Semantics/Semanticssense%20relations) [July 17, 2009])

26 ATTARDO (1997, 399) even claims that RASKIN deliberately rejected LYONS’ distinction, although he cited his book as a main source in the chapter on local antonymy. This procedure does not really make sense to me.

One possible reading²⁷ of the joke would set out to activate a DOG script on processing the question, notice an incongruity with the notion of *weeping willow* in the answer, backtrack and rethink, then switch to a second script, which is TREE.²⁸ In a wide context we would fail to describe *dog:tree* as opposed, because these two terms do not offer a dichotomous contrast as maybe *animate:inanimate* would within its universe-of-discourse [fig. 1]. Within the narrow context of joke (3) though, *dog:tree* are left by the process of disambiguation as two opposed entities offering a binary choice: local antonymy [fig. 2]. These two local antonyms are, furthermore, both compatible with the polysemous word ‘bark’ – an overlap, as required.

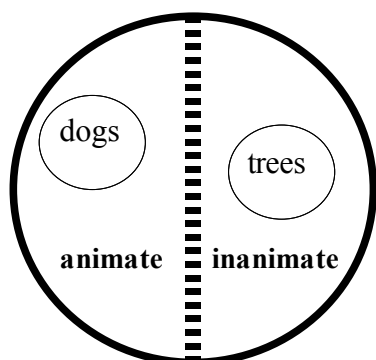


fig 1: wide context

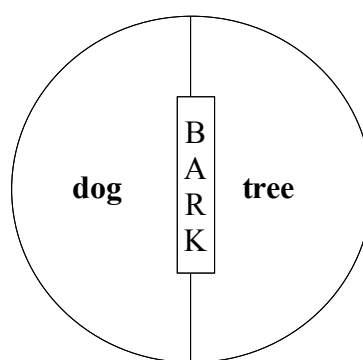


fig 2: restricted local context

The preceding argumentation contains one dangerous pitfall within its apparent conclusiveness: It is tempting to accept the SSTH and then label everything that appears intuitively humorous as *local antonymy* and then again to treat this as a confirmation of the SSTH (cf. ATTARDO 1997, 399 AND ATTARDO 2001, 18). The core of the problem is a certain lack of ‘hardwired criteria’ when it comes down to the definition of *local antonymy*. Several attempts have since been undertaken to clarify upon this matter:

- ATTARDO (1997) in a pragmatic approach attempted a redefinition of ‘script opposition’ as the “presence of a second script which is both low in accessibility and high in informativeness” (1997, 402), which sounded tempting and even included an explanation for the often claimed ‘surprise effect’ of humor but ran into problems

27 An other option would be to read ‘loud bark’ in the sense of ‘very-brightly-colored thing surrounding the tree’ at the first encounter and then (after noticing the incongruity with the very brown and regular bark of the weeping willow) track back to reevaluate ‘loud’ as ‘noisy because of crying’. Which does not increase the riddle’s wit, but leaves it a joke. A third option – the decision to choose ‘noisy-thing surrounding the tree’ straight from the beginning still leaves a frame shift from ‘weeping willow’ as a name to ‘weeping willow’ as an actively crying tree (after all, already the use of WHO somehow personified the thing). Which really does not make the joke any better, but still leaves it a joke.

28 In this sense, script simply means: one possible interpretation arising during the process of disambiguating the joke text.

with formalization and generality.

- ATTARDO (2001) in a semantic approach concluded that lexical and local antonymy “do not differ semantically, as they both involve a negation along an axis. The difference lies in the fact that the axis is the default (hence, salient) slot filler pair in lexical antonymy and a different, contextually forced one, for local antonymy” (2001, 19). He provides the example “That’s not a thief! He’s just a boy” as an instance in which the default salience ‘adult **who steals**’ switches to ‘**adult** who steals’ (cf. ATTARDO 2001, 19). This idea of local antonymy as “negation within a context” (ATTARDO 1997, 407) gets close to what I tried to visualize in figure 1 and 2.
- ATTARDO, HEMPELMAN, AND DI MAIO (2002) recapitulate script opposition in set theoretic terms: “two overlapping scripts (*A* and *B*) are opposed when within the complementary set of the intersection we can locate two [non-empty] subsets (*C* and *D*) such that the member(s) of the subset *C* are the (local) antonyms (i.e. the [linguistic] negation) of the members of the subset *D*” (2002, 24). In the further discussion, opposition is “defined as *being different* and *being foregrounded*” (RITCHIE 2004, 74).

All of these approaches seem to work *somehow* but also *somehow* leave a remaining amount of vagueness, as common in semantics. I will not go into greater detail within the limits of this paper, let alone that I would have any ingenious ideas of how to properly improve the situation. Thus, two concluding remarks shall close this discussion before continuing with the more accessible description of different levels of SO.

First, if one wanted to be picky (as GRAEME RITCHIE is), the vagueness both of the concept of script and of local antonymy would pose a real problem to the proclaimed falsifiability of the GTVH (cf. RITCHIE 2004, 79). Second, the concept of *local antonymy* may not be a perfectly circular wheel, metaphorically speaking, but it rolls. It is possibly not developed as far as it could, but it is better than pure intuition. And it is the best we have for the moment.

2.2.1 Levels of Script Opposition

Already the SSTH states implicitly what the GTVH then proclaims in clear terms – every SO takes place on (at least) three different levels of abstraction:

First, at the most abstract level, the joke opposes the *real* to the *unreal*, that is, factual reality to an imagined one. This may take three possible forms, existing on a lower level of abstraction, namely, the *actual vs. nonactual*, *normal vs. abnormal*, and *possible vs. impossible*. At the lowest level of abstraction, these three can be manifested by such oppositions as *good vs. bad*, *life vs. death*, *sex vs. nonsex* [sometimes called obscene/non-obscene], *money vs. no-money*, *high stature vs. low stature*, etc. (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1994, 308)

It seems quite clear that most – if not all – jokes indeed present one more or less ‘real’ situation and another, contrasted situation of ‘unreal’ or ‘fictional’ character, either explicitly or implicitly. I hold it possible that sometimes only the unreal situation is explicitly presented and then in the hearer’s mind compared to an implicitly assumed ‘real’ situation. The second level of abstraction is merely a tripartite concretion of this first basic opposition. As one might expect, “the boundaries between the three types are not watertight, and there is a certain amount of mutual penetration and diffusion” (RASKIN 1985, 112). Things get more interesting, when considering the third level, which contains oppositions RASKIN considers instances of the “very few binary categories which are essential to human life” (1985, 113). First observation: the list is possibly variable from culture to culture and potentially incomplete – for instance one might want to add *excrement vs. non-excrement* (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 204) or maybe *young vs. old*, *pretty vs. ugly*, etc.²⁹ Second observation: the oppositions on level three are not equal in generality. Thus, we might consider LIFE/DEATH, SEX/NO-SEX, MONEY/NO-MONEY, etc. as subclasses of the distinction GOOD/BAD (cf. ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 308) – although that is up to further context and personal taste, I suppose. Third observation: all the entries on level three are ‘classic’ antonyms or complementaries as defined by JOHN LYONS. This leads me to the claim that at least for those jokes which are based on *local antonymy*, there has to be a fourth level of SO. Actually, one might also call for additional entries on level three; yet it is my belief that every local antonym on such a fourth level will turn out to be a ‘local’ concretion of a ‘classic’ opposition on level three.³⁰

Consider the following joke (retold from a comic I once saw):

29 ATTARDO & RASKIN (1991, 308) claim their list to be not exhaustive but quite representative.

30 ATTARDO (2001, 20) mentions that DI MAIO (2000) also calls for an additional lower level instantiating a ‘concrete opposition’. [DI MAIO, SARA (2000). *A Structured Resource for Computational Humor*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Siena.]

- (4) “How did you manage to get *that* old, smoking and drinking hard?” the reporter asked the wrinkled and limp redneck sitting in the midst of empty cans and cigarette butts. – “What ya mean? I’m twenty-three!”

The text first evokes the script OLD by means of the lexematic handle *old*, supported by *wrinkled* and *limp*, which activate the same script on the basis of inference; then the text surprisingly switches to the script YOUNG, which is indeed compatible with ‘wrinkled and limp’ (therefore: an overlap) but certainly not on the basis of preferred connotations. Old and young are (gradable) antonyms; the SO OLD/YOUNG therefore should be situated on level [3], followed by NORMAL/ABNORMAL on level [2], and REAL/UNREAL on [1]. Now reconsider

- (3) Who has the loudest bark in the woods? – The weeping willow.

As argued above, the SO DOG/TREE relies on the concept of local antonymy, yet it is situated within the more general opposition ANIMATE/INANIMATE, which should be classified as level [3]. In the case of local antonymy, therefore, a four-level model is helpful: DOG/TREE [4], ANIMATE/INANIMATE [3], POSSIBLE/IMPOSSIBLE [2], REAL/UNREAL [1].

Keeping these two examples in mind, I would like to offer a revised working definition of local antonymy in jokes for this paper:

- **Two terms A and B are called *local antonyms* if they are level [4] realizations of a clearly identifiable more basic opposition (in LYONS’ terminology) on level [3].**

AS ALEXANDER BROCK points out, for some of the binary oppositions introduced by ATTARDO and RASKIN the level of abstraction is high enough to subsume a very high number of items under their label while bearing evidence of almost nothing (cf. BROCK 1996, 39). He considers it more insightful to examine “oppositions and incongruities on a very concrete level and that in connection with an investigation into the relations between the incongruous elements and the other elements of the respectively activated patterns of knowledge” (BROCK 1996, 39; my translation). This is exactly what I intend to do.

In the following chapter I am going to analyze a humorous example in greater detail, which will exemplify the discussion up to now and also prepare the introduction of the missing KRs.

2.2.2 *A Doctor – but not his Wife*

Traditionally, this would be the place to talk about doctor’s wives or crying cookies: useful examples, but treated ad nauseam. Please refer to RASKIN (1985, 117-127) or ATTARDO (1994, 206-207). The following joke features – for all the creatures of habit – at least a doctor, but then a redneck instead of his wife:

- (5) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says “Well, I can’t seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol.” The redneck replies: “Well, then, I’ll come back when you’re sober.” (ATTARDO & HEMPELMANN & DI MAIO 2002, 16)

This simple narrative joke sets out activating the default versions of DOCTOR and REDNECK as described in 2.1.1 via their lexematic handles. As humans tend to stay in an established frame as long as possible, we read the doctor’s diagnosis going along the lines of these scripts telling us that it is the *redneck* who has a problem related to the consummation of bewitching liquids. The punchline then creates an incongruity: the redneck claims, that the *doctor* is drunk! On backtracking, the reader notices that the opposed scripts PROFESSIONAL DOCTOR / DRUNK DOCTOR actually are both compatible with the sentence ‘I can’t seem to find your problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol.’ This overlap is made possible by the *referential ambiguity* of the pronoun ‘it’, which can mean both of the following:

...but I think it (your problem) has to do with alcohol. (a)

...but I think it (my inability to detect your problem) has to do with alcohol. (b)

Without this overlap, the text would indeed not be funny: “*I can’t detect your exact problem, but I think you drink too much!*” – “*Well then I’ll come back when YOU are sober, Doc!*” is snotty and weird but no more³¹. ATTARDO, HEMPELMANN, and DI MAIO claim in their analysis of this joke that the ambiguity is due to the phrase *the problem* in which “the implied possessive pronoun [is] replaced by the determinative article *the* (since the doctor can assume that it is the patient’s problem that they are looking for)” (2002, 16). I would like to disagree with the doyens on their analysis, insisting on the

31 The humor some people may find in the resulting dull absurdity or the pleasure drawn from the lack of an expected punchline are different phenomena I do not want to explore further at this point. As HEMPELMANN points out: even if one intentionally tells a non-joke lacking necessary elements, *someone* will always be able to detect some individually available scripts standing in opposition; a product of “overanalysis” (2004, footnote 9).

one I presented above. Let us assume for the moment that *the problem* could possibly be read not only as *the redneck's problem* but also as *the doctor's problem* (maybe in the sense of 'a not further specified problem occurring in that moment of examination'). That opens up the following table of references and scripts, followed by according paraphrases of the joke text.

it ↓	the problem →	redneck's problem	doctor's problem
the problem		PROFESSIONAL DOCTOR (a)	PROFESS. OF DRUNK DOCTOR (c)
the doctor's inability		DRUNK DOCTOR (b)	DRUNK DOCTOR (d)

Table [T1]: a redneck at the doctor's

- (a) I can't seem to find your problem but I think your problem has to do with alcohol.
- (b) I can't seem to find your problem but I think my inability has to do with alcohol.
- (c) I can't seem to find the problem with the examination but I think the problem with the examination has to do with alcohol (either on my or on your side).
- (d) I can't seem to find the problem with the examination but I think my inability has to do with alcohol.

First observation: I still find (c) and (d) rather weird. Second observation: if we alter the phrasing of the joke to '**your** problem', options (c) and (d) drop out. The remaining – as I would say: preferred – options (a) and (b) still manifest two overlapping opposed scripts manifesting a joke which at least some people will laugh at; thus, the important referential ambiguity for the joke resides in 'it'.

Let us turn to the notion of script oppositions once more. First of all, it seems that within the context of the joke, different phrasings may more or less capture one and the same issue: PROFESSIONAL DOCTOR = DRUNK REDNECK = SOBER DOCTOR in the beginning (although 'sober' is not a salient feature of 'professional doctor' in the default setting). The punchline then activates the scripts DRUNK DOCTOR = UNPROFESSIONAL DOCTOR (now, 'sober' is a salient feature of the local DOCTOR script). Taking this into account, I suggest the following levels of script opposition: DRUNK REDNECK / DRUNK DOCTOR as local antonyms on level [4], PROFESSIONAL/UNPROFESSIONAL as more basic antonyms on level [3] NORMAL/ABNORMAL on [2], and finally REAL/UNREAL for level [1]. The decision on level [2] goes back to my resources of world-knowledge as reflected in the script for DOCTOR and REDNECK: normally, a doctor is not drunk at work, while a redneck might be drunk while going to the doctor or at least have a drinking problem. It should be noted however (and

that is an important point) that the joke does *not* tell us, whether the doctor is sober or not; the incongruity is not (completely) resolved. This leads to further ambiguity concerning a concluding interpretation of the joke – we cannot decide if the redneck is dumb enough to misinterpret the doctor’s words, smart enough to counter the doctor’s correct diagnosis with a quick-witted remark, or simply announcing the sad truth.³² This remaining unresolved ambiguity would be unacceptable in information-based BF communication. In the NBF-mode of the joke though, hearers are willing to suspend their disbelief, enjoying to play along in the game of humor.

Without actually mentioning it, we have already touched on the remaining five KRs of the GTVH, as the following table indicates. The next chapters will introduce these resources in a more technical way, occasionally referring back to this example.

SO	DRUNK REDNECK / DRUNK DOCTOR [4], PROFESSIONAL / UNPROFESSIONAL [3] NORMAL / ABNORMAL [2], REAL / UNREAL [1] ³³
LM	referential ambiguity
SI	redneck, doctor, alcohol
TA	optionally a dumb redneck
NS	simple narration
LA	final position of punchline, importance of exact wording (<i>it</i> vs. <i>the problem</i>)

Table [T2]: 6 KRs for joke (5)

32 Concerning this matter, DAVIES observes that “in jokes about confrontations between country bumpkins and city slickers, it is noticeable that when those who are normally the butts of jokes about stupidity succeed in winning an argument, it is usually a victory of verbal trickery over logic where the ‘stupid’ one uses language skills to evade the point” (1990, 19 referring to CHRISTOPHER HALLPIKE (1979). *The foundations of Primitive Thought*. Oxford University Press, USA: 120-121.)

33 Since [1] always instantiates REAL/UNREAL I will leave this level out from now on.

2.3 KR #5: Logical Mechanism (LM)

“There are essentially four basic forms for a joke – the concealing of knowledge later revealed, the substitution for one concept for another, an unexpected conclusion to a logical progression and slipping on a banana peel.” (taken from a 1999 comic by SYDNEY HARRIS presented in NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 1)

After all the trouble with SOs, we now turn to what ATTARDO has termed the “by far most problematic parameter” (2001, 25). Actually, some researchers like CHRISTIE DAVIES have even argued that “it is time to discard logical mechanism (LM) from the General Theory of Verbal Humor because it is a variable that does nothing for the theory” (2004, 379), yet I consider it quite useful and will therefore spare no trouble and discuss the loathed parameter. In a first attempt, we will define LM as the “parameter that accounts for the way in which the two senses (scripts, isotopies,...) in the joke are brought together” (ATTARDO 1994, 225). ALEXANDER BROCK differentiates between the following well-chosen instantiations:

- **strong entry** (roughly translated from the German ‘harter Einsatz’): an element incongruous to the initially raised expectations (i.e. the second script) is introduced directly, often with only a very slight connecting element between the conflicting patterns of knowledge (cf. BROCK 1996, 31).
- **soft entry** (roughly translated from the German ‘weicher Einsatz’): an incongruous element from an introduced pattern is developed little by little, e.g. by means of pushing a possible element of an established pattern gradually over the limits of what can be considered expectable proportions (cf. BROCK 1996, 32). This very slow and subtle mechanism of exaggeration is a manipulation within the structures of an established script, finally leading to an opposition of NORMAL/ABNORMAL (cf. BROCK 2004, 358).
- **further development of incongruities**: BROCK distinguishes between *simple occurrence* (just once in minimal form), *serial occurrence* (repeatedly in minimal form), *modified serial occurrence* (repeatedly in minimal form with variations; what sometimes is called a ‘running gag’), *local escalation* (often starting with a soft entry, then modified serial occurrence with increasing intensity), *staggered escalation of incongruities* (several local escalations adding up to one huge incongruity), and *permanent incongruity* (an incongruous script is available in the background constantly). (cf. BROCK 1996, 34-35; BROCK 2004, 357)

- Further questions are: degree of deviation from expectations and existence of a switching element (what RASKIN 1985 called the *script-switch trigger* (114-117) and GREIMAS the *disjuncter* (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 95)).

To my mind, strong entries mostly go along with an unexpected punchline – if that moment of surprise is spoiled or too predictable, people will still recognize the intended joke but label it a mere ‘groaner’. What about the notion of surprise with soft entries? BROCK (1996, footnote 20, page 45; without really claiming surprise to be a constituting element of humor) points out that recipients at some point will – in a surprised manner – notice that a second script has been fully established, without being able to say when exactly this happened. I would call that ‘the cheerful foreboding of a *something* that sneakily turns into joyful certainty’. Not exactly simplifying the matter of LM is the fact that several clusters of incongruities can possibly arise simultaneously and, furthermore, on a multitude of different levels with complex combinations of scripts (cf. BROCK 2004, 358). The following examples may help to grasp matters more clearly.

Joke (5) – a redneck at the doctor’s³⁴ – clearly manifests an instance of hard entry: the punchline serves as the script-switch trigger (i.e. the element that “triggers the switch from the one script evoked by the text of the joke to the opposed script”, according to RASKIN 1985, 114) and very *directly* introduces a second reading of the text.³⁵ Could we soften the entry by entering small incongruous hints toward the second script throughout the text?

(6) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him with unsteady hands mumbles “Well... I can’t... se... seem to find the prrroblem *hicks*, but I thinkithastodo *hihihi* with alcohol.” The redneck replies: “Well, then, I’ll come back when you’re sober.”

Maybe this would indeed soften the entry for a very inattentive hearer; it would surely spoil the fun for most people – also by offering a very strong inferential path to a final disambiguated reading of the joke (compare the remaining ambiguity discussed in 2.2.2). Here is a better example for soft entry, taken from a wedding card greeting:

34 Appendix B² contains a convenient take-out list of jokes and abbreviations used in this paper.

35 RASKIN describes the process as the following: “by introducing the second script it [the trigger] casts a shadow on the first script and the part of the text which introduced it, and imposes a different interpretation on it, which is different from the most obvious one” (1985, 114). RASKIN’S differentiation between kinds of triggers (e.g. ambiguity and contradiction) appears as an early attempt in direction of the parameter LM and a taxonomy of different LMs (see table T[3]).

(7) If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this advice for thy dowry: be thou as white as snow, as red as blood, as black as ebony, thou shalt not escape your charming prince.

Every well-read redneck will (after short pondering) notice the two literary works mingled together in this passage:

- 1) SHAKESPEARE'S *Hamlet* (Act 3 Scene 1) shouting at the poor Ophelia "If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell" (<http://www.clicknotes.com/hamlet/H31.html> [July 10 2009]).
- 2) The famous tricolon exclaimed by the sewing Queen in the beginning of the fairy tale *Snow White*: "Oh, how I wish that I had a daughter that had skin white as snow, lips red as blood, and hair black as ebony." The referent of this description (as well known) is going to marry a charming prince in the end.

The text evokes the two scripts OPHELIA and SNOW WHITE, local antonyms opposed in the context of marriage: one girl drowns herself in the desperation of rejected love, the other becomes a lucky princess. This SO on level [4] manifests on level [3] AS BAD/GOOD; furthermore, both scripts overlap in the text (e.g. in the lexical item 'as ... as snow' and in the format of tricolon/dicolon). Striking difference to (5): there is no sudden and harsh switch to the second script; the incongruity silently sneaks in on tiptoe (*advice* instead of *plague*, *white as snow* instead of *pure as snow*, etc.) and the two scripts are oscillating until in the end SNOW WHITE finally takes over. This parody (keep the form, change the content) seems to me an insightful and sophisticated example of *soft entry*, therefore I ask to excuse the short digression from the topic of rednecks.

As argued far above (2.1), LM is the tool (the HOW) of the content-resource SO (the WHAT). Let us now – for a short and metaphoric moment – imagine the concept *joke* as a collision of two cars symbolizing opposed scripts (only a fender bender of course, after all, it is humor). The SO would describe the content, for example: a red Mercedes Benz driven by an elderly Sunday driver with checkered hat and a blue Fiat with a young attractive business woman behind the wheel. The LM as treated above would then comprise a description of certain technical issues, such as: the blue Fiat ran into the parked Mercedes with a big bang. Or: the two cars slowly drifted closer until they smoothly bumped into each other, nobody recalled how it really happened afterwards.

Good points, for sure, but not the whole story either. Why did it happen? (The woman on the phone, the Sunday driver snoozing? Fog? Ice storm? Revenge?) What was the effect of the crash? (The Fiat knocking the Mercedes off the road?) All these questions also belong into the realm of the LM.³⁶ In 1997, ATTARDO (referring to the incongruity-resolution theory) presented a new definition of LM which may cope with the above issue: “*the LM of a joke is the resolution of the SO (incongruity)*” (1997, 409). To grasp this definition, a few explanations will be necessary. First of all, a *resolution* (‘Auflösung’) of incongruity must not be confused with its *dissolution* (‘Annullierung’) in the sense of ‘making the incongruous congruent’. In fact, the term resolution refers to a “howsoever constructed allocation of sense” (BROCK 1996, 40; my translation), a creation of “sense in non-sense” (SIGMUND FREUD 1905 quoted in ATTARDO 1997, 405 without further reference), a *justification* of the incongruity on basis of a ‘local logic’³⁷. Just like the concept of *local* antonymy, this *local* logic only has to work within the context of the joke: it “playfully motivates” the script-overlap (HEMPELMANN 2004, 382). Concerning the incongruous elements, “the joke needs the LM that seemingly bridges that unbridgeable gap between them” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 385). It is especially this little word ‘seemingly’ for which the local logic may well contain even paralogical elements, relying on a willing suspension of disbelief on the recipient’s side (cf. ATTARDO 2001, 25)³⁸. What all these grandiloquent words were trying to say is the following: the acclaimed resolution can be partial, complete or zero (cf. ATTARDO 2002, 25). Ibidem ATTARDO claims that LM (just like TA) is an optional KR, because “we know that absurd humor, for example, lacks resolution.” I would like to reject this claim for two main reasons:

- 1) Even with zero resolution, the KR LM would (at least for us) still have to contain parameters such as hard/soft entry, etc.
- 2) Even with zero resolution (e.g. in merely juxtaposing scripts without a playful attempt to bring sense), a recipient would finally shrug, maybe smile, and then ‘tame’ the opposed scripts by labeling them as *absurd humor*. Therefore, zero resolution is not ‘zero’.

36 Admittedly, it is not always easy to clearly separate content and technique, not even on this metaphorical level. LM and SO blur as different sides of a spherical coin.

37 A term attributed by ATTARDO & RASKIN (1991, 307) to ZIV, AVNER (1984). *Personality and sense of humor*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

38 Coming back to our metaphor: the LM is not like a policeman reconstructing the event as accurate as possible, it is more like a yellow-press-journalist ignoring even apparent facts if that creates a good story.

Here comes a good example of partial resolution with local logic:

(8) What is blue and standing at the roadside? – A prostitute.³⁹

The riddle first evokes the two scripts BLUE and STANDING AT THE ROADSIDE, in anticipation of being joined together in the answer, which then presents the dubious object *frostitute*.

This very object then triggers two main processes:

- 1) World knowledge tells me that there is no such things as a *frostitute*, therefore BLUE and STANDING AT THE ROAD manifest local antonyms in this context (if *German road sign* was the answer, the scripts would perfectly fit together: no joke).
- 2) By accepting that object *frostitute* as a valid token in the playful game of humor, an overlap of the opposed scripts in this very object is made possible and the incongruity is playfully resolved. This overlap takes place on a semantic level (the imagined object is blue and a prostitute) and on a phonological level (for blue → blue with cold → freezing cold → *frost* is joined together with *prostitute*). All that only works if the recipient is willing to play along in the game of creating nonexistent objects.

ATTARDO argues that LMs (in the sense of ‘bringing scripts together in zero/partial/complete resolution’) can range

from straightforward *juxtapositions*, as in the tee-shirt slogan reading:

(9) Gobi Desert Canoe Club

to more complex errors in reasoning, such as *false analogies*, *Garden-Path phenomena*, as in

(10) Madonna does not have it, the Pope has it but doesn’t use it, Bush has it short, and Gorbachov long. What is it? Answer: a last name.

or *figure-ground reversals*, as in:

(11) How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? 5. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he’s standing on. (light bulb: figure; body: ground)

(ATTARDO 1994, 225-226; my numbering and emphasis)

In 2002, he then presented a longer but still provisional list of even more LMs (Table [T3]) – I will draw on this list in the following chapters and provide short definitions whenever necessary.

39 Thanks to RÜDIGER HEINZE for this stimulating humorous input, actually part of a German joke series:

Was ist rot und steht an der Straße? – Eine Hagenutte.

Was ist blau und steht an der Straße? – Eine Frostituierte.

Surprisingly, both the connection “blue with cold” and the pun work in English, too.

role reversals	role exchanges	potency mappings
vacuous reversal	juxtaposition	Chiasmus
garden-path	figure-ground reversal	faulty reasoning
almost situations	analogy	self-undermining
inferring consequences	reas. from false prem.	missing link
coincidence	parallelism	implicit parall.
proportion	ignoring the obvious	false analogy
exaggeration	field restriction	Cratylism
meta-humor	vicious circle	referential ambiguity

Table [T3]: List of all known LMs (ATTARDO, HEMPELMANN, DI MAIO 2002, 18)

Summing it up: we are now equipped with two kinds of helpful tools to describe the technical side of the script opposition (called logical mechanism): BROCK’s description of the collision and ATTARDO’s taxonomy of resolutions⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ Taking into account the apparent complexity of the topic, it is not surprising that ATTARDO and RASKIN first defined LM only on the basis of examples (cf. ATTARDO & RASKIN 1985) and then in reference to something that was hard to define itself (namely: resolution, cf. ATTARDO 1997). By the way: BROCK himself does not call it LM but “entry and development of the incongruity” (1996, 31; mt).

2.4 KR #4: Situation (SI)

Any joke – whatever form it takes – has to involve some kind of situation, explicit or implicit. “The situation of a joke can be thought of as the ‘props’ of the joke: the objects, participants, instruments, activities, etc.” (ATTARDO 2001, 24) and it is this KR which contains them. Compare joke (5) to this one:

- (9) What do a hurricane, a tornado, and a redneck divorce all have in common? –
Someone’s going to lose their trailer...

(<http://www.coping-with-epilepsy.com/forums/f21/redneck-jokes-5887/> [July 12, 2009])

Both jokes contain some kind of situation, but ranging from very concrete (*this* redneck comes to *the* doctor and is examined) to rather abstract (an imagined disaster and its imagined consequence). The SI is an important resource for the complete description of a joke, yet its content is by no means unique to jokes, but shared by many other kinds of texts (cf. ATTARDO 2001, 24). The decision on the SI level significantly influences the choice for the KR NS.

2.5 KR #3: Target (TA)

- (10) A ventriloquist was making fun of rednecks with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry redneck jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, “I resent that!” The ventriloquist started apologizing to the redneck, but he just looked at him and hissed, “You stay outta this, I’m talking to the guy on your lap!”

(based on http://www.geocities.com/redneck_jokes/ [July12, 2009])

In this joke, rednecks are mocked, not only by the ventriloquist but especially by the joke itself. That is what we call ‘the target’ or ‘the butt’ of the joke: the “object of ridicule” (ROSS 1998, 54). “The target KR selects who is the ‘butt’ of the joke. The information in the KR contains the names of groups or individuals with (humorous) stereotypes attached to each” (ATTARDO 1994, 224); this includes *ideological targets*, such as ‘marriage’ or ‘the establishment’ (cf. ATTARDO 1991, 24). Obviously (luckily?) not all jokes have a butt – therefore this KR is optional:

- (11) What starts with E, ends with E and only has one letter? – An envelope.

(<http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html> [July 12, 2009])

The notion of ‘target’ leads us back to one of the oldest issues in humor research: what may be laughter to one person, may be showing one’s teeth to another. When we laugh about the dumb redneck not knowing a hawk from a handsaw, the desperate woman in the parking lot, or Freddie Frinton falling over the tiger’s head once more, the reason for our amusement may well be that HOBBSIAN “ ‘sudden glory’ felt when we recognize our supremacy over others” (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/h/humor.htm> [July 12, 2009]). Or the ‘consolation’ that AMBROSE BIERCE defined as the “knowledge that a better man is more unfortunate than yourself” (1911, 24). Of course, powerful social groups can be the target of subversive humor (as in political satire, etc.⁴¹), yet “[i]n many examples of humor the butt is a representative of a group perceived as inferior in some sense” (ROSS 1998, 56). RASKIN (1985, 180) claims that a great deal of targeted jokes rely on what he calls *ethnic scripts*.

2.5.1 *Ethnic Scripts*

Scots are stingy and Jews anyways. Polish Americans are dumb, Irish people are even dumber, and German Ostfrieslanders... well, “if brains was dynamite, they wouldn’t have enough to blow their noses” (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 59).

In general, ethnic scripts are pinning some “undesirable quality on a particular ethnic group in a comic way or to a ludicrous extent” (DAVIES 1990, 4). Although an equivalent seriously held stereotype may exist, ethnic scripts are primarily “**conventional, fictional, and mythological**” (RASKIN 1985, 81), which means that for most consumers they exist “on the same fictional plane as unicorns, monsters, and Little Red Riding Hood” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1991, 301). Which does not necessarily mean that they have to be completely harmless – after all, *children* believe in unicorns and what are grown-ups but drawn-out kids? Are you really sure that the word *stingy* comes to your mind only as a comic stereotype, whenever you think of a Scot? As some people claim, “language is a powerful weapon, and [...] making conscious decisions about the use of language can help to *form or change* attitudes” (ROSS 1998, 56). RASKIN (cf. 1985, 180-209) discusses four special instances of ethnic scripts:

41 For example, it has been found “that Southern humor, often transmitted via stories, emphasized the power imbalance between the rich and common people. It provides a way for common people to become more empowered by using humor to lower the perceived status of the upper class. Southern humor accomplishes this by ridiculing the upper class’s worldview and in doing so, it strengthens the value of the common people’s worldview” (SMITH 1993 quoted in: ROMERO et al. 2007, 190) [SMITH, STEPHEN A. (1993). “Humor as rhetoric and cultural agreement”. In: *Journal of American Culture*. 16 (2), 51-63.]

- 1) The script of LANGUAGE DISTORTION, which is referring to jokes poking fun at features of deviant pronunciation attributed to a certain group: the binary opposition DISTORTED/UNDISTORTED as a lower level of GOOD/BAD. AS NILSEN & NILSEN claim, a “basic appeal of dialect humor is that many readers, listeners, and viewers feel superior to those they perceive as speaking nonstandard English” (2000, 101). The resulting jokes often rely on simple puns, like the apprentice at the German coastguard in the Berlitz© ad, who answers the incoming emergency call “We are sinking!” with an awkward “What are you sinking about?” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmOTpIVxji8> [July 12, 2009]). Obviously, this joke is referring to the often claimed inability of Germans to distinguish between [s] and [θ] (let alone pronounce the latter properly).
- 2) The script of DUMBNESS makes up by far the largest class of ethnic jokes, according to RASKIN (1985, 185). AS CHRISTIE DAVIES claims, these are especially “numerous and popular in industrial societies” (1990, 10) with their always present threat “that one will fail to master some aspect of the world of work and be regarded as stupid in consequence” (1998, 1). The redneck in (10) is the target of a DUMB-script (ANGRY AT VENTRILOQUIST / ANGRY AT PUPPET [4], SMART/DUMB⁴² [3], GOOD/BAD [2]) – but not he alone: scripts of ethnic humor are “individual-independent and provide ‘blanket-coverage’ for every simple member of the targeted group simple in virtue of his membership” (RASKIN 1985, 201). It should be emphasized once more that “[j]okes about stupidity cannot be reduced to hostile, but disguised serious statements. [...] Everyone enjoys, and always has enjoyed, jokes at the expense of some other group’s stupidity, regardless of whether they like, dislike or feel indifferent towards the butt of these jokes” (DAVIES 1998, 24). By the way: the main DUMB-group of the United States are the Poles.
- 3) The script of STINGINESS, which is of minor interest to us within this paper (also called CANNINESS).
- 4) The script of CRAFTINESS, also of minor interest to us within this paper.

42 Actually, DAVIES argues that in the world of jokes “the opposite of *stupid* is *canny*, rather than *clever*” (1990, 15), but I will simply stick to *smart*.

Ethnic scripts are wide-spread across the world (see table in DAVIES 2005, 150) and their targets are by no means limited to ethnic groups only: apart from whole nations, ‘stupid minorities’ can include smaller groups of ethnic, religious or professional nature, the same holds for the inhabitants of certain regions or provinces (cf. RASKIN 1985, 200); all in all the term *ethnic* “tends to be used in a broad way about a group that sees itself and is seen by others as a ‘people’ with common cultural tradition, a real or imagined common descent, and a distinctive identity” (DAVIES 1990, 1). In the USA, there seems to be a certain ‘pecking order’ amongst the single states; according to my personal experience, West Virginia scores high in the casting for the lower end of the continuum:

(12) How do you know that a person from West Virginia invented the tooth-brush? –
Anywhere else it would have been called *teeth-brush*!⁴³

This joke (against all insights of linguistic reflections on word-formation!) claims the inhabitants of West Virginia to be stupid and/or lack teeth (rednecks, eh?). Keeping that in mind, the following quote by CHRISTIE DAVIES sums it up well:

[I]n general the butts of stupidity jokes live on the periphery of a country or culture and speak the language of the center in a distinctive and distorted way; they tend also to be rustics or economic migrants who take on menial blue-collar jobs and in both Europe and North America are often Roman Catholics. Within any country it should be possible to find a national, ethnic, regional or local group that fits this pattern and on whom stupidity jokes can plausibly be pinned, even if they had never been the butt of such jokes before. Every country or culture has a center and a periphery, a center to laugh and a periphery to be laughed at. (2005, 152)

This implies an important point, which DAVIES makes explicit elsewhere: stupidity is not labeled onto completely alien, distant, and maybe threatening groups, but “on a familiar group, one similar to the joke-tellers [...] a slightly strange version of themselves [...] almost as if they were to see themselves in a distorting mirror at a fair ground” (DAVIES 1998, 1).

Chapter 3 will amongst other things lead us deeper into the question where redneck jokes stand in relation to the ethnic scripts of DUMBNESS and LANGUAGE DISTORTION.

43 I once heard it targeted at West Virginia; on the Internet, I found it only for Arkansas:
http://www.actionsignslv.com/S915_TEETH_BRUSH.jpg [July 13, 2009]

2.6 KR #2: Narrative Strategy (NS)

Every verbalized joke has to be told somehow, a decision captured within this parameter. Sometimes the disputable term ‘genre’ is used to describe the categories used; due to a lack of taxonomies, I will only mention a few examples (cf. ATTARDO & RASKIN 1985, 300 and ATTARDO 2001, 23):

- *simple narrative jokes* such as (5), distinguished by the existence of a punchline from *funny stories*
- *riddles* such as (11); called *pseudoriddles* if no pause for an answer is provided
- dialogue (another form of riddle)
- (straightforward) expository texts as (1)
- aside in conversation
- etc.

This KR “assigns the joke to a certain mode of presentation. The preceding parameter of language takes it from there” (ATTARDO & RASKIN 1985, 335 footnote 4).

2.7 KR #1: Language (LA)

Responsible for the “actual lexical, syntactic, phonological, etc. choices at the linguistic level that instantiate all the other choices” (ATTARDO 2008, 108) this KR “contains all the information necessary for the verbalization of a text. It is responsible for the exact wording of the text and for the placement of the functional elements that constitute it” (ATTARDO 1994, 223). Important elements of this KR are (cf. ATTARDO 2001, 23):

- the concept of paraphrase: which elements of the joke can be recasted without changing its semantic content? Which elements cannot be changed, especially in puns?
- the exact wording of the punchline: which ambiguous elements exactly bring the two opposed senses in the text together? (see for example my discussion of *it* and *the problem* in (5))

- the position of the punchline: is it final? Research suggests that “the linguistic material occurring after the punch line can be ellipsed” (ATTARDO 1994, 101).

This KR is the lowest one in the hierarchy and it takes input from all the other KRs.

2.8 Leftovers

2.8.1 Exaggeration and Surprise

It is commonly claimed that both *exaggeration*⁴⁴ and *surprise* are important elements for the creation of humor. Have these two notions to be considered as an addition to the requested overlap of two (locally) opposed scripts or are they automatically arising from this requirement? It seems to me that on the way from REAL to UNREAL, from ACTUAL to NON-ACTUAL, NORMAL to ABNORMAL, OR POSSIBLE to IMPOSSIBLE, exaggeration indeed takes an important role in the creation of what IMMANUEL KANT considers elementary to all humor: an element of absurdity⁴⁵ (cf. also MARHENKE 2003, 51). ATTARDO lists exaggeration as a logical mechanism of its own (cf. ATTARDO, HEMPELMANN, DI MAIO 2002, 18), yet it seems very likely to me that it is in fact mainly a co-pilot for other LMs. Recapitulate joke (9): the two locally opposed items HURRICANE and DIVORCE are brought together by the logical mechanism of *false analogy*, defined as “a and b (possibly multiple elements) are alike in respect to x (whereas they are not in all respects, or x does not exist, or is a marginal aspect of a and b” (ATTARDO, HEMPELMANN, DI MAIO 2002, 13). It is indeed a sad fact that very often hurricanes in poor regions of the country destroy the shaky homes of poor people; on the contrary, it is not the most salient aspect of divorces to be kicked out of one’s home. Let alone that all rednecks would live in trailer homes – here the LM of false analogy receives a little help from the side of exaggeration. Especially humor including the stereotypical depiction of such groups as rednecks heavily draws on exaggeration: these people may in fact be simple, ungroomed, and armed; yet in the over-generalized humorous depiction, *all* rednecks have *increasingly* fatter bellies and

44 Defined as the “enlarging of stories or things so that they are beyond belief or beyond normal expectations” by NILSEN & NILSEN (2000, 118).

45 “Es muss in allem, was ein lebhaftes, erschütterndes Lachen erregen soll, etwas Widersinniges sein (woran also der Verstand an sich kein Wohlgefallen finden kann). *Das Lachen ist ein Affekt aus der plötzlichen Verwandlung einer gespannten Erwartung in nichts.*” (<http://www.zeno.org/Philosophie/M/Kant,+Immanuel/Kritik+der+Urteilkraft/Erster+Teil.+Kritik+der+ästhetischen+Urteilkraft/Erster+Abschnitt.+Analytik+der+ästhetischen+Urteilkraft/Zweites+Buch.+Analytik+des+Erhabenen/Deduktion+der+reinen+ästhetischen+Urteile/%5B§+54.%5D+Anmerkung>) [July 21, 2009]

shorter shirts, the bum is hanging out even deeper, and where the ‘real’ redneck has 30 teeth and 2 guns, his alter ego in the joke may well reverse these numbers.

In chapter 2.5, I have already briefly commented on the surprising unexpectedness of the punchline, also on the notion of surprise in regard to soft entry of the second script. What about ethnic humor? When an English person starts a joke with “Two Irishmen walk into a bar...” most listeners will *expect* a DUMB script and be right in a lot of cases. DAVIES points out that it is “certainly the case that the punch line must ‘punch’ us with an unexpected surprise but surely the function of conventional scripts is to warn us what kind of surprise we can expect, which will then enable us to interpret it correctly” (2004, 375). In the case mentioned above, the ending does not surprise with a *what* (DUMB script), but with a *how*, in other words, the ending “is surprising not because it reveals unexpected stupidity but because the audience cannot predict the form the stupidity will take” (DAVIES 2004, 375) – just like a scenario we all know from cheap horror movies: the cellar door squeals, the staircase is dimly lit, the music alludes to the heartbeat of panic. We *know* the killer is going to strike within seconds, and still we scream when he finally does. And if he does not, we will sigh and laugh, for laughter “is an affection arising from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing” (KANT⁴⁶ in ATTARDO 1994, 48).

2.8.2 *What happened to the Overlap?*

AS CHRISTIAN F. HEMPELMANN points out, when referring to the GTVH “exclusive attention is usually paid to script *opposition*, while *overlap* is, at the most, quietly understood to be involved” (2004, 383). In fact, overlap is not a particular focus in RASKIN and ATTARDO’S original description of the GTVH, but merely mentioned as belonging to the KR SO, which is said to subsume the main requirements of the SSTH. In 1997, ATTARDO argued for a model called SIR, which identifies the script overlap with the setup (S) of a joke, the opposition with an incongruity (I), and the LM with its resolution (R). This seems reasonable, added the reservations that first, these categories may blend together in jokes lacking the classical tripartite structure and second, in certain situations (e.g. conversations) the setup may “present itself as purely contextual”

46 KANT, IMMANUEL (1790). *Critique of Judgement*, 177.

(ATTARDO 1997, 412). In any case, there are a lot of white spots left on the map of investigation. Consider the following joke (one of this author's favorites):

(13) You might be a redneck if... You see a sign that says 'Say no to Crack!' and it reminds you to pull your jeans up. (FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 2:22)

By exploiting two meanings of the word *crack* ('crack cocaine' and 'gap') the joke evokes the script oppositions FIGHT DRUGS / COVER YOUR BEHIND [4], SOPHISTICATED/UNSOPHISTICATED [3], NORMAL/ABNORMAL [2]. It is the polysemy of the item *crack* which makes the overlap possible (what GREIMAS calls the *connector* (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 96)), yet the *whole* text of the joke up to 'pull your jeans up' is compatible with both scripts. If one is willing to play along. Now compare joke (13) to the following:

(14) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 1)

First, the inferential script MANSION (= big and expensive house) is activated, then switched (by means of association) to the locally opposed TRAILER HOME, an opposition of RICH/POOR on level [3]. Although the phrase 'your richest relative buys a new house' selects RICH in the beginning, it is also compatible with POOR, because being the richest of a group does not have to mean that the person is generally considered rich. The overlap in this case is not connected to a polysemous/homophonous/paronymous lexical item, it resides more 'in the situation'.

There are numerous ways in which the overlap-requirement can be instantiated and the following list collects some of those, which appeared widespread to me. These are by no means mutually exclusive, but can also occur in combination.

- 1) A lexical item (**word**) has several meanings, which are pitted against each other as local opposites in the context of the joke. Jokes arising from the exploitation of such items (polysemes, homonyms, homophones, homographs, and paronyms, i.e. 'almost homophones') are often called puns: "phenomena which involve the "*signifiant*" facet of the sign of which they are part in a relevant sense" (ATTARDO 1994, 109). They rely on a logical mechanism which ATTARDO calls *Cratylism*. It can be briefly summarized as 'Recipients play along in a game that assumes a non-arbitrary linguistic system in which meaning motivates sound. Hence, words which sound similar must have similar meanings as well,

therefore it is not necessary to disambiguate homophones in a text and, furthermore, it is justified to exchange a word for a paronym, as in *You can't have your cake and Edith, too*' (cf. HEMPELMANN 2004, 385; ATTARDO 1994, 149-173). A little more down-to-Earth and with a smirk: a pun is "like an adulterous bed in which two meanings that should be separated are coupled together" (NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 181; quoting TONY TANNER).

- 2) Two senses/scripts overlap in a **phrase**, which may contain a pun.
- 3) Two scripts overlap in a (real or imagined) **item**, such as *frostitute* in (8) or *Gobi Desert Canoe Club*. Please note: the two scripts in the second example are simply *juxtaposed* (LM), and still they *overlap* in the item described.
- 4) A **situation** or the description of a situation is compatible with two readings.
- 5) A joke text evokes two (locally) opposed scripts, but merely in juxtaposition with no 'item of overlap' (as described in 3). The overlap in this case is marginal, i.e. limited to a very close appearance in the same text.

The categories listed above reflect a binary distinction commonly established in humor research, namely that between *referential humor* and *verbal humor*. Already CICERO (106-43 BC) distinguished *dicto* and *re*, i.e. jokes "about what is said" and jokes about "the thing" (cf. CICERO⁴⁷ in ATTARDO 1994, 27). Referential jokes are "based exclusively on the meaning of the text and do not make any reference to the phonological realization of the lexical items"; verbal jokes "in addition to being based on the meaning of the elements of the text, make reference to the phonological realization of the text" (ATTARDO 1994, 95), a label under which DI MAIO (2000⁴⁸) collects homophony, homonymy, and paronymy. Referential jokes can easily be translated, which is impossible for verbal jokes unless one is lucky enough to come up with corresponding items in the target language, as done with *frostitute* in (8). It is important to notice that both types of jokes are *verbalized jokes*, i.e. expressed within the realm of our spoken or written linguistic system (cf. ATTARDO 1994, 95) and that – sticking to this terminology – the GTVH actually is a *General Theory of Verbalized Humor*, not a "theory of puns exclusively" (ATTARDO 2003, 1290). As important as the

47 (CICERO LIX, 240; 248)

48 DI MAIO (2000, *A structured Resource for Computational Humor*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Siena) referred to in ATTARDO & HEMPELMANN & DI MAIO 2002, 15.

presented popular distinction may be, there is one thing that one must not forget: verbal humor creates the *overlap* on the level of the words (*in verbis*), the script *opposition* still takes place on the level of semantic/pragmatic meaning. If this ‘Sinnspiel’ (play with meaning) is missing, the pun is reduced to mere ‘Klangspiel’ (play with sounds), which is not enough to support the cratylistic reasoning (LM) and initiate humor (cf. HEMPELMANN 2004, 386-389). In other words, the game of humor knows *de re* without *de dicto*, but there is no *de dicto* without *de re*. “The near failure of this latter requirement, that is, the belief on the part of a joker that he or she can get away with pure ‘Klangspiel’ is what earns bad puns a pariah status in the family of jokes” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 388). This insight triggers a redefinition in terms of the GTVH: a joke is verbal, “if its logic partially operates at the level of the signifier” – on the contrary, in referential humor “the resolution does not involve part of the text” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 389).

	SOp (<i>in rebus</i>)	LM involving SOv (<i>in verbis</i>)	Interpretation	Common name
1.	present	present	punning joke	pun
2.	absent	present	wordplay	(bad) pun G. Kalauer F. calembour
3.	present	absent	a. non-punning joke b. non-joke ambiguity	
4.	absent	absent	non-joke text	

Table [T4]: Punning joke vs. wordplay in terms of SO and LM (HEMPELMANN 2004, 388)
SO_p = script opposition; SO_v = script overlap

2.8.3 On Ambiguity

As DAVIES observes, “[a]mbiguity and incongruity are central to most jokes, for jokes depend on the teller playing with hidden meanings that are suddenly revealed” (1990,

7). NILSEN & NILSEN elaborate a little more:

[a]mbiguity occurs when something can be understood in two or more senses or ways. It is a key component in the kind of humor where a situation is established so that the mind of the listener or a reader moves forward filling in details and making what seems to be a clear picture. Then something clicks, and there is a sudden, often laughable realization that the mind had been going in the wrong direction.” (NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 25)

The cognitive path in this process is as clear as the integrated stumbling blocks:

In the lexicon, each entry is a script, and since every word in a sentence is likely to evoke more

than one script, the disambiguation of the sentence and its comprehension are carried out by combining only those scripts that are semantically compatible with each other and by discarding the rest.” (ZHAO 1988, 281)

In a well-constructed joke of the according type, the unsuspecting consumer is misled into the believe that the above process created a definite and unambiguous interpretation, whereas this was only another of the many situations, in which “schematic processing allows people to interpret new experiences quickly and economically, making intelligent guesses as to what is likely to happen, even before they have explicit evidence” (GUY COOK 2000, 75). In BF-communication, this is an accepted and efficient way to pass on information; in the NBF mode though, the well signposted inferential path is peppered with trapdoors and banana peels. It is only natural that the recognition of such a hidden second interpretation should be triggered by an element of incongruity causing reconsideration in a moment of surprising unexpectedness.

Ambiguity in general can occur on a lot of different levels, such as lexical or syntactical, yet “[f]or the mind to experience the sharp surprise that is at the root of humor based on ambiguity, the number of possibilities must be limited probably to two, or occasionally three, definite interpretations” (NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 25). What about the notion of ambiguity in regard to the GTVH and its concepts? To my mind, the *overlap* of two *opposed* scripts contains the claim for ambiguity and incongruity: if they overlap, they are ambiguous; if that overlap becomes apparent, the opposition creates incongruity, which may or may not be resolved. Ambiguity therefore is a phenomenon linking both to the KR LM as well as to the overlap-section of the KR SO (which is not too surprising, since these two are intertwined anyways). Do all jokes, therefore, have to involve an element of ambiguity or is this limited to jokes of the above described pattern? In a way, I would say that all humor is at least partly ambiguous because it is *playful*, which includes a certain fuzziness of conventional rules blending in with a mild form of general ambiguity. Yet, this is a different kind of ambiguity than described above, and obviously in a joke such as *Gobi Desert Canoe Club*, the setup/overlap is reduced so strongly that an ambiguity may arise only in regard to the reasonability of this item (assembled from two unambiguously juxtaposed opposed scripts), not in regard to competing interpretations.

Now – finally – the lengthy and often formal discussion of chapter 2 will lead into a humorous application.

3. Welcome to Redneck Country!

3.1 You might be a Redneck if...

This section is made up of two central elements: the qualitative analysis of several selected you-might-be-a-redneck-if-jokes (in the following referred to as if-jokes) and the results of a quantitative analysis carried out with a sample of 50 jokes in this format (Appendix A). All this will be accompanied by some more general reflections on how if-jokes instantiate the KRs of the GTVH.

3.1.1 Five different Types of if-Jokes

To begin with, it should be noted that all of the treated jokes in this chapter have at least two things in common: they are very short and they all complete the phrase *You might be a Redneck if...* The latter feature qualifies them as suitable material for this paper, the first has two immediate consequences. First, the excessive shortness does not leave much room for the leisurely development of a three-stage joke with a lengthy narrative setup devolving into a stage of incongruity and then, finally, a punchline. Here, phases blend, the punchline shrinks to a mere ‘punchword’, and the setup tends to be implicit⁴⁹. Second, such a reduced structure hardly leaves room for a sophisticated logical mechanism, thus simple *juxtaposition* prevails (fig. 5 below). According to my quantitative analysis, all of the scrutinized if-jokes can be assigned to one of the five categories presented in the following. First, consider these two jokes:

(15) You might be a redneck if... You’ve ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 4)

(16) You might be a redneck if... The highlight of your family reunion was your sister’s nude dancing debut. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 4)

These humorous texts both set out activating a common script and thereby raise an expectation towards its respective interpretation in the realm of what we call *normal*: CHRISTMAS SHOPPING connotes⁵⁰ CROWDED SHOPPING MALLS AND EXPENSIVE PRESENTS; FAMILY REUNION evokes images of SMALL TALK WITH GRANDMA, a WELL-MANNERED ATMOSPHERE, and LOADS OF FOOD IN A LOW-ACTION SETTING. With the progression of the text, these

49 e.g. juxtaposition with ‘implied normality’, as exemplified below.

50 Since this is a shared experience by most people in our Western consumer culture, this is indeed a valid connotation and not simply an individual association.

expectations are then disappointed by the introduction of an item, which is indeed compatible with the initial setting, but stands in local opposition to the triggered expectation (see table T5). In both cases, this creates a situation which we can only label as *abnormal* and *uncultivated* in regard to our world-knowledge, especially when considering the allusion to the *incest* taboo in (16), which is often attributed to stereotyped rednecks, even more explicitly in jokes like the following, also of type 1:

(17) You might be a redneck if... Your family tree does not fork.

(FOXWORTHY 1989, 25) (family tree → FORKED / NOT FORKED → INCEST [4])

	Christmas Shopping (15)	Family Reunion (16)
Local Script Opposition	EXPENSIVE PRESENTS FROM A CROWDED MALL / CHEAP KITSCH FROM A TRUCK STOP	SMALL TALK WITH GRANDMA / NUDE DANCING
Level [3] SO	SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED	SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED
Level [2] SO	NORMAL / ABNORMAL	NORMAL / ABNORMAL

Table [T5]: SO in if-jokes type 1

Jokes like (15), (16), and (17) are going to be labeled **type 1**. The competing scripts in jokes of this type are usually juxtaposed (which includes sequencing for verbalized humor, i.e. a temporal ordering, cf. ATTARDO & HEMPELMANN & DI MAIO 2002, 42, footnote 6): connotation or inference evokes the first script (the expectation), then the second script (dispreferred but possible) sets in with a punch, ruling out the first interpretation. No further explanation or resolution is provided (*That's just how them redneck are...*), the overlap is marginal and simple. These jokes always involve an element of exaggeration, which renders the presented second situation as fictional, overdrawn, and unreal. **Type 2** is very close to type 1 with one main difference, namely a (still reduced) but noticeable more developed setup in form of a situational script⁵¹, which occasionally allows for a more sophisticated LM (e.g. inferring consequences⁵²):

51 SCHANK & ABELSON (1977, 61-66) distinguish between INSTRUMENTAL SCRIPTS and SITUATIONAL SCRIPTS, which differ in regard to the number of actors (only one vs. multiple) and the overall intention or goal (very rigid one-person actions like FRYING AN EGG VS. greater variability in a RESTAURANT script). This distinction points in the direction of our type1/2 classification but should be treated with care, since our notion of script exceeds the one presented by SCHANK & ABELSON.

52 Either “a situation representing a consequence of some event is presented, leaving a prior series of events to be inferred” or “a situation is represented that has an incipient consequence, which is left to be inferred” (PAOLILLO 1998, 270f in ATTARDO & HEMPELMANN & DI MAIO 2002, 6)
[PAOLILLO, JOHN C. (1998). “Gary Larson’s Far Side: Nonsense? Nonsense!” In: *HUMOR*. Issue 11–3 (1998). Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 261-290.]

(18) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 1)

(19) You might be a redneck if... Someone asks to see your I.D. and you show them your belt buckle. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 8)

	SO	LM
new house (18)	[4] rich → VILLA OR MANSION / TRAILER HOME ← house with wheels [3] RICH/POOR → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL / ABNORMAL	inferring consequences, exaggeration
I.D. (19)	[4] OFFICIAL I.D. / NICKNAME ON A BELT BUCKLE [3] SMART / DUMB → SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL / ABNORMAL	juxtaposition / inferring consequences, exaggeration

Table [T6]: if-jokes type 2 | → and ← indicate a world-knowledge based inference or the implicature of a phrase, or a connotation / association attributed to a lexical item – simply put: a triggered expectation or a suggested interpretation; more rarely waterproof logical implication (entailment) or presupposition.

In very few cases, jokes in the format of type 1 and type 2 were more or less lacking the mentioned element of exaggeration, describing a situation which appeared well aberrant in regard to world-knowledge-based ‘normality’ but not as an exaggerated version of possible ‘redneck lifestyle’ (see in more detail below). I labeled this rare instance **type 3**, exemplified by

(20) You might be a redneck if... You think heaven looks a lot like Daytona Beach, Florida.⁵³ (FOXWORTHY 1989, 4)

Keeping in mind the expectation/disappointment-pattern of the three above types, compare these jokes of **type 4**:

(21) You might be a redneck if... You own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 2)

(22) You might be a redneck if... You’ve ever spraypainted your girlfriend’s name on an overpass. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 2)

and

53 heaven → PEACEFUL PARADISE / STOCK CAR RACING ← Daytona [4], SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [3]. Rednecks are said to love stock car racing and Daytona, which (apart from being the NASCAR headquarter) has one of the biggest road courses.

(23) You might be a redneck if... Directions to your house include “turn off the paved road.” (FOXWORTHY 1989, 13)

The most outstanding feature of the three above jokes is the lack of a disappointed expectation as observed in (15) and (16). There is nothing incongruous in the text per se, no internal conflicting elements in a shirt with cut off sleeves, a name spraypainted on an overpass, or a house situated in a underdeveloped area. Furthermore, it seems that this is not even *exaggerated* redneck behavior: these people often live far out in the countryside, like to wear cut-off sleeves, and I bet some of them spraypainted their girlfriends’ names on top of the water tower when they were young and wild. Is this really verbal humor according to the requirements of the GTVH then? At first glance, these instances rather seem good *examples* for typical redneck behavior, with the famous words by ALEXANDER POPE: “What oft was Thought, but ne’er so well Exprest” (<http://poetry.eserver.org/essay-on-criticism.html> [July 22, 2009]). At second glance, they are *humorous* examples and that means that there should be a second script available, namely in local opposition. The knack in this case are the recipients, who (on perceiving the humorous input) contrast it to their world-knowledge and conclude: “That is not normal! Maybe *these* people really do it, but *usually* people do not cut off their sleeves or show affection by presenting somebody’s name in huge letters to the driving population!”⁵⁴ Thus, the *abnormal* evokes the *normal* as a contrasting foil in the background.⁵⁵ This second script joins in subtly, creating a very reduced overlap, i.e. the two locally opposed scripts are both present for the recipient at the same time. Yet, they are not both *compatible* with the text in a narrow sense. Therefore, type 4 if-jokes are not perceived as too humorous by most people. They are, however, well suited for conveying information about an existing sub-world, which may well appear exaggerated and unusual in regard to common urban middle-class lifestyle, but feels quite real for those who live it. Again, on level two the distinction between sophisticated and uncultivated captures matters well.⁵⁶

54 Rednecks themselves might think: “*Yeah, that’s true! Well observed! We’re different!*”

55 There is *one* example in which the ‘normal’ is actually pronounced: *You might be a redneck if... you prefer to walk the excess length off your jeans rather than hem them.* The shortened version *You might be a redneck if... you prefer to walk the excess length off your jeans* would work as well and leave the contrasting ‘hemming’ up to the reader’s expectation: a type 4 if-joke.

56 This prescriptive normative evaluation (What is cultivated and good? What is aberrant and uncultivated? What is smart? What is dumb?) is not supposed to reflect a moral judgment from my side but merely a description of what appears to be popular consensus.

	cutoff sleeves (21)	spraypaint (22)
Local Script Opposition	(FEW SHIRTS WITH CUTOFF SLEEVES) / MANY	(SHOW AFFECTION WITH ROSES ETC.) / SHOW AFFECTION BY SPRAYPAINTING HER NAME ON AN OVERPASS
Level [3] SO	SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED	SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED
Level [2] SO	NORMAL / ABNORMAL	NORMAL / ABNORMAL

Table [T7]: SO in if-jokes type 4 | (...) indicates 'implied normality'

Finally, if a joke exhibits the above described pattern (which I would like to call 'juxtaposition with implied normality') and at the same time involves a clearly perceivable element of exaggeration, then I labeled it as **type 5**. Examples include

(24) You might be a redneck if... The U.F.O. Hotline limits you to one call per day.

(↑ FOXWORTHY 1989, 14) (↓ FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 1:46)

(25) You might be a redneck if... You've ever made change in the offering plate.

	U.F.O. (24)	Offering plate (25)
Local So	(DO NOT BELIEVE IN U.F.O.S AND DO NOT CALL THE HOTLINE) / CALL THE U.F.O. HOTLINE FREQUENTLY	(BE GENEROUS WITH THE LORD) / MAKE CHANGE IN THE OFFERING PLATE
Level [3] SO	SMART / DUMB → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED	GENEROUS / STINGY → SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED
Level [2] SO	NORMAL / ABNORMAL	NORMAL / ABNORMAL

Table [T8]: SO in if-jokes type 5 | (...) indicates 'implied normality' | LM includes exaggeration

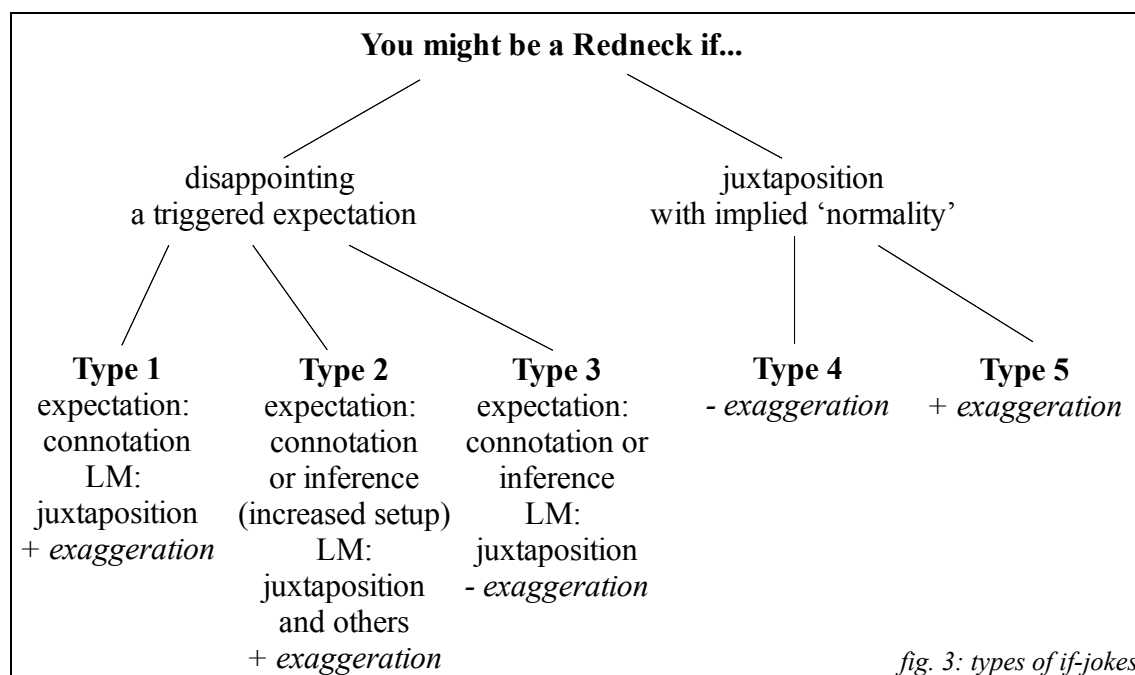
It is noteworthy that the presented differences between the if-jokes take place only on the HOW-level of the script opposition. Concerning the WHAT, there is striking similarity: we are playing a game of SOPHISTICATED VS. UNCULTIVATED (fig. 6). This matter will be explored further below in the target-section. After all, type boundaries are not always clear cut. In some cases I found it particularly difficult to decide whether 'normality' comes in as a weak connotation to a lexical item creating an expectation (type 1/3) or whether it sneaks in through the back door (type 4/5). Take this example:

(26) You might be a redneck if... There is stuffed 'possum mounted anywhere in your home. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 5)

On the one hand, this could be read as (A NICELY DECORATED HOME WITH NICE ART) / STUFFED

POSSUM (type 5), on the other hand, one might already consider *stuffed 'possum* as a trigger for UGLY which then manifests an expectation and a local opposition to HOME DÉCOR (type1). I decided to label instances like these as type 1/5, adding 0.5 to each category.

All in all, the distinctions drawn apply well to the material. The following tables summarize the categories and their main differences once more, the accompanying diagrams illustrate the distribution of the five types within the chosen data.



	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
main SO on [3]	SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED				
Setup	lexical items plus connotation	situational scripts plus inference or connotation	as in type 1/2	no explicit setup / implicit setup plain assertion	no explicit setup / implicit setup plain assertion
Incongruity	preprogrammed in the internal structure of the text			only in comparison to implicitly activated world-knowledge	
main LM	juxtaposition + <i>exaggeration</i> disappointed expectation hard entry	juxtaposition inferring consequences role reversals + <i>exaggeration</i> disappointed expectation hard entry	as in type 1/2 - <i>exaggeration</i>	juxtaposition contrast with implied 'normality' (but no further <i>exaggeration</i>) 'background entry'	juxtaposition contrast with implied 'normality' (added further <i>exaggeration</i>) 'background entry'

Table [T9]: main differences between the five types

fig. 4: distribution of types

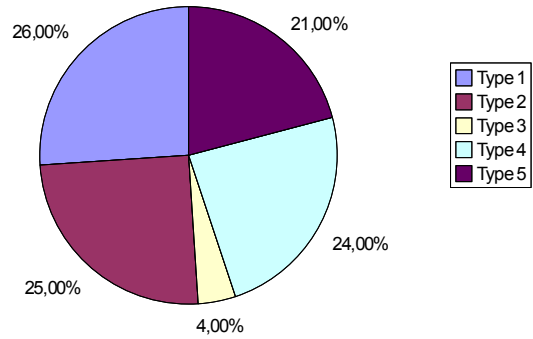


fig. 5: main LMs

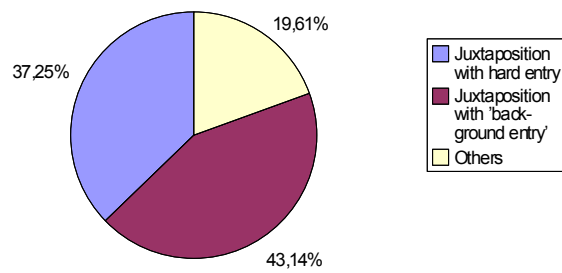
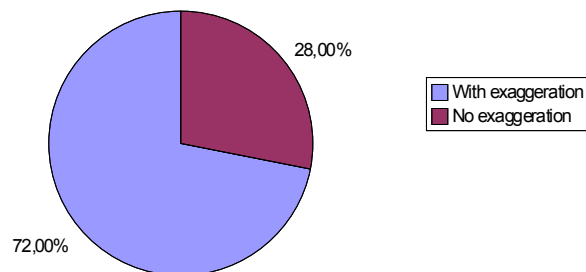


fig. 6: exaggeration



3.1.2 *Sophisticated Jokes about Unsophisticated People?*

In the following, I will take a closer look at some of the more complex if-jokes, striving for further insights into the way these function, especially concerning inferential paths and nested script oppositions. To begin with:

(27) You might be a redneck if... Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips before telling the state patrolman to kiss her ass. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 10)

This joke sets out activating a MOTHER-script⁵⁷, which connotes to well-behaved, caring, and gentle behavior – an expectation, which stands in slight opposition to MARLBORO, the cigarette for ‘wild and lonely cowboys’ (if one can trust the advertisement). Thus, the text evokes an initial local script opposition

MOTHER → WELL-BEHAVED AND GENTLE / LONELY COWBOY ← MARLBORO

which can easily be classified as belonging to the more global opposition SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED (in the following referred to as LoS = LACK OF SOPHISTICATION). Admittedly, this initial opposition is weak and – taken alone – would manifest a feeble joke at most. Luckily enough, the Marlboro is only lighting the way for the second part of a *serial occurrence* of unsophistications: the mother does not remove the cigarette from her lips *before telling the state patrolman to kiss her ass*. This second part of the joke raises and disappoints a second expectation:

STATE PATROLMAN → SHOW RESPECT / AFFRONT ← “KISS MY ASS!”

The two nested script oppositions add up in a case of *staggered escalation*, creating the overall LoS-opposition

WELL-BEHAVED AND GENTLE MOTHER / A SMOKING AND RUDE ROWDY [level 4]

The joke is of type 2 and exploits the LM of role reversal (in this case: partial negation of the expectations towards the mother role), added exaggeration⁵⁸. The initial SO may not be too witty, yet it would be strong enough to support a whole bunch of similar jokes:

57 Alone the massive popularity of the so-called *yo mama jokes* indicates the prevalence but also the vulnerability of this script.

58 Out of question: even a real redneck’s mother would not behave like that. Yet, this is humor and we enjoy to play along in this game of what-might-be-if-we-allow-the-thought.

(27)^b You might be a redneck if... You mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips to kiss her kids good night / speak to the pastor / beg for money / visit the pulmonologist, etc.

Now, consider the following joke:

(28) You might be a redneck if... You have ever cut your grass and found a car.
(FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 0:20)

The setting *cut your grass* triggers the expectation of an everyday situation: the greenish coverage on the garden soil has reached a certain length of about five inches and then one cuts it short again. The processing of *found a car* creates an incongruity with this perception: no way to hide a car in five-inch long grass! On backtracking, the recipient reevaluates and possibly enjoys the script opposition created by ‘inferring consequences’ plus exaggeration:

cut your grass → SLIGHTLY LONGER GRASS / REEEEEALLY LONG GRASS ← find a car

Again, this would be a feeble joke, if there was not something else about it. Support comes from an intratextual reference explaining the just discovered driving vehicle:

(29) You might be a redneck if... Less than half the cars you own run.
(FOXWORTHY 1989, 9)

This additional information wrapped in a type 4/5 joke does account not only for the existence of a car in the overgrown garden – we now know that it is possibly a wreck and not a lucky finding – but also labels (28) as an LoS joke, type 2, about a salvager, who does not even mow his lawn. Sticking to grass, here is another one:

(30) You might be a redneck if... You’ve ever used a Weed Eater indoors.
(FOXWORTHY 1989, 15)

What happens first is the following inferential path:

Weed Eater → garden tool → OUTDOORS / INDOORS

This is indeed an incongruity based on a triggered expectation, yet it only manifests the starting point for another inference:

use an outdoor tool for trimming grass inside → you have grass *in* your house.

This interpretation – based on the LM of inferring consequences – then leads to a LoS script in local opposition to implied ‘normality’: (A TIDY HOME)/GRASS GROWS IN YOUR HOUSE

Hence, I classified this if-joke as type 5. As already mentioned, intuition cannot be completely excluded from this process of classification; the borders between our types are blurred, and differences between jokes tend to be marginal. Consider (31), which seems to be identical with (30) in regard to structure:

(31) You might be a redneck if... You’ve ever used lard in bed. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 1)

The path of the interpretation follows this pattern:

lard → (normality:) SPREAD / LUBRICANT ← (:euphemistic for) in bed

Although the form of both jokes is much alike, their mechanisms differ. Whereas the first joke only takes a little activation energy from the play with expectations (an item is *correctly* used in an *unexpected* setting) and then evolves into a type 5 joke, the second joke is fundamentally based on the clash of two directly evoked scripts (an item is *completely misused* in an *unexpected* way) and therefore labeled as type 1.

Before I turn to some more general issues, here is a final interesting example:

(32) You might be a redneck if... You are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling. (FOXWORTHY 1989, 13)

In this type 2 joke several incongruities (script oppositions) add up. First of all, MARITAL PROBLEMS triggers the expectation of quarreling about ‘serious’ matters (such as unfaithfulness, money, lacking quality time, etc.), which is then disappointed: it’s all about a silly game: SERIOUS QUARRELING / ANGER ABOUT A SILLY GAME. Consider this altered version of the joke:

(32)^b ...you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at hide-and-seek.

Both texts are based on the SO treated above, and yet differ significantly: (32) describes the disintegrating marriage-tie of two unsophisticated hillbillies, in (32)^b marriage partners are indeed *silly* billies, but lacking LoS. The reason for this lies in further incongruities triggered by the original joke. *Your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling* presupposes *your wife arm wrestles* which contrasts traditional ideas of

femininity. Taking this to extremes, this special woman does not only engage in a masculine attributed game, she is also stronger than her husband (entailment). Thus, this very short joke text actually instantiates three nested script oppositions:

[4A] marital problems → SERIOUS QUARRELING / ANGER ABOUT A SILLY GAME ←

[4B] (WOMAN WEAKER THAN MAN) / WOMAN WINS AT ARM WRESTLING

[4C] (FEMININITY)/ARM WRESTLING

On level three – as expected – the joke instantiates SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED.

After these specific insights into selected if-jokes, I will now turn to some more general thoughts on the remaining KRs SI, NS, LA and especially important: TA.

3.1.3 SI, NS, LA, and TARGET

Situation. Nothing much to say here – the instantiation of this parameter depends very much on the concrete and individual joke. Not very surprisingly, some ‘props’ associated with stereotypical redneck life reoccur frequently: car wrecks, guns, rude mothers, trailer homes, beer, Daytona Beach, etc.

Narrative Strategy. The most outstanding feature concerning this category is the very reduced structure and brevity of all if-jokes. If one had to proclaim a general label for these humorous observations, it could possibly be

- short expository texts or plain assertions in one-liner format with a reduced narrative structure; an accumulation of second parts in an adjacency pair with the unexpressed first part *When would you be a redneck?*

Language. In *general*, nothing much can be said about the specific *individual* wording of these jokes. Chapter 3.2 will be concerned with the importance of Southern American English (SAE) for the portrayal of rednecks; hence, for the moment I would like to neglect the content of the part following *You might be a Redneck if...* and turn to this very phrase itself. On the Internet, I found a very interesting audio recording by the great Southern country Comedian JERRY CLOWER (1926 – 1998), which goes like this:

A lot of people in this country have bought books defining what a redneck is. I saw one the other day, had a thousand different things that you'd look for to identify a redneck. Well, let a good ole boy give you just a few ways you can know a redneck. And you don't need to buy no book. [...] So you can rest assured one hundred percent of the time that a man's always a redneck if he has a bunch of old second hand cars and just half of 'em will crank. You know a

man is a redneck if the front porch falls it'll always kill about four dogs. You know a man is a redneck if his mama keeps a spitcan on the ironing board. You know a man is a redneck if his mama has got in a fistfight in a high school sportin' event. [...] And you know a man is a redneck if there's two boys in the same family named Junior. You know a man is a redneck when he calls sardines and spam hors d'oeuvres.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLnAZtdnZWU> [July 30, 2009])

First observation: although the source is undated, it strongly suggests that JERRY CLOWER in fact told if-jokes in a very similar format before JEFF FOXWORTHY did so. Actually, most of the above examples are also included in Foxworthy's book – whether this goes back to the notion of retelling in Southern oral tradition, a cavalier treatment of copyrights, or financial transactions shall not be of further interest at this point. Second observation: unlike FOXWORTHY, CLOWER does not consider himself a redneck, but a *good ole boy*, i.e. an idealized rural American described as a contrastive gentleman-version to redneck behavior by WHALEY (1987, 142). Third observation: this change of perspective goes along with a grammatical variation from pure conditional clauses type 1 to a mixed form with present tense in the if-clause and *might plus infinitive* in the main clause. Thus, where CLOWER still announces that “you can rest assured one hundred percent of the time that a man's always a redneck if he has a bunch of old second hand cars and just half of 'em will crank”, FOXWORTHY proclaims that “you might be a redneck if less than half the cars you own run” (1989, 9). CLOWER sells a clear one-hundred-percent-indicator and FOXWORTHY suggests a possibility, a mere suspicion, which may of course substantiate if evidences of a person's lack of sophistication heap up. Being redneck as an attitude of life that “ain't no passin' fancy or a part-time thing” (Bo WHALEY 1987, 143) versus FOXWORTHY's 1990s part-time lack of sophistication. Last observation: on the way from CLOWER's repertoire into FOXWORTHY's the material also underwent a change in personal deixis. The ex-champion informs his audience on how to identify, label, and possibly avoid a redneck when meeting one, his successor assists them in evaluating their *own* potential, when it comes to that (glorious?!) absence of sophistication “that we are all guilty of [...] at some time or another” (FOXWORTHY quoted on <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0330069/quotes> [August 18, 2009]). Maybe the investigation into the target resource can shed at least some light on the why and how of these changes.

Target.

...*White Trash* versus *Hell Yeah!*

“I think we can work something out,” I said, “but there is one issue I want to discuss with you.” As a proponent of regional pride (“American by Birth, Southern by the Grace of God”), I was a little concerned about the use of the term *redneck*. In the mouths and minds of some Americans of the Northern persuasion, for example, it is occasionally used as a term of derision, as in “This redneck moron in a pick-up truck with tires the size of Rhode Island nearly forced me off the turnpike. Would you like a soda pop and a frank?” So I suggested to Jeff that maybe we would be best served (and less ridiculed) by naming the book *You might be a Bubba if...* Jeff squinted a bit and then said, “Welllllll, I use this material every night in front of a live audience, and no one has ever been bothered by it. You may not realize it, but there are honest-to-God rednecks all over this country.”

(from the Editor’s preface to FOXWORTHY 1995a, iv)

Quite undoubtedly, rednecks are indeed the targets of the treated if-jokes, yet it remains unclear whether they are only aimed at or really bombarded, metaphorically speaking. In contrast to the above quote, the attentive listener will be able to identify quite a number of annoyed jeers amongst the laughter on the audio recording, especially when it comes to taboo topics such as mother-dissing or incest, commented by FOXWORTHY with “I think we offended somebody out here... that ain’t funny, is it, serious...” (FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 2:11). In general, there seem to be three main points of view concerning the issue in focus.

First point of view: Rednecks are uneducated, poor, and deprived people living their lives as good as they can, in a system, that does really not help them much and furthermore laughs about them; as one of the hillbilly kids in the Simpson’s episode *Yokel Chords* shouts into the camera, well pointing at superiority theory: “You’re better than us!” (14:46). The big wave of redneck jokes hence created an ugly situation, in which “we hardly ever see the redneck as anything *but* a caricature. [...] The redneck is the only cardboard figure left standing in our ethnic shooting gallery. [...] The trailer park has become the media’s cultural toilet, the only acceptable place to dump one’s racist inclinations”, as JIM GOAD (1997, 16) describes it in his very angry book *The Redneck Manifesto*. A book like a “Smokecraft beef jerky-sponsored monster truck revved and ready to roll over the stuccoed suburban palace where Jeff Foxworthy sleeps” (GRID MAGAZINE on the back of the book). Just think back to baby Stewie in *Family Guy*, who first addresses the man in the wardrobe (a cartoon version of JEFF FOXWORTHY) with *You suck!* and later on announces *Oh, I feel so deliciously white trash...* This first point of view clearly analyses redneck humor in the light of the superiority theory, pointing a finger at “America’s dirty little secret [which] isn’t racism but classism” (from the blurb of *The Redneck Manifesto*). All that includes the

perception of JEFF FOXWORTHY as only *pretending* to be a redneck himself and an audience which “laughs nervously at one-liners that often strike too close to what was once home – or what some audience members fear might be home once again” (HAUHART 2008, 273).

Second point of view: Rednecks are poor, stupid, and racist – ‘white trash’ exactly. FOXWORTHY’S jokes euphemize and idealize a lifestyle which should not be glorified at all. (going back to a conversation with several American friends)

Third point of view: As Professor JAMES C. COBB notes in “An Epitaph for the North: Reflections on the Politics of Regional National Identity at the Millennium”, by the 1990s, the term *redneck* had changed from “the nation’s most acceptable racial slur” into “something approaching a term of endearment, connoting above anything else a fierce independence in the face of suffocating conformist pressures that permeated American mass society” (2000, 12). What this means is that to “call oneself a redneck is not so much to *be* a redneck by birth or occupational fate... but rather to identify with an anti-bourgeois attitude and lifestyle” (RICHARD PETERSON quoted in COBB 2000, 12)⁵⁹. The described change creates a highly interesting double bind. On the one hand, it allows JEFF FOXWORTHY to legitimately claim group-membership for himself (at least: a part-time unsophisticated redneck-at-heart), and to invite his audience to reconsider their *own* potential concerning this subversive, unconventional, and rejuvenated lifestyle rather than to observe and mock the outcasted otherness, as CLOWER did. In the words of NILSEN & NILSEN on ethnic humor:

When a group member tells this kind of joke, it opens the door for inner-group communication and invites group members to examine their attitudes and behavior. But if outsiders tell the same joke, the effect is quite the opposite because the outsider focuses on the group’s most obvious characteristics and implies that these characteristics belong to everyone in the group. Because outsiders have little power to bring internal change, the effect is to stereotype the group, which actually lessens the chances for change. (2000, 117)

On the other hand, despite this change of attitude, a target is a target and a bitter aftertaste may stick to the sweetest desert. Redneck jokes still aim at rednecks and at their lifestyle, which is presented in an overdrawn but by no means completely fictional way. Therefore, point of view number one and two are still around, lurking in the huge shadow casted by the immense popularity of number three. Silent jeers amongst the allegedly innocent laughter. Having said that, I would like to turn towards the script oppositions observed in our sample of if-jokes and the consequences arising therefrom.

59 referring itself to KIRBY, JACK TEMPLE (1995). *The Countercultural South*. Athens, Ga. / London, 73.

When I first encountered jokes about rednecks, I was convinced that they were just another instance of commonly known joke patterns about Irish people, Ostfrieslanders, etc. – what we know from chapter 2.5.1 as the ethnic scripts of DUMBNESS. According to CHRISTIE DAVIES' claims quoted in that very chapter, rednecks would well be 'qualified' for they live in the periphery (= Southern countryside), speak the language of the center in a distorted way (= SAE), and tend to work in blue-collar jobs. They are country people in the wider sense (see DAVIES 1990, 67-74: subchapter "Peasants and Plebeians" in "Who gets called Stupid?")⁶⁰ and considered untidy, if not dirty, badly dressed and incestuous (an American tendency to label the butts of stupidity jokes as being dirty as well, see DAVIES 1990, 84-102: "The Stupid and the Dirty"). In fact, it seems that a lot of popular circulating redneck jokes adhere to the script of DUMBNESS and can easily be retargeted at another minority labeled alike:

(33) This Irishman felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says "Well, I can't seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol." The Irish replies: "Well, then, I'll come back when you're sober."

(34) A ventriloquist was making fun of Irish people with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry Irish jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, "I resent that!" The ventriloquist started apologizing to the Irish, but he just looked at him and hissed, "You stay outta this, I'm talking to the guy on your lap!"

Retargeting works well in these two cases, for both groups are associated with limited cognitive capacities, a penchant for alcohol, and pugnacious behavior. Turning to FOXWORTHY'S material, matters complicate:

(35) You might be Irish if... you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.

(36)* You might be Irish if... you've ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop.

(37)* You might be Irish if... your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.

(38)* You might be Irish if... you own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.

Joke (35) does not directly build on a script of DUMBNESS but allows associations with a

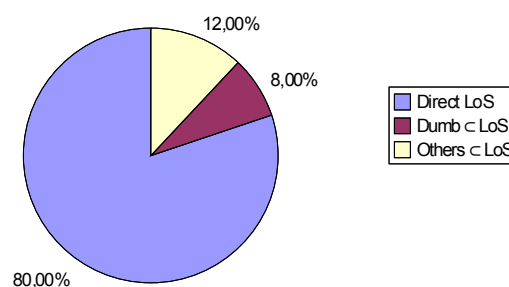
⁶⁰ and reconsider joke (23): townies and city-slackers mocking country-bumpkins! (cf. DAVIES 1990, 67)

certain narrowness, therefore retargeting seems to work. (36), (37), and (38) appear weird in the Irish-version (weirdness indicated with an asterisk) and I will suggest two main reasons for this. Obviously, at least the last two jokes feed too strongly on US-bound cultural knowledge resources to blossom in the drizzly European flair of Great Britain. But furthermore, all of the three jokes resistant to this retargeting are not based on a DUMB script, but on the level three opposition between what one might call SOPHISTICATED and UNCULTIVATED, a pattern I labeled LACK OF SOPHISTICATION, in short: LoS. According to my qualitative analysis, *all* of the if-jokes from the sample can be subsumed under this overall label, which only fits too well with FOXWORTHY’s already mentioned own definition of redneck as the “glorious absence of sophistication⁶¹” (*Blue Collar Comedy Tour: The Movie*, 54:38). In fact, only a small number of if-jokes build on a script of DUMBNESS as directly as the following:

(39) You might be a redneck if... Your dad walks you to school because you’re in the same grade. (FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 0:27)

Others suggest it, for example by alluding to incest, which does not quite produce the most brilliant children, usually⁶². All in all, these instances are not too common (fig.7). Furthermore, the opposition SMART/DUMB can be considered a proper subset of SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED on basis of association (SMART → SOPHISTICATED; DUMB → UNCULTIVATED). In other words: SMART/DUMB \subset LoS.

fig. 7: main SO [3]



61 *...and most of us are guilty of it*: the look into the distorting mirror quoted from DAVIES in 2.5.1

62 Although some people claim that incest is acceptable, as long as you keep it in the family...

Sticking to the hitherto discussion: does all that suggest we have ‘discovered’ a ‘new’ ethnic script? Is that an ethnic script after all? Let us compare the ethnic script of DUMBNESS to LoS: it is very clearly defined, what a Pole, an Irishman, or a German Ostfrieslander is. It is also very clear, that none of the above groups is in any case inherently any dumber than any other German, American, English, or whatever; the attributed lack in basic mental ability is therefore not real. Scripts as these may be “not completely mythical either” (ATTARDO 1994, 212), but rather artifacts from a time, in which socioeconomic stratification produced them (e.g. a former correlation between a certain group, economic necessities, and a resulting lack of education or necessary thriftiness). Today, however, these attributions are as fictional as the German village of Schilda and its infamous inhabitants. On the other hand: it is quite not too clearly marked off what a redneck really is⁶³ and it seems, furthermore, that a certain amount of ‘unsophisticatedness’ is (or has come to be) part of the definition. The jokes under consideration indeed exaggerate while offering blanket-coverage (choose whatever representative of the group and it applies to all), yet the presented situations are by no means purely conventional fictional myths: not all rednecks have a bond-o pickup truck and live in a trailer, but there is a certain *correlation* between the humorous material and ‘reality’, especially when it comes to type 4 if-jokes. Additionally, while no Irish (unless really dumb or drunk or both or self-deprecating) will ever be proud of being called a dimwit, the LoS leaves a lot of room for every kind of prestige ranging from covert to overt. Numerous clips on youtube, the Atlantian Redneck Summer Games, and last but not least GRETCHEN WILSONS’ debut single “Redneck Woman”⁶⁴ are great examples of how to turn the uncultivated into a cult. Taken all this together, evidence does not suffice to ascribe LoS more than a semi-status as a (pseudo-)ethnic script, if at all. Apart from all this, it should be noted that, while *dumb* will mean more or less the same thing even across cultural borders (cf. DAVIES 1990, 15), sophistication is a very particular construct: what may be a slurping gourmand to one, may be the most polite and well-mannered guest to someone else. Talking about peculiarities – the next chapter will investigate into the special way rednecks speak: “Just call me butter, ’cause I’m on a roll” (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 25).

63 A group status that DAVIES describes as TWPSIN (“Transitional Wavering People and Seemingly Intermediate Nation”), with an “uncertain and fuzzy identity [...] blurring the “clarity of boundaries” (1990, 54).

64 http://www.metacafe.com/watch/sy-18085946/gretchen_wilson_redneck_woman_official_music_video/ also consider <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0oBUdFoj9w> (called ‘reality remix’ by its authors) for an interesting reaction (→ point of view 1/2)



**You consider
a six pack of beer
and a bug-zapper
quality entertainment.**

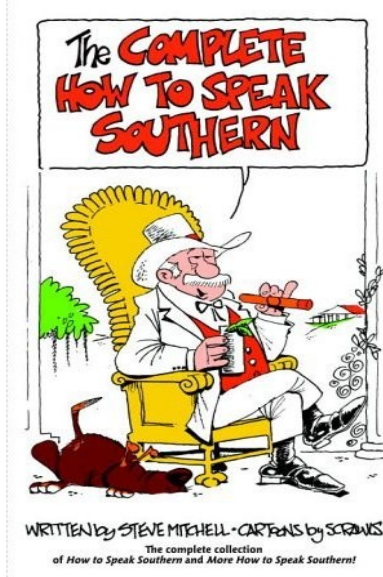
[13] You might be a redneck if...

(FOXWORTHY 1989, 6)

3.2 Words you Thought you Knew the Meaning of...

It's good to be back in Texas here. Back here, where people talk normal. I like this, aye. [...] I live in California now... people out there, they always make fun of the way I talk... and I keep tellin'... I say, you're gonna be real surprised when you get to Heaven and Saint Peter says "Y'all get into the truck, we're going up the big house..." (FOXWORTHY 1993, track 2, 0:25)

So this is it, the chapter about the wonderful dialect in which one can rhyme *forgotten* with *bin Laden* (as DARRYLL WORLEY does in his 2003 song "Have you forgotten?"), an accent⁶⁵ that can cost a person "a hundred IQ points" when talking to a Yankee (FOXWORTHY 1995b, 0:10), from a region remaining the only one "that still has identifiable comic types associated with it" (STEADMAN 1989⁶⁶, 856 quoted in DUNNE & DUNNE 2006, 258). The South. This chapter will deal with "[o]ne subject that has not gone out of fashion" at least for Southern comedians, and that is "the humor discovered in everyday speech" (DUNNE & DUNNE 2006, 257). In a fruitful combination of scientific texts (e.g. the *Atlas of North American English*, short ANAE, by WILLIAM LABOV & SHARON ASH & CHARLES BOBERG 2006) and STEVE MITCHELL's *The Complete How to Speak Southern* (2006), I will first lay out some very basic principles for the dialect called white vernacular *Southern American English* (SAE). The following analysis and reflection on selected examples from JEFF FOXWORTHY's *Redneck Dictionary* (2005) will refer to this while examining the status of language play within the realm of (unsophisticated?) redneck life.



[14] Quite not a redneck... dedicated to "all Yankees in the hope that it will teach them how to talk right."
A 2006 compilation of two books published separately in 1976 and 1980.

65 FOXWORTHY himself refers to it as Southern *accent*, but since matters also involve differing vocabulary items peculiar to the South (y'all, ain't, etc.), we should rather talk about a regional *dialect* in the following.

66 STEADMAN, MARK (1989). "Humor". In: Wilson, Charles Reagan & Ferris, William (eds.) (1989). *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P.

3.2.1 A Short Introduction to SAE

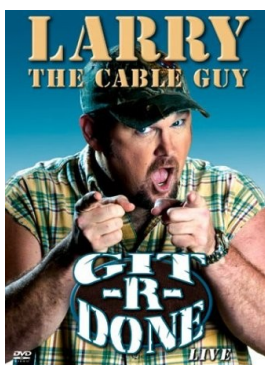
First of all, it should be noted that “[n]otwithstanding the popular stereotype of the American South as a uniform region, the Southeastern US represents one of the most diverse dialect areas in the United States” (WOLFRAM 2008, 468). Despite this observation, it is neither my aim to provide a full overview nor a complete description of what due to “its distinctiveness [...] has long been the most widely studied regional variety of American English” (TILLERY & BAILEY 2008, 127). Humor based on SAE does not refer to the attention-to-detail observations of differences within the internal system of SAE but rather plays with a simplified, generalized, and widely recognized version of this variety. As LABOV & ASH & BOBERG observe,

[a]mongst the various dialects of North America, Southern-States English is the most widely recognized as a regional dialect by the general public. In fact, the South appears to be an exception to the general observation [...] that Americans pay very little attention to regional dialects and show little ability to recognize them. Most Northerners can produce some kind of imitation of a Southern accent and will do so when the occasion demands. (ANAE 2006, 240)

What makes this regional dialect so distinct and apt for language play? Four features are standing out especially as widely recognized ‘well established stereotypes’ of SAE: the *pen/pin* merger, monophthongal /ai/⁶⁷ (cf. BAILEY 1997, 267; 271), back upglides with /oh/⁶⁸ (ANAE, 254), and the *Southern Drawl* (cf. THOMAS 2008, 93). The first of these can be exemplified by the following entry from *The Complete How to Speak Southern*:

Pinny: One hundredth part of a dollar and so valueless that these days most people don’t even pick them up when they drop them. “Ah don’t owe him a pinny.” (MITCHELL 2006, 69)

The accurate description of this phenomenon reads as follows:



[15] *pen/pin merger*

The merger of the KIT and DRESS vowels before nasals, as in *pin* and *pen*, is strongly associated with Southern speech, though it also occurs among some whites in the Midwest and California and among African Americans everywhere. The resulting merged vowel is usually closer to [ɪ] in quality, though a few speakers have it closer to [ɛ]. [...] Today, however, some Southerners, largely under the influence of schools, have begun to distinguish PIN and PEN. (THOMAS 2008, 104)

Possibly one of the most popular uses of this merger is Larry the Cable Guy’s well marketed slogan *GIT R DONE*, a “country exclamation of saying to get something finished” (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=git+r+done> [August 7, 2009]), made widely popular by this former pigfarmer (cf. HAUHART 2008, 271) and now

67 /ai/ is the IPA notation and equals /ay/ in the ANAE, which uses a ‘binary notation’ in which /y/ indicates front upglides, and /w/ back upglides.

68 also known as /ɔ:/ in IPA, which then becomes /aw/ as a back upglide in SAE

redneck comedian. According to the ANAE, the just described feature is indeed a well-recognized Southern peculiarity but not very helpful in defining the region, since it has “expanded northward a considerable distance into the Midland area” (ANAE, 120). The defining characteristics of Southern States English are listed by the ANAE as two chain shifts, summarized in the following (cf. ANAE, 240):

The Back Upglide Shift:

- 1) Fronted /æw/ for initial /aw/⁶⁹ in *out, mountain*.
- 2) Upgliding /aw/ for initial /oh/ in *caught, law, off*.

The Southern Shift:

- 3) Monophthongal /ay/ before voiced segments⁷⁰ and word-finally in *high, side, wise, time*.
- 4) Lowering of the nucleus of /ey/ along the nonperipheral track in *day, made, chase*.
- 5) The fronting, raising and ingliding of initial short vowels /i/, /e/, /æ/ in *sit, set, sat*.
- 6) Breaking of front long nuclei into two nuclei with intervening glide (Southern drawl)
- 7) Monophthongal /oy/.

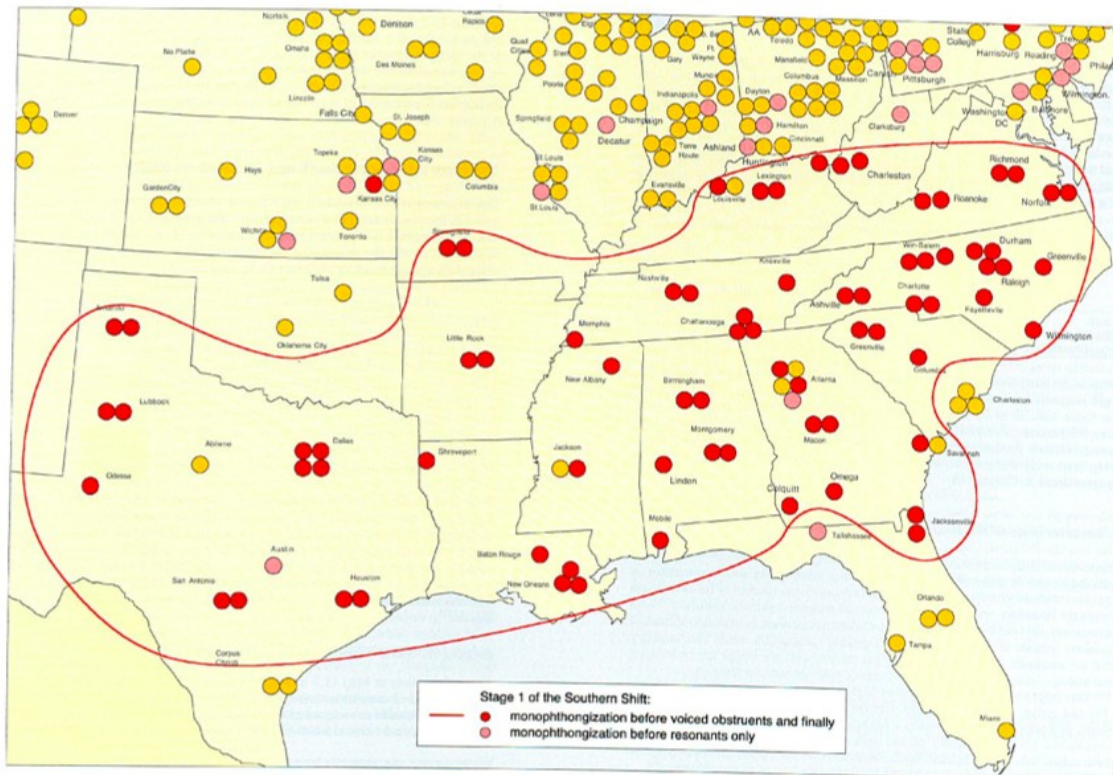
The probably most important feature of the above is the ‘triggering’ event of the Southern shift listed as (3): “the removal of /ay/ from the subsystem of front upgliding vowels” in “*my, guy, wide, wise, etc.*, which then becomes a long steady state vowel (or ‘monophthong’)” (ANAE, 125; 126). THOMAS argues that “*glide weakening* is a more accurate term because it encompasses both monophthongal forms and variants with a glide that is only partly truncated, both of which are perceived as ‘flattened’ by outsiders.” (2008, 100). In any case, this very feature – be it deletion or weakening – described well by

Ah: The thing you see with, and the personal pronoun denoting individuality. “Ah think Ah’ve got somethin’ in mah ah.” (MITCHELL 2006, 1)

appears to be the “most likely candidate for a structural delimitation of the outer limits of the Southern dialect region” (ANAE, 127).

69 also known as /aʊ/ in IPA

70 Sometimes transcribed as /ayV/ in contrast to /ay0/ before voiceless consonants.



[16] AYM: the isogloss defining the South with glide deletion of /ay/ before voiced obstruents (ANAE, 126)

The region encompassed by the AYM is large, but not completely congruent with the entire area commonly known as the Southern States, “ranging from North Carolina in the east to Texas in the west, and from the Ohio River in the north to the Southern tip of Florida in the South” (ANAE, 240).

The parameter of glide deletion is not only a helpful tool to put the linguistic South in its place, it also offers further insights into social stratification: “glide deletion before *voiceless* obstruents is generally considered to be an uneducated or lower class variant, stigmatized by the stereotyped use of /ah/ in ‘nahs whaht rahss’⁷¹” (ANAE, 244; my emphasis). Astonishingly, *The Complete How to Speak Southern* (featuring the image of a most likely educated and wealthy man in a white suit) does contain quite a few instances of glide deletion before voiceless obstruents, for example,

Braht: 1. Dazzling. “Venus is a braht planet.” 2. Intelligence. “That Sue Ellen is the brahtest child in her class.” (MITCHELL 2006, 13)

What: The absence of color. “Mark Twain liked to wear what suits.” (MITCHELL 2006, 96)

The Back Uplide Shift – “one of the most distinct features of the Southern States vowel system” (ANAE, 254) – is represented by numerous examples in *The Complete*

71 This phrase quoted from FEAGIN, CRAWFORD (1994). “Long I” as a microcosm of Southern States Speech. Paper given at NWAWE23, Stanford, CA.

How to Speak Southern:

Dawg: A four-legged animal much esteemed in rural sections of the South. “Ah just don’t feel right unless Ah got a couple of huntin’ dawgs around the house.” (MITCHELL 2006, 23)

Maul: A shopping center. “You been out to the new maul?” (MITCHELL 2006, 58)

Of the four features mentioned above, the *Southern Drawl* is the most difficult one to tackle, for opinions on its actual existence and accurate description vary. According to the ANAE, this notion refers to the fact that “for many Southern speakers, lengthened /æ/ is broken – the nucleus descends to low front position and is followed by a high front glide and an ingliding second nucleus” (244), ERIK R. THOMAS describes it as a “prolongation of certain stressed vowels and diphthongs, often accompanied by breaking of and exaggerated pitch rises in the vocoids” (2008, 93) for example “turning [æ] into [æɛæ]” (2008, 96) and for JAN TILLERY and GUY BAILEY, the Southern Drawl

typically involves two phonological processes: the extreme lengthening of stressed vowels and the development of ingliding diphthongs with lax vowels that are lengthened. Thus in Drawled Speech, MOUTH might be pronounced [mæ:oθ], *bid* might be pronounced [bɪ:əd], and *bad* might be pronounced as [bæ:ɛd]. (2008, 122)

Due to the vagueness of these definitions (for lengthened /æ/ only? for certain stressed vowels? for all stressed vowels? is this a distinct phenomenon or are the vowel shifts part of this?) and possibly due to a certain difficulty in representing the involved processes without IPA, I found it difficult to come up with clearcut examples, from MITCHELL’s book, at the best

Hale: Where General Sherman is going for what he did to Etlanna. “General Sherman said, ‘War is hale,’ and he made sure it was.” (MITCHELL 2006, 42)

Griyuts: What no Southern breakfast would be complete without—grits. “Ah like griyuts with butter and sawt on ’em. But Ah purely love ’em with red-eye gravy.” (MITCHELL 2006, 40)

My above description of selected SAE features has surely neglected a lot of important aspects, such as relative reversal of /i/ ~ /iy/ and /e/ ~ /ey/, stress placed on the initial syllable of certain words, *a-verb-ing*, use of double negations and ain’t, etc. I do believe anyhow that we have tackled quite a few of the most important points. Some more may be added in the course of the following brief analysis of selected examples from JEFF FOXWORTHY’S *Redneck Dictionary*, a book which can be seen as some kind of ‘countercultural’ answer to the observed “mild stigma that has begun to be attached to upgliding allophones of /ɔ/ (and more generally to anything resembling the Southern Drawl)” (TILLERY & BAILEY 2008, 120).

3.2.2 *The Redneck Dictionary*

Remember joke (2) quoted many pages ago? Here it comes again:

(40) *European* as in “Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!”

(FOXWORTHY 2005, Preface)

The two scripts evoked by the text are EUROPEAN (lexematic handle) and YOU ARE PEEING, which “has to be retrieved by the hearer from his/her storage of homonymic or paronymic strings (i.e., the paradigm of the targeted string)” (ATTARDO 1994, 115). What are the stations of that [jʊrə 'piən] trip? During the processing of *European on my boot*, the reader will surely perceive an incongruity, since an adjective referring to a continent can hardly be on a person’s boot and for the corresponding noun (a European) no proper sense does arise either, also considering that both structures lack an explicit verb. For the complete ‘decoding’ of the punning riddle (What the hell does that mean? [...] ...ahhhh! Hahahaha...) four main insights are necessary, with no claim towards necessity concerning their order as presented:

- 1) The item alluded to by *European* does not have to be a single word – Southern speech in general is often perceived by strangers as blending words together (as probably holds true for a lot of unfamiliar languages... for what else is Italian than one humongous, immensely accelerated, and never ending *miabrablepara-porosisissi?*)
- 2) The pronunciation of *EUR* is similar to the pronunciation of *YOU'RE*.
- 3) The pronunciation of *PEAN* corresponds to the pronunciation of *PEEIN'* and, furthermore, “[u]nstressed final *-ing* may occur as [ɪn] at higher rates in white Southern speech than in other white North American English [...]” (THOMAS 2008, 110).
- 4) There is an extra schwa left between the retrieved items of 2) and 3). The uninformed humorous consumer could well decide to simply ‘mumble it away’ and consider *European* as a paronym for *you're peein'* with a phonemic distance of about one phoneme [ə]; the informed wannabe-redneck, however, has an extra bit of information up his cut off sleeve: “The use of the prefix or proclitic *a-* with *v-ing* structures, as in *She was a-huntin' and a-fishin'* or *They came a-lookin' for the possum* is a widespread structural trait in enclave dialect

communities in the Southeast as well as in other rural vernacular varieties of English.” (WOLFRAM 2008, 476). Barely worth mentioning that *a-* is commonly realized as [ə].

Considering all of the above, it seems the formal criteria for the “cratylistic syllogism” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 387) are given, namely two scripts and an overlap *in verbis*. But are the evoked scripts really standing in (local) opposition? It is indeed possible to argue that way. EUROPEAN evokes images of a continent that often considers itself mannered, old, and historic in comparison to its North American sidekick – an expectation fizzling out quickly on being confronted with the triviality of peed-on footwear. We can thus classify the SO of EUROPEAN / YOU’RE PEEING as an instance of IMPORTANCE / TRIVIALITY, which can then again be classified as having at least an intersection with LoS. If one is willing to accept this somehow dubious argumentation, (40) is in fact a joke in terms of the GTVH. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that “humans are desperately good ambiguators with vast semantic networks available to them, as well as excellent pragmatic interpreters,” who “seek any kind of semantic overlap to be able to handle the phonological (quasi-)ambiguity as humor, even if mere wordplay was intended” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 387). Here comes another example:

- (41) **Ar•ma•ged•don** [ärm-ə-ge’-din], *n. and v.* putting oneself in a position for action. “*I tell ya, if it gets any crazier, Armageddon outta here.*”
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 4)

First of all a technical issue: after I have been mixing IPA and the transcription system of the ANAE so far, the *Redneck Dictionary* now brings in still another convention, and it does not even tell us which. All in all, this seems close to (but not completely congruent with) the notation used by the *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (compare <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/armageddon> [August 9, 2008]). Since the items used as the hook for the redneck reinterpretation (European, Armageddon, etc.) are always used in their standard pronunciation – after all people are supposed to acquire a redneck competence starting from what they already know – I will work with an equivalent IPA transcription taken from the PONS dictionary (²2003): [a:rmə’ ged^ən]. It needs four bits of SAE knowledge to explain the connection between I’M GETTING and ARMAGEDDON:

- 1) Southern monophthongization of [aɪ] before voiced segments like the resonant /m/ changes *I'm* from [aɪm] into [a:m].
- 2) From [a:m] it is only a small step to [a:rm]. BAILEY lists intrusive /r/ as a well-documented feature of white SAE in Texas (1997, 259) and provides *wash* = [wɔʃ] as an example. Although I object the classification of this as *intrusive r* (for this phenomenon per definition occurs between two vowels), on a similar level [a:m] might develop into [aʊm] or [a:rm] in the course of Southern drawling. Admittedly, this argumentation is far from waterproof and [a:m] and [a:rm] could still be mere paronyms in SAE. To complicate the discussion even more, THOMAS reports that “postvocalic /r/ is the most heavily studied consonantal variable in Southern English, and it shows rich contextual, geographical, socioeconomic, diachronic, ethnic, and stylistic conditioning” (2008, 106). As he claims, today, “even in areas that were once strongholds of non-rhoticity, young white Southerners are rhotic, especially females⁷²” (2008, 107), or as the ANAE puts it, “young white speakers are consistently *r*-ful” (47) taking their part in the “mode of restoration of /r/ in the South” (48).
- 3) *a*-verb-*ing* adds the [ə] before *getting*.
- 4) *Getting* is reduced to *gettin'* and, since “like other North Americans, Southerners produce intervocalic coronal stops as a tap or flap [ɾ]” (THOMAS 2008, 109), [t] is realized as the voiced alveolar tap [ɾ], which is close to [d]. In the same process, /ɪ/ is weakened to [ɞ] (pronounced as in the ending of *sudden*).

Just like in example (40), one can invest some effort and argue for a script opposition between ARMAGEDDON / I'M GETTING OUT AS FINAL FIGHT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL / TRIVIAL ACTION OF LEAVING \subset IMPORTANCE / TRIVIALITY \subset LoS. Again, this is somehow dubious. Whereas a dispute about the status as joke would still be possible for (40) and (41), the following two examples manifest clear examples of mere wordplay lacking script opposition. Both build mainly on the Southern phenomenon of monophthongal /ay/.

- (42) **as•par•a•gus** [ə-sper'-ə-gəs], *n.* ambivalence about having to install a replacement for an air-filled rubber wheel. “*I got a flat, so I'm gonna have to put on asparagus.*” (FOXWORTHY 2005, 7)

72 This author also holds females to be more rhotic than men.

(43) **afar** [ə-fār'], *n.* an object in the state of combustion. “*There’s no sense bein’ this cold–let’s build afar.*” (FOXWORTHY 2005, 3)

Even after quite an amount of thinking, I fail to see ASPARAGUS (the vegetable) and CHANGE ONE’S TIRE (“I have to put on a spare, I guess...”) as locally opposed, the same holds for AFAR (adverbial denoting distance) and A FIRE. Since they do not comply with the opposite requirement, these two are no jokes in the sense of the GTVH, which may appear counter-intuitive, since “non-humorous wordplay can be enjoyed, and this enjoyment can be confused with the enjoyment derived from humor” (HEMPELMANN 2004, 387).

So far, this chapter’s initial description of SAE has proven to be at least a good starting point for the understanding of FOXWORTHY’S language manipulations, yet I have to admit that the examples were chosen accordingly. A complete analysis of the book would have to dive in much deeper in order to explain entries such as

(44) **Eu•phra•tes** [yû-frāt’-ēz], *n. and adj.* to be in fear of bodily harm from a male. “*What’s the matter, Timmy? Euphrates gonna hit ya?*” (FOXWORTHY 2005, 47)

(45) **op•pose** [əp’-ōz], *prep. and n.* into an elevated position on more than one thing. “*Let’s climb oppose trees.*” (FOXWORTHY 2005, 96)

The first of these (“Are you afraid he is...”) involves *copula/auxiliary absence*, which is also commonly associated with AAVE (cf. WOLFRAM 2008, 475), also the initial [ə] of *afraid* and the [h] of *he* are omitted in the process of linking words together. The latter (“climb up those...”) features the “assimilation of /ð/ to a preceding consonant” which is “fairly common” but not a strictly Southern phenomenon (THOMAS 2008, 108). All this shows that there remains much more to discover for other works than this one, which can not be more than a not too sophisticated appetizer (maybe the linguistic version of potted meat on a saltine).

3.3.3 *The Script of Language Distortion?*

Probably the biggest single difference between early dialect humor and contemporary dialect humor is that in early years it was created by people outside of the groups. Today, it is mostly people inside particular groups who use dialect humor [...] not because they don't know the English words, but because they want to be different and to show pride in their culture.

(NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 104)

What to do now, with these jokes that sometimes are no jokes and want to teach us “learn another language” (blurb of the *Redneck Dictionary*)? Can they add anything to the discussion from chapter 3.1.3? I do believe so. Consider this joke presented by RASKIN in 1985:

(46) “Pedro,” asks the geography teacher. “Which continent has England, Norway, Poland, and Spain on it?” Pedro keeps silent. “Well, Pedro?” Dead silence. “Come on, Pedro,” says the teacher, “European.” “No,” answers Pedro, “my pants are dry.” (RASKIN 1985, 186)

Neglecting the fact that the *teacher* should actually say ‘*Europe*’ or ‘*the European (continent)*’, this joke contains a “strong element of disparagement” towards the group represented by Pedro, building on the script of LANGUAGE DISTORTION “with ‘undistorted’ as the ‘good’ value and the ‘distorted’ as ‘bad’” (RASKIN 1985, 185; see my chapter 2.5.1). We are familiar with the SO EUROPEAN / YOU’RE A-PEEIN’ from joke (40), but to me the two texts resulting from it are very different. In the *Redneck Dictionary*, people are not *mocked* for the way they speak, they are rather glorified for doing so. The book wants to teach us to speak like ‘they’ speak and every entry brings a new surprise harvested from the creative potential of SAE, rather than a pointed finger and a mischievous chuckling. Although the content of some entries fits the LoS-pattern, the wordplay itself is quite sophisticated and witty. We thus encounter what I would like to call a ‘twist’ on the script of LANGUAGE DISTORTION, which now presents ‘undistorted’ as the ‘boring convention’ and ‘distorted’ as the ‘refreshing and welcome change’. This fits very well with our last definition of redneck (third point of view in the target-section of chapter 3.1.3), which was fundamentally based on the appreciation of being different in a conformist society. The presented *redneck words* are not limited to the yelled utterances of ‘white trash’ but are available to all Southern people sticking to the regional dialect. If language shapes identity and the cheekiness of Southern speech shapes redneck existence at the chore of the above understanding, then JEFF FOXWORTHY can indeed be a ‘real’ redneck and file his report from the inside of a group, which by

now encompasses most people within the AYM-isogloss. After all, the *Redneck Dictionary* (describing the way rednecks are said to speak) and *The Complete How to Speak Southern* (referring to all people who speak SAE) are not too different after all. This becomes especially apparent if one compares (43) to MITCHELL's entry

Far: A state of combustion that produces heat and light. "Ah reckon it's about time to put out the far and call in the dawgs." (MITCHELL 2006, 30)

Just to make it very clear once more: the above is by no means meant to suggest that the Southern States are only inhabited by 'white trash' (as ironically portrayed in the discussed episode of *Family Guy*). My point was to show that people like JEFF FOXWORTHY present a popular image of rednecks as people, who deliberately show a glorious absence of sophistication and, furthermore, "have a way with words [...] not trying to be funny [...] It's just the way they talk" (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 09). Summed up: sophisticated wordplay with sometimes unsophisticated content humorously glorifying a way of speech attributed to a version of *redneck* that includes a lot of people in wide parts of the Southern region and their proud way in standing out from a prescribed linguistic standard variety.

4. Rednecks in School

“Very few controlled studies have shown that humor improves learning, although it seems that some kinds of humor improve the perception of the teacher.” (ATTARDO 2008, 127)



[17] Lisa is teaching Cletus' children in "Yokel Chords" (9:41)

This chapter is neither going to be detailed nor backed up well with literature, for it contains the brief reflections of a future teacher (me) on what he has done on the preceding seventy pages, now with a special focus on suitability for school. This is not going to set off a fireworks display of didactic precision and ingenious insight, but rather has the status of a down-to-earth retrospective view, a first kind of conclusion under the light of passing on language, culture, and fascination. I will offer some general thoughts in this section, no concrete teaching activities with worksheets or master copies.

The *Encyclopedia of 20th-Century American Humor* distinguishes two categories of **School Humor**: “that which is used in relation to intellectual development and that which is used for the emotional purposes of having fun and relieving tensions and frustrations” (NILSEN & NILSEN 2000, 263). It is undoubtedly true that humorous material

in the classroom motivates students and that humor in general can create a better learning atmosphere (unless it is sarcasm smelling of too much coffee and too few fulfillment on the teacher's side). It is also true that a certain intercultural *Humor Competence* as part of the *Communicative Competence* should be supported with great enthusiasm by mentors aiming at a well-founded preparation for their students' future in intercultural communication, for after all humor is the social lubricate "reigning in the emotional sphere in which there is decided about affection and antipathy, mutual understanding or rejection" (MARHENKE 2003, 14; my translation). Furthermore, teachers should not forget to equip their students with an awareness for the different functions laughter may play in other cultures on different occasions, e.g. mere politeness versus honest amusement. In which situations is humor an appropriate tool – in a business meeting, on a romantic date, at a funeral, or when an angry cop stops your car because you were speeding while throwing trash out of the window? ATTARDO once more summarizes matters well:

"In conclusion, it seems that there are some specific areas of 'humor competence' that must be taught to non-native speakers. These will concern mostly what scripts are available in a given culture for humorous purposes, which scripts are unavailable (tabooed), and in which settings humor is considered appropriate" (ATTARDO 1994, 213).

All of the above questions are highly interesting and worth dedicating whole books to, yet this paper has excluded the topic of conversational humor until now and I do not intend to open a cask of that size for the parting drink. In the following, I will therefore limit the main investigation to the question which helpful insights students can gain from a classroom treatment of the phenomena tackled in this paper so far.

Without getting into this topic much deeper, some of the above questions could well serve as a good peg to start an intensive classroom discussion. What is humor? What is laughter? Which functions can be served by laughter as a form? What different roles do humor and laughter play in *our* society (social lubricate, strengthening of social relationships, facework, uttering critique, showing superiority, releasing tension, etc.)? I could well imagine a teaching unit in which more advanced students prepare short presentations about different humor theories, which finally leads to a teacher-prepared introduction to the main ideas of the GTVH. Of course, this is not meant as a dry and highly mind-twisting formal undertaking but would be accompanied by numerous examples, creative exercises, and lively discussion, all that serving as a preparation for the investigation into the concrete phenomenon of redneck jokes. In cultural artifacts

special and unique (cf. DAVIES 2005, 148). The placing of redneck jokes and especially the LoS-script-opposition in regard of these categories is a highly interesting matter. Are there rednecks in Germany? We do have *unsophisticated* people for sure. There is the plastic-bag-framed figure of the uncultivated *Proll*, the *Ruhrpott* and its attached stereotypes, *Atze Schröder*, and *Cindy aus Marzahn*... but then again: the lack of sophistication alluded to in if-jokes is so idiosyncratic for the United States, that retargeting would have to go along with massive further adjustments as well (guns, pickup trucks, chewing tobacco, and trailer homes: all fairly un-German). Thus, most if-jokes clearly belong to the problematic category. Which is an informative potential as well. DAVIES suggests to lengthen narrative jokes of this kind and add an additional character, to “whom the hidden assumptions of the joke are then explained” (2005, 159), so that by means of internal conversation the joke teller

conveys the information to his audience without appearing didactic or giving too much away. It is fairly easy to convey implicit cultural assumptions in this way, far easier than it is [to] translate a complex play on words. Language is far more idiosyncratic and arbitrary than culture. (DAVIES 2005, 147; abstract)

Actually, I do believe that such a modification would destroy the charisma of the if-jokes, which is partly based on their brevity, commonly known as the soul of wit. This is pure speculation, but I can imagine well that students are indeed able to extract a lot of implicit cultural information even without such a cumbersome reformulation, just as ZHAO has argued above. Furthermore, at least if-jokes of type 4 convey very explicit cultural information about these peculiar people and thus add directly to the growth of an internalized redneck script. The catch with this clever idea is the following: students do just not know which if-jokes can be taken at face value and which are exaggerated or completely made up. I would expect a vivid classroom discourse and research resulting from this very fact: “Is that true?” – “Noooo, that can’t be...” – “Wow, they really...”, etc. In this process of extracting and reflecting, between giggling and confusion, accepting and challenging, in the vortex of youtube and reality swirling out of encyclopedias and joke-books, somewhere between East Friesland, Ireland, and the American South, I see a great potential for a critical and fun expedition into language practice, linguistics, and culture, including one’s own. Jokes “seem to provide a sensible and effective way of communicating ideas and information [...] in a comparatively safe context and enjoyable atmosphere” (ZHAO 1988, 292) and within the kingdom of *Bubba Y’all the Unsophisticated*, there surely is enough to convey: be it the Civil War, Walmart, or the trailer home, a discussion about script oppositions, logical mechanisms,

ethnic scripts, or how to raise and disappoint a humorous expectation – I do not think that there is any place left for boredom in a classroom “busier than a dog with two dicks” (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 39).

4.2 The *Redneck Dictionary* in Class

The blurb of the *Complete How to Speak Southern* promises that this book “will keep you laughing and learning – no matter where you fall on the Mason-Dixie-Line,” the *Redneck Dictionary* invites you to “expand your horizons and learn another language with this fun, instructive, and hilarious illustrated book as your guide. After all, speaking redneck is a heck lot easier than speaking French!” and finally, the backside of the *ANAE* promises “multimedia applications for classroom presentation.” Without too much additional comment: that sounds good! A fine addition for an approach to teaching which does not require students to speak perfect standard English, but wants to equip them with a fine-tuned ear that embraces the slight and wonderful differences Englishes around the world have to offer. Unfortunately, even elementary phonetic and phonological training in schools is too often neglected, but this humorous material offers great possibilities for a lighthearted and insightful approach of the topic, included an introduction to the concept of linguistic varieties and a critical reflection of the commonly prescribed standard. Not even mentioning that speaking redneck is so fascinating, it will make some students “happier than a possum in the corncrib with the dog tied up” (MUEHLHAUSEN 2006, 89). The witty ‘riddles’ posed by the *Redneck Dictionary* are a motivating invitation to dive into the mysteries of language and maybe even develop own material – as GUY COOK points out quite rightly, the

key role of language play in first language acquisition suggests the possibility of a similar role in adult second language learning. Yet for both the first and the second language learner, language play is much more than merely a potential *means*. As a widespread, highly valued use of language, of social and cognitive importance, it is also an *end*. (2000, 150)

5. Conclusion

All in all, the combination of a formal linguistic approach with sociological and cultural studies has proved very fruitful and insightful. I have demonstrated that *You might be a Redneck if...* jokes from the paradigm of JEFF FOXWORTHY are more than just a simple retargeted version of the ethnic script of DUMBNESS exerting superiority over its butts, but – within the exaggerated reality they present – leave room for (c)overt prestige concerning this uncontroversial lifestyle based on a (glorious) lack of sophistication (LoS). I have commented on this lifestyle as being deeply intertwined with the notion of Southern American English (SAE), a regional variety described and analyzed at least concerning some of its main features. Concerning this, we have figured out a twist on the script of LANGUAGE DISTORTION with ‘undistorted’ as the ‘boring convention’ and ‘distorted’ as the ‘refreshing and welcome change’ in the *redneck dictionary* – further evidence for the claim of a new popular appreciation of the *redneck* lifestyle as being different in a conformist society. The final embedding of my results into the wider context of classroom practice has turned out inspiring and very feasible, but remained on a general level, which could well be elaborated on in future research.

Looking back at this point, I am very glad that I chose a complicated but fascinating topic for this leap in the dark, for it has lost nothing of its fascination to me and I believe the results are nothing to be ashamed of. It appears to me that even in regard of all the details I have criticized, the GTVH has proven to be a useful toolbox for the linguistic disassembly of the humorous material chosen – an area not investigated into in this way before, as far as I know. It might well be argued that chapter 2 places ready more tools than urgently needed in chapter 3, but then again, one never knows beforehand and one day you might be very thankful for that extra-toothpick on your pocket-knife. Especially the intensive reflections on the notion of (local) script opposition and overlap have been very helpful, foremost in figuring out the central script opposition LoS between SOPHISTICATED and UNCULTIVATED as a subcategory of NORMAL VERSUS ABNORMAL and a demarcation to the ethnic script of DUMBNESS. Concerning the further application of the GTVH, one might remark that some of the Knowledge Resources (KRs) are fairly trivial and self-explanatory. The instruction manual is important before cranking a chainsaw (such the KR *Logical Mechanism*), not for a screwdriver (like the KR *Situation*). On the contrary, one of the advantages the GTVH has to offer is its

considerate all around approach, ranging from the careful collection of simple insights in some of its KRs up to elaborate abstractions in others. In short: a too selective description on my side would have felt a little eclectic.

During the process of writing this paper, quite a number of desiderata for future research have popped up. These include ...

... further research about LoS in Germany and the concept of ‘Proll-Comedy’, favorably in combination with an outside perspective offered by an (American) colleague. Furthermore, it might be interesting to evaluate and compare how OTTO WAALKES (one of the primary rocks of German comedy) manipulated the perception of jokes about Ostfrieslanders by cultivating his status as one of them.

... further clarification and research on the concepts of *Local Antonymy* and *Logical Mechanisms*.

... a more detailed reflection on the problems and potentials which problematic (i.e. non-switchable) scripts manifest in regard to intercultural communication.

... an even deeper investigation into the sociology of ethnic humor and the place rednecks may take in it. Although there was a sociologist twist to this paper, the main focus was a linguistic one. Therefore, my evaluations of ‘real redneck life’ were mostly based on rather intuitive ‘educated guesses’ and peripheral observations by an outsider. Continulative sociological studies in consideration of CHRISTIE DAVIES’ *Ethnic Humor around the World* (possibly in combination with a research-residence in ‘redneck country’ or a trailer park) would be helpful in this respect. All this should go along with a more global consideration of redneck jokes available in the vernacular, a phenomenon far exceeding FOXWORTHY’S material and apparently building much more rigidly on a mythical script of DUMBNESS.

In a complex paper, it is usually impossible to live up to everybody’s expectations. This leads me to a final prediction:

You might be a Linguist, if this paper was too sociological for you.

You might be a Sociologist, if this paper felt far too linguistic.

And of course

You might be a Redneck, if you thought “what the hale is this ’pean gah wrahtin’ ole dat cawmplicatid stuff bout mah feimily?”

As NILSEN & NILSEN claim, today’s “humorists nostalgically search for regional differences and for eccentric characters whose dialect they can exaggerate and laugh about while exploring challenges in human interactions” (2000, 253). In the redneck, it seems, they found some.

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- [0] after Table of Contents:
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- [1] <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/dd/Cletus.gif>
- [2] The Simpsons, *22 Short Films about Springfield* (season 7, episode 21, 16:28)
- [3] The Simpsons, *22 Short Films about Springfield* (season 7, episode 21, 16:30)
- [4] The Simpsons, *Sweets and Sour Marge* (season 7, episode 21, 11:49)
- [5] Family Guy, *To Love and Die in Dixie* (season 3, episode 12, 6:58)
- [6] Family Guy, *To Love and Die in Dixie* (season 3, episode 12, 19:27)
- [7] From the Cover of Bo Whaley's *The Official Redneck Handbook*.
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- [17] The Simpsons, *Yokel Chords* (season 18, episode 14, 9:41)

Appendix A: a Quantitative Analysis of 50 if-jokes

the covered material:

- a sample of 50 if-jokes consisting of the initial 32 jokes from [FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1989). *You might be a Redneck if...* Nashville (Tennessee): Rutledge Hill Press], and all the if-jokes from [FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1993). *You might be a Redneck if...* Audio Recording. USA: Warner Bros, track 3 and 7], unless already contained in the first sample.
- 17 additional jokes from FOXWORTHY 1989 especially selected by personal taste of the author for all y'all's amusement. I did not include an analysis for these and, of course, due to their subjective selection, they will not appear in the statistics.

extra labeling:

- LoS = builds on the script LACK OF SOPHISTICATION;
script opposition SOPHISTICATED / UNCULTIVATED
- (LoS) = amounting to LoS
- D = involves a DUMB script
- G = might happen in Germany, too.
- p = page-number in FOXWORTHY 1989

legend:

- → and ← indicate a world-knowledge based inference or the implicature of a phrase, or a connotation / association attributed to a lexical item – simply put: a triggered expectation or a suggested interpretation; more rarely waterproof logical implication (entailment) or presupposition.
- scripts in (...) are not actively alluded to by the text but are activated in the background as a contrasting foil of ‘implied normality’ (see definition for if-jokes type 4 and 5)

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if1) page 1	Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.	[4] rich → VILLA/TRAILER HOME ← house with wheels [3] RICH/POOR → (SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED) [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	inferring consequences, exaggeration		(LoS) Type 2
(if2) p1 (G)	You've ever used lard in bed.	[4] SPREAD/LUBRICANT ← in bed [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	lard = Schmalz	LoS Type 1
(if3) p1 G	You think potted meat on a saltine is an hours d'oeuvre.	[4] SNACK/FINE APPETIZER [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	'Kochfleisch auf Knäckebrötchen'	LoS Type 1
(if4) p2	You own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.	[4] (OWN FEW SHIRTS WITH CUT OFF SLEEVES)/MANY [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'	'funny example' 'good observation' implicit overlap	LoS Type 4
(if5) p2 G	You've ever spraypainted your girlfriend's name on an overpass.	[4] (SHOW AFFECTION WITH ROSES)/SHOW AFFECTION BY SPRAYPAINTING HER NAME ON AN OVERPASS = (WHAT PEOPLE DO)/WHAT REDNECKS DO [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNSOPHISTICATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'		LoS Type 4
(if6) p2 G	You've ever been blacklisted from a bowling alley.	[4] blacklist → CLUB/BOWLING ALLEY [3] BAD BEHAVIOR/REALLY BAD BEHAVIOR = LoS [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	One is blacklisted from a club, if one does not stick to the etiquette. The etiquette in a bowling alley is really low...	(LoS) Type 1

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if7) p3 G	Your high school annual is now a mug shot book for the police department.	[4] EDUCATION/CRIME [3] GOOD/BAD → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		(LoS) Type 1
(if8) p4 G	The highlight of your family reunion was your sister's nude dancing debut.	[4] family reunion → WELL MANNERED ATMOSPHERE / NUDE DANCING [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	Allusion to the incest taboo [specific redneck stereotype]	LoS Type 1/2
(if9) p4 (G)	You've ever done your Christmas shopping at a truck stop.	[4] Christmas gifts → EXPENSIVE MALL/TRUCK STOP [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		LoS Type 1
(if10) p4	You think heaven looks a lot like Daytona Beach, Florida.	[4] heaven → PEACEFUL PARADISE / STOCK CAR RACING ← Daytona [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition	Specific redneck stereotype: they love stock car racing.	LoS Type 3
(if11) p5	There is stuffed 'possum mounted anywhere in your home.	[4] (A NICELY DECORATED HOME WITH NICE ART)/STUFFED OPOSSUM or [4] stuffed 'possum → UGLY/HOME DÉCOR [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition (with implied 'normality?') exaggeration	Opossums are usually considered ugly – who wants to stuff that? And have it at home? See also (if64).	LoS Type 1/5
(if12) p6	You consider a six pack of beer and a bug-zapper quality entertainment.	[4] quality entertainment → HIGH ART/ LOW ART ← bug zapper and beer or BUG ZAPPER AS A TOOL/AS A SPECTACLE [3] SMART/DUMB → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		(LoS) D Type ½

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if13) p7	Your lifetime goal is to own your own fireworks stand.	[4] lifetime goal → ACHIEVE GREAT THINGS/OWN A FIREWORKS STAND [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		LoS Type 1
(if14) p7 G	You prefer to walk the excess length off your jeans rather than hem them.	[4] HEM EXCESS LENGTH/WALK IT OFF [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with explicit 'normality'	I do that, too!	LoS (Type 4)
(if15) p7	You go to a stock car race and don't need a program.	[4] stock car race: (NEED A PROGRAM)→ (UNINFORMED) → (NOT LOWER CLASS) / DO NOT NEED ONE → INFORMED → LOWER CLASS; in short: (NOT LC)/LC [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' (exaggeration)	Stock Car Racing is considered low class.	LoS Type 4/5
(if16) p8	Someone asks to see your I.D. and you show them your belt buckle.	[4] OFFICIAL I.D./NICKNAME ON A BELT BUCKLE [3] SMART/DUMB → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	Part of the redneck stereotype: a belt buckle with 'Bubba', 'Junior', etc.	(LoS) D Type 2
(if17) p9	Your junior-senior prom had a day-care center.	[4] prom → YOUNG AND INNOCENT/EARLY PREGNANCIES EN MASSE ← day care center [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	implied consequences, exaggeration	Exaggeration: usually, there might be <i>one</i> young mother... here, we have a whole care center!	LoS Type 1/2
(if18) p9 (G)	Less than half the cars you own run.	[4] (ONE FUNCTIONAL CAR)/MANY BROKEN CARS [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' (exaggeration)		LoS Type 4/5

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if19) p9 G	You grow your sideburns longer and fuller because it looks so good on your sister.	[4] sideburns → ON A MAN/SIDEBURNS ON A WOMAN [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] POSSIBLE/IMPOSSIBLE	role reversal, exaggeration		LoS Type 2
(if20) p10	Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips before telling the state patrolman to kiss her ass.	[4A] mother → (WELL BEHAVED, GENTLE)/RUDE [4B] patrolman → (SHOW RESPECT)/AFFRONT [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	role reversal (negation), staggered escalation, exaggeration	Two SOs nested together on level [4]	LoS Type 2
(if21) p11 G	The primary color of your car is “Bond-O.”	[4] COLOR/TRACES OF REPAIR [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	Bond-O = Spachtelmasse	LoS Type 1
(if22) p11	Your mounted dear head sports a baseball cap and sunglasses.	[4] dear head → ILLUSTRIOUS OVER THE CHIMNEY/SILLY WITH SUNGLASSES [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition (exaggeration)		LoS Type 1/3
(if23) p11 (G)	You have Pabst Blue Ribbon on tap in your bathroom.	[4] BEER ON TAP IN A BAR/ BEER ON TAP IN A BATHROOM [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] POSSIBLE/IMPOSSIBLE	juxtaposition exaggeration cratylism	Tap = Wasserhahn oder Zapfhahn; PBR = a cheap beer; rednecks love it	LoS Type 2
(if24) p12	Your pocketknife often doubles as a toothpick.	[4] (PICK YOUR TEETH SECRETLY IN FRONT OF A MIRROR WITH A LITTLE STICK)/USE A KNIFE IN PUBLIC [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'		LoS Type 4

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if25) p13 G	You are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.	[4A] marital problems → SERIOUS QUARRELING/ANGER ABOUT A SILLY GAME [4B] (WOMAN WEAKER THAN MAN)/WOMAN WINS AT ARM WRESTLING [4C] (FEMININITY)/ARM WRESTLING [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	inferring consequences, role reversal, staggered escalation, exaggeration		LoS Type 2
(if26) p13 (G)	You own a denim leisure suit.	[4] (OWN NO DENIM LEISURE SUIT)/OWN A DLS [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'	Denim leisure suits (jeans + jeans jacket) are considered unfashionable, retro, 70s, Western.	LoS Type 4
(if27) p13 (G)	Directions to your house include "turn off the paved road."	[4] (LIVE IN A DEVELOPED AREA)/LIVE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'		(LoS) Type 4
(if28) p14	The U.F.O. Hotline limits you to one call per day.	[4] (DO NOT BELIEVE IN U.F.O.S AND DO NOT CALL THE HOTLINE)/CALL THE U.F.O. HOTLINE FREQUENTLY [3] SMART/DUMB → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration		(LoS) D Type 5
(if29) p15 G	You know how many bales of hay your car can hold.	[4] (NOT BEING A FARMER)/BEING A FARMER ← know it [3] URBAN/RURAL → (SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED) [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality', inferring consequences		(LoS) Type 4
(if30) p15 (G)	You've ever used a Weed Eater indoors.	[4] (A TIDY HOME)/GRASS GROWS IN YOUR HOUSE ← Weed Eater indoors [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration	Weed Eater = a technical device to cut grass (Rasenkanten-trimmer)	LoS Type 5

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if31) p15 G	You honest-to-God think women are turned on by animal noises and seductive tongue gestures.	[4] (CARESSING EROTICISM)/ANIMAL NOISES IN BED [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality', exaggeration		LoS Type 4/5
(if32) p16 G	Your dog and your wallet are both on a chain.	[4] (DOG ON A LEASH & WALLET LOOSE IN POCKET)/ BOTH ON A CHAIN [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'		LoS Type 4
From CD					
(if33) track3 0:09	You've been on television more than five times describing what the tornado sounded like.	[4] (AVOIDING NATURAL DISASTER)/MARKETING THE EXPERIENCE [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration	See: joke (9)	LoS Type 5
(if34) track3 0:20 (G)	You have ever cut your grass and found a car.	[4A] SLIGHTLY LONG GRASS/REALLY LONG GRASS ← [4B] (OWN NO CAR WRECKS)/HAVE CAR WRECKS IN YOUR GARDEN AND FORGET ABOUT THEM [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	inferring consequences, exaggeration	Intratextuality: (if18)	LoS Type 2
(if35) track3 0:27 (G)	Your dad walks you to school because you're in the same grade.	[4] WALK YOUR KID TO SCHOOL BECAUSE YOU CARE / WALK TOGETHER BECAUSE IT IS YOUR SCHOOLWAY, TOO [3] SMART/DUMB (→ SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED) [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	role reversal, exaggeration	DUMB-script!	(LoS) D Type 2
(if36) track3 0:42 G	You've ever been too drunk to fish.	[4] (DRUNK BUT NOT PARALYZED)/PARALYZED: UNABLE TO HOLD A FISHING ROD [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality'		LoS Type 4
(if37) track3 1:00	You've ever had to holler a can of paint to the top of a water tower to defend your sister's honor.	[4] (DON'T DO THAT)/DO IT [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration	Intratextuality: this is the Type 4 version of (if5); (if5) helps to understand.	LoS Type 5

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if38) track3 1:24 G	Every day somebody comes to your door mistakenly thinking you're having a yard-sale.	[4] (TIDY FRONT YARD)/VERY MESSY FRONT YARD ← [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration		LoS Type 5
(if39) track3 1:35 G	You've ever financed a tattoo.	[4] finance → BIG THINGS LIKE HOUSE OR CAR/TATTOO [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition (exaggeration)		LoS Type 1/3
(if40) track3 1:46 G	You've ever made change in the offering plate.	[4] (BE GENEROUS WITH THE LORD) / MAKE CHANGE IN THE OFFERING PLATE [3] GENEROUS/STINGY → SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied normality, exaggeration	"Wechselgeld aus der Kollekte nehmen"	(LoS) Type 5
(if41) track3 1:59 G	You go to the family reunion to meet women.	[4] GO TO THE FAMILY REUNION TO MEET YOUR RELATIVES / GO THERE TO MEET WOMEN = NO INCEST / INCEST [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration	Breaking taboo: incest	LoS Type 2
(if42) track3 2:22 G	You see a sign that says 'Say no to crack!' and it reminds you to pull your jeans up.	[4] FIGHT DRUGS/COVER YOUR BEHIND [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	Cratylism inferring consequences exaggeration	Redneck Stereotype: pants are sitting too loose.	LoS Type 2
(if43) track7 0:51 G	Going to the bathroom in the middle of the night involves shoes and a flashlight.	[4] (HAVE A BATHROOM INSIDE THE HOUSE) / PEEING IN THE GARDEN OR outhouse ← [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition inferring consequences	German: 'Dixie Klo'	LoS Type 4/5
(if44) track7 1:06 (G)	You smoked during your wedding.	[4] (STICK TO THE FORMAL ETIQUETTE OF A WEDDING) / SMOKING (not the suit, but the action!) [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied reality (exaggeration)		LoS Type 4/5

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if45) track7 1:13	People ask to hunt in your front yard.	[4] (LIVE IN URBAN AREA)/LIVE IN DEEP COUNTRY ← [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' (exaggeration)		LoS Type 4/5
(if46) track7 1:21	Your mother keeps a spit cup on the ironing board.	[4] mother → DOMESTIC ANGLE / CHEWING TOBACCO WHILE IRONING [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	role reversal, exaggeration	Spit cup = cup used to spit chewing tobacco in	LoS Type 1
(if47) track7 1:31	Your two-year old has more teeth than you do.	[4] (HAVE ABOUT 30 TEETH) / HAVE VERY FEW TEETH ← [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED (RICH/POOR – NO DENTAL CARE) [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition with implied 'normality' exaggeration	Common Redneck Stereotype: lack of teeth	LoS Type 5
(if48) track7 1:40	Your checks feature pictures of dogs-fighting.	[4] checks → SERIOUS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS / PICTURES OF DOGS FIGHTING [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		LoS Type 1
(if49) track7 1:48 G	You have an above-ground pool and you fish in it.	[4] above ground pool → CLEAN AND BLUE AND ONLY WATER / DIRTY AND INHABITED BY FISH [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	juxtaposition exaggeration		LoS Type 1
(if50) track7 1:59 G	Your mother has ever come out of the bathroom and said: "Y'all come here and look at this 'fore I flush it..."	[4] mother → (WELL BEHAVED, GENTLE)/SHOWS FECES [3] SOPHISTICATED/UNCULTIVATED [2] NORMAL/ABNORMAL	role reversal exaggeration		LoS Type 2

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
Selected Extras					
(if51) p31	You've ever hollered, "Rock the house, Bubba!" during a piano recital.				
(if52) p32	Thanksgiving dinner was ruined because you ran out of ketchup.				
(if53) p33	Your mother has ever been involved in a fistfight at a high school sports event.			'rednecks breed rednecks'	
(if54) p36	The neighbors started a petition over your Christmas lights.			Common stereotype	
(if55) p37	You've ever ridden all the way to Florida with your bare feet hanging out the car window.				
(if56) p38	You view duct-tape as a long-term investment.			'Panzerband'	
(if57) p52	You wonder how service stations keep their restrooms so clean.				
(if58) p53	You can spit without opening your mouth.			Chewing tobacco	
(if59) p56	You call your boss "dude."			Southern American English	
(if60) p57	You think a Volvo is part of a woman's anatomy. (<i>You just paid \$2500 for a used WHAT?</i>)				
(if61) p74	Your sister's educational goal is to get out of high school before she gets pregnant.				

	You might be a redneck if...	SO on levels [4], [3], [2], [1] = REAL/UNREAL	LM	Comment	Label
(if62) p17	The kids are going hungry tonight because you just had to have the Yosemite Sam mud flaps.			‘Schlamm-Klappen’ on a truck	
(if63) p20	You don’t think baseball players spit and scratch too much.				
(if64) p20	You owe a taxidermist more than your annual income.			Taxidermist = Tierpräparator; see also (if11)	
(if65) p20	During your wedding, when you kissed the bride, your John Deere hat fell off.			Tractor company	
(if66) p25	Your family tree does not fork.	→ FORK / NOT FORK		‘Family tree’ activates the script <i>forked</i> (prototype); incest = taboo.	
(if67) p26	Your wife’s hairdo has ever been ruined by a ceiling fan.			Redneck women have huge hair... (stereotype)	

Appendix B¹: List of Abbreviations and Jokes used in this Paper.

Abbreviations:

BF	Bona Fide
GTVH	General Theory of Verbal Humor
KR	Knowledge Resource (of the GTVH)
LA	Language (one of the KRs)
LM	Logical Mechanism (one of the KRs)
LoS	= Lack of Sophistication; the script opposition between SOPHISTICATED and UNCULTIVATED
NBF	Non-Bona Fide
NS	Narrative Strategy (one of the KRs)
SI	Situation (one of the KRs)
SO	Script Opposition (one of the KRs)
SSTH	Semantic Script Theory of Humor
TA	Target (one of the KRs)

Jokes:

- (1) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
(if1) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 1)
- (2) *European* as in “Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!”
(FOXWORTHY 2005, Preface)
- (3) Who has the loudest bark in the woods? – The weeping willow.
(home-made)
- (4) “How did you manage to get *that* old, smoking and drinking hard?” the reporter asked the wrinkled and limp redneck sitting in the mids of empty cans and cigarette butts. – “What ya mean? I’m twenty-three!”
(author unknown)
- (5) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says “Well, I can’t seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol.” The redneck replies: “Well, then, I’ll come back when you’re sober.”
(ATTARDO & HEMPELMANN & DI MAIO 2002, 16)
- (6) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him with unsteady hands mumbles “Well... I can’t... se... seem to find the prrproblem *hicks*, but I thinkithastodo *hihihi* with alcohol.” The redneck replies: “Well, then, I’ll come back when you’re sober.”
(a version of (5) manipulated by this author)

- (7) If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this advice for thy dowry: be thou as white as snow, as red as blood, as black as ebony, thou shalt not escape your charming prince.
(home-made)
- (8) What is blue and standing at the roadside? – A prostitute.
(author unknown, my translation)
- (9) What do a hurricane, a tornado, and a redneck divorce all have in common? – Someone's going to lose their trailer...
(<http://www.coping-with-epilepsy.com/forums/f21/redneck-jokes-5887/> [July 12, 2009])
- (10) A ventriloquist was making fun of rednecks with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry redneck jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, "I resent that!" The ventriloquist started apologizing to the redneck, but he just looked at him and hissed, "You stay outta this, I'm talking to the guy on your lap!"
(based on http://www.geocities.com/redneck_jokes/ [July 12, 2009])
- (11) What starts with E, ends with E and only has one letter? – An envelope.
(<http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html> [July 12, 2009])
- (12) How do you know that a person from West Virginia invented the tooth-brush? – Anywhere else it would have been called *teeth-brush*!
(compare http://www.actionsignslv.com/S915_TEETH_BRUSH.jpg [July 13, 2009])
- (13) You might be a redneck if... you see a sign that says 'Say no to Crack!' and it reminds you to pull your jeans up.
(FOXWORTHY 1993, track 3, 2:22)
- (14) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it. = (1)
- (15) You might be a redneck if... You've ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop.
= (if9) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 4)
- (16) You might be a redneck if... The highlight of your family reunion was your sister's nude dancing debut.
= (if8) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 4)
- (17) You might be a redneck if... Your family tree does not fork.
= (if66) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 25)
- (18) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it. = (1)
- (19) You might be a redneck if... Someone asks to see your I.D. and you show them your belt buckle.
= (if16) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 8)
- (20) You might be a redneck if... You think heaven looks a lot like Daytona Beach, Florida.
= (if10) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 4)
- (21) You might be a redneck if... You own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.
= (if4) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 2)

- (22) You might be a redneck if... You've ever spraypainted your girlfriend's name on an overpass.
= (if5) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 2)
- (23) You might be a redneck if... Directions to your house include "turn off the paved road."
= (if27) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 13)
- (24) You might be a redneck if... The U.F.O. Hotline limits you to one call per day.
= (if28) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 14)
- (25) You might be a redneck if... You've ever made change in the offering plate.
= (if40) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1993, track3, 1:46)
- (26) You might be a redneck if... There is stuffed 'possum mounted anywhere in your home.
= (if11) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 5)
- (27) You might be a redneck if... Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips before telling the state patrolman to kiss her ass.
= (if20) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 10)
- (27)^b You might be a redneck if... Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips to kiss her kids good night / speak to the pastor / beg for money / visit the pulmonologist / etc.
(a version of (27) manipulated by this author)
- (28) You might be a redneck if... You have ever cut your grass and found a car.
= (if34) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1993, track3, 0:20)
- (29) You might be a redneck if... Less than half the cars you own run.
= (if18) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 9)
- (30) You might be a redneck if... You've ever used a Weed Eater indoors.
= (if30) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 15)
- (31) You might be a redneck if... You've ever used lard in bed.
= (if2) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 1)
- (32) You might be a redneck if... You are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.
= (if25) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1989, 13)
- (32)^b ...you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at hide-and-seek.
(a version of (32) manipulated by this author)
- (33) This Irishman felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says "Well, I can't seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol." The Irish replies: "Well, then, I'll come back when you're sober."
(a retargeted version of (5))
- (34) A ventriloquist was making fun of Irish people with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry Irish jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, "I resent that!" The ventriloquist started apologizing to the Irish, but he just looked at him and hissed, "You stay outta this, I'm talking to the guy on your lap!"
(a retargeted version of (10))

- (35) You might be Irish if... you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.
(a retargeted version of (32))
- (36)* You might be Irish if... you've ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop.
(an attempt at retargeting (15))
- (37)* You might be Irish if... your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
(an attempt at retargeting (1))
- (38)* You might be Irish if... you own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.
(an attempt at retargeting (21))
- (39) You might be a Redneck if... your dad walks you to school because you're in the same grade.
= (if35) in **Appendix A**; FOXWORTHY (1993, track 3, 0:27)
- (40) *European* as in "Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!" = (2)
- (41) **Ar•ma•ged•don** [ärm-ə-ge'-din], *n. and v.* putting oneself in a position for action.
"I tell ya, if it gets any crazier, **Armageddon** outta here."
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 4)
- (42) **as•par•a•gus** [ə-sper'-ə-gəs], *n.* ambivalence about having to install a replacement for an air-filled rubber wheel. "I got a flat, so I'm gonna have to put on **asparagus**."
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 7)
- (43) **afar** [ə-fār'], *n.* an object in the state of combustion.
"There's no sense bein' this cold—let's build **afar**."
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 3)
- (44) **Eu•phra•tes** [yü-frāt'-ēz], *n. and adj.* to be in fear of bodily harm from a male.
"What's the matter, Timmy? **Euphrates** gonna hit ya?"
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 47)
- (45) **op•pose** [əp'-ōz], *prep. and n.* into an elevated position on more than one thing.
"Let's climb **oppose** trees."
(FOXWORTHY 2005, 96)
- (46) "Pedro," asks the geography teacher. "Which continent has England, Norway, Poland, and Spain on it?" Pedro keeps silent. "Well, Pedro?" Dead silence. "Come on, Pedro," says the teacher, "European." "No," answers Pedro, "my pants are dry."
(RASKIN 1985, 186)

Appendix B²: A Convenient Take-Out List of Abbreviations and Jokes

Abbreviations:

BF	Bona Fide
GTVH	General Theory of Verbal Humor
KR	Knowledge Resource (of the GTVH)
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LM	Logical Mechanism (one of the KR's)
LoS	= Lack of Sophistication; the script opposition between SOPHISTICATED and UNCULTIVATED
NBF	Non-Bona Fide
NS	Narrative Strategy (one of the KR's)
SI	Situation (one of the KR's)
SO	Script Opposition (one of the KR's)
SSTH	Semantic Script Theory of Humor
TA	Target (one of the KR's)

Jokes:

- (1) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
- (2) *European* as in "Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!"
- (3) Who has the loudest bark in the woods? – The weeping willow.
- (4) "How did you manage to get *that* old, smoking and drinking hard?" the reporter asked the wrinkled and limp redneck sitting in the mids of empty cans and cigarette butts. – "What ya mean? I'm twenty-three!"
- (5) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says "Well, I can't seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol." The redneck replies: "Well, then, I'll come back when you're sober."
- (6) This redneck felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him with unsteady hands mumbles "Well... I can't... se... seem to find the prrroblem *hicks*, but I thinkithastodo *hihihi* with alcohol." The redneck replies: "Well, then, I'll come back when you're sober."
- (7) If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this advice for thy dowry: be thou as white as snow, as red as blood, as black as ebony, thou shalt not escape your charming prince.
- (8) What is blue and standing at the roadside? – A prostitute.
- (9) What do a hurricane, a tornado, and a redneck divorce all have in common? – Someone's going to lose their trailer...
- (10) A ventriloquist was making fun of rednecks with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry redneck jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, "I resent that!" The ventriloquist started apologizing to the redneck, but he just looked at him and hissed, "You stay outta this, I'm talking to the guy on your lap!"
- (11) What starts with E, ends with E and only has one letter? – An envelope.
- (12) How do you know that a person from West Virginia invented the tooth-brush? – Anywhere else it would have been called *teeth-brush!*
- (13) You might be a redneck if... you see a sign that says 'Say no to Crack!' and it reminds you to pull your jeans up.
- (14) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
- (15) You might be a redneck if... You've ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop.
- (16) You might be a redneck if... The highlight of your family reunion was your sister's nude dancing debut.
- (17) You might be a redneck if... Your family tree does not fork.

- (18) You might be a redneck if... Your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
- (19) You might be a redneck if... Someone asks to see your I.D. and you show them your belt buckle.
- (20) You might be a redneck if... You think heaven looks a lot like Daytona Beach, Florida.
- (21) You might be a redneck if... You own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.
- (22) You might be a redneck if... You've ever spraypainted your girlfriend's name on an overpass.
- (23) You might be a redneck if... Directions to your house include "turn off the paved road."
- (24) You might be a redneck if... The U.F.O. Hotline limits you to one call per day.
- (25) You might be a redneck if... You've ever made change in the offering plate.
- (26) You might be a redneck if... There is stuffed 'possum mounted anywhere in your home.
- (27) You might be a redneck if... Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips before telling the state patrolman to kiss her ass.
- (27)^b You might be a redneck if... Your mother does not remove the Marlboro from her lips to kiss her kids good night / speak to the pastor / beg for money / visit the pulmonologist / etc.
- (28) You might be a redneck if... You have ever cut your grass and found a car.
- (29) You might be a redneck if... Less than half the cars you own run.
- (30) You might be a redneck if... You've ever used a Weed Eater indoors.
- (31) You might be a redneck if... You've ever used lard in bed.
- (32) You might be a redneck if... You are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.
- (32)^b ...you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at hide-and-seek.
- (33) This Irishman felt sick and decided to go to the doctor. The doctor examining him says "Well, I can't seem to find the problem, but I think it has to do with alcohol." The Irish replies: "Well, then, I'll come back when you're sober."
- (34) A ventriloquist was making fun of Irish people with his dummy at a bar. Suddenly an angry Irish jumped up, rolled up his sleeves, and yelled, "I resent that!" The ventriloquist started apologizing to the Irish, but he just looked at him and hissed, "You stay outta this, I'm talking to the guy on your lap!"
- (35) You might be Irish if... you are having marital problems because your wife never lets you win at arm wrestling.
- (36)* You might be Irish if... you've ever done your Christmas Shopping at a truck stop.
- (37)* You might be Irish if... your richest relative buys a new house and you have to help take the wheels of it.
- (38)* You might be Irish if... you own more than three shirts with the sleeves cut off.
- (39) You might be a Redneck if... your dad walks you to school because you're in the same grade.
- (40) *European* as in "Hey dude, turn that way! European on my boot!"
- (41) **Ar•ma•ged•don** [ärm-ə-ge'-din], *n. and v.* putting oneself in a position for action. "I tell ya, if it gets any crazier, **Armageddon** outta here."
- (42) **as•par•a•gus** [ə-sper'-ə-gəs], *n.* ambivalence about having to install a replacement for an air-filled rubber wheel. "I got a flat, so I'm gonna have to put on **asparagus**."
- (43) **afar** [ə-fär'], *n.* an object in the state of combustion. "There's no sense bein' this cold-let's build **afar**."
- (44) **Eu•phra•tes** [yù-frāt'-ēz], *n. and adj.* to be in fear of bodily harm from a male. "What's the matter, Timmy? **Euphrates** gonna hit ya?"
- (45) **op•pose** [əp'-ōz], *prep. and n.* into an elevated position on more than one thing. "Let's climb **oppose** trees."
- (46) "Pedro," asks the geography teacher. "Which continent has England, Norway, Poland, and Spain on it?" Pedro keeps silent. "Well, Pedro?" Dead silence. "Come on, Pedro," says the teacher, "European." "No," answers Pedro, "my pants are dry."

Appendix C: CD

The enclosed CD contains

➤ Three Documents:

→ this paper as .pdf, .odt (OpenOffice), .doc

➤ Six Audio Tracks (mainly mp3):

→ FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1993). “Words in the South”. Track 2 on: *You might be a Redneck if...* Audio Recording. USA: Warner Bros.

→ FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1993). “You might be a Redneck if...”. Track 3 on: *You might be a Redneck if...* Audio Recording. USA: Warner Bros.

→ FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1993). “You might be a Redneck if... Pt 2”. Track 7 on: *You might be a Redneck if...* Audio Recording. USA: Warner Bros.

→ FOXWORTHY, JEFF (1995). “Southern Accent”. On: *Games Rednecks Play*. Audio Recording. USA: Warner Bros / Wea. [real player]

Free download from: <http://www.jefffoxworthy.com/media/>

→ WILSON, GRETCHEN (2004). “Redneck Woman”. On: *Here for the Party*. New York: Epic Records.

→ WORLEY, DARRYL (2003). “Have you forgotten?”. On: *Have you forgotten?* Nashville: DreamWorksRecords.

➤ Three Video Files:

→ JERRY CLOWER on rednecks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLnAZtdnZWU> [August 19, 2009]

→ the Berlitz© advertisement mentioned in 2.5.1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmOTpIVxji8> [August 19, 2009]

→ the Redneck Woman “reality remix”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0oBUdFoj9w> [August 19, 2009]

Echtheitserklärung.

Ich erkläre hiermit an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Masterarbeit (*Redneck Jokes as a Subcultural Phenomenon*) selbständig verfasst sowie die benutzten Quellen und Hilfsmittel vollständig angegeben habe und dass die Arbeit nicht bereits als Prüfungsarbeit vorgelegen hat.

Melvin Haack, Braunschweig, 20.08.2009