NEWS SATIRE IN THE PRESS: LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF HUMOUR IN SPOOF NEWS ARTICLES

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News satire crosses media boundaries and sports a great variety of channels and types, from satirical magazines to TV mock shows and Web spoof sites. Fake newspapers, in particular, exhibit features of parodic mimicry, social critique and humorous incongruity, turning a simultaneously critical and amused eye on the foibles of fellow humans and politicians. The present article offers a linguistic model of the elements involved in this media genre. After briefly reviewing the history of spoof journalism and discussing the intricate concepts of satire and parody, it will concentrate on the elements that are constitutive of the linguistic construction of spoof news articles. The intertextual, critical and comic components will be defined and, then, described in the particular case of a Portuguese mock newspaper. Other subcomponents, namely structural, stylistic, lexical, pragmatic and rhetorical mechanisms, will also be examined. The article thus expects to bring fresh input into the comprehension of how parodic news satire in the press is linguistically organised.

Introduction

What does "The Vulture" (a poem by Robert Brough, 1853) have in common with Marcel Duchamp's reproduction of Mona Lisa with a moustache ("LHOOC", 1919) and Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks* (1996)? The answer to this rather obvious riddle is that they are all satirical parodies—respectively, of Poe's "The Raven" (1845), of Da Vinci's "Gioconda" (c. 1519) and of such films as

Haskin's *The War of the Worlds* (1953). A fourth element of comparison could be added: the British satirical magazine *Private Eye* or the American fake newspaper *The Onion*, two cases of spoof news in the print media. Varied as they are in form and medium, ranging from literature and painting to cinema and the press, all these works share an element of humorous imitation, of intertextual play, and of comical allusion. At the same time, they poke fun at the ways and follies of society by criticising political figures, social characters, cultural references, situations and events of everyday life. As such, they merge parodic and satirical components in a typically multi-voiced type of discourse.

The present article looks at a specific case of parodic news satire—the Portuguese spoof newspaper *The Public Enemy*—with a view to unveiling the linguistic mechanisms of parodic satire in the press. Up until now, studies on satire have mainly focused on literature (major critical works include Frye 1944, Elliott 1960, Kernan 1965, and Paulson 1967), as well as other aesthetic forms, like painting (see e.g. Plagens 1986) and cinema (McCaffrey 1992, Gehring 1999, Juhasz and Lerner 2006). As to news satire, scholarly approaches have privileged its sociological and political dimension, or have sprung from media and communication studies (e.g. Cogan and Kelso 2009), but little insight has been offered with regard to its linguistic organization.

So as to help fill this gap, the present article offers an exploratory linguistic model of parodic news satire. The first section attempts to define the object of analysis—spoof news in the press—by locating it within a wider practice of fake journalism in the media, from TV to the Internet. The second section briefly reviews the literature on satire and parody—vain though it may be to wish for an overview of two leviathan topics with Greco-Roman roots—with a view to extracting a set of distinctive features of satiric news parody. The third section looks into the linguistics of humour by focusing on the foundational notion of incongruity, on the one hand, and of script opposition and overlap (Raskin 1985), on the other. The

fourth section propounds a linguistic model of parodic news satire. Finally, the fifth section applies the model to a set of texts by identifying the linguistic and textual mechanisms that shape them. It is hoped that the various analytic elements taken together will shed new light on how humour works in this specific media genre.

1. News satire, or fake journalism

A glimpse at present-day mass media—from TV to the Web—provides a great number of examples of parodic news satire: television programmes such as *Mock the Week* and *The Now Show* in the UK and *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in the US (on TV political satire, see e.g. Gray et al 2009), satirical radio quiz shows like British *The News Quiz* or American *On the Hour*, and mock news websites such as *Scunt News* and *The Giant Napkin* (only two among a multitude of cases that proliferate on the Net, a particularly thriving medium). A common trait to all these examples is that they turn everyday newsworthy events into comical fake counterparts with a greater or lesser resemblance to the original.

In the press, parodic news satire keeps the format of mainstream news coverage—the headline layout, the structure of the news story, the linguistic style—but the content clearly parodies reality. Exaggeration and nonsense are two key ingredients to this game of intertextual re-creation and playful mimicry. Indeed, as Evrard (1996: 70) remarks, the comic deformation of the hypertext occurring in parody is often achieved through hyperbole—a stylistic device that caricatures and exaggerates the properties of the source-text. Most of the time, the basis for the mock news story is taken from an actual event, e.g. a statement made by a politician, an incident in the stock market, a new law, a natural disaster, a crime, and so on. This actual basis then undergoes a "subversion of factuality", a "blurring of the line between fact and fiction", as Roscoe and Hight (2001: 4) put it. In other words, the factual substratum is comically extended to a fictitious construction where it

becomes incongruous or even absurd, in a way that intersects entertainment with criticism. According to Day (2011: 43), these news stories "rely heavily on deconstructions of real news events, … blending the mimetic with the real"—and in so doing they "tread a much finer line between news and entertainment, satire and political argument". More rarely, the factual basis for the news story is absent, just like its present-day news flavour, but the piece does not lose its critical slant: it is a made-up humorous portrait of some pervasive social aspect of reality, for instance male/female relationships, the generation gap, bosses and employees, consumerism, etc.

Far from being a recent phenomenon, news satire has been claimed to be as old as journalism itself. Often referred to as "fake news", "spoof news", or "mock journalism", the media genre may have been created by R.A. Locke, a journalist of *The New York Sun* who in 1835 published a sham series which came to be called "The Great Moon Hoax" (see Willis 2010: 19). Likewise, Mark Twain's famous hoax articles, such as "Petrified man" (1862) and "A bloody massacre near Carson" (1863), are made-up stories which propagated massively due to the readers' credulity. According to Florence (1995: 38, 40), Twain's hoaxes mix "the sensational with the ordinary, … fact and fancy, humour and atrocity, all the while playing with frames of reference". Intentionally deceptive, these inaugural forms did not depart from actual events, but instead created entirely imaginary situations so as to feed the readers' thirst for shocking sensations and satirise their manias in the meantime.

Later on, 20th-century forms of spoof news in the press—such as the above-mentioned *Private Eye* magazine, launched in 1961 (see e.g. Simpson 2003)—came to rely on the readers' capacity to identify the original reference and spot the humorous game. So, instead of misleading, like their 19th-century counterparts, fake news stories became comic, but not in a shallow sort of way. Indeed, spoof journalism has been claimed to promote forms of political participation of otherwise passive audiences, whose

thinking it encourages by way of humorous diversion. As Cogan and Kelso (2009: 121) remark, the sort of "entertainment" found in news satire "may serve to stimulate in-depth thought and discourse rather than simply distract or serve as a distraction". In fact, humour seems to serve as a way to arouse the readers' attention, amuse them, and at the same time awaken their capacity to judge contemporary society.

2. In between satire and parody

Spoof news discourse combines elements of satire (which explains its usual alias, "news satire") and parody, two frequently confused terms which require a clarification of their own. Indeed, as is often the case in humour studies, there seems to be little accord over where one begins and the other ends, and scholars seldom agree on how to ascertain their conceptual boundaries. To make matters worse, the history of their usage is as long as it is muddled. Yet, any attempt at analysing how humour works in this type of media game—fake news—involves briefly elucidating the two concepts, which bear indisputable literary ancestry.

The origins of satire can be traced back to the Greek world, with Aristophanes and Menippus of Gadara, who developed a type of satire that was "intensely personal" in its "attack on human failings and vices", going as far as representing real existing persons on the stage (Gum 1969: 81). With the Roman masters Horace and Juvenal, two important traditions began: Horatian satire is seen as a milder and more amicable form of criticism of social faults, "sweetening the pill of moral correction with humour instead of souring it with malice and envy" (Gowers 2005: 51); whereas Juvenalian satire, "akin to a tragic mode, is meant to induce fear and is uncompromisingly harsh and moralistic" (Dyer 1997: 39).

With the Renaissance, France witnessed the appearance of one of its major satirists, Rabelais, who combined "the most exquisite classical learning and the most indecorous

popular humour" (Duval 2007: 70). In Britain it was with the Enlightenment that a strong revival of satire occurred, as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) and Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729) attest. But this period also boasts relevant forerunners of the genre of satirical journalism. Swift himself, in his endeavours as a Tory journalist, mockingly criticised religion and learning, thus becoming an archetype of modern journalistic satire. As Starkman (1962: 7) remarks, "Swift's journalism achieved such a high pitch of virtuosity that topical journalism became universal satire." A contemporary satirist who also applied his talent to journalism and pamphleteering was Daniel Defoe, famous for *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), a satiric poem on patriotic xenophobia (on Defoe's journalism, see e.g. McKay 2007).

Victorian England produced important satiric literature. Dickens, for one thing, wrote satirically about such themes as law, bureaucracy and education, "being able to raise a hearty laugh whilst pointing his lesson" (Gissing, 2004: 63), whereas Thackeray brilliantly satirised Victorian materialism in *Vanity Fair* (see Catalan 2009: 38). But it is the emergence of satiric magazines, like *Punch* (1841) and *Fun* (1861), that make this period particularly noteworthy. Both publications functioned as a political and social counterweight, challenging the dominant classes and siding with the oppressed. As Walasek (2009: 13) puts it, *Punch* magazine at the start "had radical ideas of social justice, unafraid to be a thorn in the side of the powers that be". Likewise, *Fun* defied the Establishment, boldly shedding satirical contempt or applaud onto both poles of the political spectrum alike (see e.g. Vaan 1994).

Heir to this rich lineage, 20th-century satire sports a great variety of forms and genres, which thrive on the very diversity of existing communication channels, from the press to televised and cybernetic media, and which cover literature (with such renowned satirists as Sinclair Lewis, Aldous Huxley, and Evelyn Waugh), the arts, information and popular culture. All these types turn a critical eye on the foibles of society, raising a frown as much as a laugh.

In an attempt to offer a definition for satire, critics have often, rather evasively, intersected it with the notion of parody. Quintero (2007: 6) rightly notes the "consanguineous confusion of trying to define satire with the help of similarly pettifogging terms, such as 'parody'". Elliott (2004), for instance, considers parody a "method" of satire:

> Satire [is an] artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, *parody*, caricature, or *other methods*, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform. (Emphasis added)

Aware of the overlap, Nabokov, in *Strong Opinions* (1973: 75), renders the difference between the two terms in a fairly concise way: "Satire is a lesson, parody is a game." Or, in other words, satire carries a pedagogical slant, ridiculing society into improvement, whereas parody is technically an imitative exercise which does not necessarily have an instructive, or edifying, intention.

Hutcheon (1985), in an acclaimed discussion of parodic art forms in the 20th century, also attempts to bridge the gap between the two concepts. Parody, she claims, is "a form of indirect as well as a double-voiced discourse" which retains a "critical distance" from the parodied other (Hutcheon 1985: xiv). And she adds:

> It is this critical distance, however, that has always permitted satire to be so effectively deployed through the textual forms of parody. … Satirists continue to use the pointed and effective doubling of parody's voices as a vehicle to unmask the duplicities of modern society. (Hutcheon 1985: xiv)

Parody, therefore, is a "vehicle", that is, a means, a way, a mode, to bring satire into life. This mode is typically intertextual, in that it sets a new text (be it verbal, pictorial, or audio-visual) against a previously existing one, requiring

the recipient's acknowledgement of the source. Several scholars explore this line of thought. Dentith (2000: 9) defines parody as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice", and Catalan (2009: 54) claims that parody lies in a "clash between the *appearance* inherent in clichéd formulations and the *reality* of verisimilar presentation of character and action."

In the tradition of literary criticism, parody met with an ideological battle over its forms, purposes, and functions. As Muller (1997) points out, opponents alternated with advocates of parody, depending on the conventions and inspirations of each epoch. In the romantic period, for instance, with the cult of the artist as an inspired genius, the reception of parody was problematic: parody was frowned upon as paying no "respect to acclaimed works of art and their creators", as having "a tasteless humour" and, therefore, as ultimately "damag[ing] its intertext" (1997: 5). With the avant-garde movement, conversely, parody came to be seen as "a most useful critical tool for laying bare encrusted literary (and other) conventions, as a catalyst for the development of new forms" (1997: 6).

Roughly put, parody resides in keeping the outside but altering the inside. Rose (1993: 15) briefly renders parody as "imitation of form with a change to content", but she rightly notes that this definition does not suffice: "The creation of comic incongruity or discrepancy will be taken as a significant distinguishing factor in parody" (1993: 31). And the essence of parodic humour, she adds, lies in "raising an expectation for X and giving Y", in "contrasting the serious with the absurd, the high with the low, (…) the pious with the impious, and so on" (1993: 33).

The scope of parody is twofold. Chambers (2010: 48) speaks of *specific parody* and *general parody*: both employ what he calls a "parasitic methodology", but the former does so to particular individuals, whereas the latter targets "various schools or whole types of writing or art". Put another way, parody copycats either an author or a genre.

Taken against the forms of satire and parody just examined, spoof news in the press can be regarded as a *parodic form* (an intertextual game wherein two texts—the original one and the fake one—are set against one another resulting in comic incongruity) with *satirical content* (i.e. with a critical intention of laying bare, by way of ridicule, the wrongs of politics and society). This satirical content tends to be rendered in a more amicable (Horatian) than aggressive (Juvenalian) manner, even if actual public figures are under fire (as is also the case in Menippean satire), given the evidently humorous, rather than moralistic, nature of the texts.

Unlike the parodies of canonical literary and artistic works like, say, Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan* by Rabelais (see e.g. Rigolot 1985) or Tolstoi's *War and Peace* by Woody Allen (in the film *Love and Death,* 1975), the satirical parody of the news genre does not target an individual author (or a specific journalist or reporter). As such, it is not what Chambers (2010: 48) calls "specific parody"; rather, it should be seen as a case of "general parody", since it is a genre—the news genre—that gets to be parodied. But this genre, much unlike the supreme art forms raised to the pedestal of geniality, is designed for mass public consumption, which partly explains why a parody of it does not shock so much as it amuses. Therefore, news parody neutralizes the "polemical allusive imitation" inherent in parody, to which Dentith (2000: 9) refers, and seems to be received in a more tolerant way.

3. Humour, incongruity and script opposition

An understanding of the workings of humour in parodic news satire requires a brief discussion of incongruity, a vital concept which is at the basis of most linguistic accounts of humour (on a more detailed synopsis, see e.g. Ermida 2008) and which, together with surprise, underlies centuries of reflection on the nature of laughter (a rather lame precursor of the term "humour", which only emerged in the 18th century—see Escarpit 1960: 3).

Aristotle is credited for having been the first to notice the "element of surprise" present in "novelties of expression", in face of which "the listener anticipates one thing but hears another" (see *Rhetoric,* 3.11). In the Roman period, Cicero claims that "when we are expecting to hear a particular phrase, and something different is uttered … our own mistake even makes us laugh ourselves" (*De Oratore*, II-lxiii.255), whereas Quintilian holds that the "adaptation to one thing of a circumstance which usually applies to something else [is] a type of jest which we may regard as being an ingenious form of fiction" (*Institutio Oratoria* VI-iii.61). In the Renaissance, Madius in *De Ridiculis* (1550) highlights surprise (*admiratio*) as a backbone of comedy, whereas Trissino (1562), following in Aristotle's footsteps, maintains that the comic effect results from the audience's frustrated expectations (see Attardo 1994). In the Enlightenment the concept of incongruity reappears with James Beattie, who contends that laughter "arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage". Kant (1790: 133), one of the most distinguished thinkers to have elaborated on humour, asserts that "[i]n everything that is to excite a lively convulsive laugh there must be something absurd", and Schopenhauer (1818: 59) defends that laughter "results from the suddenly perceived incongruity between a concept and the real objects".

At the beginning of the 20th century, two crucial approaches to humour place the concept of incongruity at its centre. One is Bergson (1900: 74), who states that a situation "is always comic whenever it simultaneously belongs to two absolutely independent series of events that hide two different sets of meanings", and the other is Freud (1905: 365), who introduces a chief distinction between funniness and strangeness: "The comic phenomenon results from contrasting representations, yes, but only insofar as they give rise to a comic effect and not to a strange one". Later on, Koestler (1964), in an influential book entitled *The Art of Creation*, defends that humour involves a

process of "bisociation" whereby a semantic displacement occurs, be it from a metaphorical to a literal dimension (cf. 1964: 36), or from a current, "dominant", signification to a previously neglected aspect of the whole (1964: 91).

Regardless of the importance these contributions bore to grasping the nature of the humorous phenomenon, the comprehension of its strictly linguistic character was to be provided by Raskin, who in 1985 propounded a "semantic theory of humour" that quickly established itself as a cornerstone of humour studies, thus superseding the hitherto superficial and unsystematic approaches to verbal humour that existed. Raskin's two necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be humorous are a) the existence of two opposing scripts (a *script* being "a large chunk of information surrounding a word or evoked by it"—Raskin 1985: 81) and b) the occurrence of partial or complete script overlap. Being unexpected, this overlap causes surprise and perplexity, as the incongruity paradigm stipulates. Later developed in a so-called General Theory of Verbal Humour (with Attardo 1991) and recently expanded into an Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour (with Hempelman and Taylor 2009), the bases of Raskin's original Semantic Script Theory of Humour remain operationally valid.

A discussion of the mechanisms of linguistic humour in spoof news articles, as is the case at present, cannot ignore the incongruity paradigm or, more specifically, the script theory framework if it is to be semantically, as well as pragmatically, based. As we will see next, the occurrence of lexically evoked semantic oppositions which overlap and cause surprise is responsible for most verbal humour in the spoof news stories under focus. The lexical organization of the text or, to put it simply, the words it employs, are therefore the first tool to accessing the scripts that underlie it. But an important point to make is that a script approach to humour is also to a great extent pragmatic. In essence, the notion of *script* is actually a pragmatic one, inasmuch as it depends on the participants' worldview. Indeed, unlike the lexicon, which is listed in dictionaries, scripts cannot be

"dictionarised", exactly because the correspondences which bring them together, or the nodes on the script web that connect them, depend on each speaker's frames of reference, living experience, and general culture.

4. A linguistic model of parodic news satire

Bearing in mind the various contributions to the comprehension of satire, parody and humour just reviewed, and given the lack of a comprehensive, integrative, account of the elements they put forth together with the linguistic mechanisms at work in the specific case of parodic news satire in the print media, the present section offers a tentative model. It is a threefold framework of analysis, involving three major components, two of which exhibit subdivisions, which require co-presence in a text for it to qualify as belonging to the genre of parodic news satire:

COMPONENTS OF PARODIC NEWS SATIRE

I	II	III
INTERTEXTUAL COMPONENT	CRITICAL COMPONENT	COMIC COMPONENT
I.a) Structural component		III.a) Lexical component
I.b) Stylistic component		III.b) Pragmatic component
		III.c) Rhetorical component

A brief description of each of these components is in order.

I. The **intertextual** component. The text must be constructed on an intertextual basis as regards other news story texts. Intertextuality involves the "absorption and transformation of another [text]" (Kristeva 1969: 37), as is the case of *parody*: from the author's point of view, it entails borrowing or

altering a prior text, or, as Rose (1993: 15) puts it, "imitation of form with a change to content"; from the reader's, it entails identifying one text in reading another.

a) **Structural** component. The text must parody the organization layout and the general development of a news story, namely in that it must be structured in an "inverted pyramid" way, instead of a "punch line" one (like regular jokes).
b) **Stylistic** component. The text must parody the type of language (formal register), the syntactic construction (3rd person, SVO sentences) and the kind of vocabulary (objective, unsophisticated words) of a regular news story.

II. The **critical** component. The text must have a judgmental nature, in that it disapproves, censures or disparages certain aspects of society or certain social actors. This relates to the "critical distance" Hutcheon (1985) claims to be a defining feature of satire and parody. Indeed, all satire is critical and, according to Rossen-Knill and Henry (1997: 735), so is parody: "the critical act ridicules the object of parody" in a "pejorative" way, which "may range from mild teasing to contempt, depending on the speaker's attitude towards the object of parody." The above-mentioned Horatian nature of news satire makes this critical component be mild and humorous, as the next component stipulates.

III. The **comic** component. The text must be linguistically arranged around the following elements, which are responsible for imbuing it with humorous flavour:

a) **Lexical** component. The text must be lexically organised in such a way that the words employed evoke, trigger or activate scripts which are opposite and overlap (on the

basis of general or local antonymy – Raskin 1985).

b) **Pragmatic** component. The text must be pragmatically constructed in such a way that each reader's general culture and frames of reference be important players in interpretation. Non-informed readers, or those unconversant with the culture and circumstances depicted, will fail to decipher the "contextual" meanings. The very notion of script is context-dependent in that it naturally elicits encyclopaedic knowledge and carries presuppositions and allusions, namely to extratextual scripts.

c) **Rhetorical** component. The text must be constructed in such a way that the rhetorical devices it uses not only instantiate script oppositions but also intensify them. Antithesis, for one thing, pervades through any text that is to be read in script opposition terms. But hyperbole is also a major aide to setting the oppositions REAL vs. UNREAL or POSSIBLE vs. IMPOSSIBLE, whereas irony and personification facilitate the oppositions TRUE vs. FALSE and HUMAN vs. NON-HUMAN, respectively.

The expression of these different components is interactive insofar as they affect one another and also, to a certain extent, overlap. For instance, the intertextual component is pragmatically inscribed, whereas the critical component is lexically instantiated. But despite the artificiality of the division suggested here, what should be highlighted is that it is the simultaneous presence of all the components in a given text that makes it qualify for inclusion in the genre of parodic news satire. Indeed, a text may parody the news genre and exhibit the critical component but, alas, not be humorous, if it stops short of observing the comic component. Alternatively, a text may comically criticise a

certain state of affairs or a certain individual, thus observing components 2 and 3, but lack the intertextual component, thus failing to belong to the news parody category.

5. Applying the model

The analysis offered next intends to probe the analytic model proposed above for a better understanding of the linguistic workings of humour in a particular case of mock press. The corpus of analysis includes 8 pieces of fake news, published in 2011 in the Portuguese spoof newspaper *The Public Enemy*, and here freely translated into English. Short and concise as they typically are, these micro-texts exhibit a great deal of constructional richness, as the analysis will try to demonstrate.

5.1 The text

The Public Enemy is a comic supplement to a Portuguese daily newspaper, *The Public*. Published on Fridays, *The Public Enemy* plays the function of a mock newspaper covering the main events of the week and offering news pieces whose headlines, lead sections and style mimic regular journalism. The tone is matter-of-factly, indeed ostensively objective, as is expected of quality news coverage, but the content is outrageously provocative and absurd.

Graphically, the news pieces are often accompanied by photo collages, in which well-known national and international characters are pictured in models' bodies performing all sorts of funny actions under awkward circumstances, from mud-wrestling and Tarzan-like acrobatics to simple everyday routines, like waking up or walking in the street—with the proviso that the character be wearing animal print underwear or inadvertently holding a cell-phone on fire. These images, unmistakably comic as they are, automatically trigger the humour-reading mode.

5.2 The themes

As in regular quality newspapers, the themes in *The Public Enemy* cover a wide range of mainly political, economic and social events, in Portugal and abroad. Let it be noted, however, that foreign "news" material tends to involve Portugal and is seen from a Portuguese standpoint. At the same time, it targets Portugal and the Portuguese as the butt of most jokes. This is therefore a case of typically national humour, in that the international repercussions of European and American politics in Portugal constitute the bulk of comic input.

Among political topics stand out the European Union policies. Portugal is often portrayed as helpless prey to the powerful financial sharks in Brussels, who act as masters-of-ceremonies guiding the Portuguese economy back to order, all the while making it sink irrevocably further. Angela Merkel—a very popular butt of humour in the spoof paper—is thus said to have urged Portugal to find and stimulate the G spot of national economy, and Sarkozy is claimed to have defended a law, similar to the one banishing the Roma in France, that forces Portugal to expel all pimps, conmen and tricksters from the territory.

On a national level, Portuguese politicians (in the mainland and in the islands, Madeira and Azores) are portrayed as being inept, gullible, incompetent and corrupt. And the Portuguese citizens are depicted as hopeless victims, as accepting, uncomplaining, accommodating puppets who pay more and more taxes to cover up for those in power who spend more and more of their money with impunity. A typical example of this is the news entitled: "Portal of the Ministry of Finances to sport an x-rated area". The 'story' evolves around the claim that the portal is the "best place to give prestige to porn domains, as it is a site laden with obscenities, good old sexual violence, eccentricities and bizarre stuff". It is, the piece concludes, "a very, very dirty site. We love it!"

Some themes in *The Public Enemy* are sociologically and psychologically informed, bearing on different facets of

human relationships. These mock news stories reflect the so-called "faits-divers" sections in regular papers: sensational, lurid pieces covering daily events like crimes, accidents, and curiosities. Male/female interaction is a common topic. Significant of this is a piece of news entitled "Men take revenge on women who fake orgasms by pretending to admit they are right when arguing with them", or another called "Dyslexic man who was going to kill his wife and then himself committed suicide before killing his wife". Sports are naturally an important section in any newspaper, and of this particular one too. National football gossip ranks first, but Portuguese players abroad also receive frequent attention.

5.3 Textual analysis

The following set of eight spoof news articles will be tested for the presence of the components propounded above.

(1) MERKEL WANTS PORTUGAL TO BE GOVERNED BY GERMAN NUDISTS IF IT DOES NOT ABIDE BY STABILITY NORMS

The German chancellor defended the worsening of sanctions for the countries of the euro zone which do not fulfil the stability impositions, including the loss of sovereignty and the decline on the FIFA ranking. Angela Merkel also stated that the countries from southern Europe would stand a far better chance of overcoming the crisis if they let themselves be governed by German nudists, like those who live in "free love" and "flower power" colonies in the Algarve. The Portuguese government replied to Mrs Merkel that Portugal has an 800-year-old history and that, if one day it ends up being governed by nudists, they will be Portuguese nudists, who can wag their John Thomas as effectively as any German.

The first example illustrates a very common topic in *The Public Enemy*, namely the effects of European Union

policies on Portuguese politics. More specifically, it focuses on Angela Merkel, one of the most frequent international politicians to be satirized by the paper.

Seen in light of the three major components of the model, this piece clearly observes the first requirement, in that it establishes an intertextual connection with the genre of regular news stories by parodying the features of "serious" newspaper writing. To begin with, the article obeys the "headline + lead + body" structure. Indeed, the text begins by a title, signalled in block letters, then presents a first sentence with the most important information, and only then does it elaborate on this information with details of decreasing importance (thus observing the "inverted pyramid" rule of journalism writing—see e.g. Rich 2009). Besides, the language is objective, the words are common and the style is short, concise and expository. In syntactic terms, the sentences are written according to the SVO (subject – verb – object) rule, followed by adjuncts, and all of them are in the third person. In short, example 1 exhibits the first component of the model, in that it makes intertextual reference to a genre (the news genre) by imitating, copycatting or, to put it simply, *parodying* its features. The same can be said of all the other examples in this section. But if they all keep the "form" of news articles, it is the "content" that changes, as Rose (1993) claims to be the case in all parodies.

The second component of the model requires that there be a critical dimension to the text. Example 1 does boast a critical character insofar as it disparages the European Union's pressure on Portugal. In other words, it holds the European treatment of Portugal (and of other so-called "southern countries") up to censure by *satirizing* Angela Merkel's recommendations. But the way it does so is not bitter, aggressive or, to use a classical term, Juvenalian. Rather, it is humorous and amusing, because it obeys the third component, next.

Indeed, the comic component is also present in the first example, which is why the (Portuguese) reader chuckles instead of getting sombre or frustrated or angry. The way

the humour is constructed in the spoof news story is three-fold, as the model also stipulates. Lexically, the text activates scripts that are opposite and overlap. In the first sentence, the phrases "loss of sovereignty" and "decline on the FIFA ranking" trigger two scripts that are incongruous insofar as they establish an opposition between a SERIOUS SANCTION and a MILD SANCTION, or between two unrelated areas, POLITICS and FOOTBALL. Afterwards, the phrases "overcoming the crisis" and "being governed by nudists" clearly set an opposition between a GOVERNMENT script and a NUDISM script, two practices which obviously clash, thus producing comic incongruity. Pragmatically speaking, which is another subcomponent within the comic dimension, the reader is likely to be aware that GOVERNING A COUNTRY is a script that carries such presuppositions as professionalism, efficiency and expertise, not to mention the idea of respectability that comes with "having clothes on", whereas PRACTISING NUDISM presupposes a certain degree of idleness, lethargy and indolence, together with the obvious notion of nonconformity to social norms that going around naked carries. Finally, the third sentence introduces a script opposition between A COUNTRY WITH 800 YEARS OF HISTORY and A COUNTRY GOVERNED BY ITS OWN NUDISTS, the first of which presupposes the notions of seriousness, competence and ability, whereas the second suggests laziness, ineptitude and dilettantism. Another pragmatic detail is the allusion to "countries from southern Europe" which should be read as a reference to the idea that they are usually seen as incompetent—an extratextual script that requires the reader's general culture to be deciphered. In other words, the passage introduces another, basic, script opposition which is the key to reading the whole text: US vs. THEM, or PORTUGAL vs. GERMANY—metonymic extensions of the contrast SOUTHERN EUROPE vs. NORTHERN EUROPE. At last, the rhetorical subcomponent is observable in the pervasive use of antithesis which underlies the script oppositions, together with the employment of an interesting simile which also adds to the comic incongruity of the text:

Portuguese nudists being compared to German nudists. The use of the adverb "effectively" in the last sentence once again cues the opposition COMPETENCE vs. INCOMPETENCE, which underlies the entire article. As far as nudists go, the Portuguese ones are as competent as the next person. Therefore, the conclusion to draw is that they are as capable, apt and skilled as the German, be it to engage in public nudity or to run a country.

(2) PRESIDENT OF ANGOLA OFFERS A 1000-ACRE PLOT AT SEA FOR DEMONSTRATIONS

> The president of Angola wants to discredit those who accuse him of obstructing demonstrations and, to prove it, he is going to offer a plot with more than 1000 acres to be used by anyone wishing to participate in a demonstration. The space, which is located in the ocean, at about 50 kilometres from the coastline, will be patrolled by ships from the Angolan navy so as to guarantee the security of all demonstrators. Even so, some consider that the place, albeit roomy, is too far away from the political centre of the country. "The Public Enemy" has contacted José Eduardo dos Santos so as to obtain a response to these criticisms, but was unsuccessful until the closure of this edition. The journalist is patiently waiting in an isolation cell of the São Paulo Prison in Luanda.

The topic of the second example—another clear case of news parody—is international politics regarding Angola, a Portuguese ex-colony, and the focus of criticism (in which the second component of the model is instantiated) is the despotism of its president, J. E. Santos. The script construction of the text is based on oppositions which reinforce this line of criticism. For instance, the lexical activation of the script OFFER in the first sentence (in literal terms) stands in conflict with the script IMPOSITION, indirectly prompted by scattered words throughout the article. Pragmatically, the former script carries a presupposition not only of generosity but also of the

freedom to accept or to decline, whereas the latter implies authority and no freedom of rejection. It is the overlap of these incongruous scripts that creates a comic effect. The stylistic construction of the text (another element of the comic component in the model) is an important factor in setting semantic opposition: through irony, the spoof news article says one thing but means another. In the second sentence, the reference to the existence of ship patrol to "guarantee the security of all demonstrators" means, instead, the existence of ship patrol to "control / deter / repress demonstrators". So the lexical activation of the PROTECTION script (guaranteeing the security of demonstrators) raises an opposite shadow script, namely MENACE (endangering their safety). Likewise, the last sentence in the text states that the journalist in charge of interviewing the president is "patiently waiting in an isolation cell", which is obviously ironical in that it does not activate the (voluntary) WAIT script but the (compulsory) ARREST one. A case of sarcasm is yet another stylistic aid to establishing humorous semantic clashes. The passage "the place, albeit roomy, is far away from the political centre of the country" is a sarcastic understatement insofar as being "far away" from something is much less serious than, say, being completely, irrevocably and absurdly "out-of-the-way", as is the case of a plot in high sea (on the difference between irony and sarcasm, see Nash 1985: 152).

(3) A. J. JARDIM SENDS 10 TONS OF VEAL STEAKS TO THE MADEIRA KENNELS, SO AS TO WIN THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE NOW INFLUENTIAL ANIMAL PARTY
The defeated candidate at the Madeira elections was Jardim, who was re-elected with a tiny absolute majority, some insignificant 48% of all votes and a mere 25 deputies. The winner was CDS (whose candidate has fled to the Assembly of the Republic in the mainland) with a colossal 17% of the votes and 9 deputies. The 3rd party of Madeira, J.M.Coelho's PTP, had an excellent result and 3 deputies. Finally, the 4th party to occupy the

> governing dome, the Animal Party, elected 1 deputy.

Another spoof article relying on irony to establish script oppositions is example 3, which focuses on national politics, in particular the recent election in the Portuguese island of Madeira. The piece clearly parodies news articles which report on election results, using percentages and numbers to order the candidates, thus obeying the intertextual component. But it does so with a view to censuring, on the one hand, the biased media commentary on Madeira's recent election results and, on the other, the local politicians' corruption, which shows that the critical component is also present. Humour-wise, the first comic incongruity is the one expressed in the headline, between EARNING THE FAVOUR OF A PARTY and BUYING THE FAVOUR OF A PARTY, which triggers the script CORRUPTION. The body of the text primarily sets an opposition between WINNERS (literally rendered in lexical terms) and LOSERS (activated by the phrase "defeated candidate"). But the ironical incongruity resides in switching the politicians that those nouns refer to: A.J.Jardim, who got absolute majority, is the "defeated candidate", whereas the "winner" is a party with a third of the votes. The irony also lies in assigning antonymic adjectives to qualify the results: for instance, saying that a percentage of 48% is "insignificant" (instead of "major"), that 17% is "colossal" (instead of "moderate"), or that 3 deputies is an "excellent" result (instead of "poor" or "bad"). The incongruity of the whole piece prompts a third major script opposition, FACT VS. OPINION, which alludes to the frequent bias found in the national, especially leftwing, media from the mainland that tend to view Jardim, who has been in power for over 30 years, negatively. This is, of course, pragmatically constructed insofar as it lies in extratextual knowledge. In short, the article illustrates, by means of actual mimicking of what it criticises, the twisting of facts (i.e. numbers) according to opinion and point of view.

(4) LOBBY GROUP LINKED TO LEFT BLOCK CREATES "OCCUPY WALL STREET INSTITUTE" MOVEMENT
The anti-capitalist North-American 'Occupy Wall Street' movement caused a Pavlovian reaction in several activists of the Left Block party. Upon watching images of the New York demonstrators on TV, Left Block militants started to salivate and immediately headed for the Wall Street Institute language school, occupying the building. Ecologist Gualter Baptista knocked down an aged English teacher with a kick to the ribs. The Left Block group remains in the Wall Street Institute premises at the time of closure of this edition, holding banners reading '99%', which refers to the percentage of the demonstrators who idolise Bob Marley and haven't showered since the Jamaican singer died.

The fourth article is a made-up story about the reaction to the anti-capitalist demonstrations in New York in September 2011 by a Portuguese leftwing party, the Left Block. It criticises the Left Block members (and thus materialises the second component of the model) by portraying them as impetuous, rash, and contradictory lobbyists. Comically speaking, the major script opposition in the text is OCCUPYING NEW YORK WALL STREET vs. OCCUPYING A BUILDING CALLED "WALL STREET". The absurdity of the presumed occupation helps to build the characterisation of the demonstrators as impulsive, empty-minded automatons, to which the mention of Pavlov alludes. Indeed, the lexical occurrence of the verb "salivate" triggers the ANIMAL vs. HUMAN script clash. In accordance with this initial portrayal, other dichotomies follow, such as ATTACKING CAPITALISTS vs. ATTACKING AN INNOCENT OLD LADY, which in turn can be read as a clash between a WORTHY CAUSE and a PETTY OFFENSE. Most of the remaining text relies heavily on allusion, thus being pragmatically inscribed. For instance, the percentage "99%" which the Left Block activists hold on their banners is the same as the figure shown on NY activists' banners, except that the latter meant the percentage of American

people below the top wealthy 1%, whereas the former refers to Portuguese Left Block lobbyists who "idolise Bob Marley and haven't showered" since he died. The meaning of this last sentence is, of course, context-dependent and requires encyclopaedic knowledge to be interpreted (thus observing the pragmatic component): for instance, the knowledge that the Jamaican singer is a symbol for the discontented world-wide, or that leftwing party members tend to be seen as living against society's strict norms, which includes bathing and caring for personal hygiene.

(5) CAVACO SILVA FOLLOWS TWO SEX SHOPS ON TWITTER SO AS TO CHOOSE WHICH DOMINATRIX COSTUME TO OFFER ANGELA MERKEL AT CHRISTMAS
According to "Wired" magazine, the Presidency of the Republic follows the pages of two sex shops, "Love Shop" (sic) in Santarém and "Angels of Sin" in Matosinhos, on Twitter. Cavaco Silva may thus choose the best dominatrix attire to offer Angela Merkel at Christmas, when he will have to go to Berlin to explain the State Budget for 2012, on which occasion he will be flogged into accepting to convince PM Passos Coelho to introduce even harsher measures in the document and, while he licks the German chancellor's leather boots, to do everything in his power to inscribe a limit to the deficit in the Constitution. Cavaco Silva will buy the latex outfit, the horsehair whip, the leather boots and the handcuffs at the "Angels of Sin" shop in Matosinhos, where he will take the chance to visit the Leixoes seaport and think, yet once again, about all the potentialities of the sea for the national economy.

The German chancellor is, once again, the butt of example 5, together with the President of Portugal, Cavaco Silva, in a fake news story revolving around the effects of EU politics on Portugal. The focus of satire—and the corresponding critical emphasis—is twofold: on the one hand, it is the fact that Germany dominates Portugal economically and politically; on the other, that Portuguese

politicians assume a subservient role in face of EU politicians. Humour resides in a major script opposition which targets Merkel and can be phrased as POLITICAL POWER VS. SEXUAL DOMINATION, and which in turn triggers a shadow script clash between POLITICS and SEX. The remainder of the text parodies the typical "inverted pyramid" structure of news stories by providing details and secondary information, which in turn help build the SADISM VS. MASOCHISM script opposition on the basis of explicit lexical clues: "dominatrix", "flogging", "licking", "latex outfit", "horsehair whip", "handcuffs", etc. Many of these words express a stylistic device that helps to construct the incongruity flavour: saying "being flogged into accepting something" can be read as a humorous metaphor for "being forced into accepting", or "licking the chancellor's leather boots" as another metaphor for "treating the chancellor with submissive respect". A parallel script clash, between SEX (buying a sex-related present) and CHRISTMAS (a time of the year with strong religious connotations), is literally phrased in the headline as well as in the body of the article. On the margin, several allusions activate the pragmatic component of the text: the fact that Cavaco Silva is notorious for being hopeless with modern technologies (which makes it incongruous for him to be on Twitter), the fact that Santarém and Matosinhos are satellite towns to Lisbon and Porto (Portugal's second city) and add a note of suburban tackiness to the story, and the fact that Cavaco Silva repeats the "sea argument" a bit too often to be taken seriously—which, in turn, reveals the presence of another spin-off critical topic, namely the President's high blown rhetoric of national myths.

(6) EIGHT-YEAR-OLD ARRESTED FOR SEXUALLY ABUSING PRIESTS

Pedrito, an eight-year-old boy, was arrested yesterday by the police at the playground of the "Little Dolphin" Kindergarten, in Lisbon. The child is charged with sexual abuse of over 300 priests from more than 150 different parishes during a three-year period. According to the police, the boy,

> who has a fatal attraction to heterosexual priests over the age of 60, used the Internet to get to know them and, afterwards, raped them in the confession booths at the hours when fewer people used them. The young gerontophile, who employed cold weapons in case the victims put up any resistance, used to rape his own grandfather repeatedly and to give him cigarettes to keep his mouth shut.

The topic of example 6—a perfect illustration of black humour—is not political, as in the previous cases, but social, religious and ethical: sexual abuse. More specifically, the focus of censure (hence the critical component) is sexual abuse of children by priests—a notorious, frequently silenced, crime both in Portugal and abroad. Unlike the preceding examples, which target specific people and bear on a recent event, this spoof article instead alludes to (thus obeying the pragmatic component) a line of such cases which have unspecified actors and cover extended periods of time, going unnoticed or ignored. The humorous rendering of such a humourless topic—and the corresponding observance of the comic component—is once again incongruity-based: the major script opposition is CHILDREN AS VICTIMS (OF ADULTS) VS. CHILDREN AS ABUSERS (OF ADULTS), which in turn activates a collision between INNOCENCE and DEPRAVITY, or between PURITY and VICE. The lexical activation of these scripts is literal insofar as the words "sexual abuse" and "victims" are explicitly employed, but otherwise it requires pragmatically inscribed inference processes, based on a joint reading of such words as "attraction", "rape", "resistance", etc. Besides, another script opposition occurs between GERONTOPHILIA (which is literally worded) and PAEDOPHILIA, which is the shadow script the whole article truly targets. Within this semantic opposition occur other secondary clashes, like the one between GIVING CIGARETTES and GIVING CANDY as methods to silence the victims of abuse, or the one between ARRESTING A CRIMINAL (i.e. an imputable GROWN-UP) and the absurd script of ARRESTING A CHILD (the reference to the

playground of a kindergarten with an endearing name, "Little Dolphin", makes it all the more farfetched and incongruous, hence comical).

(7) JUVE LEO DRUG DEALER WAS FREITAS LOBO'S EXOTIC WORD DEALER
Besides supplying Mephedrone to Vitinho and to other 10 ancient figures who are now living on a shelf at RTP and who need hallucinogenic drugs to host imaginary TV shows, the Juve Leo drug dealer who was arrested by the police used to supply economists to SIC News Channel, businessmen to "Pros and Cons" and words to commentators who are completely addicted to erudition. According to the Special Unit against Violent Crime of Lisbon's DIAP, an aide to the dealer was caught carrying 1500 doses of exotic words, 5 kilos of metaphors and 10 quotes by Steve Jobs in pure form which had been requested by Freitas Lobo under the code name "Triangulations".

The pragmatic construction of the seventh example makes it inaccessible to non-native readers insofar as it boasts a high number of allusions to characters, institutions and facts which are known only to Portuguese people—for instance, that "Juve Leo" is the name of a football fan club with connections to the crime world. The general topic is TV commenting, while the focus of disparagement (wherein the critical component lies) is the arrogant erudition of many TV commentators. Freitas Lobo, a well-known TV analyst, is portrayed as being "addicted to erudition", which prompts a major script clash between ADDICTION TO DRUGS / SUBSTANCES and ADDICTION TO IDEAS. The reference to dealers elicits a second major opposition, "POSSIBLE : IMPOSSIBLE", insofar as it is *not* possible for drug dealers to traffic words, of all things, not to mention metaphors or quotes, all of which are externalizations of (immaterial) ideas. The lexical activation of the script opposition between DRUG DEALER and WORD DEALER is literally set in the very title, followed

by many words which confirm the DRUG TRAFFIC script: "hallucinogenic drugs", "Mephedrone", "supply", "addicted", "carrying doses", and "pure form". Besides, another script opposition occurs between DRUG ADDICT (with the corresponding connotations of dependence and deterioration) and ANIMATED CARTOON (with the corresponding connotation of childhood purity and health), as represented by "Vitinho", an animated cartoon which used to bid goodnight to children on RTP (the Portuguese public TV channel) back in the nineties. Under this script collision stands yet another opposition, namely the one between the HUMAN and NON-HUMAN scripts, respectively, which are merged together by means of the rhetorical device of personification (another subcomponent of the model).

(8) 16TH-CENTURY STUDS NEVER SENT A PIGEON POST THE DAY AFTER THE DATE
The practice of never calling the day after the date was already fashionable at the time when telephone communications did not exist. Back then the idea that women lost interest in boring and needy men who sent a pigeon post the day after was already common. Robinson Crusoe only sent a message in a bottle three days after meeting the female cannibal from a neighbouring island, and a Cherokee Indian only sent a smoke sign three days after the date. Both got away with it.

The final example deals with male-female relationships, an arguably atemporal subject which is appropriately rendered from a diachronic perspective, where the boundaries of time subside. The script opposition PRESENT vs. PAST is, therefore, blurred into a continuum insofar as the two points in time are claimed to be similar. The topic of the spoof article is the procedures regarding "dating" or, rather, "after-dating": in particular, what to do after meeting one's lover. The point of view is the male's, in an obviously sexist view of reality. The phrase "to get away with it", used in the last sentence, suggests scripts of CUNNING and

DECEIT which go against the idea of FAIR PLAY and OPEN COMMUNICATION between the sexes. But the core of humour seems to be the script opposition between PROGRESS and BACKWARDNESS, or between TECHNOLOGY and the absence of it: the idea of a phone call being replaced by a pigeon post is comic qua inefficient, time-consuming, unreliable and, naturally, obsolete. Two other alternatives are mentioned—messages in bottles and smoke signs—both of which strengthen the script clash between TECHNOLOGY and ARCHAISM, and add to the comical farfetchedness of the whole story. The focus of reproach of the text (and its critical dimension, proper of satire) is perhaps the very sexism just referred to, with the corresponding scripts of LACK OF COMMUNICATION, perhaps DISHONESTY and a bit of TREACHERY, which raise a chuckle instead of a long face thanks to the humorous incongruities that underlie them. Given that the piece observes the intertextual, critical and comic dimensions of the model, it qualifies as a concluding example of parodic news satire.

Conclusion

This article has offered a linguistic model of parodic news satire, in an attempt to describe the distinguishing mechanisms of this specific media genre. The model has aimed at providing an integrative account of various analytical elements dispersed in the literature on parody, satire, and humour. Eight texts, taken from a Portuguese fake newspaper supplement, were used in a comparative analysis with a view to testing the co-presence of the components of the threefold model.

First, the intertextual component of the model requires that two texts be blended together (Chambers 2010), namely regular news reports and spoof news stories, on a dually structural and stylistic level, in a process that implies intentional coding on the part of the producer and informed decoding on the part of the recipient (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997). All the texts under scrutiny in this paper have

duly proven to share this intertextual, imitative, element—or what Dentith (2000: 9) calls "allusive imitation of another cultural production" and Rose (1993: 15) refers to as "comical imitation of form with a change to content", typical of parody.

Secondly, the critical component stipulates that there be a disparaging, disapproving or judgmental dimension to the text. All eight texts have, likewise, shown to observe this "critical distance" (Hutcheon 1985), emblematic of satire, in that they censure and mock certain aspects of society or certain social actors (Elliott 2004). Indeed, all the cases analysed poke fun—in a mild, Horatian, manner—at the ways and vices of society by focusing on political players, social characters, cultural references, facts and situations of daily life.

Finally, the spoof articles under focus in this article have demonstrated the linguistic workings of the comic component, namely a) at a lexical level, where the words employed trigger scripts which are opposite and overlap (Raskin 1985); b) at a pragmatic level, where the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge is crucial to deciphering textual allusions and presuppositions; and c) at a rhetorical level, where the employment of figures of speech such as antithesis, hyperbole, irony and personification, serves to strengthen the script oppositions at stake.

In a nutshell, the article has confirmed that parodic news satire is a multi-layered and multi-voiced discursive genre, which summons echoes of various social facts, events, people and their shortcomings, in a simultaneously critical and humorous portrayal of contemporary reality. If undoubtedly entertaining, this pedagogical game (to merge together Nabokov's 1972 dual definition of satire and parody) may also carry a thought-provoking dimension (Cogan and Kelso 2009), to the extent that it amuses readers all the while awakening in them a capacity to judge present-day society.

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